

THE CRISTERO REBELLION AND THE RELIGIOUS  
CONFLICT IN MEXICO, 1926-1929

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

David C. Bailey

1969



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THE CRISTERO REBELLION AND THE RELIGIOUS  
CONFLICT IN MEXICO, 1926-1929

By

David C. Bailey

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

THE CRISTERO REBELLION AND THE RELIGIOUS  
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This dissertation investigates the Mexican religious crisis of 1926-1929. It attempts to explain the causes of the conflict, its multipronged nature, and its significance in the history of Mexico.

During the colonial era the Catholic Church in Mexico was closely allied with the Spanish royal government and was an intimate part of nearly every facet of life in the colony. After independence the relationship of the religious establishment to the Mexican state was never defined and jurisdictional disputes became endemic. The rise of liberal anticlericalism coupled with Catholic attempts to preserve the traditional role of the Church led to growing friction. In the middle of the 19th century governments succeeded in curtailing the Church's temporal power only after a decade of turmoil and civil strife. During the long rule of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911) the religious question was largely quiescent; the Church enjoyed some degree of freedom, although carefully circumscribed by the government.

After 1900 a fundamental reorientation took root in Mexican Catholicism. The movement's ultimate goal was to reform Mexico under the auspices of Catholic social principles enunciated in Pope Leo XIII's encyclical letter Rerum Novarum. By the time Díaz was overthrown in 1911 a Catholic political

[illegible]

party had appeared, and during the next three years it enjoyed considerable success. The Catholic rebirth was accompanied by a growth in Catholic militancy, spearheaded by a formidable and well disciplined youth movement.

Beginning in 1913, as Mexico slid into social revolution, there was a dramatic resurgence of anticlericalism. The revolutionary leadership took drastic action against the religious establishment, in turn causing the new Catholic leadership to adopt a defensive and combative stance. The Constitution of 1917 included severe restrictions on the activities of Church and clergy. Most of the provisions were not immediately enforced; for eight years an uneasy truce prevailed, broken by occasional skirmishes. In 1925 indications appeared that the Calles government was pursuing a policy actively hostile to the Church and that the laws might now be applied vigorously. Catholic activists organized for resistance. / Matters came to a head in 1926 when the government decreed enforcement of the constitutional articles on religion and Church authorities countered by suspending public worship throughout the country. Simultaneously, Catholics in various parts of Mexico rose in revolt. An organization headed by Catholic laymen undertook to coordinate and lead the rebellion, with the tacit approval of most of the Episcopate. There followed three years of guerrilla warfare marked by brutal excesses on the part of both the government and the rebels. The Catholic leadership made strenuous but unsuccessful efforts to get U.S. help for the cause.

The resort to arms led to deep divisions in Catholic ranks. Some argued that the armed movement could succeed only if its religious nature were de-emphasized in order to attract non-Catholic support in Mexico and abroad; others insisted that to play down the Church connection was both unwise and unnecessary. The most critical problem was the relationship of the rebel movement to the official Church. Although the Holy See carefully

refrained from condemning the armed movement, it finally acted to disassociate the Church from any formal connection with it. The Vatican sought unity among the Mexican bishops and searched for some acceptable solution; when it became convinced that it would be impossible to obtain repeal of the objectionable laws in the near future, and when it decided it would be dangerous to leave public worship suspended any longer, Rome accepted a de facto settlement with the government in June, 1929. The pact was arranged largely through the efforts of U.S. Ambassador Dwight Morrow, who worked tirelessly to convince both Church authorities and the government to make peace. As a result of the settlement the clergy returned to the churches, whereupon most of the rebels laid down their arms and the rebellion ended.

Neither the rebellion nor the settlement solved anything; the laws remained unchanged and the spirit of harmony implied in the 1929 agreement soon evaporated. Only after another decade of troubles was the modus vivendi which prevails in Mexico today finally achieved.

In the preparation of this study all important sources of information available were consulted. These include archival and manuscript collections in both Mexico and the United States, newspapers and periodicals, published memoirs and other first hand accounts, and pertinent secondary works. Data were also obtained from personal interviews with individuals having direct knowledge of the matter.

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## PREFACE

Between 1926 and 1929 thousands of Mexicans fought and died in an attempt to overthrow the government of their country. They were the Cristeros, so called because of their battle cry, Viva Cristo Rey--Long Live Christ the King. Although a substantial portion of this study deals with the motives and deeds of those involved in that struggle, it is not primarily a military history. The Cristero rebellion was intimately related to two other conflicts broader in scope and implication than the guerrilla warfare that devastated large areas of Mexico during those tragic years.

The first was the confrontation between Mexican Catholicism and the Mexican liberal-Revolutionary state which, stemming from roots deep in the past, reached a climax in 1926 that triggered the resort to arms. The second was the crisis within the Mexican Church occasioned by the decision of an activist segment of Mexican Catholics to combat the Revolutionary regime by violent means. These two conflicts, which help explain both the cause and the significance of the Cristero rebellion, form the major part of this work. The involvement, both official and unofficial, of the United States receives detailed attention, not only because it strongly influenced the course of events but because I believe it is important to clarify the nature of that involvement and, hopefully, to dispose of at least some of the misapprehensions regarding it.

I am indebted to a number of persons and institutions for helping make this study possible. My deepest gratitude goes to Charles C. Cumberland, in one of whose graduate seminars my interest in the Mexican religious

question was first awakened; he subsequently guided the research and writing with that rigorous attention to scholarship combined with tact and patience so familiar to his students. I wish to express thanks to Paul V. Murray, who followed my efforts with sympathetic interest, provided countless useful leads on locating materials, and allowed me to use his magnificent personal library. Antonio Ríos Facius, Mexico's foremost student of the Cristeros, made available a variety of important items from his formidable collection and contributed greatly to my understanding by sharing his thoughts with me and serving as a soundingboard for mine.

Antonio Pompa y Pompa and his efficient staff at the library of the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia were unfailingly helpful in facilitating my work in their collections. Father Daniel Olmedo, S.J., of the Jesuit Casa de Estudios in Mexico City, very kindly allowed me to consult the Mariano Cuevas library, so valuable to any student of Mexican Church history. I am particularly grateful to Father Thomas McAvoy, C.S.C., Archivist of the University of Notre Dame, for calling to my attention the Philip McDevitt Papers in his care and granting permission to use them. The dedicated and friendly personnel of the Foreign Affairs Division of the National Archives in Washington, D.C., helped make my research there both profitable and pleasant. Their Mexican counterparts at the Archivo General de la Nación were equally generous with their time and courtesy. I owe a vote of thanks to the staff of the Archives of the State of Coahuila for much valuable assistance, and to Sister Claude of the Catholic Archives of Texas in Austin for directing me to materials in her impressive collection. The staffs of the Michigan State University Library, the Biblioteca Nacional and Hemeroteca Nacional in Mexico City,

the Library of the University of Nuevo León in Monterrey, and the Latin American Collection at the University of Texas gave instinctingly of their time and talents to expedite my work in those repositories.

In addition to those already mentioned, numerous individuals with direct knowledge of the Mexican religious conflict contributed more than they may realize to whatever understanding I have of the subject. The names of all of them would fill pages, but special thanks must be given to Señor Felipe Brondo Alvarez, Father Bernard Doyon, O.M.I., the Most Reverend Luis Guízar Barragán, Bishop of Saltillo, Lic. Salvador Reynoso, Mrs. Sara Cooney, and Father José Bravo Ugarte, S.J. Perhaps none of the generous people who helped will be entirely satisfied with the end product, but they deserve a large part of the credit for whatever interest or merit it may have. The responsibility for the choice of data used and the conclusions reached is mine alone, and the shortcomings can be shared with no one else.

I acknowledge with gratitude a generous Ford Foundation grant awarded under the auspices of the Latin American Studies Center at Michigan State University which supported much of the research that appears in the following pages.

Battle Creek, Michigan

D.C.B.

June, 1969

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## CHAPTER I

### THE ANCESTRY OF A CONFLICT

The Spanish crown and the Catholic cross reached Mexico together. The desire to spread the faith to pagan lands had been a powerful motive in the decision of the Catholic Kings to support Columbus's plan, and leaders of expeditions never failed to appeal to missionary motives to justify their undertakings. The Spanish state justified the exploration and conquest of the new lands principally on spiritual grounds, and adopted from the beginning a policy of promoting and protecting Catholicism in its new domains.<sup>1</sup>

Religion was an almost fiercely natural part of the Spaniard who came to the New World in the 16th century. His very identity as a Spaniard in fact stemmed from his Catholic faith more than from anything else. The Peninsula had been overrun in the 8th century by a Moslem invasion; and shortly thereafter began the long struggle of the Reconquest, seven hundred years of intermittent warfare during which the Moslem was gradually driven southward while the Christians, although often at war with each other over control of the reconquered territories, gradually erected and consolidated Christian kingdoms which would form the basis for a Spanish nation. The Reconquest was pre-eminently a religious crusade. Catholicism was the great single constant in an otherwise disparate situation and

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<sup>1</sup> Scholarly works on the conquest and colonial period which present reliable treatments of the Church's role include Clarence H. Haring, The Spanish Empire in America (New York, 1947), Charles Gibson, Spain in America (New York, 1966), and Robert Ricard, La "Conquête spirituelle" du Mexique (Paris, 1933). The present survey is based on these studies except where otherwise indicated.

gave the movement both its justification and its dignity. When the long struggle ended early in 1492 with the fall of Granada, Spain did not even pause for breath before turning her attention to the west, and in effect merely re-channeled energies and motives that had been centuries in forming and in which religion was a cornerstone.

Catholicism was from the beginning an integral part of Spanish colonial society. Literally no facet of life, personal or public, was beyond its influence, and to speak of separating human activity from religion in colonial Mexico would have been incomprehensible to its inhabitants. Baptism initiated the new-born into society; it was as indispensable for civic standing as it was for spiritual life. The Church was responsible for education at all levels and for such social welfare and medical care as existed; it exercised primary authority in matters involving marriage and family stability. Even recreation was in a sense religious, since the innumerable fiestas with attendant bull fights and other revelry marked some saint's day or other religious feast. The priest comforted the dying with the sacraments, buried the dead in consecrated ground, and offered Masses for repose of the souls of the departed. It was an adaptation of the medieval ideal of Christendom: human society leavened by a spiritual presence which was deemed essential to that society's proper functioning. The order of things was neither new nor unnatural; anything different would have been as unthinkable in New Spain as it would have been to most Europeans of the time.

Church and state were not synonymous--although ecclesiastics did at times hold high civil office. But while the spiritual power influenced the temporal at all levels, the temporal power maintained firm and wide authority in matters ecclesiastical. The Spanish crown in fact exercised



a greater degree of control in ecclesiastical matters in its American colonies than was the rule in other Catholic countries or even in most parts of Spain itself. The peculiar arrangement was based on the "Royal Patronage," the Real Patronato, a body of concessions obtained by the crown from the Papacy in 1501 and 1508 which gave the sovereigns of Castile control over all Church matters not specifically doctrinal. The result was to make the Church in the Indies in a very real sense a branch of the royal government. The crown nominated, directly or through its agents, all holders of ecclesiastical offices from the highest prelate to the sacristan in the local parish church. The king controlled Church taxation and could dispose of at least a portion of the proceeds. Churches, rectories, convents, monasteries, schools, hospitals--any edifice related to religious uses--could be built only with royal approval. The crown decided which clergymen and how many could go to the New World; it could establish and change the boundaries of dioceses, and it reserved the right to approve or disapprove the publication and enforcement of papal communications to the colonies. In return for these formidable powers, which the crown always guarded as one of its brightest prerogatives, the king had the responsibility of seeing to the conversion and protection of the millions of indigenous inhabitants of the new lands, a task which would have been far beyond the financial or manpower capacity of the Papacy.

The Church's presence had a vast impact on the economic life of New Spain, an impact that was sometimes clearly beneficial but in other aspects less clearly so. On the one hand clergymen introduced many useful innovations. They started new industries and taught the Indian population Spanish agricultural techniques that were often a great economic boon. On the other hand, land and wealth, often in the form of pious donations from the faithful, tended inexorably to accrue to the religious establishment. The

secular authorities showed an early concern over the problem. As early as 1535 a royal decree ordered that lands in New Spain could be bestowed on worthy Spaniards only on condition that they not be alienated to an ecclesiastical body. In 1578 the Mexico City cabildo urged enforcement of similar limitations, and in 1664 that body pleaded for a halt in the founding of new convents and monasteries, making reference to the economic burden imposed on the colony by the existence of large amounts of mortmain land and the need to maintain the large number of religious establishments. While the extent of the Church's holdings in New Spain has never been determined, in 1700, according to some educated estimates, it may have amounted directly or indirectly to fifty percent of the usable land. On the other hand, again, this accumulation of wealth was undoubtedly a force for financial stability and certain kinds of economic growth. The religious institutions in fact functioned as a banking system; as the only organizations with a steady supply of cash available they provided most of the capital that stimulated colonial economic enterprise.

If the religious establishment enhanced social and economic stability, it also was the agent of serious friction at times. There were conflicts between missionaries and greedy conquistadores, and later between humanitarian clergymen and holders of encomiendas. There was also frequent strife within "The Church" (which was by no means monolithic as an institution)--between secular and regular clergy, among the various religious orders, between clergymen born in the colony and those from Spain, and between the Inquisition and most other branches of the official Church. The Patronato arrangement did not always function smoothly. Sometimes questions of protocol raised hackles on one side or the other. There were periodic clashes over jurisdiction, particularly in matters where both Church and state claimed

authority--one celebrated dispute in the early 17th century between the viceroy and the archbishop of Mexico plunged the capital into rioting and threatened the stability of the colony for weeks.<sup>2</sup>

In the area of Christian knowledge, belief, and conduct, the religious balance sheet at the end of 300 years of colonial life was highly uneven. The undeniable zeal and high caliber of the clergy in the first decades after the conquest gave way as the era advanced to something often less edifying. Clerical life settled into comfortable patterns often devoid of undue fervor, and laxity in both ambition and morals apparently became widespread. Mexico ended its colonial period a Catholic realm; but the substance of that Catholicism ranged from the high intellectual sophistication sometimes found among the Peninsular or Creole city dweller to a veneer of vaguely understood essentials often mixed with pre-Spanish pagan folk culture in the mass of the subject Indian and mestizo peoples.

It is difficult to assess the influence of the Church and clergy on Mexican colonial society. Beyond question they contributed heavily to the amazing stability that made it possible for Spain to dominate for three centuries an area remote from Europe and much larger in area and population than the homeland. Also beyond question the Church presence restrained at least some of the worst excesses of unscrupulous exploitation by Spanish colonials; it provided a protection for the defenseless Indian

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<sup>2</sup>A minor official, accused of misconduct, fled to a monastery. The viceroy posted a watch at the building to prevent an escape, an act which the archbishop claimed violated the right of sanctuary. When the viceroy refused to remove the guard the Archbishop excommunicated him. The viceroy counterattacked by confiscating the prelate's property and imposing a fine, whereupon the archbishop placed the city under an interdict. As street mobs bellowed opposition to the viceroy, the audiencia suspended him from office. Madrid recalled the viceroy and transferred the archbishop to another post. See Hubert Howe Bancroft, History of Mexico (San Francisco, California, 1883), III, 33-78.

population that otherwise might have been totally lacking. And perhaps paradoxically, if the Church was on the whole a force for order and status quo, it also nurtured clergymen like Miguel Hidalgo, José María Morelos, and Mariano Matamoros, whose leadership signaled the end of Spanish rule in New Spain. The Church must be credited with much that was good, both spiritually and materially. It is equally certain that unworthy clerics and mediocre leadership often compromised an institution that might have stood for justice and humanity more often than it did. In any event, the peculiar form of the Church's presence in New Spain as well as the fruits of that presence left seeds that became the source of bitter conflicts as both the Church and the Mexican state groped for an accomodation with the modern age.

Mexico began her national life in the wake of the French Revolution, in a world where present and future were in mortal conflict with the past. The absolutes of belief and the sacredness of institutions that had been the soul and body of European civilization for a thousand years were crumbling before the onslaught of a philosophical upheaval that left no part of that past unchallenged. Enlightenment man, man the rational animal, once freed from the handicaps of superstition and the restraints of useless and repressive political and social forms, would henceforth decide his own fate.

Plans for the new millenium of the rationalist thinkers were not unchallenged. Forces of tradition, still very much alive, fought to turn back the wave or to salvage what they could. It was Mexico's misfortune to find in her national body, more or less equally balanced, forces which on the one hand were determined to move the new nation toward the goal of Enlightenment liberalism and on the other those which would preserve and build

from what had long existed. Neither clearly prevailed for generations, and the country in the meantime was condemned to careen erratically from one side to the other. Mexico in 1821 embarked on its course as a politically autonomous entity without even rudimentary criteria that could serve as goals for national aspirations. The point of departure was Mexico's Spanish colonial past. As men struggled over the nature of the society that should emerge, they divided over the question of whether the new nation would abandon that past or adhere to it. Even the basic form of government was not generally agreed upon for nearly half a century, when the end of Maximilian's empire laid to rest the question of monarchy versus republic. As for the more fundamental issues of individual and social life in the Mexican state, apparently irreconcilable differences wracked the country for more than a century.<sup>3</sup>

The most pervasive heritage of Mexico's Spanish past was the Catholic Church, which survived the political break with Spain to become both as fact and symbol a storm center, inextricably involved in nearly every phase of the struggle for control by the contending parties. The independence movement that began in 1810 had entailed no attack on the Church. Both rebels and royalists appealed to religion for support, and clergymen played prominent roles on both sides. Priests like Hidalgo and Morelos were only the most important of a large number of the lower clergy who fought against Spanish authority in the name of social justice and political

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<sup>3</sup>The old standard source on Church-state relations in Mexico since independence is Wilfrid H. Callcott's two volumes, Church and State in Mexico, 1822-1857 (Durham, 1926) and Liberalism in Mexico, 1857-1929 (Stanford, 1931). Charles C. Cumberland, Mexico: The Struggle for Modernity (New York, 1968) has an excellent summary of the problem, woven into the larger story. On the Church in the era of Porfirio Díaz see Daniel Cosío Villegas, Historia moderna de México, especially Volume IV, El porfiriato: la vida social, by Moisés González Navarro (Mexico, D.F., 1957). With exceptions noted, the information presented here comes from these works.

independence. The higher clergy, loyalist to a man, bent all their efforts to aiding the king's cause, which they insisted was the cause of religious orthodoxy; only when the hated liberalism seemed to have triumphed in Spain in 1820 did they change sides and welcome Iturbide's drive for independence as the best way to preserve Mexico from the heresy of secularism. In 1821 Mexico gained independence on the basis of Iturbide's Three Guarantees, the first of which was the preservation of Catholicism as the religion of the new nation.

✓But independence, rather than soothing the complications that at times involved the Church during the colonial era, soon led to greater conflict as one problem after another came to the surface. First, and most immediately perplexing, was the question of the Real Patronato. Did the prerogatives of the Spanish crown in ecclesiastical matters pass automatically to the new Mexican state? Many insisted that they did; others, notably the clergy, insisted they did not. Some suggested requesting of Rome a reaffirmation of the privilege or, if necessary, a new concession; others moved as though the matter were not negotiable--the Senate in 1826, after declaring that Catholicism was the state religion and under the protection of civil authority, simply resolved that the government had the rights of patronato.<sup>4</sup>

In 1824 the government of Guadalupe Victoria sent an emissary to Rome to discuss the situation of the Church in Mexico, not only the patronato matter but the question of filling vacant Mexican sees. Many of the bishops had died or left the country during the wars, and in 1830, with matters still unresolved, there was not a single bishop in the Republic.

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<sup>4</sup>On the early years of the Church-state conflict see Martín Quiñarte, El problema religioso en México (Mexico, D.F., 1967), pp. 147-191.

Rome was reluctant to act. Spain was unhappy over the loss of her colony, and the Papacy had not recognized Mexican independence. Not until the accession of the conciliatory Gregory XVI in 1831 did matters begin to move toward more normal levels. Bishops were named and independence recognized but the patronato matter, and with it the whole question of Church-state relations, remained unresolved.

✓ The patronato controversy was related to another phenomenon which appeared in the 1820's and quickly became a central factor in the Mexican scene: anticlericalism. Broadly speaking, anticlericalism, in Mexico as elsewhere, was a natural concomitant of Enlightenment liberalism. It was already widespread in Catholic countries before the end of the 18th century, and its Mexican variety, while presenting some unique features, was basically an extension of this. Opposition in Catholic countries to the social and intellectual role of the Church antedated the French Revolution. It was manifest in the works of the French philosophes and was most effectively enunciated by Voltaire, who together with many lesser figures of the same bent was read and applauded in New Spain as well as in Europe.

✓ Anticlericalism (the word is not entirely satisfactory) was a part of the general philosophical rejection of the past in favor of the secularization of life.<sup>5</sup> It stemmed from a belief that the church, or clergy--the distinction, if any, was seldom carefully made--was an impediment to

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<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the most satisfactory treatment of the rise and nature of anticlericalism is found in Crane Brinton, Ideas and Men: The Story of Western Thought (2d. ed., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963), especially chapter X and XI. Brinton points out that Catholicism has been the most common target of anticlerical and antireligious attacks because of its generally deeper roots and its non-national character.

the achievement of natural virtue and material progress and that, allied to the discredited political and social institutions of the past, and often occupying a position of strong economic power, it constituted an implacable enemy of change. Rarely did 18th and 19th century anticlericalism, outside of France at any rate, entail a denial of the supernatural or a desire to abolish religion. Many liberals insisted on the practical utility of religion as a promoter of good personal conduct. There was always a variety of beliefs regarding approaches to specific matters involving religion. But all liberals agreed that the secular society must have the upper hand in any difference over what the role of religion would be, and they insisted most especially that the economic and political activities of the clergy must be subject to regulation by the civil order.

By 1824, when the Mexican Republic was established, a liberal-anticlerical party had emerged in Mexico. To a rather surprising degree, much of its leadership during the 1820's and 1830's was in the hands of Catholic clergymen, of whom the most prominent were Servando Teresa de Mier, Miguel Ramos Arizpe, and most especially José María Luis Mora, who deserves the title of father of Mexican liberalism. None could be classified as irreligious in the abstract, but all three propounded positions calling for the curtailment of the Church's role in Mexican society and the supremacy of civil authority.<sup>6</sup> In the controversy over the new relationship with Rome, Fray Servando argued that if Rome remained obstinate to the desires of the new government, the Church in Mexico ought to go its own way, returning to the "primitive and holy discipline" of the early centuries of Christianity.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Mora by the end of his life seems to have abandoned the practice of Catholicism and moved to agnosticism.

<sup>7</sup>Quirarte, p. 62.



✓To all Mexican liberals, privilege was the enemy, whether clerical, military, or economic, and they bent their most vigorous efforts to curbing it. Mora advocated the abolition of fueros--special rights, which in the case of the clergy included the prerogative of being subject to a separate system of justice even in purely secular matters. He also urged strict civil vigilance over the Church's financial activities and restriction of its economic holdings, which he described as vast and pernicious, and the suppression of male monastic orders, which he branded a social and economic blight on society. Education, he insisted, should be secular, because clerical education was in principle and practice inimical to the wellbeing and progress of the nation.<sup>8</sup>

Opposition both theoretical and concrete to the Mexican liberals solidified rapidly. It was most ably represented by the scholar and statesman Lucas Alamán, who in his writings and in public office sought to show that Mexico's true destiny lay in building on her Catholic and Hispanic past. By no means a proponent of returning to the colonial era, in much of which he saw injustice and stupidity, Alamán nevertheless bitterly opposed the liberal program, which he considered to be an attack on the foundations of society that portended collective and individual disaster. While never promoting the supremacy of the Church over the state in secular matters, he did believe that only the moral influence of Catholicism could insure personal honesty and integrity, and that without this Mexico, and Mexicans, were doomed. If Mora set the tone for a century of liberal anticlerical thought, Alamán enunciated a point of view that provided Mexican Catholics with some of their strongest arguments in the 19th and 20th

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<sup>8</sup> José María Luis Mora, Obras sueltas (2d ed.; Mexico, D.F., 1963), pp. 55-65; 303-312; Mora, México y sus revoluciones (3 vols.; 2d ed.; Mexico, D.F., 1965) I, 239, 240.

centuries.

The liberals had their first chance to translate their beliefs into national policy in 1833 and 1834. In the earlier year, Antonio López de Santa Anna reached the presidency for the first time. He almost immediately retired to his plantation at Jalapa, leaving the government in the hands of his liberal vice-president, Valentín Gómez Farías. There followed a whirlwind of dramatic activity. Liberal decrees poured forth: Laws prohibited clergymen from preaching on anything but strictly devotional matters; the government secularized the entire educational system and ordered an end to civil enforcement of the paying of Church tithes or the observance of religious vows; authorities confiscated some Church properties and began a survey to determine the value of all Church holdings--with the evident intent of moving much, much further.

But the liberals had over-reached themselves. Reaction was swift and devastating, and the government's attempts to suppress it only heightened the furor. In 1834 Santa Anna, never by choice a defender of lost causes, resumed personal control of the government, expelled the liberals from their posts, and nullified most of their work. But it was the end of only a brief first round.

After the debacle of 1833-1834 the liberals retrenched, while the Church establishment, thoroughly alarmed, moved resolutely to frank political conservatism.<sup>9</sup> For two decades government after government stumbled through political instability and financial chaos culminating in the disastrous war with the United States, which cost Mexico nearly half her national

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<sup>9</sup>There was a brief liberal interlude when Gómez Farías acted as president for a few months in 1847 during the war with the United States. He promptly demanded a loan from the Church--a faux pas which led to his resignation when the Archbishop of Mexico, pleading lack of funds, refused the demand.

territory and brought the nation to the brink of dissolution.

Then, in 1854, after a final short tenure in the presidency by Santa Anna (now a staunch conservative), a revolt began which quickly toppled the government and brought to power a regime made up of a new generation of liberals. Moving more cautiously than their predecessors of 1833, this new coterie undertook to rule and reform a country that was perilously close to physical and moral collapse. They were convinced that nothing less than a far ranging program of change could suffice; and as they set to work, the role of the Church in Mexico was high on their list of concerns. Between 1855 and 1857, when a new constitution was promulgated, the liberals struck at the position of the Church with the aim of settling once and for all its place in Mexican society. The strictly spiritual role of the Church did not concern them. A move to disestablish the Church was debated and discarded, and in the end the new constitution remained silent on the matter-- although it failed to sanction any official protection for Catholicism.

✓The target of the liberals was the economic and political role of the religious establishment. The liberal regime forced the Church to divest itself of all real estate not used for strictly religious purposes; it ended fueros, and set clear lines between ecclesiastical and secular spheres by such measures as the establishment of a civil registry for births and deaths and the making obligatory of civil marriage. Cemeteries were removed from Church control.

The promulgation of the Constitution of 1857 was followed almost instantly by rebellion, strongly supported by Catholic leaders. In response to an appeal by the Mexican Hierarchy, Pope Pius IX condemned the liberal provisions of the new charter, declaring them null and void. The government, now in the hands of Benito Juárez, was forced to carry on

three years of bloody warfare--the War of Reform--before the liberals gained the upper hand. It was during the dark days of that conflict that Juárez, from his temporary capital at Veracruz, attacked his clerical opponents with a series of measures that exceeded even the worst fears of the conservatives: the Laws of Reform. The series of decrees formally separated Church and state, confiscated all real Church property, forbade Church tithing, barred public officials from attendance in any formal capacity at religious services, abolished male monastic orders, and forbade female orders to accept new members.

The Juárez government returned to Mexico City at the beginning of 1861; but the conservatives, refusing to accept defeat, turned to Europe for aid. Reviving the old dream of a Mexican monarchy, they offered a crown to Maximilian of Hapsburg, who accepted and, with the military backing of the adventuring Napoleon III of France, arrived in Mexico in 1864. Juárez again took to the road as a refugee president, this time to the desolate regions of the north. With growing popular support, plus the critically important benefit of U. S. recognition, he directed a three year guerrilla war against the intruders which ended in 1867 when Maximilian, abandoned by the French, died before a firing squad outside the town of Querétaro. Juárez and his liberal government, finally victorious over all their adversaries, foreign and domestic, lay and clerical, returned in triumph to the capital in July. They resumed the rule of a broken and exhausted nation, confident that somehow the future of Mexico belonged to the progress and justice of the liberal dream.

The clerical conservatives withdrew in silence, submitting to the unavoidable state of affairs but in no way reconciled to it. A final, abortive attempt at resistance occurred when the government of Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada incorporated the hated Laws of Reform into the Constitu-

tion: in late 1873 Guerrilla bands rose in Michoacán, Jalisco, Querétaro, Guanajuato, and the State of Mexico, more or less openly supported by the clergy.<sup>10</sup> The strife did not end until 1877 when Porfirio Díaz took power and soon made his first gestures toward conciliation with the Church, as a part of his overall policy of pacification of the country.

The status of the Church during the long era of Díaz was ambivalent. Officially, nothing changed: the constitutional restrictions in ecclesiastical matters remained in force and the government showed a studied determination to avoid being considered in any way friendly to the religious establishment. But there was a definite relaxation of official concern for the enforcement of laws considered odious by Catholics. By the 1890's the Church was enjoying a large measure of freedom and at least outward vigor. New dioceses were being established, and the old bitterness seemed to be fading on both sides.

The de facto truce removed most apprehensions regarding the survival of Catholicism in Mexico. The role it might play in any but a strictly private, devotional way in future generations, however, remained obscure. Few Catholics saw any good prospect, even if desirable, for a return to the pre-1857 situation. The existence of the Church was now apparently assured, but the possibility that institutional Catholicism might re-enter the stream of national life as a social force seemed as remote to Catholics as it was unpalatable to the liberals. The possibility that such a re-entry might come under circumstances that would find Catholic leaders actively promoting social change and progress was probably beyond the belief of either camp, both of which had only very recently moved far

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<sup>10</sup> Alicia Olivera Sedano, Aspectos del conflicto religioso de 1926 a 1929: Sus antecedentes y consecuencias (Mexico, D.F., 1966), p. 23.

enough to acquiesce in a modus vivendi that hardly encouraged ventures beyond the door of the sacristy.

In 1891 the religious and intellectual world was rocked by the appearance of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical letter Rerum Novarum, issued on May 15th of that year by the eighty-one year old Pontiff who had succeeded the conservative Pius IX in 1878. Coming only twenty-seven years after the "Syllabus of Errors," in which Pius seemed to condemn most of the trends of the modern world since the Enlightenment, the new encyclical had an impact possibly greater than any papal document of modern times.<sup>11</sup>

The Pope called for the application of Christian principles to the world's social problems, and specifically for Catholics to address themselves to the problems of the working class--a task which, Leo insisted, must be carried out within the framework of Christian principles regarding the nature of man and society if any true reform were to be realized. The Church, he said, could not neglect the material interests of mankind:

Neither must it be supposed that the solicitude of the Church is so preoccupied with the spiritual concerns of her children as to neglect their temporal and earthly interests. Her desire is that the poor, for example, should rise above poverty and wretchedness. . . .

He surveyed the conditions of the working class. Workers, he pointed out, were no longer protected by the ancient guilds or by the moral authority of the Church; evils such as rampant usury and unbridled greed had reduced the masses to near slavery. The state, he insisted, had obligations: ". . . the public administration must duly and solicitously provide for the welfare and comfort of the working classes; otherwise, that

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<sup>11</sup> The text of the encyclical is in Etienne Gilson (ed.), The Church Speaks to the Modern World: The Social Teachings of Leo XIII (Garden City, 1954), pp. 205-240.

law of justice will be violated which ordains that each man shall have his due." He dealt with specifics--something of a rarity in papal teachings: he condemned the evils of child labor; he insisted that peculiarly exhausting labor, such as that performed by miners, demanded shorter hours than less rigorous work; he asserted that women must not be put in a position of having to work in occupations that damaged their dignity or weakened the cohesion of the family.

The Pope defended the right of workers to organize and to bargain with their employers; he called specifically for Catholic workingmen to form their own unions, guided by Christian principles of responsibility to God and society. The encyclical rejected certain modern approaches dealing with social evils. Socialism, it stated, was wrong, because it denied the rights of private ownership, which were natural rights; and it condemned class struggle as un-Christian and destructive of the ends of man.

The state, Leo insisted, must impartially protect the rights of all, with a special concern for the weak: ". . . the first thing of all to secure is to save unfortunate working people from the cruelty of men of greed, who use human beings as mere instruments for money-making." All should strive for justice: ". . . masters and wealthy owners must be mindful of their duty; the working class, whose interests are at stake, should make every lawful and proper effort. . . ." Religion alone, he asserted, could destroy social evils at their root, and the Church would not ignore its duty:

. . . her co-operation will never be found lacking, be the time or occasion what it may; and she will intervene with all the greater effect in proportion as her liberty of action is the more unfettered. Let this be carefully taken to heart by those whose office it is to safeguard the public welfare. Every minister of holy religion must bring to the struggle the full energy of his mind and all his power of endurance.

The encyclical attracted little immediate attention among Mexican Catholics. Although its text was printed in Mexico in 1891, the first serious comment on it did not come until March, 1895, when the lecturer and journalist Trinidad Sánchez Santos analyzed and praised the document.<sup>12</sup> Further attention to the papal pronouncement came the same year with the publication of the Colección de documentos eclesiásticos de Guadalajara. This work included a letter from Pope Leo to the Archbishop of Taragona, Spain, calling for the holding of Catholic congresses to deal with religious and social matters, for the publication of newspapers upholding the Catholic view of society, and the encouragement of workingmen's associations and other groups. In the same collection was a papal letter to the U.S. Hierarchy dated January, 1895, recommending the establishment of Catholic associations which, if necessary, would also include non-Catholics in their ranks, to promote their interests in accordance with the principles laid down in Rerum Novarum.<sup>13</sup>

Mexican Catholic spokesmen came forward, José de Cuevas asked that hacendados stop favoring their cattle over their peons, and he decried the low wages that caused hunger and disease among industrial workers. The Bishop of Chilapa urged the wealthy to revive the lay apostolate spirit by aiding Indian missions; and the Bishop of Colima, addressing the provincial council in Guadalajara in 1897, asked for the creation of Christian worker associations.<sup>14</sup>

In 1903 the first Mexican Catholic Congress inspired by Rerum Novarum met in Puebla, a gathering that set the tone for a decade of intense Catholic

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<sup>12</sup>Olivera Sedano, pp. 31, 32.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 32, 33.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 33, 34.



social effort.<sup>15</sup> A young Jalisco attorney, Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra, proposed the establishment of credit co-operatives in Mexico; the delegates discussed the creation of worker groups which in addition to furthering the spiritual development of their members would work to diffuse technical knowledge to aid their economic lot; the assemblage took up the problem of Mexico's Indian population, and also discussed projects to establish schools to uplift the general cultural level.<sup>16</sup>

A second Catholic Congress met in Morelia the following year. While its goals were primarily devotional, the delegates demanded primary education for the working class, the establishment of schools of agriculture, art, and trades; the organization of worker, employer, and craft guild associations, and a campaign against unjust and fraudulent labor contracts, which were damaging the interests of the rural population.<sup>17</sup> The third Congress, which was also the first Mexican Eucharistic Congress, met in Guadalajara in 1908. It reaffirmed the work of the two previous ones and added resolutions calling on employers to deal with the worker as a human equal, to respect the Sunday day of rest, to create schools for workers and their children, and to pay workers full salary agreed on, in currency. The Congress affirmed the doctrine of the just wage, which was not to be a minimum one but one which allowed a life of dignity for the family. The last Congress, held in Oaxaca in 1909 under the patronage of Archbishop Eulogio Gillow, took as its principal theme the problem of the Indian,

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 34. This was not strictly speaking the first Catholic congress held in Mexico. One met in 1885, but its object was purely devotional. Most Catholic writers refer to Puebla as the First Catholic Congress.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

and called for efforts to deal with problems of health, alcoholism, and concubinage. The delegates urged action to improve conditions in agriculture, mining, and manufacturing.<sup>18</sup>

Parallel to these general Congresses, agricultural congresses met at Tulancingo in 1904 and 1905 and at Zamora in 1906. The first of these was called by the bishop of Tulancingo, José Mora y del Río, who in 1908 was named Archbishop of Mexico. All three gatherings were devoted to problems peculiar to the campesino and included discussions of means to better the material and moral life of the rural populace in general.<sup>19</sup> Finally, between 1908 and 1912 various "Social Weeks" were observed under Catholic auspices, with the object of dramatizing Mexican social problems.

Concrete results of the Congresses and the accompanying intellectual activity appeared toward the end of the decade, with the establishment of the Circles of Catholic Workers<sup>20</sup> in various parts of Mexico. By 1911 there were more than twenty-five locals with a total membership of between 8,000 and 9,000, and that year the movement was consolidated and strengthened by the formation of the Confederation of Catholic Workers of the Mexican Republic.<sup>21</sup> By January, 1913, when the second meeting of the Confederation was held at Zamora, fifty groups were represented with a total membership of more than 15,000.<sup>22</sup>

A new phase of the Catholic resurgence began in 1909 when at the Oaxaca Congress José Refugio Galindo succeeded in establishing an organization

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 35, 37.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 37, 38.

<sup>20</sup> Círculos de Obreros Católicos

<sup>21</sup> Confederación de Obreros Católicos de la República Mexicana

<sup>22</sup> Olivera Sedano, pp. 38-40.

devoted to Catholic social study, which soon took the name of Operarios Guadalupanos. It attracted numerous clergy and laymen, who in several annual meetings devoted considerable effort to the elaboration of ideas and laid the theoretical groundwork for a Catholic entry into political life.<sup>23</sup>

✓ The desirability of Catholic involvement in public affairs was implicit in Rerum Novarum, but the possibility of formal Catholic participation in Mexican politics seems not to have been seriously considered until near the end of Porfirio Díaz's tenure. While there were no legal restrictions on Catholic political activity, it was as patently impossible for Catholics as it was for anyone else to organize an effective political opposition to the dictator. Moreover, one of the unspoken terms of the Díaz-Church standoff was that Catholics as such would remain silent politically. Then in 1908 the door seemed to open slightly. The aged Díaz, in an interview granted to the American newspaperman James Creelman, announced that Mexico had progressed to the point where a loyal political opposition was feasible, and that in fact he would guarantee its right to function. Almost immediately, small groups of various persuasions began to form for political action. In the late summer of 1909, with a view to laying plans for Catholic participation, Gabriel Fernández Somellera organized the National Catholic Circle.<sup>24</sup>

The revolution against Díaz initiated in 1910 by Francisco I. Madero opened the dikes. Madero's obviously sincere desire to see political democracy return to Mexico found Catholics ready, and they were under motion even before the fall of the dictator. During the first months of 1911 both the Operarios Guadalupanos of Guadalajara and the National Catholic Circle

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>24</sup>Círculo Católico Nacional. On the political stance of Catholics during the Díaz era see Karl M. Schmitt, "Catholic Adjustment to the Secular State," Catholic Historical Review, XLVII (July, 1962), 201.

in Mexico City studied various plans for political action. In the spring, the Archbishop of Mexico called together leaders of both organizations; on May 5th they founded the <sup>\*</sup>National Catholic Party.<sup>25</sup>

The Party convention, meeting in Mexico City that summer, nominated Francisco Madero as its candidate for president, after he had informed the gathering by telegram of his approval of the Party program; the Party balked however at Madero's choice of the ultra-liberal Pino Suárez for the vice presidency, supporting instead Francisco de la Barra.<sup>26</sup>

The Party's program demonstrated the distance that Mexican Catholic opinion had come in fifty years. Adopting the motto, "God, Country, Liberty," it pledged the Party to work for legal reform by legal means "on the constitutional basis of religious freedom," and to insure that democratic, republican institutions, especially free suffrage, would become a fact in Mexico. The principle of no re-election for State and federal executives was supported, as was that of judicial autonomy. Freedom of education was demanded. A cornerstone of the program was the furtherance of Catholic social aims: The Party committed itself to work for the application of Christian social principles to the problems of the worker and of the agricultural and industrial sectors in general, stating that these principles were the only ones which, "conciliating the rights of capital and labor, can be efficacious in bettering the conditions of life of the working classes, without the disturbance of order and without impairing the rights of capitalists or

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<sup>25</sup> Olivera Sedano, p. 45; Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra, El caso ejemplar mexicano (2d ed.; Mexico, D.F., 1966), p. 136. The direct impulse for the establishment of the Party in May is unclear. Palomar y Vizcarra, who was close to the event, believed the Archbishop acted to forestall an attempt by Porfirio Díaz to rally Catholic groups to the defense of his embattled regime. Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Olivera Sedano, p. 46.

managers." The Party would place special emphasis on the establishment of institutions of credit for agriculture and small business, in order to end the evils of usury and promote the public interest.<sup>27</sup>

Madero welcomed the founding of the Party as a concrete manifestation of the new freedom he wished to see in Mexico and lauded the advanced ideas contained in its platform. He praised the members' civic mindedness in involving themselves in public affairs and for their desire to cooperate for the common good.<sup>28</sup>

During the interim presidency of Francisco de la Barra and the administration of Madero, the Party's record was impressive. It elected twenty-nine federal deputies and four senators, and governors in the states of Jalisco, Zacatecas, Mexico, and Querétaro.<sup>29</sup> In Jalisco and Zacatecas it won control of the legislatures and proceeded to enact a considerable part of its program. The effort in Jalisco was especially noteworthy. Laws were passed exempting cooperative credit associations from state and local taxes and granting civil personality to syndical institutions; other legislation provided for proportional party representation in the state, established worker accident insurance based on the principle that indemnization is the responsibility of the employing agent, and regulated the Sunday rest day for workers.<sup>30</sup>

✓The final years of the Díaz reign and the short Madero period had witnessed the appearance of a new orientation in Mexican Catholicism. If practical results were still few by 1913, it was clear that strong currents of change were mounting a frontal attack on the lethargy and hostility to change

<sup>27</sup>Palomar y Vizcarra, p. 136.

<sup>28</sup>Olivera Sedano, p. 46

<sup>29</sup>Antonio Ríos Facius, La juventud católica y la Revolución Mexicana, 1910-1925 (Mexico, D.F., 1963, p. 30.

<sup>30</sup>Olivera Sedano, pp. 48, 49.

that had characterized the ecclesiastical establishment. By 1913 lay and clerical Catholic reformers, who were rapidly rising to positions of influence and leadership in the Mexican Church, could look back on the ten years that had elapsed since the Puebla Congress with considerable satisfaction. The transformation was far from complete,<sup>✓</sup> but ideas had emerged, propounded by ✓ leaders who were determined that Catholicism would again assume a central role in Mexican national life, not as the fearful defender of a discredited past but as an enlightened agent of social advance. A new era, they were certain, had dawned. Whether in the next generation the movement would have become a self-perpetuating force capable of regenerating Mexico under Catholic leadership can never be known. The Episcopate--the Church's rulers in Mexico--was still far from unanimous in its enthusiasm for the new orientation. Some bishops were totally and effectively committed but others maintained a studied determination to continue to limit their real concern to strictly spiritual duties, strictly interpreted; still others gave minimal, perfunctory support.<sup>31</sup> Even the obvious policy of the Holy See after the turn of the century of filling important sees with prelates who had shown leadership in the progressive movement had not brought all bishops along the road of reform, encouraging as that policy was to the proponents of advance.

Undoubtedly, natural attrition and careful education would have continued to accelerate change. But, unforeseen early in 1913, time had run out. Other forces bent on change in Mexico but working from premises fundamentally contrary to those of the new Catholicism had also been forming. Opposed to the stagnant liberalism of the Díaz regime and only partially attracted by Madero's efforts, theoreticians of radical social transformation

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<sup>31</sup>Palomar y Vizcarra, p. 138.

like the Flores Magón brothers and Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama had plans for the regeneration of Mexico that called for remedies beside which the Catholic social principles of peaceful change based on charity and cooperation seemed worse than inadequate.

Although very few recognized it, Mexican society was in deep trouble. The desperate frustrations of millions of Mexicans had reached a breaking point. The political and social institutions that provide cohesion in a human society had ceased to be relevant to all but a small minority of the population. The possibility of evolutionary change, if not nil, was far more remote than most believed. If Catholic leaders saw their chance as having arrived in 1911, the events of 1913 put into motion forces which propelled Mexico into one of the most thoroughgoing social revolutions the world has known. February, 1913, was the signal. On the 9th a revolt against the Madero government began in Mexico City, and twelve days later the President was assassinated.

✓ The coup which overthrew Madero and culminated in the seizure of power by Victoriano Huerta led to civil strife in which the religious question played a crucial part. Under the leadership of Venustiano Carranza, Governor of Coahuila, forces gathered to challenge the usurpation. These new revolutionists, the "Constitutionalists," turned in fury on Huerta and declared all-out war on all who failed to join them. They almost immediately accused the clergy of abetting Madero's overthrow and of allying itself with Huerta. Catholic leaders vigorously denied the charge, and pointed to instances in which the Huerta regime directed its oppressive tactics at them; but Carranza's partisans, who could cite cases of apparent accommodation between the two, remained firmly convinced that the counter-revolutionary reaction had the support of the Church.

By the summer of 1913 there had been a virulent re-emergence of the enmities which had existed between Mexican liberalism and the Church for a century. The new anticlericalism stemmed from the same philosophical premises as that of the 18th and 19th centuries, but its manifestations were more diverse. Some of the revolutionists took a generally mild position on religious questions--Carranza, for example, while angered by what he believed was Catholic support for his enemies, was never enthusiastic about moves to impose severe and permanent limitations on Church and clergy (he saw no objection, for instance, to the Church maintaining its own educational system). But men like Antonio Villarreal and Adalberto Tejeda were not only hostile to any Catholic influence on Mexican public affairs but were anxious to "liberate" Mexicans from even a private and personal reliance on religion. Still others, like Alvaro Obregón, were usually flexible on the matter--sometimes harsh, sometimes moderate in their handling of religious issues.

But as the revolutionary chaos spread, Catholic clergy and lay leaders had little interest in distinguishing among varieties of revolutionary anticlericalism. They found themselves the object of animosity that hardened into all-out assault. By mid-1914 there was open and bitter religious conflict on a national scale. The revolutionists were seizing ecclesiastical holdings, exiling or jailing increasing numbers of bishops, priests and nuns, and harrassing Catholics in a variety of other ways.<sup>32</sup> The revolutionists labeled the clergy and their followers as enemies; Catholics on their part were becoming increasingly certain that the Revolution intended nothing less than the extermination of Catholicism in Mexico.

In December, 1916, representatives of Carranza's revolutionary faction,

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<sup>32</sup>See Olivera Sedano, pp. 61-67.



which had emerged as the dominant one after a period of conflict within the revolutionary ranks, assembled at Querétaro to revise the Constitution of 1857. After two months of intense and often tumultuous deliberation a document emerged which retained much of the earlier charter but included enough significant changes to be considered a new basic law: the Constitution of 1917. Among its most radical innovations were some of the provisions relating to religious matters:

Juridical personality was denied to "religious institutions known as churches" (Article 130), and the federal government was empowered to "exercise in matters of religious worship and external discipline such intervention as by law authorized" (Article 130). Monastic vows were prohibited and monastic orders outlawed (Article 5). Religious bodies were forbidden to acquire, hold, or administer real property or loans made on such property; all real estate held by religious institutions, either directly or through third parties (church buildings, residences, seminaries, convents, schools, hospitals, orphanages, and so forth) was declared national property, and "presumptive proof" was declared sufficient to establish that such property was in fact religious-owned. The federal government was empowered to decide which church edifices might continue to be used for worship; churches could be erected in the future only with prior government approval, and would automatically become national property (Articles 27, 130). Ministers of religion were henceforth to be considered members of a profession and subject to civil regulation, and only native-born Mexicans could function as clergymen (Article 130). State legislatures were given power to determine the maximum number of clergy that might function in their States. Clergymen were forbidden, in either public or private assemblies, to criticize the fundamental laws of the nation, public officials, or the government in general; they were denied the right to vote, hold public office or assemble

for political purposes (Article 130). Periodical publications which could be deemed religious by policy, title, or "merely by their general tendencies," were forbidden to comment in any way on public affairs, or even to print information on the actions of public officials or on the activities of private persons as these related to public affairs (Article 130). Political parties bearing names that indicated a religious affiliation were outlawed (Article 130). All elementary education, public or private, was required to be secular, and religious groups or clergymen were prohibited from establishing or directing elementary schools (Article 3). Finally, trial by jury was forbidden in cases arising from violations of Article 130-- which included most of the constitutional provisions relating to religious matters (Article 130).<sup>33</sup>

Some of the provisions were reaffirmations or extensions of earlier laws. The prohibition on monastic vows had existed since the time of the Reform. Legislation half a century earlier had shorn the Church of its right to own or administer real estate, although the precise meaning of the prohibition was left in some doubt by later enactments.<sup>34</sup> The Mexican state for nearly a century had intervened in religious matters which also had a civic implication: obligatory civil marriage, secular control of cemeteries,

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<sup>33</sup>English text of the Constitution may be found in Foreign Relations of the United States, 1917 (Washington, D.C., 1926), pp. 950-981. For Spanish text see Felipe Tena Ramírez (ed.), Leyes fundamentales de México, 1808-1963 (2d ed. rev.; Mexico, D.F., 1964), pp. 817-947.

<sup>34</sup>The Constitution of 1857 prohibited the Church from owning any real property except buildings devoted to worship. The law of July 12th, 1859, confiscated even these. In 1873 the Laws of Reform were made a part of the Constitution, but in 1874 a decree expanding on the 1873 law stipulated that religious bodies could acquire no property except buildings for public worship and annexes strictly necessary to worship; it added, however, that the nation had direct authority (dominio) over such buildings, which must be registered with the civil authority as places of worship. For texts of laws relating to religious matters see J. Pérez Lugo, La cuestión religiosa en México (Mexico, D.F., 1927).

prohibitions on worship outside church buildings, and other similar items had been legal stipulations for many years. The new Constitution clarified the debatable point of church property rights. It also went beyond previous legislation in several important ways. ✓ By denying juridical personality to churches it closed the question of separation of Church and state: henceforth the Church did not exist so far as the law was concerned. Public secular education began in the time of Juarez; now all primary education must be secular. The clergy had previously been subject to certain restrictive measures--for example they were prohibited from preaching opposition to the law--but the new charter denied them the right of any public voice whatever in political matters and moreover empowered the civil authority to regulate the clerical "profession" and even determine how many individuals might practice it. Formal Catholic political involvement was ended and Catholic participation in public affairs via the printed word severely restricted.

In sum, the Church in Mexico found itself in much the same relationship to the state that it did under the Real Patronato--subject to the civil authority in all things save doctrine and private devotion. But the new patronato would be wielded by a state whose outlook was aggressively secular and from whose decisions there could be no appeal.

The promulgation of the new Constitution came after more than three years of religious strife during which Catholic clergy and laymen had been the target of often bitterly harsh treatment by local revolutionary officials. In some parts of the country Catholic worship had either ceased completely or was dependent on the whims of local revolutionary leaders and circumstances. Hundreds of clergymen had either fled Mexico or been sent into exile. Now the nightmare seemed to have capped by the appearance of the new charter.

In April, 1917, members of the Mexican Hierarchy who were in exile



in the United States issued a formal protest against the religious provisions of the Querétaro Constitution, which, they said, formalized and sanctioned the religious persecution that had wracked Mexico since 1913. The charter, they asserted, "injures the sacred rights of the Catholic Church, of Mexican society, and of individual Christians; it proclaims principles contrary to the truths taught by Jesus Christ. . . ." They refuted the religious articles one by one as being unjust and tyrannical. The Episcopate, they insisted, did not seek political power; it was committed to bettering the condition of the poor, and it supported the establishment of democracy in Mexico. They called for an atmosphere of toleration, in which the Church would lend its moral power to assisting the government in its task of promoting national wellbeing.<sup>35</sup>

It is unlikely that the bishops expected their words to alter the situation. The formal line was drawn at Querétaro, and there was little doubt on the part of anyone that confrontation lay ahead. It remained only to be seen when and how the issue would be joined.

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<sup>35</sup>"Protesta que hacen los prelados mexicanos que suscriben, con ocasión de la constitución política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos publicada en Querétaro el día cinco de febrero de mil novecientos diecisiete." Copies in various document and manuscript collections. The one cited above is in the archives of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, Texas.

## CHAPTER II

### A NEW AND FERTILE BLOOM

In 1911 a group of Catholic students in Mexico City calling themselves the "Jaime Balmes Student Philosophical Society" (Sociedad Filosófica de Estudiantes "Jaime Balmes") met regularly under the direction of Father Vicente María Zaragoza. The immediate concern of the group seems to have been to form a national organization capable of countering the growing influence of the Y.M.C.A., whose proselytizing efforts, fortified by an appealing athletic program, were making inroads among Catholic youth in Mexico City and elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

The founding of the National Catholic Party in May, 1911, immediately widened the horizon of the Society, which decided to become a student auxiliary to the new party. Their initiative was warmly welcomed by Party President Somellera, who offered his assistance and made available the rooms of the National Catholic Circle for meetings. On August 9th the new organization, called the League of Catholic Students (Liga de Estudiantes Católicos) was formally launched. Its stated aims included efforts to give all possible aid to the Party, and, collaterally, to organize Catholic students throughout the country for the purpose of encouraging "moral betterment." The program called for the establishment of meeting centers which would attract members away from "places of vice and evil," and in which students would instruct workers in their rights and duties. The Archbishop of Mexico, informed of the founding of the Liga, sent his congratulations and offered assistance. The Liga

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<sup>1</sup>Ríus Facius, p. 27.

immediately plunged into the political campaign then in progress, with public demonstrations supporting the candidacies of Madero and De la Barra.<sup>2</sup>

Through 1911 and 1912 the Liga slowly extended its organization. Centers were established in the states of Mexico, Oaxaca, Hidalgo, Zacatecas, Jalisco, Michoacán, Querétaro, Veracruz, and Yucatán. But progress was discouragingly slow, and late in 1912 a core of some twenty dedicated members met and decided to invite the Jesuit priest Carlos M. de Heredia, who was attracting considerable notice for a series of brilliant lectures to the Congregaciones Marianas, to become ecclesiastical adviser of their organization. Father De Heredia accepted, and undertook an immediate reorganization of the Liga. First, he recommended its withdrawal from all political activity, and concentration on the personal physical, intellectual, spiritual, and social development of the membership. He next formulated a program that included obligatory instruction for members and training in journalism, oratory, and propaganda activities. He also brought the Liga into contact with the Association of Catholic Women (Asociación de Damas Católicas), which he had recently founded at the request of the Archbishop and which was persuaded to provide an adequate center for the Liga's Mexico City chapter. In February, 1913, the Catholic Student Center (Centro de Estudiantes Católicos) equipped with gymnasium, library, game rooms, a session room, and study areas, was inaugurated in downtown Mexico City. The Archbishop attended the opening, along with a distinguished group of clergy and laymen.<sup>3</sup> Thus appeared the first element of a movement whose members during the next decade would

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 27-29

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 31-36

play a commanding part in one of the most dramatic episodes of Mexico's history.

The second element was a dynamic French Jesuit priest, Father Bernard Bergoënd. Born in 1871, he entered the Society of Jesus at the age of eighteen. Two years later he was sent to Mexico, where he studied philosophy in San Luis Potosí. In 1900 he was back in Europe, studying theology in Spain; then he returned to America, this time to the United States, where he was ordained a priest in St. Louis, Missouri. Once more assigned to Mexico, he served briefly in various capacities in Puebla and Mexico City and was finally named professor of philosophy at the Jesuit Institute of San José in Guadalajara.<sup>4</sup>

Father Bergoënd's two major interests--social problems and youth--found a fertile field in his adopted country. In 1907 he organized a program for workingmen in Guadalajara which combined spiritual exercises with a program to train worker leaders who, imbued with the new Catholic social philosophy, would lead the working class to the attainment of its rights. His work soon brought him into contact with Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra, Luis B. de la Mora, and other young members of the Operarios Guadalupeños, to whom Father Bergoënd urged the necessity of creating a vehicle for Catholic political action. At their request, he drafted a project expounding his views on the matter, based on precepts of a French Catholic party, the Action Libérale Populaire, which had had considerable success in promoting Catholic social action in France. Much of Father Bergoënd's project would later be incorporated into the program and organization of the National Catholic Party.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 19; Andrés Barquín y Ruiz, Luis Segura Vilchis (Mexico, D. F., 1967), p. 75.

<sup>5</sup>Rfús Facius, p. 20; Joaquín Blanco Gil [Andrés Barquín y Ruiz], El clamor de la sangre (Mexico, D.F., 1947), p. 336.



In 1911 the Jesuit turned his full attention to the role of Mexico's Catholic youth in the fast-moving course of events. The prospect, he admitted, was discouraging; his experience had convinced him that most Catholic young people were devoid of ideals for either their country or their religion; almost nothing in their preparation had readied them to take a part in Mexico's national reconstruction; indifference was common among most. What was urgently needed, he decided, was an organization that would undertake a strident religious, social, and civic formation of the young, having as its goal the preparing of youth for total commitment to the building of a Catholic social order in Mexico.<sup>6</sup>

Partly for the sake of expediency--time was too crucial, he decided, to be lost in experimentation--and partly because a good model already existed, the priest decided to pattern the new organization after the Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Française, already well established in France and with a record of achievement that had caused Leo XIII to praise it as a prime element of the French Catholic social resurgence.<sup>7</sup>

In October, 1912, Father Bergoënd, with permission of his superiors, moved to Mexico City to begin his efforts. There he was introduced to the officers of the newly established Catholic Student Center by one of its leaders, Manuel de la Peza, and made a most favorable impression. It was a propitious moment: Father De Heredia had just been reassigned to the United States, and the organization needed a new ecclesiastical adviser. At the request of the Center, and after clearing the move with the Jesuit provincial for Mexico, Archbishop Mora y del Río made the appointment,

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<sup>6</sup>Ríus Facius, p. 42.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

which Father Bergoénd eagerly accepted. He saw in the Liga the seed and vehicle for his cherished plans.<sup>8</sup>

On March 9th--less than one month after Madero's murder and Huerta's seizure of power--he assumed his new post. The priest proposed to the Center's executive committee that the organization reconstitute itself as the first local group of a new organization, the Catholic Association of Mexican Youth (Asociación Católica de la Juventud Mexicana), which would be commonly called the ACJM. In a carefully prepared address to the leadership, Father Bergoénd summarized his estimate of the problem:

All are aware of the sad situation in which our country finds itself. After God was excluded from the laws, from the schools, and from public life, positivism, that cancer of the national soul, was made the religion of the state. The results have not been long delayed: in the field of ideas, a chaos of errors and deviations; in the field of action, an accumulation of calamities. Even among Catholics, indifference has struck deep roots; for many, patriotism has become refined selfishness; our workingmen, in the country as well as in the city, have heeded the destructive doctrines of socialism and, no longer having the restraints of religion, have turned their hatred of capital and of society into deeds. No wonder, then, that the call to fratricidal warfare, which has converted the fertile soil of the Mexican Fatherland into a wasteland of bloody thorns, has erupted so strongly and has wreaked such havoc.<sup>9</sup>

Salvation was possible, he insisted, only if Mexicans sought it within their own capacities--not in dreams of the coming of some providential strong man, but in the durable work of men who would infuse vitality into the body social. Of the elements having the potential to do this, youth, he said, was perhaps the most important. Unfortunately, however, it was far from ready. While many had joined this or that pious society, they lacked unity of plan and effort and a clear understanding of modern tactics: Catholic young people there were, but not a Catholic youth.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp 42, 43.

<sup>9</sup> Barquín y Ruiz, pp. 75, 76.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 76, 77.

His aspirations for such a youth were high indeed:

Oh, the things that could be done for the renovation of Mexico by a good contingent of youth, strongly united, which, animated by a profound faith in the cause of God, of the Fatherland, and of the popular soul, would work as one, for God, Fatherland, and people, loving God to the limits of martyrdom the Fatherland to the limits of heroism, and the people to the limits of sacrifice.<sup>11</sup>

The general statutes of the ACJM, which Father Bergoënd wrote, described the organization as a self-governing Catholic lay body. However, its relationship to Church authority was carefully spelled out: each chapter was required to have an ecclesiastical adviser, named by the bishop of the diocese in which it operated; the bishop was to exercise "vigilance" over its internal government and general action, and "jurisdiction" in its religious activities and those related to faith and morals.<sup>12</sup>

The entire program, said Father Bergoënd, was contained in three words: piety, study, action. The Association was to abstain from political activities, although individual members had the "imperative duty" to defend political and religious freedom, even in the field of elective politics.<sup>13</sup>

The Jesuit's words and program were received with high enthusiasm. They unquestionably enunciated the sentiments of the directors of the Center. Yet, it was several months before the project was approved. Locals in various parts of Mexico had to be contacted; some members objected to the change; and not until August, when the Congregaciones Marianas agreed

<sup>11</sup>Barquín y Ruiz, p. 77.

<sup>12</sup>Ríus Facius, pp. 44, 45.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

to adhere to the new organization, was the ACJM formally established--on August 12th, 1913.<sup>14</sup>

Growth was discouragingly slow. A few locals of the old Liga affiliated, but many Catholic youth groups were apathetic. The appalling conditions in the country during 1914 and 1915 forced suspension of most recruitment work; the savage fighting and near anarchy often made communication impossible.<sup>15</sup> Father Bergoënd's guidance was impeded by the course of events, which frequently limited the activities of clergymen. Meanwhile, the Catholic Student Center of Mexico City continued to function as the temporary executive committee of the Association.

In 1916, with the country in relative calm, things looked up for the ACJM. A highly successful organizational effort in Guadalajara led by the Center's representative, Luis Beltrán, led to the establishment there of a strong chapter which incorporated a number of already existing Catholic cultural and recreational groups. Under the leadership of the young attorney Pedro Vázquez Cisneros, of Efraím González Luna, and one who would soon emerge as the paladin of the movement in the west, Anacleto González Flores, the ACJM spread like wildfire across Jalisco.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout 1917 and 1918 the organization burgeoned. Strong groups were constituted in Colima, Aguascalientes, Guanajuato, Zacatecas, San Luis Potosí, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas.<sup>17</sup> A corps of leaders, many of whom had played roles in earlier youth movements, rose to positions

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 469.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp 78-95 passim.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 101-103

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 109-116.

of dominance in the Association. The most widely known was René Capistrán Garza, who was elected president of the Mexico City Student Center--and thus provisional president of the ACJM--in January, 1917. Of superior intellect, well versed in the humanities, extraordinarily handsome, and with a gift for oratory and debate that soon became almost legendary, this young zealot--he was twenty years old when he assumed direction of the ACJM--would hold undisputed leadership of the Association for the next decade.<sup>18</sup> By 1918 national growth had advanced so far that the Student Center moved to relinquish its role as temporary national executive, and the following year a General Committee, made up of one delegate elected from each regional unit, assumed control under the presidency of Capistrán Garza.<sup>19</sup>

✓ While the role of defender of Catholic interests was implicit in the conception of the ACJM, there is no evidence that either Father Bergoñé or the early membership ever considered extra-legal action or physical force to be necessary or appropriate tools. Rather, they stressed a strong program of intellectual and moral formation which would prepare the Association to pursue its goals through social action of an educational nature. Combat would be on the intellectual plane. ✓ The ACJM was in fact geared to counter the liberalism of the 19th century, especially the philosophical climate of the porfiriato. ✓ The battlefield was the realm of ideas. ✓ The ACJM would grapple with the liberal enemy in the field of ideology, at the same time forming its members into an elite whose task was to awaken an ignorant and apathetic Catholic mass to its responsibilities and potentials so that permeated with a revived faith in God and Church and guided by Catholic social ideals, the nation would move forward to a

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid. pp. 97, 98.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

true national rebirth.

✓✓ But the ACJM found itself increasingly confronted with realities in the Mexican situation which were unforeseen early in 1913. They had expected obstacles, to be sure; but the burgeoning Constitutionalist movement, which by the summer of 1913 was carrying the nation into the morass of social revolution, created a radically different state of affairs. The center stage of the spreading revolution was occupied by individuals whose concept of social change was to say the least unlike that of the new Catholic leadership. The revolutionary leaders intended to reform Mexican society in accordance with postulates which seemed fundamentally opposed to Christian principles. Indeed, they labeled the Church and all its works reactionary and even un-Mexican, and insisted that Mexican Catholicism bore much of the responsibility for the doleful situation they meant to correct. Such convictions led to generalized attacks on the Catholic clergy, education, press, and even at times Catholic devotional life.

Thus almost from its inception the ACJM felt called upon to become involved directly and physically in defense--whether to protect churches and clergy from the excesses of the revolutionists, or to equal and outdo their adversaries in propaganda and street demonstrations--action that frequently led to open battle.

The ACJM's idealistic young adherents were by no means averse to confrontation. Imbued with exalted aspirations, moved by convictions that were both deeply religious and fiercely patriotic, with an esprit de corps that had about it a strong measure of the romantic, they relished the role of crusaders. Odds were a stimulus, and the possibility that they might be overwhelmed by events was beyond the calculations of all but a few of them.

Heriberto Navarrete described the ACJM in Guadalajara, which he joined in 1920 at the age of seventeen. The study circle to which he belonged was composed of some sixteen members, all students of bachillerato. The circle, together with some fifteen others, made up the Central Local, with a building for meetings that was being rapidly developed into a first-rate facility, with gymnasium, game rooms, library, and chapel. The member circles, each named for some famous Catholic--O'Connell, Kettler, Mun, Pasteur, Iturbide--held weekly meetings, attended by an ecclesiastical and a lay adviser. Sessions were devoted to the study of Catholic apologetics, with a strong concentration on sociology. Navarrete recalled the spirit of militancy and sacrifice which dominated the gatherings.

Sunday after Sunday, in our typically informal morning meetings, we listened to studies and accounts of the lives of these [For whom the circles were named] and other Christian champions of all peoples in all eras. Thus we learned, little by little, that man's life on earth is a fierce battle and that those who live it best are those who are the most warlike, those who master themselves and then throw themselves against the army of evil to conquer by dying, and leave to their sons the inestimable legacy of heroic example.<sup>20</sup>

Their efforts in Jalisco and adjacent States to promote membership and intensify the work of the ACJM, he recalled, "had all the characteristics of a holy crusade mixed with the perfect model of bohemian adventure."<sup>21</sup>

They never shrank from a fight. When Alvaro Obregón jailed a large portion of the Mexico City clergy in 1915 for refusing him a sizable financial contribution, the Student Center organized a protest demonstration

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<sup>20</sup> Heriberto Navarrete, "Por Dios y por la Patria": Memorias de mi participación en la defensa de la libertad de conciencia y culto, durante la persecución religiosa en México de 1926 a 1929 (2d ed.; Mexico, D.F., 1964), pp. 26-30.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

that ended in the arrest and jailing of several of its members, among them Capistrán Garza.<sup>22</sup> The Jalisco contingent received its baptism of direct action in the summer of 1917, when the state government, irked at Archbishop Francisco Orozco y Jiménez's public attack on the new Constitution, arrested priests who had read the protest from their pulpits and closed a number of churches in Guadalajara. The ACJM organized public demonstrations and clashed with police. A year later, the ACJM played an important part in the massive public campaign against a decree of the state of Jalisco limiting the number of priests and requiring registration of clergymen. After a struggle which saw the cessation of all public religious services, a mass boycott of businesses, and the expulsion of the Archbishop from Mexico, the government was brought to terms and rescinded the decree. The Archbishop, who was accompanied out of the country by a guard of ACJM members, returned later in the year; he brought with him authorization from Rome, which he had requested, to confer on ACJM leader Pedro Vázquez Cisneros and on Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra the papal distinctions of Knights of the Order of Saint Gregory.<sup>23</sup>

The accession of Alvaro Obregón to the presidency in December, 1920, signaled the advent of a period of relative stability and order in Mexico after a decade of national turmoil. A Sonora rancher who fervently supported Madero, Obregón had early joined the ranks of the "Apostle," and fought in the 1912 campaign to suppress the Pascual Orozco rebellion. Rallying to

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<sup>22</sup>Ríus Facius, pp. 87, 88.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 106-108; 125-134. Palomar y Vizcarra was a lay adviser to the ACJM. He had been a key figure in the Catholic congresses, a leader of the Catholic bloc in the Jalisco legislature, and, as a member of the faculty at the Escuela Libre de Derecho in Guadalajara, an outspoken advocate of Catholic social principles.



Carranza in 1913, his abilities led to a rapid climb in the Constitutionalist movement and late in 1913 he was named to command the Army Corps of the Northwest. The series of defeats he dealt to Villa in the spring and summer of 1915 saved the Constitutionalist cause and confirmed Obregón as a paragon of the Revolution. His growing popularity with revolutionary factions, combined with an increasingly sophisticated ability to articulate revolutionary sentiments and an instinct for personal survival in a milieu of treachery, made it possible for him to challenge Carranza for supremacy. In 1920, when Carranza attempted to impose a relative unknown as his successor in the presidency, Obregón, in league with Adolfo de la Huerta and Plutarco Elías Calles, rose in revolt. Carranza fled Mexico City and was killed in the mountains of eastern Mexico under mysterious circumstances. Following a six-month interim during which De la Huerta served as president, Obregón took office, on December 1st, 1920.<sup>24</sup>

In power, Obregón pursued a policy of conciliation that had as its object the consolidation of the Revolution. He combined a well-enunciated revolutionary idealism with a pragmatic approach to realities. A consummate manipulator of men and events, he preferred persuasion but was quite capable of direct and even brutal means when such seemed indicated. His handling of the complex and dangerous problem of foreign investments in Mexico--particularly those involving U.S. and British petroleum interests--resulted in an easing of tensions that had threatened to bring foreign intervention. His conclusion of an agreement with the U.S. Government--the so-called Bucareli conventions--led to American recognition of his

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<sup>24</sup>On the events of 1920 see José Vasconcelos (ed.) La caída de Carranza (Mexico, D.F., 1920); Rubén Romero et al., Obregón: aspectos de su vida (Mexico, D.F., 1935); and John W. F. Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico: A Chronicle of the Revolution, 1919-1936 (Austin, 1961).

regime, a key factor in his ability to survive the rebellion led by De la Huerta in late 1923 and early 1924.<sup>25</sup> Obregón would leave office the latter year the unchallenged master of Revolutionary Mexico.

In religious matters Obregón followed a flexible course usually devoid of extreme or impulsive moves. He left in abeyance most of the religious provisions of the Constitution of 1917. In public pronouncements he refrained from the bitter salvos that had marked his dealings with the clergy earlier in his revolutionary career. On the other hand, he maintained an unswerving determination to prevent any moves by Church and clergy to challenge the dominance of the revolutionary regime.

The prospect of harmony was not uncongenial to the Vatican, which had been forced to give increasing attention to Mexican Church matters since 1913. The ugly situation that developed that year caused considerable consternation in Rome, and in 1917 Pope Benedict XV seconded the Mexican hierarchy in its protest against the restrictive measures relating to religion in the new Constitution.<sup>26</sup> But by 1920, Rome clearly hoped for a relaxation of tensions.

Obregón appeared to be receptive. After the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Ernesto Filippi, arrived in Mexico in 1921, there were exchanges of letters between him and Obregón which showed encouraging frankness and good will.<sup>27</sup> When Pius XI informed Obregón of his elevation

<sup>25</sup>For a detailed study of the events leading to U.S. recognition of Obregón's government see C. Dennis Ignasias, "Reluctant Recognition: The United States and the Recognition of Alvaro Obregón of Mexico, 1920-1924" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University, 1967).

<sup>26</sup>The text of the Pope's letter to the Mexican bishops is printed in full in The Southern Messenger (San Antonio, Texas), July 26, 1917, p.4.

<sup>27</sup>See for example Filippi to Obregón, Dec. 30, 1921; Obregón to Filippi, Jan. 2, 1922; Filippi to Obregón, June 3, 1922; Archivo General de la Nación, "Archivo de los Presidentes, Obregón-Calles," 438-F-1.

to the Papacy in 1922, Obregon sent a courteous note of thanks.<sup>28</sup>

But if the atmosphere in Rome was conciliatory, that in Catholic Mexico clearly was not. Church leaders, embittered by the events of the teens, saw no joy in the advent of Obregón to national power. He remained for most of them the implacable persecutor who during the dark days of 1914 and 1915 had jailed and exiled clergymen and nuns, seized churches and convents, closed Catholic schools, slandered the priesthood, and who in 1917 had sided with and probably directed those who produced the hated Querétaro Constitution. To trust such a person now, they believed, was worse than futile; and to acquiesce in the permanency of the Revolution would mean, many were convinced, the ruin of a generation of Catholic efforts and perhaps the end of the Church itself.

Events during Obregón's tenure in office seemed to confirm their estimates of the situation. In February, 1921, a dynamite charge exploded at the door of the archbishop's palace in Mexico City, and in June another bomb damaged the archepiscopal residence in Guadalajara.<sup>29</sup> On November 14th of the same year, a bomb hidden in a floral offering exploded inside the Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico City, only a few feet

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<sup>28</sup>Lagarde Memorandum. This 80-page study was written by Ernest Lagarde, Chargé of the French Legation in Mexico City, in 1926. It is a carefully done study of the religious situation in Mexico from the end of the Díaz era. Lagarde was a trusted confidant of leaders in the Mexican government and in the Episcopate, and in preparing the memorandum drew heavily on information supplied by the French diplomatic mission to the Holy See. While some of his assertions cannot be verified because of lack of access to Vatican records and other sources, those which can be checked suggest a high degree of reliability for the document. Dwight Morrow considered Lagarde to be the best informed man on the matter in Mexico, and obtained a copy of the memorandum late in 1927. Copy in Department of State Records (hereinafter cited as DSR), 812.404/867 1/2.

<sup>29</sup>Rius Facius, p. 167

from the image of the Virgin, the most venerated object of Catholic devotion in Mexico. Evidence was produced which seemed to establish that the person responsible was one Juan M. Esponda, a member of Obregón's staff.<sup>30</sup>

On January 11th, 1923, an impressive ceremony was held near the city of Guanajuato, where on a hill called "El Cubilete" a monument was dedicated to Christ the King. Leading figures of the Mexican Episcopate, led by the Apostolic Delegate, officiated. Church authorities later insisted that the function had been held entirely on private property and therefore did not violate the legal restrictions on public outdoor worship.<sup>31</sup> Obregón, however, chose to view the matter as a calculated challenge, and moved swiftly: Archbishop Filippi was expelled from Mexico and formal charges (later dropped) were brought against several Mexican prelates.<sup>32</sup>

The Eucharistic Congress held in Mexico City in 1924 provoked another clash which Catholic spokesmen took as a clear example of persecution. Midway through the week-long proceedings--some of which were of at least a semi-public nature--the government dispersed the Congress, charging violation of the laws, and consigned the matter to the attorney general. Foreign clergymen involved were expelled and

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<sup>30</sup>Witnesses stated that immediately after the explosion, soldiers surrounded the presumed culprit, who was taken to the offices of the municipal president of Mexico City. A trial was ordered, but the court ordered Esponda released for lack of evidence. The image was unharmed, although the altar was badly damaged. Ríos Facius, p. 179; Aquiles P. Moctezuma Eduardo Iglesias, S. J., and Rafael Martínez del Campo, S.J., El conflicto religioso de 1926: Sus orígenes, su desarrollo, su solución (2 vols; 2d ed.; Mexico D. F., 1960, I, 282, 283.

<sup>31</sup>Their legal logic was highly dubious. Article 24, Paragraph 2 of the Constitution says: "Every religious act of public worship shall be held strictly within the churches, which shall be under official vigilance."

<sup>32</sup>Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, Recuerdo de recuerdos (Mexico D.F., 1942), pp. 81, 82; Olivera Sedano, pp. 90-92.

government employees who had participated were fired.<sup>33</sup>

✓ These events and others less spectacular heightened the militancy of Catholic organization--in particular the ACJM--as anti-Catholics became convinced that authorities were deliberately harassing the Church. In Mexico City and Guadalajara clashes between Catholics on one hand and local radical revolutionary groups on the other became increasingly frequent. In the latter, ACJM centers were sacked by street bands--and sometimes by police;<sup>34</sup> in the former, an exchange between members of the pro-government General Confederation of Labor (Confederación General del Trabajo) and ACJM members on May Day, 1922, ended in the looting of the Student Center while police reportedly looked on.<sup>35</sup> There were collisions between pro-Revolutionary groups and Catholics in Michoacán, Veracruz, Zacatecas and elsewhere. The fact that such incidents were sporadic and, compared to the 1913-1916 period, considerably less violent, and in many or most cases apparently the result of local and spontaneous passion--and that on occasion Obregón rebuked the pro-revolutionary extremists--was of little consequence; fine distinctions were scarcely congenial to the mood.<sup>36</sup>

In spite of occasional painful occurrences, Rome was determined to achieve a workable arrangement. Late in 1924, Julio Madero, Mexican Minister to Italy, exchanged letters with Pietro Cardinal Gasparri, the

<sup>33</sup> Olivera Sedano, p. 93; Moctezuma, I, 293

<sup>34</sup> Navarrete, p. 30

<sup>35</sup> Ríus Facius, pp. 202, 203.

<sup>36</sup> On Obregón's disapproval of local harassment of Catholics, see Obregón to Governor of Veracruz, May 2, 1923, SP. D.22; Obregón to Ricardo Vargas, May 2, 1923, SP.D.23, in Archivo General de la Nación, "Archivo de los Presidentes, Obregón-Calles," 438-0-6.

Vatican Secretary of State, in which the Mexican government agreed to allow a papal delegate to reside in Mexico and also promised that in case of difficulties it would ask Rome to recall its emissary rather than resort to unilateral expulsion; the Vatican on its part declared its intention to fill vacant Mexican sees with churchmen who were not involved in political conflicts and who promised to work, with their clergy, for the spiritual welfare of their people.<sup>37</sup>

The programs of Catholic social action, many of which had perforce been in eclipse after 1913, underwent some rejuvenation after 1920. That year, the bishops, meeting in Mexico City, called for an intensification of effort and established the Mexican Social Secretariat (Secretariado Social Mexicano), to function under the guidance of a permanent committee of bishops. The eminent Jesuit sociologist Father Alfredo Méndez Medina was named executive secretary. The culmination of Father Méndez's efforts, taken in collaboration with Palomar y Vizcarra and others, was a Catholic workers' congress held in Guadalajara in April, 1922, which drew over 1,300 delegates representing 353 Catholic labor associations with some 80,000 members.<sup>38</sup> From the Guadalajara congress emerged the National Catholic Confederation of Labor (Confederación Nacional Católica del Trabajo). In 1923, in response to an appeal from the hierarchy for unification and coordination of Catholic social and civic activities, a Union of Catholic Societies was established, with representation from the Union of Catholic Women, the Knights of Columbus, and the ACJM.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Texts of the letters are found in Elizabeth Ann Rice, The Diplomatic Relations Between the United States and Mexico, as Affected by the Struggle for Religious Liberty in Mexico, 1925-1929 (Washington, D.C., 1959), pp. 199-201.

<sup>38</sup>Ríos Facius, p. 242; Francisco Orozco y Jiménez, Memorándum (East Chicago, Ind., 1929), p. 4.

<sup>39</sup>Ríos Facius, pp. 242-246.

In 1922 the ACJM held its first National Congress, in Mexico City. The assembly adopted a series of resolutions concerned principally with strengthening the spiritual formation of the membership. It urged Reception of Holy Communion at least once a month, group recitation of the rosary each week, and annual spiritual retreats.<sup>40</sup> In a rousing address to the delegates, René Capistrán Garza described the challenge facing Mexican Catholics and youth in particular as essentially one of reversing the course of Mexico's history:

. . . the work of de-Christianization begun during the Reform by Juárez and skillfully continued by the porfirismo had succeeded in suppressing almost totally any public manifestation of religious life.

The Church was driven into the churches, off the street, he said; Catholics in public life had to lead double lives, leaving their Catholicism at the doors of their homes. Positivism had done huge damage to the youth in the schools.

And then came disaster; given the causes, the effects had to follow inevitably; the revolution erupted, spilling out all the evil, all the corruption that had been forming under the protecting wing of liberalism and with the protection of the regime. They wanted a people without God and they got only hordes of bandits; they wanted a nation without religion, a Fatherland without history, a civilization without ethics, and they got only disaster, ruin, decline.

Only providence, he asserted, had averted hopeless and final perdition:

. . . in the midst of the inevitable and terrifying general collapse appeared a force of singular vigor and rare potency that had not been taken into account; at the hour of disaster appeared unexpectedly in

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<sup>40</sup>"El Primer Consejo Nacional de la Asociación Católica de la Juventud Mexicana," El Archivo Social, No. 92, archive of the National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty (Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa), first part. The Archive was classified and micro-filmed in 1961. The bulk of the documents are in two groups, both of which contain data relative to Catholic activities between 1902 and 1937. Materials from these cited herein will be designated LA-1 and LA-2. Also in the collection is one un-numbered roll of film with a variety of miscellaneous items; this will be referred to as LA-3.

the public plaza, fully armed, Catholic Youth; and with it appeared, as if surging from the depths of the national soul, as a new and fertile bloom from the roots of the Fatherland, Christian civilization with all the luxuriance of its eternal youth, rising above the ruins that seemed to have demolished it forever.

Mexico, he vowed, would save itself; and in the struggle the ACJM would be the principal force if it did not depart from the spirit of Christ. The Congress, Capistrán Garza declared, marked the end of the Association's formative period; mature and ready, the ACJM would move forward in its work.<sup>41</sup>

Other Catholic organizations, some new, others already in existence, intensified organization and effort. The Union of Catholic Women held its first national convention in November, 1922, in which it devoted its main attention to educational matters. Of major concern was the constitutional ban on religious primary education; in a series of resolutions, the women called for the reform of those parts of the Constitution which restricted the right of parents to determine the kind of education their children would have.<sup>42</sup>

Formidable leaders were attaining high levels of maturity and competence. One in particular personified the determination of the new Catholic generation not to abandon the field to the Revolution which Obregón and others were determined to make permanent in Mexico.

Anacleto González Flores was born on July 13th, 1888, in the town

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> E1 Archivo Social, No. 93, LA-1.



of Tepatitlán, in the part of Jalisco known as Los Altos.<sup>43</sup> He was one of twelve children, of parents who managed to earn a sparse but respectable living by running a small tool shop. Young "Cleto" was serious by temperament; stoop-shouldered and solemn, he was nicknamed "Camel." Although fond of music and a frequent participant in town serenades, he seems to have preferred the non-gregarious life.<sup>44</sup> He was reared in a staunchly Catholic family, but his religious fervor appears to have been only average until he was seventeen, when a priest from Guadalajara preached a mission in Tepatitlán that changed his life. His conversion was total and final. He became a lifelong daily communicant and his acts of charity became legendary. His particular passions were teaching catechism to children and visiting the sick and neglected--people would later recall seeing him go each afternoon to the home of an elderly shut-in to pray the Angelus with her. He later wrote:

If you do not want to travel the road of the humble, the disinherited, of those who suffer the pain of being forgotten, until you taste the sweetness of interior and exterior sacrifice, then surely you will have to believe that redemption will never be more than a shining ideal, a beautiful hope.<sup>45</sup>

In 1908 he entered the seminary at San Juan de Los Lagos where he remained for five years, until, reaching the decision that he had no real calling for the priesthood, he left to find fulfillment in other fields. Already, while a student at San Juan, he had begun devoting his vacations to recruiting members for the National Catholic Party in Jalisco,

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<sup>43</sup>Los Altos extends from near Guadalajara east to the Guanajuato border and from the area of Encarnación de Díaz and Lagos in the northern part of the state south to Atotonilco el Alto. It is hilly upland country, well suited to agriculture, and with a heavy concentration of population.

<sup>44</sup>Antonio Gómez Robledo, Anacleto González Flores. El Maestro (2d ed.; Mexico, D.F., 1947), pp. 25-29.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., pp. 31-33; 48.

always accompanied by his constant companion, Miguel Gómez Loza.<sup>46</sup>

Forced to prepare himself for another career, he began studying preparatoria and law simultaneously, meanwhile earning a precarious living teaching history and literature in private schools. Always he was the teacher and organizer, and "Camel" became Maestro, the sobriquet that would follow him to his death. Sleeping little, he found time for conducting catechism classes, usually among the poor, and for doing highly successful organizational work among the workers; he founded and counseled study groups of young Catholics;<sup>47</sup> he established or collaborated in founding five newspapers in Guadalajara between 1916 and 1924.<sup>48</sup> In 1916 the ACJM was founded in Guadalajara, and in it González Flores found all that he wished to do with his life. He became the embodiment of the Association in Jalisco, the ideal of the young, the mentor of Catholic students, and the awe of action-minded Catholics of all ages.<sup>49</sup>

A master of words--printed or spoken--and possessed of a superior and balanced intellect, González Flores became a major spokesman for Catholic activism. More temperate and less given to florid oratory than Capistrán Garza, he propounded his views in books and articles in an increasing flow after 1918, and came closer than any contemporary to putting together a synthesis of the Catholic opposition to the Revolution. Alternately philosophical and tactical, his efforts always dwelt on two major themes: the imperative need for a structured, Christian social order, and

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 42-47.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. 56-61

<sup>48</sup> Andrés Barquín y Ruiz, Los mártires de Cristo Rey (2 vols.; Mexico D.F., 1937). I, 231, 232.

<sup>49</sup> Gómez Robledo, pp. 62, 63.

the rejection of the philosophies of secularism, class struggle, and irreligion:

The only renovation that can be a solid cement, an indestructible foundation of the social order, is the spiritual restoration of human energies; the strong, interior love of man for man which is impossible without Christ. . . .<sup>50</sup>

A healthy society, he believed, must be an organism of order and authority, in which an aristocracy of talent, imbued with spiritual values, provides the motor. The monumental modern error was to insist on a blind equality which reduced all values, all logic, to a sterile counting of noses. Spiritual unrest, economic bankruptcy, moral degeneration, and religious persecution were only manifestations of the misguided "revolutionary disease" of the modern age.<sup>51</sup> The standard bearers of contemporary democracy, he said, had struck at human nature:

They began by proclaiming equality, an absolute equality, as the basis of democracy. They threw themselves into the arms of Number and its rigorously mathematical result, and waited tranquilly for the reappearance of the golden age. Their democracy turned out to be an adding machine. . . . The table of values of democracy has reduced everything to equality. Every man equals one . . . all, totally, absolutely equal, and with the same, with equal rights, with equal prerogatives. From the point of view of the function of each one in public and social life, this democracy is an immense market in which all the merchants have gone crazy and lost even the compass of common sense. . . .<sup>52</sup>

Revolution in general, and the Mexican Revolution in particular, were, he taught, essentially destructive. Revolutionists of all ages were intruders and usurpers, and the breed that had arisen in Mexico was no exception:

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., pp. 59, 60.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>52</sup>Anacleto González Flores, El plebiscito de los mártires (Mexico, D.F., 1930), pp. 75, 76.

They have sworn first to destroy our house--this luminous and sonorous house that was the meeting place of all the ships of the West, laden with missionaries, teachers, and where for three centuries bodies and souls sweated and bled to raise walls and roofs. . . . The innovators, powerless to build even the most wretched hut, have invaded our house. And after invading it they have set about the task of ruling it despotically and absolutely. . . .<sup>53</sup>

He preached resistance--not by force, which he always abhorred--but by collective civil disobedience and individual sacrifice. Crusaders of the past, he noted, had ridden forth to defend their rights by sword point, but

the new crusaders have reached the unshakable conviction that victory over tyranny is not won by violence, but by the road opened by the idea, the word, organization, and the sovereignty of opinion. And they know that force begets force, blood begets blood, and despotism begets despotism; and that people who need violence to recover their freedom are condemned to suffer the tyranny of the many or the tyranny of one. . . .<sup>54</sup>

The spirit of Mohandas Gandhi, whom he studied and admired, was evident in his approach to resistance.<sup>55</sup> If group violence was ruled out, individual heroism, reaching to martyrdom, was urged as a powerful and eminently practical weapon: "The martyr is a miracle and a necessity so that liberty will not perish in the world," he once wrote.<sup>56</sup> Like other militants, he was much impressed by the recent events in Ireland. He recalled the fight of Daniel O'Connell: "He began his campaign amid the omnipotent silence and the treason of certain Catholics,

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., pp. 98, 99.

<sup>54</sup>Gómez Robledo, p. 111.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., pp. 166, 167.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., pp. 112, 113.

some priests among them, who tried to still his voice. But a hundred thousand Irishmen came to listen to the 'Beggar King.'"<sup>57</sup>

In 1922, already thirty-four years old, González Flores took his law degree, making an unheard-of perfect score in the professional examinations. Eight months later he married--in the chapel of the ACJM headquarters center in Guadalajara.<sup>58</sup>

González Flores saw in the ACJM the core, the elite; but he recognized that this was not enough. An organization was needed that would reach all Catholics. The answer he provided was the Unión Popular. Organized on a strict hierarchical basis, with an organizational scheme that reached to the city block level, the U.P. was designed to include every Catholic without regard to age, social level, or education. Membership was open to all, and unlike the ACJM, formal program was minimal. The goal was education and unity--to infuse into the masses a growing personal and collective awareness of the necessity for, and the means to achieve, Catholic action on the public level. While organization was at first sporadic and at times disappointingly slow (González Flores once complained that the people seemed to have little faith in the virtues of organization) the U.P. gained a considerable degree of popular participation in Jalisco, and by 1924 its official organ, Gladius, was being distributed to some 80,000 persons weekly.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., pp. 62, 63.

<sup>59</sup>Navarrete, pp. 36, 37; 88-91. The Unión Popular remained predominantly a Jalisco organization. Branches were established elsewhere in Mexico, but these seem to have been absorbed by the National League for Religious Defense after 1925.

There were sporadic attempts by Catholics beginning in 1920 to influence national events by direct political participation, but success was completely nil. In July, 1920, the Republican National Party<sup>60</sup> was rather hastily formed at a convention in which Catholic leaders predominated. Rafael Cenicerós y Villarreal, who had been governor of Zacatecas in the days of the National Catholic Party, was chosen party chairman, and the ACJM was well represented by such figures as Capistrán Garza, Luis Beltrán, and Fernando Díez de Urdanivia. Carefully avoiding any formal Catholic affiliation, the Party nominated Alfredo Robles Domínguez for president and adopted a platform calling for the derogation, by legal means, of the Constitution of 1917. In the September 5th elections Obregón and his supporters swept the field, and the two-month old party rapidly disappeared. Capistrán Garza, one of its candidates for Congress, was among those defeated. Charges of fraud were leveled at the victors.<sup>61</sup> In 1923, Capistrán Garza again failed of election to Congress as part of the movement that supported Angel Flores's unsuccessful bid for the presidency in 1924.<sup>62</sup>

Some Catholic leaders were ready to abandon words for military action. A number of them--although none, apparently, of the first echelon--threw in their lot with Adolfo de la Huerta in the unsuccessful rebellion against Obregón that began late in 1923.

By 1924, as Alvaro Obregón prepared to turn over the presidency to a successor, it was beginning to appear that the Revolution, if not

<sup>60</sup>Partido Nacional Republicano

<sup>61</sup>Ríos Facius, pp. 147-152.

<sup>62</sup>Barquín y Ruiz, Luis Segura Vilchis, pp. 101, 102.

yet unshakably secure, was achieving some degree of permanence. Having weathered serious threats both foreign and domestic the revolutionary leadership could, with each passing month, worry less about its enemies and more about its own destiny in Mexican life.

J But if the Revolution was striking roots, Catholic activist opposition to it was also assuming a kind of institutionalized existence. While the positive programs of Catholic social action formulated in the pre-1913 years were still being promoted with rather surprising vigor, a combative, defensive aspect had become clearly dominant. It was obvious that if the Revolution prevailed, Catholicism could never be the guiding force in Mexican social and political development. In fact, Catholic leaders believed the religious provisions of the 1917 Constitution might be so harshly interpreted and applied as to place the Church, even in its purely devotional sector, in a position where it would be harassed into extinction. The situation was totally unacceptable to Catholics who by 1924 had devoted nearly a generation to preparation and organization.

Rome's leanings toward accomodation met with decidedly mixed reaction among the eight archbishops and twenty-six bishops who ruled the Church in Mexico in 1924.<sup>63</sup> The prelates were by no means of one mind on the important issues confronting the Church. United in principle only in their opposition to the Revolution, their approach to specific questions involving Church-state relations ran the gamut from a patient desire to avoid conflict at almost any price to an appetite for combat that was capable of encouraging armed resistance.

The Primate, seventy year old Archbishop José Mora y del Río, a

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<sup>63</sup>For an incisive analysis of the Mexican Episcopate in the early 1920's see the Lagarde Memorandum.

veteran of the chaotic teens when he, like many of the others, had spent several years in exile in the United States and elsewhere, was in declining health and took an increasingly reduced part in ecclesiastical affairs; but his ardent nature and his taste for involvement in matters not strictly of the spiritual realm would still find room for exercise in the few years left to him.

Those generally considered moderates with a preference for conciliation--Vera y Zuria of Puebla, Banegas Galván of Querétaro, Fulcheri of Zamora, Uranga of Cuernavaca--found themselves more and more in a minority position as the 1920's advanced. An intransigent attitude that at times approached the bellicose moved to the fore, represented by such as Herrera of Monterrey, Manríquez y Zárate of Huejutla, Castellanos of Tulancingo, and Lara y Torres of Tacámbaro.

Four prelates in 1924 were destined for roles of decisive and emotional controversy in the storm about to break. Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, Archbishop of Michoacán since 1911, an eminent theologian, energetic, who had made his archdiocese one of the best in Mexico, had in his twenty-four years as a bishop shown a remarkable skill in adapting to conditions. As a young bishop he had been on friendly terms with Porfirio Díaz. He ingratiated himself with Francisco Madero, who sent him a most friendly congratulatory letter when he was named to the Michoacán see. While no friend of the Revolution, he seems to have come through the 1913-1917 period with a lack of rancor quite uncharacteristic among his fellow prelates, and in 1926 he settled a conflict with state authorities in Michoacán at a time when like situations in other dioceses led to insoluble strife. His flexibility and natural aversion to extremes would, however, involve him in bitter controversy



as he moved into situations where temporizing was to many only another word for deviousness or worse.

José María González Valencia, the brilliant, restless Archbishop of Durango, was elevated early in 1924 when only forty years old. Outspoken and at times overconfident of his ability to control events, he would welcome a resort to the use of physical force.

In a class by himself was the Archbishop of Guadalajara, Francisco Orozco y Jiménez. Of towering intellect, with a capacity for command and a presence that was little short of hypnotic, he was by 1924 a living legend because of his opposition to the Revolution and all its works. Already exiled from Mexico three times, and more than once a refugee in his own archdiocese--according to one report, he hid out for a time in 1917 disguised as a mule driver--he was lionized by Catholic activists, and most especially by the ACJM, which he supported without reserve. More than once, Rome administered reproofs to him--apparently not too effective--for his tactics. In 1923, only a year after the Apostolic Delegate Fillippi had assured Obregón that he had done everything possible to muzzle the Archbishop,<sup>64</sup> the prelate was involved in a confrontation with José Guadalupe Zuno, Governor of Jalisco, that typified his approach to Church-state matters. In a letter to Zuno, Orozco y Jiménez sternly rebuked the Governor for summoning some of his priests to appear before the civil authorities, and warned that if the government should back similar steps in the future with force, it ran the risk of grave trouble, "because the slightest indication from the ecclesiastic would suffice to

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<sup>64</sup> Filippi to Obregón, June 3, 1922, Archivo General de la Nación, "Archivo de los Presidentes, Obregón-Calles," 438-F-L.

rouse the people against an illegal order."<sup>65</sup> Yet an apparent brashness was coupled with extreme tactical discretion that at times placed him in a minority position of caution, and in the crisis in 1926 he would take a course that surprised many.

Destined for a meteoric rise in the ranks of the Episcopate was the Jesuit Pascual Díaz y Barreto, who in 1924 was completing only his second year in the hierarchy as bishop of the relatively unimportant diocese of Tabasco. A native of Jalisco, with marked Indian features--a rarity among his blue-blooded peers--he had attracted the attention of his superiors by parish work in both the mission field and in the prestigious Colonia Roma in Mexico City. Agile, perceptive, with an unusual ability to gain the confidence of persons of diverse points of view, he would rise quickly to assume a pivotal role in Mexican Church affairs and to become perhaps the most controversial Mexican churchman of modern times.

The Holy See in 1924 could survey the Mexican episcopal scene with an apprehension that would soon approach despair. Faced with disunity and also a growing intransigence on the part of the Mexican bishops, the Vatican found its policy of conciliation a hard part to follow. The bishops, in their ad limina visits to Rome,<sup>66</sup> had kept up a steady flow of hard-line criticism of the Mexican government, and were little impressed by Gasparri's counsels of patience. When Filippi was expelled,

<sup>65</sup>Orozco y Jiménez to Zuno, July 18, 1923, in Zuno to Obregón, July 23, 1923, ibid., 438-J-1. Zuno shot back that he would welcome any such challenge and would hold the Archbishop personally responsible for any armed rising in Jalisco--and then, obviously shaken, appealed to Obregón for support. Zuno to Orozco y Jiménez, July 20, 1923; Zuno to Obregón, July 23, 1923, ibid., 438-J-1.

<sup>66</sup>Canon law requires bishops to make a report in person to the Holy See every five years regarding conditions in their dioceses and their own stewardship.

to the outrage of the Mexicans, the Vatican protested but kept channels open by leaving the Apostolic Delegation in Mexico City open under a subordinate. Even Obregón's closing of the Eucharistic Congress did not impede the Gasparri-Sáenz exchange shortly afterward.<sup>67</sup> But Rome doggedly refrained from any overly precipitous stance regarding the bishops. With the future uncertain, with the dark possibility of schism lurking, it chose to operate in low key and await developments, convinced that time and dialogue were the only possible roads to some eventual satisfactory solution.

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<sup>67</sup>Lagarde suspected that Rome was not enthusiastic about the holding of the Congress--presumably because such a gathering might heighten tensions or even occasion some dispute with the government. See Lagarde Memorandum.

### CHAPTER III

#### OF LAWS AND MEN

The only serious contenders to succeed Obregón as president were his two partners in the coup that ousted Carranza: Adolfo de la Huerta and Plutarco Elías Calles. In 1923 Obregón forced De la Huerta out of the cabinet and thus out of the running. Unwilling to accept eclipse gracefully, De la Huerta made a skillful and almost successful attempt to shoot his way into office. His failure left a clear field to Calles, who was duly elected and assumed the presidency on December 1st, 1924.

Calles's rise to power paralleled Obregón's in many ways. Like Obregón he was from Sonora and of undistinguished antecedents. His origins, however, are somewhat obscure, and his early years were marked by bad luck mixed with reports of irregular conduct. He attended normal school in Guaymas and taught for a time. While treasurer of the Guaymas Teachers' Association funds in his care mysteriously disappeared. He was fired from his teaching position after parents complained of his conduct. His uncle arranged his appointment as city treasurer in Guaymas, and he was dismissed when shortages in his department were discovered. He then took work as a bartender, and followed this by brief and unsuccessful periods of employment in hotel management, farming, and milling (the hotel burned down, the farm went into bankruptcy, and the milling business failed). His true calling however was not teaching or business: it was social revolution.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>James A. Magner, Men of Mexico (2d ed.; Milwaukee, 1946), pp. 522-524.

Since his student days, Calles had been attracted by radical revolutionary ideas, and he was associated with the radical paper Regeneración in the last years of the Díaz dictatorship. The overthrow of Díaz opened the way to a new life for him. Like Obregón, he was an early supporter of Madero, and in 1912 was given the job of chief of police in Agua Prieta. He was a stern and loyal official: once, when a laborer shouted "Down with Madero" in the street, Calles ordered him hanged by barbed wire from a railroad bridge. In 1913 he threw in his lot with the Constitutionalists. His military record was not as spectacular as Obregón's, under whom he served for a time, but it was creditable enough and he rose to the rank of general. He served as both provisional and constitutional governor of Sonora under Carranza, and in 1919 became Secretary of Industry, Commerce and Labor.<sup>2</sup>

Of rather average intelligence, Calles possessed neither Obregón's reflective temperament nor his agility in handling people and problems. His revolutionary zeal was beyond question, however, and was backed by an iron will. By nature stubborn, he was implacable in pursuit of a goal and usually direct to the point of bluntness in his methods. As President he had few intimates and rarely gave his full confidence to anyone. Closest to him were his two personal secretaries, "Chole," an uncomely girl who according to rumor was also his mistress, and Fernando Torreblanco, who had been Obregón's secretary and had married Calles's daughter.<sup>3</sup>

The basis of Calles's political support varied from Obregon's in one important way that augured ill for Catholic activists. In the final

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Weddell to SecState, March 3, 1925, DSR 812.00/27508.

year of his presidency, Obregón had sought to counterbalance the growing power of Luis Morones and his labor federation, CROM, by giving increased attention to agrarian groups, notably their National Agrarian Party. Eager to strengthen their position with Obregón's successor, the laboristas--CROM's political arm--gravitated to Calles, who received them cordially. In gratitude to Morones, the new President appointed the labor leader to a cabinet position, and in the new administration CROM enjoyed favored treatment in both policy formation and patronage.<sup>4</sup> The fact that CROM represented the most implacably anticlerical hue of the revolutionary spectrum was not a happy prospect for those who hoped for official benevolence in religious matters.

Calles's stated views on the religious question were not significantly different from Obregón's. Both insisted they were not opposed to religion but only to its misuse at the hands of intriguing and meddling clergymen. Both were determined that the Church, if it must function in Mexico, would do so only under conditions laid down by the revolutionary governments they headed.<sup>5</sup> Both probably believed that the "religious problem" would one day be settled. But while Obregón obviously saw the solution as long-term and evolutionary, with time on the side of the Revolution, Calles was less patient and philosophical.<sup>6</sup> It is hard to de-

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<sup>4</sup>Robert E. Scott, Mexican Government in Transition (2d ed. rev; Urbana, 1964), pp. 119, 120.

<sup>5</sup>See Calles, Speech in Morelia, May 11, 1924, in Esperanza Velázquez Bringas (ed.), Méjico ante el mundo: Ideología del Presidente Plutarco Elías Calles (Barcelona, 1927), no pagination.

<sup>6</sup>Calles's typically broadside approach to religious problems was demonstrated in 1916 during his tenure as governor of Sonora. Receiving information that the Sonora priests who had been exiled to the United States were working for American intervention, he summarily ordered the expulsion of all other priests still remaining in the state. Hostetter, Hermosillo, to SecState, March 24, 1916, DSR 812.404/118.

termine to what degree the religious strife that developed during his administration was of his own doing, and how much of it was due to an atmosphere which he encouraged or to events he could not control. It was soon clear, however, that the relative calm that characterized Obregón's term of office was at an end.

Within a few weeks after Calles assumed power signs of trouble appeared. On January 30th, 1925, the state of Tabasco put into force a law limiting to six (one for each 30,000 inhabitants) the number of priests who could officiate in that state.<sup>7</sup> On February 14th Calles reminded the governments of all the states that it was their duty to exercise strict vigilance over the activities of the clergy. He noted that local governments had the responsibility for seeing that priests did not exceed their proper functions and also to insure that there be no more than a sufficient number of them to conduct worship.<sup>8</sup> On February 8th the State of Mexico sent a circular to municipal authorities in connection with the coming Holy Week observances, reminding them that Article 24 of the Constitution required that all religious rites be held within church precincts.<sup>9</sup> There were other indications of a new atmosphere, which observers were commenting upon. Excelsior for February 18th deplored what it called "recrudescent Jacobinism":

. . . in one place a bishop is jailed for the nefarious crime of wearing distinctive garb; in another an archbishop is charged because some of the faithful took a notion to greet him with signs of joy . . . a seminary is closed. . . .<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>El Universal, February 18, 1925, p. 1

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., February 15, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup>Excelsior, February 20, 1925, 2nd section, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., February 18, 1925, p. 5.

Such incidents, said the editorial, represented a clear regression:

"Are we perhaps so free of problems that we need to revive the religious warfare that has stained three-quarters of the past century with blood?"<sup>11</sup>

Around 8:00 P.M. on Saturday, February 21st, 1925, a group of some one hundred armed men entered the church of La Soledad in one of Mexico City's working class quarters. They ejected the sacristans and the several worshippers and announced to the astonished pastor, Father Alejandro Silva, that they were taking over the church. Father Silva and his two assistants were hurried out of the building without even being given time to get their hats.<sup>12</sup> A few minutes later, escorted by another armed group, an elderly clergyman arrived at La Soledad and to those present proclaimed himself "Patriarch of the Mexican Catholic Church."<sup>13</sup>

The "Patriarch" was Joaquín Pérez, a seventy-three year old priest whose long life had included some un-priestly behavior: he had been a Mason, and after the start of the Revolution had abandoned the altar for a time to accept an officer's commission in Carranza's army.<sup>14</sup> He was joined at La Soledad in his new venture by a Spanish-born priest, Manuel Monge, likewise of shaky sacerdotal reputation.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., February 24, 1925, p. 9; Ríus Facius, p. 276. Other reports put the time of the assault at 10:00 P.M. See Olivera Sedano, p. 103.

<sup>13</sup>Ríus Facius, p. 276; Moctezuma, II, 309.

<sup>14</sup>Ríus Facius, p. 275; Weddell to SecState, March 3, 1925, annex B, DSR 812.00/27508.

<sup>15</sup>The U.S. Consulate's report on the matter stated that Monge joined Pérez after it was discovered that he had been living with a woman. There was also an unconfirmed report that he had a police record in Spain. Ibid.



The following day was quiet. A number of the armed intruders, calling themselves "Knights of the Order of Guadalupe," stood guard around the building. But word of the event spread through the quarter, and trouble came Monday morning. When Father Monge appeared to begin the 11:00 A.M. Mass a mob of angry parishioners in the church rushed forward and attacked him. He fled to the sacristy, soon joined by Father Pérez, who had tried briefly to calm the assailants.<sup>16</sup> A general riot ensued, and the police inspector from the 2nd Precinct arrived hurriedly with a contingent of mounted gendarmes. Fire trucks followed, and the crowd inside the church left when high pressure hoses were pointed at them. After a brief lull, during which the crowd in the street grew to an estimated 1,500, the battle resumed and there was an attack on the rectory, where Pérez, Monge, and a number of the "Knights" had barricaded themselves. The firemen put their hoses into operation, and the enraged mob responded with a hail of stones and bricks torn up from the pavement. The police held their ground, firing into the air, and by mid-afternoon had managed to gain control of the situation. A number of persons were injured, with one death reported.<sup>17</sup> Pérez and Monge sent an urgent appeal to Calles for protection; the President promptly assured them that the necessary orders had been given.<sup>18</sup>

The whole bizarre incident appeared on the face of it to be the work of a handful of misguided zealots. But a suspicion was rising that the matter had wider meaning. For on the same afternoon, other "Knights"

<sup>16</sup>Ríos Facius, p. 276

<sup>17</sup>Excelsior, February 24, 1925, p. 9; Ríos Facius, p. 276; Rafael Cenicerós y Villarreal, "Historia de la L.N.D.R.," unpublished MS in possession of Antonio Ríos Facius.

<sup>18</sup>Excelsior, February 24, 1925, p. 1.

attempted to seize the church of Santo Tomás la Palma (they failed because a sacristan managed to bar the doors in time).<sup>19</sup> The next morning, February 24th, Gilberto Valenzuela, Secretary of Gobernación,<sup>20</sup> issued a statement. He said the government was completely aloof from the controversy and that it would not tolerate ministers of one creed taking over by violent means buildings or other properties belonging to the nation which had been entrusted to ministers of another creed. Then he added a statement that did much to confirm Catholic suspicions: "The members of the Mexican Church [i.e., the Pérez group] must not resort to censurable methods to obtain what the authorities are prepared to grant them provided they seek it peacefully and comply with the requirements of the law."<sup>21</sup> Excelsior the same day stated what many were already becoming certain of. The intrusions of the "so-called Mexican Apostolic Church" had happened, said the editorial,

with the arbitrary and unjust support of certain authorities. . . . the case does not involve, as one has been led to believe, a "religious schism," but at heart (and this must be said very clearly so that every inhabitant of Mexico may know it), A NEW PERSECUTION AGAINST THE ROMAN, CATHOLIC, APOSTOLIC CHURCH.<sup>22</sup>

Excelsior was entirely correct regarding the official involvement in the Soledad-Pérez affair--although "persecution" was perhaps the wrong word to describe the government's motive. In the days before the seizure of La Soledad Morones and Pérez had met for extended talks. With Calles's approval, Morones pledged all-out CROM support to the operation. The

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>20</sup>The Ministry of Gobernación is somewhat equivalent to the U.S. Department of the Interior, but with vastly greater jurisdiction, including authority over matters involving religion.

<sup>21</sup>Excelsior, February 24, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

object was to promote the creation of a "church" that would support the Revolution and would replace or at least help neutralize the influence of the Catholic Church in Mexico.<sup>23</sup>

The ruckus agitated the country for several weeks, while stories circulated that the government or at any rate persons in high office were behind the schism. The "Knights of Guadalupe," it was said, were actually police officers; others reported that they were CROM members.<sup>24</sup> In the weeks following the Soledad incident attempts were made against several other churches in Mexico City. In most cases the police protected the regular Catholic clergy, but the parish church at Coatepec, near the Villa de Guadalupe, was seized, the action provoking another riot. Some incidents were reported in other parts of the country: In Aguascalientes a group tried to occupy the San Marcos church and in the ensuing melee several were killed and a number injured.<sup>25</sup>

On March 14th it was reported that Calles had signed an order removing La Soledad from public worship, and that the church would be converted into a public library.<sup>26</sup> Soon afterward, he gave the Pérez sect the use of the more centrally located Corpus Christi church, which had

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<sup>23</sup>In a speech in Hermosillo four years later Valenzuela told the story of the government's part in the matter. He said he told Calles that a bad precedent of lawlessness was being set and got Calles to order the expulsion of the schismatics at La Soledad, but that Calles countermanded the order before it was carried out. See Ríos Facius, pp. 274, 277, and Moctezuma, II, 311-313. The U. S. Consul General in his March 3, 1925 report to Washington (DSR 812.00/27508) referred to the Morones-Pérez interviews. Lagarde confirmed the official involvement; he added that government emissaries tried unsuccessfully to persuade a visiting Eastern Orthodox prelate to consecrate Pérez an archbishop. Lagarde Memorandum.

<sup>24</sup>Weddell to SecState, March 3, 1925, Annex B, DSR 812.00/27508.

<sup>25</sup>Olivera Sedano, p. 105.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 104, 105.

not been used for religious purposes for some time.<sup>27</sup> Father Monge did not join the move; on March 2nd he published an open letter in El Universal retracting his adherence to the schismatic movement and announcing his submission to regular Church authority.<sup>28</sup>

Practical results of the Soledad affair were few. No more than five or six parishes went over to the schismatics and these only briefly.<sup>29</sup> The Archbishop of Mexico excommunicated members of the movement, but neither he nor the rest of the clergy found reason to fear that it would attract many followers. The government apparently decided to abandon further attempts to promote the new sect.

But while immediate results were sparse, the Soledad matter raised the temperature of an already tense mood. Protestations of loyalty and support for the Archbishop and for constituted ecclesiastical authority poured in from Catholic associations. The ACJM mobilized groups to guard churches in various parts of the country; in Mexico City its contingents mounted a strong around-the-clock vigil at the Basilica of Guadalupe to stave off a possible attack.<sup>30</sup> Hastily organized "defense leagues" appeared.<sup>31</sup> In Jalisco, where the governor announced that he intended

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 105; Moctezuma, II, 309.

<sup>28</sup>El Universal, March 2, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup>Lagarde Memorandum. The Pérez movement waned slowly as the months passed. There were brief incidents similar to the Soledad affair, some related to the schism, some possibly not, in Hidalgo, Tabasco, Querétaro, and Guanajuato. Weddell to SecState, April 1, 1925, DSR 812.00/27518.

<sup>30</sup>Andrés Barquín y Ruiz and Giovanni Hoyois, La tragédie mexicaine; sous l'ombre d'Obregón (Louvain, 1929), pp. 24, 25; Rufus Facius, p. 279.

<sup>31</sup>Typical was the Liga Católica Popular Potosina, sponsored by Bishop Miguel de la Mora of San Luis Potosí. Its propaganda leaflets deplored the schism launched in Mexico City and called on Catholics to unite to defend their rights by legal and peaceful means. LA-1.

to take up soon the matter of limiting the number of priests, Church authorities countered that all churches would remain open or none.<sup>32</sup> The Catholic paper El Obrero for March 1st surveyed the nation and declared that open religious persecution was under way throughout Mexico.<sup>33</sup>

By Early March the shift in the direction of Catholic efforts away from the gradualism of positive and patient social action to a stance of defiance and counterattack was all but total. Catholic leaders, convinced that either Catholicism or the Revolution would survive, and that Mexico's future would belong to one but not both, decided that the time had come to draw the lines and close with the enemy.

The idea of creating a national Catholic defense organization first appeared in 1918, when Manuel de la Peza, Eduardo J. Correa, and Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra, with the collaboration of Father Bergoënd, decided to undertake such a project. The Jesuit drew up a plan of organization. Mora y del Río supported the plan, but Orozco y Jiménez thought the time was inopportune.<sup>34</sup> Others were also unenthusiastic, and the matter languished. Another attempt, in 1920, also failed and the whole matter was shelved, but not forgotten. The events of early 1925, and the Soledad affair in particular, led to a third try.<sup>35</sup> Father Bergoënd's 1918 blueprint was

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<sup>32</sup>Dwyre, Guadalajara, to Weddell, February 28, 1925, enclosed in Weddell to SecState, March 3, 1925, DSR 812.00/27508.

<sup>33</sup>El Obrero, Guadalajara, March 1, 1925, p. 1. In the years after 1917 when the constitutional restrictions were often not enforced, a number of Catholic newspapers had flourished.

<sup>34</sup>Palomar y Vizcarra, p. 143; Cenicerós y Villarreal.

<sup>35</sup>Palomar y Vizcarra (p. 143) said that the formation of the League was a direct result of the Soledad incident. The same opinion is expressed in Alberto María Carreño, El arzobispo de México, Excmo. Sr. Dr. D. Pascual Díaz y el conflicto religioso (2d ed. rev.; Mexico, D.F., Ediciones Victoria, 1943), p. 16.

taken out of the files and at the instigation of Palomar y Vizcarra, Luis G. Bustos, and Capistrán Garza, a meeting was called for March 9th to which representatives of key Catholic organizations were invited.<sup>36</sup>

On the appointed evening nineteen men gathered at the Knights of Columbus hall on Melchor Ocampo in Mexico City.<sup>37</sup> Palomar y Vizcarra chaired the meeting, the purpose of which, he told those present, was to organize Catholics for the defense of the Church in Mexico. The acting secretary then read a "Program-Manifesto of the Nation League for Religious Defense," which the three initiators of the gathering had drafted.

The tenor of the document was combative and urgent:

The time has come for Mexican Catholics to unite to defend religion and country. The constitution that rules us, written in Querétaro by a group of armed men, has raised religious persecution to a permanent status, as an institution of the state.<sup>38</sup>

Catholics, it said, were not given the rights of citizens; they lacked freedom of education and of the press; they could have no political parties and could not even fulfill their religious duties in complete liberty. Their priests were restricted and humiliated; the Church was deprived not only of legal life but of its very livelihood. "Moreover, revolutionary socialism is rapidly undermining the essential foundations of the Fatherland, and making national life impossible by its excesses." And what had Catholics done to put an end to all this? Next to nothing; and the few

<sup>36</sup>"Cómo nació la Liga, su escudo y su lema," David, V, No. 109 (August 22, 1961), 198, 199; Palomar y Vizcarra, p. 143.

<sup>37</sup>Represented were the Knights of Columbus, the National Catholic Confederation of Labor, the ACJM, the Union of Mexican Women, the Mexican Nocturnal Adoration Society, the Labor Federation of the Archdiocese of Mexico, and both the young men's and young women's sectors of the Congregación Mariana de Jóvenes. Minutes of the meeting of the LNDR, March 9, 1925, LA-1.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

efforts that had been made by a few organizations had been largely ineffectual. Unity was lacking, and this had made possible the success of the opposition, despite its inferiority in numbers and worth:

We must unite, therefore, concerting all our forces, so that in due time, and as one, we can make an effort that is energetic, tenacious, supreme, and irresistible, and which will uproot once and for all from the Constitution all its injustices, whatever they are, and all its tyrannies, whatever their origin. Only thus will we gain freedom and justice; and it is precisely for this purpose that the National League for Religious Defense is established.<sup>39</sup>

The manifesto defined the League as "a legal association, civic in character, whose aim is to win religious freedom and all the freedoms that derive from it in the social and economic order. . . ." It added that although the Episcopate was not involved in the League's "organization, government, or action," the League did not wish to operate "entirely independent of the counsel and superior guidance of that authority. . . ." It would, however, assume full responsibility for its actions. Its program, said the manifesto, was neither a "call to war nor an irrelevant demand: it is only a synthesis of just and proper claims to which Mexicans are entitled in order to be able to live as Catholics, and which no one, in a democratic republic, can question."✓ With respect to tactics, it stated that the League would pursue its goals by constitutional means and "those required by the common good." In discussion, Ramón Ruiz Rueda asked Capistrán Garza whether the methods employed by the League would be exclusively legal. Capistrán Garza replied that, as stated in the document, the means "will be constitutional and 'those required by the common good.'"40

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid. The Spanish name was Liga Nacional de Defensa Religiosa (LNDR).

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

In subsequent meetings during March the group made some minor changes in the wording of the manifesto and program, and altered somewhat the organizational structure (also presented at the March 9th meeting). It was finally determined that the League would be governed by an executive committee of three, named by a general convention that would meet at least once a year. It was also decided to publicize the existence of the League before the arrival of Archbishop Cimino, the new Apostolic Delegate, in order to avoid any impression that he had been involved in the forming of the new organization.<sup>41</sup> At the March 17th meeting the delegates, who had constituted themselves the provisional General Convention, proceeded to elect an executive committee. Chosen were Rafael Ceniceros y Villarreal, Luis G. Bustos, and Capistrán Garza.<sup>42</sup>

On March 24th a telegram was read to the Convention from the Unión Popular in Jalisco pledging its adherence, and during the next two weeks reports began to arrive of the formation of League committees in various parts of the country.<sup>43</sup> The Central Committee of the ACJM ordered its locals throughout Mexico--nearly a hundred in number--to take the initiative in founding League committees, and ACJM members were soon occupying most of the leadership posts in these organizations.<sup>44</sup>

Official attention came swiftly. The League's birth was reported in the Mexico City newspapers on March 21st, with excerpts from the manifesto.<sup>45</sup> The following day the Secretary of Gobernación consigned the

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., March 12, 1925, LA-1.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., March 17, 1925.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., March 24, April 1, 1925.

<sup>44</sup>Barquín y Ruiz and Hoyois, p. 16.

<sup>45</sup>El Universal, March 21, 1925, p. 1.



entire matter to the procurator general's office on grounds of probable sedition.<sup>46</sup> Capistrán Garza answered immediately with a statement saying that only a "Jacobin spirit" could see sedition in the League's program; the League's purpose, he said, amounted only to asking for the derogation of constitutional provisions which Catholics opposed. "To call our actions political and therefore illegal is to try to make us victims of an attack, either by the law or by the police. . . ."<sup>47</sup> On the 24th Valenzuela sent a circular to all state governors and chiefs of military operations warning them to be vigilant in view of the "seditious" program of the new organization.<sup>48</sup> But the following day he announced that, having now seen the complete text of the manifesto, he was withdrawing charges; the manifesto, he stated, was contradictory, a mixture of statements both bellicose and legal which meant that the League could go either way. The government, he said, would await developments.<sup>49</sup>

Organization proceeded through the spring. On June 26th the Executive Committee reported a membership of 36,000, with all parts of Mexico represented except Sonora, Campeche, and the Territory of Quintana Roo. Guanajuato led with 8,600 members. At the same meeting, Manuel de la Peza announced that a representative of the National Catholic Welfare Conference of the United States was in Mexico City to study the religious situation and was asking the League for data. At Capistrán Garza's suggestion, De la Peza was instructed to cooperate with the visitor.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., March 22, 1925, p. 1; March 23, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., March 23, 1925, p. 8.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., March 25, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., March 26, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup>Minutes of the meeting of the LNDR, June 19, 1925, LA-1.

The agreement concluded between Obregón and the Holy See late in 1924 had cleared the way for the appointment of a new apostolic delegate. On December 18th, 1924, Pius XI named to the post the Franciscan Serafin Cimino, who shortly afterward was consecrated titular Archbishop of Cyrene.<sup>51</sup> He arrived in Mexico City April 1st, 1925, determined to play the role of conciliator.<sup>52</sup> He began by announcing that he would respect Mexican law; he would not officiate in public nor wear clerical garb. In a letter to the Mexican bishops he said that in accordance with his instructions he would limit his functions to matters involving the spiritual wellbeing of Mexican Catholics.<sup>53</sup> It was very quickly brought home to him however that the spirit of September and October, 1924, had been buried by events. Two days after Cimino's arrival José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate, Bishop of Huejutla, issued a pastoral letter to his diocese that expressed the increasingly dominant mood. The Church in Mexico, he said--not quite accurately--had tried to overcome sectarianism "with prudent silence and resignation," but the adversary had not responded to this approach. Was it advisable to continue the same stance? Obviously not. ✓ The Church, he insisted, could not submit to civil intervention in ecclesiastical affairs: ". . . laws, whether constitutional, organic, or any other kind, which are contrary to divine or ecclesiastical laws, are null and of no force. . . ." While the use of "brute force" by the faithful to repel the aggression was illicit, he said, Christians must remain firm, with the dignified spirit of Christian martyrs. When the

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<sup>51</sup> José Bravo Ugarte, Diócesis y obispos de la iglesia mexicana (1519-1965) (2d ed.; Mexico, D.F., 1965), p. 109.

<sup>52</sup> Lagarde Memorandum.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

Archbishop of Mexico was asked by reporters for his reaction to the Bishop of Huejutla's pastoral, he replied that it did no more than express Church doctrine.<sup>54</sup>

Cimino had been forewarned in Rome of the growing intransigence of the Mexican clergy, but he was not prepared for what he found. He was almost immediately at odds with a number of bishops over what they considered his timidity and his reluctance to take an energetic stand against the government. As for the government, his reception was almost hostile. In a brusque interview, Valenzuela coldly reminded him that he would be permitted to function only in strict accordance with the Constitution.<sup>55</sup>

On May 15th Cimino left for Denver, reportedly for reasons of health. Several weeks later he approached the Mexican Embassy in Washington about returning to Mexico, and was told that President Calles opposed it. After several months more in the United States, during which he tried to keep in touch with Mexican affairs, he resigned.<sup>56</sup>

Summer brought further troubles. On July 27th the state of Jalisco closed two seminaries in Guadalajara, touching off protests and rioting.<sup>57</sup> In August the Chihuahua legislature voted to discharge two state employees because of their membership in the Knights of Columbus, and a federal judge in Ciudad Juárez ordered that an orphan asylum and a home for the aged, both operated by religious, be transferred to government control.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>54</sup>Rfus Facius, pp. 301, 302.

<sup>55</sup>Lagarde Memorandum.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.; Bravo Ugarte, p. 109. Monsignor Tito Crespi remained in charge of the Apostolic Delegation in Mexico City.

<sup>57</sup>Dwyre, Guadalajara, to SecState, July 28, 1925, DSR 812.404/267.

<sup>58</sup>McEnelly, Chihuahua, to SecState, August 18, 1925, DSR 812.404/269.

Also in July, the federal postal authorities ordered the banning from the mails of the Revista Católica, a Jesuit weekly published in El Paso, Texas, which had been critical of the government's religious policies.<sup>59</sup>

In August Calles made a significant change in his cabinet. He replaced as secretary of Gobernación Gilberto Valenzuela--who was considered a moderate on the religious question--with Adalberto Tejeda, known to be completely adamant on the subject.<sup>60</sup>

By the fall of 1925 the Vatican was receiving urgent cries of alarm from both laity and religious. In September Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra and Gabriel Fernández Somellera were in Rome to give a personal report on religious conditions in Mexico and on the League's work. They expressed their fear that in the prevailing situation, unless something were done, action-minded Catholics--the young especially--would become discouraged and abandon their defense of the Catholic cause, and that the people, "victims of violence and immorality, under the influence of a vigorous Protestant campaign," might lose their faith.<sup>61</sup>

A few weeks later the Mexican Hierarchy, concerned over its relationship with Rome, sent Archbishop González Valencia of Durango and Bishop De la Mora of San Luis Potosí to present their case. Cardinal Gasparri reportedly received them with some ill humor. The Secretary of State feared that the Church in Mexico would be the loser in a direct collision with the government, and despite the rather vehement expositions of the two

<sup>59</sup>Clipping from La Vanguardia, Mexico City, July 28, 1925, in LA-1.

<sup>60</sup>Lagarde described Tejeda as "one of the most implacable and malignant enemies of the Catholic religion." Lagarde Memorandum.

<sup>61</sup>Memorandum to Pope Pius XI, Rome, September 18, 1925, LA-1. Italicized in the original.

prelates he still leaned toward moderation--a position also favored by other members of the Curia with knowledge of Mexican affairs.<sup>62</sup>

The two bishops laid their case before the Pope in a letter dated November 12th. The Mexican bishops, they said, were disheartened at reports that the Holy See was displeased with them, and added that the displeasure was due apparently to reports that the bishops had mixed in partisan politics. They recalled the deplorable legal status of the Church in Mexico, which could become far worse when the constitutional provisions were activated by enabling legislation--as, they claimed, the national Congress was now attempting to do. They had in their possession, they asserted, a proposed law "of undoubted authenticity" being discussed in secret by prominent deputies. It called for, among other things, the expulsion of foreign clergy, the restriction of the priestly function to men over the age of thirty-five who had studied and been ordained in Mexico, the absolute suppression of seminaries, restrictions on the hours that churches could be open for worship, and for an equal parcelling out of Catholic churches to various non-Catholic sects. The danger to the Church, they said, was heightened by the character, background, and way of life of those currently holding power in Mexico:

. . . born generally in surroundings hostile to the Church, they profess deep hatred of it, and think of little except persecuting it; they are raised to power from the lower levels of the plebe, and without the necessary preparation, they are filled with arrogance, are haughty. . . .<sup>63</sup>

The word of these men could not be trusted, they said: "They have no other rule of action than their own interest and caprice, no ideals other than personal gain, no goal other than to hold on to power." They

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<sup>62</sup>Lagarde Memorandum.

<sup>63</sup>González Valencia and De la Mora to Pius XI, November 12, 1925, LA-1.

reminded Pius of the events of the last five years--the bombings, the Fillippi case, the Eucharistic Congress, the government-backed attempt to foment schism, the closing of seminaries, the efforts of "Socialist and Bolshevik propaganda" to force Catholics into "red" unions. Protests, petitions, demonstrations, even recourse to the electoral process, they stated, had all been tried in vain. The only remedy lay in strong Catholic organization, which was being undertaken but had been developing slowly. They took an oblique slap at Cimino: Catholics, they said, wanted their bishops to speak out, and in April the prelates had in fact drafted a collective pastoral letter and an open letter to Calles; but, deferring to Cimino's judgement, they had refrained from publishing them. They begged the Pontiff to speak, to give advice and orders, which, they assured him, the faithful would hasten to obey.<sup>64</sup>

But Rome was determined not to be hasty. On December 14th, in a consistorial address, the Pope spoke only briefly and generally on the Mexican matter: "We do not expect any improvement in the present situation except by a special intervention of the Divine Will, for which We pray fervently each day, and from a 'Catholic action' undertaken, in harmony and discipline, by the people themselves."<sup>65</sup> In January, he received a group of Mexican visitors led by the Bishop of Tamaulipas. In reply to the Bishop's address of greeting, which amounted to a passionate recitation of Mexico's unbearable plight, Pius was restrained; he praised the ardent faith of Mexican Catholics and commented that "unfortunately, in your beautiful and beloved country, the conditions of the Church of God are not

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Lagarde Memorandum.

what they should be. . . .<sup>66</sup>

But the Pontiff had decided the time had come to speak out. On February 2nd he sent a letter to the Mexican Episcopate stating his position and charting a course. He shared their indignation at the situation:

It is scarcely necessary for Us to tell you how wicked are the regulations and laws invoked against the Catholic citizens of Mexico which have been sanctioned by officials hostile to the Church and which by their enforcement have long oppressed you.<sup>67</sup>

The laws, he said, were unreasonable, non-beneficial, and unnecessary: ". . . they do not seem to merit even the name of laws." He noted that his predecessor, Benedict XV, had praised the bishops for their protest in 1917, and said that he now ratified and made his own that same sentiment. The Pope said that "day after day these hostile laws and regulations are more bitterly enforced, and if this continues, the common right of citizenship will be automatically denied Catholics, and the functions and ministry of the Christian religion itself will die." He directed Mexican Catholics to conduct themselves with great circumspection:

. . . in the present sad condition of affairs, it is supremely necessary, venerable brothers, that you, together with the whole / clergy and every organization of Catholics, most studiously hold yourself entirely aloof from every kind of political party so that you will not give the enemies of the Catholic faith the pretext to contend that your religion is bound up with any political party or faction.

Therefore, all Catholics of the Republic of Mexico are forbidden as such to establish any political party under the name of Catholic.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>66</sup>Excelsior, January 25, 1926, 2nd section, pp. 1, 8.

<sup>67</sup>Text in New York Times, April 20, 1926, p. 4. The letter was not made public by the Mexican Hierarchy until mid-April.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

On the other hand, he went on, the faithful "cannot be forbidden to exercise those civic rights and duties which they have in common with all other citizens," and in this the clergy had the responsibility to participate. The only sure and wise course to follow, he said, was that of "Catholic Action"-- which he did not define as this related to the situation at hand.<sup>69</sup>

The Pope's unhappiness over the Mexican situation probably stemmed in part from reports of steps taken in Mexico the past three months. The end of October, the state of Tabasco decreed enforcement of a law (enacted in March) which provided that only clergymen who were married and over forty years of age could exercise the ministry.<sup>70</sup> In January, Chiapas authorities ordered that baptisms and religious marriage ceremonies could be performed only after proofs of civil registry or civil marriage were presented.<sup>71</sup> A bill was introduced in the Hidalgo legislature to limit the number of priests to sixty for the state. In Jalisco and Colima a number of seminaries and Catholic schools were closed.<sup>72</sup>

Reaction to these measures led to important consequences. On November 4th, Mora y del Río condemned the Tabasco decree, and two days later he sent a telegram to Washington giving details of the Tabasco situation to Father John J. Burke, Executive Secretary of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. It was the beginning of a contact between

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Félix Navarrete (ed.), La persecución religiosa en México desde el punto de vista jurídico: colección de leyes y decretos relativos a la reducción de sacerdotes (Mexico, D.F., 1939?) pp. 335, 336.

<sup>71</sup>Such requirements were not new, but evidently had not been enforced. At any rate, Catholics saw the new stipulation as a deliberate harassment.

<sup>72</sup>El Universal, January 19, 1926, pp. 1, 5.



the Mexican Church and the U.S. Hierarchy that would become increasingly  
 \* complex and from the Mexican viewpoint decidedly double-edged. The  
 \* occasion also marked the start of relations between N.C.W.C. and the U.S.  
 State Department concerning the Mexican religious question: Father  
 Burke forwarded the telegram to the Department the following day.<sup>73</sup>

In both Chiapas and Hidalgo the bishops announced their refusal  
 to comply with the new regulations. In the latter, Manríquez y Zárate  
 was summoned to appear in court but refused on grounds that the civil  
 power had no jurisdiction in purely ecclesiastical matters. On Jan-  
 uary 19th Mora y del Río issued a statement to the press denouncing the  
 actions of authorities in Hidalgo, Chiapas, Colima, and Jalisco, with  
 the comment that

. . . it is necessary to declare collectively that such steps, and  
 any others which are contrary to religious freedom, cannot be  
 heeded by prelates and clergy. This will be done. The necessary  
 steps have already been taken and on February 1st the protest  
 will be published throughout the Republic.<sup>74</sup>

El Universal for February 4th, 1926, carried the following story  
 on Page 1:

His Grace the Archbishop of Mexico has made the following  
 statement, dictated by him, to our reporter, Mr. Ignacio Monroy:

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., November 5, 1925, p. 1; Burke to Gunther, November 7, 1925,  
 DSR 812.404/271.

<sup>74</sup>El Universal, January 19, 1926, pp. 1, 5. The statement indicates  
 that some kind of formal remonstrance was being planned, but it is not  
 clear whether Mora y del Río meant that it would be done by republishing  
 the bishops' 1917 Protesta or whether some new statement was being readied.  
 Nothing appeared on February 1st. League members released copies of the  
Protesta on the 7th, but the sources available do not indicate whether  
 this was done by direction of the Hierarchy. Moctezuma (II, 326) says  
 the bishops did not order it. Luis C. Balderama, El clero y el gobierno  
de México: Apuntes para la historia de la crisis en 1926 (2 vols.;  
 Mexico, D.F., 1926-27), I, 37, says they did. Neither cites his source.  
 No other collective episcopal protest appeared, although it is possible  
 that the furor over the Archbishop's statement caused a change in plans.

"The doctrine of the Church is unchangeable, because it is divinely revealed truth. The protest which we, the Mexican prelates, formulated against the Constitution of 1917 regarding the articles which are opposed to religious freedom and dogmas, remains firm. It has not been moderated, but strengthened, because it derives from Church doctrine. The information which El Universal printed on January 27th to the effect that a campaign will be undertaken against the laws that are unjust and contrary to Natural Law is perfectly true. The Episcopate, Clergy, and Catholics do not recognize, and will combat, Articles 3, 5, 27, and 130 of the present Constitution. We cannot for any reason change this position without betraying our Faith and our Religion."<sup>75</sup>

Monroy had been assigned to interview the Archbishop regarding a January 27th report that the bishops would soon initiate steps to obtain repeal of the offending legislation, and to get the prelate's views on the Church situation in general.<sup>76</sup> All journalists are pleased when their efforts attract attention, but in Monroy's case the feed-back was truly spectacular.

The following morning Capistrán Garza and Méndez Padilla, on behalf of the League, called on the Archbishop to express the League's full approval of his position.<sup>77</sup> A few days later a group of clergymen addressed an open letter to the prelate expressing approval of his views and assuring him that "4,000 priests and 14,000,000 faithful Catholics" were with him.<sup>78</sup> On Sunday the 7th copies of the bishops' 1917 protest appeared on the streets of Mexico City, distributed by League members.<sup>79</sup> On Monday the Ministry of Gobernación consigned the Archbishop as well as the printed protest and its signers to the attorney general for legal action.

<sup>75</sup>El Universal, February 4, 1926, pp. 1, 5.

<sup>76</sup>Moctezuma, II, 324.

<sup>77</sup>Minutes of the General Convention of the LNDR, February 5, 1926, LA-1.

<sup>78</sup>Sheffield to SecState, February 9, 1926, DSR 812.404/280.

<sup>79</sup>El Universal, February 8, 1926, p. 1.

Catholic sources told the press that the document in circulation was nine years old, not current.<sup>80</sup> The government, however, reacted drastically to what it decided to consider direct provocation. On the evening of the 10th a number of Spanish-born priests in Mexico City were rounded up and sent to Veracruz the following day for deportation.<sup>81</sup>

On February 11th Mora y del Rfo issued a statement. He said he had been surprised to see that he was quoted in the press as having said that the clergy would combat certain constitutional articles--a thing which was "very far from our minds, and could lend itself to wrong interpretations, since we are aware of the way in which to initiate constitutional reforms." The religious questions which had occupied the attention of the press the past few days, he said, did not have the quality of timeliness that had been given them, since it was only a matter of a repetition of statements from a document published by the Episcopate in 1917.<sup>82</sup> E1 Universal, in an accompanying statement, said that while the Archbishop's words did not contradict categorically the February 4th report, it was nevertheless possible that reporter Morroy may not have proceeded "with all exactitude," and that the paper was investigating.<sup>83</sup>

Whatever the meaning or intention of the Archbishop's clarification, the government chose not to drop the matter. Expulsion of foreign clergy continued, and Gobernación announced that Article 130 would soon be strictly enforced.<sup>84</sup> On the 13th, officials from the attorney general's

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., February 9, 1926, p. 10; February 10, p. 7.

<sup>81</sup>Excelsior, February 11, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>82</sup>E1 Universal, February 12, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Sheffield to SecState, February 12, 1926, DSR 812.404/287.

office interrogated the Archbishop at his palace.<sup>85</sup> The aged Primate reiterated his claim that he had been misquoted and misinterpreted. On the 19th the judge with jurisdiction in the case ruled there was no cause to proceed, and on the 24th the press announced that the charges had been dropped.<sup>86</sup>

As for Monroy, the Syndicate of Editors which had undertaken an investigation at the request of El Universal agreed that he should be fired but given three months' pay plus a month's pay for each year of service with the paper.<sup>87</sup>

Thus ended the incident. Whether the result of irresponsible journalism, a calculated move by the clergy to exacerbate an already tense atmosphere, or the unintentional mistake of an elderly and infirm man--all three possibilities have been maintained--the effect was to push events toward their climax. If the Calles government needed a motive--or pretext--to move hard and quickly on the whole Church issue, it now had one.

On the 17th Tejeda announced that the constitutional restrictions on foreign clergy (Article 130) were now in force and that, in conformity with the Laws of Reform, the government had ordered the closing of convents and monasteries in Mexico. He added that investigations were under way regarding primary schools directed by religious corporations, with a view to insuring enforcement of Article 3.<sup>88</sup> He denied reports that government agents had thrown students into the

<sup>85</sup>El Universal, February 14, 1926, pp. 1, 11.

<sup>86</sup>Alfonso Toro, La iglesia y el estado en México (Mexico, D.F., 1927), pp. 402-404; Balderrama, I, 44; Excelsior, February 24, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>87</sup>Balderrama, I, 43.

<sup>88</sup>Excelsior, February 18, 1926, p. 1.



street, and said that children boarding in illegally run schools would be properly cared for while adjustments were being made to provide for compliance with the law.<sup>89</sup> This was evidently a rebuttal to a report printed two days before in Excélsior that agents closing the Colegio de la Visitación in the Mexico City suburb of Coyoacán, whose director was an American nun, Sister Margaret Semple, had moved students, nuns, and furniture into the street.<sup>90</sup> Excélsior blasted the "burst of anticlericalism" and specifically Tejeda, who, it said, had been tireless in the "gallant work of expelling foreign priests, throwing nuns into the street, and leaving thousands of children without an education. . . ."<sup>91</sup>

On the 18th Gobernación notified the clergy in charge of the Sagrada Familia church in Mexico City that pursuant to the Constitution they must apply for permission to have the building devoted to public worship. The order stipulated that the request must be received within three days. The time limit expired and no communication arrived from Church authorities.<sup>92</sup> On the afternoon of February 23rd, about an hour before the start of a scheduled Lenten service, Gobernación agents arrived at the church to inventory the premises. Worshippers--mostly women--arrived to find the doors locked, and a story spread that the priests were about to be ejected. When an official of the 10th Precinct arrived he was injured by a hail of stones thrown by some of the women. Police were rushed to the scene as a crowd

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., February 16, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid. The paper kept up a bombardment in editorials of the same tenor throughout the rest of the month. See Weddell to SecState, March 1, 1926, DSR 812.00/27735.

<sup>92</sup>Excélsior, February 24, 1926, p. 8, reporting Tejeda's version of the incident.

of some 2,000 collected. Fighting erupted, and raged for nearly three hours before order was restored. Reports placed casualties at seven dead and sixteen wounded, the accounts conflicting as to whether the police had fired at the demonstrators or over their heads. Some of the bystanders may also have used firearms.<sup>93</sup> After the parish priests were whisked away by authorities, the mob marched to the Ministry of Gobernación on Bucareli, where they were again dispersed by police and firemen.<sup>94</sup>

Tejeda told the press the following morning that the affair stemmed from Church authorities' refusal to heed a government directive; Gobernación had ordered the church closed until the legal requirement was met--three other churches in the capital, he said, had been closed for the same reason. He blamed the riot on "a group of thoughtless fanatics rebellious to the law."<sup>95</sup>

The last week of February Calles again urged state governors to take immediate steps to enforce the constitutional articles on religious matters. These had been in existence for nine years, he noted, but for a variety of reasons had remained largely unenforced; and he added:

. . . the experience of recent events makes it possible to affirm that precisely the lack of timely application of these precepts has been the cause of the present difficulties and complications which, no doubt, would have been avoided if said precepts had been observed with all energy in the first place.<sup>96</sup>

In a speech to the convention of the Labor Party on March 5th Calles linked the religious problem to the Revolution's efforts to build

<sup>93</sup>Excelsior, February 24, 1926, p. 1; Sheffield to SecState, February 23, 1926, DSR 812.404/295; ibid., February 26, DSR 812.404/324.

<sup>94</sup>Excelsior, February 24, 1926, p. 8.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>96</sup>El Universal, February 24, 1926, p. 1; Sheffield to SecState, February 24, 1926, DSR 812.404/295.

a new Mexico. What was involved, he told the delegates, was a struggle

against the prejudices of the past, that past which I strongly wish to see liquidated. . . . The opinion of the Republic, or rather a large share of that opinion, is represented here in this convention. Public opinion is not the scowls of the sacristans or the pujidos<sup>97</sup> of the over-pious.<sup>98</sup>

Reactionary pressures exerted on the press, he promised, would not sway the government: "As long as I am President of the Republic, the Constitution of 1917 will be obeyed."<sup>99</sup>

The government crackdown rolled forward, although in a highly uneven fashion and with results that varied widely from place to place. By March 15th some 200 foreign-born priests had been sent out of Mexico and eighty-three convents and monasteries closed. 118 schools operated by religious had been closed since mid-February, although most had been reopened after modifying their programs or otherwise satisfying authorities.<sup>100</sup>

Accommodations in school matters were reached in many parts of the country, often for reasons not directly related to religion. The U.S. Consul in Monterrey reported that popular opinion there was strongly opposed to seeing religious schools closed, not primarily on spiritual grounds but because the Catholic schools were providing more adequate education than others.<sup>101</sup> In Jalisco the closing of religious schools began on February 14th, but within two weeks many had reopened--in some cases after bribes were hurriedly paid to state authorities; a number of

<sup>97</sup>Roughly equivalent to "bitching." An earthy term meaning cramps or breaking of wind.

<sup>98</sup>Excélsior, March 6, 1926, pp. 1, 3. The paper called the speech "vehement" and "sensational."

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., March 15, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>101</sup>Whitfield, Monterrey, to SecState, February 19, 1926, DSR 812.404/293.



Catholic schools in the state were totally ignored by officials.<sup>102</sup> In Gómez Palacio, Durango, the mayor merely warned the mother superior of a Catholic girls' school to stop teaching religion; this was done and the school remained open. But in the neightobring town of Torreón, Coahuila, another religious school was summarily closed.<sup>103</sup> This latter, in turn, conflicted with higher policy, because the office of primary education for the State of Coahuila announced that it did not intend to close religious schools, but only to insure that they remained in operation without violating the Constitution.<sup>104</sup> In Chihuahua, school matters were settled by mid-March to the extent that it was announced that all schools could remain open at least until the end of the school year in June.<sup>105</sup>

Moves to limit the number of priests provoked clashes, but here too there was great variance in enforcement and reaction. In Puebla, Querétaro, Michoacán, and San Luis Potosí tolerable arrangements between Church and civil authorities were worked out, although only after rather serious confrontations in the two latter states.<sup>106</sup> In Michoacán, Archbishop Ruiz y Flores suspended public worship and the resultant public pressure brought the government to a workable compromise.<sup>107</sup> In the city of San Luis Potosí there was an ugly riot when the government announced its proposed limitation of clergy, with troops firing into a crowd of demonstrators,

<sup>102</sup>Dwyre, Guadalajara, to SecState, February 18, 1926, DSR 812.404/296; *ibid.*, February 27, DSR 812.404/329.

<sup>103</sup>Yost, Torreón, to SecState, February 18, 1926, DSR 812.404/299.

<sup>104</sup>Municipal President, Viesca, Coahuila, to Governor of Coahuila, March 18, 1926, Archives, State of Coahuila (Secretaría Oficial, 2nd Section, Gobernación y Fomento), Legajo 34, No. 4.

<sup>105</sup>McEnelly, Chihuahua, to SecState, March 20, 1926, DSR 812.404/377.

<sup>106</sup>Lagarde Memorandum.

<sup>107</sup>Ruiz y Flores, p. 83.

but within a few days Bishop Miguel de la Mora and state officials agreed to a settlement that left ten churches open in the city with one priest each.<sup>108</sup> In Tamaulipas a crowd gathered at the government palace in Victoria to protest reports that the state was about to limit the number of clergymen. When officials assured them the legislature would not meet to consider such a step they dispersed--whereupon the deputies hastily assembled and passed a law limiting to twelve the number of priests who could exercise the ministry in the state.<sup>109</sup>

In some states, action to reduce the number of clergymen or to oust non-Mexican clerics led to both bloodshed and irreconcilable breaks between ecclesiastical and civil powers. In Colima the legislature passed a law on February 24th, to take effect April 8th, which reduced the number of priests from sixty-five to twenty-two. On the latter date, amid demonstrations in which several were killed or injured, the bishop ordered the suspension of public worship. No settlement was reached, and it would be over three years before the priests returned to the churches.<sup>110</sup> In Nayarit, action by state officials to enforce a decree excluding foreign clergy triggered an explosion that nearly overthrew the government. In an act of bravado, Secretary of Gobernación Rafael Sánchez entered the Cathedral of Tepic on February 28th during services and, brandishing a pistol, ordered the officiating Spanish priest to leave. Sánchez was immediately set upon by enraged worshippers and was rescued, unconscious and badly beaten, only by the strenuous efforts of a few more peaceful members of the congregation. The same day,

<sup>108</sup> Weddell to SecState, March 20, 1926, DSR 812.404/399; Early, San Luis Potosí, to Sheffield, March 26, 1926, DSR 812.404/409.

<sup>109</sup> Bay, Tampico, to SecState, March 12, 1926, DSR 812.404/381.

<sup>110</sup> Blocker, Manzanillo, to SecState, August 16, 1926, DSR 812.404/593.

the president of the chamber of deputies and a colleague attempted a similar move at a nearby village; their bodies were retrieved covered with bullet holes and stab wounds. The following Monday mobs surged through the streets of Tepic; the governor, to save his own life, signed a statement promising he would make no further attempt to enforce the decree. In neighboring Sinaloa the governor told the U.S. consul that his administration would take no action whatever unless absolutely forced to do so by the national government.<sup>111</sup>

The state of Yucatán restricted the number of priests to forty and enacted a "sanitation code" relative to religious observances (similar "codes" had been in force in several states during the 1913-1917 period). The decree made it illegal to bring bodies into churches or to kiss images or other sacred objects (which were required to be at least two meters above church floors or enclosed in urns or niches); it outlawed holy water fonts and stipulated that baptismal fonts must have running water.<sup>112</sup>

On March 5th, the same day as Calles's "pujido" speech to the labor convention, a new apostolic delegate arrived in Mexico City.<sup>113</sup> Archbishop George Caruana, a native of Malta, was a naturalized U.S. citizen who had been a Navy chaplain during the war and later served as Bishop of Puerto Rico. Rome's choice of him for what was to be a last try at normal relations with the Mexican government, was apparently due to his success as apostolic visitor to Guatemala several years earlier,

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<sup>111</sup>Ibid., March 9, 1926, DSR 812.404/374.

<sup>112</sup>Vogenitz, Progreso, to SecState, April 15, 1926, DSR 812.404/424.

<sup>113</sup>Bravo Ugarte, p. 109.

where he had mediated a serious Church-government conflict. Caruana's American citizenship may also have been a factor in Rome's choice--the Vatican was not unmindful of the U.S. presence in Mexican affairs nor of American touchiness over Mexican treatment of U.S. nationals.<sup>114</sup> But if conciliation was still the objective of Vatican policy--or at least still a hope--this final attempt proved worse than useless.

Circumspection was Caruana's watchword in matters relating to public affairs. He remained out of sight for nearly two weeks before taking charge at the Apostolic Delegation and never appeared publicly in other than business dress.<sup>115</sup> But he had little faith in the prospects for his own success. He even suspected that the sending of a Delegate at the time was a mistake.<sup>116</sup> Watching with growing hopelessness the advance of the government's anticlerical activities, yet mindful of Rome's continuing preference for conciliation, he took no decisive steps. In his contacts with the bishops, however, he supported resistance. Convinced that matters were worsening, and aware of the need for unity in the Mexican Hierarchy, he recommended and obtained the establishment of an Episcopal Committee, presided over by the archbishop of Mexico and including the archbishops of Morelia, Guadalajara, and Puebla, and also any other bishops who might at any time be in Mexico City.<sup>117</sup>

His other contribution was polemical: At his request, the League

<sup>114</sup>Lagarde Memorandum.

<sup>115</sup>Excelsior, March 18, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>116</sup>Lagarde Memorandum: Weddell to SecState, April 1, 1926, DSR 812. 404/416.

<sup>117</sup>Wilfrid Parsons, Mexican Martyrdom (New York, 1936), pp. 19, 20; Carreño, pp. 16, 17.

changed its name from the National League for Religious Defense to the National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty (Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa).<sup>118</sup>

If Caruana's tenure was quiet, his departure was not. On May 12th the government ordered him to leave Mexico, charging that he had falsified his immigration form upon entering the country and that he had broken the laws by functioning as a clergyman while there. Caruana categorically denied the charges in a statement to the press on May 15th, a few hours before he boarded a train for the United States.<sup>119</sup> The resulting storm of controversy served only to embitter an already nearly hopeless situation.<sup>120</sup>

In the spring of 1926 the Mexican Hierarchy was still far from being of one mind regarding the form its opposition to the government should take. Pascual Díaz, who had moved to a position of influence as Secretary of the newly formed Episcopal Committee, was at this juncture

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<sup>118</sup> Minutes of the General Convention, May 5, 1926, LA-1.

<sup>119</sup> Excelsior, May 17, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>120</sup> The government produced what it said was a photostatic copy of Caruana's entrance papers, in which the occupation was given as "teacher." Catholic sources branded the photostat a forgery. Weddell, who investigated the matter, said Caruana's passport clearly stated his occupation as clergyman, and that he had passed immigration by the inadvertence of a local agent who did not realize who he was. See Weddell to SecState, April 9, 1926, DSR 812.00/27756. Sheffield said he was certain that Caruana had taken part in no religious ceremony and had broken no law, and the "the Government had no justifiable grounds for expelling him. . . ." Sheffield to Kellogg, personal, July 9, 1926, DSR 812.404/513 1/2. Apparently the government did not know of Caruana's coming until he was already in Mexico City. It seems unlikely that Calles, after having refused to allow Cimino to return a year earlier, would have agreed to admit a new delegate. Certainly Caruana's arrival was unannounced and quiet.

a partisan of strong resistance and was becoming the spokesman for those who opposed any policy of temporization. Some, like Herrera of Monterrey, leaned toward more passive resistance, while Ruiz y Flores, De la Mora, and others still preferred to stress a legalistic approach, appealing to the Constitution's guarantees of individual rights while at the same time urging repeal of the objectionable articles.<sup>121</sup> On the battle line were Manríquez y Zárate, whose March pastoral calling for open disobedience of the law had landed him under arrest<sup>122</sup> and Leopoldo Lara y Torres of Tacámbaro. The latter, in an open letter to Calles in March, flailed the government for its application of the laws and reiterated his adherence to the bishops' 1917 protest-- "which we are prepared to seal with our blood."<sup>123</sup> He stopped short of advocating insurrection, however; in a pastoral letter issued ten days later ordering suspension of public worship in his diocese, he warned his flock that it was not licit to resort to rebellion to recover rights.<sup>124</sup> The middle road position still seemed to predominate in April; a collective pastoral letter issued by the Hierarchy on April 21st stressed the legal approach, calling for efforts by all "licit means" to reform the Constitution.<sup>125</sup>

There was a blunt exchange between Mora y del Río and Calles in May and June. On May 28th the Archbishop, as head of the Episcopal Committee, wired Calles asking that he take steps to insure just treat-

<sup>121</sup>Lagarde Memorandum.

<sup>122</sup>Moctezuma, II, 344.

<sup>123</sup>"Memorial dirigido por el Primer Obispo de Tacámbaro, Dr. D. Leopoldo Lara y Torres, al Sr. Presidente de la República. . . ." Leopoldo Lara y Torres, Documentos para la historia de la persecución religiosa en México (Mexico, D.F., 1954), pp. 91, 92.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>125</sup>Carta Pastoral Colectiva, April 21, 1926, LA-1.

ment for Manríquez y Zárate in the legal action being taken against him in Pachuca. The text of the telegram was published in the Mexico City papers before it reached the President, and Calles accused the Archbishop of deliberately attempting to foment agitation and arouse public pressure. The bishops, he told Mora y del Rífo, were following a mistaken course:

. . . I want you to understand once and for all that neither the agitation you are trying to provoke in Mexico nor that which you have been unpatriotically provoking abroad, nor any other steps of this kind you may take, will be effective in changing the firm purpose of the Federal Government to see that everything demanded by the Supreme law of the Republic is strictly obeyed.<sup>126</sup>

He issued a warning:

. . . I give notice to you, also once and for all, that any act of defiance to the fulfillment of legal precepts, or lack of respect for the authorities charged with enforcing them, will be punished without consideration of any kind.<sup>127</sup>

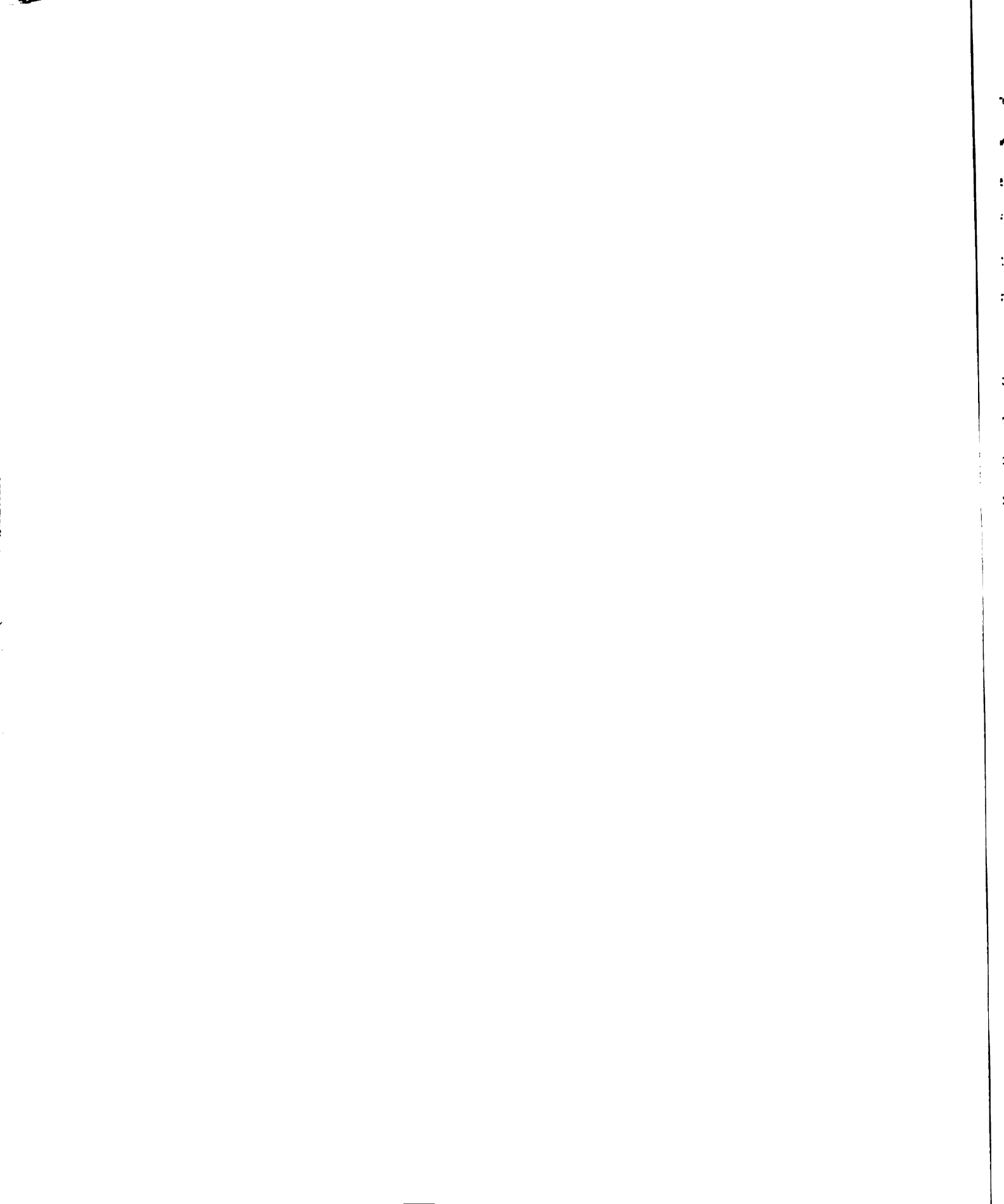
Meanwhile, the League sharply stepped up organizational efforts and worked to establish undisputed title to leadership of the Catholic defense. In March it asked the Episcopate to "declare that it considers the League's work its own [and] that it order all Catholics to work with it."<sup>128</sup> While the bishops apparently were not willing to go quite that far, they did in their April pastoral urge Catholics to join organizations "which teach the people, in theory and in practice, their rights and obligations as citizens and organize the nation for the defense of religious liberty. . ." --a statement which the League took as an endorse-

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<sup>126</sup>Excelsior, May 29, 1926, p. 1; ibid., June 3, p. 1.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid., June 3, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>128</sup>Memorandum para el Ilmo. y R. Sr. Obispo Dr. D. Pascual Díaz, March 23, 1926, LA-1.





ment.<sup>129</sup> By June the Executive Committee reported that organization was well advanced and that in some areas the League was strong enough to influence events decisively: the Committee said the League could claim credit for preventing the enforcement of Article 130 in Guerrero.<sup>130</sup> In July the League made the astounding claim that it had 480,000 members in the Federal District alone.<sup>131</sup>

The Mexican government was taking steps to stave off any criticism, official or unofficial, from the United States over its handling of the religious question. In a conversation with Ambassador James Sheffield on February 12th, Secretary of Foreign Relations Aarón Sáenz voluntarily brought up the subject and told the Ambassador that the government's stern measures were due to its awareness that the clergy and religious organizations were affiliated with movements seeking to destroy the government's authority--he did not elaborate--and that the government was forced to act "almost against its will." Sheffield reported that he merely listened and then told Sáenz that he was "of course unable to discuss such a purely internal matter as this general religious question."<sup>132</sup>

The U.S. State Department was watching matters closely, but limiting its concern to matters involving American citizens in Mexico. On February 18th Secretary of State Frank Kellogg wired Sheffield asking for

<sup>129</sup>Carta Pastoral Colectiva, April 21, 1926. The League, in a pamphlet dated April 30th, quoted the above with the comment that the League was obviously the organization that was fulfilling the bishops' advice. LA-1.

<sup>130</sup>Minutes of General Convention, June 4, 1926, LA-1.

<sup>131</sup>Ramón Ruiz y Rueda to William F. Montavon, July 23, 1926, LA-1. Montavon was head of the N.C.W.C.'s legal department. The figure is highly suspicious in view of later events; obviously the number of League members who were prepared to commit themselves to action was only a small fraction of this. Moreover, 480,000 would have included almost the total adult population of the Federal District.

<sup>132</sup>Sheffield to SecState, February 18, 1926, DSR 812.404/302.

more information on reports that American-run schools had been closed.

"I fully appreciate delicacy of making representations as to matters clearly within the rights of Mexico," he told the Ambassador. "Would be glad, however, to have you do whatever you deem proper to prevent closing of schools and deportation of American citizens and would suggest that you use your good offices where you think they will be useful. . . ." <sup>133</sup>

↓ As in other purely "domestic" Mexican matters, Washington was finding it impossible to ignore the religious controversy. The intensification of the Church-state battle in February led to a rapidly and increasingly complicated American involvement, spurred on by concerns expressed by American Catholics. On February 18th Archbishop Michael Curley of Baltimore criticized the State Department for its apathy over the expulsion of priests and nuns from Mexico: The Archbishop said that he could imagine no worse condition for freedom than the situation existing in Mexico, where religion had been assualted since the time of Villa and Carranza. "Despite all this, our government has given full recognition to Mexico. . . . we have taken Mexico in our national arms, as we have the finest nations of the world!" <sup>134</sup> Shortly afterward, Curley urged the U.S. Knights of Columbus to take some kind of positive action at their March meeting in Philadelphia regarding the condition of their fellow Catholics in Mexico. <sup>135</sup>

To the leaders of the League in Mexico City, Archbishop Curley's

<sup>133</sup>Kellogg to Sheffield, February 18, 1926, DSR 812.404/282.

<sup>134</sup>New York Times, February 19, 1926, p. 12.

<sup>135</sup>Antonio J. López Ortega, Las naciones extranjeras y la persecución religiosa (Mexico, D.F., 1944), pp. 6,7.

statements opened a new dimension of action rich in possibilities. In March two representatives of the League, Carlos Blanco and José Tercero, arrived in Baltimore. They carried with them, besides their League credentials, a letter endorsing their mission signed by Mora y del Río. Curley received them cordially and gave them a letter of introduction to Father Burke in Washington.<sup>136</sup> Blanco and Tercero presented to Father Burke a memorandum suggesting the formation of a mixed U.S. -Mexican committee which would carry out a joint defense of Catholic interests in Mexico. Specifically, the committee would collect funds and direct a publicity campaign. Father Burke was receptive, commenting that such a group might do much to arouse American public opinion and counteract false information in both the U.S. and the Mexican press. As for financial aid to Mexican Catholics, however, he told his visitors that this was not within the field of operations of the N.C.W.C., but that he would have the matter presented to the American Board of Home Missions. It was agreed that any propaganda would make clear that there was no intention to foment U.S. intervention in Mexico; to give such an impression, Father Burke insisted, would only hurt the Church there. Finally, the priest promised to take the whole matter to the Administrative Board of the N.C.W.C. for its approval.<sup>137</sup>

The propaganda battle had already begun. The New York Times of February 21st carried a letter from Mexican Consul General Arturo M. Elías, who told American readers that Mexico's Catholic clergy, unlike

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<sup>136</sup>"Anotación a la carta del R.P. Burke, dirigida al Lic. Ceniceros y Villarreal, con fecha 6 de marzo de 1926," signed by Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra and dated February 21, 1941, LA-1.

<sup>137</sup>Burke to Ceniceros y Villarreal, March 27, 1926, LA-1.

its patriotic and public spirited American counterpart, 'have consistently fought the constituted authorities, neglected their spiritual mission, and been the uncompromising foe of all progress--spiritual, political, and social.'<sup>138</sup> Adalberto Tejeda was more adamant in an interview given to a Times reporter in Mexico City on February 27th. The clergy, he said was endangering the revolutionary government's program of unity and reform. The priests, he claimed, kept the Indians in ignorance and even stymied progressive agricultural methods by telling them that good crops and adequate rainfall were the work of the priest's saints, not better seed and improved technique.√ He called the Mexican priests unpatriotic trouble makers who had worked against national harmony since independence.<sup>139</sup>

Beginning in March, other American bishops were heard from. Archbishop Arthur Drossaerts of San Antonio blasted the Mexican government, which, he said,√ was taking its cue from Soviet Russia:

There is no blinking the fact that Mr. Calles, and Morones and Tejeda and his other confreres are aiming to war against God and Christ, all their protests to the contrary notwithstanding.

One wondered, he said, how the United States, which did not recognize Soviet Russia, could keep an ambassador in "Soviet Mexico."<sup>140</sup> Archbishop Curley went even further in an article appearing in the April 11th issue of the Baltimore Catholic Review. He said the weapons being used by Calles to trample religion were being provided by the United States, and that Calles and his group would not last a month if Washington would stop aiding his "Bolshevik regime."<sup>141</sup>

<sup>138</sup> New York Times, February 21, 1926, p. section 7, p. 14.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., February 28, 1926, p. 2.

<sup>140</sup> The Southern Messenger, San Antonio, Texas, March 11, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>141</sup> Cited in Blanco Gil, pp. 136, 137.

✓ Pressure on the U.S. government of a more immediate sort began on March 4th, when Rep. John Boylan of New York made a speech in the House of Representatives calling on the Coolidge administration to suspend diplomatic relations with the Calles regime. Boylan said the Mexican government was operating under a constitution "at variance with international honor," as demonstrated by the exclusion of American clergymen as well as by harsh action against American property.<sup>142</sup>

On April 15th the Administrative Board of the N.C.W.C. addressed a letter to Coolidge. It expressed "indignation and horror" at the situation in Mexico, and criticized American policy in the matter. In 1916, they told the President, the United States had recognized Venustiano Carranza's revolutionary government only after Carranza had promised to respect the religious rights of Mexicans--a promise the Mexican government had not kept." . . .as American citizens, believing in the principle of religious freedom, we shall continue to raise our voices in protest until the intolerable conditions which exist in our sister republic have been remedied."<sup>143</sup>

On April 21st Secretary Kellogg had a talk with Father Burke at the State Department regarding the letter. He pointed out (correctly) that it was untrue that Carranza had ever given the United States any guarantees on religious matters.<sup>144</sup> The Department was clearly concerned over the barbs being thrown by prominent U.S. Catholics. Franklin M.

<sup>142</sup>New York Times, March 5, 1926, p. 10.

<sup>143</sup>N.C.W.C. to Coolidge, April 15, 1926, DSR 812.404/413.

<sup>144</sup>Memorandum of interview had by Father Burke and Father Lyons with the Secretary of State in connection with the letter to the President dated April 15, 1926. . . , "April 21, 1926, DSR 812.404/502.

Gunther, Chief of the Division of Mexican Affairs, told Kellogg he doubted that the attitude of the American bishops was being inspired by the Vatican.<sup>145</sup> After further talks with Father Burke, he managed to persuade the priest that in view of the inaccuracies in the letter it would be a mistake for the N.C.W.C. to make it public. Following a conference with Father Burke and William F. Montavon, head of the N.C.W.C.'s legal department, on May 14th, Gunther reported to Kellogg that Burke now seemed to see that the U.S. government had done all that could be done under the circumstances, and added: "I think his [Burke's] attitude so far has been governed by the feeling that as Catholics in the U.S. were so important politically, more action should be taken on their behalf than on behalf of others."<sup>146</sup>

Relations between the N.C.W.C. and the League became firm to the point of intimacy during the spring and summer. Dozens of letters traveled between Washington and Mexico City, providing the U.S. group with voluminous details on the situation in Mexico as described by the League's leaders.<sup>147</sup> The League was highly pleased with the relationship. The prospect of useful propaganda was welcome, and it was also convinced that large sums of money would be forthcoming.<sup>148</sup>

<sup>145</sup>Memorandum, Gunther to Kellogg, April 20, 1926, DSR 812.404/508.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., May 14, 1926, DSR 812.404/464.

<sup>147</sup>Most of the correspondence on the N.C.W.C. side was carried on by Montavon, who was fluent in Spanish.

<sup>148</sup>Minutes of General Convention, May 3, 1926; "Anotación a la carta del R.P. Burke. . . , LA-1. Palomar said the League was "led to believe" that the Home Missions had million of dollars available-- implying that he thought the League would receive support from that source.

The Eucharistic Congress held in Chicago in June was attended by a number of the Mexican bishops, who had an opportunity to publicize their plight and gain a favorable hearing for their case. Their warm reception was well reported in Mexico.<sup>149</sup>

There were indications that the Vatican, while still not ready to abandon all hope of peace, was becoming alarmed at the outlook. In April Pius XI ordered public prayers for Mexico in the churches of Rome--a step which the French Ambassador to the Holy See pointed out was traditionally taken only in circumstances that were considered extremely grave; the last time it was done, he recalled, was in July, 1920, when Warsaw was in danger of capture by Soviet armies. In June the papal legate to the Eucharistic Congress, Cardinal Bonzano, clearly intimated in a visit to Coolidge that the Vatican hoped to see the United States use its position to save Mexico.<sup>150</sup> Rome wanted peace, but not at any price. On June 14th the Pope addressed a second encyclical letter to the Mexican Hierarchy. He urged firmness and patience:

Unfortunately, since the day We addressed you [February 2nd], We have received no news if an improvement in religious conditions in Mexico, and much grieved at this, We have no other course, after having invoked Divine aid, than to encourage you anew to persevere courageously in the struggle for the defense of the common faith, so gravely threatened.<sup>151</sup>

As summer began, the situation offered no cause whatever for optimism. On the contrary, it was obvious that the basis for any meeting of minds was gone. Positions had stiffened into cold and unyielding intransigence and the few thin voices that still preached peace were fading into silence.

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<sup>149</sup>Lagarde Memorandum; Sheffield to SecState, June 30, 1926, DSR 812. 404/505.

<sup>150</sup>Lagarde Memorandum.

<sup>151</sup>López Ortega, pp. 26, 27; Excelsior, July 25, 1926, pp. 1, 4.

All that was needed to push matters over the edge was some provocative thrust from one side or the other.



## CHAPTER IV

### "MEXICO NEEDS A TRADITION OF BLOOD"

On July 2nd the government made public the text of a decree signed by Calles June 14th. It consisted of thirty-three articles which specified the application of the constitutional provisions relating to religious matters and spelled out penalties for infractions, whether committed by private citizens or by officials who failed to enforce the law. Many of the constitutional precepts had been invoked in varying degrees by state authorities, especially since early 1925; now, however, application was consolidated on a nation-wide basis with a view to uniform enforcement backed by uniformly severe penalties. The new law was to take effect July 31st.<sup>1</sup> Dedicated Revolutionists applauded: after nine years the Revolution's program on religious matters was to be fully implemented.

To Catholics, the "Calles Law" was the cocking of a pistol which was pointed straight at the Church.

Upon receipt of the news the Episcopal Committee went into permanent session. Although all the prelates were shocked, a majority favored a wait-and-see approach, hoping that some way might be found to soften the blow

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<sup>1</sup>"Ley que reforma el código penal para el distrito y territorios federales, sobre delitos del fuero común, y para toda la República sobre delitos contra la federación," Diario Oficial, XXXVII, No. 2 (July 2, 1926), 1-4; Excelsior, July 3, 1926, pp. 1, 11. In most instances, constitutional provisions are put in force by the passage of enabling legislation (reglamentación). In this case, Calles achieved the same results by the device of reforming the penal code, which Congress in January had authorized him to do by decree. Congress later enacted appropriate legislation implementing the religious articles of the Constitution.



or arrange some tolerable accomodation.<sup>2</sup> Most of the discussion centered on Article 19 of the new law, which required priests in charge of churches to register with the government in order to be allowed to exercise their ministry. Some of the bishops were of the opinion that this requirement was not contrary to canon law nor destructive of ecclesiastical discipline; but others insisted that it jeopardized episcopal control of the Church in Mexico by enabling the government to appoint and dismiss priests at will-- a legal vehicle for achieving what the heavy-handed "schism" of the previous year had failed to do. The only effective response, they argued, was to suspend public worship immediately throughout the country.<sup>3</sup>

Guízar Valencia of Chihuahua spoke against such a step. While he agreed that the law was unjust and could not be obeyed, he said the churches should remain open with the priests in them; if they were forcibly ejected, then others should be sent to replace them, thus peacefully defying the government until public opinion forced it to agree to a prudent settlement.<sup>4</sup> Ruiz y Flores also doubted that the suspension of worship was the best weapon.<sup>5</sup> The bishops of Veracruz, Cuernavaca and Zamora were in favor of an attempt at conciliation. Díaz leaned in that direction, but unenthusiastically.<sup>6</sup> Monsignor Crespi, Chargé at the Apostolic Delegation, sided with the conciliators, insisting urgently on the need for compromise. He pointed

<sup>2</sup>"Memorándum del Excmo. Sr. Francisco Orozco y Jiménez, Arzobispo de Guadalajara, México," David, VII, No. 155 (June, 1965), 168; Lagarde Memorandum.

<sup>3</sup>Lagarde Memorandum.

<sup>4</sup>Eduardo J. Correa, Mons. Rafael Guízar Valencia: el obispo santo, 1878-1938 (Mexico, D.F., 1951), p. 103.

<sup>5</sup>Carreño, p. 112.

<sup>6</sup>Lagarde Memorandum.

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to Tabasco and Colima, where he said great spiritual harm was being done by the lack of regular priestly ministrations.<sup>7</sup>

Strong for resistance were Orozco y Jiménez of Guadalajara and González Valencia of Durango. The latter, upon his return from Rome in January, had named a committee of theologians to study the matter of priests registering with the civil authorities. The committee's report, given to the Archbishop in April, said that to accept any such requirement was both morally and tactically wrong; even the principle of avoiding the greater evil, it said, would be puerile in the case of Mexico, since there was no greater evil to be avoided--the ultimate aim of the regime was to extinguish Catholicism and to yield on any point was simply to encourage the process. González Valencia now used this document, with considerable effect.<sup>8</sup>

The Vatican followed the bishops' deliberations with accute anxiety. Gasparri, kept informed by Crespi of the division among the prelates, was himself uncertain of the best course. Although still inclined to oppose any precipitous policy, he refrained from trying to impose a solution, desiring only that the bishops unify among themselves on whatever stand was decided upon.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, the Directive Committee of the League,<sup>10</sup> unaware of the anguished attempts of the bishops to hammer out some course of action--or inaction--formulated its own strategy for combatting the "Calles Law." The Directors recalled the effectiveness of the general boycott in Jalisco

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Andrés Barquín y Ruiz, Jose María González Valencia: Arzobispo de Durango (Mexico, D.F., 1967), pp. 26-29.

<sup>9</sup> Lagarde Memorandum

<sup>10</sup> By the middle of 1926 the three-man governing body of the League was styled the Directive Committee (Comité Directivo) rather than Executive Committee.



in 1918. They felt that the League, well established particularly in those parts of Mexico where Catholicism was strongest and which also had the highest population densities, could successfully repeat the campaign on a national scale. The Committee decided to call a nation-wide boycott to bring the government to terms. In order to obtain maximum impact, it decided that the moral support of the Episcopate was needed, and for this purpose the Directive Committee requested an audience with the Episcopal Committee. They were received at the archepiscopal residence on July 7th by Mora y del Río, Díaz, and several other prelates. When they had stated the purpose of their visit, Mora y del Río, after a rather long pause, asked them to put their request in writing. The Directors, wishing to waste no time, asked for permission to withdraw to an adjacent room to do so. This was granted, and within a few minutes their memorandum was in the hands of the bishops, who promised an answer in the near future.<sup>11</sup>

As the debate in the Episcopal Committee ground on, the conciliatory viewpoint lost ground. Díaz, followed by others, now moved toward the hardline position. Crespi found himself more and more isolated, his influence not enhanced by the fact that the Episcopate was maintaining contact with Rome through Caruana, in Havana. On the evening of the 11th the balance swung to the proponents of resistance. ✓ The Committee voted to halt all public worship throughout Mexico and to inform Rome that unless it received orders to the contrary the decision would become effective on

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<sup>11</sup>Ceniceros y Villarreal.





August 1st.<sup>12</sup>

✓ On July 14th the Episcopal Committee informed the League that it endorsed the boycott, both because of its objectives and because of the "ordered and peaceful form" the measure would take: "We are with you in this work of recovering just rights, and we earnestly recommend to our clergy and faithful their most active cooperation in so laudable an undertaking."<sup>13</sup> Two days later the League released its boycott proclamation to the press and began a massive handbill campaign in all parts of Mexico. In its announcement, the League said that the step being taken was drastic but just: "Between inaction and armed action there is a middle ground, that of civic action. It is this which we will exercise." The boycott, it said, should cause neither scruples nor alarm, "for this is an extreme case, involving the life or death of the Church in Mexico." The Directive Committee laid down general guidelines: It urged the public to abstain from purchasing all but basic necessities, to limit its use of public and private vehicles, to curtail consumption of electricity, and to refrain from all amusements and recreation. It instructed parents to refuse to send their children to nonreligious schools.<sup>14</sup> El Imparcial of July 17th carried the text of the

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<sup>12</sup>Lagarde Memorandum; Walter Lippmann, "The Church and State in Mexico: American Mediation," Foreign Affairs, VIII (January, 1930), p. 191. Orozco y Jiménez (Memorandum, p. 68) said the decision to suspend worship subject to papal approval was unanimous, but did not say whether unanimity was achieved the 11th or some days later. It is likewise uncertain just when the vote was taken. El Imparcial for July 17th (p. 1) said the decision was reached the 16th. Lagarde said the bishops sent De la Peza to Havana on July 21st to communicate the decision to Caruana, presumably for transmission to Rome. Such a delay would be difficult to explain.

<sup>13</sup>Mora y del Río and Díaz to Cenicerros y Villarreal, Bustos, and Capistrán Garza, July 14, 1926. Copy in possession of Antonio Ríos Facius.

<sup>14</sup>League Bulletin 2-A, July 14, 1926, LA-1

boycott appeal; the other main Mexico City dailies did not, either then or later.<sup>15</sup>

On the 21st orders were issued for the arrest of the members of the Directive Committee; the next day, police took them into custody at the League offices on Donceles and also seized part of the files (some compromising data was hastily destroyed before agents entered the building).<sup>16</sup> The three were transferred to the military prison of Santiago Tlaltelolco on the 23rd.<sup>17</sup> Their places were taken at once by alternates, previously selected with such an eventuality in mind. By the 31st, however, all had been freed; they immediately went into hiding.<sup>18</sup>

As events rushed toward a final rupture Rome decided to make one last attempt to reverse them. The Holy See instructed Crespi to make a formal approach to the government. With Ernest Lagarde acting as intermediary, Crespi asked for an interview with Secretary of Gobernación Tejeda. They met on the 23rd, with Lagarde present. Gasparri had directed the Chargé to "make known to the Mexican Government that the Holy See was fully in accord with the Episcopate in declaring the regulations in question detrimental to the rights of the Church and unjust, and to exhort the suspension

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<sup>15</sup>El Imparcial, July 17, 1926, pp. 1, 5. El Universal said only that the League had ordered a "program of social-economic action." Excélsior had no news of any kind on the subject. In later stories regarding the arrest of League leaders both papers made only vague references to a document which they said the government considered seditious. The reluctance to comment on the religious question was understandable; Gobernación had forbidden newspaper comment on the "Calles Law" on the grounds any newspaper doing so would be violating the constitutional prohibition on publications which manifested religious tendencies--and that criticism of the law was perforce a religious tendency. New York Times, July 24, 1926, p. 12.

<sup>16</sup>Ruiz Rueda to Montavon, July 23, 1926, LA-1; Excélsior, July 23, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup>Excélsior, July 24, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., July 25, 1926, p. 1; El Universal, July 22, p. 1; ibid., August 1, p. 1; Cenicerros y Villarreal.



or moderation of the application of the law in the interest of internal peace." Crespi did his best; he even confided to Tejeda that the Pope was aware of the need for reform among the Mexican clergy. But Tejeda was unyielding; moderation or suspension was not to be considered, although he did point out to Crespi that the registration of priests was for purely administrative purposes and had no further object, and that the bishops, as citizens, could demand reform of the Constitution. Visibly concerned over the turn of events, Tejeda said he hoped Rome would invite Catholics to use legal means to advance their interests.<sup>19</sup>

Time had run out. Two days earlier the Episcopal Committee had sent Manuel de la Peza to Havana to place in Caruana's hands a communication telling of its decision. The June 14th decree, they stated, made it impossible for the Church to function in accordance with the sacred canons or with the divine constitution of the Church. They added that they believed the suspension of worship would serve to arouse the public to work by legal means to obtain the derogation of the anti-Catholic laws.<sup>20</sup> On the 27th the Holy See, informed of Crespi's failure to obtain a satisfactory response from the government, condemned the "Calles Law" and informed Caruana that it approved not only the suspension of public worship but also the closing of the churches.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Lagarde Memorandum.

<sup>20</sup>Carreño, pp. 118-121. Carreño cites the archives of the Episcopal Committee, to which he had access. See also Lagarde Memorandum.

<sup>21</sup>Díaz to Gasparri, August 12, 1926, cited in Carreño, pp. 121-124. Díaz told Gasparri that the bishops decided the closing of the churches was unnecessary; he added that such a move could have been taken as a provocation for the people to rebel. The connection between the decision to suspend worship and the League's program of opposition is obscure. Carreño (p. 12) says the bishops who favored the suspension based their position on absolute assurances given them by the League that it would overthrow the government within two or three months, the implication being that stopping worship would help the League accomplish this. Carreño does not say whether the government was to be brought down by the boycott or by



Already, on the 24th, the Episcopal Committee had voted to release a collective pastoral letter announcing its order withdrawing the clergy from the churches.<sup>22</sup> The Mexico City papers carried the full text of the pastoral on July 25th.<sup>23</sup> Rumors that worship might be suspended had been rife since the 16th, and after the news broke churches throughout Mexico were jammed as perhaps never before in the country's history. On July 22nd, even before the formal announcement, some 10,000 persons lined up at the Cathedral in Mexico City for Confirmation--the usual number on Thursdays, when the sacrament was administered, was under a hundred.<sup>24</sup>

Plutarco Elías Calles watched the unfolding situation with apparent equanimity coupled with evidences of grim determination to hold his course. Addressing a crowd that met his train in Monterrey on July 19th he said he would do his duty on the religious matter even if it meant having to employ

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armed action. There is no other evidence available that the League leadership was planning a revolt in July. Carreño's references to matters involving the League must be used with great caution, because he was keenly interested in branding the League as irresponsible and incompetent and in defending the motives and actions of Pascual Díaz.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid. Official word of Rome's approval did not reach the Episcopal Committee until August 2nd.

<sup>23</sup>See Excelsior, July 25, 1926, pp. 1, 9.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., July 16, 1926, p. 1; July 23, p. 1; July 26, p. 1; El Imparcial, July 17, p. 1. In their pastoral letter the bishops specified that the country was not being placed under an interdict (which would have prohibited practically all ministrations by priests). But Catholic devotional life requiring the mediation of a priest (the Mass, reception of the sacraments, etc.) would have to be carried on outside church buildings. Much of the subsequent trouble was due to the fact that the law prohibited public worship anywhere except in the churches; thus, for a number of people to gather in a private home to hear Mass, for example, was illegal, and hundreds of arrests were made on that basis during the three years worship was suspended.

extreme methods; he repeated his pujido remark of March, this time applying it to the Pope.<sup>25</sup> On the 29th, a delegation representing locals of the Federation of Labor Unions of the Federal District (CROM) called at the National Palace to pledge their support in the crisis: "Let the lines be drawn," their address proclaimed. ✓ "We are ready to offer out blood to save the Revolution." Responding, the President agreed that the struggle had transcendent implications:

4 . . . I believe that we are at the moment when the sides are going to be drawn for all time; the hour of the final battle is near, and we are going to find out whether the Revolution has conquered the Reaction, or whether the triumph of the Revolution has been ephemeral.

The clerical establishment, he said, had thrown down the gauntlet in February; the Revolution had picked it up, and the resulting conflict of the past five months was common knowledge: ". . . we are compelled to it; it is the struggle of darkness against light."<sup>26</sup>

That same day, Calles's determination became even more clear. The government ordered Monsignor Crespi to leave the country. On the 31st, deeply discouraged at his own failure and with presentiments of disaster for the faith in Mexico, Crespi boarded a train to the United States.<sup>27</sup> The next day, Sunday, August 1st, for the first time in more than 400 years

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<sup>25</sup> Sheffield to SecState, July 21, 1926, DSR 812.404/523. Sheffield said that a member of the Excelsior staff told him the newspaper was embarrassed to print the word but had done so, indicating that it was a direct quote. (See Excelsior, July 20, 1926, p. 1). The Ambassador reported that a "Mexican close to the Administration" said the President had become so violent on the religious question that he lost control of himself when the matter came up in his presence, becoming red in the face and pounding the table "to express his hatred and profound antagonism to the practice of religion." Sheffield to SecState, July 20, 1926, DSR 812.404/578.

<sup>26</sup> Excelsior, July 30, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Lagarde Memorandum.

no priest mounted the altar of a Mexican church for morning mass.

The cessation of public worship and the abandonment of the churches by the clergy transpired in most cases in an orderly fashion. As provided by law, the buildings passed to the control of local citizens' committees (juntas de vecinos or juntas vecinales) named by municipal authorities. Most of the churches were closed for a day or two while government agents completed inventories but were re-opened as soon as possible, on specific orders from the national government.<sup>28</sup> In Chihuahua all churches were closed on July 31st but open on August 2nd; there was no public disorder, although guards were posted throughout the capital and vehicles entering the city were searched for firearms.<sup>29</sup> In Guerrero there were no incidents, although there were rumors of unrest in rural areas.<sup>30</sup> The west coast in general remained quiet. In Sinaloa the clergy was consulted regarding the makeup of the juntas.<sup>31</sup> In Veracruz the transfer of the churches was accomplished without difficulty and the populace in general seemed relatively unconcerned.<sup>32</sup> In Mexico City there were disturbances. Police fired on communicants who refused to leave the San Rafael Church, wounding nine of them, and women on the roof hurled stones down on the officers. Another crowd stoned Attorney General Ortega and his assistants, who were attempting

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<sup>28</sup>See Pérez Treviño to Adalberto Tejeda, July 31, 1926, and Tejeda to Pérez Treviño, August 4, 1926, Archives, State of Coahuila, Legajo 36, Exp. 6, 1926.

<sup>29</sup>McEnelly, Chihuahua, to SecState, August 2, 1926, DSR 812.404/545; ibid., August 4, DSR 812.404/561.

<sup>30</sup>Pangburn, Acapulco, to SecState, July 31, 1926, DSR 812.404/545.

<sup>31</sup>Blocker, Mazatlán, to SecState, August 6, 1926, DSR 812.404/581.

<sup>32</sup>Myers, Veracruz, to SecState, September 1, 1926, DSR 812.404/640.



to close the annexes at the Santa Catarina parish. Fire trucks rushed about the city dispersing other gatherings at church buildings.<sup>33</sup>

In some areas there was serious trouble. When authorities attempted to take possession of the churches in Guadalajara, street fighting left many dead and wounded; hundreds were jailed. By mid-August the government held only one church in the city. In outlying areas of the state, officials in most cases abandoned attempts to occupy the churches; in some regions they simply announced that the committees named by Church authorities to look after the buildings were also the government juntas.<sup>34</sup> In Torreón on August 1st a police attempt to disperse a demonstration by Catholics--mainly women--brought on an early morning riot. By noon the situation was out of hand and the mayor appealed for federal troops, who finally restored order. Two persons were killed, eight injured.<sup>35</sup> Archbishop Ruiz y Flores returned to Mexico City from Morelia with the news that the transfer of churches in northern Michoacán and southern Guanajuato had occasioned revolt and bloodshed. At Zahuayo, he reported, the populace refused to let authorities take control of the churches; troops were rushed to the scene and an all day battle left an estimated fifty dead. He added that two priests and thirty-seven other Catholics were executed in the area on August

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<sup>33</sup>New York Times, July 31, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup>Dwyre, Guadalajara, to SecState, August 2, 1926, DSR 812.404/546; ibid., August 6, DSR 812.404/560; ibid.; August 18, DSR 812.404/591. Dwyre said the number killed in Guadalajara was reported at between eighteen and forty. Orozco y Jiménez told a New York Times correspondent on the 13th that forty-three federal troops were killed or wounded and five Catholics killed. He said he understood that the soldiers had fired into the air--hence the few civilian deaths--and added that 390 persons had been arrested but were being released a few at a time. New York Times, August 14, 1926, pp. 1, 4.

<sup>35</sup>Ortiz Garza, Torreón, to Pérez Treviño, August 1, 1926, Archive, State of Coahuila, Legajo 35, Exp. 4, 1926; ibid., August 2: Yost, Torreón, to SecState, August 2, 1926, DSR 812.404/547.



1st and 2nd on charges of fomenting an uprising.<sup>36</sup>

The boycott got under way with varying intensity. In Chihuahua and down the west coast it was observed by only a small number of persons and had very little effect, although there was a significant degree of participation in the cities of Manzanillo and Colima.<sup>37</sup> In the city of Veracruz there was some decline in grocery sales for a few days; in Jalapa, Córdoba, and Orizaba the effect was more marked but was not considered serious.<sup>38</sup> The success of the boycott generally paralleled the intensity of popular reaction against the transfer of churches to government control. In Jalisco the boycott was devastatingly effective; by August 5th there was a reported eighty percent decline in theater attendance, and the streets of Guadalajara were almost empty of private cars.<sup>39</sup> Gladium, the Unión Popular organ, carried on a massive blacklisting campaign directed at merchants known to be pro-Revolution and anti-Catholic.<sup>40</sup> In Torreón and Saltillo the boycott was moderately effective through August and September.<sup>41</sup> In border towns like Piedras Negras and Mexicali it was all but ignored.<sup>42</sup> By October--much earlier in some parts of the country--it was clear that the boycott had passed its peak and was declining rapidly. One reason for the failure

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<sup>36</sup>New York Times, August 12, 1926, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup>McEnelly, Chihuahua, to SecState, August 4, 1926, DSR 812.404/561; Blocker, Mazatlán, to SecState, August 6, DSR 812.404/581; Eaton, Manzanillo, to SecState, September 20, DSR 812.404/668.

<sup>38</sup>Myers, Veracruz, to SecState, September 1, 1926, DSR 812.404/640.

<sup>39</sup>Dwyre, Guadalajara, to SecState, August 6, 1926, DSR 812.404/560.

<sup>40</sup>Navarrete, p. 110.

<sup>41</sup>Yost, Torreón, to SecState, August 19, 1926, DSR 812.404/599; Horn, Saltillo, to SecState, September 10, DSR 812.404/658.

<sup>42</sup>Leonard, Piedras Negras, to SecState, September 10, 1926, DSR 812.404/647; Bohr, Mexicali, to SecState, September 9, DSR 812.404/653.

to sustain itself was suggested by U.S. Consul Myers in Durango. Early in September he commented that there had been some effect on the purchase of luxury items, but that "the great mass of the people. . .are unable to reduce their purchases to any appreciable extent as they have never been able to buy more than the basic necessities of life and few or no luxuries."<sup>43</sup>

✓ Probably just as important were lack of organization and public apathy.

It was obvious that the careful organization and the strong religious climate that had made possible the success in Jalisco in 1918 were not duplicated in many parts of Mexico.

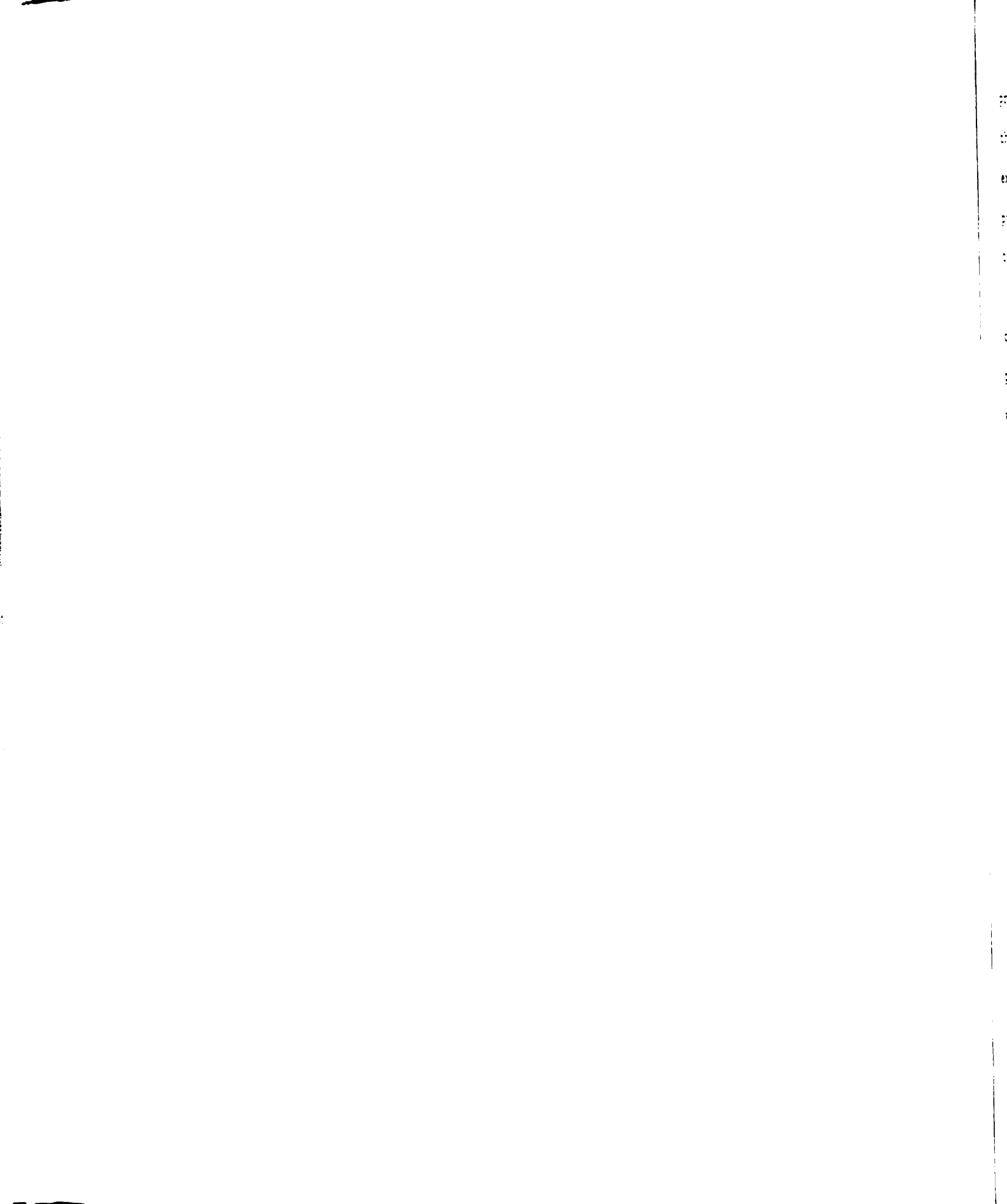
The government, during the first days of August, was clearly nervous about the possibility of widespread civil strife. On July 30th and 31st police arrested many League officers in various parts of the country and held them briefly, In Mexico City some seventy League workers--most of them ACJM members--who were caught distributing propaganda were held for three days at police headquarters.<sup>44</sup> The newspapers carefully avoided comment on the boycott or on the disturbances; in Mexico City the press ceased all editorial comment on the religious question, and in Guadalajara the authorities ordered papers to print only news handed them by official spokesmen.<sup>45</sup> The more rabid anticlericals both inside the government and out professed to be delighted with the bishops' decision to suspend worship. Tejeda told Lagarde the government was quite agreeable to the clerical strike, because it should serve to hasten the growth of indifference and unbelief. The churches, he said, would be kept open; he thought that for a few days the people would respect the sanctity of the buildings but that then, with no

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<sup>43</sup>Myers, Durango, to SecState, September 8, 1926, DSR 812.404/645.

<sup>44</sup>Ruiz Rueda to Montavon, August 6, 1926, LA-1.

<sup>45</sup>Dwyre, Guadalajara, to SecState, August 6, 1926, DSR 812.404/560.



priests present, the people would begin to relax their habits--to the point that soon the churches would become merely gathering places. Perhaps, for example, the workers would go there to eat their lunches. He added that probably many of the annexes--rectories and so forth--would be turned over to local governments for use as schools and athletic centers.<sup>46</sup>

Although the government had no concrete reasons for anticipating coordinated trouble in August, it was quite correct in suspecting that the possibility was there. The League had never excluded armed action as a weapon it might someday use, and the thought was on the minds and even the lips of some individual members throughout the spring and summer. As early as April there had been informal talk among such lines at a regional League meeting in Saltillo, where a few of those present--mostly young men who were also active in the ACJM--began quietly to accumulate ammunition for any eventuality.<sup>47</sup> As the situation deteriorated in July and August, many more began to give serious consideration to armed action. The leadership's first move in that direction, however, was more oblique than direct. A few days after the suspension of worship a few key League leaders met secretly at the home of Dr. José Meza Gutiérrez in Mexico City. They had received word that a group of Mexican exiles in the United States was about to launch a revolt against Calles; General Enrique Estrada, Obregón's Secretary of War and Marine who had backed De la Huerta and fled to the United States when that rebellion collapsed, was preparing to cross the border with an armed force.

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<sup>46</sup>Lagarde Memorandum. Not everyone in the government was as rabid as Tejeda. Alberto Pani, Secretary of Finance, was definitely opposed to the administration's religious policies; soon after the crisis broke he resigned from the cabinet to accept the post of ambassador to France. Serrano, Governor of the Federal District, and Cruz, Chief of Police in Mexico City, allowed Mass to be said in their homes. Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Interview with Felipe Brondo, Saltillo, June, 1968.



The League leaders decided to send René Capistrán Garza to offer Estrada Catholic support in exchange for a pledge to respect the interests of Catholics once he gained power. On August 10th Capistrán Garza left in disguise for Laredo; two days later, with the help of one Roberto Zúñiga, owner of a customs agency on the border, he crossed into Texas. He arrived on the American side of the Rio Grande at 3:00 P.M.; at 7:00 extras appeared on the Laredo streets reporting that U.S. authorities in California had taken Estrada and his band into custody and charged them with violation of the neutrality laws.<sup>48</sup>

Less than two weeks later League representatives from various parts of the country met in Mexico City. League President Cenicerros y Villarreal had called them together for the purpose of strengthening morale and coordinating League activities. At the end of a highly emotional session in which Cenicerros y Villarreal made an impassioned plea for total dedication to the Catholic cause, two representatives from Chihuahua asked the President if they might speak with him in private at his home. There, the regional delegate for Chihuahua, who said he was not speaking for himself alone but for other delegates as well, came to the point quickly and bluntly:

We no longer want words, sir, but deeds. We are determined to take up arms. The enemies of our Religion and our Fatherland understand no other language. We have had a century of experience, and we know them well. Without our apathy, without our culpable fear, if we had not forgotten duty, they would not have subjugated and mocked us. If the League wishes to help us and direct us in this glorious undertaking, we are at your orders. If it cannot or will not, we will do it ourselves and on our own responsibility.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Antonio Ríos Facius, Méjico cristero: historia de la A.C.J.M., 1925 a 1931 (2nd ed., Mexico, D.F., 1966), p. 108; José Gutiérrez Gutiérrez, "El General Degollado Guízar: breves apuntes histórico-biográficos. . .," David, III, No. 63 (October 22, 1957), 235. The New York Times of August 17, 1926 (p. 2) reported that 174 men were rounded up near San Diego and their weapons and ammunition seized.

<sup>49</sup> Cenicerros y Villarreal.





Ceniceros y Villarreal told them that he was in full accord with their thinking, but he expressed concern over the means available to undertake armed action. They told him that in Chihuahua men and arms were already being prepared. The President promised to place the matter before the Directive Committee immediately. A few days later, he was visited by another League official, Luis Navarro Origel of Guanajuato, who had come for the same purpose. He told Cenicerros y Villarreal he had just spoken with Pascual Díaz but that the Bishop insisted he could not give advice on such a matter and sent him to the League President.<sup>50</sup>

✓ The Directive Committee met; after lengthy discussion it resolved that a resort to arms was justified and that the League would assume leadership of the "armed defense."<sup>51</sup> The Directors established a Special War Committee, to be headed by Bartolomé Ontiveros on an interim basis until a qualified military man could be designated. They also voted to inform the Episcopal Committee of their decision and to solicit its support.<sup>52</sup> But armed action did not wait on conferences and decisions in Mexico City.

On the evening of Saturday, August 14th, two automobiles drove into the little hill town of Chalhchihuites in the state of Zacatecas. Each

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid. Special care was taken from the first to term the uprising "armed defense" and not rebellion.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid. The exact date of the decision to lead the movement, and the dates of most of the events leading up to it, are not given in the sources available. The decision to send Capistrán Garza to the United States was taken between August 1st and August 14th. Cenicerros y Villarreal thinks the League gathering which preceded the decision of the Directive Committee to head the revolt was near the end of August. Father Wilfrid Parsons, S.J., told Díaz in 1928 that he was informed in October, 1926, that the League decided in September to lead the armed defense. Parsons to Díaz, February 1, 1928, cited in Carreño, p. 280.



carried five or six federal soldiers of General Eulogio Ortiz's command. The man in charge of the small contingent, Lt. Blas Maldonato, carried orders to apprehend a number of individuals in connection with a reported conspiracy against the government.<sup>53</sup> The parish priest was the first arrested. Father Luis Batis, formerly a spiritual director at the Durango seminary, had been pastor in Chalchihuites for one year. His particular love was the ACJM, and he had worked to strengthen the local chapter. The troops took him to the municipal building and then searched his house. He denied involvement in any plot; the meetings that had been held at his home, he said, had been routine gatherings of ACJM members and Catholic Workers. The questioning continued most of the night, while the Lieutenant rounded up various individuals whose names appeared on his list. By dawn, some twenty-two had been brought in. All were questioned and released except for three young men: Manuel Morales, President of the local Catholic Workers, David Roldán, ACJM President, and Salvador Lara, an active ACJM worker. All were prominent in the League in Chalchihuites.

By the middle of the morning a large crowd filled the plaza. At 10:30 the soldiers emerged from the municipal building with Father Batis and the other three; they entered the cars--a third had been acquired--and started

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<sup>53</sup>There is no significant disagreement concerning the Chalchihuites affair. The present account is based on a hand-written, semiliterate document in the League Archive, first part, titled "Noticia pormenoriada de los acontecimientos que se desarroyaron en Chalchihuites, Zacatecas, la noche del 14 y la mañana del 15 de agosto de 1926." It is dated Chalchihuites, August 30, 1926, but is unsigned. For the backgrounds of the principals involved see Ríos Facius, pp. 95-97. Details are also given in Myers, Durango, to SecState, September 8, 1926, DSR 812.404/645, and Cenicerros y Villarreal. There was evidently substance to the charge that a plot of some kind was afoot in the state. As early as March, a young ACJM member in Valparaíso was organizing an armed movement there, although there is no evidence that persons in Chalchihuites were involved. See "Origen del movimiento católico Libertador de México," undated and unsigned document in LA-1.

slowly out of town through the hostile onlookers. At the outskirts a small group of campesinos stopped them. The Lieutenant showed them his orders; there was a small scuffle, then the cars drove on, pursued by the mounted campesinos. A short distance along the road Blas Maldonado ordered a halt and told the prisoners to get out. Father Batis sensed what was happening. He told the soldiers to shoot him if they had to but to spare the rest. The plea was ignored and, seeing that they were about to die, all four shouted "VIVA CRISTO REY!"--Long Live Christ the King. The priest and Morales fell on the spot; the other two were walked a few paces along the road and also shot. The cars drove off at high speed. Blas Maldonado later reported that he had executed the prisoners to keep them from being rescued by the pursuers.

The men who had stopped the soldiers outside the town were led by Pedro Quintanar, a native of the nearby town of Valparaíso. Quintanar was a person of some local prominence who had served under De la Huerta in 1923 and 1924, reaching the rank of colonel. He was a religious man and an active member of the Catholic Workers. On August 14th he was in Chalchihuites on business, and after the soldiers arrived decided on the spur of the moment to take a hand in things. When he discovered the bodies of the four captives, he and his followers returned to the town. There Quintanar told the crowd he was going into rebellion. The band then seized the funds in the municipal treasury and rode off toward the Jalisco border.<sup>54</sup>

On August 22nd and 23rd members of the Catholic Workers locals from the Peñitas Ranch and the Peña Blanca Hacienda near Valparaíso rose in arms. Plans had been laid for a general insurrection in the region, to be joined by men from a number of rural communities. At the designated time, however,

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<sup>54</sup>"Origen del movimiento católico. . . ," LA-1; Ríos Facius, México cristero, p. 100.

most were still unprepared, and the handful that did respond found itself isolated and had to flee. Led by Basilio Pinedo, the refugees headed in the direction of Huejuquilla, Jalisco.<sup>55</sup>

Quintanar meanwhile had conferred with Aurelio R. Acevedo, ACJM leader in Valparaíso. They mapped out a plan of action, which would begin after a period of preparation. But word of the rising led by Pinedo decided them to make an immediate move, and after hurried consultations with individuals in the rancherías around Huejuquilla they decided to take that town.<sup>56</sup>

At 11:00 A.M. on August 29th, to shouts of "VIVA CRISTO REY," Quintanar and thirty men occupied Huejuquilla without firing a shot. An hour later, as church bells pealed, Pinedo and his men arrived. At 1:00 other men were seen approaching. These proved to be a federal force, fifty-two hand-picked soldiers of General Ortiz's command who had been sent to Huejuquilla to apprehend clergymen and other Catholics suspected of seditious activities. Unaware of Quintanar's presence, the troops entered the town to be met by a hail of bullets. After a battle that lasted until nearly 10:00 P.M. the federals, who had lost half their force, retreated. But six days later, as a government force composed of regulars and agraristas<sup>57</sup> personally led by Ortiz came up, the rebels, who were outnumbered, withdrew from the town.<sup>58</sup> A few weeks later, pursued by Ortiz, hungry and demoralized, they disbanded. Quintanar received an amnesty and returned to his ranch,

<sup>55</sup>"Boletín de las operaciones del grupo liberador de Huejuquilla el Alto. . . ,"; "Origen del movimiento católico. . . ," LA-1.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Ranchers and agricultural laborers belonging to syndicates sponsored or protected by the government.

<sup>58</sup>"Boletín de las operaciones del grupo libertador de Huejuquilla el Alto. . . ,"; "Origen del movimiento católico. . . ," LA-1.

where he waited for a more favorable opportunity.<sup>59</sup>

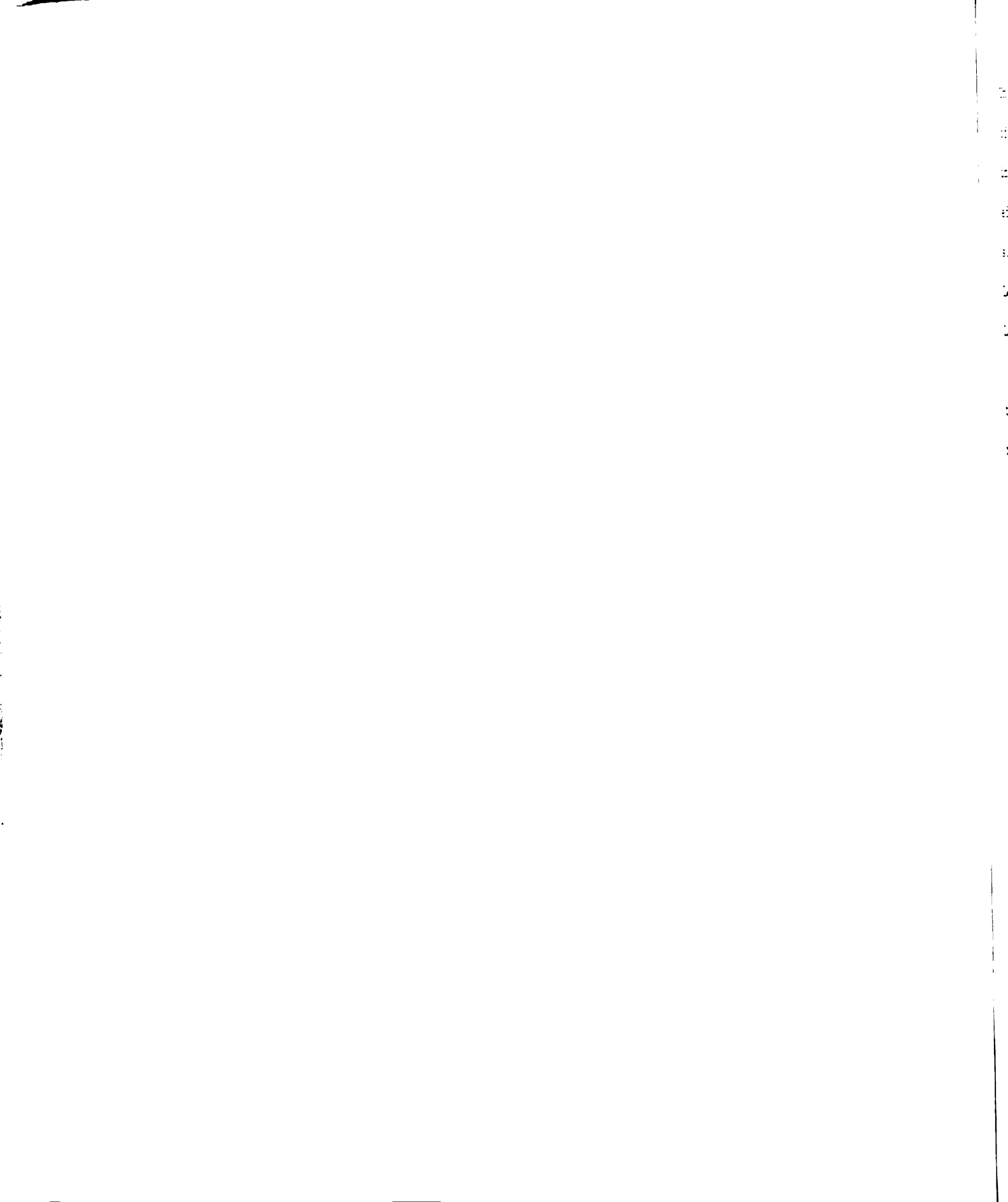
Another attempt at rebellion was squelched in September. Joaquín de Silva, Armando S. Ayala, and Manuel Melgarejo, three ACJM members whose zeal outran their sense of caution, left Mexico City for Michoacán on the 6th with the intention of organizing an uprising. After meeting with indifference among persons they had thought would help, they talked with an old general named Francisco Zepeda, who had once served under Obregón, and persuaded him--they thought--to join them. They discussed the possibility of organizing an attack on Zamora. Ayala was sent to Mexico City to report. There, the General Committee of the ACJM, alarmed at the impulsiveness of the whole scheme, sent back urgent word to call it off. But it was too late; the general had promptly turned Silva and Melgarejo over to the law. Silva defiantly told his captors that they could shoot him, because if he were released he would take up arms. Both were executed in the Zamora cemetery on September 12th.<sup>60</sup>

The leader of another rising in September was a man who would play a dominant part in the Cristero rebellion. Luís Navarro Origel of Pénjamo, Guanajuato, was twenty-nine years old in 1926. The son of a family of small but prominent landholders, he had been reared in surroundings that were socially and economically comfortable and also deeply religious. His education had included a period at the Morelia seminary. In 1917 he married and settled down in Pénjamo, where he soon became eminent as a Catholic lay leader. He established branches of the Nocturnal Adoration Society and the National

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<sup>59</sup>Ríos Facius, Méjico cristero, p. 102.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., pp. 111-117. Silva was 27 years old, Ayala 21, and Melgarejo 17. All were from moderately prosperous families, had been educated in Catholic schools, and were active in the ACJM. Silva was a nephew of Atenógenes Silva, Archbishop of Michoacán from 1900 to 1911.





Union of Parents in the town, and was an active member of the Third Order of St. Francis. In 1923 he was elected alcalde, and his year in office was impressive: he visited the jails daily to talk with prisoners, waged an effective campaign against prostitution, and stabilized the local water supply: his honesty in financial matters was legendary. He joined the League in 1925, and soon organized committees in Pénjamo, Abasolo, Irapuato, La Piedad, and Zacapú.<sup>61</sup>

In the late summer of 1926 Navarro Origel visited Mexico City twice to talk with League leaders; troubled to the point of desperation by the religious controversy, he had decided to lead armed action. Back in Pénjamo, he completed plans and on September 28th left his home to join the group of irregulars he had organized. He fully expected to die, and told his wife he would see her in Heaven. There were a few days of success: Pénjamo was attacked and taken and in the first days of October his men held up well in encounters with government forces at Cuerámaro and Barajas. But at Corralejo they were badly beaten, and Navarro Origel decided to abandon the gentle terrain of the Bajío for parts more suited to guerrilla warfare. He headed for the mountains of Michoacán.<sup>62</sup>

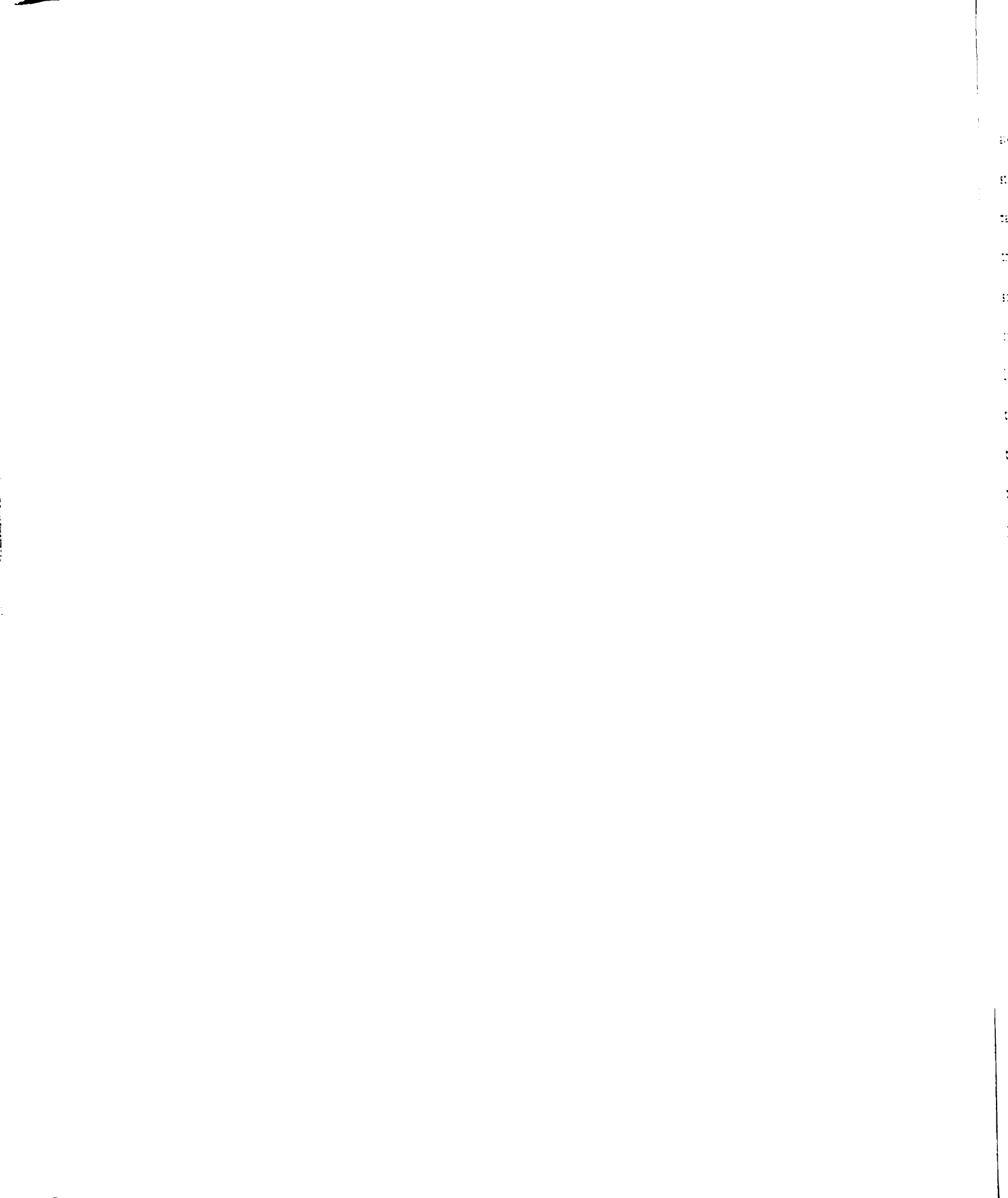
Other outbreaks of violence occurred in the weeks following the suspension of public worship. They were isolated, spontaneous, un-coordinated-- and in the most cases on a small scale. A few however involved fairly large numbers of men: Trinidad Mora in Durango led a band of almost 300 when he fought a government force near Santiago Bayacora on September 29th.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., pp. 125, 126; Martin Chowell, Luis Navarro Origel: El primer cristero (Mexico, D.F., 1959), pp. 5-77 passim.

<sup>62</sup>Chowell, pp. 87-91.

<sup>63</sup>"Santiago Baycora, Durango: Memorias de Francisco Campos," David. II, No. 33 (April 22, 1955), 130-132.



A truce between the Hierarchy and the government would probably have averted the armed outbreaks, and in fact steps to reach some kind of understanding began almost immediately after worship was suspended. The bishops made the first move. In a statement to the Associated Press on August 1st the Episcopal Committee said it was willing to restore worship for a reasonable period if during that time the government would suspend enforcement of the objectionable laws and hold a national plebiscite on the religious legislation.<sup>64</sup> Calles immediately rejected the proposal, and Díaz countered that the government would have to revoke or suspend enforcement of the laws before the Episcopate would enter into negotiations.<sup>65</sup> On the 10th the Vatican daily Osservatore Romano agreed that no parleys were possible so long as the "persecutive religious law" remained in effect.<sup>66</sup>

The bishops put forward another feeler on the 16th, in the form of a petition addressed to the President. It called for reform of the laws on religion and expressed a desire for a peaceful resolution of differences.<sup>67</sup> In a reply three days later, Calles noted that although the Constitution denied legal existence to churches as such, individuals were perfectly at liberty to seek constitutional change through proper channels. On the 20th the Episcopal Committee decided unanimously to accept Calles's invitation: they would petition Congress. Díaz told the press that the President's answer had been well received, that the bishops found it worthy and frank, and that they would make further observations in due time.<sup>68</sup> A solution

<sup>64</sup>New York Times, August 2, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., August 3, 1926, p. 1; August 4, p. 1.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., August 11, 1926, p. 2.

<sup>67</sup>El Universal, August 17, 1926, pp. 1, 7.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., August 20, 1926, p. 1; August 21, p. 2; Esperanza Velázquez Bríngas (ed.), Méjico ante el mundo: ideología del Presidente Plutarco Elías Calles (Barcelona, 1927), n.p.

seemed near.

The next day, unannounced and unheralded, Ruiz y Flores and Díaz had a two-hour talk with Calles. The meeting--whether Calles or the bishops suggested it is unclear--was arranged through Eduardo Mestre Ghugliazza, a government official trusted and respected by both the President and the bishops.<sup>69</sup> Mestre accompanied the two prelates to Chapultepec Castle. Each side stated its position. Exactly what was said has never been revealed, but evidently the bishops pressed Calles to the point where he lost patience. At any rate the session ended with the President saying the Hierarchy had only two choices: an appeal to Congress or an appeal to arms.<sup>70</sup>

Mestre tried to retrieve things. Later in the day he brought the bishops a statement which he asked them to agree to. It said that, it being understood that the registration of priests was only an administrative formality and in no way entailed government intervention in matters of dogma and religion, there was hope that public worship would soon be resumed. Ruiz y Flores and Díaz went at once to see Mora y del Río. The three decided to accept the statement, with the proviso that if Calles also endorsed it they would submit the matter to Rome for approval. This point, however, proved to be a stumbling block. Mestre returned later and said that Calles wanted the statement released to the papers as originally presented. Díaz said this could be done only if it clearly indicated that

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<sup>69</sup>Díaz said the meeting was not requested by the bishops, but did not say whether Calles asked Mestre to arrange it or whether Mestre did so on his own initiative. Mestre was head of Beneficencia Pública. Attorney General Romero Ortega and Alberto Pani of Finance were also apparently involved in the arrangements. Carreño, p. 114.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 135; Lagarde Memorandum. Lagarde said the meeting was "stormy" but did not elaborate.



Rome would have to make the final determination for the Church.<sup>71</sup> What happened during the next few hours is not clear. According to Díaz, Calles phoned him shortly before 11:00 P.M. to suggest that "a statement" be released, and the bishops quickly prepared one.<sup>72</sup> Evidently the statement was not cleared with Calles. Díaz may have assumed it would be acceptable, or he may have decided to try to outmaneuver the President. At any rate, he called in newsmen around midnight. He told them that, speaking both for the bishops and the President, the talks had been "truly satisfactory"; the President had told the Episcopate what he had said previously--that the registration of priests was purely administrative. Díaz concluded:

With this statement, we expect, once the procedures are fulfilled which in conformity with the precepts of the Church we must comply with, there will be no obstacle to the resumption of divine worship in the churches, while we attain our ultimate goal of recovering liberty, which we consider to be injured by the various legal precepts.<sup>73</sup>

Referral of the matter to Rome was not specified, but it was clearly implied.

Calles was outraged. The next morning he called off the whole business. Obviously feeling he had been trifled with, he told a reporter that in his talk with the bishops he had added nothing to his earlier statements. The whole issue, he said, boiled down to this: "When the priests resume supervision of the churches, they will be subject to the laws."<sup>74</sup> The following day, the Episcopal Committee told the press that the religious situation remained the same as before the talks.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>71</sup>Carreño, pp. 137, 138.

<sup>72</sup>New York Times, August 23, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>73</sup>El Universal, August 22, 1926, p. 1; New York Times, August 23, 1926, pp. 1, 2; August 24, p. 4. The bishops told reporters that the statement had been altered in wording at Chapultepec Castle--they did not elaborate.

<sup>74</sup>El Universal, August 22, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., August 24, 1926, p. 1.

Several days later, Calles expressed to Lagarde his exasperation at the collapse of the negotiations. He had thought reconciliation possible, he said, and blamed Rome for interference. He accused the Vatican of preferring a continuation of the conflict, and asserted he would never again tolerate a papal representative in Mexico. He would not give an inch; his measures were firm but reasonable. When the French diplomat expressed his view that the Vatican had not provoked the conflict but had tried to find a basis for agreement, and that certain bishops had not fully approved the policy of resistance, Calles launched into a tirade against the Mexican clergy spiced with anecdotes: Guízar Valencia of Veracruz, mentioned by Lagarde as a conciliator, Calles termed crooked and immoral, an intimate friend and client of brothel madams in Mexico City; Díaz was an intriguer who blindly obeyed his Jesuit advisers. He recalled his days in Sonora, where he said the clergy had adapted the natives to idolatry; his near suppression of Catholicism there, he said, had caused no problems--most of the people were concerned only about their little domestic statues, their santitos. The absence of public worship in Mexico, he concluded, was highly desirable, since it would hasten the de-Christianization of the country. He thought that each week without services would cost the Church about two percent of its adherents. Lagarde reported that Calles, "despite his realism and coldness," appeared obsessed with his moral obligation to uphold the Constitution and that he viewed the religious problem in an almost "apocalyptic and mystical spirit."<sup>76</sup> Tejeda told the Frenchman two days later that religion was an "immoral business" that needed regulating, in the same manner as did dentistry.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>Lagarde Memorandum.

<sup>77</sup>Lane to SecState, August 25, 1926, DSR 812.404/604. Lane was repeating a comment made to him by Lagarde.

Rome was nearly as upset as Calles over the peace talks, although for very different reasons. While the bishops had been negotiating, the Holy See had been working to gain support for Mexican resistance. On August 11th Osservatore Romano branded the "Calles Law" tyrannical and its application Nero-like; three days later the Vatican sent a circular to diplomats accredited to the Holy See and to its representatives abroad calling attention to the anti-Catholic policy of the Mexican government and enclosing a copy of the Osservatore article.<sup>78</sup> Convinced that the Mexican Episcopate would hold firm, and with its diplomatic offensive mounting, Rome was stunned by press reports that the bishops were holding talks (the Holy See had received no direct word of it). Gasparri wired, demanding an immediate explanation; Mora y del Río replied that no compromise would be agreed to which violated Rome's instructions.<sup>79</sup>

Rome was not alone in its nervousness. The League was apprehensive over reports that talks were going on, fearful that there might be in the offing some "incomplete, insecure and dangerous settlement."<sup>80</sup>

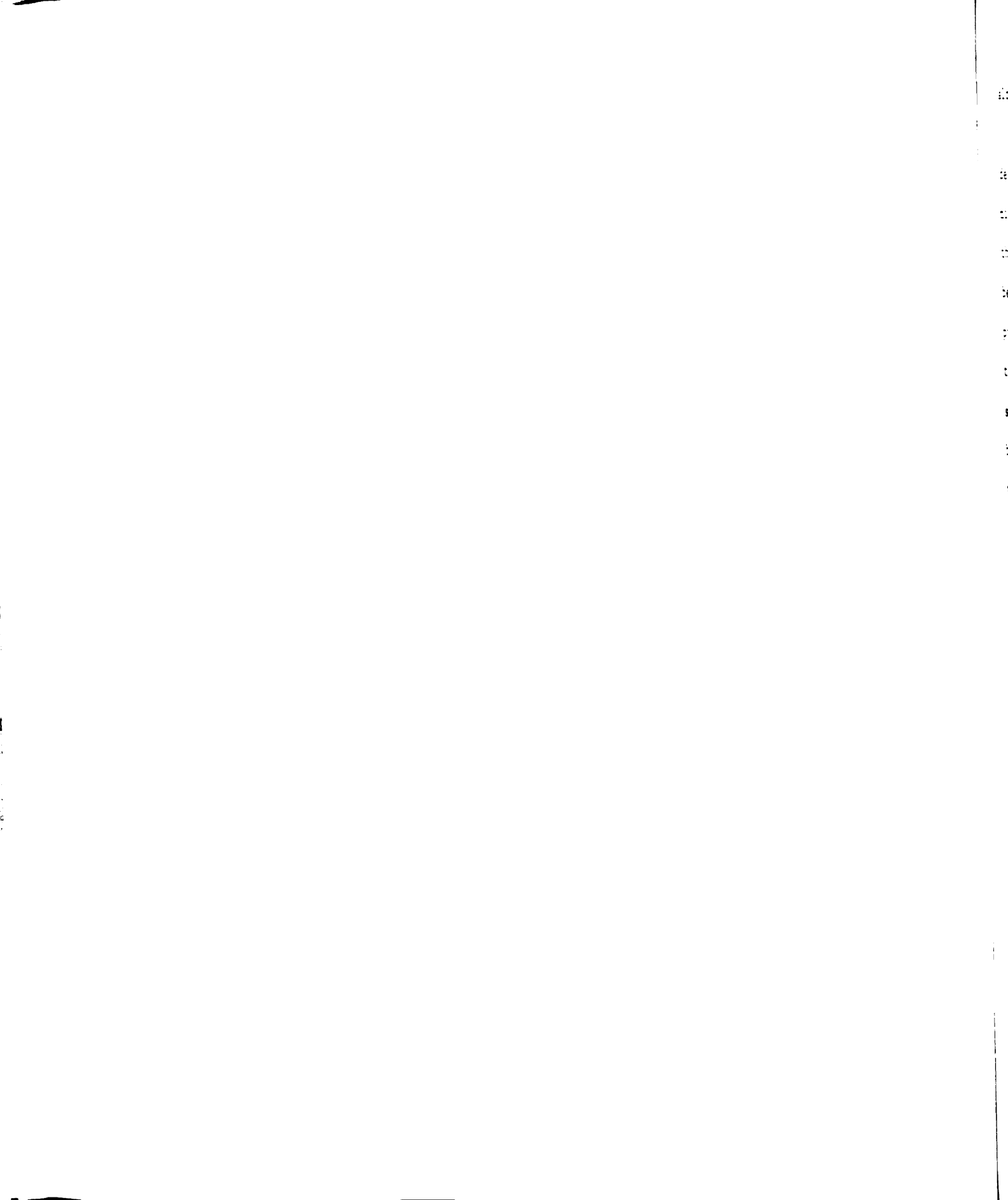
On September 1st Calles delivered his annual message to Congress. Referring to the religious question he said that the clergy, "rebellious as always to the institutions of the Republic," had created the existing situation; they had deliberately broken the truce which the Revolution, occupied with urgent problems, had allowed to stand for some years. The government had faced up to the challenge, he asserted, adding that he would soon submit to Congress proposed legislation to complement the legal steps

<sup>78</sup>Palomar y Vizcarra, pp. 164, 165.

<sup>79</sup>Lagarde Memorandum; New York Times, August 28, 1926, p. 12. The sources available do not indicate when Gasparri's telegram was sent. The instructions referred to by Mora y del Río were presumably that the offensive laws must be suspended as a condition for a settlement.

<sup>80</sup>Ceniceros y Villarreal.





already taken.<sup>81</sup>

Despite the totally deteriorated situation, the Episcopal Committee decided to try an appeal to Congress. On September 7th the Hierarchy submitted a petition requesting reform of Articles 3, 5, 24, 27 and 130 of the Constitution of 1917. A few days later Congress received a "memorial" bearing some 2,000,000 signatures of people throughout Mexico, gathered principally by League workers; it seconded the demand for amendments to the Constitution.<sup>82</sup> On the 23rd the Chamber of Deputies rejected the bishops' petition by a vote of 171 to one on the grounds that the prelates, by conspiring with a foreign power (the Vatican) to disobey the Constitution, had lost their rights as citizens to petition.<sup>83</sup>

The personal situation of the bishops was becoming increasingly precarious. Many of them had remained in Mexico City after July to participate in the deliberations of the Episcopal Committee--a situation the government preferred since it made it easier to keep an eye on the prelates. In fact, efforts were made to make it unanimous. In September the Bishop of Saltillo was arrested and brought to Mexico City.<sup>84</sup> Others, like the Bishop of Huajuapán, went voluntarily to avoid the indignity of arrest.<sup>85</sup> Orozco y Jiménez was handled with special circumspection. In October Gobernación asked Pascual Díaz to request the Archbishop's presence in the capital. On the 24th a Jesuit priest arrived in Guadalajara to deliver the message.

<sup>81</sup>El Universal, September 2, 1926, p. 3.

<sup>82</sup>Olivera Sedano, pp. 122, 123; Cenicerros y Villarreal.

<sup>83</sup>El Universal, September 24, 1926, p. 1; Moctezuma, II, 411.

<sup>84</sup>Jesús María Dávila, Saltillo, to José Tello, November 25, 1926, LA-1. Tello was secretary to the Directive Committee, Dávila the League Delegate in Coahuila.

<sup>85</sup>New York Times, October 22, 1926, p. 44.



The prelate, who had already learned that agents were in the city with orders concerning him, decided not to comply. The next day he dictated a letter to his archdiocese saying that orders were out for his apprehension and inasmuch as he would have no assurances of protection if arrested he was going into hiding. He left Guadalajara immediately for an undisclosed part of Jalisco.<sup>86</sup>

There was sporadic rebel activity through the autumn. The press said almost nothing about it, but during the debate in Congress over the bill to implement Article 130 a report from the President's office was presented which said religious rebels had been active since August in Michoacán, Jalisco, Guanajuato, Durango, Zacatecas, Guerrero, Oaxaca, San Luis Potosí, and Veracruz.<sup>87</sup> The U.S. Consul in Mazatlán said several bands were reported to be operating in Nayarit under "church colors." They were not considered significant, he reported--their action was apparently limited to minor looting and unsuccessful attempts to burn railroad bridges--but the general opinion was that they were growing in numbers.<sup>88</sup> There were rumors that outbreaks among the Yaquis in Sonora were due to instigation by the clergy.<sup>89</sup>

The League Directors had only fragmentary knowledge of the number and size of the movements and next to no control over them.<sup>90</sup> They made some attempts to coordinate some of the action: Agents tried to hurry preparations

<sup>86</sup>"Memorandum del Excmo. Sr. Francisco Orozco y Jiménez," David, VII, No. 155 (June, 1965), 168; McDonough, Guadalajara, to SecState, November 17, 1926, DSR 812.404/708.

<sup>87</sup>El Universal, November 26, 1926, p. 9.

<sup>88</sup>Blocker, Mazatlán, to SecState, October 2, 1926, DSR 812.404/679.

<sup>89</sup>Lagarde Memorandum.

<sup>90</sup>See Palomar y Vizcarra to González Valencia, October 22, 1926, LA-1.

for an uprising in southern Coahuila and northern Zacatecas to aid Quintanar (who was about to take the field again) and Trinidad Mora in Durango, but they were unsuccessful.<sup>91</sup> Clearly, matters were woefully disorganized.

Lagarde commented that "these new soldiers of 'Cristo Rey' operate in small bands and have, up to the present, succeeded only in being uselessly killed."<sup>92</sup>

It was evident by mid-autumn that the boycott would not bring the government to its knees. While it had caused considerable havoc in certain areas--an estimated 60% of the populace was observing it in Nayarit in early October--it had weakened perceptibly in most areas. Even in Jalisco it was on the wane by November.<sup>93</sup>

By the middle of October the Directive Committee of the League was facing the prospect that the entire resistance movement might collapse unless bold and effective steps were taken. Palomar y Vizcarra (who had replaced Capistrán Garza on the Committee) wrote to Archbishop González Valencia in Rome on October 22nd that the Directors were overwhelmed at the magnitude of the problem: ". . .the moment is critical and terrible and we are living now as though the end of the world were near." They were considering an "enormous plan," he reported.<sup>94</sup>

The League had committed itself to overthrowing the government. It could accomplish this only by the application of coordinated military force,

<sup>91</sup>Felipe Brondo Alvarez, *Memoirs*, 1932. Unpublished MS in possession of its author.

<sup>92</sup>Lagarde Memorandum.

<sup>93</sup>Blocker, Mazatlán, to SecState, October 4, 1926, DSR 812.404/679; McDonough, Guadalajara, to SecState, November 17, 1926, DSR 812.404/708.

<sup>94</sup>Palomar y Vizcarra to González Valencia, October 22, 1926, LA-1. In September the Episcopal Committee had sent three prelates, including González Valencia, to Rome to act as a liaison with the Holy See.

which in turn demanded the mobilization of popular support and the acquisition of material resources. A master strategy was required, in order to direct all aspects of the movement toward the achievement of victory, and to this task the leadership now turned its attention. The blueprint was hammered out during days of intensive work in which the Directors were assisted by the Jesuit priests Méndez Medina and Martínez del Campo, both of whom had often been called on for advice in recent months.<sup>95</sup> The meetings dealt with both principles and tactics. There was much debate on some matters, but the leaders had little trouble selecting a supreme leader for the movement: Ceniceros y Villarreal proposed René Capistrán Garza and agreement was unanimous. He was the obvious choice, Ceniceros later recalled; defects he had, to be sure--the most serious, Ceniceros thought, was an irritating tendency to be informal and lackadaisical at times--but these were outweighed by his great popularity and prestige, his special oratorical gifts, his proven integrity both personal and public, and the unshakable firmness of his principles.<sup>96</sup>

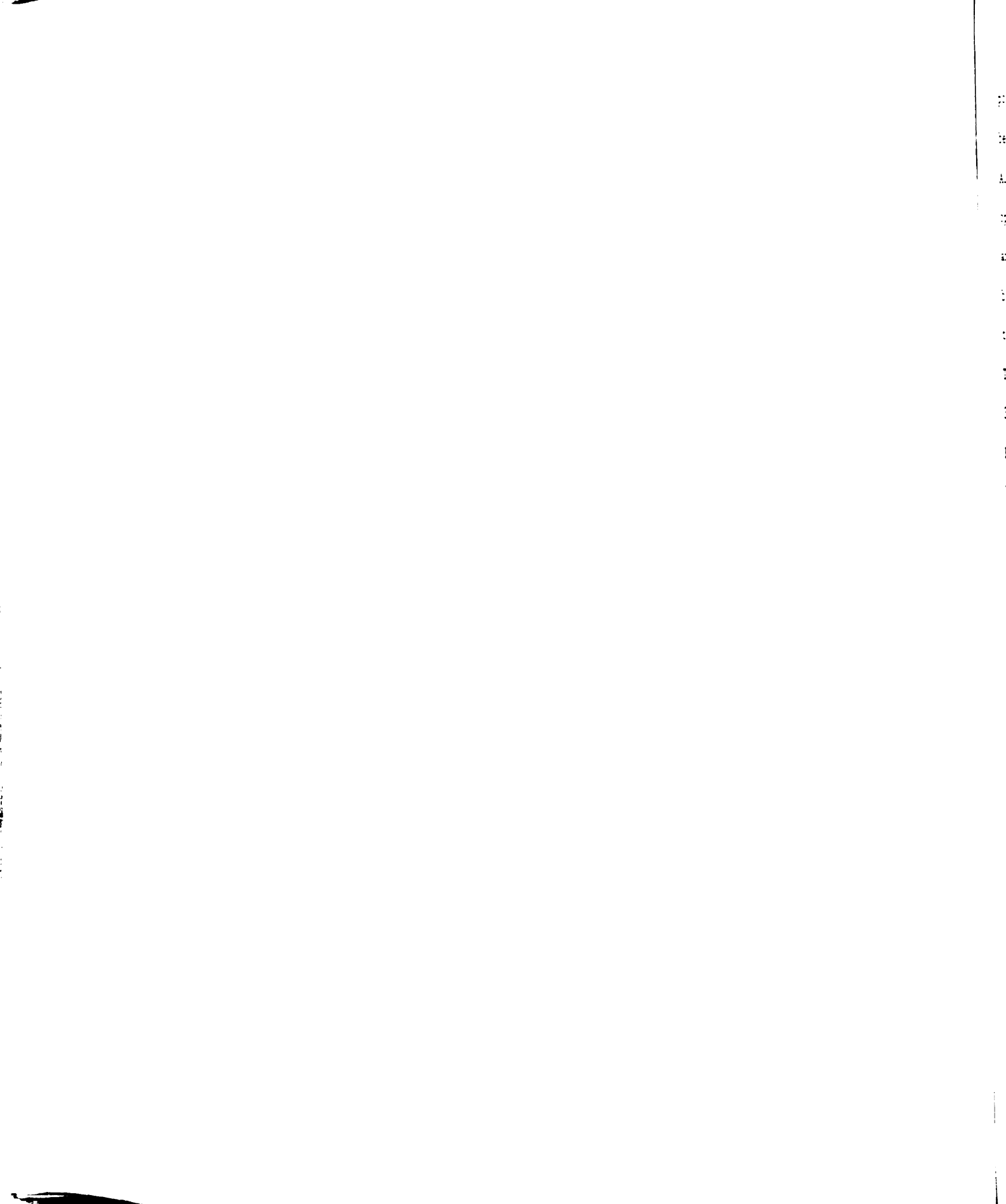
The Directors were vitally interested in clarifying the movement's relationship to the Church. They needed the acquiescence and if possible the support of the Hierarchy for their undertaking. A formal understanding with the bishops was essential, and the Directive Committee now asked for an interview with the Episcopal Committee.

The Directors could not be sure what the bishops would say; statements they had made in recent months on the subject of force could be interpreted in various ways. Pascual Díaz told the Associated Press on August 4th that the Church could never allow religion to be used as a rallying

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<sup>95</sup>Ceniceros y Villarreal.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid.



point for politics, and "much less will the Church approve armed uprising, because it would be detrimental to the people and to the country."<sup>97</sup> On August 30th he told reporters that "the Catholic Church is absolutely opposed to the use of armed force in the settlement of Mexico's problems," and added that the boycott and all other legal and peaceful means would be used.<sup>98</sup> As the uprisings spread during late summer and early autumn the bishops were facing accusations that clergymen were implicated in them. The charge was made most specifically and at the highest level on October 31st, by José Alvarez, Chief of the Presidential Staff. The next day the Episcopal Committee issued a statement to the press asserting that the bishops had absolutely no connection with the outbreaks: "As for rebellions, seditions, and conspiracies against lawful authority," their statement said, "we have always taught what the Church teaches, that is, that those means are condemned by Catholic teaching, which condemns the so-called right of rebellion." El Universal's printing of the statement ended here, leaving its readers with an impression quite different from that given by those who read the complete text--which was distributed by handbill in Mexico City. The sentence that followed said: "There are cases in which Catholic theologians authorize not rebellion, but armed defense against the unjust aggression of a tyrannical power, after peaceful means have been tried in vain." The statement added that if some individual Catholics, lay or clerical, following that principle, believed the case warranted armed defense, still "the Episcopate does not identify with that decision." The missive ended by blaming the rebel outbursts on

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<sup>97</sup>New York Times, August 5, 1926, p. 3.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.





those who had ignored just popular demands.<sup>99</sup>

On Friday, November 26th, the Directive Committee, accompanied by several advisers, was received by the Episcopal Committee. Ruiz y Flores presided for the bishops in the absence of Mora y del Río, who was ill. Also present was Pascual Díaz and eight or ten other prelates.<sup>100</sup> Geniceros y Villarreal read a memorial. \*It stated that, all legal and peaceful means having been exhausted, the people had begun spontaneously to take up arms to defend their essential liberties, and that the League, after careful consideration, had decided to assume leadership of the movement. Inasmuch as the movement was "incontainable,"

. . . it would be prejudicial if in even the slightest degree there should be a rift in the unity of action which the Episcopate with the assistance of the League has carried on in the civic field. We come therefore to ask that this unity be sustained, by the conformity of the Episcopate with a plan and a leader.

The prospects of success were good, the memorial continued:

. . . this action, at the present moment, is not faced with the difficulty it has always had in Catholic Mexico: the contrary action of the United States; rather, by providential circumstances, Liberalism, or rather Mexican Secularism, is beginning to be dangerous to American interests. . . .

Mexico was ready: "It is certain that never in the history of our country has the collective conscience been better formed for armed resistance."

The bishops, the document asserted, could not condemn the movement--it was inevitable and a matter of legitimate self defense. To oppose it would be to corrupt it, and to create a sentiment of displeasure toward the Hierarchy. Bustos then presented details of the League's plan of action, beginning with

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<sup>99</sup>El Universal, November 2, 1926, p. 1; Ríos Facius, p. 132; Geniceros y Villarreal.

<sup>100</sup>"Apuntes para la historia," statement signed by Luis Bustos, May 4, 1929; Palomar y Vizcarra to González Valencia, December 3, 1926, LA-1.

the announcement that Capistrán Garza had agreed to lead the movement. The plan stipulated that the Calles regime would be replaced by a provisional government, to be constituted in due time. The Directors asked the bishops to approve the entire program and to form the consciences of the faithful insofar as possible "in the sense that it is a matter of licit, laudable, meritorious action of legitimate armed defense." They also asked that the Hierarchy provide field chaplains and sponsor an appeal to wealthy Catholics for funds, so that "at least once in their lives they will understand their obligation to contribute."<sup>101</sup>

Ruiz y Flores said the Episcopal Committee wanted time to consider the matter. He asked for a copy of the memorial read by Cenicerós y Villarreal. As for the program of action, that, he said, was a political matter and not within the bishops' area of concern. The prelates did agree to hold the information in strictest secrecy.<sup>102</sup>

Four days later the League Directors were summoned to meet with Ruiz y Flores and Díaz. Ruiz presented the reply. He told them the bishops who had attended the November 26th meeting, as well as Mora y del Río, had with two reservations approved the memorial. Church doctrine, he said, taught that it was licit to resort to violent measures when tyranny was patent and peaceful means had proved sterile. He added that prudence demanded that an uprising have probability of success. The reservations were, first, that as for chaplains the bishops had no faculties to authorize this, but any priest desiring to perform his priestly duties in the field could request permission.

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<sup>101</sup>Sworn statement, dated Mexico City, May 13, 1929, signed by Cenicerós y Villarreal, Palomar y Vizcarra, Méndez Medina, and Martínez del Campo; Palomar y Vizcarra to González Valencia, December 3, 1926, LA-1. A copy of the memorial is in LA-1.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid.

Regarding an appeal to the wealthy, the bishops deemed such a step on their part to be dangerous, difficult, and in practice impossible.<sup>103</sup>

The League was delighted. Palomar y Vizcarra wrote enthusiastically to González Valencia: "You can well imagine our satisfaction at the success achieved. There is nothing more to ask for. . ." --except perhaps, he added, permission to sell the sacred vessels of the Church to raise funds.<sup>104</sup>

\* Did the Mexican Episcopate in November, 1926, support the "armed defense?" It is clear that the Episcopal Committee did not condemn the resort to arms. It limited itself to stating traditional Catholic teaching on the subject and made no attempt to apply this to the case at hand. Cenicerós y Villarreal later stated his understanding of the bishops' position:

The armed rising against the tyrannical government of Calles was not provoked, sustained, or financed by the Mexican Episcopate. The tyrant provoked it by his abuses, the Catholic people sustained and financed it, and the League headed and directed it; but once the uprising was in progress, the Venerable Episcopal Committee approved it implicitly. . . Some desired and confidently expected that the decision of the Episcopal Committee on behalf of the armed movement would be an explicit and categorical approval, but this was not to be expected. . . .<sup>105</sup>

Leopoldo Lara y Torres, Bishop of Tacámbaro and a strong partisan of the League and of the armed action, said in 1929 that the League, seeing itself compelled to undertake armed defense, consulted the bishops, "and

<sup>103</sup>Statement of May 13, 1929, signed by Cenicerós y Villarreal et al.; Palomar y Vizcarra to González Valencia, December 3, 1926; LA-1; Ruiz y Flores, p. 85.

<sup>104</sup>Palomar y Vizcarra to González Valencia, December 3, 1926, LA-1. Palomar was mildly sarcastic about the wealthy escaping an episcopal appeal for money. Both Palomar y Vizcarra and Father Méndez Medina reported that their reception by Ruiz y Flores and Díaz had been warm and amiable, giving the impression of positive satisfaction at the League's stance. Ibid., also Méndez Medina's annotation to the statement of Cenicerós y Villarreal et al. of May 13, 1929, LA-1.

<sup>105</sup>Cenicerós y Villarreal.



its undertaking was approved by the Episcopal Committee, without our having committed ourselves to take a direct part in that action"--a statement which Alberto María Carreño, an opponent of the League, said showed that the Episcopate was not connected ("ajeno") with the League's action.<sup>106</sup>

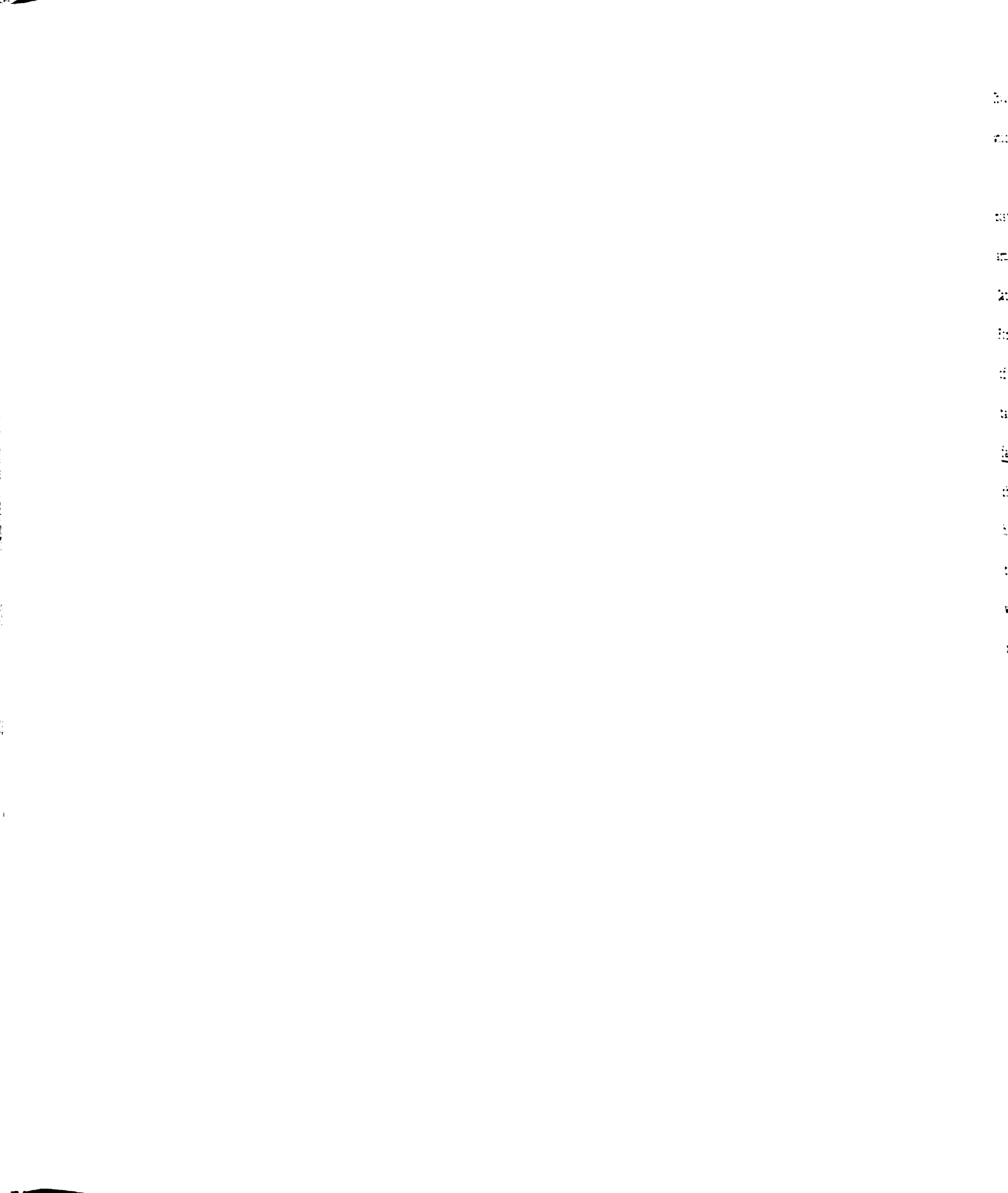
It is understandable that the bishops did not forbid armed action on purely doctrinal grounds; they could not. On the other hand, if they had chosen to do so they might have exercised their pastoral prerogative of counsel to advise against it. At least one prelate who was not present at the meeting did: Francisco Orozco y Jiménez sent his secretary, Father José Garibí Rivera, to Mexico City in the fall to tell the Committee that he was absolutely opposed to any Catholic armed movement.<sup>107</sup>

But if the bishops had no grounds for objecting to armed resistance as such, they had ample grounds for forbidding the League to be a part of it. In his apostolic letter of February 2nd, 1926, Pius XI had said that the clergy and Catholic associations were to "abstain absolutely from any participation in political factions. . . ." How did the bishops interpret "political action?" In their collective pastoral of April 21st they defined it as "any activity related to the temporal government of the nation. . . ." They urged Catholics to join and work in civic groups dedicated to the defense of religious liberty, "keeping themselves, however, outside of and above any party."<sup>108</sup> The League was undoubtedly a Catholic association. Was it also by November, 1926, a political party or faction within the meaning of the papal admonition and the bishops' definition?

<sup>106</sup>Carreño, pp. 197, 198.

<sup>107</sup>Ruiz y Flores, p. 96; "Memorándum del Excmo. Sr. Francisco Orozco y Jiménez," David, VII, 168. It is not known whether Garibí Rivera arrived before or after the bishops' meetings with the Directors.

<sup>108</sup>Cited in Carreño, pp. 22-26.



Obviously it was, since the purpose of the rebellion (or armed defense) which it proposed to lead was to substitute one political regime for another.

Why did the bishops not forbid the League to proceed? For one thing, most of them were undoubtedly attracted to the idea that if the appeal to arms succeeded it would save the Church and vindicate a generation of Catholic effort. There was in addition a more fundamental consideration. For more than a decade the Episcopate had by word and example set the tone of opposition to the Revolution. Now, with a militant lay leadership taking matters into its own hands and having presented the bishops with a fait accompli, it was far too late for the Episcopate to apply brakes or change course. The ultimate showdown was at hand, and even if the bishops had disliked the course being taken, to forbid it might have meant the tearing to shreds of Catholic morale at a time when the Church in Mexico was in the most precarious situation it had ever known. This they would not do. Rather, they took a position that left the Hierarchy technically above the resort to arms while at the same time wishing it well.

✓ American concern over the religious crisis in Mexico increased sharply during the summer. On August 5th the Supreme Council of the U.S. Knights of Columbus, at its 44th annual meeting in Philadelphia, adopted a resolution criticizing the Coolidge administration for supporting Calles's "Bolshevist" regime by continuing diplomatic recognition. The Council expressed particular indignation at the "discriminating favoritism shown to Calles by the continuance of the embargo, which makes the Calles ascendancy possible."<sup>109</sup> The reference was to the arms embargo imposed by presidential

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<sup>109</sup>James Flaherty to Kellogg, August 6, 1926, DSR 812.404/638. The convention also directed the Supreme Board to raise \$1,000,000 through assessment of the membership for purposes of waging a publicity campaign on the subject of freedom, both in its U.S. application and as this applied south of the border. New York Times, August 6, 1926, p. 1. Text of the resolution on Mexico is in ibid., pp. 1, 2.



proclamation on January 7th, 1924, designed to help Obregón survive the De la Huerta revolt. It prohibited the shipment of war materials to Mexico without government license, and specified that such materials could be sent only to a Mexican regime which enjoyed U.S. recognition.<sup>110</sup> The Knights planned to present their resolution to Coolidge in person, but the President's office told newsmen on August 10th that in keeping with his "hands off" policy regarding the religious conflict in Mexico the President had declined to grant the interview.<sup>111</sup> A week later, after conferring with Kellogg, Coolidge announced that there was no cause for U.S. interference in the Mexican religious matter, which was a domestic problem, although if American personal or property rights were violated the government would do what it could to protect these.<sup>112</sup>

Kellogg invited Grand Knight James Flaherty and another K. of C. officer to the State Department for a talk. He told them it was unjust to say that the United States had helped create or was sustaining the Mexican regime, or that Washington approved of its policies. He said the United States could not protest Mexico's handling of domestic matters unless American interests were at issue. The two visitors finally agreed that the resolution was to a considerable extent unjustified and promised to take up the matter with the Supreme Council. As for the embargo, Kellogg said that at a "proper and appropriate time" the U.S. expected to lift it, "because we do not believe that conditions exist now in Mexico which justified the Government

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<sup>110</sup>New York Times, July 30, 1926, p. 1. On July 30th Coolidge had told the press the government was studying the advisability of lifting the embargo but that there would be no action for the time being. Ibid., July 31, p. 1.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., August 11, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., August 18, 1926, p. 3.



in the first instance in putting on the embargo." Flaherty agreed that an immediate lifting of the embargo might be misunderstood, and he did not urge it.<sup>113</sup> With the Knights mollified, Coolidge received Flaherty and a delegation on September 1st. The K. of C. leader told reporters afterward that the Knights were not asking for American intervention, the lifting of the embargo, or the withdrawal of diplomatic recognition, but only for "sympathetic action in any way that can be done by the Government properly within international law."<sup>114</sup>

The State Department's concern over the religious question had not been as limited as Coolidge suggested or as Kellogg indicated to the Knights. To begin with, its own chief agent in Mexico was siding privately with the administration's critics. On July 22nd Ambassador Sheffield addressed a remarkable memorandum to Kellogg in which he called for a reassessment of the U.S. attitude on the subject:

It is at least open to question as to whether our moral leadership  
✓ of the Christian world for freedom to worship God in accord with  
the dictates of the individual conscience would not be jeopardized  
if we refused to take notice of so drastic and abhorrent a decree  
[the "Calles Law"] aimed at all religion.

He added that Latin American opinion should be considered, in view of the predominance of Catholicism in that part of the world. He was clearly exasperated:

I am not surprised that the question has been raised in the United States of continued recognition of a government capable of promulgating a penal statute of the character under discussion. Kept in power by the aid of the U.S., we have, at least, some moral responsibility for men in government in Mexico whose official existence depends in large part on our friendly acquiescence and support.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>113</sup>Kellogg to Coolidge, August 26, 1926, DSR 812.404/638.

<sup>114</sup>New York Times, September 2, 1926, p. 5.

<sup>115</sup>Sheffield to SecState, July 22, 1926, DSR 812.404/524.

Whether influenced by Sheffield's views or not, the State Department decided it was time to direct an official frown at Calles on the subject. At about the same time the Knights of Columbus were protesting--and probably before he spoke with Flaherty--Kellogg asked Sheffield to react officially to the "Calles Law":

✓ The Department desires you to address a note to the Mexican Foreign Office, stating that your Government regrets to observe that the Law as a whole appears to contravene the principle of freedom of religious worship which prevails in the United States, has been productive of most satisfactory results in this country, and is in accord with the liberal spirit of the age.<sup>116</sup>

✓ There were other indications that American Catholic sympathies were strongly on the side of the Mexican Catholic cause. On September 15th, at their annual meeting on the campus of Catholic University in Washington, D.C., the bishops of the United States sent a message to the Catholic bishops and laity of Mexico.

. . . We, our clergy, and faithful, are watching with great interest and sympathy your magnificent struggle against tyranny, and we applaud your prudence, your moderation, and your firmness, and we are amazed at the serenity, the valor, and the suffering of your Mexican people.

You are demonstrating to the entire world the true spirit of martyrs disposed to sacrifice all and suffer all for Jesus Christ. You are the true patriots and champions of Mexico, fighting for religious and civil liberty. . . .<sup>117</sup>

Would verbal sympathy turn into something more tangible when the time came for a showdown in Mexico? What would U.S. Catholic sympathizers do in the

<sup>116</sup>Kellogg to Sheffield, DSR 812.404/509. The dispatch is undated but was probably sent after July 22nd, since Sheffield would hardly have launched his complaint to Washington of that date in the terms he used if he had already had authority to make a remonstrance.

<sup>117</sup>Quoted in Antonio J. López Ortega, Las naciones extranjeras y la persecución religiosa (Mexico, D.F., 1944), pp. 54, 55. The message was signed by Cardinals Hayes of New York, O'Connell of Boston, Dougherty of Philadelphia and Mundelein of Chicago, and by nine archbishops and fifty-one bishops. The prelates also commissioned three of their number to draft a pastoral letter on the subject for publication in the United States.

event of a Mexican Catholic rebellion? More importantly what would be the stance of the U.S. government? None could say with absolute certainty as the summer of 1926 ended, but the League would gamble on help from the first and at least neutrality from the second. The first test came in the fall.

After his unsuccessful attempt to contact Estrada in August, Capistrán Garza had remained in the United States, where, the League decided, he could be of more immediate use to the cause than in Mexico. In September he was joined by his old ACJM friends Ramón and Luis Ruiz Rueda and soon afterward by José Gaxiola, a young Catholic who had served in various foreign posts as a member of the Mexican diplomatic service.<sup>118</sup>

Early in October Capistrán Garza, Gaxiola, and Ramón met in the latter's hotel room at the Robert E. Lee Hotel in San Antonio. Capistrán Garza spoke of Eamon De Valera's success in appealing to the American people for aid in Ireland's struggle against the British. This, he said, must now be repeated on behalf of Mexico. He had sent Luis to Mexico City for credentials from the League and from the Hierarchy. The following day they bought a 1925 Studebaker. They decided that while waiting for Luis to return they would contact various Mexican exiles in Texas who might be attracted to the cause. They called on several of these, but soon abandoned the whole idea: The exiles, disgruntled losers in squabbles among revolutionary factions, were, they decided, a bunch of down-and-outers lacking in education, moral force, and political capacity who had nothing to offer.<sup>119</sup>

While they were in Brownsville Luis arrived with the credentials.<sup>120</sup> The one from the League, signed by the Directive Committee on October 7th,

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<sup>118</sup>Ramón Ruiz Rueda to Palomar y Vizcarra, October 1, 1945, LA-1; Ríos Facius, Méjico cristero, p. 118.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid.

<sup>120</sup>Copies of the two credentials are in LA-1.

named Capistrán Garza its representative in the United States, with full authority to speak for the League and to raise funds. Luis also brought a letter from Mora y del Río addressed to the American Catholic Hierarchy. It introduced Capistrán Garza in laudatory terms and noted that he had fled Mexico to save his life.<sup>121</sup>

In these circumstances [Mora y del Río said] we have thought it well to take advantage of his stay in the United States to entrust him with representing us before the Catholic Hierarchy and the American people, to make more effective the religious communion between that people and ours. On the occasion of the presence in this city of a representative from him, we reaffirm our confidence in him and ask that the Venerable Hierarchy accord him favorable and beneficent assistance.

The four anticipated great success. But their first stop, at Corpus Christi, was a bad shock. Capistrán Garza spoke to the Bishop, with Gaxiola translating--René knew no English. The Bishop said he would have to consult on the matter and would send word to their hotel. It came in the form of a wire: "Nothing doing. They do not like Mexican people in this diocese." They were thunderstruck, Ramón recalled: "And we are south of the Nueces River! The territory most unjustly grabbed from Mexico!"<sup>122</sup>

In Galveston the Bishop took a ten dollar bill from his wallet and gave it to René, ending the interview. Houston, Dallas, and Little Rock were much the same--they got twenty, thirty, fifty dollars. Sleeping out at night and eating little in order to economize, they believed the northern states would be different--De Valera had succeeded there. The Archbishop of St. Louis was outraged over conditions in Mexico as described by Capistrán

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<sup>121</sup>There were reports in early August that Capistrán Garza's life was in danger, as a result of his participation in a public debate on the religious question, and he was in hiding for several days before he left for the United States. The decision to name him the envoy to Estrada may have been influenced by concern for his safety if he remained in Mexico. See Ceniceros y Villarreal.

<sup>122</sup>Ruiz Rueda to Palomar y Vizcarra, October 1, 1945, LA-1.

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Garza. He gave \$100.00. At the next seven stops--East St. Louis, Indianapolis, Dayton, Columbus, Pittsburgh, Altoona, and Harrisburg--they got even less. In Columbus the Bishop expelled them from the house without even hearing them out.<sup>123</sup> In New York, without warm clothing, they nearly froze. Friends said Boston was promising. They went. There, Cardinal O'Connell listened without interrupting and examined the credentials carefully. Then, in a fatherly tone, he urged René to suffer patiently the trials God was sending and told him to urge those who had commissioned him to do likewise. He advised René to get out of the whole business, to look for a job; he would be happy to give him a letter of recommendation to the Knights of Columbus, who might be able to help him find work.<sup>124</sup>

The Knights of Columbus in the United States were already the object of League attention. Their often stated sympathy for the plight of Catholics in Mexico indicated they might be a fruitful source of financial help, and contacts were pressed. Jenaro Núñez, a prominent Mexican Knight, reported optimistically from New Orleans in October that prospects both there and at the national level were good--although he had found a bit of skepticism in the New Orleans council, due to the fact that other Mexicans had approached the group in the past claiming to be sponsored by the K. of C.<sup>125</sup> Mora y del Río lent his support. On November 1st he wrote to Grand Knight Flaherty, referring to the credential he had given to Capistrán Garza and saying that, in view of the K. of C.'s noble efforts on behalf of Mexico,

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<sup>123</sup>Ibid,; "Informe que presenta Manuel de la Peza a la comisión de Prelados Residentes en Roma que representa al Episcopado Mexicano ante la Santa Sede," Rome, April 5, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>124</sup>Ruiz Rueda to Palomar y Vizcarra, October 1, 1945, LA-1.

<sup>125</sup>Jenaro Núñez to Directive Committee, October 28, 1926, LA-1.



we think it most appropriate to ask you and your brothers to consider said credential as directed especially to (the K. of C.) in the sense that Mr. René Capistrán Garza is, among the laity, the sole representative from us and of the Mexican Catholic interests in that country [The U.S.].<sup>126</sup>

If the Archbishop thought his letter might help open a flow of K. of C. funds to the League he was due for a disappointment. Four days after he had signed the letter, Flaherty stated publicly that the million dollars raised by the Knights was being spent in the United States for relief work among exiled Mexican religious and for propaganda purposes. He denied that the organization was instigating revolution or armed resistance in Mexico.<sup>127</sup> But the League was still determined to try. In December it was urgently promoting its case with the U.S. Knights. The Directive Committee wrote Flaherty on the 8th that the League had decided to intensify its efforts (there was no mention of armed action) and noted that Pius XI had recently praised the League and its work in an encyclical letter. The Directors lauded the Knights' reputation for generosity, and hoped it would continue:

. . . certain of the resources you have available and in view of the abundant funds you have collected to help us, may we urge that in the shortest time possible you forward to us a contribution of \$500,000, a sum indispensable for an effective, energetic and sustained campaign.<sup>128</sup>

But the Knights' generosity had its limits--or limitations. Relief work and propaganda were one thing, but helping to finance a "campaign" the nature of which they were already beginning to perceive was something else. The League would have to look for tangible help in other quarters.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>126</sup>Mora y del Río to Flaherty, November 1, 1926, LA-1.

<sup>127</sup>New York Times, November 6, 1926, p. 13.

<sup>128</sup>Directive Committee to Flaherty, December 8, 1926, LA-1. The encyclical was the Pope's Iniquis Afflictisque of November 18, 1926, in which he praised the faith and steadfastness of the Mexican clergy and various Catholic associations, including the League.

<sup>129</sup>It is not known whether any K. of C. money went into the rebellion, but if it did the amount was inconsequential. At any rate, after December the League shifted its fund raising efforts to other targets.

In the autumn of 1926 a young Mexican named José Gándara, who lived in El Paso, Texas, where he had helped found an ACJM chapter, presented himself to the League Directors in Mexico City. He impressed Cenicerós y Villarreal by his bright disposition and lively mind. Gándara told the Directors that a revolutionary junta had been formed in El Paso to work for the overthrow of Calles and that he had come to obtain the League's support. He added that the junta had a plan to raise funds in Europe; it involved pledging "certain valuable national properties" as collateral for a large loan. All that was needed to close the deal was the influence of a certain individual abroad, and he, Gándara, proposed to leave for Europe immediately. The Directive Committee decided to help.<sup>130</sup>

In a few weeks Gándara was back in Mexico with word that his démarche had been unsuccessful.<sup>131</sup> The Directors, now somewhat skeptical of the handsome young enthusiast, were nevertheless responsive to another piece of news: The El Paso junta, Gándara told them, was preparing an attack on Ciudad Juárez; men and supplies were available that would insure success. The date set was January 1st. Gándara urged that the League arrange risings in other parts of Mexico to coincide with the action on the border. The Committee told him that armed action was already in preparation and agreed to do what it could to see that this would begin the first day of the new year.<sup>132</sup> Gándara next asked to be named supreme head of the movement. When the Directors told him that Capistrán Garza had been given that post, Gándara finally agreed to act under his orders.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup>Cenicerós y Villarreal; Ríos Facius, Méjico cristero, pp. 140, 142. Presumably the Directors had more detailed information on Gandara's plan but the sources are silent on the subject.

<sup>131</sup>Ríos Facius, Méjico cristero, pp. 140, 142.

<sup>132</sup>Cenicerós y Villarreal.

<sup>133</sup>Ríos Facius, Méjico cristero, pp. 140, 142.

A few days later Gándara left for the United States. Cenicerós y Villarreal wrote Capistrán Garza reporting the whole matter, and added a word of caution: Gándara, he said, had some good qualities but also some very great shortcomings. He would do poorly as a leader because of his impulsiveness. The Directors feared, he said, that he might cause Capistrán Garza problems, "and, because of his ignorance, can seriously compromise the interests of the cause."<sup>134</sup> But Gándara's obvious talent for making a good first impression made itself felt; early in December Capistrán Garza named him military head of the entire movement.<sup>135</sup>

Despite their sanguine statement to the bishops about the American attitude being favorable to a move to oust Calles, the League was apprehensive over the matter. The leadership realized that at the very least absolute neutrality on the part of the American government was essential. The Directors decided to approach Ambassador Sheffield; Cenicerós y Villarreal asked for an appointment through a mutual friend. Sheffield replied that while he would be happy to see the League President anytime, it might be best if the latter's message were communicated in writing. The Directors prepared a memorandum and sent it to the Embassy on December 8th.<sup>136</sup>

The memorandum informed Sheffield of the plans for an armed rising and asked the aid of the American people. There was, it said, a numerous and organized group in Mexico with a program for freedom and national

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<sup>134</sup> Cenicerós y Villarreal.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. Cenicerós says Sheffield verbally acknowledged receipt of the memorandum. There is no evidence that the Ambassador informed Washington of the matter.

reconstruction. Its adherents were absolutely determined to put an end to "the anarchical situation which presently prevails." The movement had an able and popular chief, Mr. René Capistrán Garza, who despite his youth (twenty-nine) was well suited for the post and was, moreover, surrounded by men of experience and wisdom. Those ready to fight, however, did not yet have adequate material means. The League asked several specific things of the U.S. government: suspension of all current agreements with the Calles government; denial of all aid--military included--to Calles or to any other faction except the movement headed by the League; accreditation of a representative to the movement; a favorable attitude toward a League effort to arrange a loan in the United States; an offer of protection to the Mexican bishops in view of the expected intensification of persecution; recognition of belligerence; and, at an appropriate time, the granting of recognition to a provisional government. The leadership also expressed its readiness to negotiate a treaty with the U.S. government.<sup>137</sup>

This remarkable document tells much about the mentality of those who were about to launch thousands of Mexicans into rebellion. First, it indicates that although the Directors had been aware from the start that the official American attitude might well mean the difference between success and failure, they had proceeded to the eve of battle without having ascertained what that attitude might be. Secondly, it showed an amazing capacity for wishful thinking, namely, the idea that U.S. coolness to the Revolution and to Calles meant that Washington would welcome almost any opportunity to support rebellion, and that official U.S. silence on the religious issue meant Washington would back the Catholic militant cause.

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<sup>137</sup>"Memorándum al Embajador Sheffield, enviado por conducto del Sr. Manuel Amor, por el Comité Directivo de la L.N.D.L.R.," December 8, 1926, LA-1.

It was a tragically wrong reading of the situation.

As for support from U.S. Catholics, there was clear evidence by the middle of December that chances were slim. On December 12th, the feast of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the American Episcopate issued its pastoral letter on the religious situation in Mexico. It expressed strong disapproval of the Calles government's religious policies and urged American Catholics to pray for an alleviation of the situation. The pastoral said there were two human modes of conduct possible in the Mexican matter: the ballot or the sword. The first, in Mexico's case, was impossible;

The second remedy is equally hopeless, for Christian principles forbid the Church founded by the Prince of Peace to take up the sword or rely on such carnal weapons as the inflamed passions of men would select. . . .the weapons of men are not for her. . . . She has prayer.<sup>138</sup>

Prayer was welcome, but the League was counting strongly on more tangible aid as well. And if the American bishops opposed a Church-connected appeal to arms, what would be the chances that American laymen would support it?

Preparations for the January rising mounted throughout December. Propaganda was intensified, all of it designed to gain public support and much of it hinting at rebellion. A League bulletin dated December 1st said it was a mistake for the government to deprive Catholics of all legal means of defense and to persecute them for trying to defend their religion, ". . . an error all the more serious because it not only deprives Catholics of what justly belongs to them, but because it actively provokes and incites them to tumults and even to open armed rebellion. . . ."<sup>139</sup> This bulletin

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<sup>138</sup>Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Episcopate of the United States on the Religious Situation in Mexico, December, 1926. Printed by the Knights of Columbus Supreme Council, New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>139</sup>League Bulletin No. 16, copy in possession of Antonio Rius Facius. Like other League bulletins, it is printed on a single sheet bearing the League's escutcheon.

along with two others was distributed in Mexico City on December 4th by being released from balloons--reportedly some 500 of them--which were launched that afternoon in various parts of the city.<sup>140</sup> Efforts were made to revivify the boycott as an auxiliary to the military effort,<sup>141</sup> but results were not significant. A League bulletin dated December 21st was an open letter to the Mexican Army. It said the Army had a duty not to act against the people: ". . . the noble and valiant Mexican Army, made up almost entirely of Catholics, should not abet the present Calles Government, [which is] sectarian and a persecutor of the people. . . ."<sup>142</sup>

League Bulletin No. 22, dated December 24th, sought to tie the Episcopate firmly to the rebellion: The bulletin reprinted two letters: the first was from the Regional Delegation of the League in Mexico City to the Episcopal Committee on November 24th, asking for an opinion as to "the **LAWFULNESS OR UNLAWFULNESS**, from the point of view of Catholic teaching, **OF ALL THOSE ACTS WHICH ARE NOT IN ACCORD** with the norms of conduct counseled by the League to its adherents with the purpose of obtaining religious liberty." The answer, signed by Pascual Díaz and dated December 16th, gave a far clearer indication of the bishops' attitude on the coming uprising than did their formal response to the League the month before. Díaz referred to the part of the bishops' April 25th pastoral letter which said that Catholics had a grave obligation in conscience to work for the freedom and growth of the Church and for the wellbeing of the nation. This counsel, the Bishop said, was

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<sup>140</sup>Weddel to SecState, December 7, 1926, DSR 812.404/727.

<sup>141</sup>See for example the League bulletin issued by the Regional Delegation for the state of Nuevo León, December, 1926, LA-1.

<sup>142</sup>Copy in LA-1.

so clear and important, that it is unnecessary to descend to particulars in order that Catholics realize the imperative duty they have in these solemn moments to come together, to organize, and to discipline themselves in order to obtain by means of the formidable power of association that which isolated efforts will never be able to achieve.<sup>143</sup>

By the last week of December copies of the formal proclamation of the uprising were being distributed to League leaders throughout the country. It was a manifesto entitled "To the Nation," signed by Capistrán Garza. In ringing words it excoriated "the implacable rule of a regime of armed bandits over a defenseless, honorable, patriotic population," a regime whose program for Mexico was the negation of all honesty and decency:

Destruction of religious and political liberty, of freedom of education, labor, and press; denial of God and the creation of an atheistic youth; destruction of private property through plunder; socialization of the national strength; ruin of the free worker by means of radical organizations; repudiation of international obligations: such is, in substance, the monstrous program of the present regime. In a word, the deliberate and systematic destruction of the Mexican nationality. . . .<sup>144</sup>

✓ The manifesto appealed to the "sacred right of defense" as the justification for the resort to arms and proclaimed "the necessity of destroying forever the vicious rule of faction in order to create a national government." The movement was not a revolution, nor rebellion; it was a coordinating of all the living forces of the country to oppose the real rebels--those who, calling themselves a government, were attempting to destroy justice and freedom.

"The hour of battle has sounded!

The hour of victory belongs to God!"<sup>145</sup>

<sup>143</sup> Copy in possession of Antonio Ríos Facius.

<sup>144</sup> René Capistrán Garza, "A la Nación," LA-1.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

During the last part of December League messengers and agents fanned out from Mexico City. Their mission was to mobilize every Catholic contingent possible for the January move. Jalisco was crucially important to the plan, and there the League's position was complicated by the existence of the powerful Unión Popular led by Anacleto González Flores. Recognizing the realities of the situation, the League had not attempted to replace the U.P.; rather, an alliance had been worked out whereby the U.P. retained its identity and became at the same time the Regional Delegation of the League as the Unión Popular de Jalisco-L.N.D.L.R. González Flores was both President of the U.P. and Regional Delegate of the League. The Directive Committee in Mexico City did not have, it well realized, unquestioned authority in the arrangement. González Flores often told his intimates that if the Directors should take a course that seemed unwise the U.P. would be under no obligation to follow.<sup>146</sup>

The Maestro's views on the use of violence were well known, and his opposition or failure to cooperate could well sink the effort in the west. The Directive Committee sent Bartolomé Ontiveros, Chief of the Special War Committee, to Jalisco with instructions to insure the adherence of the U.P. to the cause. Ontiveros visited some of the Catholic rebels already under arms in Los Altos, then conferred with González Flores in Guadalajara.<sup>147</sup>

The U.P. chief accepted the inevitable; he acknowledged national leaders of the Catholic defense movement had called for an uprising, and for him to refuse his consent would almost certainly split the U.P. and cripple its capacity for even the civic type of action it existed to perform. González Flores agreed to support the League's call to arms and also

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<sup>146</sup>Navarrete, pp. 98-100.

<sup>147</sup>Ceniceros y Villarreal.



agreed to call a meeting of U.P. leaders to second his decision. At the same time, he decided to make an effort to keep the U.P. organization and program intact and formally separate from the armed movement. He named Heriberto Navarrete to assume immediate direction of the U.P. and a young engineer, Salvador Cuéllar, to organize the armed action with the cooperation of local chiefs who could and would follow. Both Navarrete and Cuéllar would be directly responsible to González Flores, the only official contact between the two spheres of action.<sup>148</sup>

The Unión Popular delegates assembled in Guadalajara. At their closing session they re-elected González Flores president with Miguel Gómez Loza and Navarrete as treasurer and secretary respectively. Later the same day an extra session was held for purposes of military planning, attended by League representatives from Mexico City.<sup>149</sup>

González Flores's determination to keep the U.P. out of the conflict may have been strengthened by advice from Francisco Orozco y Jiménez. The Archbishop, who had been in hiding for two months, had heard rumors that military action was being planned. He wrote to González Flores that under no circumstances was he to involve the U.P. in any armed movement, since the aim of the organization was purely civic and social.<sup>150</sup>

Nevertheless, the attempt to separate the U.P. from the rebellion in anything except a paper sense was doomed almost before it began. No one,

<sup>148</sup>Navarrete, pp. 121, 122.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid.

<sup>150</sup>"Memorandum del Excmo Sr. Francisco Orozco y Jiménez," David, VII, No. 155 (June, 1965), 168, 169. The Archbishop said that his orders were not followed, "because the Directive Center [I.e., the League in Mexico City] gave other instructions, and I, far away and in hiding, could not exercise a more important influence." Ibid.

including Navarrete, wanted to be left out of the action and González Flores had to relent.<sup>151</sup> The day after he gave his permission for Navarrete and others to join the coming fight he met with a small group of his closest associates, all veterans of the ACJM like himself, whom he summoned to his hiding place, the home of Mariano Ramírez on San Felipe Street. The Maestro took them to the roof of the house for greater privacy. He told them that their position as militant Catholics had led them almost without realizing it to involvement in the crisis at hand. The League, he said, had launched itself into revolution and he hoped its intuition had been correct. He had decided that duty required him to be with the League and he would devote to the effort everything he was and everything he had. He wanted posterity to know, he told the group, that the Unión Popular was never meant to be an agent of civil war; and the U.P. was too important "to lose in an adventure in which we are going to be left alone." Nevertheless, he went on, events were forcing them onto the battlefield, and those who were determined to go should understand what was involved:

God grant that the collective sacrifice be fruitful. I know only too well that what is beginning now for us is a calvary. We must be ready to take up and carry our crosses. . . . I invite you to give your lives to save Mexico. I, who am here responsible for the decision of all, feel the sacred obligation not to deceive anyone. If one of you should ask me what sacrifice I am asking of you in order to seal the pact we are going to celebrate, I would tell you in two words: your blood. If you want to proceed, stop dreaming of places of honor, military triumphs, braid, luster, victories, and authority over others. Mexico needs a tradition of blood in order to cement its free life of tomorrow. For that work my life is available, and for that tradition I ask yours.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup>Navarrete, p. 123.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid., pp. 124, 125. It is not known for sure whether the government was aware of the plans for an uprising. The sources that might clarify this are not available. It seems highly unlikely that authorities did not have at least some inkling of it, but evidently no particular steps were taken--possibly because the government refused to believe the movement represented any real threat.

## CHAPTER V

### CRISTO REY AND CAPISTRAN GARZA

Gentlemen, pay close attention

To what I am going to say:

The men of the Popular Union

Rose in arms today.

--Jalisco corrido, 1927

During the first week of January, 1927, rebellion flared throughout much of Mexico. Only a part of the rebel units went into action on January 1st, the date set by the League, and these proved in most cases to be the least important of the conflict. In the west, which came to be the scene of most of the fighting for the next thirty months, the majority of the risings began several days later. Effective control was loose; the order of battle, such as it was, amounted to encouraging local jefes to gather men and arms and take the field. The leaders in Guadalajara designated January 5th to 7th for the start of the movements in Jalisco and the adjoining areas, but synchronization was obviously impossible.<sup>1</sup>

Several rebel chiefs in the Guadalajara jurisdiction were under motion on the 1st. That day some thirty to forty rancheros led by Miguel Hernández assembled in the plaza at San Julián, Jalisco, where they received the blessing of the parish priest. Two days later they attacked and took San

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<sup>1</sup>Navarrete, p. 123. The term "Cristero" will be used in this study to refer to the rebel fighting men, because that is the name universally applied to them since the conflict. It was not commonly used until near the end of the rebellion in 1929.

Miguel el Alto, which was defended by only a handful of police and local officials. They stayed in the town only briefly, leaving before a federal regiment under General Ubaldo Garza arrived.<sup>2</sup> Cristeros took San Francisco del Rincón on the 2nd, while another band attacked the larger town of San Juan de los Lagos.<sup>3</sup>

During the next two weeks rebel groups fell on dozens of Jalisco towns and villages, some of which they held briefly, others of which stayed in their control. Most of the action was in the region called Los Altos, east and north of Guadalajara, where Cristeros ranged the countryside and threatened such important centers as Tepatitlán, Atotonilco, and Arandas. By the second week of the month rebels had control of sizable rural sections of the state.<sup>4</sup>

In neighboring Zacatecas José María Gutiérrez and Marcial Murillo rose at Jalpa, seventy miles north of Guadalajara, on the 2nd. At noon they captured the head of the Defensa (the municipal militia) and his second in command, and shortly afterward disarmed the Defensa and police units at the city hall. Then Capistrán Garza's manifesto was read to the crowd assembled in the plaza. That evening two other rebel leaders arrived with around sixty men, most of them mounted and with arms and ammunition. The next day the

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<sup>2</sup>Ríos Facius, México cristero, p. 145; Excélsior for January 6, 1927 (p. 3) carried a report of the attack as announced by the chief of military operations in Jalisco but with no mention of the religious tie-in. This was usual in Mexican press accounts of the rebel activity.

<sup>3</sup>José Dolores Pérez, La persecución religiosa de Calles en León, Gto. (2d ed.; León, Guanajuato, 1952), p. 12; Olivera Sedano, p. 158.

<sup>4</sup>"Informe sobre los grupos levantados en armas o comprometidos a hacerlo, a fines de 1926 y principios de 1927," January 8, 1927, LA-1; Olivera Sedano, p. 158; Excélsior, January 12, 1927, p. 3; ibid., January 18, p. 1; ibid., January 20, p. 1.

inhabitants of the town elected a new mayor. Not a shot had been fired.<sup>5</sup> On the 9th the Jalpa Cristeros (now styling themselves the "Libre de Jalpa Regiment") had their first battle. 145 strong--although only eight-five had arms and a limited amount of ammunition--they met a federal force of some 150 near Tepechitlán, just west of Jalpa. The battle lasted more than five hours and Gutiérrez reported complete victory; he claimed he lost only one man, the federals thirty-six. On the 18th he attacked Nochistlán, southeast of Jalpa on the Jalisco border, with seventy-five men; he was winning when his ammunition gave out and he had to withdraw.<sup>7</sup>

Pedro Quintanar was also on the move. He sallied forth from Huejuquilla in the extreme north of Jalisco on the 4th with ninety men, on a two-week series of hit and run attacks on mining towns in the area. He returned to his home base the 20th, only to be driven out before the end of the month by federal troops and armed agrarians, who established a firm occupation of Huejuquilla.<sup>8</sup>

The risings in northern Zacatecas and Coahuila were brief, dramatic, and abortive. Plans had begun in mid-October, when Antonio Acuña Rodríguez, 22 year old ACJM member and League delegate in Saltillo, met with the president of the ACJM in Concepción del Oro. The League was urging action, but the two leaders decided that considerable preparation was needed. They recruited Major Juan Manuel Silva, a federal officer stationed in Concepción

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<sup>5</sup>"Informe general de los hechos de armas del Regimiento 'Libre de Jalpa' que se rindió a la 'Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa' desde el principio del movimiento a la fecha," June 5, 1928, signed by Col. José María Gutiérrez, LA-1.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ceniceros y Villarreal.

<sup>8</sup>Ríos Facius, Méjico cristero, p. 147.

del Oro, who agreed to ask for leave and work for the movement. In November the authorities got wind of the fact that something was up and Silva fled to Saltillo where he took refuge in the home of League member Felipe Brondo. The planning continued. As finally formulated, the strategy called for the simultaneous capture of Saltillo and Parras in Coahuila and Concepción del Oro in northern Zacatecas.<sup>9</sup> During the last week of December orders for the January rising reached Saltillo. Time was short; all were aware that preparations were incomplete and arms and ammunition dangerously scarce. But believing that their effort would be only a small part of a movement highly organized on a national scale and that they would have to sustain it for only a few days or at the most a week or two, they prepared to move. They learned later that their operations were practically the only ones undertaken in northern Mexico.<sup>10</sup>

Brondo was appointed special representative of the League's War Committee, with orders to organize an attack on Concepción del Oro January 1st; Silva was designated as the military commander of the operation. Brondo, Silva, and several others left Saltillo by car the afternoon of the 27th. They reached Concepción del Oro early the next morning and went at once to the house of Tereso Uribe, which was to be the headquarters. There they received late reports and completed plans for the assault. Word arrived that Catholic workers in the nearby towns of Aranzazú, Salaverna, and Mazapil were ready to join them. In all, they counted on 400 men.<sup>11</sup>

At midnight on the 31st, the hour set for the final rendezvous, twenty-three men were at the Uribe home. They were mostly of the laboring class;

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 148, 149; Olivera Sedano, p. 168; Brondo, Memoirs; David, I, No. 22 (May 22, 1954).

<sup>10</sup>Interview with Felipe Brondo, Saltillo, June, 1968; Brondo, Memoirs.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

a few came from more substantial backgrounds, although none belonged to the "best" families of the area. It was a group the leaders knew they could depend on--but it was only a fraction of the number they had counted on Concepción del Oro to provide for the initial assault. Arms were in short supply: ten rifles, two or three pistols, a few machetes, and some home made bombs to use as hand grenades. The government garrison numbered twenty men and three officers, amply supplied with arms and ammunition. It was an uncomfortable moment; there were thoughts of postponing the move, but groups in the nearby towns were ready to rise--they were expected to arrive the next day--and it was too late to call them off.<sup>12</sup>

At 3:30 A.M. the twenty-three commended themselves to Christ the King and the Blessed Virgin, then moved out in small groups.<sup>13</sup> Shortly before 4:00 a signal bomb exploded and the church bell began to peal, signalling the attack. Several of the garrison soldiers went over to the rebels, taking with them a few weapons and some ammunition. The rest of the federals were soon pinned down on the roof of the city jail, where they held out until mid-morning. The Cristeros, their ammunition gone, finally dislodged them by tossing dynamite from a nearby building. The only Cristero casualty was Brondo, who was wounded in the early minutes of the assault.<sup>14</sup>

The rest of the day was spent in rounding up horses and arms and organizing new recruits--some 100 local men now wanted to join. The Aranzazú contingent arrived during the afternoon. Then, in the evening, news came that a trainload of federal troops was en route from Saltillo. The persons

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>For additional details on the assault see Sixto Juárez, "Concepción del Oro, Zac. Movimiento cristero de Concepción del Oro y Aranzazú, Zac.," David, I, No. 22 (May 22, 1954); No. 23 (June 22, 1954); No. 24 (July 19, 1954).

<sup>14</sup>Interview with Felipe Brondo, Saltillo, June, 1968.

charged with the responsibility of cutting telephone and telegraph communications had failed to cut the line to the Margaritas station, and word of the Cristero strike had got out. The Cristeros immediately withdrew to the north and the federals entered Concepción del Oro the next day. Government troops pursued Silva and his force into the mountains and by late January had completely dispersed them. Silva was killed in the final action.<sup>15</sup>

The attack on Parras fared no better. At dawn on January 3rd some 200 Cristeros swept into the town to cries of "VIVA CRISTO REY" and "VIVA CAPISTRAN GARZA." The core of the force was some thirty-five members of the ACJM; the rest were mostly Catholic laborers from Parras and the nearby rancherías of San Lorenzo and San Carlos, plus a few Knights of Columbus. They sacked the government offices and jailed local officials and CROM leaders--one of the latter was killed in the attack.<sup>16</sup> This time the Cristeros had cut telegraph lines and burned railroad bridges, but news of the attack reached Torreón and the next day government troops got through and retook the town.<sup>17</sup> The rebels, by now around 400 strong, fled into the sierra and regrouped; then they divided. The cavalry rode south into Zacatecas. The infantry dispersed in small bands; federals hounded them through most of January, capturing and executing a number of men.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Angel Rodó to Pérez Treviño, January 4, 1927; Felipe Flores to Pérez Treviño, January 4; Juan Martínez Negrete to Pérez Treviño, January 3, Archives, State of Coahuila, Legajo 4, Exp. 1/21, 1927.

<sup>17</sup>Angel Prado to Pérez Treviño, January 3, 1927; M.S. Mayagoitia to Chief of Operations and Governor of Coahuila, January 4, 1927, in ibid.

<sup>18</sup>See A. Mendiza to Pérez Treviño, January 10, 1929, in ibid.; "Los Cristeros de Parras, Coahuila. La verdad sobre los fusilamientos de 1927," David, II, No. 30 (January 22, 1955), 81, 82.



The attack on Saltillo never materialized. Late on January 2nd, after receiving the sacraments, Acuña and some thirty ACJM companions left Saltillo in small groups for the nearby Sierra of Arteaga, joined en route by a few men from ranches near the town. The plan was to assemble a force to attack the city, but the number finally mustered was less than a hundred--clearly inadequate--and the band withdrew to the mountains. At the village of Huamuchil government troops caught up with them and administered a serious defeat. The survivors separated into two small groups; one escaped, but the federals captured the other and shot every man. Acuña was executed after refusing under torture to answer questions regarding the uprising.<sup>19</sup>

Armed action in the Federal District was formulated at a meeting in Mexico City on December 28th. Armado Téllez Vargas and Manuel Bonilla organized the gathering, which was attended by several dozen ACJM members; the Special War Committee was represented by a young engineer, Luis Segura Vilchis, who was destined for a permanent and controversial place in the history of the Cristero movement. Bonilla told the assemblage that the uprising would be commanded by Manuel Reyes, a former Zapata general. Reyes had been "catechized" by Sister Concepción Acevedo de la Llata, a nun from Querétaro. Known to most as "Madre Conchita," she was the superior of a group of religious living in seclusion in the capital and was attracting much attention among Catholics for her spiritual and charitable work.<sup>20</sup>

On December 31st most of the group attended Mass at Madre Conchita's hidden convent. The nun gave Bonilla a Mexican flag to which were affixed

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<sup>19</sup>"Los Cristeros de Coahuila: Breves apuntes del movimiento cristero en Saltillo, Coahuila," in *ibid.*, I, No. 19 (February 22, 1954); No. 20 (March 22, 1954). Olivera Sedano, pp. 168, 169; Ríos Facius, Méjico cristero, pp. 148, 149.

<sup>20</sup>Ríos Facius, Méjico cristero, pp. 187-190; Olivera Sedano, p. 172.

images of the Sacred Heart and the Virgin of Guadalupe. A few of the young men tried to see Father Berogónd but could not locate him.<sup>21</sup> At 10:00 P.M. the new Cristeros--around fifty all told, only half of them armed--gathered in a cedar grove in Tlalpan on the southern edge of the city. They set out toward the south at noon the next day and rendezvoused with Reyes and ten armed men. Capistrán Garza's manifesto was read and Reyes swore to support it.<sup>22</sup> The next day the group arrived at Ajusco, high in the mountains between Mexico City and Cuernavaca, where they commandeered horses and a few weapons and destroyed telegraph and telephone lines. Late in the afternoon they reached the Mexico City-Cuernavaca highway where they spent several hours stopping traffic, passing out copies of Capistrán Garza's manifesto, and politely asking terrified motorists for contributions. Two days later a small federal contingent surprised them in the mountains and killed at least five of them. After several other small skirmishes they settled down in the mountainous region in the southern part of the Federal District. A month later, local agrarians organized into semi-official "social defense" units drove them out of their redoubt and by early April had totally scattered the remnant. Bonilla was captured and shot near Toluca; Reyes fell into government hands and was publicly executed in the same city in August. The few survivors had meanwhile managed to make their way back to Mexico City.<sup>23</sup>

The chief of the Cristeros in the state of Colima was twenty-six year old Dionisio Eduardo Ochoa. He had been raised in ecclesiastical surroundings--his brother and uncle were priests. After completing parochial elementary

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ceniceros y Villarreal; Olivera Sedano, pp. 175, 176.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

school in Colima, Dionisio spent nearly three years in the diocesan seminary but decided he had no vocation for holy orders. Instead, he threw himself into Catholic lay activities. He joined the ACJM when it was established in Colima, taught catechism, and helped distribute Catholic periodical literature. By 1924 he was himself the editor of a Catholic weekly, La Reconquista, and was also Regional President of the ACJM. In 1925 he was jailed briefly for his anti-government propaganda activities and upon being released went to Guadalajara to enter preparatory school.<sup>24</sup>

By late 1926 Ochoa was convinced that armed action against the Calles regime was both desirable and justified. In December, when he returned to Colima for Christmas vacation, he heard rumors of a general uprising in January, but not until the second day of the new year did he receive direct word. That afternoon, a young girl arrived on the afternoon train from Guadalajara, carrying orders for Ochoa and his companion Rafael Sánchez to initiate a rising on the 5th.<sup>25</sup>

The two young men were stunned, but agreed to do their best--although a hurried round of conferences made it clear that three days were not enough time to organize anything substantial. They finally decided to begin operations with a few close friends in an area where the movement could develop without threat of immediate suppression by the government. Before daybreak on the 6th, after hearing Mass celebrated by Father Enrique de Jesús Ochoa, Dionisio's brother, the two left by car for Tonila, across the Jalisco line, taking with them a close companion, Antonio Vargas. In Tonila they added several recruits and on the 11th continued toward their destination: the slopes of the Volcano of Colima on the Jalisco border. There, at a ranchería

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<sup>24</sup>Spectator (Enrique de Jesús Ochoa), Los cristeros del Volcán de Colima (2 vols.; 2d ed.; Mexico, D.F., 1961), I, 107-110.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 115, 120-123.

called Caucentla, they established headquarters, and Ochoa agreed to assume sole command. A few days later he made a brief visit to Guadalajara, where he conferred with González Flores. Back at Caucentla, he met with local leaders from various parts of the state, whom he commissioned to raise and lead Cristero bands. In accordance with instructions given him in Guadalajara, Ochoa required each leader to take an oath of loyalty to the cause and to observe Christian conduct. He also gave them instructions regarding troop discipline, procedures to follow in requisitioning or seizing supplies, and treatment of prisoners--any captives who were to be executed were to be given the opportunity when possible to prepare themselves spiritually.<sup>26</sup>

By the end of January a sizable force was being raised in Colima. Most of the new Cristeros were strikingly young--many no more than boys. Four out of five were between the ages of fifteen and twenty and some were even younger; only a handful were over thirty-five. The basic plan of organization was flexible: it provided for nucleus groups in each ranchería which were to be ready to operate locally as the need arose; a main striking force would be based around the Volcano headquarters.<sup>27</sup>

The Colima Cristeros went into battle for the first time on January 23rd at the Arena Ranch, some two hours from Caucentla. They defeated a force of around sixty mounted gendarmes under Major Urbano Gómez, sent to rout them out of their enclave. Instead, Gómez was routed; eight of his command were killed and he and several others who were captured were executed after a brief field trial. A second attempt to smash the rebels was made by General Jesús Ferreira, Federal Chief of Operations in Jalisco, who had rushed to Colima

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 137-154.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 156-168.

after restoring relative calm in his state; on the last day of January the Cristeros badly mauled one of his regiments, killing around fifty federals. The chief of the federal forces in Colima, Talamantes, was similarly unsuccessful when he made an attack on the Volcano; he lost nearly forty of his troops. Both he and Ferreira withdrew to the state capital, where rumors were becoming rife about the size and strength of the rebel effort--rumors that grew in fascination as they were added to by federal troops who returned from the combat zone: some insisted that at the height of the fighting they had seen a lady on a white horse protecting and encouraging the rebels.<sup>28</sup>

There were other Cristero bands in the field in January. Activity was reported in Oaxaca, Guerrero, the State of Mexico, Michoacán, Querétaro, Aguascalientes, Tamaulipas, San Luis Potosí, and Durango.<sup>29</sup> Much of the action was isolated and insignificant, although a few of the groups managed to create considerable havoc locally. In Durango a Cristero force seized Mesquital, about fifty miles south of the state capital, and a number of other towns which they held for several days; the rebel band rose to 400 men and bested at least one federal unit in open battle.<sup>30</sup> But one Cristero group was absent from the fighting in January: the attack on Ciudad Juárez promised by José Gándara did not transpire.

The League had hoped that the January uprising would trigger a popular revolt that would bring down the Calles government, but such did not happen. In some areas in the central and western parts of Mexico there was evidence of massive and spontaneous support for the movement, but it tended to be

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 160-174.

<sup>29</sup>"Informe sobre los grupos levantados en armas. . . ," LA-1; Excélsior, January 12, 1927, pp. 1, 3.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.; Caniceros y Villarreal.

limited to rural regions. The army remained loyal to the government, and in the urban areas generally--and in the north and the extreme southeastern parts of the country almost totally--the populace remained indifferent or at least quiet. The Cristeros of northern Zacatecas and Coahuila, defeated at Concepción del Oro and Parras, dispersed and never re-formed. The movements around Mexico City and to the east and south likewise faded permanently. In Jalisco, by the third week of January government forces were retaking a number of towns seized by the rebels.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, the rebellion did not end in January. Areas of Jalisco remained in Cristero hands, and in parts of Guanajuato, Michoacán, and Querétaro government control was little more than nominal. In these states the few weeks of intense activity were followed by a lull during which Cristero bands regrouped and hardened their determination to hold on. In Colima there was not even a slowdown; the movement gained steadily from the moment of its inception.

Leadership had emerged in January which would help guarantee that the rebellion would have a far longer life than the government expected. There was Lauro Rocha, a nineteen year old medical student from Guadalajara, member of the ACJM and close disciple of González Flores, who in a few weeks' time had shown military ability of the highest order.<sup>32</sup> There were picturesque sorts more in the tradition of other Mexican rebellions, such as Victoriano Ramírez, a Jalisco ranchero who before the uprising was something of a local hero with a reputation for gallantry, lady chasing, and brawling. His nickname, "El Catorce" (Fourteen), came from an incident in which he killed

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<sup>31</sup>Excélsior, January 18, 1927, p. 1; January 20, p. 1; Olivera Sedano, p. 158.

<sup>32</sup>"Datos biográficos del General Lauro Rocha G.," David. VII, No. 157 (August, 1965), 207, 208.

fourteen pursuers after escaping from the San Miguel el Alto jail--where he was being held on a charge of killing a man in a fight. When the Cristeros rose Victoriano rushed to join them, insisting on his strong loyalty to the Church. Within days he was at the head of an impressively ferocious band that would alternately thrill and scandalize the Cristero leadership.<sup>33</sup> There were priests, for example Father José Reyes Vega and Father Aristeo Pedroza, both of whom quickly showed spectacular military talent and rose to key commands in the movement.<sup>34</sup>

The Cristeros were far from victory in January 1927; but the government had on its hands a far more formidable contest than it imagined.

The Supreme Chief of the rebellion was not in Mexico; he was in the United States. What were his plans? No one in Mexico knew exactly, and with armed risings flaring in a dozen states the League Directors were becoming anxious. On January 8th they wired Capistrán Garza an account of the military situation and told him they hoped for action from him and the others in the United States.<sup>35</sup> On the 12th they wired again, asking when he proposed to enter Mexico. They also wanted to know the place and date of the formal issuance of his manifesto--which, they said, was already known to a few persons (they were obviously unaware that it was being read and sworn to all over the country). They also expressed anxiety over the attitude of the United States government and asked what success he had had on that score.<sup>36</sup> By the 19th, still with no word, the Committee was desperate;

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<sup>33</sup>Navarrete, pp. 183-186.

<sup>34</sup>Olivera Sedano, p. 158.

<sup>35</sup>"Informe sobre los grupos levantados en armas. . . ," in Directive Committee to Capistrán Garza, January 8, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>36</sup>Directive Committee to Capistrán Garza, January 12, 1927, LA-1.

they had heard nothing from him since December, they wired; he had promised several times to keep them well informed but had failed to do so: "We believe the matter we have on our hands merits your heeding what is not simple curiosity. . . ."37

Indirect word came on the 24th, when Capistrán Garza issued a "War Bulletin" to key leaders of the rebellion from El Paso. It gave a general overview of the military situation in Mexico and said that organization would be completed when he entered the Republic.<sup>38</sup>

On February 9th, with the initial uprising substantially over, Capistrán Garza addressed a report to the Directive Committee. It indicated clearly what he perceived his mission to be: U.S. policy and U.S. money were the overriding considerations, and his role above any other was to align both behind the rebellion. He had just been in Washington, he said, summoned by Mr. William F. Buckley, with whom he was on excellent terms and who was the key figure in a group interested in financing the movement. He (Capistrán Garza) had addressed a memorandum to the U.S. government which, he told the Directors, had been presented at a cabinet meeting. It asked for a formal promise that belligerency would be recognized as soon as a place on the border was taken--this was the only condition imposed by the prospective financial backers. He was in touch with the State Department, where he had been told that the entire matter would be decided by early March at the latest (the financiers believed this reply would be satisfactory). The donors, he reported, would advance \$30,000 within a week and he would forward \$10,000 of it to Mexico City with Juan Lainé. After

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., January 19, 1927, LA-1. The Directive Committee was using the address "J.C. Price" at the Hotel Cosmos on San Juan Letrán.

<sup>38</sup>"Boletín de Guerra, No. 3," LA-1.



the way was cleared for the total arrangement he would have an advance of \$200,000, with which it would be possible to strike a blow--he mentioned Tamaulipas as the target. Things were going slowly, he admitted, but seemed to be on firm ground. As for the men in the field in Mexico, their situation was lamentable, ". . . but do not lose sight of the fact that what is hoped of them is not that they will destroy Calles, but that they will maintain the state of war throughout the country. The blow on the border, which although it may be slightly delayed will unfailingly come, will signal the final and conclusive stage." As for the projected attack on Ciudad Juárez, he said both he and the League had been miserably deceived. There had been nothing to back the promise. As for Gándara, collaboration was at an end and he had managed with great effort practically to eliminate him from matters--although he would have to be watched; Gándara was presently in New York or Washington. He closed with the information that he had Jenaro Núñez in New York to act as his go-between with Pascual Díaz, who had just arrived: "I am maintaining constant communication with D/Íaz/, whom I am keeping informed. . . . "39

Pascual Díaz, Bishop of Tabasco and Secretary of the Episcopal Committee, was arrested in Mexico City on January 10th, along with five other bishops. All were released except Díaz, who was ordered to leave the country. On the 19th he crossed the border into Guatemala and within a few days was en route to the United States via Havana.<sup>40</sup> On February 1st he

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<sup>39</sup>Capistrán Garza to Directive Committee, February 9, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>40</sup>Excelsior, January 11, 1927, pp. 1, 3; January 20, 1927, p. 1; New York Times, January 11, 1927, p. 1. The Mexico City press said the arrests were due to the fact that religious ceremonies attended by the public were being held at the Committee's offices. The Times said the government accused Díaz of being implicated in the Catholic rebellion.

disembarked in New York, wearing layman's clothes--a gray suit, brown tie, black overcoat and dark gray hat. He was greeted at the pier by some sixty persons led by Monsignor Thomas Carroll, representing the New York Archdiocese, and went immediately to St. Francis Xavier College, where he took up temporary residence.<sup>41</sup>

Díaz's arrival in the United States put into motion a tangle of events that in a few chaotic weeks altered fundamentally and perhaps decisively the course of the Catholic armed movement in Mexico. Accusations and counterattacks would fly for years as the principals involved and their partisans told their versions of what happened. All the accounts were to some degree plausible and none was entirely objective.

Nearly two years later--in November, 1928--Capistrán Garza addressed a long statement to the Mexican bishops, then meeting in San Antonio.<sup>42</sup> He had had three roles in the United States, he said: (1) head of the liberation movement (2) representative of the League (3) representative of the Mexican Hierarchy to the U.S. Hierarchy. The first was conferred on him after the Episcopal Committee, through Díaz, had approved the lawfulness of the movement, the program, and himself as chief. Regarding his role as representative of the Mexican Episcopate, he said the credential from Mora y del Río and the letter from that prelate to the Knights of Columbus had surprised him--he had expected only a letter of introduction.

When Díaz arrived in New York, he stated, he sent Núñez to greet him and offered to see the Bishop in person or communicate by letter; Díaz preferred to communicate via an intermediary. ✓ Shortly afterward, Capistrán

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<sup>41</sup>New York Times, February 2, 1927, p. 4; Carreño, pp. 263, 264.

<sup>42</sup>"Informe del Sr. Don René Capistrán Garza a los Ilustrísimos y Reverendísimos señores Arzobispos y Obispos Mexicanos, reunidos en San Antonio, Texas," November 14, 1928, LA-1

Garza went on, confused reports began to reach him--that Díaz was saying, among other things, that Mexico needed a coalition government led by distinguished liberals. Núñez reported however that Díaz was resolved to support Capistrán Garza against any "dissident" elements (for example the El Paso junta). Capistrán Garza sent Manuel de la Peza to New York to counter any attempt by the "dissidents" to influence Díaz. Early in March, Díaz, although appearing to be neutral, asked De la Peza at least to listen to two of these-- Juan Lainé, who had shifted into the anti-René camp, and a Jesuit priest, Father Ricardo Alvarez, who were proposing that Lainé be named financial agent for the movement in the United States.

/ Late in 1926, Capistrán Garza went on, he had opened talks with William F. Buckley, a U.S. Catholic prominent in petroleum circles and head of the Patempec Oil Company, through whom he hoped to get financial aid. The prospective donor was Buckley's friend Nicholas Brady, a multi-millionaire and prominent Catholic layman. It was hoped that Brady would provide the \$500,000 with which to finance initial armed operations. Buckley had interested him in the Mexican situation, helped by a Dr. Malone, another well-known New York Catholic who several years earlier had given important help to De Valera and the Irish independence cause. Malone had important connections in U.S. financial circles and was also Governor Alfred E. Smith's personal physician. In late February, said Capistrán Garza, Buckley thought the groundwork was well enough prepared to put the matter formally before Brady. The latter had asked how much was needed; Buckley told him \$350,000 to \$500,000 and said that he would provide half the total sum. Capistrán Garza left San Antonio March 1st and reached New York two days later. On the 8th he learned from Buckley's secretary that the oilman was just leaving San Antonio and would reach New York the 10th. The proposal was already in the hands of Dr. Malone. The 10th passed with no word from Buckley. On the

11th Capistrán Garza, growing suspicious, told Ruiz Rueda to get him an interview with Pascual Díaz. There was no reply from the prelate to the request, although the nun at the College who received the note said it had been given to Díaz. Also on the 11th, De la Peza, who was working with Capistrán Garza, visited Father Wilfrid Parsons, S.J., editor of the Jesuit weekly America, who was a friend of Díaz's and known to be one of the "dissidents." Parsons told De la Peza that Buckley had reached New York the 10th and the next day had called on him to ask if it were true that Díaz was in total disagreement with Capistrán Garza. ✓ Parsons said it was true; at Buckley's request he set up a meeting between Buckley and Díaz, for the 14th (Díaz was out of the city and would return by that date).

Capistrán Garza now ordered Ruiz Rueda to get him an appointment with Díaz at any cost. Late the 13th, after Capistrán Garza and De la Peza had waited at Díaz's residence for hours, the Bishop arrived, surprised to see them, and said he had received no word that they wanted to talk with him. The three conversed for an hour and a half. Díaz said that any opinions he had expressed were purely his own and were not made in the name of the Mexican Episcopate. Capistrán Garza pointed out that anything Díaz said would naturally carry enormous weight, that he had been given his own post by the League in agreement with the bishops and deserved to be supported, not destroyed. Díaz agreed, and promised to tell Buckley when he saw him that there was no dissension, that the Episcopal Committee approved of the League, Capistrán Garza, the movement, and the program.

✓ Díaz and Buckley met. Two days later, Buckley came to Capistrán Garza's room at the Hotel Pennsylvania. He said that while he was en route from Texas, Malone had contacted him, asking to see him as soon as he arrived in New York. There Malone told Buckley that he (Buckley) had been deceived, that Capistrán Garza was an imposter. This, Malone said, had

been told him by Father Parsons, who said he could prove it by testimony from Díaz. Malone had told all this to Brady, who on the spot dropped all further connection with the matter. Buckley went to Parsons, who repeated the story, told him to be careful, and said that if he really wanted to help Mexico he should see Díaz. At his meeting with Díaz, Buckley went on, the Bishop told him that he had been "deeply hurt" that Capistrán Garza had not gone to see him when he arrived in New York. He also told Buckley Capistrán Garza represented the League but not the Episcopate-- Mora y del Río's letter was an introduction, not a credential, and Capistrán Garza by so using it was committing an imposture. ✓ Díaz added that the Hierarchy and people of Mexico wanted a coalition government led by liberals, not Catholics, and mentioned the names of Félix Díaz and Nemesio García Naranjo as possible leaders. Buckley told Capistrán Garza that personally he had no doubts concerning the latter's credentials or honor, but that the attitude of Díaz and Parsons had destroyed the whole project and had put him (Buckley) in an embarrassing position with his friends. At this point, Capistrán Garza called in De la Peza, who related to Buckley their talk with Díaz on the 13th. Buckley was stupefied.

A few days later, Capistrán Garza continued, De la Peza visited Díaz at the Jesuit novitiate at Woodstock, Maryland, and told him that it would be necessary to inform Mexico City of all that had happened. Díaz became angry and said that if this were done he would accuse De la Peza and Capistrán Garza before the Holy See of disobedience and rebellion to ecclesiastical authority.

Efforts were made, Capistrán Garza concluded his report, to revive the negotiations, but to no avail. Father Parsons now approached García Naranjo, asking him to use his influence to interest Brady in helping the

"dissidents." García refused. Later, Father Carlos María Heredia, S.J., got García and Díaz together. Díaz told García that he had \$350,000 at his disposal, and offered it to García Naranjo if he would accept leadership of the movement. García finally agreed, but reminded Díaz that he was a liberal and that his only point of contact with Catholics was his desire to oust Calles. No money ever changed hands, however.

Pascual Díaz's side of the story was provided in an informe which he addressed to his fellow bishops in 1928 and which included a copy of a letter he had written shortly before to Capistrán Garza; these documents were supplemented a few years later in a work published by Díaz's alter ego and longtime personal friend and secretary, Alberto María Carreño.<sup>43</sup> As for Capistrán Garza's status in the United States, Díaz said that Mora y del Río (who had died shortly before the informe appeared) had not indicated in signing his missive to Capistrán Garza that he was doing so as president of the Episcopal Committee; the "we" in the document was the standard pronoun used by a bishop in formal discourse, and he (Díaz) was convinced that the Archbishop intended only to make Capistrán Garza his own personal representative. As for the accusation that he had sought to wreck the financial transaction, he said, addressing Capistrán Garza: "You probably supposed that I had interposed myself between you and Messrs. Buckley and Brady, whereas in reality I was completely unaware that you, through Mr. Buckley,

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<sup>43</sup>Pascual Díaz, Informe que rinde al V. Episcopado Mexicano el Obispo de Tabasco Pascual Díaz en relación con las actividades de la Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa en los Estados Unidos de América (New York, 1928); Alberto María Carreño, El arzobispo de México, Excmo. Sr. D. Pascual Díaz y el conflicto religioso (2d ed. rev.; D.F., 1943). The first edition appeared in the early 1930's. It was reportedly withdrawn from circulation by efforts of Carreño and others.

were trying to obtain funds from Mr. Brady. . . ."44

Brady had indeed offered money to Díaz, through a Mr. John Stuart, an employee of Father Parsons who had talked with Brady and interested him in the cause. (Díaz later told González Valencia that Brady offered \$200,000 for the armed defense, if Díaz approved.)<sup>45</sup> Díaz said that he hurried to inform De la Peza of the offer and asked to be put in touch with Capistrán Garza, but received no reply.<sup>46</sup> Díaz denied offering the leadership of the movement to García Naranjo,<sup>47</sup> although he did call García to tell him of Brady's offer, and advised him to come to an agreement with Núñez after which the two of them should talk with De la Peza. The situation, Carreño later insisted, was this: Brady wished to make funds available, but only under certain conditions; Díaz told the bishops that ". . . a certain sum would be given to help the Catholics, provided they enlisted individuals who would not arouse opposition in this country--the United States--, in view of the campaign being directed in the United States against Catholics by various Protestant groups."<sup>48</sup> Díaz had hurried to ask De la Peza to have Capistrán Garza contact him, so that the offer might be taken advantage of, but nothing happened.<sup>49</sup> Díaz's approach to García Naranjo was a move to help satisfy the donor. But, said Carreño, days passed with no word from De la Peza and finally Díaz was notified that

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<sup>44</sup>Díaz, Informe.

<sup>45</sup>Sworn statement of González Valencia, appended to statement signed January 25, 1943, by Palomar y Vizcarra. LA-1.

<sup>46</sup>Carreño, pp. 257-260.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 237.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., pp. 243, 244.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 244; Díaz, Informe.

Brady had been advised by someone whom he held in high esteem not to give a single cent.<sup>50</sup>

Díaz told Capistrán Garza that when he spoke with Buckley he kept his promise not to undercut him; but he admitted that other matters were treated:

I am certain that I said nothing to that gentleman that was against you or the League, and if in the course of the conversation a coalition government was mentioned, it was not with the idea, on his part or mine, to work against you or (the League). . . . Precisely because it was a matter of people who wanted to help. . . , who already were familiar with the views that aid here would not be given to a clearly Catholic movement, I could not find it ill advised, nor does my conscience reproach me today, to indicate that if it would cause insurmountable difficulties to achieve the existence of an exclusively Catholic government, honorable individuals who were well disposed toward the Catholic Church could be accepted in forming a coalition government.<sup>51</sup>

He could not, he said, say something different from what everyone there was thinking and saying; but this did not mean that Capistrán Garza would be excluded from his post as representative or that he or the League would be opposed.<sup>52</sup> As for the dispute with De la Peza at Woodstock, Díaz said it resulted from his (Díaz's) insistence that De la Peza tell Capistrán Garza "all that was being said, so that you /Capistrán Garza/ might study the orientation that it seemed indispensable to give to your labors, and the complete refusal of Mr. Peza to do this." It was his duty, he went on, to point out to Capistrán Garza and his group that the road they had chosen could lead them to failure. De la Peza had been disrespectful, he said, but he denied threatening to accuse him of disobedience. "What I did tell him was that I was prepared, if you were following a mistaken path, to

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<sup>50</sup>Carreño, p. 245; Díaz, Informe.

<sup>51</sup>Díaz, Informe.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.



indicate publicly my disapproval of your labors, since only this would reveal that you had not understood the mission that the League had entrusted to you." He had reproached De la Peza, he said, for being unwilling to take steps to avoid disaster.<sup>53</sup>

Obviously no really important differences exist in the accounts of the protagonists, so far as salient events go. Both sides agree that Capistrán Garza was in touch with Buckley and Brady regarding funds; that at what appeared to be the crucial point, the prospective donors, or at least one of them, switched and adopted Díaz as the channel for aid; and that Díaz assented to the idea of broadening the base of the anti-Calles movement to include non-Catholics and even liberals--in fact, that he believed this to be the only sensible course. The difference in the accounts comes over motives: Capistrán Garza sees Díaz working calculatedly and with deceit to push him and the League aside and raise to at least equal command another element, whereas Díaz maintains in effect that he was working to help the cause, and that he did not know that Capistrán Garza was already negotiating on funds.

Díaz had entered the picture at a time when two factions were contending for authority and money, and it is clear that he listened sympathetically to the group Capistrán Garza labeled the "dissidents." That group is not completely identifiable as regards either personnel or outlook, although it was unified in its opposition to Capistrán Garza. The Supreme Chief had accumulated more than a few enemies well before Díaz arrived.

One of Capistrán Garza's adversaries, Father Wilfrid Parsons, seems to have had some concrete reasons for his opposition. He had met Capistrán Garza in August, 1926, and the two developed a close and even affectionate

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<sup>53</sup>Carreño, pp. 294-296.

relationship in the weeks that followed. Parsons gave him a letter of introduction to the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, and obtained donations of money and letters of introduction from Cardinal Hayes and some other American bishops.<sup>54</sup> Parsons later said that René had assured him the funds were to be used for civic action in Mexico, not armed rebellion. In October, Parsons heard that the League had, in September, decided to resort to arms. He immediately asked Capistrán Garza, then in Houston, if this were true, and told him that if it were, he was to send back the letters that had been obtained from the Hierarchy--they had been given with the understanding that only peaceful means were involved. René wired Parsons on October 25th absolutely denying the report, and Parsons accepted his word. When it became obvious, in December, that a revolt was in the offing, Parsons still maintained contact; he approved the pact with Gándara and when dissension developed, insisted that Capistrán Garza honor the agreement. He wanted to do all possible to unite the two factions, he said, and at the same time steadfastly refused to help anyone except Capistrán Garza with money or influence.<sup>55</sup>

But by the time the Buckley-Brady matter came up, Parsons was considerably disenchanted: "I had gradually become convinced, in spite of myself, that the League had made a mistake in naming René to the post it had given him. . . ." Capistrán Garza, he said, had surrounded himself with men of mediocre ability who flattered him; also, he had a great facility for making agreements he could not keep. "I spoke of all this to my friend Dr. Malone, who is one of the few men really sincere and enthusiastic about helping Mexico. . . . We both judged that no money should be given as long as dissensions existed." One day, he said, Dr. Malone called him to

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<sup>54</sup>Parsons to Díaz, February 1, 1928, cited in Carreño, pp. 266, 267.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., pp. 280-289.

his office to meet Mr. Buckley, and asked him to tell Buckley what they had discussed. Parsons--unaware, he maintained, of the relationship between Buckley and René--did so, saying that he did not think René was the right person for the leadership position and that he was not the accredited representative of the Mexican Hierarchy. He did not, he insisted, use the word "imposter"--he thought René had also been deceived in the matter.<sup>56</sup>

Parsons always denied that he was an enemy of Capistrán Garza or a member of the "dissident" camp. When John Stuart brought word to him that Brady was offering money, Father Parsons sent him to Díaz--for the purpose, he said, of having Díaz inform Capistrán Garza via De la Peza. Why he did not send Stuart directly to Capistrán Garza he did not say. René, said Parsons, was constantly misinformed by the men surrounding him, and probably misinterpreted his (Father Parsons') relations with the "dissidents"--whose anger, Parsons insisted, he had himself drawn more than once--"just as he misinterpreted his own relations with the American Hierarchy, with Buckley, and with Brady. . . ."<sup>57</sup>

There can be no question that Díaz favored de-emphasizing the religious nature of the movement. Carreño later quoted Father Carlos Heredia, S.J., a Díaz partisan, as saying: "Monsignor Díaz believed, as I did, that the presence in the Government of men who were serious and honorable, even though they had not been affiliated with some Catholic party or group, could be useful in the reconstruction of the country."<sup>58</sup>

It is also apparent that Díaz was coming to the conclusion by March, 1927, that the League had launched an armed movement which because of lack

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., pp. 289, 290-292.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 270.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., pp. 245, 246.

of preparation and resources could not succeed, at any rate not without help from the United States--and that its openly Catholic label precluded this. He still favored the overthrow of Calles and indicated no opposition to the use of force to achieve it; but he had evidently begun a transformation in his views on the matter that would finally lead him to oppose the movement. Carreño later said; regarding Díaz:

It is possible that he, like a large number of Catholics, had faith at first in the seriousness of the steps the League was taking and in the rousing assertions of expected success. . . . But later his opinions on the armed movement, which I have heard him express many times, were those held by anyone who was aware of the lack of preparation with which the Directors of the League had launched Catholics into the struggle: that such a movement would certainly not be the salvation of the Church, because the heroic sacrifice of the Catholics who did not spare their blood in defense of their religious convictions and beliefs was made sterile, on the one hand by the lack of material means needed to confront the Calles Government, and on the other hand by the opposition which the armed movement would meet in the United States, if that movement was in substance a war of a religious character and, unfortunately, it is well known by all, that in Mexico the only domestic wars that have succeeded are those that have found support there In the U.S.<sup>59</sup>

When Díaz reached the United States, says Carreño, he found the opinion abroad that a war of religion would not gain support in the United States, and he so reported to Buckley, as well as to Núñez and De la Peza. On the other hand, Díaz always denied that he told Buckley it was an error to carry out plans of the League, that the Mexican Episcopate and people wanted a coalition government led by liberals, or that he was advising consideration of someone like Félix Díaz or García Naranjo.<sup>60</sup> Díaz's only wish, concluded Carreño in his defense, was to correct what had gone off the track, "precisely in order to help the work of the League, but in the best, most appropriate way."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., pp. 187, 188.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., pp. 314, 320.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 184.

The effort to help was to say the least not appreciated. By mid-March Capistrán Garza had his back to the wall. Undercut (as he saw it, with some reason) by many Mexican Catholics in the United States, clearly out of favor with influential American Catholics both lay and clerical, his financial plans in ruins, he nevertheless struggled on. The Directive Committee in Mexico City still pledged him unwavering support. So did Archbishop Mora y del Río: The Directors wrote Capistrán Garza on March 23rd that the Primate was entirely opposed to a change in leadership and that he regretted sincerely that his letter to Capistrán Garza in October had not been heeded as its obvious meaning indicated it should; he was not sending another, he said, because that could be taken to mean that the first lacked force, but he was prepared to answer categorically any interpellation on the matter from those who recognized his authority as President of the Episcopal Committee and head of Catholic Action in Mexico. The Directors told Capistrán Garza to relay this to Díaz at once.<sup>62</sup>

The battle spread to Rome, where the League--and Caristrán Garza--had a momentary advantage. The previous autumn, the Episcopal Committee had sent three of their number to represent them at the Vatican--González Valencia of Durango, Valverde y Téllez of León, and Méndez del Río of Tehuantepec--all of them unswerving supporters of the League and of the militant position in general. Since their arrival they had labored untiringly to see that their views got an ample hearing in high places. In late March Capistrán Garza sent De la Peza to Rome to present his case and try to obtain direct intervention by the Holy See. De la Peza told the three bishops Capistrán Garza's version of the whole affair. He said that when he (De la Peza) first met Díaz in New York the latter flatly advised him to write the

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<sup>62</sup> José Tello to Capistrán Garza, March 23, 1927, LA-1.

League Directors and tell them that it was necessary to find another man to head the movement, which should not continue to appear to be directed by the League; that if it continued to appear as a holy war this would impede U.S. recognition of it. De la Peza said he had disagreed with Díaz: The purpose of the movement was not exclusively religious, Capistrán Garza had met no such opposition, and to take away the cry of "Viva Cristo Rey" would seriously pull down popular enthusiasm. He did say that when he saw Díaz at Woodstock, after the affair was over, Díaz offered to make a statement of support. This came in the form of a letter to Buckley, to be shown to Brady, and said that Capistrán Garza had been delegated by the League, which the Episcopate had blessed and approved in all its works thus far, and that he wished him success. But, said De la Peza, much damage had been done. Capistrán Garza had sent him to ask the Commission of Bishops in Rome to use its influence to obtain three things from the Holy See: Some indication to Brady to help financially; some general statement of support for the movement; and an order to members of the clergy to stop making war on the League and its cause.<sup>63</sup>

On April 6th De la Peza was received in private audience by Pius XI, to whom he presented a memorandum along with a statement by the three bishops endorsing his mission and the League.<sup>64</sup> De la Peza repeated his petitions verbally to the Pontiff. The Pope told him that the matter should have been taken up with Archbishop Fumasoni-Biondi, the Apostolic Delegate to the United States and in charge of Mexican affairs. De la Peza replied that this

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<sup>63</sup>"Informe que presenta Manuel de la Peza a la Comisión de Prelados Residentes en Roma que Representa al Episcopado Mexicano ante la Santa Sede," April 5, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>64</sup>"Memorial que el Comisionado Especial de la Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa de México presenta a Su Santidad Pío XI," April 6, 1927, LA-1.

had not been done because Díaz had already seen the Delegate, and the League representatives would have been at a great disadvantage trying to counter his influence. The Pope told him to see Gasparri and explain the whole matter, both orally and in writing. This De la Peza did three days later. He again told his story, and expressed the opinion that a coalition government for Mexico would be dangerous and would entail the risk of leaving Mexican Catholics in limbo, as they were under the regime of Porfirio Díaz. Catholics, he insisted, were capable of governing. Many, such as Ceniceros y Villarreal, had had experience in high government positions, and popular support would not be lacking--on the contrary, recent events showed it to be strong. As for the United States, the League had reason to believe there was no opposition, that in fact that country realized that American interests would be served by a Catholic triumph.<sup>65</sup>

The League had some reason to hope for support in Rome; there had been several indications in recent months that the Holy See was on the side of militancy. On January 3rd the Pope told a group of young Mexicans who were in Rome for the commemoration of the birth of Saint Luis Gonzaga:

. . . you are the sons of a country. . . which today is suffering the great trial of grief and martyrdom. You are the sons of a people who are offering their blood for the faith, for the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ the King, and for the honor of the Church, our common mother. When you return to Mexico, tell everyone the words you have heard from Our lips: Tell them that We have greeted in you all Mexican Catholics, yes, all Mexico, all the Prelates, all the clergy--that admirable Mexican clergy--all the laity, but first and foremost that beloved and generous Mexican youth. Tell them that We know all they are doing, that We know they are fighting, and how they are fighting in that great war which can be called the battle of Christ. . . .<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>De la Peza to Gasparri, April 9, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>66</sup>López Ortega, pp. 62, 63.

How much the Pope knew at this time of the armed risings is not certain. There is no evidence to link these remarks to the January outbreaks--although such is possible. The words may have been spoken in a spirit of imagery and not intended as approbation of rebellion. But Mexicans could take them as an indication of strong approval.

Throughout January the Vatican mounted a diplomatic effort on behalf of Mexico's Catholics. On the 10th the Holy See, through the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, called the attention of the U.S. government to the "barbarous religious persecution" in Mexico, where "ordinary acts of religious worship, even in private homes, are prohibited and punished as crimes," and where women wearing black in mourning over the situation were being harassed in the streets. "On account of these circumstances [we] beg the Government of the United States, in the name of religion and civilization, to make to the Government of the Republic of Mexico any remonstrance which may be opportune."<sup>67</sup> A few days later, the Vatican urged all nations maintaining diplomatic relations with the Holy See to take action on behalf of the Mexican Catholics.<sup>68</sup>

Doubtless a large part of Rome's information and advice came from the three prelates of the Bishops' Commission, whose sympathies were wholeheartedly and actively with the League and the armed movement. When Bishop Francis Kelley of Oklahoma, a veteran champion of the Church cause in Mexico, visited Rome in January, they addressed him on the subject: The principal armed nuclei in Mexico, they told him, were made up of Catholics, who, having exhausted all peaceful means, had the full right to take up arms. Catholics, they said, had been the ones who had felt more than any the

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<sup>67</sup>Fumasoni-Biondi to Kellogg, January 10, 1927, DSR 812.404/737.

<sup>68</sup>Fletcher, Rome, to SecState, January 29, 1927, DSR 812.404/749.



attack in Mexico against religious liberties and all other liberties. The Holy See, they told Kelley, had never given the slightest indication that it disapproved of the armed resistance, that "moreover, the Secretary of State, Cardinal Gasparri, has told us that Catholics are exercising their rights." The most prominent organization leading the movement, they said, was the League, whose leaders were worthy of the Episcopate's full confidence. Armed intervention by the United States, they insisted, had never been desired; ". . . nevertheless, we declare that the first and most urgent need of Catholics and of the Church itself in Mexico, is that American citizens, especially Catholics, give help SPECIFICALLY IN THE FINANCIAL FIELD to Mexicans who have raised the banner of freedom." Once liberty was gained, they said, the future would be bright. Catholics in Mexico had always been noted for their sprit of enterprise and progress: commercial relations with the United States would flourish, and the active and secure flow of capital facilitated.<sup>69</sup>

González Valencia went the furthest in giving open and public support to the rebels. In a pastoral letter directed to his archdiocese in February he said he had consulted the best theologians in Rome on the matter of armed action, and that the Catholics should be tranquil in conscience on the subject.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>"Memorandum que la Comisión de Obispos Mexicanos ante la Santa Sede presentó a Mons. Kelly," January 17, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>70</sup>Copy in LA-1. The pastoral was printed by the League in pamphlet form and widely distributed. The document has been erroneously cited by Walter Lippmann and others, who have claimed that it reported Pius XI approving and blessing the rebellion. The context does not show this. González Valencia's reference to the Pope said that the Pontiff hoped the people would persevere in their trials with firm resolve; reference to the armed action, which does include González Valencia's own approval of it, comes later in the letter, where the Pope is not mentioned. See Walter Lippmann, "The Church and State in Mexico: American Mediation," Foreign Affairs, VIII (January, 1930), 186-207.

There was no immediate response by the Vatican to De la Peza's plea; but the three bishops did their best. On April 15th they wrote to both Buckley and Brady warmly endorsing the League's efforts and asking them to lend all assistance possible through the League's authorized representatives in the United States.<sup>71</sup>

But the views of the militant Bishops' Commission and of Capistrán Garza did not go unchallenged in Rome. On April 11th Pascual Díaz arrived for the first of several visits to the Eternal City.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>González Valencia, Valverde y Téllez, Méndez del Río to Nicholas Brady and William Buckley, April 15, 1927, cited in Blanco Gil, El clamor, pp. 143, 144.

<sup>72</sup>Rius Facius, Méjico cristero, p. 208.

## CHAPTER VI

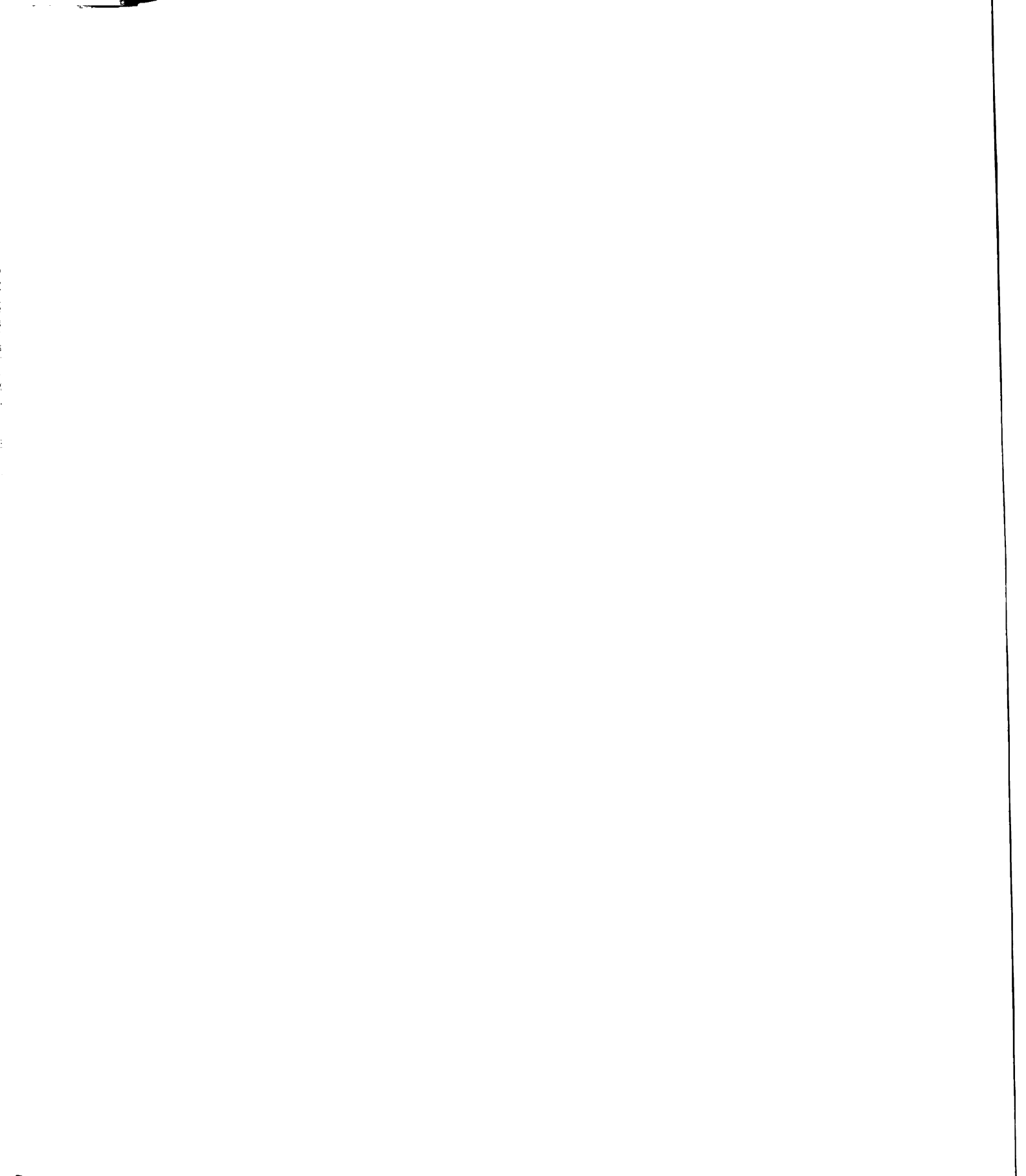
### STALEMATE

In March there was another attempt at the highest level to settle the conflict. Alvaro Obregón, already an undeclared candidate to succeed Calles in the presidency in 1928, returned to Mexico City from his home in Sonora on February 25th aboard the presidential train. The President and key government officials met him at the station and accompanied him to Chapultepec Castle.<sup>1</sup> There began a round of banquets and receptions in honor of the "Hero of Celaya." A few weeks later, in the midst of his busy schedule, Obregón moved quietly and unofficially into the religious controversy. On March 16th, working through Eduardo Mestre, who had arranged the August conference between Calles and the bishops, he contacted the Episcopal Committee and asked it to send a representative to meet with him.<sup>2</sup> The conference took place several days later, with Ruiz y Flores and Valdespino representing the Hierarchy. Obregón asked the bishops for a written statement of their conditions for a settlement. When this was handed to him (its contents are not known) Obregón immediately characterized it as "intransigent" and said he would not even show it to Calles. The next day he asked to meet with some bishop who had not participated in the talks with Calles the previous August. The prelates

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<sup>1</sup>On January 22nd Calles promulgated a constitutional amendment which allowed a former president to run for the office again after an intervening term. New York Times, January 23, 1927, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ríos Facius, Méjico cristero, pp. 213, 214.



detailed Fulcheri of Zamora, who conferred with Obregón early on the morning of March 23rd on the terrace at Chapultepec. Obregón proposed that public worship be resumed and that the Episcopate trust the government to pursue a reasonable course in religious matters. Fulcheri refused to agree, and the meeting ended. Calles wired the state governors: "General Obregón's negotiations to settle the religious conflict failed because of the intransigence of the Bishops, who are asking a return to the situation they enjoyed before the Laws of Reform."<sup>3</sup>

There were rumors that some kind of accord was being arranged, and on the 25th reporters asked Obregón if it were true that he had tried to mediate the conflict. Obregón replied in the negative, saying that he had in no way meddled in the religious question and that only officials of the federal government had authority in the matter.<sup>4</sup>

The League was upset when it learned of the talks. The Directive Committee feared that the bishops were about to reach some arrangement with the government which would undercut its leadership of the Catholic resistance. Palomar y Vizcarra wrote to González Valencia that the negotiations between the bishops and Obregón had caused "confusion" and a feeling of bitterness in the ranks of dedicated Catholics.<sup>5</sup> Ruiz y Flores went to the heart of the matter in a letter to Pascual Díaz:

The League was alarmed and came to believe that because of the approval the [Episcopal] Committee had given to its plans--the actual extent of such approval is already known--the bishops were obliged not to make a move in these matters without consulting it first, and they went so far as to threaten us that if the armed movement should fail they would proclaim that we were to blame.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 214; Carreño, pp. 159-162.

<sup>4</sup>El Universal, March 26, 1927, pp. 1, 12.

<sup>5</sup>Palomar y Vizcarra to González Valencia, March 28, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>6</sup>Ruiz y Flores to Díaz, July 26, 1927, cited in Carreño, p. 160.

It was a theme that would become increasingly dominant.

By February the rebellion was reduced but by no means suffocated. In Jalisco numerous rebel groups were quiet but intact; some, notably those under Father Vega, El Catorce, Luis Ibarra, Guadalupe Gómez, and the Cueva brothers (these last were flamboyant types in the El Catorce style) kept up hit and run attacks in rural areas and engaged government forces sporadically.<sup>7</sup> On March 10th the federal command in the state began an offensive in Los Altos with War Minister Joaquín Amaro in personal command. Within a few days Amaro reported that a number of rebel-held towns had been retaken.<sup>8</sup> In southern Zacatecas the Libres de Jalpa, who had been inactive during February, were on the move early in March. On the 5th, together with another Cristero force, they assaulted Tlaltenango, northwest of Jalpa, but retreated late in the day when a federal column of 600 men approached.<sup>9</sup>

In Colima, efforts to suppress the rebellion were all but futile. U.S. Consul Eaton reported that popular sympathy was overwhelmingly with the Cristeros. He said a pattern had set in of federal and state authorities continually releasing victory bulletins which were patently false. By March Cristero bands were raiding into the outskirts of the capital, and the governor and other officials were sleeping in the government palace for protection. Rebels put the power plant out of commission, and the city was without electricity most of the month. Brutality, Eaton said, was the order of the day. While he believed that government forces had been mainly

<sup>7</sup>Navarrete, pp. 126-128.

<sup>8</sup>El Universal, March 11, 1927, p. 1; March 12, p. 1; New York Times, March 12, 1927, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup>Ceniceros y Villarreal.

responsible for executing non-combatants and had thereby badly antagonized the populace, he added that the Cristeros were far from averse to summary treatment of their enemies. On one incursion into the City of Colima they hanged pro-government peons from trees along a main boulevard. The first week in March rebels took Suchitlán, north of the capital, which was protected by only a home guard of twelve men--all of whom were shot or hanged to shouts of Viva Cristo Rey! A few days later the same band repeated the performance at nearby Chapa, where only two of the defenders escaped. It was a common Cristero practice, Eaton said, to execute local government leaders. Early in April, on a raid into Villa de Alvarez, a suburb of the capital, rebels killed the mayor; after looting the coffers of local government offices they moved west to Coquititlán, third city in size in the state, where they executed the agrarista mayor and stayed for two days. They then followed the rail line to the Pacific resort town of Cuyutlán, where the mayor escaped death only by paying a 1,000 peso ransom.<sup>10</sup>

General Ferreira failed utterly to dislodge the Cristeros from their redoubt around the Colima Volcano--he achieved nothing more spectacular, said Eaton, than the shooting of a number of civilians and the burning of some small ranches. General Beltrán, who was considered the best federal officer in the state, was forced to withdraw from the same area after an all-day engagement in which he suffered heavy casualties. On March 23rd, General Manuel Avila Camacho arrived from Jalisco and was soon in action in the area of the Volcano--with no measurable success. By late April, government forces had abandoned the countryside and held only a few urban centers in the state. Aware that a different approach was called for, the leadership hurried plans for a multi-pronged campaign aimed at liquidating

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<sup>10</sup>Eaton, Manzanillo, to Consul General, April 25, 1927, DSR 812.00/28385.

the enclave at Caucentla.<sup>11</sup>

By early April organized Cristero activity, with isolated and unimportant exceptions, was limited to Jalisco, Colima, Guanajuato, Guerrero, Zacatecas, and Michoacán--the government publicly admitted the existence of "relatively large" rebel forces in the first four.<sup>12</sup> As for how many rebels were under arms, the League evidently was as uncertain as the government. The leaders believed the number was close to 10,000--a figure that was perhaps high; but the government's public estimate that there were only 600 rebels fighting in Jalisco was almost certainly low.<sup>13</sup>

The overwhelming problem for the Cristeros was lack of ammunition. Arms, while never in excess, were seldom a major concern. Years of strife in Mexico had left quantities of weapons in public and private hands, and from the first large numbers of these flowed into rebel hands. Eaton said that nearly half of a consignment of 100 rifles shipped to Colima from Mexico City was captured by the rebels within a few weeks.<sup>14</sup> When Heriberto Navarrete visited Luis Ibarra and his band in southern Jalisco in early February he was told that guns could be taken from the enemy; the desperate need was cartridges.<sup>15</sup>

Leaders of the movement in Guadalajara were devoting most of their attention to the supply problem. In March González Flores sent Navarrete to Mexico City to demand help from the League. In the capital, Navarrete found a vigorous and well functioning underground traffic in war materials,

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>El Universal, April 4, 1927, p. 1; Navarrete, pp. 130, 131.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Eaton to Consul General, April 25, 1927, DSR 812.00/28385

<sup>15</sup>Navarrete, p. 127.



and within two weeks he succeeded in dispatching some 30,000 rounds of ammunition to the west. The network involved an array of people and transport routes. A worker in a cement factory would slip a package of shells into a bag of cement destined for Guadalajara; the owner of a vegetable stand would hide two or three thousand bullets in crates of cabbages, which would then sail peacefully down the Xochimilco canal to a freight depot, where a railway agent awaiting their arrival would see them safely aboard a train; a vendor peddling rebozos a block from the National Palace would sell a certain person one of his creations with a packet of shells carefully wrapped inside. Most of the supplies went west by regular freight train; they might complete the last few kilometers of their journey in the bottoms of sacks of coal being transported over rural trails on the backs of burros.<sup>16</sup> The system was ingenious and efficient, but at best it was woefully inadequate to sustain military operations on the scale the leadership knew was necessary.

The rebellion gained its first eminent martyr the first day of April. Anacleto González Flores in the first months of 1927 was the personification of the movement in western Mexico. He was the head of the League in Jalisco, president of the Unión Popular, and leader of a secret elite organization called the "U."<sup>17</sup> He was overall chief of military operations, commissioning

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 127-129.

<sup>17</sup> Little is known of this organization except that it was a militantly Catholic, highly secret society that always refused to sacrifice its independence to other authority. Its origins are obscure, but it may have started in Michoacán in the early 1920's. Throughout the conflict it crossed swords periodically with the League, despite the fact that a number of influential leaders, including González Flores and Jesús Degollado Guizar, belonged to both organizations. The League archive contains numerous references to the society, most of them complaints from the League Directors that the "U" was undercutting League authority.

Cristero officers and doing his best to coordinate overall strategy. He had been sought by authorities since late December, and as it became evident that he was the kingpin in the rebellion in the west efforts to find him were intensified. Government agents apparently picked up the trail in León, Guanajuato, where a young ACJM member inadvertently provided a clue that led to the capture.<sup>18</sup>

At midnight on March 31st combined units of secret police from Mexico City and city police in Guadalajara raided four homes in the Jalisco capital belonging to persons known to be involved in rebel activity. In one of them, that belonging to Dr. Antonio Vargas, they found the Maestro. They also captured the two Vargas sons, Jorge and Ramón, and Luis Padilla, a close associate of the leader. All four were taken to the Colorado Barracks. González Flores and two of the others were interrogated under torture throughout the night and early morning. Suspended by their thumbs and alternately whipped and lacerated with bayonet points, they gave no information--the Maestro encouraged the others to remain silent through the ordeal. At noon on April 1st all four were executed. González Flores's last words were, "I die, but God does not die. Viva Cristo Rey!"<sup>19</sup>

The afternoon train for Mexico City left Guadalajara on schedule Tuesday, April 19th. Like most trains in Mexico in recent months, it carried a troop escort. Around 8:30, at a point just north of La Barca,

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<sup>18</sup>Navarrete, pp. 132, 133. Navarrete absolved the young man from any hint of treachery, although not from carelessness.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 134; Gómez Robledo, pp. 188, 189; Blanco Gil, p. 128. José Pérez, General Ferreira's private secretary, later said the executions were carried out on express orders from Calles. José Pérez, "La Muerte del Gral. Ferreira: Quién era este jefe fallecido," Hoy, February 19, 1938, p. 30; Barquín y Ruiz, Los mártires, I, 248, 249.

Jalisco, the train derailed when it struck a section of roadbed where the track had been torn up. It was immediately attacked by a large force of Cristero guerrillas. The military escort returned the fire and a general action ensued which ended when the defenders were overwhelmed several hours later. The Cristeros then collected over 100,000 pesos being shipped to Mexico City in the baggage car, set fire to the train, and departed.<sup>20</sup>

No one disagreed on the essential facts of the assault, but there were sharp discrepancies regarding important details. The Mexico City press reported the incident with huge headlines on the 21st. The papers printed the text of a dispatch sent to Calles by the Chief of Staff of the Ministry of War and Marine from Yurécuaro, near the scene of the action. It said the attack had been led by the priests Vega, Pedroza, and Angulo, and by Gómez Loza of the League; that after having killed the escort (which fought gallantly to the last man) the rebels threw themselves "like wild beasts" on the defenseless passengers with gun and knife, treating the occupants of the second class coach with especial cruelty; and that they then set fire to the train, burning the wounded alive. The press also carried a statement from General José Alvarez of the President's staff, who said that the priests involved "receive instructions from the Episcopate in this capital." Alvarez added:

Our only comment on such sad events is to call to the attention of the sensible people of the Republic, and most especially to the needy classes to which the second class passengers belonged who were so barbarously burned alive by this clerical gang, the kind of moral level held by those who want to constitute themselves the spiritual directors of our nation and assume power-something which, after all, is not to be wondered at, since it is only an exact repetition of the methods the Catholic Church has used from the Inquisition to the present.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Ríos Facius, Méjico cristero, pp. 214, 215; New York Times, April 22, 1927, pp. 1, 3. El Universal, April 21, 1927, p. 1. The Times story said an estimated 100 passengers and forty-eight soldiers were killed.

<sup>21</sup>El Universal, April 21, 1927, p. 1.

The League's version of the train attack appeared a few days later in the form of a bulletin printed for hand distribution. It did not deny that Cristeros had perpetrated the assault, and it ignored the matter of clergy being involved. But it insisted that the escort, although begged by the conductor and passengers to leave the train or fight from a separate car, had taken cover behind the passengers, mainly in the second class; that after the battle the attackers treated the passengers correctly, and that it was definitely reported there were no wounded in the second class car when it burned. The League statement added that most of the survivors blamed the escort for the loss of life, and it accused the government of ordering troop escorts on trains to use the passengers as shields in case of attacks. While it was not up to the League, the bulletin continued, to answer for the incident--that was the concern of those directing the forces in the field--nevertheless it was licit to attack trains being used for military purposes provided efforts were made to protect non-combatants. Even if the attackers had been guilty of excesses, the statement went on, it ill behooved those who for seventeen years had been guilty of horrible crimes, of which the brutal death of González Flores was a recent example, to be scandalized at atrocities. The clergy, it concluded, was with few exceptions not involved in the armed struggle and none had received authorization from the Episcopate to lead armed groups; the government was fundamentally responsible for the train tragedy and had distorted the facts in order to "cast opprobrium on our glorious army of liberators, our beloved priests, our venerable prelates, and the Catholic Church, making these appear as a mob of thieves, assassins and arsonists."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>League Bulletin No. 28, April 30, 1927, enclosed in Sheffield to SecState, May 10, 1927, DSR 812.404/791. The New York Times reports tended to support the League version; they quoted passengers as saying that the high loss of life was due to the escort entering the passenger cars and

Ruiz y Flores, in the name of the Episcopal Committee, issued a statement on the 21st denying that the bishops had been involved. The Episcopate, he insisted, had organized no rebellion; the alleged cruelties attendant upon the train attack were, if true, reprehensible, but the Church could not be held responsible. The responsibility, he said, lay with "those who have provoked this situation. . . ."23

Whatever the facts of the case, the government took extraordinary measures. On the afternoon of the 21st the police arrested Archbishops Mora y del Río and Ruiz y Flores and four other bishops and took them to the Ministry of Gobernación.<sup>24</sup> There they were confronted by Adalberto Tejeda, who accused them of being responsible for crime and bloodshed and of fomenting and directing the rebellion. Mora y del Río denied the accusations and told the Minister there was no proof to support them. There ensued a brief and terse verbal duel:

Tejeda:                      What are you doing, then?

Mora y del Río:      Everyone is aware that we have used all peaceful means to solve the conflict and avoid the bloody struggle. We have taught what is Catholic doctrine: that it is lawful to defend what is right, even with arms, when all peaceful methods have been exhausted, and this we cannot contradict. We are not directing the Catholics who have risen in arms, but we approve of them and bless them.

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fighting from there. The survivors did say that although the assailants ordered the passengers out of the cars before setting fire to them, some of the wounded were unable to crawl to safety and perished inside. The Times also reported that the Cristeros robbed the passengers as well as the baggage car. New York Times, April 21, 1927, p. 1; April 22, pp. 1, 3.

<sup>23</sup>Sheffield to SecState, April 26, 1927, DSR 812.404/780. Sheffield enclosed a copy of the statement, which he said was not printed in the Mexican press due to censorship.

<sup>24</sup>Sheffield to SecState, April 23, 1927, DSR 812.404/799. The four bishops were Valdespino of Aguascalientes, Echavarría of Saltillo, Anaya of Chiapas, and Uranga of Cuernavaca.

Tejeda: Then it is not proper that there exist in Mexico a religion that seeks to overthrow a constituted government.

Mora y del Río: It is clear to all, and history will record, that you people are not a constituted government.

Tejeda: This is not the time to argue. You are being expelled from the country.

Mora y del Río: Do as you wish.<sup>25</sup>

At 9:00 P.M., accompanied by police, the prelates boarded a train leaving Mexico City.<sup>26</sup> Gobernación released a statement to the press which said the bishops, confronted with evidence of their guilt, chose to leave the country rather than stand trial.<sup>27</sup> Ambassador Sheffield, informed of the arrest and expulsion order, immediately alerted the U.S. consuls at both Veracruz and Nuevo Laredo that the bishops might leave the country at one of those points. The place of exit was Texas. The six prelates arrived at Nuevo Laredo the morning of the 23rd. They were detained on the Mexican side of the border until U.S. Consul Walsh arrived and offered to accompany them across to the American side. That afternoon, reporters in Laredo showed the exiles a copy of the government's statement regarding their departure from Mexico. The bishops immediately issued one of their own denying that they had left voluntarily or that they had been given any choice.<sup>28</sup> The next day, Vera y Zuria, Archbishop of Puebla, and the government's long-time nemesis Manríquez y Zárata of Huejutla, also arrived on American soil. Walsh was on hand, and got permission of Mexican authorities to take the two

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<sup>25</sup>The conversation was quoted in League Bulletin No. 28 of April 30, 1927 (LA-1), which claimed to have an eye-witness account of the interview.

<sup>26</sup>Sheffield to SecState, April 23, 1927, DSR 812.404/779; Walsh, Laredo, to Sheffield, April 25, 1927, DSR 812.404/795.

<sup>27</sup>Excelsior, April 23, 1927, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup>New York Times, April 24, 1927, p. 24.

to his home for breakfast while the exit formalities were being completed-- the Archbishop, he reported, was not well. Manríquez y Zárate told newsmen he had been in the state prison in Pachuca for a year.<sup>29</sup> Expulsions of bishops continued into May. Aguirre of Sinaloa and Aspetia Palomar of Nayarit arrived at Nogales, Arizona, on April 25th.<sup>30</sup> On April 26th, the Archbishop of Yucatán was put aboard a ship for Havana.<sup>31</sup> Between May 13th and 17th, Altamirano y Bulnes of Papantla, Campos, formerly bishop of Tabasco, Palcencia of Zacatecas, and Valencia of Veracruz were deported through Laredo, keeping Consul Walsh busy escorting each across the border.<sup>32</sup>

x By April, dissatisfaction with Capistrán Garza was widespread. There were whispers that he was getting rich in the United States; some complained that he had surrounded himself with impulsive and erratic young advisers. The League Directors tried to counter the criticism, but their own confidence in the Supreme Chief had grown thin and at length they decided something must be done: Luis G. Bustos, First Vice President of the Directive Committee, agreed to go to the United States for a first-hand look at the situation.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Walsh to SecState, April 24, 1927, DSR 812.404/776; Walsh to Sheffield, April 25, 1927, DSR 812.404/795; New York Times, April 25, 1927, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> New York Times, April 26, 1927, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., April 27, 1927, p. 27.

<sup>32</sup> Walsh to SecState, May 11, 1927, DSR 812.404/786; May 13, 1927, DSR 812.404/790; May 24, DSR 812.404/794; New York Times, May 14, 1927, p. 5. The expulsions were only one of a number of steps that added up to a general toughening of the government's stance after the train incident. Many Catholics, both lay and clerical, were arrested in late April and early May, and in border towns Mexican officials put a stop to the practice of Mexicans crossing the border to attend Sunday mass in the United States--the government said these persons had been receiving seditious propaganda across the border. See for example Sheffield to SecState, May 3, 1927, DSR 812.404/782; Harper, Piedras Negras, to SecState, June 2, 1927, DSR 812.404/803. The government also imposed censorship on telegraph communications. New York Times, September 14, 1927, p. 26.

<sup>33</sup> Cenicerros y Villarreal.

The Committee gave him full authority to deal with all matters concerning the League, and specified its concerns regarding the entire situation: Capistrán Garza's entrance into Mexico could not be postponed further--delay was lessening his prestige, demoralizing the entire effort, and increasing chances that partisans of Catholic resistance might turn to other movements and other leaders; it was jeopardizing the League's control over the military effort--the El Paso junta in fact had been in touch with some leaders in the field trying to subvert their allegiance and the League had only barely managed to avert a schism. René should not wait until he secured funds; he must move--without being foolhardy, of course. A landing in Tampico might be considered as one possibility--René's friend Marroquines Herrera was organizing a move in the Huasteca and would support him. Another possibility was Jalisco, where despite appearances the government had by no means triumphed; Carlos Blanco alone had 3,000 men concentrated there and was in the process of rearming them. Many other groups in Los Altos had dispersed on orders from the League to harvest crops, but these would soon rise again. The movement in Michoacán showed promise. In short, a second offensive was being readied and Capistrán Garza must be personally a part of it.<sup>34</sup>

Bustos left Mexico City in disguise, crossed the border without incident, and on May 12th the Directors received his first report. It was not encouraging. Bustos told his colleagues that René had alienated even some of those who sincerely wanted to support him, while others who were uncommitted had tried to get interviews with him but had not even received replies. Bustos said some of the Mexican bishops were listening to "chiefs

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<sup>34</sup>Directive Committee to Luis G. Bustos, May 3, 1927. Memorandum appended.LA-1.



of opposition parties."<sup>35</sup> On the 21st Bustos wrote from New York, where he had met with Capistrán Garza. The failure to move, he said, was partly the fault of René and his group, partly not--he commented that their vision was a bit limited.<sup>36</sup> The League Directors were now entirely out of patience. They replied on June 1st that they deduced from what Bustos reported that Capistrán Garza and associates were working exclusively on financial matters, and that in this they had failed; they would not be surprised if René even went to Europe in search of funds, leaving the beleaguered fighters in Mexico to perish: "This is the most terrible aspect of the whole thing. . ."<sup>3</sup>

Matters came rapidly to a head. Capistrán Garza received a report that Emmanuel Amor, his agent in Washington, had approached the Mexican Ambassador, asking his aid in opening access to the U.S. government; he asked Bustos to repudiate Amor publicly. Instead, Bustos wired Amor saying he refused to believe the report and asking for details. Capistrán Garza was irked at Bustos' refusal to follow his advice, and said so. Bustos told him to calm down, that he would handle the matter, whereupon Capistrán Garza submitted his resignation--which Bustos refused to accept.<sup>38</sup> At this point, Mesa Gutiérrez, whom the Directors had sent from Mexico City to assist Bustos, and Father Martínez del Campo, a long-time League adviser, invited René to San Antonio for a talk. After some hesitation he went, but wired first saying that he was indeed resigning and would subordinate himself to Bustos. By the time he reached San Antonio, however, his spirits had revived. He brought news that the Brady matter once again

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<sup>35</sup>Ceniceros y Villarreal.

<sup>36</sup>Bustos to Directive Committee, May 21, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>37</sup>Directive Committee to Bustos, June 1, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>38</sup>"Informe del Dr. Mesa Gutiérrez al Comité Directivo de la Liga, en la sesión plenaria del 3 de julio de 1927," cited in Ríos Facius, México cristero, p. 209.

looked promising: the Bishops' Commission in Rome had just reported that Monsignor Bernardini, an official at the Apostolic Delegation in Washington and a nephew of Gasparri, was intervening to urge Brady to support the cause. De la Peza had written to Brady enclosing a copy of the Bishops' letter and asking for an interview.<sup>39</sup> Capistrán Garza now said he was not resigning as head of the movement inside Mexico; he would cross the border soon. This, however, was not entirely acceptable to Bustos (who had joined the group in San Antonio). After some protracted discussion, he and Capistrán Garza addressed a joint memorandum to the Directive Committee on June 29th. Bustos proposed that Capistrán Garza continue at the head of the movement but that his actions be subject to Bustos' approval. Capistrán Garza said he could not agree to this; he admitted that he had not been taken seriously in the United States (Bustos, he added had been well received there) but insisted he was entirely capable of carrying out his duties as head of the movement in Mexico.<sup>40</sup> But the closing days of June saw the collapse of Capistrán Garza's motives for optimism. After meeting with De la Peza, Brady wrote him that he had decided definitely not to proceed with the matter.<sup>41</sup>

Mesa Gutiérrez returned to Mexico City July 3rd and went immediately into conference with Ceniceros y Villarreal, Palomar y Vizcarra, and several of the Directive Committee's advisers. The session was a frank review of the entire situation both foreign and domestic. The tone was

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 209. Presumably Bernardini was acting on instructions from higher authority, but from whom is not clear, nor is there any record available of exactly what he told Brady. There is in fact no positive evidence that Brady ever received a letter from Bernardini. In his letter to De la Peza of June 27th breaking off negotiations he said only that he was returning the papers De la Peza had left him. See Carreño, p. 286.

<sup>40</sup>Bustos and Capistrán Garza to Directive Committee, June 29, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>41</sup>Brady to De la Peza, cited in Carreño. p. 286.

generally doleful: The League's diplomatic efforts in the United States had failed and its financial gestures there had likewise come to nought; the oilmen had backed off--unless Washington indicated a favorable attitude toward the movement they would not help. The U.S. bishops would not contribute financially--they were reported as saying that their Mexican counterparts were capable of helping financially but had not. The League's representatives in the United States had badly neglected to keep in close touch with the Mexican bishops there--when the prelates reached American soil they had received only nice letters from the League, while Félix Díaz and others had received them warmly and even honored them at a banquet. Bustos had met with key members of the El Paso junta and seemed to feel that the junta was not as wrong minded as had been believed; they simply considered that since their group pre-dated the naming of Capistrán Garza to the leadership, they deserved precedence over him. Bustos had succeeded in winning the junta over; Father Alvarez, the most prominent member, had finally agreed that the body would adhere to the League and that its funds would be at the League's disposal whether or not Capistrán Garza continued in command--although the junta was firmly opposed to him. As for Félix Díaz, Bustos considered him to be nothing but a big fraud. Both he and García Naranjo should be allowed to participate in the movement only to the extent that they could contribute men and supplies. There were, the conferees thought, a few encouraging elements. Both the Pope and Gasparri seemed to be wholly sympathetic to the League, and there were reports that Pascual Díaz had not been warmly received in Rome; another rumor had it that the Pope had told a member of the Bishops' Commission that he not only approved the League's work but that the bishops should support it, even financially, to the best of their ability. The three bishops in Rome had formed an organization to

collect money for the cause. But the military situation, all agreed, was in serious trouble.<sup>42</sup> Without money, organization, or adequate planning, it had been essentially a failure thus far.<sup>42</sup> Finally the discussion turned to Capistrán Garza, of whom Mesa Gutiérrez was sharply critical.\* After considerable debate the Committee decided to accept his resignation from the leadership both in the United States and in Mexico.<sup>43</sup>

It was the end of the young leader's short revolutionary careers. On July 24th the San Antonio La Prensa carried a statement from him saying that he was separated from the League's political activity but would continue his adherence to the League and its cause. He said he would refrain from publicly criticizing the League because he did not wish to do to the organization what so many Mexican Catholics in the United States had done to him.<sup>44</sup> Palomar y Vizcarra later wrote to González Valencia that René's separation was due to his impetuous character, a certain deficiency of temperament, and his failure to enter Mexico when "torrents of blood were flowing." He also blamed René's adviser, Emmanuel Amor, for giving inaccurate information on conditions in Washington. And finally, Palomar y Vizcarra asserted, the Directors were led to believe that if René were replaced, certain U.S. bishops would cooperate for the success of the armed movement. The decision was a hard one, he said, but René had behaved bravely and well in his tribulation; he was in Texas, humbly engaged in raising chickens.<sup>45</sup>

In the eyes of the League Directors and many others, Capistrán Garza's

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<sup>42</sup>"Resumen de lo que se dijo en la junta del 3 de julio de 1927," memorandum signed by Martínez Silva, LA-1.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>"Carta-Declatoria de René Capistrán Garza," copy in LA-1.

<sup>45</sup>Palomar y Vizcarra to González Valencia, September 22, 1927, LA-1.

almost exclusive preoccupation with finance had been his mistake; but all realized that failure to get money could mean the failure of the entire effort. The League had made imaginative attempts. Early in 1927 it initiated a campaign to raise funds by selling bonds. In March League personnel were circulating them in Mexico, and by May efforts were being pressed to sell them in Europe.<sup>46</sup> Inside Mexico the campaign brought down strong government reaction: some 180 persons were arrested in Mexico City in June for involvement in the drive.<sup>47</sup> In July state governors were told to be on the lookout to prevent distributions of "Liberty Bonds" and "Mexican Liberty Stamps."<sup>48</sup> Such efforts apparently failed to produce significant results.\* There was, however, a source of cash which League leaders had been eyeing for some time. Early in June, in one of his frequent letters to Archbishop González Valencia, Palomar y Vizcarra said that the Pope should order the Mexican bishops to give all they had or controlled to the cause; if they did so, prelates of other nationalities would also give: "We know that there are large sums in banks in the United States belonging to the *Colegiata*,<sup>49</sup> the Archdiocese of Michoacán, and to others."<sup>50</sup>

When the Brady negotiation collapsed later the same month, the spotlight turned directly and glaringly to the bishops. On June 30th Luis Bustos addressed a long letter to the Episcopal Committee (now quartered in San Antonio). The one essential ingredient needed to propel the movement

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<sup>46</sup>See for example Juan Farías, Monterrey, to Directive Committee, March 21, 1927; Directive Committee to Luz Goribar de Philippe, May 30, 1927; Palomar y Vizcarra to Father David G. Ramírez, June 2, 1927. LA-1.

<sup>47</sup>El Universal, June 14, 1927, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup>Circular No. 52, Ministry of Gobernación to Governor of Coahuila, July 16, 1927. Archives, State of Coahuila, Legajo 10, 1927.

<sup>49</sup>Probably the canonical chapter of the Basilica of Guadalupe.

<sup>50</sup>Palomar y Vizcarra to González Valencia, June 6, 1927, LA-1.

forward, he said, was money: "Without it, it is impossible to undertake a serious campaign. We are not disposed to send out soldiers again to a barren sacrifice." Without funds the movement would die, he warned, and if that happened religion would be dead in Mexico for many years and perhaps forever. The League had done everything possible to raise money but at the moment those efforts must be counted a failure. In Mexico money was scarce, he stated, and the wealthy were selfish; moreover, potential donors were understandably afraid of persecution. Private individuals and groups in the United States, including the oilmen, had indicated they would not contribute without some indication of approval from the State Department. Such a benevolent attitude did exist in Washington, Bustos insisted, but it would not show itself until the movement inside Mexico gave substantial signs of success. It was therefore a vicious circle. Even the unofficial intervention of Rome (apparently a reference to Monsignor Bernardini's supposed intercession) had not succeeded. The only hope left, Bustos said, was the Mexican Episcopate. When the prelates had suspended public worship and acquiesced in the resort to armed defense, they surely understood the necessity of seeing the thing through to the end; furthermore, ". . . it is known to be the desire of the Holy Father that the Episcopate actively help the League."<sup>x</sup> It was also known, Bustos went on, that the Mexican bishops had money in Mexico, the United States, and Canada; now was the time to use it. It was time also to sell the sacred vessels--eminent theologians in Rome had already been consulted on this. As for the need of the bishops to stay out of partisan politics, he asserted, the League did not see this as a serious obstacle:

. . . reason indicates and it is evident that the Holy Father has declared that the present movement of legitimate self defense is not the action of a political party, but rather the heroic resistance of a people. . . . It is clear to us, and it is also clear to you, that in accordance with what is thought in Rome, the Episcopate should stretch forth its hand to this noble cause.

The whole matter, he assured the prelates, would be kept entirely secret-- although even if it should become known the effect would be beneficial. Specifically, the League needed \$500,000: \$200,000 within two weeks, the rest within a month.<sup>51</sup>

The bishops replied on July 4th.<sup>\*</sup> They told Bustos that as custodians of ecclesiastical funds and property they could not dispose of these without orders or authorization from the Holy See.<sup>52</sup> Bustos answered immediately, asking the Episcopal Committee to apply for the permission needed and adding that the League would also work to obtain the necessary mandate from Rome.<sup>53</sup>

On July 10th Mora y del Río wrote Valverde y Téllez in Rome that the bishops were meeting the next day to act on the League's request that they approach Rome. The Primate was obviously ill at ease over the whole matter. The League seemed to believe, he said--as did many others--that the Church in Mexico had preserved great wealth, while the fact was that after some eighty years of continual plundering there was very little left. Even one of the bishops, he noted, was mistaken on this point.<sup>54</sup> To comply with the League's request for financial help would be to endanger what little had been salvaged from the wreckage; furthermore, any attempt to dispose of the devotional objects would arouse the opposition of towns and villages whose inhabitants had treasured these for generations. The people would object strenuously "especially when it involves inditos, who have been the

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<sup>51</sup>Bustos to Episcopal Committee, June 30, 1927, LA-1; Ríos Facius, Méjico cristero, p. 220.

<sup>52</sup>Gerardo Anaya to Bustos, July 4, 1927, LA-1. Anaya, Bishop of Chiapas, was serving as secretary to the Committee.

<sup>53</sup>Bustos to Anaya, July 10, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>54</sup>The reference may have been to Manríquez y Zárate, referred to by Anaya in his letter to Bustos of July 12 as the contact between the Committee and Bustos.

most conservative--to the extent that they do not even trust the priests."

Even if all available resources were turned over to the League, who, the Archbishop wondered, would administer them? Would they really and effectively serve their object? And when it all became known, as was bound to happen, what then would be the Episcopate's predicament?<sup>55</sup>

On the 12th, the Committee informed Bustos that the bishops were entirely agreeable to the League's approaching Rome on the subject, and that the Episcopal Committee was sending a full report on the League's request to the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, who was the Committee's line of communication with the Holy See.<sup>56</sup> In his letter to the Delegate, Mora y del Río said the bishops would do as Rome might direct in the matter, but he wished to point out a number of considerations: The few holdings left to the Church were in general either subject to the will of the donors or reserved to maintain cabildos, seminaries and charitable institutions. It was not true that there existed vessels and other religious treasures worth millions of pesos; what there was, if worth 100,000, would not bring 10,000 if mortgaged or 5,000 if sold. Chalices, vestments, ornaments, images and the like were either in the hands of village Indians, who would never part with them, or were hidden in private homes, where attempts to get them could seriously endanger those who had undertaken to hide them; and even if this were attempted, it would take months to complete such an operation. As for the bishops making themselves collectively responsible for a loan--another move the League was suggesting--this would require the express approval of the Holy See and the acquiescence of each bishop. The amount so raised would surely fall far short of the League's needs--needs which, Mora

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<sup>55</sup>Mora y del Río to Valverde y Téllez, July 10, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>56</sup>Anaya to Bustos, July 12, 1927, LA-1.



y del Río pointed out, were very large indeed, if victory were to be won:

One must take into account the crushing material superiority of the enemy to be combatted, protected in fact by the gigantic power of this nation [the United States]. We speak of gigantic power, because we have experienced it in all the Mexican revolutions protected by it: always victorious, backed openly or covertly by the White House. It is a fact, however much one may wish to obscure it, that this people [the American] does not look kindly on its government protecting a movement with a religious complexion. The bishops, by becoming the financial agents of the League's armed movement, would give it that complexion.

He said that he and fifteen other bishops (two of whom dissented somewhat from the view of the rest) were opposed to meeting the League's request for money.<sup>57</sup>

On July 11th Bustos wrote to González Valencia urging his help in getting the needed instructions or permission from the Pope to the bishops.<sup>58</sup> González Valencia--ever the staunch supporter of the League--wrote back immediately congratulating Bustos on his efforts and urging him to hold firm.<sup>59</sup> This crossed with another letter from Bustos, which in addition to pressing the financial matter asked that the Pope be urged not to accept any dealings with the Calles government unless derogation of the anti-religious laws was insisted upon, and to direct that any peace talks must involve the League as well as the bishops, since the conflict was not only religious but political.<sup>60</sup>

What happened to the various communications in Rome is not known, but it is certain that the Holy See gave no formal instructions in the matter. Ruiz y Flores later said that the bishops were amazed when Bustos told them

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<sup>57</sup> Cited in Carreño, pp. 100-105.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 106, 107.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* Bustos may have had wind of the new peace feeler sponsored by Obregón, which materialized early in August.

the Pope wanted them to help financially--they knew nothing of this. It was learned later, he said, that one of the bishops in Rome had written the League that some cardinal or theologian had said the bishops should contribute, and that the League had interpreted this to be a papal order.<sup>61</sup> Ceniceros y Villarreal said that when the Commission of Bishops in Rome received Bustos' request for assistance, Valverde y Téllez and Méndez del Río talked with Cardinal Buenaventura Cerretti, who told them that Gasparri said yes to the whole matter, provided the funds in question did not have a determined object, such as trust funds for masses; that moreover the Secretary of State had said that if he were a Mexican bishop he would sell all his personal effects for the purpose.<sup>62</sup> It was a pleasing comment, but far from an order.

✦ The money matter showed the degree to which the League and the Episcopate had become self-conscious over their mutual relationship. A line that had been less than clear the year before was now more easily distinguishable. In effect the League was asking the bishops to translate their enthusiastic attitude into very tangible deeds, and this the bishops would not do. They demurred on grounds of practicality: their aid would be insufficient and it might weaken the cause rather than help it. But more was implied. To smile on the probable success of an armed movement in November was one thing, but to go the last mile in support of "the League's armed movement" (as Mora y del Río now called it), which looked far less than imminently victorious in June, was something else. The bishops still hoped fervently that Calles would fall, but if the attempt should fail they were determined not to be drawn under with the wreckage. The material interests

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<sup>61</sup>Ruiz y Flores, p. 88.

<sup>62</sup>Ceniceros y Villarreal, cited in Ríos Facius, Méjico cristero, p. 138.

of the Church were at stake, to be sure, but so also was their own position and with it the entire structure of the Church in Mexico. They were, if somewhat belatedly, moving to maintain, or regain, autonomy of action.

The League in turn was confronting the basic problem of its own nature. It was by its definition a civic association, but it was also essentially Catholic. Success would perhaps make it unnecessary to face the implications of this duality, but adversity magnified them. As a Catholic body, the League had appealed to the Episcopate--and by extension to Rome--for aid, material aid which would imply unmistakable support; as a civic body dedicated to the pursuit of political goals by secular means, that aid had been refused. On the other hand, Bustos and others had become convinced that precisely because the movement appeared to be a Catholic crusade it had failed to win U.S. recognition and support--and they were still unwilling to abandon hope that this might be forthcoming. If a change in the movement's image was the price, then the League was willing to meet it.

By July plans were being made to effect the change. José Tello, secretary of the Directive Committee, wrote to Miguel Gómez Loza (who had replaced González Flores as the League's chief agent in the west) that it was possible and even probable that "without changing fundamentals, there will be some variations in our program, with the exclusive object of assuring the favor and good will of the U.S."<sup>63</sup> On July 31st Bustos met in New York with Alberto María Carreño, whom the Directors had sent to the United States in June to assist Bustos, and José Ortiz Monasterio, a key League military adviser.<sup>64</sup> In the minutes of the meeting, which all three signed, Bustos

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<sup>63</sup>Tello to Gómez Loza, July 23, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>64</sup>Ríos Facius, Méjico cristero, pp. 219, 220; Blanco Gil, pp. 304, 305.

was identified as representing the League, the other two only as representatives of "a group of distinguished and respected Mexicans."<sup>65</sup> The three approved a manifesto drafted by Carreño which provided for the formation of a political party to be called the National Union (Unión Nacional). A tentative party program, also included in the document, proclaimed the re-institution of the Constitution of 1857, minus provisions that conflicted with the bishops' memorial to Congress of September, 1926. It affirmed the party's dedication to improving the lot of the industrial worker and the campesino, without injury to the legitimate interests of capital or of rural property; it guaranteed freedom of education, press, and conscience, and promised free elections and the enforcement of the no-reelection principle. Finally, it pledged that the party would seek an agreement with the U.S. government which would in no way prejudice the dignity and autonomy of the national territory.<sup>66</sup>

Five days later the trio informed Pascual Díaz of their work. They assured him the new party would not act in religious matters without previous agreement of the Episcopate. But Díaz needed little convincing: the project harmonized with views he had held for months. He agreed to communicate it to the other bishops.<sup>67</sup> The three also asked the Bishop to help them get

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<sup>65</sup>Memorandum dated July 31, 1927, LA-1. In an annotation added to the document in 1945, Palomar y Vizcarra said he believed the "group" Carreño and Ortiz claimed to represent existed only in their own minds; he added that he suspected the whole matter was an attempt to put Pascual Díaz in a position to control events.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.; Ríos Facius, Méjico cristero, p. 221. In the discussion, Carreño said that since his arrival in the United States he had become aware, as had the other two, that the League had been opposed because of a fear that its actions might, because of religious intransigence, become terroristic--a "white terror" rather than a "red terror," to be sure, but terror nonetheless--this despite the fact that the League's program clearly showed the contrary to be the case. Memorandum, July 31, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>67</sup>Statement signed August 5, 1927, by Bustos, Carreño and Ortiz Monasterio. LA-1.

the plan before the U.S. government. Díaz later said that this request put him in a difficult position: He could not participate actively in the matter without departing from the Episcopate's decision not to mix in politics directly or indirectly (he did not specify what decision he meant), ". . . but on the other hand I saw so much seriousness, so much judgement and so much patriotism in the project. . . that it seemed to me contrary to the Church and unpatriotic to refuse them any help." He conferred with the Apostolic Delegate, who was also impressed with the plan and immediately designated "certain persons" to communicate the matter to the State Department and ascertain whether the U.S. government would thwart the work of such a movement. The intermediaries reported that the Department found the proposals extremely interesting, that of the many plans it had known of to reorganize Mexico it had not seen any as complete and well thought out.<sup>68</sup>

In Mexico City, the League Directors accepted the program, if somewhat unenthusiastically. The Directive Committee later said that what it hoped from the move was not official U.S. aid, but an end to American protection of "the enemies of Mexico, of freedom, and of the national religion."<sup>69</sup>

At the time, Palomar y Vizcarra wrote to González Valencia that the change was being made in order to attract support in the United States--the bankers, oilmen, and the rest saw the movement as exclusively religious and would not help. The change, he said, seemed to him unnecessary: the cause had always been far from purely religious or clerical. Palomar y Vizcarra also expressed

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<sup>68</sup>Memorandum cronológico para el Sr. Alfredo Méndez, "June 19, 1928, signed by Carreño; Carreño, pp. 342, 343. Díaz said the intermediaries had dealt with the under secretary of state, who was then acting secretary. The intermediaries are unidentified. Díaz to De la Mora, May 30, 1928, LA-1.

<sup>69</sup>Report of the Directive Committee to the League Convention, August, 1929, LA-2.

his distaste at resurrecting the 1857 Constitution, but added that he supposed he could swallow it if necessary.<sup>70</sup>

To Luis G. Bustos, the creation of the Unión Nacional was an act of pure expediency in the summer of 1927. Later he would take it all very seriously indeed, but for the moment he saw it as nothing more than a clever ploy. He had written to González Valencia in July with amazing candor:

In Mexico, the League will continue to function as usual. Here, we will present the movement as the product of a national union, represented by viewpoints and persons from the porfiriismo, the Revolution, and the Catholic rebirth, which encompass all the national aspirations. Liberals, honorable Revolutionists, and Catholics will believe they have an equal voice, if they accept as binding the Episcopate's memorial. In this way, without crippling in the least, without silencing the cry of Viva Cristo Rey, we will throw dust in the eyes of Washington and of the Mexican public, and draw off adherents in Mexico of those aspiring to the presidency who are about to resort to arms.

He said the plan would remain secret--only Mora y del Río knew of it at this stage (July)--and it would be made public only after it had been launched, so that its success would sanction it.<sup>71</sup>

By October, plans for the new party were well advanced. On the 11th Bustos forwarded to the Directors various documents and memoranda relative to the groundwork that had been done; memoranda were also sent to the Episcopal Committee and to the Bishops' Commission in Rome.<sup>72</sup> With the ground well prepared, Bustos hurried to Mexico City to help guide the formal

<sup>70</sup>Palomar y Vizcarra to González Valencia, September 22, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>71</sup>Bustos to González Valencia, July 22, 1927. Copy in possession of Antonio Ríos Facius, cited in Ríos Facius, p. 221. Bustos' remark concerning men about to resort to arms was no doubt a reference to Generals Gómez and Serrano, who were rumored to be planning a revolt to counter Obregón's plans to become president again.

<sup>72</sup>Bustos to Directive Committee, October 11, 1927; "Memorandum cronológico para el Sr. Alfredo Méndez," June 19, 1928. LA-1.

inauguration of the new body.

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Union  
Nacional*

\* The Unión Nacional was formally launched at a meeting in Mexico City on November 11th, chaired by Bustos. The new party's platform was largely a restatement of the principals advocated by the National Catholic Party of the previous decade, with the addition of several items evidently designed to gain official U.S. good will. ✓ The party program called for enactment of advanced social legislation--laws to protect organized labor and provisions for just arbitration of labor disputes; government supervision in matters of working conditions and child labor; the protection of women in industry; pensions for the elderly; and industrial accident insurance. It advocated the division of large landholdings (with just compensation for owners and respect for the rights of private property in general). The party pledged itself to uphold "mutual and effective" independence of church and state and guaranteed the right of all religious denominations to own and administer property. It affirmed its devotion to the principles of effective suffrage and no re-election. The platform pledged the party to defend all national interests, with due respect for the principles of international law. The Constitution of 1857 was declared re-established, with the proviso that it would be reformed so as to guarantee freedom of conscience and association, incorporating the principles contained in the September, 1926 petitions to Congress.<sup>73</sup>

The gathering constituted itself the "National Assembly of the Unión Nacional" and nominated a triumvirate to head a provisional government which would serve in the interim after the overthrow of Calles. Chosen were General José Ortiz Monasterio, representing the porfirista persuasion,

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<sup>73</sup> Minutes of the meeting of the National Assembly, November 11, 1927; proposed project for the Unión Nacional. LA-1.

Emilio Madero, a younger brother of Francisco, representing the Revolution, and Bartolomé Ontiveros, the League's military chairman, to represent the "civic-religious rebirth." Since none of the three was present, the Assembly made provision to inform them and obtain their acceptance. At the end of the evening, having completed its task, the Assembly voted itself out of existence and disbanded.<sup>74</sup> Bustos left for the United States to make what he hoped would be rapid and effective use of the new tool in both official and private circles.<sup>75</sup>

✓ In October the Calles government weathered a crisis that was a greater immediate danger to its existence than the religious struggle. Obregón's determination to re-occupy the presidency--with Calles's support--had stirred up opposition in various quarters, and his formal declaration of candidacy in June brought the more hardy of his enemies out into the open. The anti-Obregón sentiment quickly congealed around two generals, Arnulfo R. Gómez, federal chief of operations in Veracruz, and Francisco R. Serrano, governor of the Federal District, who soon combined forces for the supreme effort. Although they began on a note of high principle, with decorous appeals for support at the ballot box, it was all quite clearly a simple struggle for power quite devoid of ideological content (both generals of course waved the "no-reelection banner, rather unconvincingly). With no real hope of winning an election, Gómez and Serrano by mid-summer were preparing to use more direct methods. Gómez, speaking in Puebla on July 17th, told supporters that he had in mind two locales for Obregón and

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<sup>74</sup>It is not clear whether any of the three nominees to the triumvirate accepted, or whether they were even approached.

<sup>75</sup>"Memorándum cronológico. . . ," June 19, 1927, LA-1.



his cronies: one on the Islas Marías penal colony, the other two meters below ground.<sup>76</sup>

\* The League watched the development of the Gómez-Serrano agitation with considerable anxiety. The Directors feared that (1) it might siphon off Catholic support and (2) that a coup might succeed and thereby undercut the League's own plans for Mexico's future. When Serrano made overtures to the League for some kind of alliance, the Directive Committee played a game of feigned interest while holding him at arm's length in the hope that the threat could somehow be neutralized.<sup>77</sup>

The problem solved itself. Gómez and Serrano made their move on October 2nd. Various units of the federal army joined the revolt, but not enough of them, and after a few tense hours the outcome was clear. Serrano and thirteen of his supporters were captured in Morelos early the next day and hastily shot.<sup>78</sup> Gómez, after failing to gain the upper hand in Veracruz, was hunted down, caught, and on November 5th also executed.<sup>79</sup> The government devoted all of October to mopping up rebel pockets and dealing with those who had gambled their support on the losers. Suppression was ruthless; in Torreón, where the 16th Federal Battalion had revolted, every officer in the unit died before a firing squad.<sup>80</sup>

The government's attempts to cope with the religious rebels had been

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<sup>76</sup>Juan Gualberto Amaya, Los gobiernos de Obregón, Calles y regímenes "peleles" derivados del callismo (Mexico, D.F., 1947), p. 141.

<sup>77</sup>League memorandum, September 1, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>78</sup>El Universal, October 4, 1927, p. 1.

<sup>79</sup>Amaya, p. 150; El Universal, November 6, 1927, p. 1.

<sup>80</sup>Amaya, p. 152.

frustrating in the extreme. Immediately following the train incident in April it sharply intensified efforts to stamp out the rebellion. In Jalisco the first step was a drastic one: On April 24th planes dropped leaflets over rural areas in Los Altos announcing orders for a "reconcentration" of the civilian populace; inhabitants of areas affected by rebel activity were directed to abandon the countryside by May 3rd and move into fifteen designated towns.<sup>81</sup> During the last week of April the federal command completed preparations for an offensive. 4,000 additional cavalry were moved into the state,<sup>82</sup> and a general attack was launched the first week of May. On the 11th the presidential general staff announced that in the past week the rebels had suffered over a hundred casualties and that most of the important "episcopal bands," including those involved in the assault on the Guadalajara-Mexico City train, were in full flight.<sup>83</sup> The same source said on the 23rd that the rebels in Los Altos had been scattered and that many had surrendered.<sup>84</sup> Secretary of War and Marine Amaro, who was personally supervising the campaign, announced the last week of May that Los Altos was in government hands and that the campaign was all but over.<sup>85</sup> U.S. Consul Dwyre in Guadalajara reported that news from the combat areas was conflicting but tended to confirm that the Cristeros, lacking arms and ammunition, were dispersed and that the government seemed to be gaining the upper hand.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Rafael Martínez Camarena, "Rectificando al Mayor Heriberto Navarrete," David, V, No. 120 (July 22, 1962), 388-391; New York Times, April 25, 1927, p. 5.

<sup>82</sup>New York Times, April 28, 1927, p. 10.

<sup>83</sup>El Universal, May 12, 1927, p. 1.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., May 24, 1927, p. 1.

<sup>85</sup>New York Times, May 27, 1927, p. 16.

<sup>86</sup>Dwyre, Guadalajara, to SecState, May 26, 1927, DSR 812.404/799.

The campaign, he said, had been ruthless and, particularly in Los Altos, had brought heavy destruction; many or most of the crops were ruined and suffering was widespread--all of which, he concluded, would no doubt add to "the commercial and industrial depression which has already reached such a critical state."<sup>87</sup> He noted that four priests had been executed in the past few days and that there were rumors of many more.<sup>88</sup>

In Colima the expected assault on the main center at Caucentla began April 26th. The strike force included some 1,200 troops commanded by Avila Camacho and Talamantes and a numerous contingent of agrarians. Some 250 Cristeros sustained the brunt of the attack.<sup>89</sup> By the morning of the 27th over half of these were out of ammunition and Ochoa ordered a general retreat. It soon turned into a disorganized flight as the Cristeros were joined by over 3,000 noncombatants--women, children and elderly men, many of them relatives of the soldiers--who had taken refuge in the area. After an all-night trek the desperate mob reached relative safety on the western slopes of the Volcano. Caucentla was in government hands.<sup>90</sup> Ochoa moved quickly to rally the low spirits of his command. He decided that the most pressing need was the presence of a full-time chaplain, and within a week his brother, Father Enrique de Jesús Ochoa, had joined the main force; on May 9th the Colima Cristeros attended their first field mass.<sup>91</sup>

A few days later Ochoa and several companions left on a mission of reconnaissance and to attempt to find supplies. One of their first stops

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>Spectator, I, 226, 227.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., pp. 228-232.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., pp. 234, 241.

was a visit to the aged Bishop of Colima, Velasco, at his refuge in the El Tigre Sierra, where they received his blessing. In a sweep eastward they conferred with Navarro Origel in Michoacán, than made a swing back through Colima to talk with various Cristero leaders. Ochoa was anxious to patch up morale, damaged by news of the retreat from Caucentla.<sup>92</sup>

The Volcano Cristeros had only paused in their flight. The middle of May, government forces renewed their drive and the refugees did not regroup until May 20th, at Zaptitlán, across the Jalisco border, around which several other Cristero bands were operating.<sup>93</sup> But Avila Camacho pressed his advantage and despite spirited rear guard resistance the Cristeros again had to divide into small groups, each accompanied by a number of civilian refugees. They slowly re-formed, in the weeks ahead, on the southern slopes of the Volcano.<sup>94</sup>

Ochoa returned the end of June to find a dismal situation. Soldiers and civilians alike were in rags, and food was so scarce that starvation was an imminent threat; the wet season had set in and rain fell almost continually; discipline had deteriorated. It was a bleak hour. Discouragement had begun to take hold of the entire Colima movement. But Ochoa was determined to reverse matters. Early in July he issued a defiant proclamation to the inhabitants of the state:

. . . We are not alone; the entire nation is awake to free itself from its tyrants, who will soon fall forever before the justice and force of an entire people who are demanding their freedom. . . . We will fight without rest until victory is won; we prefer death a thousand times to the shame of abandoning the field of honor and becoming accomplices in the ruin of the Fatherland.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., pp. 257-263.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., pp. 248, 271.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., pp. 283, 284, 287.

<sup>95</sup>"Proclama Cristera," July 5, 1927, in ibid., pp. 294, 297, 298.

But the weeks ahead were desperate. On July 24th the main Cristero force was mauled in an engagement and only a sudden storm probably saved it from annihilation. Many of the civilian followers were trapped by the federal force and a number killed.<sup>96</sup>

By early summer the military movement was in significant decline. General Ferreira reported in July that Jalisco was completely pacified and that the rebels were in the process of surrendering.<sup>97</sup> While this was obviously an exaggeration, the rebellion was undoubtedly at a low ebb. Navarrete said that the armed movement was still afloat in August, "although with very few signs of vitality," in Jalisco, Zacatecas, Colima, and Michoacán.<sup>98</sup> It was not defeat, but more exactly a retraction under severe pressure; the hard core of the resistance was still intact and there were signs of life even in regions well outside the areas of major Cristero activity. In Coahuila, for example, a group was operating in the mountains, supplied by a committee functioning in Saltillo.<sup>99</sup>

The death of Anacleto González Flores led to a general shakeup in both the civil and military command in the west. On April 26th the Directive Committee appointed Miguel Gómez Loza provisional governor of Jalisco and Antonio Ruiz Rueda special representative of the War Committee.<sup>100</sup> The League also named Jesús Degollado Guízar to the post of chief of operations in southern Jalisco with jurisdiction in Nayarit and western Michoacán.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., pp. 302-304.

<sup>97</sup>Excelsior, July 27, 1927, p. 1.

<sup>98</sup>Navarrete, p. 137.

<sup>99</sup>"Informe del Delegado Especial en los Estados de Coahuila y Tamaulipas," July 5, 1927, LA-1

<sup>100</sup>Gómez Loza to Directive Committee, July 13, 1927; José Tello to Gómez Loza, July 23, 1927. LA-1.

Degollado, a fervent Catholic, was born in Michoacán in 1892. He settled in Atotonilco el Alto, Jalisco, and became a successful pharmaceutical dealer. He was an early member of the ACJM and active in Catholic organizational work. In 1923 he backed Adolfo de la Huerta in the belief that his victory would mean at least some advantage for Catholic interests. Degollado accepted the military appointment reluctantly, but once he agreed to serve he began an impressively successful effort. After collecting a large store of ammunition he left Guadalajara to take over his command.<sup>101</sup>

The military situation was precarious; the Cristero units that had withstood the recent offensive were disorganized and disheartened. Degollado went resolutely to work. By the end of May he was implementing a basic reorganization of his sector both in Jalisco and Michoacán, where he tactfully but firmly brought free-lancing Cristero bands under League control.<sup>102</sup> Discipline was a pressing problem. The recent setbacks, combined with the lack of a well defined command system, were not only hampering military operations but in some cases alienating the civilian populace. When Degollado arrived in the field he received complaints from non-combatants regarding the behavior of Esteban Caro, chief of the area of operations in southwestern Jalisco and eastern Nayarit. Degollado issued a circular to all field commanders stating that any individual found guilty of marauding would be shot. Caro soon afterward confirmed the reports of his conduct by abusing persons and property in one town in his sector, whereupon Degollado sought him out, dressed him down, and exacted a formal pledge of good behavior in the future. At Caro's own request, Degollado assigned a priest

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<sup>101</sup>Miguel Ortiz, "Combate en Lagunillas, Jalisco," *David*, III, No. 67 (February 22, 1958), 304, 305; Jose Gutiérrez G., "El General Degollado Guízar: Breves apuntes histórico-biográficos. . . , *ibid.*, No. 63, (October 20, 1957), 235-240.

<sup>102</sup>José Gutiérrez G., pp. 245-240.

to work with his unruly troops, and evidently there were no further problems. Caro later died in combat.<sup>103</sup> As part of the general tightening up, Degollado ordered all Cristero leaders to submit a strict accounting of all forced loans imposed.<sup>104</sup>

One of Degollado's field commanders, Luis Ibarra, described the general situation in his area in a dispatch to Ruiz Rueda. He listed the units under his command--groups ranging in number from twenty-five to sixty men, in all around 500--based in twelve villages and rancherías. He said there were also in his area several other bands led by self-commissioned chiefs whom he was trying to contact and bring under his control. He was, he said, in the process of concentrating his forces, to have them together and at the disposal of Degollado (who was on a reconnaissance mission in Michoacán). He reported that he had received 4,000 rounds of 7mm ammunition, however over half of the weapons his men had were 30-30's, 44's, and 8mm Mausers, and he urgently requested cartridges for these. With adequate provisions, he said, Degollado could dominate the area, although the government enemy was numerous--it had organized large numbers of agrarians. Men to fight were not lacking, he asserted; with provisions, the Cristeros could recruit far larger units than presently existed.<sup>105</sup> Ibarra too was concerned about the problem of conduct. In July he reported the scandalous behavior of Cristero leader Lucas Cueva and his men. The troops had stolen money and clothes, some of which they had given to "ladies of ill fame," and Cueva himself had given bad example by consorting publicly with one of these.

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<sup>103</sup>Jesús Degollado Guízar, Memorias de Jesús Degollado Guízar, último general en jefe del ejército cristero (Mexico, D.F. 1957), pp. 113-116.

<sup>104</sup>L.E. Ibarra to Ruiz Rueda, June 1, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

Drunkenness, music and revelry had been the rule. Cueva had several soldiers and officers with him, Ibarra said, who had unsavory reputations--"bandits by profession, like him." Yet, Ibarra recommended that Cueva be warned and given a chance to submit to higher control before being declared outside the movement.<sup>106</sup>

Late in the summer Heriberto Navarrete went into the hills to join the Jalisco Cristeros in Los Altos. The band he enlisted in was led by Chema Huerta, a Unión Popular leader, and numbered some 150 men. Navarrete's first impression of the group was not favorable: "Poorly clad, dirty, their hair matted with sweat and dirt, the horses' equipment and their cartridge belts dirty, they spent most of the day stretched out under the trees. . . ." Their chief was no more impressive: ". . . his 38 revolver hanging from the cartridge belt. . . a dirty, torn shirt on which, like sordid decorations for misery, hung devotional scapulars. . . a coat of light cotton and dark khaki trousers, like those worn by any city worker, completed his dress." Food, Navarrete found, was not of the choicest: like most other bands, Huerta's men lived mainly on the charity of sympathetic inhabitants of the region. The staple, of which there was usually enough, was beef; the men dried it until it had approximately the appearance and texture of shoe leather. This was supplemented sporadically by tortillas, frijoles, biscuits, and occasionally some cheese or milk.<sup>107</sup> Navarrete was bothered at first by the lack of military prowess of some of the leaders. They seemed to be far too blasé about such details as scouting and posting sentinels. On the other hand, he soon became impressed at their ability to rise to notable heights in tight situations. The leadership, Navarrete finally

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<sup>106</sup>Ibarra to Ruiz Rueda, July 26, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>107</sup>Navarrete, pp. 142, 143.



decided, was in general mature, in many ways competent, and above all full of faith in final victory. The rank and file were simple and honest and not given to sophisticated analysis. "They were soldiers of a new army and their enemies were allies of the devil, persecutors of religion, and Masons. That was enough. They would fight as hard as necessary. Just give them something to fight with."<sup>108</sup>

✓ On June 25th, 1927, Alvaro Obregón made his long-expected announcement that he was a candidate for the presidency in 1928. His statement, which was in essence a campaign platform, included lengthy references to the Catholic opposition, which Obregón, as always, identified with "the Reaction"--his single great enemy. His program contained little comfort for the Catholic resistance. He called for complete freedom for the exercise of all religions, "without allowing any sectarian influence and demanding always of its ministers absolute respect for the provisions which our own laws establish." The religious conflict, he said, had been provoked the previous year by the clergy, "then more visibly the head of the Reaction," who thought that Calles, preoccupied with matters relating to foreign property rights in Mexico, would not dare to face up to them; the clergy, he said, had supposed that the Revolution could be intimidated by its adversaries, whose headquarters were in Rome and Wall Street. The clergy, he charged, had fomented rebellion.<sup>109</sup> In his speeches in the weeks ahead Obregón followed the same general theme when referring to the religious question--evil clergymen had allied themselves with moneyed and political interests to exploit

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<sup>108</sup>Ibid., pp. 144-149.

<sup>109</sup>Statement of June 25, 1927, in Aarón Sáenz, Fernando Torreblanca, and Joaquín Amaro (eds.), Discursos del General Alvaro Obregón (2 vols.; Mexico, D.F., 1932), II, 80.

the unfortunate. Late in August his remarks took on a harsher tone. Unscrupulous politicians, he told a meeting in Ciudad General Terán, Nuevo León, had encouraged fanaticism,

because they know that fanaticism is the best anesthetic for atrophying the spirits of those who suffer, offering them in the next life the wellbeing which they do not have the character to give them in this life. Fanaticism. . . allows them to deny liberty and wellbeing: it is the anesthetic capital uses, and we still remember the rural priest on the hacienda whose duty it was to tell the peons: "Work without rest, work diligently, work, and bear with patience hunger, cold, and sun, for after your earthly afflictions are over you will enjoy the glory of eternal life."<sup>110</sup>

The next day, addressing a gathering in Monterrey, he excoriated "the deceitful and rebellious work of evil clergymen" who were trying to make Mexico a docile tool in the service of Rome.<sup>111</sup>

The shift from the stern but cold statement of June 25th was quite probably a reaction to events that transpired a few weeks earlier. The first week of August rumors were circulating that Obregón was making another attempt to resolve the religious conflict. Excelsior for August 7th said that Aarón Sáenz, governor-elect of Nuevo León and an Obregón intimate, had been conferring with the bishops in Texas. Both Sáenz and Archbishop Mora y del Río, the report added, had refused comment.<sup>112</sup> On the 8th Calles told newsmen that the laws on religion would not be changed, that no move to invite the bishops back had been authorized, and that he did not believe Sáenz had extended any such invitation; the bishops could return only when they agreed to comply with the law and obey the authorities. Obregón denied indignantly that he was involved in any intrigues with the Episcopate,<sup>113</sup>

<sup>110</sup>Speech in Ciudad General Terán, August 27, 1928, ibid., pp. 248, 249.

<sup>111</sup>Speech in Monterrey, August 28, 1927, ibid., p. 255.

<sup>112</sup>Excelsior, August 7, 1927, p. 1.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., August 9, 1927, pp. 1, 3.

and Gobernación said the supposed negotiations had been categorically given the lie.<sup>114</sup>

But the talks had taken place. Arthur Schoenfeld, the U.S. chargé d'affaires, told the State Department on the 13th that he had absolute proof of it; that Obregón had tried to get a settlement which he hoped would gain him the support or at least the benevolence of Catholics in the coming struggle for the presidency.<sup>115</sup> Two days later Schoenfeld reported that the chief of the Diplomatic Department of the Foreign Relations Ministry had told an Embassy staff member that Obregón's shrewd political move in trying to pacify Mexican Catholics was "messed up" by the press, which publicized the whole affair without permission from the government.<sup>116</sup> Aarón Sáenz told the story to Dwight Morrow a year later. He said he had undertaken the mission with the "tacit approval" of Calles, and that the effort was interrupted by premature publicity. The plan was to have the bishops write a letter to Calles asking to return; the government would answer, granting them permission to return to their sees and resume their functions in accordance with the law. These letters would constitute the public agreement. Private letters would stipulate that the bishops agreed to stay out of all political activity, and that the government guaranteed it had no desire to interfere with the appointment of clergy, that the committees in charge of the churches would be named by the Church, and that the laws would be interpreted reasonably and so as not to interfere

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., August 13, 1927, p. 1.

<sup>115</sup>Schoenfeld to SecState, August 15, 1927, DSR 812.404/824.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., August 17, 1927, DSR 812.404/826.

with spiritual matters.<sup>117</sup>

The bishops were uncertain how to proceed when approached with peace feelers of this kind; they wanted instructions from Rome. Upon receipt of the letter from Mora y del Río reporting the Sáenz overture, the Bishops' Commission met with Pius XI and Gasparri. The Pope spelled out the guidelines requested: If emissaries asked to see the bishops, they should be received and listened to noncommittally; if their proposals showed no indications of being anything different from past ones, the contact should be ended; if they were worthy of consideration, then the emissaries' credentials, in writing, should be requested; if these were valid, the bishops should then ask for the proposals in writing; if provided, these should then be passed on to all the bishops and to the League for their written opinions; both the proposals and the opinions were then to be forwarded to Rome for a final decision.<sup>118</sup>

X The papal norms give a good insight into Rome's thinking on the situation at the time. The Vatican hoped to get more favorable terms than those offered by Obregón in March--that is, to leave the objectionable statutes on the books and rely on the good will of the government to apply them reasonably. The Holy See wanted a de jure, not merely a de facto, settlement. The affair also showed Rome's determination to see to it that any solution was supported as nearly unanimously as possible by all Mexican Catholics, clerical and lay, and to keep the final decision firmly in its

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<sup>117</sup>Memorandum of conference between General Aarón Sáenz and Ambassador Morrow and Colonel Macnab, enclosure No. 3, in Morrow to SecState, July 31, 1928, DSR 812.404/902.

<sup>118</sup>Tritschler, González Valencia, Méndez del Río to Mora y del Río, August 15, 1927; González Valencia to Manríquez y Zárata, August 30, 1927. LA-1. The first letter says the bishops met with the Pope on August 12th.

own hands in all details.

The papal directive also amounted to a recognition of the League's stake in the religious conflict. González Valencia commented enthusiastically on this point in a letter to Manríquez y Zárate, and added:

It is necessary that the two or three of us radicals left hold firm and raise the standard of our brave Catholics, at least so they will not believe the Episcopate is abandoning them.

The rumors of a possible settlement early in August had saddened him, he said--to settle on the terms reported would have amounted to a surrender. He saw the Pope's directions as a strong endorsement for the firm viewpoint. As for the bishops giving financial aid, he indicated that Rome was unofficially favorable--the word was, he said, to meet and decide, and not ask questions.<sup>119</sup>

González Valencia's fears of an episcopal surrender were premature. Even Ruiz y Flores, known for his flexibility and scarcely a partisan of hard-line stances, insisted that the laws must be changed:

. . . we believe he said in Los Angeles on August 6th<sup>120</sup> that the Holy See, the bishops, priests, and faithful of Mexico would not be satisfied, nor duly protected, unless the Constitution is reformed in the sense requested by the bishops and millions of Catholics the September, 1926 memorial and petition, because otherwise there would always be the danger that if some government in the future should put into effect the Constitution as it now stands, the prelates and priests would again be obliged to take a step like the one that has been taken, with great disturbance to the faithful, who would again have to resort to armed defense; and despite those evils, they not only could but would be obliged to suspend worship again, because there are constitutional provisions which in conscience cannot be accepted without the Church ceasing to be what it is.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup>González Valencia to Manríquez y Zárate, August 30, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>120</sup>"Declaraciones del Excmo. Sr. Dr. D. Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores," August 6, 1927, LA-1. An annotation says it was published in El Eco de México, Los Angeles, California, August 7, 1927, and in The Tidings, a Los Angeles Catholic Weekly, August 26, 1927.

In late August the Cristero military effort rebounded. Heavy fighting was reported in Jalisco the last week of the month with action spreading over into Nayarit.<sup>121</sup> In the southern part of Jalisco, where efforts to tighten control and reorganize command had greatly strengthened things, Degollado moved. On September 19th he took Juchitlán. Two days later Cocula fell to him and on October 8th he won a bloody engagement at Unión de Tula. The campaign was crowned on October 20th by a victory at El Chante, one of the largest battles the Cristeros ever fought. Degollado's fame skyrocketed: most of Jalisco between Guadalajara and the coast was under Cristero control.<sup>122</sup>

Late in August, Pedro Quintanar launched a campaign through the west central part of Zacatecas and across the Durango and Jalisco borders. Starting with fifty men, he reported that by the end of December his command had grown to 500; they had made nineteen raids and sustained eighteen "combats of some importance." He estimated enemy casualties at between 400 and 500.<sup>123</sup>

In Colima, by the first week of August, Ochoa and his men were back at their old redoubt in the area of Caucentla and the leader was pressing plans for a renewed drive. Later in the month Ochoa went to Colima City to confer with María de los Angeles Gutiérrez, a leader in an organization of young women that had undertaken the task of supplying Cristeros in the field.<sup>124</sup> The group was called the Feminine Brigades (Brigadas Femeninas). It had been started in June, when a handful of young ladies met at Zapopán, Jalisco, and organized the St. Joan of Arc Brigade. With general headquarters

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<sup>121</sup>New York Times, August 28, 1927, p. 4.

<sup>122</sup>Jose Gutiérrez G., pp. 235-240.

<sup>123</sup>"Boletín de las operaciones del grupo Libertador de Huejuquilla el Alto al mando del Sr. General D. Pedro Quintanar," December 31, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>124</sup>Spectator, I, 305, 308, 309.

in Guadalajara, the Brigades operated secretly, in the same manner as the "U," from which it apparently had sprung.<sup>125</sup> It was now projected to form a branch of the Brigades in Colima. Near the end of the month, Sara Flores Arias, supreme head of the organization, came to Colima, accompanied by Angelita Gutiérrez. On September 1st they conferred with Ochoa at the rancheria of El Parián. The three completed plans for a state-wide network. The two women also brought word that Antonio Ruiz Rueda, the League's military delegate in the west, would meet Ochoa the 5th at Ciudad Guzmán, Jalisco. There, Ochoa was appointed representative of the Cristero Military Control for Colima and adjacent areas of southwestern Jalisco.<sup>126</sup>

By late in September nearly 1,000 Cristeros were under arms in Colima. Weapons and even ammunition were in better supply than they had ever been, and only men who had arms were allowed to join units. Ochoa had rectified one bad situation: since the tragic experience of May and June the men's families and other refugees were excluded from the camps. Ammunition had begun to arrive from Guadalajara. During September and October military reorganization went forward; the state was divided into military districts with stabilized chains of command. In November the Colima Feminine Brigade was established with "squadrons" in Colima City, San Jerónimo, Comala, Tecmán, and Manzanillo. Under the leadership of Pachita Quintero the organization quickly took form. In the capital the most important source of recruits was a Catholic girls' school, the Colegio de la Paz.<sup>127</sup>

The new military effort began on September 12th, when Cristeros of Andrés Salazar's command attacked and took the well-defended town of Suchitlán,

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<sup>125</sup>Ibid., p. 327; Ríos Facius, Méjico cristero, p. 225.

<sup>126</sup>Spectator, I, 328-331.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid., pp. 331-340.

the government losing, according to Cristero reports, nineteen dead.<sup>128</sup>

Ochoa had re-established his headquarters on the Mesa de la Yerbabuena near the old Caucentla quarters. In what was the climax of his career, he led the Volcano forces in a massive celebration of the feast of Christ the King on October 30th and 31st, personally serving the field mass. A week later, Antonio Vargas, Sara Flores Arias, Faustina Almeida, and María de los Angeles Gutiérrez arrived at the headquarters on a work mission: the manufacture of hand bombs. The work was progressing well when around noon on November 11th the store of explosives somehow ignited and blew up, horribly injuring Vargas, the women, and Ochoa, who had been helping. María and Faustina died later in the day, Ochoa and Vargas early the next morning. Sara Flores Arias lingered until the 15th. All were buried in a small hill on the Mesa.<sup>129</sup>

The death of Eduardo Dionisio Ochoa was a serious loss, but coming as it did after the movement was well entrenched in Colima it was not fatal. Anguiano Márquez assumed command and the Colima movement went forward to become one of the most active of all the Cristero efforts, one which would resist all government attempts at suppression until the very end of the conflict.<sup>130</sup>

One of the most impressive and successful Cristero campaigns in 1927 was based in Michoacán. In the autumn of 1926, after his brief uprising in the Bajío, Luis Navarro Origel had fled southward. In the remote mountain terrain of Michoacán he remained inactive for six months, planning a course of action and putting himself through a program of spiritual preparation for the new effort. The field of action he chose was one of the

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<sup>128</sup>Ibid., pp. 341-343.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., pp. 359-369.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid., p. 370.



most inaccessible parts of Mexico: the coastal region between the rugged Sierra Madre Occidental and the Pacific Ocean, stretching from Guerrero through Michoacán and into Colima. From his refuge in the Cerro de Tan-cítaro he placed himself at the League's orders. The League hoped to send him supplies but there were delays and finally the Special Committee decided Navarro Origel should not wait. Changing his name to Fermín Gutiérrez, he swung into action. His anchor point would be the town Coalcomán, in the foothills near the Jalisco border. There, with the cooperation of the parish priest, he began in April to confer with selected local persons and, with their help, to enlist men to fight.

On April 23rd, with the near-unanimous approval of the inhabitants, Navarro Origel seized Coalcomán. The next day, with 300 men, he left for Aguililla, to the east, where a federal force was reported to be operating. They entered the town without opposition (no government forces were there); Navarro Origel arranged for a solemn mass in the parish church, at which his troops presented arms at the elevation of the Host. A procession through the town followed.<sup>131</sup>

Between May and October Navarro Origel reported twenty-one engagements with government forces. Most were small, but a few were not: a three-day campaign in June involved nearly 1,000 men, and the Cristeros drove the federal forces out of the region from Coalcomán northeast to Chinicuila with losses, he reported, of 143 for the government to only seven for his own forces. He suffered reverses in June and July, as did Cristero leaders elsewhere. This was due in part to the general government offensive against the rebels throughout the west and south, and in part to reasons peculiar to the area, the climate, and the makeup of the Cristero

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<sup>131</sup>Chowell, pp. 110-114.

forces: On June 12th government troops re-occupied Coalcomán, a loss which Navarro reported was due to the fact that most of his men had temporarily disbanded to tend the crops--"no human force could hold them once the rains began." Autumn brought renewed success, as elsewhere. Early in October Navarro besieged 700 federal troops at Cañada de Ticuilucán, northeast of Coalcomán. The commanding general, Tranquilino Mendoza, finally managed to break out but lost 200 dead and--according to Cristero reports--abandoned his troops in his flight. On October 9th, raiding into Jalisco, Navarro's men attacked Tizapán el Alto where they bested the defense force and got around 200 horses. On the 15th they retook Coalcomán after a hard battle.<sup>132</sup>

Writing to the League on October 25th, Navarro urgently requested supplies. He had sent messengers to Mexico City, he said, but had received no answers. He reported that he was keeping the Michoacán coast open, even at the cost of leaving a large number of men inactive to garrison points on the Pacific which could serve as landing sites. He was desperately unhappy that higher authority was not acting with more vigor: "I think it is criminal that such opportunities are not taken advantage of--because of apathy or stupidity. . . ." <sup>133</sup>

Among the leaders who emerged in 1927 was a man who would become the most eminent and also the most enigmatic of the Cristero chiefs. Enrique Gorostieta y Velarde, a thirty-seven year old native of Monterrey, had been a cadet at the Colegio Militar de Chapultepec when the Madero revolt began in 1910. As a young career officer in the federal army in 1913 and 1914 he remained loyal to the regime of Victoriano Huerta. After the Constitutional triumph he went to the United States and then to Cuba. Returning

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<sup>132</sup>Report of the Ejército Libertador Nacional, Michoacán, Brigada Anacleto González Flores, October 25, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid.

to Mexico in 1919, he settled down in Monterrey to the life of a successful businessman.<sup>134</sup> He apparently played no part in the developing religious strife; not until after the outbreak of hostilities did he move to involve himself. Whether the first contacts were at his initiative or the League's is unclear, but his final decision to enter the fray was, as he later described it, the result of a personal event. His wife had given birth to a son, he related, and he went in search of a priest to baptize the baby. He was unsuccessful at first--he found one only after a long search:

But it happened that in my wanderings through the city I came upon a house of prostitution with its street door open, and inside I saw a disgusting and degrading spectacle: ruffians dancing with nude women. I was immediately struck by the thought: if in my country a person has so much difficulty--as I had just had--finding a minister of the Lord to administer the sacraments to us, and on the other hand licentiousness holds sway everywhere, it means that the country is threatened with death from prostitution and crime and it is the obligation of every Mexican to come to its defense. I thought it over thoroughly, and I accepted the League's proposal to fight for God, for the Fatherland, and for Liberty.<sup>135</sup>

The call came, and in July Gorostieta left Monterrey accompanied by a League representative and a guide to assume the post of chief of operations in Jalisco.<sup>136</sup> After a visit to Guadalajara he went into the hills of Los Altos. After making a thorough assessment of things he began a careful reorganization. He was convinced that much of the movement's orientation had been wrong. He saw a need to formalize and strengthen the relations between the armed movement and the civilian populace; this would not only

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<sup>134</sup>Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra, "Gorostieta," David, II, No. 39 (October 22, 1953), 233-240; Olivera Sedano, p. 195.

<sup>135</sup>"Por qué fuimos a la lucha," David, No. 15 (October, 1952), cited in René Velázquez López, "El problema religioso en México, 1917-1929" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1963), pp. 179, 180.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid.

help assure maximum support for the fighting men but would also give the movement an air of permanence that would hasten reconstruction after the military victory. Concurrently, he believed the Cristeros should establish as stable a control as possible over a maximum amount of territory rather than continue to dissipate their efforts in hit and run raids that sometimes looked impressive but which decided little. He divided the region for which he was responsible into sectors, each under a well defined command system. Personally, he made an impressive military start; on September 15th he engaged a federal force at Jalpa, across the Zacatecas border, and defeated it so soundly that the chief of operations in that state, General Anacleto López, sent a desperate plea for help to avoid a complete disaster (Gorostieta intercepted the message).<sup>137</sup>

The new leader had an impressive presence. Of average height, slender but muscular, he was fair complected with blue eyes and light brown hair. Although usually self-possessed and aloof, he was capable of high anger. He exhibited humility at times, but this was not frequent. He was not renowned for his tact.<sup>138</sup> There was about him a good measure of the inscrutable and even the mysterious. He was nominally a Catholic, but did not frequent the sacraments and his dedication to the Cristero cause sprang from motives that differed from those of most of his associates. A man of deep convictions, his strong sense of justice and decency was grounded in natural philosophical beliefs; he was closer to the liberal secular persuasion, but saw religion to be for most people a useful and even necessary aid to personal integrity.<sup>139</sup> He had no automatic respect for the clergy,

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<sup>137</sup>Olivera Sedano, pp. 196-198.

<sup>138</sup>Navarrete, p. 167. Navarrete was a member of Gorostieta's staff in 1928 and 1929 and a constant companion.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid., pp. 171, 172.

and was sometimes contemptuous of personal piety. He was always a puzzle to others in the Catholic resistance movement. His reluctance to reveal himself to others helped nourish a variety of stories about him. Some said he was secretly a Mason; others whispered that he believed himself to be a reincarnation of Miguel Miramón, Maximilian's general.<sup>140</sup>

The League Directors were aware that Gorostieta did not in all respects conform to their own predilections in matters philosophical, but they were convinced of his deep dedication to the cause of ridding the country of Calles and the Revolutionary regime, and of his capabilities as a professional military man.<sup>141</sup> In these respects their confidence proved to be well grounded. Their relations with him would be sometimes cool, occasionally even stormy; but their respect for him would be even stronger.

As autumn gave way to winter, the leadership of the League had more than a few reasons for optimism. Palomar y Vizcarra reported to Bustos in October that the military situation was "very satisfactory." He said there were over 4,000 men under arms in Jalisco alone, and these, added to the forces in Colima, Michoacán and Zacatecas, meant that the total might be as high as 10,000.<sup>142</sup>

On Sunday, November 13th, an attempt was made on the life of Alvaro Obregón. He had arrived in Mexico City that morning and went at once to his home on Jalisco Street. Scheduled to attend the bull fight that afternoon, he left the house with friends shortly after 3:00 P.M. for a drive in

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<sup>140</sup>Olivera Sedano, pp. 195, 196.

<sup>141</sup>See Palomar y Vizcarra to González Valencia, December 26, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>142</sup>Palomar y Vizcarra to Bustos, October 3, 1927, LA-1.

Chapultepec Park en route to the plaza. A second car carrying other friends followed. As Obregón's Cadillac neared a bridge over a small lake in the park, an Essex sedan carrying four men suddenly pulled alongside. Its occupants threw several bombs at the leader's car and at least one of them fired pistol shots at it. Neither the intended victim nor his companions were seriously injured--Obregón emerged with minor lacerations on the cheek and hand. The Cadillac was damaged but drivable. Obregón's friends fired at the assailants, and those in the second car darted after the Essex. There ensued a wild shooting chase along the avenues leading toward the center of the city; it ended on Insurgentes Sur at Niza and Liverpool Streets when the Essex collided with another car. The pursuers grabbed two of the men, Juan Tirado and Nahúm Lamberto Ruiz--the latter was seriously wounded with a bullet in the head. The other two managed to escape. Obregón returned to his home for a brief treatment of his scratches then proceeded to the bull fight.<sup>143</sup>

One of the two who escaped was a twenty-four year old engineer, Luis Segura Vilchis, the League's chief of military control in the Federal District. He had been given the post because of his outstanding record of leadership in the ACJM, whose members in Mexico City formed the main body of the League's military organization there. Their duties mainly involved procuring arms and ammunition for shipment to the Cristeros in the field.<sup>144</sup>

Segura Vilchis had decided at least a year before to kill Obregón. He was convinced that the persecution of the Church in Mexico was primarily

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<sup>143</sup>"Acta de Policía levantada con motivo del atentado dinamitero en contra del Gral. Alvaro Obregón, efectuado el 13 de noviembre de 1927 en el Bosque de Chapultepec," November 19, 1927, LA-1: El Universal, November 14, 1927, pp. 1, 8; November 15, p. 1.

<sup>144</sup>Barquín y Ruiz, Segura Vilchis, pp. 144, 145.

the work of a handful of strong men, of whom Obregón was the most powerful, and that unless the persecution were checked it would destroy both Catholicism and the Mexican nation. Under these circumstances, he believed, assassination was an act of justice. He had strengthened his convictions by his own reading of theological treatises on the subject of tyrannicide. He first attempted to carry out his aim in April, 1927, when he and a few close associates arranged to dynamite the General's private train as it neared Mexico City; they abandoned their plan at the last minute when they learned that Obregón was traveling in a private car attached to a regular passenger train.<sup>145</sup>

The November plot was more flexible: Segura Vilchis planned either to blow up the train, providing Obregón used a private one, or kill the General outright after he reached the capital. When Obregón again traveled by regular train the second plan was adopted. The Essex belonged to the League. José González (who drove it in the attempt and was the other who escaped) borrowed it several days before the attack, on instructions from Segura Vilchis, from the League's regional delegate in Mexico City, Humberto Pro Juárez. Neither González nor the other two accomplices knew of the plan until several hours before it was put into operation--although all were active ACJM members and acquaintances of Segura Vilchis.<sup>146</sup> Segura made the bombs at a house he rented on Alzate Street the week before.<sup>147</sup> On the morning of the 13th the four were at the Colonia Station when Obregón arrived. They followed him to his home, parked nearby, and waited until he emerged for his ride in the park.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>145</sup>Ibid., pp. 154, 155, 164, 165.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., pp. 211-213.

<sup>147</sup>"Acta de Policía. . . ," LA-1.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid.

After eluding his pursuers by boarding a streetcar on Insurgentes, Segura Vilchis paid a short visit to the home of one Roberto Núñez in the suburb of Tacubaya. The Núñez house was the hiding place of the Directive Committee of the League. The Committee had discussed the possibility of killing Obregón some time before but had finally voted not to approve such a step. Palomar y Vizcarra, however, proceeded on his own responsibility. The three Directors were just finishing dinner when a servant announced that a young man was at the door asking to see Palomar. The League Vice President received the visitor in an adjoining room. Segura told him, "Your orders have been carried out," but added that the attempt had failed. Palomar, badly shaken, returned to the dining room to tell his colleagues of the report. Segura left at once for the bull ring. There he managed to get close enough to Obregón to shake hands with him and congratulate him on his escape.<sup>149</sup>

Four days later the engineer was arrested at the electric power company where he worked and taken to police headquarters for questioning.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>149</sup>Interview with Antonio Ríus Facius, July, 1968. Ríus Facius was told the information presented here by Palomar y Vizcarra before the latter's death. See also Ríus Facius, México cristero, p. 270. Andrés Barquín y Ruiz (Segura Vilchis, pp. 193, 194) says the Directive Committee had decided that Obregón must die and left the details to Segura Vilchis, but if the entire Committee had been involved Segura would presumably have reported to them as a body, or at least to the President, Ceniceros y Villarreal. Barquín y Ruiz also says (p. 215) that the engineer thought the attempt had been successful and went to the bull fight to verify it. This is unlikely--news of Obregón's escape was public knowledge within hours. More likely, Segura was trying to establish an alibi.

<sup>150</sup>Chief of Police Roberto Cruz told the press that Lamberto Ruiz gave them Segura's name; he later said that the prisoner, wounded and blind, was tricked into talking by a police agent posing as a relative. El Universal, November 22, 1927, p. 5; Julio Scherer García, "Roberto Cruz en la Época de la Violencia," Excélsior, October 7, 1961, pp. 1, 12. The latter was an article in a series based on personal interviews with Cruz. Barquín y Ruiz (p. 229) says the police got their information from Lamberto Ruiz's wife, who had been unhappy over her husband's involvement in League activities and after his capture went to the authorities with all she knew.



He denied any involvement in the assassination attempt and his partial alibi-- he produced the stub of the ticket that had admitted him to the bull fight-- was substantiated by none less than Obregón himself, who remembered seeing him at the plaza. Obregón told the investigators he doubted Segura Vilchis was involved.<sup>151</sup> The police were about to release him when the situation suddenly changed. Early the next morning officers raided a house on Londres Street where they found Father Miguel Pro Juárez and his brothers Humberto (the regional delegate) and Roberto; they were taken into custody, and the priest and Humberto were charged with complicity in the crime.<sup>152</sup>

Father Miguel Pro, S.J., a native of Zacatecas, was thirty-six years old. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1911 and took vows two years later. After several years of work and study with the order in the United States, Nicaragua, Spain and Belgium, he was ordained a priest in the latter country in 1925.<sup>153</sup> He returned to Mexico the following year. There his brothers told him of the work the League was doing and of their own activities in it. Soon Father Pro was also involved; for a while in 1926 he headed a sort of speakers' bureau that provided programs to explain the League's aims and activities.<sup>154</sup> For several months before his arrest, he carried on his priestly functions underground in Mexico City, becoming famous among Catholics for his piety and works of charity. Among other

<sup>151</sup>Barquín y Ruiz, Segura Vilchis, pp. 230, 231, 237.

<sup>152</sup>El Universal, November 22, 1927, p. 5; Barquín y Ruiz, Segura Vilchis, pp. 232, 233. As in the case of Segura Vilchis, the police story was that Lamberto Ruiz had talked, telling his supposed kin to get word to the Pro brothers that they should hide. See Scherer García, "Roberto Cruz." Barquín y Ruiz says (p. 228) that the whereabouts of the Pro brothers was revealed by a turncoat named José Montes de Oca.

<sup>153</sup>Thomas Ryan, S.J., "Murdered in Mexico: Father Michael Anthony Pro, S.J.," pamphlet printed by the Irish Messenger, Dublin, 1928.

<sup>154</sup>Barquín y Ruiz, Segura Vilchis, pp. 138, 139.

activities, he was in charge of work financed by the League to care for the widows and orphans of Cristeros who died in combat. He also gave both spiritual and material help to ACJM and League members who were working to get supplies for the rebels.<sup>155</sup>

Both Father Pro and Humberto denied having any part in the assassination attempt; Roberto did also, and was released. Humberto said he had owned the Essex but had sold it shortly before to a friend; like Segura Vilchis he was anxious to cover up the League tie-in. He said he and his brothers had gone into hiding because when they read of the attack they knew the car would probably be traced.<sup>156</sup>

When Segura Vilchis learned that the Pros were under arrest and probably in real danger--the police had been looking for the priest for months, and they would probably have little difficulty connecting Humberto with the League--he decided to change his story. After first exacting a promise from Cruz that if he told the truth any innocent persons would be freed, he confessed everything, omitting only his connection with the League. Cruz retorted that he was obviously changing his statement to save the Pro brothers. He had the engineer's story investigated, however, and decided that he had indeed been involved; but he refused to release the priest and Humberto.<sup>157</sup> On the 22nd the papers carried a statement by Cruz saying there was absolute proof of the guilt of all three and that they had confessed. (Juan Tirado's involvement had never been in serious doubt, and Lamberto Ruiz had died from his injuries on November 20th.) Cruz added

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<sup>155</sup>Ibid., pp. 198, 199; League to José González Pacheco, May 23, 1928, LA-1.

<sup>156</sup>"Acta de Policía. . . ," LA-1.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid.; Barquín y Ruiz, Segura Vilchis, pp. 236-239.

that all were known to be prominent League members.<sup>158</sup>

Cruz had been giving Calles daily personal reports since the 13th on the course of the investigation. The morning of the 22nd he handed him a dossier of materials on the case, which the President read carefully. Then, Cruz recalled, Calles said: "So there is proof of the guilt of these individuals, and of the priest, who was the mastermind behind it."<sup>159</sup> After a pause, Calles added: "These individuals are relentless in their methods. Here, it was General Obregón. Tomorrow it will be me. And then you. Give the necessary orders and have them all shot." Cruz asked whether it might not be advisable to turn them over to the judicial authorities for trial, but Calles absolutely refused to consider it.<sup>160</sup>

The next morning, November 23rd, passers-by noticed an unusual amount of activity in the vicinity of the police headquarters, including the placing of mounted gendarmes in the street outside. Some surmised the reason; several Catholic attorneys began frantic efforts to obtain a writ of amparo.<sup>161</sup> But there was not enough time. Shortly before noon Father Pro, Segura Vilchis, Humberto Pro, and Juan Tirado were executed

<sup>158</sup>El Universal, November 22, 1927, p. 5. In his 1961 interviews given to Scherer García, however, Cruz said that Father Pro maintained his innocence to the end. Cruz said that when police went to the house on Alzate Street they found a small valise belonging to the priest that contained holy oils, hosts, and other ecclesiastical items, and that the priest could not explain how it got there. See Scherer García, "Roberto Cruz."

<sup>159</sup>Scherer García, "Roberto Cruz." At this point in his 1961 interview with Cruz, Scherer García interrupted to ask what proofs Calles was referring to. Cruz said he couldn't remember but he did know they were there--a rather astounding statement, since Cruz was highly emotional over having been stigmatized for more than thirty years as a barbarian and priest-killer for his role in the case.

<sup>160</sup>Ibid.

<sup>161</sup>An order issued by a federal court to block action by some public authority.

by a firing squad in the garden of the headquarters.<sup>162</sup>

The attack on Obregón and the ten days of public excitement that culminated in the executions carried the religious conflict to new levels of bitterness. Fear, hatred, and grim determination gripped persons on both sides of the struggle. In a speech delivered the day of the executions Obregón said the attempt on his life was one more warning signal from the "clerical reaction, showing that it is still fully active, fighting our cause by every means."<sup>163</sup> Four days later he told an audience in Toluca:

We know what to do when an ant bites us: we don't look for the ant. . . we get a pan of boiling water and throw it on the ant hill. When a scorpion bites us we get a lantern and look for it; and if we find another scorpion, we don't let it live just because it hasn't bitten us; we kill it because it can poison us with its venom, too; and it is necessary that the reaction abandon the idea of conquering us. . . . It is necessary that the reaction know that if it carries dynamite in its criminal hands, we will carry dynamite in our souls in order to overcome it.<sup>164</sup>

Father Pro's funeral on the 24th was marked by public demonstrations of devotion that amounted to a kind of popular canonization of the young Jesuit.<sup>165</sup> Stories about him multiplied almost overnight: It was reported that in Nayarit the evening before the executions a large luminous dove surrounded by three smaller doves had appeared in the sky. Miraculous cures were said to have taken place when sick persons touched handkerchiefs that

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<sup>162</sup>El Sol, November 23, 1927, p. 1; El Universal, November 24, 1927, p. 1; El Universal Gráfico, November 23, 1927, p. 1. The press carried lurid and detailed pictures of the executions, which reporters and cameramen were allowed to cover. The police headquarters was on the site later occupied by the National Lottery building, on the corner of the Paseo de la Reforma and Avenida Juárez.

<sup>163</sup>Speech in Mexico City, November 23, 1928, Discursos, II, 292.

<sup>164</sup>Speech in Toluca, November 27, 1927, ibid., p. 308.

<sup>165</sup>Palomar y Vizcarra to Bustos, November 28, 1927, LA-1.

had been dipped in the priest's blood and commended themselves to his intercession.<sup>166</sup>

Segura Vilchis, too, quickly became something of a hero to Catholic zealots. Manríquez y Zárate referred to him as

. . . this athlete of Christ. . . the unconquered champion.  
. . . This last martyr is of such colossal stature that one is astonished to consider how in one soul can be found at the same time such a great and pure sense of civic duty and a love so vast and sublime that it emulates that of the greatest saints of the Church.<sup>167</sup>

As 1927 drew to a close the religious conflict was stalemated at all levels. The government's efforts to reach a settlement with the bishops had failed, and both the Calles Regime and Rome were unwilling to pay the price demanded by the other for peace. The Cristeros in the hills and mountains of the west and south had survived a year of warfare and were becoming seasoned fighters under an increasingly competent leadership; they were far from their goal of destroying the government, but they were farther than ever from being beaten. The League had come through a series of harrowing crises still intact, and despite internal contradiction, discord and outside criticism it still held the allegiance of most militant Catholics. Passions on all sides had hardened and deepened. An end to it all either by negotiation or conquest seemed more remote than ever.

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<sup>166</sup> Peoresnada, February 1, 1928, No. 28. One of a number of crudely printed but informative Cristero periodicals. Copy in LA-1.

<sup>167</sup> Manríquez y Zárate, ¡Viva Cristo Rey! en la hora de suprema angustia (El Paso, Texas, 1928). Printed pamphlet.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE AMBASSADOR AND THE BISHOPS

James A. Sheffield submitted his resignation as ambassador to Mexico on July 8th. He had never enjoyed his post, and for months there had been rumors that he wanted out. U.S.-Mexican relations had deteriorated steadily during his four years at the Embassy. The efforts of various joint commissions to settle claims of American citizens against Mexico--mainly for damages and losses stemming from the Revolution--had not only failed but had raised hackles of national pride on both sides. Calles's hard line approach in the matter of U.S. oil holdings in Mexico had renewed a controversy that was thought to have been settled during Obregón's administration.<sup>1</sup> Sheffield became increasingly exasperated over what he considered to be the unjust and erratic posture of the Revolutionary regime, and his frustration over his own inability to mediate matters to the satisfaction of American interests only made it harder for him to work in the tense diplomatic climate. The religious conflict had added to his distress; Calles's approach to the Church question strengthened the Ambassador's conviction that Calles could not be depended on to behave either responsibly or honorably. He had had more than enough of the whole business.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Bucareli agreements of 1923 had stipulated that oil lands acquired between 1876 and 1917 could be held in perpetuity; Calles changed this to fifty years.

<sup>2</sup>The press at the time of Sheffield's resignation said only that he had favored a vigorous policy of defending American interests and that he had become discouraged at the uphill battle. Historians of the period are almost unanimous in their condemnation of him--the notable exception being partisans of the League and the Cristeros. See for example the New York Times, July 9, 1927, p. 2; October 7, p. 2; Frank Tannenbaum, Peace by Revolution: Mexico after 1910 (2nd ed.; New York, 1966), p. 173; Moctezuma II, 433, 434.

✓ On September 20th Coolidge announced the appointment of Sheffield's replacement. The new ambassador was Dwight Whitney Morrow, a partner in the firm of J.P. Morgan and Company of New York and a close personal friend of the President since their days together at Amherst.<sup>3</sup> Although not a career diplomat, Morrow had been involved in various international monetary matters, some of which had brought him into contact with Mexican bankers-- he was well acquainted for example with Agustín and Luis Legorreta of the Bank of Mexico. Coolidge had often sought his advice on questions of finance and foreign policy.<sup>4</sup> Mexican reaction to the appointment was at first somewhat cautious, but by the time the new envoy arrived the press, at any rate, was willing to give him a chance.<sup>5</sup>

Morrow reached Mexico City on October 23rd accompanied by his wife and daughter Constance. On the 29th, amidst the usual elegant fanfare surrounding such occasions, he presented his credentials to Calles at the National Palace. His formal address struck a favorable chord: ". . . It is my earnest hope that we shall not fail to adjust outstanding questions with that dignity and mutual respect which should mark the international relations of two sovereign and independent states. . . ."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>New York Times, September 21, 1927, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.; Rice, p. 109.

<sup>5</sup>The Mexico City papers reported Morrow's appointment on September 21st with the news that the Mexican government had advised Washington of its approval. Excelsior said editorially on the 23rd (p. 5) that Morrow was a man of well defined character and situation and it was assumed that he would act accordingly; as for the J.P. Morgan link, it said only that he would probably share the views of the U.S. banking community. The press was more amiable by the time the Ambassador arrived. El Universal, for example, said in an editorial welcoming him (October 24, p. 3) that his appointment was after all a frank recognition that the problems between the two countries were mainly financial.

<sup>6</sup>New York Times, October 24, 1927, p. 1; ibid., November 3, 1927, p. 1; El Universal, October 30, 1927, p. 1; Harold Nicolson, Dwight Morrow (New York, 1935), p. 316.

Calles decided it might be worthwhile to learn more about the new ambassador. Four days later he invited him to breakfast at his Santa Bárbara ranch east of Mexico City. Morrow accepted, and said he would be perfectly willing to let the President's own interpreter handle the conversation--a reference perhaps to Mr. James Smithers, a Mexican of American descent and close personal friend of Calles, who had not been welcome at the Embassy when Sheffield was there. In their talk, Morrow did not bring up oil and U.S. claims; he chose instead to discuss irrigation--a pet Calles concern. Within a week there was a second visit of the same kind. Oil came up, but so did irrigation again.<sup>7</sup>

Clearly, Morrow was determined to establish a friendly and relaxed official relationship. Moreover, his natural talent for charming people quickly made itself felt in non-official circles as well. His very appearance aided him: small in stature, not very fastidious in his dress, he looked anything but formidable. His relish for ambling through market places, where he would carefully and with seeming expertise inspect a piece of ceramic before buying it and then warmly congratulate its maker on his skill, was obviously sincere, and very widely commented upon. He was even studying Spanish.<sup>8</sup>

Morrow was aware of the seriousness of the religious situation in Mexico even before his appointment. In a letter to Agustín Legorreta in January, 1927, he commented that although the religious issue was entirely a domestic matter it would do irreparable damage to U.S.-Mexican relations

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<sup>7</sup>Nicolson, pp. 316, 317; El Universal, November 4, 1927, p. 1. The press accounts said the breakfast menus included hotcakes, ham, and eggs, thus originating the tale of what would be called Morrow's "ham and eggs diplomacy." Nicolson says, however (p. 318), that Calles ate popcorn lightly powdered with chocolate.

<sup>8</sup>Nicolson, p. 310; New York Times, October 26, 1927, p. 31.



if it were not resolved: the conflict impinged on oil and land questions, and it was aggravating Catholic opinion in the United States. Furthermore it was causing strife and ruin in Mexico.<sup>9</sup> Even before he left the United States in October he was involved in the question; Cardinal Hayes and Judge Morgan O'Brien of New York asked him to receive Father Burke for a talk on the subject.<sup>10</sup> Father Burke asked the Ambassador if it might be possible for Morrow to discuss confidentially with Calles the matter of finding some basis from which an eventual settlement might be arrived at. Morrow was polite but non-committal.<sup>11</sup>

Actually he was probably far more receptive than Burke realized. For years his favorite avocation had been the study of church-state relations--the works of Stubbs, Creighton, Lord Acton and Maitland were his favorites. As his biographer later said, "The temptation to regard the Mexican controversy as a problem in applied history was almost irresistible."<sup>12</sup> Besides, Morrow believed strongly that no Mexican government could establish order at home or be respected abroad as the head of a civilized and progressive country until the corrosive hostility of religious strife was somehow ended. All this, added to his passion for solving the seemingly insoluble, made it almost inevitable that he would tackle the matter.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Morrow to Legorreta, January 14, 1927, Morrow Papers, cited in Rice, pp. 109, 110.

<sup>10</sup>Morrow to Kellogg, July 23, 1928, DSR 812.404/895 2/9.

<sup>11</sup>Nicolson, pp. 341, 342. In all probability Burke was acting at the direction of the Apostolic Delegate, or at any rate with his approval. It is unlikely that either he or Cardinal Hayes would have approached Morrow on their own account concerning a matter both knew to be extremely delicate and in which the Vatican was deeply concerned.

<sup>12</sup>Nicolson, pp. 339.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 339, 340.

Morrow's first weeks in Mexico were spent in the bitter atmosphere surrounding the attempt on Obregón's life and the subsequent executions. He was well aware that it was an inauspicious time to move on the problem, but at least he would do nothing to lessen his chances for accomplishing something later, when a better opportunity might present itself.<sup>14</sup> He was quite familiar with the State Department's low opinion of Calles, and he had no intention of helping make it worse. When a League member handed an Embassy official a memorandum pointing out the illegality of the government's procedure in summarily executing Father Pro and the others, Morrow forwarded it to Washington without comment; Sheffield would probably have added expressions of shock and indignation.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, although few Catholics knew of it, he showed his dislike--quietly, to be sure--of the government's methods; he used his influence to obtain the release of several persons who were held by the police during the investigation into the assassination attempt.<sup>16</sup>

But at all costs he was determined to maintain his good start with Calles, even at the risk of drawing criticism from Calles's foes. A few days after the executions he accepted an invitation to accompany the President on a trip through the north to inspect irrigation projects, although

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<sup>14</sup>Morrow to Olds, November 30, 1927, DSR 812.6363/2446 1/2, cited in Rice, p. 112.

<sup>15</sup>See memorandum from Lane to Kellogg and Olds, December 13, 1927, DSR 812.404/845; Palomar y Vizcarra to Bustos, November 28, 1927, LA-1. Arthur Bliss Lane, formerly First Secretary at the Embassy, had just become chief of the State Department's Mexican Division.

<sup>16</sup>Statement of Víctor Velázquez, May 29, 1931, copy in possession of Antonio Ríos Facius. Velázquez was a Mexico City attorney acquainted with various members of the Embassy staff during both Sheffield's and Morrow's tenure.

he was well aware that some would interpret this as condoning Calles's actions.<sup>17</sup> But he knew that without the President's good will there was no chance of solving any matter of concern in the peaceful way he intended to operate. He was willing, however, to try to help soften the President's rigid attitude if he could do this without giving offense. Just before his departure with Calles the Chief of the Diplomatic Department of the Foreign Relations Ministry, obviously concerned about the injurious effects on Mexican-U.S. relations caused by the execution of civilians, "very confidentially" asked the Embassy if the Ambassador could take up the matter with the President. Morrow promised to do so if the opportunity arose.<sup>18</sup> Whether it did, by the time the trip was over he was planning to make use of Calles's friendship to help negotiate an end to the Church-state conflict. He wrote Under Secretary of State Robert Olds on December 9th that if his relations with Calles remained cordial, "it is possible that later I may be of some small assistance in helping to compose this trouble."<sup>19</sup>

\* \* \* The advent of Dwight Morrow led to decisive involvement of the American government in the religious conflict. The Ambassador's own commitment to work for a settlement quickly translated itself into a U.S. commitment, which would be unofficial but very potent. That involvement would rest on premises that dashed any hopes Mexican militants may have entertained for

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<sup>17</sup>Lane to Kellogg and Olds, December 13, 1927, DSR 812.404/845 3/4. Morrow may have suspected that Calles, by taking the American Ambassador along, wanted to show Mexican Catholics that they could not expect any concrete solace from Washington over the November events. See Nicolson, pp. 318, 319. Morrow told the Department that even though his acceptance would be interpreted as approving the executions, this was preferable to offending Calles. Kellogg replied, "I think you are right about taking the trip with the President. I do not worry at all about it creating an unfavorable impression among the Catholics." Kellogg to Morrow, December 17, 1927, Morrow Papers, cited in Rice, p. 114.

<sup>18</sup>Lane to Kellogg and Olds, December 13, 1927, DSR 812.404/845 3/4.

<sup>19</sup>Morrow to Olds, December 9, 1927, Morrow Papers, cited in Rice, p. 110n.

American aid or even American neutrality: the Calles regime was the legal government of Mexico, recognized as such by the United States, and the settlement the United States would work for must not only leave that government intact but must be brought about in a manner that would not arouse the antipathy of the Calles government. (Morrow's appointment was one of several events which, coming within a few weeks of each other, marked a turning point in the conflict.) The new American stance would not become apparent for some months. The other developments had a more immediate impact on the League and the armed movement it directed.

Despite the papal instruction given in August, which seemed to recognize the League as a component in the Church-state conflict, the League was nervous about its status in Rome. Palomar y Vizcarra wrote to González Valencia in September that things were going well militarily; "The only thing that would fill us with confusion and fear would be if our good position there should change. We urge Your Excellency to support and strengthen it even more firmly."<sup>20</sup>

González Valencia was doing his level best, but he was aware that the militant viewpoint might be in some trouble. "You cannot imagine how much damage [Pascual Díaz] has done," he wrote Palomar y Vizcarra, adding that he and his two confreres on the Bishops' Commission had managed to counter the Bishop of Tabasco at least in part. He said the Pope himself had read sections of some of Palomar's letters.<sup>21</sup> In November the Archbishop's secretary, Father David Ramírez, wrote that there was nothing to worry about--the Pope was on the side of the League. Díaz, he assured the

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<sup>20</sup>Palomar y Vizcarra to González Valencia, September 22, 1927, cited in Blanco Gil, p. 306.

<sup>21</sup>González Valencia to Palomar y Vizcarra, September [?] 1927, LA-1.

League Directors, had in fact been snubbed when he arrived recently for a visit. He did say, though, that unfortunately some of the exiled bishops had begun to think Díaz was the "fair haired boy," and were identifying with him.<sup>22</sup>

But the tide had turned, and turned strongly. Shortly after Díaz's arrival in Rome, Gasparri called in the Bishops' Commission and read it a statement which amounted to an accusation that it had been misinforming the Holy See. Two weeks later he told the three that the Holy See felt it advisable that the Commission be disbanded. Díaz left for New York two days later.<sup>23</sup> On December 12th, Fumasoni-Biondi informed Díaz that by authorization from Rome he was naming him his official intermediary with the Mexican Episcopate, "so that in these difficult and sorrowful moments through which the Church in Mexico is passing, the Bishops will be sure of knowing with certainty what the Holy See communicates through the Apostolic Delegation." The bishops, the letter said, were to take as the word of the Holy See what Díaz told them by order of the Delegate.<sup>24</sup>

✓ Díaz informed the bishops of his appointment in a circular letter dated December 19th. In the same letter, by direction of Fumasoni-Biondi, he also communicated instructions from the Pope on two matters: (Regarding a settlement of the religious question) the Pope said<sup>1)</sup> that the prelates must return to their dioceses by divine right, but<sup>2)</sup> when they could do so peacefully and with dignity. The<sup>3)</sup> government, the Pope said, was laying

<sup>22</sup>Ramírez to Palomar y Vizcarra, November 6, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>23</sup>See Ríos Facius, Méjico cristero, p. 222. The source cited is a statement signed by González Valencia in 1938, in possession of Antonio Ríos Facius.

<sup>24</sup>Circular letter from Díaz to members of the Hierarchy. Copy in Díaz to Morrow, July 24, 1928, in Lane to Morrow, July 25, 1928, DSR 812. 404/896.

down unacceptable conditions, such as refusing to correct the situation which obliged the clergy and the Holy See to suspend public worship in the first place.<sup>4)</sup> The Pope reiterated that any proposals from the government must come from someone officially authorized to make them, and that Rome reserved to itself the final decision on a settlement.<sup>25</sup>

The second matter concerned the League. The Pope, the instruction said, reaffirmed all he had stated in his apostolic letter of February 2, 1926:

Therefore [Díaz quoted the instruction], if the "League" abandons armed action and devotes itself to action entirely political, setting itself up as a party, it is clear that the Bishops, even in this case, cannot take part. The Bishops must not only abstain from supporting the armed action, but must also remain outside and apart from any political party even though it be good and honest. (This does not mean that the Bishops and Clergy are to leave their faithful people without the support of their prudent counsel and paternal guidance.)

If on the other hand the "League" intends to devote itself to action purely and simply Catholic, as defined in the apostolic letter cited, the Bishops are to direct that Catholic action of the "League" above all so that they may maintain themselves really outside and apart from any party. . . .

Bear in mind that, involved as the "League" is in the armed action of Catholics, it is impossible for it, with the same name and with the same leaders, considered to be revolutionists, to devote itself to action that is purely and simply Catholic without arousing suspicion.

For that reason it will be necessary that if the "League" abandons armed action to devote itself only to Catholic action, it gather Catholics under another name and on other grounds unrelated to armed action.<sup>26</sup>

Díaz added that the Delegate wanted the bishops to know that the instruction on the League was being given to them only so that they might clearly understand the Pope's wishes, that is, that the Bishops proceed "strictly united. . . in our relations with the League." He said that, as directed by the Delegate,

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

he was communicating the Holy Father's wishes to the leaders of the League "so that they may freely choose the kind of action to which they wish to devote themselves and so that, as they have thus far done with such great abnegation and unequalled heroism, they may continue working for the good of the Church in Mexico." He closed with the word that the Delegate advised the bishops to keep the Pope's communication confidential.<sup>27</sup>

x (Rome had spoken, and in a manner that left little room for interpretation. The Holy See had moved decisively to separate the official "Church" from any connection with the armed movement or with secular matters of a political nature. It did not--and never would--condemn the armed action, nor did it prohibit Catholics (other than bishops) from participating in it; but those who did were doing so as individuals, not as "the Church.") The League was not condemned, but it was forbidden to continue as an agent of Catholic action until such a time as it changed its program, name, and leadership.

Díaz gave the League the word in a letter to Luis Bustos on January 7th, 1928. He made it as gentle as possible. The Pope, he told Bustos, wanted the League to know of the consolation he had received from the firmness and constancy it had shown to the whole world, and from the conduct of its members--"complete Christians and obedient sons of the Holy See."

The Supreme Pontiff [said Díaz], who is fully aware of all the activities of the League, in no way intends to deprive its members of the rights which they have as citizens to involve themselves for the welfare of their country. But the Holy Father at the same time desires that the use of those rights not serve as a pretext for the launching of unjust attacks against the Catholic Church, the Episcopate, and even Mexican Catholics who are not members of the League.

In order to prevent this danger and to avoid prejudicial mistakes, Díaz

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

continued, the Pope had named him intermediary between the Apostolic Delegate and the bishops, and had ordered him at the same time to make known to the League the manner in which distinctions and separations were to be made between social and religious activities on the one hand, and on the other those that were political and, even more, of an armed nature. He said that for the present the League should take as coming from the Holy See only what he relayed to it from the Apostolic Delegate, and that likewise the Pope wished him to be the official channel between the Episcopal Committee and the League. Finally, Díaz wanted the Directors to know that he was ready to assist them in any way he could.<sup>28</sup>

The news stunned the Directive Committee. "I felt ill," Palomar y Vizcarra wrote to González Valencia (who must have felt little better), "and the heroic old man [Ceniceros y Villarrea], nearly in tears, said to me: 'Now they have really made certain that I shall not be able to sleep--nothing like this has ever happened to me. . . .'" Palomar went on to say that personally he had strongly considered withdrawing from the entire business--that, he said, was what he believed Díaz had wanted them to do for nearly two years--however, he would not do so; the League was having its Good Friday, but its Easter Sunday would surely come. The most pain was caused, he asserted, by the comment in the instruction that the leaders were considered to be revolutionists--this had cut them to the quick. The League, he said, was preparing a defense.<sup>29</sup>

The drafting of the refutation took well over a month. The Directors had been separated since the death of Roberto Núñez, in whose home they had been living, and communication was difficult. Also they wanted the advice

<sup>28</sup>Díaz to Bustos, January 7, 1928, LA-1.

<sup>29</sup>Palomar y Vizcarra to González Valenciz, February 15, 1928, LA-1.



and help of a number of individuals, including several of the bishops still in Mexico City.<sup>30</sup> The completed statement, sent to Bustos on March 5th with instructions that he forward it to Díaz, was a long, carefully constructed exposition of the League's position. It was a determined attempt to reconcile what Rome had decided was irreconcilable.

The League, it began, believed itself well informed regarding the norms the popes had laid down, especially concerning the distinctions among religious, social, civic, and political action. The League had remained since its birth, by "specific tendency" a "national civic organization, a defender of the public conscience against the attacks of the Socialism of the State on human liberties, particularly freedom of conscience." Civic action, in the League's understanding, was "that which strives, in the realm of opinion, to conquer and maintain safe and flourishing the essential rights of man as man, such as the rights to life and liberty, and the necessary and essential bases of civil society: religion, family, and property." Catholics had the duty to work in civic action--the bishops, they recalled, had said this in their April, 1926 pastoral. The League had never intended to operate in the political field and in fact had not done so as such. Its decision to second the armed effort was in conformity with its civic duty and with its conviction that the liberty and life of the Church were in grave danger. No other group was available to coordinate and direct the armed action. The League did so--with the approval of the bishops. For several months now the League, aware of the objection its actions were arousing in the United States, had been working at great sacrifice to leave the political and bellicose concerns which it had temporarily assumed in the hands of the Unión Nacional. If this organization had not yet become viable and visible it was because it

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<sup>30</sup>"Nota sobre la carta dirigida al Sr. Luis G. Bustos por el Comité Directivo de la L.N.D.L.R. en fecha de 5 de marzo de 1928," annotation written by Palomar y Vizcarra, January 27, 1941. LA-1.

would have to evolve in an orderly way, and above all because for reasons not of the League's making it still had not been deemed prudent to make the matter public. The armed movement, the Directors insisted, had not failed: it had grown day by day as it had increased its ability to procure its own supplies. The "National Liberation Army" had over 30,000 men at the moment. The Unión Nacional plan should contribute to victory: The previous summer, the League became convinced the movement would not be recognized while its chosen leader, branded as openly Catholic, remained at the helm; while its own plan was not replaced by the Constitution of 1857; and while the League, made up entirely of Catholics, was at the front of those activities. Thus with great sorrow it accepted the resignation of its chief and the change in political program, and prepared to leave the political and military action to the Unión Nacional; it was likely that this move would obtain the neutrality desired, and victory. The League wanted to turn over the military and political work, but at the moment it could not--it would take time. Catholic social action was out of the question because of the prevailing situation in Mexico; freedom of association for Catholics must come first. As for religious action, the League's only involvement had been to assist in making it possible for priests to function in the current crisis. The League was responsible for its own actions, not the clergy--although it wanted the advice of the clergy, as stated in its March, 1925 manifesto. Thus the League could not at present shift course: "To make changes right now in the bases, program, civic status and leadership of the League. . . to transform it into a religious association, thus abandoning its activities for the defense of the Church, is morally and physically impossible."<sup>31</sup> The people would see in such a move the ruin of their only hope; they would

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<sup>31</sup> All italics in original.

abandon the League, abandoning also civic action; the political and armed movement would be anarchical. The League would cease to exist--and the government would nevertheless continue to call the Episcopate, clergy and Catholics in general, rebels; the laws would remain the same and the persecution would go on. To bring these evils to an end, the League saw only two courses: ". . .destroy the government, even though this may cost time and sacrifice--or if not this, oblige it to give in with the pressure of our strength; or abandon the field to [the government] in all respects, not only the political and military. The League chooses the first." Most of the bishops (although perhaps not all) agreed that the League must not abandon its activities and change. For all these reasons, the League, which found in the papal instruction no categorical order suppressing it, believed it its duty to lay before the pope, "with absolute submission but at the same time with filial confidence, the impossibility of suppressing suddenly the activities it has as its own today. . . ." It would continue to hold itself apart from any partisan labor and from all that did not work to the welfare of the Church; it would work to see that as soon as possible the Unión Nacional would assume the political and military responsibilities; it would be careful--while continuing to work for the Unión Nacional's formation, and without involving the Episcopate and clergy--not to deal with political and military matters in the name of the Church. All this the League desired to put before the Pope, asking whether in the present circumstances it was faithfully interpreting his will. It respectfully asked that should the Holy See decide to enter into negotiations with the government, the papal delegate set the ecclesiastical conditions to be met but that the League's opinion be heard, in absolute secrecy, to determine whether it was advisable that the League intervene to point out the political guarantees that would assure the rights of the Church and also of

those who had fought with arms. The League also asked the Pope to help insure that the spiritual needs of the fighting men be met: they were often without priests and died without the sacraments, while the agraristas, fighting for the government and based in the towns, had spiritual comforts. It asked that the Pope exhort all Catholics to cooperate in unity to defend the freedom of the Church and end the disunity that had plagued that work thus far. Such was the League's case:

If the Holy Father wishes something else of the League, it will readily obey; in case it cannot continue with its character as a civic association [while] preparing the Unión Nacional, it will make the sacrifice of its character and of its life, in which the Episcopate has placed great hopes for national reconstruction for the day when peace comes, devoting itself exclusively to helping political and bellicose activities, since unfortunately Catholic action, much more noble and to its liking, without these, cannot possibly be carried on either now nor later. But if it is to die as the League, then her chiefs ask for a decisive order, and hope that in that case the views of all the Mexican prelates will be heard.

The Directors noted that Díaz had been named as the channel of communication; they declared their adherence to that nomination, offered their respects to Díaz, and prayed that "God will give him the judgement and strength to work for the good of the Church and the nation."<sup>32</sup>

The League had important and sympathetic partisans in its ordeal. Miguel de la Mora told the Committee on March 2nd that he was certain--and that Ruiz y Flores had told him the same thing in a letter--that the League had been left full freedom to continue its current activities provided these did not serve as a pretext for unjust attacks on the Church.<sup>33</sup> The Directors sent copies of its letter to other bishops. Mora y del Río wrote from Havana on March 18th that he was entirely satisfied with their reply:

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<sup>32</sup>Directive Committee to Bustos, March 5, 1928, LA-1.

<sup>33</sup>De la Mora to Directive Committee, March 2, 1928, LA-1.

. . . I especially applaud the scientific and Christian study which underlies each one of the estimates it contains and which are such firm and excellent premises that they make the practical consequences spring forth. . . . We must have confidence that the Holy Father, who is more interested than anyone in whatever concerns our cause, will with the light of the Holy Spirit point out the roads which will lead us to the goal we all long to reach.

He hoped the Directive Committee would keep him informed.<sup>34</sup> Lara y Torres of Tacámbaro also expressed his approval of the doctrines "expressed with such clarity" in the document.<sup>35</sup> González Valencia, writing from Germany, lauded the letter and said that, as always, he was with the League and was doing everything he could in "words and works" to get financial aid to it. He said the Directive Committee should not doubt for a moment that "we are supported by the affection and blessings of the Pope". . . . I laugh when it is said that my own personal posture has been disapproved."<sup>36</sup>

The Directors never learned what happened to their letter at the Vatican, or whether it ever reached the Pope.<sup>37</sup>

The bishops' reaction to the papal bringing-to-heel was decidedly mixed. Some of them--González Valencia, Manríquez y Zárate, even Mora y del Río (at least privately) disobeyed it as individuals. Manríquez y Zárate told the Directive Committee late in January: "Whatever be the outcome of our undertakings, one thing is certain: we must struggle tirelessly until we obtain the triumph of the Church and the conquest of national freedom."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Mora y del Río to Cenicerós y Villarreal, March 18, 1928, LA-1.

<sup>35</sup>Lara y Torres to Directive Committee, March 12, 1928, LA-1.

<sup>36</sup>González Valencia to Palomar y Vizcarra, May 18, 1928, LA-1.

<sup>37</sup>Palomar y Vizcarra said later that Díaz did not expedite it, saying it had not been sent to him with a copy. "Nota sobre la carta dirigida al Sr. Luis Bustos. . . ," LA-1.

<sup>38</sup>Manríquez y Zárate to José Tello, January 24, 1928, LA-1.

At about the same time the bishops were being told to abstain from supporting the rebellion they received from the League a detailed report on the military situation, prepared by the Special War Committee. In forwarding it, the Directors told the prelates they wanted them to have a factual summary that might encourage them and dispel any false information. The report said that in the entire country there were approximately 20,000 men under arms and in organized units, plus another 10,000 who were less well provisioned and organized, and only partially under League control.<sup>39</sup> In certain areas, where there were no railroads, Cristeros controlled considerable territory. Some of the military units had their own chaplains; there were masses for the men and it was not unusual for 600 or 700 soldiers to receive Holy Communion at a time. The situation regarding supplies was

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<sup>39</sup>"Situación militar de la Defensa Armada a fines del año de 1927. . . ," in Degollado, pp. 259-264. The report said the forces were distributed as follows:

|                                                 |        |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Colima, Jalisco, Nayarit and part of Zacatecas: | 10,000 |
| Coastal region of Michoacán:                    | 7,000  |
| Interior of Michoacán:                          | 1,000  |
| State of Mexico:                                | 1,500  |
| Guanajuato:                                     | 800    |
| Northern Zacatecas:                             | 500    |
| Aguascalientes:                                 | 500    |

The balance was distributed in the states of Durango, Tlaxcala, Oaxaca, San Luis Potosí, Puebla, Morelos, Veracruz, Sinaloa, Hidalgo, and Guerrero. The report did not make clear whether the breakdown by states included only the well organized units or the irregulars as well.

The total given may have been fairly accurate. It roughly correlates with those given in a report prepared by the military attaché of the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, who estimated the number of rebels at 17,000 to 20,000 in December, 23,400 in January, and 24,650 in February. He did not identify the rebels, but since there was no other rebel movement of note during those months, and since he specified that these were rebels (not bandits), the bulk of them must have been Cristeros. Report of Major Harold Thompson, June, 1928, enclosed in Morrow to Kellogg, July 16, 1928. DSR 812.00/29215 1/2, cited in Rice, p. 138n. Thompson said there was heavy activity in January in Sinaloa, Nayarit, Jalisco, Michoacán, Guanajuato, Aguascalientes, Mexico, Zacatecas, Oaxaca, Puebla, and Veracruz.

described as unsatisfactory. The men were often short of food and many were only partly clothed--conditions due in part to the destruction in certain areas and to the government's "reconcentration" policy. But despite the privations, the brutality of the enemy, the indifference of many wealthy Mexicans and of the civilized world, despite the lack of a supreme chief and of career military men (" . . . the federals of the old army, with rare and honored exceptions, have forgotten their duty. . ."), morale in the ranks was magnificent. The only thing the soldiers complained of was not having ammunition.<sup>40</sup>

The supply problem was critical, but poor communications were possibly an even greater handicap. Orders and reports, when sent, ran gauntlets and often arrived weeks late or not at all. This severely restricted the League's efforts to coordinate action or even to find out what was happening in the field. Late in 1927 the Directive Committee lost contact with Gorostieta for weeks (he was on a long swing through Zacatecas). At length, the Directors decided he had died, resigned or deserted, and named a replacement. He came to light a short time later, and gently scolded the Committee for not communicating orders and news to him.<sup>41</sup> Sometimes poor communications contributed to dangerous rifts in the higher echelons of authority. After the death of Ochoa in November, 1927, the Special Subcommittee in Guadalajara (nominally subordinate to the Special Committee in Mexico City) incorporated Colima into Degollado's command in southern Jalisco. Meanwhile the Committee in Mexico City had received a

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<sup>40</sup>"Situación militar de la Defensa Armada a fines del año de 1927. . . ," in Degollado, pp. 259-264.

<sup>41</sup>Palomar y Vizcarra to González Valencia, December 26, 1927; Tello to José María Delgado, January 30, 1928 (enclosing letter from the Special Committee to Carlos Blanco, whom it named to replace Gorostieta); Gorostieta to League, undated, but written in March or April, 1928. LA-1.

request from leaders in Colima that Miguel Anguiano be given the command in that state--an appointment which the Committee, oblivious of Degollado's designation by Guadalajara, proceeded to make. The result was hurt pride and high anger, and matters were resolved only after weeks of trouble during which Degollado threatened to resign unless unity was restored. Degollado remained in overall regional command, and Colima was divided into two sectors, one under Anguiano, the other under Andrés Salazar.<sup>42</sup> The incident was due in part to the unstable relationship between the leadership in Mexico City and the military command in Guadalajara. The latter, in theory subordinate to the League, in fact acted highly independently; the autonomy of the Unión Popular and apparently the presence of the "U" gave the Jalisco leadership its distinctive standing. It had, on its own authority, changed its name from "Military Subcommittee of Jalisco" to "Military Control of the West," and in the Colima incident, Cenicerros y Villarreal suspected, was trying to extend its radius of control. The Directive Committee nevertheless followed a peace at any price policy; had it known of Degollado's appointment, Cenicerros said, it would not have named Anguiano.<sup>43</sup>

The Supreme command unit--the League's Special War Committee composed of four members under the chairmanship of Santiago Guerrero--worked under heavy difficulties. Guerrero complained in March, 1928, that the Committee was functioning only irregularly; the members had trouble holding meetings because of police vigilance, and one member had attended only twice.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Cenicerros y Villarreal; Degollado, pp. 124-128; Spectator II, 11-16.

<sup>43</sup>Cenicerros y Villarreal.

<sup>44</sup>Guerrero to Cenicerros y Villarreal, March 7, 1928, LA-1. "Guerrero" may have been a code name or pseudonym--this is often the case in documents in the League files which refer to leaders of the movement and other important persons--but if so, I have been unable to learn his real identity.



Yet the Committee (in effect often Guerrero alone) made brave efforts to promote and strengthen organization, to encourage activity, and to keep the Directive Committee as well informed as possible. Guerrero's March 25th report to the League President was a mixture of frustration and optimism. He said the Committee was trying to establish military commands in the states of Oaxaca, Puebla, Veracruz, Guerrero, Morelos, Querétaro, Guanajuato, and San Luis Potosí, but had achieved very few concrete results thus far; things looked promising only in Oaxaca. In Puebla, recruiting was being hampered by a priest who was opposed to the movement. In Veracruz the person recently named chief of operations had been betrayed and executed. In Querétaro things were beginning to move but were complicated by the existence of one rebel band which was expressly non-Cristero and another which was presumably pro-League but had not yet affiliated. In Guanajuato things looked good on paper but were weak in fact: a rising on March 5th had failed, in large part because of poor organization--groups from only two or three districts had joined it. Things were further confused by the work of a Father Salinas, who had declared war against the Protestants and was passing out commissions helter-skelter on his own; even the League's military chief, Cuevas, was obeying Salinas more than he was the League. The March 5th fiasco had been followed by severe government repression, and there were now five or six dispersed Cristero bands that did not know whom to follow. The Committee had just appointed a new chief of operations for the region who would try to restore order. In Zacatecas, Aguascalientes, and Durango, Guerrero reported, the military effort was alive but was not growing. San Luis Potosí was in a period of organization, and progress was evident despite serious difficulties with local chiefs. There had been some small military efforts, partly successful, in the Federal District and the State of Mexico.

Michoacán and Jalisco were both highly encouraging. In the first, Fermín Gutiérrez (Navarro Origel) was conducting a brilliant campaign marked by excellent troop discipline and impressive military successes which had established control over a large coastal area. Steps were being taken to see that he received more supplies. Jalisco was the bulwark of the cause. The report expressed grave concern over the lack of unity, and referred in particular to the divisive work of the "U."<sup>45</sup>

Gorostieta, after his Zacatecas expedition during which he reached an understanding with Quintanar, who was on the verge of repudiating League authority, established himself in Los Altos early in 1928. He reported in March that since beginning operations the previous July he and his subordinates had inflicted 789 casualties on the enemy, losing themselves only seventy-nine men. In the regions under Cristero control, he said, he had set up civilian governments in seven localities, all of which were functioning well. He was working to secure a tightly disciplined military command and to stop local chiefs from passing out appointments by whim. He had, he reported, adopted two classes of military organization: one composed of regular forces who would fight anywhere, and another for regional defense, made up of men anxious to fight but reluctant to operate outside the areas where they lived. He criticized the League in Mexico City for interfering in details and urged it to leave him a free hand in the field. He strongly advised the League to name a supreme civil head of the movement; lack of one was demoralizing the entire effort. Moreover, the military leaders were urging the appointment of a supreme military chief capable of coordinating a genuine overall strategy, since otherwise the struggle might go on for several years. The armed action, he said,

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<sup>45</sup>Guerrero to Cenicerros y Villarreal, No. 95, March 25, 1928, LA-1.

had passed beyond the guerrilla stage; there were now seasoned nuclei capable of important efforts--something that was possible, however, only if larger units were formed and put into action and if cities of importance were taken. The critical shortage of ammunition was preventing any such enlargement of operations; two to three million cartridges, he thought, would turn the tide. Gorostieta urged the establishment of civilian authority in all areas taken from the government, both as a means of accustoming the fighting men to respect civilian rule and as a morale factor. In Jalisco, he said, civilian leaders had often been better able to maintain the spirit of the struggle than had the soldiers, and cooperation had been excellent: the troops looked upon civilians as people to protect, not as easy victims. He urged development of a master plan to take the Bajío; the strategy of raids must end. Available ammunition should be sent in single large consignments to chiefs who would undertake major action, rather than dribbled around. He closed with a pledge of loyalty and obedience to the League.<sup>46</sup>

Gorostieta's work in Jalisco went forward thoroughly and carefully. By the summer of 1928 the 2,000 armed men under his command were organized in one brigade of six regiments, each with a well defined zone of operations. Father Aristeo Pedroza was given command of the brigade with the rank of brigadier general. Gorostieta was tight-fisted about giving rank; with rare and grudging exceptions he issued commissions only to proven leaders, and only after he was satisfied as to their good conduct and reputation.<sup>47</sup> There remained some semi-independent groups in Jalisco that were never

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<sup>46</sup>Gorostieta to Directive Committee, LA-1. The letter is undated, but was written after February 28, 1928; the League answered it April 6th.

<sup>47</sup>Navarrete, pp. 176-181. Gorostieta once said he would never willingly make a man a colonel whom he would not have as a guest in his home.

fully incorporated into the regular structure, but these were of minor importance. With organization essentially completed in Los Altos, Gorostieta went to Guanajuato, where he appointed General José Posada Ortiz, an old friend and fellow professional, brigade chief for the Bajío with the task of organizing the various Cristero groups in that region.<sup>48</sup>

The government's attempts to crush the rebellion in Los Altos, where most of the inhabitants were bitterly hostile to the federal authority, took a peculiarly brutal form. Some 76,000 families, most of them destitute, had been herded into towns. Tepatitlán, with a normal population of 10,000, received 30,000 of these reconcentrados. Small pox and typhoid fever reached epidemic levels. Entire regions of rich agricultural land were left uncultivated. Around the "reconcentration" towns six-kilometer zones were designated as crop and cattle land to provision the populace, and patrolled in order to deny the Cristeros access to supplies. This was only partly successful: rebel bands constantly raided into the zones at night in search of provisions.<sup>49</sup>

In April the government announced an end to the "reconcentration" in Jalisco, asserting that the rebellion in that state as well as in Colima and Nayarit was nearly over--only a few dispersed bands were at large and would no doubt surrender soon.<sup>50</sup> The reasons for ending the reconcentration, however, were obviously not those given. There were important rebel victories

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<sup>48</sup>There was an additional regiment which operated at times in Los Altos--the San Gaspar, which ranged over the entire western sector. See Manuel Ramírez to Heriberto Navarrete, September 29, 1961, David, VI, No. 144 (July 22, 1964), 387.

<sup>49</sup>El Universal, February 19, 1928, pp. 1, 6. The "reconcentration" was not limited to Jalisco. On January 19th, 1928, the inhabitants of San Diego de Alejandria and neighboring villages were given forty-eight hours to remove themselves to León, under threat of bombardment. Blanco Gil, p. 52.

<sup>50</sup>El Universal, April 3, 1928, p. 1.

in March, according to reports received by the League, and even the Mexico City press carried almost daily reports throughout April of clashes between rebel and government forces, most of these in Jalisco. On April 3rd, the day after the government claimed the rebellion was near an end, a Cristero unit of 200 attacked Tequila, Jalisco, and was repulsed only after heavy fighting, according to the federal military communique.<sup>51</sup> A news release from Guadalajara dated April 19th reported federal action against a "strong nucleus" led by Trinidad Guillén, the government stating that twenty-seven rebels including Guillén died in combat, while nineteen others were executed afterwards. Other skirmishes were reported, and there was news that arms, documents, priestly equipment, and tools for making bullets had been captured.<sup>52</sup>

The Sixth Pan American Conference convened in Havana on January 16th, 1928. Like most such gatherings it was longer on camaraderie and protestations of hemispheric solidarity than on items of dramatic import. Attempts to bring the Mexican religious issue before the conference failed. Vatican representatives in Latin America raised the possibility informally with the governments to which they were accredited, and even tried--indirectly--to interest the U.S. State Department in the idea. The matter was shelved, however, apparently in part because of objections of the Calles government. The U.S. Ambassador to Argentina suggested to Washington that the matter might be talked over in Havana, if not as part of the formal

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<sup>51</sup>El Universal, April 4, 1928, p. 1.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., April 20, 1928, p. 1. Press reports seldom gave any indication of the religious coloration of the rebellion--this reference was exceptional.

meeting then outside the regular sessions and agenda.<sup>53</sup>

The subject was not formally pursued, but there was considerable activity on the matter at Havana nevertheless. Capistrán Garza, at the League's request, was there to lobby with the delegates and provide them with data on the Mexican situation.<sup>54</sup> His efforts and those of other Catholics succeeded in rattling the Mexican delegation, whose chairman informed Mexico City that, due in part to the work of the Knights of Columbus and others, Mexico had been virtually deprived of influence in the conference--the Mexicans, he said, were in an embarrassing position and feared they might even be ordered out of the country. Calles told him he was exaggerating, and to stay put.<sup>55</sup>

Father John J. Burke was also in Havana. He conferred with several people there, including Morrow. As early as December 16th Morrow had been considering the possibility that Father Burke might serve as a mediator in the religious conflict. He wrote to Olds that "a modus vivendi could be worked out without loss of dignity to either side if there were any method by which a liberal Catholic of the type of Father Burke, who talked with us in Washington, were dealing directly with President Calles."<sup>56</sup> In Havana

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<sup>53</sup>The papal representative in Buenos Aires communicated the suggestion to the U.S. Embassy through the Brazilian ambassador to Argentina. U.S. Ambassador Bliss reported to Washington that Brazil's ambassador in Mexico City talked to Calles on the matter of bringing up the question at Havana. Calles was not in favor of it, although Obregón, to whom the Ambassador also spoke, was receptive. Bliss to SecState, January 14, 1928, DSR 812.404/845.

<sup>54</sup>"Memorándum del día 17 de enero de 1928," signed by Bustos, LA-1.

<sup>55</sup>Julio García (chairman of the delegation) to the Under Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Relations, February 3, 1928, with annotation. The document found its way into the hands of the League, although when and how are not known--several highly confidential official papers did. LA-1.

<sup>56</sup>Morrow to Olds, December 9, 1927, Morrow Papers, cited in Rice, p. 115.

they talked twice. Burke told Morrow he was willing to have the Ambassador ask Calles to invite him to Mexico if there were some reasonable possibility that the reply would be affirmative.<sup>57</sup>

Burke also called upon Mora y del Río and Archbishop Tritschler of Yucatán, both of whom were residing temporarily in the Cuban capital, to ascertain their views about a possible trip by him to Mexico. Tritschler expressed the opinion that Calles was determined to crush the Church in Mexico, but assented to the idea of the priest's going; he said that Burke, acting with authority and with the cooperation of the U.S. Embassy, would probably be received by Calles and might obtain useful results.<sup>58</sup> The next day, Burke met Mora y del Río. The aged and ailing Primate, who may have sensed that his long life was nearly over, told the American priest that his one desire was to return to Mexico. When Father Burke asked how he might work with the bishops to that end, the Archbishop told him the key to a solution was in the hands of the American government, that if that government really desired an end to the conflict and so told Calles, it would end immediately. Calles, he said, was not his own master; he was a Bolshevik, and the slave of a group which guided him and kept him in power. If the United States only made known its wish that Calles amend the laws, stop the killing of Catholics, restore the churches, etc., the persecution would be over. He said further that if the United States would lift the arms embargo and allow the Cristeros to obtain military supplies, Calles

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<sup>57</sup>Morrow to Kellogg, July 23, 1928, DSR 812.404/895 2/9, cited in Rice, p. 115. The documentation does not indicate whether Burke or Morrow first raised the possibility of Burke's visiting Mexico. Both, however, were obviously enthused at the idea.

<sup>58</sup>"Interview with His Grace, Martín Tritschler, Archbishop of Yucatán, at Havana, Cuba, January 18, 1928," Philip McDevitt Papers. McDevitt, Bishop of Pittsburgh, was one of the five members of the Administrative Board of the N.C.W.C. Montavon, who wrote the memorandum, accompanied Burke and served as interpreter.

would be overthrown in a month. Burke asked the Archbishop if he realized the limitations under which the U.S. government had to act: if it demanded that Calles amend the laws and Calles refused (experience, he noted, showed that Calles would be indignant at such an attempt at interference), what could the United States do then except intervene with force? Mora y del Rfo replied that he was not in favor of armed intervention, but that if the United States would allow Mexican Catholics to get arms and supplies they would deal with Calles themselves. Father Burke asked whether negotiations might not work. The answer was perhaps, but there could be no settlement unless the laws were changed--and Calles had been induced to change other laws the United States found distasteful. He added that the economic distress of the Calles regime might be taken advantage of, that with the cooperation of U.S. bankers a man like Father Burke could probably succeed.<sup>59</sup>

When he returned to Mexico City Morrow saw Calles, to whom he spoke "more frankly than I had hitherto done about the whole Catholic question." Peace, he told the President, was an essential foundation for Mexican progress, and any matter one took up led to the very serious religious problem which was troubling a substantial portion of the nation. Calles replied that he was willing, as always, to talk the matter over with anyone who was open minded on the subject, and that he would be glad to receive Father Burke. Morrow sent this news to Burke immediately.<sup>60</sup> The priest prepared to leave for Mexico, but an unexpected hitch developed. News of the

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<sup>59</sup>"Interview with His Grace the Most Reverend José Mora y del Rfo, Archbishop of Mexico City, at Havana, Cuba, January 19, 1928," McDevitt Papers.

<sup>60</sup>Morrow to Olds, February 21, 1928, Morrow Papers, cited in L. Ethan Ellis, "Dwight Morrow and the Church-State Controversy," HAHR, XXXVIII (November, 1958), 485, 486.



projected negotiation appeared in the New York Herald Tribune, whereupon Calles called off the meeting and denied publicly that Father Burke had conferred with him or was about to. Privately, he speculated that the leak was the work of Mexican Catholics who opposed the conference. Burke later agreed that this was probably the case.<sup>61</sup>

Morrow was not discouraged. If the door had been opened once it could be opened again. The Ambassador had come to certain conclusions regarding a solution of the religious problem: "No one but a madman would endeavor to settle the question of principle between the Church and Mexico," he wrote Olds on February 21st.<sup>62</sup> The only productive approach, he was convinced, was to deal with the issue on a purely practical basis. Olds agreed: the whole matter, he told Morrow, should be handled on the basis of practical adjustments rather than continuing a struggle over principles, which would lead only to the ruin of one of the adversaries.<sup>63</sup>

March presented another, more auspicious opportunity. The oil controversy had been substantially settled to the satisfaction of both governments.<sup>64</sup> Calles's opinion of Morrow was high indeed. He told a group of visiting U.S. newsmen and economists that Mexican-American relations were

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.; El Universal, February 12, 1928, p. 1. Olds thought the leak had come about in this way: He had thought it his duty to tell Mora y del Río of the planned visit. Burke was visited a few days before he was to leave for Mexico by several Mexicans "prominent in the old regime" who had been seeking aid in the U.S. They told the priest they objected to his going to Mexico. Burke told them they were not good Catholics and in general rebuffed them; he was sure this group had tipped off the Tribune. Morrow to Olds, May 22, 1928, Morrow Papers, cited in Rice, p. 116n.

<sup>62</sup>Morrow to Olds, February 21, 1928, Morrow Papers, cited in Rice, p. 117.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 117n; Olds to Morrow, March 9, 1928, Morrow Papers, cited in Rice, p. 118.

<sup>64</sup>The new regulations, signed by Calles on the 27th, in effect provided that titles to the oil lands would stand in perpetuity. New York Times, March 28, 1928, p. 1.

increasingly cordial and said this was due especially to Ambassador Morrow's work.<sup>65</sup> On March 13th Morrow began new steps to bring the contending parties together. In a telegram to the State Department he enclosed a draft letter; if someone with proper authority--Father Burke, for example--could write him a personal and confidential letter incorporating its essentials, he thought he could get a favorable response from Calles. The draft said that the signer had learned reliably that the President had stated it had never been his purpose "to destroy the identity of the Church nor to interfere with its spiritual function"; that the purpose of the Constitution and laws, and their enforcement, "has been, and will be, to keep the ecclesiastics from being implicated in political struggles while at the same time leaving them free to dedicate themselves to the welfare of souls." The Mexican bishops, the letter continued, had felt that the laws, "if enforced in a spirit of antagonism," threatened the identity of the Church by giving the state control over its spiritual offices. The hierarchy desired to resume public worship, if assured of "a tolerance within the law" permitting the Church freedom to live and to exercise its spiritual offices. If President Calles could make a statement to the effect that the identity of the Church was not under attack, and that to avoid "unreasonable application of the laws" the government would agree to discuss matters of mutual concern from time to time with the head of the Church in Mexico, the clergy would resume their spiritual duties forthwith. The bishops or their representative, the letter concluded, would be glad to communicate with Calles in this sense if Calles were agreeable and would give the assurances suggested.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Excelsior, March 10, 1928, p. 1.

<sup>66</sup> Morrow to SecState, March 13, 1928, DSR 812.404/872.

Morrow noted that in preparing the draft he had studied Gasparri's letter to Sáenz of September 5th, 1924, and the statement made to Calles by Ruiz y Flores and Díaz in August, 1926. He had also read an editorial in Commonweal for January 4th, 1928, which Father Burke had shown him in Havana; the editorial, he recalled had stressed the point that the "identity of the Church" must be preserved and that to assure this in practice, conferences between the head of the Church and government officials would be important, rather than having the government deal with individual clergymen. Morrow pointed out that this was covered in his proposed draft. He also pointed out that as regards the clergy in politics he had followed in part Gasparri's own wording--that in fact he had where possible used phraseology already used by Church persons. He further stressed that the letter contained "an implicit recognition of the fact that experiences in an atmosphere of mutual good will may suggest subsequent changes in the law, which of course cannot be expressly promised." Calles, he said, after his experience with the bishops in August, 1926, felt that many of them did not want a settlement. It was also doubtful whether Calles would deal directly with the Vatican at present, although later it might be possible to go back to the Gasparri-Sáenz 1924 agreement. Therefore, he had made this draft in the form of a personal letter to himself, with the idea that another one similar in substance might later be addressed to Calles by the bishops, "but that such a letter would not be sent to him until I have ascertained directly from President Calles the type of answer the bishops will receive." He urged haste; time, he said, was vital.<sup>67</sup>

There was no immediate reply from Father Burke. Both he and the Apostolic Delegate were reluctant to sign such a letter without Rome's approval.

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

The Delegate had anticipated that Burke and Calles would first meet informally, and that afterwards someone from the Apostolic Delegation would report to the Holy See.<sup>68</sup> Morrow provided an opening for this approach in a second draft letter he sent March 7th. It was nearly identical to the first but contained no absolute commitment that a statement signed by the bishops would be forthcoming. If Father Burke could agree to this form, he said, he thought it possible to get permission for the priest to make the trip; he would approach Calles if he received an affirmative reply. Again he urged speed.<sup>69</sup>

Matters now moved quickly. On the morning of the 29th Father Burke signed the draft letter, which was immediately dispatched to Mexico City by diplomatic pouch.<sup>70</sup> The priest left Washington at once, accompanied by Montavon. Morrow speedily obtained the go-ahead from Calles. It was arranged that A.F. Smithers, brother of James Smithers and another Calles confidant, would meet Burke and Montavon at Laredo.<sup>71</sup>

The conference took place April 4th at the old castle fortress of San Juan de Ulúa in the harbor at Veracruz. At Calles's request, Morrow joined the party in Mexico City for the trip to the coast.<sup>72</sup> The talks lasted five hours and were cordial beyond expectations. Burke wrote in his diary:

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<sup>68</sup>Olds to Morrow, March 20, 1928, Morrow Papers, cited in Rice, p. 119.

<sup>69</sup>Morrow to SecState, March 27, 1928, DSR 812.404/874.

<sup>70</sup>Olds to Morrow, March 29, 1928, DSR 812.404/872; same, 872b.

<sup>71</sup>Memorandum to Lane, March 31, 1928.

<sup>72</sup>Wood, Veracruz, to SecState, April 4, 1928, DSR 812.404/876. Probably Morrow was present during the entire interview, although his exact role is not certain. He wired the Department on the 4th: "I shall endeavor to confine myself to the role of intermediary but it may be necessary for me to be present at the interview." Ibid.

The Apostolic Delegate had asked me to represent him and to come in his name, with no power to promise, with no formal authority and with no power to accept anything. But to come to the President, to make clear the mind of the Holy Father and to see if recognition could not be given to the Church and to its own organized life; if the laws referring to registration and the limitation of the clergy could not be interpreted in a way that the Church might, with preservation of her own organization and dignity, accept, and provision made whereby, after public worship were resumed, opportunity be given for changes in the laws and constitution that would give the Church fuller freedom.<sup>73</sup> I had come with that authority. I had come for that purpose.

Calles told Burke that he had had no intention of taking action on the religious question until the Mora y del Río interview of February, 1926 and later events had shown him that the bishops were trying to debilitate and overthrow the government; he mentioned the boycott and the suspension of worship. He noted that the bishops said his government was Bolshevik; it was not, Calles insisted: it emanated from the 1911 movement, which preceded the Bolshevik world movement. He said the bishops were intriguing with foreign powers in order to gain their ends. The Church, he asserted, could not win; in fact it had already lost. He said the bishops were ignoring the social and moral evils in Mexico. They were trying to work through the peons who obeyed them. He added that reports indicated the Pope was supporting the bishops in all of this. He had never tried to destroy the Church; he had insisted only on "fidelity to the institutions and laws of Mexico." Father Burke contradicted him by saying that the Pope fully supported efforts to better the condition of the Mexican people; the Pope supported the bishops in religious matters but was not back of any moves to overthrow the government.<sup>74</sup> Calles said that frankly he was not

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<sup>73</sup>"Extracts from Diary of Father Burke sent to D.W.M. [Dwight Whitney Morrow] by R.E.O. [Robert E. Olds] in letter of April 18, 1928," enclosed in Morrow to Clark, October 19, 1928, DSR 812.404/931 6/12. J. Ruben Clark succeeded Olds as Under Secretary of State in the summer of 1928.

<sup>74</sup>Excerpts from Burke's diary, May 4, 1928, Morrow Papers, cited in Rice, pp. 124-126.

optimistic that the meeting would be productive. He predicted bad will and opposition on the part of Church authorities. Nevertheless, letters were exchanged, as planned.<sup>75</sup> Burke's was in the form suggested by Morrow. Calles's to Burke stated that, by Burke's letter and as a result of the interview, he was advised of the bishops' desire to resume public worship, and that he wished to state, as he had on other occasions, that "it is not the purpose of the Constitution nor of the laws, nor my own purpose, to destroy the identity of any church, nor to interfere, in any form, with its spiritual functions." His purpose, he said, was to comply with his oath of office to observe and enforce the Constitution and laws "and to see that the law be applied in a spirit of reasonableness and without any prejudice, being myself as well as my collaborators, always disposed to hear from any person, be he a dignitary of some church or merely a private individual, the complaints they [sic] may have regarding injustices that may be committed through excess of application of the laws."<sup>76</sup> Calles asked what the next step would be. Burke said he would make a report to the Apostolic Delegate, who would then report to Rome. As for the presence of an apostolic delegate in Mexico, Calles said that although he could not give diplomatic recognition to one, his government would negotiate unofficially with such an individual.<sup>77</sup> At the end of the meeting Calles thanked Father Burke for coming and for explaining the position of the Holy See; and he added--"to my utter amazement," Burke recalled--"I hope your visit means

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<sup>75</sup>Morrow to SecState, April 6, 1928, DSR 812.404/877; Burke to Calles, in Kellogg to Morrow, May 9, 1928, DSR 812.404/882; Morrow to Clark, October 19, 1928, DSR 812.404/931 6/12.

<sup>76</sup>Calles to Burke, April 4, 1928, DSR 812.404/931 2/12.

<sup>77</sup>Excerpts from Burke's diary, Morrow Papers, cited in Rice, p. 129.

a new era for the life and people of Mexico."<sup>78</sup>

There was no publicity leak. The Mexico City press on April 6th reported routinely that Ambassador Morrow had visited the President, who was in Veracruz.<sup>79</sup>

In the days following there were signs that Mexican officialdom was extending an olive branch, however gingerly. Speaking at Celaya on April 15th, with both Calles and Obregón present on the platform, Education Minister Puig Casauranc invited all good Revolutionaries to demonstrate that those who fought to better the lot of the people could not commit the error of persecuting a religious conviction. "We are respectful of religious beliefs," he insisted. "In all Mexicans we find equality, whether in their hearts there is lodged a Masonic belief or whether they have an altar of the Lady of Guadalupe, the blessed virgin who signifies comfort and a feeling of love for the Mexican people."<sup>80</sup> El Universal on April 29th reported rumors circulating in the United States of a possible early settlement, based in part on the Puig Casauranc speech.<sup>81</sup>

Returning to Washington, Burke reported in detail to Fumasoni-Biondi. The Delegate delayed communicating with Rome, however, so that the Mexican bishops, about to gather in San Antonio, could be sounded out on the subject of a settlement.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>78</sup>"Extracts from Diary of Father Burke," in Morrow to Clark, October 19, 1928, DSR 812.404/931 6/12.

<sup>79</sup>See El Universal, April 6, 1928, p. 1; Morrow to SecState, April 6, 1928, DSR 812.404/877.

<sup>80</sup>El Universal, April 16, 1928, p. 5. Morrow reported to the Department that some well informed people believed the speech had the authority of Calles and Obregón. Morrow to SecState, April 16, 1928, DSR 812.404/878.

<sup>81</sup>El Universal, April 29, 1928, p. 1.

<sup>82</sup>Nicolson, pp. 342, 343.

On April 22nd, the man who had held the primacy of the Church in Mexico during the most turbulent era of its turbulent history died in San Antonio. José Mora y del Río died in exile, and even in death his wish to return home was not immediately fulfilled; he was given a temporary resting place in the cemetery of the San Fernando Cathedral in the Texas city. He was followed in death three weeks later by Ignacio Valdespino, Bishop of Aguascalientes, who was buried beside him. The two events evoked notes that were not in harmony with the softening of tensions that was beginning to appear. Archbishop Arthur Drossaerts of San Antonio preached the sermons at both funerals. They included bitter attacks on the Calles regime and on U.S. policy in Mexico. His remarks at the services for Valdespino were scathing: Liberty, said the Archbishop, was being crucified at the doorstep of the United States, and this country was contemplating it with complete indifference:

Did we not support the odious Carranza? Did we not encourage the arch-bandit Villa? Did we not raise Alvaro Obregón to the presidential chair? Are we not winning Calles' friendship by sending him planes with which he is bombarding the heroic men who are dying for freedom of conscience in the State of Jalisco?<sup>83</sup>

The oration brought a sharp rebuttal from the Mexican consul general in Washington, who challenged Drossaerts to show his courage, if he dared, by going into Mexico and converting "his filibustering words into filibustering deeds."<sup>84</sup>

Of more importance to the conflict--and its eventual solution--was the new ordering of rank within the Mexican episcopate. The vacant See of Mexico would not be filled for over a year, but the role of senior

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<sup>83</sup>Quoted in Manríquez y Zárate, Viva Cristo Rey (El Paso, Texas, 1928), pp. 83, 84.

<sup>84</sup>El Universal of May 18, 1928, (p. 1) reported the consul general's statement but not Drossaerts' sermon.



prelate in the hierarchy was now taken by Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, Archbishop of Michoacán, who was elected president of the Episcopal Committee when the bishops convened on April 25th.<sup>85</sup>

Ruiz y Flores, who had been living with Father Burke in Washington, was the only Mexican prelate who knew of the Burke-Calles meeting. The Delegate and Burke now expected him to persuade his fellow bishops--without telling them of the terms projected at the Veracruz meeting--that the Cristero effort could not succeed and that it was idle to hope for any imminent change in the Constitution or laws. Ruiz had instructions to obtain from the bishops some kind of commitment endorsing the principles contained in the Burke letter to Calles of March 29th.<sup>86</sup> The Apostolic Delegate was well aware that unity among the members of the Episcopate was almost essential if Rome were to be approached with terms which were a departure from those that had formerly been demanded for settlement.

Ruiz was less than successful. In San Antonio he read to the Episcopal Committee a communication from the Delegate. It asked the bishops for a general statement for use by the Holy See when the time came to move for a possible settlement with the government. Ruiz asked for discussion on the question of whether the Committee favored an absolutely uncompromising position. After deliberation the prelates approved a statement saying that those present were determined to obey the Pope in any decision he reached, and in this sense they were not uncompromising. But, they noted, the way the problem was finally solved would critically affect all civilized nations, and they wished to suggest several considerations: if the objectionable laws were not revoked the Church would

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<sup>85</sup>Ríus Facius, Méjico cristero, p. 339.

<sup>86</sup>Rice, p. 129.

remain in chains, with its clergy worse off than before; the sacrifices and wishes of the League ought to be taken into account; the longings of the Mexican people should be kept in view, because the blood of their martyrs demanded it. The bishops also proposed some specific points; for example, any settlement reached should contain some kind of agreement to insure the restoration of properties formerly used for religious purposes.<sup>87</sup>

It was all a rather serious hitch in the peace move. Father Burke decided to see whether he could bridge gaps. On May 9th he sent Morrow a letter for transmission to Calles. He told the President he had been working to follow up their talk and that Calles would be pleased to know that he had met with evidences of a sincere desire for peace. He would, however, appreciate receiving some clarification: "We take it that the present laws do not destroy identity of any church--for example, priests would be removed from a post when so moved by church order, and duly authorized church authority would be permitted to see that sufficient priests are secured and authorized; ..." also that religious instruction in primary education not be prohibited outside the regular curriculum and regular school hours. Might it also be assumed that consideration would be given to the question of bishops' residences? The tone was tactful and cordial.<sup>88</sup> Kellogg added in an accompanying note to Morrow that Father Burke hoped Calles would

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<sup>87</sup>Circular letter from the Episcopal Committee to members of the Hierarchy, July 2, 1928, LA-1; Rice, p. 129. Less than half the total strength of the Episcopate was in San Antonio--a handful were still in Mexico and others were in various places in the United States and Europe. Ruiz may have told the Committee something of the Burke-Calles conference, or at least that negotiations were in the offing. Nicolson (pp. 342, 343) says the bishops insisted that Calles receive Ruiz and reaffirm to him the promises he made to Father Burke--although in view of their reservations they could hardly have found these appealing.

<sup>88</sup>Burke to Calles, May 9, 1928, in Kellogg to Morrow, same date, DSR 812.404/882a.

answer to the effect that these assumptions were a correct interpretation of the President's thinking. Burke and his associates, Kellogg said, were anxious to "carry with them so far as they can in all the circumstances certain other persons for whom they are and will continue to be responsible." If Calles could acquiesce here, he said, there need be no fear of any new demands or requests for assurances; if he could "find it possible to uphold the hands of the parties here" by giving "some further appearance of a liberal and responsible attitude with respect to the specific points involved in the letter" it would be helpful.<sup>89</sup>

Morrow replied that it would be almost hopeless to try to get anything new, especially by letter. He said, however, that there might be a chance of getting additional assurances if Burke and Ruiz y Flores came to Mexico. Burke and the Archbishop agreed, and Morrow approached Calles. The President was at first strongly opposed; Ruiz y Flores's presence would incite bad publicity, he said, and agitate Mexican Catholics. But Burke insisted that Ruiz should be included, and Calles grudgingly agreed to receive them both.<sup>90</sup>

Traveling incognito and unrecognized, the priest, the Archbishop, and Montavon reached Mexico City early on May 17th. They got off the train in the suburb of Tacuba, where they were met by Captain Lewis B. McBride, the naval attaché at the U.S. Embassy. McBride took them to his home, where they remained during their two days in the capital, leaving only once--to

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<sup>89</sup>Kellogg to Morrow, May 9, 1928, DSR 812.404/882b.

<sup>90</sup>Rublee Memorandum, in Morrow Papers, cited in Rice, pp. 129, 130. George Rublee, an American lawyer privately employed by Morrow as an advisor in Mexico City, wrote a lengthy account of the religious controversy at its conclusion. He drew upon the Department of State correspondence, the Lagarde Memorandum, and other sources which Morrow made available to him.

see Calles. Morrow was with them all day on the 17th until 4:00 P.M.; at 5:00 the President received them.<sup>91</sup>

Burke began by stating to Calles that although Ruiz y Flores had accompanied him, he alone was representing the Holy See at the meeting, which he considered to be a continuation of the Veracruz talks.<sup>92</sup> Burke presented the stipulations suggested by the bishops in San Antonio. Calles explained that he could not agree to these. After some discussion Ruiz y Flores offered to write a letter to the President duplicating Burke's of March 29th but including a reference to Puig Casauranc's Celaya address. On this basis agreement was reached: as soon as higher ecclesiastical authority approved this letter, Calles would write Ruiz a reply in the same form he had used in his reply to Burke; when final approval of the entire negotiation was received, the exchange would be published, concluding the settlement.<sup>93</sup>

Burke immediately wired Fumasoni-Biondi, the message traveling from the Embassy to the State Department in U.S. diplomatic code and thence to the Delegation. He told the Delegate that the meeting had been "satisfactory," that all agreed it was futile to try to get any further concessions regarding the laws, and that it was "advisable to rely upon the broad assurance. . .that the government would enforce the laws reasonably and without prejudice." The government would receive any complaints of injustices from a Church official. Under these conditions, he said, it would be "possible to take up unreasonable applications of the law in the light of the broad standard above set out and in what we all hope will be a spirit of

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<sup>91</sup>Morrow to SecState, May 17, 1928, DSR 812.404/884; Rice, pp. 130, 131.

<sup>92</sup>Burke to Clark, June 28, 1932, cited in Rice, pp. 130, 131.

<sup>93</sup>Ruble Memorandum, cited in Rice, p. 131.

good will." He informed the Delegate that Ruiz y Flores requested authority to (1) write a letter to Calles identical to the March 29th one and including a statement that Calles had endorsed the Puig Casauranc speech, and (2) release this together with Calles's reply, as well as a statement that in light of the exchange the Holy See authorized resumption of worship. Burke said they would wait for a reply from Washington, and added that Ruiz y Flores was anxious to receive the authority requested as soon as possible so that the clergy could officiate in the churches on May 27th, the Feast of Pentecost.<sup>94</sup>

Morrow expected an affirmative reply to arrive within hours. At his request Olds had stayed at the State Department the night of the 17th in order to rush Burke's message to the Apostolic Delegation. But no answer came that night, nor the next day. On the afternoon of the 19th a telegram arrived addressed to Montavon and signed by Monsignor James H. Ryan of the N.C.W.C. It said the Delegate wanted Burke and Ruiz y Flores to return to Washington immediately and that they would then proceed to Rome: "This is the quickest and only sure way to achieve purposes."<sup>95</sup> There was to be no cutting corners. Clearly, Burke and Ruiz y Flores had edged too far out toward the end of a limb.

In Washington, there was another disquieting turn of events. Fumasoni-Biondi announced that only Ruiz y Flores would make the trip to Rome. Before he left, the Archbishop gave Burke the letter he had planned to give to Calles, with instructions that it be given to Morrow to keep; Morrow was to present it to Calles when and if Vatican approval was obtained.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., pp. 131-133.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., pp. 133, 134.

Ruiz y Flores hastened to Rome by the fastest means available, traveling day and night. Within hours after he arrived he was in conference with Gasparri, who had already been informed of his mission. Ruiz had apparently lost some of his enthusiasm for a settlement along the lines he had supported in Mexico City. When the Cardinal asked his opinion, he said he thought Calles was offering very little.<sup>97</sup> Pius XI discussed the matter with him, then said he would think, consult, and pray. The Pontiff, Ruiz recalled, was obviously anxious that the bishops be of one mind and accept any solution willingly; the Pope, he noted, was inclined to allow almost any compromise his conscience would permit.<sup>98</sup>

Two weeks after the Burke-Ruiz-Calles meeting Morrow arrived in the United States for consultation and a needed vacation. In Washington he and Olds talked several times with Father Burke and twice all three conferred with Fumasoni-Biondi at the Apostolic Delegation. Morrow was told that the matter had been referred to the Congregation on Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs in Rome and that no decision had been received.<sup>99</sup> Things were in suspension. In a letter to his friend John J. Raskob, Morrow reviewed the steps taken since March to end the conflict. He said that while some changes in the Calles letter might be obtained he doubted that it would be possible now or even early in the coming Obregón administration to get the government to agree to changes in any particular laws as a condition for resuming public worship; but he felt that in the spirit of good will that should follow the return of public worship, "changes in the laws might later be made by which the church would be in a better legal position in Mexico than it has

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<sup>97</sup>Ruiz y Flores, p. 90.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Morrow to Kellogg, July 23, 1928, DSR 812.404/895 2/9, cited in Rice, pp. 134, 135.

been for many years." His stay in Mexico had convinced him, he said, that an adjustment of the conflict would "contribute greatly to a betterment of the condition of the Mexican people and afford a great opportunity to the Church to render its spiritual services to a people sorely in need of them." He emphasized to Raskob that Calles was not asking the priests to come back: Calles, he said, had agreed to receive Father Burke "only after great reluctance," and it was only because of the priest's favorable impression on the President that he later assented to Ruiz y Flores going with Burke for the second interview. Morrow lavished praise on Burke:

He put the whole Church problem before the President in a different way than the President had heretofore seen it. While he did not give up any of the Church's contentions with reference to its historical and moral rights, he laid all the emphasis upon the help that the Church could render in lifting up the Mexican people spiritually, mentally and materially.<sup>100</sup>

Raskob was impressed. He wrote to Papal Under Secretary of State Giuseppe Pizzardo, a long-time friend, explaining Morrow's efforts. He said Morrow feared that exiled Mexican bishops might be giving an inaccurate picture of the situation due to their unfamiliarity with the problem. Raskob urged that an agreement be reached as soon as possible. If Mexico did not live up to it, he said, it would lose the respect and confidence of the American government. Morrow's presence there, he asserted, would practically guarantee against unfairness.<sup>101</sup>

The State Department remained cautiously optimistic that a settlement would soon be agreed upon. Lane wrote Ernest Lagarde on July 12th that

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<sup>100</sup>Morrow to Raskob, June 28, 1928, DSR 812.404/992 6/8. Raskob was president of General Motors and chairman of the Democratic National Committee. There is an unexplained discrepancy in Morrow's comment to Raskob that Calles was reluctant to see Burke in April and his earlier report to Olds that Calles would be happy to meet with the priest.

<sup>101</sup>Raskob to Pizzardo, July 3, 1929, Morrow Papers, cited in Rice, p. 135.

chances were good provided Rome was not too unyielding. Burke's two trips to Mexico, he said, had been "highly successful."<sup>102</sup>

A shadow crossed the horizon the same day, however. Burke and Montavon called on Lane concerning an article that had appeared two days before in the New York World. It said that a group of Mexican Catholics was urging the Pope not to conclude a truce except on the firm terms he had always insisted upon. The message to the Pope, the article reported, was sponsored by the League, which said it opposed the discussions recently initiated by Rome and conducted by Ruiz y Flores, and was urging Rome to stand by its refusal to let priests register without authorization of Church authorities; it also called for the lifting of restrictions on Catholic educational and charitable establishments. Burke told Lane he was not disturbed by the article, although he would like to know who signed the telegram to the Vatican mentioned in it. He said the "Catholic Defense League" had little if any influence with Rome because it was supporting armed revolt in Mexico. He added that he believed Morrow knew that the Holy See had repudiated the League for that reason, and had directed that even if it should end its revolutionary work it would not be recognized unless it changed its name. The priest said he did not know whether the Vatican's views on this had been made public--the Holy See was unwilling to reprimand Catholics who were fighting and dying for the Church in good faith, however misguided and even harmful to the real interests of the Church their actions might be. Lane told Morrow later that there seemed to be no danger that the World article would irritate Calles--". . . in view of what Father Burke

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<sup>102</sup>Lane to Lagarde, July 12, 1928, DSR 812.404/894b. At Morrow's request, the French diplomat had stopped in Washington en route to Paris; he conferred with State Department officials on the religious situation and developed a cordial acquaintance with Lane and others.



told us, we are inclined to doubt this. . . ."103 Clearly, the League had lost another old friend. Father Burke had chosen another path.

The League had indeed moved to counter the work of Morrow, Burke, Ruiz y Flores, and the other conciliators. Apparently as much in the dark as everyone else about Burke's April visit, the Directive Committee did learn of the May meeting. On May 31st a memorial was dispatched to Rome signed by spokesmen for a number of Catholic groups, headed by the League. They stated their opposition to any "provisional settlement."<sup>104</sup> In a telegram to Gasparri, Cenicerros y Villarreal said the League wished to inform His Eminence that the election of Ruiz y Flores to the presidency of the Episcopal Committee, as well as the resolution of the bishops in San Antonio regarding a possible settlement (Cenicerros may not have known its contents) had both been decided without the participation of the eleven bishops still in Mexico. He asked that this latter group, which had been constituted a subcommittee of the Episcopal Committee, be consulted, since its members knew best the prevailing situation within the country, "unlike Ruiz and Díaz, whose judgement appears to the Catholic people to be too conciliatory, and differs from the judgement of the subcommittee."<sup>105</sup>

Back at his post in Mexico City early in July, Morrow waited. He had every reason to believe that the course he had helped guide was the right one. He had reached definite conclusions regarding the nature of the conflict; if these conclusions were correct, and Morrow was convinced they were, then the strategy for achieving a solution all but suggested itself and success depended only on tact, patience, and a reasonable amount

<sup>103</sup> Lane to Morrow, July 13, 1928, DSR 812.404/894a.

<sup>104</sup> Memorial to Pius XI, May 31, 1928, LA-1.

<sup>105</sup> Cenicerros y Villarreal to Gasparri, LA-1. The telegram is undated but was evidently sent at about the same time as the memorial.

of good will on all sides. His premises seemed to him sound. Because of a legal dispute with the government, the Church had suspended public worship in Mexico.\* This was the crux of the conflict: the clergy had withdrawn from the churches because it opposed the laws. If the laws ceased to be a threat, either by being changed or by being applied in a manner the Church could accept, the priests would return. This might not end all the difficulties; but the very fact that the legal situation had been adjusted enough to permit them to do so would mean that much of the problem had disappeared, and in the subsequent stabilized atmosphere there was a good likelihood that any remaining differences could be handled. Morrow was sure that the protagonists could be persuaded of this. Some of them already were, and the rest could be worked with or, if necessary, bypassed.

The protagonists, Morrow took for granted, were Calles and the bishops--and by extension the Vatican. He knew little about the other components of the Catholic opposition to Calles, and quickly concluded that they were in any event irrelevant. The League, what he knew of it, was a shadowy agglomerate of irresponsible extremists possessing no significant influence in the Church, and in any case a symbol of illegality. The Cristeros were misguided rebels scarcely distinguishable from the other brigands who had plagued Mexico in the past. The very notion that the United States might lend support to such men would have seemed to him simply absurd. Even if Morrow had understood the League and the Cristeros better it would scarcely have mattered. Like most Americans of his time he was incapable of respecting armed movements against lawful authority. The Calles government was lawful authority and, despite its shortcomings, viable and at heart sincere. This Morrow never doubted.

Nor did Morrow take seriously the proposition that the revolutionary regime was incompatible with Mexican Catholicism. Differences had arisen,

to be sure, but he was certain that these were not insurmountable. Mexico needed both its government and its Church. Morrow was not anti-Catholic. All evidence indicates that he believed most sincerely in the need for the Church to play an important role in Mexican life--and in this he was surely more broadminded than millions of his fellow countrymen would have been in that heyday of the Ku Klux Klan and the viciousness of the Al Smith campaign for the presidency. Finally, Morrow had good reason to believe that he was in tune with the opinion of most responsible American Catholics regarding the Mexican situation. The Cardinal Archbishop of New York had introduced him to Father Burke, who as executive secretary of the N.C.W.C. could be deemed a responsible spokesman for the American Episcopate--an estimate that was confirmed and even broadened when Burke moved into action as the personal representative of the Apostolic Delegate.

Morrow's conscience was clear, and with good reason. With no cause to doubt the rectitude of his position he was patiently determined to hold his course.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE WAYS OF FRUSTRATION

Luis G. Bustos was in a bad frame of mind. After the paper birth of the Unión Nacional he had returned to the United States confident that at last he had the means to woo American support to the side of the cause. But the weeks passed with no signs that the Directive Committee was close to completing even the minimum of organization in Mexico that was needed to give the Unión a believable existence; and until that was done he was helpless. The Committee, he knew, had not been enthusiastic over the plan in the first place; and as he sat out the gray winter days in New York he was increasingly sure that it meant to leave his cherished cure-all to die quietly. He was angry.<sup>1</sup>

On February 16th he poured out his feelings in a letter to the Directors. They and he were on divergent paths, he told them; they obviously believed that the League in Mexico could go it alone, settle the religious question by itself, and in essence create a de facto situation which the U.S. would have to accept. In this they were mistaken, he warned: Victoriano Huerta had produced a de facto regime, supported in Mexico and recognized in Europe; Adolfo de la Huerta had accumulated quantities of men and material as well as large popular backing. Had the U.S. government accepted these de facto situations? Only a party that was a mixture, which

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<sup>1</sup>Documentation from Mexico giving organizational details and names of adherents to the new party had been promised by the League leaders, but by the end of January Bustos had received only a portion of it. "Memorandum cronológico," June 19, 1928, LA-1.

really represented the entire Mexican nation, could possibly win, because without American acceptance nothing could win. If the League continued as it had, appearing as a band of "white radicals" to the United States, the cause was doomed, "because this government [the U.S.] is determined to support the red radicals more strongly, and never White Radicals." The League must decide: which way would it go? The League was strong and capable; if it could not hold its own in a limited group like the Unión Nacional how would it ever survive in an organism as complex as a nation? As for Pascual Díaz, he told the Directors frankly that they--and he-- had misjudged the Bishop; he was now convinced that Díaz had done everything to aid the cause--that he had done heroic work in establishing contacts and giving support. Father Parsons, for that matter, had also helped. As for the League favorite, González Valencia, Bustos said that while he liked and respected the Archbishop of Durango, he believed his total lack of knowledge of conditions in the United States had misled him completely.<sup>2</sup>

The League leaders were being attacked from the other flank as well. In May the Directors received a communication from San Antonio signed by a group of ACJM veterans, among them Capistrán Garza, Luis and Ramón Ruiz Rueda, Carlos Blanco, and Salvador and Luis Chavez Hayhoe. The letter was a vigorous condemnation of the Unión Nacional plan and expressed holy

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<sup>2</sup>Bustos to Directive Committee, February 16, 1928, LA-1. Italics in original. Bustos was probably being too harsh on the Directors. Miguel de la Mora wrote to Pascual Díaz that he was certain the League had received the Unión Nacional proposal enthusiastically but that very little could be done in Mexico in view of the government's vigilance and the understandable reluctance of many persons to affix their names to documents having to do with the new organization. De la Mora to Díaz, June 22, 1928, LA-1. The belief that the Coolidge administration would support "red radicals" in Mexico or anywhere else speaks volumes regarding the lack of comprehension regarding U.S. motives, but it is in keeping with the conviction of many Mexican Catholics that U.S. support of "liberal" regimes in Mexico since the time of Juárez has in fact made the United States an ally of secularism, socialism, and even bolshevism.

horror that the League could have lent itself to such a sell-out of principle. The signers found it incredible that the Mexican Catholic majority should make common cause with its enemies--

. . . liberals, porfiristas, and revolutionaries--those who during the past century expelled bishops, sacked churches, dissolved religious communities, and sowed the ominous and irreligious seeds of secularism, who worshipped the suffocating and atheistic dictatorship and who only yesterday enjoyed themselves in the monstrous Constitutionalist orgy and walked arm in arm and gave their hands to the present scourges of Mexico. . . .

There was already dissension among Catholics, they said, and this would certainly increase it. To restore the Constitution of 1857 would be simple madness. They recalled that their fathers had combatted that charter with their blood, yet "we are raising against the scourges of today the banner of the scourges of yesterday; against those who lash us today we welcome the same whip that striped the backs of our fathers. . . ." The League, they continued, began the present struggle under another banner, and people had died for it; Anacleto González Flores and Armando Téllez did not die for the Constitution of 1857, and to bring it forth now would profane their blood. How could the League guarantee that the 1857 document would be only a temporary thing? Besides, the notion that it might gain American aid was a deplorable delusion--which even if true would not outweigh the objections. Félix Díaz had been waving the Constitution of 1857 at the United States for fourteen years and had got nowhere. The signers, the letter concluded, "cannot permit to be done without our disagreement and protest that which honor and conscience will not allow us to accept when it is completed."<sup>3</sup>

Needless to say, the missive struck a nerve. The Directors shot back

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<sup>3</sup>Memorandum to the Directive Committee and to Luis G. Bustos, March 29, 1928, LA-1.

a retort the tone of which grew in rage as it progressed: The Unión Nacional plan was adopted in order to save the movement; it was done on excellent advice from sources who were well informed; the Directors too had a strong aversion to the Constitution of 1857 and had made this a matter of record; the Directive Committee saw no danger to Catholic interests--the proposed party would welcome honorable men, not people who were enemies of freedom; the Holy See had been told of the plan, and, no objection having been received, its approval was assumed; as for the martyrs González Flores and the rest, these would not blame the Directive Committee but they might well rise to deplore disunity and cry alarm at any "satanic attempts" to make vain the shedding of their blood.

. . . We are living a life that is being poured out drop by drop in the unceasing struggle, and when we have one foot in the grave, there come to the sad enclosure of our seclusion none other than those whom we love most, to drench our hearts with grief and haughtily, almost aggressively, accuse us of the crime that is to us the most abominable of all: treason.

They urged the signers of the letter to look into their consciences, and they begged for unity.<sup>4</sup>

The League leadership also had to answer grumblings from its own lieutenants in Mexico City. On May 10th the local chiefs in the Federal District posed a list of wide-ranging questions and offered some advice: The people, they told the Directive Committee, were questioning the course of things, and many were saying that the armed struggle was a stalemate. The chiefs felt frankly that when Mexico stopped thinking about U.S. aid and put its confidence completely in God, on that day it would be closer to total victory.<sup>5</sup> The Committee replied patiently and in detail. It

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<sup>4</sup>Miguel de Loaiza (temporary secretary to the Directive Committee) to Messrs. Pedro González et al., June 1, 1928, LA-1.

<sup>5</sup>Arcoacha to Directive Committee, May 10, 1928, LA-1.

reviewed its operations and added:

There is no doubt that the most effective means of obtaining victory in the struggle we are waging would be the support, even moral, of the United States. . . . If efforts to obtain this/ should fail, God will then see to it that our means are sufficient to triumph; He is obliged to do this--mark the word: obliged--because we have done all that right reason counseled should be done, because we are defending the cause that is for Him the most beloved, the liberty of His Church, and because we have trusted in Him with the greatest and firmest of confidence.<sup>6</sup>

Bustos' impatience with the Directors was reciprocated; they may have suspected that his carping at the delay in organizing the Unión Nacional was only an excuse for his own lack of success. Palomar y Vizcarra believed early in April that Bustos had failed; he expressed his opinion to Cenicerros y Villarreal that Bustos had taken too long and gotten no results.<sup>7</sup>

Things looked indeed dark in the United States, where by late spring it was finally obvious to all concerned that American aid would not be forthcoming. Early in May Bustos and his associates learned that State Department officials had ceased to show any interest in the work being done to establish the Unión Nacional. Díaz wrote De la Mora that the division among Catholics and the fact that the organizing of the Unión Nacional had been all but abandoned in Mexico were probably factors; he went on to say that to complete the disaster, when the U.S. government made its first approach to Calles regarding a possible settlement and the intermediary went to New York to consult with Bustos, Monasterio and Carreño, the first two were so intransigent that the intermediary was openly displeased. The official door was closed, and with it all others--at least for some time, Díaz reported.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Directive Committee to Arcoacha, May 23, 1928, LA-1. Italics in original.

<sup>7</sup>Palomar y Vizcarra to Cenicerros y Villarreal, April 8, 1928, LA-1.

<sup>8</sup>Díaz to De la Mora, May 30, 1928, LA-1. The "intermediary" may have been Father Burke, who met with three Mexicans in New York on February 6th.



Bustos was all but through. There was a kind of showdown meeting in New York on May 30th, attended by Bustos, Carreño, Díaz, and Mariano Ramírez, the latter sent from Mexico City by the Directive Committee to investigate the situation in the United States. The State Department's decision to stop further consideration of the Unión Nacional plan was discussed. Díaz explained to Ramírez that it was the policy of the United States to back Calles, and that this, added to the failure of the Unión Nacional project, would make it impossible to obtain funds.<sup>9</sup> Díaz told them all that in order not to hurt the cause, and in view of the constant attacks being made on him, he was determined to separate himself increasingly from everything relating to the "present sorrowful conflict," as he had in fact been doing since Mora y del Río's death and the election of Ruiz y Flores to replace him. He spoke highly of the Archbishop of Michoacán. Ramírez denied that the League or its supporters had taken part in such attacks, a statement which Carreño contradicted.<sup>10</sup> Under questioning by Carreño, Ramírez said that while the Directive Committee thought U.S. policy would be decisive, he believed the armed action must continue with or without American support. Carreño retorted that since the Directors had in their hands the fate of those fighting, and were convinced that if the U.S. reached an agreement

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Burke later related that these opposed any settlement with the regime, that they would accept no settlement to bring the Church back to Mexico until they had accomplished their object of overthrowing Calles. Burke said he told them they were not good Catholics, that they were putting God second, and that he would report them to Rome, whereupon they reluctantly agreed that an adjustment was necessary. Burke did not identify the three, but said they were "to all intents and purposes League representatives." Olds to Morrow, March 23, 1928, Morrow Papers, cited in Rice, pp. 121, 122. It is also possible that Father Burke was the intermediary Fumasoni-Biondi procured the previous summer to help get the U.N. plan before the State Department--certainly he would have been the most logical choice.

<sup>9</sup>"Memorándum de la conversación habida entre los Sres. Lic. Mariano Ramírez, Luis G. Bustos y Pascual Díaz," New York, May 30, 1928. Sworn statement signed by Ramírez, June 2, 1930, LA-1.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.; Díaz to De la Mora, May 30, 1928, with postscript June 1, 1928, LA-1.

with Calles or his successors there was no hope of victory, he wanted to know what the League would do if the U.S. supported the present government of Mexico. "We will fight until we are all dead," Ramírez replied.

Carreño reacted vigorously to this:

You are of course free to offer your lives; but do you have the right to continue sacrificing those of others, despite your belief that the sacrifice is already totally useless? Do you have the right to continue destroying property, to continue devastating the nation, which would be the only result of a long guerrilla war--the only thing in reality to be done under such circumstances?

Ramírez said the truth would be told to those fighting so that they could decide whether to continue. Díaz again emphasized that the policy of the U.S. government was to support fully the Calles regime.<sup>11</sup>

Two days later there was a final get-together. Díaz spoke of the desire of the U.S. government to bring the religious conflict to an end. Bustos praised Díaz; he then told Ramírez to inform the Directors in Mexico City that he was resigning both as representative of the League in the United States and as second vice-president of the Directive Committee. Carreño told Ramírez that he was cutting all ties with the work he had been doing with Bustos and Monasterio, because he was in absolute disagreement with the League's procedures. Monasterio also said that he considered his mission terminated.<sup>12</sup>

✓ With the resignation of Bustos the Unión Nacional was quickly abandoned, and with it any expectation of official American aid or even benevolence. The League Directors were not discouraged over the situation--Ceniceros y Villarreal in fact was relieved: "For my part, I can say that the news of the failure of the Unión Nacional took a big weight off my shoulders," he wrote to Manríquez y Zárate. "Now I believe it will be easier, or less difficult,

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

to achieve a union with the League of all elements of good will. . . ."<sup>13</sup>  
 That prelate too faced the future serenely: "I don't know how I feel now that we have cut free from the U.S. It seems to me that we are stronger, and that we will soon win; that Providence was only waiting for this act of faith and confidence in the God of our fathers in order to give us the triumph."<sup>14</sup>

At any rate, Ceniceros y Villarreal's prediction of unity was partially fulfilled. The warring Mexican Catholic factions of the United States finally made peace--after nearly all the damage their feuding could do had already been done. An end to the dissension was being sought even before the Bustos-Unión Nacional crisis. In April plans were afoot for a convention of the various groups but the project was dropped, apparently for lack of funds.<sup>15</sup> The factions had multiplied. The ACJM contingent in San Antonio that opposed the Unión Nacional scheme had joined with others in the spring to form a Federation of Catholic Societies with headquarters in San Antonio; this in turn was affiliated with the Beneficent Society Pro-Mexico, based in Chicago and with chapters in Detroit, Gary, and Melrose Park, Aurora, and Joliet, Illinois.<sup>16</sup> In June unity efforts were pressed, and a harmony meeting was finally held in El Paso the last week in July. It was presided over by Luis Chávez Hayhoe, one of the ACJM dissidents, whom the League in a conciliatory move had recently designated its agent in California.<sup>17</sup> Out of it came an organization which would

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<sup>13</sup>Ceniceros y Villarreal to Manríquez y Zárate, June 29, 1928, cited in Ríos Facius, Méjico Cristero, p. 224.

<sup>14</sup>Manríquez y Zárate to Palomar y Vizcarra, July 15, 1928, LA-1.

<sup>15</sup>See Guillermo Prieto Yeme to Carlos Fernández, April 17, 1928, LA-1.

<sup>16</sup>Carlos Fernández to N.C.W.C., May 17, 1928, LA-1. Fernández was head of the Beneficent Society.

<sup>17</sup>Directive Committee to Chávez Hayhoe, July 14, 1928; statement signed by Luis Chávez Hayhoe, August 29, 1942. LA-1.

remain the League's arm in the United States--the Unión Nacionalista Mexicana, which expressly recognized the League as the sole legitimate leader of the Catholic liberation movement.<sup>18</sup> Elected president was Fernando Díez de Urdanivia, managing editor of the Jesuit Diario de El Paso, who was acceptable to all sides.<sup>19</sup> The only significant absence at the El Paso gathering was René Capistrán Garza, who wrote to one of the participants that the tendency toward coalition with non-Catholic elements, which he saw as a dominant trend, made it impossible for him to participate; he would save his support for whatever group would follow a policy of clearly repudiating both liberalism and the Revolution.<sup>20</sup>

Giving up hope of official U.S. help did not mean that the League was abandoning attempts to procure it unofficially. The securing of arms and money from abroad--including the United States--remained an item of prime effort. In the United States Manríquez y Zárate and González Valencia--the latter had returned from Europe and taken up residence in San Antonio--were enthusiastic collaborators. Both worked to collect and channel funds to the armed movement.<sup>21</sup> González Valencia provided Carlos Fernández with a to-whom-it-may-concern letter endorsing his work. Manríquez y Zárate agonized over the munitions problem: "I have learned from various sources that the liberators are very short of ammunition," he wrote to Palomar y Vizcarra in August. "I implore you to help those poor men as much as possible. I have resolved to send them each month at least a few thousand

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<sup>18</sup>Statement signed by Luis Chávez Hayhoe, August 29, 1942, LA-1.

<sup>19</sup>Urdanivia to Fernández, July 27, 1928, LA-1.

<sup>20</sup>Capistrán Garza to Fernández, June 29, 1928, LA-1.

<sup>21</sup>See for example Manríquez y Zárate to Palomar y Vizcarra, May 17, 1928; ibid. June 17, 1928, LA-1.

cartridges."<sup>22</sup>

Results of attempts to get aid in South America and Europe were nil. An effort to raise money in Argentina, carefully cultivated by League representatives in Buenos Aires, fell through after the archdiocese became uneasy over press reports that the funds would be devoted to military purposes and cancelled permission to carry out a collection among Catholics in the city.<sup>23</sup> In Europe the League was represented by the Unión Internacional de Todos los Amigos de la Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa de México, commonly called "V.I.T.A.-MEXICO," with main offices in Louvain and Rome and branches in other major European cities. Its efforts were devoted mainly to propaganda; apparently no financial aid ever reached Mexico.<sup>24</sup>

The League also tried, without success, to get help from the League of Nations. In a letter in June, 1928, the Directive Committee asked the assistance of that body in breaking the "conspiracy of silence" regarding the plight of Mexico. It also asked the League of Nations to urge its

<sup>22</sup>Manríquez y Zárate to Palomar y Vizcarra, August 3, 1928, LA-3.

<sup>23</sup>Manríquez y Zárate to Palomar y Vizcarra, December 10, 1928; ibid., January 10, 1929; LA-1; "Instrucciones para la comisión," July 3, 1928.

<sup>24</sup>J. Antonio López Ortega, "A propósito del archivo de la 'V.I.T.A.-MEXICO' en Roma, Italia," David, VI, No. 129 (April 22, 1963) 32; Bishops' Commission, Rome, to Mons. Louis Picard, February 20, 1927, in ibid., VII, No. 175 (February 22, 1967), 101-104; Directive Committee report to League Convention, August, 1929, LA-2. The genesis of the organization was the result of a tour by Father Mariano Cuevas, S.J., made at the direction of the Episcopal Committee late in 1926. His exact mission is not known; but in Rome he proposed to the Bishops' Commission the establishment of "Committees Pro-Mexico" in all foreign countries whose duty would be to disseminate information supporting the Catholic cause and to encourage pressure on the United States in favor of Mexico's Catholics. The Bishops' Commission was enthusiastic, and also lent its support to a project for a world-wide collection of funds. The Belgian Catholic youth movement took the initiative, establishing a Union Mondiale, headed by Monsignor Louis Picard and Giovanni Hoyois, which was the parent organization of "V.I.T.A.-MEXICO."

members to withdraw diplomatic recognition of the Calles government, and for aid in influencing the United States to stop abetting the Calles oppression.<sup>25</sup>

The presidential election of July 1st was only a formality: Alvaro Obregón received the news of his victory at his home in Sonora and left soon afterward on an unhurried trip to Mexico City. He reached the capital on Sunday the 15th.<sup>26</sup>

The next day, Aarón Sáenz, the President elect's spokesman and closest adviser, informed Dwight Morrow that Obregón wanted to have a long talk with the Ambassador. An appointment was arranged for the following day at 5:00 P.M. In the morning, Sáenz visited the Embassy for a pre-conference talk. He and Morrow ranged over a number of matters, including the religious question. Sáenz said that Calles had consulted fully with Obregón about the proposed settlement; Obregón hoped it might be concluded as soon as possible and foresaw that a later adjustment of the religious laws might be made in the peaceful atmosphere which he hoped would characterize his administration.<sup>27</sup> Sáenz left the Embassy to join Obregón at a luncheon honoring the leader.

The luncheon was at a restaurant called "La Bombilla" in the San Angel quarter of the capital. While the gala affair was in progress, a young man who had been making caricature drawings of those present moved toward Obregón, who turned smilingly to view the sketches. The artist raised a revolver and fired several shots point blank, aiming the first

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<sup>25</sup>Directive Committee to League of Nations, June 4, 1928, LA-1.

<sup>26</sup>El Universal, July 2, 1928, p. 1; July 16, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup>Morrow to SecState, July 23, 1928, DSR 812.404/895 2/9.

in the face of the President elect. Obregón died instantly. In the ensuing pandemonium the assassin was grabbed and disarmed. He had expected to be killed on the spot; instead he was hurried off to a car and taken to police headquarters.<sup>28</sup>

The young man was José de León Toral, a twenty-seven year old native of Matehuala, San Luis Potosí. He was intensely Catholic, fervent to a point that approached mysticism--or, as many insisted after Obregón's murder, fanaticism. The attempt on Obregón's life the previous autumn had not involved him; he had in fact been rather repelled by the act. But the execution of Humberto Pro, who was one of his few friends and whom he had replaced as League agent in the Colonia de Santa María in Mexico City, had moved him deeply. After Humberto's death, his religious fervor increased and he dedicated nearly all his available time to such matters as arranging spiritual ministrations for the poor and organizing holy hours. Toral had known Segura Vilchis only slightly, but he knew him to be a good Catholic, a man not given to wild and malicious excesses, and he now began to ponder the justice of Segura's deed. The increasing persecution, the growing tendency of the people to accept it, the danger that the faith might die in Mexico--all this led him gradually to a conclusion: the Cristeros in the field were dying in a stalemated struggle; if Mexicans did not help them they would all perish. He, Toral, could help them: he would kill the tyrant Obregón.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>El jurado de Toral y la Madre Conchita: lo que se dijo y lo que no se dijo en el sensacional juicio. No author or date. (2 vols.; Mexico, D.F.: Alducín y de Llano, Editores), I, 24-26. The book is a transcript of the trial. El Universal, July 18, 1928, pp. 1, 8.

<sup>29</sup>El jurado de Toral, I, 7, 9, 10; María Elena Sodí de Pallares, Los cristeros y José de León Toral (Mexico, D.F., 1936), pp. 33, 34, 39. The author was the daughter of Demetrio Sodí, who defended Toral at his trial. She based her account on the papers of her father and on personal recollections.

At police headquarters Toral's interrogation began immediately. It was accompanied by such motivational devices as suspending him by one thumb and one toe for prolonged periods and burning him with matches on the face and hands.<sup>30</sup> The rest of the day and throughout the night the police made no headway; he refused to give even his name and would say only that he had acted alone and for personal reasons. The next morning he finally gave his identity, but still insisted no one else was involved. Police quickly arrested his wife and parents. All three denied any knowledge of Toral's part in the crime, but police were still far from satisfied that others were not also responsible. Later in the day, Toral told one of the investigators that he wanted a half hour to think over what he should do. This was granted. At the end of it Toral said that he wanted to talk that evening with a certain person, after which he would be able to tell the police more. The agent agreed to escort him to see the individual. The destination was a house on Zaragoza Street, and turned out to be the current quarters of the convent and religious center directed by Sister Concepción Acevedo de la Llata--Madre Conchita.<sup>31</sup> As police agents swarmed over the premises Toral told the nun, "I'm here to see if they will believe you. I'm here to see if you want to die with me." She answered, "Yes, gladly."<sup>32</sup> Toral later explained that he had been at wits' end to try to convince the police that he had acted alone, that the arrest of his family had caused him acute anxiety, and that he felt sure that Madre Conchita, who had known him for several months, would believe him and persuade the police of his sincerity. The authorities, however, saw it all quite differently;

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<sup>30</sup>Sodi de Pallares, pp. 108, 109; El jurado de Toral, I, 59.

<sup>31</sup>El jurado de Toral, II, 56, 57.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., I, 166.



the nun was taken into custody and charged with being an accomplice in the assassination--specifically, with having cunningly implanted the idea in the mind of the impressionable Toral.<sup>33</sup>

The next few days were the most dangerous ever faced by the regime of Plutarco Elías Calles. When he arrived at Obregón's home shortly after the assassination a mob in front of the house met him with shouts of "We want justice!" Later in the day the President made a brief visit to police headquarters, where Toral refused to say anything more to him than he had to the interrogators. But Ricardo Topete, a federal deputy from Sonora and close friend of Obregón, handed Calles the murder weapon with the words, "Here is the pistol, with which you are familiar."<sup>34</sup> Emilio Portes Gil, the governor of Tamaulipas, later recalled that when he went to Obregón's home the afternoon of the assassination he found the garden filled with a frenzied throng of generals, politicians, and other friends of the deceased. Many of them were declaring their conviction that the crime had been the work of Calles and his labor allies. Some of the military among them announced that they were leaving at once for their home bases to commence military operations against the President. A few Obregón partisans, however, urged calm until there was a chance to establish the facts.<sup>35</sup>

Obregón's murder had in a trice awakened old animosities within the Revolutionary camp, most notably between Obregón protégés and the laborista element led by Luis Morones, which had been particularly influential in the

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., I, 121-138.

<sup>34</sup>John W.F. Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico: A Chronicle of the Revolution, 1919-1936 (Austin, 1961), pp. 370, 371; El jurado de Toral, I, 55, 56.

<sup>35</sup>Emilio Portes Gil, Autobiografía de la Revolución Mexicana (Mexico, D.F., 1964), p. 408.

Calles administration. On the evening of the 20th the fire-eating Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama told a large public meeting that Calles should be supported but that he must eliminate the leaders of laborism from their positions of influence.<sup>36</sup> Portes Gil, Arturo Orci, and others pressed Calles to act fast. Specifically, they suggested the immediate removal of Roberto Cruz, who as chief of police would head the investigation of the crime and who had not been on friendly terms with the murdered leader. Calles readily agreed.<sup>37</sup> Morones too was speedily sacrificed; his resignation from the government was announced the 22nd.<sup>38</sup>

\* That the assassination had been provoked by religious motives rather than political ones was a point Calles was anxious to have immediately and clearly understood, particularly by the army, where Obregón had been immensely popular. The guilt must be firmly fixed, and shown to belong to the enemies of the Revolution. On July 23rd Calles sent a circular telegram to chiefs of military operations throughout the country:

\* In these moments when the criminal hand armed by the Catholic clergy has plunged the entire nation into mourning, it is highly consoling that the Army, from its highest leaders to the last soldier, inspired by the same revolutionary ideology and by their duties to the nation, has responded as one man. . . demonstrating by their patriotic and worthy attitude that it is not in vain that we have faced together times of real trial. . . .<sup>39</sup>

✓ It was a hard, sweeping jab at the clergy en masse, one which Calles modified considerably a few days later. Under a New York dateline of July 31st, Exélsior carried the story of an interview given by the President to an American woman reporter, who asked the President if he thought that Toral

<sup>36</sup> El Universal, July 21, 1928, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Portes Gil, p. 410.

<sup>38</sup> El Universal, July 22, 1928, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., July 25, 1928, p. 1.

had acted under the influence of the Church. Calles replied that Toral "was probably under the influence of certain members of the Catholic faith," adding, however: "I cannot say that he has been the instrument of the Catholic Church: but his emotional nature was manipulated by his imagination and by a few of his co-religionists."<sup>40</sup> He also said that he did not wish to continue in power after the end of his term in December.<sup>41</sup>

✓ Dwight Morrow knew that Obregón's death had damaged efforts to settle the religious conflict, but he refused to see the incident as a permanent blight. His first move to salvage things was to urge both Calles and the Catholic side represented by Father Burke to show restraint in statements and actions.<sup>42</sup> With Calles he was not entirely successful: the President had to face the vastly more pressing problem of saving his government. His broadside inculpation of the clergy was made despite Morrow's plea, and it caused Father Burke to react bitterly. Only by strenuous efforts were State Department officials able to talk the priest out of making a public reply in kind and finally to persuade him to remain calm.<sup>43</sup>

Morrow reviewed the situation in a letter to Kellogg on the 23rd. He was plainly discouraged that Rome had delayed acting on the proposed settlement. He noted that some people seemed to believe it was Calles who was seeking peace, whereas the truth was that his meeting with Burke in April and with both Burke and Ruiz y Flores in May had come about at the behest of ecclesiastical representatives. Calles, he said, had been

<sup>40</sup>Excelsior, August 1, 1928, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., August 3, 1928, pp. 1, 11.

<sup>42</sup>Memorandum of telephone conversation with Ambassador Morrow, written by Lane, July 19, 1928, DSR 812.404/895 1/9.

<sup>43</sup>Lane to Morrow, July 25, 1928, DSR 812.404/895a.

entirely consistent since August, 1926 in his position that he could not bring about or promise any changes in the Constitution or laws, at least under existing conditions; this, Morrow said, he believed Father Burke understood, and that the priest had been able to convince some Catholic leaders of it. It was unfortunate, he continued, that Burke had not been the one to present the matter in Rome. He was aware, he said, that Burke's position was not shared by all the Mexican bishops. A tragic element in the whole thing, he added, was that Father Burke had come to Mexico to persuade Calles that he should deal with Rome because the Holy See would be more conciliatory and wiser than the Mexican Episcopate--and the priest, Morrow thought, had in fact succeeded in convincing Calles of this. But now no one seemed able to find out whether Rome really wanted to reach an agreement of the kind Calles was willing to make. He had already pressed Calles further perhaps than the President wanted to go, Morrow said, and he could do no more unless there was some reason to believe that it was all leading to an end that Church authority really desired. Obregón's death had halted matters for the moment, but it might not have to be as long as a year before a settlement could be made.<sup>44</sup>

In the same letter, Morrow addressed himself to the matter of the opposition of certain Mexicans to a settlement: He enclosed a translation of one of the League's bulletins, describing it as "an anonymous document purporting to be the June bulletin of the 'National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty.'" He said such bulletins were issued periodically, adding:

It is probable that bulletins of this type, which actually take credit for the derailing of trains, are put out by the most irresponsible type of person. The Government, of course, is able to

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<sup>44</sup>Morrow to SecState, July 23, 1928, DSR 812.404/895 2/9.



obtain copies of all these documents, and naturally associates this "League" with the "Federation for the Defense of Religious Liberty" which is referred to in terms of approbation in the Encyclical of November 18th, 1926. While the "League" may, and in all probability has, no connection whatever with the Church, this confusion in name does, however, add to that distrust of church authorities inside and outside Mexico which people in the Government undoubtedly have.<sup>45</sup>

Lane straightened the Ambassador out on the subject of the League two days later. He told Morrow that the "Federation for the Defense of Religious Liberty" was identical with the "National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty," and that the confusion was due to a "loose translation" of the Latin word foedus in the papal encyclical referred to.<sup>46</sup>

Morrow was further enlightened regarding both the League and the chain of ecclesiastical command by Pascual Díaz, who wrote him July 24th. Díaz said that Father Burke had told him that Morrow wished to know who was authorized to speak for the Church in Mexico, and that he was happy to clarify the point. The Bishop enclosed copies of Fumasoni-Biondi's letter to him the previous December, and his own letters to the bishops and the League. Díaz pointed out that he was himself the liaison between the Apostolic Delegate and the bishops, and that Father Burke was the Delegate's agent. As for the League, he noted that there was apparently some confusion over the standing of that organization--that some believed that inasmuch as the Pope had approved the League in 1926, "from this fact they have concluded that armed action by Catholics in Mexico under the direction of the League has been approved and blessed by His Holiness," and that it would be contradictory for him to "repudiate the League when it continues as such to direct armed action." Pius XI in 1926, Díaz said, had approved

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Lane to Morrow, July 25, 1928, DSR 812.404/896. It is not clear whether officials in the Department had known the situation for some time or whether they investigated only after Morrow's message arrived.

the League, which by legal means alone would work to win religious freedom in Mexico; later, however, the League, "on its own responsibility," decided to take up arms to win liberty. When matters reached the stage that it was being said that the Pope and bishops were responsible for the armed action, the Pope gave instructions "in which, leaving Catholics as individuals entirely free, he instructed the Bishops to have no part, physical or moral, direct or indirect, in any armed action by Catholics under the direction of the League." Díaz offered to provide any further information the Ambassador might desire regarding these matters.<sup>47</sup>

If Morrow read the correspondence Díaz enclosed with his usual thoroughness, he may have caught a subtle difference between what the Pope said--and did not say--about the armed action, and what Díaz said the Pope said. But apparently he was satisfied; the "League" had once been respectable, but since plunging into rebellion it had lost favor with the Church. Just as he had believed all along, the bishops--and the Pope--were the people to deal with.

On August 9th Morrow had a long visit with Calles--an early morning breakfast meeting. The President, Morrow reported, was not interested at the moment in the religious question; they had discussed other matters, including the succession to the presidency. Calles was, however, "deeply upset" at the report of an interview given by Ruiz y Flores in Rome in which the Archbishop had been quoted as saying that Obregón's death was but a natural consequence of the deplorable situation in Mexico, that Calles would remain president after December, and that Calles wanted the religious conflict settled because he needed money. Calles, said Morrow, did not want to weaken the next government by bringing back the Church now;

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<sup>47</sup>Díaz to Morrow, July 24, 1928, DSR 812.404/896, with enclosures.

unless the clergy wanted to return in the spirit shown by Father Burke, he did not want them back. Calles believed, Morrow added, that Rome had turned Father Burke down, and for him the matter was closed. But Morrow was determined not to be pessimistic: "Don't get discouraged," he told Lane. "In another week or two we may be able to go on." He said Calles was convinced that fanatical Catholics, acting with League funds, had been responsible for Obregón's death.<sup>48</sup>

On August 14th Morrow told Lane that Calles thought Rome had been duped; the President, he said, now had about the same opinion of the Vatican that he had of William Randolph Hearst. The time was definitely not favorable for the reception of an apostolic delegate in Mexico. Morrow himself was exasperated. Someone in Rome, he told Lane, must have gone out of his mind. He referred to inflammatory editorials that had been appearing in Osservatore Romano. The rebel problem in Mexico, he said, seemed to be under control--Calles had told him rebel activity had all but collapsed.<sup>49</sup>

Calles delivered his annual message to Congress on September 1st. One topic overshadowed all others: the presidential succession. His reported statement the month before that he did not wish to continue in office had not been definitive. Many believed that the President, now undisputed master of the Revolutionary government, would move to stake out an indefinite hold on the highest office. But his opening words indicated they were wrong:

<sup>48</sup>Memorandum of telephone conversation with Ambassador Morrow, August 9, 1928, DSR 812.404/895 7/9; Morrow to Kellogg, August 14, 1928, DSR 812.404/894 8/9.

<sup>49</sup>Memorandum of telephone conversation with Ambassador Morrow, August 14, 1928, DSR 812.404/903 3/5.



. . . not only ethical motives, nor considerations of personal political belief, but the necessity which we believe to be definitive and categorical to pass from a more or less veiled system of "caudillo government" to a frank regime of institutions, have decided me to declare solemnly and with such clarity that my words may not lend themselves to suspicions or interpretations, that not only will I not seek a prolongation of my mandate, accepting an extension or a designation as provisional president, but that neither for the period following the interim nor on any other occasion will I aspire to the presidency. . . .<sup>50</sup>

There were other surprises. He appealed for a political system based in fact as well as theory on genuine representative democracy:

I wish to say among other things that this temple of the law [the Congress] will appear more august and will better satisfy the national need when there are represented on its benches all the legitimate tendencies and interests of the country. . . . My advice, my warning rather, on the need for these new directions results from the conviction that real freedom of elections, which may give national representation to groups which represent the reaction, even the clerical reaction, cannot and should not alarm true revolutionaries. . . .<sup>51</sup>

It all amounted to a display of statesmanship that none of Calles's enemies and perhaps few of his friends had thought him capable of.

Even many Catholics were impressed.<sup>52</sup> There seemed to be some hope that perhaps things were changing. In the weeks following the presidential message a number of petitions were presented to Congress. The first (which was probably in preparation before the Calles speech) was introduced September 3rd, and was signed by a distinguished group that included Toribio Esquivel Obregón, Miguel Alessio Robles, and Eduardo J. Correa. It asked

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<sup>50</sup>Moctezuma, II, 481. The Constitution had been amended during Calles's administration, lengthening the presidential term to six years. By law, new elections had to be held to replace Obregón (technically, to complete the unexpired term to which he had been elected). Congress would choose a provisional president to serve during the interim between December 1st and the accession of a new president. In September, Congress set November 20th, 1929, for the election, the winner to take office February 5th, 1930.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 484.

<sup>52</sup>See for example ibid., pp. 484, 485.

for the reform of the constitutional articles on religion; three things were essential, it said, "in order that there be established in Mexico true religious freedom, the freedom which we respectfully and justly ask, the freedom which will save us from chaos. . . ." These were (1) recognition of the existence and personality of churches (2) recognition of the separation and independence between the state and all churches and therefore abstention by the state from legislating on religious questions, and (3) that such separation entail friendly cooperation for the common good rather than hostility. Specific and detailed amendments to each relevant constitutional article were proposed.<sup>53</sup> El Universal devoted an editorial to the memorial and the religious problem generally (something rarely seen in the Mexican press since 1926). While neither supporting nor opposing the memorial, the editors called for mature consideration of it and spoke of the necessity for just laws appropriate to the national needs.<sup>54</sup> Another petition, essentially a restatement of the first and bearing additional names, was submitted on the 16th.<sup>55</sup> A third, early in October, contained a detailed comparison of Mexico's religious laws with those of a number of other nations, the theme being that legislation hostile to religion was inadmissible in civilized societies and that harmonious separation of the spiritual and temporal spheres was a hallmark of national modernity.<sup>56</sup> Other petitions arrived during September and October from

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<sup>53</sup>El Universal, September 4, 1928, pp. 1, 10; Moctezuma, II, 485-492; Ríos Facius, Méjico cristero, pp. 343, 344. Excelsior for August 29 carried a report on page 1 that the Mexican bishops would soon petition Congress again for a change in the laws, but there is no evidence linking them to the memorials of September and October.

<sup>54</sup>El Universal, September 6, 1928, p. 3.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., September 20, 1928, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., October 5, 1928, pp. 1, 10; Moctezuma, II, 493-495.

various parts of the country.<sup>57</sup>

The petitions failed to confirm the existence of a thaw in the religious climate. Congress did not discuss them or even acknowledge their receipt. Some of the deputies were quoted as saying that no recognition of the communications would be given unless Catholics specifically repudiated the rebellion.<sup>58</sup> Yet, there was during the autumn a perceptible lessening in the intensity of the government's handling of infractions of the religious laws--a certain routine, matter-of-fact approach rather than the coarse over-reaction of the past three years.<sup>59</sup> Part of the reason may have been the shake-up in Calles's cabinet that followed Obregón's death.

Emilio Portes Gil was named Secretary of Gobernación on August 16th, replacing Adalberto Tejeda. Portes Gil would later claim credit for relaxing religious tensions during his three months at Gobernación. Unquestionably he was more even minded on the subject than the rabid Tejeda; at the same time, what changes he made in tactics obviously were made with Calles's approval.<sup>60</sup>

Portes Gil had not been a Calles intimate--he was generally thought of as leaning toward the Obregón faction. At first, his appointment to

<sup>57</sup>Moctezuma, II, 495, 496. The League archives (part 1) contain copies of a number of petitions submitted to Congress in September and October.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., pp. 498, 499.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 484.

<sup>60</sup>Portes Gil says that upon taking over his cabinet post in August he acted to persuade Calles that it was necessary to end the violence being perpetrated by government officials in connection with the enforcement of the religious laws, and that Calles gave him a free hand so long as the laws were not compromised; he then moved to instruct officials at all levels to put an end to unjust and arbitrary actions. Portes Gil, p. 554.

the number two position in the government was seen as a further step to pacify the political atmosphere; but after Calles's message to Congress it took on a new light. Many now suspected that he might be in the line of succession. He was. On September 19th Congress chose him to succeed Calles as interim president on December 1st.<sup>61</sup>

Summer changed to autumn, and still no word came from Rome. The first week of September Father Burke told Undersecretary of State J. Ruben Clark he understood the Holy See wanted to keep the door open and said he would be willing to go to Mexico again, with Fumasoni-Biondi, if necessary.<sup>62</sup> Morrow, told of Burke's comment, replied that he felt it was "undesirable to press the question of adjustment at the present time, at least through me." He did say he thought that the idea of Burke and the Delegate coming was excellent if things developed to make it feasible, and he hoped nothing would be done to make it impossible.<sup>63</sup>

Meanwhile, a fresh approach was being promoted, with the thought of activating matters at the Vatican or at least getting some indication of the climate there. Robert Olds, in Paris on a European visit in September, was ready to go to Rome for talks.<sup>64</sup> Working discretely and through intermediaries, Olds had some hopes of making the trip. They evaporated quickly, but in so doing gave a hint regarding the Holy See's thinking. On the 17th Olds cabled Lane that the intermediaries had told him that the Vatican, while not rejecting the idea of a visit, intimated that it might

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<sup>61</sup>El Universal, September 20, 1928, p. 1.

<sup>62</sup>Clark to Morrow, September 6, 1928, DSR 812.404/908a.

<sup>63</sup>Morrow to SecState, September 19, 1928, DSR 812.404/917.

<sup>64</sup>Olds to SecState, September 13, 1928 DSR 812.404/913.

be of little value unless Olds were coming with new facts or proposals.<sup>65</sup> Morrow, who was following the matter, said he would be inclined to drop it. He told Olds there was apparently some difference of opinion among higher Church authorities as to whether to accept the tentative proposals which had been made. He did not think that at the time, in view of the transitional state of things in Mexico, it would be possible to do anything even if the "parties abroad" were willing. He did think it might be possible to move on the matter later provided the gap was not widened by "unwise utterances" on the part of either side.<sup>66</sup>

As October opened, Morrow was standing pat; the next move was Rome's, he believed. It was his opinion that Father Burke, Cardinal Hayes, and Fumasoni-Biondi had done all they could but that authorities at the Vatican had apparently paid no attention to the steps Father Burke and Ruiz y Flores had taken. Whether this was due to an inadequate presentation of the case by the latter he did not know, nor did he understand what the essential difficulty was. He wrote Clark that "if we can judge by the Osservatore Romano and by extreme Catholic leaders in Mexico, Rome does not desire to deal with President Calles at all." The Vatican, he was sure, was deluded:

- ✕ Rome apparently considers that Mexico has not got a stable Government and that some day she will have a Government that will be wholly favorable to the Catholic Church. Father Burke's negotiations, however, were on the theory, it seems to me, that President Calles did have a strong Government and that his assertions could be relied upon, and that if the Church would try the new policy of cooperation with the Government, there was great spiritual work to be done in Mexico. Father Burke proceeded to a certain point in his negotiations and then, without any explanation whatever, those negotiations were apparently ignored. . . .

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<sup>65</sup>Olds to Lane, September 17, 1928, DSR 812.404/915.

<sup>66</sup>See Morrow to SecState, September 19, 1928, DSR 812.404/916, which includes the text of Morrow's cable to Olds.

He added his customary comment to the effect that in spite of everything the case was not hopeless, and that it might even be possible that an adjustment could come and public worship be resumed before Calles left office.<sup>67</sup>

*Rome's position* ✓ Rome's position was made known in November, via Ruiz y Flores. While still at sea on his return trip to the United States he addressed a letter to Miguel de la Mora. It said that the Pope had asked that all the bishops be informed that the Holy See was prepared to enter into talks with the Mexican government, preferably in Rome, provided the purpose of such talks was to discuss the reform of the Constitution and laws and provided the government duly authorize a representative to treat. The Pope was prepared to authorize the return of the bishops and the resumption of public worship even before the termination of the talks, as soon as he had adequate guarantees regarding the freedom of the Church. The Pontiff, Ruiz y Flores added, wanted the bishops to be of one mind with him on the matter.<sup>68</sup> The State Department learned of the Vatican's position on November 16th, when Montavon brought the news to Clark. Morrow was informed the same day.<sup>69</sup>

Immediately upon reaching Washington Ruiz y Flores went to work to try to obtain the unity Rome wanted. He wired the bishops, then meeting in San Antonio, stressing two points: the necessity that they maintain unity of action with the Holy See, and the importance of their doing nothing that might disturb the evidence of good will that had been shown by both the Mexican and the U.S. governments. The day after sending his

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<sup>67</sup>Morrow to Clark, October 5, 1928, DSR 812.404/931 2/12.

<sup>68</sup>Circular letter from De la Mora to the bishops in Mexico, undated, transmitting letter from Ruiz y Flores of November 5, 1928, LA-1.

<sup>69</sup>Clark to Morrow, November 16, 1928, DSR 812.404/936a.

message, he received instructions from Rome to go at once to Texas to meet with the bishops, and to instruct them to remain in session until he arrived. He was also ordered to proceed later to Los Angeles to confer with several prelates there who were not attending the San Antonio meeting.<sup>70</sup> Ruiz was entirely satisfied with the conference in San Antonio; all present agreed fully to the papal requests.<sup>71</sup>

Throughout November Father Burke tried to stimulate action. Calles had told Morrow on November 1st that in the few weeks left to him he would discuss the Catholic question only with Father Burke or someone introduced by him. Morrow favored the idea.<sup>72</sup> Burke suggested writing a letter to Calles referring to the Veracruz exchange and obtaining Calles's approval for a visit to Mexico by the Delegate or someone designated by him.<sup>73</sup> Both he and Montavon tried to nudge Fumasoni-Biondi forward. In a memorandum to the Delegate on the 8th Burke pointed out that the government was willing to have an apostolic delegate function in Mexico. Twelve days later Montavon told the Delegate that Calles, after the return of the bishops, would be willing to see amiable discussion looking toward either an acceptable interpretation of the laws or their amendment. On the 21st Fumasoni-Biondi pointed out to Burke that Calles's willingness to have an apostolic delegate in Mexico represented no new item--that had been granted in April at the Veracruz interview. Montavon's memorandum, he said, was interesting, but any promises of a change in position should be provided

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<sup>70</sup>Kellogg to Morrow, November 19, 1928, DSR 812.404/936b.

<sup>71</sup>Clark to Morrow, November 28, 1928, DSR 812.404/942a.

<sup>72</sup>Morrow to SecState, November 8, 1928, DSR 812.404/931.

<sup>73</sup>Kellogg to Morrow, November 5, 1928, DSR 812.404/930b.

over the signature of an official representative of the Mexican government.<sup>74</sup>

On the 22nd Morrow asked Calles his opinion regarding a visit by Burke and perhaps someone else. Calles said no; he had only a few days left in office and could give no further assurances on the religious question. He added that in view of the present state of public opinion, particularly on the part of members of congress, it would be difficult for Portes Gil to move on the matter at the start of his term. Morrow did not press the issue. He proceeded with his plans to depart for a visit to the United States, telling Kellogg that he expected to be in Washington December 9th.<sup>75</sup>

The state of public opinion mentioned by Calles was conditioned mainly by the trial of José de León Toral and Madre Conchita, which began November 2nd--the most sensational trial in Mexico, said Excelsior, since that of Maximilian of Habsburg in 1867.<sup>76</sup> The proceedings were tumultuous. The scene in the courtroom was at times riotuous: at one session a band of federal deputies invaded the chamber waving pistols and threatening to lynch Toral, and Demetrio Sodi, the distinguished jurist who headed the defense, had to defend his client by main force until order was restored.<sup>77</sup> Some members of the jury wore pistols after receiving threats that they would be killed if Toral were acquitted.<sup>78</sup> Outside the building and in the streets nearby mounted troops had to use strong-arm tactics to subdue

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<sup>74</sup>Fumasoni-Biondi to Burke, November 21, 1928, in Clark to Morrow, November 23, 1928, DSR 812.404/938a.

<sup>75</sup>Morrow to SecState, November 23, 1928, DSR 812.494/939.

<sup>76</sup>Excelsior, November 2, 1928, p. 1.

<sup>77</sup>Sodi de Pallares, p. 113.

<sup>78</sup>New York Times, November 8, 1928, p. 30.



the mobs--it was not quite clear which were demonstrating for Toral and which against him--and many persons were injured.<sup>79</sup> Inside the courtroom one sensation followed another as the case preceeded. There were strong innuendos that highly placed individuals not connected with the religious question had desired Obregón's demise and perhaps had been involved in the affair.<sup>80</sup> The testimony was laced with lurid details, It came out that some of the young militants who had frequented Madre Conchita's convent to attend religious devotions had also been manufacturing bombs, one of which exploded in the Chamber of Deputies early in the summer. Several of them, male and female, had hatched a plan to kill both Obregón and Calles at a dance in Celaya the previous spring by injecting poison into them--and the poison changed hands at a meeting in the convent.<sup>81</sup> The nun denied that she had induced Toral to kill Obregón or that she had been involved in any way in the doings of her young friends. On the witness stand she performed so brilliantly that the team for the prosecution, led by the attorney general of Mexico, at times appeared to be the defendants.

The outcome of the week-long proceeding caused little surprise. Toral was condemned to death. Madre Conchita was given twenty years in prison;<sup>82</sup> a few weeks later she was transferred to the Islas Mariás penal

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<sup>79</sup>Portes Gil, p. 555.

<sup>80</sup>El jurado de Toral, I, 101, 104-106. The defense limited itself to oblique hints at this during the trial, but Sodi later claimed he had reliable information that the autopsy showed that the bullet holes in the corpse were of three different calibers--one physician, he said, fled to escape having to sign the falsified official report. Sodi de Pallares, pp. 125, 126.

<sup>81</sup>El jurado de Toral, I, 168-170; II, 80-84. The Celaya poison plot was referred to in a published report of the investigation in August, but new details were revealed at the trial. See Excélsior August 22, 1928, p. 1.

<sup>82</sup>Excélsior, November 9, 1928, p. 1.

colony off the Jalisco coast to begin serving her sentence.

Ruiz y Flores had pronounced himself satisfied with his meeting with the bishops in San Antonio. But although the prelates pledged their obedience to the Pope, they retained a workable reserve of self-assertiveness. On November 21st those attending the session issued a collective pastoral letter. It was in part conciliatory, going so far as to praise Calles's September 1st speech, which it termed a call for true patriotism that if followed would lead to brighter days, Mexico, said the bishops, because of its large Catholic majority might aspire to be ruled by a government that was officially Catholic; this was not being sought, but rather a "friendly separation" of church and state. Catholics governments, the letter said, had to be "not a product of politics or laws, much less of violent and aggressive action. . . but rather the spontaneous fruit of the unity of faith which comes to reign in all social life by means of ordered, peaceful, Catholic action which does not perturb the social order." Then, however, the pastoral heaped praise on groups that were indeed perturbing the social order:

Next to our priests [in our esteem] are you, the Catholics grouped in the different religious and Catholic social associations, the Catholic Association of Mexican Youth [ACJM], the National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty, the Mexican Catholic Women, the Knights of Columbus, the Padres de Familia and all the others in which with so much constancy and heroism you are continuing your apostolic labors and your work of salvation. Your names the Church will preserve with gratitude. . . .<sup>83</sup>

It was a mild statement alongside those being uttered publicly and privately by the prelate who stood sternly at the extreme end of the intransigence spectrum. In the summer of 1928 the Revista Católica press

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<sup>83</sup> Carta Pastoral Colectiva, November 21, 1928, LA-1.

in El Paso published Jesús Manríquez y Zárate's strongest defense yet of the rebellion:

In this singular battle there is found on one side the most abominable, hypocritical, and vile man to appear in the history of America, leading a powerful and disciplined army equipped with every means needed to inflict destruction. . . . On the other side are the noble and suffering Mexican people, poor and abandoned, reduced to misery and lacking almost completely all human help. . . . Oh glorious soldiers of freedom! . . . You are the champions of Christian right in this century of apostasy and cowardice. . . . You merit the gratitude not only of the Church and people of Mexico but of the civilized world, because the cause you defend is the cause of order, of justice, and of right, against the cause of barbarism and crime. . . . Forward, soldiers of Cristo Rey! Do not falter for even an instant in the epic struggle you have begun. . . .<sup>84</sup>

In October, Manríquez y Zárate speculated on the possibility of himself going into Mexico to be with the "liberators." He would do so, he wrote Palomar y Vizcarra, if he had a clear and special inspiration from God, but without this he would be reluctant: "If only I knew the real thinking of [the Pope]. . . ."<sup>85</sup> The Directive Committee strongly urged him to enter Mexico and join the men in the field. The Bishop wrestled with himself over the matter: If it were up to him, he said, he would leave at once to place himself at the head of the troops, "or at least to counsel them in their glorious combat." He went on to say that he was being restrained by González Valencia, who told him that to do so under the present circumstances would expose him at the very least to a public statement of disapproval from the Pope--and this would constitute a mortal blow

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<sup>84</sup> Jesús Manríquez y Zárate, ¡Viva Cristo Rey! en la hora de suprema angustia (El Paso, Texas, 1928), pp. 18, 76, 77. In sending a copy to Palomar y Vizcarra, he said he hoped it would encourage them all. He added that the League had exclusive publishing rights in Mexico, and that any earnings were to be applied exclusively to helping the "armed defense." Manríquez y Zárate to Palomar y Vizcarra, June 17, 1928, LA-3.

<sup>85</sup> Manríquez y Zárate to Palomar y Vizcarra, October 24, 1928, LA-3.

to the movement. Even so, he would go if God gave him some "extraordinary light."<sup>86</sup> His abhorrence of the United States was becoming apocalyptic: If Al Smith had won the November election, he said, the ruin of the United States might have been retarded for a time; but as it was, Hoover's victory showed that God desired the complete and final defeat of "the children of darkness" and that the end was near for the "Colossus of the North." It had been said, he recalled, that the fall of the United States "will be the resurgence of the Hispanic race on the continent, and of course of our nationality, today so humbled. . . . Only in one way will we be truly free; if Our Lord God humbles the pride of this Colossus. . . ."<sup>87</sup>

The League leaders grasped eagerly at every indication of support in high ecclesiastical places. After talking with an envoy who returned from Texas late in September, Palomar y Vizcarra wrote that not only was González Valencia with them heart and soul but that the Pope himself approved the armed movement--although he could not say so publicly.<sup>88</sup> The Directors were careful, however, to shield others from news that pointed to lack of favor. Even the crushing blow contained in Díaz's January letter to Bustos was turned to good use by means of careful editing: In a bulletin to League delegates, local chiefs and agents in October, the Directive Committee quoted the part about the Pope's being consoled by the firmness and constancy of the League, but mentioned nothing of the rest of the letter. The statement was prefaced with the comment that the Committee wished to inform the recipients of "the constant indications of approval, encouragement and consolation that we have received from His Holiness the Pope"

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., November 30, 1928, LA-3.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Memorandum written by Palomar y Vizcarra, September 24, 1928, LA-1.

and from other members of the hierarchy: ". . . hear them with reverence, and savor the same consolation we have had."<sup>89</sup>

As in the previous year, the summer had seen a decrease in rebel activity, due to an apparent decline in the number of men under arms. Attaché Thompson estimated the rebel total at 5,000 in June, and attributed the decrease to more efficient federal military leadership and to rebel ammunition shortages.<sup>90</sup> These were, however, probably not the most important reasons. Nearly all the Cristeros were farmers, and to neglect the crops in early summer was to confront one's family with starvation.

But the decline of activity was not as marked as the previous year. May brought a particularly impressive indication that the rebellion was still vigorous in the west. After weeks of preparation, Degollado launched an attack on the Pacific coast port of Manzanillo. Early on the 24th a main force of 1,000 men led by Carlos Bouquet stormed into the town, joined a short while later by another 600 Cristeros who had neutralized a federal garrison in nearby Cihuatlán and captured needed supplies. The port fell after stiff resistance in which the government defenders were aided by a barrage from a federal gunboat in the harbor. But the victory was brief. The Colima units, which had been ordered to attack the City of Colima at daybreak to pin down government troops there, failed to do so until mid-afternoon, by which time most of the federals were rushing toward Manzanillo. Failure to destroy properly a railroad bridge on the main line also made it easier for the relief column to reach the coast. It appeared in such strength that Degollado withdrew hastily to avoid being trapped. He saved

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<sup>89</sup>"Boletín para los Delegados Regionales, Jefes Locales y Agentes de la Liga en la República," October 12, 1928, LA-1.

<sup>90</sup>See Morrow to Kellogg, July 16, 1928, DSR 812.00/29215 1/2, cited in Rice, p. 138n.

most of his force, but General Lucas and forty-five men were cut off and died fighting in the town.<sup>91</sup> Yet it had been a major engagement; the government report placed federal casualties at 350.<sup>92</sup>

In Michoacán, Navarro Origel was well on top of events as 1928 opened. A League delegate who visited his headquarters just before the start of the year was received with full military honors and reviewed 5,000 troops, nearly all of whom he reported had new arms which had been taken from government units. Ammunition, however, was scarce. He praised the strict discipline and strong religious spirit.<sup>93</sup> On January 14th federal General Juan Domínguez occupied Coalcomán with no opposition--to find himself in a well prepared trap. His command was beseiged for over two weeks and escaped annihilation only by the last minute arrival of a relief force.<sup>94</sup> Navarro reported that he was in action during all of January and that the enemy had suffered losses every day of the month.<sup>95</sup> He was at the pinnacle of his fame. By early spring the League was on the point of naming him supreme civil head of the movement.<sup>96</sup> Then, in the space of a few days, Navarro's career collapsed.

The Cristero fighting men whether led by Navarro or other commanders, were probably not markedly different in their behavior from men who had taken part in Mexico's other civil upheavals--Navarrete commented on the

<sup>91</sup>Degollado, pp. 137-150. Degollado blamed Andrés Salazar, saying that the Colima chief held off attacking the capital until there were no longer enough enemy soldiers there to do him much harm--in effect, a charge of cowardice. He said Salazar should have been shot, but that he decided against this in order to avoid greater harm to the cause.

<sup>92</sup>Ceniceros y Villarreal.

<sup>93</sup>Palomar y Vizcarra to González Valencia, December 16, 1927, LA-1.

<sup>94</sup>El Universal, January 15, 1928, p. 1; Howell, p. 133.

<sup>95</sup>Howell, p. 133.

<sup>96</sup>Directive Committee report to League Convention, August, 1929, LA-2.

basis of his experience in Jalisco that "they were no better nor worse, as a general rule, than they were when they lived as simple rancheros, before the persecution."<sup>97</sup> Overall, they were probably a cut above the usual guerrilla types--more than a few of them led exemplary lives in the field--but they were by no means all saints. Navarro Origel, however, was determined that his men would be in every sense "Christian soldiers," and the Michoacán Cristeros had tasted severe discipline more than once. Tensions smouldered. A clash came when some of Navarro's officers decided to sack and destroy a village whose inhabitants had been notoriously unsympathetic to the Cristeros. Navarro bent slightly; unable to prevent it, he at least managed to dissuade them from burning the entire town, and he got a pledge that all goods and money collected would be at the disposal of the movement. After the attack, however, no money was turned in. Navarro thereupon ordered a personal search of the men--a move that produced over a hundred pesos and infuriated many of the troops. To give things a chance to cool, Navarro ordered that each man be given a furlough and provided with food, clothing, or money for his family. The order was not carried out; instead, several of the officers managed with little difficulty to organize a mutiny. Navarro was seized and was at the point of being shot when the parish priest of Coalcomán arrived and persuaded the troops to spare the leader's life. In June Navarro Origel left Michoacán with a portion of the brigade that chose to follow him, and joined Bouquet's forces in southern Jalisco. He was killed in action two months later.<sup>98</sup>

Despite the summer slowdown, things were by no means quiet. Pedroza

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<sup>97</sup>Navarrete, p. 187.

<sup>98</sup>Chowell, pp. 137-141.

and Vega led 350 Cristeros against government forces in Los Altos on June 20th.<sup>99</sup> Command problems in general were less serious--Degollado said he was no longer plagued by disharmony among his chiefs, that the troops were having success in most of their engagements, and that even the problem of supplies was not as critical as it had been.<sup>100</sup> Still, fundamental weaknesses in the overall conduct of military operations persisted. In a report to its regional representatives in Mexico City the League leadership listed four main problems of the armed effort: (1) rivalries among leaders (2) shortage of trained military men (3) shortage of materials, especially munitions (4) the power wielded by the government as a de facto regime. As for career officers, it said, the fear that liberals might take control after the victory had caused the League to be careful about using them.<sup>101</sup>

But one professional military man was too valuable for the League to let his liberal taint stand in the way of advancement. In August Enrique Gorostieta was appointed generalissimo of the "National Liberation Army."<sup>102</sup> It had taken some soul-searching on the part of the Directors, to be sure. Ever since Gorostieta had joined the movement there had been murmuring that worried the Committee. His subordinates were uneasy over his lack of devoutness. It was said that he made slighting remarks about the bishops.<sup>103</sup> In April the Directors told Gorostieta they were entirely satisfied with his efforts but wanted to pass along to him reports (perhaps exaggerated) that they had received. These were to the effect that the

<sup>99</sup>Excélsior, June 22, 1928.

<sup>100</sup>Degollado, p. 164.

<sup>101</sup>League to Arcoacha, May 23, 1928, LA-1.

<sup>102</sup>Chief, Special Committee, to Ceniceros y Villarreal, August 30, 1928 LA-1.

<sup>103</sup>Palomar y Vizcarra to González Valencia, December 26, 1927, LA-1.



General had said things that offended the beliefs of the soldiers, and even that he had made fun of their religious practices. The Directors went on to say--somewhat tongue in cheek--that they did not believe the reports but that as jealous defenders of the General they wanted him to be aware of such rumors, since this was the sort of thing that could be divisive.<sup>104</sup>

Gorostieta took over a movement that after nearly two years was far from victorious, but was still very much undefeated. It needed leadership. González Flores, Capistrán Garza, Ochoa, Navarro Origel, Bustos, and scores of lesser lights were gone from the scene, and new faces had at best only partially filled the gaps. Gorostieta took formal command in October with the issuance of a "Manifiesto to the Nation."<sup>105</sup> The document, approved by the Directive Committee, provided for a reorganization of the "liberation movement." The forces in the field were to be known henceforth as the "National Guard" (Guardia Nacional). As military chief, Gorostieta assumed "all necessary authority" in matters of war and finance. It was projected that a supreme civil head of the movement would be chosen by the Directive Committee in consultation with the Guardia Nacional and that in the meantime the military chief would recognize as the supreme authority a leader to be named by common agreement between him and the Committee. The Constitution of 1857, "although not in fact expressing the real and tangible sentiments of the Mexican people," was declared re-established, minus the Laws of Reform but incorporating the principles of the "national plebiscite effected in 1926 [the petition bearing some 2,000,000 signatures], supporting the petition formulated by the Most Reverend Mexican Prelates on September 6th of that year," plus the

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<sup>104</sup> Directive Committee to Gorostieta, April 6, 1928, LA-1.

<sup>105</sup> "Manifiesto a la Nación," October 28, 1928, printed handbill, LA-1.

amplifications contained in the memorial to Congress of September 3rd, 1928. The Manifesto pledged the new government to recognize as valid and to enforce fairly all just measures currently in force "designed to recognize the right of laboring men to unionize, protect and defend their rights, and better their condition. . . ." The new government was also committed to the establishment of commissions to work out agreements between land owners and ejidatarios, and to adopt procedures to assure just and effective compensation for the former; where necessary for the common good, redistribution of rural lands would continue, "but in a just and equitable way and with prior indemnification." It was specified that the Manifesto could be altered only by mutual consent of the Directive Committee and the supreme military chief.

None of the participants has related how details of the Manifesto were hammered out by Gorostieta and the Directors, but undoubtedly it entailed some considerable giving in on the part of the latter. Both the appointment and the plan outlined in the Manifesto were pre-eminently war measures; evidently the Directive Committee decided that giving the military arm equal status and accepting the 1857 Constitution were prices it had to pay. It was a recognition that drastic steps were necessary--and that Gorostieta was indispensable.

Harmony was a paramount concern. One of Gorostieta's first problems on that score concerned the Feminine Brigades. That organization had grown in numbers and efficiency and by the middle of 1928 was an important factor in the Cristero effort--Degollado credited it as a major source of arms and ammunition.<sup>106</sup> The Brigades had, however, guarded their autonomy to such an extent as to constitute a self-governing military organization, obeying

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<sup>106</sup>Degollado, p. 163.

the League only when they chose to. By autumn there was open dissension and Gorostieta attempted mediation. He suggested that the Brigades be placed under his direct authority, which, he said, would in fact make them subject to the League.<sup>107</sup> This idea the Directors vetoed, and the scrap continued. By December Gorostieta was irked; he told the Directors that the friction had resulted in a big decrease in the flow of ammunition, and even though the Directors were now assuring him that acceptable harmony had been re-established, the forces in the field were getting almost nothing. During the height of the dispute, he said, the Guardia Nacional would have succumbed had he not been able to rely on other sources he had established.<sup>108</sup>

The main source of the ammunition used by the Cristeros, whether supplied by the Brigades of someone else, was the government itself. Cartridges were often bought from dishonest officials. In the spring of 1928 Felipe Brondo and some companions were obtaining sizeable amounts in this way in San Luis Potosí, at 6½ or 7 centavos per cartridge--a relatively low price in such transactions. When they had money, Brondo's group would buy up to ten cases at a time, dealing through federal officers who were in partnership with the chief of the munition depot. The next biggest source was capture, both in raids and on the battlefield. Relatively little ever came from outside the country.<sup>109</sup>

As before, there was a resurgence of military activity in late summer and autumn. In August the government again intensified efforts to defeat rebels in Jalisco, and issued the usual prediction that the state

<sup>107</sup>Gorostieta to Cenicerros y Villarreal, November 21, 1928, LA-1.

<sup>108</sup>Directive Committee to Gorostieta, December 3, 1928; Gorostieta to Directive Committee, December 28, 1928, LA-1.

<sup>109</sup>Brondo, *Memoirs*; interview with Felipe Brondo, Saltillo, June, 1968.

would soon be entirely at peace.<sup>110</sup> But action spread during September and October. Cristero bands clashed with federals in Querétaro.<sup>111</sup> In November there was a sharp climb in reports of fighting--especially in Jalisco; by the end of the month Degollado's command alone numbered over 1,000 men.<sup>112</sup> In December, with his chiefs Caro, Bouquet, and Ibarra, and a force of 900, he completely routed the Federal 60th Regiment near Ameca.<sup>113</sup> In Colima the movement was the strongest it had been in a year. Arms were plentiful and of better quality; many units were now completely equipped with Mausers instead of the less desirable carbines.<sup>114</sup> November was filled with fighting. Most of it was of the skirmish variety, but on the 7th the government suffered one of its worst defeats of the rebellion. Cristeros ambushed and cut to pieces a large federal force near Suchitlán, then pursued the survivors almost to Comala. The federals lost most of their horses and mules, forty rifles, and a large quantity of ammunition. News of the disaster caused panic in the state capital, where stores, banks, and government offices closed in anticipation of a general attack.<sup>115</sup>

There was continual Cristero action in December throughout much of western and southern Mexico. In addition to Jalisco, where clashes occurred almost daily, there were engagements in Michoacán, Colima, and Guanajuato, with action on a smaller scale reported in Zacatecas, Aguascalientes, Chihuahua, Hidalgo, Tamaulipas, Oaxaca, Veracruz, Guerrero,

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<sup>110</sup>Excélsior, August 28, 1928, p. 1.

<sup>111</sup>El Universal, October 18, 1928, pp. 1, 12.

<sup>112</sup>Degollado, p. 105.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., pp. 130-135.

<sup>114</sup>Spectator II, 118, 137.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., pp. 127-130.

Durango, and the State of Mexico. The pattern was everywhere similar: assaults on smaller towns, which were sometimes taken and occupied for a day or two, and attacks on trains. A prime objective in all cases was the acquiring of supplies.<sup>116</sup> Federal sources announced December 24th that rebel activity in Jalisco and Guanajuato had declined noticeably, but during the next two weeks the government instituted another determined program to end the rebellion. Generous amnesties were offered--including such inducements as promises of land--to Cristeros who laid down their arms.<sup>117</sup> It was also announced that a new "reconcentration" was being ordered in Jalisco as a necessary step to deprive the rebels of supplies.<sup>118</sup> On January 23rd it was revealed that three more air squadrons were joining the campaign in Jalisco, Guanajuato, and Michoacán, and on February 1st a general order was issued for a sharply intensified military effort--warfare without quarter, designed to end the rebellion completely by May.<sup>119</sup> Federal units were transferred west from Chiapas and Tabasco.<sup>120</sup> Portions of Querétaro and Guanajuato were also under "reconcentration." In parts of Querétaro the federal offensive amounted to saturation warfare--one Cristero commander reported to the League that federal troops were even burning ranches belonging to people who had no connection with the rebellion.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>116</sup>"Noticias captadas del 1° al 31 de diciembre [1928]," LA-1; Excelsior, December 3, 1928, p. 1; El Universal, December 11, 1928, p. 9; December 18, p. 1.

<sup>117</sup>El Universal, December 25, 1928, p. 1; January 3, 1929, pp. 1, 8.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., January 12, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., January 24, 1929, p. 1; February 1, p. 1. The air force contingent included 21 pilots, flying Bristol and Borhaund aircraft.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., February 25, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>121</sup>Chief of La Cruz Brigade, Querétaro, to Chief of Special Committee, February 16, 1929, David, V, No. 120 (July 22, 1962), 385, 386.

One indication of the government's determination to pacify the countryside was the announcement late in December that the various groups of armed agrarians throughout Mexico were being formally organized into local defense units (Defensas Rurales de la República), which would constitute temporarily the veteran core of the national army reserve. The decree ordering the move said that the agrarians would be considered the vanguard of forces defending the Revolution and principles of social justice and would, by helping enforce domestic peace, contribute to the protection of workers in both urban and rural areas.<sup>122</sup> But there was also no doubt another objective. The government had distributed arms to agrarian groups at the time of the Gómez-Serrano revolt in late 1927, ordering these to patrol areas from which regular troops had to be temporarily withdrawn. This greatly increased the number of agrarians under arms--many had been serving as auxiliaries to government forces fighting the Cristeros--and it quickly became obvious that they were often as much a threat to public tranquility, especially when left to their own devices, as were declared rebels. Once the 1927 revolt was over the government took steps to disarm them, but large numbers of weapons were never recovered. The December, 1928 order was both an attempt to supplement regular military units and to gain some control over the unruly irregulars.<sup>123</sup>

As the new year of 1929 began, a settlement of the religious conflict seemed remote, either by arms or by negotiation. On January 5th Morrow, Burke, Clark, and Lane discussed matters at the State Department. One item was a letter Burke had drafted which it was thought Portes Gil might be

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<sup>122</sup>El Universal, December 29, 1928, p. 1.

<sup>123</sup>See ibid., January 9, 1928, p. 1, and Excelsior, March 26, 1928, p. 1.

willing to sign. The Apostolic Delegate thus far had neither approved nor disapproved it, although Burke said he had told the Delegate that in his opinion the Mexican government would never agree to a statement more favorable than the one obtained from Calles the previous spring. Morrow observed that there was little point in Father Burke's going to Mexico for further talks only to find that an agreement reached would not get Rome's support. He said the new government in Mexico City would be busy with financial matters and it might be as long as a year before progress could be made toward a settlement. He said he did not plan to do anything further unless Father Burke requested it--although he would of course be glad to be of service.<sup>124</sup> Morrow returned to his post in Mexico City on February 3rd. On the 22nd Father Burke sailed for a two-month visit to Europe and the Holy Land.<sup>125</sup>

On February 6th the Mexican Supreme Court refused to set aside the death sentence imposed on José de León Toral. The next day, in a last attempt to save Toral's life, his attorneys petitioned Portes Gil for a commutation. The President rejected the plea on the grounds that the conviction had been legally obtained and that due process had been adhered to both during the trial and in the subsequent appeals.<sup>126</sup>

Portes Gil received the request for clemency while en route to Tampico on a swing through the northeast. Upon arrival at the port city he was informed by police that a threat had been made to assassinate him and his family if Toral died; the police said those involved were members of the

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<sup>124</sup>Memorandum of conversation, January 5, 1929, DSR 812.404/949 2/8.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid.

<sup>126</sup>El Universal, February 7, 1929, p. 1; February 8, pp. 1, 10.





League, and that according to their information the attempt would be made by dynamiting the presidential train.<sup>127</sup> Portes Gil took no official notice of the report and apparently no special precautions were taken.

Toral died before a firing squad at the penitentiary in Mexico City on Saturday, February 9th. The officer in charge of the execution, a captain formerly on Obregón's staff, administered the coup de grâce with a revolver that had been a gift from the dead leader.<sup>128</sup> Around 6:30 A.M. the next morning near Comonfort, Guanajuato, Portes Gil's train was wrecked by an exploding dynamite charge hidden in the railroad bed. The President and his party escaped injury, but the locomotive and two Pullman cars were demolished and a brakeman killed. Greater damage was averted only because some of the dynamite failed to explode.<sup>129</sup>

In Mexico City later the same day, Toral's funeral procession was the occasion for massive street demonstrations that at times reached uncontrollable proportions. Mobs threw flowers at the casket and rocks at police and firemen; many arrests were made.<sup>130</sup> The next day Portes Gil issued a strongly worded statement deploring the riot, which he blamed on "Catholic elements in the capital" who had adopted a "frankly subversive attitude." The restrictive measures it had been necessary to impose at the start of the religious conflict in 1926, he said, had been in the process of being gradually relaxed, but the government's moderate policy had

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<sup>127</sup>Portes Gil, p. 555. The League archives and pro-League sources are silent on the matter of League involvement. Portes Gil said the police's information came from some "lady of the old aristocracy."

<sup>128</sup>El Universal, February 10, 1929, pp. 1, 2; Gabriel Cházaro, "El caso de la Madre Conchita: texto revisado por ella misma," David, V. No. 110 (September 22, 1961), 221.

<sup>129</sup>Portes Gil, p. 558; El Universal, February 11, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>130</sup>El Universal, February 11, 1929, pp. 1, 9.

obviously not been reciprocated. The real villains, he asserted, were agitators who were not sincere Catholics but rather "wealthy bourgeois" who had been abetting the rebel fanatics and trying to protect their own privileges. He promised stern measures, including confiscation of property belonging to those found to be responsible.<sup>131</sup> The next day he stated that the train attack had not been politically motivated; all evidence indicated that it had been the work of individuals obeying "impassioned Catholic fanatics."<sup>132</sup>

X The same day, Secretary of Gobernación Felipe Canales issued an order directing that in the interest of public security and in view of the "subversive conduct" of a portion of the higher clergy, all Catholic priests in the country must notify the government of their places of residence within two weeks; failure to do so would be considered evidence of involvement with the Catholic rebels. The order stipulated, however, that there was no intention to jail or persecute priests, "who, in the opinion of the Government, are also victims of the material interests which have been placed in combat in connection with the religious question"; nor was it the intention of the government to act against families who had so humanely opened their homes to clergymen--either the priest or the family could register the whereabouts. The order added that there would be no interference with religious practices either in churches or in private homes. The next day, the order was extended to include the few bishops who still remained in Mexico.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup>Ibid., February 12, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid., February 13, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., February 12, 1929, p. 1; February 14, 1929, p. 1; Morrow to SecState, February 12, 1929, DSR 812.001 Portes Gil, Emilio, 24, in DSR 812.404/950. On February 1st Gobernación had confidentially instructed all state governors that by presidential order any priest apprehended or accused of violating the law in matters of religion was to be sent directly

One of these, Miguel de la Mora, secretary of the Episcopal Subcommittee, took immediate exception to the order. He told the press in a statement issued February 14th that although priests could register their addresses without violating canon law, the directive was unconstitutional, unjustified, and humiliating. He denied that bishops or priests were involved in the recent incidents, which were, he believed, "spontaneous fruits of the abnormal circumstances of the moment." He reminded the government that it could bring peace by "satisfying the just desires of the people and reforming the laws."<sup>134</sup> The government replied that De la Mora's words showed a spirit of rebellion and that he was probably one of the leaders of the armed fanatics in Jalisco. It added that the papers which had printed the statement (El Universal, Excélsior, La Prensa) had thereby made themselves accessories to sedition and warned that "those responsible for any publication which incites or tends to incite to altercation of public order and rebellion will be energetically punished. . . ."<sup>135</sup>

De la Mora did not reveal his whereabouts but other bishops did. Guízar Valencia of Chihuahua registered his residence (in Mexico City) as soon as the order appeared, and congratulated Portes Gil on escaping assassination.<sup>136</sup> Corona of Papantla informed Gobernación of his address and condemned the attempt on the President's life, adding that all "non-fanatical" Catholics did likewise. Banegas Galván of Querétaro (who also

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to Mexico City and turned over to Gobernación. The object was probably to prevent excesses and even atrocities perpetrated at times by local authorities. Francisco M. Delgado, Chief of Department, Ministry of Gobernación, to governors, Circular No. 86, February 1, 1929, Legajo 15, Exp. 2/11. Archives, State of Coahuila, 1929.

<sup>134</sup>El Universal, February 19, 1929, pp. 1, 8.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., February 20, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid., February 16, 1929, p. 1; February 20, p. 1.

deplored the attack) and Fulcheri of Zamora complied with the order before the deadline.<sup>137</sup> Not surprisingly, no communication was received from Francisco Orozco y Jiménez, somewhere in Jalisco.

The League may or may not have been involved in the incidents of early February, but it was devoting much attention to a matter of wider scope. Beginning with Enrique Estrada's abortive attempt to invade Mexico in 1926 the League had flirted with individuals and factions that were also anxious to overthrow the regime, and the Directors had wrestled periodically with both the practical and ideological questions involved in cooperating with one or another of these. Early in 1929 the League formally allied itself with a movement that looked more promising than had most of the others.

x Calles's decision to retire from office and his proclaimed preference for a government of institutions rather than caudillos were viewed from the first with suspicion--especially by certain influential supporters of the dead Obregón. Many were convinced that Calles intended to perpetuate his control by ruling through hand-picked figureheads; even the establishment of an official Revolutionary political party, they suspected, was a move to institutionalize Calles rather than the Revolution.<sup>138</sup>

x The disgruntled opposition solidified in December and January--a conglomerate of generals and politicians united chiefly by their determination to end the Calles supremacy and seize power for themselves. The top personalities were the federal chiefs of military operations in several

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., February 27, 1929, pp. 1, 9; Morrow to Clark, May 8, 1929, DSR 812.404/974 3/17. Excelsior reported on March 21st (p. 1) that 1,662 clergymen, including five bishops, had complied with the order.

<sup>138</sup> Amaya, pp. 219-292 passim.

states: José Gonzalo Escobar in Coahuila (who was to be chosen supreme leader of the rebels), Francisco R. Manzo in Sonora, Francisco Urbalejo in Durango, and Jesús M. Aguirre in Veracruz; the governors of Sonora, Durango, and Chihuahua were also involved. These were joined by others who had once held high office but were now in eclipse--men like Roberto Cruz, Gilberto Valenzuela, and Antonio I. Villarreal.

When it became obvious that rebellion was in the wind and that it would involve portions of the regular army, the government began shifting military commands--the transfer of units to Jalisco in fact fulfilled two purposes: action against the Cristeros and the interruption of efforts to wean officers and men away from their loyalty to the regime. As it became increasingly clear to the generals that the government meant to de-fuse their plot while it was still being hatched, they hurried plans to move.<sup>139</sup>

✕ Their chances looked reasonably good--certainly far better than the somewhat amateurish Gómez-Serrano gamble of 1927. ✕ This the League was well aware of and, weighing pros and cons, decided there would be more to gain than lose by going along with the "Renovators," as the conspirators called themselves. In February representatives of both the Directive Committee and Gorostieta concluded a pact with Escobar. ✕ By its terms the "Renovators," in exchange for Catholic support, promised that in power they would provide ample guarantees of religious freedom based on the bishops' 1926 memorial and that they would incorporate the Guardia Nacional into the national army.<sup>140</sup> The agreement was silent concerning other

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<sup>139</sup>Ibid., pp. 239-244.

<sup>140</sup>Lorenzo García, Pedro Ponce, and Luis G. Palacios to Ceniceros y Villarreal, March 19, 1929, LA-1. It is not known whether the "Renovators" or the League made the first approach.

matters that had been of crucial interest to the Catholic opposition. As for the 1917 Constitution, it was clear that the Escobar group did not intend to scrap it, and the League left it at that, merely getting unspecified guarantees that the charter would be modified. The Directive Committee told its envoy to Escobar that Catholics did not aspire to exclusive national leadership but did insist on full rights as citizens under a government of honorable men, whatever their creed.<sup>141</sup>

The revolt began in the early morning hours of March 3rd, joined by a sizeable minority of the federal army. Escobar occupied Monterrey the same day while Manzo and other chieftans quickly seized control of most of Sonora, Chihuahua, and Durango; Aguirre withdrew the main garrisons from federal control in Veracruz.<sup>142</sup> The government acted with formidable speed and efficiency. Within hours, Portes Gil appointed Calles Secretary of War and Marine. Loyal troops were rushed into action; on the 6th Escobar withdrew from Monterrey toward Saltillo, pursued by General Eulogio Ortiz. By the 8th Lázaro Cardenas was assembling a massive force at Irapuato for a thrust northward, and Calles, having swiftly stabilized things in Veracruz, was hurrying there to assume personal command. The border town of Naco fell to federal forces the 12th, Durango the 14th.<sup>143</sup> But things were still very much in flux. The rebel plan called for Manzo to advance swiftly down the west coast through Sinaloa and Nayarit and into Jalisco--something the government was determined to stop at any cost.

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<sup>141</sup>Tello to Salvador Chávez Hayhoe, March 30, 1929, LA-1. The Directors made it clear to Chávez that the alliance was a military one; he was told that the League did not think it opportune at the time to conclude anything political.

<sup>142</sup>Excelsior, March 4, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid.; also March 7, 1929, pp. 1, 7; March 9, p. 1; March 13, p. 1; March 16, p. 1; March 19, pp. 1, 7.

Portes Gil nervously wired Calles on the 25th that if Manzo reached Guadalajara the outlook for the government would be desperate.<sup>144</sup> Manzo got only as far south as Sinaloa.

✓ The Cristero-Escobar alliance was anything but comfortable; from the start it was marked by twists and turns rooted in genuine distrust. Escobar's "Plan of Hermosillo," the formal justification for the rebellion issued March 3rd, made no specific mention of religious matters.<sup>145</sup> On March 4th Escobar signed a decree derogating the "Calles Law" of June, 1926, but stipulating at the same time that "the practice of religion and its internal discipline are strictly subject to what is established by Article 130 of the Constitution of the Republic."<sup>146</sup> The Catholic leadership was worried. Gorostieta said in a letter on March 20th to Luis G. Alcorta, his personal liaison with Escobar, that if he received ammunition he would keep communications interrupted in western Mexico, take Guadalajara, and occupy the Bajío; but he insisted that Escobar must first give specific written guarantees regarding the matter of liberty, religious liberty in particular, ". . . without which I cannot help in any way under any circumstances." He also insisted on a guarantee of formal recognition of the Guardia Nacional as an autonomous unit, of his own position as its leader, and a pledge to ratify all military commissions issued by him.<sup>147</sup>

By the end of March Gorostieta was darkly apprehensive over the military outlook. Although the Escobar revolt might appear on the surface to

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<sup>144</sup>Amaya, pp. 245, 271. Calles reassured Portes Gil that Manzo would be stopped.

<sup>145</sup>A copy of the "Plan" was forwarded to the State Department on March 3rd by an Escobar spokesman. DSR 812.00 Sonora/478, cited in Rice, p. 164n.

<sup>146</sup>Powell, Torreón, report of March 12, 1929, DSR 812.00 Sonora/485.

<sup>147</sup>Gorostieta to Alcorta, March 20, 1929, LA-1.

be a boon to the Cristeros, he thought it possible that on the contrary the Guardia Nacional might be in a highly precarious situation. The reverses reported from the north, he told two of his subordinates, meant that Escobar and his movement were threatened with disaster--the setbacks, he opined, were due to the egotism and indecent ambition of the leaders. And their defeat, he predicted, would portend evil days for the Cristeros: "If [Escobar] should fail, the Turk will turn on us. He would come with large forces, high morale, and proud of his victories. . . ." He urged his commanders to make a maximum effort to help turn the tide.<sup>148</sup> He was himself working energetically to implement a massive Cristero offensive--something he had long dreamed of--to be waged by at least 10,000 men drawn from Jalisco, Colima, and Zacatecas.<sup>149</sup>

Things did look propitious for the Cristeros in March. Federal troops all but abandoned Jalisco and rushed north to meet an enemy the government considered far more dangerous at the moment than the Cristeros. Only Guadalajara was left reasonably well garrisoned by regulars; the rest of the state, like many other parts of the country, was left to the care of agrarians and other local civil defense units; and in some areas not even these irregulars were present. Cristero forces immediately occupied considerable territory, including such strategic centers of San Miguel, Arandas, and Tepatitlán.<sup>150</sup>

\* Gorostieta's worries were justified; he was mistaken only in believing that the government would finish with Escobar before directing its aroused

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<sup>148</sup>Gorostieta to Colonels Viramontes and Acevedo, March 31, 1929, David, II, No. 47 (June 22, 1956), 362.

<sup>149</sup>Navarrete, p. 197.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid., p. 196; Excelsior, March 24, 1929, p. 1; March 28, p. 1.



wrath at the Cristeros. On March 27th the President's office announced that Calles was giving careful attention to the outfitting of a division to be commanded by General Saturnino Cedillo, which would soon be sent to attack the rebels in Jalisco and Guanajuato. The statement added that Calles intended to put a final end not only to the Escobar movement but to the rebellion of the fanatics known as "Cristeros," which had become "chronic."<sup>151</sup>

The campaign against the "Renovators" reached a climax in a four-day battle around La Reforma, Chihuahua, March 31st to April 3rd, and was a serious defeat for the rebels. Resistance went on, but the movement's back had been broken. Federal forces took Ciudad Juárez a few days later.<sup>153</sup> The rebel leadership was beginning to crack. Manzo fled to the United States on April 12th--reportedly to escape being shot by his colleagues because of their dissatisfaction with his performance in the field.<sup>153</sup>

As the "Renovators" weakened so did their already shaky relations with the League. Chávez Hayhoe, the League's emissary to Escobar, spent late March and early April negotiating for ammunition in California, Arizona and Sonora. His first reports were hopeful: the rebels were giving 100,000 cartridges to their Cristero allies; then it was 200,000; a few days later Chávez reported that he had arranged in San Francisco for a shipment of a million rounds.<sup>154</sup> But the second week of April brought gloom.

<sup>151</sup>Excelsior, March 28, 1929, pp. 1, 4. This seems to be the first time the term "Cristero" was used in an official pronouncement.

<sup>152</sup>El Universal, April 4, 1929, pp. 1, 5; April 6, p. 1; April 11, p. 1.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid., April 13, 1929, p. 1; April 14, p. 1.

<sup>154</sup>Chávez Hayhoe to Directive Committee, April 5, 1929; ibid., April 9, LA-1. Chávez's appointment as League representative was apparently a recognition of an existing situation. Manríquez y Zárate wrote to Palomar

Not only was Chávez pessimistic over the military situation; he reported that Escobar, with whom he had finally talked at Cananea, had vetoed the entire munitions offer with the comment that the Cristeros should buy their own ammunition. The Guardia Nacional's job, Escobar told Chávez, was primarily to interrupt communications, and for this no great amounts of cartridges were needed. He expressed surprise that with as many Catholics as there were in Mexico, money could not be obtained. He warned that the Cristeros must "cooperate strongly" if they wanted the liberties they were asking for. Provisioning of Gorostieta's troops could be tended to after the two armies linked up in Jalisco. A few days later Escobar agreed to a shipment of 200,000 cartridges but said that the San Francisco order was off, due to lack of funds. Chávez reported on the 16th that the "Renovators" were still formidable despite setbacks. He doubted, though, that the Cristeros could look to them for much in the way of financial aid--they had their own problems on that score. There had been graft and treachery high in the leadership, he reported. The general in charge of finance had deserted and taken 100,000 pesos with him; Manzo had made off with a sizable sum when he fled, and there had been other instances of pilfering.<sup>155</sup>

✓ The last two weeks of April saw the rapid disintegration of the Escobar rebellion. Nogales fell the 30th and Agua Prieta the next day. On May 4th it was revealed that Escobar had escaped by plane to safety in the United States.<sup>156</sup>

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y Vizcarra from Los Angeles on April 1st that "we" (meaning the Unión Nacionalista Mexicana) had sent Chávez to Nogales in mid-March to deal with the Escobar people, and hoped the League would approve; there had been no way to communicate first with Mexico City. Manríquez y Zárate said the contact promised great things. LA-3.

<sup>155</sup> Chávez Hayhoe to Directive Committee, April 13, 1929; ibid., April 16, 1929, LA-1.

<sup>156</sup> El Universal, April 28, 1929, p. 1; May 2, p. 1; May 4, p. 1.

✕ \* Washington's lack of sympathy with Mexican rebels most definitely included the "Renovators." On March 8th President Hoover announced that the U.S. would continue the arms embargo imposed under Coolidge. The administration was not content with simple neutrality in the Escobar revolt, however; it was announced not only that the government would issue licenses for arms shipments to the Mexican government but that it would allow the Portes Gil regime to purchase war goods directly from U.S. Army arsenals.<sup>157</sup> The next day, the U.S. arranged to deliver approximately 10,000 Enfield rifles and 10 million rounds of ammunition to the Mexican army, and was reported prepared to send bombs, machine guns, and ammunition for use by military aircraft.<sup>158</sup> A sale of planes to the Mexican air force was reported the 30th.<sup>159</sup>

In a wire to Morrow late in April, Clark summarized the official U.S. attitude regarding Mexican rebels--of any breed. They had no international status, he said,

✕ and it would seem that nationally they stand as illegal groups of armed men attempting to overthrow their own government, and therefore probably having the status of traitors. They are from the standpoint of legal principle, both international and national, in no better position than ordinary outlaws and bandits.<sup>160</sup>

The Ambassador could not have agreed more.

<sup>157</sup>New York Times, March 9, 1929, p. 1; Clark to U.S. Consul, Nogales, March 8, 1929, DSR 812.113/10455a, cited in Rice, p. 166.

<sup>158</sup>New York Times, March 10, 1929, p. 1. The supplies were to be paid for on short term credit. Ibid., March 13, p. 24.

<sup>159</sup>Excelsior, March 30, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>160</sup>Clark to Morrow, April 25, 1929, DSR 812.00 Sonora/833, cited in Rice, p. 167n.

## CHAPTER IX

### AN ARRANGEMENT OF SORTS

Morrow talked with Portes Gil on March 19th. One of the subjects they touched on was the religious question. Morrow told the President he had not given up the possibility of settling the problem through Father Burke. Portes Gil said it would be desirable to find a solution before the fall elections.<sup>1</sup>

The Ambassador had been using two new sources of information and advice. One was his Mexican banker friend Agustín Legorreta in Paris; the other was Henry Getty Chilton, British minister to the Holy See. Morrow learned from the latter, by way of Sir Esmond Ovey, British minister to Mexico, that Cardinal Gasparri would be happy to receive a Mexican representative to discuss a settlement. Although dubious that the government would agree to send one, Morrow thought that approach or something similar might be worthwhile.<sup>2</sup> In a memorandum to Montavon after his meeting with Portes Gil, he said the President was apparently ready to proceed on the basis of Calles's April 4th, 1928 letter to Father Burke. Morrow urged that this be pursued. He said that a careful study of the Gasparri-Sáenz agreement of 1924 and the Burke-Calles exchange of 1928 "would indicate that if the Church and State could confine themselves to seeking a modus vivendi rather than endeavoring to make a settlement of the question, the gap between them is not a great one." He added that despite some isolated incidents of violence perpetrated by unauthorized members of the Church party in Mexico and some

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<sup>1</sup> Rublee Memorandum, cited in Rice, p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

intemperate utterances by individuals in the government, the highest authorities on both sides had been acting very responsibly during the current period of tension caused by the Escobar revolt, and had kept the gap from widening. He offered a suggestion: Perhaps if Burke presented the matter--the priest was then in Rome--Gasparri might be willing to conclude that Calles's 1928 letter to Burke, which was still unanswered, was sufficient to justify the Cardinal's communicating directly with the Mexican Minister of Foreign Relations. Gasparri might suggest the sending of a Mexican envoy to Rome, or that a Vatican representative go to Mexico; or, the Cardinal could write directly, laying down terms for a modus vivendi which, if accepted, would end the conflict then and there. Morrow thought, though, that the government would accept only the last plan. If Gasparri wanted previous assurance that he would get a positive reply, he would see Portes Gil on the matter. He reminded Montavon that there was a possibility that the Constitution and laws might be changed later. Morrow said he stood ready to help if Gasparri wished and if the Church really desired to consider an adjustment "along the lines already discussed." He said that if Burke wanted to communicate with him, Chilton would relay messages through Ovey.<sup>3</sup> Just as Morrow obviously intended, the memorandum was read not only in Washington. Clark informed him on the 28th that he understood Montavon was forwarding it to Father Burke in Rome--"by our pouch today."<sup>4</sup>

Things were dormant for several weeks. Then on April 20th Morrow heard from Father Burke by way of Montavon. The priest said he believed

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<sup>3</sup>Memorandum for Mr. William F. Montavon, in Morrow to Clark, March 19, 1929, DSR 812.404/949 3/8; Rublee Memorandum, cited in Rice, pp. 170, 171.

<sup>4</sup>Clark to Morrow, March 28, 1929, DSR 812.404/949 3/8. Morrow was sure the memorandum was read by Vatican officials. See Rublee Memorandum, cited in Rice, p. 169.

there was an atmosphere of sincerity and good will in Rome regarding negotiations; he added that it would be necessary for an officially authorized representative of the Mexican government to come to Rome. This could be done, he said, in complete secrecy. He asked that the matter be laid before Portes Gil.<sup>5</sup> Morrow answered that there was also a spirit of good will in Mexico City, but that he thought it would be futile to approach Portes Gil unless he had assurances that negotiations would proceed on the basis of the Burke-Calles-Ruiz talks of the previous year. He would like to know if this were the case. If so, he would ask Portes Gil to send an envoy to Rome. But if the Vatican wished to start anew, he thought it would be better if persons other than himself or Father Burke were used as intermediaries, since both would be at something of a disadvantage if they had to abandon the original bases without offering any explanation. In any event, however, he would be glad to help, since his object was to see the problem resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned.<sup>6</sup>

With indications that negotiations might resume, Morrow and the State Department turned their attention to the Cristeros. They were annoyed and baffled by the rebellion, which obviously could be an obstacle to a settlement of the religious question along the lines they were pursuing. Morrow remained convinced that the armed movement lacked any formal footing or respectability. The same day he sent his memorandum to Montavon, he forwarded to the Department a copy of Gorostieta's October manifesto, which he said had been widely circulated in Mexico the past week. He referred to Gorostieta as "the self-styled military chief of the Catholic rebellion in Jalisco" and commented that "it is perhaps unnecessary to state

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<sup>5</sup>Clark to Morrow, April 20, 1929, DSR 812.404/965a.

<sup>6</sup>Morrow to Montavon, May 1, 1929, DSR 812.404/974 1/17.

that the remarks of Gorostieta do not have the support of responsible Catholic leaders in Mexico."<sup>7</sup>

Lane and Montavon discussed the rebellion at the State Department on April 27th. Both were anxious to have high Church authority repudiate the Cristeros and the League publicly but neither was certain how this might be brought about. Montavon said he had talked with Ruiz y Flores about the possibility that the nine bishops in Mexico might take steps to halt the rebellion and the League's other activities. The Archbishop, he said, had replied that he doubted whether the bishops had that authority and that besides they would have difficulty communicating with their dioceses because most had been away from them for as long as three years. Ruiz had gone on to say that there were two factions among Catholics in Mexico: reactionaries, who believed in militant measures (Gorostieta and those supporting him), and a more moderate, liberal group that favored a peaceful and legal settlement. Ruiz said the bishops would be hesitant to counsel the militants to lay down their arms--on the grounds that the rebels had a right to resort to arms if they wished. Here Lane interjected that it seemed to him that the bishops, by refusing to dissuade their people from armed action--particularly the Catholics associated with the League--were in conflict with the Pope's wishes as expressed in the November, 1927 encyclical letter repudiating the League's armed action. Montavon said he agreed, but was merely passing along Ruiz's words. He went on to say that Ruiz had told him further that the bishops in Mexico would also hesitate to advise the moderates that their preference for achieving a peaceful solution had the approval of the Church--to which Lane replied that personally he thought such advice would be in harmony with the Pope's letter.

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<sup>7</sup>Morrow to SecState, March 19, 1929, DSR 812.00 Sonora/410.

Montavon added that he had discussed with both the Archbishop and Monsignor Morela--the latter was in charge at the Apostolic Delegation while Fumasoni-Biondi was in Europe--the possibility of making public Pascual Díaz's letter of January 7, 1928, which quoted the encyclical on the repudiation of the League's armed policy, and that Ruiz had told him the Holy See opposed publication of the letter. Montavon thought the objection might be due to the fact that the League had asked to be heard concerning certain accusations made against it and until this was granted, Rome might not want to act publicly. Lane recalled that Father Burke had told him the previous summer that Rome did not want to reprimand Catholics who were willing to die for the faith, even though by engaging in armed action and imperiling their lives they were acting contrary to the Pope's wishes. Lane said that if the Vatican did in fact disapprove of the rebellion it would be a sign of strength to speak out.<sup>8</sup> Lane apparently gave no consideration to the possibility that the Vatican might be following a policy outside the category of a public yes or no--although the facts at his disposal should strongly have suggested it. Montavon was no help, either because he was equally puzzled or because he chose not to go into the matter.

On April 3rd Calles wired Portes Gil that he was ordering an immediate and energetic advance against the Cristeros. He announced that Los Altos in Jalisco, the state of Guanajuato, and "other regions affected by the rebellion of the fanatics" were being designated a special zone of military operations under the control of General Saturnino Cedillo. Calles ordered Cedillo's division of almost 6,000 men, made up of both regulars and agrarians, to leave at once for the southwest--it had been concentrated

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<sup>8</sup> Memorandum of Conversation with Mr. William F. Montavon, April 27, 1929, written by Lane, DSR 812.404/949 6/8; Memorandum for the Under Secretary (from Lane), April 27, DSR 812.404/949 7/8.



in Torreón for possible use against Escobar but after the federal victories in Chihuahua was no longer needed. It was also revealed that forces which had been standing by in Zacatecas--regular units from Veracruz plus some 1,000 organized volunteers--would join the campaign. The federal command in Durango was sent into action against the Cristeros in the state, and all military commanders in central and western Mexico were directed to cooperate in the all-out drive.<sup>9</sup> By the 8th, Cedillo was in Jalisco; he reported that the offensive was being pressed and that several important towns were already in his hands.<sup>10</sup>

The government offensive struck just as Gorostieta was putting his own maximum effort into operation. By the closing days of March the Cristero plan to capture Guadalajara was in motion. The Brigade of Los Altos was advancing from the east in two columns, one by way of Puente Grande, the other, further south, along the rail line through Poncitlán. The strategy called for the northern column to pin down the federal force screening Guadalajara while the other moved quickly on the city from the southeast. Pedroza, who was with the latter column, decided on a bold stroke: He would capture the Mexico City-Guadalajara train near Poncitlán, put a shock force aboard it, and make a lightening run into the suburbs; this contingent would surprise and destroy the depleted federal garrison and open the way for the entry of the main force.

It might have worked--the federals were at minimum strength and a sizable proportion of the civilian populace could be counted on for support--but because of a combination of bad intelligence and worse luck it did not. As the train reached the ambush point, when it was too late to

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<sup>9</sup>El Universal, April 5, 1929, pp. 1, 5.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., April 10, 1929, p. 7.

call off the attack, the Cristeros discovered that it was not the regular passenger express but a large troop convoy--with a second military train only minutes behind it. It was part of Lázaro Cárdenas's division, en route to Sonora via Guadalajara and the west coast Southern Pacific line. To make matters even worse, the lead train managed to stop before being derailed and within moments the Cristeros found themselves in combat with a formidable federal force which, although momentarily withered by heavy fire, quickly formed into battle lines. Both sides held their ground, but by nightfall the Cristeros were down to less than twenty cartridges per man and had to withdraw. The northern column had fared badly, too; it ran into stronger opposition than expected and had to retreat westward. By the second week of April the Brigade was back in Los Altos, its regiments again distributed to their assigned sectors. There, it faced the rolling wave of Cedillo's advancing army.<sup>11</sup>

The federal invasion of Jalisco suffered one sharp reverse the third week of April in what was perhaps the most widely publicized battle of the rebellion. Cedillo's division was moving across Jalisco in three columns. The center one, spearheaded by agrarians and numbering between 1,500 and 2,000 men, had by the middle of April cleared Jalostitlán and was advancing toward Tepatitlán. The Cristero leadership decided to engage it there with a strong force commanded by Father Vega.<sup>12</sup> The priest-Colonel devised a ruse: Leaving around seventy of his troops inside the town, positioned atop churches and other tall buildings, he withdrew the rest--500 to 600 men--and concealed them several kilometers to the north and west.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Navarrete, pp. 213-218.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 221-223.

<sup>13</sup>Agustín Ramírez, "El combate de Tepatitlán: rectificación a Juan Rizo," David, VII, No. 178 (May 22, 1967), 163.

The federals entered Tepatitlán shortly after dawn on April 19th and within minutes were under fire from Vega's snipers, whom they set to work to dislodge. Then, around 7:00 A.M., a part of the Cristero force outside the town made its appearance. The federal commander, immediately aware that he was in bad trouble, ordered a fast withdrawal. As the federals moved along the Jalostitlán road Cristero cavalry struck them from both sides. By 11:00 scattered knots of panic-stricken agrarians and regulars were in disorganized flight. The pursuit had to be abandoned when Cristero ammunition began to give out.<sup>14</sup> Rebel reports said 225 of the enemy were killed.<sup>15</sup>

Cristero jubilation was clouded by a serious loss. More than a hundred government troops, cut off in the retreat, had barricaded themselves in a small rancho at the edge of town. While reconnoitering the situation, Father Vega was shot; he died a few hours later, after making a general confession to the parish priest. The movement had lost a remarkable leader, a priest turned soldier who, if the Cristeros had won, might have joined the national pantheon alongside Hidalgo and Morelos. Heriberto Navarrete wrote years later of Vega that he possessed a great spirit of faith and a strong love of God; "No matter how great his faults, it is certain that no one can doubt the rectitude of his intentions in the undertaking he carried out."<sup>16</sup>

Tepatitlán, like so many others, was a Cristero victory that did not long remain a victory. Three days later Cedillo attacked the town with heavy reinforcements, rescuing his cut-off troops, who had held on grimly.

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., Navarrete, p. 227.

<sup>15</sup>Ramírez, p. 163.

<sup>16</sup>Navarrete, p. 230; El Universal, April 27, 1929, p. 5.

The Cristeros, out of ammunition and without the leadership of Father Vega, had to evacuate.<sup>17</sup>

Cedillo's campaign was something the Cristeros had not faced before. Himself a veteran of the revolutionary struggles since 1910, Cedillo knew the ways of the guerrilla, and also understood far better than most military men the strengths and weaknesses of the ranchero. He took great pains to assure both the armed enemy and the civilian populace that he bore no animosity, that he was only doing his duty as a military man, and that he believed in the possibility of a peaceful settlement of the religious question.<sup>18</sup> He ended the "reconcentration" in Los Altos, sternly restrained his troops from molesting non-combatants, and stopped the execution of captured Cristeros.<sup>19</sup> His efforts to encourage surrender by offering generous amnesties were at least partly successful--capitulations of small groups were reported beginning in late April.<sup>20</sup>

Militarily, Cedillo's tactics were designed to counter the great Cristero strategem of atomizing into small bands when confronted by large enemy contingents. Cedillo mirrored this tactic: He would divide his troops into units of 100 or less, which would move out simultaneously, in constant communication with each other, to comb a sector ranchito by ranchito. If one unit made contact with Cristeros, reinforcements could be on the

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<sup>17</sup>El Universal, April 27, 1929, pp. 1, 5. As usual, there was a wide variance between Cristero and government reports of the numbers engaged and the losses. The federal command said it lost thirty-seven dead and forty wounded in the three days of fighting. It said that the Cristero force numbered at least 1,500 and comprised the entire rebel army in the state. Actually, Pedroza and most of the Brigade were not even in the region.

<sup>18</sup>Navarrete, p. 234.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 236; El Universal, April 16, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup>See for example El Universal, April 24, 1929, p. 7; April 26, p. 10.

scene in a matter of minutes. Federal troops were everywhere--not only in the populated areas but in the remote regions the Cristeros had held for nearly three years. The Cristero leadership ordered many units to disperse into minuscule bands but to be ready to reassemble when the pressure slackened. Gorostieta's strategy was to hold on; he directed that if necessary arms were to be buried and the horses released into the hills. Navarrete recalled that it was the hardest time the Cristeros ever faced, but that they never doubted they could ride out the storm. They were certain, he said, that the government could not sustain the effort indefinitely, costly as it was in men and money.<sup>21</sup> For the time being, though, the pressure was maintained and even increased. On May 2nd, with Escobar totally crushed, Calles announced that he was mobilizing 15,000 troops to send to Nayarit, Colima, Jalisco, Michoacán, Zacatecas, and Durango to add to Cedillo's already formidable force.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the onslaught, the Cristeros remained very much alive. General Amaro in late April reported to a visitor in Guadalajara that fifty rebels had just destroyed an entire regiment, that all Jalisco was under arms, and that rebel resistance was growing; he said to tell Portes Gil that it was vital to work out some kind of settlement.<sup>23</sup> Lack of ammunition remained the grave problem for the Cristeros that it had always been, although ingenuity was doing something to relieve it. The chief of the 2nd Cristero military zone in Michoacán reported to the Special Committee the first week of May that his troops were manufacturing cartridges sufficient

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<sup>21</sup>Navarrete, pp. 236, 237.

<sup>22</sup>El Universal, May 4, 1929, pp. 1, 8.

<sup>23</sup>Velázquez López, pp. 197, 198.

to meet at least minimum needs. He added that they had even made a small cannon which they had christened the "Toral."<sup>24</sup>

Gorostieta reported to the League late in May that the Guardia Nacional had 20,000 men under arms. They were, he said, limited to guerilla operations because of lack of ammunition. He described his soldiers as "men of order, of a morality such as has not existed nor will . . . in Mexico; [troops] which I doubt can be bettered in any other country. . . ." He said there were over 2,000 civil officials in office and functioning in areas controlled by the Guardia, and more than 300 schools. The tyranny, he believed--even with continuing U.S. aid--would not last more than a year or two.<sup>25</sup>

On May 1st Portes Gil answered a question put to him by a foreign correspondent in Mexico City. It concerned his views on the relationship of the religious conflict to the Escobar rebellion. The President said he did not think the Catholic Church as an institution had been implicated in the Escobar matter. He went on to say that in certain parts of Jalisco, Michoacán, and Guanajuato there were Catholics under arms who "forgetting their Christian morality, dedicate themselves to acts of absolute banditry on the pretext of defending the doctrine of their Church," but that "in contrast with that attitude there are other worthy representatives of

<sup>24</sup> José González Romo to Chief of Special Committee, May 5, 1929, LA-1.

<sup>25</sup> Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra, "Gorostieta," David, II, No. 39 (October 22, 1955), 236, 237. A G-2 report from the U.S. military attaché in Mexico City estimated that in May there were 8,000 to 8,200 armed Cristeros in Jalisco, Michoacán, Colima, and Guanajuato. It gave no estimates of Cristero strength in Zacatecas, Durango, Nayarit, and other areas of rebel activity. See Lt. Colonel Gordon Johnson, "Mexico Political: Stability of Government: Armed Revolutionary Movement: The Religious Movement," undated, stamped received by G-2 May 15, 1929, and by War Department May 16; copy in DSR 812.404/1009. Portes Gil (Autobiografía, p. 574) said over 14,000 Cristeros laid down their arms after the settlement in June.

Catholicism who counsel respect for law and authority." He said the government's position on the religious question would not change; "no religion will be persecuted nor is the government guilty of persecuting any sect.

Liberty of conscience will be respected as heretofore. The Catholic Clergy, when they wish, may renew the exercise of their rites with only one obligation: that they respect the laws of the land. . . ."<sup>26</sup>

In Washington the next day, a few hours after news of Portes Gil's press conference appeared in the papers, Ruiz y Flores issued a statement answering the Mexican President. Although the press did not know it, he did so at the direction of the Apostolic Delegation.<sup>27</sup> The tone was highly conciliatory:

The religious conflict in Mexico arises from no cause which cannot be corrected by men of sincere good will. As an evidence of good will, the words of President Portes Gil are most important. The Church and her ministers are prepared to cooperate with him in every just and moral effort made for the improvement of the people.

Not able in conscience to accept laws that are enforced in my country, the Catholic Church in Mexico, not willfully, but as a solemn duty, has found it necessary to completely suspend all acts of public worship.

With sincere respect, I ask the Government of my country to reconsider existing legislation in a spirit of sincere patriotism and good will, to the end that steps be taken to remove the confusion between religion and politics and prepare the way for an era of true peace and tranquility.<sup>28</sup>

The Archbishop went on to say that "should there arise any seemingly insurmountable difficulty to prevent this action, the logical solution would be found in the submission of disputed points to specially authorized representatives of the Church and of the Government. . . ." The Church, he added,

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<sup>26</sup>New York Times, May 2, 1929, p. 6. The statement was not reported in the Mexican press until May 3rd, and then under a New York May 2 date-line. Excelsior, May 3, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup>Ruiz y Flores, p. 93.

<sup>28</sup>New York Times, May 3, 1929, p. 2.

asked no privileges, but only that on a basis of "friendly separation" from the state, she be allowed the freedom that was indispensable for the welfare and happiness of the nation. He prayed that God might speed the day when Mexicans would work as one to make effective the three guarantees of unity, religion, and patriotism. Catholics, he said, would accept sincerely whatever arrangement might be reached between the Church and the government.<sup>29</sup>

\* The exchange amounted to an opening that was far wider than a crack. Portes Gil's words, it was true, held out no promise of a change in the Constitution or laws, but his absolving of the Church from any blame for the Escobar revolt and his praise of the moderate Catholic position seemed to be a calculated gesture of good will that merited something in return. Ruiz y Flores's reply was not only a quick acknowledgement of the apparent peace signal but a careful statement of a fundamental change in policy. The removal or reform of the objectionable laws was not demanded; suspension of worship, Ruiz said, had been decreed because of "laws that are enforced"; the government was asked to "reconsider existing legislation in a spirit of sincere patriotism"--which could refer to application of the laws, not necessarily their repeal; and any "seemingly insurmountable difficulties to prevent this action" (i.e., the reconsideration of the laws and the putting an end to "confusion between religion and politics") could be worked out by negotiation--in effect an offer to talk without specific previous conditions. The two statements were in fact a reiteration of the spirit and even much of the detail of the positions reached by Calles and

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. The text appeared in the Mexico City press simultaneously with the report of Portes Gil's statement. See El Universal, May 3, 1929, p. 1.



Burke over a year before.<sup>30</sup>

Morrow was determined to keep things rolling. He suggested to Portes Gil that he issue a public acknowledgement of the Archbishop's statement indicating his satisfaction with it; he gave the President a draft he might wish to consider using for the purpose. The presidential reply appeared on the 7th. With only two minor changes it was identical to the statement Morrow had proposed.<sup>31</sup> It made headlines in the Mexican press: Portes Gil said he had read the Archbishop's May 2nd statement with interest; he was pleased at the comments that men of good will could correct the problem and that the Church and clergy were prepared to cooperate with the government for the wellbeing of the Mexican people; such cooperation, he said, was exactly what the Mexican government had always wanted. Newsmen asked the President to comment on Ruiz y Flores's statement that difficulties might be submitted to authorized representatives of the Church and government. Portes Gil said he supposed this referred to situations in countries which had diplomatic relations with the Vatican; Mexico did not--but, he added, this did not prevent the government from "exchanging impressions with ministers of the Catholic Church or in a personal way holding talks

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<sup>30</sup>There is no conclusive evidence available that Morrow arranged the exchange, but this is entirely possible. Ruiz later said he suspected Morrow had suggested Portes Gil's statement (Ruiz, Recuerdo, p. 93), but the Archbishop said nothing about how his reply originated. The State Department may have known of the text of the latter in advance, but it did not know exactly what authority it carried: on May 9th, in reply to a question from Clark, Montavon said the statement had been authorized by the Apostolic Delegation and thus could be considered official. It is highly unlikely that Ruiz's reply, which appeared only a few hours after Portes Gil's became public, could have been drafted and approved in so short a time. Fumasoni-Biondi was in Rome, and the chargé, Morela, would hardly have assumed such authority himself. See Memorandum of Conversation with Mr. William F. Montavon, May 9, 1929, DSR 812.404/974 5/17.

<sup>31</sup>Rublee Memorandum, cited in Rice, p. 177.

with dignitaries of the Church concerning the scope and interpretation of laws applicable to the clergy." He recalled that Ruiz, who he understood was the dean of the Mexican Hierarchy, had had an interview with Calles nearly three years ago (the August 1926 meeting) which unfortunately, and due to no fault of Calles, produced no results. If the Archbishop now wanted to discuss ways of achieving cooperation in efforts to help the Mexican people, he would have no objection to dealing with him on the matter.<sup>32</sup>

Three new faces had joined the peace party. On April 23rd Morrow was visited by Manuel Echevarría, a Mexican banker who was acquainted with the Legorreta brothers. Echevarría said he was in agreement with the Ambassador's approach to settling the religious controversy and that in fact he had been trying to negotiate on the same bases between the President and the Mexican bishops.<sup>33</sup> Another interested peacemaker appeared the first week of May. He was Father Edmund A. Walsh, S.J., director of the School of Foreign Service and vice president of Georgetown University. Father Walsh had fulfilled several delicate missions for the Vatican, including supervision of relief work in Russia at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution.<sup>34</sup> Now the Holy See had sent him to Mexico to investigate and report on the status of the religious problem. He called on Morrow May 4th to inform him of his mission, which he said was not known to Father Burke or even to Pascual Díaz. The Holy See, he told the Ambassador, was very anxious to settle the conflict but was quite confused regarding the facts

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<sup>32</sup>El Universal, May 8, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup>Rublee Memorandum, cited in Rice, p. 174. Echevarría knew Portes Gil and was also on close terms with Church leaders; Fumasoni-Biondi had enlisted his help to try to combat the growing hostility of Mexican Catholics toward Morrow. Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Excelsior, June 22, 1929, p. 2.

of the situation. He had no authority to negotiate a settlement; he expected to stay about a month and then make a full report to Rome. He added that he would be in touch with some of the more uncompromising members of the Episcopate in Mexico. Echevarría told Morrow about Walsh the day before the priest went to the Embassy, and said he had suggested Father Walsh's mission to the Pope.<sup>35</sup> The third addition was Miguel Cruchaga Tocornal, a Chilean diplomat who had served on claims commissions charged with adjusting differences between Mexico and Germany and between Mexico and Spain. After several months in Washington, he arrived in Mexico City May 2nd.<sup>36</sup> The next day he called on Morrow, whom he told that he had spoken personally and at length with the Pope about the religious question.<sup>37</sup>

On May 8th, the day after Portes Gil's second statement appeared, Father Walsh dined with Morrow. He said the bishops were very pleased with what the President had said; he reported that De la Mora of San Luis Potosí, who had been in the intransigent camp, was coming around. He also told Morrow that both he and Echevarría had cabled Rome and that the latter had recommended that Walsh be authorized to proceed to make a settlement.<sup>38</sup> Walsh was also associated with Cruchaga; Morrow reported to Clark that Father Walsh was working with the Chilean in attempting to reach an adjustment, and added that while he (Morrow) did not care who effected a solution so long as one were reached, he would like to know if Walsh had the authority. Clark asked Montavon, who replied that he was certain Father Walsh

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<sup>35</sup> Morrow to Clark, May 6, 1929, DSR 812.404/974 8/17.

<sup>36</sup> Excelsior, May 3, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Rublee Memorandum, cited in Rice, p. 176.

<sup>38</sup> Memorandum to Montavon, in Morrow to Clark, May 10, 1929, DSR 812.404/974 8/17.

did not have authority from the Holy See to handle negotiations.<sup>39</sup>

Montavon told Clark and Lane that he thought the next step was to get permission from Portes Gil for Ruiz y Flores to visit Mexico. He said that Monsignor Morela had sent to Rome by mail a report of Portes Gil's May 7th remarks. It had not been cabled, he said, because the Delegation did not have sufficient funds. Clark said that as soon as the text of the statement arrived from Morrow he would be willing to have it cabled to the U.S. Embassy in Rome for transmission there to whomever Montavon designated; he added that Montavon should have Monsignor Morela send a short telegram to Rome urging immediate action. No time should be lost, he said, because a delay would cost lives in view of the government offensive being waged against the rebels. It would be unfortunate, he concluded, to prejudice chances for a settlement because of a matter of twenty or thirty dollars.<sup>40</sup> The text arrived from Mexico City a few hours later and the next day Clark informed Morrow that it had been relayed to Rome. He said a telegram had also been sent by "parties here" asking authority for Ruiz y Flores to proceed to Mexico, in conformity with Portes Gil's

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<sup>39</sup>Memorandum of Conversation with Mr. William F. Montavon (Lane), May 9, 1929, DSR 812.404/974 5/17. Evidently Morrow telephoned word to the Department of his dinner with Walsh along with a request for information regarding the priest's status; Montavon was called to the State Department on the 9th, but Morrow's written request on Walsh was not sent until the 10th.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

expressed willingness to talk with the Archbishop.<sup>41</sup>

Uneasy over the possibility of a delay--or worse--in Rome, Morrow tried to make sure things did not bog down. On the 11th he wired Ruiz y Flores (via the State Department) proposing two possible responses to Portes Gil's latest statement: the Archbishop could accept it as an invitation to come to Mexico, or start negotiations by writing directly to the President. He thought the second course might be best if Ruiz could get the necessary authority. He enclosed a draft letter that Ruiz might consider using. It expressed satisfaction at the President's words, affirmed the desire of the bishops to work for the good of the nation, and asked that the Church be assured of freedom "within the law" to exist and to carry out its spiritual mission. Such an assurance would be deemed to have been given if the President could state:

1. That it is not the purpose of the Government to destroy the identity of the Church;
2. That the provision which required the registration of priests does not contemplate that the Government would register a priest who has not been named by the Bishop of his Diocese;
3. That the laws, while requiring secular instruction in the schools, do not prohibit the giving of purely religious instruction in a suitable part of any church;
4. That in order to avoid unreasonable application of the laws, the Government would be willing to confer from time to time with the authorized head of the Church in Mexico;

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<sup>41</sup>Clark to Morrow, May 10, 1929, DSR 812.404/973. Ruiz says in his memoirs (Recuerdo, p. 93) that when he learned of Portes Gil's statement that he was willing to receive him, he wrote the President that he had no authority to deal, because such a matter required papal intervention. He said that when the Pope learned of Portes Gil's words he asked that the texts of the statements that had been made by both the President and the Archbishop be cabled to the Holy See. This would mean that the Vatican was in the dark on what had transpired before. It is possible that Ruiz did not know exactly who authorized the statement he issued on May 2nd. Not explained is Morela's reluctance to cable the texts, although possibly Rome's request did not arrive until after May 9th. It should be noted that Ruiz wrote his memoirs long after the events of 1929 and that they contain several inaccuracies.

5. That nothing in the Constitution or laws and no policy of the Government denies to the clergy the right to apply to appropriate constitutional authorities for modification of the laws and that in your [Portes Gil's] opinion such application on their part should receive such impartial consideration as the reasons offered in support might deserve.

The letter concluded by saying that if Portes Gil could make such a declaration, Ruiz y Flores was authorized to state that the clergy could at once resume their functions. Morrow went on to note that the second point was more specifically put than it had been in previous exchanges, and that the third and fifth points should please the more intransigent minded (the third point, he recalled, had been discussed before). He said that if he could be sure Ruiz had Rome's approval to submit the letter, he would find out in advance whether Portes Gil would accept it.<sup>42</sup>

Agustín Legorreta seconded Morrow the same day, urging Ruiz to follow the Ambassador's suggestion and to contact Rome. Four days later he learned from his brother in New York that Ruiz agreed. Legorreta cabled Rome supporting the plan and offering his full cooperation. Gasparri answered him through the Vatican's diplomatic mission in Paris: "Bishop who has the confidence of the Holy See has received instructions. Please tell Father Walsh to cooperate with Msgr. Ruiz and thus assist the action eventually taken by the Holy See."<sup>43</sup>

The conciliators among the bishops spoke out during the second week of May. On the 8th, Francisco Banegas Galván of Querétaro addressed a pastoral letter to his diocese. He asked his flock to remain in "peace, tranquility and order" during the current solemn moments in the life of

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<sup>42</sup>Ruble Memorial, cited in Rice, pp. 179, 180.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

the country and to implore God to "calm passions, illuminate understanding, and move wills in order that the peace we so much long for may reign in our nation." The press reported on the 12th that men and women "of the best society" were distributing the letter widely in Querétaro.<sup>44</sup> Morrow forwarded a copy of it to Washington. He reported that Echevarría had told him that Anaya of Oaxaca and Maximiliano Ruiz, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Mexico, were known to be opposed to the League's activities.<sup>45</sup> On the 14th La Prensa reported that a pastoral letter from Archbishop Vera y Zuria of Puebla, written from exile in the United States, was in circulation; the letter expressed hope for a rapid solution of the religious conflict and advised the faithful to use peaceful means as the best way of arriving at an accord between the Church and the government.<sup>46</sup> The pacific minded were also represented in Rome; Guízar Valencia of Chihuahua arrived May 11th. The press noted that he had maintained a conciliatory position throughout and had been the first to register his whereabouts in March and to protest against the attempt on the President's life.<sup>47</sup>

✕✕ Reports of the new moves toward negotiations between the Hierarchy and the government, with indications that something substantial might come from them, again brought to the fore the question of the nature of the conflict. From the first, the League had insisted on having a voice in

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<sup>44</sup> El Universal, May 12, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> Morrow to Clark, May 8, 1929, DSR 812.404/974 3/17.

<sup>46</sup> La Prensa (Mexico, D.F.), May 14, 1929, p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> El Universal, May 17, 1929, p. 1. Manuel Echevarría thought the Archbishop could do much to promote the conciliatory point of view in Rome, and offered to pay his expenses for the trip. Guízar Valencia left for Europe soon afterward--whether financed by Echevarría is not certain. Rublee Memorandum, cited in Rice, pp. 174, 175.

any settlement, on grounds that the conflict had a civic dimension which, although admittedly stemming in large part from religion, involved matters beyond the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical authority. The claim was now asserted more strongly than ever before--not by the Directive Committee but by the generalissimo of the Guardia Nacional, Enrique Gorostieta.

He addressed a letter to the Directors on May 16th. Its tone was measured but menacing. Since the start of the conflict, Gorostieta said, there had been periodic reports that a settlement might be negotiated by some representative of the Episcopate. Each time such reports appeared they had caused demoralization among those fighting; each time, the commanders in the field had seen a halt in the growth of the movement and had had to labor to counter it. Now, with the Escobar revolt suppressed, at a time of fear for the future, when the Guardia Nacional needed the support of those in authority and especially those wielding spiritual authority, there were rumors of possible talks between Portes Gil and Archbishop Ruiz y Flores and of an attempt to solve the conflict on the basis of the President's "ambiguous, hypocritical, and stupid statements." Gorostieta said he did not know what truth there was to the rumors, but he wanted to speak out very explicitly for the Guardia:

We who are fighting in the field believe that the bishops, upon entering into talks with the Government, must take a stand either approving or disapproving the position taken by at least four million Mexicans, a position which has produced the Guardia Nacional, which now numbers over 20,000 armed men. . . .

We believe also that the Government, by dealing with them (the bishops) does so in the belief that their voices are capable of ending this contest, of causing the Guardia Nacional, which now constitutes a serious threat to its security, to hand over its arms. . . .

If the bishops, when they sit down to negotiate with the Government, approve the Guardia Nacional's stand, if they agree that it was the only worthy one left to us by the despot, then they will have to consult our opinion and heed our demands. . . .



If the bishops, when they treat with the Government, disapprove our position, if they do not take the Guardia Nacional into consideration, and try to bring about a solution of the conflict independently . . . and without listening to the clamor of the huge multitude which has all its interests and ideals at stake in the struggle; if our dead are forgotten, if out thousands of widows and orphans are not considered, then we shall raise our voices in anger, and in a new message to the civilized world we shall reject such a position as unworthy and traitorous. . . I will personally levy charges against those who now appear as possible mediators.

There were many reasons, Gorostieta continued, why the Guardia and not the bishops should settle the conflict. It was not purely a religious problem; it was a broad and integral matter of freedom, and the Guardia had constituted itself the defender of all freedoms and the genuine representative of the people. The bishops, on the other hand, "for whatever reasons," had been out of the country for two years, out of touch, and ignorant of the changes wrought by the conflict. They were not in a position to speak for the people. The Guardia was the true voice of the people and would in the future protect their interests. It was the Guardia that was compelling the government to seek a solution. If the bishops from the beginning had counseled a stand worthy of Christians, "if there had not occurred the fatal discrepancies of Querétaro and Tabasco [Bañegas Galván and Pascual Díaz], which have hindered united and forceful action, perhaps by now the people would have punished their tormentors and there would have emerged a free and sovereign nation." The overriding problem, he said, had been and still was to overcome the damage the bishops' actions had done to the spirit of the people. The Cristeros would have abundant men and arms if every diocese in Mexico, instead of five states, had rallied to the cause. The tyrant would have fallen perhaps at one first blow if "for the first and only time in the history of our national tortures, the Princes of our Church had agreed only to declare: 'Defense is licit and in this case obligatory.'" There was still time for the Hierarchy to rise to the

occasion. The men in arms did not request, they demanded, that the solution of the problem be left in their hands; that the people themselves be allowed to finish their work of liberation. The Guardia Nacional and the people, moreover, had a right to be heard if for no other reason than that they were a "constituent part" of the Catholic Church in Mexico. Gorostieta asked the Directive Committee to transmit his letter to the Episcopal Committee and if possible to higher ecclesiastical authority. The Guardia Nacional would do its duty in the trials of the coming months, he said, "but I ask that no one demand of it that it go beyond duty."<sup>48</sup>

The government offensive struck the Colima Cristeros in May. By the middle of the month some 5,000 federal troops had poured into Colima City by train, and military aircraft were arriving at the city airfield. Commanded by Eulogio Ortiz, magnificently armed and mounted, the soldiers were veterans fresh from the successful campaign against Escobar.<sup>49</sup> Ortiz let it be known that he meant business. His first step was to call a meeting, attendance required, of the state's leading hacendados, cattlemen, merchants, and industrialists. He addressed the gathering with brutal directness, his remarks peppered with barracks prose not meant to soothe the ear. He blamed his listeners for the chaotic situation in Colima; if the Cristeros had multiplied and thrived it was their fault because, he said, they were abetting the rebels; he would level the very hills if necessary to put an end to it all, and if the rebels rose again he would return and liquidate not only the rebels but the hacendados, cattlemen, merchants, and industrialists.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Gorostieta to Directive Committee, May 16, 1929, LA-1.

<sup>49</sup> Spectator, II, 189, 190.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

But first, in keeping with the new policy, Ortiz tried persuasion-- in a novel form. During the campaign in Sonora his troops had captured a priest, Father J. Andrés Lara, whom they took south on the move to Colima. Ortiz now asked the priest to persuade the Cristeros to lay down their arms. Father Lara refused, but finally agreed, in exchange for his freedom, to go to the rebels and inform them of the strength Ortiz was about to hurl at them unless they surrendered. Father Lara arrived at the Cristero headquarters in the Cerro Grande, a day's ride from the capital, on May 25th.<sup>51</sup> The Cristeros not only refused to believe he was a priest; they thought he was a government spy and were on the point of shooting him when a chaplain, after talking with him, decided he was a priest at any rate. Lara told the leaders of Ortiz's power, but this had no effect on the rebel determination to keep fighting.<sup>52</sup>

Despite his reception, Lara later described the Cerro Grande Cristeros in highly laudatory terms. Whole families were there--many of them people whose homes had been destroyed by federal troops or agrarians. Morale, Lara reported, was excellent; good humor was evident everywhere. When possible, the rosary was recited daily en masse, and both civilians and fighting men were models of decency in their speech and conduct. Most of the soldiers, the priest related, were young men and boys, robust and with weathered complexions; some were from well-to-do families in Colima and Guadalajara.<sup>53</sup>

With Father Lara's mission obviously a failure, Ortiz attacked; after a highly ineffectual aerial bombardment he moved on the Cerro Grande the

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid.; J. Andrés Lara, S.J., Prisionero de callistas y cristeros (2d ed.; Mexico, D.F., 1957), p. 74.

<sup>52</sup>Spectator, II, 191-193.

<sup>53</sup>Lara, pp. 93, 94.

28th. Lara described the defense: the Cristeros, who knew the terrain, would take up positions behind boulders, and when the federals were within almost point blank range, open with a volley that all but obliterated the first wave; if the attack was pressed they would withdraw to another rocky defense line and repeat the process, usually abandoning the field only after their ammunition ran out.<sup>54</sup> Resistance was determined, but by the 30th organized defense had become futile and the leaders ordered the units to abandon the encampments, disperse in small groups, and move toward Coquimatlán. The federals had gained ground, at a high price in lives, but had not ended the rebel potential.<sup>55</sup>

Ortiz next turned his attention to the Volcano, where hymn-singing Cristeros fought him to a standstill in a bloody clash at the encampment called El Borbollón on June 4th and 5th and forced the federals to withdraw to San José del Carmen across the Jalisco border. However, a reinforcement column from Colima City arrived on the scene late on the afternoon of the 5th, slipped into the rebel lines in a dense fog, and established a toehold in the main defense perimeter. Nine days later, a strong offensive drove the defenders from the headquarters camp, but the government forces did not attempt pursuit and the Cristeros withdrew in good order toward Tonila and San Jerónimo.<sup>56</sup> By the middle of June Ortiz's offensive had caused considerable havoc in the ranks of the Cristeros, who had been forced out of long-held positions and undergone much suffering in their flights to safety, but it had failed almost entirely to destroy or capture rebels or even to weaken noticeably their will to

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., pp. 95, 96: Spectator, II, 197-199.

<sup>55</sup>Spectator, II, 200.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., pp. 200-208.

hold on. Government units had taken severe punishment and Ortiz was in no mood to keep up the momentum, at least for the time being.<sup>57</sup>

In Jalisco, as May drew to a close, the dispersal and in some cases temporary disbanding of Cristero units was well advanced. Gorostieta was not particularly worried about the military situation; what concerned him were the reports that the Episcopate might conclude some kind of peace with the government, and the effect this might have on the fighting men. He was determined to fight on, he said, even if public worship were resumed. He stated this intention so often and so vigorously that members of his staff began to wonder whether the General was trying to convince himself; they also saw it as a sign that he was uncertain how many of his followers shared his determination. Gorostieta reasoned that the same qualities in the rank and file that had kept the movement alive could well be its downfall: The strong Catholicism of the men and of the supporting civilian population, which had sustained them through three years of warfare and privation, also included a deep spirit of respect for and obedience to the clergy. If ecclesiastical authority should announce that the religious conflict was over, would they continue the struggle? He also stated his conviction that if the Cristeros laid down their arms few if any of the leaders would escape death afterward.<sup>58</sup>

At any rate, there was little he could do in Jalisco, where for the moment it was simply a matter of riding out the storm. He decided to go to Michoacán to give personal attention to organizational matters there. On June 1st he was riding eastward toward Atotonilco, accompanied by his staff, the chief of operations for Michoacán, the civil chief for Los

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., pp. 208-211. Spectator (p. 209) says the federals had suffered over a thousand casualties.

<sup>58</sup>Navarrete, pp. 238-240.

Altos, and a few soldiers--seventeen men in all. The journey was both hazardous and unpleasant. Government troops were everywhere. It had rained almost without letup for days--a cold, driving rain--and the gum-like mud of the La Barca plain clung to the horses' hooves in large clods. The party was dull with cold and fatigue as it approached a friendly hacienda where it had planned to spend the night. But federal troops were spotted and there was no choice but to move onward. They stopped in a small woods around 2:00 A.M. for a few hours of sleep. At dawn they pressed on, after some discussion as to the safest route--Gorostieta finally insisted on taking the most direct one. Shortly before 10:00 A.M. they arrived at the El Valle Hacienda, where it was thought safe to halt for a few hours to eat and to rest the horses. After a breakfast of eggs, milk, and toast, Gorostieta lay down for a while--he suffered from conjunctivitis and his eyes pained him more than usual.

Suddenly a sentry on the roof shouted that federal cavalry were coming. Instantly, Gorostieta was on his feet calling for his horse. Other members of the staff were doing the same and grabbing their weapons while confusion reigned over whether to fight or flee. In the patio some of the men were already saddled; Gorostieta was hurrying to mount when the first federals burst through the gate. The General opened fire with his revolver while Navarrete and another officer galloped toward him to help. He waved them off, telling them to get to safety and to cover him as best they could--he would be right behind them. When Navarrete reined up some distance away he turned to see the house surrounded by troops. Gorostieta lay on the ground, one leg pinned under his dead horse; he seemed to be trying to get up. Just at that moment a group of the soldiers wheeled and headed after Navarrete and the officer with him. They managed to escape--the only ones who did. Gorostieta, they later learned, had succeeded in

reaching the house; but rather than surrender he tried to shoot his way out through the enemy, alone. He was shot down in seconds. The rest were captured, except for one man who had been killed by the first federals on the scene.<sup>59</sup>

Cedillo telegraphed word of Gorostieta's death to War Minister Amaro the next day. He said the body of the "so-called supreme chief of the fanatical rebellion" had been embalmed and was in Atotonilco, and asked for instructions. It might be advisable, he suggested, to send the corpse to Mexico City to be delivered to relatives, and so that the "so-called League for the Defense of Religious Liberty" would realize that its general-in-chief was dead. He added that the campaign was going very well and that he expected to have Los Altos entirely pacified by the middle of June. Amaro replied immediately; he extended congratulations from Portes Gil and directed that the body be sent to Mexico City to be turned over to the family.<sup>60</sup>

Gorostieta's death was a bad blow to the League Directors. In a letter to the Archbishop of Yucatán, in Havana, they asked that prelate's prayers for the soul of the fallen leader, whom they praised unstintingly:

The hero conducted himself with a selflessness and a valor which will forever do honor to his memory. He was one of the few career military men who had the courage to place himself at the side of the liberators; he organized and unified them. A great loss has been sustained. . . .

But, they added, "the 'Cristeros' are fighting for Christ the King, and Christ is immortal. The defense must continue until an honorable peace is achieved."<sup>61</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp. 242-254; Pedroza to Directive Committee, June 6, 1929, LA-1.

<sup>60</sup> Excelsior, June 4, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>61</sup> Directive Committee to Tritschler, LA-1. The date on the copy is May 30, 1929, but the section concerning Gorostieta is an addendum added after news of the death was received.

Other Catholics were less grief-stricken. On June 3rd the Embassy wired news of Gorostieta's death to the State Department. Lane phoned the N.C.W.C. to tell Montavon, and noted the latter's reaction in a memorandum: "Mr. Montavon said that it was probably just as well to have this matter disposed of before the meeting between President Portes Gil and Archbishop Ruiz."<sup>62</sup>

There had been dramatic developments in Washington, Rome, and Mexico City. Fumasoni-Biondi returned from Europe on May 13th. The next day, Ruiz y Flores sent identical telegrams to each member of the Mexican Episcopate both in the United States and Mexico: "[Acting on] higher orders I request you telegraph me whether in principle you vote acceptance [of] conferences [regarding a] settlement."<sup>63</sup> Apparently all the responses were positive, although a few were qualified. González Valencia said he was in favor provided the talks were official, that they were aimed at securing effective reform of the laws, and that the Holy See have the last word.<sup>64</sup> Excelsior reported on the 19th, quoting a Washington dispatch, that the replies had been 100% favorable and that Ruiz had so informed Rome and requested instructions.<sup>65</sup>

On May 17th Agustín Legorreta cabled the Holy See that (1) the government was favorable to an understanding (2) Morrow's cooperation would

<sup>62</sup>Morgan to SecState, June 3, 1929, DSR 812.404/988; Lane, memorandum, June 4, DSR 812.404/992 1/8.

<sup>63</sup>"Declaraciones del Excmo. y Revmo. Sr. Dr. y Maestro D. Manuel Aspetia y Palomar, Obispo de Tepic," May 26, 1929, LA-1.

<sup>64</sup>Barquín y Ruiz, José María González Valencia, pp. 91, 92. Orozco y Jiménez replied, "Absolutely." Francisco Orozco y Jiménez, "Memorandum del Excmo. Sr. Francisco Orozco y Jiménez, Arzobispo de Guadalajara, México," 1929, cited in David, VII, No. 155 (June, 1965), 169.

<sup>65</sup>Excelsior, May 19, 1929, p. 5.



be important in securing a satisfactory answer to a letter from Ruiz y Flores (3) he was satisfied that although some differences of opinion on the matter were unavoidable, for the first time all "prominent" Catholics earnestly desired an adjustment. He suggested that Ruiz be authorized to write a letter, or that negotiations begin before May 20th, because Morrow was scheduled to leave for the United States the 22nd. He advised minimum publicity on the entire matter.<sup>66</sup>

The suggestion that publicity be avoided was probably due in part to Legorreta's awareness that Portes Gil was treading on soft ground. The President was leery of possible charges of softness from the more extreme factions of the Revolutionary persuasion. On May 18th he thought it necessary to deny categorially that the Mexican Ambassador in Washington was in communication with representatives of the Episcopate.<sup>67</sup>

On the 22nd Father Burke, also back in Washington, phoned the State Department to say that Archbishop Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores had just been named apostolic delegate to Mexico. He said the news was confidential, although he did think Morrow should be told. Clark informed the Ambassador at once.<sup>68</sup> Morrow was just leaving Mexico City for the United States, to attend the wedding of his daughter Anne to Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh.<sup>69</sup>

Ruiz's appointment had been made ad referendum, that is, for the purpose of dealing with a matter at hand. Ruiz y Flores understood it to be a clear indication that the Pope had decided to move for a solution. He immediately informed Mexican Ambassador Téllez of his appointment and asked

<sup>66</sup> Morrow to Clark, May 20, 1929, DSR 812.404/979.

<sup>67</sup> El Universal, May 19, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>68</sup> Clark to Morrow, May 22, 1929, DSR 812.404/980a.

<sup>69</sup> El Universal, May 23, 1929, p. 1; May 28, p. 1.

that Portes Gil be told. He proposed that the talks take place in Washington, conducted by him and the Ambassador, in order to avoid notoriety in Mexico. Portes Gil replied, however, that he preferred the conference to be held in Mexico City.<sup>70</sup> Ruiz did not argue the point. He now addressed himself to the matter of whom to take with him to Mexico. He did not want to take a foreigner--and thus Father Burke was excluded.<sup>71</sup> After approaching two Mexican priests living in the United States, both of whom advanced reasons why they might not be suitable, he turned to Pascual Díaz, who was then in Louisiana preaching missions and supervising spiritual exercises. Díaz accepted.<sup>72</sup>

But a final meeting of minds remained very problematical. Ruiz told Morrow on the 28th during a chat at Father Burke's Washington residence that he knew the Pope was most anxious to have the laws changed and that in fact he believed Pius XI considered this to be the main issue at stake. Morrow replied that if a change in the laws was to be insisted upon he thought it would be useless for him to lend his own good offices.<sup>73</sup> The next day, Morrow commented to Téllez at the Mexican Embassy that he thought it would be a good thing if Montavon or Burke accompanied Ruiz to Mexico.<sup>74</sup> But the Americans were not invited, and Morrow evidently decided not to make an issue of it. Besides, he would be in Mexico City himself. He had

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<sup>70</sup>Ruiz y Flores, p. 94.

<sup>71</sup>Memorandum of Conversation with Mr. William F. Montavon, May 23, 1929, DSR 812.404/974 12/17.

<sup>72</sup>Ruiz y Flores, p. 94.

<sup>73</sup>Memorandum of Conversation between Ambassador Morrow and Archbishop Ruiz held at Fr. Burke's residence, May 28, 1929, DSR 812.404/974 14/17.

<sup>74</sup>Memorandum of Conversation between Ambassador Morrow and Ambassador Téllez held at the Mexican Embassy, May 29, 1929, DSR 812.404/974 15/17.

originally planned to spend at least a month in the United States but at Portes Gil's request he agreed to return to Mexico sooner, in view of the fast moving developments. Ruiz requested an appointment with Portes Gil through Morrow.<sup>75</sup>

The new Apostolic Delegate was keeping his own counsel, but he confided some of his thoughts in a letter to Antonio López Ortega of "V.I.T.A.-MEXICO" in Rome:

We do not believe that hostility toward the Government will accomplish what we desire, because it has been seen that the armed defense is not capable of overthrowing the Government, counting as it does on the full material and moral support of the American Government. . . . Moral hostility is likewise of no use, because it has been seen that it only exacerbates passions in both camps.<sup>76</sup>

He went on to say that the Church must abstain from both armed action and partisan political activity, "seeking independently of everything her freedom and her rights." The Pope, he continued, wanted an honorable settlement, and desired that everyone--bishops, priests, and faithful--help in this, "leaving to the citizens in arms the use of their rights." He told López that "if this flexibility on the part of the Pope produces the evils which you deplore, I believe that the evils which the Pope sees in the uncompromising stance are greater." The armed defense, the efforts in Europe and South America, and the passive resistance of priests and laity--all this, he believed, was not in vain, because it was obliging the government to seek a solution and would be a warning for the future.<sup>77</sup>

The Directive Committee of the League watched with considerable apprehension while the peace moves thrived. It feared the League would be ignored

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<sup>75</sup>Ruble Memorial, cited in Rice, p. 181.

<sup>76</sup>Ruiz y Flores to López Ortega, June 2, 1929, LA-1.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

in negotiations between the Hierarchy and the government, and started early to try to get a place at the conference table. Cenicerros y Villarreal cabled Pius XI on May 14th: "We humbly request in the name of our brothers committed to the struggle that they be heard and heeded in negotiating a settlement."<sup>78</sup> On May 30th the Committee wrote Tritschler that difficulties of communication had resulted in the League's real designs not being known to others; that some believed the Directors thought victory could be won only by overthrowing the government. That would certainly be desirable, they said,

. . . but the Directors are perfectly aware of the situation; they know that if it were not for the determined protection being given the tyrants be certain very powerful foreign forces, these tyrants would have passed into history long ago, but [the Directors] believe it unlikely that such protection will be removed or diminished; the protectors, Protestant sectarians, are keenly interested in seeing Mexico destroyed, [in seeing] the destruction of the Catholic Faith, the vital nerve of our country.<sup>79</sup>

The Directors believed, the letter continued, that even though the government might not be overthrown, it could be forced to change "through the heroic efforts being made by the heroes who are fighting to the cry of 'Viva Cristo Rey'. . . . we are not opposed to settlements and dealings; the only thing we want is 'to sell high, in cash, and make the buyer realize the great value of our merchandise.'" They agreed that further bloodshed should be avoided, but added that the struggle had not been fruitless. In the natural order it had shown that Mexico's Catholics were capable of sacrificing everything to save their faith and their traditions--that they were men. In the supernatural order, "we well understand that the noble blood which has been shed cannot but be acceptable to God. . . ." They asked the Archbishop to communicate their views to other prelates when possible,

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<sup>78</sup>Cenicerros y Villarreal to Pius XI, May 14, 1929, LA-1.

<sup>79</sup>Directive Committee to Tritschler, May 30, 1929, LA-1.

"because we are most anxious to have it known that we are not moved by a radicalism that would be prejudicial to the cause of the freedom of the Church."<sup>80</sup>

Gorostieta's body arrived in Mexico City on June 5th and was claimed by his sister, at whose home the vigil was kept.<sup>81</sup> Burial was two days later in the suburb of Atzacapotzalco. The rites were well attended, although they were not publicized in advance. Mourners prayed the rosary aloud during the procession to the cemetery and sang the national hymn as the casket, covered with a Mexican flag on which was lettered VIVA CRISTO REY, was lowered into the grave.<sup>82</sup> A poem written for the occasion was read by its author, Francisco de P. Morales:

. . .  
 In our sky, clouded and sad  
 With your death there has bloomed in the distance  
 A rainbow of light and hope.  
 If peace, by your death, is finally won,  
 Then like the Cid Campeador, dying you have conquered.<sup>83</sup>

Ruiz y Flores and Díaz left Washington by train the evening of June

<sup>80</sup>Ibid. Tritschler had written the Committee ten days before. He praised the League's heroism and the fighting men but said the time had come to end the conflict, not only for the good of the Church, "which can no longer remain in this critical situation," but to avoid further bloodshed. He hoped the League, which had made so many sacrifices for religious freedom, would now make another in order that freedom might be obtained "even if not perhaps to the degree and with the glorious circumstances to which you have so justly aspired." He reminded them that, often, "that which is best is the enemy of that which is good." Tritschler to Directive Committee, May 20, 1929, LA-1.

<sup>81</sup>Excelsior, June 6, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>82</sup>Ceniceros y Villarreal to Pedroza, June 12, 1929, LA-1. Cenicerros said the authorities tried to conceal the time of the services--how, he did not say.

<sup>83</sup>"A la muerte del Señor General D. Enrique Gorostieta y Velarde." LA-1.

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4th for St. Louis, on the first stage of their trip to Mexico City. Montavon had phoned the State Department that morning with a message from Father Burke saying that Ruiz had agreed not to demand a change in the laws, that in other words the Archbishop would proceed on the basis of the Veracruz negotiations.<sup>84</sup> Dwight Morrow was also en route back to Mexico. Reaching St. Louis the same time as Ruiz and Díaz, he had his private car switched to their train. Shortly after leaving the station he sent his secretary to invite the two prelates to his car--for the first of several conversations over the course of the next twenty-four hours. Morrow expressed an interest in knowing what terms the bishops would propose to Portes Gil.

Ruiz y Flores later recorded that they told Morrow, in sum, that their great wish was to see the anti-religious laws derogated and that if the government wanted some kind of settlement before this was done, the Pope would agree only on condition that the Church's right to live and function be recognized, that there be specific recognition of the Hierarchy and the freedom to possess property--rectories, episcopal residences, seminaries, and so forth--and that freedom of education be guaranteed.<sup>85</sup> However Ruiz may have stated it, Morrow understood the position to be flexible; he reported later that the prelates' attitude was reasonable and conciliatory and that they were in no way disposed to push unreasonable demands.<sup>86</sup>

In San Antonio Morrow's car was uncoupled and he remained behind while the two bishops continued on toward the border. At Nuevo Laredo they were passed through immigration and customs with no formalities required.<sup>87</sup> Inside

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<sup>84</sup>Memorandum of Conversation with Mr. William F. Montavon, June 4, 1929, DSR 812.404/992 1/8.

<sup>85</sup>Ruiz y Flores, p. 94; Rublee Memorandum, cited in Rice, p. 181.

<sup>86</sup>Rublee Memorandum, cited in Rice, p. 181.

<sup>87</sup>Ruiz y Flores, p. 95.

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Mexico, they traveled south in a Pullman car; railway employees carefully respected Ruiz's orders that the doors and windows be kept shut.<sup>88</sup> Ruiz had arranged with Agustín Legorreta that his brother Luis would have a house ready for them in Mexico City and meet them at the Tacuba station. Just out of Querétaro, however, a message was passed in from Cruchaga advising them not to get off at Tacuba, as news of their arrival plans had spread and a large crowd would probably be on hand. He said he would meet them at Lechería.<sup>89</sup> At 5:30 P.M. they descended quickly at the small station--not a regularly scheduled stop. To a few reporters, who had somehow learned of the change of plans, Ruiz said only that he was happy to be in Mexico again and that the government had been helpful in facilitating their journey. He said he would have no statement until after he saw the President. Then he and Díaz entered a waiting Lincoln for the drive into Mexico City.<sup>90</sup>

On June 8th the Directive Committee wrote De la Mora that they understood Ruiz y Flores was coming--that "the hour has arrived when, in order to lay the bases on which true religious peace in our country can be established, the Venerable Mexican Episcopate and especially His Holiness the Pope are assuming the direction and the supreme responsibility for this action, of such importance for the religious, social, and even political future of our nation." They said the League was suspending all civic activity,

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<sup>88</sup> Excelsior, June 9, 1929, pp. 1,4.

<sup>89</sup> Ruiz y Flores, p. 95.

<sup>90</sup> Excelsior, June 9, 1929, pp. 1,3,4. Nicolson (p. 345) says that Morrow housed the prelates secretly in the apartment of his naval attaché, but he confuses this visit with Ruiz's and Burke's May 1928 trip. In 1929 the bishops' residence and whereabouts were known to all, and the press reported daily on their activities.

including propaganda, in order not to be responsible for hampering the effort. The armed action, however, was not being suspended. The Directors noted that their position had changed since a year ago: Then, it was one bishop, or a few, who were proposing a settlement to the Pope; now the Pope himself was sending a representative to hear Portes Gil's proposals. They asked that special consideration be given the men under arms and said that, as the ones responsible for those men, they might contact Ruiz y Flores on the matter. They reminded De la Mora that in a conference they had had with him and other bishops in Mexico the prelates had assured them that this concern would not be separated from others, thereby making it appear that the fighters were being left to their own fate.<sup>91</sup> The same day, the Directors sent De la Mora Gorostieta's letter of May 16th. They told the Bishop that Degollado had sent it to them with the notation that he endorsed it completely and that they were forwarding it in keeping with the wishes of both men.<sup>92</sup> On the 10th the Directors again wrote De la Mora to say that they had agreed, in forwarding Gorostieta's letter, to "record that the Directive Committee of the League was not endorsing the ideas expressed in said document." They noted that they had failed to state this when they sent it; the Committee, they said, wished to remove the slightest suspicion that it had had any hand in the matter.<sup>93</sup> On the 12th, the Committee instructed all League officials and rank and file members throughout the country to refrain from any action that might interfere with the talks under way between Ruiz and the government; matters were now in Rome's hands.

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<sup>91</sup>Directive Committee to De la Mora, June 8, 1929, LA-1.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid. It is not known when the Committee received the missive, but apparently it was after Gorostieta's death.

<sup>93</sup>Directive Committee to De la Mora, June 10, 1929, LA-1.

All League activities should be directed rather toward strengthening the organization and educating the public in the principles of civic duty and its concrete application.<sup>94</sup>

The Guardia Nacional was exempted from the order, and continued the struggle under a new chief. On June 4th the Directive Committee appointed Jesús Degollado Guízar to the supreme command. Gorostieta would have approved. Before his death he had named Degollado his second in command and alternate.<sup>95</sup> The new leader accepted his promotion most reluctantly. In a circular message to commanding officers of the Guardia he said he had agreed to the appointment with the understanding that it be temporary, "because this post is beyond my capabilities."<sup>96</sup> Moreover, it was a great personal sacrifice. The police in Guadalajara were holding his wife, and he told the Directors he was afraid she would be the first victim of his new command.<sup>97</sup>

Degollado was under no illusions regarding the military situation. The Cristeros were in the most difficult position they had ever known. At the same time, the situation was not yet hopeless. Even the bulletins released by government sources were giving a mixed impression. On one hand, official statements almost daily spoke of rebels surrendering in growing numbers, of demoralization in their ranks, and of disintegrating resistance.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>94</sup>League bulletin, "Instrucciones que el Comité Directivo de la Liga da a sus Delegados Regionales, jefes locales, a sus agentes y socios de toda la República," June 12, 1929, printed handbill, LA-1.

<sup>95</sup>Directive Committee report to League Convention, August, 1929, LA-2; Cenicerros y Villarreal to Pedroza, June 12, 1929; Directive Committee to Degollado, June 4, 1929. LA-1.

<sup>96</sup>Degollado to chiefs, circular letter, June 5, 1929, LA-1.

<sup>97</sup>Cenicerros y Villarreal to Degollado, June 3, 1929; Degollado to Directive Committee, June 7, 1929. LA-1

<sup>98</sup>See for example Excelsior, June 7, 1929, p. 1; June 8, pp. 1, 3.

On the other, such optimistic reports were hedged and even contradicted by others equally authoritative. After troops of Lázaro Cárdenas's command captured the Cristero base of Coalcomán, Michoacán, the second week of June, military sources told the press that the campaign in Michoacán and Jalisco was considered to be at an end; then two day later came a report that Cárdenas had organized two columns and would launch a general offensive along the Jalisco-Michoacán border to deal with a rebel group that had moved from the former state to the latter to continue operations. Cárdenas said he felt certain the band would be completely destroyed within ten days at the most.<sup>99</sup> The next day, the papers said Cedillo had informed Portes Gil and Amaro that the immediate result of the spring offensive had been the disbanding of the rebels, that those who had not surrendered had fled in small groups, and that his task in the past week had been to prevent the groups from reassembling. He was confident that by keeping up the pressure and denying the rebels provisions, Los Altos and northern Guanajuato would be completely pacified--within two months.<sup>100</sup> On June 17th it was reported that the agrarians who had accompanied Cedillo from San Luis Potosí were being returned to their homes because their services were no longer needed in Los Altos, which was practically at peace; but the announcement added that the agrarians would be replaced by regular troops from Sonora and Sinaloa.<sup>101</sup>

Dwight Morrow arrived in the capital on Sunday the 9th and the stage for the negotiations was set. Ruiz y Flores and Díaz had taken up residence

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid., June 16, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., June 17, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., June 18, 1929, pp. 1, 6.

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in downtown Mexico City. Walsh and Cruchaga, staying at the home of the secretary of the Chilean Embassy, were given use of the Chilean cable and code facilities for purposes of communicating with Rome--this would be the channel used by Ruiz for contact with the Holy See. Morrow would receive his information from Montavon (through the State Department) and from Agustín Legorreta in New York.<sup>102</sup>

Father Walsh called on Morrow the evening of the 10th. He said the two bishops had no definite course in mind for the coming talks; a position would have to be worked out. He proceeded to deliver an intricate discourse on the legal provisions relating to religion, with ideas on modifying them. Morrow said it would be useless to approach Portes Gil from such an angle and to do so might cause a collapse of the whole effort. The next day, Walsh told the Ambassador that the bishops had talked with him and Cruchaga and had decided to go ahead on the basis of the Burke-Calles exchange; they would not hold out for any specifics, even the ones contained in Morrow's May 11th draft suggestion.<sup>103</sup>

At noon on the 12th Ruiz and Díaz met Portes Gil at Chapultepec Castle. The talk was held in the formal atmosphere of the Salón de Acuerdos, but the mood was friendly and relaxed.<sup>104</sup> It was agreed that each party would draft a statement; if these were mutually acceptable and were approved by the Holy See, they would be released to the public simultaneously. The President and the bishops decided to meet the next day to discuss the

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., June 11, 1929, p. 1. Rublee Memorandum, cited in Rice, pp. 181, 182.

<sup>103</sup>Rublee Memorandum, cited in Rice, p. 182. Morrow had seen Portes Gil early on the 10th--simply a courtesy call, according to the press. See Excelsior, June 11, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>104</sup>Rublee Memorandum, cited in Rice, p. 192; Excelsior, June 13, 1929, p. 1. Ruiz (Recuerdo, p. 95) said the meeting was arranged through Luis Legorreta.

statements. Morrow was not present, but he reported to Washington that he had kept in close touch with both sides. He said Father Walsh had been most helpful, that the bishops had "carried themselves with admirable discretion" since their arrival, and that chances of an agreement were good.<sup>105</sup>

The next day's meeting, however, was not auspicious. Portes Gil produced a statement--almost identical to Calles's 1928 letter to Burke--but the bishops did not present one. Moreover, the conversation turned to a discussion of the laws. After the meeting Walsh reported to Morrow that the prelates were discouraged; they had found Portes Gil's statement, his remarks on the laws, and even his attitude to be brusque and unbending.<sup>106</sup>

On the 15th Clark wired Morrow that Montavon had just reported that Catholic intransigents in Mexico were trying to sway Ruiz and break up the talks. Montavon had added that Fumasoni-Biondi was being asked--by whom he did not say--to get in touch with Ruiz to try to counter this. He went on to say that Ruiz y Flores's instructions from Rome were broad enough so that he did not have to insist on discussing laws, although the Archbishop personally felt that the section of Article 130 which denied juridical personality to churches should be rescinded.<sup>107</sup>

Morrow was already at work to keep things from backsliding. He decided the best tactic would be to have each side see and approve the other's statement before meeting again. He drafted statements for both and on the 15th personally presented them, first to Portes Gil and then to the bishops.

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<sup>105</sup>Morrow to SecState, June 13, 1929, DSR 812.404/997; Rublee Memorandum, cited in Rice, p. 182.

<sup>106</sup>Rublee Memorandum, cited in Rice, p. 183; Excelsior, June 14, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>107</sup>Clark to Morrow, June 15, 1929, DSR 812.404/998: Rublee Memorandum, cited in Rice, P. 183.

The texts contained the five points covered in his May 11th draft to the Archbishop.<sup>108</sup> Portes Gil did not immediately commit himself, but the bishops, Morrow reported later in the day, "expressed gratification," were communicating with Rome at once, and hoped for quick approval.<sup>109</sup> Ruiz dispatched the statements to Rome. They were accompanied by a request signed by himself, Walsh, and Cruchaga, that they be accepted immediately. Walsh reported this to Morrow on the 18th. Morrow was puzzled at the need to submit the matter to the Holy See; he believed Ruiz already had ample authority, although he admitted he might not understand precisely what the Archbishop's instructions were.<sup>110</sup>

With the negotiations in mid-course and with the press speculating daily that a settlement was imminent, criticism from unyielding factions on both sides of the conflict intensified. Portes Gil was growing more nervous at the reaction of the extreme Revolutionists. On the 14th he told reporters that his position in the matter had been one of strict compliance with the duties of his office and that "the resumption of worship in the Republic may be achieved whenever it is desired, whenever the dignitaries of the Catholic Church first submit to the mandates of the Constitution and the other existing laws."<sup>111</sup> He was under pressure. The Embassy forwarded to Washington the text of a telegram received by Excelsior

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<sup>108</sup>Morrow to SecState, June 15, 1929, DSR 812.404/1001; Rublee Memorandum, cited in Rice, p. 184.

<sup>109</sup>Morrow to SecState, June 15, 1929, DSR 812.404/1001. In his memoirs Ruiz says that Cruchaga and Walsh told Rome they favored acceptance, but does not say that he added his name to the telegram. He also says that Morrow brought the statements on the 18th (not the 15th). Ruiz y Flores, pp. 94-96.

<sup>110</sup>Rublee Memorandum, cited in Rice, pp. 184, 185.

<sup>111</sup>Excelsior, June 15, 1929, p. 1.



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and containing a statement reportedly sent to the President on June 14th by Adalberto Tejeda, formerly secretary of Gobernación and now governor of Veracruz. Excelsior, understandably, did not publish it, but a member of the paper's staff passed it to the U.S. Embassy. In it, Tejeda deplored reports of the imminent return of the "dismal Catholic clergy" who "continue to darken the future of the nation." He spoke of their "criminal rebellion" and told Portes Gil:

They want to return to the pulpit, to the confessional, to the schools. . . in order to resume their monstrous task of deforming the conscience and morality of the people. . . . The people do not need them; the country has acquired, during their absence and the suspension of worship, that high knowledge of the truth which the revolution has given, and hopes because of your record as a worthy Chief Executive of the nation and because of your clean revolutionary antecedents, that with the firmness which characterizes you and with the clear-headedness and patriotism which all recognize in you, you will not permit that the Laws of Reform and the Constitution be injured.<sup>112</sup>

The Embassy also reported that various labor unions were sending respectful but energetic messages urging Portes Gil not to surrender to the clergy, and that Masonic lodges were doing likewise.<sup>113</sup> The government denied outright that messages of any kind along such lines had been received.<sup>114</sup>

On the 12th the Directive Committee of the League sent Ruiz y Flores a copy of its instruction ordering League members to abstain from any acts that might interfere with the talks. The Archbishop replied the next day. He expressed his gratitude at their demonstration of respect and obedience; it was, he said, worthy of "an institution which has worked so zealously to defend the rights of the Church." He observed, however, that he could not endorse all the points contained in the statement; the third point specified

<sup>112</sup>Morgan to Clark, June 18, 1929, DSR 812.404/992 2/8.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid.

<sup>114</sup>Excelsior, June 20, 1929, p. 1.

that the armed action would continue, the fourth that the League would support it. Ruiz said that the Holy See's instructions regarding the relations of the Episcopate with the League, "instructions which you are aware of and the exact observance of which the Holy See has recommended to me," prevented him not only from approving those points but even from giving his views on them.<sup>115</sup>

Around the middle of June--the exact date is not known--a messenger was sent to Texas with telegrams to be dispatched to Rome. They were signed by leaders of the League, the Guardia Nacional, the ACJM, and other Catholic organizations. They asked the Pope not to compromise with the government, and to hear the views of those whose representatives had signed the messages. The telegrams never reached their destination; somehow, they ended up in the hands of the government.<sup>116</sup>

A plea for patience, however, came from Archbishop Francisco Orozco y Jiménez. In a pastoral letter to his war-torn archdiocese, issued from his place of hiding on June 12th, he told his people that whatever decision the Pope made must be accepted; the Pontiff knew the situation, had received the views of the Hierarchy, and was surrounded by eminent and prudent men.<sup>117</sup>

Morrow wired the State Department on the 17th that he expected to have Portes Gil's reaction to the proposed statements later that day--some of the delay, he explained, was due to the fact that the President had had to have the drafts translated into Spanish.<sup>118</sup> That afternoon, he spent over

<sup>115</sup>Ruiz y Flores to Cenicerros y Villarreal, June 13, 1929, LA-1.

<sup>116</sup>Oscar Vargas, "Algunos Rasgos del Lic. Cenicerros y Villarreal," David, II, No. 36 (July 22, 1955), 183, 184.

<sup>117</sup>Excelsior, June 20, 1929, pp. 1, 8.

<sup>118</sup>Morrow to SecState, June 17, 1929, DSR 812.404/1002.

two hours with Portes Gil; they discussed some changes the President wanted in the documents.<sup>119</sup> The next morning Morrow received word from Clark that, according to Montavon, Legorreta said the Holy See had already cabled approval to Ruiz and that the statements would be published at once.<sup>120</sup> At 3:00 P.M. Morrow wired Clark to inform Montavon that the Archbishop had not received the word from Rome. He added that Portes Gil had not given his final approval either--some changes were being worked on, although Morrow did not think they would be substantial. Rome's approval was vital, he said, and delays were dangerous.<sup>121</sup>

The 19th was a day of anxiety. In the morning Morrow wired Clark the final texts, which both parties had now approved. He had seen the bishops the evening before and they were "very much pleased." But he still did not think Rome's approval had arrived, and added that the delay was serious "because pressure is being brought on the President from opponents of any adjustment."<sup>122</sup> Shortly after noon he wired that it should be noted that Portes Gil's statement included all the five points in the May 11th draft, that only the format was different. The change, Morrow said, had been made "because of the desire of President Portes Gil to follow as closely as possible the wording that President Calles had used with Father Burke a year ago." This should be made known to Montavon, he said. He added that he understood Ruiz to say, when he saw him the day before, that he believed he had authority to settle if he could get the five points in question.

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<sup>119</sup>Rublee Memorandum, cited in Rice, p. 184.

<sup>120</sup>Clark to Morrow, June 18, 1929, DSR 812.404/1002.

<sup>121</sup>Morrow to Clark, June 18, 1929, DSR 812.404/1003.

<sup>122</sup>Morrow to Clark, June 19, 1929, DSR 812.404/1003.

Ruiz was still waiting for word from Rome, however.<sup>123</sup> Clark checked with Montavon, then wired back: Montavon said that on the 15th Legorreta told him the Holy See had not specifically approved the proposed statements then submitted, but had told Ruiz that if he approved them there was no objection. Therefore, Ruiz, according to Montavon, apparently had the authority to go ahead. He speculated that Ruiz was being persuaded by third parties to wait for further advice from Rome--which, if Legorreta was right, might not be forthcoming. Montavon said that Fumasoni-Biondi was also worried about the delay, and that it was hoped he would emphasize this in a cable to the Holy See today.<sup>124</sup>

Evening came, and still no message from Rome arrived. Morrow sent a note to Portes Gil saying that the bishops were "very much pleased with the present draft of papers" and expected to receive Vatican approval the next day. Morrow wanted to hedge against a delayed or even negative reply from the Holy See; in case everything collapsed at the last minute, the Vatican, not the principal negotiators, would bear the responsibility.<sup>125</sup>

The 20th saw Morrow briefly at the brink of despair. A cable arrived from Rome and Walsh carried a summary of it to the Ambassador:

1. The Holy Father is most anxious for a peaceful and laic solution
2. Full amnesty for Bishops, priests and faithful
3. Restoration of property--Churches, Bishops' and Priests' houses and Seminaries
4. Free relations between Vatican and Mexican Church

Only on these understandings you may close if you think proper before God.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>123</sup> Morrow to Clark, June 19, 1929, DSR 812.404/1005.

<sup>124</sup> Clark to Morrow, June 19, 1929, DSR 812.404/1003.

<sup>125</sup> Rublee Memorandum, cited in Rice, p. 185.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 186.

Morrow told Walsh that this altered matters materially. The second and third points had not been included in the statements. He said this might end the negotiations. Walsh left. He returned later to report that Ruiz was not worried. The Archbishop interpreted "laic" in the first point to mean that the settlement could be in accordance with Mexican laws. The amnesty matter meant that bishops and other clergy should be free to return to their ecclesiastical posts. The third point he interpreted to mean that the Church should try to secure the use of Church properties to the extent it could do so. The last point, which implied residence in Mexico of an apostolic delegate, was already assured. Morrow was relieved, but baffled--both by the Vatican message as reported by Walsh and by Ruiz's interpretation of it. However, he decided that, as he had suspected, Ruiz had had from the first enough authority to agree to the projected settlement.<sup>127</sup>

Jesús Degollado Guízar dispatched a telegram to Pius XI on June 21st. Its fate is unknown; but its content was eloquent and desperate:

Mexican Catholic people launched selves armed defense essential liberties prior permission and assurances moral support Episcopal Committee given in November '26. Guardia Nacional formed blessings Cristo Rey. 20,000 armed men compelling illegitimate Government to seek settlement. Essential liberties people such as life, interests, legitimate right of those engaged this struggle we see have not been considered. Mere announcement incomplete settlement Delegate critically weakening our defensive power. In grief we approach

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid. Ruiz's version of the content of the Vatican cable differed slightly from Walsh's; he said the Pope accepted the statements, but with the provision that three points must be stipulated: return of the churches, annexes, rectories, bishops' residences, and seminaries; that the government must respect the possession of these; and that amnesty be granted to those under arms who wished to surrender. Ruiz said these points were covered verbally in his final meeting with Portes Gil--he said nothing about his interpretation of them beforehand, as reported by Walsh to Morrow. Ruiz y Flores, p. 96.

Your Holiness humbly imploring words guide us present situation and not forget faithful sons.<sup>128</sup>

But Pius XI had reached a decision. Whether it was implemented entirely in accordance with his intentions or instructions remains a debatable point, but its spirit was fulfilled. He explained his rationale publicly three years later:

. . . although taught by sad experience not to trust such promises [those of the Mexican government], We had, nevertheless, to ask Ourselves if it would be advisable for the good of souls that the suspension of public worship continue. That suspension, although it had been an efficacious protest against the arbitrary works of the Government, nevertheless, if prolonged, could have caused serious harm, in the civil order as well as the religious. Most important, such suspension, according to most grave news reaching Us from various trustworthy sources, was doing serious damage to the faithful, who, deprived of spiritual aid necessary for the Christian life and often obliged to omit personal religious duties, were in danger of remaining first away from and then separated from the priesthood, and therefore from the very source of supernatural life. Moreover, the prolonged absence of almost all the bishops from their dioceses could not help but be the occasion of relaxations of ecclesiastical discipline, especially in times of such tribulation for the Mexican Church. . . . Therefore, when in the year 1929 the chief magistrate of Mexico stated publicly that the Government, with the application of the . . . laws, did not intend to destroy the "identity of the Church," nor to disregard the ecclesiastical hierarchy, We, considering only the salvation of souls, believed it opportune not to let pass that occasion, which appeared to offer a possibility of recognition of the rights of the hierarchy. Therefore, seeing a certain hope of ending great evils and, it appearing that the principal motives that had induced the Episcopate to suspend public worship were diminishing, We asked Ourselves if it were not the time to order the renewal of worship. By this, it was certainly not meant to accept the Mexican laws on worship, not to withdraw the protests made against those laws, and still less to cease struggling against them; it was a matter only, in view of the changed statements of the Government, of abandoning before it could be injurious to the faithful, one of the means of resistance, recurring, on the other hand, to others thought to be more opportune.<sup>129</sup>

By the evening of the 20th the settlement was all but complete. Ruiz y Flores requested a final slight change of wording, and Morrow went to

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<sup>128</sup> Degollado to Pius XI, June 21, 1929, LA-1.

<sup>129</sup> From the encyclical letter Acerba Animi, September 29, 1932, quoted in Blanco Gil, pp. 322, 323.

Portes Gil with it. They President had no objection.<sup>130</sup> The final products were nearly verbatim the drafts Morrow had given to Portes Gil and Ruiz on June 15th.<sup>131</sup>

The statement which was to appear over Portes Gil's signature said that the President had held talks with Ruiz y Flores and Díaz and that the talks had come about because of public statements made by the Archbishop on May 2nd and by the President on May 8th. It noted that the two prelates had told the President that the Mexican bishops felt that the Constitution and laws, especially the provisions requiring registration of clergymen and allowing the states the right to set the number of clergymen that could function, threatened the Church's identity by giving the state control over spiritual matters. Ruiz and Díaz had assured the President that the bishops were motivated by sincere patriotism and that they wished to resume public worship if the Church could enjoy "freedom, within the law, to live and to exercise its spiritual offices." The President wished to take the opportunity to declare publicly, the statement continued, that "it is not the intention of the Constitution, nor of the laws, nor of the Government of the Republic, to destroy the identity of the Catholic Church or any other, nor to intervene in any way in its spiritual functions"; that in fulfilling his oath of office his purpose had been to "insure that the laws be applied without intolerance and without any bias whatever," and that his administration was disposed to hear complaints from anyone, whether a Church dignitary or a private individual, regarding unjust application of the laws. With respect to certain legal provisions which had been misunderstood, he wished to state that the requirement for registration

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<sup>130</sup> Morrow to Clark, June 21, 1929, DSR 812.404/1006.

<sup>131</sup> For texts of the two statements as finally agreed to see Appendix; the drafts submitted by Morrow on June 15th are in Morrow to Clark, June 17, 1929, DSR 812.404/1002.



of clergymen did not mean that the government could register ministers of religion who had not been named by ecclesiastical authority; that while the laws prohibited religious instruction in primary and higher schools, whether public or private, this did not prevent clergymen from teaching religion within the confines of the churches; and that the Constitution and laws guaranteed to every Mexican and therefore to members of any Church the right to "appeal to the proper authorities for the reform, derogation, or enactment of any law."<sup>132</sup>

Ruiz's statement was shorter. It said only that he and Díaz had conferred several times with the President, that the talks had been marked by mutual respect and good will, and that the results of the meetings were set forth in the President's statement. As a consequence of that declaration, X the Mexican clergy would resume religious services "in accordance with the laws in force." The statement expressed the hope that the return of public worship would lead the Mexican people to cooperate in whatever legitimate efforts might be made for the welfare of the nation.

On Friday, June 21st, Ruiz y Flores and Pascual Díaz arrived at the National Palace at 11:00 A.M. and were escorted immediately to the President's office.<sup>133</sup> Ruiz related to Portes Gil the reservations the Pope ✓ had specified in his cablegram. Portes Gil called in Canales of Gobernación and told him to order an amnesty at once for the men fighting, and to stipulate that Cristero officers could retain their sidearms and horses. He also directed that free rail passes be issued to Cristeros for transportation to their homes or wherever they wished to go. The President also

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<sup>132</sup>The texts may be found in Excelsior, June 22, 1929, p. 1, in Moctezuma, II, 535-537, and various other sources.

<sup>133</sup>Excelsior, June 22, 1929, pp. 1, 2.

said that church annexes not being used for other purposes would be returned to Church use immediately, and told the bishops, "I believe you can wait a bit for us to return the ones we have already occupied." Ruiz did not think it necessary to have this in writing, since both Díaz and Canales were witnesses to the statement. Portes Gil then said he had a favor to ask: that Orozco y Jiménez and Manríquez y Zárate reside outside Mexico for a short time, as an aid to the prompt pacification of the country--the part both had played in the rebellion, he said, was well known. Ruiz replied that he could not agree to this as a condition, but that he would ask the two to cooperate for a short time. He told Portes Gil he could assure him, however, that Orozco y Jiménez had not been involved in the armed movement; he would call the Archbishop for a personal talk with the President. This Portes Gil accepted. The two statements, prepared in duplicate, were then signed and exchanged.<sup>134</sup>

The two prelates left the Palace; followed by newsmen, they drove directly to the Basilica of Guadalupe, where they knelt at the high altar for a few minutes. As they rose, Ruiz turned to Díaz and announced to him his appointment as Archbishop of Mexico.<sup>135</sup> The Apostolic Delegate and

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<sup>134</sup>Ruiz y Flores, pp. 96, 97. Portes Gil (Autobiografía, p. 576) says that Díaz posed the question: "And as for our brothers who have mistakenly taken a violent position and have risen in arms, what steps will the Government take so that they may return to their homes?" Portes Gil said he replied that the government would be indulgent to those who surrendered unconditionally, that Cedillo had instructions to see that the men had land and agricultural implements and that they received full protection.

<sup>135</sup>Excelsior, June 22, 1929, pp. 1, 2. According to Ruiz, he had been considering since his arrival whom to recommend to the Pope. Díaz, he finally decided, was qualified because of his virtue, knowledge, eloquence, modern ideas, his relationship with the clergy and laity of the capital, and the esteem in which he was held by the Episcopate. He cabled Rome and was informed three days later that the Pope had made the appointment. The press carried the news on the 23rd. Ruiz y Flores, pp. 97, 98; Excelsior, June 23, 1929, p. 1.

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the new Primate left the Basilica through an excited crowd of worshippers who had become aware of their presence and all of whom were pushing forward to kiss their hands and receive their blessings.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>136</sup>Excelsior, June 22, 1929, pp. 1, 2.

## CHAPTER X

### TRIAL BY PEACE

Morrow telephoned Lane shortly after 5:00 P.M. to say that the religious conflict had been settled and that the statements were being given to the press at that hour. He asked that Burke and Montavon be informed.<sup>1</sup> The next day, Morrow sent a personal message to Father Burke congratulating the priest on the "happy outcome of the work you started more than a year and a half ago." The settlement could not have been made, he said, without Burke's "courage, patience and faith." He extended regards to Montavon, Fumasoni-Biondi, and Cardinal Hayes.<sup>2</sup> Also on the 22nd, Secretary of State Stimson sent his own congratulations and those of President Hoover to the real architect of the arrangement, Morrow. He heaped praise on the Ambassador's conduct of affairs in Mexico: "The way in which you have brought to the two governments the present friendly good will from a condition of near hostility, is a high achievement in the history of our diplomacy."<sup>3</sup>

News of the settlement quickly spread through the combat areas in the west--in some cases disseminated by leaflets dropped from government planes.<sup>4</sup> The impact on the Cristero military effort was devastating. Almost at once,

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<sup>1</sup>Memorandum from Lane to Stimson, June 21, 1929, DSR 812.404/1012.

<sup>2</sup>Morrow to SecState, June 22, 1929, DSR 812.404/1008.

<sup>3</sup>Stimson to Morrow, June 22, 1929, DSR 812.404/1012.

<sup>4</sup>Excelsior, June 22, 1929, p. 1.

several Cristero chiefs accepted offers of amnesty; others told Degollado that inasmuch as the priests were returning to the churches they felt it was no longer licit to continue fighting. The General received reports that some of the clergy were counseling an end to the struggle, and that some priests were even saying that it would be a mortal sin to aid the Cristeros. Within less than a week the situation was desperate, and Degollado decided to place matters before the Directors of the League.<sup>5</sup>

He traveled to Mexico City by train disguised as a poor ranchero. On his arrival he was escorted immediately to the house where Ceniceros y Villarreal was staying and went at once into conference with the Directive Committee. He reported what was happening in the field, at the same time pledging that he would follow the Directors' orders. Ceniceros y Villarreal asked the General for his own opinion. Degollado replied that in view of the "actions already consummated" he believed it would be useless to continue the fighting, that those who did would perish. He said some of the clergy were telling Catholics it was wrong even to give food to the Cristeros; one priest was going about the battle areas in a plane made available to him by Lázaro Cárdenas, persuading men to lay down their arms. Some bishops and priests were still for the cause, he added, but many were against it. Surrenders were increasing and he was receiving reports of insubordination in the ranks. He said he thought that if the fighting went on the only result would be scandal and anarchy.<sup>6</sup> Hours of agonized discussion followed. At length the Committee decided that the Guardia Nacional should be discharged from further duty, under terms which Degollado would work out with

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<sup>5</sup>Degollado, p. 234.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 234-237.

the government.<sup>7</sup> Degollado told the Directors that in view of the fact that his wife was a prisoner of the government he could not in honor deal with her captors. The Committee sympathized: it instructed him to demand his wife's freedom as a pre-condition for negotiating. With this understanding, Degollado agreed to proceed. He named Luis Beltrán to act as his intermediary with Portes Gil, telling Beltrán to get an entree to the President through Ruiz y Flores.<sup>8</sup>

At first Portes Gil balked at the demand for the release of Señora Degollado, but Beltrán refused to back down and he finally agreed. Then Beltrán presented Degollado's conditions: full guarantees of protection for the lives and property of all officers and men, as well as for civilians who had aided the movement; full freedom for all who were in custody for reasons related to religious issues and the dropping of any legal actions in progress against Catholics stemming from religious questions; repatriation of all persons exiled for religious reasons; payment of twenty-five pesos per rifle to men who turned in their weapons and permission for those who needed their horses to keep them; permission for officers to keep their sidearms; certificates of safe conduct for officers plus a cash grant in aid (the amount to be at the discretion of federal chiefs of operations). Finally, the mustering out was to take place in the presence of federal chiefs of operations.<sup>9</sup> Portes Gil accepted the terms without discussion and said orders would be issued at once to the military to proceed in accordance

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid. It was stipulated that what was being ordered was "discharge" (licensamiento), not surrender.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 237, 238.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 269, 270.

with them.<sup>10</sup> The President offered to make telegraph facilities available to Degollado so that he could order an immediate suspension of hostilities, but this was declined. Degollado and Beltrán left the same afternoon for Guadalajara. There, after arrangements had been made for the release of the General's wife, Degollado dispatched orders to regimental commanders of the Guardia to present themselves with their men at stipulated places for demobilization.<sup>11</sup>

During the next few weeks all but a few of the Cristeros laid down their arms--over 14,000 of them in all.<sup>12</sup> Word of the settlement reached the Colima Cristeros on July 4th, and Father Ochoa left the Volcano for Colima City to arrange details of the capitulation with federal authorities there. On the 15th the various Cristero units in the state began presenting themselves to the authorities. The last military actions occurred the 17th--two small skirmishes in the Cerro Grande.<sup>13</sup> A few bands were still at large early in August, reported U.S. Vice Consul Blocker from Manzanillo, but it was thought they would give little trouble, "due to the fact that they are not regularly organized and have not the sympathy and backing which was given to the revolutionists by many citizens who were in sympathy with their cause up until the time of the settlement in June. . ."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 239. Although the government in June was, as usual, playing down the magnitude of the fighting, Portes Gil later said that at the time the rebellion ended it was costing between 800 and 1,000 deaths a month. If this is accurate, it might help account for his eagerness to accept the terms and end the struggle. See Portes Gil, p. 574.

<sup>11</sup>Degollado, p. 239.

<sup>12</sup>Portes Gil, p. 574.

<sup>13</sup>Spectator, II, 327-329.

<sup>14</sup>Blocker, Manzanillo, to SecState, August 8, 1929, DSR 812.00-Colima/42. in DSR 812.404/1029.



In August Degollado addressed a final message to the Guardia Nacional. The resumption of public worship in June, he said, had altered everything. ✕ To continue to fight would divide Catholics and place the clergy in a most difficult position. He praised the courage and loyalty of the fighting men, and told them that the same patriotism and love for the cause they had fought for now obliged them to end their struggle. A decision had been taken to regain rights and liberties by other means, and the Guardia Nacional was thus absolved of further responsibility. He did not disguise his grief:

. . . certainly we have not completed the victory; but as Christians we have an intimate satisfaction far richer for the soul: the fulfillment of duty and the offering to the Church and to Christ of the most precious of our sacrifices, that of seeing our ideals shattered before the world; but cherishing--praise God--the supernatural conviction, which our faith maintains and nourishes, that in the end Christ the King will reign over souls in Mexico, not partially but as absolute sovereign.

As men, we have another satisfaction also, which our adversaries can never take from us: the Guardia Nacional disappears, not conquered by its enemies, but in reality abandoned by those who were to have been the first to receive the worthy fruits of its sacrifices and abnegations.<sup>15</sup>

Ruiz y Flores spoke publicly for the first time on June 25th. It had been hoped, he told Mexico's Catholics, to achieve a definitive solution of the religious question by bringing about a change in the laws. But the strong passions of the moment and the other difficulties of the situation made it plain that more time would be needed to accomplish this, and therefore it had been decided to conclude an arrangement which would allow the faithful to profess their beliefs and to worship licitly and which at the same time would remedy the evils attendant upon the suspension of worship. The existence of the Church and the freedom necessary for her to live in society had been officially recognized on a de facto basis, he said; this had been obtained in terms which satisfied principle and therefore permitted the

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<sup>15</sup> Degollado, pp. 270-273.

clergy to function publicly. The Pope had given his approval, and all should accept that decision. The good will shown by the government, he continued, was the best guarantee that a new era of conciliation had opened. It was now up to the clergy and faithful to request reform of the laws. The final solution would be obtained; "but without undue haste, because the evils of a century cannot be cured in a day; without passions which sour the spirit, because it must be the fruit of a coming together and of harmony. . . ."16

The Directive Committee of the League was uncertain at first what position to take regarding the June 21st settlement. It strongly suspected that in addition to the public agreement between Ruiz and Portes Gil there were secret ones which contained substantial and important concessions from the government.<sup>17</sup> Manríquez y Zárata was inclined to the same opinion, although for the moment, he wrote to Palomar y Vizcarra, he was "overcome by deep depression and a mortal sadness." He recommended that the Cristeros or at least a select part of them regroup in some remote area of the country and remain on standby while the others hid their arms and disbanded for the present; armed action should be suspended, he agreed, to avoid strife among Catholics in the current period of confusion, but the Directive Committee should continue to function from exile in the United States.<sup>18</sup> His letter arrived after the Directors had made the decision to end hostilities and could hardly have influenced the decision anyway. It was all over. The Committee issued a manifesto to the nation on July 12th. It said that according to press reports, on June 21st "some kind of arrangement,

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<sup>16</sup>"Carta del Excelentísimo Señor Delegado Apostólico al Episcopado, Clero y pueblo católico mexicano," June 25, 1929, Excelsior, June 26, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup>Directive Committee to Degollado, June 28, 1929; statement signed by Andrés Barquín y Ruiz, August 8, 1941. LA-1.

<sup>18</sup>Manríquez y Zárata to Palomar y Vizcarra, June 25, 1929, LA-1.

or rather, armistice" had been concluded between the Apostolic Delegate and Portes Gil "as refers to the religious controversy. . . ." The manifesto noted that one of the League's principal objectives was the reconquest and preservation of freedom of worship; "but there are other basic freedoms, such as freedom of education, association, social action, etc., which are of enormous importance to individual, military, social, and political life and which are also inscribed in our program." However, because a breach had been opened, according to the Apostolic Delegate, through which freedom might be won by ordinary means, and because the League had full confidence in the Pope's judgement, the League had decided to cease hostilities.<sup>19</sup>

When the League's national convention met the first week of August--the first in three years--the Directors were still withholding judgement, and in fact claiming for the League major credit for what they hoped had been success in the June agreement:

. . . the Guardia Nacional was not conquered by its enemies, but actually terminated its glorious mission, obliging the government by the force of its arms to recognize de facto and publicly the authority of the Pope, the juridical personality of the Mexican Hierarchy, and to open the door so that Mexican Catholics may obtain by legal means the freedoms for which they fought with admirable heroism.<sup>20</sup>

But the League's future had already been determined by events. Ruiz y Flores gave the Directors the word in a letter written August 4th:

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<sup>19</sup>Carreño, pp. 63-65. Morrow forwarded a copy of the manifesto to the State Department, with the comment that the League "now admits that it actually sponsored the armed rebellion carried on until recently in the central states of the Republic by fanatical elements." Morrow to SecState, July 30, 1929, DSR 812.404/1028. One of the most baffling problems of the entire controversy is the fact that to the very end, despite ample evidence available to him, Morrow never understood the League's role in the religious conflict.

<sup>20</sup>Directive Committee's report to League convention, August, 1929, LA-2. The Committee did not explain how "juridical personality" could exist de facto. The Directors were still straining to interpret the settlement as a substantial victory.

. . . I am not unaware that the League, by having taken part in other activities which are not directly within its province, has encountered some obstacles to its development. . . .Whether it should or should not continue to be called the "League" is a decision that belongs to the convention; but I certainly do not judge it to be practical hereafter for it to continue with the same name and the same leaders, both points of which, if changed, would leave the new institution free of many prejudices and difficulties.

If the organization chose to operate only in civic matters, he said, he stood ready to help. If it decided to dedicate itself to Catholic social action, it would be under the guidance of Archbishop Pascual Díaz, whom the Episcopate had recently named head of all Catholic social associations in Mexico.<sup>21</sup>

The League convention not only refused to agree to a change in name; it gave a rousing vote of confidence and loyalty to the Directive Committee. Ruiz was not perturbed; ever the conciliator, he invited the Directors to dinner a week later--and avoided discussing the subject. But the Committee understood the situation. It was one thing to do combat with the archbishop of Michoacán and the bishop of Tabasco when other equally important prelates were on its side; it was quite something else to take on the Apostolic Delegate and the Archbishop Primate of Mexico. At any moment, Díaz could snuff out the organization by simple fiat, and in that event the League could decide between dying in disgrace or lapsing into apostasy. To the Directors either was unthinkable, and they took a minimum step to meet the objections, changing the name to the "National League for the Defense of Liberty" (Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad)--dropping the word "religious."<sup>22</sup> The leadership remained unchanged but it became increasingly unimportant who headed what was left of the organization. The

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<sup>21</sup>Ruiz y Flores to Directive Committee, August 4, 1929, LA-1.

<sup>22</sup>Rius Facius, Méjico cristero, pp. 402, 403.

League lived on into the 1930's, more and more a name on a letterhead which inspired--or perturbed--increasingly fewer Mexicans.

The ACJM went much the same way. In the late summer of 1929 Pascual Díaz appointed a special commission to study and make recommendations on integrating all Church-related activities into a single federation of Catholic Action in Mexico. The Commission invited the ACJM to join--but under a new set of statutes which, the Association's leadership felt, would change it beyond recognition and in fact amount to suppressing it altogether. The ACJM leadership made a lively defense of its life and work, including its tie with the League and the participation of many of its members in the rebellion, but in vain. In December, Díaz promulgated general statutes for Mexican Catholic Action, which among other things provided for a new official Catholic youth organization. Six days later the General Committee of the ACJM voted the Association dissolved.<sup>23</sup> There followed a year of wrangling, during which fervent appeals were made to Ruiz y Flores and to the Pope. Finally a satisfactory agreement was reached; the ACJM reactivated itself and in November, 1930, Díaz admitted it into the Catholic Action family.<sup>24</sup> Thus the ACJM survived; but it melded quietly into the stream of Mexican religious life, away from the glare of public attention and the noise of national causes, to become a peaceful force for the spiritual growth of a new generation of young Catholics. Its members in the years ahead would be inspired and awed by accounts of the bravery and martyrdom of those who had lived the historic saga of the cristeriada, but they would honor the memories, not emulate the deeds.

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 412-421.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 424-441 passim.

At first, it seemed that the champions of conciliation had been right, that a new era had dawned for the Church in Mexico. The days following the June 21st exchange of statements were auspicious. Gobernación informed state governors that talks would begin at once between the bishops and representatives of the government to arrange for churches and annexes to be handed over to the priests designated to receive them.<sup>25</sup> On June 25th, after conferring with Ruiz and Díaz, Canales announced that the federal government would overrule any state laws relating to religion which it deemed unconstitutional.<sup>26</sup> Church services resumed in most parts of the country during the last week of June and early July: In Mexico City fourteen churches were turned over to the clergy on the 26th of June, fifteen more on the 27th; transfers were progressing well in Guadalajara.<sup>27</sup> Public worship resumed in Monterrey July 7th.<sup>28</sup> Within hours after the June settlement was concluded, orders were issued for the release of various persons being held for violation of religious laws.<sup>29</sup> After the capitulation of the Guardia Nacional still more persons were freed. Most of the Cristeros imprisoned on the Islas Mariás were released and left for the mainland the first week of July.<sup>30</sup>

But those who looked more closely began to wonder how strong the new bonds of harmony really were. For one thing, the government seemed to be going out of its way to drive home the point that the settlement

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<sup>25</sup>Excelsior, June 22, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup>New York Times, June 26, 1929, p. 4.

<sup>27</sup>Morrow to SecState, June 28, 1929, DSR 812.404/1021.

<sup>28</sup>Balch, Monterrey, to SecState, July 16, 1929, DSR 812.404/1027.

<sup>29</sup>Excelsior, June 22, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup>Brondo, Memoirs.

had entailed the surrender of the Church. Replying to reporters' questions on June 22nd, Portes Gil painstakingly pointed out that the outcome of the negotiations was identical to what was almost achieved in 1928, and that the statement he had issued the day before was in no way different from one Calles was prepared to approve the year before.<sup>31</sup> He was essentially right, but his words did not soothe Catholic nerves. Within official circles, the point was being made even more strongly: In a telegram to state governors giving instructions for the transfer of churches Canales began by noting that the clergy had "decided to resume religious services soon, submitting to the laws in force"; he ended by saying that "the application of this Circular will be made without contravening local laws which set the maximum number of clergymen in accordance with regional needs. . . ."<sup>32</sup> One report was particularly alarming to Catholic observers: that Portes Gil had told a Masonic gathering there had been no "settlement," except in the sense that the clergy had declared its strict submission to the laws, and that he would continue to see that the Constitution and laws--which held the clergy to fixed rules--were strictly obeyed.<sup>33</sup> Ruiz y Flores protested to the President. Pascual Díaz took it less seriously, commenting that after all the President, when among Masons, had to talk their language.<sup>34</sup> But there were other sharp verbal jabs from persons in high places. Minister of War and Marine Amaro, addressing the new Commission on Military History, referred to the "clerical insurrection" just concluded, and

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<sup>31</sup>Excélsior, June 23, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup>Gobernación to state governors, circular letter, June 28, 1929. Archives, State of Coahuila, Lagajo 15, Expediente 2/11.

<sup>33</sup>Ruiz y Flores, p. 100; Jesús García Gutiérrez, Acción anti-católica en Méjico (2nd ed.; Mexico, D.F., 1956), pp. 183, 184.

<sup>34</sup>Ruiz y Flores, p. 100.

reminded his listeners that the Catholic clergy "has been the sole source of Mexico's troubles" ever since the Spanish conquest.<sup>35</sup>

As the months passed the Episcopate grew increasingly anxious about the rectories, seminaries, and other buildings formerly used for religious purposes. In a large number of cases these were not being released to Church use. At length, Ruiz sent intermediaries to the Ministry of Gobernación to protest the delay. Canales told them, "It is true that the President offered this--I was present--but he did not know what he was offering, since if those buildings were vacated and returned it would stir up a swarm of enemies." Ruiz and Díaz tried to see Calles, who they were sure had the power to move matters, but he would not receive them. Ruiz was equally unsuccessful in attempts to get permission for González Valencia, Manríquez y Zárate, and Orozco y Jiménez to return to Mexico.<sup>36</sup> In January, 1930, Pascual Ortiz Rubio succeeded Portes Gil as President. Ruiz conferred with him. Ortiz reiterated what he had told Father Burke and others in Washington the month before: that his policy would be to relax tensions and avoid conflict, and that within a year he would move to reform the laws. Time passed, but there was no indication of action. Ruiz urged the President at least to keep the promises made by Portes Gil; Ortiz Rubio replied that Portes Gil denied having promised anything.<sup>37</sup>

Gorostieta's fear that the Cristeros would be in jeopardy if they stopped fighting proved well founded. When Navarrete presented himself to

<sup>35</sup>Morrow to SecState, October 29, 1929, DSR 812.404/1036.

<sup>36</sup>Ruiz y Flores, p. 100. Shortly after the June settlement, Orozco y Jiménez met with Portes Gil. He denied categorically that he had taken part in the rebellion but the President was unimpressed. The Archbishop left the country soon afterward.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 101.



authorities to receive his amnesty, the chief of operations in Jalisco, General Andrés Figueroa, advised him not to stay in Guadalajara. He said that although Navarrete and the others had nothing to fear from the federal forces, they might well become targets of other groups or individuals; local políticos harbored a deep desire for vengeance and might think they could court favor with persons in the federal government by victimizing ex-Cristeros. Navarrete accepted the advice and moved to Mexico City.<sup>38</sup> Many others who could not or would not take similar precautions were hunted down and killed. In November ex-Colonel José María Gutiérrez was assassinated in Jalpa; Primitivo Jiménez, former Cristero chief in Guanajuato, met a similar fate.<sup>39</sup> Carlos Bouquet was murdered in Sonora in December, 1929, reportedly on orders from high in the government.<sup>40</sup> Victims were not limited to ex-officers. On February 14th, 1930, at San Martín de Bolaños, Jalisco, there was a mass execution of forty-one former Cristeros, all of whom had laid down their arms after the settlement the previous summer.<sup>41</sup> The number of victims mounted month by month and included persons who had held high posts in the League. González Pacheco, a League vice-president, was tortured and killed in Hidalgo in 1932, together with Luis Alcorta, a former Guardia Nacional general.<sup>42</sup> A few former leaders went into complete seclusion. Degollado (who did not apply for an amnesty) stayed under cover in various parts of Morelos and the State of Mexico for five years in order to escape assassination.<sup>43</sup> Reports of violence against men who had taken part in the armed

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<sup>38</sup>Navarrete, pp. 269, 270.

<sup>39</sup>Jorge Téllez to Palomar y Vizcarra, December 1, 1939, LA-1.

<sup>40</sup>"Datos biográficos del General de División Sr. Carlos Bouquet Carranza. . .", David, No. 3 (October, 1952).

<sup>41</sup>Blanco Gil, p. 76.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 373.

<sup>43</sup>Gutiérrez, "El General Degollado Gufzar," p. 235; Degollado, pp. 277, 278.

movement cropped up again and again for years, some of them well into the 1950's. Many stories were unverified, but enough of them had substance so that many agreed with Lara y Torres' comment that more Cristeros perished after June, 1929, than died on the field of battle.<sup>44</sup>

For two years after the settlement the religious situation remained shaky and uneven. There were various indications of government hostility, but church services were available in most parts of the country, most clergymen were functioning freely, and new starts at religious training of the young were being made in some areas. Then in 1931, as Catholics prepared to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe, a new plunge downward began. In June Adalberto Tejeda of Veracruz approved a law limiting the number of priests in that state to one per 100,000 inhabitants; in a telegram to Ruiz y Flores he defended the step by branding the Church "the enemy of all work tending toward human redemption."<sup>45</sup> The bishop of Jalapa suspended public worship in the state.<sup>46</sup> Chiapas and Yucatán followed Veracruz's lead in drastically reducing the number of priests; in Tabasco no clergymen were functioning.<sup>47</sup> After the Guadalupe celebrations in Mexico City in December, and apparently as a response to it, Congress passed a law restricting to twenty-five the number of priests in the Federal District.<sup>48</sup>

By 1932 there was no doubt that all signs were bad. When Abelardo

<sup>44</sup>Blanco Gil, p. 213.

<sup>45</sup>Earle K. James, "Church and State in Mexico," Foreign Policy Reports, XI (July 3, 1935), 110; New York Times, June 12, 1931, p. 13.

<sup>46</sup>Eduardo J. Correa, Mons. Rafael Guízar Valencia, p. 105.

<sup>47</sup>James, p. 100.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., pp. 110, 111.

Rodríguez took office as provisional President, Ruiz y Flores, grasping at a possibility of rekindling a little good will, sent him congratulations. The message was not even acknowledged.<sup>49</sup> In September Pius XI spoke out publicly and forcefully on the deteriorating Mexican situation. The understanding reached in 1929, he acknowledged, had not led to peace; the spirit of the modus vivendi was being ignored: Clergymen had been deported, and churches, seminaries, and episcopal residences had not been returned; revenge had been taken on priests and laity who had defended the faith, and attacks in the press on both the clergy and on religion itself had increased.<sup>50</sup> When the papal letter was reported in the Mexican papers even greater troubles resulted. Rodríguez said the Pope was trying to foment rebellion--an accusation which Ruiz immediately denied. On October 3rd, in a session marked by impassioned oratory, a number of members of the Chamber of Deputies demanded the Apostolic Delegate's expulsion from the country. Ruiz was arrested at dawn the next day and deported to the United States.<sup>51</sup>

1934 and 1935 were the bottom. The Church in Mexico was undergoing the worst ordeal of its history. In many states almost every church had been closed by the government. Priests had all but disappeared; in the country at large only around ten percent of the clergymen who had functioned in 1925 could now legally officiate, and the number who were in fact exercising their ministry was far less because of such local stipulations as requirements that the clergy marry--which priests could not obey.<sup>52</sup> Anti-Catholic excesses reached their zenith in the area of

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Blanco Gil, p. 323.

<sup>51</sup>Ruiz y Flores, p. 102.

<sup>52</sup>Cumberland, p. 284.

education. In Michoacán teachers had to sign statements saying they professed no religion and that they would "fight by every means the Catholic religion and other religions."<sup>53</sup> Teachers in Yucatán were required to affirm that they were atheists, and promise to work for the destruction of Catholicism.<sup>54</sup> From exile in San Antonio, Ruiz y Flores declared: "It may be asserted that the Church in Mexico has ceased to function."<sup>55</sup> In 1934, driven by fear and despair, a few veterans of the Cristero rebellion-- Aurelio R. Acevedo, Lauro Rocha, Andrés Salazar and others--tried to launch another uprising. But most Mexican Catholics had no desire to throw their lives away in a venture that could have only one end; exhausted, disillusioned by the outcome of the 1926-1929 crusade, with most of the old leadership dead or dispersed, they could only wait helplessly and in silence. A handful did join the new attempt but only a few survived the pathetic effort, which flickered to an end in 1936.<sup>56</sup> In Mexico City, Pascual Díaz faced stoically one humiliation after another. Once, early in 1935, he and four other clergymen were arrested, jammed into a tiny jail cell like common criminals, and held incommunicado for a time--on the charge that the Archbishop was suspected of carrying a machine gun in his car.<sup>57</sup> Later that year Díaz told a visitor that he was looking for a place to live. The archepiscopal residence was still in government hands, and he had been living in rented houses; but now no one would rent to him for fear that

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<sup>53</sup>Kenneth Grubb, "Political and Religious Situation in Mexico; with Discussion," International Affairs, XIV (September, 1935), 689.

<sup>54</sup>Lyle C. Brown, "Mexican Church-State Relations, 1933-1940," A Journal of Church and State, VI (Spring, 1964), 211.

<sup>55</sup>Parsons, p. 268.

<sup>56</sup>Degollado, p. 277.

<sup>57</sup>Charles S. Macfarland, Chaos in Mexico: The Conflict of Church and State (New York, 1935), p. 264; Brown, p. 211.

the government might confiscate the property. He was considering taking a room in a hotel.<sup>58</sup> Harassed by the authorities, under fire from bitter League veterans and others who accused him of having betrayed the cause, he died on May 19th, 1936.

The coming of Lázaro Cárdenas to the presidency in 1934 neither promised nor at first produced any improvement in the situation. But in 1936, firmly in control of national affairs after besting Calles in a test of strength, Cárdenas turned his attention to the religious question and soon took some first steps to reduce the hostility of the Revolutionary regime toward the Church and clergy.<sup>59</sup> In 1937 public worship was resumed in Veracruz--for years a hotbed of anticlericalism. Matters were worked out with the cooperation of the governor, a young lawyer named Miguel Alemán.<sup>60</sup> Alemán typified a new breed in Mexican public life, men who were products of the Revolution and intellectually devoted to its goals, but at the same time more educated, urbane, and less hobbled than their elders in the Revolutionary ranks, who could not shake off the passions and prejudices accumulated during the long, brutal years after 1910. By 1938, the thaw in official attitudes toward the Church and clergy was evident everywhere, and that year leaders of the Mexican Episcopate patriotically supported Cárdenas's dramatic action expropriating foreign oil holdings. During the next two years there was steady improvement in the religious situation; more and more churches re-opened, staffed with increasing numbers of priests. General Manuel Avila Camacho, one-time scourge of the Colima Cristeros, became president on December 1st, 1940. His headline-making phrase, "I am a

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<sup>58</sup>Macfarland, p. 156.

<sup>59</sup>Cumberland, p. 284.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 285.

believer," was to many a conclusive signal that the long years of strife were ending. Deeds followed. On his second day in office the new President signed an executive decree freeing Madre Conchita from prison on the Islas Marías; the directive was rushed to the penal colony by special courier on orders from the new secretary of Gobernación, Miguel Alemán.<sup>61</sup>

Many of the pivotal figures of the religious conflict of 1926-1929 did not live to see the advent of the real modus vivendi. Dwight Morrow left Mexico in September, 1930; two months later he was elected to the U.S. Senate from New Jersey. He died October 5th, 1931. Rafael Cenicerós y Villarreal, the League's "heroic old man," died in 1933, his last years spent in acute poverty.<sup>62</sup> Francisco Orozco y Jiménez obediently accepted exile in 1929. He moved restlessly about Europe and the United States, then returned to Mexico only to be deported again. Once, while in Rome, he met Father Edmund Walsh; he asked him what had been the guarantee that the June 1929 agreements would be honored. Walsh replied, "Morrow. . . but Morrow died on us!"<sup>63</sup> In 1935 the Archbishop told Father Parsons in New York that he was going home to Mexico; when the priest commented that it might be extremely dangerous, he answered: "I do not care. I cannot die in this country." He returned to Guadalajara, where he died peacefully on February 18th, 1936.<sup>64</sup> His secretary and constant companion in hiding during the rebellion, José Garibi Rivera, succeeded him as Archbishop of Guadalajara, and in 1958 became the first Mexican prelate to be

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<sup>61</sup>Cházaro, "El caso de la Madre Conchita," pp. 220, 221.

<sup>62</sup>José Luis Orozco, "Rafael Cenicerós y Villarreal: Semblanza," David, No. 17 (December 22, 1953).

<sup>63</sup>Parsons, pp. 58, 59; Ríos Facius, México cristero, p. 397.

<sup>64</sup>Parsons, pp. 58, 59.

elevated to the College of Cardinals.

Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores resigned as apostolic delegate in 1937 while still in exile. Soon afterwards the government allowed him to return to Morelia to resume direction of his archdiocese; there he died in 1941.<sup>65</sup> Manríquez y Zárate was also granted permission in 1937 to return but did not immediately accept. Two years later he resigned his see of Huejutla and retired from any further involvement in the direction of Mexican ecclesiastical affairs. He died in Mexico City in 1951. González Valencia outlived all the prelates who were prominent in the conflict. He returned to Mexico in the late 1930's and governed his archdiocese of Durango until his death in 1959.

Plutarco Elías Calles kept the reins of power in his hands for eight years after leaving office. In 1934, however, he made the mistake of allowing Lázaro Cárdenas to become president; the young General had a mind of his own, and after carefully constructing his own base of support he finally challenged the "Jefe Máximo" for control. In 1936 Calles went the way so many of his clerical adversaries had gone: he was unceremoniously dumped across the border to exile in the United States. His power gone, he was permitted to return to Mexico in 1941, and played a kind of dour elder statesman's role until his death in 1945.

Emilio Portes Gil became a permanent office holder in successive administrations, first in top cabinet positions and later in less important posts. He sustained on the side a rather prolific literary career dedicated largely to telling his own version of the events he had been part of and affirming both his revolutionary and anticlerical purity and the importance of his own role as a mover of events. His eagerness to defend

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<sup>65</sup>Brown, pp. 218, 219.

his part in the settlement of June, 1929, would lead him to the extreme of denying that Dwight Morrow had had anything to do with it.<sup>66</sup>

A few Catholic lay leaders, too, survived well into the second half of the 20th century, some to tell their stories of the rebellion to a new generation of Mexicans, many of whom were only dimly aware that it had ever happened. Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra lived for nearly forty years, the custodian of both the League's archives and its conscience. A prodigious writer and lecturer, he devoted his energies to defending outspokenly the cause he had helped lead, increasingly certain that it had been necessary and just and even more certain that its enemies--the Revolution, the United States, and the Catholic temporizers--were the epitomes of wickedness and treachery. René Capistrán Garza carried his scars into his advancing years, moving toward an uneasy accommodation with the new Mexico while at the same time employing his journalistic talents in wry and often cynical commentary on nearly everyone and everything associated with change. Jesús Degollado Guízar died in 1957; he devoted his later years to serving as honorary head of Cristero veteran groups, a symbol of the struggle lionized by all who had taken part in it.

Most of the Cristero fighting men who survived the rebellion and the hard years that followed simply melded back into the life of the farms and villages and towns they had come from. Over the years some of them

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<sup>66</sup>Said Portes Gil in his Autobiografía de la Revolución Mexicana (pp. 574, 575): "As regards the supposed intervention of the U.S. ambassador, I deny absolutely that there was any. Mr. Morrow, a personal friend of mine, had two interviews with me during those days. At the first, while talking with me about some matter pending at the Ministry of Foreign Relations, he expressed to me his congratulations on the talks I was holding with Archbishop Ruiz y Flores and Bishop Díaz; and at the second, he transmitted congratulations from his government on the termination of that bloody conflict, as did all other representatives of friendly nations."



gathered periodically to commemorate their epic and remember the dead. A few, along with some of the men who had been their leaders, were attracted to the strange sinarquista movement that rose in the late thirties and forties to propound a kind of mystical Hispanic totalitarianism. But most of them were content to live out their lives quietly, convinced that they had done what they had to do and had done it well.

The shooting had hardly stopped in 1929 before the battle of words began. What had it all meant? Many were sure they knew. The Revolutionist would claim that the Cristero rebellion was a final attempt by reactionary clericalism to turn back the forces of enlightenment and modernization and that its defeat meant that a determined enemy of Mexico's progress had at long last been neutralized. The Catholic militant would insist that the "armed defense" had been a holy crusade against the enemies of God and Church, against secularism and tyranny, and that it ended short of its goal because God in his wisdom had permitted an evil government, abetted by wrong-minded Mexicans and imperialistic or bigoted Americans, to suffocate it. The non-militant Mexican Catholic would maintain that some of his irresponsible co-religionists had carried opposition to the Revolution to a reckless extreme that jeopardized both the lives and souls of millions of Mexicans.

And so the debate raged, much of it in the realm of abstract speculation beyond the reach of historical reasoning. The student of history would settle for something less. The evidence--what there was available--did not provide answers to all questions, but it made it possible to draw at least some conclusions.

The religious conflict of the 1920's was an episode in the great Revolution that broke over Mexico in 1910. It also climaxed a century of

enmity between Mexican Catholicism and Mexican liberalism. The clash that came in the 20th century, however, while it was part of a continuum, was different in some important ways from the earlier struggles. Both forces had changed considerably since the middle of the 19th century. Unlike the middle class liberalism of the Reform, that which became dominant after 1913 was dedicated to social revolution. Its leaders were convinced that a fundamental re-ordering of Mexican society was needed, and consequently their assault on the institutions of Mexico's past was far more determined than the one their predecessors had waged. Both the old and the new liberalism were convinced that institutional Catholicism must be shorn of its power to determine Mexican social and economic life, but whereas the 19th century liberal would accomplish this by delineating jurisdictions of civil and religious authority, the liberal of the Revolution would move to deny the Church any influence whatever in Mexican public life and endow the state with authority to decide not only how the Church in Mexico would exist but, if necessary, whether it would.

. Mexican Catholicism too had changed. Perhaps ironically, the 20th century confrontation came when it was undergoing a process of rapid modernization, with many of its leaders espousing and propounding enlightened social positions that added up to a radical departure from the negative stance of a half century earlier. But the very vigor of the new Catholicism helped provoke the collision that came in 1926. For one thing, the Catholic rebirth brought in its train a new militancy, fiercely patriotic, self-confident, determined, and with a manly élan that had great appeal. The movement had, in fact, the potential to become something formidable in Mexican life, and not by any means in the spiritual realm alone; the prohibition in the Constitution of 1917 against political parties with a

religious designation was a frank recognition of the possibility. The thrust of the new Catholicism in the decade before 1913 was highly positive; but the head-on collision with the Revolution impelled it to a defensive, pugnacious stand, and after the appearance of the new Constitution in 1917 most Catholic leaders were certain that Catholicism itself in Mexico was in mortal danger. After an eight-year lull during which the threat remained largely theoretical, actions by the Calles government seemed to indicate that the hour of doom was at hand; matters moved to a showdown which influential individuals on both sides seemed almost to welcome.

The confrontation revealed many things about both the Revolution and the Church. Perhaps more clearly than anything else it demonstrated the multiplicity of views and the varying degrees of commitment within Mexican Catholicism--so much so that to use the word "Church" when dealing with the complexities of the struggle obscures far more than it clarifies. Practicing Catholics were represented in nearly every conceivable point of view on the question except that which favored outright persecution. Some went quietly about their work as holders of middle and lower level government offices, staying carefully aloof from the controversy; large numbers of them--whether from indifference, disagreement with the activist stance, or fear--stayed out of the conflict entirely; sizable numbers were more or less sympathetic to the militants but not enough so to join them, except occasionally and in a peripheral way. Finally, there were those Catholics--many thousands of them but distinctly a minority--who committed themselves heart and soul to a supreme effort to turn the course of Mexican history.

The lack of unity among Mexican Catholics was especially glaring in the ranks of the clergy. No churchman in good standing sided with

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the government on the religious question, but large numbers refused to aid or encourage those who took up arms, and some condemned the rebellion. The division in the Episcopate was real and open. While no bishop ever saw the Revolutionary regime as a blessing, from the first some of them believed that the Church could co-exist with it--that indeed there was no alternative. Many of the prelates--probably a majority--approved of the decision to resort to armed force. Only later, when success by that route appeared unlikely, did they have to face squarely the ramifications of the official Church being formally identified with the rebel cause. In the end, only a few of them clung to the belief that the armed movement could succeed or that the hierarchy should be identified with it.

The laymen who led the Catholic activists were a remarkably homogeneous group. Its senior figures had been part of the Catholic social movement and had been active participants in the Catholic Congresses. Most had been influential in the National Catholic Party in its heyday, 1911-1914, and some had held public office under auspices of the Party. The younger lights were products of the Catholic youth movement, most notably the ACJM. Almost without exception, the leaders young and old belonged to the small Mexican middle class; they were from families that were usually of comfortable economic and social circumstances, although seldom wealthy--professionals, businessmen, less often small land holders. They were well educated, and more than a few qualified to be called intellectuals. Conspicuously absent from their ranks were people from the extremes of Mexican society, the underprivileged mass and the old landed upper class. Toward the latter, in fact, the new Catholic leadership harbored a distinct antipathy which became even more marked when most of that group refused to support the rebellion.

The Catholic activist leaders had a well developed, sophisticated social outlook. They could be labeled reactionaries only in the sense that they did not share the philosophical postulates that motivated the leaders of the Revolution; their goals and even many of the means they proposed to renovate Mexican society were not markedly different from those of their liberal enemies. They were keenly aware of the evils afflicting Mexico, and like their adversaries they advocated vigorous and enlightened government action to correct them. Most of them, although not all, were committed to political democracy. They differed diametrically from their opponents, however, regarding the nature of Mexico's problem--and its cure. To them, the sources of Mexico's ills were ignorance, selfishness, and apathy, all of these epitomized and heightened by decadent 19th century liberalism. The solution lay in revitalizing Mexican life by applying true Christian values and uprooting the evils that had accrued because of failure to do this in the past.

The leaders' stand regarding the relation of Catholicism to the Mexican state are not easy to determine; no single viewpoint seems to have predominated. The question might never have had to be faced in a milieu of peaceful evolution. In the days of the Catholic Party, the goal was somewhat akin to that advocated by the Christian Democratic movements elsewhere a generation later--a lay and pluralistic state guided by Christian principles broad enough to be accepted by most men of good will. None advocated a union of Church and state--in fact they specifically rejected this, with a handful of uninfluential exceptions. Even the ambivalence over the connection between spiritual and temporal jurisdictions in the League's program formulated in 1925 was inconsequential so long as that body worked outside the political realm. But when the Catholic activist movement became openly political by undertaking to overthrow the

government, the whole complex problem had to be faced, and after the failure of intricate attempts to reconcile things, the "Church," the formal hierarchical institution, separated itself from any connection with the effort. The ambiguity on the matter--which perhaps defied a solution--was the Achilles' heel of the militant cause. The League, in effect, tried to have things both ways, and in the effort went through a series of tortuous turns, playing down the Catholic nature of the movement in order to attract U.S. support and broaden the appeal in Mexico, and trying to preserve the Church link both because of conviction and because it was such a crucially important factor in motivating enthusiasm for the cause. In the end, it lost out on both counts; the U.S. failed to back the movement--on the contrary it backed Calles; and Rome moved to disassociate the official Church from the armed struggle and from any other Catholic political effort in Mexico.

The Holy See understood the Mexican Church-state conflict far better than did the Mexican Hierarchy. By the 1920's Rome had had well over a century of experience with the problem of the Church's life in modern secular states. Experience had indicated that a variety of arrangements were possible. In some countries, like Spain and more than a few in Latin America, an official alliance between Church and state had defined relationships to the satisfaction of most concerned. In others, like Britain and the United States, the Church was functioning and even thriving without enjoying any special privileges, competing on its own merits in an atmosphere of toleration on the part of a non-Catholic majority. In countries like France, where avowedly anticlerical governments were entrenched, it had been possible to arrive at understandings that allowed at least an acceptable degree of freedom for the Church; this kind of arrangement was in fact being worked out with the government of Italy at the very time

the Mexican crisis was at its height. In every case, Rome's minimum requirement was that the clergy be free to perform its spiritual duties under a chain of hierarchical command that left the Episcopate in control of ecclesiastical affairs. Much more was desirable, of course--Catholic education, the right of the Church to own property, freedom for Catholic bodies to participate in civic affairs--but these things were, so to speak, negotiable. Even in the case of Mexico, where the situation after 1913 was admittedly more perplexing than most, it was instinctive for the Vatican to believe that something could eventually be arranged; it was a matter of finding the right formula.

To Rome, the way a solution was reached was as important as the solution itself. It was well aware of the disunity among Mexican Catholics, especially in the Episcopate, where the prelates ranged from rabid activism to conciliation in their views of what to do, with some of them veering unpredictably from one course to another. The Holy See knew that any settlement that was unacceptable to even a small number of the bishops might ultimately be as disastrous for the Church in Mexico as no settlement at all; hence its agonizing concern to bring all the bishops together on some course of action. The Vatican, like the Hierarchy, preferred a settlement based on a change in the laws; but when it became persuaded that this was unobtainable in the foreseeable future, that to leave public worship suspended any longer was hazardous in the extreme, and when, finally, it was sure that the Episcopate would accept--even if wryly in some cases--a de facto arrangement that covered minimum requirements, it moved decisively to end the stalemate.

Rome concluded very early that the Mexican problem would not respond to domestic political action; a dominant theme throughout the period of the conflict was admonitions to Mexican Catholics to refrain from organized



participation in political activities. It was from this principle that the Holy See finally took steps to sever any link between the Church and the armed action headed by the League. The ingredients that went into that decision are still not entirely clear, although it is obvious that Rome believed more harm than good would come to the Church from such identification. Nor is it entirely clear why Rome waited so long before acting. But the directives to the League and the bishops which constituted the decision give some indications of Rome's thinking. No doubt the Holy See would have been relieved to see the Calles regime replaced by one more favorable to the Church, and it was understandably reluctant to do anything to prejudice chances that this might come about; significantly, it specifically forbade publication of its order to the League. Also, it was understandably reluctant to give any impression that it was censuring the thousands of men who had taken up arms for religious reasons. In the end, Rome neither blessed nor condemned the Cristero rebellion. This is not surprising: she could have done neither on philosophical or theological grounds, and in the realm of tactics, either stance might have led to even worse problems than already existed. All-out support of the rebels would have placed the Vatican in a highly untenable position before world opinion and quite possibly have ended for many years any possibility of organized Catholic life in Mexico. Direct opposition to the armed movement would have sharply increased the dangerous division among Mexican Catholics and could have invited apostasy or schism on a large scale. Rome, instead, made the best of a bad situation. In retrospect the policy was a wise one: even though the 1929 settlement proved unsatisfactory, matters ultimately worked out in a way they might not have had another course been taken.

Few aspects of the religious conflict have been more misunderstood than the part played by the U.S. government. Mexican partisans of the

armed movement have explained this in very simple terms: Washington backed Calles as it had his liberal forebears because it sensed unerringly that Mexican Catholicism was the vital nerve of Mexican nationhood, and by weakening or destroying the Church it would further its aim of subjugating and perhaps ultimately absorbing Mexico; moreover, traditional Yankee anti-Catholic prejudice made this course especially congenial. The argument is to say the least unconvincing. Undoubtedly U.S. policy was governed by self-interest, but the U.S. government perceived that interest far differently than its critics imagined. The League and its supporters gambled that Washington would welcome the chance to help Mexicans get rid of the Revolution, which after all had plundered American properties and wounded American pride for fifteen years. What they failed utterly to comprehend was that although Washington had often been vexed at the behavior of the Revolutionary regimes, it had come to believe that it could probably live with them. The Bucareli agreements of 1923 had indicated that the Revolutionary leadership could be reasonable and that American interests could be defended by diplomatic means. Moreover, experience had shown that troubles came when public authority was weak in Mexico, and Washington was keenly interested in seeing peace and stability established there; as Obregón and then Calles showed they were able to weather both political and armed revolts, the new political order in Mexico looked increasingly viable--and permanent. Not that things were highly harmonious in 1926 and 1927; Calles's backsliding on the oil question along with other signs of hostility during his first two years in office presented a serious problem. But the Coolidge administration decided not to be precipitous; and the solution came as a result of a change in ambassadors. After Dwight Morrow's amazing success in settling major disputes with Calles it was clear to all but a few chronic doubters in U.S. official circles that

American interests would best be served by supporting the government in power in Mexico. Morrow's zealous efforts to end the religious conflict were certainly heightened by his love of the challenge and a genuine desire to be the humanitarian; but they were also entirely in keeping with his determination to remove a serious obstacle to good relations between the two governments. In terms of U.S. interests, his work was a huge success.

Next to official American support, the League coveted most the moral and financial backing of U.S. Catholics, but in the final analysis it got little except expressions of sympathy. The American bishops deplored the persecution in Mexico, called for prayers by U.S. Catholics, and extended generous hospitality to exiles and refugees; but they drew back in horror at the idea of helping bankroll a rebellion. Some, like Archbishop Dros-saerts, might lambaste the administration for its support of Calles, but even he would never have dreamed of violating the neutrality laws to aid the rebels. Knights of Columbus leaders and a few Catholic members of Congress protested vigorously and demanded withdrawal of U.S. recognition; but when their protests had been duly lodged and reported in the press, and after administration officials had explained to them that it would be unwise to take extreme action, they grudgingly accepted matters as they were and turned to other concerns. A few prominent laymen like William Buckley and Nicholas Brady seriously considered helping finance the armed movement, but they finally concluded that without Washington's benevolence, and without unity among Mexican Catholic leaders, its chances of success were nil. Buckley had good reason to doubt that his own interests or those of other U.S. oilmen would be served by investing money, and after his experience with the bitter Catholic in-fighting early in 1927 he could well doubt whether the interests of the Church would be served either.

Rather, the moderate view prevailed--represented by Father John J. Burke, William Montavon, and Cardinal Hayes. To these, the modus vivendi approach to a solution seemed natural and feasible. The Church had flourished in the United States in an atmosphere that was not Catholic and that was at times hostile. But American Catholics had found that they could live on terms of mutual respect and even affection most of the time with people who feared and mistrusted their religion. They had found that they could live peacefully and securely as Catholics under a government run mainly by non-Catholics. The whole experience, in short, had shown that practical good will could accomplish wonders. Surely Catholics in Mexico could live and even thrive under some similar de facto arrangement.

No one can say whether the rebellion might have succeeded. It does seem obvious, however, that important ingredients for success were lacking. Governments are overthrown in several ways. Especially common in Latin America has been the coup d'état, a quick grab for power in the national capital led by influential public figures and supported by all or most of the armed forces. There was never a serious prospect of this in the case at hand; no Catholic opponents of the regime had power bases from which to engineer a coup, and the military never showed indications that it was attracted by the Cristeros. Another way is by foreign pressure or outright invasion--which in this instance would have meant the United States. This was never a real possibility. A third route--the one which the League depended upon, along with substantial American help of some kind--is a nation-wide uprising with popular support of such magnitude that a government is overpowered by sheer numbers. This never materialized; there was broad popular enthusiasm for the movement only in Jalisco, Colima, and parts of Zacatecas, Guanajuato, Michoacán, Querétaro, and Nayarit. It is possible, of course, that this might have been enough,

that with adequate supplies of arms and ammunition and a few spectacular victories, masses of onlookers and even some of the military might have rushed to join what looked like the winning side. Or perhaps a war of attrition on a large scale might eventually have weakened the government and so lowered its prestige that it could have been toppled. But none of these things happened and the rebellion settled into a familiar pattern of guerrilla warfare, where it remained until the settlement of June 21, 1929, destroyed the will to continue and it dissolved.

It is evident that the Catholic militants seriously misgauged the Mexican scene--not only the social and political climate but even the religious. They failed to understand that the Revolution, despite often inept leadership, disorganization, unfilled promises, and corruption on the part of some of its leaders, had struck deep popular roots by 1926. Millions of Mexicans either actively supported it or were not unhappy enough to oppose it. Most of those who might have wished it gone were exhausted after a decade and a half of civil strife and had no stomach for another venture into bloodshed. Catholic leaders misjudged the nature of Mexican loyalty to the Church. There can be little doubt that this loyalty was still very great; only a small number of Mexicans had abandoned their faith. But they had, like people in many other nations, compartmentalized their lives; the Mexican social cosmos by the 1920's was essentially secular. Religion was Sunday mass, baptisms, marriages, the last rites, funerals, fiestas--and for many, private devotions and spiritual dignity; but it was not wages, working conditions, food, housing, and land. Most Mexicans wanted both religious and material comforts; and just as many of them were puzzled when told by Revolutionary orators that the Church was an enemy of their happiness, so were they unconvinced that only a government inspired by Catholic ideals could give them prosperity

and justice.

When it was all over, it was by no means clear who had won-- the Revolution or its Catholic opponents. Perhaps both had, although not in the way the intransigents on both sides had wished. The laws on religion remained unchanged and in fact were made even more harsh in the few years following the 1929 agreement. The possibility of Catholic leadership or even of Catholic institutional participation in Mexican national life was gone--at any rate for a long time. But on the other hand the struggle had shown that Catholicism was more deeply a part of Mexico than most leaders of the Revolution had thought. Even during the dark days of the early 1930's there were signs that the Church was very much alive, and by the 1940's that it was definitely healthy. Most Mexicans wanted it to be a part of their lives. Laws, it turned out, were not an insurmountable obstacle to this. The government had made its point and wanted no further trouble; the Church accepted unofficial freedom and resumed its mission--not in ways that the generation of Rerum Novarum and the Catholic Congresses had projected, but certainly in a manner that satisfied most Mexicans. Possibly, as a few still said forty years later, the struggle was not yet over. But it was certain, as the decade of the 1960's closed, that Mexicans had achieved a level of material wellbeing and national pride undreamed of a few decades earlier, while at the same time few would deny that Catholic spirituality was more vigorous than it had been since Mexico became a nation. And it was obvious to all that in spite of persistent problems and disagreements most Mexicans were far more interested in conquering their own futures than they were in battling over the past.

## APPENDIX

### The June 21, 1929 agreement\*

#### Portes Gil's statement:

I have had conversations with Archbishop Ruiz y Flores and Bishop Pascual Díaz. These conversations took place as a result of the public statements made by Archbishop Ruiz y Flores on May 2nd and by me on May 8th.

Archbishop Ruiz y Flores and Bishop Díaz informed me that the Mexican bishops feel that the Constitution and laws, especially the provisions which require the registration of clergymen and which grant to the States the right to determine the number of priests, threaten the identity of the Church by giving the state control of its spiritual offices.

They assure me that the Mexican bishops are motivated by sincere patriotism and that they wish to resume public worship, if this can be done in accordance with their loyalty to the Mexican Republic and to their consciences. They stated that this could be done if the Church could enjoy freedom, within the law, to live and to exercise its spiritual offices.

I am glad to take this opportunity to state publicly and with all clarity that it is not the intention of the Constitution, nor of the laws, nor of the Government of the Republic, to destroy the identity of the Catholic Church or any other, nor to intervene in any way with its spiritual functions. In compliance with the oath I took when I assumed the Provisional Government of Mexico to observe and enforce the Constitution of the Republic and the laws emanating therefrom, my goal has always been to fulfill that oath honestly and to insure that the laws be applied without intolerance and without any bias whatever. My administration is prepared to hear from any person, whether a dignitary of some Church or simply a private individual, any complaints he may have regarding injustices which may be committed by undue application of the laws.

With reference to several articles of the Law which have been misunderstood, I also take this opportunity to state:

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\*The texts of the two statements may be found in Moctezuma, II, 535-537, and numerous other sources.

1. That the provision of the Law which requires the registration of clergymen does not mean that the Government can register those who have not been named by the hierarchical superior of the religious creed in question, or in accordance with the regulations of that creed.
2. With regard to religious instruction, the Constitution and the laws in force prohibit it absolutely in elementary and higher schools, public or private, but this does not prohibit the ministers of any religion from teaching their doctrines, within church confines, to adults or their children who attend for that purpose.
3. That both the Constitution and the laws of the country guarantee to every inhabitant of the Republic the right of petition, and therefore the members of any Church can appeal to the proper authorities for the reform, derogation, or enactment of any law.

(signed) The President of the Republic  
E. Portes Gil

Ruiz y Flores's statement:

Bishop Díaz and I have had several conferences with the President of the Republic, and their results are set forth in the statement he issued today.

I am glad to say that all the conversations have been marked by a spirit of mutual good will and respect. As a consequence of the statement made by the President, the Mexican clergy will resume religious services in accordance with the laws in force.

It is my hope that the resumption of religious services may lead the Mexican people, animated by a spirit of good will, to cooperate in all moral efforts undertaken for the welfare of all the people of the country.

(signed) Leopoldo Ruiz  
Archbishop of Morelia and  
Apostolic Delegate



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### Unpublished Primary Sources

The most important Mexican manuscript source used in this study was the archive of the National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty, for many years in the possession of Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra and now available on microfilm in the Departamento de Investigaciones Históricas of the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia in Mexico City. The archive contains materials from the start of the Catholic social movement at the turn of the century to the end of organized Catholic opposition efforts in the 1930's. Especially pertinent to the present work are copies of correspondence and minutes of meetings of the League's Directive Committee, personal correspondence of Committee Vice President Palomar y Vizcarra, letters and reports on military matters, League publications, and a variety of periodical literature relating to the conflict. Also of great importance in the collection are copies of correspondence among various Mexican bishops at the time of the rebellion, which fill some important gaps in research resulting from the inaccessability of the Episcopal Committee's files; the latter are in the archives of the Archdiocese of Mexico, unfortunately still closed to scholars.

Much manuscript material on the conflict remains in private hands in Mexico. The most important collection belongs to Antonio Ríos Facius, who made available a number of useful documents of which the most valuable was the fragmentary "Historia de la L.N.D.R." written by League President Rafael Ceniceros y Villarreal. Other important data in the form of letters and

unpublished memoirs are scattered about Mexico, and one comes across them largely by accident. Such was the case with the 160-page manuscript written in 1932 by Felipe Brondo Alvarez of Saltillo, which describes the uprisings in Coahuila and northern Zacatecas in 1927 and is equally valuable as a sensitive, reflective account of one man's motives for joining the Catholic resistance movement. Personal interviews with Sr. Brondo provided further important information.

The Mexican government's official repository, the Archivo General de la Nación, contains very little relating to the religious conflict of 1926-1929, although the series entitled "Archivo de los Presidentes, Obregón-Calles" has a few items dealing with the Church-government skirmishes during the 1920-1925 period. The Archives of the State of Coahuila proved valuable as a source of official correspondence not available in the federal files--especially circular letters sent by the Ministry of Gobernación to state governors during the rebellion.

In the United States the indispensable source for data on the religious conflict is the Department of State Records in the National Archives in Washington. Files 812.404 and 812.00 provided much information used in the present study. The archives of the National Catholic Welfare Conference are still closed to researchers, but a helpful substitute were papers of Bishop Philip McDevitt of Pittsburgh in the archives of the University of Notre Dame; McDevitt was a member of the N.C.W.C.'s Administrative Board, and received reports from Father John J. Burke and William F. Montavon regarding some of their activities relative to the Mexican problem. The Catholic Archives of Texas in Austin contain several worthwhile items, especially periodical and pamphlet materials not found elsewhere. The archives of the Archdiocese of San Antonio have nothing of significance on the Cristero period but do contain some important materials on the 1913-1917

time of troubles.

### Published Primary Sources

These fall into several categories. Most important are memoirs and other eye-witness accounts, all of which must be used with due caution. On the Catholic side of the struggle, Jesús Degollado Guízar, Memorias de Jesús Degollado Guízar, último general en jefe del ejército cristero (Mexico, D.F.: JUS, 1957) is a narrative written by the last chief of the Guardia Nacional, especially valuable for information on military matters. Spectator Enrique de Jesús Ochoa, Los cristeros del Volcán de Colima (2vols.; 2d ed.; Mexico, D.F.: JUS, 1961), written by the chief chaplain of the Colima Cristeros, is a chronicle of the rebellion in that corner of Mexico which combines useful data on leaders and military operations with a hagiographic portrayal of the Catholic rebels as modern-day Christian knights. A more matter of fact approach, by a participant in the rebellion in Jalisco who treats the Cristeros as mortal men, is Heriberto Navarrete, "Por Dios y Por la Patria": Memorias de mi participación en la defensa de la libertad de conciencia y culto durante la persecución religiosa en México de 1926 a 1929 (2d ed.; Mexico, D.F.: JUS, 1964). Besides containing an excellent and balanced account of such matters as rivalries among leaders and problems of supplies, the work provides insightful reminiscences of the author's youthful experiences in the ACJM, whose members played such a commanding role in the conflict. As colorful as its title suggests is Luis Rivero del Val, Entre las patas de los caballos: diario de un cristero (2d ed., Mexico, D.F.: JUS, 1954), which supplements Navarrete with much fascinating detail. J. Andrés Lara, Prisionero de callistas y cristeros (2d ed.; Mexico, D.F.: JUS, 1959) depicts life in the Cristero enclaves in Colima during the final weeks of the rebellion in 1929. Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, Recuerdo

de recuerdos (Mexico, D.F.: Buena Prensa, 1942) is a short, posthumously published autobiography by the controversial prelate who rose to the leadership of the Mexican Episcopate during the rebellion. At times inaccurate in detail, and silent on many important issues, it nevertheless adds to an understanding of the conciliatory position in the Hierarchy. Pascual Díaz explained his side of the dispute with Capistrán Garza and the League in his Informe que rinde al V. Episcopado Mexicano el Obispo de Tabasco Pascual Díaz en relación con las actividades de la Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa en los Estados Unidos de América (New York: privately printed, 1928). Several pamphlet-size sketches written by Francisco Orozco y Jiménez during the 1910's and 1920's shed light on that complex churchman's thoughts and deeds; particularly important for the 1926-1929 years is his Memorándum (East Chicago, Indiana: Contreras Printing Company, 1929). The fire-eating bishop of Huejutla, Jesús Manríquez y Zárate, wrote numerous rousing and bellicose pieces in support of the militant position throughout the period of the struggle; representative of his turn of thought in his ¡Viva Cristo Rey! en la hora de suprema angustia (El Paso, Texas: Imprenta de la Revista Católica, 1928). Wilfrid Parsons, Mexican Martyrdom (New York: Macmillan, 1936) has some interesting anecdotal information but carefully skirts matters relating to the bitter intra-Catholic divisions in which the author was himself involved.

Emilio Portes Gil has staunchly defended the government's position in the conflict in his Autobiografía de la Revolución Mexicana (Mexico, D.F.: Instituto Mexicano de Cultura, 1964), at the same time doctoring the record in such a way as to enhance (or defend) his own role in ending the rebellion. Alvaro Obregón, Ocho mil kilómetros en campaña: Relación de las acciones de armas efectuadas en más de veinte Estados de la República durante un período de cuatro años (Mexico, D.F.: Librería de la Vda. de

Ch. Bouret, 1917) includes accounts of the Revolutionary leader's early clashes with clergy and militant Catholics which helped condition his stance on the religious question. Cristóbal Rodríguez, Cristeros contra cristianos (Mexico, D.F.: Editorial "Revolución," 1967) is a strong condemnation of the motives and deeds of the Cristeros by a federal general who fought against them.

An important collection of documents relating to the conflict is Leopoldo Lara y Torres, Documentos para la historia de la persecución religiosa en México (Mexico, D.F.: JUS, 1954); Lara was one of the intransigents in the Episcopate, and a number of the selections reflect that position. The transcript of the sensational trial in 1928 of José de León Toral and Madre Conchita is reproduced in El jurado de Toral y la Madre Conchita (lo que se dijo y lo que no se dijo en el sensacional juicio). Versión taquigráfica textual (2 vols.; Mexico, D.F.: Editores Alducín y de Llano, 1945?). Many of the formal pronouncements by Calles and Obregón on the religious question may be found in two collections of their public addresses: Esperanza Velázquez Bringas (ed.), Méjico ante el mundo: Ideología del Presidente Plutarco Elías Calles (Barcelona: Editorial Cervantes, 1927) and Aarón Sáenz, Fernando Torreblanca and Joaquín Amaro (eds.), Discursos del General Alvaro Obregón (2 vols.; Mexico, D.F.: Biblioteca de la Dirección General de Educación Militar, 1932). Much of the official U.S. Catholic position on the struggle is given in Our Bishops Speak: Statements of the Hierarchy of the United States and of the Administrative Board of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1919-1951 (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1952). An excellent source for texts and commentary on the social teachings of Pope Leo XIII is Etienne Gilson (ed.), The Church Speaks to the Modern World: The Social Teachings of Leo XIII (Garden City: Doubleday, 1954).

To a considerable extent, the Church-state clash revolved around legal questions. The texts of Mexican laws relating to religion may be found in J. Pérez Lugo, La cuestión religiosa en México (Mexico, D.F.: Centro Cultural "Cuauhtémoc," 1927), Félix Navarrete (ed.), La persecución religiosa en México desde el punto de vista jurídico (Mexico, D.F.: n.p., 1939?), and Felipe Tena Ramírez (ed.), Leyes fundamentales de México, 1808-1964 (2d ed. rev.; Mexico, D.F.: Porrúa, 1964). The source for various executive decrees and other federal action on religious matters is the Mexican government's Diario Oficial for the period of the conflict. For the English text of the Constitution of 1917 as well as selected items of diplomatic correspondence relating to the religious question see the pertinent volumes of Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office).

#### Secondary Works

No scholar has attempted a comprehensive survey of Church-state relations in Mexico. John Lloyd Meacham, Church and State in Latin America (2d ed. rev.; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966) provides a general summary as part of a much larger study. All general histories of Mexico discuss the Church question, with varying degrees of thoroughness and objectivity. For the most successful attempt to date to put the matter in perspective see Charles C. Cumberland, Mexico: The Struggle for Modernity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), which shows a careful awareness of the relationship of the religious problem to other complex factors in Mexico's history. Mariano Cuevas, Historia de la Iglesia en México (5 vols.; Mexico, D.F.: Editorial Patria, 1946-47) is a goldmine of information, however the account ends at 1910 and is a one-sided defense of the Church rather than a treatment of all phases

of the problem. Alfonso Toro, La iglesia y el estado en México (Mexico, D.F.: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1927) and Antonio Uroz, La cuestión religiosa en México (Mexico, D.F.: n.p., 1926) sweep through 400 years in single short volumes. Their approach is typical of the passionate hostility toward Church and clergy found in many contemporary pro-Revolution works; both insist that the Church's presence in Mexico has wrought little except corruption and ruin.

On the Mexican Church in the colonial era, Robert Ricard, La "conquête spirituelle" du Mexique (Paris: Institut d'Ethnologie, 1933) remains unsurpassed on the formative period. Good summaries of the role of the Church in colonial life are found in Clarence H. Haring, The Spanish Empire in America (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1947) and Charles Gibson, Spain in America (New York: Harper & Rowe, 1966), both of which draw extensively on primary material and monographic literature. Hubert Howe Bancroft's six-volume A History of Mexico (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft & Company, 1886-88) has extensive and often valuable information on the early development of the Church in Mexico.

The most intelligible discussion of the rise of anticlericalism in the Western world is found in Crane Brinton, Ideas and men: The Story of Western Thought (2d ed.; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963). There are several important studies on the subject for the national period of Mexican history. An excellent analysis of the philosophical development of Mexican anticlericalism is Martín Quirarte, El problema religioso en México (Mexico, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1967), which unfortunately stops with the coming of the 1910 Revolution. Wilfrid H. Callcott's two volumes, Church and State in Mexico, 1822-1857. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1926) and Liberalism in Mexico, 1857-1929

(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1931) contain considerable data generally interpreted to support the anticlerical position. On the pro-Church side, Aquiles P. Moctezuma, El conflicto religioso de 1926: Sus orígenes, su desarrollo, su solución (2 vols.; 2d ed.; Mexico, D.F.: JUS, 1960) is likewise useful as a source of information but unconvincing in many of its conclusions. An outstanding study which devotes much attention to the relationship of anticlericalism to Mexican liberalism is Jesús Reyes Heróles, El liberalismo mexicano (3 vols.; Mexico, D.F.: U.N.A.M., Facultad de Derecho, 1957-61). Two works of major importance on the subject, written by the man who more than anyone else fathered Mexican liberalism and anticlericalism, is José María Luis Mora, Obras sueltas (2d. ed.; Mexico, D.F.: Porrúa, 1963) and México y sus revoluciones (3 vols.; 2d ed.; Mexico, D.F.: Porrúa, 1965). Jesús García Gutiérrez, Acción anticatólica en México (2d ed., Mexico, D.F.: Editorial Helios, 1939) surveys Mexican anticlericalism from its beginnings in the Enlightenment through the age of Porfirio Díaz and concludes that philosophical motives predominated in the recurrent attacks on the position of the Church in Mexican life. Karl M. Schmitt, The Evolution of Mexican Thought on Church-State Relations, 1876-1911 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Microfilms, 1954) maintains that the Church and the Mexican state were moving toward a workable arrangement during the Díaz period and that events after 1910 reversed the process.

Protagonists in the showdown that came in 1926 have explained their positions largely in terms of their reading of Mexican history. Emilio Portes Gil, The Conflict Between the Civil Power and the Clergy (Mexico, D.F., Press of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1935; Spanish edition, La labor sediciosa del clero mexicano, Madrid: Editorial Cenit, 1935) justifies the government's stand by tracing the problem back to the time



of Charlemagne. Ramón J. Sender, El problema religioso en México: católicos y cristianos (Madrid: Imprenta "Argis," 1928) and Luis Balderrama, El clero y el gobierno de México: apuntes para la historia de la crisis en 1926 (2 vols.; Mexico, D.F.: Editorial "Cuauhtémoc," 1926-27) are both outspoken denunciations of the Mexican ecclesiastical establishment. The historical argument runs through the works of most partisans of the Catholic stance, but it is most lucidly expounded by Anacleto González Flores. In his El plebiscito de los mártires (Mexico, D.F.: n.p., 1930), a posthumous edition of his speeches and writings, he brands the liberals and Revolutionists as intruders bent on destroying root and branch Mexico's Catholic heritage, which he argues is the essence of Mexican nationality. His earlier La cuestión religiosa en Jalisco: breve estudio filosófico-histórico de la persecución de los católicos en Jalisco (2d ed.; Mexico, D.F. Editorial Luz, 1954) follows the same theme in discussing the 1917-1918 clash in the author's home state.

Only two professional historians have published books dealing exclusively with the conflict in the 1920's. Elizabeth Ann Rice, The Diplomatic Relations Between the United States and Mexico, as Affected by the Struggle for Religious Liberty in Mexico, 1925-1929 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1959) is a detailed and scholarly study of the official U.S. connection with the conflict and in particular of Ambassador Dwight Morrow's efforts to mediate the matter. The other work, Alicia Olivera Sedano, Aspectos del conflicto religioso de 1926 a 1929: Sus antecedentes y consecuencias (Mexico, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1966) is an objective treatment of the topic which makes no pretense of being a comprehensive history of the conflict but contains quantities of hitherto unpublished data; it is an encouraging effort to approach the Cristero epoch from a base of careful research rather than

emotional guesswork.

Most of the literature on the subject is frankly polemical--hardly surprising in view of the high feelings engendered by the clash and the fact that most who have written on it were either personally involved or closely associated with the participants. By far the largest share is by Catholics, most of them partisans of the militant viewpoint. The most prolific of these writers is Andrés Barquín y Ruiz, by general acclaim the dean of the school until his death in 1967. His earliest effort, written in company with Giovanni Hoyoís and published in Belgium shortly after the settlement in 1929, is La tragédie mexicaine: Sous l'ombre d' Obregón (Louvain: Ed. Rex, 1929), which set the norm for most of what has followed: lionization of the Catholic militants, excoriation of their opponents, and presentation of quantities of valuable information. The same author's Los mártires de Cristo Rey (2 vols.; Mexico, D.F.: Edit. "Criterio," 1937), Hacia la cumbre de la cristianidad (Guadalajara: Editorial "Rex-Mex," 1945) and El clamor de la sangre (published under the pseudonym of Joaquín Blanco Gil, Mexico, D.F.: Editorial "Rex-Mex," 1947) are equally passionate and equally useful for the hard-to-find data they contain. The historian of the ACJM, and Barquín y Ruiz's successor as the chief historian of the Cristeros, is Antonio Ríos Facius, whose views on the subject generally agree with Barquín's but whose style is more mature and graceful. Ríos Facius chronicles the rise of the militant youth movement in De Don Porfirio a Plutarco: historia de la A.C.J.M. (Mexico, D.F.: JUS, 1958) and La juventud católica y la Revolución Mexicana, 1910-1925 (Mexico, D.F.: JUS, 1963). His Méjico cristero: historia de la A.C.J.M., 1925-1931 (2d ed. rev.; Mexico, D.F.: Editorial Patria, 1966) has a wealth of detail on nearly every important Catholic who was involved in the movement. In 1945 Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra began editing a series

on the religious conflict called "El caso ejemplar mexicano." His own volume of the same name (2d ed.; Mexico, D.F.: JUS, 1966) is both a fervent defense of the movement in which he took so prominent a part and a sweeping interpretation of Mexico's past that is stridently pro-Catholic militant, anti-liberal, and anti-U.S. The third volume in the series, David G. Ramírez, La trinchera sagrada (Mexico, D.F.: Editorial "Rex-Mex," 1948), by the priest who was secretary to the intransigent Archbishop González Valencia of Durango, hews faithfully to the no-quarter theme of the collection.

Probably the most comprehensive work on the religious conflict for the entire period of the Revolution is Joseph Schlarman, Mexico, the Land of Volcanoes (Milwaukee; Bruce, 1950); its anti-Revolution, pro-Church bias is evident, however it contains an excellent bibliography. Antonio López Ortega, Las naciones extranjeras y la persecución religiosa (Mexico, D.F.: n.p., 1944) includes much important information on the part played by U.S. Catholics and by the Vatican in the conflict. A useful background work on the rise of the National Catholic Party which also provides insights into the early careers of many who were prominent in the rebellion is Francisco Banegas Galván, El por qué del Partido Católico Nacional (Mexico, D.F.: JUS, 1960). Charles S. Macfarland, Chaos in Mexico: The Conflict of Church and State (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1935) is an objective piece of reporting by an American Protestant clergyman who interviewed many leaders on both sides of the question. There are a number of regional sketches dealing with the rebellion, most of them short, semi-memoir accounts; fairly representative is José Dolores Pérez, La persecución religiosa de Calles en León, Gto. (2d ed.; León: n.p., 1952).

Only a few books devoted entirely to the rebellion have been written by persons sympathetic to the government. Cristóbal L. Rodríguez, La iglesia católica y la rebelión cristera en México, (1926-1929) (Mexico,

D.F.: Editora la Voz de Juárez, 1960) is one of several works by the same author, who maintains that the rebellion was the work of crazed fanatics nourished on retrograde clericalism. Silvano Barba González, La rebelión de los cristeros (Mexico, D.F.: n.p., 1967) is in the same vein. The author, who was governor of Jalisco for a time during the rebellion, argues that Mexico's religious strife stems from the peculiar nature of Latin Catholicism, which he contrasts with the more responsible variety found in Anglo-Saxon nations.

There are several works on the period which, although not concerned primarily with the religious question, nevertheless devote considerable space to it or to related topics. John W.F. Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico: A Chronicle of the Revolution, 1919-1936 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1961) has some fascinating sketches on several aspects of the controversy, presented in an entertaining style. Juan Gualberto Amaya, Los gobiernos de Obregón, Calles y regímenes "peleles" derivados del callismo: tercera etapa, 1920 a 1935 (Mexico, D.F.: n.p., 1947) is rather non-committal on the religious matter but deals at length with intra-Revolutionary factionalism, which had an important impact on it. An early attempt to consider the Church question in the broader context of national change is Felipe Islas and Manuel Múzquiz Blanco, De la pasión sectaria a la noción de las instituciones (Mexico, D.F. n.p., 1932). A handy source of reference for political events of the period is Robert E. Scott, Mexican Government in Transition (2d ed. rev.; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964).

Biographies of participants in the struggle abound, although like the rest of the literature most of them are on the Catholic side. Except for Madero, Zapata, and Cárdenas, there are few scholarly books on the men of the Revolution. Obregón still awaits his biographer; at present Mario Mena, Alvaro Obregón: historia militar y política, 1912-1929 (Mexico, D.F.: JUS,

1960) is perhaps the best available, but it is short and somewhat superficial. Rubén Romero et al., Obregón: Aspectos de su vida (Mexico, D.F.: Editorial "Cultura," 1935) has a variety of useful pieces of information. For Calles, Portes Gil, and the lesser lights there is little except propaganda works and campaign rousers. Usually students must find information in several sources; Miguel Angel Peral, Diccionario biográfico mexicano (2 vols.; Mexico, D.F.: Editorial P.A.C., 1944) and James Magner, Men of Mexico (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1943) are sometimes helpful. Harold Nicolson, Dwight Morrow (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935) although far from exhaustive, is a competent job by a writer who had access to important sources of information on the Ambassador.

There is no dearth of biographies of Catholics who figured in the fray. Most of the works are forcefully adulatory of their subjects and many are pure hagiography. Martín Chowell, Luis Navarro Origel: el primer cristero (Mexico, D.F.: JUS, 1967) canonizes the leader of the Cristeros in Michoacán, and Andrés Barquín y Ruiz, Luis Segura Vilchis (Mexico, D.F.: JUS, 1967) comes close to doing the same with the young zealot who tried to kill Obregón in 1927. Father Miguel Pro Juárez, probably the best remembered victim of the conflict, has been the subject of wide interest for over forty years. One of the earliest contributions to the vast martyrology that has grown up around the young priest is a pamphlet biography by a brother Jesuit, Thomas Ryan, S.J., "Murdered in Mexico: Father Michael Anthony Pro, S.J." (Dublin: The Irish Messenger, 1928). Antonio Gómez Robledo, Anacleto González Flores: el Maestro (2d ed., Mexico, D.F.: JUS, 1947) is a eulogistic, well-written study of the life and thoughts of that remarkable personage. Andrés Barquín y Ruiz, Los mártires de Cristo Rey (2 vols.; Mexico, D.F.: Edit, "Criterio," 1937) is composed of vignettes on a host of individuals both religious and

lay who perished in the rebellion. María Elena Sodí de Pallares, Los cristeros y José de León Toral (Mexico, D.F.: Editorial "Cultura," 1936) is a highly informative portrayal of Obregón's assassin written by the daughter of the attorney who headed his defense.

Most members of the Episcopate who were prominent at the time of the conflict have been memorialized in books by admirers. Alberto María Carreño, El arzobispo de México, Excmo. Sr. Dr. D. Pascual Díaz y el conflicto religioso (2d ed. rev.; Mexico, D.F.: Ediciones Victoria, 1943) is a formidable defense of that prelate by his secretary and friend; Díaz's Catholic critics have sharply challenged Carreño's version of things but are somewhat hampered by not having access to materials Carreño had at his disposal. Eduardo J. Correa has written a laudatory life of another of the moderates, Mons. Rafael Guízar Valencia: el obispo santo, 1878-1938 (Mexico, D.F.: Porrúa, 1951). Andrés Barquín y Ruiz, José María González Valencia: arzobispo de Durango (Mexico, D.F.: JUS, 1967) and Ramón Moreno, Excmo. y Revmo. Sr. Dr. Dn. Miguel de la Mora, 5<sup>o</sup> obispo de Zacatecas y 5<sup>o</sup> de San Luis Potosí: breves apuntes biográficos (San Luis Potosí; n.p., 1947) are useful but are heavily weighted in favor of the two prelates' activist views; the first in particular is rabidly antipathetic to Díaz and Ruiz y Flores and must be used as cautiously as Carreño's work on the opposite side. Francisco Orozco y Jiménez deserves a scholarly biography. The only thing currently available aside from a number of short homenajes is Vicente Camberos Vizcaino, Francisco el Grande: Francisco Orozco y Jiménez (2 vols; Mexico, D.F.: JUS, 1966), which is sweepingly adulatory, avoids most of the controversy surrounding the Archbishop, and in general smacks of "authorized" biography. Two important references for names and dates on the Mexican Hierarchy are José Bravo

Ugarte, Diócesis y obispos de la iglesia mexicana, 1519-1965 (2d ed., Mexico, D.F.: JUS, 1965) and Emeterio Valverde y Téllez, Bio-biografía eclesiástica mexicana (1821-1943) (3 vols.; Mexico, D.F.: JUS, 1949).

Although the Cristero epoch scarcely requires the novelist's touch to enliven it, there are two works of fiction worthy of the topic. Graham Greene, The Power and the Glory (New York: Viking Press, 1946; first published as The Labyrinthine Ways in 1940) and Elizabeth Borton de Treviño, The Fourth Gift (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966) are powerful stories about individual Mexicans hounded by the moral anguish and physical dangers of those tragic times. J. Guadalupe de Anda, Los cristeros: la guerra santa en Los Altos (Mexico, D.F.: Imprenta Mundial, 1937) is evidently factual in origin but is written in a narrative style that makes it even more valuable as a mood-setter.

### Periodicals

The Mexican newspapers consulted in preparing the present work were the Mexico City dailies Excélsior, El Universal, La Prensa, and El Imparcial for the years 1925-1929. All must be used carefully, because in addition to containing the normal amount of journalistic error they often reflected a degree of anti-government bias and, partly in consequence, were in turn subjected to intimidation and sometimes outright censorship by authorities. The New York Times for the period had generally comprehensive coverage of Mexican affairs and related happenings in the United States. The Texas Catholic weekly Southern Messenger provided a few helpful items on events inside Mexico and on the doings of Catholic exiles, as did the Jesuit weekly Revista Católica, published in El Paso.

An absolutely indispensable source on the rebellion is the magazine David, the official organ of an association of Guardia Nacional veterans

that began publication in 1952 under the direction of Aurelio R. Acevedo. Articles are mostly first hand accounts written by participants and often include healthy controversies over disputed details. In addition, important documents that continue to come to light are sometimes printed.

Several U.S. historians have published articles on the religious conflict. An insightful contribution on the background of the 20th century clash is Karl M. Schmitt, "Catholic Adjustment to the Secular State: The Case of Mexico," Catholic Historical Review, XLVII (July, 1962), 182-204, which studies the Church-state climate of the porfiriato. James W. Wilkie, "The Meaning of the Cristero Religious War against the Mexican Revolution," A Journal of Church and State, VIII, No. 2 (Spring, 1966), 214-233, is not as definitive as its title suggests. Most thoroughly covered is Dwight Morrow's work in bringing about the 1929 settlement; the offerings include Edward J. Berbusse, "The Unofficial Intervention of the United States in Mexico's Religious Crisis, 1926-1930," The Americas, XXIII, No. 1 (July, 1966), 28-62; Stanley R. Ross, "Dwight Morrow, Ambassador to Mexico," The Americas, XIV (January, 1958), 273-289; and L. Ethan Ellis, "Dwight Morrow and the Church-State Controversy," HAHR, XXXVIII (November, 1958), 482-505. Walter Lippmann, "The Church and State in Mexico: American Mediation," Foreign Affairs, VII (January, 1930), 186-207, is especially important because of Lippmann's close personal contacts with Morrow and other individuals close to the events described. On the critical situation the Church faced during the decade after 1929 see Kenneth Grubb, "Political and Religious Situation in Mexico," International Affairs, XIV (September, 1935), 674-699; Earle K. James, "Church and State in Mexico," Foreign Policy Reports, XI (July 3, 1935), 106-116; and especially Lyle C. Brown, "Mexican Church-State Relations, 1933-1940," A Journal of Church and State, VI (Spring, 1964), 202-222.



Unpublished Theses and Dissertations

René Velázquez López, "El problema religioso en México, 1917-1929" (U.N.A.M., 1963) is a competent survey of the period that incorporates a good sampling of the literature; it is generally pro-Cristero. Juan José Valero Zetina, "Los fines del estado y de la iglesia" (U.N.A.M., 1963) considers the problem of church-state relations in the abstract and concludes that conditions in Mexico in the 1960's are such that the government should lift the objectionable (and largely unenforced) religious laws. Robert E. Quirk, "The Mexican Revolution and the Catholic Church, 1910-1929: An Ideological Study" (Harvard University, 1950) generalizes broadly on the subject from limited data and tends to treat the Church as a monolithic force in the conflict. Elena Rubio, "Aportación al estudio histórico de las relaciones entre la Iglesia Católica y el estado mexicano, durante los gobiernos de Obregón y Calles" (U.N.A.M., 1963) is a curious attempt to interpret the religious struggle within a Marxist frame of reference rounded out by overtones of Toynbee; it is shot through with errors of fact and logic. On the Bucareli accords and granting of American recognition to the Obregón government in 1923, which helped determine basic U.S. policy toward the Revolutionary regimes, see C. Dennis Ignasias, "Reluctant Recognition: The United States and the Recognition of Alvaro Obregon, 1920-1924" (Michigan State University, 1967).

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