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THE SPANISH QUESTION IN MEXICO: LAZARO CARDENAS AND THE SPANISH REPUBLICANS

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THE SPANISH QUESTION IN MEXICO: LAZARO CARDENAS
AND THE SPANISH REPUBLICANS

BY

Lynn Hollingsworth Leverty

ABSTRACT

This dissertation describes Mexico's relationship with
the Second Spanish Republic and analyzes President Lázaro Cárdenas' influence on this policy. Cárdenas institutionalized the foreign policy of the Mexican Revolution during his six-year term (1934-1940) and used this policy to establish close political and personal ties with the Republic. These ties flourished until his death in 1970. His successors continued to support the Republic with no deviation from the path charted by Cárdenas.

In 1931 Mexican President Pascual Ortiz Rubio warmly heralded the birth of the Second Spanish Republic. When the Spanish Civil War began in 1936, President Cárdenas pledged Mexico's official support for the Republic. He immediately shipped food and weapons to Spain, and ordered Mexico's representatives in the League of Nations to defend the Republic against the Nonintervention Pact of the great powers.

The Civil War ended in 1939. Cárdenas immediately announced that Spanish refugees would be welcomed in Mexico. The Mexican
government worked with other nations to assist the refugees who poured into France from Spain and helped many to emigrate to Mexico. This immigration continued throughout the 1940's and brought many talented new residents to Mexico.

Mexico allowed the exiles to set up an organization which finally evolved into a government-in-exile which was formed in Mexico City in 1945. President Avila Camacho recognized the government-in-exile as the true government of Spain, and his successors continued to maintain this relationship until 1977—two years after Franco's death.

Mexico's refusal to recognize Francisco Franco was an extraordinary episode in her diplomatic history, and can be traced, at least to a great extent, to the continuing influence of Lázaro Cárdenas. Cárdenas believed strongly that the Republic was the legally elected government of Spain and that Franco had been imposed with the assistance of foreign governments. For this reason, he continued to support the Republic and to quietly urge his successors to continue to recognize the government-in-exile. For Cárdenas, Mexico's policy toward Spain was an ideal example of the foreign policy of the Revolution.
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President Lázaro Cárdenas, inaugurated on July 1, 1934, inherited a troubled relationship with Republican Spain. After the birth of the Second Spanish Republic in April 1931, Mexico rushed to be the first nation to recognize the new Spanish government. By mutual agreement, the legations of both nations were elevated to embassies and ambassadors were exchanged in late May. However, by 1934 relations between the two nations had cooled, primarily due to shifts within the Spanish government. Cárdenas continued to have close relations with a number of Spanish officials, but diplomatic relations between Mexico and Spain were not cordial again until just before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. Once the Civil War began, Mexico pledged immediate diplomatic and material support to the Republican government.

Early Relations between Mexico and the Second Spanish Republic

In 1931, when Mexico entered a close relationship with the Second Spanish Republic that would last more than 40 years, the social and economic conditions in the two countries were similar in many aspects. Both suffered from a lack of national unity and bitter conflicts between anticlericals and Catholics, were economically underdeveloped, and had a huge rural landless
class who were generally illiterate and dominated by local leaders. Mexico, however, was on the way—often slowly and violently—toward solving these problems, while Spain was just beginning the struggle to move into the twentieth century.

Mexico stood at a crossroads in 1931—the long violent years of the Revolution were over and the government, although still dominated by a strongman, was beginning to stabilize. Mexican citizens were looking to the government to see whether the reforms which had been promised in the 1917 Constitution would actually be carried out. Some reforms had been initiated during the turbulent 1920's while ex-Revolutionary generals jockeyed for political leadership. Over 1,000 rural schools were built, acres of land distributed to the landless, and, in a clumsy, often vindicative way, the separation of the church and state continued. In 1928 a national political party, el Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR), had been founded to institutionalize the Revolution, to ensure its control by the leaders of the Revolution, and to guarantee that the reforms promised in the Constitution would be carried out by subsequent governments. However,

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1 Ex-president Elías Plutarco Calles, although officially retired in 1928, continued to intervene as he felt necessary in the affairs of the Mexican government. Known as the "jefe maximo" of the Revolution, his successors, Emilio Portes Gil, Pascual Ortiz Rubio, and Abelardo Rodríguez, served only as long as they did not oppose the wishes of Calles. In fact, Ortiz Rubio was helped to resign by Calles when he tried to remove a number of Callistas from office. Calles was finally sent into exile in April 1936 by Rodríguez' successor, President Lázaro Cárdenas and did not return to Mexico for a decade, Henry Bamford Parkes, A History of Mexico (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1970), pp. 381-401; Jesús Silva Herzog, Una Vida en la Vida de México, 2nd ed. (México: Siglo veintiuno editores, s.a., 1975), p. 159.
thousands of peons still remained landless and without schools or health care; transportation remained inadequate; and, few persons directly participated in the government.

In foreign affairs, Mexico was beginning to emerge from her long withdrawal and develop a foreign policy reflecting her Revolutionary goals. Although not a member of the League of Nations until November 1931, Mexican diplomats had begun to play a role in a number of international conferences and were working with the United States and other affected nations to settle disputes arising from the Revolution. In 1930, Mexico's Foreign Minister, Genaro Estrada, announced what has become known as the "Estrada Doctrine" building on Mexico's long and bitter experience with foreign intervention. In this doctrine, Mexico renounced the use of diplomatic recognition as a tool for governments to use in expressing approval or disapproval of other governments and

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3 The Estrada doctrine states that Mexico will not withhold recognition of existing governments on political grounds. According to the doctrine, Mexico maintains diplomatic relations with all nations without regard to their internal politics (as long, obviously, as that nation maintains relations with Mexico). The purpose of the doctrine was to stop nations from using diplomatic recognition as a tool to force policy changes within another government—a problem Mexico had encountered many times, César Sepúlveda, La teoría y la práctica del reconocimiento de gobiernos (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Facultad de Derecho, 1974), pp. 75-80; E.M. Bouchard and Phoebe Morrison, "Recognition and Nonrecognition," American Journal of International Law 36 (January 1942):108-111.
insisted that existing governments should be recognized by other nations. Mexico also began to see herself as a revolutionary example that other nations should follow. The number of Mexican embassies and legations increased around the world, and most of the future leaders of Mexico represented their country abroad at one time or another.

Official ties with Spain had reached a low point in early 1931—primarily due to the Spanish claims arising from the Revolution. Many Spaniards had accumulated great wealth and property during the 19th century, including vast amounts of real estate in Mexico City, large haciendas, and businesses. Much of this property had been damaged or destroyed during the years of the conflict, and the two governments had been unable to satisfactorily resolve the resulting claims. The Spanish colony in Mexico generally was not supportive of the Revolution and continued to support openly opponents of the Mexican government.

Despite official coolness, ties between many Mexican and Spanish intellectuals were close in the 1920's. Liberal Spanish writers, such as Ramón Valle Inclán, visited Mexico to examine first-hand the results of the Revolution. Mexican scholars often traveled to Spain, where many formed relationships

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with Spanish politicians and intellectuals who were later to lead the Second Spanish Republic. Jesús Silva Herzog, a leading Mexican economist and writer who supported the Republic, became a friend of the future Spanish ambassador to Mexico, Julio Alvarez del Vayo, during a visit to Spain during this period. These relationships were invaluable in helping Mexico and Spain restore friendly diplomatic relations in 1931.

Birth of the Spanish Republic

The abdication of the king and the birth of the Second Spanish Republic were met with immediate official support in Mexico. President Pascual Ortiz Rubio quickly dispatched his Minister to Madrid, Enrique González Martínez, to pay a visit to the new Spanish President, Niceto Alcalá Zamora. González Martínez offered Mexico's best wishes and official support to the Republic.

The new Spanish government was recognized formally by Mexico on May 14. By mutual agreement, the legations of both nations were elevated to embassies, and ambassadors were exchanged in late May. Both ambassadors were persons of respect in their home countries. Mexican Ambassador Alberto J. Pani was a former Secretary of Foreign Relations under President Obregón, and

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Spanish Ambassador Julio Alvarez del Vayo was a prominent member of the Socialist party and a journalist. Pani's statement upon presenting his credentials to the Spanish government summarized the Mexican government's desire for a close relationship. He saluted Spain "with sympathy inspired by the present similarity of political and social aspirations and enthusiasm on the possibility of effective cooperation between the new democracy of the peninsula and the young nations of America."9

Alvarez del Vayo was welcomed warmly by Mexican officials in Vera Cruz in late May. After a slow journey to Mexico City during which he visited many cities and towns, the Spanish ambassador quickly became a popular figure in Mexico. The Embassy of Spain became a gathering place for many Mexican leaders, including diplomats Genaro Estrada and Daniel Cosío Villegas, economist and historian Jesús Silva Herzog, and labor leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano. Alvarez del Vayo also became the friend of the Minister of War and future president, Lázaro Cárdenas, and of ex-president Plutarco Elías Calles. He did not limit his friendships to the national leaders of Mexico; he also traveled frequently through the country, talking to municipal leaders and peasants, in an attempt to gain firsthand knowledge of the Mexican Revolution which could be useful to Spain.10


10Alvarez del Vayo, Give Me Combat, pp. 204-6.
Development of the Republican Government in Spain

The loose coalition, which announced the formation of a new government in Spain on April 14, 1931, was made up primarily of members of the republican parties and moderate socialists. Many of these men had signed the Pact of San Sebastián in August 1930. The Pact called for a republic along the lines of the European model in which political and religious liberty would be guaranteed. According to the Pact, a Constituent Cortes, or parliament, would be elected to write a new constitution for a democratic Spain.

The elections for the Constituent Cortes were held on June 28, 1931, and resulted in a parliament which was fairly representative of the political spectrum in Spain. The leftist parties, including the Socialists and the Left Republicans, held about 250 seats. The centrist Radical Party, led by long-time republican Alejandro Lerroux, held about 100 seats, and the conservative parties about 80. Included in the conservative wing were the agrarians, conservative republicans, and Catholic Basques.

The drafting of the constitution was entrusted to a committee of the Cortes led by two men: one a moderate socialist and the other a former Minister of Public Works under King Alfonso

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12 Jackson, The Spanish Republic and Civil War, p. 41.
XIII. After the draft was completed in early August, the entire Cortes worked on the final version until it was completed in early December. The finished constitution provided for a government based on the European unicameral parliament, with an independent judiciary and a president elected for a six-year term. The president was given the authority to appoint and remove the prime minister, veto legislation, and dissolve the Cortes twice during his term. The constitution also included provisions authorizing legislation to separate the state from the Catholic church, initiating a secular education system, establishing limited regional autonomy, and providing for land reform.

Reaction in Mexico

The similarity of the Mexican and Spanish constitutions helped to cement relations between the two countries. Mexican leaders believed that Spain, for the first time since Mexican independence, was interested in Mexico, and the Mexican government sent detailed information to Spain on her experience in carrying out reforms embodied in the 1917 constitution. Intellectuals, such as Cosío Villegas, went to Madrid to teach in the university and to advise the Spanish government. Unfortunately, many of the Mexicans, including Cosío Villegas, returned to Mexico saying that "the Spanish are better intellectuals than revolutionaries."¹³

¹³Cosío Villegas, Memorias, p. 145.
Despite enthusiastic government support, not all residents of Mexico were delighted with the Spanish Republic. Conservatives and members of the Spanish colony opposed the policies of the new Spanish government. Mexican conservatives preferred the Catholic and rigidly hierarchical structure of royal Spain and hoped to see this political and social regime restored in Mexico. Many members of the Spanish colony in Mexico also feared that the Republic would not assist them in pressing for resolution of their claims against the Mexican government.\(^{14}\)

Mexico watched Spain closely and worried that the Republic would not achieve its goals. Unlike Mexico, where the politics of personality had stunted the development of parties, the Republican government had been formed by representatives of a broad spectrum of political parties. Support for the individual programs of the Republic was tenuous, even among members of the government, and the political held divergent views on the best way to implement those policies held in common. There also was widespread opposition to the Republic in rural areas and among wealthy conservatives. Mexicans who were familiar with Spain feared that the Republican government would fall prey to the opposition. Remembering the fate of Madero and other leaders of the Mexican Revolution, Silva Herzog told Ambassador Alvarez del Vayo that governments which "are so decent, so humanitarian, and

\(^{14}\)Powell, Mexico and the Spanish Civil War, pp. 49-52; El Nacional, 15 April 1931.
legal" do not last long and are "quickly taken over by more ruthless opponents." Despite Mexican fears later proved to be valid, the Spanish government made significant progress toward achieving the goals set out in the Constitution during 1932 and early 1933. By early 1933, about ten thousand new primary schools had been built in a cooperative effort between the national government and municipal authorities. Separation of church and state was a more complicated question, but a divorce law was enacted and the cemeteries were secularized. The government also managed to reduce the number of military officers and civil servants who had long cut down on governmental efficiency and had increased the national budget. A statute for autonomy of Catalonia was enacted, and the Cortes passed an agrarian reform law which authorized the expropriation of millions of acres of land and provided for both individual and collective use of the expropriated land.

As Silva Herzog and others predicted, the political and economic problems of the Republic increased over time. The generally moderate policies of the government often pleased no one. The long-awaited agrarian reform law, when enacted, proved to be an excellent example of this widespread dissatisfaction. Due to the intricacies of the law, only about 10,000 families actually received land, leaving many families no better off than they had

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15 Silva Herzog, *Una vida en la vida de México*, p. 166.
been before 1931. A number of large estates, as well as smaller holdings which were supposed to be exempt from expropriation, were sold at auction for a fraction of their value, thus irritating wealthy farmers and impoverishing small farmers. In some areas, anarchists actively worked against the government's land reform program in the belief that such reforms would rob peasants of their revolutionary fervor.  

As a result of the constant agitation by the more radical conservatives and liberal groups and the violence which often accompanied this agitation, the country became more conservative. In the Constituent Cortes, the coalition between the moderate Radical party members and the socialist and republican parties broke down in the face of increasing conservative opposition to the government, and the Radical party moved into active opposition to the government. President Azáña was forced to call elections for a Constituent Cortes for November 1933.

The policies of the Cortes became more conservative as a result of the November elections. A small group of conservative parties won the largest number of seats, followed closely by the Radical party, which retained about 100 seats. Several of the leftist Republican parties lost almost all of their seats, and socialist representation was halved.  

16 Jackson, The Spanish Republic and Civil War, p. 85; Ramos-Oliveira, Historia de España, 3:43-51.

17 Jackson, The Spanish Republic and Civil War, p. 119.
Alejandro Lerroux, leader of the Radical Party, became the new prime minister and formed a cabinet composed only of fellow Radicals. Under their direction many of the laws of the Republic were suspended, including the agrarian reform act, church schools were allowed to operate openly, and expansion of the government education program slowed to a crawl.

Reaction in Mexico

The civil strife in Spain and the resulting shift toward conservatism caused relations between Mexico and Spain to cool by 1934. Ironically, as Spain began to reverse the programs of the Republic, Mexico elected President Lázaro Cárdenas, who planned to carry out many of the reforms of the Mexican Revolution which had existed largely on paper for more than a decade. As their policies diverged, the two governments became suspicious of each other and began to criticize each other's policies.

Cárdenas was inaugurated in July 1934. He selected as members of his cabinet some of the most radical Mexican politicians, including the former governor of Tabasco, Tomás Garrido Cánabal, and Narciso Bassols, a socialist. These men and their colleagues took the 1917 Constitution seriously and under Cárdenas leadership began to accelerate the distribution of land and the construction of schools, clinics, roads, and capital development projects such as irrigation dams. Peasants were encouraged to organize unions, and a new agricultural bank was established to give them credit for equipment, irrigation,
and similar improvements. Trade unions also were organized on a more extensive scale under the leadership of Vicente Lombardo Toledano, a friend of the President.

**Cárdenas' Relations with Spain**

President Cárdenas took a personal interest in the Spanish Republic, although he did not overlook the growing differences in policy between the governments of Mexico and Spain. He had strongly supported the Republic during its early years and had established a personal relationship with Ambassador Alvarez del Vayo. When Alvarez del Vayo returned to Spain after the 1933 elections, Cárdenas continued to correspond with the former ambassador. Alvarez del Vayo later credited President Cárdenas with saving him from arrest in 1934; he believed that the telegram which Cárdenas sent to his friend inviting him to the inauguration in Mexico City convinced the Spanish authorities that an arrest could have international repercussions. Throughout his administration, Cárdenas and Alvarez del Vayo continued to correspond on matters of interest to both, especially rural development.

The Mexican President was not impressed with Alvarez del Vayo's successor, Emiliano Iglesias, who was less committed to the original policies of the Spanish Republic than his predecessor. Iglesias was treated officially as any other member of the

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diplomatic corps, but he was unable to form close friendships with members of the Mexican government. Rather, he made friends with some conservatives and members of the Spanish colony, which did not endear him to the President. 19

Events in Spain

While Cárdenas was institutionalizing the programs of the Mexican Revolution, Spain was experiencing political and social unrest. The Spanish government faced anarchist uprisings, general strikes, and increased pressure from conservatives to restore peace and tranquility. This pressure caused frequent changes in the cabinet as the government tried to balance these conflicting demands. By 1935 governmental policy was becoming increasingly reactionary; land reform and expansion of the public educational system were halted entirely, Church properties were returned, and increasing concessions were made to the opponents of the Republic. When the government finally found itself unable to form any policy consensus, elections were called for February 1936.

The general turmoil and the difficulties of the Spanish government facilitated coalition building among the parties of the left. Despite the exile of a number of leaders, including socialist Indalecio Prieto, and the jailing of others such as Francisco Largo Caballero, a socialist trade union leader, the

19 Powell, Mexico and the Spanish Civil War, p. 53.
left began building a new coalition in 1935. The growth of fascism and the support of the Spanish Communist Party helped leaders of the republican and socialist parties to form quickly the Popular Front Coalition following the model of the French. The Popular Front Pact was signed in January 1936 by members of the republican, socialist, Catalan, and Communist parties. Despite wide variations in philosophy and goals, the Popular Front was able to agree on a program which was based on a return to the policies of the first two years of the Republic, including land reform, and amnesty for all political prisoners.

The February election resulted in a clear victory for the Popular Front, which benefited not only from their own success in coalition building, but also from the lack of consensus among the parties on the right. The parties of the Popular Front won a majority of seats in the Cortes, and Manuel Azaña became prime minister for the second time.

Mexico and the Popular Front Victory

The new Spanish government moved quickly to restore friendly relations with Mexico, and the Mexican government responded warmly to this overture. When the new Spanish ambassador, Félix Gordón Ordás, arrived in Mexico in June 1936, he was happily received by President Cárdenas, who stated:

I share your Excellency's ideas about the mutual historical destiny that unites Mexico and Spain... the parallel extends to a common social task that should be immediately and effectively accomplished... please tell your government,
Mr. Ambassador, that Mexico understands and appreciates its demonstrations of international cordiality, and that we will now and in the future work to achieve in both countries a unity of objectives and action that will serve our two peoples, who have joined together permanently to seek the same solution to our social problems.20

Cárdenas did not send a new ambassador to Spain after the Popular Front victory. The Mexican ambassador in Madrid, General Manuel Pérez Treviño, had been sent to Spain in 1935 and remained there until he was replaced in 1937.

The Popular Front Government

The Popular Front government moved quickly to reverse the trends of the past several years. Political prisoners were given amnesty, initial steps were taken toward renewed land reform, and the autonomy of Catalonia was restored. However, the government again became the victim of the conflict between rising expectations of the peasants and fears of the conservatives. Civil disturbances increased as followers of the socialists and anarchists paraded and marched on churches and prisons. Some members of the far right retaliated by forming squads that drove through working class neighborhoods firing randomly at residents.

Despite government efforts to fulfill campaign promises and unite Spain, widespread social unrest continued throughout the spring of 1936. The most conservative groups, bolstered by events in Europe such as the rise of Hitler and Mussolini, tried

20 Ibid., p. 55.
to undermine the government through fear. In addition to the
death squads which drove through poor neighborhoods, editorials
and leaflets were distributed which prophesized the economic and
social collapse of Spain. Members of the radical left, including
the Communists and a number of socialists, also backed away from
supporting the Popular Front government and planned to use the
increasing demands from workers and peasants to solidify support
for a return to the most radical goals of the Republic.

In March, three generals, led by Emilio Mola Vidal, the
last Director of Security under the monarchy, began to plot a
coup d'etat. By the end of June the plans for the coup were well
organized, and commanding generals had been appointed for each
district, including Morrocco. Several civilians, such as José
Calvo Sotelo, former Minister of Finance during the monarchy, and
José Antonio Primo de Rivera, son of the dictator of Spain
from 1923 to 1930, also participated in planning the uprising
which was scheduled for late July.

Spurred by the July 12 murder of Calvo Sotelo, the leaders
of the uprising notified their followers to finish preparations,
and the coup began on the afternoon of July 17. Although the
leaders of the Popular Front government received a number of
warnings from the military and members of the government who were
close to the leaders of the revolt, the timing of the coup took
them by surprise. Nevertheless, the Republic managed to hold
major portions of Spain, including Madrid, Catalonia, much of
the southern Basque region, Asturias, and most of the eastern part of the nation. The Insurgents controlled Morocco, Cádiz, and Galicia, as well as most of the military supplies and manufacturing sites. Civil war followed, as the government and the insurgents fought for control of the nation.21

**International Response to the Spanish Civil War**

The initial international response to the civil war in Spain was mixed. Germany quickly contacted the insurgents and promised them diplomatic and material support. In England and France, government reaction was mixed, although French Socialist Prime Minister Leon Blum responded favorably to the Republic's appeal for assistance. However, within two weeks of the uprising, Blum proposed that France, Britain, Russia, Portugal, Germany, and Italy sign an agreement not to intervene in any way in the Spanish civil war. The French prime minister realized that Hitler was moving into the Rhineland and that international participation in the Spanish war could precipitate a major European war. According to the French government, the best solution to the difficult problem was an international pact which obligated the European powers to stay out of the war in Spain.

As Blum planned, on September 9 each of the nations signed the agreement, which became known as the Nonintervention Pact. All the signatories, except Portugal which had not named a representative, agreed not to award any aid, military supplies, or diplomatic

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support to either side. However, at least two of the signatory nations did not honor their agreement. During August and early September, Germany and Italy provided the insurgents with airplanes, guns, ammunition, two submarines, armored cars, artillery, anti-aircraft guns, and personnel. This aid continued after the September agreement and throughout the war.

On October 7, the Russian government declared its intention to break the agreement because other nations were not adhering to the Pact. Soon after, Soviet trucks, airplanes, tanks, and advisory personnel began arriving in Spain.

In the Americas, only Mexico promised strong support for the Republican government. Although not a member of the Nonintervention Pact, the United States decided to adhere to the spirit of the agreement and remain neutral. A number of other nations, including Argentina and Chile, sympathized with the insurgents, although they did not provide them with aid. Mexico stood alone in supplying aid and diplomatic support for the loyalist Republican government.

President Cárdenas explained that "the government of Mexico is obligated to the Republican government of Spain, legally constituted and presided over by Manuel Azaña... our responsibility is to serve Spain... moreover, the Republican government

Ibid., p. 314.
Ibid., pp. 262-75.
Ibid., pp. 315-16.
of Spain is sympathetic to the revolutionary government of Mexico. President Azaña represents the desire for moral and economic freedom of the Spanish people. Today Spain is embroiled in a difficult and bloody fight, caused by the privileged class."\(^\text{25}\)

The Mexican president announced on August 18 that Mexico would supply as many arms as possible and, what was perhaps more significant, would support the Spanish Republic in the League of Nations and other international forums.\(^\text{26}\) Mexican diplomats in Europe prepared to work together to promote international support for Republican Spain.

Cárdenas planned to base Mexico's support for Spain in the League of Nations on the similar support given Ethiopia after the Italian invasion. In 1935, he worked to use the League machinery to punish Italy. When the League did impose sanctions against Italy, Mexico participated in the Committee of Coordination, which prohibited sending munitions and war material to Italy. The sanctions then imposed by the League were generally ineffective because many members continued normal trading relations with Italy. Even Mexico eventually terminated her sanctions, although Mexico did continue to refuse to recognize Victor Emmanuel II as the emperor of Ethiopia and fought to keep Ethiopia from being


expelled by the League. The Mexican government hoped that more effective sanctions now could be imposed against the insurgents in Spain and the nations which supported them.

Cárdenas also feared that if the League failed to act decisively in the case of Spain, the Spanish Civil War would lead to a war that could engulf most of the world. He believed that if Germany and Italy continued to be able to invade smaller nations at will, with little or no response from the major powers, it would be impossible to stop them at a later date.28


Mexico's immediate support for the Republican government in Spain was followed by material and especially diplomatic assistance. Throughout the long years of the Civil War, President Cárdenas continued to try to improve the Spanish government's position in the League of Nations and with the nations of the Americas. Mexico was unable to send large shipments of weapons, but some arms were sent, as well as food and other supplies. Spanish refugees were invited to Mexico. Despite frequent changes in the Republican government, relations between the two countries remained friendly for the duration of the war.

Mexico's Early Support for the Republic

Mexico actually responded to Spain's request for assistance before the Civil War began. In June 1936, realizing that an uprising against the Republic was possible before the end of the year, the leaders of the government sent appeals to their allies for pledges of arms and other supplies. The Mexican government responded favorably on June 29, but could not promise to deliver the arms quickly or in substantial numbers. Mexico was not an arms producer, but President Cárdenas planned to buy weapons on
the international market to supplement what could be supplied from domestic stocks.  

A month after the uprising occurred, Cárdenas announced that 20,000 rifles and 20 million rounds of ammunition were being sent to Vera Cruz where they would be loaded on a waiting Spanish ship, the Magallanes. Cárdenas also stated that he had authorized the Mexican ambassador in France, Colonel Adalberto Tejada, to purchase arms and supplies in France for the Spanish Republic. Because of the policy of the European powers to avoid selling arms to either side in the Spanish war, Colonel Tejada was able to purchase only small amounts of military equipment. However, officials of the Mexican government stated that "the government of Mexico is morally and politically obligated to aid the Republican government of Spain which is legally constituted and led by President Manuel Azaña" and continued to actively pursue arms purchases wherever possible.

Although Mexico was unable to provide the Republican government with the war material that it needed, Mexico's support provided a needed psychological boost since most nations refused

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1Mexico, Archivo Historico de la Secretarfa de Relaciones Exteriores, "La Secretarfa de Relaciones Exteriores a Manuel Azaña," 30 June 1936 (hereafter cited as Archivo).

2Archivo, "Convención entre la Secretarfa de Hacienda y Credito Pública y España," n.d.


to sell weapons to the Republicans. In fact, Mexico was the first nation to sell arms directly to Azaña's government; the Soviet Union joined her two months later. However, while the Soviet Union required Spain to pay for the arms in gold, at the exchange rate set by the Russians, Mexico accepted payment in Spanish currency at the prevailing international exchange rate.\(^5\)

**International Reaction to Mexico's Aid to Spain**

The Mexican government was criticized internationally for her role in supplying weapons to the Spanish Republic. On November 7, 1936, Daniel Cosío Villegas, Mexican consular official in Portugal, informed the Mexican Foreign Ministry that relations between Mexico and Portugal "while never enthusiastic, are now, because of intolerance in Europe, very delicate."\(^6\) Cosío Villegas stated that the newspapers frequently published articles critical of Mexico, and that this criticism, coupled with public opinion, made Mexico's position in Portugal very weak. In February 1937, Cosío Villegas again wrote to inform the Foreign Ministry that the situation had not improved, and suggested that it would be best to ask the English or French embassies to arrange for the evacuation of Spanish refugees in Portugal and to protect them when

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\(^6\)Archivo, "Daniel Cosío Villegas a Eduardo Hay," III 516 (46-0) 9731 No. 10, 7 November 1936.
necessary. He believed that their association with the Mexican consulate might further complicate their tenuous situation in Portugal.\(^7\)

The government of Chile was equally disturbed by the arms sale, and Mexican Ambassador Ramón P. de Negri, who was later to serve as ambassador to Spain, wrote that the Chilean government saw the sale of arms to the Azáñia government as a "service to the Soviets."\(^8\) De Negri warned that a rupture in diplomatic relations between Mexico and Chile was possible due to the strong feelings provoked by the Spanish crisis. In response, the Mexican Foreign Minister, Eduardo Hay, advised the ambassador to remain calm and avoid doing anything rash that would force overt friction between the two nations.\(^9\) Although relations were decidedly cool throughout the duration of the war in Spain, diplomatic ties were never severed.

Ambassador Narciso Bassols in London was more philosophical about the English government's concerned reaction to the arms sale. He reported that, while the government was continuing its course of official neutrality, there was widespread sympathy in England for the Republicans and that England had no intention of publicly

\(^7\)Archivo, "Daniel Cosío Villegas a Eduardo Hay," III 1510 (46) "37/1", 10 February 1937.

\(^8\)Archivo, "de Negri a la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores," III/146 (46) 9624, 2 September 1936.

criticizing Mexico for her support for them. However, he did request that the Mexican government clarify two aspects of Mexico's policy toward the civil war: nonintervention and aid to the Republican government. Bassols commented that the English government saw these two policies as being mutually exclusive and diplomatically confusing. In response to this request and similar accusations of incongruence in policy, in late 1936 the Mexican Foreign Ministry prepared a speech on the Mexican position, which was presented by Ambassador Bassols in the League of Nations.

In the speech, Bassols stated that Mexico was following the interests of civilization and maintaining the integrity of the League by assisting a member of the League against aggression. He stressed the interdependence among nations, and the need for legitimate governments to help each other. The Mexican government, Bassols said, was simply adhering to international law and the Pact of the League by providing material aid to the Republican government of Spain.

Reaction in the United States also was subdued. The U.S. Secretary of State stated that the United States government was not going to protest the sale of arms to Spain by Mexico.

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However, a few weeks later the two nations agreed that Mexico would not buy weapons in the United States to be sold in Spain. An official in the Mexican Foreign Ministry, Ernesto Hidalgo, reported to President Cárdenas that the United States press had been generally favorable to Mexico's support of the Republican government.

The government of Uruguay took a different stand on the issue and sent a telegram to Eduardo Hay suggesting mediation by the American states to end the war in Spain. The suggestion was rejected by President Cárdenas on the grounds that mediation could constitute intervention into the internal affairs of Spain and give de facto recognition to the rebels.

The Spanish rebels sent a formal protest to the Mexican government in August 1936 concerning the sale of weapons to the Republic. Miguel Caballanes, leader of the insurgent Junta de Defensa Nacional, stated that the government of Mexico was violating the doctrine of nonintervention by aiding the "communists" and announced that his government would not recognize any agreement made between Mexico and the Spanish Republic.

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12Archivo, "Luis Quintanilla a la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores," 29 December 1936.


Although the contents of the telegram were not unexpected and Mexico did not bother to reply, the means of transmitting the protest caused consternation in the Spanish Embassy in Mexico City. The letter which accompanied the telegram was written on embassy paper and signed by a minor official, Ramón María Pujades. On September 3, Spanish Ambassador Félix Gordón Ordás announced that Pujades was working without authorization and requested that he be deported for usurping the functions of the Embassy of Spain. After a short investigation, the Mexican government complied and deported Pujades on December 30, 1936.

Reaction at Home

The Mexican people were generally apathetic about the Spanish Civil War. Few were interested in foreign affairs, especially in events that had little or no effect on their daily lives. Some members of the government, leaders of the labor unions, and many intellectuals supported Cárdenas' position, however, and understood the relationship he had drawn between events in Spain and possible international repercussions. Yet, many Mexican citizens who were interested in Spain sided with the insurgents. This group included most businessmen, leaders of the Catholic

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17Archivo, "Félix Gordón Ordás a Eduardo Hay," 2 September 1936.
church, and political moderates and conservatives who opposed Cárdenas' "socialist" policies and still preferred the traditional church and business-oriented prerevolutionary government of Porfirio Díaz.

The most active supporters of the government's policy toward Spain were members of the government and leaders of the trade unions. Members of the PNR supported this policy in editorials and in lectures at universities and social gatherings. The trade unions, led by Vicente Lombardo Toledano and his newly-formed Confederación Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM), organized rallies and raised money from members and other contributors. They also circulated propaganda through the labor press, radio, and special education programs. Most of the private funds for Spain raised in Mexico were collected by the CTM.18

The Spanish Ambassador in Mexico, Félix Gordón Ordaz, was invited to give lectures and presentations on the Spanish Civil War; he traveled throughout Mexico pleading for support. Visiting Spanish Republicans also were invited by the government to publicly present the case for Spain.

The Catholic church in Mexico supported Franco, as did the Catholic church throughout the world. However, the Church leaders in Mexico did not follow the lead of the Pope who supported the

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armed rebellion as means to stop "the destruction of civilization." Mexican bishops did instruct their priests to offer prayers for peace and liberty in Spain, and sent a message of sympathy and support for the Spanish clergy in 1937.

**Continued Support for the Republic**

Despite international criticism and tenuous support at home, the Mexican government continued to support the Republic. In February 1937, the Republicans asked for food and gasoline, which were to be exchanged for crude oil that the Spanish government purchased before the war and was no longer able to refine because the refineries were in the hands of the insurgents. Mexico immediately sent 15,000 sacks of chick peas and limited amounts of other food, including sugar and flour. Although Mexico agreed in principle to exchange the crude oil for gasoline, this exchange was impossible because the British refinery in Tampico refused to supply the Loyalists on the grounds of the Nonintervention Pact.

In March, the Mexican government sent a large shipment of arms worth $1,791,166 to the Republican government. Part of the shipment originated in Mexico and part was bought in Czechoslovakia.

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with Republican funds through Mexican contacts. The arms included rifles, ammunition, grenades, machine guns, and a few large artillery pieces. Several hundred thousand kilos of Mexican sugar accompanied the weapons. 21

On September 1, 1937, President Cárdenas told the Mexican Congress that Mexico had sold more than eight million pesos worth of arms to Spain in the past year. 22 He noted that Mexico had clearly defined her position in the League of Nations and reiterated her belief that aiding the legitimate, elected government of Spain conformed to current international law and the tenets of the Pact of the League. Reaction to the speech was generally favorable. Deputy José Cantú Estrada stated that Mexico's policy toward Spain was "inspired by a lofty sense of humanity" and other deputies also spoke in favor of the President's actions. 23

Cárdenas' agreement not to sell arms purchased in the United States to Spain elicited a negative response in at least

21Archivo, "de Negri a la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores," III 1510 (46) 37/1, 7 March 1937.


one instance. Soon after the agreement was announced the head of the Mexican Air Force, General Roberto Fierra Villalobos, reportedly resigned when Cárdenas refused to ship a load of previously-purchased United States planes to the Republican government.  

After 1937 Mexican arms shipments to Spain slowed because of the Mexican agreement with the United States and the embargo imposed by the nations of western Europe. This embargo closed many arms markets to the Mexican government and forced officials to obtain weapons in eastern Europe and elsewhere in Latin America, but when the Republican government bought arms in Bolivia they were shipped to Spain through Vera Cruz. Mexico also acted as an intermediary in several small shipments which originated in eastern Europe, especially Czechoslovakia.

Although the Cárdenas government put no impediments in the way of Mexican citizens who wished to volunteer for service in Spain, no more than 200 Mexicans actually served in the Republican Army during the war. Most of these men became officers in the International Brigades: units composed of international volunteers from Europe and the Americas that played a decisive


role in several major battles, including the defense of Madrid. Some Mexicans who wished to volunteer to aid the Republican army were discouraged by the cost of transportation to Spain. In August 1936 a group of Mexican citizens organized under the name "legión Mexicana" applied to the Spanish Embassy for transport. When the Spanish government asked Mexico for its consent the response was cool and the embassy reluctantly withdrew Spanish support for the project. The men were forced to make their own way to Spain. There is also evidence that a few Mexicans served with the rebel forces.

Experts differ on the units in which Mexican volunteers served. Verle B. Johnston, Legions of Babel: the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War (University Park, Pennsylvania: State University Press, 1965), pp. 28-32, states that most sources indicate that the Mexican soldiers served in the International Brigades. Thomas Powell, Mexico and the Spanish Civil War, pp. 103-109, believes that most published information is inaccurate (including the memoirs of Spanish Ambassador Félix Gordón Ordás) and that most Mexicans served in the regular Spanish units. An article published in Excelsior on 3 August 1937 states that several Mexican cadets who deserted their units and tried to go to Spain to fight with the Republicans were court martialed and dishonorably discharged for deserting. Several of the cadets did fight in Spain, but at their own expense.


In a letter written on 13 August 1936, de Pujades writes as a representative of La Junta de Defensa Nacional housed in the Spanish Embassy. He warned Eduardo Hay that the insurgents would consider any service by Mexican citizens on behalf of the Republican government to be a "disgrace". He also warned that the Junta "would find it difficult" not to "contain the eagerness" of Mexicans who want to serve with the insurgents' forces. Archivo, de Pujades a Eduardo Hay," 13 August 1936; Excelsior, 29 July 1936.
**Mexico Welcomes Spanish Refugees**

In addition to military aid, Mexico accepted two groups of Spanish refugees during the war. The rebels controlled major areas of Spain by 1937, including Cádiz, Seville, Toledo, and Bajadoz. In the Republican-held areas supplies were often short, and civilians were pressed into service as soldiers, nurses, or support personnel. Because of the constant threat of danger, the Spanish government decided to evacuate several thousand orphans and children whose parents were involved in the war to friendly nations such as Russia and Mexico. Of these, about 450 were taken to Mexico. They were housed in a converted monastery in Morelia for the duration of the war.29

The response of the Mexican people to this first group of refugees was supportive, but there were major differences of opinion concerning the way in which the children should be reared during their stay in Mexico. Many members of the old Spanish colony in Mexico, who otherwise did not support the Republic, wanted to adopt the children and rear them according to their national heritage. Mexican supporters of the Republic also wanted to take the children into their homes so that they could be reared in a family sympathetic to the ideals for which their parents were fighting or had died. However, for a number of

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reasons, including the fact that it was impossible to determine whether or not some of the children were actually orphans and the difficulty in determining which homes would be best for the children, the Mexican government decided to keep the children in a group. They were housed in Morelia in a home staffed by Mexican teachers and counselors. According to Patricia Fagen, they were "educated in the ideals for which their parents were fighting and in a completely Mexican environment." By 1943, most of the children had either graduated from the school, or were reunited with their families, and the home was closed.

In July 1938 President Cárdenas signed the decree establishing La Casa de España. This decree allowed Spanish intellectuals, who were no longer able to work in their own country due to the disruptions of the war, to emigrate to Mexico. La Casa de España was funded entirely by the Mexican government and designed to be a temporary home for eminent Spanish scholars who supported the Republic and had already been moved from the war zone to Valencia by the Spanish government for protection.

In a mutually advantageous plan, Daniel Cosío Villegas and Wenceslao Roces, the Subsecretary of Education in the Republican government, arranged for these scholars to come to


Mexico as "cultural ambassadors" of Spain. Unlike the treatment accorded most ambassadors, Mexico agreed to pay for their transportation and upkeep. The Mexico government retained the right to determine how long the "ambassadors" would remain in Mexico. In return for a place to work, the scholars were obliged to teach at Mexican universities and to give special lectures and classes at La Casa de España, which was established in Mexico City. In all, approximately 35 Spaniards came to Mexico under this arrangement during the Civil War.

In 1940, when it became evident that the new head of the Spanish government, General Francisco Franco, would not be easily unseated, the charter of La Casa de España was revised. Renamed El Colegio de México, it was removed from governmental control. A structured teaching staff of Mexican and Spanish scholars was hired to provide regular classes and a degree program. The college was able to recruit outstanding intellectuals from Mexico, Spain, and Hispanic America; it has since become one of the most respected universities in Hispanic America.

When the Republican government disbanded the International Brigades in late 1938, Cárdenas again agreed to accept a group of refugees from the war. In an official statement published in Excelsior, a government spokesman stated that Mexico would accept those International Brigade members no longer welcome in their

\[32\text{Ibid., pp. 169-178.}\]
homelands "in accordance with the vital interests of the Spanish people and to demonstrate before the League and the world Mexico's support for the Republic." Domestic pressure, however, forced the government to consider the former Brigade members on a case-by-case basis, and a number of applicants were denied admission to Mexico.

President Cárdenas was known for his open policy toward political refugees. According to the Mexican president, political asylum was a basic human right that must be respected, despite conflicting ideologies. His insistence on the right of political asylum, and the subsequent admittance of the Spanish refugees and Leon Trotsky, caused a number of conflicts within the government, even among Cárdenas' supporters. Narciso Bassols refused the ambassadorship to Spain as a result of Cárdenas welcoming Trotsky.

Diplomatic Support for the Republic

Mexico actively supported the Spanish Republic in the League of Nations. She had only joined the League in 1931, but her ambassadors quickly became known as outspoken proponents of the organization and its goals. For this reason, Cárdenas expected the League to support the Spanish Republic. For this

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33 *Excelsior*, 17 January 1939.
34 *Excelsior*, 31 January 1939.
purpose, two of Mexico's most able and respected diplomats, Isidro Fabela and Narciso Bassols, were sent to Geneva as ambassadors to the League during the Spanish War.  

In one of the early debates on the Spanish war in the General Assembly, Bassols denounced the rebellion of the Spanish generals, the armed intervention of Italy and Germany, and the "legal monstrosity" of the Nonintervention Pact. He called on the League to uphold Spain's right to buy and import arms to save herself from international aggression. He stated that Mexico's position was based on the belief that the Spanish Republican government was the legal representation of the Spanish people as expressed in the elections of 1936. For this reason, Mexico rejected the nonintervention policy of the Great Powers as being a denial of legitimate means of defense to a legally constituted government confronted with a military uprising. Bassols argued that, according to prevailing law and custom, Spain should be able to buy weapons

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36 Narciso Bassols, former Secretary of the Treasury for Cardenas, served as Ambassador to Great Britain from 1935-1937, and as delegate to the League of Nations in 1937. His relationship with Cardenas was tenuous—he had been removed from the cabinet and sent to Europe because of his close relationship with North American lawyers who represented interests contrary to Mexico's, but he was well known and respected in Mexico. Bassols was a socialist with close ties to the socialists and communists in Republican Spain. Isidro Fabela was Mexico's delegate to the International Court of Labor and the League of Nations from 1937-1940, and gradually took over the post of defending Spain in the League.

and supplies needed to defeat the insurgents. If, for some reason, it was necessary to act against international custom, the action should be that of the League rather than of a group of nations acting independently.38

Such active support of the Spanish Republic caused several nations to accuse Mexico of intervention in Spanish affairs. However, Cárdenas defended Mexico's support of the Republic in the League in a letter to Fabela in early 1937. The Mexican president wrote that Mexican aid to the Republic did not contradict the principle of nonintervention, because to deny aid was, in fact, indirect aid to the rebels. Mexico's support of the Republic was "the logical result of the correct interpretation of the doctrine of nonintervention."39

In early March, Cárdenas sent a personal note to the Secretary General of the League stressing Mexico's support for the League and international peace. The note strongly denounced the nonintervention policy taken by several nations, especially in the face of documented German and Italian aid to the insurgents. Cárdenas stated that the lack of cooperation with the legally constituted authorities in Spain was cruelly prolonging the war and increasing the possibility of a larger international conflict.

38Ibid., pp. 25-26.

He reminded the Secretary General that Article X of the Pact of the League made a clear delineation between a constitutional government that was legally entitled to receive aid and arms and aggressors who were due nothing.  

When the League refused to act, Bassols called for an overhaul of the organization of the League to restore its integrity and independence. He stated in a speech to the General Assembly that

the powerlessness of the League of Nations to perform its primary and most decisive task—which is of sustaining the integrity and enjoyment of their independence by the States composing it, has led all of us to recognize the need of revising existing machinery; for whatever the causes of failure may have been, it would be absurd to expect that if we keep the same factor in play, results would tomorrow or the day after, in the face of a new conflict, be any different to what they were before.

The request to overhaul the League was politely ignored by the other member nations of the League.

Continued Support of the Republic

Despite unenthusiastic international response, Mexico continued her unstinting support of Spain in the League of Nations.


In response to a British initiative to extend the Nonintervention Pact to non-European states, Cárdenas sent a letter to the Secretary of the League asking for cooperation with the legal authorities in Spain. He wrote:

Mexico cannot admit that while she is being asked to lend her assistance in solving world problems, an attempt should be made to reduce the scope of her peacemaking action and to circumscribe European problems by a method which, if successful, would undermine what is left of the foundations on which the League is built.42

On March 30, Mexico sent a note to all the countries with which she had relations, urging the termination of the Nonintervention Pact and requesting international support for the Spanish Republican government. Few nations responded favorably; only Cuba and Guatemala agreed to send what aid they could. The remaining nations were indifferent or hostile to Mexico's request.43

On the same day, Isidro Fabela delivered a diplomatic note to the Secretary General of the League which stated that "the government of Mexico considers it a duty, that it may not shirk, to contribute by all means in its power to world peace, and especially to work for the termination of the armed conflict.

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that has for the last eight months affected the Spanish Republic..."44

On September 20, 1937, Ambassador Fabela addressed the General Assembly on behalf of the Republic. He again stressed the legal responsibility of the League to assist Republican Spain and decried the policy of nonintervention which he stated was aiding the insurgents because the signatories who signed the Pact refused to acknowledge the fact that Germany and Italy (who had also signed the Pact) were actively assisting the insurgents. Fabela stated that, according to the governments of Spain and Mexico, the "only effective nonintervention in this case is the nonintervention of the League of Nations."45

In October Fabela went to Prague as the Mexican representative to the Council of the International Labor Organization. While in Prague, he met with the delegate from Czechoslovakia in an attempt to change the Czech government's recent decision not to sell arms to the Spanish Republic. The representative from France also attended the meeting between Mexico and Czechoslovakia. Although the diplomats were unable to make a commitment on behalf of their governments, the French delegate agreed to contact

44Archivo, "Isidro Fabela a la Sociedad de la Naciones," III 1510 (46) "36"/4050, no. 262, n.d.

French Prime Minister Leon Blum to suggest that France's policy toward Spain be revised and to urge cooperation with the government of Czechoslovakia. The Czech representative also agreed to ask his government to modify its policy and to send weapons to Republican Spain.46

By late 1937, it was obvious that Mexico was unsuccessful in her attempts to terminate the Nonintervention Pact and convince members of the League of Nations to support the Spanish Republic. As the war progressed, the Republican government became increasingly isolated. In late 1937, France closed her Spanish border for the final time to arms shipments to the Republic. International pressure on Spain became so strong by early 1938 that the Loyalist government finally decided to dismantle the International Brigades and send the volunteers home, so that the government could not be accused of promoting foreign intervention. However, neither of these actions terminated the massive shipments of personnel, weapons, and supplies from Germany and Italy that continued to pour into Spain to help the rebels.

The Rebels as Belligerents

General Franco and other rebel leaders wrote the Secretary General of the League and a number of nations requesting the

status of belligerent in November 1936. Mexico immediately opposed
the granting of such status, which would have given the insurgent
forces certain rights under international law, including the
right to buy arms. In July 1937 the Nonintervention Committee
approved a proposal under which belligerency would have been
recognized by all parties of the Nonintervention Pact. This pro­
posal elicited vehement denunciations from Ambassador Fabela. 47
It was never accepted by the League because it required the
approval of both parties involved in the Spanish war.

At the Eighth Conference of American States in 1938, Cuba
proposed that the conference offer itself as a mediator in the
Spanish conflict. Mexico had earlier rejected a similar, if less
formal proposal, made by Uruguay. However, the Mexican representa­
tive voted affirmatively at the conference on the Cuban propo­
sal, adding a reservation that if the proposal was approved it
would not signify that Mexico recognized the belligerent status
of the rebels. 48 Although the resolution was adopted, the confer­
ence was not able to act as a mediator in the war because of
the Spanish government's reluctance to accept mediation.

Controversy over Diplomatic Asylum

Despite the generally excellent relations between Mexico

47 Isidro Fabela, Cartas a1 President Cárdenas (Mexico: n.p.,
1937), p. 42.

48 Padelford, International Law and Diplomacy, pp. 116-117.
and Spain during the war, a disagreement over diplomatic asylum caused a strain in the relations between the two countries. In accordance with international custom and the 1928 Pan American Treaty, Mexico and fourteen other countries gave asylum to hundreds of Spaniards in their embassies in Spain. Most of these asylees were conservatives who had not supported the Republic and feared that they would be imprisoned by the Republican government for their views. After the first months of the war, the number of asylees grew so large that several nations rented additional buildings to house those persons who requested asylum.

The Spanish government insisted that, in the case of a military uprising, the right of asylum did not apply and requested that all the asylees be turned over to Spanish authorities. Because Spain was not a signatory to a treaty guaranteeing diplomatic asylum, she refused to recognize the right of foreign nations to protect opponents of the government. In addition, many of the nations that provided asylum supported the insurgents. Alvarez del Vayo states that some of these nations may have abused the principle of asylum by allowing the asylees in their embassies to participate in Spanish politics.


50Alvarez del Vayo, Give Me Combat, p. 240.
After protracted correspondence between Mexico and Spain, the Spanish government partially yielded in March 1937 and let Mexico evacuate to France asylees housed in the embassies' compounds. This evacuation was arranged by a number of persons, including the Mexican ambassadors in Madrid and Argentina and the Mexican legation in Paris. The asylees were accompanied to their ship for France by the Mexican ambassador and his assistant. Most of the asylees who were members of the Spanish military were allowed to leave the country, but four rebel officers were detained at the port. The Mexican ambassador quickly put them under his protection and took them back to Madrid, where they were forced to remain for several months.

On April 30, Spain again refused to allow these men, who now wished to go to Mexico, to leave the country. Meanwhile, Mexico had closed all but one small building in its official complex in Madrid and the Mexican ambassador had followed the Republican government to Valencia where a temporary embassy had been established. For this reason, it was difficult for Mexico to feed and house the asylees in Madrid and to provide security for them.


Finally, on August 7, 1937, the Spanish government gave Mexico and the other nations still providing diplomatic asylum five to ten days to evacuate to France or North Africa all remaining persons housed in their embassies. Mexico was able to include the four military officers in the evacuees.54

After this final group left Spain, each of the embassies and legations was forced to close its facilities for housing asylees. All complied because the situation was too chaotic to provide security for any asylees. Most of the governments had already closed their embassies and only a few had followed the government to Valencia.

54 Mexican diplomats in Madrid also were disturbed by the ongoing terror in Madrid during the early months of the war. Pro-government death squads roamed the streets, often attacking persons they suspected of being against the government. Although the Republican government did not condone the violence and killings, many diplomats, including those from Mexico, believed that it did little to stop it. The "terror" was one of the primary reasons why almost 14,000 asylees were housed in embassies and legations in early 1937. The Mexican government chose not to publicly rebuke the Spanish government, but did privately urge the Republicans to curb the violence, Archivo, "de Negri a la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores," 1 February 1937; "de Negri a la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores," 22 January 1937.
CHAPTER III
DEFEAT OF THE SPANISH REPUBLIC

Mexico's support for the Republican government in Spain did not end with the Civil War. In the years that followed the war, Mexico accepted thousands of Spanish refugees and worked to protect those refugees still in Europe. Not all of Mexico's efforts were successful, but President Cárdenas and his successor, Manuel Avila Camacho, tried to ensure that as many Spaniards as possible escaped from being sent back to Spain for trial and imprisonment or death. Mexico continued to protect the Spanish refugees in France until diplomatic relations were severed between the two nations in November 1942.

End of the War

The Spanish Republican government fell to the insurgents in early 1939—less than three years after the beginning of the civil war. Although Mexico had become embroiled in an international controversy over her expropriation of foreign oil properties,¹

¹In March 1938, Cárdenas expelled the foreign oil companies operating in Mexico and seized their properties. This bold move followed years of escalating conflicts between Mexican workers, the Mexican government, and the oil companies. In retaliation, the expropriated companies organized a boycott of Mexican oil, which forced the Mexican government to sell its petroleum to countries such as Germany and Italy to keep the Mexican economy afloat, Lázaro Cárdenas, Obras: Apuntes 1913-1940, 3 vols. (México Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1972), 1:382.
Cardenas instructed his government to assist the Republican government and to provide aid for the Spanish refugees fleeing into France.2

Only Mexico and the Soviet Union gave support to the combat forces of the Republican government during the last months of the war. However, a number of technically neutral nations were willing to assist Mexico and France (which reluctantly became the host nation) in caring for the refugees who arrived daily from Spain in late 1938 and early 1939. Relief groups from the United States, Sweden, and Britain worked to provide basic necessities for the homeless Spaniards, while their governments began to look for long-term arrangements for those refugees who felt that they could not return safely to Spain. By late spring 500,000 Spanish refugees were crowded into southern France.

In recognition of Mexico's close ties with Republican Spain, President Cardenas had announced during the fall of 1938 that any Spanish national who could no longer live in Spain would be granted a home in Mexico.3 However, no groups of refugees emigrated to Mexico until late spring.

2 "Carta de Lázaro Cardenas al Coronel Adalberto Tejada (Embajador de México en España)," quoted in Centro Republicano Español de México, ed., México y la República Española, p. 54.

International relief efforts were made more difficult because of the factional divisions within the Republican government. The leaders of the government could not agree on the way in which the war should be ended. President Azaña and his followers wanted to surrender immediately in order to prevent additional loss of life and property. Prime Minister Juan Negrín and his supporters insisted that the Loyalist forces continue to fight until the rebels agreed to three guarantees: independence for Spain and freedom from foreign influence, the right of the Spanish people to pursue their own destiny, and that the end of the war would bring a new era of reconciliation. Former Defense Minister Indalecio Prieto, whose pessimistic views had alienated some members of the government, had already left the cabinet and was traveling in Hispanic America to raise funds and support for the Republic. President Cárdenas met with Prieto both officially and informally on February 20 and 21 to discuss the war and Mexico's efforts to assist the Spanish refugees.  

During the first week in February 1939 the Constituent Cortes met for the last time on Spanish soil at el Castillo de Figueres to analyze their position and to plan for the next few months. Following the meeting, Azaña, President of the Cortes,  

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5 Cárdenas, Obras, 1:412.
Diego Martinez Barrio, and several other government officials crossed into France. Negrin and his followers joined the group a few days later, and the reunited government met briefly in Toulouse until February 10. Negrin, Foreign Minister Alvarez del Vayo (former ambassador to Mexico), and most of the others then returned to Spain to continue the war. Despite Negrin's insistence, Azaña refused to return to Spain. On February 27, 1939, he resigned as President of the Republic.6

President Azaña's resignation created a momentary dilemma for the Mexican government, because its ambassador had been accredited to Azaña's government. The Mexican Foreign Ministry solved this problem by announcing that it would keep a representative in Spain as long as "representative authorities" of the Republic existed. However, Ambassador Adalberto Tejada was called home to report on the situation.7 He left Spain on March 8, taking with him the embassy archives and records.

The civil war ended in March 1939 when Prime Minister Negrin and most of the remaining members of the government crossed into France with thousands of other refugees. On April 1, the members of the Spanish Embassy in Mexico asked for political asylum, which was immediately granted. On April 16, the embassy

6 del Valle, Las instituciones de la república española en exilio, p. 15.

officials announced that the Spanish embassy would be put under the care of the Cuban ambassador. Diplomatic relations between Mexico and Spain were severed, not to be resumed in any form until 1945.  

The Mexican government did not recognize officially any of the Republican leaders as representatives of the Spanish refugees. Members of the Spanish Cortes who escaped to France had decided that Prime Minister Negrín would have to continue to represent the Spanish Republic because there was no constitutional body to accept his resignation or choose another leader. Negrín accepted this responsibility and announced that the mission of his government was threefold: to keep alive the philosophy of the Republic, to help the refugees, and to reestablish the Republic in Spain.  

Mexican officials in France maintained friendly relations with Negrín, but chose to remain nonpartisan, because of growing political and tactical splits between the Republican leaders.  

Cárdenas personally supported the position of his friend, former ambassador to Mexico Alvarez del Vayo and of Negrín, who had preferred to fight until the last moment. In a letter to Alvarez del Vayo, the Mexican President stated his appreciation for their "courage and loyal participation until the ultimate
moment in the defense of the Republican cause." In the same letter Cárdenas reiterated his fears that the Republican defeat could lead to a second world war and blamed the nations which remained neutral as Spain, Czechoslovakia, and Ethiopia were invaded and conquered.10

Care of the Refugees

Mexican officials in France initially concentrated on assisting the Republican leaders and the French government to find food and shelter for the Spanish refugees. As it became clear that the Spaniards would not find permanent homes quickly, the Mexican government shifted its attention to interim arrangements that would get the refugees out of the camps and allow them to live more normal lives. By the fall of 1939 Mexico had established centers for the refugees around Bordeaux and Marseilles.

In early 1941, the Mexican government responded to pleas for additional housing and rented two chateaus in France which were used to house refugees in transit to other nations and also served as an office where Mexican officials could process visas and provide other good offices for the refugees. The centers remained open until the fall of 1942 when World War II forced the Mexican government to close them.11


Republican leaders also took responsibility for assisting the refugees. An organization had been founded in 1937, el Servicio de Emigración de las Republicanos Españoles (SERE), which worked with the French government and other nations to provide housing and food for the Spaniards who were fleeing Spain. In 1939 the SERE had to expand its activities tenfold to cope with the number of refugees who left Spain at the end of the war. In addition to helping to provide necessities, the SERE also began to compile official papers and background information on the Spaniards in France to assist their eventual emigration to other nations.

Emigration

In January 1939 President Cárdenas elaborated on his statement made in the fall of 1938 and declared that it was Mexico's intention to admit an unlimited number of refugees to Mexico if the Republican relief organizations would pay their transport costs and contribute to the resettlement expenses. On April 13, the Mexican President wrote a letter to Alvarez del Vayo and offered a "modest, but sympathetic home" for the refugees who had been "temporarily displaced from their country." He also offered


homes to Alvarez del Vayo and Negriñ. Neither accepted the offer.

Although the acceptance of Spanish refugees was popular with strong supporters of the Spanish Republic, immediate protests came from other groups who believed that the immigrants would compete with them for already scarce jobs and social services. They also argued that there were too many socialists and communists in the exile group who might undermine the Mexican government. Representatives of the government replied that preference would be given to those refugees who possessed needed skills and would be able to support themselves with a minimum of aid. President Cárdenas also reminded the Mexican people that Chapter III, Article 33, of the Constitution forbade foreigners from participating directly in Mexican politics.\footnote{14}{"El Presidente y los cuestiones actuales: al caso de los refugiados," quoted in Centro Republicano Español de México, ed., México y la República Española, p. 62; Gerald E. Fitzgerald, ed., The Constitutions of Latin America (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1968), p. 158.}

The Mexican president in an interview published in El Nacional that any anti-Spanish sentiment was "artificial"—created by those who wanted to upset the nation. Mexico needed more skilled workers, he believed, and this justified his open-door policy. No Mexican workers would be displaced by the Spaniards,
who would be useful in filling jobs and accelerating Mexico's economic development. 15

These sentiments were repeated in September 1939 during the President's annual address to Congress. Cárdenas stated that the Spanish refugees were contributing to the Mexican nation, and that they were able to assimilate easily into the national culture. He assured the deputies that the open door policy would not be extended to other nations whose interests did not correspond to Mexico's. The Mexican president again blamed any anti-Spanish agitation on opposition parties that wished to create chaos and undermine his government. 16

In May, Cárdenas formed a special Interministerial Committee composed of the heads of the government agencies that would be involved in helping the refugees. He directed this committee to develop a program for the transfer of refugees to Mexico and to devise the regulations that would govern their lives. 17

In addition to the aid extended to the refugees in general, the Mexican government extended special attention to former


17 "Asilados políticos españoles recentemente llegados a México," quoted in Centro Republicano Español de México, ed., México y la República Española, pp. 63; El Nacional, 20, 24 May; 6, 12, 14, 17 June 1939.
President Azaña, whose health was failing rapidly. On June 26, 1939, the Germans occupied the beach suburb of Bordeaux where Azaña had made his home. The Mexican government quickly moved Azaña by ambulance to Montauban and were prepared to offer him asylum in the Mexican consulate in Vichy. When the French government denied the request to move the former president to Vichy, a diplomatic guard was placed in his room and funds were provided for his board and medical care until his death November 3. Azaña's casket was draped with a Mexican flag during the funeral and his widow was immediately flown to refuge in Mexico.18

Refugees to Mexico

Despite the Mexican offer of hospitality, relatively few of the Spanish refugees in France were able to get to Mexico. This was due primarily to the lack of transportation and the lack of agreement among the Republican leaders. The philosophical and strategic differences that had divided the Republic throughout its existence were exacerbated in France. The followers of Negrín and Prieto both claimed that their leader should control the government funds that had been taken out of Spain and the leaders themselves could not agree on a way to finance the transportation and resettlement of the refugees who wished to leave France. Negrín and Prieto each had his own refugee association and claimed it to be the sole legitimate agency acting on behalf

of the Spanish refugees.

At the end of the war Negrín had been left in control of the remaining funds of the Republican government and he immediately put these funds into the already established SERE. He began working with the Mexican ambassador in France, Narciso Bassols, to care for the refugees and to begin their evacuation to other countries. For a time, the SERE continued to be the only active Spanish agency acting on behalf of the refugees. However, in March 1939 Prieto managed to "capture" part of the Spanish treasure which Negrín had sent to Mexico for safekeeping. Negrín had arranged with President Cárdenas to ship the treasure, mainly jewels and art objects, to Tampico, where it was to be held until he or his representative could collect it. No one knows exactly how Prieto, who had been sent to Hispanic America by the Republican government before the end of the war and was travelling in Mexico at the time, managed to learn about the treasure and persuade Cárdenas to turn it over to him. However, Prieto did receive the treasure and used it to set up his own organization.19 After 1940, Prieto's group, el Junto de Auxilio a los Refugiados Españoles (JARE), took over the major responsibility for the care and transportation of the refugees. The differences between the two groups (the SERE and the JARE) were never resolved.

19 José Fuentes Mares, Historia de una conflicto: el tesoro del "Vita" (Madrid: CVS Ediciones, 1975), pp. 177-191.
Transportation from France to the United States and Hispanic America was scarce because of the war. Few nations were interesting in transporting large groups of refugees: for political and economic reasons they felt this would be unwise. Mexico was able to work out arrangements with several nations that agreed to consider the refugees as expatriates and charge them only half-fare. In return, Mexico guaranteed to fill all the third class space available on the ships. The Spanish Republicans paid their own fares.

Despite these difficulties, four ships carrying large groups of Spanish refugees did cross the Atlantic in 1939. Many other persons made their way to Mexico individually or in small groups. During this period, the SERE provided the bulk of the funds for the refugees; by December approximately 3285 men, women, and children had arrived in Mexico. By July 1, 1940 this number had grown to 8,628, a number slowly augmented by those who came individually. After 1940 the growing intensity of the war in Europe further impeded the arrival of large groups.

Selection of Refugees

Selection of the refugees to go to Mexico was difficult. Most indicated a desire to leave France, and Mexico was a preferred

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20 New York Times, 4 May 1939, p. 15, column 2; El Nacional, 14 June 1939.
destination. The crowded and chaotic conditions in the camps also affected the selections, because few of the refugees had identity papers and communication was limited. The SERE tried to provide documentation for the Republicans and compiled lists which gave the age, occupation, marital status, and political affiliation of each person. After the lists were compiled, the SERE made the original selections, which were then turned over to Mexican officials for final selection.

Despite the announced open door policy, the Mexican government required that preference be given to those refugees who had skills needed in Mexico. The preferred list included professors and teachers, skilled industrial workers, and those with established business skills such as accounting. 21

The selection of these first groups of refugees aroused controversy among the refugees and in Mexico. Mexican officials insisted that all the political groups that had been a part of the Republic be represented in the groups which arrived in Mexico, but many refugees contended that the communists and supporters of Negrín received preferential treatment. 22 In 1940, when the JARE


began to select and transport refugees, similar complaints were heard about favoritism toward pro-Prieto factions. All of these complaints probably had some factual base, but because persons who were members of all the Spanish political parties did come to Mexico during the first few years, it is unlikely that the selection process was greatly biased.

The French government cooperated with the former leaders of the Republic and with Mexican officials by allowing the refugees to leave France with a minimum of documentation, exempting them from the usual emigration tax and from placing the bond usually required to prevent repatriation. The fees for exit visas were also waived.23

On September 21, 1939, Mexico announced that the Spanish immigration would be temporarily suspended due to the outbreak of the world war in Europe.24 Other factors contributing to this suspension may have been the upcoming presidential election in Mexico and the lack of Republican funds to pay for the transportation and care of the refugees. The war also caused the Mexican government to emphasize the protection of the refugees in France as much or more than transporting them to Mexico. However, this suspension was indeed temporary, and in December the fourth boatload of refugees arrived via New York.

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23Fresco, La emigración republicana española, pp. 145-146.

Citizenship in Mexico

In order to facilitate the refugee's assimilation into Mexican society President Cárdenas issued a decree January 23, 1940, enabling the Spaniards to become Mexican citizens by a special procedure designed to reduce expenses, difficulties, and delays. Unlike the normal naturalization procedure, in which applicants for citizenship were required to complete a minimum residency requirement of two years before beginning the application process, the Spanish refugees became eligible for citizenship practically at the moment of arrival. In order to obtain naturalization papers they simply had to prove that they were Spanish citizens and that a Mexican residence had been established. In respect for Spanish custom and because it was hoped that the situation would be temporary, the refugees were not required to renounce citizenship in their country of origin.  

Several months after this decree was announced, the government issued a list of actions for which any naturalization would be annulled. These included acts against the security of Mexico, acts on behalf of a foreign country that were incompatible with Mexican citizenship and contrary to the interests of Mexico, maintenance of relations with non-Mexican authorities, groups or institutions of a political or public character, and entrance into national associations which directly or indirectly were

25 Diario Oficial CXVIII:9 (23 January 1940); 2.
linked with a foreign state or dependent on it.  

Most of the refugees took advantage of the offer of citizenship, because it regularized their status and removed any travel or work restrictions normally imposed on noncitizens. Although, in the strictest sense, the provisions for annulment could have been applied against much of the refugees' activities against the Franco regime, the Mexican government did not consider participation in political groups formed by the refugees to be against the security of Mexico. No action was ever taken against the refugees who continued to work for the restoration of the Republic. Only one documented case of the provisions of the annulment decree being enforced against a Spanish refugee was presented, and the person involved was reported by the Mexican government to be working directly for a foreign government.  

International Efforts  

The fall of France in June 1940 made the plight of the refugees in that country more critical, and Mexico increased her efforts to offer asylum and improve the housing and support facilities in France. The Mexican mission to the Vichy regime and the Mexican consulates in the occupied zone of France represented the Spanish Republican interest in France. These

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27 Ibid., pp. 1-36; *Excelsior*, 31 August 1940.
missions especially tried to keep the Vichy government from turning former leaders of the Republic over to the Spanish government.28

On June 23, Licenciado de Rodríguez, the Mexican minister to the Vichy government, was instructed to inform the French government that Mexico was disposed to give hospitality to "all the Spanish refugees of both sexes in France." This instruction had a triple purpose: to provide additional protection for the refugees, to give as many as were able to come to Mexico a safe home, and to provide Mexico with a skilled, well educated work force at little cost to the Mexican people. Many of the refugees were still able to pay their own way to Mexico, and simply needed the official sanction to do so before they were sent back to Spain or engulfed in the war which was sweeping Europe. Mexico also requested officially that all Spaniards in France be put under official Mexican protection.30

Under the guidance of General Francisco Aguilar, Mexican Consul General in Marseilles, and a representative of the Vichy government, an agreement concerning the status of the Spanish


29Ibid., p. 69.

30Rodríguez, Ballet de sangre, pp. 233-38.
refugees was finalized. In an exchange of letters on August 22 and 23, the two governments agreed that Mexico would provide protection for the Spanish refugees while they remained in France. Under the terms of the agreement, France was prohibited from extraditing the refugees to Spain simply because they had supported the Republican government during the Civil War.  

Earlier in the year, Mexico had hosted the Pan American Assembly for Aid to the Spanish refugees, which was designed to facilitate coordination of the work of relief agencies throughout America. In this conference, delegations from the United States, Mexico, Cuba, Uruguay, Chile, and Puerto Rico agreed on four goals: aiding the refugees still living in the camps in France and North Africa; bringing them to America when possible; helping the refugees already in Hispanic America and the United States; and, providing a unified American resistance to Franco.  

Later in 1940 the Mexican government managed to include the plight of the Spanish refugees in the agenda of the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the American Republicans in Havana. At

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the same time, according to Excelsior, Mexican officials tried to persuade the United States to provide ships for the transport of the refugees. The request for transport was denied, but the Mexican proposal to establish a network of committees to deal with the Spanish refugees was sent by the Foreign Ministers to the Pan American Union for further study. 33

Despite these setbacks, in July 1940, Mexico received another shipload of refugees. These refugees received a much warmer welcome than the earlier groups who had been greeted with apprehension. By mid-1940 the early groups had proved to the Mexican people that they were not political extremists or an economic burden to the nation. This shipload of refugees also had been selected more carefully than earlier groups; they were ready to establish permanent homes in Mexico.

The End of Mexico's Role in France

In late 1940 the Vichy government in France began to put obstructions in the way of Spanish emigration. Despite the August agreement, the government, in many cases, refused to grant exit permits to Spanish refugees. In response to pressure from the German government and Franco, the Vichy government in March 1941 issued a decree which stated that no Spanish male of military age (18-48) would be allowed to leave the country. The immigration of former Spanish government officials was delayed also because

33 Excelsior, 22 July 1940.
of an informal agreement between the Vichy government and Franco which required these men to remain in France.  

Mexico's new president, former Secretary of National Defense, Manuel Avila Camacho, sent a telegram to the Vichy government reminding them of the August agreements and pledging to assist France in taking care of the remaining Spanish refugees. He reiterated his support for former president Cárdenas' policies and said that his government also wanted to protect those who "were able to leave the prisons or concentration camps and others who had escaped certain death which would be their fate if they were extradited from France to Spain."  

Despite these impediments, some organized emigrations did cross the Atlantic to Mexico in late 1941. At least three large groups, as well as numerous individuals and small groups, arrived in Mexico. They joined other Spanish refugees who had already established schools, clinics, small businesses, and political associations.  

Relations between Mexico and France over refugee problems became increasingly tense in 1942, after Mexico entered the war on the side of the Allies, although Mexican authorities continued

34 Fresco, La emigración republicana española, p. 51; Excelsior, 25 March 1941.

to try to improve the conditions under which many of the refugees in France still lived. Mass emigrations became impossible, however, due to French restrictions. General Aguilar was recalled to Mexico in late June 1942 for talks with the Foreign Minister. The Mexican government insisted that it had no intention of breaking relations with the French government, but relations between the two countries were finally broken on November 9, 1942. This cessation of relations, and the occupation of non-Vichy France two days later, meant the end of mass emigration and of Mexican protection of the Spanish refugees in France. Before the Mexican mission was closed, the Mexican government arranged for Sweden to protect the Spanish Republicans who remained in France.

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President Cárdenas' retirement from the presidency in 1940 did not alter Mexico's policy toward Spain. Despite the lack of transportation and other complications caused by the war in Europe, several thousand refugees came to Mexico from 1939-1942 when the German takeover of France made further emigration difficult.

Many of the Spanish refugees in Mexico after 1940 benefited from the emphasis of the new President, Manuel Avila Camacho, on economic development. This emphasis, coupled with increased wartime demand for raw materials and consumer goods, gave many refugees opportunities to use their technical and managerial skills in a wide variety of businesses and development projects.

Mexican leaders continued to believe that General Franco would be deposed in Spain at the end of the war. For this reason, the refugees' formation of a government-in-exile was supported in Mexico, and members of the Mexican government willingly participated in the ceremonies that accompanied the inauguration of the government.

**Early Settlement**

Cárdenas and his Interministerial Committee, which was
appointed to organize the Spanish immigration and settlement in Mexico, originally devised a detailed plan for the Spanish refugees. While on the ship to Mexico each refugee was briefed by a Mexican official and told of his/her rights and duties as a resident of Mexico. Each Spaniard received a carefully prepared packet of information on Mexico—its people, language, customs, and geography. A letter from the Mexican government was included in the packet, stating that the first obligation of the refugees was to understand and conform to Mexican culture. The refugees also were told that they were expected to work honorably, obey all laws, avoid involvement in foreign political parties, and to forget the "errors of the past."¹ They were reminded that their behavior in Mexico would determine, at least in part, how many more Spanish refugees would be admitted to Mexico in the coming years. By issuing these warnings, President Cárdenas hoped to alleviate potential problems which might make the Spaniards unwelcome guests and jeopardize future assistance to Republican Spain.

Under the original plan devised by the Interministerial Committee appointed by President Cárdenas, the majority of the Spanish refugees were legally required to settle in underpopulated regions of the country where they could farm, establish small businesses, and aid in the development of their newly-adopted

¹Fresco, La emigración republicana española, pp. 47-8.
Officials of the committee met each group as it arrived in Mexico and, after a short processing period, assigned them to a particular destination. Twelve agricultural colonies in Chihuahua, Baja California, Michoacán, and the coastal areas were created especially for the refugees. On the whole, however, these colonies were failures, chiefly because few of the refugees had agricultural experience. The isolated location of the settlements and competition with the poorly paid Mexican campesinos helped to make these colonies unattractive to most of the Spaniards.

The industrial and commercial enterprises established by the refugees were more successful than their farming communities. A number of self-help organizations were set up soon after the refugees arrived to assist them in finding jobs or beginning new businesses. The JARE, as required under its agreement with the Mexican government, also continued to disburse funds to refugees in need of financial assistance or a capital loan. The industrial boom in Mexico caused by the world war often produced

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3 El Universal 22 June 1939; Fagen, Exiles and Citizens, p. 53; Smith, Mexico and the Spanish Republicans, p. 262.

employment and business opportunities for refugees with technical and managerial skills.  

More than fifty publishing houses were founded by the Spanish refugees, including Editorial Séneca (founded with the help of the SERE), Editorial Arcos, and Ediciones Minerva. Although the majority of books printed by these houses were in Spanish, a few specialized in other languages such as English, French, and Catalan. Each publisher tended to specialize in one or two areas, such as basic text books, classical literature, political or scientific analyses, or economics. Many were quite successful, and by 1950 hundreds of original volumes had been published by the Spanish refugees.

Spanish authors and scholars, such as Javier Márquez and Vicente Herrero, also joined with their Mexican colleagues to edit books of sociology, economics, philosophy, and science, which were published by the Mexican publisher el Fondo de Cultura Económica and the Spanish publishing houses. In addition, the refugees helped to translate well known European literature, including the works of Balzac, Durkheim, Kant, Marx, Rousseau,

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5 Fresco reports that Spanish engineer Pable Seguí used Mexican capital to build a factory to produce kitchen stoves. Within a few years his factory produced about 30,000 stoves a year which reduced Mexico's need to import United States' products by about 60 percent, Fresco, La emigración republicana española, p. 169.

6 Ibid., p. 92.
and Stendahl, into Spanish for Mexican readers. For many of the most noted scholars among the refugees, these translations provided much needed income during their first days in Mexico before they could establish permanent careers in their new home. Among the translators were scholars such as Pedro Bosch Gimpera, Francisco Giner de los Ríos, and Luis Jiménez de Asúa.7

Industries established by the Spaniards included canneries, textile shops, and steel foundries. A number of prestigious laboratories were founded in conjunction with medical schools or drug companies which facilitated the development of new medicines, the study of tropical diseases, and nutrition research. Commercial laboratories assisted in the production of aluminum and mineral extraction. Small businesses, including restaurants, film production studios, and retail shops, flourished in the refugee committee.8 In accordance with Mexico's interest in building her infrastructure, refugees also founded firms such as la Compañía Constructora de Aguilar, which built railroads, roads, and canals throughout Mexico.9


8Fresco, La emigración republicana española, pp. 168-9.

Many of the refugees were teachers and professors who chose to continue their profession in Mexico. The professors were well organized in "La Union de Profesores Universitarios Españoles en el Extranjero" which was formed in Paris in 1939. This group, whose governing board was later moved to Mexico City to facilitate communication among the professors throughout the Americas, helped to coordinate the exiled professors' professional work. The "union" also held conferences on a variety of education issues and helped to create and sustain amicable relations with indigenous scholars. Many of the more than three hundred professors who came to Mexico from Spain taught in Mexico's leading universities, while others continued research interrupted by the war.\(^\text{10}\) Although the list of active Spanish professors is too lengthy to enumerate, teachers such as Juan Comas, José Ignacio Montecedo, and Rafael Altamira y Crevea, were known around the world.

A number of professors and teachers also established schools for the young refugees who had fled Spain with their families. In cooperation with the Mexican Secretary of Public Education, La Academia Hispana-Mexicana was begun in September 1939 to provide secondary education for 850 students. Soon after, El Colegio Madrid, El Instituto Luis Vives, and la Fundación Cervantes (with schools in Tampico, Torreón, Córdoba, Veracruz, and 253-8.

\(^\text{10}\)Ibid., p. 65; Abellán, ed., Guerra y Política, pp. 229-30, 253-8.
Texcoco) began providing instruction to young Spaniards and Mexicans. These schools were intended not only to educate the young refugees and employ Spanish teachers, but also to keep alive the traditions of Spanish education and culture.\textsuperscript{11}

The two hundred and twenty-five doctors who sought refuge in Mexico began private practices and clinics to serve fellow refugees and Mexicans and taught in most of the nation's medical schools. Although most of the doctors settled in urban areas, a number worked with the Mexican government to provide health care in rural areas. Spanish nurses also worked in rural areas such as Oaxaca at the Cultural Missions founded after the Mexican Revolution. These women worked with Mexican volunteers to provide basic medical care. They also taught home nursing and simple first aid as a means of making the local residents more self-sufficient.\textsuperscript{12}

In 1941, President Avila Camacho imposed more rigorous restrictions on the refugees to be admitted to Mexico. Recognizing the fact that the war in Europe made it difficult to enforce a complicated selection process, admittance was limited to those refugees who could meet certain easily determined criteria. Persons with close family ties, prominent scientists and

\textsuperscript{11} de Palencia, Smoldering Freedom; p. 162; Fresco, La emigración republicana española, p. 144.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., pp. 122-5; Lini M. de Vries, Please God, Take Care of the Mule: Personal Adventure in Mexico (México: Editorial Minutiae Mexicana, 1972), pp. 79-88.
intellectuals, recognized artists, those in significant danger of losing their lives, and those whose skills were greatly needed were allowed to enter Mexico. No one whose profession could constitute unfair competition with Mexican nationals was to be allowed to enter the country. This category included doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, and writers.  

These restrictions, coupled with the lack of transportation and the difficulties in arranging papers and visas, reduced the number of Spanish refugees entering Mexico. Many Spaniards who had escaped to other nations in Europe, North Africa, or the Americas and hoped to eventually resettle in Mexico were forced to remain where they were until late in the war. After the war most of the restrictions were lifted and large numbers of refugees again arrived in Mexico. Many of these refugees arrived from Santo Domingo, where many Spanish professionals had lived during the war.

Political Activities of the Refugees

The political activities of the refugees were limited during the war due to the distance separating them, the difficulties in communication, and the restrictions imposed by their countries of refuge. Many of the leaders of the Spanish Republic

had made their home in Mexico, including Prieto and Martínez Barrio; still others remained in France or had temporary homes in Santo Domingo or other nations in Hispanic America. Former Prime Minister Negrín had settled in London, and the British government was reluctant to allow him to leave and reenter the country at will.

Despite this fragmentation, many refugees did continue their participation in political parties or groups, and additional associations were formed with the goal of keeping the Spanish Republic alive.¹⁴ The Mexican government maintained unofficial contact with many of these groups in order to facilitate the immigration and successful settlement of the refugees. However, the Mexican officials tried to avoid showing favoritism to any of the groups, although this was not always possible.

One of the most publicized and acrimonious disputes between the Mexican government and a refugee group concerned the JARE. Throughout 1940 the JARE, especially its leader Prieto, was openly accused by other refugees of mismanaging funds. Although Prieto emphatically denied these accusations, in January 1941 President Avila Camacho ordered that the JARE form a limited liability company to be administered by a mixed commission comprised of representatives of JARE and representatives from de Palencia, Smoldering Freedom, p. 162; Fagen, Exiles and Citizens, pp. 81-144; Abellán, ed., Guerra y Política, pp. 179-203.
the Mexican ministries of Foreign Relations and Interior. This arrangement was intended not only to ensure that the funds were being distributed equitably, but also to eliminate the potential problems of a foreign business operating on Mexican soil.

When the JARE did not carry out Avila Camacho's instructions, he issued a second decree on November 27, 1942. In this decree he reiterated his order to form a limited liability company, ordering that the mixed commission be formed immediately. Prieto appealed to the courts to rescind this order, but his suit was refused, and the mixed commission was created. The commission quickly set up the limited liability company which was named el Federación de Organismos de Ayuda a la Republicana Española (FOARE). After investigating the administration of the JARE's funds, the commission criticized its leaders for mismanagement. The commission also declared that no further mass expeditions to Mexico would be undertaken, because the JARE did not have sufficient funds to pay the refugees' transportation costs. Following this investigation, the Mexican government restricted the amount of money that could be sent out of Mexico for maintenance of Spanish refugees in other nations.


16 Diario Oficial CXXXV:25 (11 December 1942); 1-3.

Although there were no further mass immigrations after 1942, refugees continued to enter Mexico. Mexican visas were issued to seven hundred refugees in North Africa in April 1943, however, wartime travel restrictions kept many of the Spaniards from reaching Mexico. After the war immigration to Mexico increased, reaching a peak in 1947 and continuing several years thereafter from Santo Domingo and other nations where the Spanish refugees had sought refuge during the war.  

Early Moves Toward a Government-in-Exile

In 1943, many of the refugee leaders began to consider the formation of some type of organization which could be ready to take over the government of Spain when Franco was deposed as they anticipated at the end of the war. Martínez Barrio, as the former President of the Cortes, took the lead in trying to reconcile the refugee factions in support of such an organization. These efforts were generally unsuccessful, since the organizations envisioned by the two primary leaders, Negrín and Prieto, were radically different. Negrín proposed an umbrella group composed of all the political parties that had participated in supporting the Spanish Republic. Prieto favored a government of socialists and their philosophical allies.  

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19 del Valle, Las instituciones de la república española en exilio, pp. 72-91; Fagen, Exiles and Citizens, p. 280; Abellán, ed., Guerra y política, pp. 204-7.
The Mexican government was unreceptive when Martínez Barrio proposed that a meeting of the Spanish Cortes be held in Mexico City to resolve the differences among the refugee groups. No official reason was given for this objection, but the fact that the war would prevent many deputies from attending and the lack of agreement among the refugees on the utility of such a meeting were certainly factors.  

Many of the refugee groups, including the Catalans, believed that the formation of a committee to represent the interests of the refugees was preferable to an official meeting of the Cortes. As an interim measure, la Junta Española de Liberación (JEL) was formed in November 1943 with the backing of Prieto and Martínez Barrio, but not of Negrín, the communists, the Basques, the Catalans, or the Galicians. The Junta sought to pressure governments to break relations with Franco and to aid the underground opposition to the government in Spain. Mexico did not inhibit the formation or the work of the JEL, and Mexican officials often attended banquets and other functions given by the group and met with JEL leaders.  

Martínez Barrio and his supporters continued to advocate a meeting of the Cortes in Mexico. In late 1944, Avila Camacho stated that he had no objection to the meeting being held in

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20 Excelsior, 10 May 1945.

Mexico City. In December, the former President of the Cortes announced that the first meeting of the Cortes since 1939 would be held in Mexico City in January.\(^2\)

On January 10, 1945, the much-discussed meeting of the Cortes was held. Because a quorum was not present (only 72 of the 474 members attended) little could be accomplished. Negrín and his followers boycotted the meeting because he was not consulted before the final arrangements had been made.\(^3\) The convocation of the Cortes was generally believed to be counterproductive; it merely served to underscore the differences among the refugee leaders and did little to strengthen ties among the Spaniards in exile.

Leaders of the refugee community did use the meeting of the Cortes to discuss the future of Spain with Mexican officials. Ex-president Cárdenas met several times with his old friend Julio Alvarez del Vayo to discuss the possible restoration of a Republican government in Spain. Although Cárdenas had purposefully remained in the background on foreign policy issues, he did maintain his ties with his Republican friends and was

\(^{22}\) Novedades, 16 November 1944; New York Times, 11 November 1944.

\(^{23}\) A Spanish Republican who participated in several stages of the formation of the government-in-exile states that Negrín was not informed of the meeting of the Cortes until ten hours before the meeting and that he would have been unable to attend had he wished to do so. She also states that Negrín opposed allowing the Cortes to meet until the end of the war when Franco's fate would be clearer, de Palencia, Smoldering Freedom, pp. 69-71.
eager to privately discuss the chances for forming a government-in-exile and the eventual overthrow of Franco in Spain.\textsuperscript{24}

Alvarez del Vayo met with the former president again on January 28 when they were joined by Indalecio Prieto. In this meeting Cárdenas expressed his wish that the former leaders of the Spanish Republic could unite and take "intelligent action" so that they could win sympathy and aid from the Allies.\textsuperscript{25} Despite this plea, the Spanish refugees continued to bicker. On January 29, the "negrinistas" held a meeting in Mexico City to demonstrate their support for Negrín's boycott of the meeting of the Cortes. Licenciado Fernando Laras Alemán, governor of the Federal District, spoke to the meeting, thus demonstrating Mexico's nonpartisan support of the Spanish Republic. He stated that Mexico continued to believe in the restoration of democracy in Spain, adding that his country's support for the Spanish refugees as the "incarnation of the true Spain" would never waiver.\textsuperscript{26}

**San Francisco Conference**

The opening of the San Francisco Conference to form the United Nations organization in 1945 caused the refugees to postpone discussion on the creation of a government-in-exile. Republican leaders were invited to the Conference as official observers,

\textsuperscript{24}Cárdenas, *Obras*, 2:142-6.

\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., pp. 142-6.

\textsuperscript{26} *El Nacional*, 30 January 1945.
and the Mexican government offered to work with the Spaniards to draft a proposal to be submitted to the Conference. The refugees hoped to prevent the Franco government from being accepted as a member of the United Nations and to gain support for their cause. For the first time since the end of the Civil War, Negrín left London for Mexico City to work with Prieto and the other exiled leaders of the Republic.  

As part of the Spanish refugees' campaign against the government in Spain, a conference was held in Mexico City on March 20-21, 1945. Members of the leading refugee groups attended, as well as a number of Mexican officials associated with the FOARE. One of the resolutions adopted at the conference directed the FOARE to present a document at the San Francisco Conference. This document, which was written by the refugees attending the conference in Mexico City, described the regime of terror imposed by Franco and suggested that the member states of the soon-to-be-created United Nations: 1) send a commission of jurists to Spain to examine the situation; 2) press for aid for the people of Spain, cessation of executions, and the release of all political prisoners; and, 3) break all commercial and diplomatic relations with the Franco regime.

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27 Fuentes Mares, Historia de un conflicto, p. 192; del Valle, Las instituciones de la república española en exilio, pp. 91-108.

28 "Informe sobre la situación de terror en España, enviado por la FOARE a San Francisco, EE.UU.," quoted in Centro Republicano Español de México, ed., México y la República Española, p. 113.
In accordance with this resolution, on May 10 the JEL circulated a petition at the San Francisco Conference which was written by Prieto, Alvarez del Vayo, and former ambassador to Mexico Félix Gordón Ordás. This petition declared that "the moral repudiation of the Franco government by the United Nations is necessary so that the government will fall without violence." On the same day, Alvarez del Vayo met with the chief of the Soviet delegation and Negrín arrived in San Francisco to join in the struggle. Martínez Barrio remained in Mexico City, where he consulted with Mexican officials concerning the fate of Spain and the Spanish exiles.  

Mexican delegate Luis Quintanilla and France's Joseph Paul Boncour launched a frontal attack on Franco on June 19. As a result of their impassioned speeches and of the groundwork laid by the exiles and their supporters, the San Francisco General Assembly adopted an agreement not to admit Spain to the United Nations.  

After the conference in San Francisco, the Spanish Republicans returned to Mexico to discuss their future with the Mexican government. Cárdenas met with Alvarez del Vayo and Juan Negrín

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29*Excelsior*, 10 May 1945.

30*Fuentes Mares, Historia de un conflicto*, p. 193.

31Ibid., pp. 193-4.
to discuss the possible reorganization of the Republican government. The former president strongly supported the creation of a government-in-exile which could form the basis for a government in Spain when the leader of the insurgents, Francisco Franco, was removed from office. Cárdenas and most other Mexican officials believed that General Franco would be among the European leaders assisted by the German and Italian governments who would be removed from power by the Allies at the end of the world war.

Formation of the Government-in-Exile

On August 1, 1945, Negrín, Alvarez del Vayo, and Cárdenas met again in Mexico City. They discussed the role of a government-in-exile and the support which such a government could expect to receive in Europe and the Americas. Cárdenas also met separately with the former Republican general, Jose Majia, who had come to Mexico to participate in the formation of the exile government. After this meeting on August 1, Negrín stated in a speech at the Mexican Palace of Fine Arts that the time had come to establish a Spanish government which would be recognized by all nations. Following his formal request, Mexican authorities gave

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32 Cárdenas, Obras, 2:180.

33 Ibid., 2:183.

34 del Valle, Las instituciones de la república española en el exilio, p. 113.
permission for a meeting of the Cortes to be held on August 17 in one of the government buildings in Mexico City. The building was temporarily declared to be the property of Spain, and Mexican troops were ordered to provide an escort for the Spanish dignitaries.  

Several prominent Mexican officials attended this meeting of the Cortes, including ex-president Cárdenas, a personal representative of President Avila Camacho, and representatives of the army and the navy. Martínez Barrio took the presidential oath of office and the next day named a cabinet under the leadership of José Giral. Negrín and Prieto both supported the new government, which was recognized immediately by Mexico. However, neither Negrín and his wing of the socialist party, nor the communists participated in the new government.

Before returning to their homes in Europe, Alvarez del Vayo and Negrín met once again with former president Cárdenas. President Avila Camacho also met briefly with the Republican leaders and Cárdenas.

Martínez Barrio was invited to attend the opening of the Mexican Congress on September 1, 1945, as the representative of

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35 El Universal, 18 August 1945.

36 El Universal, 18, 27, 28 August 1945; de Palencia, Smoldering Freedom, p. 75.

37 Cárdenas, Obras, 2:186-7.
of the government of Spain. About a month later, the building and the archives of the Spanish embassy were turned over to the government-in-exile. In November, a third meeting of the Cortes approved Martínez Barrio's choice of José Giral to lead the government. Giral's government was recognized only by Mexico, Venezuela, Guatemala, and Panama. Mexico continued to represent the Spanish Republic in countries where the government-in-exile could not or did not establish diplomatic missions. Mexico also set up a system by which Spanish refugees in Mexico whose family and friends were imprisoned by Franco could officially plead for their release. These pleas for clemency were sent to Spain through nations that maintained relations with Franco's government.

On October 29, 1945, a banquet was held in Mexico City by the government-in-exile and the Mexican government to honor the Spanish refugees. At this dinner, Mexican Foreign Minister Francisco Castillo Najera stated that there are no differences between us, and as intimates of Spain we ought to try to interact with sincere fraternity and friendly understanding. The people of Mexico feel, as blood brothers, the unjust aggression of which Spain has been a victim; we . . . see the Spanish tragedy as a repetition of the sad events which have punctuated the Mexican history . . .

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38 El Universal, 31 August 1945.

39 Smith, Mexico and the Spanish Republicans, p. 289.

40 "Del discurso del Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores de México, Dr. Gra. Francisco Castillo Najera, en el homenaje a México y a la República Española el día 28 de octubre de 1945," quoted in Centro Republicano Español de México, ed., México y la República Española, p. 117.
CHAPTER V
MEXICO-SPANISH RELATIONS AFTER WORLD WAR II

Mexico remained steadfast in her support of the Spanish government-in-exile in the three decades following World War II. Although the Spanish exiles moved their government to France in 1946, successive Mexican presidents maintained close ties with the exiles and refused to recognize the government of Francisco Franco. Informal relations did gradually develop between Mexico and Spain, but the Mexican government made no move toward diplomatic recognition of the Spanish government.

Mexico itself changed radically between 1945 and 1970. The government's increasing emphasis on economic development and building the national infrastructure helped to modernize the country. However, the split between rich and poor continued to grow, land distribution almost ceased, and outbreaks of hostility against the government became more frequent. Former president Lázaro Cárdenas continued to be actively involved with development projects and, as the years passed, he also became increasingly outspoken about world events.
Mexico and the United Nations

The Mexican government strongly supported the United Nations and was an active participant in its deliberations. At the Inter-American Conference on the Problems of Peace and War, held in Mexico in early 1945 before the San Francisco Conference, Mexico had proposed two amendments to the draft United Nations Charter. One would have required member states to incorporate international laws into their national legal system; a second would have eliminated most restrictions on the UN's competence in international controversies.¹

The second proposed amendment grew directly out of Mexico's experience in the League of Nations prior to World War II, when the League refused to assist nations such as Spain on the grounds that a civil war was a domestic issue. The Mexican government believed that the United Nations or the Permanent Court of International Justice should have the responsibility to mediate in "any dispute, or in any situation which may lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute."² Mexican delegates also supported broad powers for the General Assembly, greater international protection of human rights, and reduced veto power for the great powers.³ In the Mexican view, these proposals, if

²Ibid., p. 45.
³Ibid., pp. 45-6.
accepted, would have strengthened the new international organization as well as role of the smaller nations in it.

Although Mexico's suggestions were not accepted at the San Francisco Conference where other nations preferred to limit the power of the United Nations, the Mexican government planned to be an active participant in the new organization and its affiliate organizations. President Avila Camacho accepted an invitation for Mexico to hold one of the nonpermanent seats on the Security Council for its first session in 1946—a seat which he said Mexico planned to use to protect the interests of smaller nations.

When the initial session of the Security Council convened in February 1946, Roberto Córdova, the Mexican delegate, announced that his country would support any initiative to discuss the "Franco problem." This announcement did not elicit any action until April, when the Polish delegate proposed that the Security Council call members of the United Nations to break diplomatic relations with the government in Spain in accordance with the spirit of the San Francisco Conference. Rafael de la Colina, the Mexican alternate, spoke strongly in favor of the Polish proposal, and the Council members agreed to order a report on the current situation in Spain.

4 Smith, Mexico and the Spanish Republicans, p. 292; Excelsior, 9 April 1946; El Popular, 19 April 1946.

5 Smith, Mexico and the Spanish Republicans, p. 293; United Nations, Security Council, 1st Session, Official Records of the
After several months of investigation, the committee, which consisted of representatives from Australia, Brazil, France, China, and Poland, found Franco to be a potential threat to international peace and recommended that the matter be placed before the General Assembly for consideration. The committee also recommended that all United Nations members break diplomatic relations with Spain if Franco was still in power when the General Assembly considered the Spanish situation. This resolution was put to a vote, but failed to pass.6

Following the Security Council's vote, Poland, Yugoslavia, and Hungary officially recognized the Spanish government-in-exile, and in October Republican representatives were received in the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).7 In a final gesture of support for the Spanish Republic, the General Assembly approved a resolution on December 12, 1946, which: 1) barred Nationalist Spain from membership in the international organizations of the United Nations; 2) called on the Security Council to consider measures to remedy the situation in Spain; and , 3) recommended that all members of the United Nations withdraw ministers and ambassadors from Madrid. Mexico supported

Mexico hoped that the United Nations' recognition of the
government-in-exile and its censures of the Franco regime would
force Franco to step down and allow free elections in Spain. In
late December 1946, Mexico's new president, Miguel Alemán, stated
that the acceptance of Republican Spain in UNESCO showed that the
Republic was not forgotten during the reconstruction of the world
(following the war). He expressed the hope that the Republic
would soon be able to "liberate itself from the past which pre­
vented its normal development."^9

Despite initial success, international supporters of the
Spanish Republic began to experience difficulties in the United
Nations in 1947. During a Security Council debate in the fall of
1947, the Polish delegate proposed that the Council determine
whether or not members of the United Nations had complied with
Part 2 of the December 12 resolution. If they had not, he suggested
that the UN should take immediate action. Mexico supported the
Polish proposal, which was intended not only to demonstrate that
the member nations were not in compliance with the resolution, but
also to highlight Spain's continued threat to international peace. 10

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8 United Nations, General Assembly, 1st Session, Official

9 "El gobierno de la república española recibido y aclamado
por la UNESCO," quoted in Centro Republicano Español de México, ed.,
México y la República Española, p. 385.

10 "Debate sobre las relaciones de los Estados Miembros de las
Naciones Unidas con España," quoted in Centro Republicano Español de
The response of the Security Council to the proposed resolution was cool, and when it became obvious that the members were not willing to support the Polish proposal, Mexico joined with Cuba, Guatemala, Panama, and Uruguay to suggest that the General Assembly simply reaffirm the December 12 resolution. This suggestion failed to arouse any interest, and in December 1947, the General Assembly voted only to express its confidence that the Security Council would act on the Spanish questions if events warranted. Mexico voted affirmatively.  

As Cold War issues began to dominate the United Nations debate, the "problem" of Franco raised less interest. Many members viewed Spain as a valuable ally in the fight against communism and preferred to ignore the origin and actions of the government. This mood culminated in a reversal for the Spanish Republic on November 4, 1950, when the General Assembly voted to revoke the recommendation that member nations withdraw their diplomatic representatives from Madrid. This resolution also removed the restrictions which barred Spain from becoming a member of the United Nations' international organizations. Only Mexico, Guatemala, Uruguay, and the Soviet Union voted against the resolution.  


The Mexican government strongly disagreed with the emphasis on Cold War issues in the United Nations, and refused to align with either the United States or the Soviet Union in UN debates. President Alemán and his successors believed that the unequal distribution of resources and power among nations was a far greater threat to world peace than was communism, and continued to press the UN to examine ways in which poverty could be alleviated.

This Mexican belief was stated by ex-president Cárdenas, who declared publicly that the smaller nations were the victims of the Cold War, which he thought limited their sovereignty, sustained dictators, and negated personal liberty. Cárdenas was especially disheartened to find that the western nations had abandoned Republican Spain in the name of peace and democracy.\(^{13}\)

**Government-in-Exile**

Spanish exile Prime Minister José Giral moved the headquarters of the government-in-exile from Mexico to Paris in February 1946.\(^{14}\) This move, which was made to facilitate contact with Spain, was made with the full support of the Mexican government. The refugees hoped that their proximity to Spain in France would ease the transition to a democratic regime when Franco was

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deposed. The move did not lessen, however, the internal problems of the Republican government. Despite several cabinet changes during 1946, which were designed to broaden refugee support for the government-in-exile, Giral was forced to resign in January 1947, when the socialists and anarchists left the government. The new government, formed under the leadership of socialist Rudolfo Llopis, was immediately recognized by Mexico. Mexicans continued to support the government-in-exile through succeeding governments as when the Llopis government fell in the summer of 1947 and a new government was formed under Alvaro de Albornoz.

The internal difficulties of the refugees' government were further exacerbated in 1948 when Indalecio Prieto and the Spanish monarchists signed a pact that proposed to replace Franco with the heir to the Spanish throne, Juan de Borbón. The republican parties and most of the other refugees refused to respect the pact, which was superceded when Franco and Juan de Borbón signed an agreement later in the same month.

During the remainder of the 1940's the Republican cause continued to suffer setbacks. The government-in-exile lost international support when both Venezuela and Panama recognized Franco. France opened her border with Spain, and the United States sent

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16 Ibid., pp. 283-8.
$100 million in foreign aid in a move that most observers considered to be the first step toward diplomatic recognition.\textsuperscript{17}

Events in Mexico

As time went by and memories of the Spanish Civil War faded, some Mexicans began to urge normalization of relations with Spain. Mexico stood almost alone in maintaining her support for the increasingly impotent Spanish government-in-exile, and many businessmen came to believe that this foreign policy was anachronistic and did nothing to help Mexico or Spain. As early as 1948, President Alemán felt obliged to publish a statement reiterating Mexico's support for the Republic. In an article published in Nueva España in February 1948, he wrote that he did not believe that "circumstances justified a change in Mexico's conduct," despite pressure from the Mexican Chamber of Commerce. The Mexican president stated, however, that, in most cases, no barrier existed to prevent private relations—both commercial and tourist—between Mexico and Spain.\textsuperscript{18}

President Alemán's statement reflected more than official sentiment. Immediately after the Civil War Mexico had stopped all trade with Spain. This trade resumed indirectly during World

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\textsuperscript{17} Giral, \textit{La república en exilio}, p. 166; Abellán, ed., \textit{Guerra y política}, p. 187.
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\textsuperscript{18} "El Sr. Presidente de los Estados Unidos de Mexico reafirme que México no reconocera al gobierno franquista," quoted in Centro Republicano Español de México, ed., \textit{México y la República Española}, p. 387.
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War II, when Mexico shipped goods meant for Spain through Cuba and Portugal. In 1947 private trade ties were formalized in a commercial agreement between El Banco Nacional de México and El Banco Exterior de España. This agreement facilitated the exchange of credit and the transfer of funds between the two banks. Shipping service and direct telephone and air service also were resumed in 1947.  

For the most part, the Spanish exiles in Mexico supported these measures because they made it possible to send money to relatives and friends in Spain and to receive news without having to use the services of a third nation. A formal trade agreement was signed by the national banks, El Banco de México and El Instituto Español de Moneda Extranjero, in March 1951. This further facilitated the transfer of funds and trade between the two nations.  

In March 1951, delegates from Spain were invited to the quadracentennial celebration of the founding of Mexico's National University (UNAM). Although some of the refugee groups and their Mexican friends protested this invitation, the Spanish visitors were generally welcomed. Many Mexicans hoped they would be the precursors of a reestablishment of diplomatic relations.

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20 Ibid., pp. 35-8.
with Spain. 21

As a secondary result of this growing closeness between Mexico and Spain, the activities of Franco's unofficial representative in Mexico City became more overt. El Oficina de España, which was opened in Mexico City in the late 1940's, encouraged public debate on the establishment of diplomatic relations with Spain. By 1952, newspapers such as *Excelsior* regularly printed letters and essays exploring and/or urging the renewal of diplomatic relations. In the spring of 1952, a lengthy letter from a correspondent in Madrid urging the reestablishment of official ties was published in *Excelsior*, provoking a stream of favorable and unfavorable responses. 22 However, Mexican officials continued to reaffirm Mexico's commitment to the Spanish Republic and the government-in-exile.

Ex-president Cárdenas publicly supported his successor's policy toward Spain, stating frequently that he was proud that Mexico remained faithful to her tradition. He also retained his personal ties with Republican friends, often writing them and exchanging visits. In a letter to Luis Quintanilla, Mexican Ambassador to the Organization of American States, Cárdenas wrote that Mexico could not recognize Spain because of the government's spurious origins. He then quoted the ambassador of Brazil, who


had stated that "Franco is not eternal; Spain is," voicing the opinion that when Franco left office Mexico could restore relations with Spain.  

In recognition of Mexico's support for the Spanish Republic, members of the exile community held a number of receptions to honor key Mexican supporters. In 1957, Cárdenas was the special guest at an event held in the Spanish Embassy in Mexico City. A year later, the former ambassador to the League of Nations, Isidro Fabela, was honored at a similar reception. On the occasion, Fabela spoke at length about the relationship between Mexico and the Spanish Republic and emphasized the legal and moral imperatives to support the Republic until the current government in Spain was removed from power. He stated that the three most fundamental reasons for supporting the Republic were that: 1) the Republic represented the historical consensus of the Spanish people; 2) the Franco government was put into power by foreign governments and continued in power through force; and, 3) the Spanish Republic deserved moral reparation before the world for the treatment it received during the Civil War.  

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Contacts between Mexico and Spain increased throughout the 1950's despite Mexico's refusal to renew diplomatic ties. Agreements concerning mail delivery and tourism promoted communication and travel, and thousands of Mexicans and Spaniards took advantage of the improved political climate to visit each others' homes. The exiles generally continued to support these agreements. In a few cases, where there was little danger of arrest, some were able to visit their relatives and friends in Spain.

An agreement between Mexico and Spain concerning the Spanish exiles' documentation also facilitated these visits. Under this agreement, Spain officially recognized the signature of the Mexican foreign minister and the Spanish consul on passports and visas as being legitimate documentation to enter Spain. The signature of a representative of Franco on the visa was not required.25

Spain's Relations with Other Nations

Despite Mexico's disapproval, Spain's international relations improved significantly in the early 1950's, and by 1953 Spain was considered to be a fully accepted member of the world community by most nations. Developments in the United Nations clearly demonstrated Spain's growing importance and prestige. As a result of the November 1950 vote in which the General Assembly reversed its decision to urge member nations to sever diplomatic and commercial

relations with Spain, France and other Western European nations opened their borders to increased trade and immigration. Thousands of Spanish workers began to move north in search of the employment that was still unavailable at home.

Spain finally sought admission to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1952. UNESCO considered this request and voted 12-5 in favor of admitting Spain. Mexican delegate Ernesto Padillo Nervo spoke vehemently against the admission of Spain; but in November the Seventh General Conference of UNESCO approved the admission of Spain by a vote of 44 to 4, with seven abstentions. Mexico voted against admitting Spain. On December 18, Spain's membership in UNESCO was formally approved by the General Assembly, along with that of 19 other nations.26

Spain sought admission as a full member of the United Nations in 1955. In January of that year she was given a seat as a permanent observer. Because none of the major powers opposed seating Spain as an observer, she was accepted as a full member on December 18, 1955. Mexico and four other nations abstained from voting.27


Mexico and the Government-in-Exile

Supported by Mexico and a few other nations, the Spanish government-in-exile continued to be active in the 1950's, although the lack of funds and disagreements between exile leaders continued to present problems. The growing international acceptance of Spain, however, gave the exiles a focal point of resistance which helped to unify their factions.

A new government was formed under former ambassador to Mexico, Félix Gordón Ordaz, in August 1951. The first goal of the new government was to organize action against the admission of Spain to UNESCO. In late 1951, Gordón Ordaz signed a declaration which was sent to the President of the Sixth General Assembly, Mexican delegate Ernesto Padillo Nervo. The declaration listed all the decisions made by the United Nations concerning Spain and explained in detail the exiles' position that the admission of Spain would be contrary to the provisions of the San Francisco Conference and subsequent United Nations actions. Padillo Nervo was sympathetic to the statement and circulated the declaration among all the delegations. The exiles gained little international support for their position.28

Gordón Ordaz flew to Mexico City in January 1952 to ask for permission to hold the meeting of the Cortes in Mexico City to discuss the future of the JARE. Although he met with refugee

28 del Valle, Las instituciones de la república en exilio, p. 332.
leaders and with officials of the Mexican government during his two weeks visit, his request for a meeting of the Cortes was rejected on the grounds that the timing was not appropriate.\textsuperscript{29} A short meeting of the deputies of the government-in-exile was convened in January in Paris to modify the rules of the Cortes, but discussion of the JARE was postponed. During a fund-raising trip to Guatemala and Cuba in March of the next year, Gordón Ordaz returned to Mexico to celebrate the April 14 commemoration of the Republic. Later in the year he again returned to Mexico, accompanied by Negrín and other exile leaders, to attend the inauguration of President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines.\textsuperscript{30}

When Spain sought admission to the United Nations in 1955, the government-in-exile sent telegrams to all the delegates and officials of the international organization which stated that Franco's government did not conform to the ideals set forth in the San Francisco Charter, and that the government in Spain did not express the free will of the Spanish people.\textsuperscript{31} These telegrams were generally ignored by the members of the United Nations, and the exiles' position gained little support.

By 1956, the government-in-exile had come to realize that it could no longer hope to unseat Franco through actions in international organizations. The Republican government was

\textsuperscript{29}Ibid., p. 321.

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., pp. 321-3.

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., pp. 324-5.
was recognized only by Mexico and Yugoslavia, although France and several Hispanic American countries tolerated the political activities of the Spanish refugees. For this reason, the second government formed by Gordón Ordaz in 1956 decided to focus on three courses of action: 1) clandestine work within Spain to encourage opposition to Franco; 2) publication of Republican writings which expressed the goals of democratic Spain; and 3) aid to the Spaniards in exile and to political prisoners in Spain. Members of the exile groups met regularly with opposition leaders in Spain and tried to send financial aid to these groups whenever possible. For the first time writings by opposition leaders were published in the books and magazines written by the Spanish Republican exiles in Europe and Hispanic America.

These articles, books, and magazines, such as *Nueva España* and *España Peregrina*, written by the exiles served to support both international and domestic opposition to Franco, and to provide a means of communication between the different groups of exiles. In addition to their writings, the Spanish refugees also attended meetings of international organizations such as the United Nations and the Organization of American States to defend the cause of the Spanish Republic. Republican leaders continued to travel incessantly to raise funds for the support of the older exiles and to remind other nations of the repressive nature of the government in Spain.  

\[\text{\footnotesize 32 Ibid., pp. 327-8.}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize 33 Ibid., pp. 331-2.}\]
Despite its reorganization, however, the government-in-exile continued to be fractured in the 1950's and 1960's by internal divisions and by the deaths of many of the original leaders of the Republic. Martínez Barrio, Prieto, and José Giral died within months of each other in 1962.

During the late 1950's and in the 1960's, the exiles were effective chiefly in keeping the world's attention focused on the policies and cruelties of the Franco government, and in providing funds to opposition groups in Spain. They retained very little international political power; only Mexico and Yugoslavia remained firm in their support of the government-in-exile. The Spanish government did make a few concessions to the exiles in 1966. Franco declared a limited amnesty for the refugees and confiscation of their property was terminated. Returning exiles still faced the possibility, however, of a military or civil trial for their activities during the Civil War.

Relations between Mexico and Spain

Successive Mexican governments continued to support the Spanish Republic and to insist that diplomatic relations should never be established between Mexico and Spain as long as Franco remained in power. Each April 14, the anniversary of the founding of the Republic, Mexican officials joined the Spanish exiles at El Centro Republicano Español for a banquet to commemorate the Republic. During international trips, Mexican presidents met with exile leaders to reaffirm Mexico's unwavering support.
President Adolfo López Mateos met with exile leaders in Venezuela in 1960. There he stated that, "Mexico does not sustain relations with Spain because the government was imposed on the Spanish people by two foreign powers: the Nazis and the fascists. Since that time, my country has not maintained relations with the Franco regime."34

López Mateos' successor, President-elect Gustavo Díaz Ordaz stated, during a luncheon meeting with the press in April 1964, that Mexico would never consider establishing relations with Franco because it was put into power by foreign intervention. The president-elect criticized those nations which had compromised international principles and renewed relations with the government in Spain. However, he also expressed the hope that cordial cultural, business, and personal relations would continue between the Mexican and Spanish peoples.35

As president, Díaz Ordaz further elaborated the government's position during a trip to Central America in 1966. At a press conference in San José, Costa Rica, he stated that the government in Spain "was born under the inspiration of Nazi fascism" and through foreign intervention that Mexico would not support. When asked to compare the policy toward Spain with Mexico's policy toward


Cuba, the President replied that Mexico maintained amicable relations with most nations and that the government did not attempt to judge other nations' political philosophies.  

Official support for the Spanish government-in-exile also was echoed in 1969 by Díaz Ordaz's successor, president-elect Luis Echeverría, when he stated that although he expected ties with Spain to increase, he had no intention of establishing diplomatic relations with Franco. The new President's policy was implemented in January 1970 by Antonio Carrillo Flores, Echeverría's Secretary of Foreign Relations. During a trip to Europe and Asia, Carrillo Flores met briefly with Spanish Chancellor López Bravo to discuss commercial relations between Mexico and Spain. He described the meeting as cordial, but also stated that he reaffirmed Mexico's commitment to the Spanish Republic and to the policy that no formal relations would be established as long as Franco controlled the government.

Many exiles and Mexicans took advantage of the increased closeness between Mexico and Spain to reestablish their personal friendships which had been strained during the previous decades. Travel restrictions for Mexicans were eased, and a number of

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37Fuentes Mares, Historia de un conflicto, pp. 199-200.

Mexican leaders, including future president José López Portillo, took the opportunity to visit Spain as private tourists.\(^{39}\)

By 1970, despite the constant expression of support for the Spanish exiles and their cause, it appeared that the Mexican government was waiting for Franco to retire or die and a new, democratic government to be established in order to restore diplomatic relations with Spain. President Echeverría did not intend to renew diplomatic ties immediately, but Mexicans were sincerely interested in the eventual restoration of relations.

The Continuing Role of Lázaro Cárdenas

Cárdenas gradually became more comfortable with his role as elder statesman, and, in addition to maintaining personal ties with the former leaders of the Spanish Republic, began to speak out on international issues which affected Mexico. During a much-publicized trip to Europe, the Soviet Union, and China in 1958, Cárdenas met with the president of the government-in-exile, Félix Gordón Ordás and members of his cabinet. With them he talked of the need for peace and increased international protection of human rights, including the rights of refugees.\(^{40}\) Upon his return from China in early 1959, the former Mexican president stopped again in France to meet with Republican leaders.\(^{41}\) One of the continuing topics


\(^{40}\) Cárdenas, Obras, 3:62.

\(^{41}\) Ibid., 3:107.
of these conversations was the care of the remaining elderly refugees in France who had little income or family support.

Some Republican leaders were critical of the fact that Cárdenas had not taken a more active role in Mexican politics after his retirement from office. Responding to this criticism in a letter to his friend Marte Gómez in June 1961, he wrote that he could not justify "an illegal intrusion into the powers of the presidency of the Republic." He noted, however, that Mexico alone had stood firm in supporting Republican Spain which had been his policy while president.

During the 1950's and the 1960's the former president was increasingly critical of the Cold War, which he believed had caused the world to abandon Republican Spain, overthrow the Arbenz government in Guatemala, delay development in the Third World, and finally, upset Castro's revolution in Cuba. Cárdenas continued to approve of Mexico's support of Cuba and to hope that Castro would not fall victim to the fate of the leaders of the Spanish Republic.


43 Cárdenas not only supported the admission of Spanish refugees into Mexico, but also strongly supported the admission of refugees from Guatemala in 1954 and Cuba in the late 1950's. He believed that political asylum was one of the most basic human rights and that Mexico should be a leader in accepting any person who would be in danger of losing his life for political reasons if forced to return home, Elena Vásquez Gómez, ed., Epistolario de Lázaro Cárdenas, 2 vols. (México: siglo veintiuno editores, 1974), 2: 91-4, 291.

With other Mexican leaders, Cárdenas continued to expect that Franco would retire or be deposed so that normal relations could be reestablished with Spain. He often discussed the future of Spain with members of the exile community in Mexico who shared his hope that democracy could be restored after Franco left the government.45

Cárdenas' death in October 1970 was mourned by many Spanish refugees, as well as by the Mexican people. They regretted that he had never been able to visit Spain. Speakers delivering the many eulogies at meetings following his death often mentioned his work on behalf of the Spanish Republic.

Spanish exiles also honored Cárdenas after his death by founding a school in his memory in Mexico City. Several years later, a monument to the former president was built in the heart of the city by the refugees. This monument contains soil from each of the Spanish provinces.

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CHAPTER VI
RESTORATION OF RELATIONS

The 1970's marked a growing divergence between official and unofficial Mexican attitude toward Spain. Officially, the Mexican government under the leadership of President Luis Echeverría followed Cárdenas' policy and continued to support the Republican government-in-exile. Unofficially, except for a brief period during the fall of 1975, Mexico and Spain grew closer as trade and tourism flourished. Mexico had never expected Franco to remain in power so many years, but the government leaders believed that it was necessary to wait for Franco's death or resignation before beginning negotiations to resume diplomatic relations. Franco's death in 1975 finally allowed Mexico and Spain to begin these negotiations, which culminated with the establishment of formal relations in March 1977.

President Luis Echeverría

Soon after his election, Mexican President Luis Echeverría stated that "our relations with Spain should get better and more extensive."\(^1\) However, in a press conference six days later, he

ruled out the possibility of renewing diplomatic ties with Spain and expressed total solidarity with the Spanish Republicans. Mexico would not break relations with the government-in-exile, he said, until democracy had been restored in Spain.²

Echeverría reiterated this policy three years later during an official trip to Paris in the spring of 1973. He made a particular point of meeting with the leaders of the government-in-exile in Paris, now headed by José Maldonado and Fernando Valera. When asked about Mexico's relationship with Spain, the Mexican president told the press that his country had never lost its faith and love for the Spanish people and that the thirty year break in diplomatic relations was simply an expression of Mexico's adherence to international law and her hatred of fascism. He described the lengthy estrangement as a transitory period, with little effect on the centuries of close relations between the two nations, "a brief interruption, a small lapse in the relations between our peoples." He also added that, "however, if there are future changes in Spain we will study them in depth."³

Many Spaniards were incensed by Echeverría's statements and believed that they were an intervention in the internal affairs of Spain. However, this outcry against Mexico quickly died down as trade and tourist relations continued to grow steadily.

²Ibid., p. 211.

³Ibid., pp. 212-3.
Unofficial Ties between Spain and Mexico

Tourist offices were opened in Madrid and Mexico City in the early 1970's to facilitate travel between the two nations. Regular flights were scheduled between the two capitals and the number of businessmen and tourists who traveled frequently between Mexico and Spain increased each year.\(^4\)

Trade also flourished in the growing climate of cooperation. In 1971, Spain's National Institute of Foreign Currency and Mexico's Foreign Trade Bank signed an official agreement that simplified payments and encouraged economic transactions.\(^5\) By the first half of 1976, trade between the two nations totaled U.S. $60 million in Spanish exports to Mexico and U.S. $37 million worth of Mexican products sent to Spain. This represented a steady increase from a total of U.S. $37 million and U.S. $16 million respectively in 1974.\(^6\)

Republican Exiles

The approximately 20,000 Spanish Republican exiles in Mexico remained a symbol of resistance to fascism and to Franco, although most were well assimilated into Mexican society by 1970. They continued to resist the establishment of diplomatic ties between Mexico and Franco's government, but most were resigned or even

\(^4\) Interview with César Sepúlveda, Mexico City, August 1977.


\(^6\) Ibid., n.p.
welcomed the gradual rapprochement between the two nations. Some of the exiles were able to use the closer ties to visit relatives in Spain. Others, who still feared for their personal safety if they returned to Spain, enjoyed the simplified communication, but waited for Franco's death before returning home.

Meanwhile, the government-in-exile worked with the resistance leaders within Spain to overthrow Franco. In February 1971, Prime Minister Sánchez-Albornoz resigned and was replaced by Fernando Valera, a Republican party leader. Valera continued the same policies as his predecessors including the call for free elections in Spain and a return to the republican form of government.

At a meeting in May 1971, leaders of the government-in-exile honored Mexico and her people for their faithfulness to the Spanish Republic. In a resolution issued to the press, the Republicans stated that such faithfulness should "serve as an example to all of the democratic governments of the world."\(^7\)

The government-in-exile responded coldly in July 1974 when an ailing Franco temporarily handed the Spanish government over to his appointed successor, Prince Juan Carlos, heir to the Borbon throne. The exiles announced that Juan Carlos did not personify national reconciliation or the advent of democracy.

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\(^7\)del Valle, Las instituciones de la república española en exilio, p. 360.
Only the leaders who supported the goals of the 1931 Constitution, they said, would be able to bring Spain to peace, liberty, and democracy. The exile leaders also reiterated their demand that Spain have free elections to determine the next government. 8

Changing Relations between Mexico and Spain

The increasingly friendly relations between Mexico and Spain were suddenly destroyed in September 1975 when Franco's government executed five men charged with terrorism. President Echeverría, who believed that the executed men were actually killed for opposing the government, immediately ordered all contact with Spain suspended. The offices of the unofficial representative of the Spanish government, the Spanish tourist agency, and the EFE (Spanish news agency) were closed, and the Spanish members of their staffs expelled from Mexico. All flights between Mexico and Spain were cancelled, and the offices of Iberia Airlines closed as soon as Mexicans in Spain arrived home. Echeverría also ordered Mexican embassies and consulates to deny visas to Spaniards, unless they were refugees fleeing Franco, and prohibited Mexicans from visiting Spain. 9

The Mexican president attempted to broaden his censure of Spain beyond Mexico. He asked the United Nations to call a special Security Council meeting, to call for a vote to expel Spain from the United Nations, and to require all UN members to break

8Ibid., p. 363.

diplomatic relations with Spain. In his letter to Secretary General Kurt Waldheim, Echeverría stated that the gross and repeated violations of human rights perpetrated during the Spanish dictator's regime could not be ignored. On October 7, he addressed the General Assembly, and stated that the situation in Spain must be confronted because the denial of rights was creating a climate of "violent confrontation" which was contributing to international friction and constituted a danger to international peace. The Security Council was unresponsive to Echeverría's proposal, burying it in committee without debate or discussion.

Despite the unresponsiveness of the United Nations, Echeverría received Mexican support for his stand against the government in Spain. Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, president of the executive committee of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), declared that the President's actions were an example of the continuity between Mexican foreign and domestic policy against all forms of fascism. Fernando Estrada Samano, a member of the

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Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN), Mexico's more conservative opposition party, praised the appeal to the United Nations as the proper vehicle for consideration of such a denial of human rights. He also expressed the hope that the international organization would examine the possibility of suspending Spain as a member nation.  

In general, international reaction to Echeverría's policy was negative. Most nations thought he was overreacting and intervening in the internal affairs of Spain. Some analysts believed that the Mexican government's strong response to the Spanish executions was part of the President's desire to gain international recognition and leadership in the Third World. Spain retaliated by accusing Echeverría of "intolerable interference" in its internal affairs, noting that he was Minister of the Interior in 1968 when a student protest in Mexico City was crushed, killing more than two hundred people.

Franco resolved the crisis by dying in November 1975 at the age of 83. Mexico immediately responded by lifting all sanctions imposed on Spain in September. Commercial relations were restored, and the expelled officials, bankers, and journalists


were allowed to return. Regular flights between the two nations resumed in December.16

Restoration of Diplomatic Relations

Interest in restoring diplomatic relations with Spain grew rapidly in Mexico after the death of Franco. At a press conference in early December, reporters asked President Echeverría whether or not Mexico would establish relations with the government of King Juan Carlos, Franco's successor and grandson of the deposed King Alfonso. Echeverría replied that he hoped relations would be restored as soon as the Spanish government began to reestablish democracy in Spain. He also stated that members of the Spanish government-in-exile had been consulted about the possibility of renewing relations with Spain and that Mexico would remain faithful to the Republic until the "last moment."17

Other Mexican officials echoed the President. Octavio Santeis, head of the Federal District, declared that a "new stage has been opened for the Spanish people—hope of liberty and democracy."18 Eugenio Méndez Docrurro, Secretary of Communication

16 Interview with César Sepúlveda, Mexico City, Mexico, August 1977.


and Transport, stated that the reestablishment of telecommunications and air traffic seemed to him to be a "step in the establishment of diplomatic relations between two nations"—a step which he believed to be desired by the Mexican people.19

The first direct contact between the governments of Mexico and Spain since the end of the Civil War took place in Paris on December 15, 1975. The Mexican Minister of National Patrimony, Francisco Javier Alejo, and the Spanish Foreign Minister, José María de Areilza, met for almost two hours to discuss the resumption of relations.20 Although the meeting was amicable, the conversation revealed potential obstacles to the resumption of official ties. The Spanish leaders indicated that many of Spain's senior government and military leaders were still bitter about Mexico's refusal to recognize Franco and resented Echeverría's reaction to the September executions. Alejo said that "Mexico is very willing to resume commercial relations, but diplomatic ties will have to wait until there is a clear and broad democratic opening in Spain. Mexico would like to see in Spain an open struggle between political parties, clear and open representation of workers and peasants, and the release of all political prisoners from jail."21


21 Ibid., 1:12.
Both Echeverría and presidential candidate José López Portillo reaffirmed Alejo's position.²² At a luncheon meeting at the Spanish Republican Center on January 7, 1976, López Portillo told a group of exiles that "normalization of relations with Madrid can only take place when those Spanish in exile can return home with dignity." López Portillo went on to tell his audience that the forty years of tragic estrangement with the Spanish people also could be concluded only in the context of the principles for which the Republic had been fighting.²³

In his address to Congress on September 1, 1976, President Echeverría praised the progress toward democracy in Spain, again stating that diplomatic relations would be restored when all political parties were allowed representation, freedom of the press was guaranteed, political prisoners were freed, and all exiles, without distinction, were allowed to return to Spain without penalty. He added that he doubted relations could be restored during his administration because the time left was short.²⁴


²³"Palabras improvisadas por el licenciado José López Portillo el término del desayuno en el Centro Republicano Español de México," quoted in Centro Republicano Español de México, ed., México y la República Española, pp. 444-5.

Although commercial relations continued to improve, and more Mexicans and Spaniards exchanged visits each month, the prospects for renewal of formal relations remained elusive. In late September, President-elect López Portillo sent aides to Spain to discuss future relations. The results of these talks were not made public, but a month later Spanish representatives were invited to López Portillo's inauguration to be held in December.  

In late November and early December 1976, the director general of the Mexican Institute for Foreign Trade, Julio Faesler, and a representative of President-elect López Portillo, Santiago Roel, made a fifteen-day visit to Spain. They met with the Spanish Minister of Commerce, José Llado y Fernández de Urrutia. Their talks resulted in a new trade agreement designed to supplement the 1971 pact and to further simplify and encourage trade. The new accord, the first to be signed at the Spanish Ministry of Commerce, was intended to be the initial step in formalizing a comprehensive trade agreement once diplomatic relations were restored.  

One of the first results of the trade agreement was a thirty-five member Mexican trade delegation sent to Spain in December. Delegation members held talks with the major Spanish

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26 ^Spain 76, December 1976.
corporations and businesses and agreed to plan for a large trade fair to be held in Spain in 1977. A number of "Mexican weeks" designed to display Mexican culture and economic progress were also planned. In return, Spain arranged a show of heavy equipment to be held in Mexico City.  

Renewal of Diplomatic Relations

On March 28, 1977, several rounds of talks between representatives of King Juan Carlos and President López Portillo ended with the announcement that diplomatic relations between Mexico and Spain would be established. At a press conference on the 28th, López Portillo stated that the renewal of relations was a "realistic and objective action" with which he was fully satisfied.

Two weeks earlier relations between Mexico and the Spanish Republican government-in-exile had been broken. The Mexican President stated in his announcement of the rupture that "for Mexico it is more important to reestablish relations with the national government, than to maintain an ideal which has begun to lose its sense of objectivity." He reiterated Mexico's support for the Republicans, however, characterizing the long relationship with the Republic as period of loyalty, dignity, and solidarity.  

27Ibid., n.p.


Maldonado, president of the government-in-exile, expressed the hope that a new regime would be established in Spain through honest elections and that the Republicans who returned to Spain from Mexico would look out for Mexico's interests in Spain.  

López Portillo named former President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz as the first Mexican ambassador to Madrid in more than thirty-five years. The appointment was met with official approval, but some public criticism, in Spain. *El País*, Madrid's liberal daily, characterized Díaz Ordaz as the "most repressive politician Mexico has ever had." Others contended that the man whose administration began with the suppression of a railway strike and ended with the 1968 student massacre at Tlatelolco was more representative of Franco than of the ideals of freedom and democracy which Mexico professed to respect. The Spanish government ignored this denunciation of the proposed ambassador and quickly accepted his credentials. However, ill health forced Díaz Ordaz to retire and return to Mexico about a month later.  

López Portillo made an official visit to Spain in October 1977 to further cement friendly relations between Mexico and Spain. His entourage of 200 included not only government ministers and other officials, but also mariachi bands, artists, and dancers who

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entertained the Spanish public. While in Spain, the Mexican President signed an extensive trade agreement and opened a Mexican art exhibit in Madrid.

The Spanish Republicans reacted quietly to the new relationship between Mexico and Spain. Most of the Republicans leaders had realized that Mexico would eventually break its ties with the government-in-exile after the death of Franco in order to establish formal relations with King Juan Carlos. Although exile leaders were not included officially in the talks between the two governments, they were consulted by the Mexican government during the negotiations with Spain. As promised by Mexico, the Spanish government agreed to guarantee the exiles' right to return to Spain without reprisals; many were eager to take advantage of this opportunity. 33

The restoration of diplomatic ties with Spain removed one small issue from the shoulders of the Mexican government. Almost overwhelmed by economic problems and a growing population, most Mexican leaders were relieved to resolve a tangled relationship which no one had expected would last for more than forty years.

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33 Interview with César Sepúlveda, Mexico City, Mexico, August 1977.
CHAPTER VII
LAZARO CARDENAS AND THE SPANISH REPUBLIC

Lázaro Cárdenas played an instrumental role in the development of 20th century Mexican foreign policy. His vigorous support of liberal governments and his repudiation of intervention and international aggression provided the foundation for Mexican policies during the succeeding four decades. Even after his retirement from the presidency in 1940, Cárdenas remained a symbol of the foreign policy of the Mexican Revolution.

Cárdenas' support for the Spanish Republic from 1934-40 established a relationship with Spain that lasted until 1977. He initiated Mexico's intense involvement with the Republic and a policy which has interested and confused scholars for many years. This dissertation attempts to provide an initial analysis of both the unique relationship between Mexico and Spain and Cárdenas' role in the development and preservation of this relationship. Many questions about this topic remain unanswered and deserve further study.

The Presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas

Lázaro Cárdenas was inaugurated at a critical time in Mexico's history. The country was just beginning to stabilize
after more than two decades of turmoil, and the new president had
the opportunity to move ahead with the implementation of the goals
of the Revolution and to consolidate political support for the
government.

As a candidate for the presidency, Cárdenas indicated his
interest in bringing the government to the people of Mexico.
Despite his certain election as the official party candidate, he
campaigned throughout the country for six months. This traveling
continued after his inauguration in 1934; Cárdenas rarely stayed
in Mexico City and preferred to take his government to the people,
visiting small villages and remote towns with members of the cabi­
et. This "road show" served two purposes. It reminded government
officials that most Mexicans still lived in dire poverty with no
access to the schools, clinics, or roads promised during the
Revolution, and it demonstrated to the peasants and workers that
the government was concerned about their situation.

Unlike many of predecessors, President Cárdenas believed
that the power of national governments should be used to bring
about social justice. He wanted to rearrange the social and
economic forces of the nation in accordance with the goals expressed
in the 1917 Constitution. Like most Mexican presidents, he did
not hesitate to use all of the power at his disposal to achieve
his purpose: men and women at every level of government were
expected to be on call night and day to assist sick villagers or
others who had appealed to the President for assistance.
The President also did not hesitate to forcibly expropriate businesses and land which his predecessors had left in the hands of private owners. During his six-year term, Cárdenas expropriated more than forty-five million acres of land—twice as much as the previous presidents of the Revolution combined. Realizing the danger to the Mexican economy if the new land owners who generally received minute parcels of land were not helped to modernize production, the government also established a National Bank of Ejidal Credit to supply loans for seed, machinery, and tools. Villagers were also helped to organize into cooperatives to pool their talents and resources. Many of these cooperatives were organized into larger political groups to maximize their effectiveness.

In addition to his famous expropriation of the British and American oil companies in 1938, Cárdenas also expropriated the National Railways, a sugar refinery in Morelos, and numerous small businesses. Other businesses were virtually run by their union employees—Cárdenas encouraged workers to strike for better working conditions and higher wages, and often used this as a threat to force owners to comply with labor's demands. In the spring of 1936 a new labor organization, the Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM) was formed under the leadership of Vicente Lombardo Toledano and patterned after the industrial unions in the United States. Cárdenas used this organization to mobilize support for his government and to help its 450,000 members.
Cárdenas also used the newly organized peasants and laborers to form the basis of a new political party. By 1938, he had completely reorganized the national political party. The Party of the Mexican Revolution (PRM), as his new organization was named, had representatives from four groups—peasants, labor, the military, and the general population. This equal representation provided a checks and balances system: no one group was able to dominate national politics. Their leaders were required to work together, which helped to form a stronger national consensus. He reduced the influence of professional politicians, and office-holders were no longer required to pay dues to retain their jobs.

**Cárdenas' Foreign Policy**

Cárdenas' personal philosophy of government was translated into his foreign policy. The world was in chaos in the 1930's. Many nations were struggling with the effects of the worldwide depression, long-standing disputes such as the conflict between Italy and Ethiopia were erupting, and Germany and Italy were beginning to prepare for war. The new president of Mexico saw an opportunity to demonstrate his foreign policy of the Revolution which stressed nonintervention, national sovereignty, the equality of nations, and the peaceful solution of conflicts. Cárdenas hoped to make Mexico the champion of an international policy of social justice and democracy, even if this policy could be expressed only through such forums as the League of Nations.
International debate, speeches, and diplomatic measures were the only methods by which Mexico could hope to influence international events during Cárdenas administration. Mexico was still weak, both economically and politically, and the League of Nations and other international meetings were the most efficient and effective place for him to express Mexico's position on world events such as the United States' occupation of Nicaragua, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, and the German invasion of Austria.¹

When Cárdenas appointed Isidro Fabela as the Mexican Ambassador to the League of Nations in 1937, his instructions to the new ambassador were characteristic of his foreign policy. Fabela was told: 1) Mexico would remain faithful to the League of Nations despite the League's shortcomings; 2) Mexico intended to comply with the Pact of the League even if other nations did not; 3) the principle of nonintervention must be inalienable; and 4) Mexico would defend, if necessary, any nation suffering from external aggression.²

President Cárdenas and his representatives in the League did follow this philosophy, although Mexico was not able to defend all the nations which suffered from external aggression. Mexico supported the economic sanctions imposed on Italy by the League in 1935 for the invasion of Ethiopia, even though these sanctions

¹Leonel Durán, Lázaro Cárdenas: Ideario Político, pp. 345-63.

included a prohibition against exporting petroleum and petroleum products to Italy until that nation pulled out of North Africa. Cárdenas was furious two years later when the League recognized Italy's position in Ethiopia and removed the subject nation from membership in the League. He instructed Fabela to strongly protest the expulsion of a member and to attempt to persuade other members that Italy should continue to be punished for its aggressive behavior. Mexico was unsuccessful in this attempt.

Despite continual frustration with the League and its refusal to act decisively in international conflicts, Cárdenas insisted that Mexico remain an active member of the international organization. Mexico needed this forum to express her international philosophy, and, at times, to warn opponents of the Mexican government at home and abroad about Mexico's determination to fight intervention and to promote social justice.

The Mexican government also was active in other international organizations during the 1930's. Cárdenas used many of the Pan American meetings as a forum to express Mexico's desire for economic development in Latin America. He was keenly aware of Mexico's need for assistance and tried to include the topics of tariff reductions, more liberal commercial policies, and

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3 Ibid., pp. 25-7.

increased trade on the conference agendas.\(^5\)

Cárdenas did not neglect the more traditional diplomatic relations, and tried to improve Mexico's effectiveness and image abroad by increasing the number of embassies and legations and employing more professional staffs. Eduardo Hay, Minister of Foreign Relations, was instructed to staff Mexico's embassies with well-trained personnel who could explain and adequately represent the policies of the Revolution. The practice of appointing political troublemakers to foreign posts was not abandoned, but these men were supported by better staffs.\(^6\) The Mexican president took the time to inform other nations, especially in Hispanic America, about his foreign policy goals and actions.\(^7\)

**Lázaro Cárdenas and Spain**

The Republic in Spain occupied a special place in Cárdenas' foreign policy. He was fascinated in the similarities


\(^6\)The political appointees occasionally embarrassed the Mexican government. A number of the staff of the Mexican Embassy in Madrid wrote a confidential letter to the Foreign Ministry accusing Ambassador de Negri of selling Mexican passports, maltreating secretaries, and doing little to help Mexicans in Spain. Several months after his appointment, the ambassador was recalled to Mexico, Archivo "Consulado Juan B. Arriaga a la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, III, 570 (46-0) "36"/4050, n.d.

In the Mexican and Spanish constitutions, and flattered that Spain was interested in Mexico's Revolution. Before assuming the presidency, Cárdenas had made friends with several members of the Republican government, and he applauded their desire to distribute land, build schools, improve the working conditions for laborers, and reduce the influence of the Catholic church. Although Spain was entering a more conservative period in 1934, Cárdenas still kept his ties with the original leaders of the Republic and often discussed the future of Spain with his government officials.

Cárdenas was especially interested in the Republic's plan for rural development. Much of the land in Spain was marginal at best and the number of peasants who needed land far exceeded the arable land available. Mexico suffered from similar problems, and Cárdenas was eager to see if the Spanish government could increase production while distributing land to the maximum number of people. Although an agrarian reform law was enacted in Spain, the plan was never carried to fruition and Mexico was not able to benefit from Spain's experience.

After the military rebellion in July 1936, Cárdenas decided to aid the Spanish Republic in any way that Mexico could. He realized that this aid would be limited to international diplomacy and small amounts of arms and food because Mexico was barely able to feed its citizens and did not produce weapons. However, in the context of overall Mexican foreign policy the decision to send material assistance to Spain was striking: Mexico had not sent
similar assistance to any other nation since the Revolution.\(^8\)

Although the amount of material aid that Mexico was able to send to Spain during the Civil War was quite small, it did represent a genuine effort on Cárdenas' part. Excess Mexican weapons were sent immediately in the summer of 1936, and Mexican representatives all over the world worked to purchase food and arms for the Republicans. Cárdenas did draw the line at violating international law or agreements to assist Spain. His refusal to ship airplanes purchased in the United States to Spain after the U.S.-Mexican agreement not to do so caused a rift in his relations with the Republican government. The Mexican president feared jeopardizing his improving relationship with the United States by violating the agreement.

Cárdenas required the Ministry of Foreign Relations to support Spain's interests in all possible ways. Mexican embassies were instructed to help Spaniards whenever possible, although as the Civil War progressed, Mexico's aid became a liability in nations which sided with the insurgents.\(^9\) The work of the Mexican ambassadors to the League of Nations has been well documented;

\(^8\)Cárdenas did support sending limited financial aid to other "revolutionary" leaders in Latin America. Some assistance was given to César Augusto Sandino during President Portes Gil's administration, and Cárdenas later tried to help Sandino when he was imprisoned. However, this and any similar aid did not match the quantity sent to Republican Spain, Pareyón Azpeita, Cárdenas ante el mundo, p. 196.

Narciso Bassols, Isidro Fabela, and their colleagues labored diligently on behalf of the Republican government. Cárdenas also made sure that the topic of Spain was included in inter-American conferences whenever possible. He was determined to demonstrate Mexico's opposition to the prevailing lack of international concern for the Republic and to foreign intervention.

Spanish Refugees in Mexico

Although Cárdenas used the foreign policy of the Revolution to provide the basis for his policies toward Spain, his sympathy and support for the Republic led him into uncharted territory after the Civil War. Mexico's assistance to the Spanish refugees in France, and her decision to help thousands of refugees enter Mexico was unprecedented. These actions were a direct reflection of Cárdenas' interest in the Republic. Mexico had traditionally respected the right of political asylum and allowed individuals and small groups into Mexico, but mass immigrations had never been allowed. There is evidence that Cárdenas privately hoped that the majority of Spanish refugees who wished to emigrate to Mexico would be allowed to do so; he believed that their political philosophies and skills would aid Mexico's social and economic development.\(^{10}\)

Political pressure and the lack of funds for transportation and resettlement reduced the number of refugees entering

Mexico below this optimal level. However, the president's decision to waive most of the requirements for citizenship also was extraordinary—the only instance of these requirements being waived for a group of immigrants.

By the end of World War II Cardenas' successors had realized that the Spanish refugees were an invaluable resource for Mexico, and they continued his policies. The refugees quickly proved their worth, and although there were isolated resettlement problems, Mexican leaders continued to support Cardenas' "open-door" policy for refugees who could make their way to Mexico.

Cardenas' Policies after Retiring from the Presidency

Cardenas continued to influence Mexico foreign policy after retiring from the presidency in 1940. He was especially active in international meetings concerning democracy and peace. In the early 1960's, he organized a Latin American Congress for National Sovereignty, Economic Emancipation, and Peace which was held in Mexico City.\(^{11}\) The purposes of the congress included creating support for Cuba and other Hispanic American nations with similar goals and policies. He participated in the World Assembly for Peace in 1955, the World Congress for General Disarmament and Peace in 1962, and numerous other international conferences which promoted nonintervention, the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and social justice.

\(^{11}\)Leonel Durán, Lázaro Cardenas: Ideario Político, p. 313.
Cárdenas also used his international image to speak out against international aggression and discrimination. He protested the United States' involvement in Indochina, the refusal of the United Nations to admit China as a member, and the Organization of American States' policy against Cuba. Until his death, the former Mexican president continued to support the Cuban Revolution. During a press conference in Boston in 1970, Cárdenas told the press that the "socialist revolution in Cuba should be respected as the will of the Cuban people" and that other nations should respect Cuba's right to self-determination. During the same conversation, he supported the social changes initiated by the government in Peru.

Although he remained active and interested in international issues after 1940, Cárdenas was careful not to usurp the power and influence of the incumbent Mexican president. This attention to the powers of the presidency allowed him to remain an unofficial advisor to several of his successors.

Conclusion

Lázaro Cárdenas established a liberal tradition for Mexican foreign policy. His policy of supporting nations which were victims of international aggression (such as Ethiopia and Spain) has

\(^{12}\)Ibid., p. 291.
been followed by his successors, who have provided official support to Guatemala in 1954, Cuba in 1962, President Allende in Chile, and, more recently, the Nicaraguan government. Since 1940, Mexico presidents have consistently supported liberal or "leftist" governments--often in contradiction to prevailing international opinion. 13

Mexico's policy toward Spain from 1934-77 is clearly characteristic of this liberal tradition, and may, in fact, be the most pronounced manifestation of this policy. The refusal to recognize the government of Francisco Franco, even after Spain became an accepted member of the United Nations and the world community, highlighted Mexico's abhorrence of international intervention and her support of governments whose policies centered on economic and social reforms. 14

This dissertation has attempted to define and make a preliminary analysis of Mexico's unique relationship with Republican Spain. For the forty years that the Republic existed, either

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13 Examples of this support for liberal governments include a refusal to vote in the Organization of American States (OAS) in favor of condemning the government of Guatemala in 1954, the refusal to vote in favor of expelling Cuba from the OAS in 1962, the extension of financial credits and material assistance to Salvador Allende's government in Chile, and the current support of the government of Nicaragua.

in fact or in exile, the Mexican government was the only nation that provided the Republicans with unwavering support. The duration of this relationship, as well as its intensity during the early years, helped to establish Mexico's policy toward other nations and her reputation as an international sponsor of social justice.

At least two important questions remain unanswered and deserve further study. The first concerns the relationship between Mexico's policy toward Spain and the Estrada Doctrine. Scholars disagree on whether or not Mexico's refusal to recognize Francisco Franco's government constitutes a violation of the doctrine. The second question is whether or not the Mexican government ever regretted refusing to establish relations with Franco, and whether or not such a policy would be implemented today. It is now fashionable in some government circles in Mexico to describe her relationship with Republican Spain as "unrealistic and idealistic"--too idealistic for today's world.

The relationship between the policy toward Spain and the Estrada doctrine is key to a thorough understanding of the doctrine and its importance in Mexican foreign policy. For many years Mexico suffered from international intervention through a variety of means including military force and refusal of diplomatic recognition. Genaro Estrada's policy was a reaction to this manipulation and is considered to be one of Mexico's most important contributions to the body of Latin American international law.
César Sepúlveda, former director of Mexico's foreign service institute and an international lawyer, believes that Mexico violated the Estrada doctrine in refusing to recognize the Franco government. He states that Mexico's refusal to establish diplomatic relations, coupled with the announcement in Montevideo in 1943 recommending that no nation recognize a government imposed by force, abrogated the spirit of the Estrada Doctrine which repudiates the use of diplomatic recognition as a means of expressing approval or disapproval for a government.

Javier Malagón Barceló, a Spanish Republican exile and scholar, believes that Mexico, in refusing to recognize Franco, adhered to the Estrada Doctrine. Mexico never withdrew recognition of the government elected by the Spanish people, he states, and continued to maintain relations with the only legitimate government of Spain. Mexico's refusal to establish official relations with the Franco regime was not a sign of disapproval, but merely an indication that a more legitimate government existed.

Official government statements for the last forty years reveal no regret or lack of commitment to Republican Spain.

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15 Interview with César Sepúlveda, Mexico City, Mexico, August 1977.

16 Sepúlveda, La teoría a la práctica del reconocimiento de gobiernos, pp. 75-80.

17 Interview with Javier Malagón Barceló, Washington, D.C., September 1982.
Privately, however, this policy is often characterized as too idealistic for the modern world, and perhaps even detrimental to Mexico's international relations. It would be worthwhile to explore the depth of this sentiment—the results of this examination could indicate changing values in Mexican foreign policy.

Mexico has maintained an independent and liberal foreign policy in the 20th century, and her relationship with Spain is certainly characteristic of this policy. However, the intensity and duration of the relations with Republican Spain will remain a unique chapter in the history of Mexican international affairs and Lázaro Cárdenas.

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18 Interview with César Sepúlveda, Mexico City, Mexico, August 1977; interviews with a number of officials in the Mexican Foreign Ministry who wish to remain anonymous, August 1977.
Appendix A

Presidents of Mexico Involved with the Second Spanish Republic

Plutarco Elías Calles 1924-1928
Emilio Portes Gil 1928-1929
Pascual Ortiz Rubio 1929-1932
Abelardo Rodríguez 1932-1934
Lázaro Cárdenas 1934-1940
Manuel Ávila Camacho 1940-1946
Manuel Alemán 1946-1952
Adolfo Ruiz Cortines 1952-1958
Adolfo López Mateos 1958-1964
Gustavo Díaz Ordaz 1964-1970
Luis Echeverría 1970-1976
José López Portillo 1976-1982
Appendix B

Selected Leaders of the Second Spanish Republic

Julio Alvarez del Vayo: Socialist, first ambassador to Mexico, and later member of Prime Minister Negrín's cabinet

Manuel Azaña: founder of the Left Republican Party, first Prime Minister of the Republic and later President of the Republic

José Giral: follower of Azaña, first President of the government-in-exile

Francisco Largo Caballero: Socialist, union leader

Alejandro Lerroux: leader of the Radical Party, Prime Minister of the Republic in 1933-5

Diego Martínez Barrio: leader of the Republican Union Party, President of Cortes, and one of the leaders in forming the government-in-exile

Juan Negrín: Socialist, last Prime Minister of the Republic, and one of the leaders of the Spanish in exile

Idalecio Prieto: Socialist, member of several Republican cabinets, and a leader of the Spanish in exile

José María Gil Robles: Catholic leader, member of several cabinets in the Republic
Appendix C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1929-</td>
<td>Ortiz Rubio inaugurated President of Mexico</td>
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<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Second Spanish Republic established, king leaves Spain</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mexico and Spain exchange ambassadors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>elections for the Spanish Constituent Cortes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Manuel Azaña Prime Minister</td>
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<td></td>
<td>promulgation of the new Spanish Constitution</td>
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<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Spanish divorce law enacted</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Abelardo Rodríguez replaces Ortiz Rubio as President of Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Catalan autonomy and agrarian reform statutes enacted in Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>anarchists riots in Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>municipal elections go against the Azaña government</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>new conservative Spanish government, Lerroux prime minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>anarchists riots in Catalonia and Aragon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>four-week general strike in Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>campesinos strike in Andalusia and Extremadura, Socialist deputies arrested in Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lázaro Cárdenas inaugurated as President of Mexico</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>state of war declared in Asturias, African troops and the Foreign Legion called in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1935

April-

republican parties in Spain announce unity

June-

Cárdenas dismisses cabinet and forms coalition of anti-Callistas

October-

Lerroux forced to resign

1936

January 7-

Cortes dissolved in Spain

January 15-

Popular Front electoral pact announced

February-

Spanish elections, Popular Front victorious and Azaña named Prime Minister

March-

Spanish generals begin to plan coup d'état

April-

Cárdenas forces Calles to leave Mexico

April-

Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM) organized in Mexico

May-

Azaña President of Spain

June-

strikes in Madrid

June-

Spanish ambassador Félix Gordón Ordás arrives in Mexico

June 29-

Mexico agrees to assist Spanish government if needed

July 12-

Calvo Sotelo assassinated

July 17-

Spanish generals attempt coup, Civil War begins

July 20-

new Spanish government formed under José Giral

August-

Cárdenas sends first weapons to Spain

August-

Spanish rebels formally protest Mexican assistance to the Spanish government

September 4-

Largo Caballero government formed

September 9-

Non-Intervention Committee meets in London

September-December-

Mexican government supports Spain in the League of Nations

October 7-

Soviet Union announces will send weapons to Spain

November 6-

Spanish government moves to Valencia

November-

Mexican embassy moves to Valencia
1937
February- Mexican food shipment to Spain
March- Mexico sends weapons to Spain
March- Cárdenas sends letter to the Secretary General of the League of Nations denouncing the nonintervention policy of the League
March 30- Mexico sends letters to all nations urging termination of the Non-Intervention Pact and requesting support for Spain
May 17- Negrín Prime Minister
Summer- children arrive in Mexico, housed in Morelia
August 7- final group of asylees in Mexican embassy in Spain allowed to leave Spain
September 30- Fabela makes speech in League of Nations concerning Spain
October- Negrín government moves to Barcelona

1938
March 18- Cárdenas expropriates the property of the foreign oil companies
July- Casa de España established in Mexico City
September- Cárdenas announces that Spanish refugees will be welcomed in Mexico
November- International Brigades leaves Spain

1939
January- Cárdenas announces that Mexico will admit an unlimited number of Spanish refugees
February 1- last meeting of the Constituent Cortes in Spain
February 20-21- Cárdenas meets with Prieto to discuss the fate of the Spanish refugees
February 27- Azáña resigns as President of Spain
March 5- Negrín cabinet go to France
March 8- Mexican ambassador Tejada leaves Spain with embassy documents
March 31- meeting of the Permanent Committee of the Cortes in Paris
March-

Prieto receives the "treasure" Negrín sent to Mexico and sets up el Junto de Auxilio a los Refugiados Españoles (JARE)

April 16-

Spanish embassy in Mexico closed

June 26-

Azaña put under Mexican protection

April-

Mexico works to help Spanish refugees in France

December-

four boatloads of Spanish refugees arrive in Mexico

September 21-

Mexico announces that mass emigrations to Mexico temporarily suspended

1940

January 23-

Cárdenas announces special citizenship procedures for Spanish refugees

June-August-

Mexico negotiates with the Vichy government in France to protect Spanish refugees

August 22-23-

Mexican-French agreement finalized

November-

Azaña dies in France

December-

Manuel Avila Camacho inaugurated in Mexico

1941

January-

Avila Camacho orders the JARE to form a limited liability company

March-

Avila Camacho sends a telegram to France concerning Mexico's willingness to protect the Spanish refugees

1942

May-

Mexico declares war on the Axis powers

July 22-

Permanent Committee of the Spanish Cortes meets in Mexico City

August 10-

Permanent Committee of the Spanish Cortes meets again in Mexico City

November 9-

Mexico and France break diplomatic relations

November 27-

JARE again ordered to form a limited liability company
December- Mexico decides to allow no additional mass emigrations of Spanish refugees to enter the country

1943
Summer- Social Security system implemented in Mexico
Summer- Vicente Lombardo Toledano replaced as head of CTM by Fidel Velásquez
November- la Junta Española de Liberación (JEL) formed

1944
December- Avila Camacho agrees to allow a meeting of the Spanish Cortes to be held in Mexico City

1945
January 10- Spanish Cortes meets in Mexico City
January 24- meeting of "negrinistas" in Mexico City
March 20-21- conference in Mexico City to prepare the document to be presented at the San Francisco Conference on behalf of the Spanish Republic
May 10- JEL petition circulated at the San Francisco Conference
June 19- Luis Quintanilla speaks in favor of the Republic at the San Francisco Conference
August 17- Spanish Cortes meets in Mexico City and Spanish government-in-exile formed under the leadership of Diego Martínez Barrio and José Giral
September- Mexico formally recognizes the government-in-exile
November 9- Spanish Cortes meets in Mexico City to recognize Giral government

1946
February- government-in-exile moved to Paris
February- Mexico holds seat on the United Nations Security Council and her delegate announces that Mexico would welcome any opportunity to discuss the "Franco problem"
April- United Nations Committee formed to study the Spanish situation
October- Republican government-in-exile admitted as member of UNESCO
December- Miguel Alemán inaugurated as President of Mexico
December 12- United Nations approves resolution against Franco

1947
January- Giral resigns and new government formed under Rudolfo Llopis
Summer- Mexico establishes trade, shipping services, and direct mail and air service with Spain
August- new government-in-exile formed under Alvaro de Albornoz after Llopis resigns
December- General Assembly votes to express confidence that the Security Council will act if situation in Spain warrants

1948
February- President Alemán publishes article in support of the Spanish Republic

1950
November 4- United Nations General Assembly revokes recommendation that member nations withdraw representation from Madrid

1951
March- formal trade agreement signed between Mexico and Spain
March- Spanish delegates invited to anniversary celebration at UNAM
August- new government-in-exile formed under Félix Gordón Ordás
November- Gordón Ordás sends declaration against Franco to members of the United Nations
1952
December- Adolfo Ruiz Cortines inaugurated as President of Mexico
December- Spain admitted as member of UNESCO

1953
Spring - Mexico adopts full suffrage rights for women

1955
November- government-in-exile campaigns against Spain's admission to the United Nations
December- Spain admitted to the United Nations

1956
November 14- Juan Negrín dies in Paris

1957
April- Cárdenas honored by Spanish Republicans at reception in Mexico City

1958
April- Isidro Fabela honored by Spanish Republicans
October- Cárdenas meets with members of the government-in-exile in Paris
December- Adolfo López Mateos inaugurated as President of Mexico

1959
April- railroad strike in Mexico
April 17- Gordón Ordás replaced by General Herrera as leader of the government-in-exile
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Fall- López Mateos meets with exile leaders in Venezuela</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>January- Martínez Barrio dies in Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February 11- Indalecio Prieto dies in Mexico City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February 19- Luis Jiménez de Asúa replaces Martínez Barrio as President of the Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December 23- José Giral dies in Mexico City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>December- Gustavo Díaz Ordaz inaugurated as President of Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>Franco declares limited amnesty for refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>July- UNAM students boycott classes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December- mass student demonstrations put down by force in Mexico City</td>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>November 16- Luis Jiménez de Asúa dies in Buenos Aires, replaced by José Maldonado as President of the Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October- Cárdenas dies in Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December- Luis Echeverría inaugurated as President of Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Spring- official trade agreement between Mexico and Spain signed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>government-in-exile honors Mexico for its support of the Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Luis Echeverría meets with exile leaders in Paris</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Contact between Mexico and Spain severed by Echeverría</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Echeverría condemns Franco's execution of five men, uses United Nations as his forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Franco dies in Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mexican and Spanish officials meet in Paris</td>
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<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>New trade agreement signed by Mexico and Spain</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>José López Portillo inaugurated as President of Mexico</td>
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<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Mexico breaks diplomatic relations with the government-in-exile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mexico and Spain establish diplomatic relations</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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