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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA AT NORMAN

GRADUATE COLLEGE

TEXAS MEXICAN REPATRIATION DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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BY

R. Reynolds McKay

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TEXAS MEXICAN REPATRIATION DURING THE

GREAT DEPRESSION

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

TEXAS MEXICAN REPATRIATION DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Geography
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Professor Richard L. Nostrand, Chairman

Between 1929 and 1939 at least 500,000 Mexicans and their U.S.-born children repatriated to Mexico. Fully half of them left Texas, primarily from five rural areas of Texas, but also from its cities. Both push factors and pull factors were responsible for this sizable and often tragic movement which reached its numerical peak in the fall of 1931. The Texas repatriates were channeled through three major portals, Laredo, Brownsville, and El Paso, and about four-fifths of them were destined for Mexico's northern states.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Great Depression of the 1930s caused millions of people in the United States to move. These population shifts were the focus of numerous studies during the 1930s and 1940s by demographers, historians, geographers, and other scholars, but one aspect of this process received relatively little attention: the migration of Mexicans and Mexican Americans.*

In this study the term Mexican is used to refer to Mexican nationals, both those residing in the United States and those in Mexico. The term Mexican American refers to individuals of Mexican heritage who are U.S. citizens by birth or naturalization. The term Texas Mexican is used for individuals or groups when it is unknown whether they are Mexicans or Mexican Americans and for groups that include both Mexicans and Mexican Americans. There are a number of limitations in these labels, as there are in any descriptive terms used to identify the heterogeneous Spanish-speaking peoples of Texas. Various writers have referred to this ethnic group as Spanish, Spanish-American, Latin American, Latino, Hispano, Spanish-speaking American, Spanish-surnamed American, Americans of Spanish or Mexican decent, Chicano, La Raza, etc. McWilliams noted in North from Mexico that "any phrase selected to characterize the Spanish-speaking will necessarily prove to be misleading, inaccurate, or possibly libelous." This subject has been discussed by a number of authors who have considered this problem in detail.[1]

In the decade following 1929 an estimate 500,000 Mexicans and Mexican Americans crossed the international border into Mexico. The movement of Mexicans across the southern border of the United States was not a recent development. From 1900 to 1929 large numbers of Mexicans moved north into the United States. Then, with the advent of the Great Depression, this movement ceased and the process reversed as thousands of Mexicans and their U.S.-born children returned to Mexico. This return migration has been characterized as repatriation.*

The Mexican exodus from the United States during the 1930s was unprecedented not only because of its magnitude but also in the fact that the movement of Mexicans to the United States was severely restricted for the first time,

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*Repatriation may be defined as the return to the country of one's birth or citizenship. Bogardus stated that in Mexico a repatriate is defined as a person who returns to his own country to reside and assume the duties of citizenship after having lived for a number of years in another country. Bogardus noted that it is inmaterial whether the decision to return was voluntary or involuntary. Humphrey defined repatriation as a restoration to one's homeland. He pointed out that deportation "differs in connotation since it has a coercive or compulsive element which repatriation does not." Hoffman viewed repatriation as a sending back to one's homeland and emphasized that students of Mexican repatriation often distinguish between voluntary and forced repatriation. Other authors have also examined the various meanings accorded repatriation.[2]

largely through the coercive action of various public and private agencies in the United States.

The purpose of this study is to document and analyze Texas Mexican repatriation and resettlement in Mexico during the Great Depression--two distinct but interrelated phenomena. It begins with the onset of the Depression in the latter months of 1929 and continues through 1939.

A number of current immigration problems in the Southwest warrant a better understanding of the historical migration process, for many of the basic problems have changed little since the 1930s. Between three and eight million illegal aliens resided in the United States in the late 1970s. Although some aliens eventually migrate to mid-western and northern urban centers, the majority take up residence in the Southwest. High unemployment in the United States during the 1970s has led to renewed efforts to implement strict legislation regarding the alien employment. The rationale advanced for this legislation is strangely reminiscent of that voiced during the 1920s and 1930s.

This study is related to several geographic fields and subfields that traditionally have been of interest to the geographer. The concern with events and processes that

occurred during the Great Depression might lead one to characterize the study as historical geography. However, the focus on the movement of an ethnic group across space and its subsequent reestablishment extends into the subfields of migration and settlement geography. Indeed, the nature and extent of the study make its categorization difficult.

Study Objectives

Major Objectives

1. The source areas--rural and urban--of Texas repatriation are documented and analyzed. Five rural and four urban sources are identified and examined.

2. The routes used by Texas repatriates to return to Mexico are identified. Three routeways in Texas and two routeways in Mexico were used by repatriates to reach their destinations in Mexico. The major and minor gateways to Mexico are also identified.

3. Repatriate destinations and resettlement efforts in Mexico are documented and analyzed. The types of repatriate colonization projects are examined as well as colonization activities under the various Mexican presidents of the Depression era.

Minor Objectives

1. A detailed review of the literature about Mexican repatriation is undertaken to identify recurring themes. Six themes are identified and examined. These themes reveal much about the nature of repatriation activity in the United States, the focuses of previous studies, and the methodology used in the various studies.

2. The immigration to and settlement of Mexicans in Texas from 1890 to 1929 is documented and analyzed. Repatriate source areas in Texas and the routeways used by repatriates to reach their destinations are closely related to the settlement patterns of Mexicans in Texas.

3. The complex social, economic, and political events and circumstances in which Texas repatriation was rooted are documented and analyzed. These events and circumstances included deportation activity, the impact of the agricultural depression on Texas Mexicans, and federal, state, and local relief efforts.

Justification

This study of the repatriation and resettlement of Texas Mexicans is designed to fill a major void in Mexican American historiography, for little is known about the

experiences of rural Mexican immigrants in the United States during the 1930s. Thus far all detailed, well-documented repatriation studies have concentrated upon urban areas. This study is unique in that it focuses on the repatriation of Texas Mexicans from rural areas of Texas and their resettlement in Mexico. As late as 1973 Hoffman observed that the departures of Mexicans from the Rio Grande Valley and throughout southern Texas had not been recorded.[3] Since that time no study of the repatriation or resettlement of Texas Mexicans has been published.

Although accurate data are unavilable on the number of repatriates departing from the United States, it is estimated that one-half of all returnees were from Texas.[4] This mass movement across the Texas border, one of the largest migrations in recent history, remains obscure a half century after the exodus occurred. Writing in 1932, McLean noted that "the Mexican labor invasion of the United States--and the subsequent return--is one of the largest and most interesting racial movements in all history."[5] Recognizing the complexity of this interesting and multifaceted movements, Bogardus concluded in 1933 that "the repatriation of Mexicans is so complicated that the process requires far more study that it has yet received."[6] In 1937 Young, author of

Research Memorandum on Minority Peoples in the Depression, called for a study of "assisted repatriation."[7] Unfortunately, the pleas of such scholars as Bogardus and Young went unheeded until the 1970s.

Several historians have recently pointed to the need for detailed studies of the repatriation phenomenon. Kiser and Silverman noted in 1973 that

> few scholars have paid serious attention to the coming and going of the Mexican workers. However, the arrival of these people in the United States has attracted more study that has the departure of many who have returned to Mexico.[8]

A similar opinion was voiced by Hoffman in his 1974 study of repatriation from Southern California:

> If Mexican immigration has received little enough notice from historians, Mexican repatriation studies have been practically nonexistent. That a movement of such significance previously has been omitted from our history books is a forceful indictment of the neglect given to the historical presence of Mexican-American people.[9]

Hoffman's concern with the deplorable state of Mexican American historiography in general and repatriation research specifically led him to state that

> all of the agitation for respectability in Mexican-American historiography will not detract from the bald fact that in the year 1972, with very few exceptions, there are no scholarly, documented accounts of the contributions and experiences of Mexican-Americans in the United States. A case in point is that of the repatriation phenomenon . . . apart from a scattering of works written over thirty years ago, all the student--

> or teacher, for that matter--of Mexican American history has for reference are rather impressionistic accounts recorded by a few observers and the brief comments of a smattering of social scientists and journalists.[10]

A thorough literature search by the investigator substantiates Hoffman's indictment of the status of Mexican repatriation research. Hoffman concluded that "the time is overdue, however, for new research into the period and topic."[11] A similar viewpoint was expressed by Kiser and Silverman when they stated that the "repatriation movement has been studied so little, there is a great need for filling in even elementary facts."[12] This study is an initial attempt to document and analyze this much ignored and misunderstood historical process for the state of Texas.

The paucity of repatriation studies is complemented by the dearth of documented studies dealing with repatriate resettlement. Over 50 years after the mass exodus from the United States began, the student of repatriate resettlement is almost exclusively dependent on the observations of a few writers.[13] Only Gilbert's study of repatriate readjustment problems focuses specifically on the repatriate in Mexico.[14] Recently Carreras de Velasco has devoted a few pages to resettlement in Mexico during the early years of the Depression.[15] The lack of studies focusing on resettlement is the basis for the second phase of this study.

Conclusions derived from this study should aid others interested in Mexican migration phenomena. To be of value, such conclusions must be based on solid information. Kiser and Silverman have stated that "Mexican repatriation during the Great Depression has been studied so little that any generalizations about it [can] be dismissed as unjustified."[16] Hoffman maintained a similar viewpoint when he asserted that before "generalizations about repatriation can be made, the specifics need to be thoroughly investigated."[17] This study provides basic information for repatriate scholars to use.

Data Sources

Perhaps the most useful source of information is the Historical Archives of the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores in Mexico City. This archive contains reports and correspondence between Mexican consular representatives in Texas and officials of the Ministry of Foreign Relations. In addition, the archive contains various communiqués between the Ministry of Foreign Relations and other departments of the Mexican government.

Another useful source of information on Texas Mexican repatriation is the National Archives in Washington, which houses several record groups containing valuable information.

The most important is the General Records of the Department of State, with its numerous reports on repatriation activity in Mexico filed by U.S. consular representatives. Other useful data are found in the Records of the Department of Labor, Records of the President's Organization on Unemployment Relief, and Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Texas newspapers are another important data source. Both Spanish- and English-language newspapers provide a wealth of facts regarding the departure of Mexicans from Texas. Newspapers recorded the events and captured the attitudes and opinions held by Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and Anglo Americans of the time. This source has been largely ignored in previous studies.

A number of other archives possess data used in this study. These include the Texas State Archives, the University of Texas at El Paso Archives, county historical society archives, municipal and county archives, and the Southwestern Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church Archive.

Interviews with persons involved in Texas Mexican repatriation are an important data source. Interviews were used to obtain new data as well as to verify information obtained from other sources. In addition, interviews

provided insights into repatriate experiences that were generally not available from other data sources.

Literature Review

In view of the magnitude of Mexican repatriation during the Great Depression, the number of individuals writing about it is astonishingly small. Journalists have been the main contributors, although a few social scientists have studied the movement in detail. Most studies were undertaken either during the Depression or in the early 1970s. Published studies for the three decades after 1939 are virtually nonexistent.

Investigators interested in the repatriation will long be indebted to Robert N. McLean for his contemporary accounts of repatriation activity in the Southwest. In a series of articles published between 1929 and 1932, McLean vividly described the plight of the departing Mexicans.[18] In these reports McLean demanded compassion and justice for the Mexican laborer.

The devastating consequences of severe economic depression on the Mexican American and Mexican communities were largely ignored by academicians at the time. One exception was Emory S. Bogardus, a sociologist at the University of Southern California, who, in 1933, published an

article entitled "Mexican Repatriates" in Sociology and Social Research. This article was later revised and appeared in The Mexican in the United States.[19]

Another author concerned with the dilemma of the Mexican and Mexican American during the Great Depression was Carey McWilliams. McWilliams, a highly regarded lawyer/journalist and a critic of the repatriation movement, published only one article on the subject, "Getting Rid of the Mexican." In several later books dealing with minorities in the United States, McWilliams briefly discussed the repatriation effort in Southern California.[20] Many historians have relied almost exclusively upon McWilliams' accounts of Mexican repatriation during the 1930s.

"Mexican Repatriation from Michigan: Public Assistance in Historical Perspective," by Norman D. Humphrey, was the first well-documented, in-depth study of the repatriation movement. This article concentrated on organized repatriation in Detroit, and explored patterns of repatriation activities that were described in subsequent studies of other urban areas.[21]

Adena M. Rich provided insights into the efforts of relief agencies to promote repatriation from midwestern urban centers. Rich described the tactics utilized by welfare

workers to encourage repatriation and carefully documented cases of several families who underwent repatriation.[22]

During the 1930s several writers focused on the readjustment of repatriates in Mexico. In a study concluded prior to the Depression, Manuel Gamio, an U.S.-trained anthropologist, expressed concern for the problems encountered by Mexicans who returned to Mexico in the 1920s.[23] In a later article Gamio examined the influences of migration on Mexican life.[24] These basic works provided the foundation for a number of later studies on the adaptation of the repatriate to life in Mexico. The most detailed analysis of the readjustment process is provided by James C. Gilbert, a student of Bogardus. Gilbert traveled throughout Mexico in 1933 and 1934, gathering data for his master's thesis.[25] In A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community Arandas in Jalisco, Mexico, economist Paul S. Taylor also analyzed the difficulties inherent in the readjustment process,[26] while Emma R. Stevenson[27] and Osgood Hardy[28] each contributed brief articles relating to the readjustment to Mexico.

A thorough search of the literature revealed a paucity of published studies dealing with repatriation activities in Texas. However, this search did disclose one source apparently unfamiliar to recent students of the movement.

In 1941 Federico Allen Hinojosa, a Mexican journalist, wrote El méxico de afuera, in which he devoted a brief chapter to the repatriation and resettlement of Mexicans from South Texas during the concluding years of the Depression.[29] Other studies include a 1932 article by Edna E. Kelley on the departure and resettlement of Mexicans from South Texas[30] and a brief reference to Texas repatriation by Joe W. Neal in a master's thesis dealing with the U.S. government's Mexican immigration policy.[31]

Other scholars of Mexican and Mexican American affairs residing in Texas during this era failed to examine repatriation activities. George I. Sanchez, Max S. Handman, H. T. Manuel, and Ruth Allen, for example, all of the University of Texas at Austin, did not write about Texas Mexican repatriation.

In the 1970s a number of scholarly works dealing with the repatriation phenomenon appeared. Two of these were monographs. The most notable was Hoffman's Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939, (1973).[32] Hoffman's exacting study focused on repatriation activities in Los Angeles County and was based on his doctoral dissertation at the University of California at Los Angeles. The second monograph, published

in 1974, was Los mexicanos que devolvió la crisis, 1929-1932 by Mercedes Carreras de Velasco. She relief primarily upon Mexican sources and examined the Mexican government's response to massive repatriation.[33]

During the 1970s a number of articles on Mexican repatriation were published in scholarly journals. Moisés Gonzáles Navarro wrote "Efectos sociales de la crisis de 1929" in Historia Mexicana in 1970. He focused on the Mexican government's efforts to deal with the return of Mexican repatriates after 1929.[34] Hoffman was the most prolific author of repatriation related topics during the 1970s; he authored five articles between 1972 and 1975.[35] In 1973 Neal Betten and Raymond A. Mohl's "From Discrimination to Repatriation: Mexican Life in Gary, Indiana, During the Great Depression" appeared in the Pacific Historical Review.[36] That same year George C. Kiser and David Silverman published "Mexican Repatriation during the Great Depression." Their article included two brief case studies about repatriation in Detroit and Los Angeles.[37] In 1977 the New Mexico Historical Review published "Deportation: The Immigration Service and the Chicano Labor Movement in the 1930s," in which David H. Dinwoodie documented the deportation of Chicano labor activists.[38]

Recently, several books on Mexican immigration have devoted some attention to repatriation during the Great Depression. Mark Reisler in 1976 provided the first detailed analysis of economic conditions in the United States in which Mexican repatriation is rooted.[39] In 1978 Hoffman authored "Mexican Repatriation During the Great Depression: A Reappraisal," which appeared in Immigrants--and Immigrants: Perspectives on Mexican Labor Migration to the United States. In it he synthesized much previously published information on Mexican repatriation.[40] In 1979 several brief selections related to Mexican repatriation were reproduced in Mexican Workers in the United States: Historical and Political Perspectives, edited by George C. Kiser and Martha Woody Kiser.[41] Finally, in 1980 Lawrence A. Cardoso devoted a brief chapter to Mexican repatriation during the Great Depression in Mexican Emigration to the United States 1897-1931: Socio-Economic Patterns. Cardoso's well-documented study provides the first detailed examination of efforts to repatriate Mexicans during the 1920s.[42]

The Context

The repatriation of Mexicans has often been viewed as a phenomenon that first occurred in the United States after

the onset of the Great Depression. Repatriation from Texas, however, has been an on-going process which began at least as early as the conclusion of the Mexican War. Olmstead stated that during the 1840s Mexicans were driven from their homes in Austin and Seguin, and that San Antonio was virtually abandoned by Mexicans in 1848.[43] Zorilla noted that a number of Mexicans were repatriated under the sponsorship of the Mexican government in 1848.[44] Statistical data regarding the number of departures from Texas during the late 1840s are scarce. Nevertheless, Martínez estimated that about 1,000 Mexicans were repatriated from Texas.[45] Cortez stated that the years after 1848 were "too turbulent for the Mexican government to implement its [repatriation] program."[46]

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, Anglo American discrimination against Mexicans was so severe that immigrants to Texas were often forced to return to Mexico. Thousands of Texas Mexicans lost their land as Anglo American cattle barons established large ranches. Texas Mexican "settlers became the victims of the general absence of law and community."[47] In 1856 the entire Mexican population of Colorado County was arrested and ordered to leave the state.[48] Shortly thereafter all Mexicans in

Matagorda County and many Bexar County residents were instructed to return to Mexico.[49] In an effort to eliminate competitors, Anglo Americans frequently attacked Mexican ox-cart freight trains over a wide area of South Texas after 1856. This conflict, generally referred to as the Cart War, continued until the Mexican freighters ceased to operate.[50] Many traders and their families abandoned the state.

Meier and Rivera noted that aggression against Mexicans became so widespread during the 1870s that large numbers of Mexicans moved across the Rio Grande into Mexico.[51] The El Paso Salt War is exemplary of Anglo American violence against Mexicans which prompted repatriation during this era. Anglo American efforts to gain private control of West Texas salt mines--which long-time Mexican residents of the region considered a public resource--lead to widespread hostilities between the two groups. A number of Mexicans were killed.[52] To avoid harassment by Anglo-Americans many Mexicans left the state.

After 1880 a number of Mexicans and Mexican Americans returned to Mexico to establish agricultural colonies. The largest of these colonies was La Ascension in the state of Chihuahua. By 1887 nearly 3,000 colonists had settled there.[53] During the late 1880s and early 1890s Texas

Mexicans frequently petitioned the Mexican government to make land available for repatriate colonization. Most of these petitions originated from residents located near the Texas-Mexico border, although in 1887 one group of San Angelo residents requested repatriation by the Mexican govern-government. Apparently, most repatriates who returned to Mexico during this era left the state in small groups. They often returned with large herds of livestock and substantial personal belongings.[54] The number of departures is not available.

During the second decade of the twentieth century two massive Texas Mexican repatriation movements occurred. The first of these movements began in 1915 and was a result of intense conflict between Anglo Texans and Mexicans in the lower Rio Grande Valley. In the summer bands of Mexican guerrillas repeatedly entered Texas and initiated a series of surprise quazi-military raids against Anglo Texans. Anglo Texans organized local vigilante groups to combat the raids.[55] Harassment of Texas Mexicans by vigilante groups became so severe that an estimated 25,000 Valley residents were driven across the Rio Grande into Mexico.[56]

The second massive exodus occurred after the United States entered World War I. For two years after the U.S.

declaration of war on 6 April 1917, thousands of Mexicans were periodically compelled to return to Mexico. Although a number of reasons were advanced to explain this substantial migration, the most frequently suggested cause was widespread fear among Mexicans of being forcibly inducted into the U.S. military service.[57]

The post-World War I recession was marked by large scale repatriation of Texas Mexicans. Between 1919 and 1923 thousands of long-time residents of Texas crossed the Rio Grande into Mexico. This exodus of Texas Mexican workers was caused primarily by the recession, but this movement also received support from the Mexican government.[58] Details regarding the departure of Texas Mexicans during the post-World War I era remain obscure.

Large scale repatriation of Texas Mexicans diminished during the 1940s with the unprecedented demand for labor created by World War II. However, during the early 1950s large numbers of Texas Mexicans were compelled to return to Mexico. Between 1950 and 1955 approximately 3.7 million Mexican residents of the United States were deported. Deportation activity peaked in 1954 when over one million Mexican workers were apprehended and expelled by U.S. Immigration agents. This deportation campaign, generally

referred to as "Operation Wetback," was similar in many respects to that carried out in the 1930s.[59]

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CHAPTER II

MEXICAN REPATRIATION THEMES

Introduction

In 1972 Hoffman wrote that Mexican repatriation was "a complicated process composed of many factors and nuances, most of which have been unexplored, neglected, omitted, or oversimplified. Before generalizations about repatriation can be made, the specifics need to be investigated."[1] In an article the following year Kiser and Silverman agreed with Hoffman but suggested that tentative generalizations were useful as a guide to further investigations of repatriation.[2] An examination of the literature on Mexican repatriation during the Great Depression reveals a number of recurring themes. These themes provide a structure for examining Mexican repatriation in the 1930s and for making tentative generalizations about it. The purpose of this chapter is to identify and examine these themes.

Voluntary and Involuntary Repatriation

The degree of coercion used in affecting the decision of Mexicans to emigrate is a theme that has concerned most repatriation scholars. McLean suggested a number of overlapping categories to explain the Mexicans' decision to return to Mexico. These categories include deportation, threat or fear of deportation, assistance in returning provided by welfare agencies, and widespread unemployment.[3] Bogardus noted three distinct classes of repatriates: (1) those who voluntarily packed up their belongings and returned, (2) those who returned under polite coercion, and (3) those who were deported.[4] Betten and Mohl, in their study on repatriation from Gary, Indiana, identified two types of repatriation--voluntary and involuntary.[5] In his study of Los Angeles County repatriation, Hoffman suggested a similar two-division classification system and a number of subcategories.[6] More recently Hoffman developed a six-division classification scheme with estimates of the percentage of returnees for each division for the period 1929-1937:

Formal deportation	4 percent
Voluntary departure under escort	15 percent
Voluntary repatriation by aliens themselves (Some of this group received transportation subsidies from Mexican and U.S. sources.)	40 percent
Repatriation of destitute aliens by the federal government	1 percent
Organized repatriation by local U.S. relief agencies	20 percent
Assisted repatriation by Mexican consul and Mexican community groups	20 percent
Total	100 percent[7]

Two major problems exist with these classification schemes. First, these schemes are based upon the assumption that the decision to repatriate was affected by a single variable (pressure or institution). It is probable that the decision of most individuals or families to return to Mexico was influenced by a number of variables. Second, these classification schemes have tended to focus on push factors (repatriation pressures or institutions in the U.S.), while they have ignored the many pull factors in Mexico which influenced the decision of Mexicans to return to Mexico. Moreover, virtually nothing is known about the socio-economic/demographic characteristics of Depression era repatriates which might provide a basis for developing classification schemes. Until additional studies of motivations for Mexican repatriation, institutional involvement

in the return of Mexicans, and the socio-economic/ demographic characteristics of Mexican repatriates are undertaken the development of meaningful and reliable classification schemes is unlikely.

Personal Hardships and Human Rights Violations

A second theme is the personal hardships and human rights violations suffered by Mexican residents in the United States. Nearly every study has revealed numerous excesses and abuses by industrial enterprises, businesses, welfare workers, federal officials, and individuals.

As economic conditions deteriorated during the early 1930s, Mexican workers encountered increased job discrimination.[8] In some urban areas Mexicans were required to prove U.S. citizenship in order to retain jobs they had held for a number of years. Throughout the country, state and municipal governments enacted measures to restrict public employment to U.S. citizens, and during the mid-1930s Mexicans were sometimes purged from Works Progress Administration relief programs.[9] In some areas of the U.S. local Chambers of Commerce supported repatriation as a means of creating jobs for Anglo Americans.[10]

Jobless and destitute, Mexican residents became dependent upon relief organizations. As early as 1929, one relief agency reported that 40 to 50 percent of its cases were seasonal Mexican laborers.[11] As the financial burden on these agencies increased, persuasion, incentive, and unauthorized coercion were widely practiced to facilitate emigration from the United States.[12] Acuña stated that

> many Anglo-Americans became concerned about the growing cost of welfare and unemployment and resented the "brown men" in their midst who, after all, were not Anglo-Americans. The philosophy of "take care of our own" emerged, as well as the fallacy that the foreigners were responsible for unemployment and that they should return to their homeland.[13]

Indeed, the denial of relief to Mexicans during the Depression was instrumental in the decision of many to return to Mexico.

A number of writers have suggested that welfare agencies often induced Mexican Americans as well as Mexican nationals to return to Mexico. In some cases men who had served in the U.S. armed services during World War I were repatriated. Other reports have suggested that some naturalized American citizens were compelled to return to Mexico.[14] Perhaps the greatest hardships were endured by U.S.-born children of Mexicans who repatriated.[15] To

these children, Mexico was a foreign country. Nevertheless, as Lamb concluded, "in an atmosphere of pressing emergency, little if any time was spent in determining whether the methods infringed upon the rights of individuals."[16] Meier and Rivera stated that recent research indicates about one-half of the returnees were born in the United States.[17] It should be pointed out that Hoffman disagrees with the assertion that large numbers of Depression era repatriates were U.S. citizens. He stated:

> Another common misconception about Depression repatriates is that large numbers of them were American citizens, either naturalized or by birth, and that such persons were often induced to accept repatriation in violation of their constitutional rights.[18]

Once the decision to repatriate was made, Mexicans were confronted with the problem of disposing of both real and personal property. In New Mexico, foreclosures and tax sales were utilized to deprive the indigenous Spanish Americans of their land.[19] The magnitude of these dispossessions has not been fully investigated. Kiser and Silverman reported that many Mexicans who departed California in 1931 were compelled to abandon their property.[20] The district director of Immigration at Los Angeles explained conditions in Southern California in 1931:

> Taking advantage of this situation a number of unscrupulous persons . . . approached many Mexicans who were property owners and . . . managed to swindle them out of their holdings, persuading them the best thing they could do would be to return to Mexico.[21]

The Mexican family, whose cohesion was a strong social value,[22] was severely tested during the Depression. The coercive activities of local welfare agencies and deportation actions by the Bureau of Immigration fragmented countless Mexican families. Manuel stated that

> the record of their going back is filled with stories of personal hardships, blighting of hopes, and separation of kin, mingled with heroism and at times with perhaps a certain joyful anticipation of being again in the land of their fathers. There have been many desperate family crises.[23]

Hoffman noted that in some instances children remained in the United States with friends or relatives while the parents returned to Mexico.[24] Dinwoodie reported recently that in 1936 welfare workers at El Paso were alarmed over family separations caused by deportations which "would result in over six hundred additional welfare cases in the El Paso, Texas area alone."[25] The magnitude of family separations has not been fully investigated.

U.S. Government Agencies Involvement

The diverse assortment of local, state and federal agencies utilized to facilitate Mexican emigration is a third theme common to repatriation studies. It has been suggested that most repatriation activity was initiated at the local level.[26] This supposition is supported by the role local welfare agencies played. The emigration of Mexicans from Chicago; Gary, Indiana; and Detroit was largely implemented by local welfare agencies.[27] As Bogardus stated:

> Many Mexican immigrants are returning to Mexico under a sense of pressure. They fear that all welfare aid will be withdrawn if they do not accept the offer to help them out of our country. In fact, some of them report that they are told by relief officials that if they do not accept the offer to take them to the border, no further welfare aid will be given them, and their record will be closed with the notation "Failed to cooperate." Rumor becomes exaggerated as it passes from mouth to mouth. It takes only an insinuation from an official in the United States to create widespread fear among Mexican immigrants.[28]

Perhaps the most efficient local repatriation organization was the Los Angeles County Charities and Public Welfare Department, which actively promoted the repatriation of Mexicans in order to reduce welfare expenditures.[29] Between 1931 and 1935 the department routinely chartered

repatriation trains, which returned 13,000 Mexicans and their U.S.-born children to their homeland. McWilliams, who witnessed the departure of the first train, reported:

> The loading process began at six o'clock in the morning. Repatriados arrived by the truckload--men, women, and children--with dogs, cats, and goats; half-open suitcases, rolls of bedding, and lunchbaskets. It cost the County of Los Angeles $77,249.29 to repatriate one trainload, but the savings in relief amounted to $347,468.41 for this one shipment.[30]

Another organized repatriation movement occurred at Detroit, where the Department of Public Welfare joined forces with the Mexican consul to return hundreds of Mexicans to Mexico beginning in October 1931. A local Mexican organization--the League of Mexican Workers and Peasants--assisted at the initiation of the Detroit repatriation movement. Many unemployed Mexicans expressed a desire to return to Mexico; however, welfare workers engaged in coercive tactics to persuade many welfare recipients to return. Mexicans who lacked funds to reach the U.S.-Mexico border were provided free transportation on chartered repatriation trains to either Laredo or El Paso. During the first 10 months of 1932 at least 1,500 persons were removed from Detroit by the Welfare Department.[31]

Local repatriation initiative was complemented on the federal level by programs to limit Mexican immigration and to deport aliens. Prior to the 1930s, little effort had been made to limit Mexican immigration into the United States. With the onset of the Depression, however, the Immigration Service undertook a campaign to halt the flow of Mexicans into the United States. By the middle of 1930, Mexican immigration had been checked. This was achieved by stringent enforcement of immigration regulations that denied admission of illiterates, alien contract labor, and persons likely to become public charges.[32]

With the abatement of the Mexican immigration problem, the Immigration Service turned its attention to deportation. As the severity of the Depression increased, an aroused public demanded the termination of alien employment in order to create jobs for U.S. citizens. Responding to the public outcry, Secretary of Labor William Doak urged Immigration agents to intensity their hunt for deportable aliens. With dedicated zeal, Doak's agents invaded private homes and public places in a massive search that extended from New York to Los Angeles. Hoffman described the effects of this deportation drive on California Mexicans as traumatic, for many of the aliens apprehended

had failed to regularize illegal entries made years before.[33] McLean, an early critic of forced repatriation, noted that the Immigration Service encouraged the voluntary deportation of Mexican aliens by "putting the 'fear of God' into their hearts."[34] The campaign was effective because thousands of Mexicans illegally residing in the United States were frightened into crossing into Mexico.[35]

Deportation pressures were not uniformly applied throughout the United States. Hoffman contended that the focal point of deportation activity was Southern California.[36] Few deportation cases from Midwestern urban centers have been reported. Little is known about the deportation activities in other states, although a recent study of Chicanos in Lubbock County in West Texas found that the Border Patrol was engaged in deporting Chicanos from that region during the early 1930s.[37]

Although relief agencies and the U.S. Immigration Service compelled thousands of Mexicans to return to Mexico during the Depression, it has been suggested that most Mexicans departed voluntarily. McLean, an observer of Mexican repatriation during the early 1930s, noted that most Mexicans left voluntarily because they were afraid of deportation.[38] Hoffman concluded that during the early

months of the Depression the departure of virtually all Mexicans was voluntary.

> It was mostly self-aided and self-propelled. Families made their way back to the border usually in their own autos and trucks, rather than trains, and most carried some money or household goods.[39]

Betten and Mohl arrived at a similar conclusion in their study of repatriation from Gary, Indiana, where, prior to May 1932, most departures were voluntary.[40] For the 1929-1937 period Hoffman estimated that 40 percent of all repatriations were voluntary.[41]

Mexican Government Repatriation Programs

A fourth theme that emerges is the Mexican government's role in promoting repatriation. Mexican leaders had become concerned about the northward migration of young, productive Mexicans even prior to the economic crisis of 1929. They considered this drain on Mexico's human resources exploitation by the United States.[42] In the early 1920s thousands of Mexicans in the United States were discharged from their jobs as a result of the recession of 1920-1921. In response to massive unemployment among Mexicans in the United States, President Alvaro Obregón initiated a program to repatriate destitute Mexicans. This

repatriation program, which began in late 1920, was of short duration and success. The Mexican government lacked the financial resources to implement a large-scale repatriation program, and improved economic conditions in the United States after 1921 alleviated the Mexican unemployment problem and the need for repatriation.[43]

The Mexican government acted through its consuls in the United States to facilitate repatriation during the Great Depression. Hoffman found that repatriation in Southern California had the complete support of the Mexican consuls.[44] In the upper Midwest Mexican consuls served as liaison officers between local authorities and the Mexican government.[45] In one of the few published reports on Texas repatriation, Kelley noted that the Mexican consul general at San Antonio supervised the departure of Mexicans from Texas in the early 1930s,[46] while Cardoso reported that Mexican consular officials were responsible for the return of about 1,600 persons to Mexico from Karnes City south of San Antonio in October 1931.[47] Carreras de Velasco found that during the early years of the Depression Mexican consuls at various locations in the United States assisted in arranging transportation of Mexicans to the border.[48] Although many Mexican consulates were actively involved in

the repatriation effort, their role as intermediaries between the immigrant and Anglo society has not been examined or documented.[49] Hoffman has suggested that the critical role of Mexican consuls in the repatriation of Mexicans has often been ignored by critics of repatriation activity during the Depression.[50]

The most important repatriation program sponsored by the Mexican government was based on the belief that each expatriate should have an opportunity to earn a living on Mexican land. This view was formally endorsed at the National Revolutionary Party's second convention, held in December 1933. The party advocated increasing Mexico's sparce agricultural work force by creating

> a policy of colonialization, attracting to lands that shall be made available to them, all the Mexicans that have migrated from the country in pursuit of an economic prosperity which they did not find here but which Mexico now offers them through the opportunity of acquiring on easy terms land conveniently prepared for cultivation.[51]

Publicity regarding these colonies was an important factor in the repatrites decision to return to Mexico. After conducting hundreds of interviews with returning Mexicans, McLean stated that the Mexican was sure "a kind government [was] waiting to make him a land-owner, and to stake him to a start."[52] Carreras de Velasco reported that

Mexican consuls in the United States played an important role in informing prospective repatriates of government land available for colonization in Mexico. In some cases the consuls were charged with responsibility for recruiting Mexicans to settle on government-owned land.[53] In 1941, Neal indicated that Mexican consulates in the United States were charged with responsibility for screening and selecting potential colonists.[54]

The participants of the government-sponsored Third Mexican Immigration Conference, held in Mexico City in 1932, proposed that communal and cooperative agricultural colonies be established to accommodate expatriates returning from the United States. As the flow of returning Mexicans increased, the Mexican government began to make plans for a number of agricultural colonies. Land in several states was set aside for repatriation colonies in accordance with the conference's suggestion. These preliminary steps received widespread publicity in the United States.[55] According to Kiser and Silverman, a 1932 Detroit newspaper reported the allocation of 10,000 acres in Nuevo León for repatriates.[56] The same newspaper reported that special colonies were being established in each of the 28 Mexican states. Humphrey concluded that "the

reported promises of the Mexican government, if not elaborate, were attractive."[57] Kelley praised the efforts of the Mexican government, "which has grown increasingly stable . . . [and] could stand behind its offer of homes and jobs to returning Mexicans. Government lands, both irrigated and nonirrigated, were opened free of taxes to settlers."[58]

These repatriation colonies were based on the assumption that the Mexican immigrant, as a result of having lived in the United States, had attained a level of cultural advancement superior to that of the less sophisticated rural Mexican.[59] Mexican intellectual Manuel Gamio argued that the dispersal of repatriates to small Mexican villages would lead to a loss of skills acquired in the United States and a "retrogression in cultural habit." To avoid this, Gamio urged that these settlements should be relatively isolated from Mexican communities.[60] This thinking seems to have been instrumental in the creation of the first two colonies in isolated areas of Guerrero and Oaxaca. Several hundred repatriates took up residence in these colonies in the spring of 1933.[61] Although little is known about their organization and operation, the Mexican government and most of the original colonists had abandoned these colonies by the end of 1933.[62]

In another effort to accommodate returning Mexicans, the government settled a number of repatriates on government lands at the recently completed Don Martín Irrigation Project in the northern states of Coahuila and Nuevo León.[63] This project was originally designed to assist landless Mexicans from the surrounding region. However, by 1933 the Mexican government had resettled about 500 recent repatriates on government land at the project.[64] Mexican repatrites were also granted land at the El Mante Irrigation Project in south-central Tamaulipas.[65] With the election of Lázaro Cárdenas to the presidency in 1934, one final effort was made to establish repatriation colonies. Plans were made for colonies in Chihuahua, San Luis Potosí, and Tamaulipas. In 1939 the Mexican government recruited several hundred families from the United States to settle on government-owned land at the Eighteenth of March Colony near Matamoros, Tamaulipas.[66]

Little is known about the organization or operation of these colonies or about their success or failure. Even the number of repatriates who were settled on them is subject to speculation. In 1934, Bogardus estimated that 5 percent of the repatriates were settled in repatriation colonies.[67] Writing in 1930, Gamio noted that nearly all

attempts at colonization had failed.[68] A few years later Bogardus stated that according to preliminary reports the repatriation colonies were not a great success.[69] Although this conclusion has not been substantiated, similar opinions have often been voiced by subsequent students of repatriation. For example, Humphrey asserted that the Mexican government failed to provide land, tools, and other aid necessary for the success of the colonist.[70] Betten and Mohl concluded that the "haven in the homeland did not materialize" because of the inadequacy of the settlement schemes.[71]

Repatriate Readjustment

A fifth theme, one that has claimed the attention of few Mexican repatriation scholars, is the ability of the repatriates to readjust to life in Mexico. In 1934 Bogardus posed a number of analytical questions regarding the readjustment process:

> Why do some repatriates succeed in Mexico and others fail? Is adjustment purely a matter of luck, or can some principle or rule be discovered? What effect does advancement of the economic and cultural scale in the United States have upon these returned repatriates? Do education and cultural advancement hinder or help adjustment in Mexico?[72]

Bogardus' questions have remained virtually unexplored for more than four decades. Only a handful of scholars have considered the life of the repatriate in Mexico.

Gamio was perhaps the first scholar to address the readjustment problem. He had a thorough understanding of the stagnant nature of the Mexican village in the first decades of the twentieth century, and of the cultural and attitudinal changes brought about in the repatriate by life in the United States. This understanding led him to conclude that readjustment presented dilemmas not easily resolved.[73] A 1931 study by Stevenson of a Mexican village revealed that the adoption of U.S. cultural traits and subsequent metamorphosis of traditional Mexican values often led to conflict between local villagers and the recently returned migrant.[74] As Gamio stated:

> There arises at times a natural antagonism which is often even unconscious between the characters, automatic attitudes, and tendencies of the reactionary majority and the progressive minority of those who are being repatriated, who are charged with being "Yankified" innovators, Masons or pagans, destroyers of the old customs, freakish, intruders, etc.[75]

Bogardus argued that this conflict continued until the repatriates departed the village for urban centers or abandoned their alien ways.[76] This hypothesis is supported by

the conclusions of Gilbert. Gilbert's study, based on over 100 interviews with repatriates he encountered while traveling in Mexico in 1933 and 1934, also indicated that poor economic adjustment was more common than was satisfactory adjustment. He found that many repatriates were semiunemployed, and that the cultural skills they had acquired during immigration were apparently only semipermanent.[77] Taylor came to a similar conclusion after a detailed study of Arandas, Jalisco, where he found "American cultural influence was but slightly transmitted to Arandas by the returned emigrants."[78] Although the readjustment process was clearly difficult,[79] the reasons for the failure of immigrants to readjust have not been extensively studied by repatriation scholars.

Repatriation Statistics

A sixth theme involves the number of repatriates who departed the United States during the Depression era. Because repatriation statistics are generally unreliable, a great deal of confusion exists regarding the number of Mexicans who departed.

Manuel noted that annual reports of the U.S. commissioner general of immigration indicate that 66,921

Mexicans left the United States in 1930-1931.[80] Schwartz stated that in the fiscal years 1931-1933 inclusive 70,000 Mexicans departed the United States,[81] while Grebler reported that in the five years 1930-1934 more than 64,000 aliens departed voluntarily.[82] These repatriation figures for the early years of the Depression contrast with those of Gamio, who stated in 1931 that 200,000 Mexicans had departed the United States since 1930.[83] In the spring of 1932 Kelley reported that 250,000 Mexicans had left the United States within the last year.[84] Statistics supplied Bogardus by the Mexican Departamento General de Estadística indicate that from 1930-1932 inclusive more than 275,000 Mexicans had returned to Mexico.[85] Gilbert, utilizing the same source, stated that by December 1933 Mexican repatriates numbered 311,711.[86]

Total estimated departures for the entire decade of the 1930s vary from a low of about 89,000[87] to a high of more than 500,000.[88] Schwartz stated that 100,000 Mexicans returned home after the onset of the Depression,[89] while McWilliams estimated that 200,000 Mexicans crossed the international border into Mexico.[90] A number of writers have pointed out that the U.S. Census of 1930 showed 639,000 Mexican residents of the United States, whereas the

1940 census indicated the number had decreased to 377,000.[91] Stillwell estimated the number of Mexican returnees at 350,000,[92] while Hoffman concluded in 1974 that more than 400,000 Mexican aliens and their U.S.-born children departed.[93] A more recent examination of repatriation statistics by Hoffman led him to estimate that at least 500,000 persons returned permanently or temporarily to Mexico during the years 1929-1937.[94] Hoffman's analyses of repatriation statistics are the only critical examinations of the subject.

Discrepancies in repatriation statistics may be attributed to a failure of many scholars to utilize the most accurate data sources of Mexican repatriation statistics. Most writers have depended on one of four sources to estimate the number of Mexican repatriates. First, many writers have used statistical data compiled by the U.S. Immigration Service. In 1929 Taylor pointed out a number of inherent limitations of these data.[95] These limitations have resulted in statistical data that provide figures of Mexican repatriates far below their actual number. Second, many scholars have relied on U.S. Census data, and, as is often pointed out, the 1930 and 1940 census data indicate an unrealistic decline of 262,000 Mexican residents in the

United States.[96] This figure is unsatisfactory in that it fails to account for natural increases in the population between 1930 and 1940. Moreover, many undocumented aliens may have avoided the 1930 census only to be deported or to voluntarily depart for Mexico after 1930. In any case, the number of Mexican departures during the 1930s was in excess of 262,000. Third, many later students of the Mexican repatriation movement have depended upon the works of McWilliams for statistical data regarding number of Mexican departures. Hoffman noted that these writers "have tended to accept uncritically McWilliams' statistical figures for repatriation." He pointed out numerous inaccuracies in McWilliams' data.[97] Fourth, data compiled by the Mexican Migration Service and published by the Departamento General de Estadística are often cited. As Taylor stated in 1929, "the Mexican data on movement southward are a much better gauge of the volume of that movement than those of the United States, which are valueless for this purpose."[98] Nevertheless, many studies of Mexican repatriation during the Great Depression have continued to utilize U.S. data. Although the total number of repatriates is unknown, the evidence indicates that most repatriates entered Mexico during the early years of the

Depression, from 1929 through 1932. The largest number repatriated in 1931. During 1931 the number of departures increased gradually until it peaked in the last quarter of the year, when over 50,000 persons were repatriated. From 1932 thru 1937 repatriation activity decreased annually.[99]

Conclusions

Most published studies of Mexican repatriation have examined repatriation pressures which compelled Mexicans to return to Mexico. These studies have usually focused upon the degree of coercion used to effect migration from the United States or upon the various institutions in the United States involved in Mexican repatriation. There appears to be little agreement among repatriation scholars regarding the relative importance of various pressures on the returnees or institutions involved in repatriation. Most studies have ignored many of the factors which influenced the decision of Mexicans to return to Mexico.

Although the magnitude of personal hardships and human rights violations experienced by Mexican repatriates during the Great Depression has not been thoroughly investigated, substantial evidence exists to show that they were

systematic and nationwide. Individuals, businesses, welfare workers, and governmental officials all violated the rights of the Mexican repatriates. Transgressions took many forms, including job discrimination, denial of relief, loss of property, expulsion of American citizens, and separation of families.

While a variety of U.S. government agencies was utilized to facilitate emigration from the United States, welfare agencies played a key role in repatriation of Mexicans from many urban centers. Efforts of welfare agencies were sometimes complemented by Immigration Service deportation campaigns. The relative importance of the role of local welfare agencies, the Immigration Service, and other government agencies in the repatriation process is in dispute. Case studies of Depression era repatriation movements from all areas of the United States are needed before specific conclusions can be made. Virtually nothing is known about repatriation activities in Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Colorado, and many urban centers in the Midwest and Northeast.

The Mexican government sought to promote the return of unemployed, destitute Mexicans. Mexican consuls in the United States were often instrumental in organizing

and implementing the removal of Mexicans to Mexico, although the relative importance of Mexican consuls in repatriation has not been ascertained. In addition, the Mexican governments established a number of agricultural colonization projects to accommodate returning Mexicans. Publicity given these projects gave impetus to the repatriation movement. Before specific generalizations about the roles of various Mexican government agencies in the repatriation of Mexicans can be made, detailed investigation of these government agencies is needed.

Upon their return to Mexico many repatriates experienced readjustment difficulties. Neither the nature nor extent of these difficulties has been explored in depth. Perhaps even less attention has been devoted to those repatriates who successfully adjusted to life in Mexico. In addition, the reasons for readjustment failures and successes have not been studied.

The exact number of Mexicans who returned to Mexico is unknown because repatriation statistics are highly unreliable. Best estimates indicate that at least 500,000 persons were returned to Mexico between 1929 and 1940. The largest number of repatriates were returned during the early years of the Depression--from 1929 through 1932.

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CHAPTER III

MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS IN TEXAS

There is general agreement among scholars of Mexican immigration that, prior to about 1890, migration of Mexicans to the United States was of minor importance.[1] Immigration increased dramatically after 1900, however, as can be seen in Table 1. Mexican immigration apparently peaked during the second decade of the twentieth century, although large numbers continued to migrate to the United States during the 1920s.

Prior to 1929 most Mexican immigrants settled in one of five southwestern states: Texas, California, Arizona, New Mexico, or Colorado. They did not relocate in these states simultaneously. Most who arrived between 1890 and 1920 apparently settled in Texas. The Mexican-born population of Texas increased by more than 75 percent between 1900 and 1910, and by more than 100 percent between 1910 and 1920. However, during the 1920s the increase of Mexicans in Texas was only about 5 percent (Table 2).

TABLE 1

PERSONS OF MEXICAN BIRTH IN THE UNITED STATES POPULATION, CENSUS YEARS, 1880-1930; AND IMMIGRANTS ADMITTED EACH DECADE, 1900-1930

Census Year	Number of Persons Born in Mexico	Immigrants Admitted	Decade
1880	68,399		
1890	77,853		
1900	103,393		
1910	221,915	49,879	1900-1910
1920	486,418	219,004	1911-1920
1930	641,462	459,287	1921-1930

Source: Adapted from John C. Elac, The Employment of Mexican Workers in U.S. Agriculture, 1900-1960: A Binational Economic Analysis (San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1972), p. 15.

TABLE 2

MEXICAN-BORN POPULATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND IN SELECTED STATES, CENSUS YEARS, 1890-1930

	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930
United States	77,853	103,393	221,915	486,418	640,741
Texas	51,559	71,062	125,016	251,827	266,364
California	7,164	8,086	33,694	88,771	199,994
Arizona	11,534	14,172	29,987	61,580	48,941
New Mexico	4,504	6,649	11,918	20,272	16,373
Colorado	607	274	2,602	11,037	13,152

Source: Adapted from John C. Elac, The Employment of Mexican Workers in U.S. Agriculture, 1900-1960: A Binational Economic Analysis (San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1972), p. 15.

One may conclude that between 1890 and 1920 most Mexican immigrants settled in Texas, while later arrivals tended to locate in other southwestern states. The significance of this conclusion is that, by 1929, many Mexican residents of Texas had lived in the state for 10, 20, or even 30 or more years. Many of these long-term Texas Mexicans regarded Texas as their permanent home; the advent of the Great Depression in 1929, and the subsequent repatriation efforts of the 1930s, seriously jeopardized their existence.

The purpose of this chapter is to document and analyze the settlement of Texas by Mexican immigrants from about 1890 to 1929. Attention will be given to push factors which compelled emigration from Mexico, and to pull factors which attracted the Mexican immigrant to Texas.

Push Factors

Students of migration often explain mass population movements by identifying "push" factors (forces that repel people) and "pull" factors (forces that attract people). During the first three decades of the twentieth century a number of push factors in Mexico prompted the emigration of hundreds of thousands of Mexicans. To understand these,

one must understand the character of Mexican society and changes within that society after about 1875.

From the time the Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz ascended to power in 1876 until the collapse of his regime in 1911, Mexico's population increased from about 9,000,000 to 15,000,000,[2] due largely to a rapidly declining mortality rate. This dramatic population growth rate undoubtedly contributed substantially to the exodus from Mexico, a factor that may not have been accorded its true importance as a push factor by those who have studied Mexican emigration cause-effect relationships.

The larger numbers of people meant less agricultural land per capita, and thus led to underemployment of millions of Mexican laborers. According to McBride, between 1883 and 1906, the Mexican government divested itself of nearly 61 million hectares of public lands. These lands were disposed of in immense tracts (one hacendado in Baja California acquired nearly 12 million acres) and were usually held for speculative purposes.[3] The Díaz regime alienated one-fifth of the Mexican republic, and by 1910 public lands were virtually nonexistent.[4] In addition, thousands of small private and communal holdings were absorbed by expanding

haciendas.[5] By 1910 over 96 percent of all rural families in Mexico owned no land.[6] The disappearance of suitable lands for agrarian expansion, to accommodate a rapidly increasing rural labor force, must be regarded as a significant emigration push force during the early twentieth century.[7]

The growing surplus of underemployed agrarian labor also suffered from a standard of living that continually declined after 1870. During the Díaz administration the prices of basic consumer goods rose sharply. Cockcroft found that food price inflation diminished the workers' real income an estimated 57 percent between 1876 and 1910.[8] Between 1891 and 1908 the price of beans rose approximately 65 percent, corn 95 percent, flour 100 percent, and chile 115 percent.[9] The dramatic reduction in real income may be partially attributed to a wage rate that remained virtually unchanged from 1876 until 1900, and increased only slightly between 1900 and 1911.[10] The decline in the Mexican peasants' living standard undoubtedly also served as an emigration push force.

Before 1880 one obstacle to mass emigration to the United States was the lack of transportation across the desert regions of northern Mexico. This problem was resolved

by the construction of 15,000 miles of rail track between 1880 and 1910. These lines ran north and south and connected the densely populated regions of central Mexico with United States border towns.[11]

The final push factor during the second and third decades of the twentieth century was the Mexican Revolution, which began in 1910. The revolution acted as an agent to free the socially and geographically immobile Mexican peasantry.[12] McLean noted that

> the revolution freed the Mexican serfs; but with their freedom came a paralysis of agriculture. For years marauding bands swept back and forth over the land. Revolution was followed by counter-revolution. A nation of slaves had suddenly tasted of liberty, and had become drunken. Bandit chieftains who talked importantly about liberty, independence and the constitution swept down upon feeding herds and ripening crops. There was no profit in producing a harvest which must be exchanged perforce for a worthless scrap of paper.[13]

It has been asserted that the widespread violence in Mexico after 1910 was more important in accelerating emigration than the lack of economic opportunity in Mexico.[14] It is indeed difficult to overemphasize the economic disorder created by the revolution as a reason for emigration. Scott noted that "over a million people were killed or starved to death before order was restored, and the country suffered the economic consequences for years."[15] One of the most

important of these consequences was the depletion of human resources caused by emigration from Mexico. Contemporary news accounts indicate that disturbances created by conflicts between various political factions in Mexico led to the emigration of thousands of Mexican refugees.[16] One estimate indicated that by the fall of 1918 one and one-half million persons had been driven from Mexico.[17] Many of these refugees remained in the United States only a short time. Nevertheless, the effect of massive population deplacement was widespread. In some areas entire villages were abandoned as their residents fled to the United States,[18] leaving whole regions depopulated.[19] Indeed, the Mexican Revolution must be regarded as one of the most significant push forces in accelerating Mexican immigration to Texas.

Pull Factors

While Mexico was undergoing profound economic change during the Díaz epoch, Texas was entering a period of sustained economic growth that continued until the Depression of 1929. This growth was characterized by an intense demand for labor that translated into a strong pull factor. McWilliams explained the relationship between Mexican immigration and economic development:

> The great wave of Mexican immigration . . . coincided with the birth of the Southwest as an economic empire; and, in each instance, Mexican immigrants labored in the building of industries in which there had been an earlier Spanish-Mexican cultural contribution. These industries in which Mexicans were concentrated, moreover, were those vital to the economic development of the Southwest. In all essentials, therefore, the story of the invasion of the borderlands can be told in terms of railroads, cotton, sugar beets, and truck or produce farming.[20]

In Texas the expansion of the cattle and sheep ranches, the creation of an extensive railroad network, the spread of cotton culture, and the development of extensive irrigation projects were, indeed, built by the toil of Mexican immigrant labor.

Some early Mexican immigrants originally came to Texas as traders. As early as the late 1850s, large caravans of Mexican traders made periodic trips from San Antonio to Dallas to purchase flour and other commodities. Ox carts were used to return these commodities to San Antonio, where they were sold. The Dallas Herald recorded the arrival of one of these caravans in Dallas.

> We chronicle the arrival of another caravan of Mexican carts in our town,--by far the largest we have seen. Their singular looking vehicles, with bodies thatched with straw, their yokes attached to the horns of the oxen instead of being worked with bows, and the dark, gipsy looking carters, with their strange musical cries, are all objects of curiosity to our citizens--especially to those who have flour to sell--as these Mexicans generally bring the cash with them.[21]

During the Civil War itinerant Mexican traders ventured among Anglo Texan settlers to sell goods brought from Mexico. In some areas of the state migrant Mexican herders and cattle traders sold cattle to Anglo American settlers.[22]

Mexican workers were first attracted to the ranches of South and Southwest Texas.[23] Later, as the cattle industry expanded from South and Southwest Texas to West Texas, the Mexican vaquero found an increasing demand for his labor there.[24] Eventually the vaquero became the predominant ranch worker over much of Texas.[25] By 1870 Mexican pastores were in demand on Texas ranches for their skill in herding sheep;[26] within a decade virtually all pastores in Texas were of Mexican origin.[27] Even the art of sheepshearing came to be regarded as an exclusively Mexican skill.[28] According to Taylor, migratory Mexican shearing gangs crossed into Texas twice each year in order to fill the seasonal demand for sheepshearing.[29]

Many early Mexican immigrants were employed in the construction or maintenance of railroads in Texas.[30] As early as 1870 one railroad opened a labor office in San Antonio to recruit Mexican workers for a line being constructed from Austin to Brenham. Mexican labor was also used to reconstruct the railroad from Indianola to Victoria.[31]

McWilliams noted that after the 1880s virtually all of the employees of section crews were Mexican.[32] Bryan found that by 1908 labor agencies in El Paso were furnishing American railroads with an average of 2,060 Mexican workers per month.[33] When labor agencies were unable to satisfy the labor requirements, which happened frequently, the railroads advertised for workers in Spanish-language newspapers in Texas border towns.[34]

Throughout the early years of the twentieth century, Mexican railway workers immigrated to Texas in search of similar but better-paying employment. According to an agent of the National Railroad of Mexico, in 1908 nearly all of 1,500 workers brought north to work on the upper section of the line crossed into Texas.[35] In December 1915 La Prensa reported that several thousand employees of the Mexican National railroad had recently entered Texas at Eagle Pass. Many found jobs with U.S. railroads.[36] During the summer of 1918 at least 1,500 railway mechanics and other technicians left Mexico for Texas and were quickly employed by the Southern Pacific Railroad.[37] In 1925 the El Paso Chamber of Commerce arranged for the importation of 6,000 Mexican road and railroad construction workers,[38] while in 1928 thousands of Mexican railway workers were

reportedly immigrating to the United States in order to secure higher wages.[39]

Mexican labor gradually replaced other ethnic groups in railroad construction and maintenance. By 1910 the railroads were employing more Mexican laborers than any other industry except agriculture.[40] By the late 1920s the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe and the Rock Island lines alone were employing a combined total of nearly 10,000 Mexicans.[41] According to the 1930 census, 70,799 Mexicans were engaged in transportation and communication enterprises.[42]

Anglo American settlers arriving in Texas in 1821 brought with them the southern cotton culture that eventually came to dominate Texas agriculture. Cotton production increased slowly for half a century, then expanded rapidly after 1880 when the extension of railroads cut marketing costs and made such production highly profitable. In 1886 the Taylor County News noted that cotton expansion in Texas was so rapid that ranchmen had "just time enough to move their cattle out and prevent their tails being chopped off by the advancing hoe."[43] Between 1880 and 1900 cotton became the leading commercial crop both in value and in area under cultivation.[44] After 1880 cotton expanded from its

base in East and South Central Texas into the area south of San Antonio.[45] The Corpus Christi Caller reported the introduction of cotton into Nueces County about 1882.[46] The expansion of cotton led one resident of Cotulla in La Salle County in Southwest Texas to comment:

> We have kept an eye on the man with the hoe, and have watched his movements carefully. Inch by inch he has been coming west, and lands that twelve years ago contained or raised nothing but a few heads of stock, are now filled up with thrifty farmers.[47]

By the beginning of the twentieth century cotton production had replaced the range cattle industry as the leading economic activity over much of South and Southwest Texas.

The three decades after 1900 were marked by a further decline in the sheep and range cattle industries as cotton continued to encroach upon Texas range land.[48] McWilliams noted that "from 1890 to 1910 the cattle industry began to retreat before the forces of King Cotton, first in middle Texas and later (1910-1930) in west Texas."[49] After 1895 cotton rapidly penetrated north and west of Austin into Brown, Coleman, Runnels, Taylor, Midland, and Ector counties.[50] The number of acres under cultivation more than doubled from 1900 to 1930, while, for the same period, cotton ouput declined from about a half bale to a fourth bale per acre.[51] The decline in per-acre output may be attributed

largely to the introduction of cotton into areas of West Texas that were marginally productive. In 1930 Crawford stated that "in the unirrigated plains regions of Texas and Oklahoma millions of acres of land formerly used as ranges for cattle and sheep and goats are being cultivated in cotton."[52] Simultaneously with this expansion of cotton production in West Texas, thousands of new acres of cotton were brought under cultivation in the lower Rio Grande Valley.[53]

The demand for unskilled labor resulting from the expansion of the cotton culture was probably the single most important Mexican immigration pull force in Texas during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[54] The conversion of range lands into cotton farms and plantations necessitated the clearing of the land, which in turn created a demand for an abundance of manual labor, since hand methods were employed in brush removal. Mexican labor was exclusively utilized to clear the land, with payment usually on a per-acre basis.[55] South Texas newspapers frequently carried advertisements for "grubbers" (land clearers), and news articles expressed the need for grubbers on local ranches.[56]

Cotton production, largely unmechanized before the 1930s, required intensive manual labor. Labor costs were relatively low, but still exceeded other production costs.[57] Although substantial annual labor was required, demand for workers peaked at harvest time. A shortage of cotton pickers was a common occurrence that had been reported as early as 1865.[58] By the early 1870s cotton farmers in the Georgetown area in Central Texas were importing Mexican workers from San Antonio to harvest cotton,[59] and by 1885 cotton growers in Central Texas were recruiting additional labor from Mexico.[60] Montgomery stated that Mexican cotton pickers first appeared in Caldwell County in Central Texas in 1887,[61] while Borden, an early cotton grower in San Patricio County (near Corpus Christi), observed that Mexican workers were employed from the time cotton was first introduced in the area.[62] Early Anglo American settlers in the lower Rio Grande Valley reported that Mexicans were being utilized in the production of cotton at the turn of the century.[63] Apparently many of these laborers were recent arrivals to the United States, because wage payments were made in Mexican currency.[64]

Between 1900 and 1929, cotton continued to spread across Texas, creating an intense demand for labor and

resulting in the immigration of thousands of Mexicans into the state. In 1915 the San Antonio Express reported that hundreds of Mexican cotton pickers were being imported to Texas. Additional cars were attached to the Texas-Mexican Railroad's excursion train to transport the workers from Laredo to Corpus Christi.[65] A critical labor shortage in the lower Rio Grande Valley in 1926 was attributed to the expansion of cotton in that area.[66] A few months later, large numbers of emigrants from the interior of Mexico arrived in Matamoros planning to cross into the lower Rio Grande Valley.[67] Recurring seasonal labor shortages, especially during the cotton harvest, were frequently reported.[68] In 1930 Handman stated that the seasonal demand for cotton pickers was occasionally so great that "Texas farmers have stood guard with shotguns over their Mexican cotton-pickers to prevent other farmers from luring them away by the promise of better pay."[69] These labor shorages were largely solved by the immigration of Mexican workers.

Extensive irrigation projects begun in South Texas around 1900 and provided that region with the means to develop agriculturally. The most important of these was located in the lower Rio Grande Valley and included much of Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy, and Starr counties. Prior to the

extension of the St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico Railroad to Brownsville in 1904, that sparsely populated area was primarily dependent upon stock raising, although some commercial farming was practiced.[70] After 1904 irrigated acreage increased rapidly through the construction of irrigation canals and pump stations on the Rio Grande. Cotton acreage expanded rapidly, and cotton production became a mainstay of the area's economy.[71] Commercial vegetable production was an immediate success, with carload lots of vegetables exported from the area as early as 1907 and 1908.[72] Because freezing weather was almost nonexistent, citrus was introduced about 1920.[73] By 1929, over five million citrus trees had been planted.

Another twentieth-century irrigation project was developed in the Winter Garden district, an area which encompases much of Dimmit, Maverick, and Zavala counties in Southwest Texas. The Winter Garden district was developed by Anglo Americans who settled there in the late 1890s. Initially, winter truck farming was practiced using artesian well irrigation and pumps on the Rio Grande and the Nueces River. Later, deeper wells requiring pumps were drilled and the irrigated acreage was greatly expanded. After 1909, when the railroad was extended into the area, many of the

large ranches were subdivided to create farms.[74] The encroachment of irrigated farming upon the ranching industry is reflected in the decline of cattle in Dimmit County--from about 40,000 head in 1910 to 11,000 head in 1929.[75] Although a variety of winter vegetables was produced in the area, onions and spinach were the most extensively grown and shipped.

The development of irrigation projects in South Texas after 1900 served as a strong pull factor for the Mexican immigrant. The rapid expansion of the vegetable, cotton, and citrus industries intensified the demand for unskilled labor. This demand is evidenced by newspaper reports of critical labor shortages.[76] Efforts to resolve this problem focused on the importation of Mexican laborers. Taylor stated that "the growth of the Mexican population since the development of irrigation has been very marked, both in absolute numbers and relative to the total population of the country."[77]

Settlement Pattern

Many of the Mexicans who arrived in the United States during the first decade of the twentieth century remained only a short time before returning to Mexico. Early Mexican immigrants seem to have made repeated trips to and from

Mexico before settling permanently in the United States. Clark noted in 1908 that the Mexican immigrant often made two annual trips to the United States, returning to Mexico for the planting of crops and again at harvest time.[78] Bryan drew a similar conclusion in 1912 when he stated that 50 percent of all Mexicans employed as section hands on railroads claimed free return passage to Mexico after working in the United States for six months.[79]

With the passage of time, however, more and more Mexicans remained permanently in the United States, which led Hoover to conclude in 1929 that "the Mexican is not primarily a 'homer' in the sense that he returns home to stay."[80] In 1920 Congressman James C. Box of Texas stated that two-thirds of the Mexican immigrants who entered the United States under contract labor provisions of the immigration law failed to leave after the harvest season had ended.[81]

Clark found that early Mexican immigrants to the United States seldom settled more than 100 miles from the border,[82] while Burma noted that, prior to about 1918, virtually no Mexicans resided more than 250 miles beyond the border.[83] The establishment of permanent Mexican settlements in Texas seems to have been directly associated with the expansion of the cotton plantation system, which

required large numbers of tenant farmers and laborers. Many Mexican immigrants arriving in Texas about 1900 readily found permanent employment as tenant farmers on large cotton plantations in areas adjacent to the border. Allhands stated that Mexican tenant farmers were employed in the lower Rio Grande Valley in the production of cotton and corn even before irrigation was widely practiced.[84]

From the area of original concentration near the Rio Grande, Mexican tenant farmers and agricultural laborers "spread fan-like in a northeasterly direction" from the border region into Central Texas.[85] In a detailed study of one community in Caldwell County, in Central Texas, Montgomery found that Mexican tenant farmers were first utilized on cotton plantations in the area in 1892; by 1900 only Mexican tenants were employed there.[86] Davis declared:

> As early as 1908, the Mexican army of peaceful invasion had driven itself like a wedge into the heart of Texas beyond San Antonio, veering to the South of the Balcones Escarpment and the ranch country, and sticking close to the cotton fields of Comal, Hayes, and Caldwell counties. Coming through the ports of Laredo, Eagle Pass, and Brownsville, the Mexican had concentrated at San Antonio, and that city, like the small end of a funnel, poured them out into the cotton fields to the northeast with such speed that by 1920, the greatest density of rural Mexican population in Texas was not along the Rio Grande border but in Caldwell County in sight of the dome of the state capitol.[87]

In 1929 Cauley noted that all of the counties in the neighborhood of San Antonio, Austin, and Waco had large concentrations of Mexicans.[88] Many of the Central Texas residents were employed as tenant farmers.[89]

> In central Texas, for example, the tendency has been for farms to turn into large landed estates, and in west Texas some of the new cotton land comes in large tracts, opened up and managed by a land-owner partly for speculative purposes. In central Texas there has been a definite exodus from the country to the city, farm-owners leaving their old places and turning them over to Mexican tenants on halves while they live in town.[90]

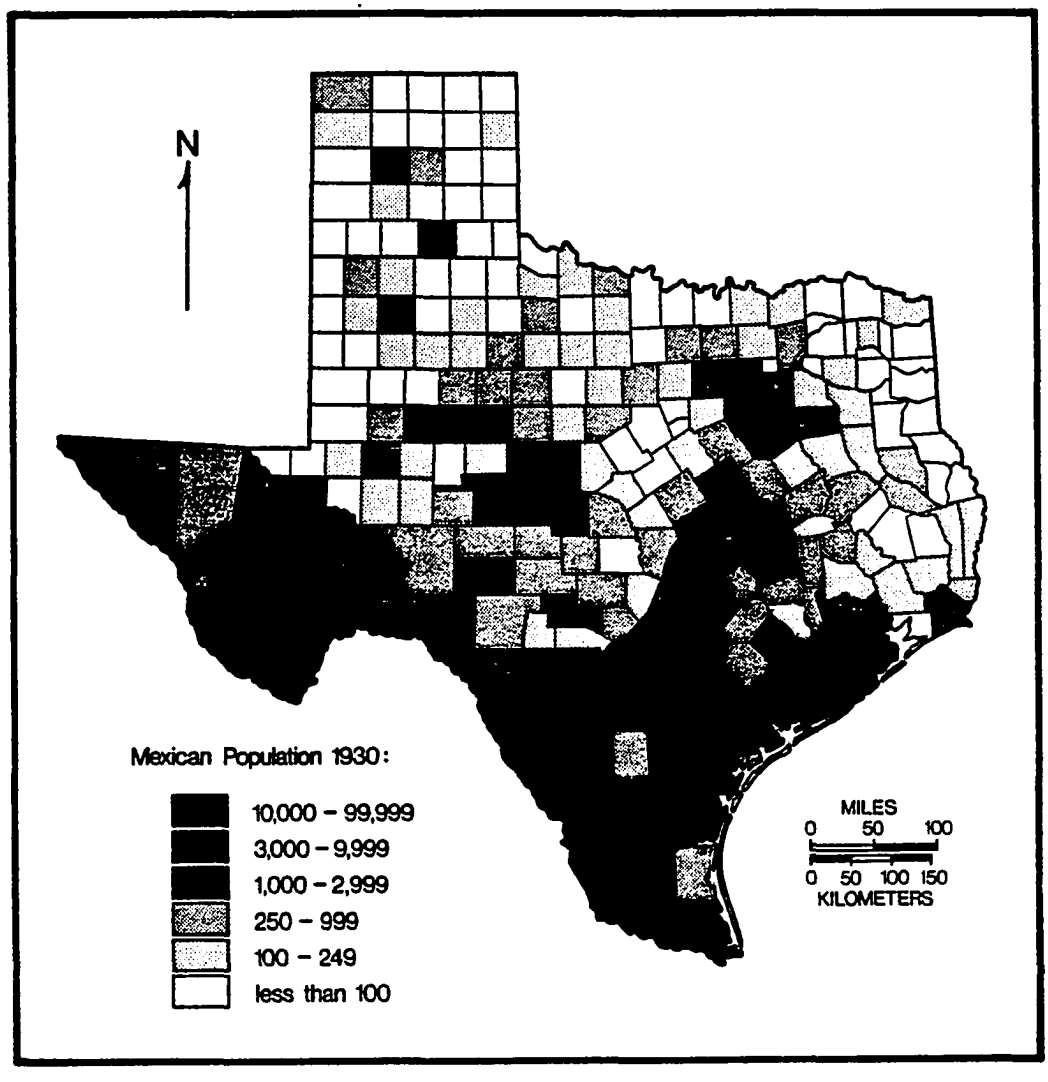
By the beginning of the Depression the Mexican tenant farmer had replaced his Anglo American and black counterparts over wide areas of Texas. Most black tenant farmers in the Corpus Christi region and along the Brazos River had been displaced by Mexicans.[91] From Central Texas the Mexican tenant farmer followed the expansion of cotton north and west into Brown, Coleman, Runnels, Taylor, Midland, and Ector counties.[92] Crawford observed in 1930 that millions of acres of cotton in the semiarid plains of Texas were being cultivated by Mexican tenants or hired laborers.[93] Congressman Box, a leading proponent of restrictive legislation for Mexican immigration during the 1920s, noted that vast areas in West and Southwest Texas were being cultivated

by Mexican "peon and serf labor, working mainly for absentee landlords."[94]

Although the Texas Mexican population was widely distributed across the state, there were three areas of dense concentration in 1930 (Figure 1). One area was found in those counties adjacent to the Mexican border. Even before the acceleration of immigration about 1890, large numbers of Texas Mexicans resided in these counties. After 1890, thousands of Mexican immigrants settled in these counties on a temporary or permanent basis. A second area of dense Mexican population was located in South Texas. This area extends northwest from Nueces County (Corpus Christi) to Bexar County (San Antonio), then northeast to Travis County (Austin), then southeast to Victoria County (Victoria), and then southwest to Nueces County. This area is associated with the development of the cotton plantation and Mexican farm tenancy systems. A third area encompassed the urban areas of the state. Although many Mexicans were employed in cities prior to 1930, urban areas often served as temporary homes for a vast reservoir of seasonal agricultural labor.

FIGURE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF MEXICAN POPULATION, 1930



Source: U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Population, vol. 3, pt. 2, pp. 1014-1015.

Summary

During the first three decades of the twentieth century, unstable social, political, and economic conditions in Mexico, coupled with dramatic economic development in Texas, resulted in the migration of hundreds of thousands of Mexicans to Texas. By the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929, many of these Mexican immigrants and their U.S.-born children had resided in Texas for two or three decades and regarded Texas as their permanent home.

Early Mexican immigrants to Texas often made repeated trips to Texas before they settled permanently. Most early immigrants came as traders, vaqueros and pastores, railroad construction and maintenance laborers, grubbers, tenant farmers and field hands, and as laborers on irrigation development projects. It is difficult to measure or evaluate the contribution of these Mexican immigrants to the economic development of Texas; they became an intricate part of the economic structure of the state, however.

Although the immigrants worked at a variety of jobs after arriving in Texas, most settlers found employment in the production of cotton. They served primarily as tenant farmers and agricultural laborers. The expansion of cotton

culture across Texas closely paralleled the permanent settlement of Mexicans in Texas.

There were three areas of dense Texas Mexican population in 1930. These included an area of dense population in counties adjacent to the Mexican border; a large area of South Texas settled by Texas Mexicans engaged in the production of cotton; and urban areas of the state.

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CHAPTER IV

DEPORTATION OF TEXAS MEXICANS

Introduction

Late in the evening of 2 February 1931, Mrs. Angela Hernández de Sanchez hurriedly approached the International Bridge between Ciudad Juárez and El Paso. Mrs. Hernández was returning to El Paso from a week-long visit with relatives in Carrizal, Chihuahua, Mexico. Although in a hurry to reach home, she paused momentarily to watch the passage of several Model T Fords. These vehicles were heavily laden with household goods, farm equipment, and personal belongings of a number of Texas Mexican families returning to Mexico after residing in Texas for many years. Mrs. Hernández was apprehensive as she approached the austere United States Customs House on the north side of the river. She reminded herself that there was no reason to be afraid. For fourteen years she had returned annually to Carrizal for a short visit. On none of the previous visits had she experienced any difficulty in reentering the United States.

At the United States Customs House, however, Mrs. Hernández was arrested and detained by United States immigration agents for "medical adenities [sic] and proof [of] residence." The following day she was paroled to the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC)--a local agency that assisted Texas Mexican residents under threat of deportation--until her legal residence could be determined and until blood tests for veneral disease could be taken and evaluated. Evidence produced by Mrs. Hernández showed that she had been a continuous resident of the United States since 3 October 1916; thus, she was a legal resident of the United States and not subject to deportation. Moreover, two of her children had been born in the United States. On 26 February 1931, results of the blood test proved negative. However, the doctor who examined Mrs. Hernández refused to certify her, for he was "apparently convinced that this disease [syphilis] exists." Mrs. Hernández appealed the doctor's decision, but on 12 March the Department of Labor ordered the deportation of Mrs. Hernández and her children. On 17 March Mrs. Hernández made a final appeal to the NCWC. She called Bruce Mohler of the NCWC to report that she was being deported. The final notation on Mrs. Hernández's file reads:

> 3/17/31--Excluded by Depts.
>
> 3/17/31--Called going to Juárez date with 2 U.S. Born & 1 Mex. Born child. "Crying."

Mrs. Hernández apparently remained in Ciudad Juárez, serving there as a domestic servant, for on 14 May 1938 she reapplied to the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service at El Paso for "local crossing privileges." This access was denied on the grounds that Mrs. Hernández had been previously deported.[1] The fate of her U.S.-born children is not apparent from an examination of her file.

The case of Angela Hernández de Sanchez exemplifies the experience of thousands of Mexicans and their U.S.-born children who were humiliated, harrassed, arrested, detained, incarcerated, and expelled from the United States during the Great Depression. Many of these deportados and their U.S.-born children were later denied readmission to the United States because they had been deported during the 1930s. The tragic stories of thousands of Texas Mexican deportees are still untold.

To understand the Texas Mexican repatriation movement one must understand the relationship between repatriation and deportation. Deportation pressures were

directly and indirectly responsible for the departure of thousands of Texas Mexicans during the Great Depression. This chapter documents and analyzes this deportation movement.

Repatriation and Deportation

Several problems are involved in distinguishing between repatriation and deportation. Frequently, deportees and repatriates traveled together in the United States, entered Mexico together, and in Mexico continued to journey together. News reports, official correspondence, and governmental documents and reports used the terms "deportees" and "repatriates" interchangeably, although deportees was often reserved for formally deported persons. The problem is further complicated by usage of the terms "voluntary" and "involuntary" for repatriates. News accounts and official reports seldom differentiated between voluntary and involuntary repatriates, although these terms were widely used to indicate the absence or presence of deportation pressures. "Voluntary" repatriates usually referred to departing Texas Mexicans who were not coerced into leaving Texas. "Involuntary" repatriation usually meant Texas Mexicans departing under threat of deportation,

although occasionally this term referred to formal deportation. Even the Mexican government often used the term "repatriate" for Texas Mexicans being expelled from Texas. Use of repatriación to include deportados and repatriados is perplexing. Carreras de Velasco has suggested that repatriaciones included deportaciones because Mexicans felt shame at being expelled. "Repatriation" was a more emotional and patriotic term which indicated a desire to return to one's native land.[2]

Departing Texas Mexicans may be grouped into four categories: involuntary repatriates, voluntary repatriates, informal deportees, and formal deportees. These groups are not mutually exclusive or inclusive. The groupings are simply a means of understanding the types of repatriation and deportation pressures Texas Mexican residents encountered during the Great Depression. Further, many Texas Mexicans were compelled to return to Mexico for reasons unrelated to this categorization. This chapter focuses on informal and formal deportation.

Large numbers of unemployed Texas Mexicans returned to Mexico because of their impoverished economic condition. This group may be classified as involuntary repatriates. Many had been born in Texas or had lived in Texas for years.

A large number had entered the United States legally and possessed documentation. Economic coercion in Texas during the Depression gave impetus to the repatriation of this group. Unemployed, destitute Texas Mexicans with little hope of governmental or private assistance were compelled to join the trek back to Mexico. Involuntary repatriates often desired to remain in Texas, but as their economic condition deteriorated repatriation offered the only hope for survival. Members of this group were often incorrectly referred to as voluntary repatriates by the press and by governmental officials in both Texas and Mexico. For example, one press report from El Paso in 1930 indicated that of 12,291 departing Texas Mexicans 9,746 were returning to Mexico because of lack of work.[3] Although little statistical data exist to support this contention, involuntary repatriates probably composed the largest group of Texas Mexicans that entered Mexico during the Great Depression.

Some Texas Mexicans left Texas of their own volition and may accurately be characterized as voluntary repatriates. They regarded their sojourn in Texas as temporary and would have returned to Mexico regardless of economic or political conditions in Texas. They may have believed that their economic situation would be improved in

Mexico, although this was not a major factor in their return to Mexico. Members of this group were probably the only true repatriates. This group included many small business operators, professional people, tenant farmers, and laborers who could have remained in Texas. Controversy exists regarding the number who departed the United States of their own volition after 1929. Hoffman has stated that large numbers of California repatriates returned to Mexico voluntarily.[4] Carreras de Velasco disagreed sharply, concluding from a recent study of Mexican repatriation records that insignificant numbers of Mexicans departed the United States voluntarily.[5] Although little comparative statistical data exist true voluntary repatriates were probably numerically the least important group of Texas Mexicans to return to Mexico during the Great Depression.

Large numbers of Texas Mexicans departed Texas under the threat of deportation. These returnees may be classified as informal deportees. They were often detained by Bureau of Immigration inspectors and given an opportunity to "voluntarily" return to Mexico. Techniques utilized by the Border Patrol to promote informal deportation are explained in a 1929 news article published in the

McAllen Monitor:

> The border patrolman has become a keen student of faces. He has observed types carefully, and can almost at a glance spot a "wet" alien. The man suspected is stopped, and is asked for his credentials. He is interrogated closely, and if he cannot give a satisfactory account of himself, and prove his legal entrance, he is, if a Mexican, given opportunity for a voluntary return across the border.[6]

Many thousands of Texas Mexicans decided to return to Mexico because of the belief that they would soon be deported. These returnees were often categorized as voluntary repatriates or voluntary deportees by the Texas press and by American and Mexican governmental officials. For example, the 1929 Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration stated that 8,531 Mexicans had been permitted to depart the United States voluntarily during the past fiscal year.[7] In May of 1929, George B. Terrell, state commissioner of Agriculture, referred to the "return of many Mexicans voluntarily to escape deportation," while the Texas Farm Placement Service reported "800 voluntary departures to prevent deportation."[8] Similarly, D. W. Brewster, chief of the United States Immigration Service at Brownsville, reported to La Prensa that during the first quarter of 1929, 82 percent of all deportations were voluntary.[9] In July of 1930 the headlines of La Prensa proclaimed the voluntary return of "2,500 Mexicanos Deportados

por Laredo en un Ano."[10] But designating as voluntary repatriates Texas Mexicans who left under the threat of deportation is clearly misleading. Informal deportations were probably the second largest group of returnees to Mexico.

Large numbers of Texas Mexicans were legally deported from Texas under warrant proceedings during the Depression. This group may be classified as formal deportees. Texas Mexicans apprehended and detained by the U.S. Bureau of Immigration who refused informal deportation were formally deported. On 30 October 1930, a report from El Paso indicated there were two classes of deportees. Of 2,545 recent deportees, 1,208 had been apprehended, detained, and formally deported. The remaining 1,337 deportees were expelled "without ceremonies." The latter group was characterized as voluntary deportees by American immigration authorities.[11] Formal deportation proceedings received widespread coverage in the Texas-Mexican and Anglo-Texas presses. Publicity accorded these proceedings inevitably accelerated informal deportation. To complicate matters, members of this group were occasionally referred to as repatriates by the press and government officials. It seems probable that the number

formally deported was significantly less than either involuntary repatriates or informal deportees but perhaps greater than voluntary repatriates.

The Texas Federal Deportation Campaign

Hoffman has stated that the federal government's campaign of deportation was initiated in the spring of 1931 and was centered in Los Angeles.[12] He noted that repatriation increased throughout the United States in the

> latter part of 1931 and coincided with the aftermath of the federal deportation campaign so highly publicized in Los Angeles and elsewhere, and the beginnings of the organized repatriation programs in that county and across the nation.[13]

The Los Angeles campaign, however, was actually an extension of an intensive, well-organized, and effective campaign that had been in operation in Texas since the summer of 1928. Taylor, for instance, noted that deportation activity in the Southwest was at its height during the spring of 1929. He stated:

> Along the entire Mexican border the Immigration Service was making a determined effort not only to stop the flow of surreptitious entrants, but to return to Mexico those who had previously crossed illegally and were subject to deportation.[14]

Taylor observed the effects of the deportation raids as he traveled in Texas in the summer of 1929. He was often asked by Mexicans in South Texas whether "it was true that

the United States was about to send all Mexicans back to Mexico." Sensitive to the dilemma confronting Mexican residents of Texas, Taylor noted that "the fears, real and fancied, which spread among an uneducated alien group in such a situation can perhaps be imagined."[15] Taylor's observations of widespread apprehension among the Texas Mexicans are supported by news accounts from that era. For example, in July 1929, the Hidalgo County-Independent stated:

> Most of our Mexican citizens, except the educated class, are frightened and they will leave rapidly as soon as they have accumulated a small amount of money from work in the cotton fields.[16]

This prophesy was soon fulfilled. The movement back to Mexico had been underway for more than a year. Only the magnitude of the exodus remained to be determined.

Lower Rio Grande Valley Deportation

According to John Peavey, assistant chief of the Border Patrol at McAllen during this era, the Texas federal deportation campaign of 1928-1931 was initiated in the lower Rio Grande Valley.[17] Beginning in the summer of 1928, large numbers of Texas Mexicans came under the scrutiny of the Bureau of Immigration. In May 1928 a San Antonio Express report indicated that wholesale deportation

of Texas Mexicans in the lower Valley had created general agitation throughout the area. Valley residents complained to Congressman John Garner that the supply of agricultural labor was being jeopardized by massive deportations. He urged the U.S. Immigration Service in Washington to cease deportation of Valley residents.[18] Apparently the appeal was ignored, for on 29 June 1928 the Hidalgo County-Independent referred to the hundreds of Mexicans deported each day by federal officers.[19] In January 1929 the editor of La Prensa deplored the harsh enforcement of immigration laws that had been ignored for many years.[20] In late April 1929, D. W. Brewster, chief of the U.S. Immigration Office at Brownsville, reported that hundreds of Texas Mexicans were under detention in the district and that more than 2,600 Mexicans had been deported since 1 January.[21] By the summer of 1929, George B. Terrell, commissioner of Agriculture, expressed concern over deportations and predicted a labor shortage for the fall harvest.[22]

Reliable data are not available for the total number of deportations from the Valley in 1929. A news report from Mexico City stated that statistics complied by the Ministry of Interior indicated that more than 10,000 Mexicans had been deported from the United States in 1929.[23]

If the rate of deportation activity that occurred during the spring remained constant, however, more than 15,000 Texas Mexicans were returned to Mexico during the remainder of the year. All evidence suggests that the Texas federal deportation campaign continued to accelerate throughout 1929. News accounts indicate an intensification of deportation activity during the summer. The raids were apparently effective, for large numbers of Texas Mexicans began seriously to consider repatriation.[24]

These deportation activities were part of a well-organized campaign to coerce Texas Mexicans to return to Mexico. Reports from the Valley routinely acknowledged that Immigration authorities were acting on Department of Labor orders from Washington.[25] To intensify and coordinate these deportation efforts, the Department of Labor reorganized and strengthened the Immigration Service in 1930. Headquarters were provided in Brownsville, and substations were established in McAllen, San Benito, Harlingen, Raymondville, Donna, Mission, and Rio Grande City. Initially, 45 inspectors were assigned to these substations.[26]

A report from the lower Rio Grande Valley in 1929 indicates that Bureau of Immigration agents were raiding

homes of Texas Mexican residents without first obtaining warrants. The Mexican government formally protested this action. Later the Mexican Embassy in Washington ordered all Mexican consuls in the Valley to take all possible measures to protect the interests of Mexican residents in Texas. The consuls informed the Mexican community that U.S. Immigration agents could not enter the homes of alien residents without a warrant.[27]

Intense deportation efforts continued throughout 1930. In the spring Texas Mexicans were deported en masse. The McAllen Monitor reported that in February "Mexican people of the Valley were in a state of panic expecting to be deported by the thousands."[28] According to one Valley resident, A. F. Parker, the Texas Mexican population of the Valley was in such fear of Immigration authorities that they refused to leave their homes.[29] This panic was justified, for by March hundreds of Texas Mexicans were reportedly under detention in Brownsville awaiting transfer to Matamoros.[30] An editorial in La Prensa in April protested the massive deportation campaign and urged that Mexican residents of Texas be accorded legal U.S. residence.[31] In July the McAllen Monitor criticized the wholesale deportation of Mexican immigrants from the

Valley, stating that the campaign had gravely endangered the Valley's labor supply.[32] By the end of the year entire communities of Texas Mexicans had been deported.[33]

All Texas Mexicans became suspect in 1931 as economic conditions worsened. Even the objections of local Chambers of Commerce and the large growers were muted. Immigration agents, free from local protests, initiated unrestrained raids on the Valley Texas Mexican community. In a one-month period in the spring of 1931, more than 450 Texas Mexicans were deported from Brownsville.[34] In early May the Hidalgo County-Independent reported.

> Arrests by agents have terrified the Mexicans, the immigration officials acting in accord with orders from Washington to deport every deportable alien. It is obvious only a small fraction of the number returning to Mexico would be deportable, but ignorance of the law and fear of arrest has added to the movement across the border.[35]

On 21 May, La Prensa reported that widespread arrests in the Mexican barrio in Harlingen--apparently without just cause--had aroused the concern of a number of Cameron County officials. The county judge, district attorney, chief of police, and the sheriff reportedly investigated them,[36] but evidently nothing came of their efforts, for no further references to them appeared in the Valley press. Mexican Migration Service statistics of July 1931 indicate

that at least 2,600 Texas Mexicans were deported from the lower Rio Grande Valley during the first six months of 1931.[37] After midyear the deportation activities appear to have diminished slightly. News accounts of such activities became less frequent, and late in the year D. W. Brewster, chief immigration officer at Brownsville, reported that deportations had decreased 50 percent in the last six months and that the "large-scale raids had ceased."[38] Nevertheless, at least 1,111 Texas Mexicans were deported at McAllen in the latter half of 1931,[39] while a much larger number were probably expelled through Brownsville.

El Paso Deportation Campaign

By 1930 the Texas federal deportation campaign had been extended to West Texas. For a number of years prior to the Depression limited deportation efforts in rural West Texas were carried out by Immigration inspectors stationed at El Paso and Presidio. In an effort to facilitate deportation from vast areas of West Texas the United States Immigration Service established an office at Lubbock.[40] Many Texas Mexicans were subsequently apprehended and deported from rural areas of West Texas. The

focus of most deportation activity, however, was El Paso and nearby agricultural enterprises.

In a series of raids initiated during January 1930, U.S. Immigration agents apprehended and jailed about 400 Texas Mexican residents of El Paso. Many were arrested in the streets, roads, plazas, and other public places. After a short period of incarceration, they were formally deported. The press reported that the Texas Mexicans were deported because they did not possess proper documentation.[41]

In late March 1930 the El Paso Herald reported that 1,000 persons, mostly from El Paso, were being deported to Ciudad Juárez. To alleviate the congestion created by the influx, Juárez officials authorized payment of train passage for these deportees to their destination in Mexico. The train they were placed on was composed of boxcars in order that the maximum number of passengers, together with their belongings, could be hauled.[42]

By the summer of 1930 Texas Mexican residents of the smaller communities in the El Paso region were in a state of panic.[43] Deportation raids had become a daily occurrence. Thousands of Texas Mexicans were being deported. Other thousands had been driven into hiding. Press reports

indicate that an average of 50 persons were deported daily from El Paso and the surrounding region. Any Texas Mexican without proper documentation was subject to deportation. Business concerns known to employ Texas Mexican workers were raided often, as were markets and shops in the barrios. Even the homes of Texas Mexicans were not secure from raids.[44]

In July of 1930, the headlines of La Prensa proclaimed, "3,500 Mexicanos Deportados por El Paso, Texas." According to Grover C. Wilmoth, district director of the U.S. Immigration Service at El Paso, 3,581 Mexicans were deported during the fiscal year that ended 30 June 1930. He stated that this exceeded the total number deported at El Paso in the previous decade.[45] These 3,581 Texas Mexicans were all formal deportees. In another press release, Wilmoth indicated that 6,752 Mexicans were informally deported in the fiscal year ending 30 June 1930.[46] This figure seems accurate, since during the Depression there were more informal than formal deportees. Thus, more than 10,000 Texas Mexicans were deported formally and informally at El Paso for fiscal year 1930. These reports indicate that few if any repatriates were included in these statistics. This conclusion is in accord with

records in the Historical Archives of the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, which show that most of the Texas Mexican returnees at El Paso during this time were deportees, not repatriates.[47] The exodus of Texas Mexicans continued in the El Paso area during the summer of 1930. At least 250 Immigration inspectors were engaged in efforts to apprehend and expel all deportable Texas Mexicans in the district. Wilmoth stated that his agents were acting under orders from the federal government in Washington to apprehend and deport every illegal alien in the district.[48] The effectiveness of the strict campaign is evidenced by congestion created in Ciudad Juárez by the deportees. In response to this problem, the Mexican consul general, Luis Medina Barron of El Paso, appealed to the Ministry of Foreign Relations to assist in the transportation of approximately 1,600 stranded deportees to their homes in Mexico.[49]

Apparently, deportation activity at El Paso abated temporarily in the fall of 1930, for press reports from that period indicate that the number of deportees diminished to about 25 per day.[50] During the fall of each year demand for Texas Mexican farm labor reached its peak and an abundance of labor was needed to harvest crops. Some

deportation activity continued, however. A letter dispatched on 21 October 1930 from the Mexican National Railroad in Ciudad Juárez to the railway's central office in Mexico City stated that 2,000 Mexican deportados were awaiting transportation to various destinations in Mexico. It stated that the deportees had been expelled because of strict enforcement of immigration laws.[51]

An editorial in El Continental in March of 1931 stated that during the past year 16,000 Mexicans had been expelled at El Paso. The editor stated that he had seen statistics confirming the 16,000 figure, but he did not give the source.[52] Although it is somewhat higher than other estimates, this figure may be fairly accurate. It apparently included all deportees at El Paso, both formal and informal, and may have included some deportees from states other than Texas.

Throughout 1931 the Texas federal deportation campaign continued at El Paso. A United States consular dispatch dated 3 January indicated that 30 percent of a group of 2,000 Mexicans then leaving Ciudad Juárez were deportees.[53] By mid-January several thousand deportees had gathered in Juárez. News accounts recorded their plight.[54] On 18 January, 3,200 deportees reportedly left

Juárez via a train composed of 34 boxcars. These 3,200 deportations probably included both formal and informal deportees, for H. C. Horseley of the U.S. Border Patrol indicated that only 512 persons were deported to Ciudad Juárez during January 1931.[55] A report from Mexico City datelined 19 January 1931 noted that only 20 compatriotas were being deported daily at El Paso.[56] McLean recorded the departure of some of these Texas Mexicans from Juárez:

> Late in the month, the government sent a train of thirty-three box cars--and then a second train--to take them south and scatter them over the country. Twenty-seven hundred people were thus removed from the "Tortilla Line" in Juarez.[57]

It is difficult to determine with certainty the origin of the deportees at El Paso during this period. Press accounts did not always indicate their origin, but when they did they usually stated these deportados were from Texas. The Texas Mexican press often reported the home states of the groups passing through El Paso, which was usually Texas. In addition, as Hoffman has pointed out, large-scale repatriation and deportation from California and other states did not begin until late March 1931.[58] Massive deportation from other states apparently began later in 1931 or 1932. Consequently, it seems likely that

most of the deportees at El Paso in early 1931 were from Texas.

Deportation activity in El Paso continued at a reduced level throughout 1931. Some Texas Mexicans were deported weekly, but press reports indicate that the number was usually less than 100. Only a few massive raids on the Texas Mexican barrios occurred. One such raid was staged on 20 April. Records of the Ministry of Foreign Relations in Mexico City indicate that on that date 857 Texas Mexicans were arrested and deported from El Paso.[59] The large-scale raids apparently focused on place of employment, but in some cases Immigration agents entered the homes of suspected aliens.[60] A press account in May estimated that 50 persons a day were being deported at El Paso.[61] The actual number of deportees may have been fewer, for a later report indicated that only 280 Texas Mexicans were deported in May.[62] Perhaps the latter reference was to formal deportations, while the former included both formal and informal deportations. The number of formal deportations at El Paso fluctuated from month to month. According to Mexican Migration Service officials in Ciudad Juárez, 292 Texas Mexicans were deported in July,[63] while the number of deportees in September increased to

more than 600.[64] These figures are questionable, however, since it was common for Mexican Immigration officials to count formal deportees as repatriados.

After March 1931 the intensity of local deportation efforts diminished. This is partially because the number subject to deportation had been greatly reduced the previous year. In addition, local Immigration authorities were involved with the thousands of deportees and repatriates who arrived in El Paso from California each week. Deportation activity involved a limited number of raids in which a few dozen Texas Mexicans were apprehended and deported. Although these deportation efforts were reported in El Continental, many of the accounts were brief, routine acknowledgements of the number of deportees. These accounts often included the names of the deportees.[65]

Grover C. Wilmoth, Immigration Service director at El Paso, was not satisfied with deportation activities during this period. In an interview with La Prensa in May 1931, Wilmoth appealed to Washington for increased money and manpower. He noted that there were thousands of unemployed, destitute Mexicans subject to deportation in West Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. He pointed out that 50 Mexicans were currently serving 60-day jail sentences

in Silver City, New Mexico, and would be deported after their jail terms were completed.[66] The appearance of deportation articles such as the above in the Texas Mexican press created great consternation among Mexican residents in Texas. Inevitably these reports accelerated the massive repatriation movement already underway.

The activities of Immigration inspectors at El Paso created strong resentment among Mexican officials in Ciudad Juárez and Mexico City. Their activities led the mayor of Juárez to declare a boycott of U.S. businesses in El Paso. Police and firefighters were ordered not to patronize American merchants, and a number of committees were organized to head a campaign against El Paso merchants stocking American products.[67] Apparently the boycott was not effective, for harassment of Texas Mexicans in the El Paso area continued.

Deportation pressures remained so intense at El Paso that in August 1932 a group of Texas Mexicans petitioned Mexican President Pascual Ortiz Rubio to intervene. The petition noted that hostility and persecution had remained constant in the El Paso community since the advent of economic difficulties in 1929. The petition charged that daily Immigration Service trucks could be seen in the

Texas Mexican colonias conducting inspections of residents. It was further charged that more than 300 Immigration inspectors were currently harassing all Texas Mexican residents in an effort to intimidate and coerce residents into leaving Texas.[68] There is no evidence that the situation was alleviated by the petition.

Central, South, and North Texas Deportation

The deportation campaign that began in the lower Rio Grande Valley in the summer of 1928 and was later extended to the El Paso area was apparently never as intense or extensive in other areas of Texas. Most of the deportees from other areas were expelled through Laredo. According to Mexican immigration statistics, 1,758 Texas Mexicans were deported at Laredo in 1929, a monthly average of about 146 persons.[69] In 1930 the number of reported deportees at Laredo decreased to 1,686, a monthly average of 142 persons. These statistics probably refer to formal deportees only, for more than 30,000 Texas Mexicans departed through Laredo in 1930.[70] It is probable that many of the 30,000 returnees left under threat of deportation. Data on the number of deportations at Laredo in 1931 are incomplete; however, an examination of available monthly data indicates little change from the two previous years.

In addition, Spanish language news reports indicate no substantial change in deportation activity during 1931.

The number of deportados was probably greater than that recorded by the Mexican immigration office, for many deportees were apparently counted as repatriates. Further, numerous Texas Mexicans failed to be counted upon entry into Mexico. In La Prensa on 7 July 1930, the Mexican Chief of Immigration at Laredo explained that many deportees did not register with the immigration office upon departing Texas.[71]

The Texas Mexican press recorded efforts of the U.S. Bureau of Immigration to deport Texas Mexicans residents over a wide area of Texas. Deportation efforts in 1929 were implemented in Houston, Galveston, Bay City, Corpus Christi, San Antonio, Laredo, and other cities.[72] However, the massive raids that characterized the Texas federal deportation campaign in the lower Rio Grande Valley and the El Paso regions were less prevalent in other areas. The number of Texas Mexicans deported at any one time was seldom more than a few dozen. Monthly statistical data for the number of deportees at Laredo in 1929 are scarce. However, reports in La Prensa, based upon Mexican statistical

data, stated that about 250,128, and 124 Texas Mexicans were deported in April, August and September, respectively.[73]

In 1930 many of the deportees were apprehended in a triangular area south of San Antonio, with the apexes being Laredo, Corpus Christi, and San Antonio. On 1 January 1930, 24 were expelled from Beeville, Alice, and Cotulla.[74] In the ensuing months deportation efforts were focused on rural areas of South Texas. Texas Mexicans throughout the area were subject to frequent inspections by Immigration agents. News reports of Texas Mexicans being expelled at Laredo became a daily occurrence. In fact deportation activity became so routine in 1930 that news accounts of this activity seldom appeared on page one.[75]

These expulsions resulted from a desire by Bureau of Immigration officials in Washington to increase deportations. In May 1930 the Bureau of Immigration ordered the dispersion of immigration inspectors from San Antonio to various South Texas communities. These transfers were made to reenforce patrols in rural areas of South Texas where large numbers of Texas Mexicans resided. Only three Immigration agents remained in San Antonio.[76] Government officials in Washington were apparently pleased with the deportation campaign, for in September President Hoover

praised the "splendid" work of Immigration officers in ridding the country of large numbers of aliens in recent months. He stated that these efforts would help solve the unemployment problem and urged that immigration laws be strictly enforced.[77]

In 1931 Bureau of Immigration inspectors initiated widespread raids into North Texas. Texas Mexicans in the Dallas area were apprehended by the hundreds.[78] In June an Immigration inspector at Dallas reported "a drive to arrest and deport all Mexican aliens in the North Texas onion fields."[79] He did not indicate concern for whether these aliens had been admitted legally or not.

Previous to 1931 most Texas Mexicans were deported for illegally entering the United States or for a failure to possess documentation. However, by 1931 many Texas Mexicans were unemployed; therefore, they were subject to deportation under the "likely to become a public charge" (L.P.C.) provision of the immigration laws. Many unemployed Texas Mexicans who had entered Texas legally in the 1920s were soon deported. Press reports of deportation activity in Texas in 1931 frequently indicated that the

deportees were being expelled under the L.P.C. provision of the immigration statutes.[80]

The comparatively limited scope of deportation raids in areas of Texas other than the lower Rio Grande Valley and El Paso may be explained by a combination of factors. First, much of North, Central, and West Texas was sparsely populated by Texas Mexicans in 1930. This made deportation activities in these areas more difficult. The number of Immigration agents available to patrol the vast areas of Texas was limited. Maximum deportation results could be attained by focusing deportation efforts on those areas with large concentrations of Texas Mexicans. Most Bureau of Immigration deportation activity focused on a triangular area with San Antonio, Corpus Christi and Laredo forming the vertices. This area was inhabited by significant numbers of Texas Mexicans in 1930. Second, the character of much of the Texas Mexican population in border areas near Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Laredo was different from that of other areas of Texas. Many of the Texas Mexican residents of these areas were descendants of Mexicans who had settled in Texas prior to the arrival of the Anglo Americans. These Texas Mexicans owned land and had lived in Texas all of their lives. They were a stable

population that seldom migrated. Expulsion of these long-term residents was more difficult than that of the highly mobile arrivals from Mexico who were situated in the El Paso region or the lower Rio Grande Valley. In May 1929, U.S. Border Patrol inspectors initiated a series of deportation raids on local onion farms in the Laredo area. One thousand forty-seven Texas Mexican workers on 14 farms were examined. Only 13 of these workers were arrested and deported. The others were either U.S. citizens or Mexicans not subject to deportation.[81] Third, Bureau of Immigration raids received widespread publicity in the Texas Mexican community. Consequently, fear of deportation by Texas Mexicans living in all regions of Texas accelerated repatriation.

Violation of Civil and Human Rights

Violations of civil and human rights of Texas Mexicans were widespread as a result of the Texas federal deportation campaign. These violations were manifested in a variety of ways; some were overt while others were surreptitious. Immigration authorities would periodically deny that unusually large numbers of Texas Mexicans were being deported, or they would assert that only criminals

had been expelled. On other occasions these same authorities would publicize local deportation activities in an effort to accelerate repatriation of Texas Mexicans. Regardless of the nature of these transgressions, the Texas federal deportation campaign inflicted immense suffering on a people that were unable to respond effectively. Few institutions existed through which Texas Mexicans could effectively protest the indiscriminate action of Bureau of Immigration authorities.

The Imprisonment of Texas Mexicans

On 4 March 1929 the U.S. Congress enacted general immigration legislation that was to have a profound effect upon the Texas federal deportation campaign. Several provisions of this legislation imposed jail terms and heavy fines for illegal entry into the United States. Two of these provisions had drastic effects on the Texas Mexican residents. These provisions were

> that any alien who enters or attempts to enter the United States after deportation shall be guilty of a felony and upon conviction thereof shall be punished by imprisonment for not more than five years, or by a fine of not more than $1,000, or by both such fine and imprisonment.
>
> that any alien who enters the United States other than at officially designated time or place, or who eludes inspection by immigration officials, or who obtains

> entry by a willfully false or misleading representation or the willful concealment of a material fact shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction thereof shall be punished by imprisonment for not more than one year, or by a fine of not more than $1,000, or by both such fine and imprisonment.[82]

It was not the intention of the Congress to make this legislation retroactive. Nevertheless, Bureau of Immigration agents frequently arrested and jailed many Mexicans who had entered Texas prior to 1929. A month after initial efforts were made to enforce this legislation 333 Texas Mexicans were reportedly being held in El Paso jails for violation of immigration laws.[83] Many of those arrested were tried and sentenced to prison terms of varying lengths, action which received widespread attention in the Texas press and undoubtedly encouraged the departure of thousands of Texas Mexicans.[84] The number of Texas Mexicans that were tried, convicted, and incarcerated for violation of immigration laws was, however, relatively small in number compared to the deportations.

Immigration statutes were strictly enforced. Often, there was no legal basis for the procedures used to arrest and detain suspects thought to be in violation of immigration laws. Texas Mexicans were sometimes arrested and detained for lengthy periods of time before arraignment on charges of violation of immigration laws. In 1934 the

U.S. commissioner general of immigration reported that aliens "were being held in jail for months, often for a year or longer, while awaiting the completion of deportation proceedings."[85] At times during the Depression, county jails in Texas were filled to capacity with Texas Mexicans being held for deportation proceedings.

Prior to 1934, Bureau of Immigration inspectors would arrest and detain Texas Mexican suspects prior to the issuance of a warrant. In 1934 the Bureau acknowledged that

> no legal authority exists for this practice. After careful study it was ordered discontinued. Under the present law, warrants in immigration cases can be issued only by the Secretary of Labor. By the use of the telegraph they can be obtained from Washington in 2 or 3 hours, but the interval is sufficient for the disappearance of many suspects, particularly on the Mexican border.[86]

Furthermore, warrant procedures in operation by the Bureau of Immigration prior to 1934 gave overzealous agents almost unlimited power to arrest and deport persons suspected of violation of immigration statutes. The 1934 Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration stated that

> frequently a single inspector worked up the case, conducted the preliminary hearing, conducted the final hearing and prepared the report and recommendation for the action of the department.[87]

Texas Mexicans were not always given fair hearings. In July 1931, Federal Judge F. M. Kennerly heard evidence in 83 cases in one six-hour session. Seventy of these cases were related to violations of immigration statutes. All of the defendants in the immigration cases were found guilty. Fifty-nine of the defendants were deported, while the remainder were given jail sentences.[88] Later the same year in a three-hour special session at Laredo, Judge Kennerly tried 98 cases and handed down 98 convictions. Judge Kennerly ordered the deportation of 72 of the Texas Mexicans, while the remaining 26 were given jail sentences.[89] The following year Judge Kennerly disposed of 63 immigration cases in a one-hour session: fifty-nine of the defendants were deported immediately, while the others were given jail terms.[90] Although some of the defendants reportedly entered guilty pleas, it is difficult to understand how Judge Kennerly could have heard sufficient evidence in these short sessions to arrive at just sentences.

Press reports indicate that most prison sentences were limited to a few months in the county jails. However, in the spring and summer of 1930, Federal Judge Charles N. Boynton sentenced a number of Texas Mexicans to the federal

penetentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas, for violation of immigration regulations with terms as long as two years.[91]

No data are available regarding the number of Texas Mexicans who received jail terms during the Depression. However, in November 1931 El Continental published a report datelined Mexico City which stated that more than 3,000 Mexicans were incarcerated for illegal entry in various cities throughout the United States. The report stated that this information had been received from authorities in the United States. This report apparently created great indignation among Mexican government officials.[92]

Deportation of American Children

In 1937 Young raised a question regarding the deportation of children of Mexican workers who were "born in and citizens of the United States [but] who were also forced out of the country with no legal justification and with considerable confusion concerning their subsequent citizenship status."[93] Thirty-five years later Hoffman pointed out that this question of citizenship and how it affected the deported children of Mexican immigrants has not been examined by scholars of Chicano history.[94] The data indicate that this is one of the most serious areas

of civil rights transgressions resulting from the Texas federal deportation campaign.

It is difficult to assess the number of U.S.-born children expelled from the United States because most reports failed to distinguish the nationality of returning Texas Mexican children. Moreover, most reports usually referred only to the deportation of a specified number of Mexican families or individuals. A few reports did indicate that large numbers of children had been returned. In September 1930 La Prensa reported the deportation of 75 Texas Mexicans at El Paso. The paper observed that many of the returnees were very young children born in the United States.[95] Reports from Laredo in 1930 indicate that during one six-month period 1,412 Texas Mexican children had entered Mexico at Nuevo Laredo,[96] while 1,667 children less than 15 years of age had departed during the first quarter of 1931.[97] Presumably, some of these children had been born in the United States and were U.S. citizens.

In late March 1931, Bureau of Immigration officials began a series of raids on the El Paso public schools. These raids were carried out with the cooperation and support of school personnel and resulted in the expulsion of more than 500 Texas Mexican school children. Many

parents protested that their children had been born in the United States and were legal residents. In many cases parents had failed to obtain birth certificates; consequently, no proof existed regarding the legal residence of these children. In other cases Immigration agents failed to permit parents time enough to produce birth records to verify their children's legal residence.[98] There apparently was little or no opposition to these raids by the Anglo Texan community in El Paso. In fact, the only reference to these deportations in the major English-language newspaper was a three paragraph account found on page 20 of the El Paso Herald on 25 March 1930.[99]

School officials were apparently willing to cooperate with Bureau of Immigration authorities because of a critical shortage of school rooms in El Paso. During the 1920s, the number of students in El Paso schools had increased much more rapidly than had school facilities. In October 1929, the El Paso Herald reported that 92 part-time classes were in operation which meant that "full-time education has necessarily been denied because of the lack of housing facilities."[100]

A press report from El Paso in August 1931 indicated that enrollment in El Paso schools had been reduced

by the thousands due to the deportation of Texas Mexican families.[101] This assertion is supported by an examination of State Department of Education records from that era. There was a net decrease in the enrollment in the El Paso Independent School District of 2,487, or nearly ten percent, from 1930-1931 to 1931-1932.[102] Few details of these raids on the El Paso public schools are available. The 1930 issues of El Continental apparently do not exist and there appear to be few other records. Articles published in El Continental in 1931 indicates that numerous children were still being deported at El Paso. Many of these articles provided the names and ages of the children.[103] According to Cleofas Calleros of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, only 3,000 of El Paso's school children with "Spanish-speaking names" were born in Mexico. The remaining 17,000 children with Spanish surnames were born in the United States[104] and would not have been subject to deportation.

The most concrete evidence of the deportation of U.S.-born children is found in the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC) Collection at the University of Texas at El Paso. In this collection are hundreds of deportation cases involving U.S.-born children who tried

to reenter the United States in the 1940s and 1950s. The NCWC assisted many former Texas Mexican residents in proving their U.S. citizenship. The files of the NCWC exhibit the monumental difficulties that confronted these American citizens when they attempted to reenter the United States.[105] Verification of citizenship was often difficult, for during the early decades of this century many Mexican immigrant families failed to have the births of their children officially recorded. Often the children were born in isolated rural areas and later the parents had difficulty remembering the exact location of these births. A study conducted by the Texas Bureau of Census in 1929 revealed that 77 percent of the Mexican American children born in Webb County and the city of Laredo in 1928 had not been registered with the State Health Department. Justo S. Penn, County Judge, was reportedly admonished by Bureau of Census officials for his failure to require physicians and midwives to promptly register each child born in Webb County. It was noted that "many children born in Webb County during 1928 were deprived of the protection of a legal record of their age, parentage and citizenship."[106]

Economic Exploitation of the Deportees

The compelling force that motivated Mexicans to immigrate to the United States during the early 1900s was the desire to attain economic security. This desire for economic security often manifested itself in the acquisition of real property. Handman observed three years before the onset of the Depression that many mobile Texas Mexicans were acquiring

> little houses or huts which they close while they are away working and return to occupy when the slack season has set in. Some of them buy small plots of land on which they erect houses as good as they can afford. Others, in rather large numbers, are falling in with the American idea of home owning, and real estate companies are doing a flourishing business in opening up Mexican additions in the new parts of town.[107]

No study has been made of the effects of the Depression on the ownership of real property by Texas Mexicans. Nevertheless, considerable evidence exists to suggest that thousands of Texas Mexicans lost their homes and other real property after the summer of 1928.

Frequently, deportees lost property that was being purchased on credit. At El Paso many deportees lost homes on which they owed only a few monthly payments before obtaining a clear title. These abuses led El Continental to initiate a free legal service for deportados in danger

of losing property purchased on credit.[108] The response to this service was immediate and strong: within days 153 persons had appealed to El Continental for assistance.[109] News accounts indicated that hundreds of other Texas Mexicans under the threat of deportation had tried unsuccessfully to obtain equitable consideration for their real estate. Prior to the inauguration of this service there appear to have been few alternatives open to Texas Mexicans who were being deported from El Paso. Yet this legal service was no panacea, for in August of 1932 a group of Mexican residents of El Paso petitioned the Mexican government to provide them protection against the harassment of U.S. Immigration inspectors. The petition declared that many Texas Mexicans were losing equity in their homes.[110] In other areas of Texas, legal aid for Texas Mexicans apparently did exist.

Routine deportation procedures afforded little opportunity for the deportees to collect their wages, sell their personal and real property, or make arrangements for personal affairs. Fear of being deported or jailed led many residents either to abandon their property or to sell it at a price far below current market values.[111] As early as February 1929, the headlines of the El Paso Evening Post

proclaimed, "Deportees Lose U.S. Wage." The article noted that Texas Mexicans:

> are rushed out of the country before they can receive wages due them for as much as two years of labor. Others state many expelled Mexicans leave valuable property behind.[112]

In 1930 and 1931, deportados at Ciudad Juárez periodically complained to the press that U.S. Immigration agents would not permit them to sell their furniture or household goods or to bring them.[113] In September of 1930, an eight-year resident of the United States complained to the press about his arrest and immediate deportation at El Paso. His family was permitted to take only part of their clothes, a sewing machine, and some furniture. They were forced to leave behind their other household goods and personal belongings.[114]

By late 1930 thousands of Texas Mexicans, under the threat of deportation in the lower Rio Grande Valley, reportedly were selling their property for nominal prices.[115] The departure of hundreds of families from the Valley had created a surplus of both real and personal property. Consequently, departing Texas Mexicans were often unable to sell much of their property. A report in May 1931 from the lower Rio Grande Valley states:

> Officials of the relief committee assert that Mexican families frequently made considerable sacrifices in real and personal property to obtain money for traveling. In scores of cases equities in homes have been transferred for little return, household goods and personal effects sold for practically nothing, and merger savings of years used.[116]

In July of 1930 a group of 68 Texas Mexicans were deported at El Paso. Eighteen of the deportees indicated they had been denied an opportunity to dispose of their property or to bring their belongings with them. The remaining 50 informal deportees ("voluntary deportees") had been permitted to sell their property or to transport their belongings back to Mexico.[117] Apparently Immigration inspectors allowed Texas Mexicans an opportunity to dispose of their property or to take their belongings with them if they agreed to informal deportation. However, if they refused, they were not permitted time to dispose of their property or to take their goods with them.

In many cases the wages of deported Texas Mexican workers were delayed or never received. Workers deported at El Paso often appealed to the National Catholic Welfare Conference to assist in obtaining back wages. Even back wages of railroad section workers were usually delayed three to six months. Farm workers generally received payment for their labor only after crops had been harvested and

sold. Consequently, landowners often owed the laborers several months wages when they were deported. These wages were rarely collected.

Abuses of the rights of Texas Mexicans by Immigration officials led the Mexican ambassador in Washington in early 1931 to seek assurances from the U.S. authorities that deportees would be given "time to clean up their personal business and adjust their financial interests before being deported."[118] There is no evidence that this appeal led to any change in the deportation policies.

Deportation of Long-Term Residents

Mexicans who had resided in Texas for a number of years--some for 10, 20, 30 or more years--were frequently deported, although this practice was illegal.*[119] Documentary evidence exists to show that some 50-year Mexican residents of Texas were deported.[120] An editorial in La Prensa in January 1929 deplored the cruel and arbitrary enforcement of immigration laws against Mexicans who had

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*The legal basis for the deportation of Mexicans in the Great Depression was the Immigration laws of 1917, 1921, 1924 and 1929. The various provisions of these laws are complex, but aliens--even if their entrance was illegal--who had resided continuously in the United States since before 1 July 1924 were not subject to deportation. This fact excluded thousands of Mexican alien residents of Texas from legal deportation.

resided in Texas for ten or more years.[121] In May of 1929, the Hidalgo County-Independent reported the

> sudden deportation of many Mexicans who had been here so long they have almost become part of the soil. . . . Hundreds, if not thousands, of simple Mexicans, many of who [sic] have resided on this side of the river so many years they cannot remember when they came over, are being sent home.[122]

Other reports from the Valley indicated that the constant harassment of long-time Texas Mexican residents forced many to abandon their homes in order to avoid jail and deportation.[123] In August of 1930 a 29-year resident of Texas was deported at El Paso, and his story reflects the dilemma of many long-term Texas Mexican residents:

> I came to the United States in the year one [1901]. At that time there were no immigration agents to stop those who crossed the border without anyone requesting documentation.
>
> I worked in many parts of the United States but I always returned to my permanent home in El Paso. Since the immigration agents never bothered me nor asked for legal documentation, I never made an effort to obtain letters or documents for identification.
>
> The other day while working as a gardener, earning my bread, I was arrested by inspectors and after some time, I was sent back to the other side of the border. I was not given time to prove my identification.
>
> Without any friends or employer who know me, I can't find a job and I'm living in poverty. I am sure that if the inspectors would have given me more time, I could have obtained written evidence from my former employers, who have known me for a long time, to prove my legality in the United States.[124]

In 1930 a Mexican American resident of Brownsville testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Immigration and Naturalization that Immigration authorities had deported many Mexican Americans from South Texas. J. C. Canales noted that the families of many of these deportees had resided in South Texas for several generations. He explained that until recently many rural areas of South Texas lacked doctors and medical facilities; thus, Mexican American women often returned to Mexico to give birth to their children. Because the children were born in Mexico the U.S. Immigration authorities apparently assumed they were aliens.[125]

Neither the length of residence in Texas nor service to the U.S. government prevented the deportation of Texas Mexicans. In June of 1929 a long-time Texas Mexican resident was deported at Laredo. According to a press report, at the time the individual had served five years in the U.S. Army and had been honorably discharged after World War I.[126] In November 1931 the Mirando City American Legion Post lodged a formal protest with Immigration authorities against the deportation of aliens who had served in the U.S. armed services during World War I. This protest was a result of the deportation of several

Texas Mexican veterans from the Mirando City area. It was noted that these veterans had failed to sign naturalization papers during their military service.[127]

Complaints by Americans that Immigration inspectors were arbitrarily forcing many aliens legally in the United States to leave were often denied by American officials. In May 1931 Secretary of Labor William N. Doak wrote George W. Wickersham, Chairman of the National Commission on Law Enforcement, "that it is not the practice for immigration inspectors to indulge in so-called raids." Moreover, Doak elaborated that "check-ups" of boarding houses, restaurants, and pool rooms occur "only in very rare and exceptional instances."[128] Doak was either unaware of the activities of Immigration inspectors in Texas or unwilling to admit the realities of the situation.

Separation of Families

One aspect of deportation activity in the United States that has remained undocumented by previous studies of deportation was the separation of families. Hart Stillwell, writing a decade after the close of the depression, asserted that:

> some of the scenes were heart-rending to people who believe that someone with a different skin color is

> capable [sic] of suffering. Families were torn apart--parents taken away from children, husbands and wives separated.[129]

This generalization of events in the United States is supported by an examination of deportation records for Texas. In April 1929, a report from the lower Rio Grande Valley revealed that numerous families were being separated, and that women and children frequently remained in Texas in destitute conditions.[130] It was not uncommon for a woman to be deported while her husband and children remained in Texas. In January of 1930 the El Paso Herald reported the deportation of a woman who had resided in the United States since she was a child. The woman's husband lived in California but she was not permitted to join her family because she had been deported.[131] In October of 1931 La Prensa reported the case of a woman who had been deported for the third time for illegally entering the United States in an effort to see her husband and children who resided in El Paso.[132]

Cases of family separation during the Depression were numerous among the deportees. According to the 1934 Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration,

> the law makes no provision for the repatriation of the wife or the children of the deportee. These dependents, if unable to pay their own traveling expenses, not only

> have been separated from husband but further have been left destitute.[133]

One major consequence was that destitute family members became dependent upon local relief agencies. Concern for overburdened relief agencies led the Commissioner General of Immigration, Colonel Daniel William MacCormack, and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), under the direction of Harry L. Hopkins, to strike an agreement whereby the FERA would provide transportation for destitute family members of deportees.[134] As a result of this agreement, after mid-1933 it was possible for government authorities to initiate deportation warrant proceedings without fear of creating additional welfare cases for local relief agencies.

Deportation of the Infirm

Bureau of Immigration agents did not limit deportation raids to the factories, fields, and homes where Texas Mexican residents worked and lived. As the Depression intensified during 1930 and 1931, the Bureau of Immigration used virtually every means to ferret out Texas Mexicans believed to be deportable. Even the ill were not excluded from harassment. Hospitals and clinics became the focus of the Bureau's raids. Even the mentally ill did not escape

the harsh actions of the Bureau of Immigration.[135] The basis for the deportation of the ill, was usually the "likely to become a public charge" (LPC) statute. The large number of infirm deportees created problems for medical facilities in Mexico. In May of 1930, for example, the Civil Hospital in Chihuahua, Chihuahua, was filled to capacity with _deportados_.[136]

Conclusions

The federal deportation campaign begain in Texas in 1928 and intensified between 1929 and 1931 when thousands of Texas Mexicans were deported. Threat of deportation was instrumental in the decision of many Texas Mexicans to return to Mexico. Although few massive deportation raids were staged in Texas after 1931, Bureau of Immigration inspectors periodically apprehended and deported many Texas Mexicans throughout the 1930s. These deportation efforts, though reduced in scale from the 1928-1931 period, created widespread apprehension within the Texas Mexican community and accelerated the departure of thousands of Texas Mexicans.

Virtually all studies of Mexican deportation during the Great Depression have suggested that deportation efforts were a result of a desire to reduce unemployment, to create jobs for Anglo Americans, and to relieve the burden on local

welfare organizations. However, the federal deportation campaign in Texas began two and a half years before similar campaigns in other areas of the United States. The fact that the Texas campaign was initiated in the summer of 1928--nearly 18 months before the collapse of the stock market leads one to question the motivation for deportation in Texas. Was the Texas campaign motivated by economic considerations? During the summer of 1928 there was no widespread unemployment in Texas. Indeed, no effort was made to justify deportation activity in 1928 or early 1929 on economic grounds. Perhaps the Texas campaign was motivated by racial or ethnic considerations, especially during 1928 and 1929.

Efforts to implement the Texas federal deportation campaign resulted in the widespread violation of the civil and human rights of thousands of Texas Mexicans. These violations took many forms including illegal imprisonments; deportation of American citizens including many U.S.-born children; the expulsion of many who were not permitted to dispose of their property or to collect their wages; the deportation of many not legally subject to deportation after having resided in Texas for many years; the separation of families; and the deportation of the infirm.

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CHAPTER V

THE AGRICULTURAL DEPRESSION AND RURAL TEXAS MEXICANS

Introduction

Previous studies of Mexican repatriation have indicated that in the 1930s large numbers of industrial workers and residents from urban areas across the United States were returned to Mexico. Undoubtedly many Texas Mexican repatriates were employed by Texas industries and resided in the larger cities of Texas. However, repatriation in Texas may be distinguished from similar movements in many other states in that the departing residents were mainly rural tenant farmers and laborers. In 1930 the United States Census indicated that over 50 percent of the Mexicans in Texas were engaged in agricultural work. Approximately 35 percent were employed as laborers while 15 percent were classified as tenant farmers.[1] The fate of

the Texas Mexican was inexorably tied to the Texas agricultural industry and especially to the cotton industry. The deterioration of the economic structure of American agriculture--which preceded the general economic crisis that began in 1929--combined with several natural disasters in Texas in the Great Depression to jeopardize the livelihood of the more than 600,000 Texas Mexican residents of the state. In addition, legislation designed to alleviate the disastrous effects of the depression on farmers failed to benefit the Texas Mexican and was, in fact, instrumental in compelling many Texas Mexicans to return to Mexico.

Although the 1920s were generally regarded as years of prosperity, American farmers did not participate in this prosperity. Agriculture remained a major economic and political issue throughout the 1920s. In many areas of Texas farming had been an unprofitable venture since the close of World War I. In areas where farming was of paramount economic importance, entire communities were devastated by the diminished economic power of the farmer.[2] Deteriorating economic conditions within the agricultural sector had drastic effects on Texas Mexican residents during the Depression. The purpose of this chapter is to document and analyze the impact of the agricultural

depression on Texas Mexicans, especially regarding the decision by many to return to Mexico.

The Texas Cotton Acreage Control Law of 1931

Although the agricultural depression of the 1920s and 1930s was severe for all types of agricultural operations, no group suffered more than the cotton farmers, their tenants, and their field workers. At the center of the problem was a rapidly increasing surplus of American cotton marked by sharply declining prices (Table 3). Foreign markets for American cotton were gradually lost in the 1920s and 1930s because cotton was produced more cheaply elsewhere--especially in Egypt, Brazil, and India.[3] In 1927 the United States exported nearly 11 million bales of cotton. By 1930 American cotton exports had declined to scarcely seven million bales. The New York Times summarized the situation:

> A further powerful contributing cause for the great collapse in value has been the competition of foreign cottons, whose low prices have enabled them to undersell American cotton in the European markets.[4]

The surplus of cotton in the United States was about six million bales in 1931 and nearly nine million bales in 1932. Cotton prices reached an all-time low of 5.7 cents per pound in Texas in 1931 (Table 3).

TABLE 3

UNITED STATES ANNUAL COTTON SURPLUS AS OF AUGUST 1 AND AVERAGE PRICE PER POUND FOR COTTON, 1925-1938

Year	August 1 Surplus in Bales	Average Price (Cents per lb.)
1925	2,711,000	18.2
1926	3,380,000	10.9
1927	5,501,000	19.6
1928	7,845,000	18.1
1929	5,206,000	16.8
1930	4,517,000	9.5
1931	6,187,000	5.7
1932	8,976,000	6.5
1933	13,263,000	10.2
1934	11,809,000	12.4
1935	10,701,000	11.1
1936	9,041,000	12.3
1937	6,998,000	8.4
1938	6,235,000	8.3

Source: Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide, 1939 (Galveston: A.H. Belo and Company, 1939), pp. 182-183.

The yield per acre of Texas cotton was always below the national average because of vast areas of submarginal lands under cultivation (Table 4). In many areas of the state cotton output was less than one-quarter of a bale per acre. In 1929, when cotton prices were still fairly high, the Dallas Morning News warned farmers that submarginal lands should be withdrawn from production, since these lands lacked the capacity to make high or profitable yields. It was noted that the cost of producing cotton in many areas of the state was 20 cents a pound,[5] while the price Texas farmers received for the cotton in 1929 was less than 20 cents (Table 5).

Much of the marginal cotton land in Texas was subsequently withdrawn from production. Cash stated:

> Its natural tendency, obviously was to drive the marginal lands and the poorer sort of lands generally--precisely those which the man with little or no capital who was trying to become a farm owner on his own account had found it easiest to acquire--out of cotton-production and increasingly restrict the growing of the staple to the best and higher priced lands.[6]

This characterization of impoverished American tenant farmers and the lands they occupied accurately describes Texas Mexican tenant farmers. Between 1929 and 1940, cotton acreage in Texas decreased by nearly 60 percent. Much of this land had been farmed by Texas Mexicans.

TABLE 4

AVERAGE COTTON YIELD PER ACRE FOR THE UNITED STATES AND TEXAS FOR 1920-1940

Year	Average U.S. Yield Per Acre in lbs.	Average Texas Yield Per Acre in lbs.
1920	186.7	169
1921	132.5	101
1922	148.8	129
1923	136.4	140
1924	165.0	139
1925	173.5	115
1926	192.9	152
1927	161.7	133
1928	163.3	145
1929	164.2	112
1930	157.1	120
1931	211.5	173
1932	173.5	162
1933	212.7	192
1934	171.6	114
1935	185.1	133
1936	199.4	121
1937	269.9	197
1938	235.8	168
1939	237.9	160
1940	252.5	184

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Statistics on Cotton and Related Data, Statistical Bulletin no. 99 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1951), p. 56.

TABLE 5

COST OF PRODUCING COTTON AND PRICES RECEIVED FOR COTTON FOR VARIOUS REGIONS OF TEXAS FOR 1929

Region	Production Costs per Acre	Price Received per Acre	Production Costs per lb.	Price Received per lb.
Eastern	$30.00	23.53	21.5	16.7
Northern	27.90	30.00	16.6	17.1
Western	28.00	27.00	17.1	16.9
Central	27.16	20.71	23.5	17.2
South-western	18.27	18.00	19.1	18.3
North-western	19.14	17.70	17.7	15.8

Source: Dallas Morning News, 18 April 1930, p. 12.

The trend away from planting cotton was accelerated by the passage of the Texas Cotton Acreage Control Law of September 1931. This legislation may have been more detrimental to the Texas Mexican tenant farmer and laborer than any other single event in Texas during the Depression. The legislation was largely instrumental in the decision of thousands of Texas Mexicans to return to Mexico in late 1931 and early 1932. When cotton prices dropped to six cents per pound in 1931--the lowest price since 1898[7]--the Texas legislature enacted legislation prohibiting Texas farmers from planting more than 30 percent of all acreage under cultivation (in all crops in 1931) in cotton in 1932 and 1933. The penalty for violation of this law was a fine of from $25 to $100 for each acre planted. Moreover, cotton could not be planted on the same acreage for two successive years.[8] The law was designed to reduce cotton acreage in Texas by at least 50 percent. In those counties with a high percentage of land in cotton--such as South Texas--the law required that well over 50 percent of the cotton lands be withdrawn from production in 1932 and 1933. For example, under the law cotton acreage in Nueces County was reduced from 254,000 acres to 90,000 acres, while the allotted acreage for San Patricio County was decreased from

155,000 acres in 1931 to 59,000 in 1932.[9] Of the 209 Texas counties with cotton in 1931, 154 were required to reduce their acreage. In two counties the allotted acreage remained the same in 1932. In the remaining 53 counties a slight increase in acreage was permitted. Cotton was not of great importance in those counties where the allotted acreage was increased.[10]

The law was found unconstitutional in the spring of 1932. By then, however, the legislation had had devastating effects on Texas Mexican tenant farmers and field workers. Customarily landowners in Texas renewed contracts with tenants in November for the coming year. However, in November 1931 Texas landowners believed that they would be required to withdraw over 7,000,000 acres of cotton land from cultivation. Many landowners refused to negotiate contracts with their tenants. Farmers throughout the cotton regions in the state objected strenuously to the legislation. The most serious objections came from the large plantation owners with numerous tenants. In early October the Texas Weekly expressed concern over the increasingly desperate situation.

> There is good reason to believe that many landlords expect to do little else different next season than to reduce the amount of cotton acreage on their farms, and also to reduce the number of tenants used

> in the production of cotton. Are the farm landlords preparing to throw thousands of tenants out of employment next season? If they are, how are the people of Texas going to deal with the enormous problem such action would create?[11]

The Rio Grande Review expressed similar concern over the possible displacement of farm tenants. The Review asked:

> What is to take the place of cotton as an income producer and what is to offer employment for the thousands of men--tenant farmers and their families--incident to such acreage reduction?[12]

Later in the month the Texas Weekly noted that some landlords were seriously considering the massive expulsion of tenants from their plantations. The editor wondered:

> What methods are the landlords going to employ to comply with the acreage law? Will they make a real attempt to work out a revised plan of farming on their lands that will require the same amount of man-power in spite of the reduced cotton acreage? Or will they reduce the number of their tenants in keeping with the reduction of cotton acreage?[13]

These were valid concerns as future events among Texas Mexican tenant farmers and laborers were to demonstrate.

Farmers over much of Texas had relied on cotton as their sole source of income for so long that this dependency had robbed them of their ingenuity. They were reluctant to experiment with alternative crops. Many voiced fears that their land was not suited for crops other than cotton. Others argued that sparse rainfall would prevent successful cultivation of corn or other grains. Not

infrequently landowners argued that their farms were not organized for raising livestock or crops other than cotton: the absence of fences and farm buildings on most cotton farms was cited as a major limitation to these alternatives. The Texas Weekly was sympathetic to the plight of cotton plantation owners and their resident tenants. In response to suggestions that the Texas cotton farmer should diversify, the editor responded:

> Those who suggest such easy routes are not familiar with the lay-out of cotton farms in Texas and the limitations on many of the cotton "croppers" who live on them. Many of these farms are without fences, shelter for livestock, water, or even shade; the entire improvements often consist of a tenant dwelling and a small cotton house.[14]

In addition, many bankers were unwilling to finance landowners and tenants who would be able to produce only a limited amount of cotton.[15] They apparently were skeptical that the return on other crops would be insufficient for farmers to repay their loans.

After the completion of the cotton harvest in October and November of 1931, Texas farmers turned their attention to the 1932 season. Farmers were confused and troubled by the dubious future of the cotton industry. Many landowners felt responsible for providing employment for tenants who had resided on their property for years.

Yet landlords repeatedly acknowledged that curtailment of cotton production had limited their options. Tenants would have to seek employment elsewhere. Large plantation owners in several Coastal Plains communities informed a reporter for the Dallas Morning News that the reduction of cotton acreage would necessitate that their tenants shift for themselves next season.[16] One large landowner, who had refused to negotiate contracts with his tenants for 1932, complained that more than 60 tenant families on his plantation would be forced to move if the Cotton Acreage Reduction Law were enforced.[17] In November the Dallas Morning News warned that thousands of tenant farmers were in "danger of being set adrift."[18] That same day the headlines of the New York Times proclaimed, "Solution Must Be Found Quickly--Many Poor Tenant Farmers in Sorry Plight." The article explained:

> Some alarmists have cried out that tenants will ruthlessly be thrown out of work and that the newly released land will be allowed to lie idle. . . . Those who are most nervous about this are the landlords of the large cotton plantations in South Texas. For them it means a change in the tenant system which some of them are reluctant to undertake. Naturally, this affects the tenant also. In too many cases his own assurance against family ruin is the landlords moral responsibility.[19]

Cotton planters from across the state met in Waco to discuss the Cotton Acreage Control Law. A farm leader of this

meeting stated that "the enforced law would drive many [tenants] off the farm and into towns adding to the necessity of larger 'relief' funds and the problem of unemployment."[20]

The situation became so desperate that by late November Lawrence Westbrook, a Texas state representative, urged Governor Ross Sterling to reconvene the legislature in order to repeal the law.[21] This concern was belated, for many tenant farmers had already been driven from their farms in search of other employment. In mid-November the editor of Texas Weekly regretfully reported that

> Some landlords throughout the state, notably in South Texas where the lands are unsuited for most crops except cotton, are informing most of their tenants that they must move.[22]

An indication that substantial farm labor had been displaced was given in a report in the Dallas Morning News in April 1932, which indicated there was a shortage of labor in West Texas to plant the cotton crop in the spring of 1932.[23] Moreover, in 1932 cotton acreage was reduced by about 10 percent from the 1931 level. This reduction can be primarily attributed to the withdrawal of cotton from production because of low prices.[24]

The impact of the Texas Cotton Acreage Reduction Law on Texas Mexican tenant farmers and laborers is difficult

to assess. Thousands of these tenants and workers departed their farms in search of other jobs after September 1931. Rice noted that after the fall harvest many Texas Mexican farmers in Central Texas began to leave their farms and move into cities and towns.[25] In late September La Prensa reported that the planned reduction of cotton acreage for 1932 was largely instrumental in creating widespread unemployment among Texas Mexicans in South Texas.[26] The repatriation of Texas Mexicans greatly accelerated in the months immediately following the enactment of this legislation. Caravans of thousands of repatriates crossed the Rio Grande into Mexico. More Texas Mexicans returned to Mexico in November and December of 1931 than in any other Depression era months. Many of the departing tenant farmers and laborers entered Mexico from Laredo during this period. The number of repatriates returning through Laredo increased from about 3,000 in July, August, and September to over 10,000 in November and December.[27] In September over 4,000 prospective repatriates, all unemployed tenant farmers and laborers from the cotton-growing regions of South Texas, were making plans to return to Mexico.[28] The following month many of these repatriates gathered at Karnes City south of San Antonio, and with the

assistance of the Mexican consul and the Mexican American community were returned en masse to Mexico.[29]

The Agricultural Adjustment Act

Many thousands of Texas Mexicans refused to leave Texas despite the fact that the agricultural sector of the economy continued to deteriorate. In the fall of 1932 the hopes of most farmers were raised by the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt to the presidency. Farmers believed that their situation would soon be improved, for Roosevelt was convinced that the national economy could not be improved until the purchasing power of the farmer was restored.[30] During the election campaign Roosevelt had promised farmers immediate relief if he was elected. Farmers were repeatedly assured that under a Roosevelt administration, farm income, purchasing power, and debt-paying power would be restored.[31]

The cornerstone of Roosevelt's New Deal for the farmer was the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) passed by Congress on 10 May 1933. The goal of the "Triple A" was to establish and maintain a balance between production and consumption of farm commodities. To deal with the cotton surplus the legislation required a reduction in cotton acreage. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration was

given authority to limit acreage by negotiating contracts with farmers who agreed to limit production. Since the 1933 cotton crop had been planted prior to the enactment of this legislation, the AAA required participating farmers to plow up a portion of their crop. On 24 June, the President appealed to farmers to cooperate with the crop-reduction program.[32] Accordingly, in August farmers throughout the South and Southwest began to plow up from one-fourth to one-half of their crop.[33] Eventually more than 10 million acres of cotton were plowed up.[34] In return, farmers received government payments of from $6 to $20 an acre. Payments were based on the relative productivity of lands withdrawn from cultivation.[35]

Texas cotton farmers were eager to participate in the AAA acreage reduction plan.[36] In some areas enthusiasm for the new plan was so great that local Department of Agricultural offices ran out of cotton contracts for farmers to sign.[37] The program was so effective that 40 percent--4,351,000 acres--of all Texas cotton was destroyed.[38] Nearly 50 percent of this acreage belonged to the vast cotton plantations of West Texas[39] which provided the livelihood for thousands of Texas Mexicans. By the fall 28 percent of the Texas cotton crop had been destroyed.

Texas cotton acreage was decreased by nearly 1,000,000 acres in 1934 from that harvested in 1933 (Table 6). In 1934 Congress passed the Bankhead Cotton-Control Act, which levied a heavy tax on cotton produced in excess of assigned quotas. Farmer participation in the New Deal cotton acreage reduction program after 1934 was less voluntary than it had been under the original Agricultural Adjustment Act. Landowners benefited immensely from these laws. In 1933, the first year of the program, payments totaling over $44.5 million were made to Texas cotton farmers. The following year payments in excess of $75 million dollars were received.[40]

Tenant farmers, however, suffered dire consequences because of this legislation. Tenant farmers throughout the South and Southwest usually failed to derive equitable benefits from the cotton acreage reduction program. Gard stated:

> Almost the only adverse criticism of the acreage-limitation program is that its benefits have not gravitated sufficiently to the share-croppers and other tenants, who constitute the bulk of the actual cultivators and who live under conditions approaching peonage. Often the landlord had retained a lion's share of the rental check which came from the government for retired cotton land.[41]

In order to secure the AAA subsidies for themselves, landowners devised a number of strategies. In some cases

TABLE 6

ACRES OF COTTON HARVESTED IN TEXAS
FOR 1925-1940

Year	Acres Harvested
1925	17,336,000
1926	17,749,000
1927	15,689,000
1928	16,887,000
1929	16,875,000
1930	16,138,000
1931	14,754,000
1932	13,334,000
1933	11,069,000
1934	10,097,000
1935	10,657,000
1936	11,597,000
1937	12,539,000
1938	8,784,000
1939	8,520,000
1940	8,472,000

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Statistics on Cotton and Related Data, Statistical Bulletin no. 99 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1951), p. 52.

tenants were persuaded to give the subsidy payments to the landlord. Some of the money would then be periodically loaned to the tenant, who was expected to repay the money with interest. Subsidy payments for cotton destroyed during the first year of the AAA were of little benefit, for tenant debts were usually greater than the payments received. After 1933 landowners found it advantageous to organize their farm operations so as to exclude tenants from the cotton acreage reduction program. This was frequently achieved by shifting the status of tenants to that of wage hands.[42] These techniques were effective: as Schlesinger has pointed out, planters received 90 percent of the AAA cotton subsidy payments.[43] Almost immediately after the creation of the cotton acreage reduction program some tenants, finding it difficult to survive on farm wages, began to depart for the cities. Others remained, hoping that economic conditions would improve. Eventually most tenant farmers were compelled to leave for other jobs or for the benefits of urban relief.

Perhaps the most severe consequence of the AAA was the forced displacement of tenant farmers and farm laborers. There is considerable evidence that throughout the South and Southwest thousands of tenant farmers were

expelled from farms by landowners seeking greater subsidy benefits. Schlesinger contended that "many cropper families were cast off their farms to go on relief or to shift pitifully for themselves. The ones who had fallen farthest behind were ordinarily turned loose first."[44] Thomas, a close observer of Depression era events and an articulate spokesman for the rights of tenants, arrived at a similar conclusion. In 1935 he summarized the results of the massive displacement of tenant farmers by the AAA.

> A large army of unknown size has been driven off the cotton land to swell the legions of the unemployed in towns and cities, or it has been driven in the deeper misery of casual day labor on the land.[45]

In a study of the effects of the AAA on farmers and tenants relationships, Hoffsommer documented the displacement of thousands of tenant farmers in Alabama. Farmers frequently admitted that tenants were no longer needed to cultivate the smaller acreages permitted by the AAA.[46] While a similar study conducted by the AAA found that significant numbers of tenants had been displaced as early as the spring of 1934.[47]

Initially officials of the U.S. Department of Agriculture did little to protect the tenant farmers. Mitchell charged that during the first three years of the AAA no

procedure existed to assure an equitable sharing of benefits between landlord and tenants.[48] Myrdal noted that AAA officials refused to recognize that the cotton acreage reduction program was instrumental in creating itself a new unemployment problem,[49] while a study commissioned by the AAA showed that provisions to protect tenant farmers were inadequate.[50] Myrdal claimed that "hundreds of thousands of them [tenants] did not get any protection at all. They were pushed off the land, and, if anything, the AAA hastened their elimination."[51] Thomas revealed that at least four provisions of the AAA legislation provided the "unscrupulous landlord loopholes enough to get rid of any tenant he does not want because he regards him as either superfluous or as too likely to stand up for his rights."[52] Apparently AAA administrators did little to protect tenant farmers because they believed that the basic problem was a surplus of labor in cotton regions and that they could not remedy this situation.[53]

The AAA was a highly decentralized organization. Administration of the legislation was carried out at the local level by county committees. These committees were dominated by landowners who often endeavored to defraud tenants of their subsidy payments or who were insensitive

to the plight of the displaced tenant. Few if any tenant farmers were included on these committees.[54] Eventually the AAA established procedures whereby tenants could appeal the actions of landowners. However, only a few tenants registered formal complaints. One writer noted tersely that most tenants were "too ignorant or timorous to complain,"[55] while another stated that "it took an unusually defiant cropper to bring charges against his own landlord."[56]

The basic philosophy of the AAA was a menace to the livelihood of the Texas Mexican. During the 1932 presidential campaign candidate Roosevelt stopped in Topeka, Kansas, to address a group of farmers. In his speech Roosevelt outlined his farm policy, which called for "planned use of farm land, with elimination of relatively poor or marginal land for raising farm products."[57] These were the lands often cultivated by Texas Mexican tenant farmers and laborers. New Deal administrators had not considered the problems involved in eliminating marginal farming land. Thomas noted that "it is obviously impossible to reduce cotton acreage by 40 percent, as the AAA has planned, and at the same time keep on the job the number of families now engaged in cotton cultivation."[58] Another

observer of agricultural conditions in Texas made a similar observation in March of 1934.

> Drastic curtailment of cotton acreage as a permenent policy must inevitably cause far-reaching changes in sources of employment in the cotton regions. Thousands of agricultural laborers, especially Negro and Mexican cotton choppers and pickers, will be forced immediately on relief rolls and will stay there until a comprehensive plan of rehabilitation can be worked out.[59]

By the conclusion of the Depression, Texas cotton acreage had been reduced by over 50 percent and thousands of Texas Mexican tenant homes stood vacant throughout the state.

The economic position of both Texas Mexican tenant farmers and wage laborers was jeopardized by federal cotton policy. The farmers not only occupied marginal agricultural lands but in many cases the amount of land that they operated was less than their capacity. Their income frequently depended upon daily wages provided by working for large landowners. Thousands of urban Texas Mexican residents also were dependent upon cotton production for their existence. They provided the labor to chop and pick the cotton, and to run the cotton gins, oil mills, and cotton compresses. These workers also suffered from reduced cotton acreage through the disappearance of cotton-related jobs. The Dallas Morning News quoted an observer of these events in Texas in 1935.

> These people have not participated in any benefits from the Government's cotton program. Indeed, may it not be said truly that they are to a large extent the victims of it--they are the forgotten man? A detailed analysis of the relief rolls will have much to tell about the effects of the Government's cotton program.[60]

One study of farmers on relief in 1935, after AAA benefits became available, suggests that tenants and laborers failed to benefit materially from the program. Only 5 percent of landowners were on relief, while 50 percent of tenant farmers were unemployed and nearly 70 percent of all wage laborers were seeking jobs.[61] Richardson stated that a county judge in West Texas claimed in 1939 that at least 60 percent of all heads of families on relief were displaced tenants or farm hands.[62]

Even before the onset of the Depression--when periodic labor shortages existed--some Texas landowners expelled Texas Mexican tenant farmers in order to secure the benefits that would have accrued to the tenants. Virtually all of the contracts between landowners and Texas Mexican tenant farmers in South Texas were oral.[63] Unscrupulous landowners apparently had little difficulty in dispossessing the Texas Mexican tenant farmer. An Anglo Texan landlord stated to Taylor in 1929 that "some people prefer the Mexican tenants because they can get out of

paying them all they owe them. They just tell them they did not do the work right and tell them to go along."[64] Another resident of South Texas asserted to Taylor that farmers would report tenants who had entered Texas illegally to the Immigration Service so that they would be deported, thus depriving the tenant of his yearly earnings. Taylor concluded there was substantial evidence that tenants were frequently forced by the landlord to abandon the crops they cultivated.[65] The tenants apparently had little recourse when they were dispossessed by landowners.[66] In West Texas the AAA cotton reduction program prompted landowners to remove the maximum acreage from cultivation. By 1936 no tenant farmers remained in some counties.[67] Many of these tenants were Texas Mexicans who had occupied the land for a decade or more. The number of Texas Mexicans who were displaced by New Deal agricultural policies is unknown. However, Menefee and Cassmore encountered many displaced Texas Mexican tenant farmers and laborers residing in San Antonio in 1940 who indicated they were the victims of the AAA cotton acreage reduction program.[68] Undoubtedly thousands of others had returned to Mexico hoping to improve their economic circumstances.

Natural Disasters

In addition to the agricultural depression of the 1930s Texas farmers were plagued by a number of recurring natural disasters that devastated crops and livestock. Droughts, hurricanes, and floods displaced thousands of Texas Mexican tenant farmers. Over vast areas of the state tenant farmers were forced from farms due to repeated crop failures, while agricultural laborers were unable to secure employment. Employment opportunities in cotton gins, oil mills, cotton compresses, cotton yards, and other cotton-related industries disappeared.

Drought

The most severe, enduring, and widespread natural disaster of the Depression was drought. Half a century or more had lapsed since an equally severe drought had struck Texas. In some areas of the state the drought would abate for a year or two only to return with greater intensity. The prolonged drought jeopardized the lives of thousands of farmers, tenants, and laborers. In some areas of the state--especially in West Texas--thousands of cotton farmers were driven from their land. Businesses in communities dependent upon agriculture suffered because landowners, tenants, and field workers were unable to make

purchases or repay debts. Financial institutions faced bankruptcy because large numbers of landowners defaulted on farm mortgages. The cumulative effect of the prolonged drought and catastrophic depression brought business activity to a standstill in many small Texas communities.

During the summer of 1929 Texas experienced severe drought conditions. According to weekly Dallas Morning News crop reports, by summer the lack of rain was beginning to restrict crop progress over most of the state. By late summer farmers in many localities were abandoning severely damaged cotton.[69] Although damage was greater in the northern part of the state, the drought extended into the Coastal Plains region of South Texas--an area of infrequent drought--where the poorest cotton crop in nearly a decade was harvested.[70] The losses to the state's cotton farmers were enormous. The 1929 Texas cotton crop declined by more than a million bales from that produced in 1928.[71] According to the 1930 Census, crop failure affected over 1.8 million acres in 1929.[72]

Some areas of South Texas received rain in 1930, but general drought conditions persisted over much of the cotton growing region of Central and West Texas. In March of 1930 the Midland Reporter-Telegram related that that

city had received no rain in over four months.[73] Cotton farmers in some areas were unable to plant their crops because of sparse rainfall. Negative crop conditions continued for much of the state throughout the summer. The Dallas Morning News crop reporting service indicated that the cotton continued to deteriorate and that prospects for a normal crop existed in only a few areas of the state.[74] The Texas Business Review, a publication that endeavored to provide optimistic reports of business and agricultural activity in Texas, stated that the cotton crop in the northern half of the state was in critical condition and there was little hope for improvement: only exceptional weather would save the crop.[75] However, the drought persisted and by late summer vast areas of Central and West Texas were described as desperate.[76] The New York Times declared that "over the safe and comfortable lives of perhaps 1,000,000 farm families hangs the shadow not only of crop failure but of an actual water famine."[77] In August Governor Dan Moody was compelled to act. He wired President Hoover and urged that federal assistance be made available to Texas farmers and stockmen.[78]

By the fall of 1930 drought devastation was so great that 50 to 75 percent of all farmers in several West Texas counties were reportedly in need of immediate relief.[79]

By October 1930 the American Red Cross had launched a relief program. During the winter of 1930-1931 nearly 27,000 Texas farm families depended upon aid from the Red Cross. Virtually all of these residents were destitute and faced starvation. In December the Dallas Morning News appealed to its readers to donate clothing and money to aid destitute tenant farmers who faced the winter with no prospect of adequate clothing.[80] Farmers in South Texas donated carloads of vegetables to the drought victims. In February 1931 over $20,000,000 in federal farm loans were made available to drought victims.[81] A federal drought relief headquarters was established at Fort Worth and soon Texas farm families began to receive loan monies. Loans of about $2.3 million were made to Texas farmers in 74 counties.[82]

Conditions were more favorable for cotton production in 1931 and 1932, although the drought continued in some parts of Texas. However, in 1933 an extended and widespread drought struck many of Texas' cotton districts. Reports of crop conditions during the spring and summer of 1933 indicated that cotton and grain crops had been severely damaged by the sparse rainfall. In some areas crops were only 50 percent of normal.[83] One of the most devastated

areas was West Texas. In June the Midland Reporter-Telegram remarked that the city had received only 1.30 inches of rain in the first six months of 1933.[84] Farmers in at least 15 West Texas counties had not been able to plant crops due to sparse rainfall.[85] In July farmers in other parts of the state began to sign contracts with the Agricultural Adjustment Administration to destroy a part of their cotton crop. Ironically, drought-stricken cotton farmers in West Texas were ineligible for the AAA program because they had no growing cotton.[86]

The drought continued over much of Texas in 1934. Schlesinger described drought conditions in the state in 1934.

> In the spring of 1934 only sun, and no rain; sun, at first, and then the winds. In May the dust storms began to blow. . . . Great clouds mushroomed into the sky, a powder of humus and colloids, the topsoil of the country blowing away. And still the sullen sun shone. . . . And beyond the farmers, suffering the calamity of depression, beyond the baked crops and emaciated livestock, lay the land itself, naked and vulnerable, tracking off into rills and gullies, yielding ever more of its fertility to wind and water, brown, barren, silent.[87]

Agricultural losses attributed to the drought increased throughout the spring and summer. The New York Times asserted that almost everyone in Texas was seriously affected. This included the farmers of nearly 11,000,000

acres of cotton. The cotton forecast was the lowest in years, with staggering losses reported across the state.[88] By summer, rural residents of many Texas counties were devastated. In June President Roosevelt requested Congress authorize funds to meet the needs of the drought victims,[89] and by July federal relief monies began to relieve the burden of drought.[90]

Evidence of the direct impact that prolonged drought had upon Texas Mexican tenants and farm laborers is limited. It is probable, however, that they suffered many of the consequences of other Texas drought victims. Many landowners dependent solely upon farm income were unable to meet mortgage payments and taxes and thus lost their land. Farmers who were able to retain possession of their land often lacked funds to finance their tenants due to successive crop failures. By 1930 the lack of credit available to tenants in drought areas was a major constraint to their continued operation.[91] When drought persisted massive outmigration of residents of severely stricken areas occurred. In September 1930 the Dallas Morning News reported that over a vast area of West Texas 25 percent of all farm families had been forced from their farms by the drought. In those counties where the drought

was most intense 50 to 75 percent of all farmers had abandoned the land in search of work.[92] Few job opportunities existed for tenant farmers and farm laborers in cities. Nordeman noted that when thousands of West Texas farmers were driven into towns the Midland Reporter-Telegram urged them to return to their farms.[93] Black and Anglo Texas tenants and laborers often sought employment in cities before becoming recipitants of public welfare. Displaced Texas Mexicans had an alternative option--repatriation. This alternative at the time may have seemed appealing.

Hurricanes

While much of Texas was in the grip of a severe and prolonged drought, coastal areas were periodically being ravaged by hurricanes. In 1932 and 1933 substantial loss of life and property was incurred by communities in South Texas. In August 1932 a hurricane struck the Texas coast near Freeport. Extensive crop damage occurred along the Coastal Plain from Houston to Corpus Christi. Early reports estimated crop losses in excess of $2,000,000. In several counties, including Wharton and Brazoria, the cotton crop was a complete loss and estimates of damage to the rice crop ranged from 50 to 75 percent.[94] In many

other counties losses to the cotton crop were estimated at from 20 to 30 percent.[95] Not only did landowners and their tenants suffer extensive losses during a period of severe economic depression, but laborers dependent upon the cotton harvest were in little demand. It was estimated that 8,000 hurricane victims were forced to seek public assistance during the winter of 1932,[96] although the actual number may have been substantially higher.

A year later two hurricanes devastated much of the lower Rio Grande Valley. Damage from the first hurricane to the cotton and vegetable crops in coastal regions of the state was widespread, while Valley citrus growers lost about 8 percent of their crop. Damage to the citrus crop alone was estimated at over $7,500,000.[97] Before Valley residents were able to recover, a second and more intense hurricane struck the same area. In Harlingen at least 600 were left homeless and 80 percent of all of the buildings were destroyed or so badly damaged as to require reconstruction. The destruction was equally severe in Brownsville, where 800 families were reportedly homeless.[98] At least one-half of the rural homes were unroofed or destroyed.[99] Reports indicated that more than 8,000 families were left homeless and 25,000 persons destitute and

in need of aid.[100] The citrus crop valued at between 10 and 15 million dollars, was a complete loss,[101] and virtually all of the Valley's packing and canning plants were destroyed.[102] Total damage to the area was estimated at $50,000,000.[103] Reports indicated that at least 5,000 men were left jobless because of the storm,[104] although the number may have been much higher. Much of the area remained under water for several weeks. Farm laborers dependent upon day labor were unable to enter the fields. In addition, thousands of Texas Mexicans lost their major source of income in the winter--harvesting oranges and grapefruit.

Floods

Floods also caused much damage. From early September through October 1932 communities along the Rio Grande from Presidio to Brownsville were repeatedly subjected to unprecedented flooding. The international bridges at Presidio, Eagle Pass, and Laredo were destroyed. The most extensive crop damage was sustained in the lower Rio Grande Valley where hundreds of square miles of agricultural lands were inundated.[105] During one of the floods water extended as far north and east as Raymondville. Over 100,000 acres were flooded[106] and 2,000 persons were left

homeless in the Brownsville, San Benito, and Harlingen areas.[107] Damage was so extensive that the International Boundary Commission issued a special flood report. Losses to the winter vegetable crop amounted to millions of dollars and thousands of Texas Mexican field hands were unemployed for several months while fields were too wet to work. Estimates of damages due to the floods varied, but Stambaugh concluded that all losses amounted to $100,000,000.[108]

Lengthy periods of unemployment resulting from hurricanes and floods led some Texas Mexicans to repatriate. In August 1933, after the first hurricane struck the lower Texas coast, a report from Mexico City indicated that 8,000 Texas Mexicans were leaving Valley farms for Mexico. The report made reference to the extensive damages sustained by farmers from the hurricane. Apparently most of these repatriates were farm laborers who had not resided in Texas long.[109] Little evidence exists to show that other Texas Mexicans were compelled to return to Mexico because of the floods or hurricanes.

Technological Innovations

Advances in agricultural technology contributed to the diminished demand for Texas Mexican tenant farmers and

laborers in the 1930s. The increasing use of the tractor and the cotton sled (a device that stripped the lint and bolls from the plant) reduced labor requirements. After 1920 the tractor was rapidly adopted by farmers throughout Texas. The number of tractors in use in Texas increased from 9,000 in 1920 to 99,000 in 1938.[110] Each tractor reportedly displaced from one to three families.[111] From these data one can infer that from 1920 until the close of the Depression at least 90,000 and perhaps as many as 270,000 Texas farm families were displaced by the adoption of the tractors.

In 1937, Taylor made a study of the mechanization of cotton plantations in two Texas counties, Hall and Childress, on the South Plains. He found that the introduction of the tractor and other farm implements was largely responsible for the profound transformation of the old system based upon tenant farmers. This transformation included the rapid displacement of tenants. Taylor concluded that the same processes that were at work in Hall and Childress counties were occurring over a much larger area of Texas.[112] A similar study by Taylor the following year revealed that the use of the tractor was indeed rapidly displacing tenants over a wide area of Central

and North Texas.[113] A Works Progress Administration study of the mechanization of cotton production in several areas of the United States, including northwest Texas, revealed that "during the last three or four years large numbers of tenants have been 'tractored off' [the farms] and can expect work on cotton as day laborers during the peak seasons."[114]

The December 1927 issue of the Texas Business Review reported that in West Texas farmers were rapidly adopting the cotton sled with gratifying results.[115] Similarly, the Dallas Morning News reported that

> sledding was used on an enormous scale in the Western part of the cotton area the past season. . . . Estimates of the amount of snapped and sledded cotton in Texas and Oklahoma run to four million bales, which is a good proportion of the Western crop. Probably more than half of the cotton in the semi-arid regions of Texas and Oklahoma was harvested by sledding.[116]

The Texas Almanac reported that 330 sleds were in operation in the plains area of Texas in 1932.[117] After being widely used for only a few years, the cotton sled was replaced by the more efficient mechanical cotton picker, which had been invented in 1927. The Dallas Morning News reported that only four of these machines were in use in the plains region of Texas in 1930. The following year about a hundred were in use.[118]

Another factor that significantly diminished the demand for cotton was the increased use of synthetic fibers in the 1920s and 1930s. Rayon production, for example, increased from 33 million pounds in 1920 to 458 million pounds in 1930.[119] According to Mitchell, "rayon was used not only in hosiery, dress goods, suitings, and cord tires, but was put to numerous minor purposes formerly filled by cotton. Cotton in mercerized form suffered acutely in competition with rayon."[120] Gard found that the expanded use of synthetic fibers had a drastic effect on cotton production in West Texas.[121] Most of the laborers in this area were Texas Mexicans, and the decreasing demand for cotton jeopardized their livelihood.

It is difficult to assess the impact of technological innovations in the 1920s and 1930s upon Texas Mexicans. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the advent of the tractor, the cotton sled, the onion transplanter, the mechanical cotton picker, and other innovations did contribute substantially to their displacement. At the close of the Depression the San Antonio Express reported that Texas Mexican cotton choppers and pickers were being replaced by machine methods of cultivation.[121] In his study of agricultural changes in the Southwest, Standing

concluded that a direct relationship existed between the decline in the number of sharecroppers and the utilization of the tractor.[122] A study of labor conditions in San Antonio in the late 1930s indicated that many Mexican farm hands and tenant farmers had been displaced by mechanization and had drifted into San Antonio seeking jobs.[123]

Agricultural Depression and Repatriation

With the continued deterioration of the agricultural economy in the 1930s the employment opportunities for Texas Mexican laborers diminished. The price that farmers received for their cotton continued to decline from 1928 until 1932 (Table 3). Wages for cotton picking, one of the primary sources of income for Texas Mexican field hands, paralleled this decline (Table 7). In some areas of the state wages plummeted to 45 cents per one hundred pounds of seed cotton in 1930 and finally to a low of 30 cents in 1932.[124] The laborer could not exist on such low wages. In September 1930 the Temple Daily Telegram reported that when six Mexicans were offered cotton-picking jobs at 60 cents per hundredweight they declined the offer. These potential workers responded that "they would remain in town and starve before they would pick at that price." One man stated, after earning only 91 cents for a week's work,

TABLE 7

AVERAGE WAGE PAID FOR 100 POUNDS OF SEED COTTON PICKED IN TEXAS FOR 1925-1940

Year	Wages
1925	1.33
1926	1.20
1927	1.24
1928	1.21
1929	1.11
1930	.71
1931	.44
1932	.45
1933	.55
1934	.60
1935	.60
1936	.65
1937	.65
1938	.55
1939	.55
1940	.58

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Statistics on Cotton and Related Data, Statistical Bulletin no. 99 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1951), p. 61.

that he could starve sitting down as easily as he could picking cotton. He explained that the "bolls were too small and the crop too sparse" to pay him to work.[125] A few weeks earlier a letter to the editor of the Daily Telegram had asserted that it was an injustice for pickers to receive only 50 to 60 cents a hundred for picking cotton. The writer noted that "pickers were in danger of starving and going without clothes having to pick this drought-stricken cotton at 50 cents a hundred."[126] Similar conditions existed throughout Texas for several years during the Depression. La Prensa reported that wages were so low in 1931 that Texas Mexicans refused to leave San Antonio to harvest spring vegetables.[127] Reports from the lower Rio Grande Valley, the Winter Gardens district of Texas, and South Texas in 1931 indicated that Texas Mexicans could not earn a reasonable return for their labor and refused to continue the cotton harvest. Farmers simply suspended the harvest.[128]

Not only were wages low during the 1930s but in most areas opportunities for agricultural employment were limited. In 1931 Texas Weekly noted that wage earners were receiving one dollar a day while a few years earlier wages of two to two and one-half dollars had been paid.

But because of reduced farm income farmers "can ill afford to pay laborers for work he can do himself. So he is doing practically all of the work."[129] Similar observations were made the same year in the Texas Business Review and the San Antonio Express, which reported an ample labor supply but that farmers were harvesting with family labor if possible.[130] In 1932 the Mexican consul at McAllen reported that Valley farm workers were able to obtain only two or three days of work each week. He found little hope for improvement in the area because of low prices. Similar consular reports were submitted by Mexican officials at San Antonio, El Paso, and Corpus Christi.[131] These conditions led to the massive exodus of Texas Mexicans from the state after 1928.

The economic position of the Texas Mexican tenant farmer was always tenuous. Texas Mexicans were subject to the slightest change in agricultural markets. When cotton prices dropped a few cents per pound the results were catastrophic. According to Taylor the Texas Mexican tenant seldom gained economic independence.

> Nearly all of the Mexican share-croppers on halves owe the landlord money by the time cotton picking arrives. Most of them clear their debt and receive some cash when the crop settlement is made. A few do not get clear of debt, especially in years when crops fail.[132]

However, when successive years of crop failure occurred many Texas Mexicans found it difficult to continue farming. Repeated crop failure and low prices for cotton during the Depression compelled many Texas Mexican tenants to abandon their cotton farms. Some of the tenants returned to Mexico immediately. Others gravitated to Texas cities in search of jobs while a few endeavored to remain on the farm as day laborers. Taylor reported that after the 1929 harvest many South Texas tenant farmers gave up farming but continued to work on the cotton plantations as day laborers.[133]

In late March 1930 the Mexican consul at Laredo, Alejandro V. Martínez, reported that many former Texas Mexican farmers were entering Mexico at Laredo. He observed that the displaced farmers were returning with their U.S.-born and -educated children and with agricultural equipment, automobiles, and trucks.[134] Mexican consular reports occasionally detailed the grave situation confronting the Texas Mexican tenant farmer and owners of small parcels of land in South Texas. The reports usually attributed the crisis to the diminished demand for cotton and the resulting low prices farmers received for cotton.[135] In August 1931 the Mexican consul at McAllen reported to

his superiors in Mexico City that many of the Valley tenant farmers had lost their land. Some tenants had apparently turned to day labor in an effort to secure a living.[136] A later report from Brownsville indicated that the economic situation for Valley tenant farmers had continued to deteriorate. The report noted that normally farmers in the area were able to harvest four crops annually with good returns for their labor. However, agricultural products could scarcely be sold. Consequently the Texas Mexican tenants and owners of small farms were planting only subsistence crops.[137]

Eventually thousands of Texas Mexican tenants were compelled to return to Mexico. Many of these farmers had resided in Texas for years. Their children had been born in Texas and the decision to return to Mexico was made reluctantly. Probably no other group of repatriates had such a strong attachment to the land and to their homes in Texas. A reporter for the San Antonio Express observed one group of returning tenant farmers in October of 1931. He noted:

> Many of the children in the caravans of "covered wagons" passing through Laredo range in age from one to 10 years, and the larger "children" invariably speak English perfectly as a result of schooling, with others [they] have not overcome the dialect of the alien. Some of the Mexican

> farmers and their wives are fairly good linguists in the English language.[138]

A repatriate who had resided in Texas for more than 30 years stated:

> For many years what I grew on my little farm in Central Texas was sold so that there was a little profit for my work. Now I cannot grow corn and sell it for enough to pay for my work. I hope things are better in Mexico, for I am going to secure a farm and plant crops we can use and sell.[139]

News accounts occasionally made references to Texas Mexicans returning with farm equipment.[140] In January 1931 Paul H. Foster, the American consul at Piedras Negras, reported that 25 percent of the repatriates entering Mexico at Eagle Pass and Del Rio possessed farm implements, trucks, and farm animals.[141] A similar report in 1934 indicated that approximately 25 percent of the repatriates existing through Eagle Pass and Del Rio were former Texas tenant farmers who were returning with farm equipment, trucks, and farm animals.[142] The possession of farm equipment and work animals by repatriates indicates that these Texas Mexicans had been employed as tenants or landowners prior to leaving the state.

Summary

Previous studies of Mexican repatriation have failed to examine in detail the economic forces that compelled the departure of an estimated one-half million Mexicans from the

United States between 1929 and 1940. These studies have suggested that with the advent of depression thousands of Mexicans were thrown out of work and forced to return to Mexico. This review of economic conditions within the agricultural sector in Texas indicates that a complex set of events occurred after 1929 to compel thousands of Texas Mexicans to return to Mexico.

State and federal legislation enacted in an effort to aid landowners proved devastating to Texas Mexican tenant farmers and agricultural laborers. The Texas Cotton Acreage Control Law of 1931 and the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933 were instrumental in the displacement of thousands of Texas Mexican tenant farmers. Texas farmers were plagued by a number of recurring natural disasters during the Great Depression that accelerated the displacement of Texas Mexican tenant farmers and farm laborers. In addition, advances in agricultural technologies contributed to the diminished demand for Texas Mexican tenant farmers and laborers in the 1930s. These unemployed, destitute Texas Mexicans frequently migrated to urban centers in search of employment. However, few urban jobs were available to Texas Mexicans; therefore, many were compelled to repatriate.

SOURCE NOTES

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CHAPTER VI

RELIEF AND REPATRIATION OF TEXAS MEXICANS

Introduction

The deterioration of the agricultural sector exacerbated the severe economic depression in urban areas of Texas. Thousands of unemployed tenant farmers and agricultural laborers who left the farms in search of jobs joined the ranks of urban unemployed, which brought about a massive, unprecedented unemployment problem. Although reliable data on unemployment in Texas in the early years of the Depression are not available,[1] the 1930 United States Census recorded 95,263 unemployed Texans.[2] By December 1932, State Labor Commissioner Robert Gregg estimated that 348,000[3] unemployed Texans were searching for nonexistent jobs. Most of the unemployed were destitute and were compelled to turn to relief agencies to survive.

No study has been published about the experiences of Texas Mexicans who sought relief during the Great Depression.

In some urban areas welfare agencies were apparently the most important institution involved in their repatriation,[4] although there is some confusion about the role these agencies played. Moore, for example, in 1970 stated that during the Depression "Texas had almost no welfare provisions; hence no repatriation."[5] Her conclusion is patently incorrect and demonstrates the general lack of knowledge about the relationship between welfare agencies and repatriation. It is the purpose of this chapter to document and analyze relief efforts and repatriation of Texas Mexicans during the Great Depression.

Poorly Organized Relief Efforts in Texas

Prior to the advent of the Depression relief agencies throughout the United States were poorly organized. Traditionally, responsibility for relief lay with local, private agencies. During periods of economic growth, when few persons were unemployed, charity organizations were able to meet the welfare needs of local citizens. Wecter wrote, "In a virgin and agrarian nation local relief had not worked too badly; it was cushioned by the neighborliness which Americans liked to think was a national trait."[6] However, during severe economic crises local welfare agencies were frequently

overwhelmed. This was the situation during the Depression era of the 1930s. Cities and counties--faced with bankruptcy brought about by declining revenues--were often unable to assist private relief efforts. In many areas of the nation, local agencies did not exist. These areas of the nation were often slow to organize relief efforts during massive unemployment. This absence of relief efforts existed in a number of states as late as 1933.[7]

Perhaps no other state was as poorly prepared as Texas to meet the relief needs of its citizenry during the Great Depression. In many rural counties of South, Southwest, and West Texas--counties with a high percentage of Texas Mexicans--no organized relief was available before the Depression. In 1930 Taylor wrote that no organized charity existed in Dimmit County in Southwest Texas. He observed that the Texas Mexican population bore "their poverty themselves, with the aid of their fellows, or by appeal to individual [Anglo] Americans whom they know--perhaps a doctor or merchant who gives them credit, or an employer."[8] Similarly, in Midland County in West Texas no organized charity existed until April of 1930, when the Community Welfare Association was established.[9] Until October 1930 no effort was made by the municipal government of Temple to assist the jobless,

although private welfare organizations had existed previously.[10] McAllen in the lower Rio Grande Valley lacked a local relief organization until December 1930, when the Chamber of Commerce assisted in the organization of the McAllen Relief Committee.[11] In 1931 the Austin Statesman noted that Georgetown in Central Texas had neither a Community Chest nor a United Charity.[12] Records of the President's Organization on Unemployment Relief indicated that until the winter of 1931 dozens of Texas communities lacked relief organizations.[13] As late as August 1933 at least 10 Texas counties had failed to create relief organizations.[14] That same month former Governor James E. Ferguson observed that most cities and counties in Texas lacked funds to provide for the needs of the destitute.[15]

Poorly organized relief programs were not limited to rural areas of Texas. Two of Texas' five largest cities--El Paso and San Antonio--lacked welfare departments. Neither of these cities had organized municipal welfare departments as late as 1936.[16] Probably no other city in the United States was as poorly prepared as San Antonio; prior to the Depression the city had neither a Community Chest nor a United Charity. Moreover, both the municipal and county government moved slowly and ineffectively to aid the

destitute. Knippa stated that "other than the miniscule contributions, in tax relief, office supplies and utilities, the City did not assume responsibility for the relief of its destitute citizens."[17] Bexar County provided assistance to only one-half of 1 percent of all relief cases in the county, most of which were Texas Mexicans. Only in December 1930, when thousands were unemployed and confronted with starvation, did the city leaders organize the San Antonio Unemployment Relief Committee. In addition, the local government was slow to secure Federal Reconstruction Finance Corporation funds when these became available. After 1933, about 95 percent of all relief cases in San Antonio were provided for from federal funds, while private contributions accounted for nearly all of the remainder.[18] McMillin concluded that

> This shirking of moral responsibility is reprehensible, but County and City alike were guilty of this. They were both overly concerned with attaining balanced budgets it seems, and too little concerned with the unfortunates of the district.[19]

Relief benefits to unemployed Texans were among the lowest in the nation. Consequently, indigent residents of Texas frequently suffered great privation. Virtually all American cities with large numbers of Mexican and Mexican American residents provided greater per capita relief

expenditures than did Texas cities. For example, in 1931 relief expenditures averaged less than 50 cents per person in Texas, while many other United States cities provided several dollars of per capita relief (Table 8).

TABLE 8

PER CAPITA RELIEF EXPENDITURES FOR SELECTED U.S. CITIES, JANUARY 1931-SEPTEMBER 1931

City	Per Capita Expenditure
Detroit	$6.59
Los Angeles	3.40
Chicago	2.41
Minneapolis	1.69
Denver	.79
Kansas City	.53
Dallas	.49
El Paso	.29
Houston	.34
San Antonio	.15

SOURCE: U.S. Congress, Senate, Subcommittee of the Committee on Manufactures (Hearings on S. 174 and S. 262), Unemployment Relief, 72d Cong., 1st sess., 1932, pp. 174-175.

Collapse of Relief Efforts in Texas

Texas cities derived their income primarily from property taxes. These revenues decreased sharply after 1929 as property valuations plummeted, and many faced bankruptcy. Virtually all cities initiated drastic budget reductions. One area in which many cities reduced expenditures was relief for the unemployed. As the Depression gained momentum during the early 1930s, local relief organizations throughout the state began to collapse. Martin noted that

> as the storm clouds lowered during 1930 and 1931, the collapse of the local welfare organization was not long delayed; and that they should break down was inevitable, since the machinery had been designed to accommodate only a fraction of the numbers clamoring for assistance.[20]

In most Texas cities between 1929 and 1939, relief programs broke down on a number of occasions and had to be reorganized to meet increasing welfare demands with decreased revenues.

As early as November 1930, families in dire need were being turned away from the United Charities office in Dallas for lack of funds. The shortage of funds was attributed to the failure of the City Commission to provide relief monies and to the increased number of relief applicants which had swamped relief agencies.[21] Testimony by a social worker before a United States Senate committee indicated

that relief for destitute Dallas citizens continued to diminish in 1931 and 1932. Applicants for relief had increased by 40 percent while funds available to welfare agencies had increased by only 10 percent. Hard-pressed social workers were extremely concerned that provisions to care for needy families--especially blacks and Texas Mexicans--had not been made.[22] Similar conditions existed at Galveston, where by mid-December 1930 the United Charities treasury was exhausted. The following month, United Charities of Galveston ceased to operate for the first time in over 16 years.[23] Studies of Fort Worth[24] and Houston[25] indicate that both cities depleted their relief funds during the early years of the Depression. In January 1931 the United Charities of El Paso announced that unless funds were raised immediately the organization would be forced to cease operation. The report noted that $14,000 was needed to care for 800 families. Many families were reportedly "suffering from pneumonia, shivering without clothing or blankets in huts and tents."[26] Relief organizations in San Antonio were being taxed beyond their capacity as early as October 1930.[27] Due to inadequate funds, suspension became routine. In 1933, relief to indigents was suspended no fewer than three times.[28] Unprecedented demands on relief agencies at San Angelo in

1931 led Mayor B. F. Lee to declare that local unemployment problems were without solution. The mayor noted that many people who usually contributed to local welfare needs were in need of aid themselves.[29] Recent studies of Midland[30] and Temple[31] revealed that neither city was able to provide relief to all of the needy during the winter of 1931-1932. Relief agencies collapsed in both cities in 1932. By the fall of 1932 relief funds in Laredo were also depleted. In an appeal for contributions to the local relief funds the Laredo Times declared:

> This is no cry of "wolf." There are a number of families, too many to contemplate in fact, for whom if something is not done the grim specter of death will stalk over the threshold and take several members by the throat.[32]

Later reports indicated that during the winter of 1932-1933 relief agencies could provide aid to only a small percentage of destitute Laredo residents.[33] In 1933 a state welfare official in Austin expressed grave concern over the collapse of local relief agencies in Texas. He asserted that scarcely a county in the state could provide adequately for destitute citizens through local contributions or taxation.[34]

Attitudes Toward Relief in Texas

Providing relief for unemployed Texas citizens was made more difficult by the belief that each locality was

responsible for caring for its needy. Most Texans held this opinion. They believed that state and national governments should not be burdened with providing welfare assistance for local residents. In discussing the general attitude toward relief, Wecter observed:

> It was commonly believed that charity pauperizes those who receive it, that public relief and, above all, that such disbursements are "something for nothing." Aid to the indigent thus tended to become a local responsibility, given as grudgingly and humiliatingly as possible in order to discourage spongers and point up the disgrace of poverty. The bleak horror of the poorhouse was thought to be salutary.[35]

Even when local welfare agencies collapsed, most Texans felt that state and federal governments should not intervene and assist them. In 1930 a leader of organized labor in Texas declared that the working man was not looking for a "subsidy from the Government in the form of a pittance or a dole, no matter what high-sounding term is used to cover up the nature of the measure."[36] In San Antonio in November 1933, when at least 15,000 persons were unemployed and local relief agencies were forced to deny relief daily to hundreds, the editor of the Express asked:

> What has become of that sturdy, prideful national trait--mutual self-help? Have the people forgotten former President Hoover's repeated appeals to "the God-given responsibility of every man and woman toward their neighbors"? . . . In a word, relief must be humanized again--transferred back from an

> impersonal, far-off Government to men and women: the family's own neighbors.[37]

Long after it became evident that local welfare agencies could not adequately meet the increasing needs of the unemployed, Texas newspapers maintained that welfare was solely a local responsibility.[38] Even in the darkest days of the Depression, local leaders insisted that unemployment relief was solely a local responsibility. Yet many localities could not or would not provide for unemployed residents. This paradox existed in Texas for the duration of the Great Depression.

Sentiment for local responsibility was also manifested at the state level. No other state government was as slow as Texas to respond to the needs of its citizens. In December 1932, Irvin S. Taubkin, an editoral correspondent for the New York Times wrote:

> The state itself had done almost nothing to ameliorate conditions. A large committee named by the Governor met once, but did little more than disseminate propaganda for spreading work. Labor Commissioner Robert Gregg has been hampered by lack of funds even in making adequate surveys of conditions; the Legislature appropriated only $500 for this.[39]

The state legislature repeatedly refused to appropriate general revenue funds for relief. Further, without a constitutional amendment, the state could not issue bonds to assist local relief agencies. Only after it became evident

in 1933 that the federal government would not continue to provide assistance to the state, did Texas finally amend its constitution. In July 1933, Harry Hopkins, Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) director, wrote to the governor of Texas about the proposed amendment.

> I wish to point out that it is going to be possible to carry only a part of the cost of unemployment relief in the state of Texas out of federal funds. I understand there is pending a proposal to amend the State Constitution so as to permit the legislature to bond the State up to twenty million for relief of the unemployed. What I wish to make clear is that funds must be available by the State and/or its political subdivisions, by this or some other means if we are to continue to make grants from the federal funds.[40]

The relief bond issue amendment became a major political issue. In an effort to enlist the support of Texas voters, Hopkins visited Texas in August 1933, a few days before the election. He stated that the federal goverment was providing 95 percent of relief aid in Texas, while in other states it was financing only one-third of relief costs.[41] On 26 August, the $20,000,000 relief bond issue amendment was approved by voters. However the state experienced difficulty in selling the bonds. In December Hopkins "put Texas at the head of the list of States termed laggards" in caring for their needy and ordered the FERA to cease providing federal aid.[42] A few days later, in January 1934, the

state reissued the unemployment relief bonds under more favorable terms. The bonds were quickly sold, and for the first time during the Depression substantial amounts of state monies became available to local governments for relief to the unemployed.

Federal Relief and the Texas Mexicans

During the Hoover administration, the federal government was only minimally involved in aiding states and cities in their efforts to care for the unemployed. After the election of Roosevelt, significant funding became available to aid distressed local communities. The most important social legislation enacted during the early days of the New Deal was the Federal Emergency Relief Act of May 1933. This act created the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and provided $500,000,000 for the unemployed.[43] Further, in November 1933 Roosevelt created by executive order the Civil Works Administration (CWA). The goal of the CWA was to employ 4,000,000 workers with $400,000,000 in operating funds provided by the Public Works Administration (PWA). The CWA proved an effective vehicle for providing emergency unemployment relief. Within two months 4.25 million people were employed by it.[44] In Texas 191,000 jobs were created

immediately[45] and by January 1934, 239,264 persons were employed on CWA work relief projects.[46]

It is generally believed that the economic position of minorities in the United States was improved with the advent of the New Deal.[47] The evidence indicates, however, that most Texas Mexicans failed to benefit appreciably from CWA work-relief projects. Almost immediately after CWA funds became available, complaints arose over the employment of Texas Mexicans on CWA projects. Since the CWA had been created by executive order, few administrative regulations or guidelines existed regarding employment. Further, although the CWA was a federal program, the various projects were administered at state and local levels. Many policy decisions were thus made by state directors. Late in November 1933 Lawrence Westbrook, Texas CWA director, called a meeting in Austin of local CWA administrators. At this meeting it was decided that aliens should be barred from CWA employment, though there was little legal basis for this order. Apparently the decision to deny CWA employment to aliens was based on a clause in the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) of June 1933. The NIRA did not specifically exclude alien employment on public works and construction projects. However, section 206 of the act

stated that preference in hiring workers for public works projects should be given to citizens of the United States and to aliens who had declared their intention of becoming citizens. In addition, and perhaps more important, the law provided that bona fide residents should be given preference in employment projects within their political subdivision.[48]

The announcement that aliens were ineligible for employment on CWA projects received widespread publicity in Texas. Many newspapers in South Texas carried reports of the Westbrook pronouncement.[49] Almost immediately local CWA administrators initiated campaigns to identify all Mexican aliens employed on CWA projects. Many Mexican American residents were unable to prove their citizenship and thus were denied employment. Thousands of Texas Mexicans were discharged from the projects. The exact number discharged or denied employment is unknown, since local CWA officials did not maintain records of aliens they excluded and were reluctant to publicize the expulsion of indigent workers. In addition, in many communities, the discharge of Texas Mexicans was not considered a newsworthy event and did not appear in the newspapers. It is known that approximately 6,700 Texas Mexicans were exluded from employment in San Antonio.[50] Apparently all aliens in the lower Rio Grande

Valley lost their jobs, for on 24 November 1933 the headlines of the Valley Morning Star at Harlingen proclaimed that "U.S. Citizens Only Entitled to Relief Work."[51] At Eagle Pass approximately 200 Texas Mexicans were reportedly discharged. This number represented about one-half of all CWA employees in Maverick County. Most of those discharged had lived in Eagle Pass for many years: they were property owners and taxpayers, and felt strongly that they should not be excluded from CWA jobs. A meeting was held to protest the mass discharge,[52] but apparently nothing was done to remedy the situation. At Laredo, 300 Texas Mexicans were dismissed from CWA employment, while at least 1,200 others were unable to secure CWA employment because of their alien status. An effort was made by the Webb County Welfare Board to provide temporary employment for these workers. Aliens were assigned jobs on a temporary road construction project financed from state funds.[53] The pay for this project was substantially less than that received for CWA employment and state funds were limited to the duration of the project, so many of these Texas Mexicans soon found themselves unemployed again. Some found employment on local farms, although pay for agricultural labor in the Laredo area was about two-thirds less than that for CWA employment. By mid-December

a report from Laredo indicated that an abundance of agricultural labor was available in the area, since aliens were no longer eligible for CWA employment.[54] Soon after the Westbrook pronouncement, several hundred Texas Mexicans were dropped from CWA employment at El Paso.[55] By mid-December, El Continental reported, 2,500 Mexicans were being denied CWA employment because of their citizenship.[56]

An unexpected consequence of excluding Texas Mexicans from CWA employment was a campaign by Laredo relief officials to encourage alien Mexicans to apply for naturalization. According to a ruling by Westbrook, aliens who had secured first papers for naturalization were eligible for CWA employment. The campaign was apparently effective, for 135 requests for first-paper application forms were immediately issued by the United States District Court Clerk's office. The supply of first-paper application forms was exhausted the first day of the campaign and additional forms had to be ordered.[57]

In August the Mexican Embassy in Washington formally protested to the U.S. Secretary of State the practice of requiring Mexican residents of Texas to file for American citizenship in order to obtain federal relief.[58] The Department of State responded that it would investigate this

practice if the Mexican Embassy would identify the Texas communities where it had occurred.[59] Apparently the Mexican government failed to provide the names, for no investigation occurred.

The indiscriminate expulsion of Texas Mexicans from CWA jobs resulted in the loss of jobs by many citizens as well as noncitizens. In December 1933, a Mexican American resident of San Antonio, Martin Guerrero, who had been denied CWA employment, filed suit against CWA officials. The petition stated that, as a citizen of the United States, Guerrero was "entitled to all privileges of an American citizen by birth." Guerrero asserted in his petition that he had been denied CWA employment even though he had produced a birth certificate showing his place of birth, Sabinal, Texas. Bat Corringan, Guerrero's attorney, explained to a San Antonio Express reporter that he had received complaints from several other Mexican Americans who had been refused relief work even after baptismal certificates were produced showing that they had been born in Texas. Corringan explained that this was a test case designed to remedy this situation.[60]

The policy of denying relief work to Texas Mexicans had been established well before Westbrook's decision of November 1933. In fact, the reason why more Texas Mexicans

were not expelled from CWA employment was that a concerted effort had been made in many Texas communities during the five months preceding November to purge them from the relief rolls. As early as July, thousands of Texas Mexicans were discharged from local public works projects. These projects were financed largely through federal Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) loans. Apparently the largest number of Texas Mexicans to lose such jobs lived in San Antonio, where over 50 percent of the RFC employees were reportedly aliens. There, the head of the Bexar County Relief and Rehabilitation Committee announced that it was the policy of the U.S. government to exclude aliens from work relief projects,[61] after which at least, 4,200 allegedly alien Texas Mexicans were purged from the relief rolls. Many of these reportedly had family members who were native-born American citizens. A number had lived in Texas for decades but had failed to take out naturalization papers.[62] In other efforts to restrict the employment of Texas Mexicans on work relief projects, the committee cooperated with the U.S. Immigration Service in identifying illegal aliens employed on work relief projects. The committee requested that Immigration inspectors be present each week when RFC workers were paid. Apparently this technique was

successful, for on one occasion a number of workers reportedly broke and ran from the pay line when Immigration inspectors arrived.[63]

The elimination of Texas Mexicans from work relief projects in the summer and fall of 1933 was partially in response to claims by farmers that their labor supply was being jeopardized. The farmers asserted that Texas Mexicans refused to pick cotton or do other agricultural labor if they could work one or two days each week on RFC projects.[64] In an effort to force them to accept agricultural employment, the local relief administrator of San Antonio suspended all relief to Texas Mexicans. The action was based on Farm Labor Bureau reports that indicated a serious labor shortage in South Texas. However, local news reports indicated that unemployed workers in San Antonio could not find agricultural employment, and that, in fact, there was no farm labor shortage.[65] Apparently, the claims by Farm Labor Bureau officials were part of an organized campaign to purge the relief rolls of Texas Mexicans. Reports of farm labor shortages continued to appear throughout South Texas in 1933. In response to these reports, the state relief administration on 31 August withdrew funds for able-bodied persons in areas where cotton-picking jobs could be obtained.[66]

The Works Progress Administration (WPA) was the most important source of work relief employment under the New Deal. Its legal restrictions on the employment of aliens, however, sharply reduced employment opportunities of Texas Mexicans. The original legislation that created the WPA in 1935 did not forbid the employment of aliens. However, during 1935 and 1936 U.S. congressional representatives came under intense political pressure from groups and individuals to restrict alien employment on WPA projects. The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), various labor unions, and fraternal and patriotic organizations joined to lobby Congress on this issue. In 1936 Millard W. Rice, legislative representative for the VFW, appeared before the House Subcommittee on Appropriations to argue for the exclusion of alien employment on federally funded works projects. Rice declared that

> the experience of the last 2 years had led us to believe that employment, through Federal funds, cannot be furnished to all citizens. Therefore, there ought to be a preference to citizens and to others who, prior to this time have taken out their first citizenship papers, that other legally entered aliens should have the second chance, and that illegal entrants should not be given any opportunity for employment through the use of Federal funds.[67]

Later in 1936, during House Appropriations hearings, Rep. Lloyd Thurston of Iowa stated:

> There has been some serious complaint by some of our citizens who could not obtain employment when they knew persons who spoke broken English, and who were recent arrivals, were being employed. . . .[68]

Thurston indicated that he would introduce an amendment to the 1936 legislation to limit the employment of aliens on WPA projects. Consequently, the Emergency Relief Administration Act of 1936--the legislation that provided WPA funding--barred aliens illegally within the United States from WPA employment.[69]

By 1937 no more than 120,000 aliens were employed on WPA projects throughout the United States. This number was less than 5 percent of all WPA employees. The families of at least two-thirds of the aliens employed contained children, mostly dependents, who were American citizens. Nevertheless, the clamor continued for additional restrictions on WPA employment of aliens. The VFW led efforts to lobby Congress for this issue, and in 1937 appropriations legislation was passed that barred the employment of all aliens on WPA projects except those who had filed a formal declaration of intention to become an American citizen.[70]

The revised WPA laws of 1936 and 1937 were effective in eliminating alien employment. At least 72,000 aliens were dropped from the WPA rolls in 1937, leaving only a few employed by this agency. However, the legislation of 1937

encouraged some aliens to file a declaration of intention to become a U.S. citizen. In response, the VFW initiated an intense campaign to further restrict the employment of aliens on WPA projects.[71] No additional restrictions were imposed in 1938, but in February 1939, legislation was passed that banned all aliens from WPA employment and required that all WPA workers make an affidavit as to United States citizenship.[72]

Few Texas Mexicans lost their jobs as a result of the 1936 legislation excluding illegal aliens from WPA projects. This would indicate that most had entered the United States legally. However, in 1937, when alien employment was limited to persons who had received their first papers, thousands of Texas Mexicans were discharged from WPA jobs. All WPA applicants were required to present U.S. birth certificates or citizenship papers before being approved for employment. This ruling created great consternation among Texas Mexicans. The Mexican consulate in San Antonio was beseiged by Texas Mexicans who sought rulings on their citizenship. Many of these Texas Mexicans had lived in Texas for over 25 years. Others had served in the U.S. military during World War I.[73] At El Paso 217 Texas Mexican workers were discharged from WPA jobs in July,[74] and

eventually WPA enrollment was reduced by nearly 50 percent by the exclusion of Texas Mexicans.[75] At Eagle Pass several WPA work relief projects were suspended for lack of sufficient workers after the rolls were purged of alleged aliens. By September only 26 American citizens were employed on WPA projects at Eagle Pass.[76] At Fort Worth, 3,200 Texas Mexicans were barred from WPA employment. Many of these requested direct relief but none was available. Nearly 2,700 Texas Mexicans were eliminated from WPA employment at Houston in August. Some found employment picking cotton, while a few requested direct relief.[77]

In the spring of 1939 reports from Washington indicated that between 20,000 and 30,000 aliens employed on WPA projects, who had taken out first papers for American citizenship, would lose their jobs. Most of the aliens were thought to reside in New York, Boston, San Francisco, New Orleans, and Midwestern industrial and mining centers.[78] In Texas, thousands of long-term Mexican residents of Texas were discharged from WPA jobs in 1939. The exact number is not known, although 2,222 were discharged immediately after local WPA administrators began to enforce the revised 1939 WPA legislation. Newspaper reports provided the following data on the number of aliens discharged in Texas: Houston,

459; El Paso, 300; Austin, 275; Fort Worth, 132; San Angelo, 71; Dallas, 66; Lubbock, 50; and Waco, 19.[79]

Much of the support for legislation to restrict alien employment came from Texas legislators in Congress. The chair of the powerful House Committee on Appropriations, James P. Buchanan of Brenham, always supported efforts to bar alien employment on federally financed projects. In addition, Rep. Fritz G. Lanham of Fort Worth, a vocal opponent of alien employment, worked arduously to exclude aliens from WPA projects. In 1938 Lanham appeared before the House Committee on Appropriations to argue for further restrictions on alien employment in the United States.

> Those who have been in this country for a long time have had ample opportunity to become citizens of this country. If they have not been sufficiently interested in this Government and the things for which it stands to become citizens, surely they are not proper objects of our bounty.
>
> My object in appearing before you is to protest these payments and to stress the necessity of putting into our law, with reference to all of these expenditures, a provision that none of this money shall be paid to any alien; that it shall be paid only to American citizens who are in need of such relief.[80]

State Relief and the Texas Mexicans

In addition to restrictions on federally funded employment, state requirements limited the employment of Texas Mexicans on state-financed public works projects. In

1931 the Texas legislature passed the Minimum Wage Scale for Highway Workers Act. This legislation included a provision that "citizens of the United States and of the county wherein the work is being proposed shall always be given preference in such employment."[81] Prior to the enactment of this legislation thousands of Texas Mexicans had been employed in highway construction and maintenance, which was a major source of work relief in Texas during the Depression.[82] Although this legislation dealt only with highway construction and maintenance, a joint resolution adopted by the Senate and House in September 1931 provided that

> it is a sound and proper policy of government to give preference in all public works to local contractors and to local labor and to methods of construction calculated to provide the greatest possible economical employment of farm and unskilled labor.[83]

This resolution was often strictly enforced. For example, in December 1931 the University of Texas announced that bids for the construction of seven buildings would soon be let. It was stated that, because of the Senate-House resolution giving preference to Texas labor on public works, the specifications for the building construction would include a provision "favoring the preference of Texas contractors, materials and labor."[84]

As early as 1920 some Mexican teachers were employed in the segregated Texas Mexican schools of South Texas.[85] The number of Mexican teachers employed in Texas increased during the 1920s as emigration from Mexico increased.[86] During the 1930s these Mexican teachers were unable to secure employment, for the state legislature in 1929 enacted a law requiring U.S. citizenship of public school teachers.[87] No data exist regarding the number who lost jobs because of this legislation.

Local Relief and the Texas Mexicans

One major problem encountered by Texas cities in providing relief was the large influx of transients. By 1931 at least one million Americans had left their home states in search of jobs.[88] Town and city officials in Texas responded to this "invasion" in two ways. First, most Texas cities encouraged transients to continue on their way. Second, virtually all cities initiated programs to prevent transients from securing local employment. Both of these responses were devastating to Texas Mexicans. Prior to the Depression, Texas Mexicans had provided a hugh reservoir of mobile labor which moved within the state to fill the shifting demand for labor. During the Depression, thousands of Texas Mexicans continued to seek employment by moving to

areas rumored to have employment opportunities. Anglo Texans often considered these highly mobile laborers to be temporary residents, for they were on the road several months of each year. Therefore, when municipalities adopted ordinances requiring the employment of local labor, Texas Mexicans often found that they were denied employment. These ordinances usually included lengthy citizenship requirements which they simply could not meet.

Bernstein noted that cities and states "overburdened with the relief of their own, refused to accept the responsibility for others. In the smaller communities, the migrants were simply told to get out of town."[89] In Texas, transients were frequently forced to leave the larger cities as well as smaller communities. As early as 1929 the police in El Paso initiated a lengthy campaign to force unemployed Texas Mexicans to leave the city.[90] In May 1930, 60 "loiterers" were arrested. A few were turned over to the U.S. Immigration Service for deportation. The others were eventually released.[91] Laredo maintained one of the most intensive campaigns against transients. During the early years of the Depression, hundreds were taken into custody by police and forced to leave Laredo.[92] In October 1931, the Temple Daily-Telegram stated that 30 transients had been

jailed and then hauled out of the city in trucks "with warnings to stay out of Temple."[93] Police in Dallas periodically raided the Trinity River Valley--an area where migrants congregated--and forced the transients to leave the city. On one occasion, the Dallas Morning News reported that 10 transients had been arrested and another 40 or 50 permitted to leave the city voluntarily.[94] In December 1931, the San Antonio police apprehended 200 alleged vagrants. One hundred were jailed and the remainder escorted to the city limits and urged to depart the city.[95] The editor of the Houston Post-Dispatch condemned the action of the San Antonio police, stating that these actions simply shifted "the problem to other communities, all of which have their own situation to care for. Passing the buck is not the proper policy in stressful times such as these."[96] It is ironic that such a charge would come from Houston, for that city possessed a similar policy. Transients in Houston were sentenced to three days of work and then ordered to leave the city.[97]

During the winter of 1929-1930, thousands of persons migrated to Houston in search of jobs. This influx of transients led the Post-Dispatch to report that

> it would be unkind to job-seekers not to put them on notice, so far as that may be possible, that we are now taking care of about as many homeless,

> workless people who have drifted in from far away places as we can handle.[98]

The influx led to the home labor movement in Houston. By December 1930, 25,000 persons were unemployed in Houston and the city was experiencing difficulty in caring for the needy.[99] As the number of unemployed increased, the clamor for employment restrictions on nonresidents increased. Informal regulations limited work relief in Houston to local residents, and applicants were required to show certified residency in Houston.[100]

Nonresidents continued to find employment in Houston, however, and so in the fall of 1931 organized labor became involved in the home labor movement. Local unions organized the Home Labor Association of Houston and Harris County to promote the enactment of a home labor ordinance. The association was largely responsible for the Houston relief plan of 1931, which was "designed to protect Houston from an invasion of loafers, idlers, snowbirds and drifters such as descended on the city last winter."[101] At the initial meeting of the association, a resolution was adopted and subsequently submitted to Houston and Harris County officials. Part of the resolution stated: "From and after the passage of this resolution all workmen and laborers of whatever kind or character employed by any contractor engaged in the

construction of any public works shall be bona fide citizens."[102] At this meeting one of the speakers stated that the association was "not waging a fight against any specific body or group or individual." Yet another spokesman complained that one Houston contractor who was "engaged in a city paving project, has in his employ some 75 Mexican laborers who receive but 20 cents per hour for their work."[103] The Home Labor Association of Houston and Harris County prevailed in their efforts: the city and county adopted rules that required all employees, laborers, and subcontractors be bona fide residents of six months standing in Houston in order to be employed on public works.[104]

By 1932 thousands of Texas Mexicans in Houston were experiencing the effects of the home labor movement. Hundreds were suffering from extreme privation. Testimony before a U.S. Senate Committee on relief revealed that applications for unemployment relief by Texas Mexicans were not accepted in Houston, and that "they are being asked to shift for themselves."[105] A Mexican consular report indicated that Houston authorities were refusing to provide work relief for indigent Texas Mexicans. The only assistance available was used clothing and food.[106] Apparently Texas Mexican residents of Houston soon became aware that they were not

eligible for assistance and ceased to apply for aid. The city business manager reported that out of one group of 431 persons who had received aid through the commissary only three applicants had been Texas Mexicans.[107]

Efforts were made in most Texas cities to deny jobs and other unemployment relief benefits to Texas Mexicans. One of the first communities in Texas to initiate such efforts was El Paso. In July 1929, the United General Contractors of El Paso passed a resolution restricting the employment of Texas Mexicans on construction projects to permanent residents of El Paso.[108] The following October, the City Council passed an ordinance barring the employment of Texas Mexicans on public construction projects. The ordinance required that each construction bid let by the city limit employment to American citizens. This policy was adopted prior to the construction of a municipal airport, a city hall annex, and other major improvements.[109] Some contractors continued to use Texas Mexican labor on projects funded by the city, and in August 1930 labor leaders complained to Mayor R. E. Thomason about this practice. After the mayor ordered an investigation, contractors ceased to hire Texas Mexicans for public construction projects.[110]

In Midland the Community Welfare Association adopted a work eligibility requirement of a year's residency.[111] Although this policy apparently never became a legal requirement, it was stringently enforced by relief officials. In November the association announced that

> names of Mexican whites and Negro families and individuals who go away from here to pick cotton, and names of loafers who refuse to work are being kept on file. If they appeal for aid this winter, they will go hungry as the absolute law is laid down that people must work or starve in Midland.[112]

Many other Texas cities, including Corpus Christi, Laredo, and Eagle Pass, enforced similar rules in 1933.[113]

Relief and Repatriation

The failure of public and private relief agencies to provide relief to indigent Texas Mexicans undoubtedly contributed to the magnitude of the repatriation movement. Many involuntary repatriates surely would have remained in Texas had direct relief or work relief been available. Prior to the Depression, however, few Texas Mexicans received assistance from local welfare agencies,[114] and after 1929 most apparently did not expect assistance from such agencies. Few accounts of repatriates departing Texas referred to the unavailability of relief as a cause of repatriation. Among the sparse references, a 1931 report

from El Paso noted that departing Texas Mexicans were unable to obtain assistance from welfare agencies,[115] and a 1933 news report datelined Mexico City stated that Mexican consuls in the United States attributed the exodus to CWA policies denying employment to aliens.[116]

Previous studies have shown that local relief agencies were largely responsible for the repatriation of Mexicans from Los Angeles, Detroit, Chicago, and Gary, Indiana.[117] These findings contrast with Texas, where evidence indicates that local agencies were not extensively involved in repatriation. In general, for three reasons, Texas agencies ignored the plight of Texas Mexicans returning to Mexico: First, at the onset of the Depression most of these agencies were poorly organized and lacked the personnel to organize and implement repatriation programs. Second, as the Depression intensified, relief funds were limited, and local agencies were unwilling to expend funds on aliens. Third, transportation costs to the Mexican border from most Texas cities were much less than from California or points in the upper Midwest; therefore Texas Mexicans experienced less difficulty in reaching the border than did repatriates from other areas of the United States.

Two previous studies have indicated that state government agencies were indirectly involved in repatriation in some states.[118] In Texas there is no evidence of this type of involvement, although the option was considered. In the fall of 1931 a committee to study unemployment and relief problems in Texas was appointed by Gov. Ross S. Sterling. The committee was composed of 100 business, industrial, labor, professional, religious, judicial, political, and civic leaders from across the state.[119] One of its resolutions urged that unemployed Texas Mexican residents be returned to Mexico with the assistance of Mexican consuls.[120] There is no evidence that any effort was made to implement the resolution. Although the committee was never formally dissolved, no subsequent meetings were called by Governor Sterling.

The state government was not involved in repatriation, although it provided a negative incentive through legislation and resolutions giving employment preference to Texas citizens. By enforcing these legislative requirements on citizenship, the state denied employment on highway construction and maintenance projects and other public works projects to thousands of Texas Mexicans. On a smaller scale, Texas Mexican teachers were discharged from state-funded jobs.

Undoubtedly, these legislative requirements gave impetus to repatriation to Mexico.

There is no evidence that local welfare agencies in Texas were extensively involved in either the organization or funding of Texas Mexican repatriation. Prior to the advent of the Great Depression, local relief agencies in Texas were poorly organized or nonexistent. As the Depression gained in intensity many collapsed for lack of funds. Political opposition to state and federal relief to the unemployed was strong in Texas. Only after the intense and prolonged character of the Depression became evident were substantial state and federal monies made available for local relief. Even then thousands of unemployed, destitute Texas Mexican families were unable to obtain assistance from welfare organizations. Many returned to Mexico, where the prospect of employment appeared to be better.

Most Texas communities organized campaigns to limit public and private employment to local residents. Many communities enacted ordinances denying employment to nonresidents. These ordinances were especially devastating to Texas Mexican agricultural workers, who spent much of the year in migration. These unemployed workers were often forced by police to abandon one community after another, and eventually many returned to Mexico.

Conclusions

After 1932 economic conditions for many Americans improved greatly with the inauguration of New Deal work-relief programs. The FERA, CWA, and WPA provided employment opportunities for thousands of Texans. Texas Mexicans, however, failed to benefit appreciably from these projects. Federal legislation systematically excluded alien employment. In virtually all Texas communities efforts were made to exclude them from federal work relief projects. Residents of Mexican descent who were unable to prove their citizenship were also denied employment, and many of these also returned to Mexico. These findings contradicted the common belief that the Mexican populace in Texas benefitted greatly from New Deal work relief programs.

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CHAPTER VII

REPATRIATION FROM RURAL TEXAS

Introduction

From 1929 through 1939, more than 500,000 Mexicans and their U.S.-born children returned to Mexico. At least 250,000 of them returned from Texas. Few records exist regarding the departure of these repatrites from hundreds of communities throughout the state. Most departed alone or in small groups. Their departure seldom received the attention of local newspapers. In addition, although welfare agencies have provided a historical record of repatriation in several other states, they were seldom involved in Texas repatriation and thus have furnished few records of this exodus. However, although detailed records do not exist, there are sufficient data to show the nature and extent of repatriation activity in Texas during the Depression. This chapter documents and analyzes repatriation from rural areas of Texas during this period.

The vast majority of repatriates who departed from Texas between 1929 and 1939 did so during the early years of

the Depression--from 1929 through 1932. Repatriation gained momentum from 1929 through 1931 and peaked during the fall of 1931. Although a substantial number of Texas Mexicans returned to Mexico after 1931, departures from the state continued to diminish each year until 1939. Because most Texas Mexicans returned to Mexico between 1929 and 1932, this chapter will focus on repatriation during those years.

Unlike repatriation from most other large states, repatriation from Texas was principally a movement from rural areas. Most Texas repatriates had been tenant farmers or agricultural laborers prior to their departure for Mexico. Even repatriates from urban areas of Texas often depended upon agricultural employment for their livelihood. Widespread rural repatriation occurred from the lower Rio Grande Valley, South Texas, Southwest Texas, Central Texas, and from West Texas.

Repatriation from the Lower Rio Grande Valley

Massive repatriation from Texas began in the lower Rio Grande Valley in 1929 when the U.S. Immigration Service initiated a massive deportation campaign. By the summer of 1929 thousands of Valley residents were considering repatriating.[1] In June, the Laredo Times announced that 36,000

Texas Mexicans intended to return to Mexico.[2] Apparently these prospective repatriates had applied for certificates of repatriation from Mexican consuls in the region. During the fall of 1929 several thousand Valley Texas Mexicans crossed into Mexico because of the fear created by the deportation campaign.[3]

As deportation raids increased in 1929, Texas Mexicans held mass meetings at many Valley locations including Harlingen, San Benito, Mercedes, Raymondville, and Brownsville. The focus of these meetings was always the tenuous situation of Texas Mexican workers.[4] At these meetings Texas Mexicans voiced concern over the deportation of friends and neighbors. They expressed doubts regarding their future in Texas. Many declared that the threat of deportation was too overwhelming for them to want to remain in Texas, and they expressed a desire to return to Mexico. However, many others had come from Mexico decades ago and were reluctant to abandon their homes in Texas. There was general curiosity about opportunities in Mexico.[5]

In an effort to respond to questions about opportunities in Mexico, the Mexican consul from either Hidalgo or Brownsville attended each meeting. These consuls provided information on an agricultural colonization project

located adjacent to the Rio Grande near Matamoros and were usually accompanied by several representatives of the Mexican government including the project's chief engineer. These officials emphasized that the Mexican government welcomed the return of citizens willing to engage in reconstruction of the country, and that efforts would be made to accommodate the returnees. It was explained that unirrigated lands were available for immediate colonization and that irrigated lands would become available after the completion of several dams. Title to these lands could be acquired from the government and long-term government financing was available to colonists who lacked funds to purchase land. An additional inducement was a reduction of import duties on the belongings of the returnees. All farm implements, household goods, and $100 in provisions per family were to be exempt from import duties.[6]

In order to facilitate the return of Texas Mexicans, Mexican government officials urged them to inform officials in Mexico City of their intention to return. Prospective repatriates were told to petition formally the government of President Emilio Portes Gil for land to be colonized. They were advised to form councils in each Valley community with elected officers responsible for communicating with the

Mexican government and for arranging the return of the Texas Mexican farmers to Mexico. The officials emphasized that appeals to the Mexican government should be formal in nature. Councils of Texas Mexican farmers were formed at several Valley locations and efforts were initiated to return groups of repatriates to Mexico.[7]

One group of Texas Mexican farmers from Mercedes solicited the assistance of the Mexican government in their resettlement in Mexico. Their petition to the Mexican government included a request for 5,000 acres of government-owned land adjacent to the Rio Grande in Tamaulipas. The prospective repatriates reportedly possessed funds to acquire this land from the government and to begin development of an irrigation works project.[8] By September 1929, over 2,000 Texas Mexican families had requested through the Mexican consul in Brownsville that they be allowed to repatriate and resettle near Matamoros. The Mexican consul announced that arrangements had been completed for the return of the first 205 families to the area.[9] Although the number of Texas Mexican repatriates who settled in the Matamoros region during the early Depression years is unknown, it was apparently not great.

By the spring of 1929, agricultural interests from Laredo to Brownsville were gravely concerned over Bureau of Immigration deportation activity and the departure of hundreds of Valley Texas Mexicans under the threat of deportation, for these actions jeopardized the economy of the region. The Valley Chamber of Commerce at Harlingen provided early and vigorous opposition to the federal deportation campaign in Texas. It repeatedly protested the federal government's deportation campaign and appealed for its halt.[10] When its protests failed, the Chamber of Commerce devised other measures. It purchased and distributed to Texas Mexican residents thousands of circulars outlining steps required of aliens to legalize their entry into the United States. It also organized mass meetings throughout the Valley to explain to Mexicans how to legalize their residence in the United States. One of these meetings was attended by over 500 Texas Mexicans.[11] Despite the efforts of the Valley Chamber of Commerce, the federal deportation campaign continued.

It soon became apparent to the large landowners and businesses dependent upon Texas Mexican labor that the Valley Chamber of Commerce could not impede the massive exodus of alien workers. Two organizations thus came into existence

to help restrict their departure. The first was the Confederación Mexicana de Obreros y Campesinos, which was headquartered at Mercedes and directed by Fred L. Johnson. A Spanish name was given to the organization presumably to promote its acceptance among Texas Mexican residents. The confederation was organized on 5 May 1929 with an announced objective to care for the "welfare of Mexican workmen and especially unskilled laborers in the United States and to render them what aid is possible to making their environment in this country the best obtainable."[12] However, it appears that its true objective was to encourage and assist Mexicans who wished to legalize their entry into the United States. The organization distributed hundreds of identification cards to Valley Texas Mexicans on which information about the individuals was recorded. Each card contained an endorsement of the holder by a prominent Anglo American resident of the Valley.[13] It was apparently believed that these cards legitimized the residency of the holders and therefore would prevent their deportation. In addition, the confederation promoted and facilitated legal entry of hundreds of lower Rio Grande Valley residents. Long-time Valley residents who lacked documentation but were eligible for resident visas were encouraged by the confederation to

return to Mexico, secure a passport, pay the head tax, and reenter Texas legally.[14]

The second organization created to restrict Texas Mexican emigration was the Lower Rio Grande Valley, Inc., a Valleywide, chartered, nonprofit corporation. This corporation was administered by a committee composed of a president and two vice-presidents. For day-to-day operations it employed a manager, a secretary-treasurer, and two field investigators. The organization had a projected first-year budget of $25,000. Funds to support the organization were to be raised by a $10 annual membership fee. The goal of the organization was to insure an adequate labor supply for Valley agricultural and business interests. This goal was to be achieved by promoting Mexican immigration into the Valley and by preventing the repatriation and deportation of Texas Mexican residents. Initially, Lower Rio Grande Valley, Inc., had widespread support in the Valley and hundreds of residents pledged to join.[15]

Lower Rio Grande Valley, Inc., became involved in a number of activities designed to insure an adequate labor supply for the Valley's agricultural and business enterprises. One of its first actions was to form an immigration committee composed of three prominent Valley residents and

the organization's manager, S. Lamar Gill. The committee initiated meetings with D. W. Brewster and Dave Ferguson, Immigration inspectors at Brownsville and Harlingen respectively in an effort to persuade them to limit Texas' Mexican deportation. A similar meeting was held with William A. Whalen, district director of the Immigration Service at San Antonio.[16]

Lower Rio Grande Valley, Inc., also worked to legalize the status of thousands of Texas Mexican residents. To inform these workers of procedures involved in obtaining legal residence, the corporated invited them to a series of meetings held in various Valley communities. These meetings were often presided over by prominent members of the Texas Mexican community, the Mexican consul, or officers of a local Comisión Honorífica.* In addition, corporate employees met with publishers and editors of Spanish-language newspapers in Harlingen, Brownsville, and San Antonio to solicit their support in informing readers of the steps required to obtain legal U.S. residency.[17]

These efforts by Lower Rio Grande Valley, Inc., were partially effective, for it was reported in 1930 that large

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*The Comisiones Honorífficas were organized by Mexican consuls to provide assistance to Mexicans in adjusting problems and to give the consuls closer contact with Mexicans. They existed in many Texas towns and cities.

numbers of Texas Mexicans had avoided deportation by legalization of their residency. This report noted that "at the time it [Lower Rio Grande Valley, Inc.] was organized, and for months previous to that date, the Mexican people of the Valley were in a state of virtual panic, expecting to be deported by the thousands, and thousands of them were leaving rather than wait to be arrested."[18] The report asserted that since the creation of Lower Rio Grande Valley, Inc., the confidence of the Texas Mexican people had been restored.[19] This assertion was a gross exaggeration, for thousands continued to depart the Valley under the threat of deportation in 1930 and 1931.

As the economy continued to deteriorate in 1930 and unemployment in the Valley increased, support for the organization waned. By midsummer 1930 Lower Rio Grande Valley, Inc., was experiencing severe financial difficulties. Only $2,500 had been raised to finance the organization's operations. The McAllen Monitor noted that many Valley organizations which had made financial pledges had failed to honor them.[20] After mid-1930 there were no further references in the Valley press regarding Lower Rio Grande Valley, Inc. The short-lived organization apparently died for lack of financial support.

Throughout 1930 many small contingents of Texas Mexicans continued to leave the Valley. Departures of individual families and of small groups of repatriates received little attention in the press. Nevertheless, by the fall of 1930 thousands of Texas Mexican families had sold their belongings and returned to Mexico.[21] Lower Rio Grande Valley businesses began to suffer the consequences of the massive repatriation. Owners of retail concerns complained that the departures had significantly reduced sales of both industrial farm products and consumer goods.[22]

Repatriation from the Valley continued throughout 1931. News reports in January indicated that large numbers of Texas Mexican families were entering Mexico through Valley ports.[23] The American consul, John E. Holler, described the exodus of Texas Mexicans at Matamoros.

> The returning repatriates resemble gypsies as they usually return by either wagon or broken down motor car in which children, household furniture, and domestic animals are loaded.[24]

Holler endeavored to explain the exodus by noting that

> the Mexican repatriates appear to be returning to their country, due to the hard times in the United States, the difficulty of obtaining employment, and the fact that living costs are considerably cheaper in Mexico than in the United States.[25]

Holler ignored, however, the most important factor in the decision of those who repatriated: the climate of terror and panic resulting from the Immigration Service's deportation campaign.

South Texas Repatriation

Another factor that gave impetus to repatriation from South Texas was the opportunity for the Texas Mexicans to own land in Mexico. During the early years of the Depression the Mexican government established a number of agricultural colonies in northern Mexico which attracted thousands of tenant farmers and agricultural laborers from the farms and ranches of South Texas. One of the most important of these colonies was the Don Martín Colony located about 80 miles southwest of Nuevo Laredo. Although a number of Mexicans from northern Mexico were granted land at this colony, most of the colonists came from the farms and ranches of South Texas.

Throughout 1930 reports periodically appeared in the Texas press regarding opportunities to acquire land at the Don Martín Colony. These reports, which usually originated with Mexican consular officials in Texas, outlined in detail the requirements to obtain land and the benefits to repatriates who settled at Don Martín.[26] The reports

undoubtedly accelerated repatriation for they often exaggerated opportunities at Don Martín.

By January 1930, a few families from South Texas began to return to Mexico to take advantage of the Mexican government's offer of free land at Don Martín. On 30 January a reporter for Laredo Times recorded the departure of one of the first contingents of Texas Mexicans to pass through Laredo for Don Martín.

> What may be considered the beginning of a repatriation movement of Mexican families back to Mexico after being in the United States for the past 25 years or more to till the soil of their native land, is now underway with the emigration of 50 families, consisting of about 125 persons, who are being passed through the Mexican consulate and allowed the privilege of taking with them free of duty farming implements, household goods and other things necessary for their homes.[27]

In February the Eagle Pass Daily Guide announced that repatriation promised to assume larger proportions after the completion of the irrigation project at Don Martín later in 1930.[28] Small groups of tenant farmers and agricultural laborers from South Texas continued to emigrate to Mexico throughout the spring and summer of 1930.[29]

During the fall of 1930 the number repatriating from South Texas greatly accelerated. Most of the repatriates passed through Laredo on their way to Mexico. Press

reports in October indicated that arrivals at Laredo were increasing daily.[30] Most reports indicated that the repatriates were on their way to the Don Martín Colony. Virtually all of those repatriates assigned land at the project possessed automobiles, trucks, farm equipment, work animals, livestock, poultry, and household goods. Many of the settlers possessed some funds.[31] By December an average of about 250 persons were leaving the United States through Laredo each day.[32] A news report from Laredo estimated that at least 60 percent of the 1930 repatriates returned to Mexico

> well fixed financially and with a large supply of goods, as many went back with their families in good automobiles or on trucks and carried with them household goods, farming implements, tractors, radios, phonographs, and other goods. Many had good bank accounts.[33]

Substantial numbers of Texas Mexicans also departed for the Don Martín Colony during 1931. The largest number left Texas during the spring. By summer most of the land available for settlement had been assigned. Most of the South Texas repatriates who settled at the colony in 1931 possessed some economic resources. Reports of departing repatriates indicated that they often returned with farm equipment, automobiles, trucks, wagons, and personal belongings.[34]

Although the Don Martín repatriates were generally in good economic condition, most returnees from South Texas in 1931 were not. Many were destitute. The number of reports of repatriates in poor economic condition increased each month during 1931. By fall virtually all of the returnees were impoverished.[35] In order to alleviate congestion in Nuevo Laredo, the Mexican government provided free transportation to the interior of Mexico to thousands of destitute repatriates.

News reports describing the departure of Texas Mexicans from South Texas during the fall of 1931 often recounted their difficulties. In October the Laredo Times indicated that

> Reports reaching Laredo are that great numbers of repatriates in cars, trucks or afoot are to be found all along the highway from Laredo to San Antonio, some of them having their trucks so heavily laden with household goods and other belongings that members of the family are compelled to walk.[36]

Virtually all accounts of Texas Mexicans returning to Mexico during this period emphasized the deplorable economic condition of the repatriates. A reporter for the Laredo Times observed that

> One traveling along the San Antonio highway any day now cannot but be impressed by the hundreds of Mexican nationals, treking back to their native land after

> determinate stays in the U.S. Most of these repatriates are in a sorry fix, many of them are poverty stricken.[37]

In November, when 300 to 400 Texas Mexican repatriates were departing through Laredo each day, a correspondent for the San Antonio Express recorded the return to Mexico of numerous families in wagons.

> Pioneer days when the "covered wagon" slowly made its way along the roadways blazing the path of civilization are practically being re-enacted on the roadways leading into Laredo these days, but not blazing the way of civilization. The "covered wagons" slowly winding their way to and through Laredo are those of Mexican repatriates headed for their native heaths of old Mexico.
>
> For some days past virtual streams of "covered wagons" have passed through Laredo, stopping first at the Mexican consulate to secure the necessary clearance papers before wending their path over the international bridge into Nuevo Laredo, Mexico. These are Mexican farmers and their families traveling in the original way--by wagon. With them are children who have been born and reared, and in some instances educated, in Texas. Their parents have been residents of Texas many years, some as long as 40 years, but never naturalized as American citizens.[38]

The exodus of Texas Mexicans from South Texas cotton farms and plantations continued, and in December El Tiempo de Laredo reported that

> along all highways of the state the trucks, cars and wagons of repatriates and their families are to be found in large numbers slowly wending their way to the border and their native country. Many of these people suffer many hardships for lack of food and clothes to keep them warm, it is said, but they doggedly continue their journeys southward.[39]

Repatriation of Texas Mexicans from South Texas reached its peak during the fall of 1931. Large contingents of repatriates returned to Mexico from various South Texas communities daily. The return of over 1,200 Texas Mexicans from Kenedy during the first 10 days of November was characteristic of these mass movements. Many of these South Texas residents had been employed as tenant farmers and agricultural laborers on cotton farms immediately prior to their departure for Mexico. The first contingent of 125 families comprised of 500 persons assembled in Kenedy and departed for Laredo on 2 November. They returned to Mexico in cars, trucks, and wagons owned by the repatriates. Many of the families in this contingent were reportedly in deplorable economic condition. Only a few possessed substantial economic resources. The first contingent was followed by several smaller caravans from the Kenedy area.[40]

One of the largest rural repatriation movements from South Texas occurred in the fall of 1931 when about 2,700 persons returned to Mexico from Karnes County. Most of these repatriates had been employed as tenant farmers and agricultural laborers on South Texas cotton plantations prior to their departure. Virtually all were destitute and

many faced starvation. The Mexican consulate in San Antonio was largely responsible for organizing and implementing this movement. The Laredo consulate also provided leadership by preparing for the arrival of the repatriates in Laredo. In addition, a number of Mexican and Mexican American organizations in Nuevo Laredo, Laredo, San Antonio, and other South Texas communities provided assistance. The Karnes City Comisión Honorífica assisted in organizing the return of the repatriates, while various Texas Mexican mutual self-help societies made financial and material contributions. Repatriation committees in several communities including Laredo initiated vigorous campaigns for funds and material assistance. Texas Mexican businesses made donations of material goods. Individuals from a number of South Texas communities volunteered vehicles to transport the repatriates from Karnes County to Laredo, where they were provided with free transportation to the interior of Mexico.[41]

Another repatriation movement was initiated in Gonzales County in the fall of 1931 when about 30 Texas Mexican tenant farmers returned to Mexico to a government-sponsored agricultural colony near Múzquiz, Coahuila. These Texas Mexican repatriates may be distinguished from

many other groups which departed the state in the fall of 1931 in that they possessed substantial economic resources and their decision to emigrate to Mexico was voluntary. The principal motivation for their return to Mexico after lengthy residence in Texas was the opportunity to own land in Mexico and the waiver of import duties on their belongings by the Mexican government. The Gonzales Comisión Honorífica and the Mexican consulate in San Antonio provided minimal organizational and moral support for the Gonzales County repatriates, who returned to Mexico in their own vehicles.[42]

In 1932 repatriation of Texas Mexicans from South Texas diminished significantly from that of the previous fall. In January the number of repatriates entering Mexico at Laredo averaged about 100 persons daily,[43] a decrease of about 200 persons from the fall of 1931. During the spring of 1932 the number of repatriates passing through Laredo reportedly decreased to an average of about 60 each day.[44] Departures at Laredo varied from 50 to 80 persons each day for most of the year. News reports often neglected to report where in South Texas the returnees had departed from as they passed through San Antonio and Laredo in 1932. The well-organized, massive

repatriation movements that occurred in 1931 contrasted greatly with the reduced flow in 1932 when most repatriates returned to Mexico as individual families. Not only were there fewer repatriates in 1932, but many of those who left were not Texas Mexicans; large numbers of repatriates from urban areas of the upper Midwest also passed through Texas on their way to Mexico.[45]

Repatriation from Central Texas

Virtually all of the small rural communities as well as the larger towns in Central Texas furnished repatriates during the early 1930s. Many Central Texas returnees had served as tenant farmers on cotton plantations for years prior to their return to Mexico. A larger number had been employed as day laborers. Some had established small commercial enterprises in the larger towns. Many of the operators of these businesses remained in Texas after most agricultural laborers and tenant farmers had returned to Mexico. However, as the Depression gained in intensity many of these Texas Mexican entrepreneurs also returned to Mexico.

By January 1931, 60 percent of the Texas Mexican residents of the Austin area had reportedly returned to

Mexico. Reports indicated that many Texas Mexican tenant farmers who remained in the area were planning to return because of reduced profits from agricultural operations caused by the Depression. Agricultural day laborers who had previously been in great demand were unable to secure work, and virtually all were suffering from the agricultural depression.[46]

In September 1931, La Prensa reported that 36 families comprised of 150 persons from Maxwell were making plans to return to Mexico. The 36 families commissioned two members of the Maxwell Comisión Honorífica to arrange with the Mexican government for their return and resettlement at the Don Martín Colony. In late September the Comisión Honorífica representatives met with Mexican consular officials in San Antonio to make the arrangements.[47] Early in October the consular officials traveled to Maxwell and assisted in organizing the repatriates' return to Mexico.[48]

In November 1931, large numbers of Texas Mexicans from diverse locations in Central Texas emigrated to Mexico. Most of these returnees departed in small groups or as individual families. The Eagle Pass Daily Guide reported the arrival of numerous groups of Central Texas repatriates at the border in early November. The newspaper stated that

many of the repatriates were from Georgetown and Austin and that most of them possessed some economic resources including vehicles.[49] El Porvenir recorded the arrival of approximately 28 Texas Mexicans from Waco in Monterrey in early November. They had been employed on cotton plantations in Central Texas for many years prior to their departure and reportedly possessed five trucks laden with agricultural implements, furniture, and personal belongings.[50] In mid-November the Mexican consulate in San Antonio assisted in the repatriation of about 60 Texas Mexican families from Luling. The consulate arranged for a special railroad car to transport the repatriates to Laredo.[51]

In January 1932 the Comisión Honorífica of Austin initiated efforts to return a number of destitute Texas Mexican families to Mexico. The president of the commission, Amador Candelas, appealed to the consulate in San Antonio for assistance. The consulate responded that no assistance was available for transportation within Texas. However, Vice Consul H. E. Torres stated that perhaps funds could be raised by appealing to the Mexican community in South Texas through La Prensa. Torres noted that if the

indigent Austinites could reach Laredo they would be transported to their destinations in Mexico.[52] The Comisión Honorífica was able to raise funds from local residents to return seven families consisting of 35 persons late in the month.[53]

In March 1932 another group of unemployed families from Austin appealed to the Comisión Honorífica for assistance. Seventeen families possessing limited financial resources wished to return to Mexico. Candelas initiated a campaign to raise funds for transportation of the indigent families. Local churches, mutual self-help societies, and individuals made small monetary contributions to a repatriation fund. The only Anglo Texan institution which provided assistance was the Community Chest, which donated canned goods. A dance was held to raise funds, but only $10 was raised. Eventually, sufficient funds were forthcoming and the repatriates were provided with transportation to Mexico.[54]

In late March of 1934, 120 families in Austin petitioned the Mexican consulate in San Antonio to assist them in their return to Mexico. Consul General Rafael de la Colina contacted the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations in an effort to secure funds for their transportation.

The Mexican government responded that funds were not available for transportation across Texas, but that if the families could reach the Texas-Mexican border, transportation to the interior of Mexico would be provided by the Mexican government. A request for transportation funds was also denied by the local relief committee in Austin. However, the committee did agree to furnish the repatriates with enough provisions to reach the border. Mexican Consul General de la Colina reportedly made other arrangements for the return of the repatriates.[55] The number of repatriates who returned to Mexico from Austin in 1934 is not available.

Repatriation from Southwest Texas

It is commonly believed that residents of the industrialized regions of the upper Midwest and Northeast were more severely affected by the Great Depression than were persons from rural areas of Texas. For example, Steed concluded in a 1968 study of Eagle Pass that

> most of the people had been spared the severity, hardships, and desperation felt by many in the more densely urban and industrialized areas of the country. But when confronted by exacting situations, they had responded admirably.[56]

Steed's study ignored the impact of the Depression on Texas Mexicans in Eagle Pass. Not only were agricultural workers adversely affected by the Depression, but in March 1931 large numbers of Mexican American employees of Eagle Pass businesses were discharged from their jobs and replaced by Anglo Texans. The Mexican Americans formed a Mexican Defense League to protest their discharge, but apparently nothing was done about the situation.[57] Eventually, several hundred long-term residents of Eagle Pass were compelled to return to Mexico.

Although there was relatively little repatriation from Southwest Texas in 1930, that which existed received virtually no attention from the local Anglo Texan press. The American consul at Piedras Negras, Paul H. Foster, reported that during the last quarter of 1930 2,233 repatriates entered Mexico at Eagle Pass, while 1,505 persons passed through Del Rio.[58] The Eagle Pass Daily Guide reported that most of the repatriates returned to Mexico to colonize land at the recently completed Don Martín Dam.[59] According to American consul Foster, the Mexican Migration Services authorities estimated that 25 percent of the repatriates entering Mexico from Southwest Texas in 1930 were destitute, while 25 percent possessed money, farm implements,

livestock, household goods, and automobiles or trucks. No explanation was given in Foster's report regarding the economic condition of the remaining 50 percent of Texas Mexican repatriates.[60] Presumably they possessed only limited economic resources.

Large-scale repatriation of Texas Mexicans from Southwest Texas apparently began later than similar movements from other rural areas of Texas. However, by the winter of 1930-1931 large numbers of Texas Mexicans were unemployed in the area. Wages paid to agricultural laborers in the Winter Garden district were so low that the workers were unable to support their families. At Crystal City 4,000 Texas Mexican workers formed the Catholic Workers Union to petition local landowners for higher wages.[61] Their efforts met with little success, which caused many to repatriate.

During the first five months of 1931, nearly 2,400 repatriates crossed the border at Eagle Pass.[62] In February 1931, a U.S. Border Patrol officer reported that long caravans of repatriates could be seen winding their way toward Del Rio. These caravans reportedly originated in the plains of Texas and Oklahoma.[63] Most of the repatriates who returned to Mexico from Southwest Texas during the spring of

1931 were resettled at agricultural colonies in northern Mexico. Others found employment as agricultural laborers on farms in Coahuila.[64]

Most of the repatriates who departed from Southwest Texas during the spring of 1931 were in poor economic condition. Many were destitute. Local welfare agencies in Piedras Negras, across the river from Eagle Pass, were unable to meet the needs of the hundreds of impoverished returnees. In March local authorities in Piedras Negras established a Comité Pro-Repatriados* to raise funds for the repatriates. The committee decided to sponsor a festival as a fundraising project. The major attraction of the festival was a bullfight which was organized by employees of the Mexican Migration Service. The Govenor of San Luis Potosí, Saturnino Cedillo, donated five bulls for the event. The festival was held on 22 March and was very successful; the substantial funds that were raised benefited hundreds of indigent repatriates who passed through Piedras

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*During the early years of the Depression local Comités Pro-Repatriados were established in several Texas Mexican border communities. These Committees, which received their support from Mexican Americans and Mexicans, provided assistance to destitute repatriates. The nature and extent of the aid varied among communities.

Negras for the next several months.[65] When these funds were exhausted, a second bullfight was held to raise additional funds.[66]

During the fall of 1931 repatriation from Southwest Texas reached its peak. In early November as many as 200 persons were entering Mexico at Eagle Pass each day. Some of the repatriates returned to their homes in the interior in their own vehicles. Destitute repatriates, on the other hand, were provided with free passes on the Mexican National Railroad. Officials of the Mexican Migration Service endeavored to expedite the passage of the repatriates through Piedras Negras and Villa Acuña, across the border from Del Rio, to avoid congestion in those border communities.[67] By the end of November 1931 nearly 12,000 repatriates had departed Texas through Eagle Pass and Del Rio.[68]

Although repatriation from Southwest Texas diminished significantly during 1932, substantial numbers of Texas Mexicans continued to abandon their homes in Texas because of widespread unemployment. Over 4,000 persons departed the state through Eagle Pass and Del Rio in 1932. Many of these repatriates were agricultural workers who departed in March when it became apparent that they would

not participate in the spring planting and that the unemployment problem would not soon be resolved. Departures usually occurred as single families or small groups. Only a few large caravans were reported.[69] After 1932 repatriation from Southwest Texas was reduced substantially, although some emigration from the area continued for the duration of the Depression.

Repatriation from West Texas

Few records exist of Texas Mexican emigration from West Texas to Mexico during the Great Depression. Repatriation--usually by single families or small groups--received little attention in local newspapers. One reason is that departures from West Texas communities were fewer than those from many other areas of the state.

In February of 1930 a contingent of about 125 repatriates left Lorain for Mexico. These Texas Mexican tenant farmers had resided in Texas for over 25 years. They reportedly returned to Mexico to take advantage of land offered at the Don Martín Colony. This contingent apparently possessed substantial economic resources including farm implements, tractors, automobiles, and personal belongings.[70]

One of the largest movements of repatriates from West Texas to Mexico occurred after the mines at Terlingua and Shafter were closed in the early 1930s. About 600 Texas Mexicans were dependent upon the operation of quicksilver mines at Terlingua, while over 300 Texas Mexicans were employed by the American Metals Company in the silver mines at Shafter.[71] The San Angelo Standard-Times described the departure of the Texas Mexicans from Shafter in July of 1930 and the effects of their departure on the residential area of Shafter.

> Pretty soon 300 people left Shafter to make a living somewhere else. A lot of the Mexican laborers took the doors, windows, and roofs of their rock and adobe cottages and you should see the buildings now, after a year of rain and frost and wind and broiling sun.[72]

Virtually all of the Texas Mexican miners and their families eventually returned to Mexico. The Mexican consul at Presidio reported that Texas Mexicans in the region had been devastated by the closing of the mines; they were soon destitute and compelled to turn to the Red Cross for aid.[73] La Prensa reported that in late 1930 departures from Ojinaga, across the border from Presidio, had increased substantially on the Mexican National Railroad to the interior of Mexico.[74]

In February 1931, La Prensa reported that caravans of repatriates could be seen returning to Mexico along many of the highways of West Texas. Many of these caravans were departing from Texas through Presidio. The departures were attributed to three factors: a lack of work, offers of land in Mexico by the Mexican government, and an anti-Mexican campaign in many areas of the state.[75] A prolonged and severe drought was responsible for much of the unemployment in West Texas during the spring of 1931. Mexican consular reports indicated that Texas Mexican residents of West Texas had been devastated by the extended drought.[76]

During the fall of 1931 Texas Mexicans continued to abandon their homes in West Texas. In September one group of about 20 Texas Mexican families from San Angelo petitioned the Mexican government for assistance in their return to Mexico. This group indicated that it possessed few resources and would be unable to sustain themselves much longer. They emphasized that they lacked the financial resources to journey to Mexico. The Mexican government responded that no funds were available for transportation within Texas; however, free transportation would be provided from the Texas-Mexican border.[77]

Some repatriation from West Texas continued in 1932. One report indicated that a few of the tenant farmers from the large cotton plantations of West Texas returned to Mexico with substantial resources. One Mexican who had been engaged in the cattle business returned through Del Rio with over 60 head of cattle. Another group of 17 farmers departed with automobiles, farm equipment, wagons, livestock, and poultry. Those Texas Mexicans departing from West Texas in 1932 reportedly had been long-time residents of the state.[78]

Conclusions

Studies of Mexican repatriation have shown that organized repatriation of Mexicans in other areas of the United States usually originated in urban centers. This contrasts with Texas, where most repatriation originated in rural areas. Most rural Texas Mexican repatriates had been employed as tenant farmers or agricultural laborers prior to their departure for Mexico. Many of the repatriates had resided in Texas for 20 or more years. Frequently their children had been born, reared, and educated in Texas. These long-time residents of Texas often hesitated to return to Mexico. However, as the Depression gained in intensity many Texas Mexicans decided to return to Mexico.

Another factor which distinguished Texas repatriation from repatriation in other states was the lack of involvement of Texas welfare agencies. Previous studies have shown that local welfare agencies were largely responsible for organizing and implementing Mexican repatriation movements in other areas of the United States. However, during the early years of the Depression relief agencies in rural Texas were poorly organized or nonexistent. Later, as the Depression gained momentum, many rural relief agencies collapsed from lack of community support. Those that survived usually lacked both funds and personnel to assist in repatriation.

One institution that offered assistance in the repatriation of Texas Mexicans was the local Mexican consulate. Mexican consular officials provided a number of services that facilitated repatriation. Employees of Mexican consulates often provided organizational expertise for groups desiring to return to Mexico. In addition, consular officials often provided leadership in raising funds to return destitute Texas Mexicans. Another important role of the Mexican consulate was that of liaison between prospective repatriates and the Mexican government. Prospective Texas Mexican repatriates often learned of employment

opportunities in Mexico from their local consulate. In addition, they also obtained information from the consulate regarding free transportation from the Texas-Mexican border to the interior of Mexico and the waiver of import duties on belongings.

Three different types of organizations provided assistance to returning rural Texas Mexicans: Comisiones Honoríficas, mutual self-help societies, and Comités Pro-Repatriados. The Comisiones Honoríficas were extensions of the Mexican consulates organized at the local level. They provided information to prospective repatriates regarding opportunities in Mexico, assisted in organizing groups of Texas Mexicans who desired to return to Mexico, and provided leadership in raising funds to transport repatriates to the Texas-Mexican border. Involvement of mutual self-help societies was usually limited to financial and material support. The societies made direct contributions to and sponsored benefits for thousands of returning Texas Mexicans. The Pro-Repatriate committees provided basic necessities to destitute Texas Mexicans when local welfare agencies failed to meet their needs. These committees, which came into existence in Texas-Mexican border

communities, were effective in soliciting financial and material support from Texas Mexican businesses and individuals.

It has been asserted that, with the advent of the Depression and widespread unemployment, the large landowners, growers, and businesses dependent upon Mexican workers began to promote repatriation of surplus Mexican labor. There is no evidence to indicate that this occurred in Texas. In fact, in the lower Rio Grande Valley the large growers and businesses which employed many Texas Mexicans initiated campaigns to limit repatriation and deportation.

A major concern of repatriation scholars has been to identify the causes of massive Mexican repatriation in the Depression era. Previous studies have considered the actions of welfare agencies the principal cause for the repatriation. In Texas, however, repatriation from rural areas was prompted by a multitude of factors. It is virtually impossible to assess the relative importance of these factors because they varied significantly among rural regions of the state. For example, repatriation from the lower Rio Grande Valley was given impetus by an intensive deportation campaign, while the opportunity to own land in Mexico was a primary consideration of many Mexicans from South and

Southwest Texas. Moreover, the importance of various causes varied among the individual repatriates and between groups of repatriates because of their diverse circumstances.

Nevertheless a number of important causes of repatriation from Texas can be identified. These causes may be viewed as "push" factors which existed in the United States and "pull" factors which existed in Mexico. Repatriation push factors included pressures resulting from an intensive deportation campaign, the failure of relief agencies to provide assistance to impoverished Texas Mexicans, the collapse of the Texas agricultural industry and a lack of employment opportunities for Texas Mexicans, a severe drought which devastated Texas agriculture, and widepsread discrimination against Texas Mexicans. Repatriation pull factors included opportunities to acquire land in Mexico, opportunities for employment in Mexico, provision of transportation from the Texas-Mexican border to the interior of Mexico, abolition of import duties on the repatriates belongings by the Mexican government, and lower living costs in Mexico.

One of the most clouded issues involves the economic status of the repatriates. It has often been asserted that repatriation campaigns were initiated by welfare agencies to relieve the burden of caring for thousands of unemployed

Mexicans. Yet during the early years of the Depression many Texas Mexicans returned to Mexico independent of welfare agencies and in good economic condition. Prior to 1931 many Texas Mexican repatriates from rural areas of Texas possessed substantial economic resources. These long-time Texas residents, many of whom had been employed as tenant farmers, had accumulated belongings including vehicles, farm equipment, work animals, livestock, poultry, furniture, household goods, and personal belongings. Some of the repatriates had accumulated savings.

However, as the Depression gained in intensity an increasing number of rural Texas Mexican repatriates returned to Mexico in poor economic condition. After 1930 large numbers of the returnees from rural areas were destitute. Apparently many Texas Mexicans refused to abandon their homes when economic conditions began to deteriorate during 1929 and 1930. Even after they became unemployed, and there was little prospect of employment, large numbers remained in Texas hoping for improved economic conditions. During these months of unemployment their savings were depleted. After their economic resources had been exhausted, thousands of destitute Texas Mexicans reluctantly returned to Mexico where prospects for employment appeared to be more favorable.

Photograph 1. Repatriates Return to Mexico, 1930 (Courtesy of the Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin).

Note: In 1930 Pablo Baiza and his family returned to Mexico after 15 years in Texas. Their departure was prompted by continual harassment by Texas officers. All of their belongings were loaded in a single wagon drawn by four burros. Their arrival in Mexico was not recorded by Mexican Migration Service authorities for they departed from Texas at a remote river crossing in West Texas. The Baiza family remained in Mexico only a short time. They returned to Texas where they lived for many years.

SOURCE NOTES

1. San Antonio La Prensa, 5 May 1929, p. 4; San Antonio La Prensa, 14 May 1929, p. 5; Edinburg Hidalgo County-Independent, 31 May 1929, p. 5; San Antonio La Prensa, 16 June 1929, p. 2; San Antonio La Prensa, 20 June 1929, p. 4; Edinburg Hidalgo County-Independent, 12 July 1929, p. 1; Edinburg Hidalgo County-Independent, 16 August 1929, p. 1.

2. Laredo Times, 18 June 1929, p. 5.

3. Edinburg Hidalgo County-Independent, 12 July 1929, p. 1; Laredo Times, 30 July 1929, p. 1.

4. San Antonio La Prensa, 16 June 1929, p. 2; San Antonio La Prensa, 20 June 1929, p. 4; Edinburg Hidalgo County-Independent, 16 August 1929, p. 1; Eagle Pass Daily Guide, 30 August 1929, p. 1.

5. San Antonio La Prensa, 16 June 1929, p. 2; San Antonio La Prensa, 20 June 1929, p. 4.

6. San Antonio La Prensa, 16 June 1929, p. 2; San Antonio La Prensa, 20 June 1929, p. 4; Edinburg Hidalgo County-Independent, 16 August 1929, p. 1; Eagle Pass Daily Guide, 30 August 1929, p. 1.

7. San Antonio La Prensa, 16 June 1929, p. 2; San Antonio La Prensa, 20 June 1929, p. 4; Eagle Pass Daily Guide, 30 August 1929, p. 1.

8. San Antonio La Prensa, 20 June 1929, p. 4.

9. Eagle Pass Daily Guide, 30 August 1929, p. 1.

10. San Antonio La Prensa, 28 April 1929, p. 1; San Antonio La Prensa, 29 April 1929, p. 1; San Antonio La Prensa, 5 May 1929, p. 1.

11. San Antonio La Prensa, 29 April 1929, p. 1; San Antonio Express, 11 May 1929, p. 10.

12. Laredo Times, 15 September 1929, p. 2; El Tiempo de Laredo, 16 September 1929, p. 6; Edinburg Hidalgo County-Independent, 20 September 1929, p. 4.

13. Laredo Times, 15 September 1929, p. 2; El Tiempo de Laredo, 16 September 1929, p. 6; Edinburg Hidalgo County-Independent, 20 September 1929, p. 4.

14. Laredo Times, 15 September 1929, p. 2; El Tiempo de Laredo, 16 September 1929, p. 6; Edinburg Hidalgo County-Independent, 20 September 1929, p. 4.

15. Edinburg Hidalgo County-Independent, 13 December 1929, p. 5.

16. Edinburg Hidalgo County-Independent, 13 December 1929, p. 5; McAllen Monitor, 11 July 1930, p. 3.

17. Edinburg Hidalgo County-Independent, 13 December 1929, p. 5; San Antonio La Prensa, 19 March 1930, p. 6; Edinburg Hidalgo County-Independent, 16 May 1929, p. 1; McAllen Monitor, 11 July 1930, p. 3.

18. McAllen Monitor, 11 July 1930, p. 3.

19. McAllen Monitor, 11 July 1930, p. 3.

20. McAllen Monitor, 11 July 1930, p. 3.

21. San Antonio La Prensa, 26 October 1930, p. 1; San Antonio La Prensa, 16 November 1930, p. 1.

22. San Antonio La Prensa, 16 November 1930, p. 1.

23. Eagle Pass Daily Guide, 29 January 1931, p. 1.

24. Washington, D.C., National Archives, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59 (hereafter cited as N.A./R.G.), File 311.1215/25.

25. N.A./R.G. 59, File 311.1215/25.

26. Laredo Times, 30 January 1930, p. 1; El Tiempo de Laredo, 30 January 1930, p. 4; Eagle Pass Daily Guide, 29 April 1930, p. 1; Eagle Pass Daily Guide, 1 May 1930, p. 1; San Antonio La Prensa, 11 June 1930, p. 4; Laredo Times, 13 June 1930, p. 5; San Antonio La Prensa, 27 July 1930, p. 1; San Antonio La Prensa, 17 August 1930, p. 6; Laredo Times, 2 September 1930, p. 1; El Tiempo de Laredo, 2 September 1930, p. 5; San Antonio La Prensa, 1 October 1930, p. 4; Eagle Pass Daily Guide, 16 October 1930, p. 1; Laredo Times, 13 November 1930, p. 1; San Antonio La Prensa, 16 November 1930, p. 1.

27. Laredo Times, 30 January 1930, p. 1.

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CHAPTER VIII

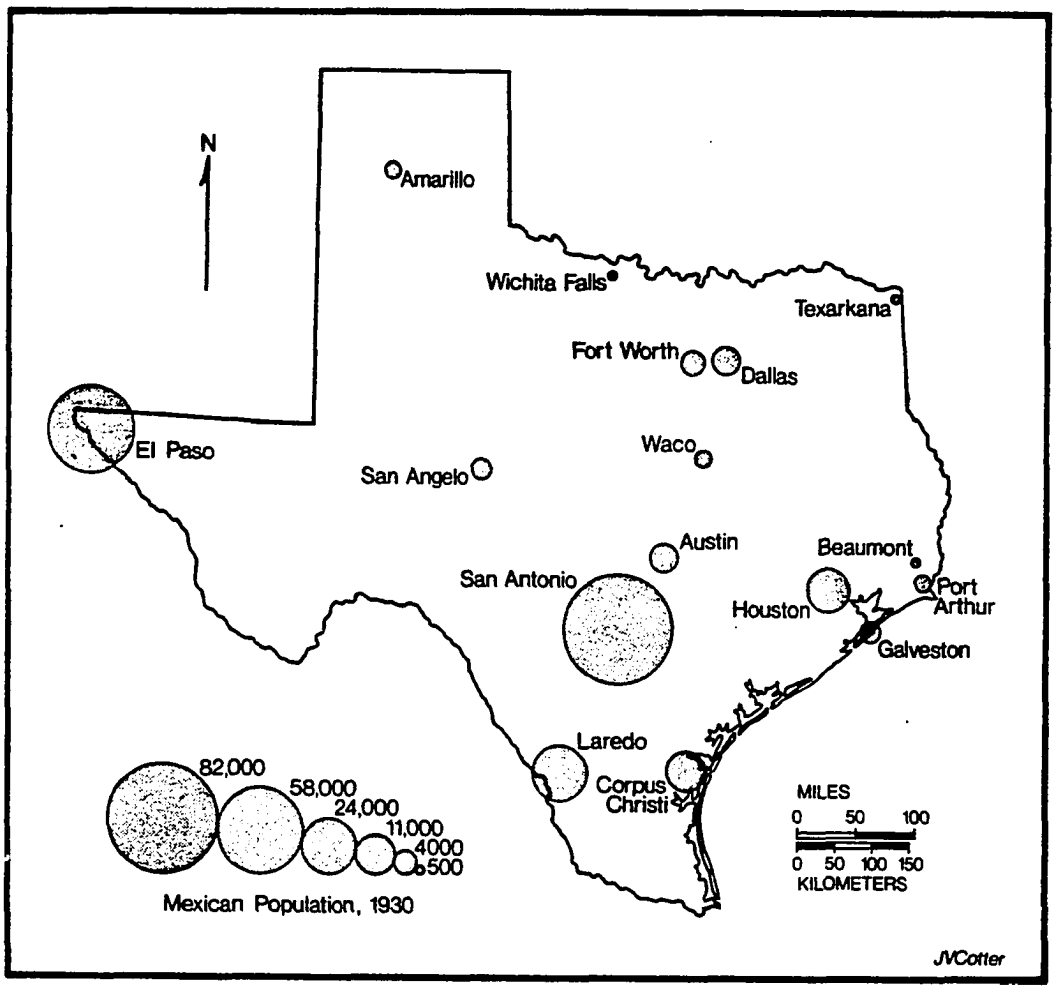
REPATRIATION FROM URBAN TEXAS

Introduction

Although most Texas Mexicans repatriated from rural areas of the state, a substantial number returned to Mexico from urban areas. Repatriation from urban and rural areas occurred simultaneously. Most urban repatriation occurred in the early Depression years from 1929 through 1932. This chapter will focus on these years, although some attention will be given to events that occurred after 1932. Data for repatriation from urban areas of the state are no more complete than are data for rural Texas. Nevertheless, sufficient data are available to show the nature and extent of urban Texas repatriation. This chapter will document and analyze Texas Mexican repatriation from four urban areas: San Antonio, Houston-Galveston, Dallas-Fort Worth, and El Paso.

FIGURE 2

URBAN MEXICAN POPULATION, 1930



Source: U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Population, vol. 3, pt. 2, p. 1015.

Repatriation from San Antonio

Organized, massive repatriation campaigns occurred in many urban areas of the United States with large Mexican populations--including Los Angeles, Detroit, Chicago, and Gary, Indiana--but apparently they were never carried out in San Antonio. Reports of large-scale repatriation from San Antonio did not appear in the local press until 1931. Nevertheless, the American consul in Nuevo Laredo, Richard F. Boyce, reported that 3,318 Texas Mexicans left San Antonio for Mexico during the last six months of 1930.[1] It is probable that the number of repatriates actually departing from San Antonio during the period was greater than that reported by Boyce.

Statistical data on repatriation from San Antonio are not available for 1931. However, it is probable that more Texas Mexicans returned to Mexico from San Antonio in 1931 than in any other Depression era year. During the spring of 1931 a report from San Antonio indicated that a number of families were making arrangements to return to Mexico to settle at agricultural colonies sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture and Development. One group of 125 families had negotiated an agreement with the Mexican

government to form an agricultural cooperative on an hacienda in Durango in Central Mexico.[2]

During the spring of 1931 the Mexican Consul General in San Antonio reported to the Ministry of Foreign Relations in Mexico City that many Mexican residents of San Antonio wished to return to Mexico in their vehicles. However, they were unable to because they did not possess current license plates nor did they have funds to purchase the plates. On 17 March, L. Perez Abreu, an employee of the consul general, met with San Antonio Mayor S. O. Hamm to seek his intervention on behalf of these Texas Mexicans. The consul general wanted Hamm to ask the Texas Highway Patrol to allow the San Antonio residents to drive their vehicles to Laredo without current license plates. Texas officials apparently denied the request, for many Texas Mexicans continued to experience difficulty in removing their vehicles to Mexico.[3]

During the fall of 1931, when repatriation from Texas reached its peak, several large contingents of repatriates returned to Mexico from San Antonio. One contingent of approximately 300 persons in critical economic condition left San Antonio in mid-October. The Mexican consul general from San Antonio, Eduardo Hernández Cházaro,

arranged for their return. At Nuevo Laredo the Mexican government issued the impoverished repatriates free rail passes to their destinations in Mexico.[4]

By January 1932, thousands of Texas Mexicans in San Antonio were in poor economic condition. Many were destitute. The income for thousands was obtained from one or two days of relief work each week. Many others were unable to secure any employment.[5] These conditions accelerated repatriation from the city. In early January over 1,000 Texas Mexicans from San Antonio returned to Mexico.[6]

During the spring of 1932 Mexican Consul General Hernández Cházaro continued his efforts to help unemployed, destitute Mexicans in San Antonio return to Mexico. In February Hernández Cházaro organized and implemented the return of 82 Texas Mexicans to Laredo. Vehicles used to transport the indigent residents were furnished by the Texas Mexican community of San Antonio. A group of nine families in their own vehicles accompanied the main contingent to Laredo. Upon their arrival in Laredo, the repatriates were met by members of the Comité Pro-Repatriados--a Texas Mexican relief organization which assisted impoverished repatriates--who provided them with food and other provisions for their journey in Mexico. The Mexican government

furnished many of the repatriates with free transportation to their destinations in Mexico.[7]

In October 1932, the Bexar County Central Relief Committee was organized.[8] Soon afterward it began to promote repatriation of unemployed Texas Mexicans. The committee volunteered to pay the transportation from San Antonio to Laredo of Texas Mexicans in groups of 50 persons. The Mexican consul general in San Antonio secured an agreement from the Mexican government to provide transportation from Laredo to the interior of Mexico for all who wished to return.[9] This repatriation effort met with little success. Apparently by the fall of 1932 few residents of San Antonio desired to return to Mexico, for there is no indication that the Central Relief Committee assisted in the repatriation of any Texas Mexicans. By 1932 reports of widespread hardships encountered by repatriates in Mexico had filtered back to San Antonio, and Texas Mexicans were reluctant to return.

Most efforts by the Mexican government to promote the return of Texas Mexicans were successful. An exception occurred in 1933 when the Mexican government initiated a campaign to recruit Texas Mexicans for road construction work in Mexico. An intensive campaign was undertaken in San

Antonio in February to recruit and repatriate 1,000 laborers for the Laredo-Mexico City highway. The campaign was initiated by the Mexican Department of Highways, which announced that the workers would not receive a fixed wage for their labor but would be paid on a contract basis. The Mexican consul general in San Antonio was assigned responsibility for recruiting the 1,000 workers from San Antonio.[10] In its eagerness to assist in this endeavor, the Bexar County Central Relief Committee agreed to provide free transportation from San Antonio to Laredo for all returnees.[11]

The Mexican consulate in San Antonio anticipated that hundreds of local residents would be willing to return to Mexico to work on the highway project. However, only six persons registered to return on the first day applications were accepted.[12] In an effort to promote interest the consul general initiated a media campaign to inform residents of San Antonio and the surrounding area of the road construction program. Frequent news reports in the South Texas press encouraged repatriates to register with the Mexican consulate.[13] Nevertheless, little interest was created by this publicity. Two weeks after the recruitment campaign was initiated only 80 persons from San Antonio had registered to return.[14] On 20 February 1933 these workers

departed for Laredo.[15] Subsequent efforts at recruitment were unsuccessful. Therefore the highway recruitment campaign was discontinued.

Repatriation from Houston-Galveston

As the Depression intensified hundreds of industrial concerns in the Houston-Galveston area reduced their labor forces. Many Texas Mexicans were discharged from their jobs when cotton compresses were closed and when the fishing industry curtailed operations in 1930. Many unemployed Texas Mexicans encountered difficulties in obtaining back wages from bankrupt industrial concerns. By the winter of 1930-1931 thousands of Texas Mexicans in the Houston-Galveston area were unemployed. Many were destitute and in need of assistance.[16]

During the early years of the Great Depression a number of displaced Texas Mexican industrial workers from the Houston-Galveston area returned to Mexico. The Mexican consul in Houston reported that in the first 11 months of 1930 333 Texas Mexican families repatriated from Houston. This number probably included only those families who registered with the Mexican consulate prior to their departure,[17] since the American consul at Nuevo Laredo

stated that 895 former Houston residents entered Mexico at Laredo during the last six months of 1930.[18]

In January 1931 the Mexican consul at Houston, Daniel Garza, initiated efforts to return a number of Texas Mexicans. The consul arranged for the return of about 50 families to Mexico to be settled at the Don Martín irrigation project. Local Comisiones Honoríficas and Brigadas de la Cruz Azul were instrumental in raising funds for these repatriates.[19]

Although most Texas Mexican residents of the Houston-Galveston area were unemployed throughout 1931, many refused to leave the area; they hoped for improved economic conditions. However, the Houston-Galveston economy continued to deteriorate. In 1932 the Junta Patriótica Mexicana of Galveston assisted a number of destitute Texas Mexicans in their return to Mexico. The honorary vice consul at Galveston, R. G. Muñive, contacted the Missouri-Pacific Railroad to secure reduced rates for indigent Texas Mexicans who wished to return. The Junta Patriótica Mexicana also raised funds for the return of impoverished Texas Mexicans.[20]

Throughout the Depression small groups of Texas Mexicans from the Houston-Galveston area abandoned the state. In June 1933, for example, two contingents with a

total of 79 repatriates were assembled at Houston by the Mexican consul and provided transportation to Mexico. The trucks carrying these repatriates were so crowded that the returnees were required to stand the entire trip--a distance of about 350 miles.[21]

Repatriation from Dallas-Fort Worth

The sheer number of repatriates from the Dallas-Forth Worth urban area was less important than in many other areas of the state. A few Texas Mexicans repatriated during 1929 and the early months of 1930. After June 1930 the number leaving the Dallas-Fort Worth area increased significantly. An American consular dispatch indicated that 912 Texas Mexicans from Dallas and Fort Worth entered Mexico at Laredo in the last six months of 1930.[22] However, the largest number of departures from the area did not begin until 1931.

By January 1931 thousands of Texas Mexicans in Dallas and Fort Worth were unemployed. C. W. Woodman, director of the U.S. Farm Labor Bureau, reported that 4,000 heads of household, many of whom were Texas Mexicans, were unemployed in Fort Worth,[23] while about twice that number were without jobs in Dallas.[24] La Prensa reported that the

Texas Mexican colonies in Dallas and Fort Worth were being reduced each day by repatriation.[25] In late January the Mexican consul at Dallas provided transportation to the border for a number of destitute Dallas residents.

Repatriation from the Dallas-Fort Worth area gained momentum throughout 1931. In the fall of 1931 the Rev. G. A. Walls, pastor of the Mexican Presbyterian Church and superintendent of the Mexican Mission in Fort Worth, initiated a campaign to finance the return of unemployed Texas Mexicans. A number of families returned to Mexico in vehicles owned by the Mexican Mission. On 4 November the first contingent of 20 families departed Fort Worth for Laredo. Although these departures were initiated and implemented by Reverend Walls, they had the support and approval of the Dallas Mexican consul, Juan E. Anchondo.[26] In early December 700 Texas Mexican families, most of whom were suffering from extreme privation, departed the Dallas-Fort Worth area for Mexico.[27]

About 60 percent of the Texas Mexican residents of Dallas-Fort Worth eventually returned to Mexico. Of the approximately 5,000 Texas Mexican residents of Fort Worth in 1929, for example, only about 2,000 reportedly remained in the city in March of 1933.[28]

Repatriation from El Paso

Departure of Repatriates

Repatriation from El Paso is more difficult to document and analyze than movements from other urban areas of Texas because of the massive influx of repatriates from other states. The majority of repatriates who passed through El Paso during the Great Depression were from states other than Texas. Most were originally from California, although large numbers came from Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and elsewhere in the West. A few returnees from the upper Midwest also passed through El Paso. It is often difficult to distinguish between repatriates from Texas and repatriates from other areas of the United States. Newspaper reports often neglected to provide information on the sources of the returnees.

Another difficulty in documenting El Paso repatriation is that a massive deportation campaign and large-scale repatriation from El Paso occurred simultaneously. Moreover, it is sometimes impossible to differentiate between repatriates and deportees because they often departed El Paso together and continued their journey into Mexico together. Further, news reports and official government documents often used the terms "repatriates" and "deportees"

interchangeably. One newspaper report indicated that in the spring of 1931 only 25 percent of those persons leaving El Paso were deportees, while 75 percent were repatriates. An accurate figure for the entire Depression period, however, seems impossible to obtain.[29]

Large-scale repatriation from El Paso did not begin until 1930. By late March over 1,000 unemployed repatriates had entered Mexico at El Paso and were creating problems for municipal authorities in Ciudad Juárez. The repatriates, along with a number of deportees, lacked funds to return to their homes in Mexico. The mayor of Juárez, Gustavo Flores, appealed to the Mexican government to provide funds for their return to the interior. In late March the Mexican government announced that 3,000 pesos would be allocated for this purpose.[30] However, authorities in Mexico City failed to make these funds available immediately. Meanwhile, the movement of destitute repatriates and deportees continued through El Paso to Juárez. Throughout April groups of repatriates, municipal authorities, and officials of the Mexican Migration Service at Juárez petitioned the national government to alleviate the congestion created by the repatriates. These petitions received little attention from the national government,[31] which

apparently was unprepared to meet the crisis. Finally, in May of 1930, as conditions among the repatriates became critical, the Ministry of the Interior authorized passes on the Mexican National Railroad for stranded repatriates and deportees.[32] However, these passes were issued only to returnees actually in Juárez at the time; they were not intended to relieve long-term congestion.

By midsummer 1930, 40 to 50 persons were returning to Mexico through El Paso each day.[33] Some of the repatriates possessed vehicles and continued their journey to the interior without a stopover at Ciudad Juárez. Many others were destitute and lacked funds to travel further.[34] By late July nearly 2,000 persons in Juárez were awaiting transportation to the interior. Conditions were desperate in the city. In July the chief of the Mexican Migration Service, Eduardo Salazar, stated to an El Paso Herald reporter that in practically every case the repatriates were penniless.[35] In August Salazar noted that

> these people, recently deported from the United States or voluntarily returned to Mexico, are in critical condition in Juarez. Having neither funds or employment they face starvation unless transported to their original homes in the interior.[36]

The Juárez municipal government was unable to provide for the impoverished returnees. Finally, in mid-August the

Mexican government dispatched a special train to Juárez to remove them. Over 1,600 persons were returned to the interior of Mexico in 25 boxcars. Later, a second train was sent to transport the remaining repatriates to the interior.[37]

Massive repatriation continued at El Paso during the fall of 1930. Congestion worsened in Ciudad Juárez as the number of repatriates and deportees increased to about 100 a day. Large numbers of the recent arrivals continued to be destitute.[38] By mid-September 1,500 persons were stranded in Juárez, most of whom where dependent upon local charity for their existence. By the end of September over 2,000 persons were awaiting transportation to the interior. Periodically, the Secretary of the Interior would authorize the return of large numbers of repatriates on special repatriation trains, which would temporarily relieve congestion in Juárez.[39]

Repatriation through El Paso continued in 1931. A report in early January indicated that as many as 200 repatriates a day were entering Mexico at Ciudad Juárez.[40] The influx resulted in a continuation of the problems encountered in 1930. Once again many destitute repatriates experienced difficulty in securing transportation to the

interior. American Consul William P. Blocker reported that on 3 January the Mexican government dispatched a train to Juárez to transport over 2,000 destitute returnees to their homes. Blocker estimated that 70 percent of these emigrants were repatriates and 30 percent were deportees.[41] The congestion in Juárez was alleviated only temporarily. By mid-January over 3,000 more returnees were awaiting transportation inland. Hundreds of families had taken up residence at the Juárez customs house and railroad station. A few families reportedly found shelter in abandoned boxcars.[42] Conditions among the repatriates soon became desperate. McLean described the situation in Juárez in January:

> Up at the customs house, there is a large corral, where early in January more than two thousand repatriados camped and starved, huddled together, waiting for a kind government to provide them with transportation so that they could move on. Upon their little charcoal burners they cooked their tortillas and boiled their beans. Through the chilly nights they shivered because of insufficient clothing. The little Mexican stenographer told me that when it rained, the big examination rooms of the customs house were opened to them. Juárez citizens organized as best they could to provide food but there was much suffering. Women swarmed about the warehouses picking up one by one the beans which spilled through holes in the sacks.[43]

The indigent repatriates issued repeated appeals to Mexican President Pascual Ortiz Rubio for assistance. Ortiz Rubio

responded in late January by dispatching a train of 34 boxcars to Juárez. Over 3,200 persons were transported to the interior on this special train.[44]

Repatriation and deportation of Texas Mexicans from El Paso continued to intensify during the spring of 1931. In mid-March 1,200 returnees were stranded in Ciudad Juárez.[45] A few days later El Continental reported that the number of repatriates awaiting transportation to the interior had increased to 1,900.[46] Although Mexican Migration Service officials reported that in March only 2,472 persons entered Mexico at Juárez, the number was probably higher.[47] Apparently not all returnees were recorded by Mexican officials, for during the last three weeks of March the Mexican government issued 2,700 free railroad passes to destitute repatriates.[48] In addition, hundreds of persons returned in their own vehicles.

Most repatriates departing through El Paso during the spring of 1931 were in critical economic condition. Virtually every news report on repatriation referred to their deplorable condition.[49] According to Mexican Migration Service statistics, only 2 percent of the repatriates leaving the United States at El Paso possessed funds sufficient to sustain themselves for more than four months. Of

the 3,000 repatriates entering Ciudad Juárez in April, 75 percent received free rail passes to the interior.[50] Since only the destitute were eligible for free passes, no more than 25 percent of the repatriates possessed economic resources to reach their destinations in Mexico without assistance.[51]

During the early spring of 1931, many of the repatriates entering Mexico at Ciudad Juárez came from El Paso.[52] After March 1931, however, the relative importance of repatriation from El Paso decreased as repatriation from California, Arizona, Colorado, and other western states increased. Reports of repatriation activity at El Paso appeared frequently in the local press. Most of the articles reported the arrival of large caravans from states other than Texas or focused on problems created in Juárez by the influx of repatriates. Some Texas Mexicans repatriated from El Paso during the summer and fall of 1931; however, their departure received little attention in the local press.

Repatriation and deportation activity during 1930 and early 1931 devastated the Texas Mexican community of El Paso. In March 1931 La Prensa reported that many homes stood vacant in El Paso. A large number of Texas Mexican

businesses were bankrupted by the Depression and by the loss of business caused when customers left for Mexico. Many of the owners of these businesses themselves returned to Mexico.[53] In June 1931, the headlines of La Prensa proclaimed, "Hundreds of Houses Are Vacant." The article stated that numerous commercial enterprises, including hotels and restaurants which depended upon a Texas Mexican clientele, had ceased to operate. Throughout the barrios of South El Paso, an area occupied by Texas Mexican laborers, dozens of homes, rooming houses, and apartment buildings were vacant. Real estate concerns reportedly were among the most severely affected businesses.[54] The City of El Paso took advantage of the departure of thousands of residents from South El Paso to condemn many of the worst tenements on the south side of El Paso as unsafe. These buildings were subsequently destroyed.[55]

Although repatriation from El Paso peaked in the spring of 1931, limited emigration from the city occurred throughout the 1930s. During the summer of 1932 large numbers of impoverished Texas Mexicans, many of whom feared deportation, began to consider repatriation. However, most of the propsective repatriates lacked the economic resources to reach their destinations in Mexico. In

August a number of Texas Mexicans who wished to undergo repatriation met to form the Colonia Mexicana Unida (CMU)--an organization to facilitate repatriation from El Paso. Within days of its founding, the CMU boasted a membership of about 950 families. The organization was composed of businessmen, small industrialists, artisans, and workers. The CUM elected a president, secretary, and treasurer who were responsible for arranging for the return of the repatriates to Mexico.[56]

Two major problems confronted the CMU repatriates: obtaining transportation and transportation of their belongings. Many of the prospective repatriates were engaged in commercial and industrial activities in El Paso, and they wished to return with all of their belongings so they could reestablish themselves in business in Mexico. They wanted the Mexican government to exclude from duty their tools, equipment, and merchandise. In addition, they wanted free transportation for their belongings to their various destinations in Mexico.[57]

In an effort to solve these problems the leaders of the Colonia Mexicana Unida began negotiations with the Mexican government. On 26 August 1932, the CMU petitioned Mexican President Ortiz Rubio to provide free transportation

for the repatriates and their belongings to their homes in Mexico. In addition, they petitioned him to exclude from duty all possessions of the returnees.[58] Ortiz Rubio turned the petition over to the Ministry of Foreign Relations, which secured approval from the Ministry of the Interior to provide free rail passes for the El Paso repatriates. After a two-month delay the Mexican National Railroad authorized a 60 percent discount on all cargo belonging to the repatriates.[59] Further, the Mexican government waived duty on all commercial and personal belongings of the repatriates.[60]

Beginning in October 1932 a number of El Paso residents began to return to Mexico under the direction of the CMU. In order to avoid congestion in Ciudad Juárez the repatriates left El Paso in small groups. The total number of repatriates returned to Mexico by the CMU is not available. However, a news report in mid-October indicated an increased number of vacancies in the commercial district of South El Paso because of recent repatriation of Texas Mexicans.[61]

Discrimination

Repatriation of Texas Mexicans at El Paso was accelerated by an intensive anti-Mexican campaign. It is probable

that sentiment against Texas Mexicans was greater in El Paso than in any other Texas city. Anti-Mexican sentiment often manifested itself in job discrimination. As early as May 1929, El Continental reported emigration from the United States because of widespread harassment of workers.[62] The following October the El Paso City Council enacted an ordinance prohibiting the employment of aliens on construction projects financed by the city.[63] In August 1931, one of the last avenues for employment of Texas Mexicans was closed when the city prohibited the placement of aliens by the City Employment Bureau. At the time about 200 persons were being placed in jobs each week by the bureau.[64] Many of these persons were Texas Mexicans who were subsequently unable to secure employment.

In January 1931, a mass meeting of unemployed workers was held at El Paso. The meeting resulted in the formation of the Unemployed American Voters-League. Two of the major objectives of the organization were to have drastic consequences for Texas Mexicans: the discharge of alien workers from the railroads and the elimination of alien hiring practices by El Paso contractors, merchants, and employers. A leader of the League stated that

> American citizens of Mexican decent will not be discriminated against by the league. . . . It is the alien who has never become naturalized, never can nor expects to be and is holding jobs that unemployed citizens deserve, that we want to eliminate.[65]

Nevertheless, in an atmosphere of pressing emergency hundreds of Mexican American residents of El Paso lost jobs because of actions by the League. Soon after its formation, private business throughout El Paso came under intense pressure from the League to discharge Texas Mexican workers. Responding to this pressure, J. R. Martin of the U.S. Employment Service announced that no alien would be employed on construction projects at Fort Bliss. Martin stated that the last aliens had been eliminated when 11 persons had been turned over to the Immigration Service for deportation earlier that month.[66] Apparently, not all Texas Mexicans had been excluded from employment at Fort Bliss, for later in the month an additional 10 workers were deported to Ciudad Juárez.[67]

There was usually little opposition to efforts of the Unemployed American Voters-League to purge Texas Mexican employees from local businesses. One exception occurred in January 1931 when members of the League met with the Overland Street Mercants' Association to seek the

discharge of all their Texas Mexican workers. The Merchants' Association--an organization composed primarily of Jewish businessmen whose customers were largely Texas Mexicans--voiced opposition to discrimination against Texas Mexicans. They believed that Mexicans would boycott their stores if their Texas Mexican employees were discharged and that their businesses would be severely affected.[68]

El Paso labor unions initiated vigorous and sustained campaigns to prevent the employment of alien workers. In September 1930, the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen passed a resolution urging the mandatory employment of American labor exclusively in all departments of the national, state, county, and city governments.

> The brotherhood also favored enactment of a law requiring persons, firms and corporations doing business in the United States to employ at all times a number of native-born or naturalized citizens of the United States to reach at least 85 per cent of the total number employed. Native born or naturalized citizens of the United States would be eligible for jobs only in national, state, county or city government, and a clause in the labor law would make it unlawful for public officials to hire other than American labor.[69]

The Brotherhood's anti-Mexican campaign became more intense in the spring of 1931 when the Southern Pacific Railroad laid off a number of Anglo Texan workers while retaining

some Texas Mexican workers with more seniority. Railroad officials responded that they were only following the rules of seniority established by the union.[70]

The Central Labor Union (CLU) also played a critical role in the anti-Mexican campaign at El Paso. In March 1931, the CLU began a campaign to identify and eliminate alien workers employed by the El Paso public schools. The union sent a questionnaire to all school personnel requesting information on alien employees. The CLU maintained that all school personnel including teachers, laborers working on school construction projects, and employees of the schools' printing facility should be American citizens.[71] A few months later the CLU initiated a vigorous campaign to compel businesses and industrial plants to discharge all alien employees. A committee was appointed to meet with owners of businesses to insure that no aliens were employed by the private sector.[72]

The Central Labor Union also became embroiled in a controversy over the employment of Mexicans who resided in Ciudad Juárez but who crossed the border each day to work in El Paso. The number of alien commuters was estimated at between 1,700 and 3,500. The collapse of business activity and increased unemployment in El Paso was often attributed

to commuter labor.[73] Most of the commuters were employed as laborers, laundry workers, maids, domestic servants, clerks, and office workers.[74] By August 1930, unemployed El Pasoans began to urge restrictions on alien commuter labor.[75] Throughout 1931 the CLU campaigned for the restriction of commuter workers. One of their proposals was to close the International Bridge from 6:00 p.m. until 10:00 a.m. They believed that the shorter bridge hours would reduce the availability of alien commuter labor, thereby creating jobs for El Paso residents.[76] In September the CLU placed petitions urging shorter bridge hours with 41 local businesses and urged El Paso residents to sign them.[77] Although limited bridge hours were not adopted in 1931, other efforts to curtail commuter employment were effective, for later that month the El Paso Herald Post reported that not more than 400 Juárez commuters were employed in El Paso.[78]

During the fall of 1931, Texas Mexican workers at El Paso were frequently criticized by Anglo Texans for their refusal to pick cotton. Although wages had fallen to 35 cents a hundredweight, a level so low that workers could not support their families on it, local officials and community leaders would not accept the low pay scale as a

valid reason for workers not to pick cotton.[79] J. R. Martin of the U.S. Employment Service articulated the attitude of El Paso community leaders.

> The situation is simply ridiculous. . . . There are between 6000 and 7000 persons in El Paso and the smelter district who can do nothing but pick cotton. They flatly refuse to work, despite the offering of free transportation, house, fuel and water. The farmers are paying as much as they can.[80]

The county commissioners and Associated Charities met to discuss the dilemma. They decided that cotton pickers who refused work should be excluded from charity, and the Chief of Police threatened to arrest and jail pickers who accepted charity but refused work.[81] Early in October the headlines of the El Paso Herald-Post proclaimed, "Order Jobless to Find Work or Go to Jail." At a conference attended by Mayor R. E. Sherman, County Judge E. B. McClintock, Police Chief L. T. Robey, Sheriff Tom Armstrong, Deputy Sheriff E. S. Bache, and J. R. Martin of the Employment Service, it was decided that unemployed cotton pickers would be arrested and jailed.[82] Three days later the Herald-Post reported that 12 men had been arrested on vagrancy charges after they refused to go to the cotton fields. It was announced that the vagrants would be placed on the chain gang.[83] The campaign against Texas Mexicans who refused to accept jobs

picking cotton continued. La Prensa reported that many of the Texas Mexicans under detention in El Paso were carpenters, plumbers, bricklayers, and other skilled workers who lacked experience picking cotton.[84] In a further effort to force Texas Mexicans to accept cotton-picking jobs, 200 Texas Mexican families were purged from the United Charities relief roll. No Anglo Texans were refused aid for not picking cotton.[85]

Anglo Texans often became overzealous in their efforts to encourage Texas Mexicans to return to Mexico. In February 1931, a number of anti-Mexican agitators initiated a campaign to intimidate Texas Mexicans into repatriating. Civilians posing as Immigration Service inspectors detained and interrogated a number of Texas Mexicans. Legal Mexican residents of El Paso had their immigration papers confiscated. Texas Mexicans who were unable to produce immigration papers immediately were beaten. These attacks against Texas Mexican residents of El Paso caused a number of families to return to Mexico.[86]

Hostility toward Texas Mexicans at El Paso was also exhibited in letters to the editor and to public officials. A letter sent to Mayor R. E. Sherman reflected the frustration and resentment of many unemployed Anglo Texans. The

writers of the letter, identified as "Rifle Pall" and "Six shooter Bill," threatened to blow up City Hall if they were not given jobs within 30 days. Part of the letter reads:

> Brother we passed the court house the other day. Look who was a clerk, a Mexican.
> A Mexican, can you beat that? In a white man's place.
> Also by the city hall there sat two Mexicans.
> And white men walking around trying to get something to eat and something to pay house rent with.[87]

Although few letters to the editor of local papers were as overtly anti-Mexican as the above, newspapers frequently published letters which attributed the unemployment problem to Mexicans. These letters virtually always supported the deportation of Mexicans.[88]

Relief Agencies

During the early years of the Depression, when repatriation from El Paso was greatest, no organized relief agencies existed to meet the exigencies of the repatriates. Only intermittent, limited assistance was available to destitute returnees at El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. The demand for relief was so great and relief resources were so limited that the needs of most indigent repatriates could not be satisfied. Periodically efforts were made to organize relief programs for the repatriates in Juárez and El Paso. These efforts, however, generated only limited

community support. They usually collapsed for lack of financial and material support. Neither organizational structures nor resources existed in either El Paso or Juárez to provide for impoverished repatriates. Widespread suffering was thus the norm among thousands of repatriates who returned to Mexico through El Paso during the Depression.

The influx of thousands of indigent repatriates into Ciudad Juárez created immense problems for municipal authorities. Repatriates were often forced to remain in Juárez for several weeks before being transported to the interior of Mexico. They received little assistance from the state of Chihuahua and the Mexican national government. The United States government and the state of Texas provided no assistance whatsoever. El Paso relief agencies largely ignored their plight as they passed through the city. The burden of providing relief therefore fell upon Mexican and Mexican American residents of Juárez and El Paso. Most assistance was provided by businesses, organizations, and residents of Juárez, though limited assistance was also provided by the Texas Mexican community of El Paso.

The failure of local repatriate relief efforts may be largely attributed to a lack of funds. Drives to raise funds for the impoverished repatriates were periodically

inaugurated at El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. Local residents, however, were either unable or unwilling to contribute much to these funds. In one of the most successful repatriation relief drives, in January 1931, only $425 was contributed by businesses and individuals in El Paso.[89] A less successful drive the following April netted only $11.50.[90] A similar campaign initiated in February 1932 raised only $10.30.[91]

Committees to aid the repatriates were periodically organized at Ciudad Juárez and El Paso. These committees usually were able to provide only limited assistance. One of the earliest committees, formed in Juárez by January of 1931, was the Comité Municipal de Auxiliar Pro-Repatriados (Municipal Committee to Aid Repatriates). This committee was composed of and supported by local public officials and municipal authorities. An initial project of the committee was to provide temporary lodging for indigent families.[92] This project soon ceased to operate for lack of funds. Throughout most of 1931 the committee was able to provide only limited assistance because of a shortage of funds.

In late 1931 another committee was organized to assist repatriates. The Comité de Auxiliar Pro-Repatriados

(Committee to Aid Repatriates) was established by the Ciudad Juárez Chamber of Commerce. This committee began to make plans to open a public dining hall and a dormitory for indigent repatriates.[93] For a short time the two relief committees competed for limited financial resources. However, in January 1932 they united to form the Comité de Beneficiencia (Committee for Assistance).[94] This committee was more effective than its predecessors, and many impoverished repatriates who passed through Juárez benefited from its efforts.

Similar efforts to aid the repatriates were made in El Paso. The Comité de Beneficencia Pro-Repatriados (Committee for Assistance to Repatriates), organized in late 1931 by Mexican Consul General Luis Lupian G. and Cleofas Calleros of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, was composed of a number of Texas Mexican businessmen and professional persons from El Paso. No Anglo Texans were included on the committee. This committee initiated a campaign to raise funds to open a dining hall and a dormitory for the repatriates.[95]

During 1932 the El Paso Comité de Beneficencia Pro-Repatriados and the Ciudad Juárez Comité de Beneficencia engaged in a number of projects designed to assist the

thousands of returning repatriates. The major projects in both cities were dining halls and dormitories. In addition, the committees collected food, clothing, household goods, and other provisions.[96] A number of benefits were held in El Paso to raise funds for the repatriates. These benefits included concerts, dances, fiestas, and movies. Only limited funds were raised from them.[97]

Although local committees to benefit repatriates usually initiated relief efforts, businesses in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez donated most of the provisions. Local merchants were repeatedly requested to make donations of food, clothing, medicine, and other provisions.[98] Restaurants occasionally provided free meals for large groups of indigent repatriates.[99] Repatriates who possessed vehicles but lacked funds to purchase gasoline, oil, or tires could usually depend upon service stations in El Paso or Juárez for assistance.[100]

Conclusions

Although fewer Texas Mexicans were repatriated from urban than from rural areas of Texas, significant numbers of Texas Mexicans did return to Mexico from urban areas of Texas during the Great Depression. Unlike welfare agencies in many other urban areas of the United States, welfare

agencies in urban areas of Texas were not involved in massive repatriation campaigns. Available records indicate that only in San Antonio were efforts made by relief agencies to assist in repatriation. However, it appears that offers of free transportation from San Antonio to the Texas-Mexican border were ignored by most San Antonio residents, and few if any repatriates returned to Mexico at the expense of such agencies. This effort to promote repatriation from San Antonio was not initiated until 1932. By 1932 reports of widespread hardships encountered by repatriates in Mexico had filtered back to San Antonio, and Texas Mexicans were reluctant to return to Mexico.

Most repatriates from urban areas of Texas returned to Mexico in poor economic condition. Virtually all reports of Texas Mexicans leaving urban areas emphasized the impoverished circumstances of the repatriates. The possession of vehicles, tools, equipment, and merchandise was not in itself an indication of financial well-being. Repatriates who possessed vehicles often lacked funds to acquire license plates, oil, gasoline, tires, and repairs for their vehicles. Operators of small commercial enterprises often wished to return to Mexico with tools, equipment, and merchandise. Yet these entrepreneurs usually

lacked funds to transport their belongings to Mexico or to establish themselves there.

Several Mexican and Mexican American agencies and organizations assisted in the return of urban Texas Mexicans to Mexico during the Depression. The most important were the Mexican consulates, which organized and coordinated urban repatriation, arranged transportation for indigent repatriates, solicited financial and material assistance for impoverished repatriates, and petitioned the Mexican government for repatriate assistance. In addition, Mexican consuls served as liaisons between Texas Mexicans and the Mexican government. In this capacity the consular officials recruited workers for public works projects in Mexico and informed Texas Mexicans of job opportunities in Mexico. Information regarding transportation within Mexico and policies regarding import duties were also provided to repatriates by Mexican consular officials.

Urban Texas Mexicans also received assistance from a number of mutual self-help societies, comisiones honoríficas, and committees established to provide assistance to the repatriates. These organizations were often involved in soliciting of food, clothing, and other provisions from individuals and businesses and in drives to raise

repatriation funds. They provided transportation for destitute urban Texas Mexicans to the Texas-Mexican border. To a lesser extent they assisted in the organization of repatriation movements from urban areas of the state.

Repatriation from urban areas was often given impetus by intense anti-Mexican campaigns as well as a statewide Immigration Service deportation campaign. Texas Mexicans encountered increased job discrimination as the Depression gained momentum. They were not only denied jobs but were often discharged from jobs they had held for many years. Many Texas Mexicans initially refused to abandon their homes in Texas; however, after their savings were exhausted, they reluctanlty returned to Mexico.

Owners of small commercial enterprises, artisans, and professional persons were devastated by the Depression. This devastation was heightened by the repatriation and deportation of thousands of customers and clients. The effects of the Depression on Texas Mexican businesses was perhaps greatest at El Paso, where hundreds of commercial enterprises closed. Many of the owners of these businesses were compelled to return to Mexico.

Communities along the Texas-Mexican border experienced the full impact of repatriation and deportation

activity. El Paso and Ciudad Juárez were the most seriously affected. The influx of thousands of destitute repatriates into Juárez created immense, recurring problems. The Mexican government was incapable of effectively responding to the needs of the returnees. Repatriates often waited several weeks for transportation from the Texas-Mexican border to their hometowns in Mexico.

The burden of providing relief for the repatriates in border communities fell upon local authorities. National and state governments provided only minimal assistance to local border communities. Problems in caring for the needy frequently arose because border communities lacked the resources to aid the large number of returnees. At El Paso and Ciudad Juárez committees were formed to meet the exigencies created by the influx of repatriates. In general these committees were poorly organized and lacked sufficient financial and material resources. Consequently, widespread suffering occurred among thousands of impoverished repatriates who returned to Mexico through El Paso.

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81. El Paso Herald-Post, 16 September 1931, p. 14.

82. El Paso Herald-Post, 9 October 1931, p. 11.

83. El Paso Herald-Post, 12 October 1931, p. 1.

84. San Antonio La Prensa, 18 October 1931, p. 4.

85. San Antonio La Prensa, 25 October 1931, p. 8.

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97. El Paso El Continental, 24 January 1932, p. 6; El Paso El Continental, 27 January 1932, p. 3; El Paso El Continental, 28 January 1932, p. 1; El Paso El Continental, 30 January 1932, p. 3; El Paso El Continental, 4 February 1932, p. 8; El Paso El Continental, 11 February 1932, p. 1; El Paso El Continental, 17 February 1932, p. 2; El Paso El Continental, 26 February 1932, p. 7; El Paso El Continental, 4 March 1932, p. 1.

98. El Paso El Continental, 13 Janaury 1931, p. 1; El Paso El Continental, 16 January 1931, p. 1; San Antonio La Prensa, 18 January 1931, p. 5; El Paso El Continental, 26 March 1931, p. 3; El Paso El Continental, 27 March 1931, p. 1; El Paso El Continental, 12 November 1931, p. 1; San Antonio La Prensa, 15 November 1931, p. 3; El Paso El Continental, 15 November 1931, p. 2; San Antonio La Prensa, 16 November 1931, p. 2; El Paso El Continental, 4 December 1931, p. 1; El Paso El Continental, 15 January 1932, p. 1; El Paso El Continental, 3 February 1932, p. 3; El Paso El Continental, 22 February 1932, p. 8.

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CHAPTER IX

REPATRIATION CASE STUDIES

Introduction

On the evening of 18 October 1931, Americans across the nation gathered about radios to listen to an address by President Herbert Hoover. This address, delivered from Fortress Monroe, Virginia, launched a national drive to raise funds for jobless Americans. Hoover reasserted his belief in the doctrine of community responsibility for the unemployed and urged every American to become his brother's keeper. Hoover proclaimed that

> no government action, no economic doctrine, no economic plan or project can replace the God-imposed responsibility of the individual man and woman to their neighbors. This is a vital part of the very soul of the people. If we shall gain in this spirit from this painful time, we shall have created a greater and more glorious America. The trial of it is here now. It is a trial of the heart and conscience of individual men and women.[1]

Ironically, at the moment Hoover was delivering this address over 2,700 destitute Texas Mexicans--who were faced with starvation--were being returned to Mexico because their local

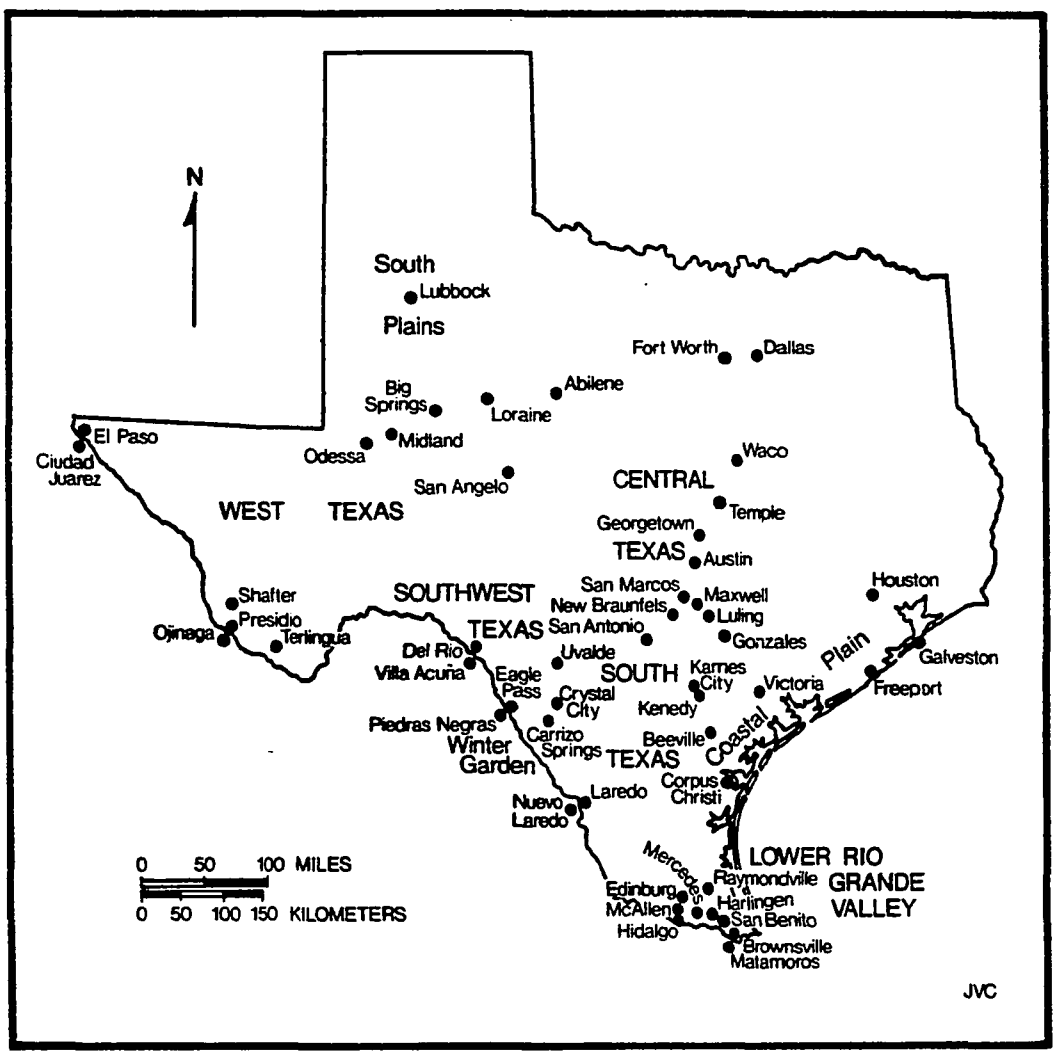
communities in Texas refused to accept responsibility for the welfare of their needy. These long-time Mexican residents of Texas and their U.S.-born children were forced to abandon their homes in Texas for the remote prospect of employment in Mexico.

Previous studies of Mexican repatriation have generally failed to examine the details of local movements. Most studies have been general in nature and limited in scope. Little is known about the initiation, organization, and implementation of repatriation movements from local communities in the United States, and confusion exists regarding financial, material, and moral assistance for such movements. In addition, little is known about the physical removal of most repatriates, and virtually nothing is known about the attitudes and expectations of those being returned. Moreover, the readjustment of repatriates to life in Mexico has long been neglected.

In an effort to provide details regarding these issues, this chapter will document and analyze four organized repatriation movements from Texas during the Great Depression. These four in-depth case studies are the Karnes City, Gonzales, Bridgeport, and Eighteenth of March repatriation movements.

FIGURE 3

SOURCES OF MEXICAN REPATRIATION



Karnes City Repatriation Movement

Introduction

The agricultural depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s proved devastating to thousands of Texas Mexican tenant farmers and farm laborers. By the summer of 1931, hundreds of Texas Mexican agricultural laborers in South Texas had been unemployed for months and had little prospect of future employment. Unemployment among rural Texas Mexicans increased enormously in the fall of 1931, when thousands of tenant farmers were discharged from their land. Agricultural workers who obtained jobs found wages so low that they were unable to support their families. Rural Texas Mexicans were experiencing extreme privation because of their financial plight. The situation was further complicated by the absence of organized relief agencies in many South Texas communities. Simultaneous to these events, the U.S. Immigration Service had launched a massive deportation campaign against Texas Mexican residents. In counterpoint, the Mexican government had initiated a program to encourage the return of Mexican expatriates to Mexico to engage in the reconstruction of that country. As a consequence of these push-pull factors, thousands of Texas Mexicans in South Texas began to consider repatriation.

However, a major obstacle to their return was a lack of financial resources to make the trip to their homes in Mexico.

The center of the unemployed, destitute Texas Mexicans in Texas was Karnes County, located between San Antonio and Corpus Christi in South Texas. Large numbers of unemployed tenant farmers and agricultural laborers were also found in the surrounding counties of Dewitt, Goliad, Bee, Wilson, Gonzales, and Atascosa. Because of its central location Karnes City became the focal point in the repatriation of thousands of indigent Texas Mexicans in the fall of 1931.

On 12 July 1931, about 2,000 impoverished Texas Mexicans congregated at Karnes City to discuss their tenuous situation. The meeting was attended by Mexican Consul General Eduardo Hernández Cházaro and several other consular officials from San Antonio. A news report indicated that many of the Texas Mexicans expressed a desire to return to Mexico. Hernández Cházaro explained to the group that the Mexican government welcomed the return of its citizens to Mexico. He emphasized that many employment opportunities existed in Mexico, since a number of irrigation and road improvement projects had been recently inaugurated and would require many workers. The consul general reviewed the legal

procedures for the return of expatriates to Mexico and told the group that each repatriate would be required to register with the Mexican consulate and obtain a repatriation certificate.[2] For the next several weeks privation increased among Texas Mexicans in South Texas. This privation was manifested in an increased desire by rural Texas Mexicans to return to Mexico. Economic conditions in South Texas deteriorated to the extent that the Texas press reported that many of the indigent Texas Mexican residents of Karnes and surrounding counties were planning to return to Mexico on foot.[3]

Organization of the Movement

Upon his return to San Antonio from Karnes City, Consul General Hernández Cházaro began to explore ways to assist the Texas Mexicans who had expressed a desire to return to Mexico. In a report to the Ministry of Foreign Relations on 8 September 1931, the consul general emphasized the increasingly desperate situation confronting approximately 800 families in the Karnes City area. The report included an urgent appeal for funds to assist in the return of the Texas Mexicans to Mexico. There was no immediate response from the Mexican government; it was the Mexican government's policy not to provide assistance to Mexicans in

the United States. On 6 October, Hernández Cházaro made a second appeal to the Ministry of Foreign Relations for funds to remove the 4,000 destitute Texas Mexicans to the border. After reviewing the request authorities in the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Relations responded that no government funds were available for this purpose. However, the Mexican government did agree to furnish free rail transportation for destitute repatriates from Nuevo Laredo to their destinations in Mexico.[4]

Initial response to the announcement that an organized effort was underway to return Texas Mexican residents to Mexico was overwhelming. The consul general in San Antonio was besieged by Texas Mexicans who expressed a desire to be repatriated. It soon became apparent, however, that many of those interested were not destitute. Some were Texas Mexicans with steady employment. Others were Texas Mexicans with substantial financial resources who were considering a return in order to take advantage of the offer of free transportation from Laredo to the interior of Mexico. Consul General Hernández Cházaro realized that only limited transportation would be available to remove the repatriates from Karnes City to the border. Therefore he initiated efforts to discourage Texas Mexicans from returning to Mexico. On

11 October the headlines of La Prensa reflected his message: "Mexicans Should Not Be Alarmed by the Departure of the Karnes City Caravan." The article noted that general economic conditions in Mexico were poor and that the repatriates would have difficulty in finding employment in Mexico.[5] Gainfully employed Texas Mexicans were urged not to abandon their jobs in Texas. Efforts were made to clarify the Mexican government's policy on transportation: only destitute repatriates were eligible for free transportation from the Mexican border to their hometowns in Mexico.[6] This effort to limit the return of Texas Mexicans to Mexico was not a reversal of the Mexican government's policy but a result of difficulties Consul General Hernández Cházaro was experiencing in arranging transportation to the Mexican border. He apparently feared that insufficient transportation would be available to return those Texas Mexicans in greatest need. His efforts apparently were effective; early reports indicated that 4,000 persons from 800 families would be returned from Karnes City,[7] but the actual number who were returned was approximately 2,700.

A number of Mexican and Mexican American agencies, organizations, commercial enterprises, and individuals assisted the Texas Mexicans in their return to Mexico. Many

of the organizations and businesses donated or raised funds for the repatriates. The most important agency--the Mexican consulate in San Antonio--provided little financial or material support, but the consul general provided leadership and expertise in organizing the movement. Consul General Hernández Cházaro was largely responsible for enlisting the support of the Texas Mexican community from South Texas. He made repeated appeals to the Texas Mexican community of South Texas to volunteer aid. These appeals were made through newspapers and by announcements on local radio stations.

Consul General Hernández Cházaro realized that the major problem involved in returning the repatriates would be transportation to the border. The removal of hundreds of families was an enormous endeavor, since most of the repatriates owned furniture, household goods, and personal belongings, while some also possessed tools, farm implements, poultry, and livestock. Yet only a few of the expatriates possessed vehicles. The consul general thus initiated a campaign to borrow additional vehicles for transportation. Appeals for aid appeared in the Texas press on 29 September and continued until the repatriates departed for Mexico.[8] Vehicles were volunteered by Texas Mexicans in the South

Texas communities of Laredo, San Antonio, Hebbronville, Donna, San Diego, and Pearsall.[9] No Anglo Texans volunteered vehicles to be used in the movement. A week before the repatriates were to be removed to Laredo, the consul general announced that commitments had been received for 104 vehicles, but that additional vehicles were still needed.[10]

Early in October Hernández Cházaro dispatched Fernando Azonos and Santiago Campbell, employees of the San Antonio consulate, to Karnes City. Initially, Azonos and Campbell were involved in efforts to register and certify each family of repatriates. The Comisión Honorifica of Karnes City collaborated in the registration. A week after the registration effort was begun the consul general announced that 647 persons had been registered to return to Mexico.[11] Most of the repatriates who lived some distance from Karnes City were not registered or certified by the consular official until the day preceding their departure.

The Mexican consulate in Laredo was also actively involved in efforts to facilitate the return of the Karnes City repatriates to Mexico. The Mexican consul at Laredo, Alejandro V. Martínez, coordinated activities at Laredo and Nuevo Laredo, and served as liaison with the consul general in San Antonio. Martínez was chiefly concerned with

expediting the departure of the repatriates after they arrived in Laredo. Since most of the repatriates lacked funds to pay the bridge tariff, Martínez negotiated a suspension of this tariff with the Laredo Bridge Company. The consul made arrangements with Mexican Immigration and Custom authorities to insure that repatriates would be rapidly processed after their arrival in Nuevo Laredo. The Mexican National Railroad was contacted by Martínez to insure that sufficient train coaches would be available in Nuevo Laredo to return the repatriates to the interior. In addition, the consul persuaded a number of Texas Mexican residents of Laredo and other South Texas communities to loan their trucks to transport the repatriates and their belongings from Karnes City to Laredo.[12]

The most important organization involved in assisting the Karnes City repatriates was the Comité Pro-Repatriados established in early October by a group of prominent Texas Mexican women at Laredo. This committee was created when it became apparent that the repatriates would require substantial food and other essential items for their return to Mexico. An active campaign was conducted by the committee to inform Laredo residents of the repatriates' needs and to solicit aid from other organizations and businesses. Their

campaign was quite successful: large donations of food, medicine, and other items were given by Laredo residents for the Karnes City repatriates. In addition, substantial funds were raised to provide for the miscellaneous needs of the returnees.[13]

Other organizations that provided aid to the Karnes City repatriates were Mexican mutual aid societies, social clubs, and patriotic societies. These organizations sponsored programs to raise funds to benefit the repatriates and give direct monetary donations to the Karnes City repatriation fund. Benefits sponsored by the various societies and clubs in San Antonio, Laredo, and Nuevo Laredo included fiestas, movies, a festival of local talent, a basketball game, a baseball game, a boxing match, and a lottery. Proceeds from these functions were donated to the repatriation fund.[14] Perhaps the most important contribution from a society was 2,000 loaves of bread donated by the Sociedad Mutualista de Panaderos "Cuauhtemos" (a mutual aid society of bakers) in Laredo.[15] In addition, a host of mutual aid and patriotic societies made monetary contributions amounting to less than $25.[16]

A number of Texas Mexican commercial enterprises made contributions essential to the return of the repatriates.

Several San Antonio service stations provided fuel for the vehicles transporting the repatriates free of charge or at cost. Meat markets in San Antonio and Laredo donated large quantities of meat, while other Texas Mexican businesses donated fruit, vegetables, canned goods, and bread.[17]

In addition to the donations from various organizations, hundreds of Texas Mexicans throughout South Texas contributed to the Karnes City repatriation fund. Most of these contributions amounted to less than a dollar. Many of the donations were only a penny or two. Regardless of the amount of the contribution, La Prensa published the name of the contributor and the amount of each contribution.[18]

Return of the Repatriates

On 15 October 1931, the consul general of San Antonio issued a bulletin to the owners of cars and trucks who had volunteered vehicles for the trip to Laredo. The bulletin instructed the drivers to arrive in Karnes City by the evening of 17 October, so that the vehicles could be loaded before the departure of the caravan the following morning. Detailed instructions were provided on the route to be followed through San Antonio.[19]

Late in the afternoon of 15 October the first contingent of the caravan departed Karnes City for Laredo.

This contingent of about 150 repatriates traveled in trucks together with livestock, furniture, farm equipment, and tools. This group departed prior to the main caravan because they were returning to Laredo via the southern route--through Beeville, George West, and Freer. This was the most direct route to Laredo from Karnes City, but the roads were unimproved and unsuitable for automobiles.[20] The remainder of the caravan traveled over improved roads via San Antonio. The following day two contingents of about 500 repatriates left Karnes City for Laredo.[21] Apparently many members of these contingents were returning to Mexico in their own vehicles.

On 16 October hundreds of men, women, and children began to arrive in Karnes City from farms and ranches in South Texas. These families arrived two days prior to the departure of the caravan in order to be insured a place in the repatriation caravan. A few of the more prosperous repatriates came in dilapidated automobiles. Many others came on foot bringing only those possessions that could be carried in their hands. A reporter for the San Antonio Express observed the arrival of the first 250 families in Karnes City.

> More than 250 families are waiting with various degrees of patience for the transportation which will carry them back to their native land. Hundreds of children run about and play among the heaps of personal belongings ranging from rolls of bedding to crates of poultry that mark the only worldly goods these people have to bring from their adopted home to their place of birth. The women sit stolidly by their belongings while the men pace the ground or gather in groups to discuss the trip.[22]

The repatriates were greeted by the staff of the Mexican consul general from San Antonio. After registration of each family, the repatriates were assigned to various units of the caravan. Each unit or contingent was headed by a leader appointed by Consul General Hernández Cházaro. Many of these leaders were employees of the consul general.[23]

At dawn on 18 October a fourth caravan of repatriates, the main contingent, departed from Laredo via San Antonio. The caravan was composed of approximately 1,200 persons in about 50 trucks. Many of the San Antonio residents who had agreed to provide transportation for the Karnes City repatriates failed to bring their vehicles to Karnes City; consequently, several hundred repatriates remained in Karnes City. Priority was given to those repatriates with few personal belongings.[24] A reporter for the San Antonio Light observed the departure of the caravan from Karnes City.

> Jammed into some 50 trucks furnished by the local Mexican consulate, the crowd of repatriates, composed largely of farm hands and their families, started the exodus to their native land from Karnes City as dawn broke Sunday.
>
> Sensing the long trip home would probably mean work and food for them, they had an almost cheering attitude as they climbed into the trucks and started the journey. They were standing up in the trucks with a distance of more than 200 miles ahead of them.
>
> Some of the more prosperous Mexicans piled their families into old dilapidated cars and followed the long caravan.[25]

Two hours after its departure from Karnes City the caravan arrived in San Antonio and was directed to service stations which provided free fuel for the vehicles. Food donated by local Texas Mexican merchants was distributed to the repatriates by employees of the Mexican consul general. This main contingent of repatriates was joined in San Antonio by about 300 repatriates from San Antonio and nearby communities.[26] Reports of the repatriates' departure from Texas often indicated they were pleased to be leaving Texas, and that the returnees were optimistic that their fortune would improve in Mexico. The following excerpt from La Prensa describes the passage of the caravan through San Antonio:

> The [compatriotas] were jubilant and confident of their future as they passed through San Antonio for the border.
>
> In cars and trucks loaded with furniture, bundles of clothing, kitchen utensiles, and agricultural implments the repatriates paraded through

> the streets of the southern part of the city and answered the greeting of their fellow countrymen.
>
> The caravan was so long that traffic was stopped for several minutes.
>
> Hundreds of persons gathered at the corners where the caravan passed to greet and bid farewell to the repatriates.
>
> A smile, a movement of the hand and a "good-bye fellow countryman," was the farewell; but that farewell signified a final tribute of admiration and affection toward the unfortunate compatriots who had worked and fought in a strange land for a dream and an illusion.[27]

By the afternoon of 18 October the main contingent began to arrive in Laredo. The repatriates were met by representatives of the Mexican consulate in Laredo, who had established a special office to process them.[28] While the repatrites were completing the registration process, volunteers of the Laredo Comité Pro-Repatriados gave each family sufficient food to sustain it during its journey in Mexico.[29] The San Antonio Express described the arrival of the repatriates in Laredo:

> All afternoon trucks, crowded with refugees of economic disorder, rolled into the city. Clinging to meager personal belongings the refugees disembarked here for their short trip across the border into Mexico.
>
> Countless volunteers moved among the returning Mexicans with water and food for adults and milk for the babies. All appeared weary and exhausted from their 250-mile trip from interior Texas. The journey here was made in trucks, donated in Karnes County.
>
> Large sacks of food, designated to provide the self expatriates for their journey south into interior Mexico which begins Monday, were distributed by citizens here. Additional food was given

> the refugees on arrival at Nuevo Laredo across the border.
>
> Entry of Mexicans was expedited by immigration officials by addition to the regular border force. Not a piece of their household goods was barred by officials. Fare across the international bridge was provided free.[30]

A reporter for the Laredo Times observed the distribution of food to the Karnes City repatriates:

> For several blocks in all directions from the relief headquarters great masses of curious residents lined the street while at times the thoroughfares around the headquarters had to be cleared by the police and officers from the sheriff's department, who assisted in handling of the situation. The crowds were second only to those witnessed on the occasion of a celebration or like event.
>
> As each of the arriving Mexican nationals were handed packages of food they expressed thanks, while many others were so grateful they blessed themselves by making the sign of the cross and lisping short for the good people who had played the part of the good samaritans and provided them with the necessaries of life.[31]

Vehicles carrying the main contingent of repatriates continued to arrive in Laredo throughout the night of 18 October. After the repatriates disembarked from the vehicles and their belongings were unloaded, many of the trucks returned to Karnes City to pick up those repatriates who had not been provided a place in the main caravan.[32]

Many of the vehicles the repatriates were traveling in were in poor mechanical condition and required frequent repairs. The journey to Laredo from Karnes City required

several days for some repatriates due to lengthy delays incurred while their vehicles were being repaired. The last of the Karnes City repatriates reached Laredo a week after the movement had begun.[33]

After crossing the Rio Grande to Nuevo Laredo, the repatriates were met by Mexican Migration Service and Mexican Customs authorities. A number of employees of these two agencies were temporarily transferred to Nuevo Laredo from other Mexican cities to expedite the departure of repatriates from Nuevo Laredo.[34] Members of the main contingent spent their first night in Mexico camped in the patio of the Customs House and on adjacent vacant lots. Although the repatriates were weary from the long journey from Karnes City, many of the returnees gathered around camp fires and spent much of the night reminiscing about their experiences in Texas and discussing their future in Mexico.[35]

The number of Texas Mexicans who were returned to Mexico in the Karnes City repatriation movement is difficult to assess. Consul General Hernández Cházaro's final report indicated that the number was "in excess of 1,600."[36] This figure appears to have been in reference to and limited to those repatriates who left Karnes City and San

Antonio in the main caravan on 18 October 1931. Those repatriates who were in contingents that preceded or followed the main one were not included in Hernández Cházaro's calculations. In fact, the consul general's report was dated 21 October, several days before the final vehicles reached Laredo. Several news accounts based upon Mexican Migration Service data reported that more than 2,000 repatriates from the Karnes City area had been returned to Mexico.[37] One report which appeared several days after the Karnes City repatriation movement had ended provided the following data: 1,600 returned on 18 and 19 October; 281 returned on 20 October; and 180 returned on 23 October, for a total of 2,061 repatriates.[38] These data are probably accurate; however, a number of repatriates are known to have entered Mexico on 21 and 22 October. Moreover, the Mexican Migration Service apparently did not begin to compile data on the number of Karnes City repatriates until the main contingent began to arrive in Neuvo Laredo on 18 October. By this time approximately 650 repatriates, who had departed from Karnes City between 15 and 17 October, had already entered Mexico.[39] Therefore, it would appear that the Karnes City repatriation movement was composed of at least 2,711 persons.

One of the major concerns of Mexican authorities was to prevent congestion in Nuevo Laredo from the influx of repatriates. Efforts were made to expedite the departure of the repatriates from Nuevo Laredo as rapidly as possible. In most cases the repatriates were dispatched on trains to the interior of Mexico within hours of their arrival in Nuevo Laredo. Transportation was provided in coaches attached to regularly scheduled trains and on several special repatriation trains.[40] Members of the first contingents were sent to the interior even before the main caravan arrived in Nuevo Laredo. Virtually all of the members of the main caravan were dispatched to their destinations in Mexico by 22 October 1931.[41] Although most of the repatriates left Nuevo Laredo on trains, the Mexican government made three large army trucks available to repatriates whose destination was near Nuevo Laredo.[42]

Many of the reports of the Karnes City repatriation movement indicated that the returnees had resided in Texas for many years and that their children had been born in Texas.[43] Several news reports--especially those in English-language newspapers--indicated that the repatriates had lost hope that economic conditions in Texas would soon improve and did not regret being forced to abandon their homes.

Indeed, most of the repatriates believed that their economic fortunes would be improved in Mexico. They were convinced that a benevolent government awaited their return--a government which would provide them with employment opportunities.[44] Further, the economic status of most Karnes City repatriates could have been little diminished by their return to Mexico. Many of the accounts of the departure of these long-term Texas residents were heart-rending. For example, a reporter for the Laredo Times observed:

> On one of the smaller trucks was a family of four and an aged couple bent by the burden of years. The woman was palsied and emaciated, and the old man was too weak to sit up. They both said they were going back to their native land, which they had left about 40 years ago, to spend their declining days.[45]

A reporter for La Prensa witnessed and recorded the departure of an 82-year-old Mexican returning home after 25 years in Texas.

> A gesture of happiness and enthusiasm was given Sunday afternoon by an elderly Mexican who had lived in the United States for 25 years. [The man] from Karnes City was making the trip accompanied by several of his sons on horseback.
>
> As soon as the old man crossed the border, he threw his hat on the pavement and let out a "Viva Mexico!" which he later explained as an expression of satisfaction, given that once he found himself in the United States, it would be very difficult to return alive, if one took into account that he was 82 years old.[46]

Although some accounts indicated that the repatriates were jubilant over their return to Mexico, this facade was deceptive, for many of the repatriates reluctantly abandoned Texas. A La Prensa reporter who witnessed the departure of many of the repatriates from their homes near Karnes City reported the Mexicans and their U.S.-born children were grief stricken. Many were pessimistic about opportunities in Mexico. One Mexican laborer who had emigrated from Zacatecas, Mexico, 20 years before expressed regret at leaving the farms of Texas where his children had been born and reared, and where his youth and energy had been exhausted. During his years in Texas he had saved a little money, but these funds had been consumed during the many months of unemployment preceding his departure from Texas. The reporter noted that all of the workers had similar histories.[47] The repatriation of Texas Mexicans occasionally led to conflict between family members. Upon their arrival in Nuevo Laredo, one family became embroiled in an argument over their return to the interior of Mexico. The mother, who had several small children with her, refused to board the train which was to take them to the interior. The woman asserted that she did not wish to return to Mexico as she had become accustomed to life in Texas, while

her husband argued that there was no other alternative since he could not find work there. Eventually, employees of the railroad and the Mexican Migration Service persuaded the woman to board the train with her family.[48]

The Karnes City repatriates returned to many diverse locations in Mexico. A few early reports in English-language newspapers stated that some of the repatriates would be sent to agricultural colonies or given land in Mexico.[49] These reports were apparently inaccurate, for there is no evidence that the repatriates were assigned land in Mexico. A number of news reports referred to the states to which most of the Karnes City repatriates were destined. Most apparently returned to the Mexican states from which they had emigrated many years before, presumably to the towns and villages where they had been born and where their relatives still resided. A large proportion of the repatriates apparently returned to San Luis Potosí in central Mexico. Other Mexican states to which significant numbers of repatriates returned included Aguascalientes, Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán in the central highlands of Mexico.[50] Only one report mentioned Coahuila as a destination,[51] while no report indicated that Karnes City repatriates were

returning to the Mexican border states of Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, or Chihuahua.

In an interview with a reporter from La Prensa several days following the return of the repatriates, Consul General Hernández Cházaro castigated the San Antonio Texas Mexican community for its failure to provide more assistance. Hernández Cházaro was especially incensed with those San Antonio residents who had promised to provide vehicles but failed to honor their pledge. The consul general was also critical of the limited donations of food and other items from Texas Mexican businesses in San Antonio. Hernández Cházaro asserted that the Karnes City movement would have been a calamity except for the diligent efforts of the Texas Mexican residents of Laredo, whom he praised.[52] He made no reference to the failure of local relief agencies in South Texas to provide for the needs of its citizens. Nor did he mention the Anglo Texan community, which had ignored the plight of over 2,700 South Texas residents--many if not most of whom were American citizens.

Bridgeport Repatriation Movement

A second organized Texas Mexican repatriation movement involved unemployed coal miners from Bridgeport in Wise County in North Texas. After the coal mines owned by

the Bridgeport Coal Company were closed on 23 November 1931, several hundred Texas Mexican miners and their families were forced to abandon their homes in Bridgeport. Many of these long-time Mexican residents of Texas and their U.S.-born children returned to Mexico.

Although coal was discovered at Bridgeport about 1860, commercial mining operations were not established there until the 1880s. By 1890 coal extracted from the mines was being hauled by wagons to Decatur and other nearby communities for domestic consumption.[53] The Rock Island Railroad reached Bridgeport in 1893 and became the chief purchaser of locally produced coal. Surplus coal was shipped to Oklahoma for use in industrial plants or sold locally for domestic use.[54] Coal production continued to increase at Bridgeport during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Soon after the mines were opened immigrant laborers from Mexico were hired to extract the mineral. The number of Mexican miners employed at Bridgeport gradually increased in the 1880s and 1890s. In 1900 Farm and Ranch reported that about 150 miners were employed at the Bridgeport mines.[55] Two years later a bulletin published by the University of Texas noted that about 225 miners were employed.[56]

Most of these miners were Mexicans. By the turn of the century many of the children of the original Mexican immigrants were being employed in the mines.[57]

The influx of miners in the late 1800s and early 1900s resulted in a critical housing shortage in Bridgeport. To meet the housing needs of the recent arrivals from Mexico, the mining company constructed a number of residences in an area adjacent to the mines. By 1923 the Bridgeport Coal Company provided housing for about 40 miners and their families,[58] while other miners rented or purchased homes in the colonia near the mines.

During World War I a critical labor shortage developed in Bridgeport, as many local residents had either volunteered for military service or had been conscripted by the U.S. Army. The Bridgeport Coal Company initiated efforts to recruit additional labor from South Texas and Mexico. Advertisements for miners frequently appeared in La Prensa, which emphasized high wages, steady work, good schools, and churches. Although a few miners were paid a daily wage, most miners were compensated for each ton of coal extracted. Wage rates during the late 1910s and early 1920s varied from $2.23 to $2.79 per ton.[59] When sufficient labor could not be obtained from Laredo or San Antonio, mine owners

dispatched labor recruiters to Mexico to secure additional workers.[60]

The 1920 U.S. Census reported that 354 Mexicans resided in Wise County,[61] virtually all of whom were employed in the Bridgeport coal mines. Texas Mexicans became an integral part of the Bridgeport community, and by the mid-1920s the town was characterized as "predominantly Latin-American."[62] During the 1920s the number of immigrant Mexicans ceased to increase, while many Mexican Americans--especially the sons of the original Mexican immigrants--found employment in the mines. By 1930 two-thirds of the miners at Bridgeport were Mexican Americans.[63] Approximately 250 Texas Mexican miners and their families, for a total of about 750 people, resided in Bridgeport in 1930.

With the advent of the Depression in the early 1930s, the Bridgeport Coal Company began to encounter financial difficulties. After January 1931 the mines were operated intermittently; however, most Texas Mexican miners remained in Bridgeport, where they averaged two days work each week during 1931.[64] By the end of July many of the Texas Mexican miners and their families were experiencing financial difficulties. In an effort to alleviate the situation the Mexican consul from Dallas, Juan E. Anchondo, met with the

miners to discuss the possibility of their returning to Mexico. A few indicated their willingness to return if transportation was provided. Anchondo then appealed to John T. Farmer, general passenger agent for the Rock Island Railroad, to provide "charity tickets" to those who were willing to return to Mexico but lacked funds for transportation. Anchondo noted that such requests were normally made to charitable organizations, but that no relief agency existed in Bridgeport.[65] There is no record of a response to Anchonda's request by the Rock Island Railroad. Moreover, there is no evidence that any Texas Mexican miners departed from Bridgeport at that time.

On 23 November 1931 the Bridgeport Coal Company ceased to operate. Shortly thereafter reports began to appear in the Texas press that 250 Texas Mexican mining families, comprised of over 750 persons, were in critical condition. They were reportedly suffering from hunger and a lack of clothing.[66] Some families had been forced to subsist on beans for several weeks, while others had had their stoves and other household goods repossessed because they were unable to make installment payments.[67]

In early December a few destitute miners left Bridgeport for Fort Worth, where employment and relief

opportunities appeared to be greater. Concern that all of the unemployed miners would migrate to Fort Worth resulted in efforts to repatriate them. On 7 December Rev. G. A. Walls, pastor of the Mexican Presbyterian Church and superintendent of the Mexican Mission in Fort Worth, stated that efforts should be made to prevent the Bridgeport miners from coming to Fort Worth. Walls declared, "The deprivations will be as great in the city as they are in Bridgeport and . . . their coming will put an additional burden on local [relief] agencies."[68] Walls appealed to Mexican Consul Anchondo in Dallas to make funds available for the return of the miners to Mexico, but the Mexican consulate in Dallas lacked funds for this purpose. Anchondo then discussed the matter with the Mexican consul general in San Antonio. The consul general responded that no funds can be made available for the transportation of Mexicans in Texas; however, he stated if the miners could reach the border they would be provided transportation to their destinations in Mexico.[69]

Having failed to secure the support of the Mexican government to transport the miners to the Mexican border, Walls began negotiations with the Fort Worth chapter of the American Red Cross. On 8 December Walls met in Bridgeport with members of the Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce,

Bridgeport town officials, a field representative of the Red Cross, the chairperson of the Wise County chapter of the Red Cross. At the meeting it was decided that a request for funds to transport the unemployed Bridgeport miners to the Mexican border should be made to the national headquarters of the American Red Cross in St. Louis.[70] Several days later officials in St. Louis responded that no funds could be made available until all local resources had been exhausted. The Red Cross suggested that a local relief drive should be initiated. Red Cross officials in St. Louis noted that privation among Bridgeport miners was no greater than that being experienced in other American mining centers.[71]

A local relief committee under the auspices of the Red Cross was consequently established at Bridgeport. The committee was composed exclusively of Anglo Texan community leaders; no Texas Mexicans represented their community. From office space provided by the Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce a well-organized campaign for repatriation funds was coordinated. Red Cross field representative Cora V. Shuman served as a liaison member of the committee and was responsible for coordinating and directing the campaign in other Wise County communities. The first day of the drive

to raise repatriation funds $247 were collected. Contributions diminished significantly after the first day.[72]

The drive for Texas Mexican repatriation funds in Bridgeport, Decatur, and other Wise County towns was intense. Community leaders were extremely concerned, since the 750 indigent miners and their families had become an immense burden to the town. Reports indicate that by early December between $25 and $40 were expended from the city treasury each day to provide them with food. In addition, the Chamber of Commerce borrowed $100 to provide other assistance to those families in greatest need.[73] Community leaders in Bridgeport knew that the town could not provide for the unemployed miners indefinitely and that there was no prospect of state or federal assistance. Their efforts to obtain the return of the miners were simply a strategy to shift responsibility for their care to Mexican authorities.

A similar campaign to raise funds was also initiated in Fort Worth. It was spearheaded by Reverend Walls, who organized and chaired the fundraising committee. Other members of the committee included Mexican Consul Anchondo from Dallas, and R. Lopez Guerra, Laureano Flores, Aurora Barron, and Vera Rogers, all of Fort Worth. During December

the committee sponsored three benefits to raise funds. Funds derived from these benefits were used to aid both miners who were returning to Mexico and those who chose to remain in Texas.[74]

Many of the Texas Mexican miners had remained in Bridgeport in an effort to secure wages for work performed in November after the mines closed on 23 November 1931. The Bridgeport Coal Company owed the miners about $6,000 in back wages. Soon after the mines closed the company announced that the proceeds from a sale of movable mining property would be distributed to the miners. An auction of the property was held on 11 December and approximately $2,500 was raised. Funds raised from the local relief drive were combined with monies derived from the sale of the mining property and distributed to the unemployed miners. The miners eventually received about 60 percent of their back wages.[75] Once it became apparent that they would receive no additional pay the miners began to leave the town.

It is difficult to determine the number of Bridgeport miners who returned to Mexico, for they did not return en masse. They often departed in small groups.[76] These departures were usually not covered by the press, which accorded little attention to their plight after they

received partial payment of their back wages. In addition, a number of the miners and their families did not return directly to Mexico. A few migrated to South and West Texas in search of agricultural jobs.[77] Others drifted into Dallas and Fort Worth in search of work, while one contingent migrated to the Red River Valley of Minnesota, hoping to secure employment on the sugar beet farms the following spring.[78]

In mid-December 1931 the Missouri Pacific and Rock Island railroads offered the miners transportation to the Mexican border at reduced rates.[79] A number of the miners returned directly to Mexico from Bridgeport after these special transportation rates were made available. The first contingent of 27 families departed from Bridgeport immediately after they received their back wages.[80] On 11 December the Rock Island and the Missouri Pacific announced that arrangement had been made to remove 112 destitute miners, many of whom were single men, to the border free of charge.[81] By the end of December most of the miners had abandoned their homes in Bridgeport; one report indicated that only 50 families remained.[82]

By 1 January 1932 virtually all of the former miners and their families and abandoned Bridgeport. One of the few

miners who remained remembered that only seven or eight Texas Mexican families continued to reside in the town. Most of the workers had secured jobs at a local brick plant.[83] U.S. Census data for 1930 and 1940 indicate that the population of Bridgeport decreased by 729 persons during the 1930s.[84]

News reports often indicated that many of the Bridgeport miners wished to return to Mexico. It was frequently asserted that 40 percent, or about 250 of the Texas Mexican miners, wished to return.[85] Apparently those who organized the Bridgeport movement failed to determine whether or not the former miners really wanted to return to Mexico; two former miners--who lost their jobs when the mines were closed in 1931--asserted that virtually none of the miners or their families wished to return to Mexico.[86] This is understandable when it is realized that most of the miners had been employed at the Bridgeport mines for 10, 15, or 20 years and many had children born and reared in Texas.[87]

Initiation of the Bridgeport repatriation movement appears to have been largely the result of the efforts by Rev. G. A. Walls. Walls' efforts were strongly supported by Cora V. Shuman of the American Red Cross, Mexican Consul Juan E. Anchondo of Dallas, Anglo Texan residents of

Bridgeport, members of the Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce, Bridgeport town officials, and some residents of Fort Worth. The miners and their families were not involved in the organization or implementation of the repatriation movement. Many of those individuals and organizations involved in the financing and organizing the movement failed to consider the gravity of their actions. However, it does appear that the Rev. Walls was aware that his efforts were not in the best interests of the Texas Mexicans, for on 10 December 1931 he stated:

> Those who go to Mexico will be no better off. Most of them have no other occupation than working in mines. They have been away from Mexico for 15 or 20 years and are completely out of touch in that country. They will actually go there as foreigners.[88]

Nevertheless, Walls continued to promote the repatriation of several hundred unemployed, destitute Texas Mexican residents of Bridgeport.

Gonzales Repatriation Movement

A third organized repatriation movement was that of about 30 Texas Mexican tenant farm families from Gonzales County in South Texas. Most of these repatriates were residents of the Rather Farm--a large cotton and corn plantation east of Gonzales. These repatriates, numbering approximately 200 persons, left Gonzales in October 1931 and

settled at El Nogal, a government-sponsored agricultural colony near Múzquiz in the Monclova district of Coahuila, about 50 miles south of Eagle Pass. This repatriation movement is distinguished from many others in that it was spontaneous and voluntary. Neither officials of the Mexican government nor Anglo Texans were involved in efforts to initiate, organize, or finance this movement. Only minimal organizational efforts were provided by the Gonzalez Comisión Honorífica. The return of the repatriates was financed by the repatriates themselves.

According to a former tenant who was employed on the Rather Farm from 1918 until 1923, many of the Gonzales repatriates had resided in Texas for two or three decades, and a few had been employed on the Rather Farm for 15 to 20 years. The absentee owner resided in Austin and rarely visited his plantation. A resident foreman managed day-to-day farm operations. Although several different tenant-landlord agreements were used by the Rather Farm, most of the Texas Mexican tenants farmed on the halves. The customary contract required the landlord to furnish teams of mules, farm implements, feed, and seed, while the tenant provided only labor. Under this tenant-landlord arrangement tenants were advanced money--usually $15 a month for each

team-operated--for living expenses. A tenant generally operated as many teams as he and his male children could handle. After each harvest, proceeds from the cotton and corn crops were divided equally between the tenant and the landlord. The tenants' share of the proceeds from the sale of farm commodities was usually sufficient for them to repay their debts to the landlord and to enable them to save some money each year. Other benefits to the tenants under this agreement were free housing, firewood, and water. In addition, each tenant was given a few acres of land on which a milk cow, pigs, chickens, and a garden could be maintained.[89]

During the 1920s the Texas Mexican tenants on the Rather Farm benefited substantially from the tenant-landlord system. Virtually all of the tenants were able to acquire automobiles, trucks, livestock, and household goods. In addition, most of the tenants accumulated substantial savings. A number of the families had saved several thousand dollars by 1931. One family had more than $5,000 in savings. None of the tenants, however, had acquired teams or farm implements to cultivate the land they rented.[90] It should be noted that the tenant-landlord arrangements on the Rather Farm--which enabled the tenants to prosper--

were unusual. Several studies conducted during the 1920s reveal that few Texas Mexican tenant farmers were able to accumulate significant savings.[91]

In 1930 the Mexican government began to develop plans to establish an agricultural colony at the Hacienda El Nogal near Múzquiz. An engineer, Melquiades Angulo, was assigned the task of surveying the land, which was to be distributed to landless agricultural workers from Coahuila. Initial plans were to settle approximately 180 colonos at at El Nogal. Angulo was also in charge of developing plans for a new town at El Nogal. In October 1930, former Mexican president Plutarco Elías Calles stopped in Múzquiz to review the progress of the colony. Calles was reportedly pleased with the progress that had been made.[92]

In February 1931, an announcement in La Prensa stated that the Mexican government was soliciting colonists for government-owned land at El Nogal. It explained that most of the land had been reserved for residents of the Monclova district of Coahuila, but it said that acreage had been reserved for 10 Mexican families from Texas. The announcement was alluring: it claimed that the land was suited to the production of cotton, sugar cane, wheat, corn, beans, chickpeas, potatoes, sweet potatoes, many other vegetables,

and all kinds of fruits. It asserted that the land was of superior quality, level, and situated in an area of abundant rainfall. Furthermore, it noted that each colonist would be granted a water concession sufficient to irrigate each parcel. Each colono was eligible to purchase one 12-hectare parcel for 4,000 pesos. However, the entire purchase price could be financed over 20 years at 6 percent interest, which would require an annual payment of 350 pesos. The announcement emphasized that only those colonists with substantial resources would be considered for the El Nogal project. Prospective colonists were expected to possess a team of mules, farm implements, tools, and provisions to live on until the first harvest. Colonists might be considered for the project if they lacked the above resources but possessed funds sufficient to purchase them.[93]

In the summer of 1931, Martín Rosales, a Mexican resident of the Rather Farm, met with Mexican Consul General Hernández Cházaro in San Antonio. During this meeting Hernández Cházaro mentioned that the Mexican government was making land at El Nogal available to Mexican residents of Texas. The consul general noted that the Mexican government would waive custom duties on belongings of repatriates who wished to settle there. Upon his return to the Rather

plantation, Rosales met with a number of other Texas Mexican tenant farmers and informed them of the opportunities at El Nogal. Several expressed interest but were hesitant to leave their farms in Gonzales. It was decided that two of the Mexican farmers, Vicente Patlan and Elijio Rosales, would go to El Nogal to examine the land.[94]

Patlan and Rosales departed from Gonzales for El Nogal in early September. They spent three days examining the land and meeting with Mexican government officials in charge of the project. Patlan and Rosales were favorably impressed with the quality of the land and with the opportunity to acquire farms of their own. They learned that the Mexican government had revised its policy regarding the sale of El Nogal land to colonists. Repatriates could obtain land free provided they agreed to remain on it and cultivate it for at least five years. Upon their return to Gonzales, Rosales and Patlan held a number of meetings with tenant farmers from the Rather Farm. Approximately 30 families decided to colonize lands at El Nogal.[95]

Efforts to organize the Gonzales repatriation movement were initiated in September by members of the Gonzales Comisión Honorífica. The commission had only five members in 1931, including Vicente Patlan, president; Martín Rosales,

secretary; and Elijio Rosales, treasurer. The president and secretary of the Comisión Honorífica were in charge of organizing and coordinating the repatriation movement; however, neither of these officers intended to return to Mexico but simply assisted those who wished to be repatriated. The commission possessed limited funds, none of which were expended to aid the repatriates.[96]

By the third week in October the Gonzales repatriates had completed plans for their return to Mexico, and on 23 October they departed from Gonzales in a caravan of automobiles and trucks that they owned. Two additional trucks were provided by Martín Rosales. The first night of the journey was spent in San Antonio. On 26 October the repatriates reached Eagle Pass where they were met by the Mexican Consul Francisco B. Salazar and Vice Consul P. Bringas Almada. These consular officials expedited the passage of the repatriates across the border to Piedras Negras.[97]

The repatriates proceeded directly to the El Nogal project, where they were given tents to reside in; there was no temporary housing available at the colony. The colonists were then assigned parcels of land. Their land was reportedly level and fertile, and irrigation water was available; however it was covered with dense chaparral. The first task of the colonist was to remove the brush. The

repatriates were given no assistance in clearning the land nor were they given instructions in brush-removal techniques.[98]

Victor Camarillo, one of the Mexican Americans who went to El Nogal with his parents, remembered that many of the colonists encountered difficulties in their efforts to clear the land. Most of the returnees soon became discouraged because they lacked the equipment needed to clear the land. Tools owned by the repatriates consisted mainly of shovels, picks, grubbing hoes, and other hand tools. Perhaps more important, none of the repatriates possessed heavy plows needed to break the virgin sod, and only a few families possessed farm equipment needed to cultivate the land. Some of the settlers believed that the land would be nonproductive even when cleared. Within a few weeks of their arrival at El Nogal, many of the colonists were thoroughly disillusioned.[99]

The El Nogal colonists soon began to abandon their land and seek employment elsewhere in Mexico. Some of the colonists found employment in the coal mines near Monclova, Coahuila, while others became agricultural laborers on farms near Matamoros in northeastern Tamaulipas.[100] A few of the families secured employment on farms near Monterrey.

Some of the older children--who had been born in Texas and possessed proof of their United States citizenship--immediately returned to Texas. However, their parents were unable to join them because they were Mexican citizens and the U.S. government had ceased to issue visas to Mexicans. Consequently a number of families remain separated.[101]

By March 1932, only one of the 30 families who left Gonzales the preceding October remained at El Nogal. This was the family of Elijio Rosales--the father of Martín Rosales, one of the organizers of the repatriation movement. The Rosales family was successful in clearing their land and produced good cotton and corn crops from 1932 thru 1935. However, in the mid-1930s several years of crop failure, precipitated by a sustained drought, compelled the Rosales family to sell their farm.[102]

The decision of these long-term residents of Texas who had been successful tenant farmers to voluntarily abandon their homes in Texas is perplexing. Martín Rosales indicated that the Texas Mexican residents of the Rather Farm were content with life in Texas and prior to 1931 had had no plans to return to Mexico. Although many Texas Mexican tenant farmers were evicted from their farms in Texas in the fall of 1931, the Gonzales farmers could have

remained on the Rather Farm and renewed contracts for 1932. While the Gonzales repatriates were disenchanted with the ethnic prejudice and discrimination encountered in Texas, this discrimination was not instrumental in their decision to return to Mexico. Rosales contended that the major factor influencing the decision of the Gonzales repatriates to return to Mexico was the opportunity to own land. A secondary factor was the Mexican government's policy of allowing the repatriates to take their belongings to Mexico duty free.[103]

A second perplexing question involves the failure of the repatriates to remain on the land granted them at El Nogal. Why were the former Gonzales tenant farmers, who had had many years of successful agricultural experience and who had substantial financial resources, unsuccessful in their initial efforts to readjust to life in Mexico as land owners and farm operators? Martín Rosales provided an incisive and plausible answer to this question. He contended that the Texas Mexicans--while employed as tenant farmers on the Rather Farm--were part of an integrated system in which they were provided teams, farm implements, tools, seed, housing, and most important, directions for day-to-day farm operations. In Mexico many of the ingredients of this

system were missing. Though the colonists possessed financial resources, they lacked supervision in day-to-day activities such as the removal of brush from their land. The absence of a foreman or facilitator to insure that the work was done may have been an obstacle they could not overcome.[104]

Eighteenth of March Repatriation Movement

Introduction

A fourth organized repatriation movement involved the return of over 1,800 Texas Mexican families comprised of at least 7,500 persons to the Eighteenth of March Colony 30 miles south of Matamoros, Mexico, in 1939. From May through November 1939, small groups of repatriates were transported to the colony from diverse locations in Texas. This agricultural colony was established exclusively for Mexican repatriates on land formerly held by the Hacienda La Sauteña in the state of Tamaulipas. The Eighteenth of March Colony derived its name from the date on which foreign oil holdings in Mexico were expropriated--18 March 1938.

In 1898 Mexican President Porfirio Díaz granted over 2,000,000 acres of land in the state of Tamaulipas in northeastern Mexico to Iñigo Noriega, a Spanish businessman. The boundaries of the grant were the Gulf of Mexico on the east, the San Fernando River on the south, the Nuevo León

boundary on the west, and the Rio Grande on the north. The grant was known as the Hacienda La Sauteña. During the first decade of the twentieth century the La Sauteña Corporation was founded to promote the agricultural development of the hacienda. Irrigation works initiated by La Sauteña included the drilling of artesian wells and the construction of canals and pumping stations on the Rio Grande. Land was cleared and a few irrigated farming enterprises established. This land development scheme was abandoned with the advent of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, and during the prolonged conflict that ensued most of the irrigation works were destroyed.[105]

In 1917 the Mexican government announced plans to establish a number of agricultural colonies on lands formerly controlled by the Hacienda La Sauteña. A commission of engineers was appointed by the government to oversee the development of the region. Consideration was given to settling Mexican repatriates from South Texas on these lands.[106] However, political unrest in the area continued and few if any colonists from Texas were settled in the area at that time.

During the administration of Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) efforts to develop the lands formerly

held by the Hacienda La Sauteña were renewed. After a severe flood in northeastern Tamaulipas in September 1935, the Mexican government sent engineer Eduardo Chávez to Matamoros to begin a flood control and malaria prevention project in the area.[107] Chávez was provided with 200,000 pesos to build levies and drainage ditches in areas adjacent to the Rio Grande. Soon after his arrival Chávez realized that the economic potential of the district could be maximized only if extensive irrigation works were implemented. Although no government funds had been appropriated for the purpose, he began to develop plans for a massive irrigation project at La Sauteña.[108]

Early Development

In February 1936, President Cárdenas, while on an extended tour of northern Mexico,[109] received a telegram from Chávez regarding a number of problems in the Matamoros area. Cárdenas proceeded to Matamoros where he met with Chávez. Together they examined the newly built flood control and malaria prevention works adjacent to the Rio Grande. Chávez appealed to Cárdenas for funds to begin an extensive irrigation project at La Sauteña. Cárdenas found merit in the project and allocated 400,000 pesos for this purpose.[110]

In August 1938, the Mexican government announced that 250,000 acres of land in the lower Rio Grande Valley of Mexico, across the Rio Grande from Cameron County, Texas, would soon be open to colonization. Land would be provided for three types of farmers: small landowners, renters, and communal groups.[111] The land, a part of the original Hacienda La Sauteña tract, had been developed to provide settlement opportunities for landless Mexicans in Mexico and destitute Mexicans in the United States. President Cárdenas was gravely concerned about economic conditions among Mexicans in the United States. He was committed to a program of repatriation for all Mexicans who wished to return to Mexico. Cárdenas felt that the Eighteenth of March Colony would provide an excellent settlement area for Mexican citizens in need of repatriation.

President Cárdenas' concern about conditions among Mexicans in the United States led him to dispatch Secretary of the Interior Ignacio García Téllez to Texas in November 1938 to determine if Mexican residents there were in need of repatriation.[112] García Téllez met with consular officials in Laredo and San Antonio before traveling to Austin, where he conferred with state government officials including Gov. James V. Allred. He then journeyed to El Paso where

he observed economic conditions among Mexican residents. During his trip through Texas, García Téllez emphasized that the first priority of the Mexican government was to provide jobs to Mexicans in Mexico, but that an effort would be made to repatriate any Mexicans unable to earn a living in Texas. He stated that repatriates who returned to Mexico would be provided employment opportunities which utilized skills they had developed in the United States. García Téllez was not a strong advocate of Mexican repatriation, or of the creation of repatriate colonies in Mexico. He believed that a great deal of money had been wasted by the creation of the Eighteenth of March Colony. Upon his return to Mexico he minimized the need for massive repatriation.[113] Nevertheless, Cárdenas continued to support the establishment of repatriate colonies.

During the spring of 1939, Cárdenas instructed his cabinet to assist in the development of the Eighteenth of March Colony.[114] He issued specific instructions to the Ministries of Communication and Public Works, Housing and Public Credit, Education, Agriculture and Development, Public Assistance, and the Agrarian and Public Health Departments. Representatives of these government agencies

met in Mexico City to formulate plans for the development of the colony.[115]

On 3 April 1939, Cárdenas dispatched Under Secretary of Foreign Relations Rámon Beteta to the United States to explain the federal government's repatriation program to Mexicans in the United States. He was directed by Cárdenas to recruit and register all Mexicans interested in returning to Mexico. Beteta's recruitment and registration efforts initially included trips to the East and West coasts of the United States to survey conditions among Mexicans in those areas. He found little interest in repatriation among the Mexicans in those areas and thus concentrated his efforts on repatriating Texas Mexicans.

Recruitment of Repatriates

During his tour of Texas, Beteta appeared before numerous groups of Texas Mexicans to outline the Cárdenas repatriation plan. Beteta emphasized opportunities in Mexico before each group he addressed. He explained that the Mexican government welcomed the return of Texas Mexicans to Mexico. Special consideration would be given to destitute Mexicans in need of immediate repatriation. However, no deadline was set on the return of the repatriates. Beteta frequently noted that some of the repatriates

might need a year or more to settle their affairs before they returned to Mexico. In order to facilitate repatriation, transportation of the repatriates and their belongings would be provided by the Mexican government and import duties on belongings would be waived.[116]

According to Beteta, benefits to be derived by the repatriates upon their return to Mexico were substantial. Repatriates would be granted either 50 acres of dry land or 20 acres of irrigated land at the Eighteenth of March Colony. The only requirement of the colonist to obtain title to the land was to remove the brush and begin cultivation of the land. In addition to farmland, pasture would be provided to farmers with livestock. Colonists would be provided with a wage for clearing and improving their land. Wages would be sufficient to support the repatriates and their families until the first crop was harvested. Additional wages could be earned by the repatriates who assisted in the construction of roads, sanitation projects, drainage works, or other community projects. Long-term, low-interest bank loans would be available to colonists for the construction of homes, acquisition of farm equipment and livestock, and the development of the land. Short-term

loans would also be extended to meet emergency needs of the colonist.[117]

Ramón Beteta, a dynamic and persuasive speaker, was effective in presenting President Cárdenas' repatriation plan. His speeches often included passionate appeals to the patriotism of his audience. Texas Mexicans were urged to return to Mexico to engage in the reconstruction of the country.[118] Soon after his arrival in Texas Beteta discovered that his audiences knew little about improved social, political, and economic conditions in Mexico or about the government's efforts to reconstruct the country. Therefore a part of each presentation was devoted to explaining the achievements of the revolution. Beteta emphasized that for the first time in Mexico's history the Mexican people controlled their resources and their destiny.[119]

When Beteta began his recruitment tour, his appeals were made exclusively to Mexican residents of the state. However, he soon realized that many Mexican Americans were interested in the Mexican government's repatriation program. In a confidential report to President Cárdenas on 24 June 1939, Beteta noted that virtually all of the prospective repatriates in Texas were American citizens.[120] Under Mexican law children born in the United States of Mexican

parents were accorded Mexican citizenship. These Mexican Americans were eligible for land in Mexico. Beteta therefore began to actively recruit Mexican Americans who wished to return to Mexico to colonize Eighteenth of March land.[121]

On 9 April 1939, Beteta held the first two of a series of meetings with Texas Mexican residents in South Texas to explain the repatriation program. These meetings at Karnes City and Kenedy were attended by over 200 and 400 persons respectively. A number of officials from the San Antonio consulate, including Consul General Omar Josefe, Vice Consul Raul S. Spindola, and attorney Manuel C. Gonzalez, assisted Beteta in the recruitment and registration of prospective repatriates. Questionnaires were distributed to Texas Mexicans who indicated a desire to be repatriated. More than one-third of those who attended the Karnes City meeting wanted to be repatriated immediately. Many others indicated they would be interested in returning after crops were harvested in the fall. They stated that they could not leave immediately because of tenancy contracts with landowners.[122]

On 15 April several representatives of the San Antonio consulate and Manuel Gamio of the Mexican Migration

Service joined Beteta on a recruitment tour of the lower Rio Grande Valley. Over 700 persons filled the National Theater in Weslaco for a recruitment meeting, while about 600 Texas Mexicans heard Beteta explain the Mexican government's program in Benito Juárez Hall in Brownsville. Reports indicated that the audiences were receptive to the proposed program. Many families indicated a willingness to undergo repatriation as soon as arrangements could be completed. The largest contingent of prospective repatriates was from Raymondville, where 100 families were registered.[123]

In Corpus Christi Beteta met with between 800 and 1,200 Texas Mexicans on 16 April to explain the Mexican government's program. The auditorium of the North Side Junior High School, where the meeting was held, was filled to capacity and several hundred Texas Mexicans listened to Beteta's presentation from the corridor. The response was enthusiastic.[124] Although the number who registered for repatriation at the meeting was not reported, press reports 10 days after the meeting revealed that the Mexican consul in Corpus Christi had registered more than 500 families.[125]

Upon his return to San Antonio, Beteta held a meeting with Texas Mexicans in that city. Over 3,000 persons

attended the session held in the Sidney Lanier High School auditorium, including many prospective repatriates from rural areas of Central and South Texas. Reports indicated that the repatriation plan was received enthusiastically. Beteta's presentation was repeatedly interrupted by applause that reportedly shook the building. Many of those who attended expressed a desire to be repatriated, although the number registered by consular officials was not reported.[126]

Beteta's tour of South Texas was successful in creating widespread interest in the government's repatriation program. The task of arranging the return of the repatriates was then delegated to local Mexican consular officials. Texas Mexicans were encouraged to contact local Mexican consuls for information on the Cárdenas' program and to register for repatriation. Mexican consulates in South Texas were beseiged by Texas Mexicans interested in repatriation. Numerous written requests for repatriation were also received from Texas Mexicans residing in rural areas of South Texas. Officials from the San Antonio consulate visited numerous South Texas communities including Oilton, Mirando City, Hebbronville, Benavides, and San Diego to register prospective repatriates.[127] In addition, they

prepared and distributed hundreds of circulars explaining the program.[128]

Mexican consuls in Texas were responsible for selection of colonists to be assigned land at the Eighteenth of March Colony. Apparently few guidelines existed for their selection. The most important consideration was a willingness to return to Mexico and work the land. Also important was a background in agriculture, although some persons with other skills were granted land in the colony.[129] In addition, the Mexican government gave priority to those repatriates in great economic need. Many destitute Texas Mexicans returned to the Eighteenth of March Colony.

There is evidence that a large number of the Texas Mexicans who returned to the Eighteenth of March Colony were Mexican Americans. Many reports indicated that many repatriates were on relief at the time they were transported to Mexico.[130] Since few Mexicans were on relief in Texas in 1939, these repatriates were probably Mexican Americans. In addition, a report of 53 Texas Mexicans departing San Antonio in May of 1939 indicated that many were American citizens.[131] This report concurs with the June 1939 report of the American consul at Matamoros, which stated that

two thirds of the repatriates departing from Texas in May were American citizens.[132]

The major problem involved in returning the thousands of Texas Mexicans to Mexico was providing transportation for them and their belongings. To secure transportation for the repatriates, officials in the Mexican Embassy in Washington appealed to the U.S. Department of State to provide Immigration Service trucks. The request noted that the success of the Cárdenas repatriation plan depended upon large-scale movement of repatriates, which would require the assistance of the U.S. government. Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles promptly informed Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins of the Mexican government's request. Welles' communiqué to Perkins urged the Department of Labor to cooperate with the Mexican government.[133] Perkins responded by making available to the Mexican government several Immigration Service trucks.[134] These vehicles became the major means of transporting the repatriates to the Eighteenth of March Colony. A small number reached the colony by train or in their own vehicles.

Return of the Repatriates

By mid-May 1939, small groups of repatriates began to depart their homes in South Texas for the Eighteenth of

March Colony. Trucks furnished by the Immigration Service and vehicles rented by the San Antonio consulate were used to transport the colonists and their belongings to Brownsville. The first contingent, from small communities near San Antonio and from San Antonio, left for Matamoros on 16 May. This contingent of 13 families comprised of about 65 members was in critical economic condition. Most had been relief recipients immediately prior to their departure.[135] The following week a second contingent of about 60 repatriates was transported from San Antonio.[136] On 20 June, 59 Texas Mexican agricultural laborers from Von Ormy and McDonna were transported to the colony,[137] and a month later 44 Texas Mexicans from San Antonio left for Matamoros.[138]

One of the major sources of repatriates for the Eighteenth of March Colony was Karnes County south of San Antonio. By late April 1939 Texas Mexican farm laborers at Kenedy in Karnes County began to consider returning to Mexico. These laborers met at Kenedy under the auspices of the Kenedy Comisión Honorífica and appointed a committee to visit the Eighteenth of March Colony to study conditions there including the quality of land available for colonization, the availability of housing, the availability of

financial assistance to settlers, the types of farm implements needed to cultivate the land, the amount and quality of land available for livestock, and other factors that would be related to their economic well-being at the colony.[139]

Early in May, the Kenedy repatriation committee spent several days investigating conditions at the Eighteenth of March Colony. They were favorably impressed with the opportunities offered by the Mexican government. Upon their return to Kenedy they reported that the land was similar to that in the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas and was well-suited for the production of cotton, corn, beans, and vegetables. The committee found that while some of the parcels of land had been cleared and were ready for cultivation most were covered with dense chaparral. Although much of the land at the colony would eventually be irrigated from the canal system, the committee was impressed by the fact that inexpensive irrigation wells could be drilled: the water table was only 50 feet deep.[140]

Soon after the Kenedy repatriation committee returned, organized groups of Texas Mexicans began to leave Kenedy for the colony. On 23 May, 13 families consisting of 73 repatriates accompanied by representatives of

the San Antonio consulate left Karnes County in several Immigration Service vehicles.[141] The following month Vice Consul Spindola accompanied a group of 20 Kenedy repatriates to Brownsville.[142] During the summer of 1939, several other small contingents of Texas Mexicans departed from Karnes County for the colony. Some of these groups returned to Mexico by trains sponsored by the consulate in San Antonio.[143] The number of repatriates transported to Mexico from Karnes County is unknown, although early reports indicated that more than 362 families planned to settle in Mexico.[144]

Soon after Beteta's recruitment tour of the lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas Mexicans throughout the area began to plan to return to Mexico. By May 1939 Texas Mexican residents at several Valley locations were awaiting transportation to the Eighteenth of March Colony.[145] A report form McAllen in mid-May indicated that groups of Texas Mexicans at Donna and Weslaco were making arrangements to enter Mexico at Brownsville.[146] On 30 May, 50 to 60 Texas Mexicans from Raymondville were transported to Mexico.[147] In late June, 20 families from Sebastian and 81 persons from Raymondville returned to Mexico.[148] On 30 July, 98 Texas Mexicans from Donna were removed to Matamoros for

settlement at the colony. A number of these repatriates had been involved in the construction industry in Texas and planned to assist in the construction of housing and public works projects at the colony.[149] In early August, approximately 140 families from various Valley communities including Raymondville, Sebastian, San Benito, Harlingen, Los Fresnos, and La Feria were transported to the colony settlement.[150] One report based upon Mexican consular data indicated that in 1939 approximately 2,980 persons were repatriated from the Rio Grande Valley, and that an additional 830 persons were transported from the area during the first three-quarters of 1940.[151]

On 24 June 1939, about 65 agricultural laborers from Robstown north of Cropus Christi were transported to the Eighteenth of March Colony. Immigration Service trucks were used to transport the repatriates and their belongings. Corpus Christi Mexican Consul Javier Osornio was responsible for organizing this contingent.[152]

At least two contingents of repatriates departed from the Dallas area for the Eighteenth of March Colony during the summer of 1939. On 11 June, 17 families comprised of 77 Texas Mexicans left Dallas for Brownsville.[153] A month later 16 families comprised of 80 persons were transported

to the colony from Malakoff and Terrell in North Texas.[154] Both contingents were extremely impoverished. Many of the repatriates had been on welfare prior to leaving Texas. The financial needs of the second contingent were so great that assistance from the Dallas Mexican consulate amounted to over $900 prior to their departure from Dallas. These Texas Mexican repatriates possessed few resources to begin colonization of land in a new environment. A few families owned dilapidated vehicles which they drove to Matamoros. However, most of the repatriates from the Dallas area were transported in Immigration Service trucks. Dallas Mexican Consul Adolfo Dominguez accompanied both groups of repatriates to Matamoros.[155]

Another source of colonists for the Eighteenth of March Colony was the Houston area. On 28 May 1939, 40 Texas Mexicans from Beaumont and Port Arthur left Houston for Brownsville. The following week 107 persons left Houston for the agricultural colony. Some of the repatriates from the Houston area were transported to Brownsville on the train. Their transportation costs were paid for by the Mexican government.[156]

A number of Texas Mexicans left their homes in Central Texas to join the Eighteenth of March Colony. In

late June 1939, several members of the Kyle Comisión Honorífica--representing a number of prospective colonists from Central Texas--journeyed to Matamoros to study conditions at the colony. Upon their arrival in Matamoros they discovered that heavy rains had made the roads to the colony impassable; therefore, they were unable to examine the actual land at the colony. However, colony adminstrators in Matamoros assured them that the land was of excellent quality and that the needs of settlers would be provided for by the Mexican government. Members of the Kyle repatriation committee returned to Central Texas and gave a favorable report regarding opportunities at the Eighteenth of March Colony.[157]

On 26 June 1939, 16 families comprised of 60 persons departed from Gonzales for the Eighteenth of March Colony. These repatriates were transported in Immigration Service vehicles under the direction of Mexican consular officials from San Antonio. Early in July, approximately 60 persons from Kyle, San Marcos, and New Braunfels were transported to Brownsville along with their household goods, farm equipment, and livestock.[158] On 13 July, the Immigration Service dispatched several trucks to Austin to assist in transporting 44 persons.[159] After the 1939 harvest Consul

General Josefe assisted in transporting 51 persons from Kyle to the colony.[160]

By the end of July 1939, several hundred Texas Mexican families had been transported to the Eighteenth of March Colony and most of the land available for immediate colonization had been distributed. Therefore, on 25 July Mexican Consul General Josefe announced that distribution of land at the colony had been halted. Josefe explained that additional land near the colony would be opened for colonization at a later date.[161] In August Beteta made a tour of several South Texas communities--where large numbers of Texas Mexicans were still awaiting repatriation--to explain the government's decision to halt repatriation.[162] After July 1939, only a few government-sponsored contingents of Texas Mexicans were returned to the colony.

The exact number of Texas Mexican repatriates who settled at the Eighteenth of March Colony is difficult to assess. By the end of July 1939 over 600 families had been provided land at the colony.[163] Throughout the remainder of 1939 and much of 1940, hundreds of families--many from the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas--entered Mexico without government sponsorship and were settled at the Eighteenth of March Colony. By the end of the summer of

1940, over 1,800 repatriate families comprised of over 7,500 persons were residing at the colony.[164] Those families departing from Texas in 1940 received little attention in the press, for apparently they returned to Mexico individually and without encouragement from the Mexican government.

Response to the Cardenas repatriation program was much greater than Mexican government authorities had anticipated.[165] During the summer of 1939, the Mexican National Irrigation Commission--the agency responsible for settling the repatriates at the colony--was unable to effectively accommodate all Texas Mexicans demanding repatriation. In June the engineer in charge of the project, Eduardo Chávez, limited the number of repatriates joining the colony to 100 families monthly.[166] However, the number of repatriates transported from Texas by Mexican consuls during the summer of 1939 greatly exceeded this number.

Groups of Texas Mexicans frequently encountered lengthy delays for lack of transportation to Brownsville. The Immigration Service had provided only eight trucks to transport the repatriates and their belongings. This limited the number of contingents of repatriates that could be transported from Texas to about two each week, for a

total of about 150 repatriates. Texas Mexicans often became impatient over these delays. For example, on two occasions groups of prospective repatriates from Corpus Christi and Robstown entered the Mexican consulate in Corpus Christi and refused to leave until they were repatriated. These Texas Mexicans had sold their belongings and vacated their homes, as they expected to be returned to Mexico immediately. They possessed inadequate resources for a long wait in Texas before repatriation.[167]

Arrival of the Repatriates

Each group of repatriates that arrived in Matamoros was met by representatives of the Mexican National Irrigation Commission (NIC). From Matamoros the repatriates were transported with their belongings to the Eighteenth of March Colony, where they were assigned parcels of land. Most of the repatriates arrived at the colony with no tools. Each colono was given an ax, a machete, and a hoe for clearing the dense brush from the land--a process that took several months for most settlers.[168]

Colonists were paid 65 pesos for each hectare of land cleared. Each week employees of the NIC measured the land cleared on each parcel, and gave each family credit at local stores equal to the amount of land cleared.

Essential provisions could be purchased from these stores which had been established at the colony to limit the distance colonists had to travel to acquire provisions.[169]

Upon their arrival a few families were lodged in temporary dormitories, but these dormitories could accommodate only a limited number of families. A few other colonists were provided with tents to reside in until houses were erected. Most of the settlers, however, were simply given several sheets of galvanized roofing material to use in constructing temporary lean-to shelters. A few of the repatriates were able to erect rudimentary homes within a few days of their arrival, but most of the colonists lived in temporary structures for several months while permanent homes were being constructed. Each family was provided with construction materials equal to 200 pesos.[170] By the summer of 1940, permanent homes for most of the repatriates were completed.[171]

During the summer of 1939, the NIC initiated a public works program at the Eighteenth of March Colony. This program included the construction of a school, an infirmary, a post office, stores, roads, and drainage works. The NIC began to drill water wells at strategic locations at the colony. Although only four wells were completed in

1939, many other wells were drilled in the early 1940s. In addition, the Mexican government began implementing a plan to provide electricity for the homes of the colonists. A few repatriates were provided employment on these projects.[172]

Repatriate Readjustment

The colonists at the Eighteenth of March Colony experienced many hardships during 1939 and 1940. Conditions at the colony were often miserable. During the summer of 1939, the area was periodically innundated by heavy rains which made roads impassable. The rains were followed by periods of intense heat. Settlers were troubled by swarms of insects which made work difficult. Shortages of food and other provisions frequently occurred and medical facilities were virtually nonexistent. Temporary housing was primitive or unavailable. Some colonists wrote letters to Mexican consuls in the United States complaining of the difficult conditions at the colony. The letters led to an investigation by Rámon Beteta in August.

Many of the problems encountered by colonists occurred because of the premature arrival of large numbers of repatriates in the summer of 1939. Chief engineer Eduardo Chávez was prepared to accommodate about 100 families each month. However, during the first 10 weeks of

the program over 600 families were settled at the colony.[173] A study of sanitary conditions at the colony in 1943 noted that the premature transportation of repatriates to the colony in 1939 was responsible for congestion in the area and for many of the repatriates' hardships.[174]

Food shortages compelled some repatriates to devote much of their time to hunting and fishing to supplement meager rations received from the NIC. Wildlife, reportedly plentiful in the area, included deer, rabbits, javelinas, and wild hogs which were a major source of meat for some families. In addition, settlers were able to supplement their diets with locally caught fish.[175]

One of the most critical problems was inadequate medical care. According to Beteta, who visited the colony in August 1939, many colonists were stricken with typhoid fever, paratyphoid, and amoebic dysentery. Many colonists were unable to work because of them. Epidemics of these diseases were often attributed to contaminated water. The children apparently suffered most from lack of medical care. Beteta reported that many children had developed an infectious eye disease because of the heat and dust.[176] A report compiled by the American consul at Matamoros noted

that two small children had reportedly died at the colony for lack of adequate medical care.[177]

A complaint voiced by many repatriates involved the failure of the NIC to provide potable water for the colonists. Upon their arrival at the colony, each family was provided with a 55-gallon drum for water shortage. These barrels were filled twice each week from NIC water trucks. Colonists often complained that the water was insufficient, of poor quality, and contaminated.[178] In August 1939 Beteta reported to President Cárdenas that provision of water to the colonists remained a major problem. Three wells had been drilled in the area to a depth of 200 feet, but the water was not potable because of the high salt content. Plans were made to deepen these wells in order to reach water suitable for drinking.[179]

The temporary housing arrangements at the colony were another source of dissatisfaction. Before the Texas Mexicans departed Texas for the Eighteenth of March Colony they were assured that satisfactory temporary housing would be provided. Residents of the recently constructed dormitories complained of crowded conditions, lack of ventilation, intense heat, and dust. Lack of materials for temporary housing led some repatriates to erect lean-tos

of canvas stretched between trees, while others were compelled to build huts from tree branches. A few colonists lived in the open with no protection from the elements; some lived in automobiles.[180]

Many of the repatriates at the Eighteenth of March Colony became disillusioned with the efforts of the NIC to resolve these problems. The colonists noted that while they often went hungry, employees of the NIC received substantial food rations. The colonists protested the meager food allowances to chief engineer Chávez, but apparently little was done to resolve this problem. In August 1939, a number of colonists complained to Marte R. Gomez, governor of Tamaulipas, that NIC authorities were insensitive to their needs. Many of the repatriates came to believe that efforts to establish viable farms at the colony would be in vain. They appealed to the Cárdenas government to place them in other areas of Mexico where conditions would not be so difficult.[181]

Although conditions were difficult at the Eighteenth of March Colony in 1939, a number of repatriates were pleased with the opportunity to own land and with conditions at the colony. Letters written by colonists to Mexican consuls in the United States in late May and early June--soon after

the first contingents arrived--gave no indication of problems. One writer indicated that he was going to encourage friends and relatives who remained in Texas to emigrate to the colony as soon as possible.[182] It is possible that these letters were written before severe problems developed in late summer--after the influx of several thousand colonists which the NIC was not prepared to accommodate.

Chief engineer Chávez confirmed recently that great privation occurred during the first few months after the repatriates arrived at the colony. The main difficulty was the unpreparedness of the NIC to accommodate the repatriates upon their arrival, Chávez stated. In addition, a few repatriates had had no agricultural experience prior to their arrival at the colony. They had been employed as barbers, carpenters, plumbers, construction workers, errand-runners, and shoeshiners. These workers lacked the expertise to clear the land and establish successful farming operations. Chávez noted that their adjustment to life at the Eighteenth of March Colony had been much more difficult than that of agricultural laborers who had been employed on the cotton plantations in Texas.[183]

Chávez asserted that most of the problems experienced by the colonists had been of short duration. He said that

within a few months the NIC was able to solve most of the problems confronting the repatriates. Within a year many had cleared their land and were producing excellent crops of cotton, corn, and beans. After the 1940 harvest, a number of the colonists were self-supporting and required little additional government assistance. Moreover, Chávez maintained that only 10 percent of the colonists abandoned their land. This, he asserted, supported his view that conditions at the colony improved. However, Chávez acknowledged that many of the American-born children of the colonists returned to the United States in the 1940s when economic conditions there improved.[184]

Conclusions

One of the most significant aspects of these four repatriation movements is the dissimilarity in their initiation, organization, and implementation. The Karnes City movement was sponsored by Mexican consular officials while the Eighteenth of March movement resulted primarily from the efforts of the Mexican government. The Bridgeport movement was largely attributable to Anglo Texans, but the Gonzales movement resulted from the efforts of the repatriates themselves.

The most important institution or government agency involved in these four repatriation movements was the Mexican consulates. Mexican consular officials were directly responsible for all facets of the return of the Karnes City repatriates, and they played an important role in the other three movements as well. The Mexican consul in Dallas assisted local welfare workers in raising funds to return the Bridgeport repatriates, while consular officials at San Antonio and Eagle Pass facilitated the return of the Gonzales repatriates. After Under Secretary of Foreign Relations Ramón Beteta initiated the Eighteenth of March movement, Mexican consular officials were responsible for organizing and implementing the return of repatriates from diverse locations in Texas. Selection of repatriates for this colony was a major responsibility of local consuls. Mexican consular officials apparently played a much greater role in the four Texas movements than did Mexican consuls in Los Angeles, Detroit, or Gary, Indiana--the only other case studies of Mexican repatriation during the Depression era.

In addition to Mexican consular officials, a number of Texas Mexican organizations were involved in these repatriation movements. Local Comisiones Honoríficas were perhaps

the most important of these organizations. These quasi-official bodies assisted the consuls in organizing and implementing the return of many Texas Mexicans. They provided expertise, leadership, and information at the local level. At Karnes City the Comisión Honorífica was largely responsible for registration of prospective repatraites, while local commissions in other communities provided financial aid and transportation for the repatriates. Another role of local Comisiones Honoríficas was investigating opportunities offered by the Mexican government to determine if opportunities were sufficient to warrant the return of Texas Mexicans.

Social organizations also played a critical role in the repatriation process. Societies in this category include mutual benefit and self-help societies, social clubs, patriotic societies, and committees established for the explicit purpose of assisting destitute repatriates. These social organizations provided both financial and material aid. The Karnes City repatriates received more assistance from these societies than did other groups of repatriates.

The Mexican government played an important role in the repatriates' return, although the only movement in which

Mexican government officials became directly involved was the Eighteenth of March movement. However, the Mexican government played a critical role in all four movements by abolishing import duties on the belongings of repatriates and by providing the repatriates free transportation from the Texas-Mexican border to their home towns in Mexico. In addition, the establishment of the El Nogal agricultural colony was largely responsible for the return of the Gonzales repatriates.

Anglo Americans and their institutions were involved in very limited ways except in the Bridgeport movement, which they initiated, organized, and implemented. Involvement of Anglo Americans in the other three repatriation movements was limited to suspension of the bridge tariff by the Laredo Bridge Company for the Karnes City repatriates and provision of U.S. Immigration Service trucks for the return of the Eighteenth of March repatriates. This limited involvement contrasts with findings from previous case studies of Los Angeles, Detroit, and Gary, Indiana, where Anglo Americans were largely responsible for the return of Mexicans to Mexico.

A number of conclusions regarding the repatriates themselves may be drawn from these four case studies.

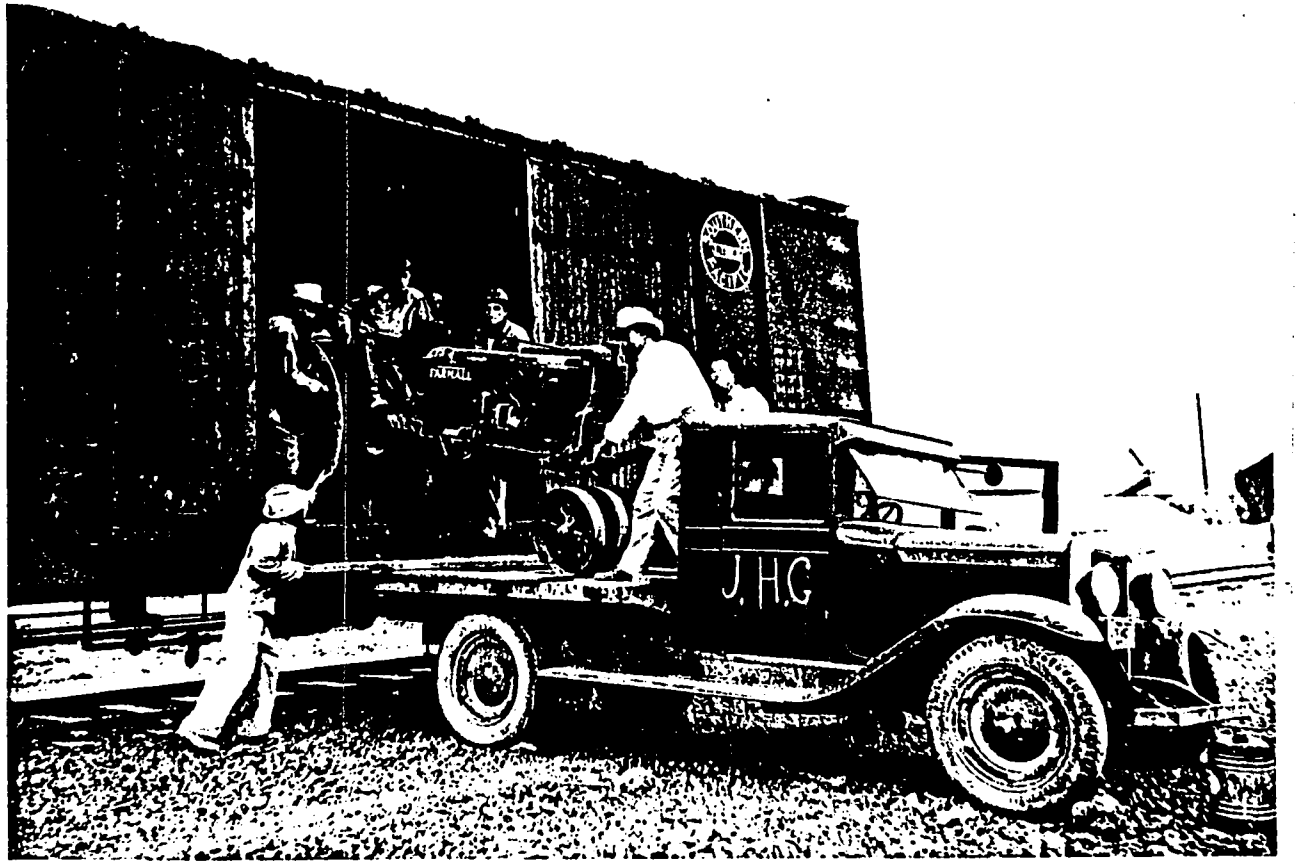
Most of the Texas Mexicans who returned to Mexico were impoverished at the time of their departure from Texas. Only the Gonzales repatriates possessed substantial economic resources. Automobiles, furniture, household goods, farm equipment, and livestock were not in themselves indicative of financial well-being, for many repatriates who possessed substantial material belongings lacked funds to begin life in Mexico. The repatriates' belongings were frequently of such little monetary value that they were unable to sell them.

A large number of repatriates in these four movements had resided in Texas for many years. Various reports indicated that the repatriates had resided in Texas for 10, 20, 30, or more years. Many of the repatriates had U.S.-born children who had been educated in Texas schools and who had adopted American customs. These children often viewed Texas as their home and Mexico as a foreign country, even though the Mexican government accorded them Mexican citizenship.

Many of the repatriates were reluctant to leave Texas. They remained in Texas for many months after the onset of the Depression, hoping for improved economic conditions. Most abandoned Texas only after their savings were exhausted.

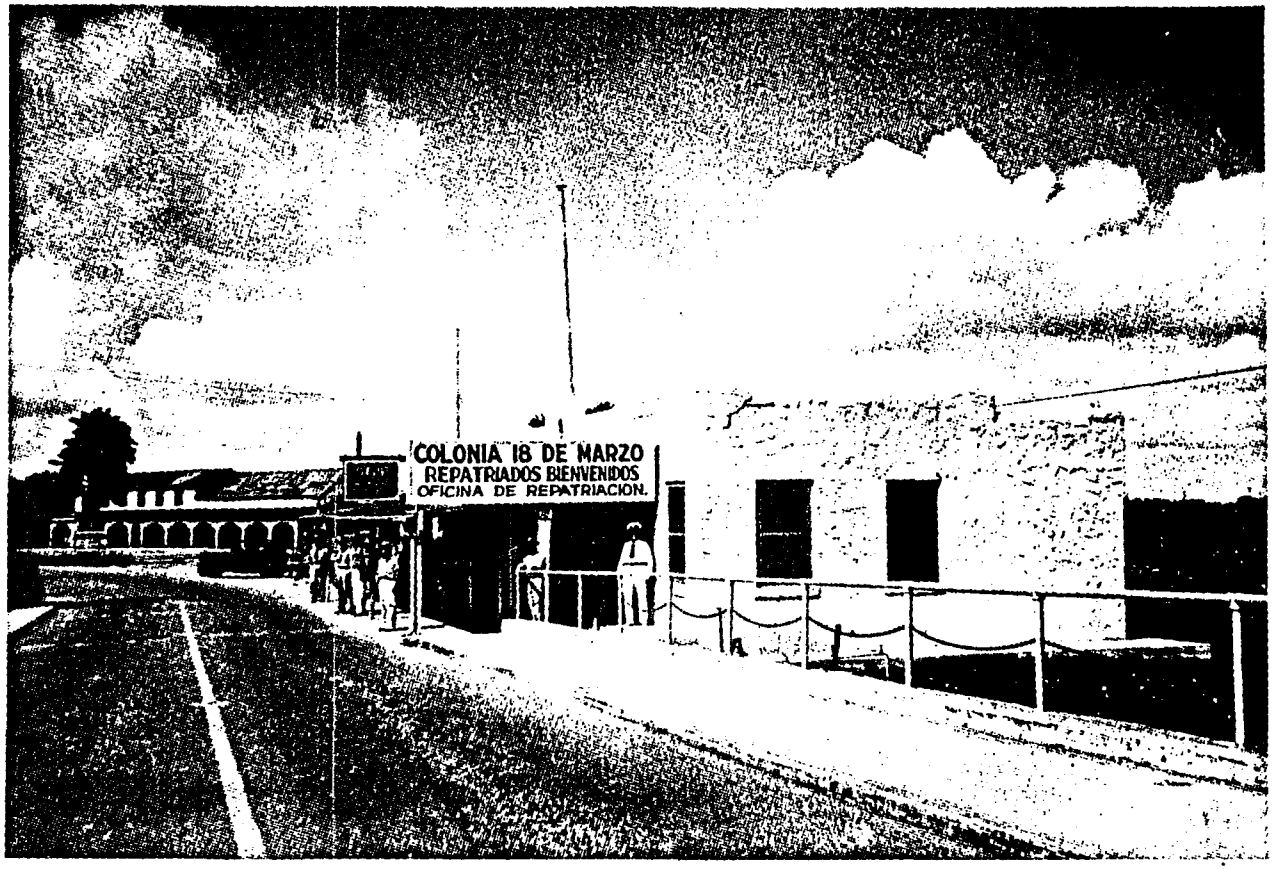
Little is known about the life of the Karnes City or Bridgeport repatriates after they reached Mexico, for they were transported to many diverse locations. However, many repatriates of the Gonzales and the Eighteenth of March movements initially experienced severe adjustment difficulties. The failure of the Mexican government to provide sufficient financial, material, and moral support was largely responsible for their difficulties.

Photograph 2. Arrival of Texas Repatriates at Eighteenth of March Colony, 1939 (Courtesy of Eduardo Chávez).

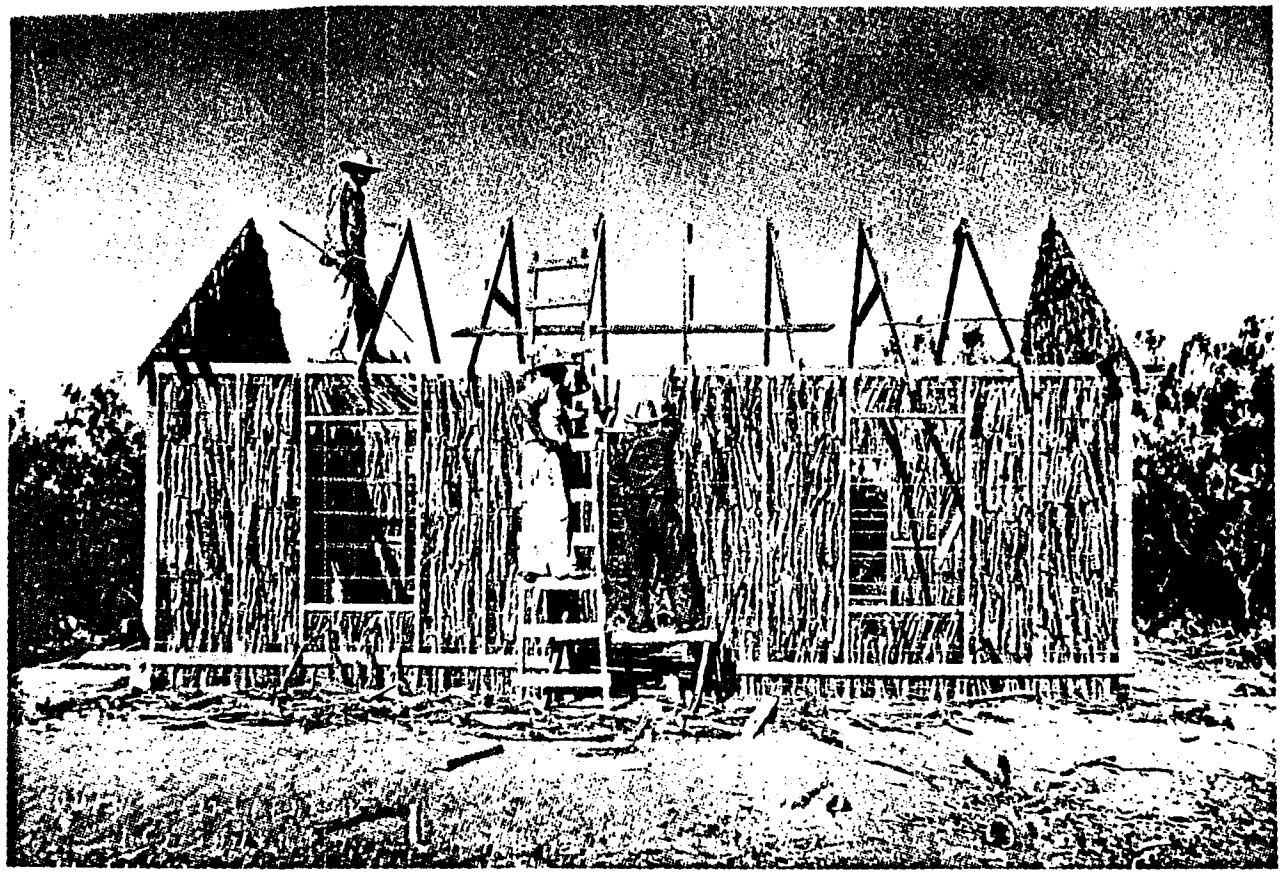


Photograph 3. Repatriates Unloading Farm Equipment at Eighteenth of March Colony (Courtesy of Eduardo Chávez).

Photograph 4. Repatriates Clearing Land at Eighteenth of March Colony (Courtesy of Eduardo Chávez).

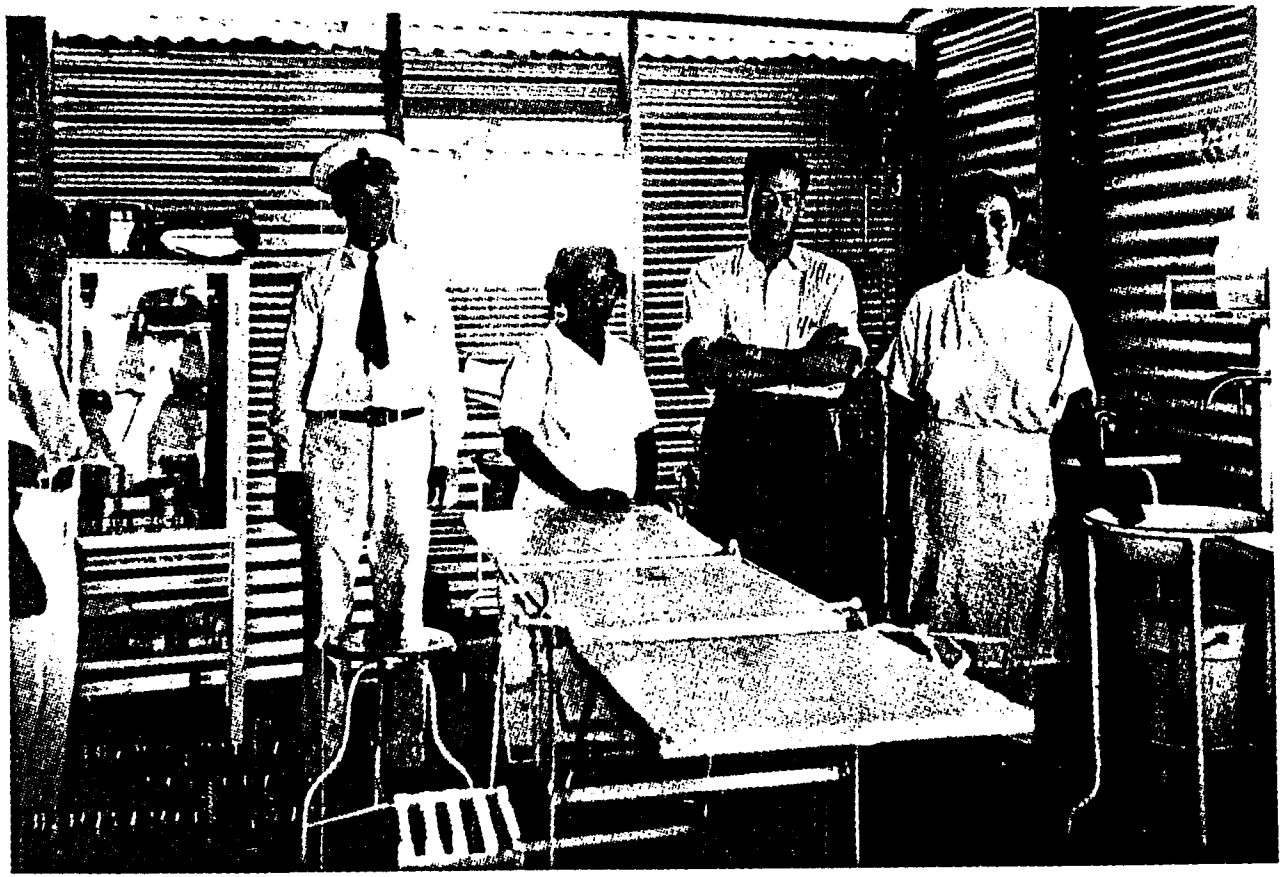


Photograph 5. Repatriation Office for the Eighteenth of March Colony (Courtesy of Eduardo Chávez).

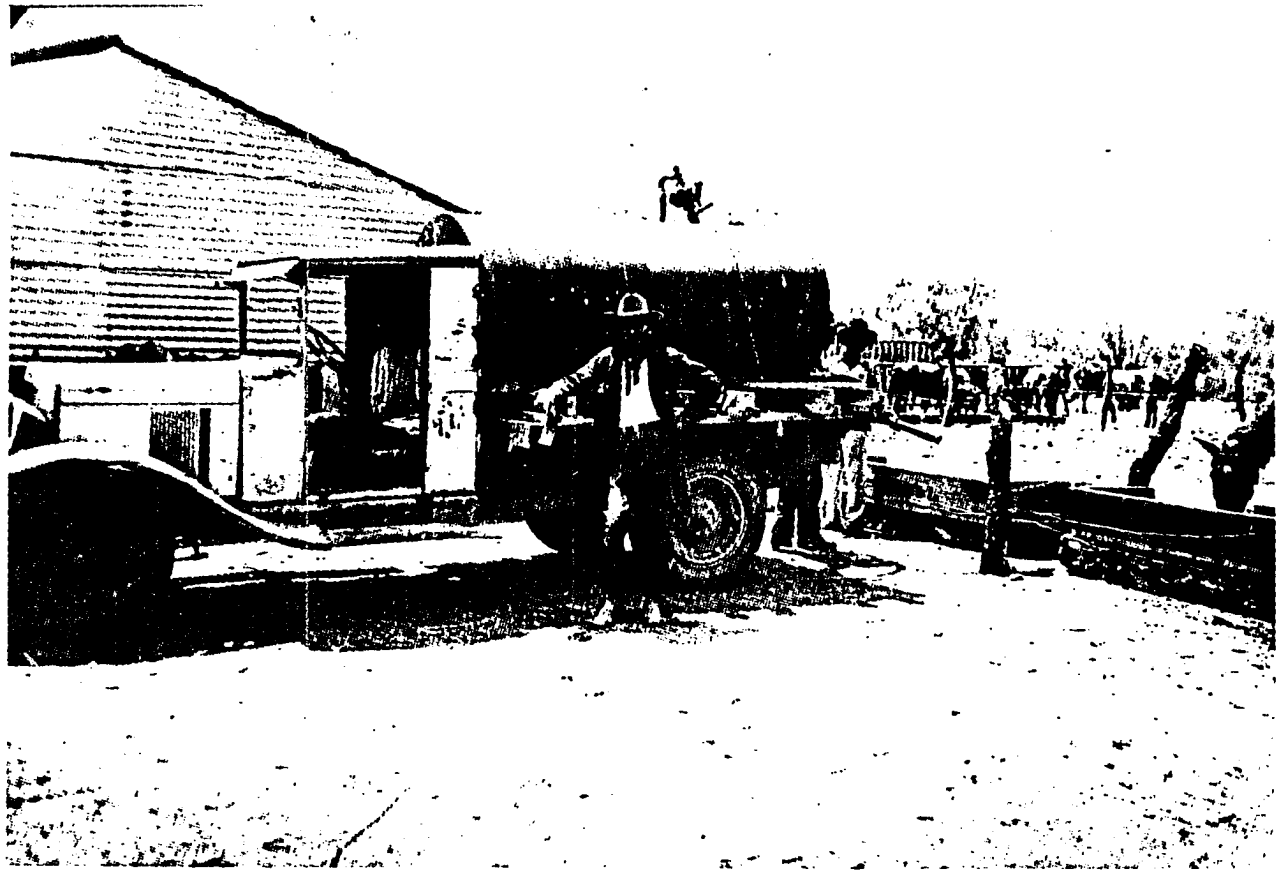


Photograph 6. Future Home of Eighteenth of March Colonist (Courtesy of Eduardo Chávez).

Photograph 7. Construction of a Home by Eighteenth of March Colony Repatriates (Courtesy of Eduardo Chávez).



Photograph 8. Government Clinic and Medical Personnel (Courtesy of Eduardo Chávez).



Photograph 9. Truck Used to Deliver Potable Water to Eighteenth of March Colonist (Courtesy of Eduardo Chávez).

Photograph 10. Farm Equipment Awarded to the First Colono to Complete Clearing of Land (Courtesy of Eduardo Chávez).

Photograph 11. Cotton Produced by Eighteenth of March Colonist in Early 1940s (Courtesy of Eduardo Chávez).

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179. AHSRE, "Repatriaciones de Mexicanos," 20-23-52, H/524.5(72:73)/2.

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CHAPTER X

ROUTEWAYS AND DESTINATIONS

Introduction

The routeways used by repatriates to reach their destinations have been neglected in previous repatriation studies. Most Mexicans who returned to Mexico during the Depression departed from the United States through Texas' ports. Repatriates from the upper Midwest and the eastern United States usually entered Mexico at Laredo, while returnees from the western states departed through El Paso. Departures from California, Arizona, and New Mexico border points were few compared to departures at El Paso.

The few published studies have focused on travel within the United States and have ignored the repatriates after their arrival in Mexico. Little is known about the specific destinations of Mexicans, although it is presumed that most repatriates returned to the states from which they had emigrated.[1] Much of what is known about the destinations of Mexican repatriates is provided by Taylor.[2] This chapter

documents and analyzes the routeways and destinations of Texas Mexican repatriates.

Routeways

The routeway that repatriates selected was predicated on a combination of factors. First, repatriates in Texas usually selected the most direct route to the border. Second, repatriates destined for the northern border states--Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Sonora--entered at many locations along the Texas-Mexico border, while repatriates going to the interior usually entered at Laredo or El Paso. Third, destitute repatriates gravitated to Matamoros, Nuevo Laredo, and Ciudad Juárez, from which most repatriate trains to the interior departed. Fourth, most repatriates going to the interior who possessed their own transporation entered at Laredo or El Paso, because the roads south of Nuevo Laredo and Ciudad Juárez were the best roads to the interior.

Three major gateways and several minor gateways to Mexico were used by Texas repatriates (Figure 4). The major gateways were Laredo, Brownsville, and El Paso. By far the largest number of Texas Mexican repatriates returned through Laredo. Large numbers of Texas Mexican residents from North, South, Central, and part of West Texas entered Mexico at

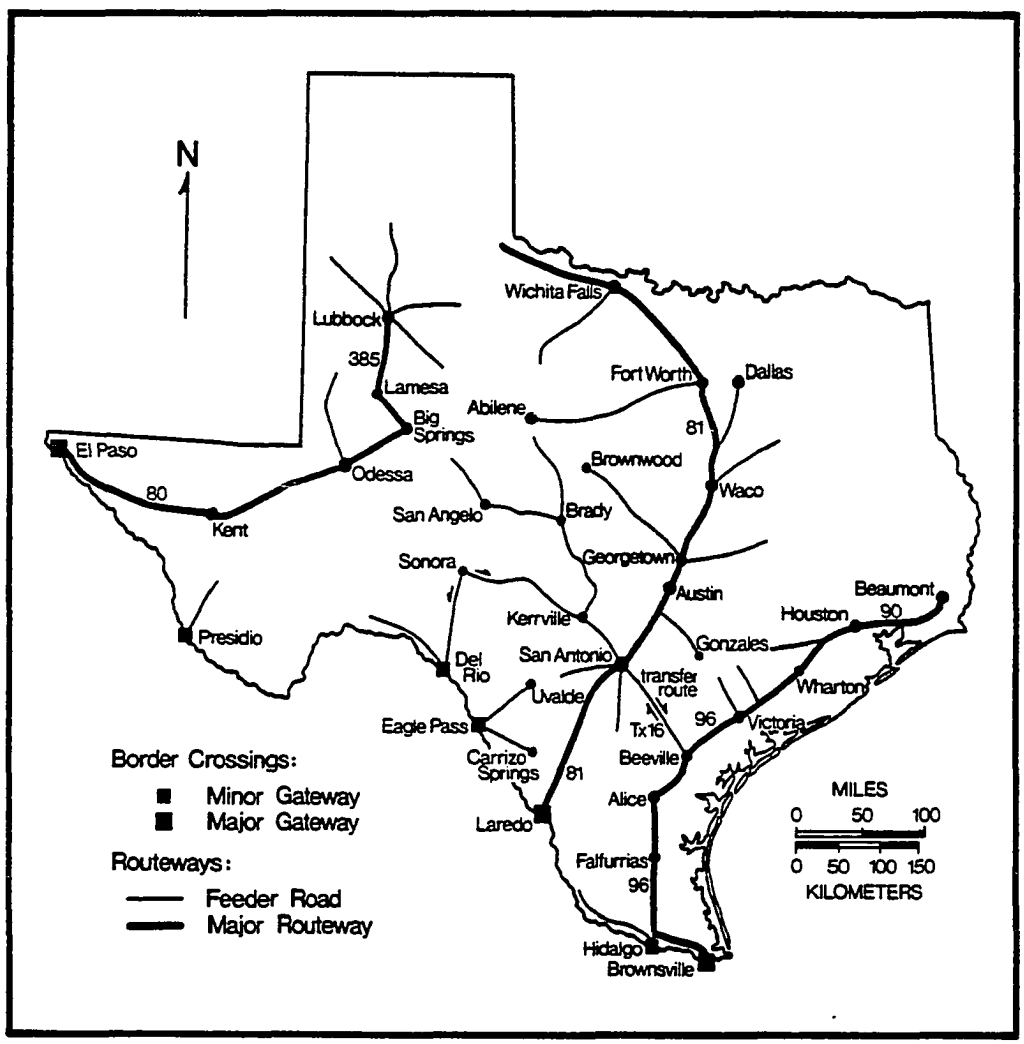

FIGURE 4

REPATRIATE GATEWAYS AND ROUTEWAYS IN TEXAS

Laredo. Brownsville served as the major gateway for lower Rio Grande Valley residents and for others whose destinations were in Tamaulipas. Probably the second largest number of repatriates entered Mexico through Brownsville. The number of departures at El Paso was almost as great as those at Laredo; many of the repatriates departing through El Paso, however, came from western states. Texas Mexican repatriates who entered at El Paso were generally from El Paso, towns in the El Paso area, and a vast area of West Texas extending into the Texas Panhandle.

The most important minor gateways to Mexico were Hidalgo, Eagle Pass, Del Rio, and Presidio. Although repatriates entered Mexico at many other points along the Texas-Mexico border, their numbers were insignificant. In general, the minor gateways served Texas Mexicans residing in areas adjacent to them. Many of the repatriates who entered Mexico at Hidalgo, for example, came from Hidalgo and Starr counties in the lower Rio Grande Valley, while repatriates from the Winter Garden district and Southwest Texas passed through Eagle Pass and Del Rio, respectively. Many of the repatriates who entered at Hidalgo, Eagle Pass, and Del Rio were destined for repatriate colonies in the northeastern border states of Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, and

Coahuila, not for the interior of Mexico. Only a small number of Texas Mexican repatriates entered at Presidio. Most of the repatriates who exited Texas at Presidio had been miners in Brewster and Presidio counties in West Texas.

Three major repatriate routeways led across Texas to the Texas-Mexico border. The most important of these was a central routeway which originated near the Texas-Oklahoma border and passed through North, Central, and South Texas. Major cities on this routeway included Fort Worth, Waco, Austin, San Antonio, and Laredo, where the routeway terminated. This routeway followed U.S. Highway 81 and paralleled the Missouri Pacific Railroad. A number of important feeder roads to this routeway provided access to repatriates living at diverse locations in West, East, South, and Central Texas. Two of these feeder roads originated in West Texas and became linked near Kerrville before they joined the central routeway at San Antonio. Other important feeder roads linked rural areas of South, East, and Central Texas with the central routeway.

An eastern routeway extended from the Beaumont-Port Arthur area near the Texas-Louisiana border to the lower Rio Grande Valley. This routeway skirted the Texas Gulf Coast and passed through Houston, Victoria, Beeville, Alice,

Falfurrias, Pharr, and terminated in Brownsville. This routeway followed U.S. Highway 96 and paralleled the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railroad. Several feeder roads in South Texas and the lower Rio Grande Valley provided repatriates access to this eastern routeway. The most important of these feeder roads was Texas Highway 16, which linked San Antonio and Beeville. This highway was the primary link between the central and the eastern routeway. Repatriates leaving North, Central, and West Texas whose destination was the Brownsville gateway usually followed the central routeway as far as San Antonio. From San Antonio the repatriates turned south on Texas 16 and proceeded to Beeville, where connections were made with the eastern routeway.

A third major routeway extended from Lubbock on the South Plains across West Texas and terminated at El Paso. This routeway passed through Lamesa, Big Springs, Odessa, and Van Horn before reaching El Paso. The western routeway followed U.S. Highway 385 from Lubbock to Big Springs and U.S. Highway 80 from Big Springs to El Paso. A number of feeder roads extended into West and Southwest Texas to serve repatriates destined for El Paso.

From the border, most Mexicans returned to the interior via one of two major routeways: the Nuevo Laredo-Mexico City highway or the Ciudad-Juárez-Guadalajara highway (Figure 5). Most of the repatriates who entered Mexico through lower Rio Grande Valley ports and whose destination was the interior joined the Laredo-Mexico City routeway at Monterrey. Few repatriates traveled south along the Mexican Gulf Coast because the roads south of Matamoros were in poor condition.

The two major north-south routeways began several hundred miles apart on the Texas-Mexico border at Ciudad Juárez and Nuevo Laredo. The Ciudad Juárez-Guadalajara or western route followed the Mexican Central Railroad from Ciudad Juárez to Guadalajara, and passed through the cities of Chihuahua, Torrerón, Zacatecas, Aguascalientes, and Irapuato, before terminating at Guadalajara. The Nuevo Laredo-Mexico City or eastern route paralleled the National Railraod from Laredo to Mexico City, and passed through the cities of Monterrey, Saltillo, San Luis Potosí, Celaya, and Querétaro, before reaching Mexico City. The western and eastern routeways came within a few miles of converging at Irapuato and Celaya, respectively, in the state of Guanajuato. The western routeway turned west at

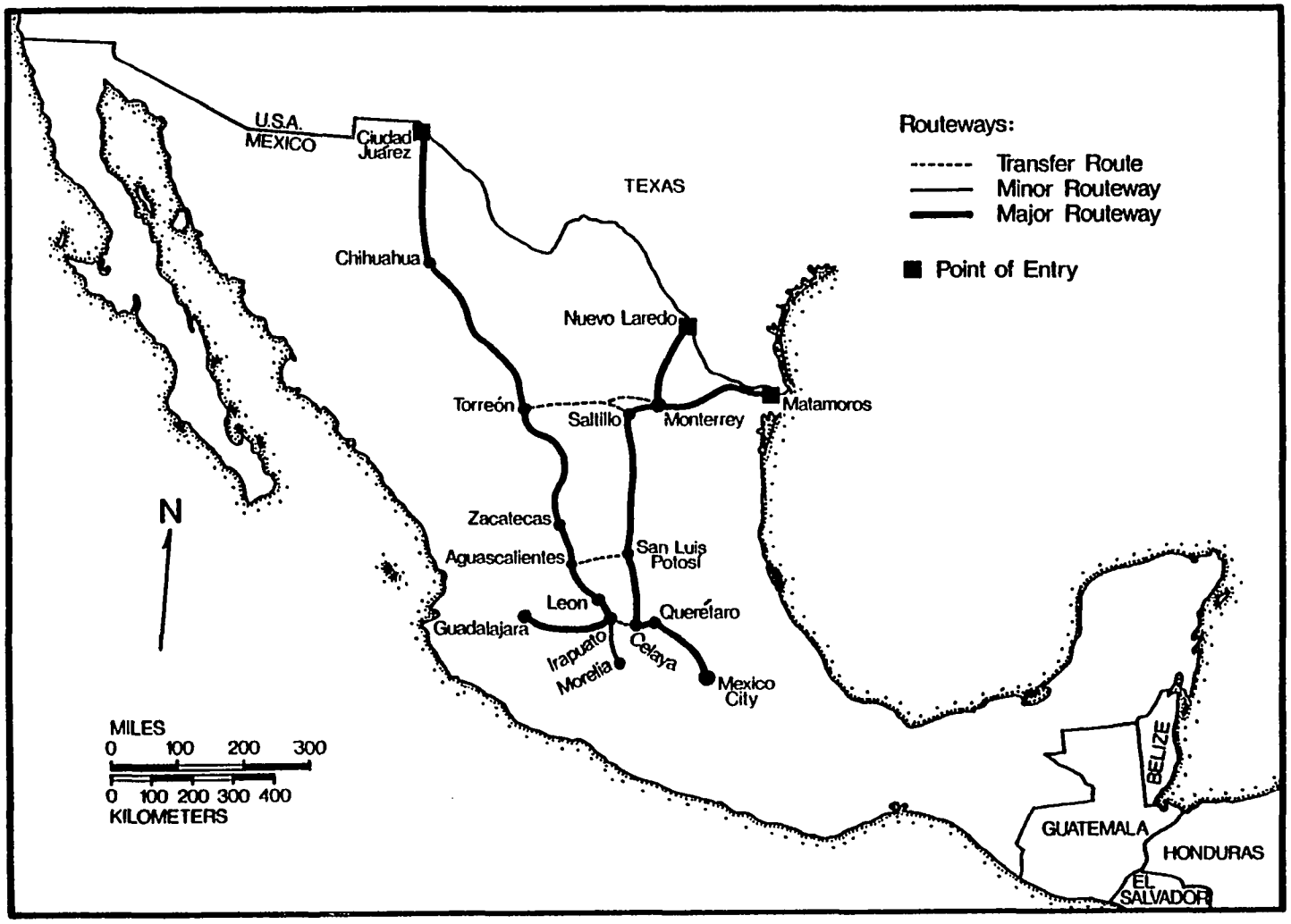

FIGURE 5

REPATRIATE ROUTEWAYS IN MEXICO

Irapuato and passed through Guanajuato and Jalisco before reaching Guadalajara, while the eastern routeway turned southeast at Celaya and passed through the states of Querétaro and Mexico before terminating in Mexico City.

Mexican repatriates traveling to the interior in their own vehicles frequently encountered difficulties because of poor roads. In 1925 Mexico had only a few miles of improved roads, most of which connected Mexico City with nearby cities. As late as 1930 only 885 miles of improved roads had been constructed.[3] Many principal cities could be reached only by wagon trails or dirt roads, which became impassable during heavy rains. The roads used by repatriates on the eastern route varied from hard surface roads from Nuevo Laredo to Monterrey to dirt roads over much of the route between Saltillo and San Luis Potosí. Roads on the western route were generally inferior to those of the eastern routeway. In 1931 McLean described the 200-mile road between Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua as a "rough, sandy trail,"[4] while many of the roads from Chihuahua to Zacatecas were scarcely more than wagon trails.

The two major north-south routeways were connected by several east-west railways and roads. One of the most important transportation junctions on the western routeway

was Torreón, which was connected to Monterrey and Saltillo by railway and road. Further south Aguascalientes on the western routeway was connected with San Luis Potosí on the eastern routeway by railway and road.

The most important linkage between the eastern and western routes were the railway and road between Celaya and Irapuato in Guanajuato. These cities were frequently cited in news reports as the destinations of large numbers of repatriates. In 1930 and 1931, when repatriation activity was at its peak, hundreds of repatriates arrived in Irapauto and Celaya daily and fanned out over the bajío (a series of connected basins) of Guanajuato to the towns and villages from which they had emigrated. Irapauto and Celaya were also major junctions for repatriates with other destinations. Repatriates from the eastern routeway who had destinations in Jalisco made connections at Irapuato, while repatriates from the western routeway made connections at Celaya for destinations in the southeast including Querétaro and Mexico City. Further, repatriates destined for Michoacán proceeded to Irapuato and Celaya before continuing their journeys south by train or motor vehicle to Morelia, Michoacán. Morelia served as a major distribution point for repatriates returning to the towns and villages in Michoacán.

Destinations

The specific destinations of most Texas Mexican repatriates is unknown. News reports chronicling their departure rarely mentioned repatriate destinations. When the Texas press referred to a destination in Mexico, it was usually to a state or region, not to a town or village. In 1933 Bogardus wrote that most repatriates returned

> to their native villages and towns, to the large cities, and to the repatriation colonies established by the government. While it is evident that by far the largest percentage have gone back to their native communities and that only a small percentage have gone to the large cities and to the repatriation colonies, the extent of these percentages is not clear. Perhaps we may estimate that about 80 per cent have returned to the villages; 15 per cent to the large cities; and 5 per cent to the repatriation and colonization centers.[5]

If most repatriates returned to their native towns and villages, and recent studies do not dispute this assertion,[6] by identifying the sources of Mexican immigration, one may hypothesize repatriate destinations. A brief analysis of these sources of Texas migrants follows.

Only a few studies have tried to identify the sources of Mexican immigration to the United States. In 1908 Clark reported that the source of most Mexican immigration was the western section of the Central Plateau, which includes part of Jalisco, Michoacán, Guanajuato, Aguascalientes, and

Zacatecas.[7] One of the best statistical sources, whose data have been largely ignored, is Foerster's study on the place of birth of Mexicans immigrating to the United States in April 1924 (Table 9).[8] Of 9,965 Mexicans who entered Texas in April 1924, over 66 percent came from seven states--Jalisco, Guanajuato, Michoacán, Aguascalientes, Durango, Zacatecas, and San Luis Potosí--all of which are located in central Mexico. Another 25 percent came from the northern border states of Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, Coahuila, Chihuahua, and Sonora. Although these Mexicans entered Texas, their destination was not given, and they may not have become residents of Texas.

In another effort to identify Mexican immigration sources, Gamio examined the destinations of money orders mailed from the United States to Mexico during July and August of 1926. He assumed that Mexicans in the United States mailed these money orders to relatives in the areas of Mexico where they were from. Gamio's findings correlated strongly with Foerster's: he found that over 70 percent of the money orders were sent to the seven states in central Mexico which Foerster had identified as a major source of Mexican immigration, while approximately 20 percent of the money orders were directed to the northern border

TABLE 9

BIRTHPLACE OF MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS ADMITTED TO THE UNITED STATES AT SAN ANTONIO AND EL PASO IMMIGRATION DISTRICTS IN APIRL 1924

Mexican State of Birth	San Antonio District	El Paso District	Total
Aguascalientes	85	179	264
Campeche	2	---	2
Chiapas	1	7	8
Chihuahua	15	454	469
Coahuila	832	109	941
Colima	3	8	11
Durango	91	492	583
Federal District	---	109	109
Guanajuato	662	440	1,102
Guerrero	---	3	3
Hidalgo	19	8	27
Jalisco	920	1,095	2,015
Lower California	---	9	9
Mexico	185	4	189
Michoacán	1,029	447	1,476
Mayarit	---	68	68
Nuevo León	576	6	582
Oaxaca	1	3	4
Puebla	14	16	30
Querétaro	6	3	9
San Luis Potosí	314	21	335
Sinaloa	---	209	209
Sonora	3	373	376
Tamaulipas	186	8	194
Tepic	1	---	1
Tlaxcala	---	---	0
Veracruz	23	10	33
Yucatan	4	1	5
Zacatecas	223	688	911
Total	5,195	4,770	9,965

Source: Adapted from Robert F. Foerster, The Racial Problems Involved in Immigration from Latin America and the West Indies to the U.S. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1925), p. 51.

states that Foerster had identified as a secondary immigration source.[9]

In a study limited to Texas, Taylor examined the records of the Mexican consul at Corpus Christi in Nueces County. Taylor compiled information on the home states of all Mexicans who registered at the Corpus Christi consulate for a 19-month period in 1928 and 1929 and found that over 90 percent of the registrants came from six Mexican states. Over 60 percent were originally from Nuevo León, Tamaulipas, and Coahuila--northern border states--while about 30 percent had immigrated from the states of San Luis Potosí, Guanajuato, and Zacatecas in central Mexico.[10] Taylor contradicts data given by Foerster and Gamio, for his study indicates that, at least for Texas, about twice as many immigrants came from the northern border states as from central Mexico. There is no indication, however, of the years these Mexicans immigrated to Texas; some could have been in the states for decades, others for only a few months.

Taylor's 1930 study of Mexican labor in the Winter Garden district of Texas revealed similar findings. Taylor examined records maintained by the Catholic Church in Dimmit and Zavala counties to determine the sources of Mexican immigration to the Winter Garden district. He

concluded that 87 percent of the Mexican immigrants came from the northeastern border states and that only 12 percent came from the western section of the Central Plateau of Mexico.[11] Again, the limitation of this study is that there is no indication of when these Mexicans immigrated to Texas, or whether it was only during a few weeks or over many years.

Studies of Mexican labor in Texas conducted during the late Depression reveal similar findings to Taylor's. Menefee found that about 85 percent of the Mexican residents of Crystal City in Zavala County emigrated from the northeastern border states,[12] while a study of the San Antonio pecan-shelling industry by Menefee and Cassmore late in the Depression revealed that the largest number of employees in this industry had come from the northeastern states.

> The pecan shellers and their families, like most Mexican immigrants, came originally from the near-by border states of Mexico. The largest number who named their places of family origin came from the state of Nuevo Leon, just south of Laredo, Tex., in which the industrial city of Monterrey is located. Coahuila, another border state which includes the cities of Saltillo and Piedras Negras, was second in importance; and the states of San Luis Potosi, in the interior, and Tamaulipas, along the lower Rio Grande, followed in the order named.[13]

During the first three decades of the twentieth century most Mexican immigrants to Texas came primarily from either the northern border states or central Mexico.

Apparently the northern border states provided a much larger portion of immigrants than did central Mexico. The flow of immigrants from the source areas into Texas did not remain constant for the 1900-1930 period.[14] Most Mexicans who settled in Texas prior to the Mexican revolution originated from the northern border states. After the advent of the Mexican revolution an increasing number of immigrants came from central Mexico, although the northern border states remained an important source. Most Mexican immigrants who arrived in the United States after 1920 apparently settled in states other than Texas.[15]

Information on the sources of Mexican immigration to Texas is consistent with data compiled by the Mexican Migration Service on the destinations of Texas Mexican repatriates for 1930-1932. These data indicate that over 80 percent of the Texas repatriates returned to the northern border states of Nuevo León, Coahuila, Tamaulipas, and Chihuahua, while about 15 percent returned to the central Mexican states of Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán, Zacatecas, San Luis Potosí, Durango, and Aguascalientes. Other destinations were relatively unimportant, although 3.3 percent of Texas Mexican repatriates returned to the Federal District (Table 10). Within each of the two regions to which most Texas

TABLE 10

DESTINATIONS OF TEXAS REPATRIATES BY MEXICAN STATES, 1930-1932

Destinations	Percent	Number
Nuevo León	30.7	40,759
Coahuila	22.0	29,126
Tamaulipas	16.0	21,254
Chihuahua	12.0	15,903
Guanajuato	4.8	6,383
Distrito Federal	3.3	4,403
San Luis Potosí	2.4	3,172
Michoacán	2.3	3,076
Jalisco	2.2	2,890
Durango	1.7	2,241
Zacatecas	1.1	1,496
Aguascalientes	.8	1,039
Sonora	.1	103
Sinaloa	.0	44
Other States	.6	719
Total	100.0	132,639

Source: Adapted from Paul S. Taylor, Mexican Labor in the United States: Migration Statistics, IV, University of California Publications in Economics, vol. 12, no. 3 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1934), p. 45.

Mexicans returned, two subregions are apparent. In northern Mexico Nuevo León may be categorized as a subregion, while Coahuila, Tamaulipas, and Chihuahua may be grouped together. In central Mexico Guanajuato, San Luis Potosí, and Michoacán emerge as a subregion, while Jalisco, Durango, Zacatecas, and Aguascalientes form a subregion (Figure 6). Although data on destinations are not available for 1933-1939, it is probable that most Texas repatriates who arrived in Mexico after 1932 also returned either to the northern border states or to central Mexico.

Conclusions

During the Great Depression Texas Mexican repatriates returned to the Texas-Mexico border via three major routeways: a central routeway which extended from North Texas across Central and South Texas to Laredo; an eastern routeway which originated near the Texas-Louisiana border and skirted the Texas Gulf Coast across South Texas before passing through the lower Rio Grande Valley, where it terminated at Brownsville; and a western routeway which began near Lubbock on the South Plains and extended across West Texas to its terminus at El Paso. By far the largest number of Texas Mexicans returned to Mexico via the central routeway.

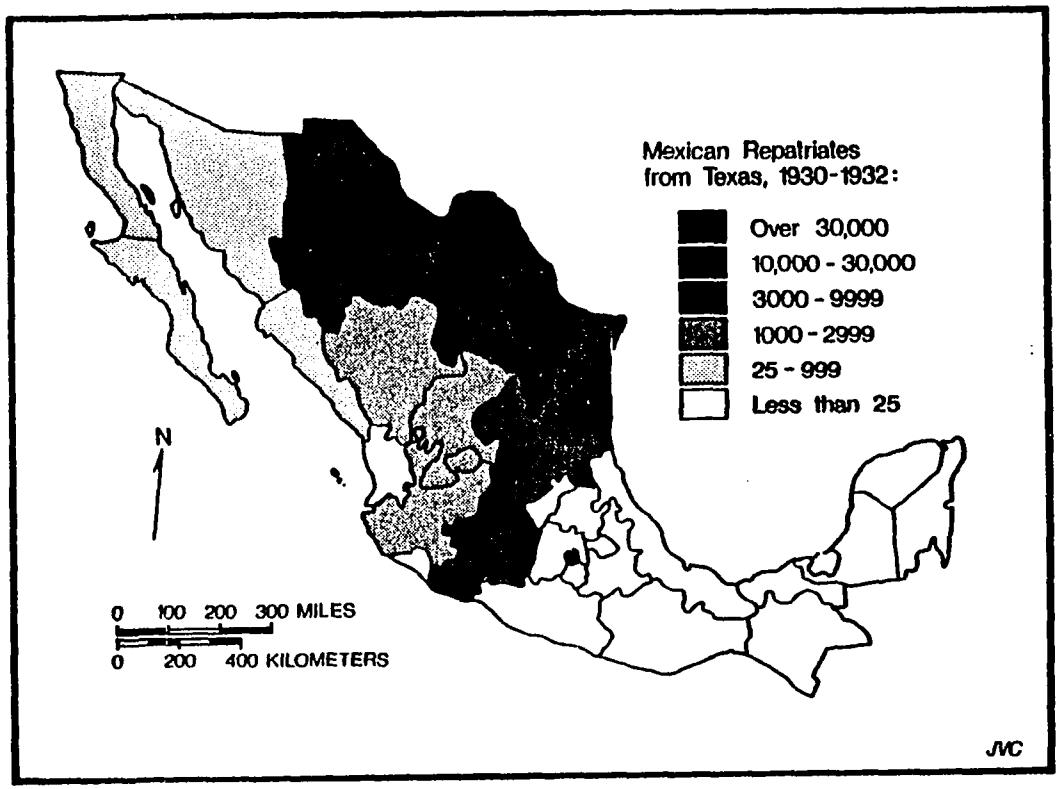

FIGURE 6

DESTINATIONS OF TEXAS MEXICAN REPATRIATES, 1930-1932

Source: Paul S. Taylor, Mexican Labor in the United States: Migration Statistics, IV, University of California Publications in Economics, vol. 12, no. 3 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1934), p. 45.

The major routeways were linked to rural areas by a number of feeder roads.

Repatriates also entered Mexico at one of a number of minor gateways along the Texas-Mexico border including Hidalgo, Eagle Pass, Del Rio, and Presidio. Most of the repatriates who entered at these points came from the local area, and many were destined for points near the border, especially government-sponsored colonization projects.

Texas Mexican repatriates with destinations in the interior usually followed one of two major north-south routeways in Mexico. The western routeway extended from Ciudad Juárez to Guadalajara, while an eastern routeway originated at Nuevo Laredo and terminated in Mexico City. These major routeways were connected at several points by railway and roads.

The specific destinations of most Texas Mexican repatriates is unknown. Apparently, most returned to the towns and villages from which they had emigrated, while some migrated to urban centers and government sponsored agricultural colonies. The destination of most Texas repatriates was the northern border states, while a smaller but significant number returned to central Mexico.

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CHAPTER XI

REPATRIATE RESETTLEMENT

Introduction

A number of studies have concluded that the Mexican government failed in its efforts to settle repatriates. Criticism has focused on the government's failure to develop and implement a comprehensive colonization program. Writing at the close of the Depression era, Humphrey stated, "land and tools had been 'promised,' but often no adequate provision was actually made."[1] Hoffman noted that most of the Mexican government's plans were on paper,[2] while Betten and Mohl stated that

> land made available by the Mexican government seldom came with enough water to support even subsistence agriculture. Because of such difficulties, most repatriates returned to the country's villages and towns. . . . Thus, a haven in the homeland did not materialize for the repatriates.[3]

Cardoso observed that "as late as 1933 the Secretary of Foreign Relations and the Secretary of Interior had failed to formulate a workable plan to return the workers to a

productive life in their home land."[4] Martínez arrived at a similar conclusion:

> By 1933, four years after the initiation of the land program, many colonies had failed. Repatriates and deportees had arrived in Mexico with high expectations, but they encountered innumerable difficulties. Returnees found the land less abundant or productive than initially believed, and they failed to obtain enough money to buy such necessities as farm equipment and seeds.[5]

These conclusions may be valid, for there is evidence that many repatriates suffered extreme privation upon their return to Mexico. However, no comprehensive study of repatriation colonies exists, and any generalizations about them must be regarded as tentative.

Although land was made available to repatriates at dozens of locations throughout Mexico and thousands of repatriates took advantage of the opportunity to own land, little is known about the number or location of repatriation colonies. Even less is known about the number of repatriates assigned land, the kind or amount of assistance they received, or the success or failure of these colonists. Much of what is known is provided by Gilbert, who interviewed 114 repatriates in Mexico in 1933-1934.[6] Carreras de Velasco has identified and examined a number of repatriate colonies, but her study focuses on the early Depression

years before most colonies had been fully developed and tested.[7] Detailed information regarding repatriate colonization projects is limited to discussions of El Coloso Colony in Guerrero, the Pinotepa Nacional Colony in Oaxaca,[8] the Don Martín Project in Coahuila and Nuevo León,[9] and the Eighteenth of March Colony in Tamaulipas.[10]

This chapter first identifies the types of repatriate colonization projects. It then documents and analyzes colonization efforts under each of the three Mexican presidents who presided during the Depression era, Pascual Ortiz Rubio (1930-1932), Abelardo Rodríguez (1932-1934), and Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940).

Types of Colonization Projects

Four types of repatriate colonization projects have been identified. First, the National Irrigation Commission (NIC) initiated projects which provided land for the largest number of repatriates. Between 1926 and 1940 work was begun on at least 42 major irrigation projects[11] and 58 minor irrigation works.[12] Most of these projects were completed during the 1930s. A few were designed exclusively for repatriates. Most, however, were created for residents of Mexico, although repatriates could usually apply for land. In some cases the NIC made

grants of land to repatriates; in most cases they were required to purchase the land. Usually little or no down-payment was required and the colonos were provided with 20- to 30-year mortgages with low interest rates. Six NIC works are known to have attracted significant numbers of Texas Mexican repatriates: the Don Martín, San Carlos, El Nogal, El Mante, Bajo Rio San Juan, and Bajo Rio Bravo. They are all located in northern border states.

Second, the Mexican government often provided land to repatriates in colonization projects not administered by the NIC. A diverse assortment of governmental agencies was involved in establishing and administering these projects. They were usually smaller than those sponsored by the NIC and could accommodate fewer repatriates. In some cases the amount of land available for settlement was sufficient to accommodate only a few families. These projects were established at diverse locations throughout Mexico, often on land that had been abandoned during the Mexican revolution or on land expropriated by the government. In many cases the land had not been under cultivation since the Mexican revolution.

Third, Mexican state governments often made land available to repatriates. Apparently fewer repatriates

received land from state governments than from the national government. State governments often volunteered land with the stipulation that the national government survey the land and supervise its distribution. In some cases both the federal and state governments developed a resettlement project, although usually one of several federal agencies then administered it.

Fourth, a few individuals made land available to repatriates at various locations throughout Mexico. Most of these resettlement schemes required that the repatriates purchase the land. In a few cases repatriates were granted or rented land on haciendas. Large landowners in several states made land grants to the government for repatriation projects. The number of repatriates who benefited from these opportunities was apparently small.

Colonization under Ortiz Rubio

National Irrigation Commission Projects

The Ortiz Rubio administration (1930-1932) initiated efforts to resettle Mexican repatriates in 1930 providing land at large irrigation projects which were being developed by the National Irrigation Commission (NIC). During the early Depression years land was made available at Pabellon, Aguascaliente; Tula, Hidalgo; El Mante, Tamaulipas;

Delicias, Chihuahua; El Nogal, Coahuila; Don Martín, Coahuila and Nuevo León; and San Carlos, Coahuila. Of these seven NIC projects, the latter five all of which were located in border states adjacent to Texas, are known to have accommodated repatriates from Texas. Two, the Don Martín and San Carlos projects, merit special attention because of the large number of Texas Mexicans who were settled there.

The Don Martín Project

The Don Martín project has been recently examined by Hoffman, who, apparently relying on Gilbert's evaluation, deemed it a success.[13] After visiting the project in November 1933, Gilbert reported that "no colonists were found who felt that they were not making a fair success of their enterprise."[14] This conclusion may have been valid in November 1933, but if later events are taken into consideration, a much less successful colony than Hoffman suggested is revealed.

The Don Martín project, also known as NIC System Four, received widespread publicity in the Texas press. Construction on the dam, located on the Rio Salado in a semi-arid region of Coahuila about 80 miles west of Laredo,

was begun in 1927 (Figure 7). The dam was completed in November 1930. Original plans called for the settlement of about 65,000 hectares of land in the municipios* of Juárez and Progreso in Coahuila and Lampazo de Naranjo in Nuevo León.[15]

Although the Don Martín project was originally designed for landless Mexicans from Northern Mexico, a number of repatriates, mostly from Texas, were assigned land there. The order of priority used in selecting colonists was (a) former owners of the land, (b) residents from the region, (c) Mexican farmers returning from the United States, (d) Mexicans returning from urban areas of the United States, and (e) students from agricultural schools in Mexico.[16] Other criteria were (a) citizenship (only Mexican citizens were eligible), (b) agricultural background and experience, (c) funds for cultivation and resources to live on until the first harvest, and (d) physical and moral capacity to adjust to life as a colono.[17]

The amount of land acquired by repatriates varied widely. A few colonists acquired tracts as large as 100

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*The municipio is the basic legal subdivision of each state. It is a county-wide area with one or more cities or towns within it and constitutes the smallest unit of government. This unit combines the concepts of city and county government as understood in the United States.

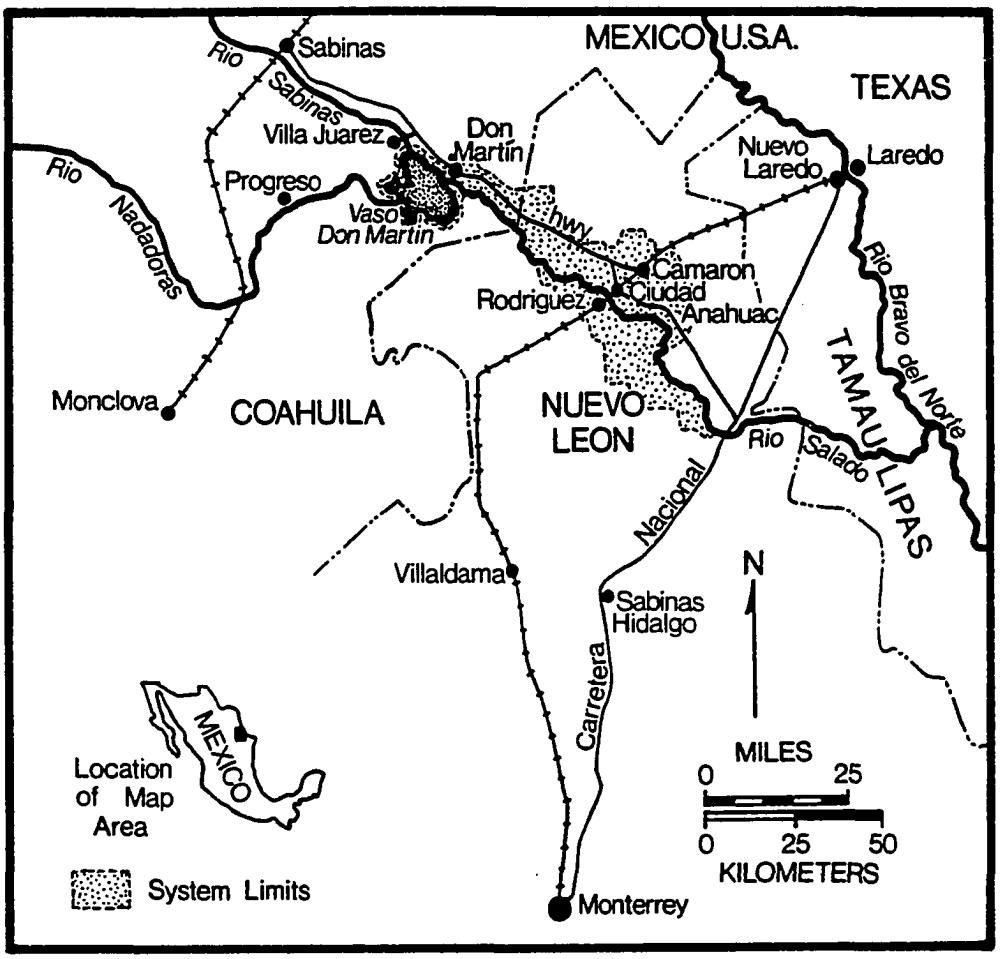

FIGURE 7

THE DON MARTÍN COLONIZATION PROJECT

Source: Adapted from National Archives, Record Group 59, File 812.502/58.

hectares, but most farms ranged from five to 25 hectares.[18] The maximum amount of irrigated land that colonists could legally acquire was 25 hectares, which was the average parcel size in 1934. The cost varied from 270 to 300 pesos for land that had been cleared and prepared for cultivation. Uncleared, undeveloped land with the potential for irrigation sold for 7.50 to 40 pesos per hectare.[19]

Land could be purchased at Don Martín through two payment methods. Under one plan colonists were required to pay 5 percent of the value of the land at the time the land was assigned. The balance was payable in annual installments over 25 years at 4 percent interest. The second plan was designed for colonists who lacked funds to make an initial downpayment. Under this plan settlers were given three years to make a 10 percent down payment. The balance was payable over 25 years at 4 percent interest. Colonists were also charged for water used and maintenance of the irrigation system.[20]

Land could also be leased from the NIC. If a farmer furnished seeds and farm equipment, the annual rental fee was 20 percent of the crops; if the NIC provided seed and farm implements, the government received 30 percent of all produce.[21] Gilbert reported that only a

few repatriates chose to lease land. Most repatriates signed contracts to purchase land,[22] indicating that they probably planned to remain in Mexico.

Frequent press reports of opportunities at Don Martín created widespread interest among Texas Mexicans. Mexican consuls in Texas and the NIC were beseiged with applications for land.[23] By January 1930 Texas Mexicans began to arrive at Don Martín. A number of the repatriates departed from Texas several months prior to the project's opening. The colonists apparently believed that their early arrival would assure them choice parcels of land.[24] The movement of Texas repatriates into the Don Martín region continued unabated for the first six months of 1930.

By mid-1930 over 4,000 persons were awaiting distribution of land at the reservoir.[25] This number increased as the repatriation of Texas Mexicans gained momentum in the latter months of the year. In November 1930 one observer noted that "the sleepy little village of Rodríguez had grown into a town of about 10,000 inhabitants."[26] In March 1931 the Mexican government transported 1,500 unemployed repatriates from Mexico City to Don

Martín.[27] By the spring of 1931, 20,000 families had moved into the region.[28]

Distribution of land was postponed several times because of delays in completing the canal system and removing brush from the land. The Mexican consul at Eagle Pass explained that "getting arid land into shape after the irrigation project is developed is necessarily a rather slow process."[29] Nevertheless, on 1 February 1931 the first group of colonists were assigned land. Initially about 1,000 colonos received land,[30] although only 456 holdings were brought under cultivation in 1931. By the end of 1932, 1,053 holdings were being cultivated. This number increased each year until 1935, when 1,694 holdings, covering 46,480 hectares, were under cultivation (Table 11).

Many of the other residents of the area found employment with the NIC clearing the land, constructing roads, and building irrigation works. Others were hired to work on the farms. Reports in March 1931 indicated that 8,000 workers were employed in the region.[31] In addition, many workers were employed in the construction of Ciudad Anáhuac. In 1934 Gilbert noted that Ciudad Anáhuac was "a very modern little town with brick stores, hotels, warehouses, and a government office is under

TABLE 11

AREA UNDER CULTIVATION, NUMBER OF HOLDINGS, AND MEAN PARCEL SIZE AT DON MARTÍN, 1931-1935

Year	Area under Cultivation (in hectares)	No. of Holdings	Mean Parcel Size (in hectares)
1931	9,595	456	21
1932	14,917	1,053	14
1933	31,614	1,313	24
1934	37,764	1,478	26
1935	46,480	1,694	27

Source: National Archives, Record Group 59, File 812.6113/134.

construction."[32] Buildings eventually constructed at Ciudad Anáhuac included a hospital, school, city hall, post office, railroad station, bank, federal building, casino, and community center.[33]

Heavy rains over the Don Martín watershed during the early 1930s filled the reservoir to capacity, which accelerated the extension of the irrigation system, and led to rapid expansion of the area under cultivation. Many observers believed that the excessive rainfall would be a permanent condition. In August the Mexican consul in San Antonio stated that

> the creation of the hugh lake has changed the climatic conditions of the entire area. The rainfall has doubled since the lake was created and the entire area is now a garden spot. None of the water scarcely is drawn off for irrigation purposes, due to increased rain fall.[34]

In September 1932 the El Paso Herald-Post reported that the dam was "filled to the brim, presenting an inland sea that threatened the dam walls. Attendants opened flood gates to prevent damage to the great irrigation project."[35]

Because of the abundance of water and the fertility of the soil, developers of the project were optimistic about opportunities for colonists during the early 1930s. In October 1930 a prominent employee of the government announced that the Don Martín region was superior to the

Laguna region for the production of cotton.[36] An article written by a resident engineer of the project emphasized the low cost of producing cotton, corn, and other crops at Don Martín.[37] A year later the Eagle Pass Daily Guide stated:

> Farmers are planning [on] raising all necessaries of life including hogs, cattle, sheep, potatoes, pumpkins, beans, peas, tomatoes and various other crops. Farmers who have already settled there, including many experienced agriculturists who have repatriated to their native land after learning American agricultural methods, are now on the high road to prosperity and making their rich land yield heavily. Many [citrus] groves [have been planted] and in a few years oranges, grapefruit, tangerines, lemons will be produced in addition to the many other indigenous fruits so popular in Mexico.[38]

Although many repatriates experienced success for the first two or three years after their arrival at Don Martín,[39] many others, especially those who were unable to obtain land, encountered difficulties from the beginning. La Prensa reported in November 1931 that Mexican authorities were making plans to transport unemployed laborers to the interior of Mexico. Further, a shortage of housing and potable water created dissatisfaction among settlers.[40] In July 1932 El Continental reported widespread discontent among Don Martín colonos; some had even abandoned their land.[41] That same month an official of the Mexican National Railroad reported that many of the repatriates at the

colony were in "lamentable condition and suffering a thousand penalties."[42] In April 1933 some 275 repatriates--described as hungry, sick, and empty-handed--departed the region for Mexico City, where they were to await transfer to a repatriate colony in Oaxaca.[43]

Unemployment remained a major problem for the remainder of the decade. Lack of employment opportunities led to conflict between residents of the region and local authorities. When land was distributed to the colonos in the early 1930s, a number of individuals circumvented the agrarian law and acquired several parcels of land while many other residents received no land. In 1936 some residents applied for redistribution of a number of large cotton farms at Don Martín. The situation was tense when President Cárdenas arrived at Don Martín in February to arbitrate the dispute. After reviewing the situation, Cárdenas determined the number of persons eligible for ejidos and ordered the distribution of about 3,000 hectares among them. Another 2,000 hectares were distributed to members of the local union, and 1,000 hectares were granted to other workers, but many persons still remained landless. Cárdenas then ordered the transfer of several thousand workers, most of whom had repatriated from the

United States, to the Bajo Rio Bravo and El Mante irrigation projects in Tamaulipas.[44] The largest number of workers were transferred to the Bajo Rio Bravo project near Matamoros, where the Anáhuac Colony--named after the new town of Ciudad Anáhuac--was established. The Anáhuac Colony was formally inaugurated on 10 December 1937.[45]

Conditions worsened at Don Martín in the late 1930s when agricultural activity was sharply curtailed by a prolonged drought. During the spring of 1937 colonists were unable to plant crops because of a shortage of irrigation water. An estimated 80 percent of the colonos were unable to make payments on their land. By summer settlers were reportedly leaving their land.[46] In October four truckloads of Don Martín colonists, who had abandoned their land, passed through Monterrey on their way to the Laguna region. They were reportedly going to Oquendo, Coahuila, to begin colonization of land made available by President Cárdenas. Another 1,000 persons were planning to join them at Oquendo later that week.[47]

The drought persisted throughout 1938 and residents continued to depart from the region. In the spring the American consul reported that only 31,000 hectares were under cultivation at Don Martín, a decrease of one-third

from the 46,480 hectares under cultivation in 1935.[48] Dicken found the reservoir almost dry in the winter of 1937-1938,[49] and another report indicated that residents were using the lake bed as a road.[50]

Although the government provided food and various other necessities to Don Martín residents in 1937, they continued to suffer economically from the drought. Farming was at a standstill and employment opportunities were virtually nil. In April 1938 the American consul at Nuevo Laredo reported that private construction in the region had ceased. Only a small number of persons were employed by the NIC in the maintenance of the irrigation system, road construction projects, and mosquito eradication projects.[51] In an effort to minimize the widespread suffering, on 1 May President Cárdenas authorized the expenditure of 1,000,000 pesos in direct relief for the region. In addition, the federal government reduced by one-half the value of land which had been purchased on contract by the colonos in the early 1930s. This act reduced the debt of local landowners to the Mexican government by 20,000,000 pesos.[52]

Some colonists remained at Don Martín hoping for improved conditions, but the drought continued throughout

1939. Cotton production declined from over 41,000 bales in 1936-1937 to 3,000 bales in 1938-1939.[53] In the summer of 1939 the NIC suspended work on the canal system and 800 laborers lost their only means of support.[54] Conditions among the colonos became desperate. The Cárdenas administration tried to aid the destitute residents, but the task was enormous; as many as 36,000 persons had migrated to the region in the early 1930s and most were dependent on the government for aid.[55]

Emigration from the region peaked in 1939, when even the most tenacious colonists abandoned the land, selling their farm implements in order to obtain funds for travel.[56] Many colonists sought employment in Monterrey, Durango, Nuevo Laredo, and other cities.[57] The Mexican government resettled many others at the Bajo Rio Bravo and El Mante projects.[58] Depopulation of the region was so complete that by October the new town of Ciudad Anáhuac was reportedly deserted.[59]

Little is known about the fate of the Texas Mexican repatriates who departed from Don Martín. After nearly a decade in Mexico few had succeeded in their colonization efforts. Their economic status was at best little improved; in many cases it had deteriorated from the time they had

returned to Mexico in 1930 and 1931. Very probably many reentered the United States in the 1940s when immigration restrictions were relaxed.

The San Carlos Project

A second colonization project that accommodated many Texas Mexican repatriates was the San Carlos project, also known as the NIC System Six. Established on the Río San Diego near Palestina, Coahuila, in the municipios of Villa Acuña and Jiménez about 20 miles south of Villa Acuña, the project was designed exclusively for repatriates (Figure 8).[60] The land at San Carlos was described as extremely fertile and suitable for the production of corn, beans, wheat, and potatoes. Prior to the Mexican revolution rice had been cultivated in the area. When the project was opened in 1930, approximately 5,900 hectares were available for colonization, and an additional 1,760 hectares were later made available.[61]

Destitute repatriates were not permitted to settle at San Carlos,[60] although fixed guidelines regarding assets were apparently never established. The Eagle Pass Daily Guide reported that

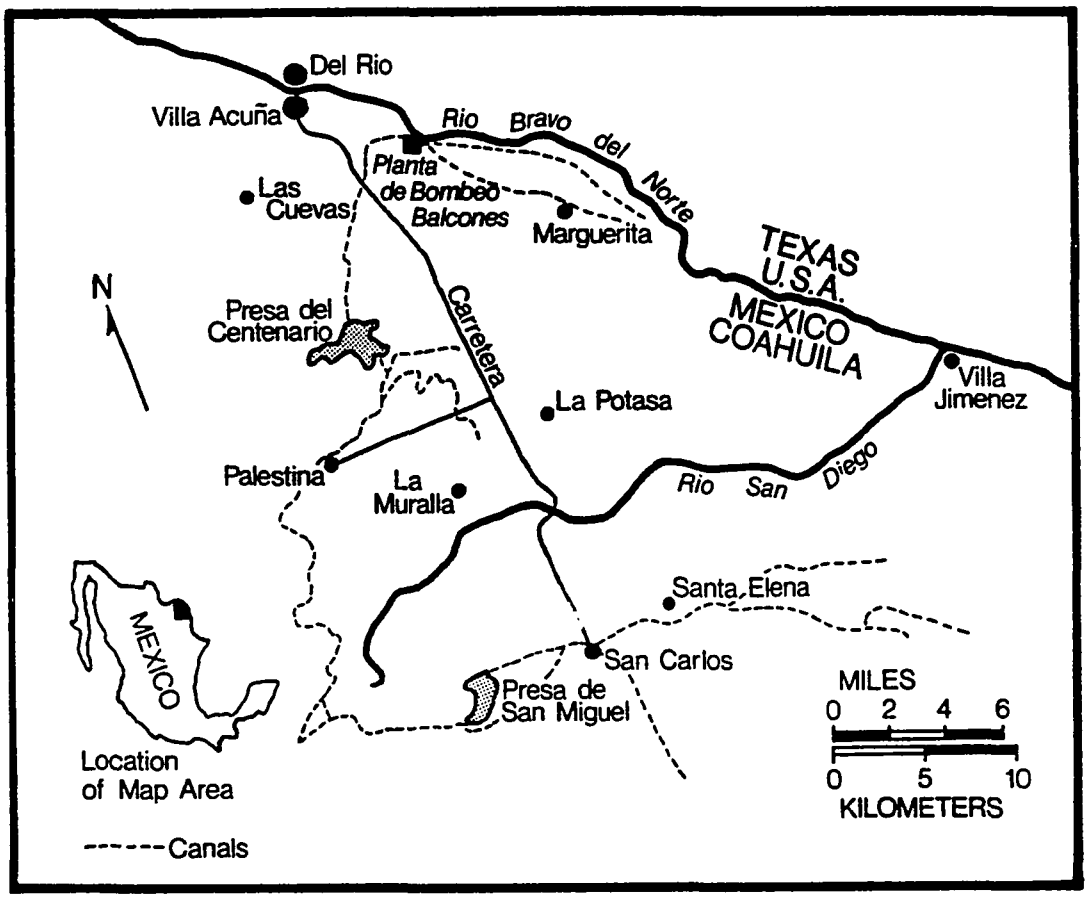

FIGURE 8

THE SAN CARLOS COLONIZATION PROJECT

Source: Adapted from "Sistemas de Riego," Irrigacion en Mexico (July-December 1937): 39.

> each family is usually equipped with [a] mode of transportation one or two dozen chickens, perhaps a cow and a team of horses, modern farming implements and enough frijoles and food stuffs to last until the first crops are gathered.[63]

The Houston Post-Dispatch noted that

> reports from the border tell of Mexican families returning home, taking much property accumulated in the United States, with them. A story from Del Rio relates how 17 Mexican families, en route to Villa Acuna to select lands in the San Carlos irrigation project, one of Mexico's great new irrigation districts, crossed the Rio Grande a few days ago with their possessions, consisting of live stock, poultry, automobiles, wagons and other equipment for farming. One family was driving 60 head of cattle; another had several automobiles. All seemed in good financial condition. They had been farming in West Texas for several years, and having gotten on their feet economically, were returning to their own country with assets to engage successfully in farming there.[64]

Colonists who purchased land at San Carlos were required to make a larger initial investment than Don Martín colonists. The Mexican government provided two purchase plans for San Carlos. One plan required an initial downpayment of 20 percent of the value of the land (about 500 pesos per hectare), with the balance to be paid in annual installments over 25 yeras. Colonists who possessed farm equipment and other material resources but lacked funds were allowed three years to accumulate the 20 percent downpayment and 25 years to pay the balance. In addition, low-interest loans were available for the

acquisition of livestock, farm machinery, seed, and other necessities.[65]

During the fall of 1930 a few Texas Mexican tenant farmers and agricultural laborers began to leave Texas for San Carlos. Most of these repatriates returned via Del Rio, although some entered Mexico at Eagle Pass.[66] Reports from the border indicated that small groups continued to arrive at San Carlos throughout 1931.[67] Most of the colonists began to cultivate their land immediately and within months the region was transformed. One report in the fall of 1931 described a "bumper" corn crop. In fact some of the corn was not being harvested because of a shortage of buyers.[68] The following year a reporter for the Eagle Pass Daily Guide observed that "one may drive for miles and see well laid out farm lands, which were but a few years ago bleak stretches of wilderness."[69]

Emigration from Texas to San Carlos continued until mid-1932, when land ceased being distributed. Although the exact number of repatriates who received land is still not available, press reports indicate that about 1,000 families had established residence at San Carlos by mid-1932.[70]

Anglo Americans strongly supported the repatriation and resettlement of Texas Mexicans. Newspaper editors emphasized the benefit of colonization projects to both repatriates and the Mexican government. In January 1931 the editor of the Houston Post-Dispatch applauded the resettlement of Texas Mexicans at San Carlos.

> The entrance into the San Carlos irrigated district of farmers who have learned to farm successfully in the United States will assure the Mexican district of a high state of development, and will make it a source of great new wealth to the Mexican nation.[71]

The same month the American consul at Piedras Negras expressed a similar sentiment.

> It is noted that all of these returning emigrants bring with them practical knowledge of more modern farm and shop work which will not fail to be of value not only to themselves but to the district in which they take up their residence and to the country at large. . . . A very large proportion of these have had experience in handling irrigated lands in the United States and are, therefore, in a very good position to make a success in that line of endeavor.[72]

Although a significant number of Texas Mexicans, perhaps as many as 6,000, settled at San Carlos, this project received less attention in the Texas press than did the Don Martín project. Information is unavailable on the development of the project during the early 1930s. There is, however, no evidence that the San Carlos repatriates

experienced the hardships that the Don Martín colonists encountered.

State and Federal Colonization Projects

As repatriation gained momentum in 1931, Mexican President Ortiz Rubio realized that resettlement would require effective governmental planning. In November he appointed a repatriation committee composed of representatives of the ministries of Interior, Industry, Commerce and Labor, Agriculture, Housing, and Communications and Public Works. The committee formulated a master plan to deal with problems created by the massive influx and in February 1932 submitted it to the President. Three major suggestions of the plan were to continue development of repatriate colonies; to accelerate the redistribution of ranches, haciendas, and government-owned land; and to assist in the formation of repatriate agricultural cooperatives.[73]

Ortiz Rubio soon realized that repatriation problems could not be resolved solely by federal action and initiated efforts to involve state governments. Federal authorities periodically sought commitments from state govenors to aid in resettlement.[74] These requests were often followed by announcements that state governments

would provide repatriates with land.[75] In many cases, however, state authorities did little or nothing to resettle repatriates.

A major problem in examining colonization projects of the early Depression years is determining sponsorship. Some projects apparently involved joint state and federal sponsorship, while others were sponsored only by the state or the federal government. In some cases project sponsorship is not clear because of limited information regarding them. Therefore state and federal projects, exclusive of NIC projects, are herein examined together, yet efforts are made to identify their primary sponsors.

Perhaps no state government made a greater resettlement effort than did Chihuahua. Many of the repatriate schemes in Chihuahua focused on using land formerly held by a few hacendados. Prior to the Mexican revolution 40 percent of the state was owned by 17 persons.[76] In 1910 the holdings of the Terrazas and Creel families, which were related by marriage, encompassed about 6,000,000 hectares.[77] Although much of this land was too arid for cultivation, the potential for farming existed in many diverse locations throughout Chihuahua.

As early as the spring of 1930 the Chihuahua government reportedly was involved in efforts to settle repatriates on state-controlled land. The American consul at Ciudad Juárez, William P. Blocker, reported that several hundred experienced farmers who had returned to Mexico with farm equipment had been settled near Villa Ahumada. Their land had not been cultivated since 1916.[78] Later in the year a number of repatriates entered Mexico at Laredo with the intention of establishing farms in the municipio of La Cruz in eastern Chihuahua. These repatriates, like many who entered at Laredo in 1930, possessed farm implements and work animals.[79]

In 1931 the governor of Chihuahua, Andrés Ortiz, announced that 90,000 hectares of land would be distributed to repatriates. Ortiz stressed that repatriates would be received with "open arms" and that every effort would be made to provide for their needs.[80] Neither the location of these lands nor the kind of assistance available were mentioned.

In the spring of 1931 the national and Chihuahua governments began joint efforts to open part of the Luís Terrazas estate to repatriates. Three hundred thousand hectares in northwest Chihuahua, including both agricultural

and ranching land, were reportedly made available for colonization. The national government opened an office at Villa Ahumada, under the direction of J. Vargas Cienfuegos, to supervise distribution of the estate. Administrators there were provided funds to dispense to needy repatriates. Reports in Texas newspapers promoted the return of Texas Mexicans to take advantage of the program. During the summer of 1931 some 200 repatriate families were assigned land and plans were announced for the settlement of 10,000 colonists in the region.[81] In February 1932 the Ministry of Agriculture announced plans to open additional Terrazas land in Camargo, Morelos, and other state districts.[82] The number of repatriates assigned land is not available. After the spring of 1932, however, few reports of resettlement on Terrazas land appeared in the press in Texas.

Carreras de Velasco identified a number of repatriate colonies established in Chihuahua during the early 1930s. These include colonies near Vado de Piedras in the municipio of La Ascensión, San Juan in the municipio of Ojinaga, and Cuchillo Parado in the municipio of Coyame. In addition, the federal government relocated a number of repatriates on irrigated land near the Rio Conchos in the municipios of Camargo and Meoqui. Many of these colonists

reportedly arrived in Mexico in good economic condition.[83] In April 1932 El Continental reported that 40 Texas Mexican families from West Texas had entered at El Paso to begin colonization at Bosque Bonito near the Rio Grande in the municipio of Guadalupe.[84] In June, the governor offered the federal government 50,000 more hectares for repatriate colonies. This land, some of it irrigable, was located close to the Rio Grande; however, it was reported that canals would have to be constructed and the land cleared before farms could be established.[85] The following October the editor of La Prensa reported that 127 Mexican farmers had exchanged their property in the United States for the Rancho La Gloria, located on the Chihuahua-Durango border in the municipio of Jiménez in southern Chihuahua.[86]

Large extensions of land were also made available in Veracruz. In February 1931 the San Augustín del Palmar farm in the municipio of Tezonapa in the Cordoba district was opened for colonization, with preference being given to repatriates. The 1,800-hectare farm had been divided into 180 10-hectare plots which could be purchased for 2,500 pesos each. Colonos who lacked funds could pay for the land over 20 years at 6 percent simple interest. The land was reportedly in a zone of abundant rainfall; irrigation was

not required. A variety of crops could be grown including sugarcane, cotton, vanilla, and numerous fruits and vegetables. Only 100 hectares had been cleared and prepared for cultivation when the land was offered for colonization, and information is unavailable on its development.[87]

In April 1932 Gov. Alberto Tejeda announced that 50,000 additional hectares in Veracruz would be opened for repatriate colonization. The governor promised to assist repatriates until they had established themselves. The location of these lands was not mentioned in press reports,[88] but the following June, Tejeda announced the development of a new colony near the Congregación* of Patria Nueva in the municipio of El Chiconamel. Repatriates could obtain title to the land merely by settling on it. The land was of excellent quality and could be irrigated. Five thatched houses had been constructed for the colonos and sites were available for an additional 40 homes. Tejeda also promised to provide the repatriates with enough food for several months.[89] A few days later a number of repatriates left Mexico City for Veracruz to take advantage of the governor's offer.[90] A second colony was established near

*Congregación was the name applied to Indians towns by the Spanish during the colonial period.

Jalapa, and on 2 July 200 repatriates were transported there from Mexico City. Repatriates in Jalapa were promised farm equipment and money to sustain themselves for at least four months.[91] In October El Continental reported that 150 repatriate families would receive land at a third location in Veracruz. The exact site of this colony was not given.[92]

During the spring of 1932 the governor of San Luis Potosí, Ildefonso Turrubiates, announced a plan to establish a repatriate colony near Micos in the municipio of Ciudad del Maiz. The plan, which received widespread publicity in Texas,[93] provided for the initial settlement of 50 families; they were to be joined by other colonists later. Government officials promised to provide farm implements, work animals, food, and other assistance. In June the first group of about 50 families arrived. The colonos soon discovered that little assistance was available from either the state or federal government. Moreover, the dry pastureland at Micos would have required substantial preparation for cultivation. Some of the repatriates abandoned the site almost immediately and traveled to Ciudad del Maiz, where they were stranded for several weeks. Others tried to cultivate the land but without success.

By October all the repatriates had returned to Mexico City.[94]

Governor Adrián Castrejón in 1932 offered two haciendas in remote areas of Guerrero for resettlement. Land was available at these sites to accommodate 5,000 persons. The Hacienda Tlapehualapa was located in the Chilapa district of Guerrero, six hours by horseback from the Mexico City-Acapulco highway. Colonists were assured transportation to it by the Ministry of the Interior. In addition, settlers were promised enough food, tools, livestock, and other supplies to sustain them until the first harvest. La Prensa noted that the hacienda was located in an area in which malaria was a problem, but it stated that a government agency would be assigned to eradicate the disease. A second colony was established at the Hacienda Murga near La Unión in the Montes de Oca district of Guerrero.[95] Carreras de Velasco stated that in 1932 40 families from Detroit were granted land at this hacienda.[96]

Two colonies were estabished in Durango in the early 1930s. The extent of the involvement of the state government in these projects is not clear. The first project was opened at the Hacienda Santa Catalina in the municipios of Penón Blanco and Cuencamé. The National

Agrarian Commission was responsible for the distribution of these lands, for which repatriates were recruited through Mexican consuls in Texas.[97] In 1932 the National Agricultural Credit Bank began land distribution at the Hacienda Santa Lucía in the municipio of Canatlán. The bank encouraged repatriates from the United States to apply for land at this site.[98]

A number of other repatriate colonies were established at diverse locations in Mexico during the early 1930s. These projects included the distribution of portions of the Hacienda La Misa in the municipio of Guaymas in Sonora in 1930;[99] the installation of about 100 Texas Mexican families on land adjacent to the Rio Grande near Colombia, Nuevo León, in 1931;[100] the opening of the Hacienda Sarabia, which had been used as a government concentration camp, near Celaya, Guanajuato, in 1932;[101] the establishment by the National Bank of Agricultural Credit in 1932 of a repatriate colony on the Hacienda Atequiza in the municipio of Chapala in Jalisco;[102] and several other repatriate colonization projects in Sinaloa, Sonora, and Baja California identified by González Navarro and Carreras de Velasco.[103]

During 1932 land was reportedly made available to repatriates by governments in several other states including Coahuila, Puebla, Michoacán, Guanajuato, Sonora, Tabasco, Chiapas, Oaxaca, Hidalgo, Jalisco, and Yucatan. In most cases the location of land within these states was not reported.[104] Several of the land grants were substantial: 30,000 hectares were offered in Coahuila and 25,000 hectares in Puebla.[105] Little information is available regarding the settlement of these land offerings.

Individual Schemes

During the early Depression years a number of individuals made land available at varying prices for repatriate resettlement. In some cases information on land costs and purchase terms is not available. In August 1930 colonists were sought for the Hacienda Santa Catalina del Álamo in the municipios of Penón Blanco and Cuencamé northeast of Durango. A representative of the owners, Pablo Martínez del Rio, recruited repatriates in the Laredo area.[106] Carreras de Velasco reported that in 1930 David S. Russek, owner of the Hacienda Santa Clara in the municipio of Namiquipa south of Buenaventura, Chihuahua, was authorized by the Mexican government to settle repatriates on 120,000 hectares of his estate.[107] In February 1931

the Mexican consul in El Paso recruited repatriates to colonize about 1,000 hectares of the Hacienda de Silva in the municipio of Romita in Guanajuato. The consul reported that the land was of good quality, capable of producing corn, wheat, and other cereal crops. Repatriates were encouraged to contact the owner of the land, Javier Piña Aguayo, in Mexico City.[108] Later in the year Leopold Naranjo, owner of the Hacienda Dolores in the municipio of Lampazos de Naranjo, Nuevo León, made 5,000 hectares available for repatriate colonization. The land was reportedly of excellent quality with a permanent water supply. By November 60 families, many of them from Kenedy, Texas, had settled on this hacienda and other settlers were anticipated.[109] La Prensa reported that Antonio Ramos y Serna, a large landowner in Tamaulipas and Nuevo León, had informed the Mexican consul in Laredo that repatriates could purchase either agricultural or ranch land from his holdings in the municipios of Treveño and Cerralvo in Nuevo León. Ramos y Serna also possessed land for sale near Mier and Camargo in Tamaulipas.[110] In 1932 several hacendados in Chihuahua offered 50,000 hectares of land to the Mexican government for the resettlement of repatriates,[111] while José González Soto, a Spanish citizen who

possessed substantial holdings in Mexico, volunteered 150,000 hectares of his land on the south coast of Oaxaca for colonization projects.[112] In May Gabriel Betanzos, an owner of extensive properties in Veracruz, offered about 3,000 hectares of land near Tuxpan, Veracruz, to repatriates at 100 pesos a hectare. Betanzos also agreed to provide some assistance to those colonos who settled on his land.[113]

Colonization under Abelardo Rodríguez

Colonization of Mexican repatriates peaked in 1932 under the leadership of President Ortiz Rubio (1930-1932). In the fall of 1932, when colonies were being developed at many locations throughout Mexico and many others were being planned, Ortiz Rubio abruptly resigned. Abelardo Rodríguez (1932-1934) was elected interim president and, almost immediately, federal efforts to establish repatriate colonies diminished. During the ensuing 27 months of the Rodríguez presidency only a few colonization projects were initiated. Repatriation remained an official government policy during Rodríguez's presidency,[114] but he appears to have been much less dedicated to providing for repatriates than his predecessor.

Although the government's involvement in resettlement diminished, many Mexicans continued to be troubled by the hardships experienced by repatriates. This concern led to the creation of the National Repatriation Committee (NRC) in November 1932. The NRC, which Hoffman described as "a curious amalgam of private and public agencies,"[115] became the principal organization responsible for solving the problems of repatriates. Soon after its creation the committee initiated a campaign to raise 500,000 pesos to establish repatriate colonies. Two colonies, El Coloso in Guerrero and Pinotepa Nacional in Oaxaca, were founded in the spring of 1933. Only about 30 colonos were assigned land at El Coloso, while approximately 700 repatriates were settled at Pinotepa Nacional in April and May of 1933.[116] Many of the repatriates settled at Pinotepa Nacional were former residents of Texas. In early April two representatives of the NRC arrived in Texas to recruit colonists. Fifty repatriates were recruited in Laredo,[117] 125 South Texas residents (98 from Bexar County and 27 from Guadalupe County) were recruited at San Antonio.[118] Approximately 275 impoverished Texas Mexican repatriates were transferred from the Don Martín irrigation project in northern Mexico to Pinotepa Nacional in mid-April 1933.[119]

Almost immediately after arriving at Pinotepa Nacional the repatriates began to encounter difficulties. A lack of health and sanitary facilities at the colony were a major problem; a former colono reported to Gilbert that 60 colonists died in one 20-day period.[120] Many of the problems may be attributed to poor project management and corruption within the NRC.[121] Colonos began to depart almost as soon as they arrived. By the end of 1933 virtually all of the colonists had abandoned the site. Some of the settlers traveled to Acapulco and Oaxaca before making their way to Mexico City. A number of repatriates were provided with transportation to northern Mexico, where they hoped to find employment,[122] while one group was assigned land in an area near the Rio Verde in San Luis Potosí.[123]

In July 1934 the defunct National Repatriation Committee was replaced by the National Repatriation Board (NRB), which was created by presidential decree. The board, which was charged with responsibility for coordination, assistance, and settlement of repatriates,[124] announced plans to establish a major colony on a large extension of land in Nayarit. Detailed plans were formulated and the project was publicized in the United States.[125]

There is, however, no evidence to indicate that large-scale resettlement occurred in Nayarit.

Apparently few other efforts were made to establish repatriate colonies during the administration of President Rodríguez, although consideration was given to developing colonies in Baja California. In the spring of 1933 news reports revealed that the Mexican government was planning to acquire 1,250,000 hectares in Baja California for resettlement.[126] The following year President Rodríguez authorized the Ministry of Agriculture to acquire 250,000 hectares in Baja California,[127] but the creation of colonies there failed to materialize.[128]

Colonization under Lázaro Cardénas

During the early years of his administration, President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) paid little direct attention to the problem of repatriate resettlement. Cárdenas was preoccupied with distributing land to the general populace. Soon after his inauguration in December 1934, Cárdenas accelerated the land redistribution program, which had moved slowly after 1928. In 1935 Cárdenas distributed 2,900,226 hectares of land to 178,995 persons, an increase of about 300 percent over the previous year. The land

redistribution program peaked in 1937 when over 5,000,000 hectares were assigned to nearly 185,000 persons. More land was distributed to Mexican farmers under Cárdenas than in all previous administrations combined: over 800,000 Mexicans were recipients of land between 1935 and 1940 (Table 12). No data exist on the number of repatriates who received land during the Cárdenas era, although some undoubtedly benefited. It is possible that more repatriates received land through Cárdenas' program than through projects designed specifically for them.

For many years prior to the Depression, Mexican emigration and exploitation in the United States were deplored by officials of the Mexican government. Repatriation was often advocated.[129] Concern for the welfare of Mexican workers living in the United States was not diminished by the Depression or the return of several hundred thousand workers during the early 1930s. Repatriation remained a major political issue throughout the Depression era. A special correspondent for the Dallas Morning News who resided in Mexico noted that

> the question of repatriation has become an issue of increasing political significance in Mexico. Representing as it does, an expression of the growing nationalism of the country, it has furnished a subject for strong comment at times in the press, generally, upon reports

TABLE 12

LAND DISTRIBUTED AND NUMBER OF PERSONS ASSIGNED LAND UNDER MEXICAN AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAM, 1916-1940

Year	No. of Hectares Distributed	No. of Persons Assigned Land
1916	1,246	182
1917	5,491	1,536
1918	63,292	14,099
1919	37,639	14,849
1920	58,903	15,384
1921	173,307	25,268
1922	113,157	14,629
1923	257,547	30,319
1924	580,661	64,081
1925	723,957	78,837
1926	758,055	76,728
1927	888,917	81,234
1928	608,949	60,155
1929	1,003,124	103,654
1930	697,124	65,655
1931	600,986	43,792
1932	340,075	20,729
1933	188,889	16,733
1934	676,037	55,271
1935	2,900,223	178,995
1936	3,303,787	198,278
1937	5,016,321	184,457
1938	3,206,772	115,014
1939	1,746,890	65,957
1940	1,716,581	71,818

Source: Adapted from Nathen L. Whetten, Rural Mexico (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 125.

> of wholesale deportations of Mexicans from the United States or other acts calculated to stir up national concern.[130]

Although President Cárdenas gave little attention to repatriation during the early years of his administration, he was genuinely concerned over reports emanating from the United States of widespread hardships suffered by Mexicans there. In addition, repatriation was one of the basic tenets of the National Revolutionary Party's program of action, which Cárdenas strongly supported. The program of action stated:

> The National Revolutionary Party holds that in order to remedy the scarcity of agricultural population in the country, it is necessary to frame a policy of colonization, attracting to lands that shall be made available to them, all the Mexicans that have migrated from the country in pursuit of an economic prosperity which they did not find here but which Mexico now offers them through the opportunity of acquiring on easy terms land conveniently prepared for cultivation.[131]

Because of these factors the Cárdenas government initiated a repatriation program in 1937. In the fall the Mexican Department of Publicity and Propaganda issued a formal appeal to Mexicans living outside of Mexico to return home. It announced that unemployed, destitute residents in the United States would be given special consideration. Funds would be provided for transportation to Mexico.

Mexicans living in the United States were urged to contact Mexican consular officials for details.[132] The Cárdenas plan called for the return of 200,000 Mexicans to agricultural colonies in Coahuila, Sonora, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas. Returnees would be provided loans for constructing homes and preparing land for cultivation. According to a September 1937 report, the Cárdenas plan would soon be submitted to the Mexican congress for approval.[133] This announcement was premature; a subsequent report indicated that in 1937 the Mexican government lacked funds to carry out large-scale repatriation.[134]

Nevertheless, throughout 1938 the Mexican government continued to formulate plans to resettle Mexican repatriates at several locations in northern Mexico. In February 1938 the Ministry of Foreign Relations ordered Mexican consuls in the United States to survey Mexican residents within their jurisdictions to determine the number of persons in need of repatriation.[135] Later in the year, in an address delivered on the twenty-eighth anniversary of the Mexican revolution, Cárdenas reasserted his belief in the need to promote repatriation.[136] Immediately thereafter the government announced plans to provide land for repatriates at three irrigation projects: the Bajo Rio

Bravo Project in northeastern Tamaulipas, the Rio Colorado Project in northern Baja California, and the Rio Fuerte Project in northern Sinaloa. Repatriation efforts during the Cárdenas era focused on these three projects. News reports promoting the return of Texas Mexicans to these projects appeared frequently in the Texas press in 1939.[137]

During the spring of 1939 efforts were made to recruit Mexicans residing in the United States for these projects. Apparently, the most important of the three was the Bajo Rio Bravo project, where the Eighteenth of March Colony, the Magueyes Colony, and the Anáhuac Colony had been established. Most of the repatriates who arrived at the Bajo Rio Bravo project in 1939-1940 were assigned land at the Eighteenth of March Colony, although a few colonos were resetteled at the Magueyes and Anáhuac colonies.[138] Approximately 1,800 Texas Mexican families were resettled at the Eighteenth of March Colony in 1939-1940.[139] Repatriate recruitment for the Bajo Rio Bravo project focused on Texas because of its proximity to the project.

Efforts were also begun in 1939 to recruit California Mexicans for the Rio Colorado and Rio Fuerte projects. In July 1939 Ramon Beteta, Assistant

Undersecretary of Foreign Relations, traveled to California to assess the need for repatriation in that state.[140] Apparently there was only limited interest in the Mexican government's program. Hoffman has suggested that no large-scale repatriation occurred from California in 1939-1940.[141] This lack of interest did not dissuade the Mexican government from promoting repatriation, however, for on 16 October 1939 Beteta announced that the government planned to repatriate 80,000 Mexicans during the remaining 10 months of the Cárdenas administration.[142]

President Cárdenas, like Ortiz Rubio before him, realized that repatriating large numbers of Mexicans could not be accomplished without the cooperation of state and local officials. On 12 April 1939, Cárdenas appealed to each governor to assist in resettlement efforts. Cárdenas emphasized the need for assistance in the form of farm jobs and land.[143] Several governors responded favorably to the President's request. Gov. Anacleto Guerrero of Nuevo León arranged for 70,000 hectares at several locations to be made available.[144] By the summer of 1939 about 200 repatriates were planning to colonize land provided them by the Hidalgo government.[145] The governor of Chihuahua responded that land was available to accommodate 3,000

persons immediately. In addition, other repatriates could be resettled by developing new irrigation projects and expanding existing irrigation works.[146] About 50,000 hectares of land at several locations were volunteered by the governor of San Luis Potosí. The federal government initiated efforts to establish a repatriate colony on 10,000 hectares of this land in the Valley of Naranjo.[147] Apparently this colony was established near the failed Micos Colony which was created and abandoned in 1932.

The Cárdenas government also utilized the National Agrarian Commission and the National Ejido Credit Bank to identify sources of land and agricultural employment in Mexico. Opportunities identified by these institutions were usually on ejidos at diverse locations throughout Mexico. These opportunities were often limited to a few dozen families. In some cases only one or two families could be accommodated. In April 1939 the National Agrarian Commission reported to the Cárdenas administration that approximately 475 repatriates' families could be accommodated at 17 locations in 12 states,[148] while the National Ejido Credit Bank notified the President that 246 families could be accommodated at 31 locations in nine states.[149]

Conclusions

Four types of repatriate colonization projects were established during the Depression era: National Irrigation Commission projects, other federal projects, state projects, and individual schemes. The largest number of repatriates apparently were resettled by the National Irrigation Commission. Although a large number of other projects were developed by diverse federal and state agencies, they were generally smaller, and the number of repatriates who received land was limited. A few individual landowners were involved in resettlement, but few repatriates benefited from their schemes.

Settlement opportunities for repatriates varied significantly under the three Mexican presidents of the 1930s. Under Pascual Ortiz Rubio a detailed plan was formulated which provided for the establishment of numerous repatriate colonies. The development of these colonies peaked in 1932, at which time colonies had been established at diverse locations throughout Mexico and plans had been made to establish many others. After the elevation of Abelardo Rodríguez to the presidency, federal involvement in resettlement diminished. During this period the National Repatriation Committee made unsuccessful efforts to

establish repatriate colonies. Under President Lázaro Cárdenas the federal government renewed efforts to promote repatriation and colonization. A number of colonies were established and Mexicans residing in the United States were recruited to settle them.

Resettlement projects were usually sponsored by one of several federal agencies. It is often difficult to determine primary sponsorship, however, since frequently several federal and state agencies were involved in various aspects of their development. The federal government frequently persuaded state governors to provide land, but project development and administration was usually carried out by federal agencies. In some cases individual landowners volunteered land to federal or state governments for resettlement.

Although the federal government usually initiated settlement projects, state governments were more involved in efforts to provide land and assistance than has been suggested in previous studies. Several state-sponsored colonies were founded, but less information about them is available than about federally sponsored projects.

Repatriate projects were established at many diverse locations throughout Mexico, but the largest number were

located on land in the northern border states of Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, Coahuila, and Chihuahua. Perhaps this was a result of their proximity to the United States and the availability of large tracts of unsettled land. Repatriation colonies in other areas of Mexico tended to be located in remote regions--often on recently expropriated haciendas or on abandoned land.

Location of colonies in remote regions contributed to the hardships experienced by repatriates, and, in some cases, to the collapse of these projects. Their failure often compelled colonists to migrate to urban areas in search of employment or to resettle at a second colony. Many repatriates suffered severely from these dislocations, and the desire of some repatriates to return to the United States may be attributed to colonization failure.

Although a number of repatriate colonization projects are known to have failed, little information is available regarding most colonies. In many cases detailed information is lacking on the number of repatriates assigned land at a colony as well as on project development and administration. Although many newspaper reports on colonization projects asserted that governmental assistance was available to colonists, numerous other newspaper reports

attributed the repatriates' hardships to inadequate governmental aid. The amount and kind of assistance provided repatriates at most colonization projects is unknown. For these reasons any generalizations regarding the success or failure of repatriate colonies in Mexico during the Great Depression must be regarded as tentative.

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CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSIONS

The Context

From the conclusion of the Texas-Mexico War in 1836 until 1890 Mexican immigration was but a trickle each year. A number of Mexicans entered Texas annually to work, but most of these returned to Mexico. After 1890, and until the advent of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, emigration from Mexico accelerated. Then, between 1910 and 1929, Mexican immigration to Texas and the United States was massive. Some of the immigrants periodically returned to Mexico, but many remained.

Most Mexicans who went to Texas after 1890 came from one of two Mexican source areas. The major one was the northern border states of Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, Coahuila, and Chihuahua. A less important source area was central Mexico, especially the states of San Luis Potosí, Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán. After 1910, an increasing number of immigrants came from central Mexico, although the northern

border states remained the major contributor. Mexicans who arrived in Texas from about 1900 to 1929 found temporary employment as agricultural laborers, or they worked on railroad construction and maintenance. Many of these immigrants made a number of trips to Texas before making the decision to settle permanently. By 1929, several hundred thousand Mexicans had settled permanently in Texas.

A number of push factors in Mexico encouraged Mexicans to emigrate. During the regime of Porifiro Díaz (1876-1910) Mexico's population increased nearly 40 percent. This increase resulted in widespread unemployment since there was less agricultural land per capita. Further, little land was made available to landless peasants for colonization; the land distribution policies of the Díaz government benefitted only the large landowners and corporations. In addition, thousands of small private and communal holdings were absorbed by large haciendas. The growing surplus of unemployed rural labor suffered from a living standard that declined continually after 1870 as prices of consumer goods increased and wages decreased. Before 1880 a major obstacle to mass emigration was lack of transportation across the desert regions of northern Mexico. This problem was resolved with the construction of a number of

railroads from the interior to the Texas border between 1880 and 1910. The Mexican Revolution, which began in 1910, also acted as an agent to free the socially and geographically immobile Mexican peasantry, and to accelerate Mexican emigration.

Pull factors in Texas also accelerated Mexican emigration. After 1880 Texas entered a period of sustained economic growth that continued until the Depression of 1929. This growth resulted in an intense demand for labor. The expansion of the cattle and sheep ranches, the spread of cotton culture, the development of railroads, and the creation of extensive irrigation projects attracted thousands of Mexican workers to Texas.

Early immigrants settled near the Texas-Mexico border. Most who arrived about 1900 found work as tenant farmers and agricultural laborers. As late as World War I few Mexicans had settled more than 250 miles beyond the border. From the area of original concentration near the Rio Grande, Mexican tenant farmers and agricultural laborers spread into South, Central, and West Texas. The permanent settlement of Mexicans in Texas paralleled the expansion of cotton. By 1929 Mexican tenant farmers and agricultural laborers could be found over wide areas of

Texas. Many of these immigrants and their U.S.-born children had resided in Texas for two or three decades, and they regarded Texas as their permanent home.

By 1929 a number of Texas Mexicans were employed by private businesses in urban areas. Railroads furnished the largest number of nonagricultural jobs. Industrial concerns also employed many unskilled and semiskilled workers. Thousands found seasonal or permanent employment in San Antonio as pecan shellers, cigar rollers, meat cutters, and clothing fabricators. In the cities and towns along the Gulf Coast Texas Mexicans were employed in the fishing industry, while in towns across the state others were employed as coal miners. Finally, the construction industry and road construction and maintenance provided jobs for many urban immigrants.

The Findings

Although exact data are not available, between 500,000 and 600,000 Mexicans and their U.S.-born children departed from the United States from 1929 to 1939. Approximately half of these repatriates were Texas residents. Repatriation from Texas began in 1929 and increased until its peak in the fall of 1931. After 1931 departures decreased until 1939 when a final massive exodus occurred.

Most Texas repatriation after 1929 originated in five source areas. First, large-scale repatriation occurred in the lower Rio Grande Valley. Most of the repatriates had been employed as laborers on the large truck farms, although some had worked in packing plants and other agriculturally related industries. Repatriation from some Valley towns was so complete that few Texas Mexicans remained. Second, South Texas probably furnished the largest number of repatriates. They departed from hundreds of cotton plantations and farms where they had served as tenant farmers and laborers. Third, many rural communities and small towns throughout Central Texas furnished repatriates. These repatriates had been employed as tenant farmers and laborers on the large cotton plantations, and as unskilled laborers in cotton-related industries. Fourth, significant numbers of repatriates left Southwest Texas. These returnees had been employed on the cattle and sheep ranches and as agricultural laborers in the Winter Garden district. Fifth, West Texas was a source of repatriation. From the extensive cotton farms on the South Plains to the silver mines in the Big Bend, Texas Mexicans departed en masse.

Although most Texas Mexicans repatriated from rural areas, a substantial number returned to Mexico from urban

areas. At least some repatriates departed from every large Texas city, but the largest number departed from San Antonio, Houston-Galveston, Dallas-Fort Worth, and El Paso. Many urban repatriates had been employed as seasonal or permanent workers in labor-intensive industries prior to 1929. With the onset of the Depression, these industries curtailed employment. Texas Mexicans were among the first discharged. Many urban Texas Mexicans initially refused to abandon their homes in Texas; only after their savings were exhausted did they reluctantly return to Mexico. Urban repatriation was fueled by intense local anti-Mexican campaigns as well as by a statewide Immigration Service deportation campaign.

Owners of small commercial enterprises, artisans, and professional persons were severely harmed by the Depression. Their financial problems were compounded by the repatriation or deportation of thousands of customers. The effects of the Depression on Texas Mexican businesses was perhaps greatest at El Paso, where hundreds of commercial enterprises closed. Many of the owners were compelled to return to Mexico.

One of the most clouded issues involves the economic status of the repatriates. Many repatriates returned

to Mexico in good financial condition. They returned in their own vehicles laden with farm equipment, tools, livestock, furniture, merchandise, household goods and other belongings. However, the possession of material belongings was not always an indication of financial well-being. Urban entrepreneurs often left with merchandise so they could reestablish their businesses, yet they usually lacked funds to do so once they returned. Rural repatriates who returned with substantial belongings frequently lacked funds to begin life as farmers in Mexico. The repatriates' belongings were often of such little monetary value that they were unable to sell them. Repatriates who possessed vehicles frequently lacked funds to acquire license plates, oil, gasoline, tires, and to make repairs.

Repatriation was accompanied by a federal deportation campaign which began in 1928 and intensified between 1929 and 1931, when thousands of Texas Mexicans were deported. Deportation raids were carried out in both urban and rural areas. The most intense activity was conducted near the Texas-Mexico border. Few massive deportation raids were staged in Texas after 1931, although Immigration Service inspectors apprehended and deported Texas Mexicans throughout the 1930s.

The deportation campaign began in the lower Rio Grande Valley in the summer of 1928 and continued through 1931, when thousands of Texas Mexicans were jailed and deported. The campaign was so thorough that in some small rural communities few or no Texas Mexicans remained after 1931. By 1930 the deportation campaign had been extended to West Texas, where activity centered on El Paso and nearby agricultural enterprises. Thousands were deported and authorities in Ciudad Juárez experienced great difficulty in providing for their needs. The deportation campaign was less intense in other areas of Texas, although raids occurred at diverse locations in South, Central, and North Texas. Reliable data are not available for the number of deportations from the various areas of the state.

Efforts to implement the deportation campaign resulted in widespread violation of civil and human rights. These violations included illegally imprisoning immigrants, deporting U.S.-born children, not permitting returnees to dispose of their property or to collect their wages, deporting many not legally subject to deportation because of their length of Texas residence, separating families, and deporting the infirm.

Repatriates returned to the Texas-Mexico border via three routeways: a central routeway which extended from North Texas across Central and South Texas to Laredo; an eastern routeway which originated near the Texas-Louisiana border and skirted the Texas Gulf Coast across South Texas before passing through the lower Rio Grande Valley, where it terminated at Brownsville; and a western routeway which began near Lubbock on the South Plains and extended across West Texas to its terminus at El Paso. Rural areas were linked to the major routeways by a number of feeder roads.

Two major north-south routeways in Mexico were used by repatriates to reach the interior. The western routeway extended from Ciudad Juárez to Guadalajara, while an eastern routeway originated at Nuevo Laredo and terminated in Mexico City. These routeways were connected at several points by railways and roads.

The specific destinations of most repatriates are unknown. Apparently most returned to the towns and villages from which they had emigrated, although some migrated to urban centers and government-sponsored agricultural colonies. Approximately 80 percent returned to the northern border states of Nuevo León, Coahuila, Tamaulipas,

and Chihuahua, while about 15 percent returned to Guanajuato, San Luis Potosí, Michoacán, Jalisco, Durango, Zacatecas, and Aguascalients in central Mexico.

Large-scale efforts were made to provide returnees with land to farm. Land was made available for colonization projects by the National Irrigation Commission (NIC), other federal agencies, state agencies, and individuals. Most repatriates were resettled by the NIC, although a large number of smaller projects were developed by a diverse assortment of federal and state agencies. A few individual landowners were involved in resettlement, but few repatriates benefitted from their schemes.

Opportunities for repatriate resettlement varied significantly under the three Mexican presidents of the 1930s. Efforts were greatest under Pascual Ortiz Rubio. Under his leadership the federal government developed a detailed repatriation plan which provided for repatriate resettlement at numerous colonies. A number of colonies were established at diverse locations between 1930 and 1932 and plans were made to establish several other colonies. However, after the elevation of Abelardo Rodríguez to the presidency in September 1932, federal involvement

in resettlement diminished. During the Rodríguez administration the National Repatriation Committee made several unsuccessful efforts to establish repatriate colonies. After the inauguration of President Lázaro Cárdenas in December 1934 the federal government renewed efforts to promote repatriation and colonization. A number of colonies were established and Mexicans residing in the United States were recruited for them. However, repatriation had peaked several years earlier and the number who returned to settle at them was not large.

Although various federal and state agencies sponsored repatriate resettlement, it is often difficult to determine primary sponsorship since, frequently, several agencies were involved in various aspects of one project. State governments often provided land for resettlement projects, but federal agencies usually developed and administered them. A few individual landowners volunteered land for the projects, and in a limited number of cases they assisted in repatriate resettlement.

Many of the repatriate colonies were located in northern Mexico where large tracts of unsettled land were available. Resettlement projects in other areas of Mexico were often located in remote regions, usually on

haciendas abandoned during the Mexican Revolution or on recently expropriated land. Much of the resettlement land was undeveloped; it required clearing and preparing before being cultivated.

Little information is available on the success or failure of most colonies, although some are known to have failed. Some repatriates settled at several projects before finding a successful one. Other colonists left the resettlement colonies for urban centers in search of jobs, while still others tried to reenter the United States. Displaced colonists often suffered severe hardships from these dislocations. In some cases they had to dispose of all their belongings in order to obtain travel funds.

Causes of Repatriation

Previous studies of Mexican repatriation have often presented simplistic explanations of this Depression-era phenomenon. In general these studies have failed to examine in depth the institutions and organizations involved in repatriation. Further, the complex social, economic, and political events and circumstances in which Mexican repatriation was rooted have been neglected. Mexican repatriation is usually explained by the following

scenario: with the advent of the Great Depression thousands of Mexicans were thrown out of work, and relief agencies were unable to provide for their needs. In an effort to relieve the financial burden of caring for the Mexicans and to create jobs for unemployed Anglo Americans--a contradiction in itself--relief agencies across the nation developed massive repatriation programs through which they persuaded or coerced thousands of Mexicans to return to Mexico. These repatriation programs were usually accompanied by intense deportation campaigns which created fear within the Mexican community and accelerated repatriation.

This scenario may satisfactorily explain repatriation in some areas of the United States, but a more complex set of circumstances and events led to repatriation from Texas. These circumstances and events are not only complex but are often interrelated and interdependent. A number of push factors in Texas and pull factors in Mexico combined to make repatriation a viable alternative for many Texas Mexicans. Many of the push factors were related to the deterioration of the agricultural economy of Texas, since most Texas repatriates had been employed as tenant

farmers and agricultural laborers. The pull factors involved the Mexican government's long-standing policy of promoting repatriation.

It is impossible to rank repatriation push and pull factors, although some of the factors were obviously of greater importance than others. Further, probably several push and pull factors were instrumental in the decision of many Texas Mexicans to repatriate.

1. Passage of the Texas Cotton Acreage Control Law of 1931 caused the displacement and return to Mexico of large numbers of Texas Mexicans in 1931 and 1932. This legislation severely limited the amount of cotton farmers could plant. Landlords responded by evicting thousands of tenant farmers and agricultural laborers.

2. The enactment of the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) in 1933 proved devastating to Texas Mexican tenant farmers and agricultural laborers. This legislation provided for large reductions in cotton acreage. In 1933 over four million acres of Texas cotton were destroyed. With the destruction of the 1933 cotton crop, thousands of jobs harvesting cotton--jobs usually occupied by Texas Mexicans--were eliminated. After 1933 landowners found it advantageous to organize their farm operations to exclude

tenants from the AAA cotton-acreage reduction program and government subsidies. Thousands of long-time Texas Mexican tenant farmers were displaced.

3. During the early 1930s wages paid agricultural labor diminished sharply. The average wage paid cotton pickers decreased from $1.21 for 100 pounds of cotton picked in 1928 to 44 cents in 1931. In some areas of the state cotton pickers received only 30 cents per hundredweight in 1932. Texas Mexican laborers, many of whom depended on cotton picking as a major source of income, could not exist on such low wages. Low wages prevailed throughout the agricultural sector for the duration of the Depression.

4. In addition to the agricultural depression of the 1930s, Texas farmers were plagued by recurring natural disasters that devastated crops and livestock. Droughts, hurricanes, and floods displaced thousands of Texas Mexican tenant farmers. Over vast areas of the state tenant farmers were forced from farms due to repeated crop failures, while agricultural laborers were unable to secure employment. Jobs in cotton gins, oil mills, cotton compresses, cotton yards, and other cotton-related industries disappeared.

5. Advances in agricultural technology contributed to the diminished demand for Texas Mexican tenant farmers and laborers in the 1930s. The adoption of the tractor, the cotton sled, the onion transplanter, the mechanical cotton picker, and other innovations contributed substantially to the displacement of Texas Mexican tenant farmers and agricultural laborers.

6. Federal legislation systematically excluded alien employment on federal work relief projects. In virtually all Texas communities Texas Mexicans were denied work because of these federal provisions. Even Mexican Americans were often unable to prove their citizenship and were denied employment. The denial of relief work on Civil Works Administration and Works Progress Administration projects was especially devastating to Texas Mexicans because these projects provided a major source of employment for unskilled labor during the Depression.

7. State requirements limited the employment of Texas Mexicans on state-financed public works projects. Employment was denied to Texas Mexicans on state highway construction and maintenance, on construction of state buildings, and to teachers in the public schools. Before 1930 construction projects had provided a major source of

employment for semiskilled and unskilled Texas Mexican labor.

8. Many municipal and county governments adopted ordinances and resolutions which required the employment of local labor on locally financed projects. Texas Mexicans were often denied employment because these ordinances usually had lengthy citizenship requirements which they could not meet. In addition, informal regulations were often used to deny relief to Texas Mexicans. Local communities denied relief and employment to Texas Mexicans who temporarily left home to engage in seasonal agricultural work because they had not been continuous residents.

9. The Mexican government promoted repatriation from Texas by reducing import tariffs on repatriates belongings and offering free transportation from the Texas-Mexico border. Reduction of import duties was an influential factor for long-term Texas residents who had accumulated many belongings, while free transportation was important to destitute repatriates.

10. Mexican consuls in Texas encouraged repatriation as official government policy. Consuls served as a communication link between Texas and the Mexican government

and provided information on opportunities in Mexico. Although they possessed limited funds to aid needy repatriates, consuls often led drives to raise funds for repatriate transportation from Texas. Further, they often initiated, organized, and implemented the return of repatriates.

11. Employment opportunities in Mexico motivated unemployed Texas Mexicans to return to Mexico. Jobs were made available to repatriates on a number of public works projects, especially road construction and irrigation projects. Many other repatriates were able to obtain jobs in the agricultural sector.

12. Opportunities to acquire land in Mexico led to the return of thousands of Texas Mexicans. Mexican colonization projects received widespread publicity in Texas, where they were widely promoted by Mexican consuls. In some cases the Mexican government dispatched high government officials to Texas to recruit repatriates for the colonies.

13. An intensive, well-organized deportation campaign accelerated repatriation from Texas. Although deportation activity peaked during the early Depression years, low-level deportation continued throughout the 1930s. Deportation raids received widespread publicity in

Texas. Threat of deportation led to the exodus of thousands of Texas residents, including many Mexicans residing legally in the state.

Unique Characteristics of Texas Repatriation

Several factors distinguish Texas repatriation from repatriation in other areas of the United States. The following list provides the most important factors.

1. Repatriation from other states was primarily urban based. In Texas most repatriates departed from the plantations, farms, ranches, and mines located in rural areas.

2. Local relief agencies were largely responsible for repatriation from Los Angeles, Detroit, Chicago, and Gary, Indiana. In Texas local relief agencies were not extensively involved in organizing and implementing repatriation. Texas relief agencies were poorly organized prior to the Depression and many collapsed as the Depression gained momentum. In general, they lacked both the funds and personnel to execute massive repatriation programs.

3. The Mexican government was apparently more involved in repatriation activity in Texas than in other

areas of the United States. The Mexican government was probably the single most important institution involved in Texas repatriation. Mexican consuls, who represented the Mexican government in Texas, promoted, organized, and implemented repatriation throughout the State.

The consuls organized Comisiones Honoríficas, quasi-official bodies which served as their extensions in local communities. The Comisiones provided information regarding opportunities in Mexico to prospective repatriates. They then offered organizational expertise to those who decided to return. In addition, they assisted in raising funds to transport repatriates from their homes to the border.

Several other Mexican government agencies assisted in repatriation. The Presidents, through a series of decrees, abolished import duties on repatriate belongings. The Ministry of Interior provided destitute repatriates with transportation from the border to their destinations in Mexico. The Mexican Migration Service expedited the passage of the repatriates through border communities and often organized drives to raise funds for them. During the late Depression the Ministry of Foreign Relations actively recruited Texas Mexicans to colonize land.

4. Unlike societies in other areas of the United States, social organizations played an important role in Texas repatriation. These organizations included mutual self-help societies, social clubs, patriotic societies, and Comités Pro-Repatriados. They raised funds to return Texas Mexicans to the border and provided other financial and material assistance.

5. A number of studies have suggested that minorities including Mexicans and Mexican Americans benefitted from the New Deal relief projects, although there is little concrete data to support this view. In Texas many Mexican Americans failed to benefit appreciably from these projects. Texas Mexicans were systematically excluded from New Deal employment opportunities in many Texas communities.

6. Virtually every study of Mexican deportation during the Great Depression has revealed that deportation was a result of efforts to reduce unemployment, to create jobs for Anglo Americans, and to reduce relief expenditures. However, the federal deportation campaign in Texas began in the summer of 1928 two and one-half years before similar campaigns in other areas of the United States. The fact that the Texas campaign was initiated

about 18 months before the onset of the Depression leads one to question the motivation for deportation in Texas. Was the Texas campaign motivated by economic considerations or perhaps by racial or ethnic considerations?

Suggested Future Research

Repatriation of Mexicans from the United States during the Great Depression offers a fertile field for investigation. Before generalizations can be made about Depression-era repatriation additional regional studies are needed. Virtually nothing is known about repatriation from a number of western, midwestern, and eastern states.

Although thousands of Mexicans repatriated from Arizona between 1929 and 1939, no published account of the departures exists. A study of the experiences of the Mexican miners of Arizona who lost their jobs after 1929 and returned to Mexico would prove fascinating as well as enlightening. Hundreds of repatriates are known to have departed from Phoenix, Tucson, Miami, Bisbee, Douglas, Nogales, Florence, Morencio, Clifton, Globe, Hayden, Flagstaff, Yuma, and Sonora. The departure of these repatriates through Nogales and El Paso was recorded by newspapers in Texas and Arizona.

Abraham Hoffman's exacting study of Mexican repatriation focused on Southern California and especially Los Angeles County. The departure of Mexicans from other cities and rural areas in California awaits investigation. Large numbers of rural residents repatriated from the Imperial Valley and San Joaquin Valley. Brawley served as a departure point for many Imperial Valley residents, while Stockton was a concentration point for repatriates from the San Joaquin Valley. In addition, thousands of urban residents departed from Oakland, San Francisco, and Antioch in the San Francisco Bay area. In Southern California large numbers of Mexicans returned from San Bernardino, San Diego, Riverside, Colton, and Santa Ana. Both English- and Spanish-language newspapers published accounts of these departures. These articles were often carried by the wire services and were subsequently published in Texas newspapers.

Another state from which a large number of repatriates returned to Mexico was Colorado. Although some repatriates left Denver, Boulder, Colorado Springs, and Pueblo, apparently most Colorado repatriates departed from sugar beet plantations. The largest number of repatriates left from small towns in the South Platte River Valley

including Fort Morgan, Brush, Longmont, and Fort Lupton. A second source of rural repatriates from Colorado was the Arkansas River Valley. No published study of these departures exists.

Although several studies of repatriation from the Upper Midwest have been published, those studies have focused on urban areas. Little is known about repatriation from midwestern rural areas, although many Mexicans returned to Mexico from midwestern sugar beet plantations. Rural Mexican agriculturalists departed from diverse locations in Michigan, Illinois, Minnesota, Indiana, Ohio, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

Repatriation from the eastern United States has been completely neglected. During the 1920s thousands of Mexicans were recruited to work in the Pennsylvania steel mills. Many of these workers returned to Mexico after 1929 when employment was curtailed. Another source of Mexican repatriation in the eastern United States was New York. During the 1930s hundreds of Mexican residents of New York were returned to Tampico and Veracruz by ship.

In addition to the need for regional studies of Mexican repatriation, there is a need for topical studies. Among the multitude of repatriation topics awaiting

investigation are an in-depth comparative study of the causes of repatriation throughout the United States; a comparative study of Anglo American and Mexican institutions involved in repatriation; a study of repatriate colonies in Mexico; and a study of the readjustment of repatriates who returned to their homes in Mexico.

Finally, there exists a critical need for case studies of repatriates before they departed from the United States and after they arrived in Mexico. Case studies could provide insights into repatriate experiences that cannot be provided through regional or topical studies. The case study approach, based upon an oral history methodology, would undoubtedly yield new perspectives on twentieth-century repatriation.

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