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# Wheels of Government: The Alianza de Camioneros and the Political Culture of P.R.I. Rule, 1929-1981

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

by

Michael Joseph Lettieri

Committee in Charge:

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Nancy Kwak
Everard Meade
Pamela Radcliff

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2014

DEDICATION

For my family.

# EPIGRAPH

"Los intermediarios eran una pieza básica del orden político.
Con ellos podía hacerse mucho, sin ellos, casi nada."

– Fernando Escalante Gonzalbo, *Ciudadanos Imaginarios*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| ACRM | Alianza de Camioneros de la República Mexicana |
| ACS | Alianza de Camioneros del Sur |
| CGT | Confederación General de Trabajadores |
| CNC | Confederación Nacional Campesina |
| CNTC | Cámara Nacional de Transportes y Comunicaciones |
| CNOP | Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares |
| CRB | Comisión del Río Balsas |
| CROM | Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana |
| CTM | Confederación de Trabajadores de México |
| CU | Ciudad Universitaria |
| DF | Distrito Federal |
| DFS | Dirección Federal de Seguridad |
| DGIPS | Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales |
| FEU | Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios |
| FSTSE | Federación de Sindicatos de Trabajadores al Servicio del Estado |
| GCE | Gran Comisión Estudiantil |
| IMSS | Instituto Mexicano de Seguro Social |
| LVGC | Ley de Vías Generales de Comunicación |
| Organizaciones Unidas | Organizaciones Unidas de Autos de Alquiler |
| PEMEX | Petroleos Mexicanos |
| PNR | Partido Nacional Revolucionario |
| PRI | Partido Revolucionario Institucional |
| PRM | Partido de la Revolución Mexicana |
| Postergados | Sindicato de Trabajadores Postergados por la Alianza de Camioneros de México |
| SCOP | Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Obras Públicas |
| SCT | Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes |
| UNAM | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México |

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# PREFACE

The 1999 film *La Ley de Herodes* is not a classic tale of redemption. In it, Vargas, the protagonist, almost accidentally becomes mayor of the invented Mexican town of San Pedro de los Saguaros. As the tale unfolds, Vargas slips into a moral abyss of corruption, deceit, and violence, ending up not dead or imprisoned but in a final plot twist, as a member of the national congress. As with all satire, such a depiction of the authoritarian regime that governed Mexico for most of the twentieth century contained an element of truth. Read perversely, *La Ley de Herodes* is a coming of age story, an account of how the bumbling Vargas learns the rules of Mexican politics. This dissertation is a study of those rules, what they were, how they worked, and how they contributed to the stability of the regime. There is no Vargas in the account below; the protagonists of my story were skillful entrepreneurs and political actors. They were men who invested in the bus industry, building a powerful interest group organization and, over time, became incorporated into the machinery of single party rule. Some, like Vargas, ended up in congress. Some enjoyed lengthy careers, others saw their aspirations thwarted. All knew the rules almost innately. This is an account of their lives and of the rise and fall of their system.

## Acknowledgements

After many months of writing, acknowledgements sections can often feel formulaic. There has been nothing formulaic, however, about the support given me by those who so generously offered their time, insights, and encouragement. This work owes its existence to them.

First, I would be remiss in not acknowledging those institutions whose financial support of the project made its success possible. Initial trips to Mexico that established the viability of the research were made possible with travel grants from UC San Diego's Center for the Humanities, the Center for Iberian and Latin American Studies, and the Institute for International, Comparative, and Area Studies. Funding from a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad grant allowed me to pursue my investigations farther through the archives than I could have imagined. The Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies has provided me a welcoming home, the graduate student luxury of private office space, and a generous writing grant that made the completion of the dissertation possible.

During a long research year in Mexico, I benefited from the assistance of many people. Elisa Servín, Ariel Rodríguez Kuri, and Rogelio Hernández Rodríguez all offered advice, guidance, and most importantly their heartening interest in the research. The staffs at numerous archives were exceedingly patient with my ongoing requests for materials, particularly those of the Archivo General de la Nación and the Hemeroteca Nacional. Raymundo Álvarez García in Gallery Three accommodated my earliest, bumbling research attempts with a smile. In Gallery One Gerardo Vergara García and Esther Santos Hernández offered friendly faces, thousands of documents, and a genuine

concern for the success of the project. Maria Cristina Solís and Eva Hernández Casanova graciously shared with me their fathers' stories and papers, documents that offered invaluable insights. Carlos Grados García and Rubén Guevara Alarcón told me of their experiences and allowed me access to their personal collections, and this dissertation is much richer for it.

My attempt to grapple with those sources owes much to the excellent historical training I received at UC San Diego. My development as an academic owes even more to a broad network of personal and intellectual companions. Eric Van Young's sturdy good humor, calming reassurances, and tireless commenting brought the dissertation safely to port and I am profoundly grateful for his steady guidance. The inspiration for my project I owe to Ev Meade, who initially suggested I research something entirely different. Nevertheless, his unflagging support and enthusiastic comments made it possible, and he will hopefully see his first idea vindicated in future work. Christine Hunefeldt, Pamela Radcliff, and Nancy Kwak all took time to work with me as I explored topics outside of Mexico and I am thankful for their patience. Stanley Chodorow encouraged me during as I began writing and his advice on both style and substance is hopefully reflected below. Roderic Camp offered supportive words and helpful comments from the project's beginning and Alberto Díaz Cayeros provided insightful commentary and key suggestions to Chapter Four. Paul Gillingham has been an invaluable sounding board and gracious mentor, and his own work has been my model for elegant modern Mexican history. Special thanks is due Allen Wells for inspiring me to study Latin America as an undergraduate and whose friendship and counsel served as a beacon during graduate school's darker moments. My colleagues at the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies and

beyond shared thoughtful advice, crucial encouragement, and most importantly have made the trip a little more pleasant. I am thankful to have had Casey Lurtz, James Schrader, Hanni Jalil, Marco Morales, Vanessa Frieje, Sebastián Garrido, and Sarah Osten all as traveling companions.

I never could have begun, much less finished, this journey without my family. Cat Condliffe's unrelenting optimism kept me moving when my own enthusiasm waned, and her skills with a word processor sped the final steps. My sister kept me digital company during long days writing and always knew the right joke to cheer me up. Three of my grandparents will not see this, but their sacrifices, savings, and love made my pursuit of a doctorate possible. I hope to have made them proud. The fourth gave me the same love and support, and also steady reminders that I should probably finish the dissertation already. My parents introduced me to Mexico, fostered my love of learning, believed in me when I did not, and promised to read all 300 pages of the dissertation. I cannot thank them enough. To all those who have supported me in this endeavor I owe immeasurable debts, and I hope that they find in the following pages some small measure of reward.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Wheels of Government: The Alianza de Camioneros and the Political Culture of P.R.I. Rule, 1929-1981

by

Michael Joseph Lettieri

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, San Diego, 2014

Professor Eric Van Young, Chair

This dissertation is a study of the relationship between the Alianza de Camioneros, the organization that represented Mexico's middle-class bus industry entrepreneurs, and the soft-authoritarian regime that governed the country from 1929 to under the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). The PRI's 71-year rule defies easy explanation. Its legitimacy was shallow and uneven, yet it did not use outright repression

to retain power. Rather, it relied on the coherence and loyalty of a broad group of mid-level elites who acted as intermediaries between the regime and society. Its mid-century dominance was possible because it retained the allegiance of those actors. Drawing on a range of official documents and private publications this dissertation explains how it did so. Through the biographies of Alianza leaders, I argue that the history of a *priísta* political culture prevented elite ruptures and thus lent crucial strength to soft authoritarian rule. This system included the unwritten rules that kept order on the political playing field and determined the terms of the relationship between intermediate elites like the Alianza's leaders and the regime. I trace the career of Antonio Díaz Lombardo, the Alianza's leader from 1929 until 1954 to offer a "long arc" perspective on the formation of the PRI regime and argue that the incorporation of entrepreneurial groups stabilized the postrevolutionary state in a process involving changes in political institutions and the development of a "political style." I follow José Valdovinos, the Alianza's leader from 1954 to 1958, arguing that the relationship between intermediate elites and the regime was renegotiated during the 1950s in response to public pressures. In examining Isidoro Rodríguez's struggles for power within the Alianza I reveal how the PRI's corporatist system maintained the loyalty of mid-level elites. Through the career of Rubén Figueroa, I demonstrate how calculations of "political strength" shaped the construction of clientelistic networks. Finally, through the experiences of the Alianza's last leader, Hector Hernández Casanova, during the municipalization of the urban bus system in 1981 I show that by the late 1970s the political culture that had supported mid-century stability was beginning to decay.

## INTRODUCTION:

### THE LEVIATHAN AND THE OCTOPUS

When Luis Echeverría Álvarez departed on his presidential campaign tour across Mexico in late 1969, he could be sure of two things: first, that he would handily win the election, a guarantee enforced by the machinery of the soft authoritarian regime that backed him, and second, that his rallies would be full of supporters trucked in on buses organized by Hector Hernández Casanova, head of the Alianza de Camioneros.[1] For a quarter-century the Alianza, the group representing the interests of the country's middle-class transportation entrepreneurs, had steadfastly participated in the rituals of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Over that same quarter-century, PRI candidates had steamrolled opponents in typically fraudulent elections and the party had dominated all aspects of the country's political life. Its rule was not uncontested, but during the middle of the twentieth century this hegemonic party regime consolidated its power and achieved a remarkable macropolitical stability. The soft authoritarian state, of which the PRI was an appendage, gained fame as a leviathan.[2]

The history of the Alianza runs nearly parallel to that of the PRI regime.[3] Both were born in the late 1920s, flourished from the 1940s through the 1960s, and began to

---

[1] In literal translation, the Alliance of Busmen.

[2] The PRI and the state ought not be conflated. The vast government apparatus under the president held repressive power, was responsible for most policy decisions, and was financially flush. The party and its structures served to organize campaigns and manage candidacies, control tensions between interest groups and channel the aspirations of political entrepreneurs. The PRI received financial and strategic support from the state, reinforcing the party's monopoly on political access; see Victoria Rodríguez and Peter Ward, "Disentangling the PRI from the Government in Mexico," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 10.1 (1994).

[3] I will typically refer to the "PRI regime" to mean the party and state as an integral whole that together composed the institutions of power. If they should not be conflated, the party and the state tended to work in concert and it is useful to speak of the regime as the system of soft authoritarianism that used a dominant party to bolster the state. More subtly, I use the term to draw on Kevin Middlebrook's definition of a

decay in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Their histories were also intertwined: the Alianza's entrepreneurs were incorporated into the PRI at a key moment in the party's development, as the state turned in the 1940s away from a program of revolutionary reform and toward a conservative vision of economic development. During the 1950s, as that new version of the party grew stronger, the Alianza's members came to form part of the cadre of loyal PRI supporters. They wore party pins, waved banners at rallies, and put the weight of their organization behind the regime, providing free transportation to PRI events and helping to mobilize the rent-a-ralliers known as *acarreados*. In return, the regime supported their business interests, lowering tariffs on automotive parts, subsidizing gasoline, and granting the Alianza a near monopoly on operating concessions in Mexico City even as the organization's buses provided inadequate and often unsafe service. The PRI also fueled the personal ambitions of Alianza leaders, offering them seats in congress and other plum political positions. So legendary was the group's reputed influence that residents of Mexico City, suffering unpleasant commutes on Alianza vehicles, referred to *el pulpo camionero*: the bus octopus that strangled urban life and stretched its tentacles into the government.

The machine that Echeverría rode to victory was not a simple one. Strained by factionalism and facing often intense social stresses, the regime seems to have lacked broad legitimacy, yet did not rely on outright repression to retain power. Instead, stability was the product of the regime's ability to ensure the unity and allegiance of a diverse and

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regime as: "the formal and informal principles, norms, rules, and procedures regarding participation, representation , decision making, and the use of force in a political community, including forms of leadership recruitment and the division of authority among different institutions and political entities."; Kevin Middlebrook, *The Paradox of Revolution: Labor, the State, and Authoritarianism in Mexico* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 5.

often fractious group of elites. That for most of mid-century, it was able to do so allowed a soft-authoritarian system to survive and flourish even as it faced increasing pressures for change. It succeeded in no small part thanks to its ability to incorporate intermediate elites into the country's political structures and socialize them into a culture where the terms and expectations of collaboration were clear. Those mid-level actors turned the wheels of government, implementing and enforcing the regime's policies, disciplining and indoctrinating the members of their organizations, and ensuring the functioning of the PRI political machine. The workings of that political machine were predictable, in turn, precisely because they followed a set of unwritten rules that intermediate elites understood and abided by. Absent such a system, soft authoritarianism would not have endured.

Through biographical case studies of the Alianza's leaders, I will argue that the regime's durability had much to do with the PRI's ability to cultivate and maintain the loyalty of a broad stratum of intermediate elites. I will show that underpinning such loyalty was a political culture of *priísmo* that worked to prevent ruptures and manage dissent, and that this political culture—a universally-understood set of rules governing the practice of politics—was the product of institutional changes during the 1940s and early 1950s. The "classic" PRI of mid-century was not conjured into being; rather it was the result of many years of political negotiations and maneuverings that began to institutionalize a set of unwritten rules. I will argue that from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, those rules structured political life in such a way as to minimize elite schisms and ensure stability. I will also suggest that this system of understandings began to break down in the late 1970s, crucially weakening the regime's foundations just before it would

be buffeted by economic and political crises during its final two decades. This unique *longue durée* perspective on the PRI system spans traditional historiographical divisions and moves past narrowly focused studies of specific episodes to provide a fine-grained examination of the regime across the entire arc of its history. The approach makes it possible to demonstrate that the slow development and breakdown of elite political culture provides the best explanation for why the regime remained stable when faced with crises in the 1950s and 1960s yet collapsed in the face of similar challenges during the 1980s and 1990s.

## THE OCTOPUS

To stand on nearly any major street in Mexico City, be it today or in 1950, is to witness a truly stunning movement of humanity and to understand why urban transportation offers such a vibrant starting point for an analysis of PRI authoritarianism. In a place where residences, markets, and jobs were rarely found in the same place, buses became crucial to the economic and social life of the city. As late as 1980, over a decade after the first subway line was inaugurated, approximately half of all trips in the city were on buses.[4] The city's electric trolley network, municipally owned after 1952, never served a significant portion of the population after the 1920s. For the state, a smoothly functioning and low-cost urban transportation network was essential to urban economic development objectives, as well as to maintaining the quiescence of residents. Yet because the operation of the bus network remained in the hands of the Alianza's

[4] The subway, or Metro, only accounted for approximately 12% of all trips; Peter Ward, *Mexico City*, 2nd ed. (New York: John Wiley, 1998), 147.

entrepreneurs, public, state, and private interests intersected on the buses on a daily basis. And despite frequent popular complaints over the quality, cost, and efficiency of service, for more than 50 years the Alianza remained in control of the bus system. How an entrepreneurial group such as the Alianza survived and thrived during that period offers a glimpse of the regime's often hidden practices of negotiation and consensus-making.

From its institutional birth in 1927, the Alianza controlled most of Mexico City's public transportation network. The nascent postrevolutionary state sponsored that control, as its conservative reconstructionist ideology aligned with the aspirations of the *camionero* entrepreneurs. The new state granted the Alianza exclusive concessions for gasoline and credit institutions, and by the mid-1930s nearly anyone who sought permits to operate passenger buses in or around Mexico City had little choice but to join the Alianza. If political decisions had helped the Alianza consolidate its control over transportation in the 1920s, the regime had several reasons for continuing to sanction the organization's dominant position after the 1930s. The organization grew steadily, from 30 affiliated lines in 1931 to 36 by 1942, 52 in 1949, 60 by 1953, and 92 by 1958, a growth that coincided with a dramatic expansion in the number of buses in service, from around 2,000 in 1930 to well over 7,000 in 1953.[5] From a practical perspective, the private operation of the bus system relieved the government of the burdensome and expensive task of managing public transportation.[6] The Alianza's dominant position in

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[5] Secretaría de Obras y Servicios, Comisión de Vialidad y Transporte Urbano, *Anuario de Vialidad y Transporte del D.F. 1980* (México, D.F.: Departamento del Distrito Federal, 1981). Located in the SETRAVI Archive. Counts of actual members, while interesting, tend to be inconsistent as the group would often inflate such numbers for political purposes.

[6] It seems unlikely that the city government would have been capable of effectively managing the system during the regime's early years, and when a highly bureaucratized state finally municipalized the bus system in 1981, the resulting boondoggle became part of Mexico City lore.

the city's infrastructure shaped its political relationships. In part to ensure the smooth functioning of the city's transportation network, during the 1940s the regime brought *camionero* leaders into its orbit, and over the next 30 years they collaborated closely with the state on policy, keeping the organization disciplined to official decisions. The Alianza's leaders became ardent *priístas*, marshalling their organization behind regime activities, while many of them received the party's coveted nomination for seats in congress. The depth of their incorporation into the regime during mid-century is precisely what makes these men interesting.

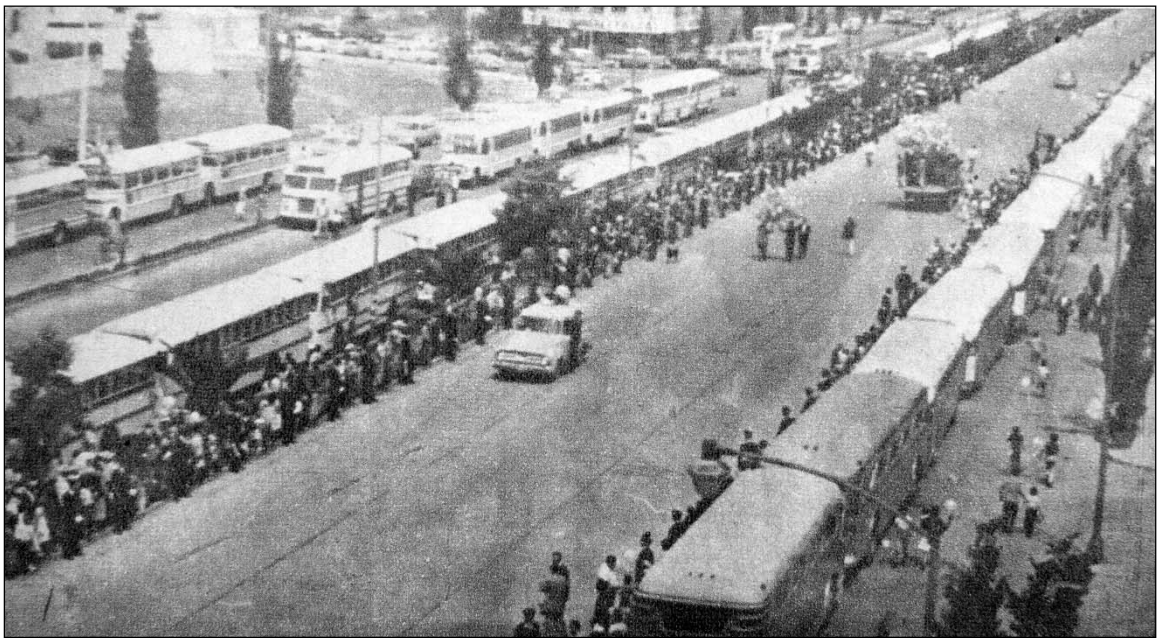

**Figure 1:** Alianza buses and political theater. *Transportes y Turismo,* July, 1962.

The Alianza was a group of small businessmen, a trade association rather than labor union: its members were generally middle-class entrepreneurs who chose to join the organization since it provided the best collective defense of their interests. They identified as *camioneros* (busmen) or as *permisionarios* (permit-holders), and saw

themselves as distinct from their employees, who were drivers or mechanics. Alianza members paid monthly dues—seven pesos (approximately US$1.40) per vehicle in 1945—and through its lending institutions and automotive parts agencies it appears as though the organization wielded substantial financial capital, although it was not itself incorporated as a business entity.[7] Alianza leadership was elected for three-year terms by an assembly of bus line presidents (the administrators who were elected annually by assemblies of their fellow permit-holders on each line)**.** But while the system was nominally democratic, in practice the group's most financially powerful members tended to serve continuously on its executive committee and exercised near total control over the industry. Those leaders typically owned more than ten buses each and earned enough from their investment in transportation to move into the ranks of the upper-middle-class, even as the Alianza's members who owned one bus often faced difficult economic circumstances.[8] The Alianza's leaders thus comprised a group of intermediate elites, located securely in the middle of the economic ladder, and positioned politically between the members of their organization and their patrons in the PRI. The integration of Alianza leaders into the machinery of the PRI was not inevitable, however, and cannot be understood apart from the larger history of the regime.

## THE LEVIATHAN

The solid mid-century dominance of a hegemonic party system has long defied easy explanation and several decades of scholarship have grappled with two intertwined

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[7] All peso-to-dollar calculation based on the Montevideo-Oxford Latin American Economic History Data Base and are not adjusted for inflation. Dues for lines outside of Mexico City were five pesos; *El Informador Camionero*, October 1, 1945.

[8] The economics of bus ownership in mid-century are difficult to ascertain, as discussed below.

questions: how did the regime come into being, and how did it survive during a period in which most Latin American countries experienced extreme political instability? Following the bloody revolutionary civil war from 1910 to 1917, the reconstruction of the Mexican national state was a prolonged and often difficult process and the appearance of a sturdy authoritarian system by the mid-1950s therefore striking; scholars have long debated its origins. The Revolution had upended, if not destroyed, the country's political institutions, shattered the economy, and taken an extreme demographic toll.[9] Yet the process of the Revolution also helped birth a new order as different elites with national political aspirations emerged from the fighting.[10] Those new elites became statebuilders during the 1920s and 1930s, and many influential interpretations trace the origins of single-party hegemony to these years. Scholars differ, however, on whether the important state formation processes were the educational and cultural programs that created a national identity and laid the foundation for the PRI's subsequent hegemony, the incorporation of labor and peasants into corporatist structures of mass politics, or the

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[9] Estimates of the human cost of the Revolution vary, but recent work suggests there were around 1.5 million war-related deaths. Emigration and lost births took the overall demographic loss to 2.1 million; Robert McCaa, "Missing Millions: The Demographic Costs of the Mexican Revolution," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 19.2 (2003).

[10] Most studies of the Revolution are in some way influenced by the capitalist regime that emerged in mid-century. Classic, official historiography sought directly to connect the PRI to the revolution, a perspective that fell out of academic fashion by the 1970s. Revisionist perspectives took the PRI's emergence as evidence that no revolution occurred. Neo-revisionists, in their effort to redeem the Revolution, still often seek to explain how the PRI could emerge from an authentic social upheaval. Alan Knight, in warning against "outcome-ism," suggests that the war led to the rise of a new national leadership capable of building the edifice of the postrevolutionary state. Similarly, Ian Jacobs describes how by the end of the second decade of the twentieth century the rural strongmen in Guerrero who had fought the revolution saw their futures eclipsed by younger political entrepreneurs who forged ties with the emerging national state. Others with such approaches include John Lear, who suggests that worker mobilizations in Mexico City during the Revolution shaped the postrevolutionary regime's incorporation of labor; Ramón Eduardo Ruiz, *The Great Rebellion: Mexico, 1905-1924* (Norton: New York, 1980); Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Ian Jacobs, *Ranchero Revolt: The Mexican Revolution in Guerrero* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982); John Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens: The Revolution in Mexico City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

often coercive articulation of rural rule through regional strongmen.[11] Many institution-focused interpretations highlight Plutarco Elías Calles's founding of the PRI's predecessor party (the PNR) in 1929 and its subsequent development as an inclusive but non-democratic system, suggesting that soft authoritarian stability was born very early.[12] Most of these interpretations thus consider the birth of the authoritarian regime to have occurred by 1940, when the radical reformist administration of Lázaro Cárdenas was succeeded by the conservative government of Manuel Ávila Camacho.[13]

Yet during from the 1920s to the 1940s, factionalism and defections presented serious challenges to the emerging regime, and middle class entrepreneurial groups such as the Alianza frequently clashed with the state, particularly under Cárdenas (1934-1940). Indeed, well into the 1950s the regime faced significant threats from both the left and right.[14] A diverse group of scholars have examined how the regime dealt with those

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[11] Mary K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997); Arnaldo Córdova, *La política de masas de cardenismo* (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, 1974); Nora Hamilton, *The Limits of State Autonomy: Post-Revolutionary Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); Kevin Middlebrook, *The Paradox of Revolution: Labor, the State, and Authoritarianism in Mexico* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Christopher Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos: Politics, Identity, and Agrarian Struggle in Postrevolutionary Michoacán, 1920-1935* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Alejandro Quintana, *Maximino Ávila Camacho and the One-Party State: The Taming of Caudillismo and Caciquismo in Post-Revolutionary México* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2001).

[12] Jürgen Buchenau, *Plutarco Elías Calles and the Mexican Revolution* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); Tzvi Medin, *El minimato presidencial: historia política del maximato (1928-1935)* (México D.F.: Ediciones Era, 1982); Alejandra Lajous, *Los orígenes del partido único en México* (México, D.F.: UNAM Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 1979).

[13] Alan Knight's description of the vehicle of *cardenismo* being "retuned… and [driven] in a different direction" is the most articulate expression of a frequent sentiment; Alan Knight, "*Cardenismo*: Juggernaut or Jalopy?" *Journal of Latin American Studies* 26:1 (1994).

[14] Much interesting and important work on conservative movements has been done recently. John Sherman, *The Mexican Right: The End of Revolutionary Reform, 1929-1940* (Westport: Praeger, 1997); *Conservadurismo y derechas en la historia de México*, ed. Erika Pani (México, D.F.: CONACULTA-Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2009). Several scholars have documented opposition to *cardenista* policies and shown how it was often successful in forcing the national state to cede to local forces. Ben Fallaw, *Cárdenas Compromised: The Failure of Reform in Postrevolutionary Yucatán* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); Adrian Bantjes, *As If Jesús Walked on Earth: Cardenismo, Sonora, and the Mexican Revolution* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1998); Jennie Purnell, *Popular Movements and State*

pressures, suggesting that the roots of mid-century dominance can be found in the strategies of rule employed during the 1940s and early 1950s.[15] These studies have suggested that the nascent PRI was responsive to popular demands and more flexible than previously believed, but also that the techniques of electoral authoritarianism hardened in response to opposition presidential campaigns in the elections of 1940, 1946, and 1952.[16] Some have also pointed to important cultural shifts during this period, as the regime found rhetorical reconciliation with conservative groups and a new generation of civilian, college-educated politicians took the stage.[17]

By all accounts, by the mid-1950s the regime had consolidated political power and, in self-satisfied fashion, oversaw the 'Mexican miracle,' a period from the late 1940s to the early 1970s when consistent economic growth, rapid industrialization, and steady urbanization was coupled with low levels of social and political conflict.[18] This did not imply an absence of corruption or repression as the country moved toward a vision of

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*Formation in Revolutionary Mexico: The Agraristas and Cristeros of Michoacán* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Elisa Servín's study of the *Henriquista* political movement offers an important exploration of elite schisms during the 1940s; *Ruptura y oposición: el movimiento henriquista* (México, D.F.: Cal y Arena, 2001).

[15] Credit for "institutionalizing" power has often been allocated to Ávila Camacho or his successor, Miguel Áleman (1946-1952); Stephen Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s: Modernity, Politics, and Corruption* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1999); Luis Medina Peña, *Del cardenismo al avilacamachismo* (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1978); Luis Medina Peña, *Hacia el nuevo estado: México, 1920-1993* (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1994). Tiziana Bertaccini's study of the CNOP (the party sector representing middle-class groups founded in 1943) is an interesting approach to understanding how the regime's power was structured through its institutions; *El régimen priísta frente a las clases medias, 1943-1964* (México, D.F.: CONACULTA, 2009).

[16] Paul Gillingham, "Maximino's Bulls: Popular Protest After the Mexican Revolution, 1940-1952," *Past and Present* 206:1 (2010); Aaron Navarro, *Political Intelligence and the Creation of Modern Mexico, 1938-1954* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2010).

[17] Daniel Newcomer, *Reconciling Modernity: Urban State Formation in 1940s León, Mexico* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Roderic Camp, *The Metamorphosis of Leadership in a Democratic Mexico* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[18] A classic laudatory account of the regime's governance can be found in Frank Brandenburg, *The Making of Modern Mexico* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1964).

modernity; indeed, both were rampant. Even the impressive macroeconomic indicators—an annual 6.4% growth of GDP between 1940 and 1968—disguised the ugly reality of growing social inequality.[19] Neither was the political system as stable as it superficially appeared. Indeed, the putatively hegemonic system was challenged by peasant groups in Morelos and Guerrero, doctors, railroad workers, and most memorably, students in Mexico City and conservatives in San Luis Potosí.[20] As revisionist historians reexamining this supposed golden era have pointed out, the state met the frequent challenges to its rule with more low-grade coercion than has often been acknowledged: if the regime's authoritarianism was soft and somewhat flexible, there was, nevertheless, no *pax priísta*. The leviathan was, perhaps, more of a pufferfish.

Regardless of its actual miraculousness, however, the "miracle" birthed the PRI of legend, a vision of the soft authoritarian system that combined fact with folklore to explain the often mysterious alchemy of power. This campfire narrative describes a regime consisting of omnipotent presidents who served six-year *sexenio* terms, a corrupt and bloated bureaucracy, and a party juggernaut that skillfully deflected popular demands through corporatist institutions. Regular elections were regularly rigged to ensure imposing margins of victories for PRI candidates, and at any rate opposition parties

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[19] Per one account, the country's Gini coefficient marked it as Latin America's most unequal in this period. Malnutrition was widespread, rural wages fell 40%, and urban real wages did not improve between 1940 and 1967; Paul Gillingham and Benjamin Smith, "Introduction: The Paradoxes of Revolution" in *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968,* eds. Paul Gillingham and Benjamin Smith. (Durham: Duke University Press, Forthcoming 2014).

[20] Tanalís Padilla, *Rural Resistance in the Land of Zapata: The Jaramillista Movement and the Myth of the Pax Priísta*, *1940-1962* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Alex Aviña, "Insurgent Guerrero: Genaro Vázquez, Lucio Cabañas, and the Guerilla challenge to the Postrevolutionary Mexican State, 1960-1996" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2009); Ricardo Pozas Horcasitas, *La democracía en blanco: el movimiento medico en México, 1964-1965* (México, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1993); Robert Alegre, "Contesting the 'Mexican Miracle': Railway Men and Women and the Struggle for Democracy in México, 1943-1959" (PhD diss., Rutgers, 2007).

lacked the resources to put up much of a fight. The PRI became more "institutional" than "revolutionary," supporting conservative policies and candidates while its corporatist structures ensured that labor was domesticated and increasingly impoverished peasants remained quiescent. Economic elites took full advantage, bribing officials and repressing workers with relative impunity. The country's middle classes, drunk on consumerism and imported whiskey, acquiesced to non-democratic rule in exchange for upward mobility, economic stability, and bought into the PRI wholeheartedly. To deflect any challenges to the legitimacy of the system, the regime built rhetorical bulwarks, offering hollow pronouncements on social justice and proclaiming itself the rightful heir to the Revolution.[21] Though all of this was true, in its broadest strokes, the reality was significantly more complicated.

This regime of lore, the "leviathan on the Zócalo," as Thomas Benjamin termed it, has long intrigued sociologists and political scientists who have offered various critical interpretations of its mid-century reign.[22] Their studies have identified key features of the regime and have often stressed the importance of social and political institutions in maintaining stability, including elite socialization patterns, the loyalty-creating mechanics of hierarchical political cliques (*camarillas)*, and the pervasive nature of clientelistic practices that often served as a simulacrum of redistributive policy.[23] For some, the PRI's

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[21] Thomas Benjamin, *La Revolución: Mexico's Great Revolution as Memory, Myth, and History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000).

[22] The term is from his excellent historiographical essay; Thomas Benjamin, "The Leviathan on the Zócalo: Recent Historiography of the Postrevolutionary Mexican State," *Latin American Research Review* 20:3 (1985).

[23] Peter Smith, *Labyrinths of Power: Political Recruitment in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); John Cross, *Informal Politics: Street Vendors and the State in Mexico City* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Susan Eckstein, *The Poverty of Revolution: The State and the Urban Poor in Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

dominance was something of a self-fulfilling prophecy, a resistance-is-futile perspective on the signaling power of massive margins in electoral contests.[24]

Historians have only recently and tentatively begun to approach the legends of the regime. The period after 1940 is no longer a historiographical lacuna, and many of the fine historical studies of opposition movements offer insights into the workings of the PRI system.[25] Work by Paul Gillingham and Benjamin Smith has done much to shape discussion of the regime as a mutable and complex *dictablanda* (an untranslatable play on *dictadura* [dictatorship]).[26] We have, nevertheless, lacked truly longitudinal studies of the regime across the arc of its rule and nuanced biographies of the people who were its steadfast supporters. This dissertation offers both. The Alianza's leaders appear in many ways to be stereotypical figures of the stereotypical PRI, political brokers who waxed fat on party patronage and shady business dealings. In tracing the intertwined histories of the regime and those who made their careers in the Alianza, I am able to offer a valuable discussion of how the stable mid-century system functioned, as well as where it came from and why it eventually broke down. Stretching from the 1920s to the 1980s, this history spans presidential periods and other traditional historiographical watersheds to offer a unique perspective on the regime. The Alianza's leaders are representative of the intermediate elites and political brokers whose participation in, and acquiescence to, PRI

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[24] Beatriz Magaloni suggests that the PRI's electoral dramas—ensuring that official candidates won by huge margins—was a signaling mechanism of regime power that helped ensure elite cohesion; *Voting For Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and its Demise in Mexico* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[25] Beyond those discussed above, Louise Walker's study of middle class opposition after 1968 is an important contribution to understanding the regime through non-traditional approaches; *Waking from the Dream: Mexico's Middle Classes After 1968* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

[26] *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968,* eds. Paul Gillingham and Benjamin Smith. (Durham: Duke University Press, Forthcoming 2014).

rule often rendered them historically invisible even as they were an integral part of the system. Here, they are brought to the fore. To understand the leviathan, we must understand those who traveled, remora-like, alongside it.

## THE RULEBOOKS OF THE REGIME

Apparent historical continuity rarely stands up to close examination. Such is the case with the PRI's seven decades in power: party and state mutated constantly, ideologies shifted, and political practices changed or evolved. How then to explain the durability of single-party rule? Studies of mid-century opposition have shown that regime hegemony was thin and uneven, yet it is also clear that power was retained not through widespread and outright repression. Another explanation is therefore needed for the regime's durability. I will argue that a relatively stable political culture—particularly among intermediate PRI elites—offers a compelling answer. I define "political culture" as the values, attitudes, and beliefs relating to political relationships. "Political culture" is how actors understand and give meaning to the Lasswellian "who gets what, when, and how" material aspect of politics.[27] It implies expectations and norms about both behaviors and material exchanges that amount to codes of conduct. The hardball political games played by mid-level *priístas* were clearly governed by such a set of unwritten rules, and because those rules proved resilient even as ideologies, personalities, and policies changed, political conflicts within that group remained rare during the regime's mid-century moment.

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[27] Harold Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (New York: P. Smith, 1950).

Examining the PRI through the concept of political culture is by no means a novel approach. In 1963, social scientists Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba sought to understand the civic culture of Mexicans through a comprehensive survey, though they considered the country to be democratic.[28] In that same year Octavio Paz's *Labyrinth of Solitude* offered an intellectual's interpretation of the popular Mexican psyche, a work that has cast a long shadow as it linked the psychological traits Paz perceived to the country's history, society, and government.[29] Others provided more impressionistic analyses of elite ideology, such as Frank Brandenburg, who in 1964 suggested that the ethos of the "Revolutionary Family" served as a powerful force for unity.[30]

More recently, historians have also attempted broad descriptions of "Mexican political culture" in order to understand better the reign of the PRI regime. As Alan Knight noted in 1996, "given the relative stability and durability of the Mexican system, it is not unlikely that cultural traits are deeply rooted and therefore resist change and favor continuity," arguing that "'political culture' continues to be one of the pillars of Mexican politics and an essential element of any careful analysis."[31] In his study, Knight describes how coexisting political "games"—the "softball" rules of national politics (populist, inclusive, conflict-averse) and the "hardball" rules of local politics (violent,

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[28] Their conclusions about Mexican alienation from "political outputs" combined with simultaneous affective ties to the edifice of government would have been more incisive had they seen the country otherwise. Nevertheless, they were hardly out of step with their contemporaries in their views; Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1963).

[29] Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude and Other Writings*, trans. Lysander Kemp, Yara Milos, and Rachel Phillips Belash (New York: Grove Press, 1985).

[30] Brandenburg, *The Making of Modern México*...

[31] Alan Knight, "México bronco, México manso: una reflexión sobre la cultura cívica mexicana," *Política y Gobierno* III:1 (1996).

corrupt, informal)—serve to mask and soften the nature of authoritarian rule.[32] Surveying dramatic changes as Mexico began to democratize in 1997, Wil Pansters opens his volume on political culture by observing that while it is undoubtedly important to understanding regime change, in Mexico political culture "has scarcely occupied a central position in…research efforts."[33] Acknowledging methodological and theoretical difficulties, Pansters nonetheless suggests that through empirical historical observation and an approach that does not seek to essentialize a single national political culture it is possible to draw useful conclusions.[34]

Other studies from social scientists have also pointed to the value and significance of the idea of political culture. Roderic Camp's valuable prosopographical analyses of Mexican elites, produced over several decades, have also provided important discussions of how shared values helped knit the regime together.[35] In their anthropological study of the 1987-1988 presidential campaign, Larissa Adler-Lomnitz, Rodrigo Salazar-Elena and Ilya Adler argue that patronage relationships were a central part of *priísta* resilience: "during political crises, the regime had time reserves that allowed it to recuperate and reestablish the status quo thanks to the aggregate impact of multiple relationships based

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Wil Pansters, "Introduction," *Citizens of the Pyramid: Essays on Mexican Political Culture*, Wil Pansters, ed. (Amsterdam: Thela, 1997), 2-4.

[34] Pansters' assessment is that generally the dominant political culture in Mexico has been "the political culture of the pyramid," which he describes as "center-oriented, vertically structured, and the 'cement' that holds it together is the culture of *personalismo*. The pyramid is massive and demands collective (corporatist) and unanimous support, exemplified by practices such as *carro completo* and *la cargada*. It is monistic. Power is given, self-referential, highly concentrated and negotiated mong corporate groups. The use of the law is subject to personal mediation. The political culture of the pyramid 'produces' subjects (in the Foucauldian sense).": "Introduction," 9.

[35] In 1984, while not using the term "political culture," Camp dedicated an entire chapter to exploring how shared values among political elites overrode differing ideologies and policy preferences; *The Making of a Government: Political Leaders in Modern Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1984).

on personal loyalties—not always necessarily vis-à-vis the government—that forged the foundations of the system."[36] They define the terms of those loyalties and the language of those relationships as the political culture of the system. Even when the term "political culture" is absent from social scientists' analyses of PRI unity, the sentiment is often lurking: Jonathan Schefler's 2008 study remarks that "in the 1950s and 1960s, 'cooperation' within the Mexican political elite made it possible for the state to sustain economic stability."[37]

In examining *priísta* intermediate elites, my approach builds on those studies to make legible the unwritten rules that kept order on the political playing field. Rather than attempting to generalize the political culture of all Mexicans in order to understand why the regime was able to retain control, my discussion is narrowly framed and focuses on the values that bolstered the unity of important political actors in the face of stresses that threatened to fragment them into openly competing groups. Drawing on Knight, I define political culture through historical observation of practices.[38] By examining the patterns of interactions, as well as the language used by *camioneros* and regime actors to discuss those interactions, I am able not only to describe the "political styles" of intermediate *priísta* elites, but also to outline the values that structured their careers.[39] As the camioneros understood it, the "rules of the game" were fairly simple and based on

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[36] Larissa Adler-Lomnitz, Rodrigo Salazar-Elena, and Ilya Adler, *Symbolism and Ritual in a One-Party Regime: Unveiling México's Political Culture*, trans. Susanne A. Wagner. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010), 19.
[37] Jonathan Schefler, *Palace Politics: How the Ruling Party Brought Crisis to Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008).
[38] Knight, "México bronco, México manso..."
[39] The notion of a "political style" is borrowed from Alan Knight to describe the outward, historically observable characteristics of political life; "Populism and Neo-populism in Latin America, especially Mexico," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 30:2 (1998).

collaboration with the regime, corporatist organization and representation, and flexible, negotiated policy. The values that shaped how those rules were enacted, however, were slightly more complex. It was a political culture that stressed reciprocity, disinterested and loyal leadership, masculinity, and a conservative, middle-class sense of civic virtue.

## THE ARENA OF POLITICS

Most interactions between Alianza leaders and politicians occurred against the unique backdrop of twentieth-century Mexico City. It was more than the country's capital, since it was disproportionately important to the nation's political and economic lives and significantly larger than any other urban center. The postrevolutionary regime reinforced Mexico City's primacy, supporting industrial development around it and encouraging overwhelming political centralization there. Problems in Mexico City's infrastructure were more plainly visible to national leaders and the Alianza's control of transportation there produced, as discussed above, a distinct set of tensions with particular policy repercussions. Those tensions were magnified by the city's peculiar political structures and tumultuous history.

In 1928 Mexico City's various municipalities were consolidated into a singular administrative unit (the Department of the Federal District or DDF) and placed under the authority of a specially appointed cabinet member commonly referred to as the city's regent.[40] Significantly, the regent was not an elected position, making the Federal District the only political entity in the republic without the appearance of meaningful local

[40] For purposes of concision I have preferred the term "regent" here to the more technically correct "Head of the Federal District Department." Similarly, I will refer to the "city government" to mean the government of the Federal District.

franchise. This was hardly accidental: Mexico City was too important to risk its stability in even fraudulent elections. Urban transportation was thus both a parochial metropolitan policy concern and a national political issue, since the president was directly responsible for the regent's decisions.

The urbanized "Mexico City" was not initially coincident with the larger geographic boundaries of the Federal District (D.F.), the political entity in which it was located.[41] By the 1960s, however, urban sprawl would extend beyond the Federal District and into the surrounding Mexico State.[42] Early in the twentieth century most of the capital's urban population lived near the downtown "first quadrant" around the Zócalo (central plaza) and suburban boroughs were often more like outlying villages than parts of an urban space. As the city's population expanded from approximately 600,000 in 1921 to slightly more than one million residents in 1930, upper and middle-class residential growth moved to the south and west of the first quadrant, though most businesses and workplaces remained downtown.[43] Lower-class neighborhoods emerged to the north and east of the first quadrant, though as Peter Ward notes most development occurred within the central boroughs of Mexico City.

The history of the city's physical and demographic growth is intertwined with the history of its transportation network.[44] During the period after service began in 1917,

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[41] The Federal District is akin to Washington, D.C.: it has a local government and residents vote in federal elections, but it is not administered as a state.

[42] There were thus three concentric zones, moving outward from Mexico City to the Federal District, to the "Urban Zone of Mexico City" (AUCM), though here for purposes of simplicity I have tended to refer to the first two simply as Mexico City.

[43] These statistics are based on data from Mexico City's central boroughs, not the Federal District as a whole prior to the 1950s. Beginning in 1940, I will use census data from the entire Federal District when describing Mexico City. Diane Davis, *Urban Leviathan: Mexico City in the Twentieth-Century* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), Appendix B.

[44] See Appendix 1 for a visual representation of bus network expansion paralleling urban growth.

Mexico City's buses were initially used by the city's professional middle-classes and early routes were structured to serve that market. By the 1930s, however, industrial workers and lower-class residents came to rely on bus transportation and the network of routes expanded to cover nearly the entire city which was, nevertheless, relatively compact physically. In 1940, 1,700 buses transported 336 million passengers annually on routes that typically ran from outlying areas into the first quadrant.[45] The three busiest routes ran from the south-central middle-class districts of Roma and Colonia del Valle, from the lower-class neighborhood of Peralvillo north of the first quadrant, and on an east-west axis across first quadrant between the neighborhoods of San Rafael in the west and Aviación Civil in the east.[46]

[45] Moises T. de la Peña, *El servicio de autobuses en el Distrito Federal* (México, D.F.: Departamento del Distrito Federal, 1943), 118.
[46] Data from de la Peña, *El servicio de autobuses.*

**Figure 2:** Overcrowding on buses in 1958. *La Prensa*, September 21, 1958.

From 1940 to 1950, the population of the Federal District increased from approximately 1.6 million to 3.2 million inhabitants as new subdivisions opened south of the first quadrant in previously suburban areas.[47] After 1940, the city experienced unchecked growth as rural migrants sought opportunities in the capital's industrial plants and markets.[48] By 1960, the residents of the D.F. numbered nearly 5.2 million, increasing to 7.3 million in 1970 and 9.2 million by 1980. Vast slums appeared outside edges of the Federal District as a response to restrictions on building within the city. The population of the "urban area" as a whole exploded: it had contained only 200,000 more residents

[47] Diane Davis, *Urban Leviathan…* Appendix B. Peter Ward offers a comprehensive discussion of urban growth from the 1910s to the 1980s; *Mexico City*… 54-58.
[48] An increasing rural population with limited access to land combined with often endemic violence in the countryside also served as "push" factors driving migration to Mexico City.

than the D.F. in 1960, but by 1970 had two million more residents than the Federal District and five million more by 1980.

This growth placed extreme strain on the transportation network. The metropolitan demographic expansion provided a steady customer base for the Alianza's entrepreneurs, but also led to traffic problems as buses competed for space with private cars, taxis, and commercial trucks. Between 1949 and 1958, the number of bus lines in the city jumped from 52 to 92. By then, many routes no longer ran into the extremely congested first quadrant, a change made at the behest of the city government in 1954, though the center of the city remained the destination for most passengers. The most traveled routes in 1958, based on number of buses running on them, were those connecting to neighborhoods in the south of the urban space (General Anaya, San Angel Inn, and Coyoacan); those running to the working-class areas north of downtown (Colonia Peralvillo and particularly Gustavo A. Madero); and the central east-west lines of San Rafael Aviación and Lomas de Chapultepec. The industrial area of Azcapotzalco, which had one line running to it in 1942, had five lines by 1949 and seven by 1958. Suburban bus companies that connected to the poor districts in Mexico State became increasingly important in these years as well, though their growth is harder to measure. By 1971, buses transported upwards of six million passengers daily on 10,000 vehicles.[49]

Throughout mid-century, travel on buses was undoubtedly uncomfortable. At peak times passengers rarely found seats, and often had to wait for a bus not already at capacity. Many resorted to clinging to the outside of the vehicles, despite constant safety

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[49] Ward, *Mexico City,* 147; Secretaría de Obras y Servicios, *Anuario de Vialidad y Transporte del D.F. 1980*.

warnings. Accidents, frequently resulting in the deaths of passengers or pedestrians, were perennial fodder for the back pages of the metropolitan press. Even if fares, as Peter Ward observed during research in 1979, were not particularly expensive even for the city's lower classes, when combined with the discomfort of travel it proved a volatile mix and popular protests over the cost of transportation were frequent.[50] It is unsurprising, then, that bus transportation and the Alianza became a lightning rod for public discontent.

Whether the *permisionarios* who operated buses at the officially declared fare rates turned a profit is somewhat unclear: reliable statistics are unavailable, since the Alianza had every reason to exaggerate losses when lobbying for increases in fares.[51] In 1943, respected economist Moises T. de la Peña found that most lines operated at a loss, but was only able to compile sufficient data from two-thirds of the city's lines. Fifteen years later, a commission convened by the city government found that around half the city's buses failed to break even, while those that did earned only $6.04 per day (US$0.50). Yet those statistics do not seem to tell the whole story, as the continual investment of entrepreneurs in the bus industry suggests that profits were possible. Owners of single buses might have been able to survive on a the revenues of a bus while using debt to finance repairs or capital costs, while owners of several buses likely benefited from economies of scale and made decent earnings. While there is little

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[50] Ward, *Mexico City*, 138.

[51] In 1943, Moises T. de la Peña was only able to compile sufficient data from two-thirds of the city's lines. Fifteen years later, a commission convened by the city government found that most lines still failed to break even. Yet those statistics may have been less than accurate, as the continual investment of entrepreneurs in the bus industry suggests that profits were possible. Owners of single buses might have been able to survive on a the revenues of a bus while using debt to finance repairs or capital costs, while owners of several buses likely benefited from economies of scale and made decent earnings. While there is little evidence to support the popular allegations that a cabal of bus moguls raked in fabulous earnings, it does seem that owning multiple vehicles tended to shift the bottom line favorably.

evidence to support the popular allegations that a cabal of bus moguls raked in fabulous sums, it does seem that owning multiple vehicles tended to shift the bottom line favorably. That the industry survived and grew suggests that there were pesos to be wrung from the buses that tied the great city together.

## THE PURSE SEINE OF HISTORY

The enduring importance of bus transportation to urban life meant that it has left a rich archival record. The intervention of the federal government in the bus industry, from early sponsorship of credit institutions in the 1920s to legislative reforms in the 1940s, is well documented in the presidential section of Mexico's national archive.[52] Yet the archive of the executive branch only serves as a useful source through the 1950s, after which correspondence between the presidential office and the public and intra-government communication agencies is absent. Unfortunately, archives for important government ministries, such as the Department of the Federal District, are unavailable and others, such as the Ministry of Transportation and Communications (SCT), have well organized but extremely limited material.

The official preoccupation with the smooth functioning of the bus system led to voluminous reporting on the Alianza's affairs and other transportation issues by Interior Ministry agents for both the General Directorate of Political and Social Investigations (DGIPS) and the Federal Security Directorate (DFS), an internal spy agency akin to J. Edgar Hoover's FBI.[53] These sources, particularly the DFS, are of tremendous value in

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[52] Below, I will use the abbreviation "AGN, P" for the documents located in the *Ramo Presidentes* of the Archivo General de la Nación.

[53] Though both agencies reported to the Interior Minister, there were distinct differences in the nature of their mandates and the content of their reports. In my experience, DGIPS reports were of varying quality,

reconstructing the history of twentieth-century Mexican politics. DFS agents produced detailed accounts of Alianza assemblies, conflicts between leaders, and often detailed the group's strategies in its negotiations with the government. Security documents such as these are not without problems: agents lied, were lied to, and were sometimes sloppy in their reports.[54] Neither was their surveillance secret: it appears their presence at Alianza meetings was open, and *camionero* leaders seem to have fed them information.[55] Yet rather than flaws, these features of security documents often make them more interesting. The DFS served as a sort of informational conveyer belt and reports provided an intimate perspective on low-level politics for higher-ups. The edited memoranda were delivered to the Interior Minister, and from there passed to the President, Attorney General, and other officials.[56] Regardless of their accuracy, DFS agents' reports reflect their preoccupations,

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ranging from obvious first-hand reports of conflicts to bland summaries of newspaper coverage of ceremonies. DFS reports often seemed more incisive and more closely connected to the fieldwork of agents. Regardless, as Tanalís Padilla and Louise Walker point out in their introduction to their excellent special edited volume of the Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research on security agencies in Mexico, the "bureaucratic life" of the documents and the paths they traveled is unclear; "In the Archives: History and Politics," in the special edition of the *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research* "Spy Reports: Content, Methodology, and Historiography in Mexico's Secret Police Archive" eds. Tanalís Padilla and Louise Walker 19:1 (2013). Documents from DGIPS are bound in large volumes and catalogued by boxes, and in most cases will be cited by box and file (*expediente*) numbers, and date when possible, i.e.: AGN, DGIPS 1981 Exp. 14, 24 February 1965. Documents from DFS are catalogued by file number, volume (*legajo*), and page (*hoja*), and will be cited by dates, i.e.: DFS, 45-1 L7 H302-H306, 5 January 1965. In addition, certain DFS documents are contained in specially prepared *Versiones Públicas*, redacted personal dossiers that are a valuable cross-reference with thematic files such as those on the Alianza. These are classified by personal names, and after the initial citation will be cited with the initials of the subject, i.e.: Versión Pública del expediente de Rodolfo Solís Soto L1 H17, 1 November 1958 or DFS, RSS VP L1 H17, 1 November 1958.

[54] Excellent older and recent work has been done on the history of the security services. Beyond Aaron Navarro's study, cited above, Sergio Aguayo offered the first solid history of the DFS in 2001; *La charola: una historia de los servicios de intelligencia en México* (México, D.F.: Grijalbo, 2001). More recently, both the DGIPS and DFS receive important examinations in the above referenced collection of articles in the *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research* edited by Tanalís Padilla and Louise Walker.

[55] In her interviews with doctors who had participated in the 1964-1965 strike movement, Gabriela Soto Laveaga uncovered that surveillance was something of an open secret: her informants had known they were being monitored and by whom; ""Gobierno enfermo" y revolucionarios de batas blancas: la huelga médica de 1964-1965" (paper presented at the XII Reunión de Historiadores México, Estados Unidos y Canadá, Querétaro, México, October 26-30, 2010).

[56] Padilla and Walker, "In the Archives: History and Politics."

the preoccupations they perceived their superiors to have, their ideological and personal biases, and, importantly, a sense of the regime's political values. As Tanalís Padilla and Louise Walker observe, it is possible to "read the documents 'along the grain' to figure out the 'common sense' of the PRI's regime."[57]

These sources alone, however, hardly provide sufficient basis for an analysis of political culture or of the *camioneros* in politics. To that end, I have relied heavily upon the Alianza's magazine, *El Informador Camionero*, and other industry publications such as the nominally independent *Transportes y Turismo* magazine.[58] These magazines had a long history: one Alianza publication, *Movimiento*, ran from 1927 to 1936, and *El Heraldo Camionero*, also under the direction of the Alianza, was published intermittently between 1931 and 1933.[59] They were ostensibly produced for average *camioneros*: at various moments they contained advice on tire maintenance, English language lessons, and tips for modern women's hairstyles. But more than technical manuals or family magazine fluff, their content tended toward discussions of the political issues facing the industry (official policy on fares and parts, primarily) and descriptions of Alianza "social life," such as Saint's Day celebrations and holiday parties.[60] Accordingly, the magazines generally sought to promote a sense of Alianza unity by emphasizing shared struggles and highlighting fraternal activities. It is unclear, nevertheless, how widely read the

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[57] Ibid, 4.

[58] Both magazines mutated frequently, changing both their names (slightly) and their editorial boards (often dramatically). Regarding the first issue, for purposes of clarity I will refer to them by the names above. With regards to the editorial content, I will typically indicate which faction controlled it when Alianza schisms occurred. One important change that occurred with *El Informador Camionero* involves the frequency of its publication. It was originally published on the 1st and 15th of every month, however by 1952 it had moved to a monthly format. Accordingly, volumes from 1941 to 1951 will be cited by their date (1 or 15) but from 1952 on they will be cited only by month.

[59] The only extant copies of *Movimiento*, oddly, are located at the New York Public Library.

[60] The baptisms and graduations of the children of Alianza leaders were also reported, albeit sporadically.

magazines were.[61] As a historical source, they are useful as records of policy struggles and Alianza activities, as well as a window onto political culture and life. Editorial content, often written by Alianza leadership and certainly vetted by it, can be read in several ways. First, it is a transcript of the organization's official positions on issues related to the industry such as fares or route restructuring. Second, it is a source for the values and attitudes that Alianza leadership sought to convey to the group's members, suggesting that Alianza leaders attempted to foster a collective professional identity as *camioneros* that would override differences between the economically fortunate and unfortunate. Third, as this editorial content represented the voice of the leadership, through its discussions of the group's political involvement it offers hints at the political beliefs of intermediate elites.

Like any evidentiary base, mine is imperfect. The Alianza and its leaders are something of a unique case, as the importance of transportation made them much easier to track than comparable figures in, say, the trash or taxi industries. Yet archives for the national oil company that might have provided key data on gasoline subsidies are inaccessible, the very existence of an official PRI archive is uncertain, and most of the Department of the Federal District archive is housed in a warehouse, uncatalogued and closed to the public. The rich documents I have examined, however, allow me to encircle the case study, drawing up in the net tantalizing conclusions about PRI rule.

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[61] It is worth noting, however, that the personal archives of former Alianza leaders did contain copies of the magazines, and their presence in the Hemeroteca Nacional suggests they were not limited-production vanity publications, either.

All politics is not only local, it is also personal and the work that follows is arranged around the biographies of Alianza leaders. This approach is uniquely suited to an analysis of Mexican political culture. Bonds of loyalty, affection, and shared objectives were the warp threads of the soft authoritarian regime, crossing the multicolored weft of competing interest groups to form the fabric of the regime; more than mere historical voyeurism, biographies enable us to focus our gaze on one part of this tapestry.

The following chapters are divided into two sections. The first, composed of Chapters One and Two, follows the career of Antonio Díaz Lombardo, the Alianza's secretary general from 1929 until 1954, and offers a "long arc" perspective on the formation of the PRI regime. I argue that the incorporation of middle-class entrepreneurial groups stabilized the emerging postrevolutionary state, but that this was a slow process involving changes in political institutions as well as the development of a "political style" that smoothed their interactions with the regime. Chapter One demonstrates how that political style began to emerge during the 1920s and 1930s, as a conservative vision of the postrevolutionary reconstruction process provided common ground for *camioneros* and statebuilders. Yet that vision was challenged at times, no more so than during the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940), when aggressive reformist legislation forced the Alianza to fight for survival. Chapter Two shows how following the election of Manuel Ávila Camacho to the presidency in 1940, the "conservative turn" in policies encouraged the Alianza's leadership to align the group closely with the regime, but that it was the 1945 presidential campaign of Miguel Alemán when Díaz Lombardo and the group became active participants in PRI politics.

Part II examines the mid-century political system, what I have above referred to as the PRI of lore. Through three biographies of Alianza leaders, I argue that from approximately the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, a political culture of *priísmo* helped prevent ruptures in the coalition between entrepreneurial intermediate elites and the regime that had been forged during the Ávila Camacho and Alemán *sexenios*. Chapter Three follows José Valdovinos, the Alianza's secretary general from 1954 to 1958, arguing that the terms of the relationship between intermediate elites and the regime were renegotiated during that period in response to public pressures. Chapter Four follows Isidoro Rodríguez, a longtime *camionero* whose perpetual struggles for power within the Alianza reveal how the PRI's informal corporatist system worked to maintain the loyalty of mid-level elites. Chapter Five follows Rubén Figueroa, the Alianza's most politically powerful leader, and demonstrates how the regime's calculations of "political strength" shaped how upwardly mobile actors constructed and maintained broad networks of support. Chapter Six, an extended epilogue, discusses Hector Hernández Casanova, the Alianza's last secretary general and his struggles with Carlos Hank González, Mexico City's regent from 1976 to 1982. Those struggles, which ultimately resulted in the municipalization of the urban bus system and the death of the Alianza in 1981, show that by the end of the 1970s the political culture that had supported mid-century stability was beginning to decay.

## PART I:

## ANTONIO DÍAZ LOMBARDO AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE INTERTWINED RELATIONSHIP

In the spring of 1946, the face of presidential candidate Miguel Alemán began appearing on the thin gray slips of paper that served as tickets on Mexico City's overcrowded buses. The organization responsible for printing the passes, the Alianza de Camioneros, had thrown its full weight behind the youthful candidate, mobilizing thousands of drivers for rallies and turning the vehicles that transited the city into mobile propaganda stations. Outside of the capital, the same city buses logged hundreds of miles traversing the country's rough highways, transporting contingents of peasants from the countryside to campaign events in Guerrero and Veracruz. The architect of this extraordinary effort was the Alianza's charismatic president, Antonio Díaz Lombardo. For two decades he had been at the organization's helm, and now he was guiding his companions into a partnership with a political system that he hoped would help the industry find firm footing after many difficult years.

Much had changed since 1940, when the organization sat on the sidelines during the Ávila Camacho campaign. In the intervening six years the Alianza had blocked a legislative attempt to overhaul the legal structure of the industry, and Díaz Lombardo had consolidated his control over the often fractious group of small owners who ran the bus lines. Of equal significance, by 1946 the party backing the official candidate had morphed from the Partido de la Revolución Mexicana to the Partido Revolucionario Institucional, a change symbolizing both a reorientation in its platform and a reconfiguration of its relationship with society. In Alemán, the party had nominated a

candidate who appealed to the country's development-oriented urban middle classes; that he was also a personal friend of Díaz Lombardo was merely an accident of history.

After Alemán cruised to an easy victory, he tapped the *camionero* leader to head the recently created Social Security Institute, increased subsidies to the bus industry, and oversaw the reform of key transport legislation. Despite whispers of cronyism and corruption in the press, the Alianza flourished as the interests of small businessmen became evermore intertwined with the regime. These interactions—the Alianza's enthusiastic material collaboration with campaigns and the incorporation of *camionero* leaders into the party structure through elected or appointed positions—amounted to a highly effective mechanism for ensuring the *camioneros'* loyalty to the regime after 1946. In this section, I track the evolution of the relationship among *camioneros*, a consolidating post-revolutionary state, and an emerging single-party system. I suggest that the difficulties the Alianza faced down during the 1920s and 1930s, problems that resulted from inconsistent government policy, shaped the group's political strategies from the 1940s until 1981. I explore the career of Antonio Díaz Lombardo as both a unique and a paradigmatic example of a middle-class entrepreneur and politically active intermediary, arguing that his leadership was crucial to shaping the politicization of the Alianza. Finally, I argue that the 1945-1946 presidential campaign marked the moment when Mexico's authoritarian system began a transition from a *partido de masas* to a structure based on broad coalitions and the incorporation of popular sector groups such as the *camioneros*. That process, vital to the successful institutionalization of the postrevolutionary regime, intertwined the strategic interests of the state with the economic interests of the private sector and gave rise to the characteristic portrayal of a

conservative, capitalist, middle-class regime by mid-century. At its heart, this chapter offers an exploration of how the authoritarian regime was constructed in a world far removed from that of peasants and organized labor. This was the world of Antonio Díaz Lombardo.

## CHAPTER ONE:

### THE STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL (1923-1940)

In 1916 there was very little to suggest that either Mexico City's bus system or the national government residing there were destined for greatness. A coalition of revolutionary forces under General Álvaro Obregón had only recently defanged their opponents and installed Venustiano Carranza as *de facto* president. The country's new leaders inherited a country torn by years of violence and lacking a political system capable of addressing the demands for social justice that had welled up during the Revolution.[1] Yet by 1940, the successors to Carranza and Obregón had succeeded in drafting and implementing a progressive constitution, pacifying the remaining pockets of rural rebellion, and laying the foundations of a political system that, while still shaky in the 1920s and 30s, would display remarkable durability over the rest of the century. During the same period, the city's bus services, too, grew from their improvised and chaotic beginnings. That process of growth is inseparable from the development of the Alianza as it moved far from its origins in 1923 when a fractious group of upwardly mobile owner-drivers had first banded together to lobby an unsympathetic government and negotiate industrial deals. By 1940, the group came to be a commercial empire under the direction of Díaz Lombardo, exerting significant political pressure on behalf of its most powerful members, the upper-middle-class entrepreneurs who owned multiple buses and dominated the industry.

[1] The nascent postrevolutionary state only slowly acquired the muscle to address demand for land redistribution and an end to labor abuses. The quest for meaningful democracy that was also a consistent part of revolutionary mobilizations quickly fell by the wayside, while local autonomy was offered only in the perverse form of petty political fiefdoms.

In this parallel evolution of the regime and the Alianza is the story of how the political "styles" of Mexico's mid-century authoritarian one-party state came into being. It is an account of how the post-revolutionary regime moved, haltingly and inconsistently, to bring the small entrepreneurs of the Alianza under its control, and how that process remained incomplete by 1940. Chapter One argues that the numerous political difficulties the *camioneros* experienced during these years shaped a repertoire of associational politics and collective interaction with the state. The Alianza gained strength from its capacity to protect the economic interests of its members from unfavorable policies. Yet, central to the *camioneros*' political culture was a belief in cooperation with the overall state-building effort; although the group may have resisted certain policies, it sought to position itself as a collaborator, not an opponent. Furthermore, this section will show that during these years a system of informal negotiation with state actors emerged, privileging political savvy and networks of personal connections, and that *camionero* leaders such as Antonio Díaz Lombardo capitalized on this as intermediaries on behalf of the Alianza. After 1940, those "political styles" helped solidify a regime that was still visibly fragile.

**Figure 3:** 1920s bus transportation in Mexico City. *Sesenta años de Ford En Mexico: Narrativa Grafica*.

## BEGINNINGS

Mexico's urban autotransport system was born largely by accident.[2] Rickety, improvised buses—often cargo trucks converted to passenger transport with the addition of wooden benches—first appeared in 1916 as an entrepreneurial response to strikes that paralyzed the Compañía de Tranvías, the foreign-run trolley company that then served as the city's sole form of public transit.[3] The resulting bus service, opportunistic and unregulated, left much to be desired. Moreover, the owners and operators of these buses faced threats from corporate foreign competitors, unfavorable or inattentive government policy, and their own lack of business-minded organization.

It was during these first unstable years that Antonio Díaz Lombardo became a *camionero*. Born in 1903, he had spent his childhood in Mexico City. Although his uncle,

[2] "Autotransport" is a direct translation of the term Mexicans commonly employed when speaking of bus and truck transport.

[3] The Compañía, which was part of a foreign-owned electric company, had developed the first public transportation in Mexico City, paving streets and laying tracks in first two decades of the Twentieth Century. It also had a well-deserved reputation for radical workers, and strikes over wages and working hours were not uncommon. See Davis, *Urban Leviathan*, 30-31.

Miguel Díaz Lombardo, was a *villista* intellectual, aside from a chance meeting with Obregón at age eleven, Antonio's comfortable middle-class upbringing seems to have been largely sheltered from the turmoil of the Revolution. During his adolescence Díaz Lombardo traveled to Detroit, where he worked at a Ford factory, eventually returning to Mexico around 1920 to organize the newly-opened Packard distribution agency in partnership with Carlos Salgado, a friend of his parents.[4] Together, Díaz Lombardo and Salgado purchased several buses and began operating them on the Peralvillo-Cozumel line running from the northern border of the city's center to a residential area in Colonia Roma on the western edge.[5] The distribution agency served to establish relationships with *camioneros* who relied on them for parts and repairs, and it is likely, moreover, that Salgado and Díaz Lombardo also extended credit to buyers, thus creating bonds of patronage.[6] The growth of Díaz Lombardo's stature paralleled his apparent entrepreneurial successes, and as a teenager he was elected President of the Peralvillo-Cozumel line after Salgado declined the nomination, suggesting instead that the *compañeros* put their trust in his youthful partner.[7]

Members of the new industry across the city were beginning to band together in defense of their interests. In 1917 drivers and bus owners living in the central Santa

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[4] Carlos Bravo, *Apuntes para la historia del autotransporte* (México, D.F.: Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes, Dirección General de Autotransporte Federal, 1982) 78. The material comes from an interview with Antonio Díaz Lombardo. This source, and the valuable interviews contained within, will herafter be abbreviated as "*Apuntes*," followed by the last name of the interviewee and the page number of the book, for example: *Apuntes,* Díaz Lombardo, 78.

[5] Peralvillo-Cozumel was traditionally one of the most important and busiest lines in the city, it was likely a profitable place to have invested.

[6] This practice of comparatively wealthy Alianza leaders extending credit to less well-off *camioneros* as a means of securing influence within the organization would become increasingly common as the Alianza grew. It also occasionally served to circumvent limits on individual permit-holding, as will be discussed later.

[7] *Apuntes*, Díaz Lombardo, 78.

Maria district of Mexico City joined together to form the first official line, Santa María Mixcalco y Anexas, as a way to address the disorderly services. As Moises T. de la Peña noted,"It was not an accident that Santa Maria Mixcalco was the first to organize…their route ran over paved roads running to the Buenavista [train station], the large number of passengers along the route, and the poor service offered by the tram cars in the area."[8] The line's first decision was to levy a 10-centavo-per-day charge on each bus to pay for a dispatcher to regulate departures from the downtown terminal.[9] Though the process of forming these associations was often fraught—pistols were often flourished during heated disputes over routes, labor ideologies, and responsibilities—the benefits of unity were undeniable.[10] By 1921 an embryonic group of *camioneros* and taxi drivers had organized as the Centro Social de Choferes, affiliating themselves with the moderate Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (CROM) labor union. A group representing bus industry interests, the Federación Camionera, formed in the same year. Umbrella organizations such as the Centro and the Federación were a natural progression from the atomized system of individual lines, since it was becoming apparent that resolving problems over permits, taxes, and other regulations required presenting a collective front to the authorities.[11]

The government's response to the early chaos in the auto-transportation industry had been hesitant and improvised. By the end of 1917 the Federal District government began designating routes and legitimizing *de facto* operators with permits.[12] Yet officials

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[8] de la Peña, *El servicio de autobuses*, 16-17.
[9] Ibid.
[10] *Apuntes*, Díaz Lombardo, 78.
[11] Bravo, *Apuntes*, 59.
[12] De la Peña, *El servicio de autobuses*, 18.

displayed little discretion in awarding the concessions, and the most desirable routes quickly became overcrowded. Such saturation posed a serious threat to the economic viability of the industry, and provided common cause for owners and drivers alike. In 1922, the Centro Social began lobbying the municipality for better regulation and an end to the excessive competition. Particularly worrying for the auto-transport entrepreneurs was the Compañía de Tranvías's plan that year to begin operating bus service, a large-scale investment that would likely squeeze them out. When a demonstration outside of the city government turned violent in 1922, President Álvaro Obregón was forced to intervene, blocking the Compañía's plans and helping to implement a modified permit system that limited the number of vehicles per route.[13] To facilitate changes in permit procedures, moreover, Obregón named members of the Centro *consejales* to the municipal government and centralized control of the traffic department.[14]

In this struggle, we can begin to glimpse the contours of the future relationship between *camioneros* and the government, as well as a sense of shared political and economic values within the industry. Of chief importance is an emerging sense of a *gremio* (professional or guild) identity among *transportistas*, who prided themselves on the nationalistic small-holding, entrepreneurial nature of their industry and a staunch resistance toward a capitalist labor structure. These were not casual positions. Defending the "Mexican-ness" of bus service worked to oppose the entry of better-capitalized foreign investors, such as the Compañía de Tranvías, into the market. Ensuring that the

[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid. Obregón did not totally resolve the problem of the omnibuses: the following year petitions from camioneros regarding the issue were still arriving in the presidential office. AGN, P O-C, 242-D2-C-7.

system retained its traditional "artisan" owner-driver structure also deliberately complicated the possibilities for a radicalized unionization of industry workers.

Simultaneously, *camioneros* clamored for more representative leadership: The existing organization, the Federación Camionera, had proven only a tepid defender during the 1922 dispute, refusing to condemn officials who had been responsible for the violence.[15] This soft response incensed many in the bus industry who saw in it the sheer "political opportunism" of the Federación, and it led them to search for other options: they ultimately chose to join the Centro Social.[16] Thus, on March 10, 1923 the Alianza de Camioneros formed as a subsection within the older Centro Social, grouping together 21 lines, and the twenty-year-old Antonio Díaz Lombardo assumed a prominent role in the new organization.[17]

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[15] Account published in the Alianza's official magazine from 1931-1933, *Heraldo Camionero*, July, 1931; The Federación Camionera had been founded in 1921-1922, and represented 23 lines, though it was short-lived.

[16] *Transportes y Turismo,* December, 1963. Though the Federación would continue to petition the government, and on March 24, 1923, claimed 3,000 affiliates, it was a dying organization. AGN, P O-C, 812-LL-7.

[17] *Apuntes*, Martín Ruiz, 97.

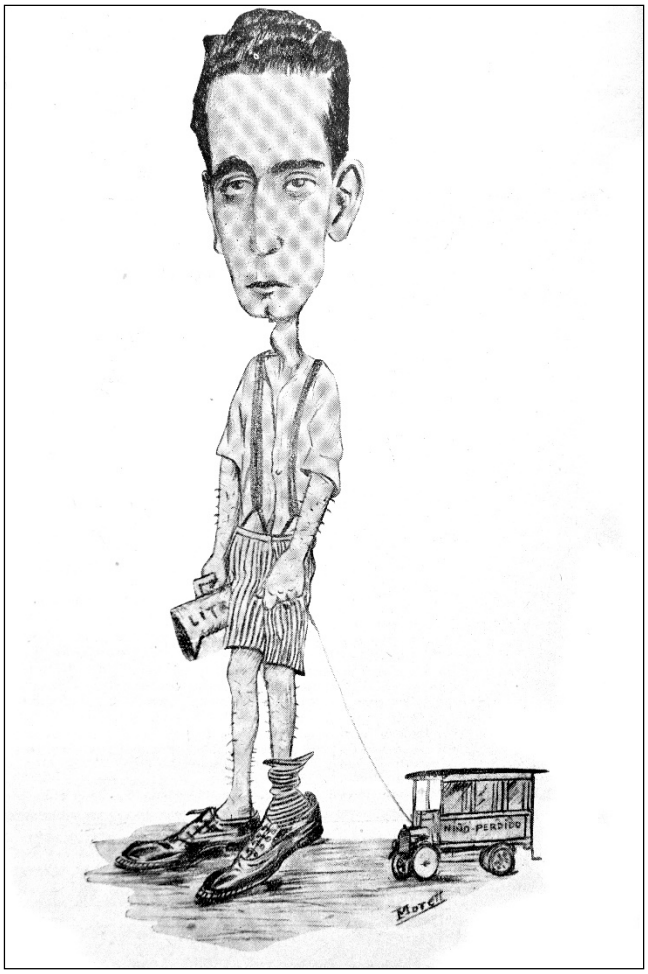


**Figure 4:** Antonio Díaz Lombardo in *Heraldo Camionero*, February, 1931.

In the Alianza's 1923 charter document, the directorates of the city's bus lines lamented that "until today, the *Gremio* of *Camioneros* has been a force, yet one which was not organized to advocate for the collective interest."[18] But now, facing the challenge of "foreign companies and a powerful Mexican business group that are attempting to control and congest our lines, with the exclusive goal of killing the *pequeña propiedad*

[18] The document was republished in the Alianza's official magazine, *El Informador Camionero*, July, 1973.

*camionera,*" a united front was vital.[19] The document asserted that only through a solid organization could the *camioneros* "meet the requirements of hygiene, public confidence and comfort."[20] Finally, the charter proposed a plan of action that included lobbying the city for improved route regulation, providing legal assistance to members, offering financial aid to prevent members from losing their buses when they were unable to pay their loans, and lastly, forming a variety of cooperatives to facilitate purchasing of parts, lubricants, and gasoline, as well as establishing garages and schools for drivers. The charter concluded with the Alianza's motto, "Health and Emancipation." If this vision was at times overly romantic, it was also consummately practical. It succinctly addressed the key issues facing the industry, and sought to cultivate the favor of both public and government by implementing measures to improve service. Significantly, it also established the Alianza as the representative voice of the industry's many small entrepreneurs and insisted on a collective approach to economic and political problems.

By the time the Centro Social de Chauffeurs and the Alianza jointly petitioned the Budget Minister in protest over a one-centavo-per-liter gas tax in July of 1923, the Alianza had grown to 44 affiliated lines, and both groups combined represented 12,000 workers.[21] Decrying the lamentable economic state of the industry, the petition claimed that in 1921 the average bus took in 38 pesos daily (US$19), while costs totaled $28.52, a

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[19] Ibid. "*Pequeña propiedad*" was an intentional reference to small landholding; the *camioneros* sought to portray the buses they acquired as a sort of revolutionary birthright, just as rural fighters claimed parcels of land.
[20] Ibid.
[21] AGN, P O-C, 808-G-1. It appears as though lines were subsequently consolidated, as by 1931 there were only 30 lines.

profit of $9.48 pesos per day.[22] By 1923, the complaint continued, overall income per-bus had dropped to $18.50, which was not offset by a one-centavo decrease in gas costs, leaving a daily operating loss of $2.74, though those who drove their own buses could still earn a $1.88 peso (US$0.94) profit.[23] Moreover, the petitioners noted, "many *compañeros* [presumably owner-drivers] are paying for their vehicles in installments, subjected to the high interest rates of capitalists, and in order to keep up they must work 14 to 16 hours a day, and it is [they] who are most affected by the new [1923 gas] tax."[24] Their petitions did not result in a repeal of the tax, but the *camioneros* did obtain the elimination of the vehicle registration tax, enough to pacify the situation.[25]

By the mid-1920s the *camioneros* had gained the ear of Álvaro Obregón, the country's most important politician. This owed to more than ideological convergence.[26] In 1924 the *camioneros* sent 300 buses for troop transport across bad roads from Mexico City to Jalisco in support of Obregón's campaign against *delahuertista* rebels in the Battle of Ocotlán. The effort was not immediately repaid, however. A few months after the battle the Alianza's first president, Antonio Morales, sent the government a telegram citing the financial difficulties of many affiliates and pleading for compensation.

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[22] Ibid. The most significant costs were gas, at $6.60 pesos-per-day, and the 25% commission for drivers, for those who did not drive their own buses, which amounted to $9.50.
[23] Ibid. Interestingly, in 1923 taxis were still profitable, though earnings had dropped from $6.08 to $0.68.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Bravo, *Apuntes*, 62.
[26] In her account of the 1920s, Diane Davis observes that the *transportistas* aligned naturally with the CROM, particularly as it gained influence within the government, and that their identity as 'self-employed businessmen' set them apart from the radical workers of the Compañía de Tranvías organized in the Confederación General de Trabajadores (CGT). She notes that "…the CROM's willingness to collaborate with the state was hardly a point of contention for the city's growing cadre of bus drivers; it may have been precisely the opposite, since may of them owed their livelihood to CROM-government efforts to limit [the Compañía de Tranvías'] trolley service and expand the urban bus industry."[26] Correctly concluding that the 'artisan' character of the bus industry married well with the "moderately conservative political ideology of Carranza and…Obregón," Davis suggests that the Alianza's collaborationism and its steady control of the industry turned the group into "a political force to be reckoned with"; *Urban Leviathan*, 59.

Nevertheless, the *camioneros*' material support for the government seemed to cement their revolutionary credentials as an entrepreneurial middle-class group.[27] Ocotlán helped solidify a bond between the *camioneros* and Obregón that proved valuable as his relationship with the CROM cooled by the late 1920s. When the group chose to separate from the labor central in 1926, they could thus count on the general's personal patronage.

Knowledge of this support undoubtedly facilitated the decision to begin life as an independent entity. Moreover, as had occurred with the Federación Camionera, the CROM's politicking began to alienate *camioneros* who saw the labor central as too opportunistic. In a subsequent retrospective in June of 1933, the Alianza's magazine reflected that prior to 1926 the Centro Social de Chauffers and the CROM had failed to provide proper leadership, as "egotistical individuals", clinging to posts for purposes of self-enrichment, had, "constantly provoked unrest and conflict," preventing those who sought progress from attaining their goals.[28] In an assembly of line presidents on June 23, 1926, the *camioneros* openly repudiated the Centro's leadership. After a late-night meeting between an Alianza commission and CROM leaders Luis Morones and Ricardo Treviño, the group won its liberty from the Centro Social. Four days later, the line presidents elected a new committee, headed by Fernando C. López as Secretary General.[29] Antonio Díaz Lombardo was named Recording Secretary. In 1927, the Alianza formalized its independence from the CROM, and Díaz Lombardo's career as a leader began to take off.[30]

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[27]AGN, P O-C, 815-C-21, Morales to Obregón, 24 June 1924.
[28] *Heraldo Camionero*, June, 1933.
[29] López had fought at Ocotlan with Obregón. *Heraldo Camionero*, January, 1931.
[30] Bravo, *Apuntes*, 62-63.

During the separation process a *camionero* commission had met with Obregón at the Castillo de Chapultepec, while the general was visiting the city on official business. Díaz Lombardo was a member of the delegation, and a few days after the meeting he received a personal note from Obregón asking the 23-year-old Díaz Lombardo if they had met previously.[31] The *camionero* recounts that when he replied in the affirmative, Obregón invited him to a personal breakfast meeting. Why the general chose Díaz Lombardo as a preferred intermediary within the industry is unclear; perhaps he recognized in the skinny young *camionero* an ambitious, intelligent member of the urban middle class who shared a moderately conservative vision of the country's progress. Whatever the motivation, Díaz Lombardo soon appeared to be the point man in the highly personalistic relationship that Obregón cultivated with the Alianza.[32] Significantly, in choosing Díaz Lombardo, Obregón privileged a *camionero* who had not fought at Ocotlán: entrepreneurial civilians were gaining purchase in the new political order.

When the *camioneros* abandoned the Centro Social and the CROM, they may have done so for political reasons, but their economic needs had also begun to outgrow the limited labor-oriented frameworks of those organizations as they undertook an increasing number of entrepreneurial ventures. As *Heraldo Camionero* later recounted, during the 1920s the *camioneros* formed associations "to pave or repair streets, construct roads in collaboration with the government, to buy or buy out [excess] permits…[or] to share the cost of taxes."[33] Those efforts had the fundamental goal of expanding the

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[31] *Apuntes*, Díaz Lombardo, 80.
[32] Luis Javier Garrido has observed that both Obregón and Calles attempted to reinforce the weak state by relying on organizational strongmen; *El partido de la revolución institucionalizada (medio siglo de poder político en México): la formación del nuevo estado, 1928-1945* (México, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno, 1982): 61.
[33] *Heraldo Camionero*, October, 1933.

industry by creating new markets and new sources of profit; they were business ventures that were incompatible with the structures of a labor union. For the leaders of the Alianza, it was also clear that the success of such projects would require political assistance, and that Obregón was the man to provide it. Two years after Ocotlán, the ideologies, economic, and political interests of Obregón and the Alianza had fully converged. Writing in the *Heraldo Camionero*, Francisco Zubillaga, a long-time leader of the Alianza, recounted that Obregón "had a clear vision, uniquely his own… He outlined his plan to create genuinely Mexican industries, to secure the growth and development of small property, and to form an authentic and **strong middle class,** not with the detritus of the old bourgeoisie, but out of workers who struggle to achieve this stature."[34] More important, Zubillaga continued, "[T]o achieve such lofty ends, [Obregón] expressed that he had planned to place our *Gremio* as a cornerstone of this future social edifice, provided that we never slacken our constructive efforts in the field of indispensable private enterprise."[35]

When the Alianza commission met with Obregón at the Castillo in 1926 it was to lay the foundation for the personal patronage the organization would enjoy from the general until his death in 1928. At that meeting Obregón directly addressed one of the industry's greatest financial difficulties—the high cost of fuel—by putting his imprimatur on the Alianza's plan to form a gasoline purchasing cooperative that would receive a

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[34] Bolding in original. *Heraldo Camionero*, October, 1933. The Alianza continually republished accounts of its history from various members in its magazines, and these remain among the best sources for the 1920s. The group's concern with promoting its history likely stemmed from two sources, first, the desire to remind members of the early struggles the industry had faced, and second, the desire to remind others that no less of a revolutionary icon than Obregón had been their greatest supporter.
[35] Ibid.

government subsidy. Gas prices had risen to 22 centavos a liter, inflated by control the foreign oil companies exerted over the market.[36] What was perhaps unique about this project was Obregón's insistence on leading the effort himself. In a series of exchanges in early March of 1926, Obregón complained to Calles' personal secretary that Morones, then Minister of Industry, had granted an interview to *El Universal* publicizing the minister's own plans for a cooperative.[37] Obregón went on to request that no further steps be taken on the project until he was able to travel to Mexico City, a strategy that ensured he alone would receive credit and that Morones and the CROM would be unable to hijack the project. A little over a month later, on April 21, alongside the *camioneros*, Obregón signed the founding documents for the Cooperativa de Combustibles y Lubricantes.

To finance the venture, Obregón arranged for fifteen government ministries and dependencies to become investors in the Cooperative, providing an initial capital investment of 50,000 pesos.[38] On May 31, 1926, Eduardo Delhumeau, the government's legal counsel, formalized this plan, citing the principle that "one of the functions of the modern state is to shelter industries of particular public interest from the demands of overly egotistical capital," and that in order to do so, "[w]hen private initiative alone is insufficient to obtain a just equilibrium between the cost of production and the price of a basic good, the State must intervene, within the economic domain, in benefit of the collective interest."[39] Programs such as the Cooperative were typical of the era's interventionist political economy that sought to support development and national

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[36] A cooperative already in operation in Monterrey in 1926 had reduced gas prices for members from 18 centavos to 14. AGN, P O-C, 104-G-48 L2.
[37] AGN, P O-C, 104-G-48 L2
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

reconstruction. In these years, the government sponsored financial institutions for private sector groups whose interests aligned with official ideology and projects.

As Roderic Camp notes, "perhaps the most important contribution of the 1920s administrations to the private sector's well-being…was government support of the banks."[40] Facilitating transport was crucial to national reconstruction, as it literally brought the nation together. Opening roads to rural villages was of limited value unless buses and trucks arrived to carry people, goods, and ideas in and out.[41] Whether it was for passenger buses in Mexico City or agricultural transport in Sonora, securing affordable gasoline was vital to the shared goals of the Alianza and the state.

By the end of the summer, the *camioneros* had raised 100,000 pesos, which, combined with another 20,000 pesos from businesses and individuals, allowed the Cooperative to begin operation at the end of August 1926, distributing discounted gasoline purchased from California Standard Oil—a contract that Obregón had personally negotiated.[42] Obregón had also given the *camioneros* a concession for an industry-specific development bank attached to the Cooperative, and on May 10, 1927 the Banco Industrial de Transportes began operation with a start-up capital of 250,000 pesos—almost entirely backed by the Cooperative—and offering small loans to *camioneros* purchasing buses and parts.[43] Though the Cooperative's 1926 directorate had originally

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[40] Roderic Camp, *Entrepreneurs and Politics in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 17.

[41] Wendy Waters, "Remapping Identities: Road Construction and Nation Building in Postrevolutionary Mexico," *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940*, eds. Mary Kay Vaughn and Stephen E. Lewis (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

[42] *Heraldo Camionero*, October, 1933. Bravo, *Apuntes*, 63. The benefits of the Cooperative were multifold: Obregón had negotiated the elimination of the import tariff for gasoline, thus undermining the control over the market that domestic oil producers—also foreign companies—previously enjoyed. The competition thus contributed to lower gasoline prices on whole; de la Peña, *El servicio de autobuses*, 101.

[43] Ibid. The Cooperative earned significant profits in its first year.

included a pair of prominent *cromistas*, by 1927 they had been unceremoniously dropped after the split, as Díaz Lombardo and the Alianza assumed control of the enterprises. In his inaugural address at a meeting of the Cooperative's partners, Obregón remarked that his contribution had been modest, remarking that "it was possible to overcome many obstacles with the perseverance and energy of an important group of *camioneros* from the capital."[44] But if Obregón attributed the creation of the Cooperative to the need for reconstruction and development, and credited the efforts of the *camioneros*, years later Martín Ruiz would offer a more succinct explanation: "[At Ocotlán] we provided an undeniable service that demonstrated our support for Obregón, who then repaid us by organizing the Cooperative and the Bank."[45] Yet Díaz Lombardo's rise to the head of the Alianza suggested that revolutionary credentials only counted for so much.

**INSTITUTIONALITY**

With the establishment of the Cooperative and the Bank, the Alianza attained a sort of organizational adolescence: it had grown muscles, but still had only an inchoate sense of self and purpose, and it would struggle for identity in the halls of 1920s Mexico City. The Alianza's growth as an institution meant a more formalized—but no less thorny—relationship with the political system. Obregón's personal patronage had proven a boon: with significant capital invested in the bank and gas cooperative, Alianza members had been able to not only operate at a profit, but purchase new vehicles and expand services as well. However, the Alianza's existence was now more entangled with

[44] *Heraldo Camionero*, October, 1933.
[45] *Apuntes*, Martín Ruiz, 97.

the benefactor state, which created a host of new obligations, ranging from material collaboration to symbolic participation in a national political project. For Antonio Díaz Lombardo, these developments increased his authority within the *gremio*, strengthening his position as a capable negotiator on behalf of the organization's affiliates and also handing him effective control of the industry's purse strings. Politicians almost certainly took notice of the preternatural influence the young man wielded among this important urban group, and must have detected a whiff of ambition.

When José de Leon Toral fired five bullets into Álvaro Obregón on July 17, 1928, it marked a watershed moment for the country. For the *camioneros*, the caudillo's death meant the loss of a patron and a sudden uncertainty about the future. They did not, in 1928, have particularly close ties to Plutarco Elías Calles, who now stood alone as Mexico's preeminent power broker and the man responsible for finding a route out of the crisis. Calles' objective when he addressed congress that September and proposed the formation of a unified 'Revolutionary' political party that would bring an end to *caudillismo* was simple. He sought to find a viable means of perpetuating his personal influence while circumventing legal strictures prohibiting his reelection to the presidency and avoiding conflict with political opponents. Calles almost certainly did not envision a party that would outlive him politically and outgrow his control. No one in 1929 could have conceived of the Institutional Revolutionary Party that appeared after 1946, even as Calles proclaimed his intent to move Mexico "from a country of one man to a nation of institutions and laws."' The new party, named simply the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR) was officially formed during a convention in early March of 1929 as an inclusive coalition of all revolutionary forces. At that convention, Calles

masterminded the nomination of Pascual Ortiz Rubio as the party's presidential candidate, choosing a politically weak figure who would serve as a convenient puppet. Over the next six years, Calles disregarded institutional structures, forcing Ortiz Rubio from office in 1932 and replacing him with a more pliant Abelardo Rodríguez, and generally positioning himself as the supreme arbiter of political life. The period came to be known as the *Maximato*, a reference to Calles, the country's *Jefe Máximo*. Yet, during those same years the country's political terrain began to change and, perhaps paradoxically given Calles' meddling, the frames of institutions materialized. A new "political style" emerged too, and helped shore the foundation of the regime.

The Ortiz Rubio campaign, as Alejandra Lajous observes, provided an important opportunity for the PNR to begin stitching together the network of *caciazgos*—local political fiefdoms—that the party had to rely upon for support.[46] In thus enlisting regional leaders in the campaign effort, the PNR began "to extend its tentacles."[47] Yet something larger was at work; beyond the process of building an organizational hierarchy, the campaign began to establish patterns of interactions that shifted the symbolic and affective basis of politics. As Lajous writes, "It was an extensive campaign, during which the candidate visited more than 200 distinct communities. But what was truly surprising was its organization: everywhere the candidate's entourage passed, they found towns decorated for the occasion and crowds ready to applaud and cheer… this was, in itself, a testimony to the cooperation of regional leaders."[48] While such displays were not

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[46] Lajous, *Orígenes*, 66.
[47] Ibid, 66.
[48] Ibid, 66-67. Importantly, Lajous points out that these local strongmen also bore the costs of such events. See also Verónica Oikión Solano, "Pascual Ortiz Rubio: ¿Un presidente a la medida del Jefe Máximo?"

fundamentally unique from rallies in support of a popular local leaders, with the 1929 campaign a vision—however faint—of a new political machinery began to appear. The gears of that machinery were not just rural bosses but also urban labor leaders and heads of middle-class groups like the Alianza. Not all supported Ortiz Rubio, however, as a strong conservative opposition supported the candidacy of José Vasconcelos. Yet the *camioneros* were loyal to the memory of Obregón, and did not break with the PRM. In November 1930 when a telegram from Díaz Lombardo arrived in the presidential offices, a secretary wrote out a memo commenting "The Alianza controls almost all the *camioneros* in the Republic [and] provided support during last year's rallies in support of Ortiz Rubio."[49]

Yet the *camioneros* quickly learned that such collaboration did not always lead to reliable political patronage as it had with Obregón. Ortiz Rubio's response to Díaz Lombardo's petition—which concerned a dispute over suburban route concessions—was to pass the matter off to the Minister of the National Roads Commission, General Juan Andreu Almazán, with special instructions that the minister "not show any particular favor" to the *camionero* leader.[50] The Alianza would not, in fact, find any favor at all with the short-lived Ortiz Rubio government and a few months later conflicted erupted over urban route concessions granted to non-Alianza members. As in 1922, the prospect of competition from any group alarmed the existing *camioneros*, but nine years later there

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*Gobernantes Mexicanos*, vol. 2, ed. Will Fowler (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2008), 165-166.

[49] AGN, P POR, 314/50, 11 November 1930.

[50] Ibid.

would be no riot outside city hall; instead, Díaz Lombardo and the Alianza would move their influence through institutional and informal channels.

As Mexico City had grown, urban bus transport had become an increasingly attractive investment. Between 1921 and 1930 the population of the metropolis had grown from just over 900,000 to 1.2 million, although the number of autobuses had actually decreased by 500, from approximately 2600 in 1925 to 2100 in 1931.[51] Even if the capacity of individual buses had increased over those six years, there was almost certainly unmet demand in newly settled areas of the city. This market attracted both urban businessmen who recognized the opportunity, and residents of peripheral *colonias* who were confronted with the inadequate transport options. The attempt of these two groups to enter the bus industry presented a direct challenge to the Alianza.

The situation detonated in February, 1931, when the Alianza first complained that Mexico City radio stations were announcing the formation of several new bus lines in the capital and inviting residents to buy shares in the new societies.[52] More troublingly, according to an editorial published in February in *Heraldo Camionero*, these new groups—consisting of unemployed workers—claimed to have the backing of important government officials.[53] In a February 11 letter to Ortiz Rubio, Díaz Lombardo expressed confidence that the president was unaware of the rumors of new routes and requested that the Alianza's legally-established concessions for exclusive service in key areas be

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[51] Secretaría de Obras y Servicios, *Anuario de Vialidad y Transporte del D.F. 1980*, 16. The decrease might have been tied to global economic conditions, though it seems just as likely that these numbers are inaccurate as even De la Peña was unable to find reliable government statistics for those years.
[52] AGN, P POR 2/1249 (1931).
[53] *Heraldo Camionero*, February, 1931.

respected.[54] Two days later Díaz Lombardo submitted a five-page memorandum insisting that new concessions would violate the 1929 regulations for routes in the D.F., and asserting the revolutionary credentials of the current *camioneros*. The language of this petition is important precisely because it reveals how the Alianza sought to establish its legitimacy and authority within the new political environment of post-Obregón Mexico. In it Díaz Lombardo reflected that the *camioneros* had always been able to count on the support of "the Revolutionary Authorities," making an oblique reference to Obregón's patronage of the group. The memorandum went on to note that "our work and tenacity has helped crystallize one of the most noble ideals of the revolution: the economic emancipation of the proletariat." In claiming this mantle as an organization of independent, upwardly-mobile workers, Díaz Lombardo implicitly defined the Alianza's members as entrepreneurs, but emphasized that the thousands of families who had improved their lot as *camioneros* remained one broken axle away from a return to poverty. He went on to stress that Alianza was a veritable "school of civicism" producing "good citizens with firm concepts of rights and obligations," and thus the *camioneros* had "always offered their backing and collaboration to the Revolutionary Governments."[55] Finally, Díaz Lombardo emphasized that the organization was a disciplined and responsible partner of the regime, observing that "although the Alianza de Camioneros has thousands of members, we have never had serious problems or conflicts with the authorities, because even in cases such as the current one, we have always behaved in a serene and reasoned manner."[56] To underscore the extent of *camionero* collaboration, he

[54] AGN, P POR 2/1249 (1931).
[55] AGN, P POR 8/1413 (1931).
[56] Ibid.

commented that not only had the Alianza's programs of purchasing and canceling operating permits—a program backed by previous city governments— succeeded in making the industry economically viable while solving the problem of traffic congestion, but that the organization had also paved streets and improved roads, allowing for the development of new *colonias* in the city.[57] The key points of the Alianza's attempt at gaining the political high ground in 1931 were, then: a claim—however misleading—of proletarian identity consonant with the principles of the Revolution, a suggestion of civic consciousness commensurate with the programs of modern development, and an ethos of collaboration with the post-revolutionary regime. Over time, it was this last claim, constantly repeated and reaffirmed, that proved most important.

The *camioneros*' rhetorical salvo, however, seemed to fall short of its mark. On February 20, Ortiz Rubio's personal secretary, Crisóforo Ibáñez, sent a lengthy rejoinder to the February 13 memo beginning with the curt observation that the president "would attempt to respect existing interests, so long as they were not an obstacle to progress and collective wellbeing."[58] The secretary further, remarked that "I do not know why you believe that this [new] organization will attack you, bankrupt you…when all it will do is satisfy new demands for public service," and serve the additional purpose of providing a source of income to many.[59] The rebuke concluded with the line "I do not believe you have the right to let your fellow citizens die of hunger."[60] In the face of this official

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[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] AGN, P POR 8/1413 (1931). In April, a group calling themselves the "Cooperativa 'Modelo,'" formed of former railroad workers, petitioned Ortiz Rubio for new permits in Mexico City to operate a route running through *colonias* Doctores, Obrera, and Del Valle. After observing that the streets along the route were in extremely poor repair, the petitioner, Demetrio Sánchez, wrote: "In reciprocity for the permits, we propose

intransigence, Díaz Lombardo's political adeptness shined. Rhetorical weapons having failed, he turned to informal personal negotiation and marshaled his influence with other important groups that might intervene on the Alianza's behalf. Even before Ibáñez had sent his four-page rebuttal, the Alianza enlisted the support of Mexico City's automobile importing businesses—businesses with which Díaz Lombardo had had connections since his first days at the Packard agency—to petition the President on their behalf, repeating the claim that new lines would bring financial ruin to the industry that they, too, relied upon.[61]

By March the *camioneros* had shifted their pressure from the president to the Jefe Máximo—Calles—widely known to be the power behind the throne. On March 9, Martin Ruiz sent a telegram to Calles pleading for support and requesting that the Jefe Máximo meet with Díaz Lombardo, remarking that "since you have always been the paladin of the revolutionary conquests, and since our industry is the crystallization of one those [conquests], we hope that, as you did with our brothers the *campesinos*, we will also receive your generous assistance."[62] If Calles did not receive the *camionero* leader then, he certainly did so when the dispute nearly came to a boil and the organization was threatening to paralyze the Zócalo with a strike. As Díaz Lombardo recounted years later in an interview, with Ortiz Rubio on the verge of approving the new concessions Luis

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to you the following: we solemnly commit ourselves to repair the streets in accordance with a standard above that of even the United States." Sánchez went on to remark that it was up to the president "to alleviate the situation of many workers who are members of 'Modelo'. We are anxious to show you that we have the most earnest desire to work." Riddled with orthographical errors and balky language, the letter indicates just how poignant the struggle to break into the bus industry was during these early years for those who did not belong to the Alianza; AGN, P POR, 8/4918 (1931).

[61] AGN, P POR 8/1413 (1931).

[62] Archivo Calles-Torreblanca, PEC Exp125 Inv5185 L1.

León, a close Calles collaborator, arrived at the Banco de Transportes where Díaz Lombardo was working. During their exchange, the *camionero* "took advantage of the opportunity to relate [his] concerns about the conflict and responsibility for the strike, which was going to fall on [him] because [he] had not been able to alter the will of the majority of [his] *compañeros*."[63] León conveyed the message to Calles, who sent a motorcycle messenger to summon Díaz Lombardo. In a dramatic eleventh-hour meeting at Calles' house in Colonia Anzures, the Jefe Máximo agreed to back the Alianza's cause and accompanied Díaz Lombardo to a meeting with Ortiz Rubio the following day in which the Alianza was assured that no outside groups would be allowed into the city's transportation market. It was, as Díaz Lombardo later reminisced, a "total victory."[64]

Calles did not, however, become a patron of the Alianza as Obregón had.[65] But the episode did reinforce the importance of Díaz Lombardo's leadership as a capable intermediary between the *camioneros* and the world of politics, a world that—while still dominated by Calles—was acquiring unique "institutionalized" characteristics.[66] Perhaps the most salient of these was the appearance of a double system of negotiation in which formal channels of dialogue existed parallel to informal networks of influence peddling.[67] While the mechanisms by which each channel operated were still largely undefined, two

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[63] *Apuntes*, Díaz Lombardo, 89.
[64] Ibid. As part of this agreement, however, the Alianza had to agree to open a new route to underserved parts of the city, a route that became the Circuito de Circunvalación, eventually one of the most important lines; *Heraldo Camionero*, July, 1931.
[65] Calles did, however, play an Obregon-esque role in helping the *camioneros* establish a partnership with U.S. rubber producers and the El Popo tire company in Mexico, approving the Alianza's purchase of shares in the struggling El Popo in 1932; Archivo Calles-Torreblanca, FFT Serie 10303, Exp63 Inv1469 L1. Archivo Calles-Torreblanca PEC Exp189 Inv5010 L9/11.
[66] In his 1931 *informe* to the group, Díaz Lombardo pointedly used the first person when discussing how he obtained meetings with ministers when a *camionero* commission had visited Ortiz Rubio in Michoacan; *Heraldo Camionero*, July, 1931.
[67] Lajous refers to 'dualism' of the Maximato; *Orígenes,* 151.

points were central to the arrangement: avoiding open conflict, and presenting an image of revolutionary collaboration. Díaz Lombardo's role as an intermediary was to ensure that his organization played by these rules, keeping the *camioneros* in line with the needs of the government as he did in the timely negotiations with Calles that prevented the 1931 strike.

Simultaneously, Díaz Lombardo was weaving the Alianza practically and symbolically into the new post-revolutionary political fabric. In its founding documents, the PNR had sought to establish itself as the legitimate heir of the Revolution, moving quickly to gain a full-fledged rhetorical monopoly as the interpreter of revolutionary values.[68] If party leaders offered a distinctly conservative translation of those ideals, it was nonetheless a vision that the Alianza found amenable to its interests. By asserting their revolutionary paternity, the members of the Alianza provided support for the urban-centric, less socially radical interpretation of the Revolution espoused by the PNR. In casting themselves as emancipated workers rather than proletarians or entrepreneurs, the *camioneros* aligned with the *callista* formula of class collaboration; they would present no threat to the government.[69]

The Alianza aimed its overtures at a state that was gradually becoming the dominant force in the country's political life. During these years party leaders aggressively promoted a calendar of civic ceremonies, events designed to reinforce the party's claim to represent the institutional fulfillment of the Revolution's aims.[70]

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[68] These ideas have all been elaborated by Luis Javier Garrido, Jurgen Buchenau and Alejandra Lajous.
[69] Calles had a distinctly 'small property' vision of Mexico's future that would have appealed to the *camioneros*; Buchenau, *Calles*, 103.
[70] If this was not the mature theater state that appeared by the 1950s, it was nonetheless a very identifiable embryo.

Although the construction of the imposing Monument to the Revolution (begun in 1933) was the most obvious example of the *callistas*' attempt at public appropriation of the emotional force of the armed struggle, the PNR's symbolism-rich spectacles were a regular feature of urban life and involved more active participation.[71] From an early stage of its existence, the PNR placed great importance on popular mobilization. As Garrido comments, among the motives for holding the 1931 presidential *informe* in the National Stadium instead of the halls of Congress was "to demonstrate their mass mobilization abilities."[72] Such an endeavor undoubtedly required the Alianza's collaboration to transport contingents to the stadium, though there is no record of a formal agreement.[73] By 1933, the Alianza was enthusiastically participating in the PNR's November Athletic Parade commemorating the start of the Revolution, marching behind a large white float proclaiming the fitness of the group's sports section.[74] But however much the Alianza participated in party demonstrations and echoed PNR tropes in their petitions, the group's behavior was undoubtedly instrumentalist: the *camioneros* sought to obtain official support for concrete ends, and they proved adaptable in their rhetoric. In these years, the state's hegemony among groups such as the *camioneros* depended as much on shared material and political interest as it did upon the success of cultural programs that sought to inculcate a "revolutionary" identity.

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[71] Buchenau, *Calles*, 156.
[72] Garrido, *Partido de la revolución*, 132.
[73] As will be discussed later, Alianza assistance in such mobilizations was a cornerstone of their relationship with the PRI.
[74] The *camionero* commentary on the parade noted that the PNR "demonstrated with this grand athletic parade the strength of its *arraigo* among the masses of the country."; *Heraldo Camionero*, November, 1933.

Yet even as the Alianza moved toward adulthood, its relationship with the regime never transcended the political instability of the *maximato*; the *camioneros* found neither a reliable patron nor a clear place within the party. This was symptomatic of a broader political anemia—as Garrido concludes, the "PNR was only partially consolidated during the years of *callismo*…After these six years, [it] was essentially composed of public employees, some *campesino* groups, and the middle classes, all of whom had been incorporated by their leaders, but their participation was little more than as legitimizers."[75] Between 1934 and 1940, however, the party transformed into a mass organization incorporating significant numbers of *campesinos* and workers. Accompanying this shift was a move toward more radical and populist policies that increasingly threatened the Alianza's position by challenging the legitimacy of the group's labor practices.[76]

**THE BIRTH OF THE PULPO**

If the Alianza began the *maximato* in 1929 as a gangly adolescent, by the start of Lázaro Cárdenas's presidency (1934-1940) the organization had reached maturity as a creature nearly unrecognizable from the embryonic organizations of 1923. In a scathing 1934 report on the Alianza, José María Dávila, the president of the PNR in the Federal District wrote of a "*pulpo monopolizador*", a monopolizing octopus, that had "wrapped its tentacles" around the city and the industry.[77] The nickname would stick, and until the

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[75] Garrido, *Partido de la revolución*, 174.
[76] See Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas' forward to *Populism in 20th Century Mexico* for a redefinition of *cardenista* policies as 'popular' rather than populist; "Forward," *Populism in 20th Century Mexico: The Presidencies of Lázaro Cárdenas and Luis Echeverría*, Amelia M. Kiddle and María L.O. Muñoz, eds. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010).
[77] AGN, P LCR, 512.51/3, José Maria Dávila to Cárdenas.

system was municipalized in 1981, critics and opponents would refer to the Alianza as the *Pulpo Camionero.* Whether or not facts justified the moniker's harsh connotations, the Alianza had indeed attained an impressive degree of economic and institutional power by the mid-1930s, as it controlled most of the city's bus lines and automotive distributors.

The core of this process was the solidification of the group's internal politics around the figure of Díaz Lombardo and a cadre of supporters. Although the organization held annual elections for the five posts on the executive committee, members unfailingly selected Don Antonio as the Secretary General. The other men were comprised of a diverse group that rotated in office, ranging from old-guard *camioneros* such as Fernando 'Chato' López and Juan P. Morales, who had fought at Ocotlán with Obregón, to Enrique Barragán, a former Federal Deputy (congressman) who had purchased buses on the Tacuba line, to younger men such as Evaristo Rodríguez and Martín Ruiz Gómez, who were gaining recognition as administrators of prominent urban lines. By 1936, Ruiz Gómez would become Díaz Lombardo's right-hand man and remain in the Alianza's number two post until the late 1940s. These men were not the owner-operator *pequeños propietarios* exalted in the Alianza's rhetoric; while all had a common origin story of how they had first acquired a bus on one of the city's lines, most now owned several, either under their own name or through proxies. Even more intriguingly, it appears as though Díaz Lombardo probably owned no buses personally by this point and was principally involved in managing the industry's financial institutions.

The coherence of this group, reinforced through ties of friendship, shared economic interests, and a common experience of entrepreneurial struggles, was revealed in festive banquets and the sharp satiric humor published in *Heraldo Camionero*:

> - *Chato* [Pug Nose] *López enters Díaz Lombardo's office*
> -*"Good morning Skinny, how are you?"* [Skinny—*Flaco*—was an affectionate reference to Díaz Lombardo's slim physique]
> -*"Good morning,* Chato*, very well, and yourself? What can I do for you?"*
> -*"Well, I've come to ask a favor: one of my nephews is out of work and needs a letter of recommendation from you for the Captain of the 5th District"*
> -*"Is that all?"* [Díaz Lombardo sends his secretary to type the letter]…
> -*While* [the Secretary] *types, Chato wanders around the office, cigarette dangling from his lip, hands in his pockets, hat on his head*
> -*"Here," Díaz Lombardo finally says, "but first I'm going to give you some advice: when you enter the office of the 5th District, you shouldn't be smoking, keep your hands out of your pocket and take off your hat.*
> -*"You offend me, Sir, I am well aware what I have to do when I'm in the office of* respectable *people!"*[78]

The sense of camaraderie that infuses the joke hardly obscures the internal dynamics of the group: while Díaz Lombardo was much loved, support for him was also very much bound up in patron-client relationships requiring him to draw on political connections and financial resources.[79] This was, in many ways, a classic set of political relationships. Patronage was an omnipresent part of Mexican political culture and whether practiced by rural *caciques* or urban labor bosses it involved trading favors, protection, and often resources for support—support that could then be bartered with those higher up the political pyramid. As the postrevolutionary regime expanded its authority, those processes occurred in new spheres of society and in new ways: Díaz Lombardo's control of state-sponsored financial institutions and use of political recommendations as tools of patronage were natural mutations of old behavior. And, as the *camionero* institutions expanded from 1926 to 1936, Díaz Lombardo's authority grew.

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[78] *Heraldo Camionero*, January, 1933. Emphasis mine.
[79] A 1931 *Heraldo Camionero* profile of Díaz Lombardo described him as the "handkerchief for the tears of the *camioneros*" and offered a litany of problems his *compañeros* expected him to resolve ranging from route invasions, gas prices, debts, and taxes; *Heraldo Camionero*, February, 1931.

Since the founding of the Cooperativa de Combustibles y Lubricantes and the Banco de Transportes, Díaz Lombardo had overseen their growth into major institutions. In 1931, the Banco had lent 1,980,287.22 pesos to members of the Alianza and other members of the auto-transportation industry, turning a profit of 52,350.56 pesos which was reinvested in the bank.[80] By 1933 the Alianza's constellation of commercial institutions included not only the cooperative and the bank but also two automotive sales agencies, an automotive parts distributor, and an insurance company.[81] The organization also maintained a medical clinic serving the *camioneros*, a legal office to help process permit applications and resolve complaints, and a business department that printed standardized tickets for every bus line in the city.[82]

The Alianza's institutions were only the tip of the financial empire that Díaz Lombardo controlled. In November of 1934, along with Alianza members Enrique Barragán, Eusebio Acosta Velasco, Ramiro Dávila, Miguel Barrón, and Eduardo Soberanes, Díaz Lombardo founded Aeronaves de México, S.A., the airline company which would later become Aeromexico.[83] The majority shareholders were Díaz Lombardo and Barragán, who each held 44 of the 100 shares issued, at a value of 1,000 pesos each. The remaining 12 shares were split evenly among Soberanes, Barrón, Acosta Velasco, Dávila, and two apparently non-Alianza members, José Montalvo and Gustavo

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[80] "Informe de la Cooperativa," 7 March 1931, published in *Heraldo Camionero*, March, 1931.
[81] *Heraldo Camionero*, September, 1933. Díaz Lombardo was president of the Cooperative and the two automotive agencies, which had distribution agreements with Ford and Dodge. Enrique Barragán was the president of the bank.
[82] During the 1930s, Díaz Lombardo's brother Isidro served in the Legal Department. In later years, a number of prominent jurists would also work for the Alianza, particularly as disputes with drivers became increasingly frequent and bus lines ended up in the country's labor courts.
[83] AGN, P GDO, 666 (108), "Actos Constitutivos de Aeronaves de México."

González.[84] A few years later the company would begin flying the Mexico City-Acapulco route, undoubtedly passing over the Alianza-affiliated Estrella de Oro buses that ran along the highway below.[85]

Simultaneously, Díaz Lombardo had invested in Acapulco real estate and began constructing a tourist hotel through a company simply named "Hoteles, S.A," that appeared to be a subsidiary of the Banco de Transportes.[86] This decision certainly aligned with official goals of promoting tourism and put Díaz Lombardo squarely in the ranks of developmentist financiers pursuing profit in state-promoted nascent industries. Tourism was also a logical investment for members of the transportation industry and the Alianza's magazines routinely published travel reports and bits of local boosterism. When the hotel La Marina opened in 1939, it offered guests an impressive list of amenities, including air conditioning, 24-hour hot water, a soda fountain, a roof garden, and an electric elevator.[87] Moreover, the announcement observed that Acapulco was only

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[84] Ibid. Soberanes, Barrón, and Acosta were prominent *camioneros*, and Soberanes would remain active in the organization until the 1970s. It is unclear if Barragán's investment was personal or as a representative of the Alianza's Commercial Department, as years later the *camioneros* remembered the airline as having been founded with Alianza participation. Nevertheless, Díaz Lombardo's involvement with the company outlived his leadership of the Alianza.

[85] *El Informador Camionero* 1-June-42. The Estrella de Oro line had begun operation in 1934 under the leadership of Eduardo Peynetti Volpi, connecting Mexico City, Cuernavaca, Taxco, and Acapulco. See Bravo, *Apuntes*, as well as "Servicio de Autotransporte Federal de Pasaje en México" in the SETRAVI archive. Though the highway to Acapulco had openend in 1927, bus service had not become regularized until several years later; see Andrew Sackett, "Fun in Acapulco? The Politics of Development on the Mexican Riviera," in *Holiday in Mexico: Critical Reflections on Tourism and Tourist Encounters*, eds. Dina Berger and Andrew Grant Wood (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

[86] In the 1970s, an Alianza-affiliated magazine recounted that the hotel was built with *camionero* money to serve *camioneros*, though this does not seem to be the case. Hoteles, S.A., however, was connected to the successor to the defunct Cooperativa de Combustible, a Banco de Transportes subsidiary company called "Combustible, Turismo y Transporte, S.A. de C.V." that Díaz Lombardo headed. See "Informe de la Cooperativa" in *El Informador Camionero*, April 1, 1946.

[87] The "magnificent" hotel was apparently an early project of Carlos Lazo, a renowned architect who was close with Miguel Alemán and would later design the UNAM's campus at Ciudad Universitaria; *El Nacional*, July 8, 1944.

one hour and 45 minutes from the capital aboard an Aeronaves de Mexico flight, and nine hours in the special luxury omnibuses provided by Estrella de Oro's new service.[88]

Estrella de Oro was hardly the only intercity line that had signed on with Díaz Lombardo, however. Because membership brought easy access to the organization's commercial institutions—affiliated *camioneros* invariably had an easier time purchasing new equipment than did non-affiliates—and because the Mexico City organization could be counted upon to intervene on behalf of provincial members in local disputes, the gravitational pull of the Alianza brought *camioneros* from around the country into its orbit. In 1932, the group had opened a "Department of Tourism" to promote the operations of non-urban lines, adding to a list of members that already included urban operators in Veracruz and Monterrey and lines connecting Mexico City to the provincial capitals of Puebla, Toluca, and Pachuca.[89] But membership in the Alianza was neither always a decision made freely. In one petition sent to President Cárdenas, a representative of the Cooperativa de Transportes de Suroeste Veracruzano claimed that Díaz Lombardo and associates were attempting to "force them to join the Alianza."[90]

This push for affiliation of other lines around the country came to a head in August of 1936, when the Alianza organized a three-day congress in downtown Mexico City. Díaz Lombardo presided over the event, attended by more than 1600 delegates from 119 lines across the country. During the event's closing session, the attendees signed a

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[88] *El Nacional*, January 14, 1939. If these ventures were more logically connected to the transportation industry, Díaz Lombardo had also invested in the filmmaking industry, and in 1936 his company would release "Alla en Rancho Grande", one of the first blockbusters of the era; *El Informador Camionero*, April, 1975.

[89] *Heraldo Camionero*, March, 1932. In 1931 *Heraldo Camionero* proudly announced that a group of urban camioneros in Veracruz had voted to join the Alianza; *Heraldo Camionero*, February, 1931

[90] AGN, P LCR 512.51/3. Probably 1934.

'pact of solidarity' agreeing to form a single national *camionero* organization, in effect ratifying the Alianza's—and Díaz Lombardo's—status as the sole politically relevant representative of the industry. This was in many ways the culmination of the process that had begun with the formation of the Federación Camionera in 1922, but the industry had also moved far from its romanticized artisan roots. Yet collective defense of interests, phrased in the language of corporate representation and shot through with revolutionary references, remained a key part of the *camioneros*' political repertoire, even as they increasingly resembled an entrepreneurial conglomerate with Díaz Lombardo as their banker. And when leading *cardenistas* leveled their guns at the group such unity was necessary for survival.

## THE ALIANZA UNDER ATTACK

When José Maria Dávila wrote to newly elected President Cárdenas in December of 1934, he did more than label the Alianza as a voracious *pulpo*; he detailed a growing list of transgressions, chief among them insidious anti-worker practices.[91] The memorandum, which appears to be a background paper for the incoming government, emphasized that the Alianza was "*una institución patronal*," an employers' organization. This hidden capitalist business perpetuated itself through the use of *prestanombres* (strawmen) whose formal ownership of permits and buses simply served to disguise the fact that the real owners were the monopolists of the *pulpo*.[92] This was a pointed charge

[91] AGN, P LCR, 512.51/3, José Maria Dávila to Cárdenas.
[92] The term *prestanombre*, literally a 'loaned name,' described a system whereby ownership of something would be under the name of relatives or fictive kin as a means of disguising ownership of a business or property. For politicians, the use of *prestanombres* allowed for plausible deniability when one was accused of illicit enrichment and was a common means of protecting wealth. In the bus industry, obtaining

indeed, and one that directly challenged the *camioneros'* rhetorical recourse to their origins as "emancipated workers."[93] Indeed, in Dávila's portrayal the organization was able to "wash its hands of labor conflicts," since its consistent opposition to collective contracts and unionization of drivers and fare collectors meant that disputes remained between individual bus owners and their particular workers.[94] Most egregiously, the Alianza blacklisted any worker who attempted to form or join a union.

Such labor conflicts had been on the rise over the first half of the decade. In 1934 Gonzalo Salazar, the president of the Mexico-Puebla line informed the president of the nearby Puebla-Atlixco line that he had fired eleven drivers and five dispatchers "for carrying out unionizing activities against the interests of the group," and requested that the Puebla-Atlixco line not employ them, since "the assembly of line presidents of the Alianza had resolved that [the workers] be blacklisted in all the lines that belong to the Alianza."[95] In one particularly nettlesome case, the Circuito Circunvalación line fired 42 workers after an attempt to form a "Red" union on the line.[96] According to a representative for the workers, after the "Red" leaders triumphed, the Alianza forced a new election and brought in workers from other lines to throw the second ballot to

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operating permits under the names of children, wives, or cousins allowed Alianza entrepreneurs to circumvent the limits placed on individual permit-holding.

[93] Moreover, it is unclear whether the charge was a wholly accurate one. While many members of the Alianza did come to own upwards of four buses, and occasionally as many as twelve or fourteen, this alone hardly implied a centralized monopoly: in 1934 there were 2,330 buses in Mexico City. Even assuming as many as fourteen buses per individual, the Alianza would have still numbered approximately 166 discrete owners; Secretaría de Obras y Servicios, *Anuario de Vialidad y Transporte del D.F. 1980*.

[94] Ibid.

[95] AGN, P LCR, 111/1176.

[96] It is unclear whether the contemporary terminology of "red" and "white" indicated the former's communist leanings or not. At any rate, "white" union referenced the landlord-controlled "white guards" that protected *haciendas*; "red" may have simply denoted radicals of any stripe.

"White" union leaders.[97] This incited a strike, then a months-long legal battle after the Alianza allegedly bought off the representative of the Labor Board (Junta de Conciliación y Arbitraje), who declared the strike illegal.[98] When a Circuit Court Judge overruled that decision, the Alianza appealed to the Supreme Court. Even the intervention of Cárdenas' personal secretary to arrange a meeting between the disputing parties was unable to produce an agreement.[99] Elsewhere in the city, Jacinto Hernández wrote to President Cárdenas in September of 1935 complaining that the Santa Maria Mixcalco line had fired him for being the president of the "Syndicalist Union of Drivers."[100] By early 1936, the members of Hernández's union remained unsatisfied and continued to plead with Cárdenas, lamenting that the "employers control a White Union…and extort at all costs the dutiful workers who are your [Cardenas's] adherents," and declaring their intention to launch a strike which would have the backing of the "majority" of *camioneros* in the city.[101]

Combined with Dávila's forceful exposé, these petitions rang alarm bells in the presidential offices of Los Pinos. Cárdenas had entered office with a decidedly more radical reputation on both agrarian and labor issues than his Jefe Máximo mentor, and during the first two years of his presidency this pro-union stance encouraged a wave of strikes. The Santa Maria Mixcalco petitioners had played to that paternalistic image, and

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[97] AGN, P LCR, 512.51/6.
[98] AGN, P LCR, 434.2/3. There were frequent allegations that the Alianza bribed officials in exchange for favorable decisions.
[99] Ibid. By the fall the Alianza was clearly feeling the mounting political pressure; in October a commission from the group submitted a defensively worded memorandum to Cárdenas observing that the long-running conflict was being exploited by outside instigators perpetuating problems with the line's ex-workers, even though the situation was now resolved.
[100] AGN, P LCR, 434.3/55, 2 September 1935
[101] AGN, P LCR ,432/388, 6 March 1936.

like many poor Mexicans, they were ready to throw their lot with Cárdenas. Their faith was not entirely misplaced. By 1936, bolstered by mass demonstrations of support from workers and peasant organizations, Cárdenas had succeeded in ending Calles' influence assuming sole control over the country's political machinery.[102] This newfound autonomy allowed Cárdenas to pursue profoundly reformist policies, and for a president who saw large scale labor organization as key to the stability of both his government and the political system as a whole, the retrograde Alianza undoubtedly presented a symbolic and a practical problem. As Alan Knight observed, in reorienting government policy to address popular demands and promote pro-labor policies, "leading Cardenistas distinguished between (roughly) progressive and parasitic business interests," and Dávila's memorandum suggested that the Alianza was coming to be viewed as one of the latter.[103] Moreover, the Alianza was so politically entrenched in Mexico City that it now held a virtual veto power over transportation policy: it could shut down the capital at will.

The steady stream of denunciations arriving in the presidential office found their way to Francisco Múgica, the head of the Ministry of Communications and Public Works (SCOP), a Cárdenas confidant and well known radical.[104] By the time the Alianza convened the 1936 congress, Múgica had already begun to formulate revisions to the *Ley de Vías Generales de Comunicación* (LVGC—the law regulating all forms of communication and transportation). Though the attendees at the Alianza's 1936

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[102] See Middlebrook, *Paradox of Revolution*, 87-88.
[103] Knight, "Juggernaut". According to Kevin Middlebrook, *cardenista* policies "promoted unionization, sought to block the creation of employer-controlled labor organizations (*sindicatos blancos*), and rapidly increased resources for government labor inspectors…"; *Paradox of Revolution*, 88-89.
[104] Cárdenas' penchant for delegating tasks to Ministers was well known; see Knight, "Juggernaut". For Múgica's radicalism, see Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos*, particularly 80-95.

convention had sought to curtail this drive, presenting their own legislative project and entreating President Cárdenas to take into consideration the organization's eighteen years of experience, Múgica was not swayed, and it was clear that the group was out of political favor.[105] The *camioneros* did nothing to curry favor with the minister when, in response to the SCOP's decision to authorize permits for a controversial new route running through the north of the city, workers and owners of the Atzcapotzalco line stoned Múgica's offices in protest.[106]

In December, Múgica sent the president a formal proposal for reforms that would make sweeping changes in the industry. In his preamble to his initiative, submitted to the presidential office on 25 December, Múgica remarked that the reforms' "principal objectives" were to put the industry in the hands of its authentic workers.[107] Echoing Dávila, the minister lamented the exploitation of those who labored in the industry, the dangerous and dirty condition of the buses, and particularly the efforts of the "monopoly" to bar others from entry to the industry.[108] The solution, Múgica declared, was for the government first to allow open competition that would break the current monopolies, and then intervene to assist in the formation of workers' cooperatives that would receive

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[105] *El Universal*, August 19, 1936. The Alianza had petitioned Cárdenas in March of 1937, requesting that the SCOP take their perspectives into consideration in the drafting of the new LVGC (AGN P, LCR 545.2/65) Múgica, however, could credibly deflect such entreaties with the President by pointing to complaints from workers in the autotransport industry that the convention had been a farce put on by wealthy bus owners and not true *camioneros* (AGN, P LCR, 512.51/3). At any rate, it was clear that the prevailing winds were against the Alianza: In November, Cárdenas had used banking regulations to cut the authorized operating budget of the Banco de Transportes; *El Universal*, November 1, 1936.

[106] *Transportes y Turismo*, July, 1976. The President of the Atzcapotzalco line, Rafael Pimentel, was a close friend of Díaz Lombardo and served as a Congressional Deputy and Senator in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The head of the Atzcapotzalco union, Arturo Ledesma, had a lengthy and somewhat notorious career as a labor leader. Both men were involved in the stoning episode.

[107] AGN, P LCR, 545.2/65.

[108] In this Múgica made direct reference to a 1935 petition from ex-railroad workers whose efforts to establish a line connecting Mexico and Veracruz had been blocked by the Alianza-affiliated Flecha Roja line; AGN, P LCR, 512.51/17.

exclusive concessions.[109] This was nothing less than a full frontal assault on the Alianza. If allegations of labor abuses had sparked the minister's moral outrage, the new legislation was also a means of fragmenting the recalcitrant Alianza into more tractable groups of workers who would align ideologically with the Cárdenas regime.

Múgica's proposal thus played directly into the hands of one particular group: a diverse group of former drivers and mechanics who had been blacklisted by the Alianza during the 1920s and 1930s. Over the spring and summer of 1936 these workers had begun to organize, forming the awkwardly named Sindicato de Trabajadores Postergados por la Alianza de Camioneros de México (Union of Workers Excluded from the Alianza de Camioneros, here abbreviated to *Postergados*).[110] By 1937 the group had signed on with the newly created Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM), a *cardenista* attempt to unify the country's labor movements.[111] According to a subsequent history of the *Postergados*, on June 24 the leader of the CTM, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, led a demonstration of the 287 blacklisted workers outside the congress building.[112] This forced Cárdenas to intervene, and in July he personally designated the head of the Department of Press and Propaganda, Agustin Arroyo Ch., to handle the case.[113] Over the summer the burgeoning movement drew support from other urban labor groups that petitioned the office of the President on behalf of the *Postergados*, who were now

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[109] AGN, P LCR, 545.2/65. While the proposed legislation hit inter-city lines hardest, as these were more likely to be run as share-holding companies than owners' collectives, the impact on both would have been dramatic.
[110] The first petition from the *Postergados* arrived in Cárdenas' offices in March of 1936.
[111] Some of the early, poorly written *Postergados* denunciations of the Alianza can be found in AGN, P LCR 111/1176 and AGN, P LCR 512.51/6
[112] AHDF, DDF Obras Publicas, C.606 L.1. This report, published in the 1950s, commented that as many as 1000 workers had been blacklisted, but all but 287 eventually found new jobs.
[113] AGN, P LCR, 111/1176.

requesting concessions for three routes: "Gustavo Madero-Escandón", "Circuito Mercados," and "Colonia Clavería-Colonia Alvaro Obregón."[114] Múgica had also thrown his support behind the new venture, meeting with the group's Secretary General, Miguel Vargas, during the summer of 1937. In October, after Arroyo backed the decision of Mexico City's *Director de Tránsito*, Coronel Rafael Pedrajo—who had aligned with the Alianza—to deny the *Postergados*' concession requests, a wave of protests forced Cárdenas to replace Pedrajo with Captain Eduardo Rincón Gallardo and order the new *Director* to grant the workers a single route concession in Mexico City. Cárdenas also arranged for the *Postergados* to receive a $1,300,000 credit from the Banco Nacional Obrero y Fomento Industrial to support the acquisition of buses.[115]

Such a response was in keeping with the general tenor of Cárdenas's presidency. Revisionist historians have effectively questioned the mythical vision of a '*cardenista* utopia,' yet organized labor and rural groups did in fact receive far more favorable treatment during these years than in subsequent decades, even if this support was often calculated and inconsistent.[116] This pragmatic populist drift was mirrored in political institutions. When Cárdenas oversaw the reorganization of the PNR into the Partido de la Revolución Mexicana (PRM) in 1938, he sought to establish a more stable institutional base for the party. The PRM replaced the system of direct affiliation of the PNR with a corporatist system of indirect affiliation structured around four sectors: *campesino*, labor, military, and bureaucratic. Because this officially enfranchised the mass groups that had

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[114] AGN, P LCR, 111/1176.
[115] AHDF, DDF Obras Publicas C.606 L.1
[116] Alan Knight, "Lázaro Cárdenas" in *Gobernantes Mexicanos* vol. 2. ed. Will Fowler (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2008), 203.

long supported Cárdenas, the PRM was very much a personal project of the President.[117] In privileging the leaders of those groups, moreover, the PRM proved an effective corporatist tool for articulating authority. In particular, by adopting the slogan "For a Workers' Democracy" and incorporating the CTM as the labor sector, the regime gained a measure of control over the union movement by constraining its political options. As with the *Postergados*, for both ideological and strategic reasons *cardenistas* worked to cultivate political clients in the labor movement.

A year after Cárdenas initially backed their demands, the *Postergados* were still struggling to get their new route off the ground. Tensions ran high as the Alianza sought to undermine the group. At one point Guillermo Cochegrús, a Díaz Lombardo ally and president of the Mexico-Villa Obregón line, telegrammed Cárdenas that the *Postergados* were ambushing Alianza-affiliated buses and workers, breaking windows, slashing tires, and disrupting traffic, causing 15,000 pesos worth of damage.[118] A few months later, the *Postergados* complained that the Alianza had attacked their garage.[119] Beset as well by problems of internal organization, the *Postergados* thus struggled to acquire the necessary buses and parts—a predictable if insidious outcome, given that Díaz Lombardo and the Alianza controlled many of the automotive industries in the city. When the *Postergados* finally did arrange to purchase buses in July, Cárdenas's attentions were focused elsewhere, and even after the group camped outside the president's house in the

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[117] Garrido, *Partido de la revolución*, 251.
[118] AGN, P LCR, 432/782. If the *Postergados* actually attacked the Alianza, it was likely pure turnabout. There were several episodes of Alianza aggression against non-affiliated cooperatives, including the "Occidental" cooperative that was attempting to begin service between Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Morelia; AGN, P LCR, 512.51/135.
[119] AGN, P LCR, 512.51/3

hopes of obtaining an audience, the government was slow to release the promised funds to complete the acquisition.[120] When the *Postergados* officially formed as the 'Cooperativa 18 de Marzo' with a concession to exploit the route "Gustavo A. Madero-Tacuba-Tacubaya" in December of 1938, they would still not begin operation until nearly a year later, in November of 1939. This was hardly the vision of efficient service that a system based around workers' cooperatives was supposed to bring. Yet it seems likely that the struggles of the *Postergados* galvanized Múgica to push through the anti-Alianza legislation he had proposed in 1936, even if Cárdenas had soured on the project.[121]

The proposed reforms arrived on the floor of Congress in September of 1939, amid fervid protests from the *camioneros.* The final shape of the reforms was even more aggressive than the Alianza had initially feared. Múgica proposed limiting permits to one per person, whereas before the limit had been three, and returned to the language of "permits" rather than "concessions," implemented in 1931.[122] Moreover, all permit holders were to form cooperatives; those who did not would have their permits revoked, so that many of the industry's founders stood to lose their right to operate buses.[123] Still worse, in the D.F. the government was to intervene as a partner in the cooperatives,

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[120] AGN, P LCR, 111/1176. Cárdenas' ambivalence on the issue is surprising: even if he had been distracted by the process of oil nationalization that was underway at that time, he was remarkably reticent to intervene on behalf of the *Postergados* who were staunch ideological and political allies of the president.
[121] In September of 1938, Múgica wrote to Cárdenas complaining about four new route concessions that had been granted the Alianza, noting that in doing so, the urban planning commission in charge of the decision had not sufficiently considered the interests of other groups, including the *Postergados;* AGN, P LCR, 512.51/202.
[122] *Transportes y Turismo*, July, 1976. The distinction between "permit" and "concession" was an important one from a legal perspective: the former implied something that was easily revoked, whereas the latter implied a contract between the state and the concession holder. In comments on the legislation, the Alianza accepted the general goal of preventing individuals from hoarding permits, but remarked that in most cases a family could hardly survive on the income from a single bus; AGN, P LCR, 545.2/65.
[123] A history of the struggle against the law written by Martín Ruiz was published in *Transportes y Turismo* in September of 1976; AGN, P LCR, 545.2/65

which were obligated to join a single, government-controlled federation representing them politically—a "mortal wound" for the Alianza.[124]

During the first discussions of the project dissent came from an unlikely place. Fernando Amilpa, a member of the CTM and union organizer in the bus industry, challenged the reforms on the grounds that they lacked sufficient guarantees to ensure the autonomous survival of the workers' cooperatives that Múgica proposed to create.[125] Because the new laws did not offer provisions for future financial aid to the *cooperativistas*, Amilpa asserted, the supposedly liberated workers would no doubt fall under the control "of a monopoly even more hateful than the monopoly that is the Alianza de Camioneros."[126] In lengthy and tortuous speeches over the course of two congressional sessions the *cetemista* inveighed against both the new legislation and the Alianza, announcing that in his "struggle against the *patrons*, against the capitalist regime, I have tasted the bitter bread of strikes, and my name has been placed on the blacklist so I could not work," yet he also denounced the government's attempt to reshape the industry on a whim by turning proletarians into cooperativists.[127] The undertones of an orthodox class-struggle ideology, however, may have masked a more insidious reality. Four days after Amilpa's speech, Cárdenas's personal secretary sent the president a coded telegram reporting that the chief clerk of the Congress had complained to him about corruption among the deputies and that the secretary had learned "that a

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[124] *Transportes y Turismo*, September, 1976; AGN, P LCR, 545.2/65.
[125] Amilpa was a member of the *cinco lobitos* (the five little wolves), a group of CTM members arranged around Fidel Velazquez, who was elected Secretary General of the organization in 1941. Amilpa succeeded him in 1947; See Middlebrook, *Paradox of Revolution*.
[126] *Diario de los debates*, XXXVII Legislatura, 3º año, September 15, 1939.
[127] *Diario de los debates*, XXXVII Legislatura, 3º año, November 30, 1939

commission, including Fidel Velázquez and Fernando Amilpa, is attempting to arrange an interview with you, after a secret meeting [with Díaz Lombardo] in which they backed the point of view of the Alianza…which has defended its interests with, according to rumor, one million pesos."[128]

Allegations of the Alianza's backroom dealings burst into the open in the December 6 congressional session. During a lengthy opening tirade Deputy Antonio Sánchez hurled accusations at the Alianza, fuming to his colleagues, "I must tell you, the interests behind this discussion no longer maintain even the minimum level of decency they had last week: today, in plain daylight, it is the rare deputy who has not received propositions from the Alianza seeking to buy their support."[129] Revealing that he had received three visits from Alianza representatives, Sánchez hissed that they "ask us why we are not friends of the Alianza, and especially of Mr. Díaz Lombardo, who wants to be our friend and help us in all we need."[130]

**Figure 5:** Camioneros protesting in the congressional galleries. *El Informador Camionero*, July, 1970.

[128] AGN, P LCR, 545.2/65, Leñero to Cárdenas.
[129] *Diario de los debates*, XXXVII Legislatura, 3º año, December 6, 1939.
[130] *Diario de los debates*, XXXVII Legislatura, 3º año, December 6, 1939.

As discussions of the new legislation intensified, the congressional chamber—then located in Mexico City's historic center—became the site of increasing theatrics. *Camioneros* packed the galleries, and their heckling prompted some deputies to call for the sessions to be closed to the public.[131] On the streets outside, members of the Alianza waited, alternating between applause and jeers as news of the debates inside the chamber leaked out. Yet neither maneuverings in the chamber nor mobilizations outside it succeeded in altering the prevailing political mood: on December 15, in a session closed to the public, the deputies approved the package of reforms, sending them to the Senate for further debate.[132] Even Amilpa, despite his earlier grandstanding, bowed to the wind, remarking that "out of discipline and conviction that the government will take the necessary steps to impede the formation of a new monopoly, I voted in favor."[133]

The situation now reached crisis-level for the *camioneros*. While the reforms were being debated in congress, Díaz Lombardo and Martín Ruiz had led a commission to the state of Yucatán—where Cárdenas was touring—in the hopes of obtaining an audience with the president.[134] Even before the delegation departed, line presidents in Mexico City had begun preparing to oppose the project through a massive downtown strike and blockades that would shut down the city's major arteries, including highways running to Puebla and Cuautla. The goal, as Ruiz later remembered, was to a situation that "could

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[131] *Transportes y Turismo*, October, 1976. *Diario de los debates*, XXXVII Legislatura, 3º año, December 6, 1939.
[132] *Excelsior,* December 16, 1939. On December 16, the Alianza telegrammed Cárdenas their unhappiness with the "farcical" manner in which the deputies had passed the reforms in a closed session, barring the *camioneros* from entering the galleries. They went on to entreat the president to intervene with the senators on their behalf; AGN, P LCR, 545.2/65.
[133] *Diario de los debates*, XXXVII Legislatura, 3º año, December 19, 1939.
[134] AGN, P LCR, 111/1176.

only be resolved by the military through a massacre."[135] As Díaz Lombardo frantically attempted to arrange a meeting with Cárdenas, events in Mexico City accelerated.

Shortly after congress approved the legislation, the president agreed to a meeting. As they walked the grounds of a *hacienda* in the state capital of Mérida, Díaz Lombardo and Ruiz made their case to the silent president, only eliciting a reaction when they mentioned their plans for a strike. At this, Ruiz remembers, "the general waved his hand and said 'I have listened to you carefully; I am aware of your revolutionary credentials. I will try to ensure that the law does not harm you, but I am also warning you that if you go through with the strike, you are screwed'."[136] This was hardly an airtight assurance, but for the *camioneros* open confrontation with the government was not a step to be taken lightly, and Cárdenas' goodwill mattered more than Múgica's enmity. Yet telegrams from Mérida canceling the strike never reached Mexico City, and the *camioneros* took to the streets on December 19, setting off a firestorm of accusations.

Flyers posted around the city sought to convince residents of the righteousness of the *camioneros'* cause. Citing their years of experience, the broadsides declared that it was "inhuman and antipatriotic, under the pretext of establishing cooperatives, to end with a pen-stroke the system of autotransport that sustains 168,000 families."[137] An advertisement in *Excelsior* listed all 1715 *permisionarios* in Mexico City in an attempt to

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[135] *Transportes y Turismo*, November, 1976. This dual strategy of personal appeals backed by the threat of a strike drew on the *camioneros'* successes during the previous decade when direct appeals to the president or *Jefe Máximo* had thwarted unfavorable policies, and seemed to mimic the 1929 clash with Ortiz Rubio.
[136] *Transportes y Turismo*, November, 1976. Ruiz chose to redact 'screwed' from his recollections, however the President's message was unmistakable.
[137] AGN, P LCR, 545.2/65.

counter allegations of a monopoly.[138] Announcing that "We don't want communizing cooperatives!!," the broadside appealed to the senate and the president for protection.[139]

These public appeals did little to diminish the force of the anti-Alianza backlash that the strike had provoked. During the December 19 congressional session, *campesino* deputy César Martino proclaimed that the protesting workers were victims of their corrupted leaders, suggesting that their actions were the by-product of false consciousness. Deputy José Zavala Ruiz denounced as a mere fig leaf the list of *permisionarios* published in *Excelsior*. When Deputy Antonio Sánchez proclaimed that in his investigations into one urban line he had discovered that children as young as three years old supposedly held permits—a clear stratagem for disguising the actual monopoly—his companions mockingly called out that they were "*niños precoces.*"[140] Former *cromista* Celestino Gasca offered a lengthy exposé of the Alianza's commercial operations based on his experience as an early director of the Cooperativa de Combustibles, directing particular scorn at Díaz Lombardo's financial empire, including Aeronaves de México and Hotel La Marina.[141]

Outside the chamber, the day was violent. Miguel Vargas and the workers of the 18 de Marzo cooperative (the *Postergados*) clashed with Alianza members, and according to one official report at least ten of the Cooperative's buses were damaged, some by gunshots.[142] On December 21 the National League of Cooperatives issued a

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[138] *Excelsior*, December 19, 1939.
[139] AGN, P LCR, 545.2/65.
[140] "Precocious children."; *Diario de los debates*, XXXVII Legislatura, 3º año, December 19, 1939.
[141] The following day, Díaz Lombardo denied these accusations in a letter to *Excelsior*; December 20, 1939.
[142] AGN, P LCR, 545.2/65. *Excelsior*, December 20, 1939, Segunda Edición.

public statement condemning the aggressions of the 'monopoly' against the 18 de Marzo and labeling the protests an "Employers' Strike."[143] Head of the Federal District Raul Castellanos telegrammed Cárdenas describing the protests as an open attack on the state, and requesting permission to cancel the Alianza's permits.[144]

Yet against all odds, the Alianza gained and held the high ground. On December 20, Cárdenas accepted a telegrammed apology for the strike, and the *camioneros* launched a publicity campaign to rebut the congressmens' allegations. In one letter to *Excelsior* Díaz Lombardo scoffed at Gasca's insinuations about Aeronaves de México and the Hotel La Marina, declaring that "as the genuine representative of the *gremio*," it was his responsibility to defend the industry's conquests, and that the airline and hotel were legitimate investments undertaken by the Alianza as a whole.[145] On December 28, Díaz Lombardo and four other *camioneros* met with Agustín Leñero, the President's personal secretary, to discuss possible changes to the Múgica reforms. After the Alianza submitted a lengthy study and commentary of the legislation to Leñero, the president personally reiterated his promises of fair mediation to Díaz Lombardo.[146] When the Senate remitted the reformed LVGC to the Chamber of Deputies for final approval on December 30, one key change had been made, extending the period within which the *camioneros* were required to form cooperatives from 90 to 360 days; Cárdenas had indeed intervened. Though subtle, the modification was significant: it allowed the

[143] *Excelsior*, December 21, 1939.
[144] Ibid.
[145] *Excelsior*, December 20, 1939.
[146] Ibid.

Alianza to mount a legal challenge to the cooperativization clause through constitutional appeals as the reformist zeal of *cardenismo* waned during the last year of the *sexenio*.[147]

Although Múgica's supporters had held deeply entrenched positions and had seemingly deflected the Alianza's various maneuvers, when the smoke cleared Díaz Lombardo had emerged victorious. The story of this battle reveals that the conservative turn of late *cardenismo* was hardly a tidy process. Rather, it emerged from diverging strategies within the ruling faction, from the skillful politicking of dissenting groups, and in no small part from the moderating interventions of Cárdenas himself.[148] Traditional interpretations of this process hold that after nationalizing the oil industry in 1938, the president oversaw a shift away from radical policies and toward a centrist developmentalism that continued with his successors. By the end of the decade, the president had faced increasing resistance from many conservatives, and though he had succeeded in pushing forward significant agrarian redistribution and labor reforms, moderation was vital for any effort to secure the state's legitimacy with World War II on the horizon. That support for *cárdenismo* among the elite was often shallow and self-serving, as Alan Knight has noted, made such a rollback feasible. Diehards, such as Múgica, clung to their projects past 1938, but faced a president whose interests lay in reconciliation, not confrontation.

In essence, the Alianza was successful in thwarting the Ley Múgica because they could push back. The organization's effective control of the near totality of urban

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[147] The Alianza's legal strategy, documented in the many *amparos*—constitutional injunctions—filed by individual urban bus lines, basically overwhelmed the system, as legal exchanges dragged on throughout 1940.

[148] For the 'Conservative Turn' see Knight, "Juggernaut".

transport meant that it could shut down the city at will, with disastrous results. Castellanos' post-strike complaints to Cárdenas revealed the depth of policymakers' concern over the group's leverage, but simultaneously the President seems to have realized that little could be done. A massive restructuring of the system along cooperativist lines might have resulted in less efficient service. At any rate, it appears as though Cárdenas had moved away from his earlier support of the 18 de Marzo cooperativists in the face of Alianza opposition, just as he moderated policies elsewhere in the nation.[149] The more drastic option of municipalizing the bus system would have been a costly and difficult undertaking and was tantamount, moreover, to nationalizing an industry that was already in Mexican hands. It was thus wholly inconsistent with the general thrust of *cardenista* political economy and ideology. Thus the state had few palatable options in 1939, and the decision to push the reforms forward appears in retrospect a miscalculation on Múgica's part.

Despite their triumph over what they would come to call Múgica's Law (the Ley Múgica), the episode was traumatic for the *camioneros.* It was clear that their political situation was untenable, since they could only resist unfavorable government initiatives through brute force, and public protest hardly garnered good will. Even if Díaz Lombardo had succeeded in persuading Cárdenas, the *camionero* was very much on the outside looking in: when he offered to organize a public demonstration in support of the president on December 28, 1939, Cárdenas politely rebuffed the proposal.

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[149] See Fallaw, *Cárdenas Compromised*, and Bantjes, *As if Jesús Walked on Earth.*

Over the sixteen years from the founding of the Alianza to its near destruction in 1939, the group struggled to find accommodation with a political system that was moving, falteringly, toward stability. In these tumultuous years, in victories and defeats, a "political style" emerged that privileged intra-elite negotiation, espoused a conservative vision of revolutionary reconstruction, and valued political loyalty and collaboration. Even in the struggles with Cárdenas, this emergent "political style" was visible. Díaz Lombardo used back channel negotiations to outflank his opponents, using a carefully cultivated relationship with the president to obtain a victory for the Alianza. Díaz Lombardo was flexible and pragmatic, and the ultimate resolution allowed for a reconciliation between the ideological needs of the regime—the Ley Múgica remained on the books—with the political realities on the ground and the need for pragmatic compromise with groups like the Alianza. Yet in 1940 the regime remained largely unconsolidated; groups like the Alianza were only hesitant partners. The *pulpo* may have wrapped itself around the city, but it tentacles could not reach into the halls of power.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### IN FROM THE COLD (1940-1954)

Two years after leading the *camioneros* in a successful rearguard action against the Ley Múgica in 1939, Antonio Díaz Lombardo faced a bitter challenge to his leadership within the Alianza. Despite the gains of the previous 14 years, his *compañeros* questioned the political tactics that the long-time leader had adopted. Díaz Lombardo easily stared down this insurrection, but the episode was profoundly revealing of the subtle processes through which the Ávila Camacho administration started to bring conservative groups, among them small entrepreneurs, into the fold of the postrevolutionary state. Many nation-building narratives traditionally have stopped at 1940, an end point that assumes the stability of the postrevolutionary state after Cárdenas (a myth that historians have exposed as false) and one that overlooks the equally important processes of conservative incorporation after the Cárdenas *sexenio*.[1] Chapter Two tells this story by following the Alianza's incorporation into an increasingly institutionalized political system. I will argue that while the costs of weak and highly personalistic political linkages with the Mexican state were obvious to the *camioneros* in 1940, it was Ávila Camacho's moderate policies that allowed the Alianza's leaders to

[1] Daniel Newcomer's work on León, Guanajuato offers an excellent study of how conservative groups reconciled their relationship with the state during the 1940s. Tanalis Padilla, Paul Gillingham, and Elisa Servín have all offered convincing historical reexaminations that show the supposed stability the Mexican political system enjoyed after 1940 to be a myth. None of this is to say that historians and political scientists have ignored the processes of state formation after 1940, as John Sherman, Ryan Alexander, Roderic Camp, and others have all pointed to the significance of the Miguel Alemán administration (1946-1952) in institutionalizing many of the political practices of *priísmo*; Ryan Alexander, "Fortunate Sons of the Mexican Revolution: Miguel Alemán and his Generation, 1920-1952" (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 2011); John Sherman, "The Mexican 'Miracle' and Its Collapse," in *The Oxford History of Mexico*, eds. Michael C. Meyer and William H. Beezley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

align their organization more closely with the state. Furthermore, part II suggests that conservative government policies across the Ávila Camacho and Alemán *sexenios* ran parallel to the emergence of a party apparatus that drew the *camioneros* into its orbit, establishing patterns of interaction that remained unbroken until 1981.

By December of 1940, when Lázaro Cárdenas left office, it was clear to contemporaries that times were changing. Since nationalizing the oil industry in 1938, Cárdenas consistently had pulled back from radical reform, tempering agrarian reform policies and selecting a recognized moderate as his chosen successor. As many historians have noted, in this gradual shift, 1940 was less a watershed than simply a notable landmark on a longer slope leading from the heights of revolutionary reform to the coastal lowlands of single-party retrenchment. However, as the *camioneros* traversed this terrain, the struggle over the Ley Múgica still ongoing, it was hardly clear to them that the last eighteen months of Cárdenas's administration represented the "conservative turn" that Alan Knight later perceived.[2] Rather, it was with great relief that the Alianza observed the inauguration of Manuel Ávila Camacho as the country's new president, and the formal end of *cardenismo*.[3]

**DÉTENTE**

When Norberto Ruiz rose to speak before an Alianza assembly at the Fronton México on June 6, 1941, his words reflected profound uncertainty about the future.

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[2] See particularly Knight, "Juggernaut".

[3] Bertaccini writes that "The first sep toward reconciliation between the state and the middle class occurred with the election of Manuel Ávila Camacho. Many organizations representative of the middle and entrepreneurial classes began a process of 'return' ending with their entry into the official party."; *El régimen priísta*, 235

"What is the *camionero* to the authorities?" he asked, "a *Don Nadie*"—a nobody—was his insistent answer.[4] Ruiz went on to lament the economic conditions of the industry, the continual struggles to maintain equipment and acquire parts, and most pointedly, the leadership of Antonio Díaz Lombardo. In unvarnished language Ruiz observed that for fourteen years, while the docile majority of *camioneros* starved, a "closed oligarchy had paralyzed the Alianza," living luxuriously on profits squeezed from the group's businesses and financial institutions at the expense of their supposed *compañeros*. Such complaints had sparked a dissident movement within the Alianza, and the threat of violence erupting at the assembly prompted city officials to dispatch police to monitor the meeting hall.[5] Beyond allegations of corrupt mismanagement, however, Díaz Lombardo was under fire for his unwillingness to confront the government over low fares and adverse regulatory decisions. Had the long-time leader done enough to secure the group's members against political economic threats? Even as he acknowledged that he had kept the Alianza "completely removed from politics" during the 1940 presidential campaign, Díaz Lombardo openly admitted to the attendees that, in his defense, he saw collaboration with the revolutionary government as the "the only way we will be able to move forward."[6]

When the voting concluded, the assembly roundly confirmed Díaz Lombardo in his position as Secretary General of the Alianza, marking not just the continuation of his leadership but the triumph of a collaborationist position. Only seven months past the end

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[4] AGN, P MAC 710.1/101-21.
[5] *La Prensa*, June 7, 1941. The pages of La Prensa in the days before the assembly denounced Díaz Lombardo in typically sensationalist fashion, but offered little resistance when he proved victorious. Other accounts of these events can be found in AGN P, MAC 432.2/27.
[6] AGN P, MAC 710.1/101-21.

of Cárdenas's term, the Alianza was willing to bargain. To say that Díaz Lombardo's open willingness to work with the government was self-serving is clear understatement: in painting his adversaries—who accused him of financial *caciquismo* more than political betrayal—as unruly opponents of the government, he was establishing himself as the *camionero* leader most aligned with the incoming administration's goals of stability. Emphasizing, as he did during the assembly, that in order to meet the needs of a changing city the *camioneros* "must satisfy the ever-growing need to improve service, making it worthy of the modern city and deserving of the authorities' attention," he simultaneously marshaled Alianza members into line behind him and moved to allay the obvious concerns of the government.[7] Such a strategy suggests that by mid-1941, Díaz Lombardo had judged the Ávila Camacho government to be, if not more amenable to his interests, at least easier to negotiate with than its predecessor.

Rapprochement had come with impressive quickness. Shortly after taking office in January of 1941, Ávila Camacho had suspended the *Reglamento Para el Servicio de Autotransportes de Pasajeros en el Distrito Federal***,** the code governing transport in Mexico City that applied the precepts of the federal 1939 LVGC locally, and had commissioned a new study of urban transport policy.[8] This was a clear signal that the new administration favored a different approach to the bus industry, and in September Ávila Camacho issued a decree allowing new lines to be established in the D.F. with no explicit preference for workers' cooperatives, instead directing city administrators to issue permits to whomever could most quickly and effectively begin service—a clause

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[7] Ibid.
[8] *El Informador Camionero*, November 1, 1941.

that in practice overwhelmingly favored the Alianza's entrepreneurs.[9] More importantly, in the process of revising the legislation, authorities were quick to consult with the Alianza. Over the course of the fall Alianza leaders met with both the regent of Mexico City, Javier Rojo Gómez, and the head of the SCOP, Maximino Ávila Camacho, the president's brother. Thus, not only was policy substantively different under the new regime, but the general tenor of the policy-making process was also in stark contrast to *cardenismo*, when Múgica had refused meetings with Alianza commissions. Revealing the *camioneros*' optimism, the first issue of *El Informador Camionero*, published in November, commented of the meeting with Maximino that the attendees "left with the impression that a new productive era is beginning."[10]

The clearest indication of that new era came just a few weeks later during festivities commemorating the first anniversary of Ávila Camacho's inauguration. During massive demonstrations marking the event, enthusiastic *camionero* participation indicated that a rapprochement with the state was under way. Beyond a simple display of loyalty, however, as the Alianza paraded 1,500 buses and sizeable contingents of men through the Zócalo, the banners they displayed revealed their attempt to cultivate a new political relationship with the regime. Announcing that Ávila Camacho represented "the symbol of a new national order," and that the President had indeed "governed for all,"

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[9] Ibid. The Alianza's initial hesitancy over the application of these reforms were allayed in a subsequent meeting with Mexico City regent Javier Rojo Gómez, *El Informador Camionero*, November 1, 1941.
[10] *El Informador Camionero*, November 1, 1941. The decision to begin publishing an Alianza magazine seems closely tied to the struggle over leadership earlier that year. *El Informador Camionero* served as a mouthpiece for Díaz Lombardo's Executive committee, and promoted the goals of the organization's leadership.

amounted to an implicit condemnation of the Cárdenas administration.[11] Indeed, editorials lauding the new administration in *El Informador Camionero* referred to Ávila Camacho's calming of class tensions that had begun to boil over during 1940.[12] As they praised Ávila Camacho's moderation the Alianza's leaders also sought to position their group as effective and important collaborators in the task of modernization. The buses that paraded that day had been drawn from lines across the city, in a display of discipline and orderly service calculated to impress authorities. Underscoring the group's commitment to progress and the improvement of urban transport, a 1920s-era bus labeled "Yesterday" traveled alongside a new, modern bus labeled "Today."

It was clear that these overtures were finding their mark, and the Alianza leadership was eager to advertise their reconciliation with the system. During the parade Díaz Lombardo marched at the head of his *compañeros*, then ascended to the balcony of the Palacio Nacional to observe the remainder of the demonstration alongside Ávila Camacho, posing with the President in photos published on the cover of *El Informador Camionero*.[13] When the ceremony concluded a sizeable delegation of *camioneros* presented Ávila Camacho with an elegantly inscribed formal statement of adhesion signed by the presidents of 46 bus lines. Such pageantry was hardly novel, but it was an important means of signaling political connections. The following spring the Alianza's

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[11] *El Informador Camionero*, December 16, 1941. Certain elements of the display, however, displayed marked continuity with the earlier postrevolutionary epoch: the same groups of Alianza-affiliated athletes who had marched in the 1933 November Athletic Parade participated in 1941.
[12] *El Informador Camionero*, December 1, 1941.
[13] *El Informador Camionero*, December 16, 1941. John Mraz has suggested how staged photographs projected political authority and legitimacy in Mexico. Certainly, the purpose of such arranged photographs was to suggest to readers of *El Informador Camionero* that Díaz Lombardo had the president's respect and was therefore a valuable representative and leader; Mraz, "Photographing Political Power in Mexico," in *Citizens of the Pyramid*, 147-180.

loyalty was rewarded when Ávila Camacho issued a new Reglamento de Tránsito that explicitly nullified the cooperativizing articles of the Cárdenas-era laws as applied in Mexico City.[14]

Rapprochement did not immediately translate into material benefits, however. While Ávila Camacho cut away Múgica's legislative legacy, he could do little to attenuate the crisis brought on by wartime conditions. The years were marked by shortages and inflation, and although price controls were a constant feature of life, residents still felt squeezed. Under such conditions, the government was disinclined to grant the Alianza an increase in fares, which were so low Martín Ruiz labeled them "miserable."[15] The global conflict loomed large during nearly all of Ávila Camacho's *sexenio*, and the exigencies of wartime shaped the country's political economy. At the end of 1942, *El Informador Camionero* reflected that over the previous two years, the *camioneros* had enjoyed economic success, but "in the current year, the situation has changed completely, as the high cost and scarcity of buses and parts have eliminated the small profit that *permisionarios* previously earned."[16] Over the subsequent three years, in fact, wartime restrictions denied the *camioneros* access to chassis and tires typically imported from the United States, forcing them to struggle to keep decaying buses in service through constant repairs. Díaz Lombardo even traveled to Washington D.C. to lobby U.S. policymakers to permit the export of necessary automotive equipment.[17] *El Informador Camionero* did not sugar-coat the situation, publishing pictures of destroyed

[14] *El Informador Camionero*, July 1,1942.
[15] *El Informador Camionero*, January 1, 1942.
[16] *El Informador Camionero*, November 1, 1942.
[17] *El Informador Camionero*, October 16, 1942.

buses in junkyards and noting that given the "abnormal conditions" that prevented easy replacement, for a distracted driver to destroy his vehicle [in a senseless crash] was not simply the path to unemployment and misery, it was also tantamount to treason.[18] Similarly, proper tire maintenance was a constant topic in industry publications. In order to minimize wear on tires and chassis from passenger overloading of buses, government offices began staggering their hours of business to eliminate rush-hour crowding.

War also allowed for a reconfiguration of national politics, allowing Ávila Camacho to suppress political differences in the name of national unity.[19] Amendments to the penal code in 1941 created the crime of "Social Dissolution" for broadly defined acts of sedition, serving to strengthen presidential authority by creating a flexible legal mechanism that could be used to punish dissent.[20] Generally, the approach of war facilitated the expansion of executive power and Ávila Camacho was able to use the international context to discipline organized labor which, under the collaborationist CTM, agreed to a largely-symbolic pact to avoid strikes and slowdowns during the war.[21] The war also helped bring together elite factions, and in 1942, every living former president since Carranza, including Calles and Cárdenas, joined Ávila Camacho at the National Palace to proclaim their support for the war effort. Cárdenas, Calles, and Abelardo

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[18] *El Informador Camionero*, November 1, 1942.
[19] Halbert Jones, "'The War Has Brought Peace to Mexico': The Political Impact of Mexican Participation in World War II" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2006).
[20] Evelyn Stevens, "Legality and Extra-Legality in México," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 12:1 (1970). Though originally designed to target potential fascist infiltrators, the law quickly morphed into an anti-communist measure with revisions in 1951, and was frequently used to prosecute leftists in following years. The removal of the Social Dissolution law was a central demand of student protesters in 1968.
[21] Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s*, 121. The pact between workers and employers did not halt all strikes, as employers often refused to cooperate with the agreement and the government often had to intervene to impose wage increases; Luis Medina Peña, *Del cardenismo al avilacamachismo 1940-1952*, Historia de la revolucion mexicana, vol. 18 (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1978), 314.

Rodríguez—the first two former enemies, the latter a pro-business conservative—were even recommissioned as military officers. In what Stephen Niblo deemed a "masterstroke," Ávila Camacho "neutralized" both Cárdenas and Rodríguez by dispatching them to command military zones far from their regional strongholds of Michoacan and Baja California, respectively.[22]

In this crucible of regime consolidation and wartime stress the relationship between the Alianza and the regime was strengthened. With social control and economic growth both pressing issues, the unwavering loyalty of urban service providers mattered profoundly. Ironically, the same labor practices that had put the group in Múgica's crosshairs in the 1930s now served to endear it to the regime. During the first years of the 1940s, strikes and ongoing disputes crippled service on several important lines, prompting at least one group of residents to complain to the president about the inconvenience.[23] Moreover, the cooperatives favored by Cárdenas as a solution to such problems had increasingly fallen into disarray.[24] Internal schisms among the *cooperativistas* invited meddling and led to almost immediate financial troubles. The 18 de Marzo cooperative, which had been at the center of the Cárdenas-era struggles, had never succeeded in establishing effective service after beginning operation in 1939, as its leaders clashed with city officials and with each other.[25] By 1943, the 18 de Marzo was

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[22] Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s*, 116.
[23] AGN, P MAC 432.2/27, 16 April 1941.
[24] Most of the cooperatives formed after 1939 never even got off the ground, stymied by Alianza opposition and official foot-dragging on concession procedures.
[25] In May, 1940, Transit Director Gallardo Moreno informed Cárdenas that 18 de Marzo leader Miguel Vargas: "…has an intemperate character, often forgets the respect and consideration that he should have for the authorities, and because he is one of the newest supposed 'proletarian defenders of the workers,' he believes that all authorities should bend to his whims and those who do not are enemies of the government, anti-revolutionary, and anti-worker… He forgets that there are laws and regulations that should be respected."; AGN, P LCR 512.51/244.

unable to pay its debts, and the Ministry of the Economy placed the line under receivership. But this failed to improve service and by the following summer only eight buses were in service, down from 66 a few years before. During the same period Jesús Yuren, head of the Federation of Workers of the Federal District (FTDF, the CTM's Mexico City branch), began to recruit dissident members of the cooperative in an attempted takeover, and when 18 de Marzo leader Miguel Vargas was imprisoned in 1944, Yúren and CTM boss Fidel Velázquez consolidated their hold on the group.[26] This was no small shift: Velázquez and Yuren shared Díaz Lombardo's collaborationist attitude toward the government, and more significantly the CTM supported the Alianza's employer-friendly "white unions," which it claimed as affiliates. By the 1950s, the consolidation of the bus industry under the Alianza and the CTM was a boon to urban stability and tended to prevent widespread disruptions in service, as *camioneros* and union leaders worked in concert to quash any serious labor movements.[27]

Additionally, because of its affiliated commercial and financial institutions, and the savvy of its leaders, the Alianza was better positioned to weather the wartime storms than its cooperative competitors. In 1942, Alianza members established the city's first "luxury" (or "first class") service connecting the upper-middle-class Lomas de

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[26] Velázquez and Yuren enjoyed exceptionally lengthy careers as union bosses, accumulating staggering political power and wealth. Velázquez used his unquestioned control over the massive CTM to influence national politics from the 1940s to the 1990s. Yuren, Velázquez's close associate, controlled Mexico City's workers with an iron fist, and was twice elected a congressional deputy and twice again as a senator. See Roderic Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935-1993*, 3rd ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).

[27] Additionally, the C.T.M. sanctioned the system of individual bus line unions, rather than an entire-industry union, which atomized workers and limited the potential for a system-wide strike. After 1981, the newly municipalized system was buffeted by strikes as a single union emerged for all bus industry workers.

Chapultepec neighborhood with downtown.[28] In this effort to satisfy a demanding clientele and improve urban service, *El Informador Camionero* was quick to point out, the group had received ample cooperation from city authorities—a stark change from several years earlier.[29] During these years, indeed, Díaz Lombardo and the Alianza had fostered close ties to important regime officials, catering to the narcissistic whims of Maximino Ávila Camacho with lavish saint's day parades, meeting regularly with Javier Rojo Gómez—though not always fruitfully—and establishing close ties with new Transit Director David Pérez Rulfo, who attended Díaz Lombardo's 1944 saint's day celebration "not as an official, but as a friend."[30] The fruits of this cultivation were evident when in 1943 the group won a small but important fare raise to offset rising costs, over the objections of city residents.[31]

The government's decision to sanction the Alianza's control of buses and to license it, in effect, as the official manager transportation infrastructure was not a casual one. It took the measure of the Alianza's strength, demonstrated in the struggle against the Ley Múgica, the group's ability to provide effective service, and was a decision shaped by Díaz Lombardo's effective lobbying. At any rate, in the context of the 1940s, officials were inclined to placate the organization. As Foreign Minister Ezequiel Padilla remarked in 1942, "[T]he Alianza's endeavors are of great importance for the economy of the country, given that, within the Federal District, it controls the near totality of the

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[28] "First-Class" lines would gradually emerge as part of a two-tier system, supposedly offering newer, better-maintained buses with ample seating, as opposed to cheaper, standing-room-only "Second-Class" bus lines.
[29] *El Informador Camionero,* September 16, 1942.
[30] *El Informador Camionero*, July 16, 1944.
[31] Rather than a true fare raise, the city government simply began permitting certain lines to charge a rate above the previously standardized fare.

autotransport services, and the paralysis of those services would carry grave consequences."[32]

The backdrop of an urbanizing Mexico City was central to this story. By 1940 the population of the metropolis had increased by nearly a half million residents since 1930, and in the next decade the number of *capitalinos* would double. As developers established new subdivisions (*fraccionamientos*) along the edges of the city, upwardly mobile middle-class professionals came to depend on bus service. A 1941 advertisement for lots in the new Colonia Moctezuma noted that new residents would enjoy amenities including water from Xochimilco, electricity, drainage, asphalt pavement, and a bus every minute on the San Rafael Aviación line, meaning they would only be five minutes from the Zócalo, and thus five minutes from their workshop and office, five minutes from the markets, and five minutes from diversion.[33] While there is no solid evidence that *camioneros* were ever active participants in developing these new residential *colonias*, they certainly competed aggressively to tap the new markets. In the classic 1948 film *Esquina, bajan…!*, a rag-tag group of *camioneros* receive the concession to provide service to a new *fraccionamiento*, but must first face down the efforts of a bigger bus line to invade their new route.[34] The eventual victory of the owner-drivers over their challengers, and the protagonist's amorous conquest of an upper-middle-class passenger, painted an undeniably romantic picture of the city's transportation network.[35] If buses were crowded, riders ill-mannered, and disputes between bus lines violent—and all of

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[32] *El Informador Camionero*, August 16, 1942.
[33] *La Prensa*, June 7, 1941.
[34] *Esquina, bajan...!* dir. Alejandro Galindo, 1948.
[35] Salvador Novo's romanticized (and often eroticized) vision of bus drivers is discussed in Rubén Gallo *Freud's Mexico: Into the Wilds of Pyschoanalysis* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010).

these things were true—*Esquina, bajan…!* suggested a happy ending. And by the war's end in 1945, for the Alianza's members at least, the future did appear bright.

## THE NEW ORDER

Though they had been determined by a welter of personal and strategic interests, the Ávila Camacho administration's decision to bring the Alianza into the fold must also be understood as part of a political process. Over the course of a 'long decade,' from the late 1930s to the early 1950s, profound currents eroded and redeposited the political silt of the Revolution. This was a layered process, involving a gradual expansion of state power and capacity, paired with increasingly effective corporatist strategies.[36] Equally important was the subtle reorientation of policy in response to the conservative pushback against the more radical elements of *cardenismo*. As Alan Knight remarked, after 1940 the vehicle of *cardenismo* "was hi-jacked by new drivers; they retuned the engine, took on new passengers, and then drove it in quite a different direction."[37] Díaz Lombardo and the Alianza were in many ways emblematic of those "new passengers," middle-class leaders and groups who moved into the institutional fold of the postrevolutionary state during these years. The process through which this occurred annealed the state, changing its basic metallurgy into a durable authoritarian steel. My model of state building here is

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[36] Corporatism is discussed at greater length in Chapter Four. It should also be noted here that the success of corporatist control was uneven. Groups from all sectors of society broke with their official representatives, and the techniques of corporatism did not ensure the party complete authority. The regime's hegemony was mottled. See Gillingham, "Maximino's Bulls" and Jeffery Rubin, *Decentering the Regime: Ethnicity, Radicalism and Democracy in Juchitán, Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

[37] Knight "Juggernaut".

institutionally focused, privileging the role of the party in structuring political life. The ruling party was neither meaningless acronym nor promiscuous big tent that indiscriminately sought to include all factions and social groups. If shifts in the state fostered affective ties with groups alienated by *cardenismo*, such as the Alianza, shifts in the party institutionalized their incorporation into the political order.

When Lázaro Cárdenas impelled a reform of the PNR in 1938, he put a personal stamp on the *callista* project, transforming the old agglomeration of regional parties into a singular party, fundamentally *cardenista* and tied to the government.[38] Reorganizing the PNR along corporatist lines, Cárdenas channeled the representation of *campesino*, worker, bureaucratic, and military interests into four sectors that composed the new party. If this new structure initially privileged the first two sectors, by March 1938, when a convention formally constituted the new Partido de la Revolución Mexicana (PRM) under the slogan "For a Democracy of the Workers," the radicalism of the *cardenista* project was beginning to ebb.[39] When the party officially nominated Manuel Ávila Camacho as its presidential candidate in 1939, suppressing the objections of a radical faction supporting the pre-candidacy of Francisco Múgica, the 'conservative turn' was made official. The *Segundo Plan Sexenal*, the party-sponsored platform for Ávila Camacho's candidacy, struck a decidedly conciliatory note toward conservatives.[40]

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[38] Bertaccini, *El régimen priísta*, 42; Garrido, *Partido de la revolución*, 251.

[39] Garrido sees the creation of the PRM as meeting Cárdenas' need to institutionalize his base of mass support and serving as a means to deepen reforms, while nevertheless retaining many of the sins of *callismo*. Pablo Gonzalez Casanova remarks that the PRM maintained a sort of "institutional *caudillismo*" for workers and *campesinos* that effectively disarmed the radical movement by supporting loyal bosses and local leaders; *El estado y los partidos políticos en México* (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, 1981), 49. Tiziana Bertaccini notes that the PRM represented a turn from liberal, constitutional democracy toward "the concept of social justice as a substitute for the law as a guarantee of proletarian rights."; *El régimen priísta*, 55.

[40] Garrido, *Partido de la revolución*, 285.

But if the PRM's language during the campaign was overtly moderate, it did not fully succeed in bringing immediate rapprochement with the country's alienated conservative and middle-class groups, who threw their support behind the opposition candidacy of Juan Andreu Almazán. By Niblo's account, Almazán's support was massive, particularly in urban areas, and speculations of fraud plagued the ballot.[41] After the government violently suppressed the *almazanistas*' post-election protests, some conservative groups moved even farther from the PRM while others found accommodation with the regime. In this sense, the Alianza's non-participation in 1940 was perhaps typical, as was its gradual incorporation after the event.[42] As Tiziana Bertaccini observes, "the first step toward reconciliation between the state and the middle-class occurred with the election of Manuel Ávila Camacho. Many of the groups representing middle-class and entrepreneurial interests began a process of 'return,' culminating with their inscription in the official party [in 1946]."[43]

This reconciliation had not occurred by chance, however. After the 1940 election, state builders were painfully conscious that the allegiances of significant sections of the country's population were in other political directions.[44] While moderation of government policies alleviated middle-class concerns, Ávila Camacho's government also undertook a reform of the official party's previously anemic bureaucratic sector with the intent of courting middle-class groups. Under Cárdenas, the popular sector had primarily

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[41] Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s*, 87.
[42] The Alianza's members, it should be noted, were not overt *almazanistas* and indeed, even in 1940, the *camioneros* were far more tied to the regime by virtue of their reliance on subsidies and concessions than were the Catholic conservative middle class groups who tended to ally with Ávila Camacho's opponent.
[43] Bertaccini, *El régimen priísta*, 235.
[44] Bertaccini remarks that "since 1940, one of the principal preoccupations of the Party has been obtaining the participation of the middle-classes within the revolutionary institution."; *El régimen priísta*, 235.

served as a counterweight to the CTM, keeping government workers—its primary members—from coming under the control of the labor central. In Bertaccini's account, this changed quickly after 1940: "starting in the first year of Ávila Camacho's government, the reorganization of the popular sector of the party became the central aspect of his strategy of national unity."[45] The new popular sector was based around an official confederation of popular groups, labeled the Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares (CNOP), with a structure analogous to that of the *campesino* and labor sectors.[46] While establishing an institutional channel for the incorporation of middle-class groups did not automatically guarantee their participation in the official project, the effort did pay almost immediate political dividends. As the state increasingly based its rhetorical legitimacy on a forward-looking, modernizing project—rather than invoking a direct revolutionary paternity—it was crucial that, as Bertaccini suggests, the political system develop a mechanism "to obtain the consensus of the middle sectors: the social group that would, in short time, become the symbol of the country's coming modernity."[47] The CNOP served that end, but more substantially it bound those social groups more tightly to the state. Bertaccini observes that unlike the CTM and CNC, the CNOP was an official creation, a top-down effort to incorporate politically otherwise amorphous groups. Thus, because it lacked an organic, pre-existing structure and ideology, the CNOP was both more malleable than other sectors and its candidates were

[45] Bertaccini, *El régimen priísta*, 236. Garrido offers nearly this precise sentiment as well; *Partido de la revolución*, 319.
[46] Non-CNOP groups could still technically form part of the popular sector, but this was rare.
[47] Bertaccini, *El régimen priísta*, 235.

often hand-picked by regime officials; the CNOP became effectively the "organ of the government in the party."[48]

The CNOP effectively presented an open door to entrepreneurial groups and smallholders that had previously been excluded from the party, and it quickly became evident that it was the politically ascendant sector. In the 1943 congressional elections, 75 of the PRM's 144 deputies were from the popular sector, while only 46 and 23 came from the *campesino* and labor sectors, respectively.[49] One such deputy was the secretary general of the Alianza de Camioneros de Jalisco, Luis Jiménez Delgado. In congress, Jiménez Delgado was responsible for the formation of the Autotransport Commission in 1945 and his legislative work was lauded in *El Informador Camionero*. His career therefore suggests how the creation of the CNOP and the political opening to entrepreneurial groups like the *camioneros* contributed to shifts in the country's political economy.[50]

It was into this political niche that the Alianza slipped seamlessly. In 1945, the banners *camioneros* carried at a rally in support of Ávila Camacho not only announced that the President was the "symbol of national unity and respect for citizens' rights," but also bore the CNOP's insignia.[51] None of this would have been possible without Díaz Lombardo, as he had orchestrated the Alianza's reconciliation with the regime after 1940, establishing close ties with political leaders such as Maximino Ávila Camacho and

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[48] Bertaccini *El régimen priísta*, 326; 245.
[49] Garrido, *Partido de la revolución*, 340.
[50] *El Informador Camionero*, November 1, 1946; *Diario de los Debates*, XXXIX Legislatura, 3º año, September 4, 1945.
[51] *El Informador Camionero*, December 16, 1945.

bureaucrats such as Transit Director David Pérez Rulfo, and ensuring that the organization struck the right tone at demonstrations in support of the government.

The Alianza's official integration into the party came at an historical juncture. The nomination of Miguel Alemán in 1945 as the ruling party candidate reinforced the rightward political shift, as he affirmed a policy of developmentalism under which the government would stimulate industrial growth while leaving large areas of economic activity as the domain of private investment.[52] As Roderic Camp has noted, the ascendance of Alemán represented a fundamental generational shift toward a conservative, civilian, educated, and technocratic cohort that had been forged in the 1929 Vasconcelos campaign against Ortiz Rubio and at the National Preparatory Academy and UNAM.[53] Noting the historical significance of *alemanismo* in shaping the Mexican regime, John Sherman writes that it "rested on a new coalition of the formerly disassociated… [and] turned Mexico's body politic on its head."[54]

The 1945-1946 campaign thus offered an opportunity for the country's conservative and entrepreneurial middle-classes to invest symbolically in the regime, and in this sense marked a key moment in the development of the one-party system. For the *camioneros*, 1945 was worlds away from 1939 when they had remained warily distant from Ávila Camacho's campaign. Alemán was not only a known quantity politically, but he was a known ally, since as Interior Minister in 1945 he had endorsed the Alianza's

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[52] Partido Revolucionario Institucional, Instituto de Capacitación Política, *Historia Documental del Partido de la Revolución, PRM-PRI, 1945-1950*, vol. 5 (México, D.F.: Partido Revolucionario Institucional, 1982): 136.
[53] Camp, *The Metamorphosis of Leadership.* Interestingly, unlike the *alemanistas*, the *camioneros* had not been *vasconcelistas*. See Chapter 1.
[54] Sherman, "The Mexican 'Miracle'", 576.

proposed revisions to the controversial 1939 LVGC during a meeting with Alianza representatives.[55] Beyond that, however, the official candidate was a personal friend of Antonio Díaz Lombardo. How *camionero* and politician first became acquainted is not clear, but as a man on the make in Mexico City during the 1930s and 40s, it is hardly surprising that Díaz Lombardo crossed paths with the future president. There was certainly ample basis for a friendship. Both men were members of the reconstruction generation, shared a particular vision of economic development, and had a common financial interest in the tourism industry—especially Acapulco, Alemán's personal development project. When Alemán, as PRM candidate, spoke at Díaz Lombardo's saint's day celebration on June 13, 1945, he put his loyalty to both the Alianza and its leader on public display.[56] The Alianza's enthusiastic support for Alemán's candidacy was therefore not surprising, but the degree of formality this backing displayed was nonetheless striking.

In June 1945 the Alianza officially endorsed Alemán, declaring him the "candidate of the *camioneros*" and organizing a massive publicity campaign, recommending to provincial affiliates that they publish full-page newspaper advertisements supporting the official candidate, and that "in the appropriate moment, [they] participate in public demonstrations of the same nature."[57] On July 26, Narciso Contreras Contreras—Díaz Lombardo's close associate and the Alianza's director of publicity—informed members that in accordance with requests from the group's Executive committee, they were to place campaign posters on board buses, paste stickers

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[55] *El Informador Camionero*, April 1, 1945.
[56] *Mañana*, June 23, 1945
[57] *El Informador Camionero*, July 1, 1945, "Alianza Circular No. 23," June 29, 1945.

on the windows and backrests, paint slogans on the walls of terminals and at the entrances to principal highways, and prominently display portraits of the candidate, among other activities.[58] Contreras reminded affiliates that "the program represents ample opportunities for publicity and propaganda that will have benefits for the entire *gremio*."[59] It was not long before tickets on every Mexico City bus line bore the portrait of Miguel Alemán.[60]

When the official PRM campaign got underway in the fall of 1945 with rallies in Iguala, Guerrero, and Mexico City, Alianza buses provided free transportation to supporters mustered from villages and labor unions. These bussed-in rent-a-ralliers—*acarreados* in the terminology of Mexican politics—were not a new feature of official party campaigns, but the practice seemed to grow more institutionalized in 1945 with the willing participation of the Alianza.[61] It was a mutually beneficial arrangement. By 1945, Alianza-affiliated organizations controlled most of the country's buses and a significant number of cargo trucks, a substantial resource for political organizers seeking both to bolster their cause and weaken the opposition.[62] For the September 9 rally in Iguala,

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[58] *El Informador Camionero*, September 1, 1945.
[59] Ibid.
[60] The opposition *padillistas* complained bitterly about this shameless promotion of the official candidate. Examples of tickets can be seen in the library-archive of the Fundación Miguel Alemán.
[61] The theater of elections was perhaps the most important part of *priísta* ritual. While the results were widely known to be bogus, elections served many purposes. Frank Brandenburg saw it as a period of political measurement, when the official presidential candidate gauged the strength of regional leaders and bought support with promises of projects and money; Brandenburg, *The Making of Modern Mexico*, 148. Similarly, Lorenzo Meyer has written of the "legitimizing" function of electoral rituals, noting that the process requires forging compromises with various factions within the governing group; Meyer, "La revolución mexicana y sus elecciones presidenciales, 1911-1940," in *Las elecciones en México: evolución y perspectivas*. Pablo González Casanova, ed. (México, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno, 1985).. From another perspective, Beatriz Magaloni argues that fraudulent elections served to signal the high cost of breaking with the system, reminding potential dissidents that the regime still retained significant power; the intended audience of electoral fraud was not the public but the elite; Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy.*
[62] Padillistas complained that Díaz Lombardo specifically restricted urban bus service to limit attendance at their rallies. AGN, DGIPS C.96 Exp.12.

flatbed trucks and a caravan of over 100 Alianza buses—most, probably, dispatched from Mexico City—transported *campesino* contingents from around the state.[63] On September 30, when the Alemán campaign organized a massive demonstration in Mexico City, not only did the *camioneros* temporarily restructure urban service to transport the 250,000 participants to and from downtown areas, but also sent a column of 1,000 ornately decorated buses and 10,000 members parading through the streets while Díaz Lombardo and Alemán observed from the balcony of the Hotel Majestic.[64] A few days later, Díaz Lombardo and Contreras were named to the PRM's official campaign committee.[65]

**Figure 6:** Campaigning in Guerrero. *El Informador Camionero*, September 16, 1945.

[63] *El Informador Camionero*, September 16, 1945.
[64] *El Informador Camionero*, October 1, 1945.
[65] *El Informador Camionero*, October 16, 1945. Padillista commentary about the rally considered it a show for foreign (U.S.) consumption; AGN, DGIPS, C.87, exp.1, 3 October 1945.

Over the following months, as Alemán rolled toward an inevitable victory in July, the Alianza's collaboration with the campaign assumed an almost official quality, suggesting that the political rituals of *acarreo* were neither secretive nor haphazard. In early 1946, Alianza leadership provided members with clear instructions for "Special Service" for a January 20 demonstration in Mexico City. Affiliated urban lines were informed that:

> By agreement of the line presidents, members will provide special service to transport *alemanista* contingents from the diverse [labor] centrals and political parties, following the instructions and orders of José T. Gutierrez, Secretary of Transit, who will specify the location, hour, and person to whom the buses will be dispatched... It is recommended that by no means should you fail to provide buses for this service… it is the strict responsibility of each line president to ensure the fulfillment of the obligation our organization has with the Party… The personnel who drive these buses should make whatever trips are ordered by the head of the group or representative of the organization for whom they are providing the service…[66]

Just as the Alianza had been a vital collaborator for governments interested in moving urban residents from residence to work, the group became a vital collaborator for a party increasingly obsessed with orchestrating massive turnouts at public events. The Alianza hardly shied from this: *camioneros* not assigned to "special service" were instructed to participate in the rally with—as the circular clearly specified—"a three-meter-long banner with the name of the corresponding line and of the Alianza de Camioneros de México."[67] The circular concluded that "in moments such as this, all the directors and members of our organization are obligated to demonstrate that our candidate can count on the decided support and enthusiasm of the *gremio*."[68] A few months later Alianza

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[66] *El Informador Camionero*, February 1, 1946.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid. Similar circulars were sent with instructions for caravans sent to Veracruz in May 1946.

circulars were reminding line presidents to ensure that all personnel were duly registered to vote for "our candidate" on July 7.[69] If the *camioneros*' language and behavior suggested a sense of reciprocity, and a belief that collaboration would yield immediate benefits, they did not have to wait long.

In January 1946 the national PRM convention voted to reform the party as the PRI. The transformation followed the patterns of the campaign, enshrining in party statutes and electoral platforms the social composition and ideological foundations of *alemanismo*. As in 1938, the restructuring of the party meant more than a new acronym. An editorial published in the government newspaper, *El Nacional* remarked that "the national reality left behind the PRM….The revolutionary clamor for years sought the transformation or liquidation of the PRM, to become a group of a new type, an institution maintaining and strengthening the coalition of society's progressive forces and adapted to the demands of the country's political and economic development."[70] The new Institutional Revolution Party (PRI) adopted a new slogan, abandoning "For a Workers' Democracy" for the more vague and inclusive "Democracy and Social Justice."[71] Where the PRM's statutes had explicitly discussed class struggle and declared "one of [the party's] fundamental objectives is the preparation of the country for the implementation of a workers democracy and the achievement of socialism," the PRI's statutes acknowledged class struggle but recognized the right to "freedom of economic activity," promoted economic development, and spoke only of civic education and preparing the

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[69] *El Informador Camionero*, April 16, 1946.
[70] PRI, *Historia documental*, vol. 5, 249; *El Nacional* January 20, 1946.
[71] The PRI also represented a return to the direct membership structures of the PNR from the indirect sectoral structures of the PRM, a shift that centralized party authority and subordinated the sectors, although this did not imply a weakening of the CNOP's growing power relative to the CTM and CNC.

country for "participation in authentic democracy."[72] Thus, the PRM's sense of ongoing struggle was replaced with the PRI's declaration that "the ideals of the Revolution have been crystallized in institutions that form an integral part of national life:" a new phase of political life had begun, one where ideological ferment was to be replaced with the institutionalized administration of the revolution and economic development.[73]

The new PRI quickly brought the *camioneros* into the fold. That spring, the party nominated Manuel Peña Vera, the president of the Alianza-affiliated Lomas de Chapultepec Line, as candidate for a congressional deputyship from the First District in the D.F., which he predictably won in the July elections. As *El Informador Camionero* noted, Peña Vera would be the "mouthpiece of *camionero* longings in the Chamber of Deputies."[74] This was in some ways an odd choice: Peña Vera was not a particularly long-tenured member of the Alianza, he had never served on its executive committee, and he does not appear to have been close to Díaz Lombardo. Nevertheless, he had distinguished himself as administrator of the first urban luxury service line, and seems to have had some political connections, since he had already figured as a pre-candidate for a deputyship in 1940.[75] Peña Vera was not the only *camionero* to prosper politically in

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[72] PRI, *Historia documental*, vol. 5, 254-255; Partido Revolucionario Institucional, Instituto de Capacitación Política, *Historia documental del partido de la revolución, PNR-PRM 1934-1938*, vol. 3 (México, D.F.: Partido Revolucionario Institucional, 1981), 476.

[73] Ibid. Indeed, where the PRM's statutes tended to use verbs such as "struggle," "advocate," and "impel," when discussing objectives, the PRI's declaration of principles tended towards "cooperate," "recognize," and "propose." As Luis Medina writes, "The [PRI's] fundamental contrast with the PRM resided in the "institutional" appellation of the new party. Beyond the jokes and commentary that note an absurd contrast between Revolution and Institutionality, the fact was that the appellation implied a radical change in the mission of the party and in the interpretation of the Mexican Revolution. In the preceding decade, it was considered a living, actual process, that had not yet found the means of achieving all its promises and ideals. With the creation of the PRI… the Mexican Revolution passed into being something already achieved institutionally."; Medina Peña, *Hacia el nuevo estado,* 159-160.

[74] *El Informador Camionero*, April 16, 1946.

[75] AGN, DGIPS C.200 Exp.26. Peña Vera was not the first *camionero* to serve in the Chamber of Deputies, though he was the first from Mexico City.

1946: Gonzalo López Manzanero, founder of the Alianza de Camioneros de Yucatán was selected as one of the PRI's candidates for Senator (and was duly elected).[76] Díaz Lombardo, for his part, denied any interest in obtaining personal benefits from collaboration, announcing at his July 1946 saint's day party that:

> There are those who allege that my friendship with *licenciado* Alemán and my closeness to him during the campaign has turned me into one more unconditional follower seeking a job. To them, I say that my friendship and closeness with our candidate simply obeys the general will of our *gremio* which, formerly distant from all politics, desired to show *licenciado* Alemán its adhesion and sympathy. But Antonio Díaz Lombardo does not seek, nor will he ever seek, an accommodation in the *alemanista* administration, understanding that, now as always, my place is with you [the *camioneros*], the men who made me and to whom I owe my loyalty.[77]

Such protestations notwithstanding, when, shortly after his predestined triumph in the elections, Alemán named Díaz Lombardo head of the Social Security Institute, Martín Ruiz wrote in *El Informador Camionero* that "the designation is a tremendous honor for the *Gremio Camionero* of the entire country, and particularly for *compañero* Diaz Lombardo. It is an explicit recognition of our virtues as a *gremio*."[78] When Alemán took office on December 1, the Alianza again turned out in force, decorating city buses with celebratory posters, hiring musicians to play in bus terminals, and publishing congratulations in major newspapers across the country.[79]

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[76] *El Informador Camionero*, August 16, 1946. The history of *camioneros* in Yucatán is an impressive and interesting one, meriting more discussion than can be provided here. Briefly, the two competing organizations in Mérida, the Unión de Camioneros de Yucatán and the Alianza de Camioneros de Yucatán, both achieved significant regional political influence, though at different times, and many *camionero* leaders from the state served in the Chamber of Deputies.
[77] *El Informador Camionero*, June 16, 1946
[78] *El Informador Camionero*, December 16, 1946.
[79] Ibid.

The choreography of the 1945-1946 campaign marked an important moment in the transition from PNR to PRI. It was in this campaign that middle-class and entrepreneurial groups first found a place in a welcoming political system. This transition had been a long time in the making. As Pablo González Casanova observes: "The transformation of the PNR into the PRM obeyed a movement of workers and *campesinos* led by the leaders of rural military-political organizations. The middle-classes were never able to organize around revolutionary social and ideological poles," but over time, as the PRM moved toward the PRI, "the practices of institutional *caudillismo* broadened, first based on popular coalitions, and later on alliances with the business classes based on concessions, reversals, and reconciliations."[80] Alemán pledged to carry out a policy of developmentalism, funneling state support to domestic industry, promoting consumption, and linking it all to a vision of modernity. It was a policy that appealed deeply to the *camionero* entrepreneurs.

**INTEGRATION**

For the Alianza and Antonio Díaz Lombardo, the Alemán *sexenio* was born under an auspicious sun. The incoming president had roundly endorsed the organization's vision of the autotransport industry—one based on capitalist small-holding—and even before the PRM had named Alemán its candidate, Ávila Camacho had initiated reforms to the LVGC that would cement that vision in law. Those reforms signaled that the goals of state and Alianza were harmonizing, the beginning of an partnership that stretched over the next several decades. Integration, in this sense, meant not only the Alianza's

[80] González Casanova, *El estado y los partidos políticos*, 49.

cooperation with the regime toward shared political and economic goals, but the stabilization and institutionalization of a system of relationships.

By the end of the Ávila Camacho *sexenio*, the rapprochement that had occurred over the first several years of the decade was already moving unsteadily toward a partnership. Though *avilacamachista* reforms to local codes had blunted the full effect of Múgica's legislation, the 1939 LVGC remained the law of the land. For the *camioneros*, as long as the cooperativizing clauses remained on the books, the threat of future enforcement would forever hover over them. Thus, in the spring of 1945, with wartime concerns receding, the Alianza organized a convention of all national affiliates to discuss post-war political strategies and to pressure the government for what they felt were long overdue reforms to the LVGC. In a petition signed by delegates from seventeen regional affiliates and presented to the president by Díaz Lombardo on March 20, 1945, the Alianza formally requested that Ávila Camacho modify the LVGC, "in the spirit of nationalism and freedom of association that has characterized the autotransport industry, thus enabling the industry to operate in a form that will afford the Mexican Nation a world-class transportation service."[81] A followup national convention in Monterrey that August endorsed a formal set of recommended reforms to the legislation drafted by Alianza lawyers Ernesto Roel Peña and Othón Pérez Correa.[82]

In October 1945, Ávila Camacho acceded to the Alianza's wishes, signing a decree establishing a Joint Committee to study possible reforms to the LVGC. In his signing statement the president acknowledged the *camioneros*' lobbying efforts, noting as

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[81] *El Informador Camionero*, April 1, 1945.
[82] *El Informador Camionero*, September 16, 1945

well that the 1940 legislation "was doubtless convenient in the era in which it was elaborated, but is quite possibly inadequate for today."[83] The Joint Committee was composed of nine representatives from the SCOP, the Ministry of the Economy, the Interior Ministry, the Finance Ministry, the Government of the D.F., PEMEX (the state oil company), Chambers of Commerce, the Confederación Nacional de Cooperativas, and the Alianza. With the active support of the SCOP representative, Miguel Mazín Cervantes, as well as aggressive campaigning by Alianza leadership, who organized affiliated lines to petition the committee members, in late 1945 the commission voted to eliminate the cooperativizing clauses of the existing law.[84] Only representatives from the Ministry of the Economy and the Confederación de Cooperativas opposed the changes.[85] This minor victory did not yield immediate benefits, however. Ávila Camacho delayed action on the committee's recommendations, leaving major legislative efforts to his successor, and balking at the Alianza's request for a much needed fare increase for Mexico City's bus lines.

Where Ávila Camacho had kept his distance from the *camioneros*, Alemán embraced them. Under the new administration both substance and form of policy shifted, and the Alianza reaped the harvest of political favor it had so assiduously cultivated since 1940. The Alemán administration's solicitousness toward the *camioneros* and incorporation of Antonio Díaz Lombardo was part of a broader change, as the new

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[83] *El Informador Camionero* October 1, 1945.The comisión included representatives from the SCOP, the Ministry of the Economy, the Budget Ministry (SHCP), the Interior Ministry, the Federal District government, PEMEX, the National Confederation of Cooperatives, the Alianza, and from the chambers of commerce and industry.

[84] Mazín Cervantes went on to publish editorials favorable to the Alianza in *El Universal* during Alemán's *sexenio*.

[85] *El Informador Camionero,* November 16, 1945.

president quickly established tight bonds with the business community, including naming industrial magnate Antonio Ruiz Galindo to head the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. In observing this, Roderic Camp remarks that during these years, "the number of entrepreneurial collaborators reached a high point for post-1940s governments," and notes that developmentalist policies pursued by Alemán's economic technocrats also smoothed the relationship with the private sector.[86]

Transportation policy provides one example of this shift in attitudes. In December 1946 members of the congressional Autotransportation Committee sent the incoming president a report on the state of urban transport—identical in form to the memorandum Dávila had sent Cárdenas in 1934 but drastically different in message. The Comisión observed that the Federal District's 30% demographic growth over the preceding decade justified various changes to improve service in the city. Among other proposals, the deputies recommended that the government authorize new first-class lines with a corresponding fare increase of ten centavos.[87] Alemán clearly agreed, since a month later, after the Alianza petitioned the president directly for a fare increase, city officials began granting a rolling increase in authorized rates on select first class lines, even though the average bus reportedly earned a tidy profit of around 32 pesos per day (US$6.40).[88] The new rates were eventually extended to the entire system, with fares of fifteen centavos for second-class lines and 25 centavos for first-class, increases of five and ten centavos, respectively.[89] Even at this early moment, it was evident that the Alianza enjoyed a

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[86] Camp, *Entrepreneurs*, 22.
[87] AGN, P, MAV, 513.7/1-A. Comisión de Autotransportes to Alemán, December 11, 1946.
[88] *El Informador Camionero*, March 1, 1947; *Tiempo*, October 4, 1946.
[89] AGN, P, MAV, 513.7/1-A. Alianza de Camioneros to Alemán, October 31, 1952; AGN, P, MAV, 513.7/1-A. Martín Ruiz to Alemán, January 16, 1947.

newfound degree of access and influence, and that decisions on transport policy were now being made at the highest levels.

Shifts in the policy climate became fully evident the following fall, when a delegation from the Alianza enjoyed a lengthy audience with the President. After posing with him for a canned photo with illustrations of newly purchased modern buses, the delegation presented Alemán with a six-page memorandum detailing the history of the organization, as well as its current difficulties. In the document the Alianza's Executive committee also formally requested six concrete actions: that the government of Mexico City speed up the issuing of fare increases to lines; that electric trolleys in the city be blocked from invading bus routes; that the request for concessions for a new cross-city line running from Atzcapotzalco to Xochimilco be blocked; that the President recommend to governors that they take steps to further the post-war improvement of transport conditions in their states; that the president recommend that the Banco de México issue a 25 million peso credit to the *camioneros* to renovate city buses; and most importantly, that the president send congress the package of reforms to the LVGC previously formulated by the Joint Committee.[90] At the conclusion of the meeting, the *camioneros* received the President's verbal promise of support.[91] Less than a month later, the Alianza organized a *comida* in Alemán's honor, an event which, *El Informador Camionero* somewhat ridiculously remarked, "was symbolic: it signified that [Alemán] is dedicating all his time to constructive work; since at the same time as he satisfies a physiological need, he is ascertaining the opinions and needs of our industry. By meeting

[90] AGN, P MAV 513.7/1-A.
[91] *El Informador Camionero*, October 1, 1947.

to eat with the representatives of the *gremio camionero*, he is realizing his task of national unity, recognizing problems, and bringing together governors and governed to make his program of government a reality."[92]

By the end of 1947, the Alianza ramped up its pressure on the president to push through the reforms. In a telegram, Martín Ruiz reminded Alemán that "*camioneros* throughout the country have been informed of the audience our executive committee had with you in September and are anxious that the legislative reforms discussed there be carried out."[93] To underscore the extent of this support the Alianza organized a campaign on the part of its affiliates, who sent generic telegram messages to the president requesting the reforms. [94] The Alianza's messages also observed that "the country is clamoring for an improvement in the means of communication, and reforms to the law are vital so that the government's highway program will yield the benefits that the country desires."[95] Where Obregón had supported the Alianza's efforts as part of a project of national integration and reconstruction, the organization aligned with Alemán's vision of industrial development and economic growth.

In December, Alemán fulfilled the Alianza's wishes and sent congress a project of reforms to the LVGC. The new legislation was a clear signal of the direction the country's political economy had taken in the years after *cardenismo*, and the process that produced it revealed the interplay of interests at work under *alemanismo*. In definitively eliminating the legacy of the Ley Múgica, Alemán both addressed the deeply held wishes

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[92] *El Informador Camionero*, October 16, 1947.
[93], AGN, P, MAV, 545.3/10. Ruiz to Alemán, December 26, 1947.
[94] *El Informador Camionero* 16 December 1947.
[95] AGN, P, MAV, 545.3/10. Ruiz to Alemán, December 26, 1947.

of a powerful constituency and primed the country for a transportation boom. In the preamble to the new legislation, sent to the Senate on December 24, the president noted that "lamentably, the Law of December 30, 1939…far from remedying deficiencies, ignored the characteristics of the industry…whose economic and social success depends fundamentally on the strictly voluntary character of its organization."[96] The reforms went further than simply guaranteeing such freedom of association, however. In his commentary regarding the reforms, SCOP head Agustín García López addressed the many advantages of the new legislation. First, as the Alianza had proposed, the reforms transitioned the industry from a system of permits to one of concessions, a change that García López claimed would improve transportation services both because operators would now have to pay a bond to acquire an operating concession, and because the less arbitrary nature of the concession—as opposed to the easily revoked permit—would facilitate the camioneros' ability to obtain credit.[97] Moreover, the proposed reforms modified the nature of concessions themselves. First, the new law permitted both individuals and "every kind" of society to participate in the industry, definitively eliminating the 1939 cooperative clauses. Secondly, the reforms stipulated that each concession might cover five vehicles, although even with multiple concessions no individual would be allowed to operate more than five vehicles in total—a sharp break from the existing legislation, which only granted one vehicle per concession, a clause that García López affirmed tended to produce "the atomization of the industry."[98] Finally, the

[96] AGN, P, MAV, 545.3/10. Miguel Alemán Valdes, Decree reforming the Ley de Vías Generales de Comunicación, December 24, 1947.
[97] AGN, P, MAV, 545.3/10. "La reforma a la Ley de Vías Generales de Comunicación importa las siguientes ventajas," Agustín Garcia López to Alemán, December 26, 1947.
[98] Ibid.

reforms increased the duration of each concession to ten years. Although *camionero* organizations had pushed for twenty-year concessions, García López commented that "twenty-years was excessive," though the final reforms did allow for extensions after the initial ten.[99]

Despite protests from transportation cooperatives, disadvantaged by the new legislation, and who carried out a telegram campaign lobbying the president against the legislation, congress approved the reforms with a vote of 99-3, without debate.[100] Two years later the Alianza's Executive committee met with Alemán again, agreeing on further modifications which were subsequently approved on top of the 1947 reforms.[101] Together, these reforms cemented the predominantly capitalist structure of the industry and benefited the political and economic interests of the Alianza's leading members.[102] While the shift to concessions aided industry entrepreneurs large and small alike, the bond requirement certainly favored individuals with greater amounts of disposable capital; the five-vehicle clause, by the same token, made the industry a more attractive investment.

The reforms to the LVGC marked the start of a somewhat paradoxical process through which the Alianza grew increasingly powerful politically and economically while simultaneously becoming both more dependent upon, and more controlled by, the regime. The legislative victory strengthened the Alianza's hold over the national industry, allowing the group's leaders to claim all the more credibly that they represented the

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[99] Ibid.
[100] *Diario de los debates,* XL Legislatura, 2º año, December 29, 1947.
[101] AGN, P, MAV, 545.3/10. Ruiz to Alemán, February 8, 1949.
[102] Valentin Ibarra Vargas, "La producción del servicio de autotransporte en el área urbana de la Ciudad de México," *Demografía y economía* 17:1 (1983), 41.

interests of *camioneros*. The group's fame stretched well beyond Mexico City. In one case, for example, Pedro de los Santos, who operated a local bus route in Coahuila, wrote to the Alianza in a slanting, primary school script expressing his desire to register as a member.[103] Burgeoning membership bespoke the rapid expansion of the bus industry under the Alianza's watch. New intercity lines flourished, connecting the capital with important provincial cities and catering to the growing tourist traffic between Mexico City and Acapulco. The financial success of these lines was evidenced in the glistening terminals they inaugurated throughout the city. Because members paid regular dues to the Alianza, the organization was able to invest in its businesses and planned to purchase a building exclusively for its headquarters.[104]

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[103] *El Informador Camionero,* June 1, 1948.

[104] The established membership dues for provincial lines was five pesos per month per vehicle; for urban or intercity lines based in Mexico City the rate was seven pesos per vehicle per month. (*El Informador Camionero*, October 1, 1945). According to 1948 Alianza statistics, there were 3,338 urban buses and 1,031 intercity buses based in Mexico City, which would have made the organization's income from membership dues alone well over 367,000 pesos, since no reliable statistics for the number of affiliated provincial buses can be found (*El Informador Camionero*, 1-July-48.), but if one assumes that even half of the 16,872 passenger buses in the country were affiliated with the Alianza, a conservative estimate of the Alianza's income is around 600,000 pesos annually. (Díaz Lombardo's 1948 informe claimed monthly organizational income of 25,433 pesos, with expenditures equaling 27,631 pesos); *El Informador Camionero*, July 1, 1948.

**Figure 7:** Bus owner and employees, 1948. Author's Personal Collection.

In late November 1948, when the Alianza convened a national convention in the Palacio de Bellas Artes in downtown Mexico City, the organization claimed 76 member lines based in Mexico City, and 263 affiliated organizations in the provinces.[105] When Alemán declared the convention open he stood before an auditorium packed with 1,500 delegates from the entire country—an impressive display of organizational force. Voicing that tacit message of political strength, Díaz Lombardo stood alongside the President and affirmed to the audience of both *camioneros* and high-ranking politicians that "representatives from the autotransport industry from across the country have gathered in

[105] *El Informador Camionero*, December 16, 1948.

this assembly to offer their sincere and loyal collaboration to the current administration and to study the serious problems facing the industry."[106]

Over the remainder of the *sexenio* the Alianza lobbied the government intensively and with relative success for the resolution of those problems. In the process, however, the group grew increasingly dependent on the administration, since it was in these years when the *camioneros* became reliant on government subsidy. When, in the summer of 1948, the national oil company, Petróleos Mexicanos (PEMEX), announced its plan to implement a three-centavo-per-liter price increase, the Alianza was alarmed.[107] After petitioning the president the group won a reprieve, when PEMEX agreed to continue providing the 90,000,000 liters per year necessary to fuel urban services at the previous rate of 23.5 centavos per liter.[108] By the following summer, when PEMEX again announced an increase in the price of gasoline to from 27.5 centavos to 37 centavos per liter, Alemán again stepped in, establishing a monthly subsidy for Mexico City *camioneros* of 8,200,000 liters at 23.5 centavos per liter, plus 1,200,000 liters at 27.5 centavos.[109] The president also intervened with the SCOP, backing an Alianza petition raising the authorized rates on intercity bus lines by one cent per passenger/kilometer for first- and second-class lines, and one-and-a-half centavos per passenger/kilometer for luxury-class lines.[110] The *camioneros* also received governmental support in their efforts

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[106] *El Informador Camionero*, December 1, 1948.
[107] This change appears to have predated the July 21 devaluation, as the Alianza had petitioned the President on the issue on July 5; AGN, P MAV 527/141. The increase was actually undertaken as the discontinuation of 57-octane gasoline in favor of a product called 'mexolina'.
[108] Ibid.
[109] AGN, P MAV 527/141. The Alianza claimed that this nevertheless fell 450,000 liters short of the group's overall consumption.
[110] *El Informador Camionero*, September 1, 1949; *El Informador Camionero*, August 1, 1949. The Alianza still paid taxes on subsidized gasoline, however,

to organize a purchasing cooperative to reduce the cost of parts—support nearly identical to that which Obregón had offered two decades earlier.

Such subsidies suggested the Alianza's success in positioning itself as the regime's partner in development. The frenzied economic growth of the Alemán years coupled with breakneck urbanization had increased the demand for urban transportation dramatically. Where the Alianza's value to Ávila Camacho's administration was its ability to simply keep the system functioning, under Alemán, the group worked to expand and improve service with new buses (1,597 were replaced by December 1949), terminals (such as the one inaugurated by Circuito Colonias in November, 1949), and lines (such as service to the new Colonia Moctezuma opened in 1949).[111] A 1948 *El Informador Camionero* article declared the bus "a factor in national development," observing that urban growth would have been impossible without the *camioneros* who joined the new communities to the metropolis, and wondered "how many small towns have benefited from the arrival of those pioneers of transport who, in most cases, freed them from a true economic and material struggle and connected them to the rest of the country?"[112] Since it was in both the "public interest and national benefit" to support the *camioneros*, the article continued, the authorities should ensure that credit was made available to support the industry: the Alianza remained reliant on the government.

Dependence meant reciprocity; it was not hollow verbiage when Díaz Lombardo rhetorically linked "loyal collaboration" with the resolution of the *camioneros*' problems. Over the course of the Alemán *sexenio* the relationship that the Alianza had begun with

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[111] *El Informador Camionero*, December 1, 1949.
[112] *El Informador Camionero*, October 16, 1948.

the official party in 1945 blossomed. During a 1947 assembly, *El Informador Camionero* reported that after the large turnout "unanimously expressed its loyalty and support for the PRI," the meeting granted the executive committee and Díaz Lombardo authority to continue their political activities and to carry out a program of PRI affiliation among the group's members.[113] A 1949 insert in *El Informador Camionero* announced: "*Compañero Camionero*: remember that as a citizen, it is your duty to vote, defending through the PRI the revolutionary conquests that gave you life."[114] Beyond simply strong-arming members into party membership, however, the Alianza also ensured that the practical mechanisms of collaboration that had proved so important in Alemán's presidential campaign continued to operate smoothly. In March 1949, in anticipation of the midterm elections an Alianza assembly formally constituted the group's Political Committee. That fall, the group sent to the head of the PRI in Mexico City 50,000 color-printed free bus passes to promote attendance at the administration's exposition highlighting the accomplishments of Alemán's government.[115] When the PRI held a national convention a few months later, the Alianza sent members a circular informing them that "our organization has decided that in order to ensure the fullest success of the meeting," each urban line was to ensure that ten members attended each session of the convention, as well as to provide free transportation to duly credentialed delegates.[116] As such collaboration became more frequent, it became more burdensome. When the Alianza provided the PRI with 25,000 free passes in August 1950 for Day of the Athlete

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[113] *El Informador Camionero*, September 1, 1947.
[114] *El Informador Camionero*, April 1, 1949.
[115] AGN, P MAV 505.1/52.
[116] *El Informador Camionero*, February 1, 1950.

celebrations, the organization informed members that they would be able to exchange free passes collected on their buses for the corresponding fare amounts from the Alianza's treasury.[117] When the presidential campaign got underway in late 1951, the Alianza's assembly agreed that the owners of buses requisitioned for the campaign should be reimbursed at a rate of twenty pesos-per-hour for urban buses and 50 pesos-per-hour for intercity buses and established a fund for that purpose by levying a 10 peso-per-bus assessment on all members.[118]

The benefits of this integration into the party and the state largely accrued to the Alianza's upper levels. For the coterie of *camioneros* who surrounded Díaz Lombardo the possibilities seemed limitless. For example, Manuel Peña Vera, the first Alianza member to hold national political office, was praised in *El Informador Camionero* for his role in advocating for both the LVGC reforms and fare increases.[119] As a congressional deputy, Peña Vera hobnobbed with President Alemán following his 1948 *informe* and seemed poised to leverage his position as a *camionero* into a political career. His aspirations were dashed, however, when he committed a fundamental political sin in 1951, openly backing Mexico City regent Fernando Casas Alemán (Miguel Alemán's nephew) during the presidential precampaign and thus 'burning' himself when the president tabbed Interior Minister Adolfo Ruiz Cortines as the official candidate.[120] Despite a desperate attempt in 1952 to regain political position by founding the

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[117] *El Informador Camionero*, August 1, 1950.
[118] *El Informador Camionero*, October 1, 1951.
[119] *El Informador Camionero*, September 1, 1949.
[120] *Mañana*, October 13, 1951.

Federación Coordinadora de Organizaciones (Pro-Ruiz Cortines) to provide informal propaganda support to the campaign, Peña Vera never recovered from his misstep.[121]

Díaz Lombardo's closest ally in the Alianza, Rafael Sánchez Pimentel, fared far better than Peña Vera and enjoyed a far more notorious career, one perhaps more revealing of the hardball nature of politics during those years. According to a report filed by an Interior Ministry agent in 1949, when Sánchez Pimentel was standing as the PRI candidate for a congressional deputyship in the first district of the D.F., Sánchez Pimentel had first acquired control of bus lines running through the northern district of Atzcapotzalco "by unknown—but presumably illicit—means."[122] Famous in the Alianza for his girth, "*El Gordo*" Pimentel seems to have enjoyed considerable prestige among his *compañeros*. Pimentel held control over profitable bus lines, managed labor disputes with heavy-handed effectiveness, reportedly amassed a considerable fortune, and seems to have become something of a small-time *cacique* in Atzcapotzalco.[123] When the PRI named him congressional candidate in 1949, *El Universal* declared it "the first political bombshell" of the electoral season, later suggesting that it was only Sánchez Pimentel's friendship with Díaz Lombardo that earned him the nomination, and that he would be a "representative unworthy of the *camioneros*."[124] The harshest indictment, however, came from the Interior Ministry agent, who reported that although Sánchez Pimentel was "poorly considered among the members of the Alianza" who saw him as Díaz Lombardo's muscle, the organization's executive committee had "obliged all the

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[121] *Impacto*, April 26, 1952.
[122] AGN, DGIPS C.288 Exp.8.
[123] Whether or not it was ironic or revealing that Sánchez Pimentel was the Alianza's Secretary of Labor is unclear; he certainly had a reputation for rather vicious strikebreaking.
[124] *El Universal*, March 1, 1949; March 10, 1949.

*camioneros* to contribute to Sánchez Pimentel's political campaign."[125] None of this impeded Sánchez Pimentel's rise within the PRI, particularly as he made himself useful as an organizer of the Alianza's collaboration with *acarreo* and in 1952 he was named to the newly created post of Transportation Coordinator for the PRI.[126] That year Sánchez Pimentel's career peaked when the PRI nominated him as candidate for senator from his home state of Colima.

Narciso Contreras was also pulled up on Díaz Lombardo's long coattails. As the Alianza's Secretary of Publicity and Propaganda, he served as director of *El Informador Camionero* until 1954, using the publication to promote the activities of the Díaz Lombardo-led executive committee within the industry. After spearheading the Alianza's collaboration with Alemán's campaign, Contreras was named to the CNOP's national committee as Secretary of Technical Affairs in 1947, a post he would hold for several years.[127] Aided by his close relationship with Díaz Lombardo, Contreras succeeded precisely where Peña Vera had failed: by integrating himself into the party structure, Contreras became a key intermediary for the PRI's transportation needs. His political ascent continued in 1952, when the PRI awarded him a congressional deputyship in the sixth district of Mexico City. Campaigning alongside senatorial candidate and CTM transportation boss Jesús Yuren, Contreras cruised to victory. When the election concluded Contreras stood before a gathering of Alianza members and PRI leaders to present each *camionero* with a gold pin on which the emblems of the Alianza and PRI

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[125] AGN, DGIPS C.288 Exp.8
[126] *El Informador Camionero*, January 1, 1952. In 1949, Sánchez Pimentel spearheaded the creation of the Alianza's Political Committee, and in 1952 was active in organizing transportation for the Ruiz Cortines campaign.
[127] *El Informador Camionero*, April 1, 1947.

were intertwined, declaring that "as loyal soldiers of the Alianza and the Party, they will carry forever above their hearts the names of the two great organizations to which they belong."[128]

These men were part of a transforming system of representation, in which leaders of various social groups brought their affiliates into the PRI, and by extension the state. These processes of intermediation (discussed in Chapter Four) lent tremendous strength to the emerging political system, as the leaders of labor, peasant, or entrepreneurial groups were incorporated into the party. By 1952 the Alianza was no middling social club either, it reportedly counted 10,000 *permisionarios* as members.[129] For the regime, coopting ambitious leaders into the party went hand in hand with the state's moderation of the radical policies of *cardenismo*. As a whole, the regime simultaneously fostered shared developmental goals and catered to cupidity.

**ICARUS**

Few rode the winds of change better than Antonio Díaz Lombardo. His career had taken wing at the head of the Alianza during the turbulent years of postrevolutionary consolidation, and the updraft of *alemanismo* carried him to staggering heights. Social mobility and personal enrichment were central to the process of postrevolutionary pacification. If Obregón had smirked that no soldier could resist a fifty-thousand-peso salvo, and Carlos Fuentes's Artemio Cruz futilely sought redemption in wealth, Díaz Lombardo's journey from small businessman to finance magnate to government minister

[128] *El Informador Camionero*, July 1, 1952.
[129] *El Informador Camionero*, January 1, 1953. Those 10,000 *permisionarios* gave work to 7,000 administrative employees, more than 20,000 drivers, and even more mechanics, assistants, and others.

was suggestive of the intertwined political and economic processes that typified this era. Ultimately, however, the wax of friendships and fortune that held his wings together melted: less than two years after Adolfo Ruiz Cortines assumed the presidency, Díaz Lombardo was out as head of the Alianza and retired to private life. In the story of his rise and fall, it is possible to trace how the processes of integration that had proved so central to *alemanismo* proved unsustainable even as the political culture that would survive the collapse brought a fundamental stability to the political system.

Seemingly boundless ambition lay at the heart of Díaz Lombardo's remarkable career. He had spun Obregón's support for a gas purchasing cooperative and a credit union into investments in Aeronaves de México and the La Marina tourist hotel in Acapulco, while investing spare resources to back the filming of the 1936 hit *Alla en Rancho Grande*. Through the Banco de Transportes he had also tightened his control over the Alianza, ensuring that most *camioneros* were either literally or figuratively in debt to him. He also diversified into various automotive distribution agencies beyond the original Packard dealership, principally one known as the Agencia Central. By the early1940s Díaz Lombardo was a member of the powerful Mexican Bankers Association (Asociación de Banqueros de México or ABM), and when the news magazine *Mañana* interviewed Díaz Lombardo in 1945 they labeled him one of "Mexico's Constructive Forces."[130]

Constructive though they may have been, like most financial operations in this period, Díaz Lombardo's maneuverings were hardly transparent. Constantly on the

[130] *Mañana*, March 3, 1945.

lookout for a scandal involving the Alianza, in 1941 *La Prensa* alleged that Díaz Lombardo had tricked members out of their shares in the organization's successful insurance company, Protección Mutua, by suggesting they could withdraw their original contributions to the business, not explaining that doing so also forfeited their stake in the company.[131] Although there is no evidence that such fraud occurred, the company did remain a profitable business linked to the Alianza well past the end of Díaz Lombardo's career.[132] Similarly, the purchasing cooperative founded in 1949 survived into the 1970s, although not without occasional scandals and near-bankruptcies. The operations of the Alianza's other businesses were even murkier. By 1946, the Banco de Transportes had been reconstituted as the Banco Latinoamericano, and both the gas cooperative and the Alianza's ancillary tourist industries had been spun off to the Combustibles, Tourism, and Transport company, now designated as a corporation rather than a cooperative—and they in turn were in debt to the Banco Latinoamericano.[133] If the businesses were part of an elaborate web of shell companies and debt, there was no doubt that Díaz Lombardo had been the central weaver. It was furthermore alleged that through his control of the Banco's credit—and thus any of debt a *camionero* might contract—Díaz Lombardo had acquired (through *prestanombres*) the control of 162 second-class buses and 108 first-class buses, which between them earned 22,500 pesos daily.[134] Neither did Díaz Lombardo exclude others from the windfall: Pimentel supposedly controlled 140 buses,

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[131] *La Prensa*, June 5, 1941.
[132] In fact, the company was still going strong in 1960 when Martín Ruiz was elected president of its board; *Transportes y Turismo*, July, 1960.
[133] *El Informador Camionero*, April 1, 1946.
[134] *La Prensa*, June 23, 1953.

Contreras 115, Eduardo Soberanes 250, José Valdovinos 90, and Martín Ruiz 150.[135] In many ways, Díaz Lombardo's success had much to do with his ability to nurture the success and cultivate the loyalty of a clique of bus industry capitalists.

When Díaz Lombardo embraced Alemán in the summer of 1945, the *camionero* leader was hardly a newcomer to the national political scene. He regularly met with presidents and other high-ranking officials, advocating the Alianza's—and his own—interests, and was often vilified by his opponents who saw corruption and greed in every *camionero* campaign. It was, nevertheless, primarily his friendship with Alemán that carried Díaz Lombardo into the political elite. The roots of this relationship are unclear, but the two men shared much in common. Both had a personal economic stake in the development of Acapulco, where Díaz Lombardo owned property beyond La Marina, and Alemán's vision of nationalist industrialization was entirely consonant with the interests of the Alianza.[136] This connection alone was meager justification for a government position, although the distribution of political posts to one's allies was an established tradition by 1945. It had been rumored that Díaz Lombardo was angling for the SCOP, and it was perhaps unexpected when Alemán named him to the Social Security Institute; as Díaz Lombardo admitted in interviews many years later, he was surprised by the designation.[137]

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[135] Ibid.

[136] Exactly how much land Díaz Lombardo owned in Acapulco is unclear, but he was invested enough in the development of the port to support improvements to a park that abutted the hotel La Marina and a number of his other properties there; *El Universal*, January 6, 1947. In the 1960s, his brother, Isidro, was named as the owner of the Hotel Tropical that was constructed next to the then defunct La Marina; *Periodico Oficial Estatal de Guerrero*, June 20, 1962.

[137] *Apuntes*, Antonio Díaz Lombardo. For the SCOP rumor see *Jueves de Excelsior*, August 8, 1946.

Questionable qualifications aside, Díaz Lombardo took full advantage of the appointment. The institute was not a wholly inappropriate place for Díaz Lombardo, given the Alianza's history of providing social services to bus industry employees. Yet since 1944, the Alianza had also struggled with the IMSS over the contributions the institute required of the *camioneros* as employers, claiming the they were excessive, onerous, and not correctly correlated to the salaries of drivers and mechanics. By 1946, many bus lines owed years of back payments to the IMSS. Under Díaz Lombardo, those debts were settled and a new, favorable agreement was reached that moderated the required contributions. Díaz Lombardo also brought several *compañeros* from the Alianza along, naming Alonso Lazcano, the leader of the Monterrey *camioneros*, to head the IMSS in that region, and hiring a young Alianza accountant, Rodolfo Solís Soto, to manage budgets at the ministry.

The IMSS was only two years old when Díaz Lombardo took the helm, and he oversaw a period of massive growth as the agency established hospitals and clinics across the country.[138] Construction had always afforded ample opportunities for corruption—Maximino Ávila Camacho famously granted building contracts to companies he or his friends owned, then skimmed from inflated expenditures on materials and labor. Allegations that Díaz Lombardo lined his own pockets at IMSS through similar practices thus likely rang true, although there was no obvious proof of malfeasance.[139] More easily verified was Díaz Lombardo's use of his position to lobby Alemán on behalf of the

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[138] See Alemán's 1952 presidential *informe*.

[139] *Time* magazine, among others, asserted that Díaz Lombardo "had made $40 million as boss of the bus lines and head of Alemán's lucrative Social Security Department." *Time*, "The Domino Player," September 14, 1953.

Alianza. And when the Banco Latinoamericano ran into financial trouble, Díaz Lombardo sold part of it to the IMSS to cash in his share of the bank before it went bankrupt and the Comisión Nacional Bancaria intervened in 1951.[140]

As Alemán's *sexenio* wound down in 1952, Díaz Lombardo attempted to finesse the difficult transition between presidencies. His proximity to Alemán (the two vacationed in Acapulco together after the presidential term concluded) meant that he was closely associated with the publicly recognized excesses of *alemanismo*, among them corruption and cronyism.[141] But if Ruiz Cortines considered Díaz Lombardo a political liability, during the campaign he certainly did not turn down the *camioneros'* aid and regularly appeared in public with the Alianza's directorate. Indeed, at the conclusion of the campaign Díaz Lombardo seemed positioned to retain his influence, receiving official thanks from the PRI and obtaining official audiences for the Alianza early in Ruiz Cortines' term.[142]

Yet the following year Díaz Lombardo would experience a dramatic reversal of fortune. Díaz Lombardo had broken with his longtime second, Martín Ruiz, during the spring of 1952 over differences of opinion regarding the group's political strategies, whispered allegations of fraud and financial mismanagement by the organization's leadership, and principally Díaz Lombardo's unwillingness to step down from the group's top post to allow fresh leadership. Over the first months of the Ruiz Cortines

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[140] *El Nacional*, June 23, 1953.
[141] *Time*, "Private Citizen" March 2, 1953; As Frank Brandenburg remarked, "Dedicated Revolutionaries everywhere deplored the conspicuous consumption, graft, and highhandedness of Alemán and his clique…"; *The Making of Modern Mexico*, 106; Paul Gillingham describes how Casas Alemán was chased from the stands of a soccer match in 1948 by jeers of "bandit, bandit"; "Maximino's Bulls", 203.
[142] *El Informador Camionero*, July, 1952; March, 1953.

*sexenio*, those grievances became a volatile combination when mixed with the long-time leader's failure to obtain concrete economic benefits for the *camioneros*, who were still struggling with the effects of the 1950 devaluation and desperately sought official authorization for a fare increase.[143] That Díaz Lombardo's authority was wavering became clear by the spring of 1952, when the organization held a dinner meeting of the "*camionero* fraternity" (in this case, most of the city's *permisionarios*) at the Embassy restaurant in Mexico City in an attempt to shore up support for the executive committee.[144] Such lavish events, paid for by the organization's directorate, were rare under normal conditions; that Díaz Lombardo was now openly currying favor indicated his tenuous position. There were indeed, by this point, whispered rumors that he was on the political outs, and his inability to gain the backing of either new Mexico City regent Ernesto Uruchurtu or President Ruiz Cortines for a raise in urban bus fares reinforced that perception. Commenting on the gathering, a DFS agent observed that its purpose was to discuss strategies to counteract the dissident coalitions forming on various urban lines, which, combined with increasing labor problems such as wage demands and strike threats, seriously threatened Díaz Lombardo's control of the organization.[145] That the Alianza was now increasingly under attack in the metropolitan press hardly improved the situation.[146] It was thus not in the least surprising that at the Alianza's annual June 1 general assembly a few months later, Díaz Lombardo faced the first open challenge to his leadership since 1941.

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[143] *El Informador Camionero*, June, 1953, "Asamblea de Elecciones en la Alianza."
[144] *El Informador Camionero*, April, 1953, "Fraternidad Camionera."
[145] DFS 45-1 L1 H30 and H35, 18 March 1953.
[146] The Alianza attempted to fight back with paid articles and broadsides; DFS 45-1 L1 H49, 28 April 1953.

Outwardly, the event had gone off without a hitch, as the assembled *permisionarios* raised their hands to vote in support of continuity. But beneath the predictable coronation of Díaz Lombardo, Pimentel, and Contreras as the leaders of the group's executive committee, cracks were forming as some Alianza members formed a dissident *Bloque Depurador* (Purifying Bloc) that sought to place new members on the executive committee. Speaking for the *bloque*, which had postulated him as a candidate, Martín Ruiz professed his loyalty to the Alianza but criticized Díaz Lombardo for the ruinous economic conditions in the industry, the group's excessive political activity, and the lack of democracy within the group.[147] After an "ironic and aggressive" Contreras rebutted Ruiz's claims, the assembly confirmed the existing executive committee in their posts. The outward appearance of a contentious but conventional assembly masked the reality of significant organizational strife. Beyond the traditional seven positions, four new secretaries had been added to the Alianza's directorate, a move that interior secretary José T. Gutiérrez claimed to government officials was a response to the organization's tremendous growth, but which seemed to be a move designed to appease the ambitions of potential defectors.[148] Moreover, rumors quickly filtered out that *diazlombardistas* had packed the assembly hall with loyal shills while barring potential opponents in order to ensure their victory, and had even offered members large sums of money in exchange for support.[149]

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[147] *El Informador Camionero*, June, 1953, "Asamblea de Elecciones en la Alianza."
[148] AGN DFS 45-1 L1 H71, 3 July 1953; *La Prensa* had noted at the time that this move, like many other aspects of the assembly, was in flagrant violation of the group's statutes; June 19, 1953.
[149] *La Prensa*, June 19, 1953.

Less than a month later, Díaz Lombardo's 25-year reign began to unravel.At his saint's day celebration on June 13, 1953—another upscale Alianza affair at the Club Francés—Pimentel and Contreras showered Díaz Lombardo with fawning panegyrics, and *El Informador Camionero* commented that the honoree received numerous ovations.[150] *La Prensa*'s report was more revealing, noting that by eight in the evening "the steady flow of libations turned the event into "a democratic row" (*un 'democratico' relajo*)," with attendees hurling empty bottles across the room.[151] If the party grew raucous, it also grew honest: Díaz Lombardo reportedly told the gathering of *permisionarios* not to be concerned about the upswing in agitation, since the Alianza was easily under his thumb, given that he had enough money to buy support and a group of loyal diehards to rely upon. Assurances made, he proceeded to announce that he would be leaving shortly for a European vacation. In suspiciously vague descriptions of the event's speeches, however, *El Informador Camionero* declined to inform its readers of either Díaz Lombardo's claims or his impending trip. The vacation was hardly a sign of strength. In the past, Díaz Lombardo's absences had severely undercut his authority and now, *La Prensa* speculated, the maneuver was a means of transferring effective power to Senator Pimentel—who would stand in for Díaz Lombardo during his absence. Pimentel was, moreover better positioned politically, and as Díaz Lombardo's close friend the gradual transfer of power would not have meant relinquishing control of the organization.[152] Yet these stratagems could not turn the tide now running against the Alianza's leadership.

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[150] *El Informador Camionero*, June, 1953.
[151] *La Prensa*, June 19, 1953.
[152] *La Prensa*, June 22, 1953.

On June 22, on instructions from Ruiz Cortines, the Comisión Nacional Bancaria abruptly ousted Díaz Lombardo as director of the Banco Latinoamericano. The intervention dissolved the old bank, reconstituting it as the Banco Nacional de Transportes, naming Uruchurtu as its director, and giving the Mexico City government a majority share in the new institution.[153] *La Prensa*'s front page rejoiced: "The *Camionero* Monopoly has Collapsed!"[154] Telegrams poured into Ruiz Cortines's office congratulating him on the move. The Revolutionary Coalition of Drivers published an open letter applauding the president for "the thundering death he gave to the gangster Antonio Díaz Lombardo."[155] Even *The New York Times* remarked on the move, calling it evidence of the new president's purge of *alemanistas*.[156] Indeed, Ruiz Cortines had sought to restore political balance by presenting an image of rectitude and moderation, naming respected bureaucrats to his cabinet, and clipping the wings of overly avaricious *alemanistas* by removing several unpopular governors and cracking down on corruption.[157]

The Alianza's leadership, for its part, put on a brave face, publishing a broadside—in *La Prensa*, no less—thanking the president for creating the important new institution, which they noted "was the result of our repeated efforts to achieve the rehabilitation and development of the country's transportation."[158] Since Pimentel and

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[153] See: AGN P, GDO 666 (108), "Actos Constitutivos."
[154] *La Prensa*, June 23, 1953.
[155] DFS 45-1 L1 H84, 13 July 1953.
[156] "Monopoly Reform Pushed in Mexico, " *New York Times*, July 12, 1953.
[157] Brandenburg, *The Making of Modern México*, 111; Contemporary reports in the U.S. press certainly played up Ruiz Cortines' discipline, thoughtfulness, and morality. Enrique Krauze provides a rather hagiographic description of Ruiz Cortines' anti-corruption drive; *Mexico: A Biography of Power: A History of Modern Mexico, 1810-1996* trans. Hank Heifetz (New York: HarperCollins, 1997).
[158] *La Prensa*, June 23, 1953.

Martín Ruiz were members of the new Banco Nacional de Transportes board, the optimism was not entirely unwarranted, although privately the organization's leaders were worried. A DFS agent's report quoted his informants, remarking that: "although they recognize that they received a hard blow with the loss of the Banco Latinoamericano, the directorate hopes that in the future the government will recognize 'what the *camioneros* did during the recent presidential campaign, and allow them…to raise fares.'"[159] No such reciprocity was forthcoming, however, and it was clear that without his political patrons, Díaz Lombardo's grip on the Alianza was tenuous. A few weeks later, when the Proveedora held its annual assembly, the candidates of the Bloque Depurador swept the elections.

Members of the Alianza's Executive committee gathered in October at Díaz Lombardo's elegant house on Amsterdam street in Colonia Condesa. As Carlos Dufoo later related, they had come on a "painful errand: to ask Díaz Lombardo to step down."[160] If Pimentel's ambition lay behind the maneuver, as Dufoo remembered, "there were many pretexts: that 'he [Díaz Lombardo] had fallen from favor with president Ruiz Cortines,' and therefore risked the stability of the industry and the Alianza, that 'his personal businesses took up too much of his time,' etc etc."[161] Although Pimentel hardly had majority support in the Alianza, he was indeed the best positioned member of the group politically. Thus the die was cast and Díaz Lombardo had little choice but to assent.[162]

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[159] DFS 45-1 L1 H72, 8 July 1953.
[160] *El Informador Camionero*, December, 1978, "Cuando Díaz Lombardo Dejo el Mando."
[161] Ibid.
[162] Dufoo comments that Ruiz, Isidoro Rodríguez, José Valdovinos, and Luis Ortiz Revilla all opposed Pimentel.

This orderly succession, however, was not to be. Three months later Pimentel was dead, felled by a cerebral embolism. In a dramatic emergency assembly in March 1954, Díaz Lombardo reaffirmed his earlier decision to step aside, citing poor health and exhaustion following the deaths of both his son and his close friend Pimentel within a two month span.[163] Although members of the *Bloque Depurador*, led by Rubén Figueroa and Isidoro Rodríguez, spoke vehemently in opposition to the designation of Narciso Contreras as the Alianza's next president, Díaz Lombardo registered one last victory, successfully passing control of the organization to his long-time ally. His downfall had been sudden: in 1954, Díaz Lombardo was still a young man, only 51 years old, and was not bereft of political allies.[164] Yet he seems to have been caught between the "moralizing broom" of *ruizcortinismo* and a restive Alianza. Had the political climate been warmer or his *compañeros* more pliant, Díaz Lombardo would likely have survived.

As it was, Díaz Lombardo quickly faded from the scene after leaving the Alianza. He retained a stake in Aeronaves de México, although this was much reduced after the government assumed a 49% share in 1954.[165] He continued to encourage the development of Mexican tourism, and was involved with Miguel Alemán's National Tourism Commission into the 1960s.[166] It is unclear, however, what happened to the hotel La Marina: by 1962 it was behind on taxes and was auctioned off by the state government.[167] He also remained involved in banking, and according to Roderic Camp,

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[163] His son had been killed in a dispute in November. *Los Angeles Times*, November 7, 1953.
[164] Indeed, Rubén Figueroa was only five years his junior, and Figueroa's career stretched into the 1980s.
[165] Though less public than the moves against the Alianza, Ruiz Cortines also seems to have successfully checked Díaz Lombardo's control of the airline as well.
[166] *Transportes y Turismo*, May, 1962.
[167] *Periodico Oficial Estatal de Guerrero*, June 20, 1962; *Periodico Oficial Estatal de Guerrero*, November 28, 1962.

served as president of the Central Savings Bank until 1972.[168] Whatever financial interests he may have had in the bus industry disappeared, however, and he largely retired to private life, leaving politics and the Alianza behind him.

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If Díaz Lombardo's downfall had been both sudden and premature, his career was nevertheless extraordinary. For a quarter century his name was synonymous with that of the Alianza and well into the 1970s *camioneros* still gathered to fete him at his saint's day celebration in numbers impossible to explain through intimidation or bribery. To these men, his legacy was as the benevolent founder of the country's modern transport organization.

To history, Díaz Lombardo was something more. Under his leadership, a group of strategically important and conservative entrepreneurs began a partnership with the postrevolutionary regime, a process that was revealing of broader shifts in the construction of the mid-century Mexican political leviathan. That relationship was not *fait acompli*: in 1940 the *camioneros* guarded their distance from a regime that they distrusted, even as they grudgingly relied upon it for subsidies and operating concessions. By 1952, however, they were loyal participants in PRI campaigns and enthusiastic boosters of government policy, and many Alianza leaders served in party and elected posts.

This is, therefore, the story of how over the long decade of the 1940s, the postrevolutionary regime changed in ways that encouraged the incorporation of

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[168] Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies.*

conservative middle-class groups such as the *camioneros* into its party structures and ideological projects. The mutation of the PRM into the PRI was crucial to this process as groups who had clashed with *cardenismo* by 1946 found a welcoming home in the new party, and they enthusiastically participated in Miguel Alemán's campaign. The history of the Alianza, in short, shows that the party mattered greatly in the process of state formation. Important too were the personal relationships that emerged over that long decade as members of a reconstruction generation inherited the increasingly powerful central state created by Calles and Cárdenas and bent it to the task of economic development.[169] As both the *camioneros*' intermediary with the state, and a crony of Alemán, Díaz Lombardo was typical of the social networks that helped ensure elite cohesion. Finally, these years strengthened the "political styles" that had first appeared during the 1920s and 30s, providing the basis for mid-century macropolitical stability as a set of basic *priísta* values and practices became an almost institutional feature of the regime. As Díaz Lombardo worked the *camioneros* into the machinery of PRI campaigns, he created a system of collaboration and incorporation that remained in place long after his tenure ended.

Díaz Lombardo thus represented the processes of conservative, middle-class integration—circuitous, conflicted, and highly contingent—that shaped the PRI system

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[169] Roderic Camp, particularly, has argued that it was the Alemán generation that "contributed most significantly to the development of Mexico's [subsequent] political leadership model," noting that it was *alemanistas* who established many of the "patterns…for political elite recruitment, composition, socialization, and public policy orientations;" Camp, *The Metamorphosis of Leadership*, 154. My conclusions here generally aligns with Camp's in seeing this generation as fundamental, though the *camioneros* followed a much different trajectory than did the *alemanista* elite both before and after the *sexenio*, and my analysis privileges the significance of a "political style" that emerges before Alemán, flourishes during his *sexenio*, and is refined afterwards.

during its formative years. Those processes occurred fundamentally over the long decade of the 1940s, and the PRI's mid-century hegemony cannot be understood without them. After 1954, the country enjoyed an impressive degree of macropolitical stability and steady economic growth, due in large part to the maturation of the political relationships that brought groups such as the Alianza into the regime.

## PART II:

## JOSÉ VALDOVINOS, ISIDORO RODRÍGUEZ, RUBÉN FIGUEROA, AND THE PRI SYSTEM

In the fall of 1980, painted slogans began appearing on the windows of Mexico City's buses. The messages were critical of the city government and complained of the miserably low fares that kept bus operators in a state of near-constant penury. This was not the first time that members of the Alianza had clashed with officials over fares—such fights were nearly as old as the industry. Never before, however, had conflict been so public and so acrimonious. With the conflict still ongoing a year later, the government municipalized urban bus service and dissolved the Alianza in an unprecedented rupture of the longstanding relationship between the regime and the *camioneros*. Yet what was surprising about the municipalization is not that it occurred, but that it had not occurred sooner: the mid-century structures of the PRI that had emerged during the 1940s and 50s proved remarkably adept at managing difficult interest groups like the *camioneros.* It is also striking, moreover, that behind the 1981 rupture lay not a struggle over particular policy goals but a broader breakdown of the "rules of the game" as it had been played during the preceding three decades.

Part II attempts to outline the structure of PRI rule as it applied to the *camioneros* during the regime's hegemonic moment. After 1952, the country experienced—on the whole—dramatic economic growth, while serious national political challenges to the PRI's authority faded. Crucial to that macropolitical stability was the steady participation of middle-class entrepreneurial elites such as the *camioneros* in the regime's project. They acted as the transmission belts of *priísmo*; they were card-carrying members, they

were sturdy allies, and they kept organizations and industries squarely under the regime's control. Yet their loyalty was not a given and the regime's embrace of them was not always enthusiastic. Part II departs, then, from a study of this historical negative space. Because such middle-class, entrepreneurial, fundamentally *priísta* groups so rarely broke with the regime, they have largely been painted out of the historiography. But a painting does not succeed without its shadows and voids, and the PRI regime cannot be understood without its adherents. That the *camioneros* did not break with the regime does not mean they were caricatures—avaricious stooges or complicit businessmen. We have lacked a nuanced understanding of why these groups remained so deeply attached to *priísmo* and a historical explanation of why events such as 1981 were uncommon. What is intriguing is not what occurred, but what did not.

The careers of Valdovinos, Rodríguez, and Figueroa reveal a flexible system that governed interest group representation and allowed leaders of powerful sectors to negotiate both policy and personal aspirations. Those structures maintained the loyalty of middle-class entrepreneurial groups, like the Alianza's bus owners, ensuring the participation of a broad "elite" in the regime's political project. In some way, the following chapters all address the mechanics and political culture of that system. In Chapter Three, I argue that by the mid-1950s, the regime succeeded in domesticating the Alianza, achieving what was fundamentally a cosmetic reshaping of urban transport in response to popular protests over service. That process was closely tied to the development of a system of mid-century corporatism discussed in Chapter Four, where I argue that a common political culture shaped the struggles over Alianza leadership. In Chapter Five I explore the historical formation of a *camarilla*, the political cliques that

were vital upward to political mobility, arguing that successful leaders built networks spanning groups and regions in accordance with the PRI's calculations of "political strength." Taken together, these chapters suggest that the regime drew middle-class entrepreneurs into its political orbit and was remarkably successful at holding them there not because its gravity was inescapable but because it held them on predictable paths. By the late 1980s, as the sun of the PRI began to decay, its forces became erratic, and the system collapsed.

## CHAPTER THREE:

### JOSÉ VALDOVINOS AND THE POWER OF THE PUBLIC

The congressional Electoral College had already been in session for several hours, dutifully validating the election of new members to the Chamber of Deputies, when José Guillermo Salas Armendáriz rose to speak on October 15, 1959. Exhorting his colleagues to action, the congressman from Durango thundered that "we cannot open the doors of Congress to those who are rejected by public opinion… we must concern ourselves with ensuring that only those citizens who have won their election cleanly are allowed to take their seats in this chamber."[1] Three unresolved cases from the previous summer's election lay before the Electoral College that day, each involving PRI congressmen-elect whose victories the congress had not yet officially recognized. Each result had been duly verified and approved by an examining commission recommending recognition of the congressmen-elect.[2] One case, that of Jalisco's seventh district, was proving particularly contentious, however. In that contest PRI candidate José Valdovinos had triumphed by 35,000 votes over his *panista* rival, but it was a meaningless margin, Salas Armendáriz affirmed, since it was tainted by irregularities. Moments later, José Pérez Moreno rallied to Valdovinos's defense, admonishing his colleagues: "Is it, honorable deputies, that we are going to succumb to pressures alien to the public vote? Are we to shrink in the face of demands by groups other than the will of the voting public?" This impassioned defense

[1] *Diario de los Debates*, XLIV Legislatura, 2º año, October 15, 1959.
[2] The Electoral College was required by the Constitution to approve the election of all members of Congress, though in most cases this was a rubber-stamp procedure, interrupted only by boilerplate speeches. It was, predictably, a lengthy process. For the 1958-1961 legislature, the Electoral College began sessions as soon as the congressional period convened in August of 1958, and as Valdovinos's case illustrates, the decisions on controversial elections were postponed as long as possible.

did not sway the Electoral College's members, however, and the answer to his rhetorical questions was apparently "yes" on all counts: the Electoral College voted 91-13 to nullify Valdovinos'svictory. The other two congressmen-elect, Miguel A. Olea Enríquez from Chihuaha and Rubén Marín y Kall from the Federal District, fared better than Valdovinos: were both confirmed in their seats.

Valdovinos was hardly a likely patsy in a seemingly platitudinous debate about democracy. Between 1954 and 1958 he had served as secretary general of the Alianza de Camioneros and had wrangled the organization into complying with the dictates of the new urban transportation program that Mexico City regent Ernesto Uruchurtu had issued. Indeed, general sentiment among political commentators held that Valdovinos had received the candidacy in return for his compliance with official intervention in the Alianza's management of the bus system. Moreover, he was personally close to both Uruchurtu and incoming president Adolfo López Mateos.[3] Yet between spring of 1958 and fall of 1959, Valdovinos suffered a remarkable reversal of fortune. Pérez Moreno's shadowy "pressures" were a clear reference to the student movement that had exploded in the summer of 1958 as resentment over inadequate and expensive bus service to the national university boiled over following an official decision to enact a 10-centavo fare increase. In downtown demonstrations, students carried Valdovinos's symbolic coffin through the streets, denouncing the Alianza leader as an example of illicit enrichment, labor bossism, and regime complicity.[4] Thus, by October 1959, when the Electoral

[3] López Mateos actually visited Valdovinos's Jalisco ranch during the presidential campaign.
[4] Though the 10-centavo increase had actually been destined to improve wages paid to drivers, the students attacked Valdovinos as a corrupt boss of poor bus owners rather than the leader of businessmen that he more realistically was.

College heard his case, the deputies had already been subjected to the jeers and exhortations of university students who filled the galleries to reject vocally Valdovinos's ascent to political office. The decision to invalidate the election remains as curious as it was unusual, however, and speaks to the interplay of popular opinion and political life especially visible when public transportation was the matter at hand.

This chapter will examine the relationship among protest, public interest, policy, and politics. The 1958 movement was not an isolated episode; rather, it was part of a metronomic tick of low-level challenges to the regime over seemingly mundane policy issues. The eruptions of minor grievances over concrete issues such as bus fares provide important insights onto the effectiveness of Mexico's authoritarian system. Paul Gillingham has argued that popular pressures exercised a sort of veto power during the formative years of the one-party state, and similar processes were still at play after 1950.[5] It was over questions of misadministration that citizens confronted the government and spoke out against corruption and it was on such matters, where policy decisions could either be sustained or altered to serve the "public interest," that the regime proved most responsive. In the face of public pressure, from the mid-1950s onward, the state proved remarkably capable of extracting concessions from partners such as the Alianza who had wielded outsized influence in earlier years. In doing so, the regime renegotiated its

[5] Gillingham, "Maximino's Bulls"; After the 1940s, the role of protest in shaping regime policies is less clear. Eric Zolov and Anne Rubenstein have both explored how cultural regulators attempted to balance the complaints and demands of diverse constituencies in the mid-century, and several studies have examined the cataclysmic 1968 student movement, but low-level protests from the 1940s to the 1980s have received little attention. Eric Zolov, *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1999); Anne Rubenstein, *Bad Language, Naked Ladies, and Other Threats to the Nation: A Political History of Comic Books in Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

arrangements with intermediate elites, subtly reworking their relationship with the government and the terms of their integration into the party.

## EL CHARRO

José Valdovinos's ascent to the Alianza's presidency in 1954 was in many ways surprising. Competition for control of the Alianza was fierce, and Valdovinos hardly had the pedigree or positioning of his main rivals, Martín Ruiz, who had doggedly defended industry interests for two decades, or Narciso Contreras, who was serving in congress. Born in Sayula, Jalisco in 1904, Valdovinos had emigrated to the capital at a young age, working first as a driver for General Carlos Prieto and later for other prominent politicians.[6] After acquiring a bus on the Guadalupe line in 1931, he flourished as a *camionero*, and by the mid-1940s owned buses on various urban routes and had distinguished himself as an administrator of the Circuito Colonias line. Perhaps his greatest fame within the Alianza was for his ranch in Jalisco and fondness for *charrería*, Mexico's sport of folkloric rodeo. But if he lacked Ruiz's stature as a *camionero*, what Valdovinos did have in 1954 was a reputation unsullied by close connections to Antonio Díaz Lombardo, and the crucially important support of Ernesto Uruchurtu.[7] That last factor elevated the 48-year-old self-made man into a major role Mexico City's political stage.

Uruchurtu's decision to throw his weight behind Valdovinos came at a moment of growing tension between the government and the Alianza. Narciso Contreras, a

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[6] *El Informador Camionero*, March, 1954.
[7] Valdovinos was, at one point, described as a *diazlombardista*, but there is no evidence of a particularly close personal connection.

congressman from 1952-1955, had taken the organization's helm in 1954 under less than auspicious conditions. Fares had not changed since the modest increase Miguel Alemán had authorized in 1947, and devaluations in 1948 and 1954 eroded the peso's international purchasing power. This was a particular blow to an industry that depended on imports of U.S.-made automotive equipment, forcing down profit margins for owners in the face of rising capital costs.[8] If Díaz Lombardo had managed to keep a lid on *camionero* discontent during Alemán's *sexenio*, the fractured leadership that followed him proved unable to contain such pressures. Contreras in particular seemed to lack both the tact and connections that would have allowed him to navigate skillfully between his affiliates' demands and the new government.[9] A few days after the March 10, 1954 assembly that named Contreras as Díaz Lombardo's replacement, DFS agents reported that the Alianza's leadership intended to pressure the city government to allow second-class buses to charge the higher 25-centavo first-class fares—a idea, the agents noted, that President Ruiz Cortines and Uruchurtu had previously rejected, "considering it inopportune."[10] Contreras certainly tried to maintain a tight grip on the Alianza's membership, using *El Informador Camionero* to announce his meetings with the regent and the government-controlled Banco Nacional de Transportes, and to suggest that a resolution was near. But by the end of April his control was slipping. On April 24, the

[8] The Alianza had actually begun petitioning Alemán for a "readjustment" of fares in 1952, though they increased their pressure after Ruiz Cortines took office.
[9] More than any personal failing, since Contreras does not appear to have been unpopular within the Alianza, his ill-fated tenure as Secretary General seems to have been the product of political circumstances not under his control.
[10] DFS, 45-1 L1 H132, 15 March 1954. The report also noted that Díaz Lombardo planned to launch a press campaign "creating problems for the government with the goal of pressuring for the authorization of the Alianza's plan."

DFS reported that divisions within the Alianza were growing, fueled by Uruchurtu's "flat-out rejection" of Contreras's request to raise fares, and the regent's subsequent threat that any overt attempt by the Alianza to pressure the government would lead to official intervention.[11]

Even had the administration been inclined to grant Contreras's requests, it was readily apparent that the political costs of doing so would be high. On April 16, as rumors of the Alianza's efforts to obtain a fare rise swirled in the city press, *La Prensa*, the group's old enemy, published a manifesto from the Unión de Colonias Proletarias (Union of Proletarian Neighborhoods) speaking in "representation of the majority interest of the public who pay for a defective, disorganized, and anarchic service," and demanding that the government dissolve the Alianza and take control of public transportation services.[12] Even as government officials announced that fares would not be increased, and Contreras affirmed publicly the Alianza's willingness to accept that decision, tensions were rising. On April 25, *La Prensa* reported that the city's southern lines had arbitrarily increased their fares, an action that provoked g a group of university students to declare that while "we believe the authorities will protect the interests of the *pueblo*… if they do not we are ready to do whatever is necessary," as it was no longer tolerable that "the voracious and insatiable vultures of the bus routes" continue to prey on the city's most vulnerable classes.[13] That Contreras was closely linked to Díaz Lombardo, and thus to the Alemán-era excesses that Ruiz Cortines had openly sought to rein in, only made him an easy target for public criticism. And despite Uruchurtu's connections to Alemán—they had

[11] DFS, 45-1 L1 H139, 24 April 1954.
[12] DFS, 45-1 L1 H138, 24 March 1954; *La Prensa*, April 16, 1954.
[13] *La Prensa*, April 25, 1954.

studied law at UNAM together and Uruchurtu had worked on Alemán's presidential campaign—the regent had shown no fondness for Díaz Lombardo's Alianza.

Unwilling to unleash the wave of protest that a fare increase would likely have brought, the city government stonewalled the Alianza, and Contreras paid the price. In a stunning breach of protocol, on May 21 a group of dissident bus lines published a newspaper broadside, in *La Prensa* no less, announcing their intention to remove Contreras from the leadership of the organization.[14] The dissidents met with Uruchurtu that day, and the regent appears to have assured them that such a new committee would receive the support of officials.[15] Five days later, in an extraordinary assembly, Alianza members ousted most of the executive committee and named José Valdovinos the new secretary general. Whether or not Uruchurtu's intervention in the ouster had been direct, as was later rumored, he had certainly influenced events. That not a single member of the new executive committee had held a leadership position during the Díaz Lombardo era spoke to the depth of the purge that had occurred.[16] Other than Valdovinos, many were relative unknowns. Alianza members recognized, however, that despite having been elected treasurer in March, Valdovinos was never close to Contreras and that since he enjoyed Uruchurtu's favor his leadership offered the best hope for a resolution of the industry's economic crisis. This was a perception Valdovinos sought to encourage,

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[14] *La Prensa*, May 21, 1954; DFS 45-1 L1 H160, 20 May 1954.
[15] DFS, 45-1 L1 H160, 20 May 1954. The DFS agents reported that the only purpose of the meeting with Uruchurtu was to express the "critical" financial situation of the lines, although given subsequent events this seems unlikely. The agents also reported increasing discontent within the Alianza over Contreras's "overly collaborationist" stance.
[16] Valdovinos had served in a low-level capacity on one of Díaz Lombardo's Executive committees for a brief period, though he was hardly an active member of the leadership prior to 1954. See Chapter Four for a discussion of turnover in Alianza Executive committees.

publicizing his warm relationship with the regent by appearing with a smiling Uruchurtu on the June cover of *El Informador Camionero* in a clear attempt at signaling to readers that after a year and a half of antagonism, a new era in relations with the government had begun.

That new era, however, seemed more about symbolism than concrete changes in policy. In early June meetings, Uruchurtu offered the new Alianza committee a warm reception, reminding them that while "the interests of the *pueblo* are far greater than the interests of your *gremio,*" he understood their problems, greatly appreciated their understanding and support of government policy, and asked that they be patient while the president considered the matter.[17] The change in tone was enough to prompt *El Informador Camionero* to label the interactions "A Ray of Hope."[18] On June 24, the *camioneros* met the president personally, and as Ruiz Cortines shook their hands he asked them to have "patriotism and patience."[19] A month into his tenure, if Valdovinos had achieved little for the Alianza, for the government he had proven far more adept than Contreras at controlling the organization and had thus begun to establish himself as a crucial ally in the Alianza.

As it played out, patience was the order of the day. In August, Ruiz Cortines elected to delay a decision on the fare issue, choosing instead to delegate the resolution to a tripartite committee with representatives from the Alianza, the Banco Nacional de Transportes, and the city government. As the issue dragged through the summer and into the fall, the Alianza once again became restive. In a heated 27 September assembly,

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[17] *El Informador Camionero*, June 1954.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.

Valdovinos faced a no-confidence vote and an opposition slate headed by Martín Ruiz, who had reappeared as a powerful voice within the group after Contreras's downfall.[20] As tempers rose Valdovinos suspended the assembly, and after privately meeting with Ruiz announced the decision to postpone the election of a new executive committee until October. But by October little had changed, and again, Ruiz and Valdovinos reached an agreement to postpone elections until the following January, declaring a change in leadership ill advised given the delicacy of the ongoing negotiations with the government.[21] DFS agents observing the October assembly noted the deep division within the Alianza between supporters of Valdovinos and those of Ruiz, and reported on rumors circulating among *camioneros* that the fare conflict remained unresolved because "individuals with a large stake in the Alianza had sold out to the government in order to *quedar bien* with the president."[22]

Valdovinos's apparent passivity aside, the government's stalling was predictable considering the unpalatable choices it faced. Since Ruiz Cortines had devalued the peso in April, rising prices had battered city residents and an increase in fares on public transportation seemed likely to spark widespread protests. On October 1, 800 students and residents attended a protest against a rumored fare increase, marching from the downtown Santo Domingo plaza to the national palace on the Zócalo.[23] As student leaders warned that they would respond to an increase by overturning and burning buses,

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[20] DFS, 45-1 L1 H251, 28 September 1954.
[21] DFS, 45-1 L1 H275, 30 October 1954.
[22] DFS, 45-1 L1 H273, 29 October 1954.
[23] *La Prensa*'s front-page coverage offered slightly higher crowd estimates, suggesting "thousands" had turned out for the demonstration, but given the paper's history, it seems likely that their reports exaggerated the importance of the march; *La Prensa*, October 2, 1954.

one student implored Ruiz Cortines to "demonstrate that you are not of the school of Miguel Alemán, but of Lázaro Cárdenas—save the *pueblo*, expropriate the buses."[24] Official concern with public perception was particularly acute in late 1954 and early 1955. In one instance, to prepare for an increase in PEMEX's gasoline prices, a member of the presidential staff drafted a detailed public relations strategy suggesting that governors identify popular newspaper columnists in each state and encourage them to publish articles in support of government policy.[25] When the city government announced an unexpected five-centavo bus fare increase in mid-January, 1955, Alianza leaders were caught off guard and suspected that the decision was a sort of opinion poll intended to gauge the public reaction.[26] *Capitalinos* were not pleased: DFS agents reported that the fare increase provoked passengers to "hurl insults at the authorities and particularly the president, and in some areas passing buses were stoned."[27] Neither was the Alianza pleased, and on January 20 a testy Valdovinos informed a high ranking city official that the increase was wholly insufficient to allow for both the improvement of urban transport and the increase in wages that bus drivers were now vocally demanding.[28] The situation appeared to be nearing a breaking point.

In the Alianza's extraordinary assembly of January 1955, Ruiz and Valdovinos split permanently. Explored at length in the following chapter, this schism saw Ruiz and Contreras form a dissident executive committee as Valdovinos announced that if they

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[24] AGN, P ARC, 512.51/87.
[25] AGN, P ARC, 527/163/8. The author of the memorandum is unclear.
[26] DFS, Versión Pública del Expediente de Ernesto Uruchurtu, DFS H24, 18 January 1955. Hereafter abbreviated as DFS, VP EPU.
[27] Ibid.
[28] DFS, 45-1 L1 H366, 20 January 1955.

wanted to found a new organization, he would not stop them, and whichever lines wanted to leave the Alianza were free to do so.[29] At that moment, Valdovinos had the loyalty of only 40 of the city's 81 bus lines, but maintained official recognition as the Alianza's head, as well as control of the organization's offices. Any doubts over whom the authorities favored were erased when Valdovinos requested and received a police detail to guard the Alianza's offices from a possible raid by Ruiz's faction.[30] In February, Ruiz complained to the office of the president that neither Uruchurtu, the minister of the Social Security Institute, nor the head of the Banco Nacional de Transportes would agree to meet with him.[31] Over the following months nearly all of the dissident urban lines would return to Valdovinos, as his close ties to the regent, and therefore with the government-run Banco Nacional de Transportes—the sole source of credit for the industry—proved decisive in returning would-be defectors to the fold.[32]

Valdovinos was thus left with sole control over the Alianza by the spring of 1955, and as his authority over the group tightened he was more able to fulfill the needs of the political patrons who had seen him through the challenges of the preceding months. In May, DFS agents reported that "for now, the Alianza does not have the slightest intention of requesting a new fare increase…to avoid creating new problems for the Government… The Alianza's directorate has calculated that the current fares will allow the current

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[29] DFS, 45-1 L1 H394, 27 January 1955. This dissident group was composed of Ruiz and Contreras, prominent *diazlombardistas* Evaristo Rodríguez, Manuel Zurita, and José T. Gutierrez, and Isidoro Rodríguez and Rubén Figueroa, who are discussed in chapters four and five, respectively.
[30] DFS, 45-1 L1 H398, 28 January 1955.
[31] AGN, P ARC, 437.3/109, February 16, 1955.
[32] By April, Valdovinos had control of most of Mexico City's lines; DFS, 45-1 L2 H75, 6 April 1955. The jousting between factions that occurred from 1955 onward will be discussed at length in Chapter Four.

vehicles to continue in operation for two more years."[33] Such optimism, however, did not translate into reality: by late June, lower-class *colonias* across the city began to complain of irregular and insufficient bus service as second-class lines began removing vehicles from circulation, alleging that current fares made it impossible to afford necessary maintenance.[34] After a rebuke from the metropolitan Transit Office, Valdovinos reminded Alianza members through *El Informador Camionero* that "we are obliged to provide service."[35] In meetings among Uruchurtu, Valdovinos, and the head of the Banco Nacional de Transportes, Guillermo Riveroll, it was decided that the Alianza should acquire 1000-1500 new buses through the bank at a cost of $55,000 to $60,000 pesos (approximately US$5000) per vehicle.[36] The new buses would be subsidized by the government and provide more comfortable and efficient service. In August, the Alianza published a broadside thanking the president for approving the plan, noting that the 1500 new vehicles would "resolve, in part, the problem of transport in the Federal District, making it worthy of its inhabitants."[37] The decision was not, however, an act of charity: the specifications and design of the new buses had come from the top, and the *camioneros* were required to purchase the vehicles the city government had mandated. Even subsidized, this meant both a substantial expenditure and a significant loss of autonomy for the *camioneros*. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that by November

[33] DFS, 45-1 L2 H85, 12 May 1955.
[34] DFS, 45-1 L2 H113, 29 June 1955.
[35] *El Informador Camionero*, June, 1955.
[36] DFS, 45-1 L2 H124, 5 July 1955.
[37] *El Informador Camionero*, August 1955.

Alianza members were again grumbling that their leaders were more interested in "political convenience" than the needs of the industry.[38]

The renovation of equipment began that fall, and by early 1956 new buses were being introduced regularly, replacing older, broken down vehicles.[39] Under the agreement the Alianza had signed with the government, the Banco Nacional de Transportes extended 75 million pesos in credit, directly acquiring 1,500 imported chassis-drive train packages for sale to the *camioneros*, and brokering favorable deals with domestic Ford and G.M. plants to assemble carriages and interiors on those chassis.[40] The terms of the arrangement were favorable to owners, as the Banco reduced the down payment on the chassis-drive trains from 12,000 to 9,000 pesos and provided long-term financing to cover the cost of assembly. Even if the Banco was heavy-handed—specifying the exact characteristics of the carriages, down to the type of foam to be used in seats—the low subsidized cost made the purchases attractive, and discontent over the arrangement within the Alianza seems to have subsided.[41] The organization even negotiated with the Banco to acquire another 1,000 chassises for sale to *camioneros* outside of Mexico City.[42] Throughout the renewal period, fares remained largely unchanged, but the Alianza received a generous allowance of subsidized gasoline at 0.35 centavos per liter, which helped to offset the cost of the renovation.[43]

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[38] DFS, 45-1 L2 H158, 9 November 1955.
[39] By May, 100 new buses were in circulation, and by June that number had climbed to 750; DFS, 45-1 L2 H210, 9 May 1956; DFS, 45-1 L2 H216, 13 June 1956.
[40] Chassis implied the drive train, suspension, axles, and engine.
[41] DFS, 45-1 L2 H218, 16 June 1956.
[42] This was a tremendous point of pride for Valdovinos, who remained locked in a struggle with Ruiz's provincial dissident group; *El Informador Camionero*, January, 1956.
[43] *El Informador Camionero*, December, 1956.

The net effect of this project was to allow both the Alianza and the Government to reaffirm their commitment to improving urban life and transportation, and the inauguration of new buses into service was nearly always cause for fanfare. In August, 1956, a DFS report commented that the Regent's ceremonial review of 200 new vehicles "was so the public would realize that the Alianza is working to put new vehicles in service."[44] When the last of the 1,500 buses were put into service at a January 14, 1957 celebration in the Zócalo attended by hundreds of *camioneros*, president Ruiz Cortines himself examined the vehicles alongside Uruchurtu and Valdovinos—the first time a president had ever done so, according to *El Informador Camionero*.[45] As journalists admired the impressive spectacle of 325 buses parked neatly around the plaza, the President announced plans for the Alianza to acquire 1,500 more buses through the Banco to complete a total restructuring of urban transport that year.[46] Along with the replacement of deteriorated vehicles, over the following months the arrival of new buses allowed for the establishment of new routes touching outlying areas of the growing metropolis.[47] The second phase of vehicle replacement was not entirely smooth: on the Insurgentes-Bellas Artes line, 25 buses from 1956 that owners had not yet paid off were set to be replaced by a new style of flat-front bus (nicknamed *chatos* or "pug noses") that the city government had chosen.[48] This predictably prompted considerable discontent,

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[44] DFS, 45-1 L2 H228, 24 August 1956.
[45] *El Informador Camionero,* June 1957.
[46] *El Informador Camionero,* January 1957. The 3,000 new vehicles meant that 81% of the city's buses would be new, as the 1951 models would be completely phased out; *El Informador Camionero*, August 1957.
[47] The routes were, in March, Madereros-Puerto Aéreo, and in April, Xochimilco-Chapultepec.
[48] *El Informador Camionero,* August, 1957.

and the problem festered throughout the remainder of Valdovinos'stenure.[49] But when Ruiz Cortines again presided over an inaugural ceremony for new buses in the Zócalo in June 1957, *El Informador Camionero* remarked that the President's attentiveness to urban transport signaled that after years of struggle "our personal interests are plainly aligned with those of our government, and the future appears bright."[50]

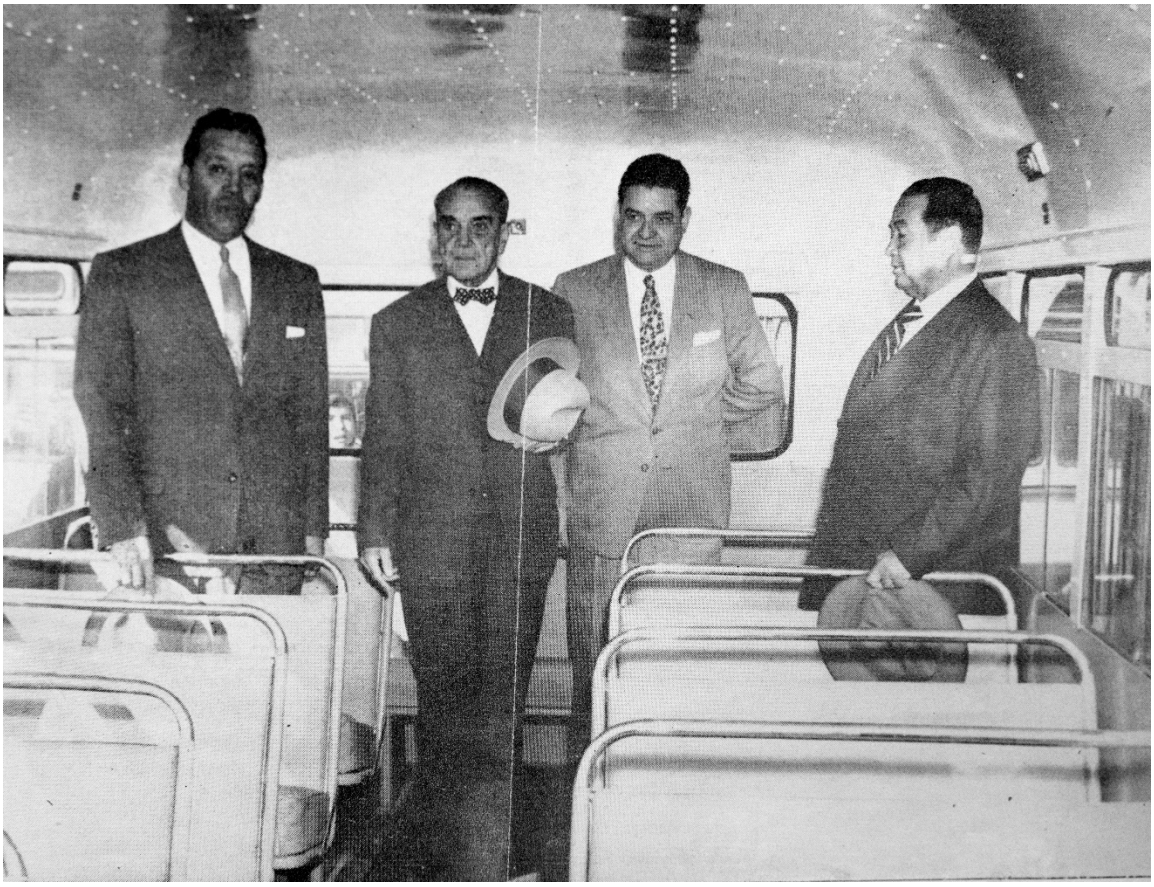

**Figure 8:** Adolfo Ruiz Cortines and Ernesto Uruchurtu inspect new buses with José Valdovinos. *El Informador Camionero* January 1957.

For Valdovinos it was indeed an optimistic time. Not only had he solidified his control of the Alianza, but in binding the organization tightly to the city and federal

[49] DFS, 45-1 L3 H23, 4 September 1957, among others.
[50] *El Informador Camionero*, June, 1957.

governments he had positioned himself as something of a political powerbroker. In one case, Valdovinos reportedly urged members of the Alianza to "cooperate fully with the government" by accepting new '*chato'* buses, even though doing so "represented a loss of profits."[51] While his ambitions were properly veiled—DFS agents frequently reported that the Alianza had assumed a stance of apoliticism as the elections approached—Valdovinos was certainly aware of the opportunities available to him now that the Alianza had returned to official favor following 1955 mid-term elections in which no *camionero* representatives replaced Contreras in congress. If Valdovinos was feeling expansive, it showed. In February, 1957 Valdovinos inaugurated a school in his hometown of Sayula, Jalisco named after his father and funded through contributions from the Alianza that had likely been less than voluntary.[52] It was no small linguistic irony when a few months later Valdovinos was elected president of *charrería*'s national governing body, the Federación Nacional de Charros: in the country's political lexicon the term *charro* had come to describe the labor bosses whose practices the Alianza leader increasingly mimicked.[53] Like the original *charro,* the corrupt leader of railway workers Jesús Díaz de León, Valdovinos was an aficionado of the sport and fond of the ornate embroidered uniforms and traditional rituals.[54] And, like the leaders who came to bear the label of *charro*, out of political expediency and an interest in public perception Valdovinos had goaded his affiliates into complying with the wishes of the government.

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[51] DFS, 45-1 L3 H190, 18 January 1958.
[52] *El Informador Camionero*, February, 1957.
[53] Valdovinos was not a random choice for the position, as he had been a major booster of *charrrería* for many years.
[54] In 1952, Valdovinos organized a '*Fiesta Charra*' for the Alianza; *El Informador Camionero*, September, 1952.

When the PRI designated him its congressional candidate the following spring, it was in many ways the predictable culmination of that career trajectory, especially as Valdovinos arranged for caravans of 100 or more urban buses to accompany the campaign tours of presidential candidate Adolfo López Mateos, and even hosted the candidate's personal visit to the *camionero*'s Sayula ranch.[55]

**Figure 9:** Urban buses transport *acarreados* in 1958. *El Informador Camionero*, May, 1958.

## THE CITY OF THE IRON REGENT

The rise of José Valdovinos as leader of the Alianza cannot easily be separated from the backdrop against which it occurred, for it was Uruchurtu who stamped Mexico

[55] DFS, 45-1 L3 H177, 10 January 1958, among other examples. The details of the struggle over Valdovinos's nomination will be further explored in Chapter Four.

City with a particular brand of politics, and whose cultivation of specific urban constituencies shaped transport policy in the 1950s. By the start of Ruiz Cortines's *sexenio* the management of the capital was increasingly becoming a national political issue. Rapid urban growth and the government's promotion of industrialization around the city meant that the regency was increasingly a high-profile political position.

The man who became known as the Iron Regent had traveled a circuitous path to the city government. Born in 1906 in Sonora, after studying law in Mexico City he returned to his home state in the 1930s, serving briefly as a judge during the government of Román Yocupicio, only to be forced out after reportedly opposing the construction of low-income housing.[56] His conservative nationalism, antagonism to rural migrants, and his connections to small industrialists provided him a political base on the right wing of the official party.[57] After serving as campaign coordinator for his former classmate Alemán in 1946, Uruchurtu was appointed undersecretary of the Interior Ministry, and in 1952 Ruiz Cortines selected him to lead the city government. Uruchurtu's reputation for both traditional conservatism and energetic dynamism made him a compelling choice for the leadership of the capital: as Diane Davis observed, "[his] ideological proclivities and his receptiveness to the city's petit bourgeoisie and their urban concerns were perhaps his principal qualification for being mayor."[58]

Like a Mexican Richard J. Daley, Uruchurtu cultivated a "bungalow belt" of supporters in the city's centrally located middle-class *colonias*. As Davis and Rachel Kram have observed, it was in these areas that the pressures of urbanization had been

[56] DFS, VP EPU, Legajo IPS H1.
[57] Davis, *Urban Leviathan*, 123.
[58] Davis, *Urban Leviathan*, 124.

most acute, as an influx of rural migrants strained the city's social and physical infrastructure and encroached on the urban center.[59] Poverty became more pervasive and visible, residential overcrowding burdened sanitation services, and crime rates increased while vendors and beggars swarmed narrow downtown streets. For the city's shopkeepers, small industrialists, and businessmen, the capital seemed to be starting a dramatic descent into the darkness of modern urban life. Uruchurtu's highly visible "moralization" and "beautification" campaigns catered to those concerns.[60] The new regent won acclaim for campaigns including new restrictions on "centers of vice" such as cantinas, controlling the sale of alcohol, and cracking down on prostitution by closing cabarets and shuttering clandestine brothels. This heavy-handed paternalism was not unwelcome, and the regent was indeed widely praised for his rectitude and determination. *Capitalinos* similarly lauded Uruchurtu's efforts to plant flowers and trees, improve trash collection, and establish public parks—efforts that seem to have made real improvements in the quality of life in the central residential districts. Taken together, Uruchurtu's programs sought to smooth the jagged edges of a modernity that had arrived too quickly.

This zeal for imposing order on the metropolis extended to transportation policy. As residents had long complained about the Alianza's services and influence, bringing the group to heel paid obvious political dividends. With the 1953 dissolution of the Banco Latinoamericano and formation of the government-controlled Banco Nacional de

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[59] Rachel Kram Villareal, "Gladiolas for the Children of Sánchez: Ernesto P. Uruchurtu's Mexico City, 1950-1968" (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 2008).

[60] Diane Davis makes this argument based on a sociological analysis of the group interests of Mexico City's petit bourgeoisie; Davis, *Urban Leviathan*. Rachel Kram Villareal makes the same claim based on close readings of newspapers, though her model of urban policymaking is substantially less refined than is Davis's. What is sufficiently clear is that Uruchurtu's programs found ready support among conservative groups in the city; Kram Villareal, "Gladiolas".

Transportes, Ruiz Cortines and Uruchurtu began a systematic campaign to reduce the Alianza's political autonomy and improve service. These efforts were part and parcel of the broader urban reform project and appealed to the same constituencies who suffered increasingly crowded buses and traffic-clogged streets.[61] If clipping the wings of Díaz Lombardo's clique facilitated the Alianza's participation in a government-led restructuring of transportation, the logistics of reworking the city's chaotic bus network proved more complex, and Valdovinos's collaboration was essential. By appearing to tackle the problem aggressively, Uruchurtu sought to earn the plaudits of lower- and middle-class commuters.

The regent's intervention in the industry served both to make concrete improvements in service and to present the public image of a modern, clean, orderly transportation system. On January 14, 1954 the Transit Department issued a comprehensive plan restructuring service in the city's downtown area (the "first quadrant"), limiting the number of vehicles that each line could route along designated streets, and banning passenger pickups in certain areas.[62] By the following year Uruchurtu had set in motion the massive 1,500-vehicle replacement project, using his control of the Banco Nacional de Transportes to dictate the exact specifications of the buses. As part of that effort Uruchurtu sought to homogenize the appearance of the city's vehicle transportation network. In the summer of 1955, Uruchurtu passed down a decree that all the city's buses were to be painted a particular shade of "pistachio" green. Though the Alianza protested, claiming that illiterate city residents would be confused without the

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[61] Davis, *Urban Leviathan*.
[62] *El Informador Camionero*, January, 1954.

distinctive paint schemes that identified each route, the Regent held firm, agreeing only to change the color of the first-class buses to what *El Informador Camionero* labeled a "tolerable brown."[63] The regent also ordered the Alianza to equip each bus with easily legible, illuminated route placards and to remove the advertisements traditionally displayed on the external rear panels of buses.[64] Those advertisements, which in 1955 added approximately 72,000 pesos per year to the earnings of each bus, had first appeared in the 1930s as a way to supplement income from low fares, and in 1970 would be reinstated in the midst of another economic struggle as the government sought strategies for subsidizing the industry without resorting to fare increases.[65] Under Uruchurtu, however, the advertisements were deemed eyesores. In an editorial praising the reforms, *El Informador Camionero* opined that "the elimination of the multi-colored buses that gave the appearance of a country fair, plastered with their gaudy and tasteless ads…was a small sacrifice for the *permisionarios*, but represented a tremendous step forward in improving the appearance of our services."[66] Nevertheless, by 1957 the city's Transit Director was complaining that the uniform elegance of the buses was being defaced by small "for sale" announcements or "$$$" painted on the windows.[67]

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[63] *El Informador Camionero*, September, 1955; January, 1956. If the Alianza was not interested in unifying the color scheme on the city's buses, there was still some long standing concern with image. In 1952, an editorial in *El Informador Camionero* suggested that a central office assist with the painting of route signs, noting the poor orthography on many bus placards: "Por lo demás se evitaría que las 'banderas' contuvieran tan constantes faltas ortográficas como las que se observan en casi todas las rutas: Pencil, Balvuena o Valbuena, Cohrrito esta bien h Azcapozalco, San Lásaro, Civilización, Ciprés, y otros errores garrafales que tan mal dicen de nuestra industria y de nuestra ortografia"; *El Informador Camionero*, Feburary, 1953.
[64] DFS 45-1 L2 H142, 29 August 1955.
[65] *Transportes y Turismo*, October, 1970; *El Heraldo Camionero*, April, 30, 1931; *Transportes y Turismo*, July, 1971. The *camioneros* did complain about the loss in income in 1955, but could do little about the order, which was apparently part of the "beautification" campaign; DFS, 45-1 L2 H158, 9 November 1955.
[66] *El Informador Camionero*, November, 1957.
[67] *El Informador Camionero*, January, 1957.

While Uruchurtu succeeded in imposing an impressive degree of orderliness on the *camioneros*, therefore, the government's attempt to regulate the minutiae of the industry often proved difficult to put into practice. The frequency of Transit Department communiqués regarding minor infractions suggests not only that *camionero* compliance was fleeting and uneven, but also that Uruchurtu sought to impose an extreme degree of order: if he could close cantinas, he could also require bus drivers to silence the music from their radios.[68] The men behind the steering wheels ultimately proved the sturdiest bastion of resistance to Uruchurtu's campaign to improve urban transportation. According to the Transit Department, drivers committed a litany of offenses including allowing an excess of standing passengers on first-class buses, picking up passengers mid-street, permitting musicians and singers on board buses to perform for money, conversing with passengers to the point of distraction, and not keeping buses adequately clean. Reckless driving, a chronic problem, was exacerbated by the fact that many of the drivers were newly hired as the number of buses in the city shot upward. A February, 1957 editorial in *El Informador Camionero* bemoaned the "deficiencies" of the men behind the wheel, lamenting that many of the dazzling new buses quickly arrived for repairs with scratches, dents, and broken windows, and suggested that the group take steps to better select and train personnel.[69] At least one observer felt that the government's insistence on uniforms would help to moral reforms of the drivers. In May, 1957 General Luis Casillas, a member of the Alianza's executive committee, wrote that "the disheveled driver, with his undershirt and straw hat and grime, fingernails eternally

[68] *El Informador Camionero*, June, 1957. The majority of Alianza members apparently ignored an order to remove radios from buses.
[69] *El Informador Camionero*, February, 1957.

black in mourning, all bluster and bravado, bent over the steering wheel like an authentic troglodyte, ready to devour streets and even sidewalks, smearing his fellow men on pavement and posts—he belongs to the past: we have erased him with a good bath, a new uniform, decent manners, education, discipline, and above all, respect for the interests of the public."[70] But to judge by the number of official warnings the Transit Department sent the Alianza, despite the threat of fines drivers disobeyed consistently the requirement that they wear official uniforms, thus provoking, the Department claimed, "the censure of the public."[71]

In the end, imposing order on the Alianza proved as difficult as imposing order on the city, and Uruchurtu could only succeed partially. The regent's motivations for undertaking such a quixotic project were both political and personal, but the effort was nevertheless revealing of the regime's preoccupations in the mid-1950s. As Diane Davis has observed, support for PRI congressional candidates in the Federal District in the 1952 elections had declined to 49.01% from 61.9% three years earlier, while support for opposition candidates reached the highest levels of any election between 1946 and 1988, at 50.99%.[72] Perhaps more tellingly, Uruchurtu's predecessor, Fernando Casas Alemán was so unpopular that in 1948 he had been chased from a movie theater by boos and from

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[70] *El Informador Camionero*, May, 1957.
[71] *El Informador Camionero*, December, 1957.
[72] Davis's claim that this was evidence of extreme dissatisfaction with urban policy seems questionable, considering that in 1949, under the immensely unpopular Fernando Casas Alemán, support for PRI candidates was significantly higher, at 61.9%, than it was in 1946 (50.34%) or 1955 (56.05%), when Uruchurtu's reform projects had been operating for two years. In fact, national support for the PRI in 1952, at 74.31%, while higher than the Federal District, was still down from 89.32% in 1949, and lower than 1955 (87.27%) or 1958 (88.33%), a dip likely tied to the henriquista campaign. These fluctuations suggest that electoral results may be a poor barometer of public opinion and popular sentiment regarding policy. In short, the PRI and Ruiz Cortines did not likely conspire to promote Uruchurtu's urban reform initiatives as a response to declining electoral returns: the motivations lay elsewhere; Davis, *Urban Leviathan*.

a soccer stadium by jeers of "bandit."[73] Flooding, housing shortages, and decaying urban transport all contributed to a general atmosphere of urban unrest. It is hardly a stretch, therefore, to conclude that in 1952 the regime was well aware of its "image problem" in Mexico City.

The Alianza was no small part of that problem. After the Ley Múgica struggle in 1939, there had been little improvement in transport during the 1940s and it was that perception of official inactivity that Uruchurtu sought remedy in the mid-1950s. There was certainly plenty of fuel for reform. A 1941 *La Prensa* headline had screeched that it was "scandalous" how the Alianza "swindled the public with atrocious service."[74] Even mainstream publications such as *Excelsior* and *El Universal*, which generally treated the Alianza gently, had skewered the quality of urban service in editorial cartoons during the 1940s. *Excelsior* cartoonist Freyre depicted overcrowded buses as sardine tins with the biting caption "How odd, canned humans."[75] More subversively, *El Universal*'s Audiffred had juxtaposed the city's dilapidated buses, their unshaven drivers and passengers clinging to bumpers, with the neatly dressed transportation moguls arriving in luxury cars to the 1948 Auto-transport Convention.[76] But where Audiffred insinuated, the shrill left-wing weekly *La Crítica* was explicit, as it once depicted a grotesquely fat prostitute stamped with the label "Alianza de Camioneros," baring her breasts and crushing both *pueblo* and authorities beneath her prodigious rump.[77] In 1951 *La Crítica* had remarked that a rumored fare raise would "increase the *pueblo*'s disgust with the

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[73] Gillingham, "Maximino's Bulls," 203.
[74] *La Prensa*, June 3, 1941.
[75] *Excélsior*, June 6, 1946.
[76] *El Universal*, December 1, 1948.
[77] *La Crítica*, January 15, 1948.

patent indifference of the authorities."[78] The Alianza's newsprint opponents alleged more than mere indifference: in 1953, *La Prensa* had suggested that *camionero* abuses were tolerated because of "political trafficking." The rather striking indictment of corruption and influence noted that "if there is, for example, a political campaign, the transport 'pool' always joins up with the winning side. They contribute money or vehicles, and politicians fight for this since it means the *acarreo* of contingents to the meetings and demonstrations… then, at the hour of taking stock, the party and the triumphant candidate keep in mind only the interests of the *camionero* magnates."[79] By 1954, *La Crítica* was imploring Uruchurtu to block a fare increase, noting that "the *gente* of the city had placed their hopes in him," and *La Prensa* announced that an undefined "They" demanded "the dissolution of the Alianza so that the city might have quality transportation."[80] When students protested a potential fare increase in 1954 they carried banners declaring that

[78] *La Crítica*, April 1, 1951.
[79] *La Prensa*, June 23, 1953.
[80] *La Critica*, March 1, 1954; *La Prensa*, April 16, 1954.

"Transportation is a public service – the government should take it over!," and "Should the *pueblo* sacrifice for the millionaires of the Alianza? Enough is enough!"[81]

**Figure 10:** Popular visions of the Alianza. *La Crítica*, January 15, 1948.

But the universe of policy options in 1954 was not a big one. In her study of twentieth-century Mexican comic books, Anne Rubenstein has suggested that regardless of the regime's success or failure in regulating content and responding to public complaints, what mattered politically was the "*appearance* of control over popular culture industries."[82] Similarly, Uruchurtu's transportation policy seems calculated to have presented an image of authority when tactical calculations precluded more

[81] *La Prensa*, October 2,1954.
[82] Rubenstein, *Bad Language*, 2. Italics mine.

aggressive policies. Municipalizing services would have run counter to Uruchurtu's conservative ideology, unsettled his small-industrialist constituency, and burdened the city with a new expenditure during difficult economic times. Fares, the issue on which most public opinion seemed to pivot, could not be lowered without provoking a direct conflict with the Alianza. The regent had few options other than attempting to work with the Alianza, therefore, which even under pliant leadership still resented and resisted his efforts. Ordering the uniformity of paint schemes on buses was more a show of power than a productive measure to improve transportation; it was a cosmetic response to long-running complaints—a public relations palliative.

Although its prescriptions were largely decorative, Uruchurtu's program did represent an attempt to respond to public concerns. To paraphrase Fernando Escalante Gonzalbo, however, this was a public more imagined than real.[83] Because Mexico City's residents did not even participate in ornamental elections for their local representatives, urban government tended to arrogate to itself the task of interpreting the will of the public. Such a paternalistically-determined abstraction, however, was a simple magnification of features inherent in the broader political system, in which the *notion* of public opinion did indeed carry great weight. Ev Meade has meticulously demonstrated this with death penalty debates in the 1940s, when congressmen made impassioned pleas for the reinstatement of the *pena máxima* on the basis of "the sentiments of the people" as expressed in the metropolitan press.[84] Simultaneously, however, Meade reveals that

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[83] Fernando Escalante Gonzalbo, *Ciudadanos imaginarios: memorial de los afanes y desventuras de la virtud y apología del vicio triunfante en la República Mexicana: tratado de moral pública* (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1992).

[84] "Luis Márquez Ricaño proclaimed it 'his duty" to make himself 'an echo of the opinion and clamor of the pueblo,' and reminded the assembly that the Chamber of Deputies was 'the people's tribunal.'

political elites segmented distinct "publics:" the popular public, labeled irrational and volatile, was set in contrast to the educated, modern public, with the state as the paternalistic arbiter between the two. It was within that framework that Uruchurtu operated, offering policies to the "popular" public that, at their core, were the project of a modernizing elite. It was not until 1958 when protests, the tool of popular veto described by Paul Gillingham, revealed the dissonance between Uruchurtu's superficial policy and broader demands for lower fares and meaningful government control over the Alianza.

## VICTIMS OF THE PULPO

Protests over transportation policy were something of a new phenomenon in 1958. Although virulent attacks against the Alianza had long appeared in the press and were a staple of opposition political discourse, only on rare occasions had these translated into action after the 1930s. In one prominent 1948 episode, university students had overturned and burned buses in Puebla when the state government attempted to raise fares by 15 centavos, but failed to block the increase since the Alianza furiously lobbied President Alemán on behalf of its *poblano* affiliates.[85] By the mid-1950s, however, public transportation had become a flashpoint for discontent, particularly among Mexico City's students, who had begun a faltering process of political radicalization.

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Renovación Nacional leader Juan Gil Preciado proclaimed that his support for the death penalty was 'a genuine representation of the sentiments of the people' as demonstrated by the crime pages. As public representatives, these federal deputies had a *duty* to carry out the will of the people, and, according to the crime pages, the people wanted the death penalty."; Everard Meade, "From Sex Strangler to Model Citizen: Mexico's Most Famous Murder and the Defeat of the Death Penalty" *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 26:2 (2010), 359-360.

[85] MAV 512.51/223, various.

University students had particular and parochial reasons for concern with transportation. Beginning in 1954, UNAM had begun to relocate from the center of the city to new facilities at Ciudad Universitaria (C.U.) on the southern edge of the capital.[86] The move meant that many students were forced to undertake a lengthy commute to attend classes, and the services available initially were often poor.[87] One group of students petitioned the city government in June, 1954 for permits to begin a collective taxi-van service, noting that buses servicing C.U. were "scarce" and "deficient in meeting their obligations."[88] By spring, 1955 the city government had taken note of the problem, and Valdovinos and Uruchurtu had arranged for various lines not only to provide special services for students, but to do so at a five-centavo discount as well.[89] Though nearly 10,000 students utilized these services, another 6,000 made the trip by other means, often through sharing private vehicles. The situation seemed to frustrate the *camioneros* who, while describing their services to C.U. as "efficient and of the highest quality," griped that providing them meant sacrificing a large part of their regular passenger base.[90] With

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[86] The CU project was begun under Miguel Alemán, who was honored with a large Soviet-style statue on the campus. That statue, which contemporaries noted more resembled Stalin than Alemán, was subsequently defaced by students and removed.

[87] "The opening of the university city in 1954 isolated the students from such government buildings as the National Palace, making effective demonstrations more difficult and thus providing an additional reason for the decline of university-state conflicts in the 1950s. To reach these buildings from the campus, students had to travel over ten miles by city bus in a system that was not as well developed as it would become by the end of the decade. In fact, the senior class of the law school tried to boycott the new campus on February 4, 1954, when ordered to move. They claimed that the campus was too far from the city, lacked communications, and was not ready to use. This issue of isolation, often disguised as protests over the bus system, was the most volatile issue for UNAM in the 1950s."; Donald Mabry, *The Mexican University and the State: Student Conflicts, 1910-1971* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1982), 207.

[88] AGN, P ARC, 512.51/44, 22 June 1954.

[89] AGN, P ARC, 512.51/44, 23 March 1955.

[90] *El Informador Camionero*, April, 1955. Moreover, the Alianza's editorialists in *El Informador Camionero* sniped that "…the remoteness of C.U. imposes an intellectual hierarchy, aristocratizing studies. Only those with the money for buses and much time to lose are able to study at C.U." Students had not always been undesirable passengers: in the early years of the industry, one report notes, drivers sought out

students spending increasing time on buses conflict also increased. On at least one occasion students demanded reparations from the Alianza for a *compañero* injured in a bus accident. In the summer of 1955, *permisionarios* on the Clasa-20 de Noviembre line reported several incidents in which non-student teenagers had attempted to pay the reduced student fare and rallied the student passengers to threaten drivers when full payment had been demanded.[91]

The cost of transportation was a shared grievance uniting diverse groups of students with other sectors of the population. When a fare increase appeared likely in the late summer of 1954, groups of students attacked buses traveling along downtown streets on the evening of August 27, and on October 1, UNAM's University Student Federation (FEU) rallied supporters in a vigorous, if small, demonstration.[92] Although the ostensible purpose of student activism was to resist fare increases, at 25 centavos first-class fares in 1954 were not outlandishly high and had not changed in seven years even as the nominal weekly wages of workers increased from 59.86 to 118.74 pesos.[93] Rather, it was what the Alianza symbolized that provoked the students' ire. Denouncing the group's members as "monopolists" who "lived in palaces" and paid 50,000 pesos for permits to operate on the most lucrative lines, speakers drew sharp contrasts between the *camioneros* and the defenseless city residents, lamenting that poverty was so extreme workers could no longer pay for their daily commutes.[94] The official tripartite commission that had sided

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university students on Mondays when, flush with cash, they would pay for seats rather than riding standing up; *Transportes y Turismo*, December, 1963.

[91] DFS, 45-1 L2 H126, 21 July 1955.

[92] DFS, 45-1 L1 H220, 2 September 1954.

[93] Jeffery Bortz, *El salario en México* (México, D.F.: Ediciones El Caballito, 1986), 69.

[94] It is intriguing to note that the 1958 movement, which has received some scholarly attention from Donald Mabry, Gilberto Guevara Niebla, and José René Rivas Ontiveros, was entirely prefigured by the 1954-1955

with the Alianza that summer on the matter of fares was thus "betraying the *pueblo*."[95] The charges of Alianza monopolization and wealth were not new—*La Prensa* had published such accusations for years—but in 1954, for the first time, they had been raised as a banner of popular struggle. The young orator who implored Ruiz Cortines to follow Cárdenas and not Alemán was doing more than summoning the memory of the 1938 oil expropriation: he was alluding to popular understandings of corruption, and suggesting that the *camioneros* had waxed fat as *alemanistas* lined their pockets and turned a blind eye to abuses in transportation. For many residents, the Alianza's alleged sin was predatory and excessive enrichment through monopolistic control of a public service, a control sustained through bribery and cronyism. It was a sin in which the government was wholly complicit, and in "betraying" its obligations to the *pueblo* it had committed perhaps a greater transgression than had the *camioneros* themselves. At a smaller January 1955 demonstration, speakers darkly tagged Ruiz Cortines as the Alianza's "pimp."[96]

Despite this apparently simmering resentment, the intensity of the "*movimiento de los camiones*" in the summer of 1958 caught both the government and the Alianza off guard. In the months prior to the protests, Uruchurtu had redoubled his efforts to address transit issues, prompted in part by a steady increase in labor conflicts on urban bus lines over salary demands that the Alianza claimed it could not meet. In January 1958, Uruchurtu convened the Technical Commission on Urban Transport and tasked the group

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protests: in the earlier protests, Politechnic and UNAM students collaborated—if only modestly—and advocated on an issue that was not student-specific. According to DGIPS agents, three workers also spoke at the second demonstration; AGN, P ARC, 512.51/87, 18 January 1955.

[95] AGN, P ARC, 512.51/87, 1 October 1954.

[96] AGN, P ARC, 512.51/87, 18 January 1955.

with finding "an integral solution to the problem."[97] The task force was led by a pair of engineers from the Federal District's planning and transportation ministries, and included five additional government representatives from the Banco Nacional de Transportes, the Banco de México, the SCOP, the Ministry of the Economy, and Transportes Electricos del D.F., as well as representatives from the CTM and CGT labor unions, and José Valdovinos from the Alianza.[98] If the Commission was broad, it was also both highly technocratic and politically tone deaf. After months of deliberation, in late July the Commission recommended a stepped increase in urban fares of ten centavos, with the first five centavos of increase destined directly for increasing drivers' salaries and the second five designated for *permisionarios* in order to facilitate the purchase of new buses. The resolution immediately defused the threat of a drivers' strike, and on August 11 the city government approved the proposal and the new fares went into effect the following week.

Despite the high-minded aims of the increase, press and public reactions to the Commission's verdict were decidedly mixed. While newspaper coverage of the decision was generally matter-of-fact, acerbic commentary on *La Prensa*'s editorial pages panned

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[97] *El Informador Camionero*, January, 1958.

[98] That the project unsettled the *camioneros* was clear from editorialist Enrique Aguirre Harris's commentary in *El Informador Camionero* that the Commission's charge of planning an "integral restructuring," in fact, "says nothing," and that regardless of the Commission's decisions, the Alianza must continue to struggle for the recognition that "our patrimony is the product of authentic private initiative, promoted by every government of the Revolution," and that "our services are a 'service TO THE PUBLIC,' not a 'public service'."; *El Informador Camionero*, January, 1958, capitalization in original. Aguirre Harris's semantics are striking, as the Alianza tended to speak instead of "the public services entrusted to us," as Díaz Lombardo had in his 1948 *informe*, and as Hector Hernández Casanova would repeat verbatim 26 years later in his 1974 *informe*, among other instances. Ultimately, the prevailing idea among *camioneros* seems to be that the government delegated the provisioning of transport as a public service to private individuals; *El Informador Camionero*, July 1, 1948; *El Informador Camionero*, March, 1974.

the decision. One cartoon by Don Yo on August 18 depicted an overcrowded bus with the message "look, dear friend, this is about raising fares and the rest is just hot air. They're going to renovate!? They'll have *chatos*!?… We poor riders would be happy if they even bothered to clean the windows for five pesos."[99] Three days later, as new buses were put into service, Don Yo sniped that "…after profound studies, and complicated calculations and statistics, the conclusion is that the passengers will pay for the new buses. How surprising, my dear friend! What do we not pay for anymore… only the air and the sun."[100] There was a sharp edge of truth to this, as the cost of living seems to have been on the rise during 1958.[101]

Even before the Commission released its conclusion, groups from UNAM had begun to issue statements and organize in anticipation of the fare increase, claiming the mantle of popular defense.[102] This unrest, intriguingly, seemed unrelated to the direct impact on students, to whom the new fares did not apply. On Friday, August 22, shortly after the new fares had gone into effect, a group of students clashed with *camioneros* at the Villa Obregón-Bellas Artes bus terminal just north of Ciudad Universitaria.[103] After smashing windows and attempting to set fire to the terminal buildings, a group of approximately 500 UNAM students seized forty buses and drove them to the campus.[104]

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[99] *La Prensa*, August 18, 1958.
[100] *La Prensa*, August 21, 1958.
[101] Gilberto Guevara Niebla makes this claim, and there are also indications that students perceived this in José Rene Rívas Ontiveros's study; Guevara Niebla, *La democracia en la calle: crónica del movimiento estudiantil mexicano* (México, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno, 1988); José Rene Rívas Ontiveros, *La izquierda estudiantil en la UNAM: organizaciones, movilizaciones y liderazgos, 1958-1972* (México, D.F.: Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2007), 131.
[102] Rívas Ontiveros, *La izquierda*, 131.
[103] The terminal was located in colonia Guadalupe Inn, and its buses would have run from the Centro Historico along Avenida Insurgentes, providing transportation for students.
[104] Rívas Ontiveros, *La izquierda*, 133.

The disruption to urban transportation was so severe that *Excelsior* reported cargo trucks were serving as makeshift taxis in some areas.[105] That evening, at a meeting in a UNAM auditorium, participants in the movement announced their intention to continue seizing buses until fares were restored to their previous levels without reducing drivers' salaries, as well as promising to destroy one bus for each driver fired for siding with the students.[106] By August 23 students had taken 190 buses and attacked or vandalized many others, and Valdovinos announced that the Alianza was temporarily suspending service to prevent further incidents.[107] That afternoon, aboard 80 of the seized vehicles, a rowdy group of 2,500 students gathered in the Zócalo in a demonstration that *Excelsior* labeled "tumultuous," noting that "the students left incalculable damage in their wake on their way to the noisy event."[108] Although the protestors clamored for Ruiz Cortines to hear their demands from the balcony of the national palace, the president never appeared, since as *La Prensa* noted it was Saturday and no president came to his office on that day.[109] The students' demands were straightforward: that the government suspend the fare increase, that city transport services be municipalized, and that José Valdovinos not be seated as a congressman.

The movement continued to grow over the following days, even as attacks on buses slowed thanks to more vigilant police enforcement, and service began to normalize. On August 26 the students formed the Gran Comisión Estudiantil (GCE) and published

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[105] *Excelsior*, August 23, 1958.
[106] Rívas Ontiveros, *La izquierda*, 139.
[107] In response to the escalating student violence, the Alianza apparently also organized "brigadas de choque" (shock troops) to combat the students.
[108] *Excélsior*, August 24, 1958.
[109] *La Prensa*, August 24, 1958.

five basic demands echoing earlier petitions.[110] The following evening nearly 100,000 people marched from the Monument of the Revolution to the Zócalo to protest the fare increase and the dismal state of urban transportation.[111] The demonstration was more orderly than the August 23 protests had been and the protests continued to attract support from diverse sectors, but the tone remained heated. Carrying Valdovinos's symbolic coffin at the front of the procession and shouting slogans, the demonstrators seemed particularly focused on attacking the Alianza's president. At a subsequent demonstration on August 30, *La Prensa* reported that downtown residents vigorously applauded from their balconies as students carried an effigy dressed in womens' clothing and labeled "Valdovinos."[112]

While students demonstrated downtown, representatives from the GCE were meeting with President Ruiz Cortines at the presidential residence at Los Pinos. In the face-to-face meeting, described as "cordial," the president promised to suspend the fare increase and release all arrested students. Ruiz Cortines demurred, however, on the students' demand that the government intervene in the Alianza and municipalize the bus system, although he agreed to reconvene the Commission on Transportation to undertake a new study of urban transportation including the possibility of municipalization. With

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[110] Item number four on the manifesto is particularly intriguing: "Improvement of service without any increase in fares for residents of the Federal District. University students, whose academic experience is only possibly through the economic support of the *pueblo*, reject any arrangement that places us in a privileged position and does not serve the general good. Therefore, we reject out of hand the bribe of a supposed seat in congress, as well as the student subsidy, lukewarm propositions intended only to quiet our larger demands."; Rívas Ontiveros, *La izquierda*, 146.

[111] *La Prensa*, August 27,1958; Rívas Ontiveros, *La izquierda*, 150.

[112] *La Prensa*, August 31, 1958. Rívas Ontiveros claims that "Compared with the public demonstrations that had occurred earlier, this was qualitatively and quantitatively more important, not only for the presence of thousands of people, but also for the diverse sectors that had coalesced around the student movement."; *La izquierda*, 158.

that resolution, the movement gradually dissipated, its grievances over Valdovinos and the Alianza's power largely unaddressed.[113]

After the student movement disbanded the situation in the city remained tense. Without the new higher fares, the Alianza had declined to enact the five-centavo salary increase for drivers. On September 2, after rumors had swirled for days, the CTM-controlled drivers' unions formally announced plans to call a strike against the *permisionarios*. Over the following weeks, the metropolitan press reported a constant stream of ultimatums and retractions from both drivers and owners as all parties attempted to stare down the government. The Alianza went so far as to threaten to suspend all urban service unless fares were increased. Ultimately, the city government refused to blink and by mid-October most of the agitation had died down. The unrest did little to improve the situation on the city's transportation network, however. As *permisionarios* pulled vehicles from circulation, riders crammed aboard the scarce buses, often clinging dangerously to the outside of windows and doors.[114] *La Prensa* reported on September 14 that the city was "alarmed by the lack of buses," and noted that more than a million passengers a day were without service.[115] The following day, after interviewing frustrated residents waiting for buses at the curbside who declared themselves willing to pay more for efficient service, the newspaper announced that "the public should be heard on the issue of transportation," and that fares ought to be increased.[116]

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[113] Though there was some dissent among students over whether to accept the presidential offer, and the GCE did attempt to hold a hard line over municipalization, by September 3, 150 of the kidnapped buses had been returned.
[114] *La Prensa*, September 21, 1958. Such behavior was not new, but the shortage of buses seemed particularly acute in this moment.
[115] *La Prensa*, September 14, 1958.
[116] *La Prensa*, September 15, 1958.

It is thus difficult to discern the extent to which the students' protests resonated with the concerns of a broader segment of the urban population. In a postmortem of the conflict, *Mañana* wrote that "faced with the silence of the representatives and the ineffectiveness of the defenders of the public, it was lamentable that it had to be the students who advocated on its behalf. Because only their force seemed to have effect."[117] In one of the first studies of the *movimiento de los camiones*, Gilberto Guevara Niebla asserted that it was "able to attract some popular sectors and noticeably influence national public opinion."[118] José René Rívas Ontiveros, who has offered the most comprehensive scholarly examination of the episode, claimed that by the final demonstration the students had been joined by a "diverse sectors" of the population, making the movement a powerful political force.[119] Yet, as in the more famous student movement ten years later, a considerable part of the population remained aloof from the demonstrations. This attitude was perhaps best captured by *La Prensa*'s cartoonist Carreño (no fan of the transportation system), who depicted a group of unruly students protesting on top of a bus proclaiming "the students are defending the interests of the *pueblo!*" while a well-dressed middle-aged onlooker calls out "that's enough of defending us, *compadres!*"[120] As one housewife, whom *La Prensa* described as "worried by her household duties and struggling to return home in time to cook," remarked to the interviewer: "Five or ten centavos we could pay happily, because we need buses, but only if the transportation system becomes more comfortable, efficient, and attentive to passengers."[121] But while

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[117] *Mañana*, August 30, 1958.
[118] Guevara Niebla, *La democracia*, 19.
[119] Rívas Ontiveros, *La izquierda*, 159.
[120] *La Prensa*, August 16, 1958.
[121] *La Prensa*, September 15, 1958.

there was no consensus on protests over fares or even on transportation policy more generally, it does appear that the repudiation of Valdovinos was one thing everyone could agree upon, and in the end he would personally suffer the greatest fallout. In this regard, 1958 marked the moment when buses, and those who controlled them, became the paradigmatic symbol of scandalous personal enrichment and political cronyism.

**Figure 11:** Middle-class attitudes toward protest. *La Prensa* August 26, 1958.

After the '*movimiento de los camiones*,' student activism developed along an increasingly radical trajectory but continued to target buses. The "kidnapping" of buses, a novel tactic in 1958, frequently reappeared in subsequent years as seizures became a common feature in a repertoire of protest linking daily struggles with larger political

concerns.[122] In his study of the student movement ten years later, Ariel Rodríguez Kuri observed that "by 1968, the capture and holding of autobuses was one of the most efficient weapons in the symbolic and practical arsenal of student protests and mobilizations in the city."[123] Beyond the issue of fares, after 1958 the transportation system also increasingly came to represent the failure of the regime to provide adequate or safe services for the poorest members of the population, as well as its unwillingness to restrain the avarice of well-connected individuals. In 1968, the student movement would make common cause with the residents of San Miguel Topilejo, a community located at a particularly dangerous turn along the Mexico-Acapulco highway in Tlalpan. Topilejo had suffered several serious fatal bus accidents including an incident in September 1968 that took the lives of ten members of the community.[124] With the support of the students, Topilejo's residents seized seventeen buses and effectively demanded that the government force the Mexico-Xochimilco line to pay indemnities to those injured and the families of the victims.[125] On other occasions throughout the 1970s, students kidnapped buses to force indemnization for students injured in accidents, to support striking bus drivers, to back the demands of street vendors for access to markets, or simply to take joyrides to the La Marquesa park.[126]

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[122] *Jueves de Excélsior* wrote in 1958 that "as a consequence of the impunity of *camioneros*, the kidnapping of buses has become a student fashion…" ("*una 'moda' estudiantil*"); September 19, 1958.
[123] Ariel Rodríguez Kuri, "Los primeros días: Una explicación de los orígenes inmediatos del movimiento estudiantil de 1968" *Historia Mexicana* 53:1 (2003), 219.
[124] *Jueves de Excélsior*, September 19, 1968.
[125] Antonio Vera Martínez, "Topilejo, primer territorio libre de México," *La Jornada del Campo*, October 14, 2008. http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2008/10/14/topilejo.html, accessed October 11, 2013.
[126] See DGIPS C.1524C Exp.10 and 12 for instance. DFS, 11-4 L159 H346-348, 13 January 1972, documents the ill-fated La Marquesa adventure of students from la Vocacional No. 5.

As chaotic, unruly, and narcissistic as many of these seizure episodes were—and there were easily hundreds of them during the 1960s, 70s, and 80s—their parochial nature masks a greater truth: students and activists continued to target buses throughout the years of PRI hegemony because they were the physical manifestation of the regime's corruption. In reporting on the Topilejo incident, *Jueves de Excelsior* remarked that while accidents cost "much blood and pain for the poor," the "rich" *camioneros* "enjoyed an impunity built on a vast platform of vested interests including bad functionaries from the transit department, lawyers of scarce ethics, and a confusing and anachronistic legal code filled with loopholes."[127] Kidnapping buses was also a highly effective strategy for bringing authorities to the table. Fearful of damages to the vehicles—in 1968 students had burned and destroyed many buses—the *camioneros* tended to urge police restraint in favor of negotiation and were often willing to offer concessions on indemnities and fares. Ultimately, however, these incidents did not constitute a larger political challenge to the regime, but rather functioned as a release valve, a *jacquerie* on wheels allowing the easy escape of frustration built up during millions of dangerous, uncomfortable commutes. Protests never did produce significant change, but for some, at least, there was opportunity in the poor state of urban transportation: during the height of the 1958 protest movement an advertisement for a sporting goods store appeared in *Excelsior* announcing "Save time and money! Avoid lines and indignities! Get to work and school on time! Buy a bicycle today!"[128]

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[127] *Jueves de Excelsior*, September 19, 1958. The same article reported on one allegedly infamous *permisionario* known only as "El Gato" (The Cat), who instructed his drivers, in the event of hitting a pedestrian: "cuando atropelles a un tipo, remátalo. Cuesta menos un muertito que un herido," roughly translated as "If you hit a guy, hit him good. An injured guy costs more than a stiff."
[128] *Excelsior*, September 2, 1958.

## FALLOUT

While strenuous protests over transportation remained common after 1958, it was nevertheless that first movement that had the greatest political impact. Valdovinos had kept in lockstep with Uruchurtu's plan for restructuring urban transport even as it intensified through the spring and summer, and increasingly affiliates pushed back over demands that they purchase the expensive new "*chato*" buses. He had also won election to the congressional seat representing Jalisco's seventh district in July, and had ensured the Alianza's enthusiastic collaboration with the PRI during the presidential campaign. He had the open support of the regent, and had hosted then-candidate López Mateos at his Sayula ranch in the spring of 1958.[129] The student movement began to erode Valdovinos's political position, washing at the foundation of leadership and responsibility that he had built up over the preceding years, and as the transportation crisis lingered through the fall of 1958 with strike threats and scarce buses, the Alianza's president suffered. By the end of October, Valdovinos's footing was precarious.

Since July, 1958, the Chamber of Deputies had stalled the certification of several elections, including that Jalisco's seventh district, and the metropolitan press tracked the fortunes of presumptive deputies in sensationalist fashion with headlines such as "Electoral Guillotine."[130] But if Valdovinos was not alone in this limbo, he faced uniquely long odds. On October 28, César Silva Rojas, one of *La Prensa*'s political columnists, reported that the president of the Chamber of Deputies had received a petition from residents of Ocotlán, Jalisco, protesting that "we have learned, to our utmost

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[129] *El Informador Camionero*, March, 1958.
[130] *La Prensa*, August 8, 1958.

surprise, that [the PRI] wants to impose as our congressman the immoral and shameless leader José Valdovinos."[131] While acknowledging that Valdovinos might be influential and well connected, the *campesinos* complained that he was known only in the district through rumors about his acquisitiveness, had done nothing to help residents during recent floods, and was, in short, a carpetbagger whose hometown of Sayula fell in another district. Simultaneously, students began protesting Valdovinos's election in the Chamber of Deputies itself, demonstrating in the gallery and claiming that he had not actually won the election.[132] On October 30, the head of one of the factions of the Federation of University Students of the UNAM (FEU) telegrammed Ruiz Cortines to request the president's intervention to prevent the "repudiated" Valdovinos being seated as a deputy.[133] That same day, Valdovinos resigned the secretary generalship of the Alianza.

In renouncing his position Valdovinos lamented that his leadership of the group, "far from being beneficial, had become inconvenient," since "diverse interests…have centered their attacks on me personally," and suggested that a new Executive committee might have greater success resolving the industry's economic problems.[134] *El Informador Camionero* pulled no punches, describing the decision as an "act of sacrifice" and writing that "one day after he refused to be blackmailed for the umpteenth time by pseudo-students, who subsequently slanderously attacked him in the Chamber of Deputies, José

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[131] *La Prensa*, October 28, 1958.
[132] *La Prensa*, November 6, 1958.
[133] AGN, P ARC, 544.5/17, 30 October 1958, Primo F. Reyes to Ruiz Cortines.
[134] *La Prensa*, November 1, 1958; DFS, Versión Pública del Expediente de Rodolfo Solís Soto L1 H17, 1 November 1958. Hereafter DFS, VP RSS.

Valdovinos presented his resignation from the Alianza."[135] The *camionero* was now fighting for his political life. In a statement to the press after announcing his decision to leave the leadership of the Alianza, Valdovinos addressed "the public opinion" regarding his congressional candidacy. Denying that he had ever actively sought the nomination for himself and had only accepted it since he considered it his duty to represent his *tierra natal,* he asserted that he had never "sought patrons or trafficked in influence to obtain the recognition of [his] victory."[136] In these explicit rejections of practices commonly understood as part of Mexico's "politics as usual," Valdovinos attempted desperately to paint himself as disinterested and untainted by corrupting associations with power. Such protestations of integrity fell on deaf ears, however. By November 1958, as allegations of embezzlement swirled around the Alianza's former leader, *La Prensa*'s Manuel Buendía wrote in his "Private Line" column: "Every day, the clouds over José Valdovinos's head grow ever darker… On the political and social stock market, his shares have suffered the most spectacularly swift fall ever seen."[137] A disfavored leader was a liability, and the Federación de Charros also turned against Valdovinos, forming a "Purifying Committee" and ousting him from leadership.[138]

It took almost a year, however, for the Electoral College finally to deliver the *coup de grace* to Valdovinos's political career. In doing so, the deputies presented a

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[135] *El Informador Camionero*, November, 1958.
[136] *La Prensa*, November 1, 1958. In the DFS account of his resignation, Valdovinos reportedly told the Alianza that he had only accepted the nomination at the urging of *camioneros* who wanted to have a representative in congress; DFS, VP RSS L1 H17, 1 November 1958.
[137] *La Prensa*, November 8, 1958.
[138] The DFS would report in Valdovinos's 1961 dossier that he had not duly handed over the Federation's presidency "in an attempt to continue enjoying the political privileges that came with *charrería*;" DFS, Versión Pública del Expediente de José Valdovinos Rodríguez L1 H193-195, 15 March 1961, "Antecedentes de José Valdovinos Rodríguez." Hereafter DFS, VP JVR.

vision of the Mexican political cosmos in which congressmen were to be authentic representatives of the people, and elections were to be legitimate expressions of public will. This meant, of course, denying that the decision to nullify the election was in any way connected to the protests of the student movement or popular anger over transportation. As *diputado* José Guillermo Salas Armendáriz declared, the College must invalidate the election not because of "external pressures," but because it had been marred by "serious irregularities."[139] Acknowledging that many felt disdain for politicians, Salas Armendáriz enjoined his colleagues to prove their commitment to "democracy and social justice" by "rejecting [an electoral victory] that skirts legality, raises suspicions of trickery and deceit, and attempts to appropriate the authentic will of the *pueblo* of Jalisco's seventh district, which deserves the justice of national representation."[140] José Pérez Moreno, speaking in defense of Valdovinos's victory, simply reversed his colleague's argument, suggesting that those irregularities were unverified and unclear, and asking the rhetorical question: "[H]ow can we go before the people of the seventh district and say, 'your vote did not matter'?"[141] Nevertheless, it appears the debate was a formality: the lots had long been cast against Valdovinos, and Salas Armendáriz's exhortation that the doors of congress not be open "to those who are rejected by public opinion" revealed the underlying truth of why the *camionero* could not be seated. As with Uruchurtu's urban transportation policy, representation in congress turned on an imaginary electorate and reacted to a perceived popular will. In many ways José Valdovinos was a victim of circumstances, caught in a maelstrom he neither created

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[139] *Diario de los Debates*, XLIV Legislatura, 2º año, October 15, 1959.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid.

nor could predict. Student grievances in 1958 were not new, but the intensity of protests had been.[142] Valdovinos had played the game right, collaborating with the government and cultivating powerful patrons, but had proved expendable, and in the end was sacrificed on the altar of public opinion. In his downfall, it is clearly apparent that the terms of the relationship between the regime and intermediate elites such as the Alianza leaders had changed during the 1950s.

Though Valdovinos had hoped to protect the Alianza by resigning its leadership, he ultimately could do little to shelter the organization from the prevailing political winds. In December 1958, scant weeks after his inauguration, President Adolfo López Mateos sent to congress a bill that aimed to bring *camioneros* to heel. Observing that the need for restructuring the industry was plainly clear, and that it was "imperative" that the government play a greater role in regulating the public transportation, López Mateos proposed the creation of a new body, the Unión de Permisionarios, which would allow the city government "a direct, efficient, and ample intervention" in the administration of the urban bus industry.[143] The Unión was to be the officially recognized representative organ of permit holders, thus arrogating to itself the Alianza's traditional informal role; membership was obligatory and monthly dues required to the Banco Nacional de Transportes. That the leadership of the Unión was to be a non-*camionero* appointed by the regent, was a further jab at the Alianza. There was no uncertainty about the Unión's subordination to official dictates: "[U]nder the control, direction, and vigilance of the city

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[142] The 1958 *movimiento de los camiones* dovetailed with a larger labor movement, and students were often involved in both sets of protests. That the two movements were not explicitly linked in contemporary reports, however, perhaps suggests the regime's willingness to acknowledge protest over transportation policy while suppressing coverage of labor conflicts.

[143] *Diario de los Debates*, XLIV Legislatura, 1º año, December 27, 1958.

government, it is to cooperate with the structuring, organization, and improvement of the public service of passenger transport in buses in the city."[144] Neither was there uncertainty about the genesis of the new legislation, which was a clear response to the failure of Uruchurtu's cosmetic approach to transportation and the widespread protests that had erupted months earlier.

The Unión was, in many ways, the bureaucratized offspring of the Ley Múgica, but much had changed since 1939. Although they did not approach the intensity of the Cárdenas years, congressional debates over the creation of the Unión in 1958 were heated, and both PAN deputies and certain PRI senators vocally opposed the law on constitutional grounds.[145] More intriguing is the difference in tone between 1939 and 1958 from the supporters of the law. While in 1939 congressmen had attacked the Alianza as a monopoly and focused on its labor practices as justification for government intervention, in 1958 orators tended to follow Arturo Llorente González who pronounced that the need for restructuring urban transport services was not only "the absolute, clear, definitive opinion" of congress, but was also "the unanimous opinion of the entire population of the Capital of the Republic; we have felt it and noticed it through the multiple opinions expressed in their tones and through the press."[146] As Macrina Rabadán Santana de Arenal insisted during a lengthy polemic, "the public, the *pueblo*, who are the ones who use the buses, the transportation, need a good service and not high fares." In arguing that the law served "the public interest," Enrique Santana Olivares asked "what is

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[144] Ibid.
[145] Hilario Medina, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and *priísta*, notably stood in opposition to the law in the Senate, while José Humberto Zebaduá Liévano of the PAN spoke against it in the Chamber of Deputies.
[146] *Diario de los Debates*, XLIV Legislatura, 1º año, December 27, 1958.

more important: the interests of four thousand concessionaries or the interests of four million residents of the D.F.?" Indeed, in 1958 the deputies seemed taken with the idea that they were legislating on behalf of an abstract public whose interests they perceived rather than a real public with a legitimate will. In this, much had changed since the days of the Ley Múgica. In 1939, over the course of four lengthy debates totaling approximately 37,000 words over the reform of the LVGC, the term "public interest" was used only six times while "public opinion" was referenced ten times.[147] In 1958, in a single, short debate totaling fewer than 9,000 words, deputies referred to the "public interest" eleven times in an impressive rhetorical overload, but the "public opinion" was only mentioned once.[148]

Against the notional popular mandate driving government intervention, the Alianza could do little. Although *camioneros* again packed the galleries of congress, jeering the law, their protests were in vain. Nearly twenty years after the organization had fended off the Ley Múgica, Valdovinos's successor at the Alianza, Rodolfo Solís Soto, had little choice but to accept the Unión de Permisionarios and direct affiliates to do the same.[149] In a December 29 assembly, the new secretary general informed *camioneros* that based on advice from the organization's legal counsel that the Unión would neither dissolve the Alianza nor harm its interests, the group would not be resorting to an *amparo*

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[147] The overall and specific word counts are based on condensed versions of the debates that removed most of the procedural language; *Diario de los debates*, XXXVII Legislatura, 3º año, September 15, 1939; November 30, 1939; December 6, 1939; December 14, 1939; December 28, 1939.

[148] *Diario de los Debates*, XLIV Legislatura, 1º año, December 27, 1958. See Appendix 2 for a chart of commonly appearing words. Interestingly, the shift seems not to have been one from a language of class to that of 'the public': forms of the word "worker" which were dominant in the 1939 debates still appeared with relative frequency in 1958.

[149] Solís Soto, interestingly, was Valdovinos's *compadre*, and represented a cosmetic change to the organization rather than a turnover of leadership.

to fight the legislation.[150] Politically weakened, the Alianza spent the next several years negotiating the difficult relationship with the Unión and waiting for the winds to shift.

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The four years of Valdovinos's rise and fall between 1954 and 1958 coincided with a period of crucial political consolidation and his career is representative of that process. Many of the vested interests that had gained power under *alemanismo*—the Alianza among them—remained in place after 1952. During the 1950s, however, the relationship between the one-party state and those interest groups were stabilized, as many of the institutions and practices that had provoked the most outrage during the last years of Alemán's presidency were brought to heel, or at least subjected to intense public relations makeovers. If the revised policies themselves did not fundamentally upend existing structures—even the Unión de Permisionarios never succeeded in subordinating the Alianza—they reflected a growing concern with public perception and a political discourse that attempted to claim the mantle of representing the public interest. Such a shift, however, was only possible because powerful interest groups also renegotiated their relationship with the regime, often losing power relative to the state and accepting reduced autonomy in exchange for the benefits of political incorporation into the single-party structure. José Valdovinos was emblematic of this consolidation process. He contributed to its early successes, attempted to navigate its shifting currents, and was ultimately a victim of its uncertain exigencies.

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[150] DFS, VP RSS L1 H32-33, 29 December 1958.

After his painful defeat in 1958, Valdovinos remained part of the Alianza and was not unpopular with his peers, who feted him at his 1962 Saint's Day celebration.[151] He nevertheless withdrew from the group's politics, his story a cautionary tale. In 1963 the group's secretary general would remind a rival that times had changed and that "now 100% of the *camioneros* are controlled by the government, and for that the blame lies with themselves and José Valdovinos. The former for not providing the public the service they deserve…and the second for having delivered the *gremio* to [Uruchurtu] in exchange for a seat in the Chamber of Deputies."[152]

[151] *Transportes y Turismo*, April, 1962.
[152] DFS, VP JVR L1 H219, 9 May 1963. Valdovinos died suddenly in 1986, and was remembered in Jalisco's *El Informador* as a "Great Benefactor of Sayula;" *El Informador* December 17, 1986.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### ISIDORO RODRÍGUEZ RUIZ AND THE POLITICS OF ORGANIZATION

On November 14, 1963, five hundred *camioneros* gathered in the downtown Mexico City offices of the Alianza de Camioneros de la República Mexicana (the ACRM). The organization, in title distinguished from the Alianza de Camioneros de México by little more than slight twists of language, was a relative upstart. Since 1955, when Martín Ruiz, Isidoro Rodríguez, and Rubén Figueroa formed the breakaway group after losing the battle for control of the Alianza to José Valdovinos, the ACRM had struggled to find its identity. The new dissident organization had enjoyed little political favor and struggled to gain members, while their rivals had collaborated closely with the government. With the creation of the Unión de Permisionarios in 1958, however, the Alianza's influence ebbed to its lowest point since 1939. When, in 1962, the older organization fell under the control of Francisco Eli Sigüenza, a political opportunist who fully subordinated the group to the Unión, the ACRM began to gather strength as an independent voice for the *camioneros*. On that November morning Figueroa and Rodríguez executed a political masterstroke. In an event consecrated by the attendance of prominent PRI leaders, Figueroa and Rodríguez announced the formation of the "Comité Político Camionero del D.F. pro-Gustavo Díaz Ordaz," thus staking a decisive claim not only to the industry's participation in the upcoming presidential campaign but to the representation of urban bus interests as well. For Isidoro Rodríguez, who assumed the presidency of the Comité, it was a brilliant career move.[1]

[1] Figueroa's career was already on the upswing at this point: he was elected as a congressman from his home state of Guerrero the following year.

With the Comité, Rodríguez and his allies planned to undercut Eli Sigüenza, demonstrating that they—not he—held the loyalty of the *camioneros* and that they—not he—had the power to mobilize resources for the campaign. Over the following months, as each side jockeyed to prove their importance, sending competing caravans of buses to rallies and organizing elaborate demonstrations, Rodríguez moved closer to his goal of controlling the Alianza. Though this was simply another chapter in his decade-long struggle for control of the organization, when the dust settled, this time Rodríguez had emerged victorious. When the Díaz Ordaz administration took office, Rodríguez was named the transportation secretary of the CNOP, and in 1965 Eli Sigüenza was forced out of the Alianza. For the remainder of a career that stretched into the 1990s Rodríguez would serve as an important liaison between the *camioneros* and the PRI, holding numerous party positions, hobnobbing with presidents and party leaders, and exerting powerful influence over both the Alianza and the ACRM.

This sort of minor political drama was in many regards a typical episode in mid-century Mexico: if Rodríguez's rise from ineffectual Alianza dissident to political fixer was unusually rapid, the general contours of such a career were hardly uncommon. Indeed, the ranks of the PRI were filled with mid-level leaders whose resumes read like compendia of corporatist organizations. By mid-century, the regime oversaw a rowdy system of political associations that both fought internally and between themselves for influence and material benefits. How that system emerged and how it functioned from the mid-1950s until the early 1970s reveals much about how the regime maintained the loyalty of the political brokers like Rodríguez who were essential to its survival. Indeed,

in tinted glasses and a dark suit, Rodríguez appeared the perfect caricature of a Mexican politico.

During the years of the regime's greatest political stability, Rodríguez and others fought bitterly for the control of the Alianza, participating in a system of chaotic corporatism that was different from what had come before. I will show that the Alianza's integration into the formal and informal structures of the PRI during the late 1940s had a profound impact on its internal politics, as it seemingly opened new paths of upward mobility and encouraged infighting among ambitious leaders. This corresponded with a shift in the nature of corporatist politics between the 1940s and the 1950s as the regime consolidated its political authority. These new corporatist arrangements took multiplex forms, from the long-tenured and extravagantly powerful leader of the PRI's national labor confederation to the stygian bosses who staked out petty political fiefdoms among street vendors or trash pickers. Figures such as Isidoro Rodríguez were integral to, and integrative of, this system.

By the mid-1950s, the regime tolerated a great deal of unruliness within the framework of the corporatist system, but because the terms of these battles were set—the political culture and unwritten rules of *priísmo*—such struggles for leadership of corporate groups *increased* loyalty to the regime rather than producing dissent and rupture. Even as corporate actors cultivated patrons in competing party factions, the *sine qua non* of success was staunch loyalty to the PRI. Paradoxically, then, the instability of

that rough-and-tumble world was central to the overall stability of the regime as it ensured the terms of political integration were clear and the costs of exit high.[2]

In this chapter I will explore the rules of the game that governed this chaotic corporatism. Political intermediaries such as Rodríguez were Janus-faced figures, caught between the demands of their would-be followers and the needs of their would-be patrons. In the first section, I will discuss the "downward looking" aspect of this, particularly the culture and language of "authentic representation" that existed among *camioneros*. In the second section, I will examine the "upward looking" features of chaotic corporatism and the political hardball that victory often required. The remaining three sections, respectively, offer a theoretical perspective on chaotic corporatism, an analysis of Alianza corporate politics before and after 1954, and a discussion of how the system of chaotic corporatism broke down in the mid-1970s.

## JANUS LOOKS DOWN

Isidoro Rodríguez was 31 years old and hardly among the upper levels of the Alianza when the end of 25 years of Díaz Lombardo's leadership left the organization rudderless in 1954 and set off a decade of infighting among those who sough to succeed him. The origins of these battles were a complex mix of diverging visions for the Alianza, personal animosities, and frustrated ambitions; it was an equally murky blend of political aspirations and near-pathological pugnacity that led Rodríguez to choose dissidence over collaboration. In the protracted struggle for control of the group, each

[2] The analysis developed below draws on Albert O. Hirschman's "Exit, Voice, and Loyalty" framework for organizational behavior in many places; *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970).

side sought to gain adherents by painting their opponents as opportunistic and politically motivated, while casting themselves as "authentic" and "legitimate" representatives of the *gremio*.[3] The ferocity with which the contest over followers was fought reveals its importance: those who aspired to Alianza leadership needed to defend their claims on the basis of popular *camionero* support. It was a lesson Rodríguez would take to heart.

The disputes that would eventually tear the Alianza apart emerged slowly over the course of 1954. In March, Rubén Figueroa and Isidoro Rodríguez had presented mild opposition to Narciso Contreras's designation as secretary general, but had reconciled with the new leadership before the end of the assembly.[4] After Valdovinos rose to the helm of the organization in June, Rodríguez had even invited nearly every Alianza notable, including the estranged Martín Ruiz and Valdovinos, to his ranch in Texcoco as a sign of goodwill and fraternity.[5] But by the fall whatever amiability once existed had evaporated. As it became clear that Valdovinos had no intention of forcing the

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[3] Salvador Maldonado Aranda observes a similar practice in the cacical politics of urban labor unions, noting that "'Legality' and 'legitimacy' are two interchangeable aspects of cacique-style domination, because when caciques are impugned by their constituents they frequently appeal to the 'authenticity' of their leadership, which they obtained in an election, or to the 'authority' invested in them by the state through the recognition of the position they occupy in the union." Here, we will see a completely different dynamic at work among the *camioneros* where claims to 'authenticity' arise from sources other than elections, and the notion of state-granted 'authority' is absent. This suggests that none of the Alianza leaders can properly be called caciques, as their leadership was perhaps more consensual than classic *caciquismo*: they were less instruments of domination and more instruments of incorporation. Thus, while they were broadly similar in the context of the political system, the nature of Alianza leadership reveals the nuances and variations of PRI rule; Maldonado, "Between law and arbitrariness : labour union Caciques in Mexico" in *Caciquismo in Twentieth-Century Mexico*, eds. Alan Knight and Wil Pansters (London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, 2005), 230.

[4] The ringleader of the opposition to Contreras was Rubén Figueroa, who organized the Bloque Depurador (Purifying Bloc). Figueroa was apparently outspoken in his opposition, though the Bloque did not attempt to block Contreras's election and simply nominated alternative candidates for posts on the Executive committee. Rodríguez was nominated for the post of Secretary of Urban Routs, but lost the election handily to Miguel Zurita; *El Informador Camionero*, March,1954.

[5] Rodríguez possessed considerable familial wealth and owned a substantial amount of land in Mexico State, of which the ranch was part.

government's hand on a fare increase, nor any desire to cede control of the organization to Ruiz, a rupture became imminent. In early September, Ruiz, Figueroa, and Rodríguez formed the Commission of Camionero Unification, claiming in a letter to Ruiz Cortines that they sought a resolution of the industry's "grave moral and economic problems" and represented the interests of all of the country's *camioneros*.[6] Valdovinos returned fire through *El Informador Camionero*, informing Alianza affiliates that the Unification Commission "is a crude political scheme by people who are attempting, at any cost, to use our members as a trampoline to obtain elected positions," and noting that the Commission's members were "wholly divorced from the problems" of the national industry.[7] The bulletin went on to insist that Valdovinos's Alianza, on the other hand, "has not rested a single moment" in its efforts to resolve the economic crisis.[8]

The Unification Commission was fundamentally a sign that the dissidents were losing the battle for the Alianza: it sought to garner the support of the less organized, non-Mexico City *camioneros* as an alternative political power base to the Alianza's strength in the capital.[9] On January 27, 1955, the dissidents made one last play for power in Mexico City. After walking out of an Alianza assembly with their supporters, Ruiz, Contreras, and Rodríguez staged elections and declared themselves, respectively, Secretary General, Interior Secretary, and Transit Secretary of the Alianza.[10] The

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[6] AGN, P ARC 512.51/228, 10 September 1954.
[7] *El Informador Camionero*, September, 1954.
[8] *El Informador Camionero*, September, 1954.
[9] For Figueroa, this was plausible: his interests had always been in intercity bus lines. Ruiz was known and respected among national *camioneros* for his long tenure in the Alianza as a defender of industry interests, and had broad appeal. Rodríguez, however, was unknown outside of Mexico City and had no financial interests in intercity busing at this point.
[10] This according to the memorandum the dissident committee sent to Ruiz Cortines; AGN, P ARC, 437.3/109, 27 January 1955. The DFS account reported that Rodríguez became Labor Secretary and listed Figueroa as a technical advisor of this rump committee; DFS 45-1 L1 H394-395, 27 January 1955.

maneuver fell flat. The same day, Valdovinos announced the results of elections held without the participation of the dissidents, in which he had been confirmed as Secretary General.[11] As a DFS report on the schism noted, Valdovinos had the support of Uruchurtu and the protection of police, and thus retained control of the Alianza's offices.[12] Over the following weeks both Ruiz and Valdovinos attempted to gather support, sending letters to *permisionarios* and traveling the city to visit bus line offices.[13] By early February, DFS reported that Valdovinos's partisans intended "to continue their efforts of trying to gain the greatest number of adherents within the Alianza in order to erase politically Martín Ruiz and his followers."[14] Ruiz retaliated by purchasing broadsides in Mexico City's newspapers asserting that Valdovinos was not the "legitimate representative" of the *camioneros*, and spreading rumors that he had proof of Valdovinos's "desire to use the *camioneros* he controls for political ends, as he aspires to a deputyship in the next congress."[15] Valdovinos seemed to have the upper hand, however: most of the telegrams arriving in the presidential offices from Alianza affiliates around the country supported his leadership.

Having failed to dislodge Valdovinos, on February 24, 1955, Ruiz and Figueroa inaugurated the founding convention of the Alianza de Camioneros de la República Mexicana. At its root the ACRM was a response to Valdovinos's collaboration with the

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[11] Another DFS report provides a vastly different account of events and one that would support Ruiz and Figueroa's allegations of extreme political meddling in the Alianza's affairs. In that account, Ruiz received the support of 62 of the city's lines to Valdovinos's 30, and it was Valdovinos who abandoned the assembly and Ruiz who was duly elected. The following day, however, the report continued, Ruiz's committee found that the Alianza's offices had been seized by Valdovinos's group, with the support of the city police; DFS, VP RSS L1 H1-3, 29 January 1955.
[12] DFS, 45-1 L1 H394-395, 27 January 1955.
[13] DFS, 45-1 L1 H413, 1 February 1955.
[14] DFS, 45-1 L1 H419, 3 February 1955.
[15] DFS, 45-1 L1 H7, 12 February 1955.

government's cooptation of the Mexico City Alianza—it was a refuge organization that claimed to speak in the authentic, independent voice of the industry. Ruiz's pointed opening remarks left little question about the ACRM's purpose, position, and antagonism to Valdovinos, announcing that "those present here are not *arrivistes*, we are longtime *camioneros*."[16] Yet at least one member of the new organization's executive committee could have been accused of careerism: Isidoro Rodríguez assumed the post of Secretary of Urban Transportation and was part of the group's five-member delegation sent to meet with Ruiz Cortines on February 26.[17] Valdovinos wasted no time in attempting to discredit the new organization, publishing a newspaper broadside addressed to "the President, the authorities, public opinion, and all of the country's *camioneros*," in which he described his election as a purge, in which "the *camioneros*, tired of suffering under the rule of professional leaders who only used the Alianza as a political trampoline…enthusiastically joined together to achieve a complete renovation" of the Alianza.[18] These were not idle intimations of greater aspirations. So damaging was the allegation of political ambition for any pretender to the Alianza's leadership that throughout 1957 Valdovinos had to deny the ACRM's accusations that he was involved in politics in Jalisco, even though those accusations were apparently true.[19]

This rhetorical jousting masked the seriousness of the struggle within and between the *camionero* organizations for legitimacy and followers. All sides knew the government and party kept detailed records of how many bus lines each representative

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[16] DFS, 45-1 L2 H13-16, 24 February 1955.
[17] Figueroa seemed to be behind the presidential audience; DFS, 45-1 L2 H45-49, 26 February 1955.
[18] *El Informador Camionero*, February, 1955.
[19] DFS, 45-1 L2 H297, 26 June 1957.

actually controlled; to have claimed leadership without adherents was a serious political faux pas.[20] One of the most serious charges leveled at the ACRM was that it was an *organización de membrete*—a "letterhead organization," meaning it was little more than a name with which its leaders attempted to create an image of influence.[21] To that end, each side was willing to play hardball to ensure its authority and control of affiliates. In this, Valdovinos's political access proved decisive for several reasons, but especially because it allowed him to take credit for whatever benefits the *camioneros* received from the government, such as fare increases and subsidized gasoline.[22] He publicized his relationship with Uruchurtu, hugging the regent on the cover of *El Informador Camionero*, and spoke frequently of a new era of productive collaboration, efforts intended to convince Alianza members that he was their most effective spokesperson. Persuasion was often backed with muscle, however, and Valdovinos knew how to flex. In one episode, Martín Ruiz complained to president Ruiz Cortines that Valdovinos had used political connections to ensure that Mexico City's Director of Transit would not process any crucial bureaucratic paperwork unless it ran through the Alianza—of which

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[20] For example, on September 7, 1955, DFS agents reported that eight inter-city bus lines had chosen to join the ACM; DFS, 45-1 L2 H144, 7 September 1955. Reporting on the ACM-ARCM schism in 1957, one memorandum observed: "The Alianza de Camioneros de México controls in the Federal District all the first and second-class lines. In the interior of the republic, it has almost total control, with the exception of Mérida and 50% of Monterrey. There has formed a small group of dissidents expelled from the Alianza for their "*malos manejos*," with Martín Ruiz as its intellectual leader, and including Rubén Figueroa, a certain Lazcano, and Narciso Contreras. These individuals have been disorienting and creating agitation in the interior of the republic; they attempted to gain an audience with the president, leaving instead a memorandum that contained many falsehoods and in which they launch unjustified attacks on the Alianza. This group has also had audiences with various governors, scheming and surprising them with an "*organizacion de membrete*" called the [ACRM]."; AHDF, DDF Obras Publicas, Caja 268 Legajo 1.
[21] DFS, 45-1 L3 H95, 7 November 1957. The allegation, untrue in this case, would be made seperately by Valdovinos and a government informant; AHDF, DDF Obras Publicas, Caja 268 Legajo 1.
[22] One especially vicious *Informador Camionero* editorial reminded readers that the 700 discounted chassis offered for sale in Monterrey were the result of Valdovinos's successful lobbying, and not the work of the ACRM and "someone who claims to be an 'engineer' and calls himself Rubén Figueroa;" *El Informador Camionero*, January, 1956.

the Ruiz-led San Rafael Aviación bus line was not part.[23] By 1957, Ruiz had left the line, his leadership having become a liability for the *permisionarios* on it, and focused his energies on the ACRM.

From 1956 to 1957 Ruiz traveled extensively, coordinating numerous roundtables and conferences with provincial *camioneros*. These efforts began to cement the organization's credentials and the "legitimacy" of Figueroa and Ruiz as representatives, as the organization held well-attended national conventions in 1957 and 1958. Valdovinos could not match that, and struggled to project his authority on a national level. But neither could his opponents gain traction in Mexico City, where Valdovinos enjoyed the patronage of the regent and the support of transit authorities. The stalemate continued until 1958, when Valdovinos was forced to resign. By the early 1960s the ACRM had succeeded in affiliating most of the country's *camioneros* outside of the capital, and attained a level of political influence that possibly surpassed that of the Alianza.

For Isidoro Rodríguez, who had a sizeable investment in several of Mexico City's bus lines, the struggle for the Alianza was more personal, immediate, and complicated than it was for those who simply decamped to the ACRM.[24] By 1957 he had resigned his post in the ACRM "to avoid *malas interpretaciones*," and begun organizing a campaign of staunch opposition to Valdovinos from within Mexico City.[25] Rodríguez, however,

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[23] AGN, P ARC, 437.3/109, Martín Ruiz to Ruiz Cortines, 16 March 1955.
[24] Unlike Rodríguez, who was heavily invested in Mexico City transportation, Figueroa's interests had always been on intercity lines affiliated with the Alianza. Ruiz, meanwhile, seems to have had the smallest financial stake in the industry of any leader; ironically, he was perhaps the most committed and "authentic" *camionero* representative.
[25] Alianza de Camioneros de la Republica Mexicana, A.C. *Memoria*. Asamblea Nacional, Monterrey, 1957.

struggled to appeal as a leader. The son of a Spaniard who had invested in agriculture and ranching in Mexico State, he was a relative newcomer to urban transport, having only begun working in the industry in 1942, although some accounts suggest his father had owned urban buses.[26] Like Antonio Díaz Lombardo, he enjoyed a certain level of familial wealth that, combined with a sharp entrepreneurial talent, allowed him to quickly exert financial influence in the industry. In the 1940s he had acquired buses on a number of lines, primarily on Penitenciaria-Niño Perdido and Circuito Hospitales, rising to the presidency of both by the early 1950s.[27] Like Valdovinos, he had some reputation within the Alianza as a forceful and effective administrator, and he controlled *permisionarios* on his lines through a combination of generous lending, debt-induced loyalty, and coercion through the control of credit and parts. More than any other *camionero* leader, Rodríguez seems to have owned, directly or through loans, an enormous number of buses.[28] In Rodríguez's case, financial clout was not married with political tact: he would struggle to attract followers throughout 1957 and 1958, even though he attempted to present himself as an advocate for *camionero* interests.

The root of the confrontation between Rodríguez and Valdovinos was the Alianza's acceptance of the city government's requirement that *permisionarios* begin purchasing a new style of flat-front buses known colloquially as *chatos* (pug-noses). The mandatory vehicle replacements had never been particularly popular among the

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[26] *El Informador Camionero*, May, 1966.
[27] DFS, Versión Pública del Expediente de Isidoro Rodríguez Ruiz L.Especial H22-24. Hereafter DFS, VP IRR. He reportedly also owned buses on the Gustavo A. Madero-Lindavista, Gustavo A. Madero-Tacuba-Tacubaya, Azcapotzalco-Jamaica, and Circunvalación lines; *El Informador Camionero*, May, 1966.
[28] By the late 1960s, Rodríguez's financial stake in the industry extended to several intercity and suburban lines, and he also owned a number of automotive parts distribution agencies.

*camioneros*, because they were financially burdensome and politically intrusive, and the 1957 *chato* decision provoked unrest since the new buses were both expensive, costing at least 41,000 pesos more than "conventional" buses, and would have required new parts and service methods.[29] An official 1957 study would find that *chatos* lost 23 pesos per day, while "conventional" buses earned six (US$0.50).[30] *Permisionarios* on the Bellas Artes-Insurgentes line were the first to protest the *chatos*, but it was Rodríguez who turned Valdovinos's acquiescence on the matter into cause for rebellion. In September, 1957, the DFS reported that Rodríguez had been visiting bus lines across the city and attempting to convince line presidents to join his opposition to the Alianza's leadership, even offering bribes, yet his efforts "had not resonated" according to the agents.[31] The dissidents campaigned on the grounds that "instead of defending the interests of those they represented, [Valdovinos's committee] had colluded with the Authorities."[32] Given that the cause of *camionero* autonomy had long underpinned the ACRM's claim to representation, it was hardly surprising that the DFS reported that Rodríguez was receiving advice and economic assistance from Martín Ruiz and Rubén Figueroa.[33] Nevertheless, rumors about Rodríguez's motivations for rejecting the new vehicles may have contributed to these recruiting struggles: it was claimed that as the owner of the

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[29] DFS, 45-1 L3 H23, 4 September 1957; DFS, 45-1 L3 H45, 20 September 1957.
[30] See Appendix 3. The greatest differences between conventional buses and *chatos* were that conventionals earned more daily, possibly because they were easier to overload with passengers, and that the expensive *chatos* had high rates of depreciation; *El Informador Camionero*, February, 1958. Uruchurtu had convened The Technical Commission on Urban Transport in late 1957. The following summer the commission recommended the ten-centavo fare increase that sparked student protests.
[31] DFS, 45-1 L3 H38, 14 September 1957.
[32] DFS, VP IRR L1 H15, 21 November 1957.
[33] DFS, 45-1 L3 H136, 30 November 1957. This support continued through the following summer; DFS VP JVR L1 H140, 10 July 1958. These reports often also alleged that Antonio Díaz Lombardo was surreptitiously behind the efforts, although there is no evidence to support that claim.

International brand automotive distribution agency he had sold buses to *permisionarios* on his lines, and stood to lose out if the *permisionarios* were required to buy Ford *chatos* from the Banco Nacional de Transportes.[34] Valdovinos's counterattack also had an effect, as broadsheets smeared Rodríguez as a toady and perpetual agitator.[35] By late November 1957, only four of the city's 86 lines had joined Rodríguez in disowning the Alianza's leadership. In the spring of 1958, Valdovinos received the PRI's blessing in the form of his congressional nomination, and as the financial and political costs of continued resistance wore on the dissident *permisionarios*, support for Rodríguez's opposition withered. In May, members of the Penitenciaria line began openly backing a plan to rejoin the Alianza, and others grudgingly accepted the *chatos*.[36] As his followers drifted away, Rodríguez took the decision to suspend his effort to claim leadership.[37]

If he failed to earn the trust and support of the *camioneros* in his struggle against Valdovinos, by 1962, when he would challenge Francisco Eli Sigüenza, Rodríguez had the advantage of eight years of dissidence and emerged as a legitimate contender for the title of "authentic representative." It doubtless helped that his opponent was an upstart with weak credentials as a *camionero*. Eli Sigüenza had come to Mexico City in 1946 as a congressman from his home state of Oaxaca, where he had been an active participant in local politics, and almost immediately purchased a bus on the General Anaya line.[38] After

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[34] For this rumor see DFS, 45-1 L3 H112, 18 November 1957.
[35] DFS, VP JVR L1 H144, 29 July 1958.
[36] DFS, VP IRR L1 H41, 8 May 1958.
[37] DFS, VP IRR L1 H38, 17 April 1958.
[38] *Transportes y Turismo*, May, 1962. Eli Sigüenza's involvement in Oaxacan politics was rather tangled. In 1943 he had run an independent campaign for congress after failing to receive the PRM candidacy for the 2nd District in the Sierra Juárez. Though he lost, the election was annulled after irregularities surfaced. He subsequently served as the state's attorney general from 1944 to 1945 and received the PRI's nomination for the 2nd District in 1946.

the congressional term ended, Eli Sigüenza remained in the capital to open a law firm and acquired several more buses, eventually assuming the presidency of the General Anaya line by the late 1950s. But unlike Valdovinos or Rodríguez, he never distinguished himself as an administrator or played a role in Alianza politics. His surprising rise to the group's secretary generalship in 1962 was thus almost entirely the result of political manipulation by Julio Serrano Castro, the head of the relatively new Unión de Permisionarios discussed in Chapter Three.[39] Serrano Castro had been charged with the difficult task of controlling the *camioneros*, and after losing a political struggle with the Alianza in 1961 over the legal structure of bus lines, he was determined to subordinate the group fully.[40] In late February 1962, during a rigged assembly open only to loyal adherents, Eli Sigüenza was elected the Alianza's secretary general.[41] Those who refused to participate in the sham saw their supply of subsidized gasoline—distributed through the Unión de Permisionarios—disappear.[42]

Opposition erupted almost immediately. Denouncing Eli Sigüenza's "autodesignation" as secretary general and complaining that "there had not been a democratic election," Rodríguez led a protest of approximately 40 *permisionarios* at the

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[39] Serrano Castro's biography is no less intriguing than Eli Sigüenza's. A prominent jurist from Chiapas, he attended law school at UNAM with Miguel Alemán, had been a Senator, served as the head of the country's top labor court, and worked as a sub-secretary at PEMEX. The appointment to head the Unión de Permisionarios seems to have been something of a career-killer for the jovial *chiapaneco*, however, particularly after his attempt to subordinate the Alianza failed; See Camp, *Political Biographies.* One interesting report from the Díaz Ordaz presidential archives notes that Serrano Castro attempted to rig early elections in the Alianza in 1964, "to the effect of presenting Uruchurtu with a new directorate of *lideres incondicionales*." Eli Sigüenza considered the idea ill-conceived; AGN, P GDO, 189 (177).

[40] In the 1961 struggle the Alianza had received substantial support from the ACRM, and Figueroa was likely responsible for the victory. This episode is discussed in Chapter Five.

[41] DFS, Versión Pública del Expediente de Héctor Hernández Casanova L1 H6, 1 March 1962. Hereafter DFS, VP HHC.

[42] DFS, 45-1 L5 H247, 20 October 1961. The effort to form a committee around Eli Sigüenza was apparently in the works well prior to the actual 1962 assembly.

offices of the Unión de Permisionarios.[43] By May, Rodríguez was in open revolt. Although Eli Sigüenza declared that "being a leader does not mean being an exploiter," and promised to struggle against the "*caciquismos*" that had oppressed the industry, his policies were widely unpopular with the *camioneros*.[44] Asserting that "collaboration" was the order of the day, he ordered the Alianza to accept the government's decision to implement a new round of bus replacements at a cost of $190,000 pesos per vehicle. That move created a ready audience for Rodríguez's argument that his rival "had sold out to Serrano Castro" instead of advocating for the best interests of the *camioneros*.[45] In October, DFS was reporting that "various line presidents" were "in disagreement" with Eli Sigüenza's leadership, as he "would not move a finger without Serrano Castro's authorization."[46] Discontent grew over Alianza membership dues, paid in addition to those owed the Unión de Permisionarios, as well as over Eli Sigüenza's management of the group's funds: it was rumored he spent approximately 100,000 pesos on a banquet for Serrano Castro in April, 1963.[47] By September 1963, Eli Sigüenza was so unpopular among *camioneros* that when he returned from a trip to United States with Serrano Castro, the usually sizeable welcoming committee was comprised only of a few loyal members of the Alianza's executive committee.[48] His hobnobbing with Serrano Castro, moreover, seemed to confirm the *camioneros*' suspicions that "both leaders were only

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[43] DFS, 45-1 L6 H33, 27 February 1962.
[44] *Transportes y Turismo*, 15 October 1963.
[45] "*Totalmente entregado*;" DFS, VP IRR L1 H173, 7 December 1962; DFS, VP IRR L1 H165, 18 August 1962.
[46] DFS, 45-1 L6 H219, 18 October 1962.
[47] DFS, VP IRR L1 H178, 23 April 1963. It was also rumored that he awarded himself a 1500 peso per month salary, in violation of the Alianza's statutes; DFS, VP HHC L1 H29, 28 July 1964.
[48] DFS, VP HHC L1 H23, 2 September 1963.

pursuing political ends, using the Alianza and the Unión as stepping stones."[49] In Sigüenza's case, even more than in Valdovinos's, allegations of political opportunism rang true. In a vain attempt to receive the party's nomination for a senate seat, he pursued Díaz Ordaz around the country during the presidential campaign, only suspending his effort after a serious car accident left him hospitalized.

Rodríguez, meanwhile, played his cards well. Because the economic situation in the industry had failed to improve as fares had remained unchanged, the new round of bus replacements became a flashpoint for spontaneous *camionero* discontent. Even previously quiescent line presidents began to complain vocally.[50] These new dissidents rallied to Rodríguez's side, and he dutifully patronized them. In 1965 DFS would report that Rodríguez's faction was primarily composed of "those to whom he had given money, saving from economic ruin multiple *permisionarios* who for obvious reasons are his devotees."[51] In September 1963, Rodríguez obtained a deal on Sultana Diesel buses at a better price than what was offered through the Banco Nacional de Transportes and offered them for sale to *permisionarios*, helping to cement his moral authority.[52] The PRI's support for the formation of the Comité Político not long after, furthermore, suggested to impatient urban *permisionarios* that Rodríguez had sufficient political capital to be a worthwhile representative. Over the course of the electoral season, Rodríguez gathered political strength, and in an Alianza assembly in February, 1965, Eli Sigüenza was drummed out of office and heartily jeered when he attempted to call for the

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[49] Ibid.
[50] DFS, 45-1 L7 H153, 26 August 1963.
[51] DFS, 45-1 L7 H302-H306, 5 January 1965.
[52] DFS, VP HHC L1 H23, 2 September 1963.

unification of all *camioneros*, unity that most felt he had helped fracture.[53] The group's new secretary general was Luis Ortiz Revilla, a longtime and well-regarded *camionero* who had been involved in the industry since the 1930s and was untainted by allegations of either avarice or ambition. Rodríguez, meanwhile, quietly pursued his own political goals, accepting the job of Transportation Secretary in the CNOP in 1964, and consolidating a nationwide network of loyal followers who gave him credibility as a leader and influence as an intermediary.

**JANUS LOOKS UP**

Over the ten years after 1955, Isidoro Rodríguez carried on an almost permanent struggle against Alianza leaders he attempted to portray as ineffective and illegitimate representatives. At the same time as he attempted to convince *camioneros* of his own worthiness as a leader, Rodríguez played a game of political hardball, using a variety of tactics to discredit his opponents to the PRI patrons he courted. Indeed, it was in this world of schemes and subterfuge that Rodríguez excelled, and it was there that his career was made. Campaigns for followers and battles over "authenticity" were not mere fig leaves for personal ambitions, but representative status was only one factor in the PRI's political calculus, one often secondary to more strategic considerations. Rodríguez had clearly learned that lesson, having seen Ruiz and Figueroa lose ground as Valdovinos consolidated his authority by leveraging personal connections. Those who won the contest for leadership were those who best cultivated support from the party and government and successfully played the political game; by late 1958 Rodríguez was

[53] AGN, DGIPS C.1981 Exp. 14, 24 February 1965.

determined not to lose. Indeed, to understand why Isidoro Rodríguez emerged victorious in 1965, we must turn back to examine how this other side of corporate politics functioned during the years of Rodríguez's rise.

During 1957, Valdovinos had deftly outmaneuvered his rivals, positioning himself as the PRI's preferred *camionero* leader. When Adolfo López Mateos was nominated as the party's candidate, the Alianza's leaders ensured that their organization was first in line to collaborate with the campaign efforts. On November 8, Valdovinos met with PRI leaders to plan the Alianza's strategy for mobilizing and transporting contingents from across the city to López Mateos's campaign kickoff later that month. Commenting on the meeting, a DFS report concluded that "with this, the leaders of the Alianza have become the legitimate representatives of the *gremio camionero* with regards to the PRI, a designation that they have been disputing with the leaders of the ACRM during recent weeks, and it is now clear that it will be the [Alianza] that will take an active part in the upcoming campaign."[54] Faced with Valdovinos's apparent success in gaining the political high ground, and with his struggle against the *chatos* faltering, Rodríguez began a new clandestine strategy to unseat his rival. In order to undercut Valdovinos, he sought to make the Alianza's leader appear weak, incapable of controlling the industry, and if possible, a political liability. Such was the motivation behind Rodríguez's decision to withhold buses he controlled from participation in convoys that Valdovinos had organized in support of the PRI's 1958 presidential campaign. Rather than a practical matter—since only 36 buses would have been absent from convoys that

[54] DFS, 45-1 L3 H98, 8 November 1957.

ranged from 100 to 200 vehicles, and Valdovinos likely covered the shortfall easily—it was a symbolic gesture that the DFS considered tantamount to an attempted "sabotage."[55] Campaign participation was an important ritual in the careers of Alianza leaders, and in fomenting unrest within the Alianza Rodríguez hoped to trip up Valdovinos just as he paraded before his political patrons. Valdovinos hardly took these jabs passively, and used his connections to city government and particularly the Transit Department to deny Rodríguez and his supporters operating permits, embargo their vehicles for minor infractions, and sanction route invasions of Rodríguez's lines. At the same time, with the disingenuous innocence of a misbehaving child, Rodríguez petitioned Ruiz Cortines for redress unsuccessfully, accusing Valdovinos of immoral and abusive behavior.[56]

Rodríguez spent the early summer of 1958 attempting to stir up labor unrest on many of Mexico City's bus lines and encouraging wildcat strikes.[57] The impending change in administrations spurred such activities, as Rodríguez reportedly felt that with Uruchurtu's inevitable departure from Mexico City's regency in the next government "it was very likely he would succeed in deposing Valdovinos" as it was now he who had powerful patrons, including prominent PRI leader and former Mexico State governor Alfredo del Mazo, who was in charge of López Mateos's campaign.[58] Events conspired in Rodríguez's favor. When the student protests discussed in Chapter Three broke out in August over the proposed increase in bus fares, Valdovinos became the object of popular

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[55] Valdovinos had requested three buses per line and Rodríguez, at that point, controlled 12 lines in total; DFS, 45-1 L3 H194, 21 January 1958.
[56] AGN, P ARC, 703.4/1161, various letters Rodríguez to Ruiz Cortines.
[57] DFS, VP IRR L1 H53, 11 July 1958.
[58] DFS, VP IRR L1 H59, 29 July 1958; DFS, VP JVR L1 H144, 29 July 1958. Rodríguez, del Mazo, and López Mateos all had strong political ties in the Estado de México.

ire and a thus vulnerable target for his enemies. While those demonstrations did represent a genuine expression of discontent, something more sinister may have been afoot. At least one DFS report suggested that Rodríguez was cultivating ties to student leaders, providing them economic support to continue protesting, in order to "create problems" for Valdovinos and Uruchurtu.[59]

With his rival on the ropes, Rodríguez delivered a flurry of political jabs that proved devastatingly effective. In October, Rodríguez struck at Valdovinos's soft flank, attempting to complicate his confirmation to a seat in congress and thus deny him the prestige, connections, and influence that the post presumably would have conferred. According to a DFS report, Rodríguez dispatched "several people of his utmost trust to Jalisco's seventh district…with the goal of carrying out a defamatory campaign, and as a result Congress has received messages from residents and merchants from the district requesting that Valdovinos not be approved as a deputy."[60] Those letters, described in Chapter Three, were central to the Electoral College's discussion of whether or not to approve Valdovinos's electoral victory. Simultaneously, Rodríguez encouraged student leaders, particularly the head of one faction of the Federación Estudiantil Universitaria (FEU), Primo F. Reyes, to demonstrate in the galleries of congress against Valdovinos, almost certainly by offering sizeable financial incentives, leading to a rowdy protest in late October and the end of Valdovinos's political career.[61] By the end of November,

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[59] DFS, VP IRR L1 H61, 22 August 1958.
[60] DFS, VP JVR L1 H173, 28 October 1958.
[61] DFS, VP RSS L1 H17, 1 November 1958; *La Prensa*, November 6, 1958. Reyes made the most of his association with the *camioneros*. By 1965, he was serving as a legal advisor to the Alianza and by the 1970s was working as Rubén Figueroa's personal secretary. Indeed, it seems as though it was Figueroa who was responsible for connecting Rodríguez and Reyes in 1958. Figueroa's son attended law school at UNAM with Reyes, and the student leader appears to have been drawn into the family's *camarilla*

Rodríguez seemed close to retaking the Alianza. The group's interim secretary general, Rodolfo Solís Soto, was open to a reconciliation and Rodríguez intended to participate in the upcoming internal elections.[62] On November 25, DFS agents reported that around 40 of the city's bus lines had joined Rodríguez's group, believing that Uruchurtu was on the outs and that the dissident's star was on the rise.[63]

Rodríguez's luck would run out at the close of 1958. On December 2, López Mateos reappointed Uruchurtu to an unprecedented second term as regent, an unpleasant surprise for a man who had built his career around bitter opposition to Uruchurtu's intervention in urban transportation.[64] Moreover, the designation bolstered Solís Soto's position within the Alianza as he represented continuity with Valdovinos's leadership, and left Rodríguez pondering whether it would be most "convenient" to take an extended trip abroad.[65] Rodríguez ultimately stayed, however, continuing to agitate for a change in the Alianza's pliant collaboration with official policy and levying 180-peso contributions on his supporters to sustain this campaign.[66] When labor disputes broke out in late December, DFS agents blamed Rodríguez, who allegedly had "pressured labor leaders to provoke the conflict, with the goal of demonstrating to the Government and the Alianza that he had the strength needed to control the *camioneros*."[67] The attempted display of

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(hierarchical political clique). The Figueroa family *camarilla* is the subject of Chapter Five. Other sources suggest that Reyes was the nephew of Manuel Peña Vera; DFS, VP RSS H1 L21, 5 November 1958, Manuel Alatriste Reynoso to DFS.

[62] DFS, VP IRR L1 H80, 21 November 1958.

[63] DFS, VP RSS L1 H24, 25 November 1958.

[64] Traditionally, with the change in administrations appointed positions were nearly always distributed to supporters of the incoming President, a clientelistic rotation of elites that, while problematic for long-term policymaking, was useful in preventing elite dissidence.

[65] DFS, VP RSS L1 H27, 2 December 1958.

[66] DFS, VP IRR L1 H89, 20 December 1958.

[67] DFS, VP IRR L1 H191, 23 December 1958.

power fell flat. A week later, López Mateos sent to congress legislation creating the Unión de Permisionarios, in theory reducing Solís Soto, Rodríguez, and any other pretender to the Alianza's leadership to the status of bit players in the management of the urban bus industry. In a final act of defiance, Rodríguez again paid Reyes to "make a scandal" in the galleries of congress during debates over the Unión, but then retreated, declining to file an *amparo* against the legislation and reaching a détente with Solís Soto, with whom he was friendly, by the following summer.[68] Rodríguez had outlasted Valdovinos, but he still lacked the connections to become a major political player.

When Rodríguez confronted Eli Sigüenza four years later in 1962, however, he would do so from a position of strength. Not only did he profile as a potentially more "authentic" leader within the industry than he had in 1958 (as discussed in the previous section), but he had the backing of increasingly powerful and well-connected patrons. Rodríguez particularly benefited from close ties to Rubén Figueroa, who would be elected to Congress in 1964 and served as a conduit to high-ranking party officials. But because Eli Sigüenza also had prominent supporters, principally Serrano Castro and Uruchurtu, Rodríguez had to tread carefully. As a result, the struggle for the Alianza during the mid-1960s played out much as a *sub rosa* struggle among elite factions in the PRI and the government. Rodríguez's victory thus had much to do with his talent for cultivating political patrons and his luck in choosing those patrons wisely. More than recruiting followers, where Rodríguez succeeded in the 1960s was in playing the corporatist system to his advantage.

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[68] DFS, VP RSS L1 H32-33, 29 December 1958; DFS, VP IRR L1 H100, 31December 1958.

In late April 1962, two months after Eli Sigüenza had taken control of the Alianza, Rodríguez began meeting with Figueroa to explore the possibility of affiliating with the ACRM. By August, the DFS reported that Rodríguez had formalized that link and joined the ACRM.[69] Figueroa was a natural ally: he had played a key role in blocking Serrano Castro's attempt to impose a new legal structure on the urban transport industry in 1960 and shared Rodríguez's opposition to government intervention in the Alianza.[70] Figueroa was also interested in expanding his own influence by unifying the Alianza and the ACRM, and for Rodríguez the organizational heft of the ACRM allowed him to change his image from that of lone agitator to corporatist leader. As DFS agents reported, in joining Figueroa, Rodríguez was "attempting to obtain *fuerza gremial* [strength within the industry]."[71] Rodríguez also recruited other urban line presidents to his cause, encouraging Carlos Dufoo, head of the Santa Julia y Anexas line to publically condemn Eli Sigüenza at *camionero* events. He also unsuccessfully attempted to convince Manuel Soto Ponce to infiltrate the Alianza's executive committee in order to obtain "material with which to attack the committee."[72]

Eli Sigüenza attempted to deflate the growing opposition movement by alleging to DFS agents that not only was Rodríguez consulting with Figueroa, but that he was working with Martín Ruiz and Antonio Díaz Lombardo as well, thus warning of a return

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[69] In the DFS report's use of "affiliated", it is unclear whether Rodríguez technically joined the group or if it was simply signaling that the Rodríguez-Figueroa alliance was *fait accompli*.
[70] DFS, Versión Pública del Expediente de Rubén Figueroa Figueroa L1 H37, 25 April 1962. Hereafter DFS, VP RFF; DFS, VP IRR L1 H165, 18 August 1962.
[71] DFS, VP RFF L1 H40, 25 June 1963.
[72] DFS, VP IRR L1 H178, 23 April 1963; DFS, VP RFF L1 H40, 25 June 1963.

to the Alianza's allegedly venal past.[73] To support those claims, Eli Sigüenza encouraged Mariano Sánchez, a *permisionario* on the Circuito Hospitales line whom Eli Sigüenza had plucked from obscurity to become the Alianza's *oficial mayor* [chief clerk], to file denunciations of Rodríguez's alleged corruption and then publicize those charges. The laundry list included an April, 1962 accusation that Rodríguez owned upward of 300 urban buses and was worth more than 60,000,000 pesos; a claim in May that Rodríguez had taken over the Circuito Hospitales line; a September complaint that Rodríguez imposed 570-peso monthly dues on members of his lines; a November allegation that Rodríguez bought off Transit officials in the Estado de México and overcharged *permisionarios* on his line for gasoline; and a March, 1963 suggestion that Rodríguez forged the signature of a general as part of a 100,000-peso fraud.[74] Where in the past the audience for such denunciations had been the *camioneros*, during 1962 and 1963 Eli Sigüenza was almost desperately playing to his patrons: rather than pushing these accusations through the Alianza-affiliated magazine, *Transportes y Turismo*, Eli Sigüenza attempted to filter them up the political pipeline by selectively releasing them to DFS agents.[75] Similarly, Eli Sigüenza made a public show of his warm relations with

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[73] DFS, VP IRR L1 H165, 18 August 1962. Rodríguez was certainly in contact with Ruíz, and Figueroa did participate in the development of tourism with Díaz Lombardo and Miguel Alemán in the early 1960s, but the suggestion that Díaz Lombardo sought to reexert control over the industry lacked evidence.

[74] DFS, VP IRR L1 H162, 23 April 1962; DFS, VP IRR L1 H164, 7 May 1962; DFS, VP IRR L1 H168, 11 September 1962; DFS, VP IRR L1 H170, 6 November 1962; DFS, VP IRR L1 H177, 9 March 1963. It is hardly surprising that at Díaz Lombardo's Saint's Day celebration in June, 1963, Rodríguez and Sánchez almost came to blows; DFS, Versión Pública del Expediente de Eduardo Soberanes Romero L1 H13, 14 June 1963. Hereafter DFS, VP ESR.

[75] *Transportes*—or *Transportes y Turismo* as it was originally called (and as I will cite it)—began its sporadic publication life in 1960, one year after *El Informador Camionero* ceased publishing after the creation of the Unión de Permisionarios threw the organization into turmoil. Originally an unaffiliated publication in 1960, after a one year hiatus, it returned in 1962 with a decided slant in favor of Eli Sigüenza, though it never displayed the same degree of subordination to the Alianza's committee that *El Informador Camionero* had.

Serrano Castro, hosting banquets in the bureaucrat's honor and making countless appearances with him in an attempt to display his connectedness and ability to ensure *camionero* loyalty to the Unión de Permisionarios. The strategy seems to have failed. Eli Sigüenza never cultivated any patrons other than Serrano Castro who, while a proxy for Uruchurtu, lacked influence within the party. It was a significant tactical error within the framework of the corporatist system.

The sparring between Rodríguez and Eli Sigüenza came to a head as the 1964 presidential election approached. As he had in 1957, in 1963 Rodríguez promised his supporters that with the change in presidential administrations he would "return to occupy a position of power within the Alianza."[76] Unlike in 1957, however, Rodríguez successfully outmaneuvered his rival, in part because of his alliance with Figueroa, in part because Eli Sigüenza's 1962-1963 smear campaign fell flat, and in part because the strength of Eli Sigüenza's patrons, particularly Uruchurtu, was waning as the regent's vision of urban development clashed with that of Díaz Ordaz's group.[77] In the fall of 1963, both factions courted important party officials, particularly Alfonso Martínez Domínguez, the head of the CNOP.[78] In September, Eli Sigüenza participated in a national autotransport convention under the auspices of the Confederation and with Martínez Domínguez in attendance. But if Figueroa and Rodríguez were notably absent, neither did Eli Sigüenza seem to cut an impressive or powerful figure at the convention

[76] DFS, VP IRR L1 H181, 6 June 1963.
[77] Davis, *Urban Leviathan*.
[78] If the *camioneros* generally articulated their interests through informal channels rather than through the CNOP, it was the Confederation that mediated their participation in political campaigns and whose recognition was thus crucial for leaders seeking status and access. It also appears that from the late 1950s through the mid-1960s the CNOP played a greater role in *camionero* politics than it did either before or after.

despite his place at the head table—the DFS report on the event paints him as something of an also-ran who was only mentioned in the middle of a list of unremarkable attendees.[79] A little more than a month later, it was Figueroa alone among *camioneros* who attended the CNOP's assembly in Queretaro as head of the ACRM.[80] On November 5, after Interior Minister Díaz Ordaz officially received the PRI's presidential nomination, both factions participated in the *cargada*, the traditional stampede to congratulate the candidate. Eli Sigüenza sent Alianza affiliates an urgent message asking them to join the Martínez Domínguez-led CNOP delegation meeting at the Interior Ministry building at 6:30, while Rodríguez took a group of ten *camioneros* to a street corner on Díaz Ordaz's route to the Ministry where they hoped to catch the minister and obtain an audience.[81] In the end, it was Figueroa again who, as head of the ACRM, joined Martínez Domínguez's CNOP delegation to congratulate the nominee. Eli Sigüenza's group was left out of the delegation.[82] Nine days later, on November 14, with Martínez Domínguez presiding, Figueroa and Rodríguez formed the Comité Político Camionero del D.F. pro-Gustavo Díaz Ordaz.[83] Five days later, when Eli Sigüenza attempted to form a rival campaign organization also in favor of Díaz Ordaz, Serrano Castro was the only notable politician in attendance, and the assembly refused to back him.[84] Indeed, Eli Sigüenza never managed to form a political committee: at the end of November, a DFS

[79] DFS, 45-1 L7 H162-164, 10 September 1963.
[80] DFS, VP RFF L1 H43-44, 19 October 1963.
[81] DFS, VP RSS L1 H133, 5 November 1963.
[82] DFS, 30-24 L5 H92, 5 November 1963.
[83] Some reports suggested Rodríguez also joined a CNOP Propaganda Commission; DFS, 30-24 L5 H111, 12 November 1963.
[84] DFS, VP HHC L1 H26, 19 November 1963. It was later reported, however, that Uruchurtu was apparently "annoyed" by Rodríguez's success in forming a campaign committee, an understandable pique given Rodríguez's longtime opposition to the regent; DFS, VP HHC L1 H27, 29 November 1963.

agent observing an Alianza assembly recorded that, suspicious of his political ambitions, no line presidents were supporting Eli Sigüenza's plan to create a competing organization.[85] Rodríguez was winning the all-important battle for political patrons and prestige.

By early December, whispers were already circulating among the Alianza's membership that "in light of [the Alianza's] disorganization, it is doubtful that its activities will be successful and that Rodríguez Ruiz had beaten them to the punch."[86] Rodríguez had something else that Eli Sigüenza did not: the financial wherewithal to cover the expenditures of the *camioneros* who sent buses to participate in his campaign efforts, which was no small enticement.[87] On December 11, most members of Eli Sigüenza's executive committee resigned their positions to join Rodríguez's organization.[88] The Alianza's leader nevertheless struggled against the current, attempting to leverage his position into a senatorial seat from his home state of Oaxaca.[89]

During the first month of the campaign, however, neither side gained a truly decisive advantage. On November 28, as Eli Sigüenza delivered three buses to PRI president Gen. Alfonso Corona del Rosal for use in the campaign, Rodríguez dispatched two buses under the command of Carlos Dufoo to Guanajuato to support Díaz Ordaz's

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[85] In blocking Eli Sigüenza's efforts, the line presidents stated that they believed that "the industry should first be unified…then would only participate under the condition that no *camionero* director would obtain political positions, especially seats in Congress or the Senate, as supposed compensation for having managed the sympathies of the *gremio*, since their only desire in [supporting the campaign] is to attain a greater comprehension of their efforts as an important factor in the country's economic life;" DFS, VP EPU L1 H122, 29 November 1963, Gabriel Guarneros Mendoza to Director of Security.
[86] "*Ya le ganó la delantera*"; DFS, VP IRR L1 H94, 6 December 1963.
[87] DFS, 45-1 L7 H235, 11 December 1963.
[88] Ibid.
[89] DFS, Versión Pública del Expediente de Francisco Eli Sigüenza L1 H12-13, "Antecedentes," undated document. Hereafter DFS, VP FES; DFS, VP IRR L1 H199, 13 May 1964.

tour through the state.[90] Over the next month, Rodríguez and Dufoo trailed the candidate to Jalisco and Michoacan, earning Díaz Ordaz's recognition while Eli Sigüenza struggled to organize a coherent contribution. In late December, Corona del Rosal stepped in to end the institutional chaos, creating a new *camionero* campaign committee under the control of Serrano Castro.[91] This did not seem to stop the competition. In January, 1964 during Díaz Ordaz's visit to his home state of Oaxaca, Eli Sigüenza attempted to make a show of his strength, sending 100 of Mexico City's buses transporting food, cots, and his Sierra Juárez countrymen to the state capital in an attempted display of influence.[92] Rodríguez and Dufoo meanwhile continued their efforts, and when Eli Sigüenza was seriously injured in an auto accident in February they seem decisively to have gained the upper hand, although the Alianza would maintain an active presence at campaign events up to the election. The senatorial seat Eli Sigüenza sought proved an illusion, vanishing from his grasp as he reached for it. The Alianza too slipped away from him. By the spring of 1964, DFS agents reported that only Serrano Castro's efforts kept Eli Sigüenza clinging to his post in the Alianza, and that Rodríguez's eventual victory seemed a foregone conclusion.

By December, 1964, when Díaz Ordaz was inaugurated, Rodríguez had gathered behind him most of the opposition to Eli Sigüenza, and according to a DFS report it was rumored "that Rodríguez Ruiz feels rather strong, owing to the political connections he has with Alfonso Corona del Rosal and with [D.F. PRI head] Rodolfo González

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[90] DFS, VP IRR L1 H190, 28 November 1963.
[91] DFS, VP HHC L1 H28, 21 December 1963.
[92] DFS, VP FES L1 H2-3, 19 March 1968, "*Antecedentes*."

Guevara…"[93] As Díaz Ordaz settled into office in January 1965, he received a memorandum on *camionero* factions that labeled Rodríguez the "most significant" force for unification among Alianza dissidents.[94] To the incoming administration, not only had Rodríguez staked a claim to leadership of the *camioneros*, but he had made himself appear capable of orchestrating their tightly disciplined political participation. It was also crucially important that he had demonstrated loyalty to the president and built ties to party leadership during the campaign. Serendipity also played a role in Rodríguez's ascent, as the influence of his patrons was on the rise. Figueroa was elected to congress in 1964 while Uruchurtu, the force behind Serrano Castro and Eli Sigüenza, saw his influence waning as a result of his cold relationship with Díaz Ordaz.[95] Eli Sigüenza's inability to obtain the PRI's nomination for an elected post from Oaxaca was almost undoubtedly a manifestation of his politically weak position, and it was hardly surprising that after being voted out in the Alianza's March 1965 elections his influence in the industry evaporated.

Rodríguez, meanwhile, parlayed his experience with the Comité Político Camionero del D.F. pro-Gustavo Díaz Ordaz into a more permanent role as a liaison between the PRI and the *camioneros*. A year after the campaign concluded, Rodríguez was still at the head of the organization, which by then had been renamed simply the Comité Político Camionero and converted into the institutional coordinator of Alianza participation in politics. In the summer of 1965 he was named Secretary of Transportation of the CNOP, presumably to facilitate the Alianza's integration into the

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[93] DFS, VP ESR L1 H14, 30 December 1964.
[94] DFS, 45-1 L7 H302-306, 5 January 1965.
[95] Davis, *Urban Leviathan.*

party structure.[96] Over the following years, Rodríguez built an extensive web of personal relationships with important *priístas* and used his stature in the industry to propel his career upward. As we will see in section four of this chapter, this rise was not without conflict, and struggles over representation, legitimacy, and political access remained at the center of fights for control of the Alianza.

### CHAOTIC CORPORATISM: A PERSPECTIVE

The battles Rodríguez, Valdovinos, and Eli Sigüenza fought were not sterile struggles over prestige and power, nor were they isolated, *sui generis* episodes. Rather, they were products of a PRI system that privileged brokers, encouraging competition and fostering a culture of intermediation. Neither was that system, in turn, an embedded feature of Mexican politics. As with many aspects of classic-period *priísmo*, it was a cultural institution that developed during the 1950s and 1960s and was qualitatively different from the systems of intermediation that had existed before. Beyond the formal bounds of official corporatism, by the 1950s the PRI succeeded in creating a system where expectations of reciprocity, responsibility, and representation greased the cogs of a well-functioning machine. This culture of corporatism shaped the politics of organization, from the internal moral economies of occupational interest groups to the strategies political entrepreneurs used when fighting for their leadership. Above all, the system was one that created brokers like Rodríguez and encouraged them to fight for leadership.

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[96] It appears that with the Díaz Ordaz administration the Alianza turned back to the 1940s, as Antonio Díaz Lombardo began appearing at *camionero* events, including a 1965 convention where he sat at the head table with the head of the PRI, the head of the CNOP, Julio Serrano Castro, Isidoro Rodríguez, Rubén Figueroa, and Luis Ortiz Revilla; DFS, Versión Pública del Expediente de Luis Ortiz Revilla L1 H69, undated photo. Hereafter DFS, VP LOR. Certainly, the relationship between the party and the Alianza seemed the warmest it had been in many years.

Those struggles for the control of organizations created an image of low-level chaos, yet proved central to the overall stability of the regime.

Traditional interpretations of the regime's macropolitical stability have often privileged the formal structures of the regime's institutional corporatism.[97] The basic contours of that system after the formation of the PRI in 1946 are well known: the party articulated state-society relations through the representatives of officially sanctioned organizations that spoke for the interests of discrete social groups. The PRI's technically constitutive sectors—labor, peasants, and popular—created a pyramidal structure whereby interest representation flowed upward, from affiliate organizations, first to the three party sectors, then to the party itself. The PRI privileged a single confederation within each sector. The National Confederation of Peasants (CNC), the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM), and the National Confederation of Popular Organizations (CNOP) contained most, but not all, of their respective sector's members, and had exclusive access and influence within the PRI. As it developed during the decade or so following 1946, that system effectively limited the range of political expression for workers and peasants, and proved a valuable tool of social control. Because the dominant confederations controlled social groups important both symbolically and numerically, and could thus potentially threaten political stability, leaders such as Fidel Velázquez of the CTM gained power by ensuring that the rank-and-file acquiesced to official projects and

[97] Schmitter's 1979 basic definition of corporatism is a worthwhile starting point: "Corporatism can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state *and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and support*." [Italics mine]. Philippe C. Schmitter, "Still the Century of Corporatism?" *The Review of Politics* 36:1 (1974), 97.

participated in party mobilizations. This system generally conforms to what Philippe Schmitter describes as "state" corporatism—an imposed system of social and political organization where the state holds a preponderance of power.[98]

Yet by the 1950s independent, semi-autonomous organizations proliferated in the dim catacombs beneath the institutional pyramid. This system, of which the Alianza formed a part, resembles the other half of Schmitter's typology, "social" corporatism, which he describes as a common phenomenon in modern, capitalist, and typically open societies. The *camioneros* conform to that model, as the original collectivist, commercially-minded Alianza morphed rather naturally into a political body, and despite integration into the regime, were not in any way "officially licensed" by the PRI; the ease with which dissidents created the ACRM provides ample evidence of this.[99] The *camioneros* were hardly alone in this informal "social" corporatism: trade associations boomed in mid-century Mexico. At one point, three different groups vied for control of

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[98] Paul Drake's definition of this phenomenon is more succinct and clear than Schmitter's: "The second type is is political, 'state', 'revolutionary', or 'artificial', corporatism. Here, the more powerful state strictly licenses and far more closely regulates existing, monopolistic interest associations. At the same time, the state manufactures new occupational organizations under its tutelage, turning them to its purposes rather than allowing them great latitude to pursue their constituent interests. Rather than existing beside party politics, these sanctioned, co-opted, tamed, or invented corporate entities are normally installed as the sole intermediary bodies. Officially tied to the state, they help it discipline society. Corporatism now becomes a government program, imposed from above at least as much as generated from below."; Paul Drake, "Functionalism and Corporatism in Modern Chilean Politics" *Journal of Latin American Studies* 10:1 (1978), 85-86.

[99] The *camioneros*' earliest associations were organized under postrevolutionary labor law as employers' unions (*sindicatos patronales*) and eventually became rather unique *sindicatos de permisionarios* that gave collective legal character to all permit holders on a given bus line for purposes of finances. The Alianza originally formed as an umbrella organization for those atomized groups but without a defined legal character, finally registering in 1954 as a Civil Association (AC), the amorphous designation used by most civil society non-profit organizations. It was no coincidence that the Alianza acquired that label with the ascent of José Valdovinos to the organization's leadership: it was theoretically a way of removing the group from politics. The *Acto Constitutivo* of the Alianza de Camioneros de México, A.C. can be found in IPS C.1593C Exp.8. See also Héctor Hernández Casanova Private Archive. Hereafter HHC AP.

Mexico City's taxis, and street vendor organizations numbered in the hundreds.[100] Nearly every occupation that could be named had a legally constituted organization claiming to speak for the interests of its members. Similarly, sports groups such as the *charros* had politically active organizations, and residents' associations were tremendously powerful whether they spoke for middle-class neighborhoods or, more frequently, lower-class slums. Party demonstrations often appeared an alphabet soup of acronyms as these groups hoisted banners announcing their affiliations, and names suggesting that this broad corporate engagement with the political system was both pervasive and, importantly, competitive.

The ultimate result of this grassroots corporatism, however, was not the effective articulation of group interests, nor did the government truly achieve a meaningful form of social control through selective distribution of benefits.[101] Rather, the payoff was the creation of a class of intermediaries who found in those groups the key to career advancement.[102] In this sense, what was significant here was the interaction between a vibrant "social" corporatism and a substantial "state" corporatism in the years after 1946.[103] Because the institutional structures of corporate representation through the party

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[100] Approximately 300; Cross, *Informal Politics*, 233.

[101] In the case of the *camioneros* there is very little evidence that any significant interest representation flowed through the CNOP.

[102] I am certainly not alone in observing this. John Cross locates these processes within the framework of a *camarilla* and labels it clientelism, both themes I will address in Chapter Five, suggesting at the very least a semantic difference between my interpretation and Cross's. For Cross, "upwardly mobile officials" colonize such associations, as they "foster a power base of one's own by patronizing a social cause for a specific group in exchange for vocal support at rallies, thus demonstrating one's ability at organizing. On a macro level, this technique has the effect of helping to incorporate potentially rebellious groups into the Party/State structure… Large camarillas include many of these types of 'intermediaries,' and all important politicians are able to turn to allies who can produce thousands of vocal citizens at rallies…"; Cross, *Informal Politics*, 75-76.

[103] Pablo González Casanova's analysis, while focused on groups that could be loosely categorized under the social corporatism half of this equation, describes a degree of official control and power to sanction leaders more suggestive of state corporatism; *El estado*, 109; 124-125.

sectors were also the organs by which political patronage was channeled downward, leaders had both personal and constituent motivations for working with and within the PRI. To that end, Pablo González Casanova is correct to signal the preponderance of state power in dealing with intermediaries of both official and unofficial corporate groups. Because state corporatism exerted little control over the organic formation and fracturing of groups on the lower levels, there was in truth an open arena where dissidents were able to form competing organizations and fight for influence, provided they did so according to the rules of the game and within the PRI's institutional structure. Albert O. Hirschman's formulations thus prove valuable for understanding this key dynamic of Mexican corporatism.[104] The system worked because on an organizational level the cost of exit was low—but not insignificant—while on a systemic or party level it was high. Simultaneously, the possibility of upward mobility through organizations on terms that were widely understood, helped foster tremendous loyalty to the system since there was indeed a logic to advancement through organizations. Voice, inasmuch as it existed for those in the lower and middle political strata, passed through both formal and informal corporatist channels.[105] Organizational politics (how these groups functioned internally) and the politics of organization (why they behaved the way they did) are thus key to understanding the regime during its mid-century heyday.

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[104] Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty.*

[105] The Alianza's leaders, for example, rarely used the CNOP as a formal channel for interest representation but consistently referred to the Alianza's position as the representative body of the nation's *camioneros* when taking claims directly to the executive.

**Figure 12:** Political Trampolines. *La Prensa*, September 2, 1958.

**MUSICAL CHAIRS**

Before 1954 the Alianza had participated in a sort of crony corporatism discussed in Chapter Two, where Díaz Lombardo's connections and charisma facilitated the group's integration into the machinery of PRI politics. Yet almost none of those men who oversaw that process and subsequently spun their leadership into the gold of political posts were able to extend their careers past 1954. Díaz Lombardo left the organization under duress, Peña Vera misplayed the presidential succession, and Contreras lasted just months as the group's secretary general. Had he not died, Pimentel might have proved the exception, but his proximity to Díaz Lombardo and rather nefarious reputation suggest that he would likely have been swept out in the same 1954 housecleaning. For over two

decades prior to that 1954 moment when Contreras and Valdovinos disputed the Alianza's secretary generalship, only one man had held the organization's top post; in the two decades that followed, seven men held the position and turnover was frequent.

That a substantive change occurred in the Alianza's organizational politics after the Alemán years is evidenced by the extreme fragmentation of its leadership group over the following decade. Between 1941 and 1953, a total of fifteen different men served on the Alianza's executive committee, in the next dozen years, between 1954 and 1966, that number rose to 50. Excluding fleeting schismatic groups, only four men—Eduardo Soberanes, Carlos Dufoo, José Suárez, and Ramiro Dávila—served on the Alianza's executive committee at some point during both periods and only a handful more stretched organizational influence across the 1954 divide.[106] On the other hand, at least eleven men held posts on the Alianza's executive committee at some point during the period 1954-1966 and then again at some point between 1966 and 1978.[107] Additionally, those few who had successfully crossed the 1954 watershed also tended to succeed in extending their careers past 1966: Dufoo, Valdovinos, Solís Soto, Soberanes, and Evaristo Rodríguez. If we expand our view beyond the Alianza and include the ACRM, which saw less overall turnover in its leadership but suffered a major schism in 1975, we see a picture where an increasing number of men struggled for influence in organizations, and formed competing bodies when they saw their ambitions frustrated. Isidoro Rodríguez, in particular, struggled bitterly for control of organizations and was willing to form

[106] Evaristo Rodríguez, José Valdovinos, and Rodolfo Solís Soto are the notable examples. Martín Ruiz, who remained active in some capacity until the 1960s, is a singular case.
[107] From 1966 to 1978, 31 men held posts in the Alianza though the number of posts in the group's leadership was expanding.

schismatic groups. This is suggestive of a highly fluid situation that resembles neither models of state corporatism nor classic accounts of long-tenured bosses in Mexican labor and peasant confederations. The organizational politics of the *camioneros* post-1954 thus appear the inverse of their pre-1954 stability.

The key to understanding why the Alianza's organizational politics changed after 1954 lies in the politics of organization. Prior to the Alemán campaign, the Alianza functioned primarily as a lobbying group, its leaders retaining control through a credible claim to access to policymakers, a record of effective advocacy, and control of the industry's financial levers. After 1945, with the formal incorporation of the group into the PRI, and the informal integration of the *camioneros* into the machinery of the regime—particularly campaigns and mobilizations—the calculus changed. Leaders faced new expectations from political patrons, but could in turn expect new payoffs in both personal and group benefits. The predictability with which the Alianza leadership rallied the group for the Ruiz Cortines campaign suggested that this was indeed the understanding. Following the takeover of the Banco Latinoamericano recounted in Chapter Two, a DFS agent relayed the sentiment of an unnamed Alianza source who commented that the *camioneros* hoped the government would acknowledge their participation in the campaign and grant them concessions.[108] A few years later, when Valdovinos's second-in-command, Rodolfo Solís Soto, was appointed to the CNOP's Political Action Committee, the DFS acknowledged that this seemed to indicate that Solís Soto would be nominated for a seat in congress in 1957, though the assumption proved wrong.[109] By the

[108] DFS, 45-1 L1 H72, 8 July 1953.
[109] DFS, 45-1 L3 H83, 18 October 1957.

middle of the 1950s it was thus clear to members of the Alianza that those who orchestrated collaboration with the party were both better able to obtain benefits for the group, and more likely to be individually rewarded. The fights for followers thus had equally high stakes. Since one could not offer collaboration without a group of supporters, when *El Informador Camionero* wrote that the decision of new members to join 'strengthened' the organization, it was not a hollow claim.[110] Allegations of opportunism and careerism, of using the *camioneros* as "political trampolines," were grounded in reality and contained at least a few grains of truth. And it was that reality that fueled the organization's intense struggles during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.

Several features of this freewheeling corporatism emerge clearly from those years. First, political importance was conditioned upon plausibly legitimate control of a plausibly authentic organization. Isidoro Rodríguez had wealth, some political patrons, and a degree of influence long before his career began to take off in 1963 when he finally could claim to represent a sizeable group of *camionero* followers. Second, leaders needed to manage the delicate balance between collaborating with the authorities and representing the interests of their affiliates, and, moreover, to do so as the political seas continually shifted underneath them. José Valdovinos built his career around his cooperation with the city government, but Eli Sigüenza's attempt to do the same backfired dramatically. Managing patrons and reading the political winds was an essential skill for navigating that world. Third, the regime was acutely aware of the maneuverings within organizations such as the Alianza, and kept meticulous track of

[110] For example *El Informador Camionero*, January, 1971, "La Alianza de Camioneros de la Republica Mexicana Fortalece sus Cuadros."

whether or not a presumptive leader exercised any real control over affiliates. In one case, an Interior Ministry memorandum detailed the exact number of inter-city cargo trucks controlled by various factions, including Rubén Figueroa.[111] Security reports suggest that all involved understood this situation and shared a common language when speaking about the political weight of organizations. Finally, it is worth noting that the frequent change in Alianza leadership after Díaz Lombardo suggested not a greater degree of organizational democracy, but rather that government intervention and pressure increasingly shaped the group's politics, and in combination with internal fractiousness prevented any one leader from establishing firm control.

What is striking, moreover, is that during the period of apparent turmoil after 1954, the group's relationship with the regime remained unchanged, as did the internal codes that governed its leaders. Part of this systematic stability had to do, no doubt, with a rather fixed incentive structure and predictable paths of upward mobility. Once established as a leader within the Alianza—a process that required a certain degree of previously existing wealth, connections, and luck—one could reasonably aspire to a political position. Where the PRI traditionally provided a means of upward mobility for dutiful functionaries who rose through a secular political *cargo* system, moving between party administrative and government bureaucratic jobs, posts in the CNOP served to coopt and integrate leaders from civil society and the private sector. Many Alianza notables thus moved into the party bureaucracy as secretaries of transportation in the CNOP. A symbolic job, it nevertheless offered personal access to party bigwigs and at

[111] DGIPS, C.2943A, unfiled, undated document.

least three *camioneros*—Narciso Contreras, Carlos Dufoo, and Isidoro Rodríguez—leveraged the position and its connections to further their own careers. Others, such as Solís Soto, also passed through party sector jobs.[112] To that end, the CNOP not only served an important role not as a channel for interest representation, but also as a means of distributing political patronage in the form of status and access.

The most significant resource the CNOP controlled, however, was not party jobs but nominations to congressional seats. Those deputyships were perhaps the crucial symbolic feature of the political system. A seat in congress represented the formulaic recognition of leadership and the presumptive pinnacle of a mid-level career. To a certain degree, this was a crude political bartering: as Frank Brandenburg commented in 1964, "the union boss [keeps] the rank and file in line, loyal to Revolutionary regimes. His reward, besides the permanence of his tenure, sometimes comes in the form of a legislative office."[113] In Brandenburg's assessment, deputyships were desirable as a means of distinction, to "rise above the man in the street," as well as an attractive source of additional income, legal immunities, and benefits such as tariff-free imports.[114]

Yet for the Alianza, and for many other such groups, deputyships require a more nuanced explanation—they were neither predictable pecuniary 'rewards' nor simple exercises in vanity. Rather, they were a recognition of corporate importance and favor; it was not by accident that no Mexico City *camioneros* were nominated to office in 1955 and 1961, moments when the Alianza's strength, unity, and political influence were at

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[112] See Appendix 5.
[113] Brandenburg, *Making of Modern Mexico*, 154.
[114] Ibid.

low ebbs.[115] Congressional deputyships also served to validate leadership, signaling official support or censure for members of the organization, and the state appears to have used them strategically: Valdovinos received the nomination but lost his congressional seat, Eli Sigüenza was passed over for a nomination. Moreover, unlike the CTM leaders Brandenburg describes, who rotated between the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate while serving multiple terms, such a trajectory was unimaginable for an Alianza leader: after 1954 Carlos Dufoo was the only *camionero* to serve multiple terms in congress, from 1973-1976 and again from 1979 to 1982.[116] For the *camioneros*, then, prestige was only one facet of a deputyship's attractiveness, since the ceiling for such a career would have been apparent. Similarly, the limits of corporate representation were clear: although they served on the transportation committee and were lauded in *El Informador Camionero* for their work on the LVGC and other important reforms, everyone was aware that congress was little more than a rubber stamp for the executive.[117] And if congress perhaps offered an opportunity for illicit enrichment or personal advancement, none of the Alianza leaders who served in congress seem to have measurably benefited from their time there. In the end, the most visible benefit from a congressional seat after 1954 was in solidifying organizational leadership.

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[115] Tiziana Bertaccini describes how the distribution of congressional seats worked through the party sectors as each organization put forward lists of candidates that were then evaluated by party delegates, with the proportional influence of each sector in any given region determining the final distribution of nominations. Significantly, nominations for those congressional seats flowed through the CNOP, but were ultimately approved by both party leadership and the President; *El régimen priísta*, 184-185.

[116] See Appendix 4. Rafael Sánchez Pimentel served in both congress and the Senate, the only other example of a leader who served in multiple elected positions.

[117] Peña Vera also received plaudits in 1949 for not having been involved in any scandals; *El Informador Camionero*, September 1, 1949.

**THINGS FALL APART**

For all his politicking, Isidoro Rodríguez never achieved a congressional deputyship, but he would enjoy exceptional longevity in his multiple careers as *camionero*, businessman, and political fixer. The pugnacity that characterized his political activity in the 1960s remained his defining feature throughout the 1970s and 80s even as the political landscape around him changed. That new topography was one in which the rules of the game seemed to shift, slightly but perceptibly, away from the stable chaos of the 1950s and 60s and toward an unstable situation where intensifying demands for political patronage and the weakening of corporatist tools of cooptation eroded the bedrock of mid-century *priísmo*. Rodríguez's career after 1965 exemplifies those trends.

Following the election of Luis Ortiz Revilla as Secretary General of the Alianza, Rodríguez and Figueroa had facilitated the reconciliation of the Alianza and the ACRM, celebrating an 'assembly of unification' in June 1965, with both PRI head Carlos Madrazo and CNOP Secretary General Renaldo Guzmán overseeing the gathering. With nearly 2,000 *camioneros* in attendance, the assembly was a show of group strength with regional delegates prominently displaying placards for their home states.[118] The assembly proposed the creation of a National Autotransport Chamber as a more formal representative body than the two Alianzas, an idea that Rodríguez apparently favored strongly.[119] Rodríguez also took over the General Directorship of the resurrected *El*

[118] Other policy proposals included a switch to diesel motors and the construction of centralized terminals for intercity buses; *El Informador Camionero*, July, 1965.
[119] This seems to have been established as a section of the National Chamber of Transport and Communication.

*Informador Camionero,* which had ceased publishing in 1958. As always, industry publications—and there were now two with *Transportes y Turismo*—would play an important role in disputes over leadership, and Rodríguez had the more prestigious of the two working at his service.

The success of the Comité Político Camionero was also a harbinger of the tighter integration of the newly unified Alianzas into the party. In March, 1965, Rodríguez had moved from the head of the Comité to the post of CNOP Transportation Secretary, but where in the past the appointment often seemed symbolic, now it was part of a more meaningful process. More than any other Alianza leadership group since the time of Díaz Lombardo, in the late 1960s Rodríguez and Figueroa began to align the *camioneros* with the PRI both materially and symbolically. At a May 1966 breakfast organized by Figueroa and Rodríguez, new party head Lauro Ortega urged the Alianza leadership to move beyond "simply cooperating with the requests of the party" to a participation rooted in a broad "active and enthusiastic party militancy," and suggesting that the organization undertake an effort to affiliate all bus transportation industry workers with the PRI.[120] Over the following months Rodríguez duly oversaw Ortega's proposed campaign, urging drivers, mechanics, office staff, and even their families to join the party, while setting up an office in PRI headquarters and promising to distribute credentials to 100,000 new PRI affiliates.[121] The effort predictably nourished the political ambitions of many *camionero*

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[120] *El Informador Camionero*, June, 1966. The PRI's push for wide party membership at this moment is intriguing: the general mass of *camioneros* had dutifully supported the party at the polls and at rallies without being active party members, and in this they were not wholly unique. Indeed, the PRI's financial base was never dues-paying members, but rather government subsidies.

[121] *El Informador Camionero*, September, 1966; DFS, VP RFF L1 H125, 7 June 1966.

leaders, as an editorial in *Transportes y Turismo* observed, it was "filling them with brio as though their names were in play for a congressional seat in the upcoming term."[122]

Rodríguez, at least, was considered for a deputyship in the 1967 elections. A DFS dossier listed him as a possible pre-candidate for a seat from Mexico State, noting that while he was "considered a very rich person," his "*modo de vivir*" was "honest, he does not have vices nor bad habits and is considered an accessible and considerate man."[123] The dossier also observed that Rodríguez was an important part of party machinery, describing him as "the conduit through which the PRI arranges transportation for its mass demonstrations," and remarking that his "principal political connection" was no one less than party chief Lauro Ortega himself.[124] Yet when it came to the all-important evaluation of his political appeal, the reporting agent noted simply "*Arraigo político*: *no lo tiene*"—"he does not have any."[125] Rodríguez was thus ultimately passed over, even though the PRI failed to register a candidate in Mexico City's 9th district, for which he was also considered. After the fact, *El Informador Camionero* interviewed Rodríguez regarding rumors he had considered an independent candidacy for the 9th district seat, rumors he roundly denied. In a telling moment at the end of the interview Rodríguez, perhaps disappointedly, reflected that: "We do not need to take the forced path of an independent candidacy, when in the past we had worked justly and enthusiastically to obtain representation for our *gremio* within Congress. In that struggle we put our faith,

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[122] Héctor Hernández Casanova writing in *Transportes y Turismo*, September, 1966.
[123] DFS, VP IRR L1 H240-241, 17 February 1967, Agent 87 (Isidoro Fernando Jasso) to DFS.
[124] Ibid.
[125] "*Arraigo Político* [Political Rootedness] – He has none, and is only known because he is the owner of suburban and inter-city buses, principally in the Vaso de Texcoco region, and he is little known in the political circles of Mexico State."; DFS, VP IRR L1 H240-241, 17 February 1967, Agent 87 (Isidoro Fernando Jasso) to DFS.

effort, dedication, and cooperation, without any limits on the tasks that our party entrusted to us. We did not achieve our goal, but that in no way neutralizes or paralyzes our action within the ranks of the party."[126] It is clear from that commentary that in these years the relationship between the party and the *camioneros* moved past the tacit understandings of earlier periods, and into a more high-stakes exchange, where collaboration had the explicit end of obtaining political positions and expectations of rewards were high, if in this case unmet. Rodríguez's intimate involvement with the PRI was part and parcel of this new political atmosphere.

These changes coincided with the decade from 1965-1975 that represented the high-water mark of *camionero* influence and power. On an individual level Figueroa, whose career will be discussed in Chapter Five, acquired tremendous political weight in these years as he moved from a congressional deputyship in 1964, to a senate seat in 1970, to the governorship of Guerrero in 1975. Figueroa's rise was aided by his close ties to Luis Echeverría, who headed the Interior Ministry from 1964-1970 and was elected President in 1970. During Echeverría's campaign, the Comité Político Camionero appeared to redouble its collaboration efforts, and in 1973 Carlos Dufoo, the Comité's leader during the campaign, was elected to a congressional deputyship from the Federal District, and again in 1979. Héctor Hernández Casanova, the Alianza's Secretary General after 1971, served in congress from 1973 to 1976, and Figueroa's son, Rubén Figueroa Alcocer, was elected to a Mexico City deputyship in 1979. For the *camioneros*, the ascent of their leaders paralleled a growing organizational strength. Ernesto Uruchurtu, a

[126] *El Informador Camionero*, June, 1967.

longtime antagonist of many in the Alianza and ACRM, was forced out of Mexico City's mayorship in 1966, and under his successors the group had a nearly free hand to determine official transport policy. From 1971 to 1976 Octavio Sentíes Gómez—who had formerly worked as a legal consultant to the *camioneros* and was personally close to Figueroa—occupied the mayorship. Under the Sentíes administration, the Alianza received a government subsidy for the purchase of new Mexican-built buses called *delfines* (dolphins) that the organization itself had designed. That those buses had diesel motors, and thus used cheaper fuel, was an additional concession to the group.[127]

Rodríguez, too, moved upward in these years. In 1963 he had established Autobuses del Valle de México, a company offering service in Mexico State with routes running from the industrial city of Naucalpan on the Federal District's western edge, to Texcoco on the city's eastern boundary.[128] This decision marked Rodríguez's reorientation away from Mexico City proper—he apparently began selling his stake in urban bus lines in these years—and toward suburban transportation. This shift was perhaps a natural one: the Rodríguez family ranch, El Progreso, was located in Mexico State, outside the Federal District. By the late 1960s, Rodríguez had also acquired significant political influence in Mexico State, building a clientele of *transportistas* there

[127] Though diesel was an inappropriate fuel for Mexico City's buses, since the city's elevation led to highly-polluting diesel combustion, in the early 1970s PEMEX had developed a supposedly clean-burning diesel, and it was that fuel that the *delfines* were to use. In practice, PEMEX's fuel proved less clean than promised, bus owners rarely kept up on the maintenance required to keep the motors of the *delfines* non-polluting, and the switch to diesel proved an environmental disaster.

[128] DFS, VP IRR L.Esp. H22-24, "Curriculum Vitae de Isidoro Rodríguez," undated document. Autobuses del Valle de México was incorporated as a Sociedad Anónima de Capital Variable, the legal framework for a corporation used by every bus line. Rodríguez had a significant investment in the company and owned a substantial portion of its buses, although he was not likely the only owner on the line. The 1967 dossier described above suggested that Rodríguez "primarily lives on the income from buses serving the Texcoco region."; DFS, VP IRR L1 H240-241, 17 February 1967, Agent 87 (Isidoro Fernando Jasso) to DFS.

that included the powerful Alcántara-Sánchez Alcántara families.[129] Through those connections Rodríguez seems to have ties to the Governor of Mexico State from 1970-1976, Carlos Hank González. Power followed wealth. In the early 1960s Rodríguez acquired buses on the interstate line of Tres Estrellas de Oro, purchased the interstate Corsarios del Bajío passenger bus company, and founded a tourism line called Panoramas de México.[130] By the mid-1970s, it was estimated that he owned around 500 buses and trucks.[131] Rodríguez's other business interests also grew steadily, including a gas distribution company, an automotive dealership, and an industrial and agriculture development bank known as FIASA.[132] An *El Informador Camionero* profile observing this economic flourishing praised Rodríguez as a "dynamic and steady-handed administrator."[133] A less favorable observer might have described this tremendous wealth in slightly different terms, as Rodríguez was now a mogul in an industry of small businessmen. At the same time that he consolidated a fortune, Rodríguez began establishing his control over the Cámara Nacional de Transporte y Comunicaciones (CNTC), a business chamber that in theory included all *camioneros* and provided members of the industry more formal political representation than the Alianza or

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[129] Salvador Sánchez Alcántara played a major role in ACRM politics, and Jesús Alcántara would be elected a congressional deputy. Through those individuals it appears Rodríguez had ties to future governor of Mexico State and regent of Mexico City, Carlos Hank González.
[130] *El Informador Camionero*, May, 1966, "Profile of Isidoro Rodríguez."
[131] AGN, DGIPS C.1593C Exp.8, "El Autotransporte en la República Mexicana."
[132] *El Informador Camionero*, May, 1966, "Profile of Isidoro Rodríguez." FIASA, the Financiera Industrial y Agrícola, eventually became a holding company for many of Rodríguez's investments. By 1968 FIASA's holdings included the Automotriz Aeropuerto automotive dealership, the Inmobiliaria Estrella real estate company, bus line financing companies for the intercity lines Tres Estrellas de Oro and Transportes Norte de Sonora, as well as RAIMSA, Transportes de Gas Rodher, and Rancho el Progreso; *El Informador Camionero*, February, 1968.
[133] Ibid. Many of those interests were managed by Rodríguez's siblings.

ACRM.[134] As leader of the CNTC, Rodríguez traveled the country to meet with regional *camioneros* working in both passenger and cargo transport, and quickly acquired a national profile as an industry leader. In 1971 he was appointed to serve as Transportation Secretary of the National Executive committee of the PRI, but he remained something of a permanent bridesmaid to Figueroa.[135] A DGIPS report in early 1975 remarked that Rodríguez "has always aspired to elected office, but owing to his political indiscipline within the industry"—a nod to his fights with Valdovinos and Eli Sigüenza—"he has been unable to reach this goal."[136]

It was perhaps unsurprising, then, that by 1975 cracks appeared in the unity forged ten years earlier, a unity that had always been fragile. One intriguing measure of the pressures on the organization is that in 1963, the Alianza's Executive committee had thirteen members. In 1965, four new positions were added in order to incorporate a greater number of economically powerful *camioneros* whose frustrated ambitions might have caused problems. In 1975, there were eighteen positions, and 27 in the ACRM.[137] It would not be enough. Luis Ortiz Revilla's death in 1969 complicated organizational politics, especially after Héctor Hernández Casanova, a close Figueroa ally, was elected

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[134] The CNTC fit in the regime's structure of business chamber representation, providing the corporatist means of representing private sector interests technically excluded from the PRI. The CNTC was roughly analogous to the National Chamber of Manufacturers (CONCAMIN) or the National Chamber of Merchants (CONCANACO), but lacked the heft of those larger organizations. Although the CNTC was not a new creation in the 1960s, it had acquired new relevance under Rodríguez's leadership. Theoretically it was above both the Alianza and the ACRM.

[135] The PRI position may have been only a modest step up from the CNOP post, but it was a symbolic promotion.

[136] AGN, DGIPS C.1593C Exp.8, "El Autotransporte en la República Mexicana."

[137] There was some crossover between the two groups, as Rodríguez, Abelardo Matamoros, and Manuel Soto Ponce served on the committees of both organizations in 1971.

Secretary General of the Alianza in 1971 and a congressional deputy in 1973.[138] As in 1957 and 1963, the impending change in national presidential administrations also fueled organizational unrest in 1975, particularly since Figueroa's influence seemed tied to the outgoing president.[139] When the tensions and resentment bubbled over in the spring, Rodríguez was stoking the fire, but the dry timbers of the corporatist structure provided ready fuel.

On April 26, 1975, Figueroa stood to inaugurate the central bus terminal in Acapulco, Guerrero. He was 67, and a few weeks removed from receiving the PRI's nomination to the governorship of Guerrero. In the sizeable audience were president Echeverría and numerous transportation industry notables; Isidoro Rodríguez, however, was pointedly absent. After a formulaic introduction, lauding the work of the *camioneros* and praising the support of the authorities, Figueroa veered from the typical script, declaring that this inauguration was to be "beyond a shadow of a doubt, the last act of my life as a *camionero*" as it was time to "pass the torch to a handful of youngsters and students who are clamoring to lead."[140] The startling digression stood out from a speech otherwise filled with platitudes, and it did not go unnoticed: when the speech was reprinted in the May edition of *El Informador Camionero*, the key lines were bolded. That edition also marked a key change in the magazine's masthead, as Figueroa had been

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[138] Carlos Blando López, who had previously served as a caretaker Secretary General when Eli Sigüenza was injured during the 1964 campaign, again served as interim leader from 1969 until 1971. It was rumored that Mexico City's *camioneros*, and Julio Serrano Castro, had backed Alfonso Corona del Rosal in the pre-campaign for the presidency in 1970 and thus were politically weak after Echeverría received the nomination. AGN, DGIPS C.1593C Exp.7, 6 July 1970.

[139] An early IPS report on tensions in the ACRM observed that the presidential succession had simply intensified divisions that were already several years old. AGN, DGIPS C.1593C Exp.8, "El Autotransporte en la República Mexicana."

[140] *El Informador Camionero*, May, 1975. "Youngsters" was relative: Figueroa was 67 at the time.

unceremoniously removed from the publication's Director Generalship, with Rodríguez having moved up from Managing Editor to fill the top position. This was the opening salvo in the coming struggle. Figueroa had not intended to retire, nor even relinquish control, but rather to pass control of the ACRM to his son, and Rodríguez was bitterly opposed to that nepotistic succession.

By early summer, the battle lines were drawn. Rodríguez and Dufoo faced off against a Mexico City-based group lead by Figueroa and Hernández Casanova. Rodríguez controlled *El Informador Camionero*, had the support of SCT head Eugenio Méndez Docurro, and the backing of perhaps most of the ACRM's affiliates. Figueroa and Hernández Casanova controlled the Alianza and had a strong base in Mexico City, particularly with the support of Sentíes, and had the loyalty of *Transportes y Turismo*. This alignment of allegiances reflected Rodríguez's political and financial shift out of Mexico City over the preceding years. It appears that in 1975 he had few backers within the Alianza but ample support among the provincial and interstate *camioneros* he had cultivated through the CNTC. In a situation reminiscent of the 1954 struggle between Contreras and Valdovinos, both groups claimed the mantle of the ACRM, establishing competing offices and thoroughly confounding DFS agents who were forced to distinguish between "Figueroa's" and "Rodríguez's" Alianza de Camioneros de la República Mexicana.

On June 5, 1975, Rodríguez published a broadside in Mexico City's leading newspapers, informing ACRM affiliates that "In light of the frequent and prolonged absences of Rubén Figueroa from his position as President of this organization, for more

than two years the secretary general [Rodríguez] has served in that capacity."[141] The statement went on to observe that now, given Figueroa's election to the governorship of Guerrero, it was the view of the organization that his "new responsibilities are incompatible" with continued leadership, and new elections should be held. The broadside was signed by 16 of the 27 members of the ACRM's executive committee and admonished affiliates not to participate in assemblies convoked by the Figueroa faction. The following day, Hernández Casanova joined the heads of 80 interstate and provincial bus lines to publish a broadside ratifying their support for Figueroa's leadership, and denouncing the "divisionist movement led, like so many times in the past, by Isidoro Rodríguez."[142] That day, Figueroa's supporters took control of the ACRM's offices and placed armed guards outside the building, although they refuting to reporters the charges that they had seized the offices by force.[143] Rodríguez's faction, meanwhile, took up temporary quarters in the offices of the CNTC. A DGIPS report the following day pithily commented that the schism "in the long run, will be harmful, first to the *camioneros*, and second to the government."[144]

Over the following months the two sides maneuvered for political position and industry support as they prepared to hold competing national assemblies in September that would ratify their respective leadership.[145] In this struggle, as in earlier episodes, the

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[141] *El Universal*, June 5, 1975. Clipped in AGN, DGIPS C.1593C Exp.8.
[142] *El Universal*, June 6, 1975. Clipped in AGN, DGIPS C.1593C Exp.8.
[143] *Últimas Noticias*, June 6, 1975. Clipped in AGN, DGIPS C.1593C Exp.8. Figueroa's faction may well have taken the offices by force, however. *Excelsior*, the best paper publishing at the time, offered a detailed account of the assault; *Excelsior*, June 6, 1975. Clipped in AGN, DGIPS C.1934A Exp.4.
[144] AGN, DGIPS C.1593C Exp.8, 7 June 1975, "Situación que prevalece en la Alianza de Camioneros de la República Mexicana, A.C."
[145] Rodríguez had the clear support of SCT head Eugenio Méndez Docurro, while Figueroa had significantly more accumulated political capital but his patrons were remarkably reluctant to intervene in the conflict: other than Octavio Sentíes, no major political figures attended his September assembly.

combatants jockeyed to claim "authentic" representation of the industry. Rodríguez appeared to have an early advantage, as a DGIPS report suggested that he "possibly has the greatest number of adherents."[146] Figueroa convoked his assembly on September 8, and with 2,300 *camioneros* in attendance was duly confirmed in his post.[147] In his remarks Figueroa denounced his opponents, claiming they sought to create a monopoly and promising to give unrelenting battle to the "small group of opportunists who have sought to acquire wealth without limit."[148] Rodríguez and Dufoo, of course, rejected the legitimacy of the assembly, informing both affiliates and DFS agents on various occasions that Figueroa's assembly "would be well attended, but only by *camioneros* from Mexico City," who would be credentialed as provincial delegates "in order to carry off the fraud."[149] Eleven days later, Rodríguez's assembly was attended by more than 6,000 *camioneros* who enthusiastically and unanimously proclaimed him as their leader.[150] In captioning a photo from the event, *El Informador Camionero* remarked that "urban *transportistas* have traditionally considered Rodríguez their natural leader, given his vision and administrative qualities as a businessman. Owing to his work across the country in interstate transport, he has been elected President of the [ACRM], making him now nothing less than the national leader of the *camioneros.*"[151] In accepting the

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Méndez Docurro would attend Rodríguez's assembly and declare Figueroa's election to have been illegal; AGN, DGIPS C.1593C Exp.10, 19 September 1975.

[146] AGN, DGIPS C.1593C Exp.9, 9 September 1975.

[147] It is not odd that *camioneros* would support a leader with such obvious political clout as a sitting governor, which Figueroa was. It is, however, striking, that a sitting governor would pursue such a position with such vigor.

[148] *Ovaciones*, September 8, 1975. Clipped in AGN, DGIPS C.1593C Exp.8. The article ran under the sensational headline "War Among *Transportistas!* Figueroa Promises to Crush his Enemies."

[149] DFS, 45-1 L13 H16, 28 August 1975; DFS, 45-1 L13 H39-40, 5 September 1975.

[150] The assembly had delegates from every state save Guerrero and Morelos—the former controlled by Figueroa and the latter linked to Figueroa's second in command, Humberto Córdova Soto.

[151] *El Informador Camionero*, September, 1975.

nomination Rodríguez recounted the roots of the schism, noting that while "we regret losing a leader [Figueroa] with ample knowledge and capacity, and whose work was, on the whole, positive," it was important that unity be maintained, a unity that had been threatened by Figueroa's attempt to ignore the "democratic will" of the industry in choosing its own leaders.[152]

If the two elections did not leave a clear winner, Rodríguez would nonetheless promptly outmaneuver Figueroa and Hernández Casanova, meeting with presidential candidate José López Portillo on September 26.[153] As in 1963, Rodríguez deftly managed the national political succession, positioning himself as the political representative of the transportation industry and an able coordinator of *camionero* collaboration with the campaign. On October 8, Rodríguez and his allies delivered eighteen vehicles to López Portillo on behalf of his ACRM faction, including nine buses equipped for transporting the candidate and the press corps, a refrigerated truck for food, a tow truck, and several other support vehicles.[154] A bus was also designated to transport the Comité Político Camionero, and *El Informador Camionero* predictably published full-page photos documenting the delivery of the buses. [155] Rodríguez's ability quickly to garner López Portillo's support likely had several causes. For one, López Portillo recognized that the division among the *camioneros* was a political liability and had made a futile attempt to reconcile the two groups in early October.[156] Failing unity, however, Rodríguez presented the numerically stronger option, although both factions participated in the campaign.

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[152] AGN, DGIPS C.1593C Exp.10, 19 September 1975.
[153] *El Informador Camionero*, September, 1975.
[154] *El Universal*, October 9, 1975. Clipped in AGN, DGIPS C.1593C Exp.10.
[155] *El Informador Camionero*, October, 1975.
[156] DFS, 45-1 L13 H170, 6 October 1975.

Second, there is some evidence that Hernández Casanova and the Mexico City Alianza had misstepped during the precampaign and backed Echeverría's ambitious Interior Minister Mario Moya Palencia.[157] Third, it appears Rodríguez had a warm personal relationship with the candidate and certainly had some ties to Carlos Hank González, a political powerbroker whom López Portillo would appoint to replace Sentíes. That Hank was a staunch enemy of Figueroa made it clear the wind was blowing in Rodríguez's direction.

The struggle ultimately ended in something of a deadlock, however. Rodríguez proved incapable of dislodging Figueroa and Hernández Casanova from Mexico City and was unable to claim unequivocally the title of ACRM leader. But he did succeed in shifting the allegiance of most provincial and interstate affiliates to the CNTC, which he continued to control for another decade or so.[158] Why Figueroa was willing to fight so hard for the ACRM, when he had already achieved his political goal of winning the governorship of Guerrero, is something of a mystery. Perhaps he felt an emotional attachment to the industry and the organization, perhaps it was simply an attachment to power. Either way, the struggle speaks to the ongoing importance of corporatist organization in the political economy of PRI rule and reveals the emotional intensity of fights over leadership by the mid-1970s.

After taking office, López Portillo launched the first comprehensive national plan for autotransportation and oversaw both legislative changes and infrastructural

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[157] AGN, DGIPS C.1593C Exp.8, "El Autotransporte en la República Mexicana."
[158] In 1981, *El Día* labeled Figueroa the lord and master of the ACRM, and Rodríguez the lord and master of the CNTC, announcing that there were two *pulpos* head-to-head; *El Día*, October 14, 1981. Clipped in the Archivo Económico del Autotransporte, Biblioteca Lerdo.

improvements, efforts undertaken with Rodríguez's support and advice. The schism between Rodríguez Ruiz and Figueroa never caused the harm to the government that the 1975 DGIPS report had foretold, but it did leave the *camioneros* politically weakened. When Carlos Hank González municipalized urban bus service in 1981, the Alianza was able to mount only token resistance and was dissolved not long after. The municipalization left Rodríguez's suburban and interstate financial interests largely untouched, and the suburban transport that he controlled became increasingly lucrative. As head of the only remaining group of independent *camioneros*, he continued to wield significant political influence. In 1982, increasingly appearing to be a transport mogul and party *apparatchik*, he again organized transportation for the de la Madrid presidential campaign and reportedly used 150 million pesos in compulsory donations from CNTC affiliates to sponsor the effort.[159] It was also rumored that in a meeting of the CNTC's political wing, Rodríguez expressed his intention to "demand from the PRI administrative or elected positions" for the organization's top leadership.[160] In 1985, Rodríguez was again considered for a congressional deputyship from Mexico City's 9th district, but was again passed over. He nonetheless retained a friendship with Miguel de la Madrid (president, 1982-1988), and during the mid-1980s began to expand his banking and commercial interests, and over the next decade would become entangled in several banking scandals. In the final act of his long career as a *camionero*, he reportedly provided buses, and a ten-million-peso contribution, to the presidential campaign of

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[159] *El Día*, October 14, 1981, "Reportorio Político." Clipped in the Archivo Económico del Autotransporte, Biblioteca Lerdo; DFS, VP IRR L.Esp. H45-53, 11 October 1981.
[160] *El Día*, October 14, 1981, "Reportorio Político." Clipped in the Archivo Económico del Autotransporte, Biblioteca Lerdo.

Carlos Salinas in 1988.[161] By that point, though, it appears he had dropped all pretense of being an "authentic representative" of common *camioneros*.

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For two decades, from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, fights over control of the Alianza were remarkably commonplace. This perpetual unrest, particularly in an industry of such political and strategic importance, is striking for several reasons. First, traditional interpretations of PRI corporatism tend to suggest that the prevalence and importance of bossism was a stabilizing factor, particularly the long tenured, often tyrannical labor leaders. In the case of the Alianza, we see constant turnover and internal ferment. Second, it is clear from this account of Alianza organizational politics that the competition among potential leaders did little to disrupt the relationship between *camioneros* and the regime. Indeed, this chapter has suggested that the PRI's adroit management of intermediaries within the corporatist framework contributed to the overall stability of mid-century politics. As I have argued here, the clear rules of politics within organizations went hand-in-hand with the clear patterns of interactions between those organizations and the political system—what I have called the politics of organization. Upwardly mobile leaders struggled for corporate power using the language of authentic, representative leadership while simultaneously employing underhanded tactics and political gamesmanship. Unlike classic *caciquismo*, however, they could not rule by force alone, and they could not monopolize political access or patronage: as small entrepreneurs, aspiring *camionero* leaders were able to find their own paths upward by cultivating their

[161] DFS, VP IRR L.Esp. H7, "Ficha Ejecutiva: Rodríguez Ruiz, Isidoro," undated.

own clienteles and rival networks of patrons. Victorious, a *camionero* leader could expect a modest reward for ensuring the compliance of their followers with official dictates, typically a party position or a term in congress. Rodríguez understood this system intimately. Over the course of a remarkably lengthy career, he navigated the hardball politics of the 1950s and 1960s during the era of PRI hegemony and the slow decay of the regime's structures of rule during the 1970s and 1980s. He was a man emblematic of his times, beginning as a classic corporatist leader, putting his organization at the service of the party. He ended as a classic capitalist, having grown tremendously wealthy and tremendously powerful, yet lacking any popular legitimacy.

## CHAPTER FIVE:

### RUBÉN FIGUEROA AND THE PATHS OF POWER

On the morning of May 14, 1974, three hundred buses from Guerrero arrived outside the central offices of the PRI on Insurgentes Boulevard in Mexico City.[1] Six thousand peasants streamed from those buses toward the central patio of the building, proclaiming their support for Rubén Figueroa's candidacy for the governorship of their state. That Figueroa was better known for being the undisputed national leader of the *camioneros* than as a spokesman for *guerrerenses* and resided primarily in the Mexico City neighborhood of Coyoacán had not proved overly problematic in his attempt to secure the gubernatorial nomination. In marshalling the peasants to the capital, he broadcast not only his putative popularity among the residents of his home state but also the impressive reach of his influence. How those peasants came to be bit players in the pageantry of power is deeply revealing of the pathways of Mexican politics. It was no accident that Figueroa could muster thousands of *acarreado* supporters from Guerrero in 1974, just as it was no accident that he could also easily arrange for their transportation to Mexico City on buses he controlled. Over a dramatic political career that spanned more than four decades, Figueroa constructed a network of personal relationships that stretched from the *tierra caliente* of his home state of Guerrero to Mexico City's bustling bus terminals. As he reached for power in Guerrero, those connections stood him in good stead.

[1] AGN, DGIPS C.1934C Exp.2, May 14, 1974.

This chapter examines the historical evolution of that network. Such cliques were known in the language of Mexican politics as *camarillas*, groups bound together by ties of personal loyalty to a single prominent individual, and are perhaps best conceptualized as webs rather than pyramids.[2] Figueroa's *camarilla* was remarkably broad and seemingly quite effective in supporting the ambitions of its leader, but it was not wholly unique. Neither were the mechanisms that held it together: Figueroa's use of clientelism, trading favors and material rewards for loyalty, was standard practice for PRI politicos building *camarillas*. These phenomena were, like the corporate politics discussed in Chapter Four, commonly observed features of the PRI regime and Figueroa's career is thus best understood as an emblematic case of larger phenomenon.[3] Most major politicians during the years of PRI hegemony aspired to construct a sturdy *camarilla*; Figueroa accomplished it. Yet traditional discussions of *camarillas* and clientelism offer few insights onto how they propagated power.

Through a biographical study of Figueroa's career, I will show how the political system's calculations of "strength" drove the creation of vast social networks tied together by clientelistic loyalties. Those *camarillas* became, over time, the path to power. Yet they were not simple instruments. In examining Figueroa, the historical contingencies of *camarilla* construction emerge vividly: he struggled to build a solid clientele during the 1930s and 40s, years when a new political style was taking shape,

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[2] This definition differs from traditional interpretations, however I believe it is a better description of the phenomenon. Figueroa did not simply perch above a base of loyal followers, rather, he cultivated diverse loyalties of equals and near-equals. Isidoro Rodríguez, for example, was undoubtedly a member of Figueroa's *camarilla*, but was also an autonomous actor with significant power of his own. Horizontal ties, it appears, were as important as vertical ones.

[3] Roderic Camp's superb work on elite social networks has provided great insights onto the mechanisms of Mexican politics. Others have examined clientelism and *camarillas* extensively.

and it was only in the late 1950s—after becoming an Alianza leader—that he began to acquire a national profile. This suggests, as did the chaotic corporatism discussed in Chapter Four, that a substantive change occurred in Mexican political practice during the mid-1950s. Of equal note is that Figueroa's career reveals how successful network builders slid between interlocking spheres of action, often cultivating regional bases while simultaneously seeking opportunities in Mexico-City-based organizations that had close ties to the national political system, and moving from private, public, and political circles with greater ease than has often been assumed. I will also show that these broad-based *camarillas* were held together through classic clientelistic patronage mechanisms, but that the participants traded in a variety of currencies, including policy influence and access to politicians, as well as public works projects, sweetheart contracts, and cash-filled envelopes. Personal loyalty was also part of those exchanges, and the ties that sustained *camarillas* also served as bonds that kept actors loyal to the political system. Where Chapter Four offered a structural explanation of regime stability, in examining *camarilla* networks and clientelism, this chapter thus offers a social one.

In exploring Figueroa's *camarilla*, I will begin with a discussion of the family history, examining how the careers of Rubén, his brother Rufo, and his uncles intertwined from the 1920s to the 1940s, and how Rufo came to be the family's standard bearer until his death in 1962. The second and third sections of the chapter will offer synchronic discussions of Figueroa's *camarilla*-building efforts during the 1950s and 1960s, with the second section covering the creation of a *camarilla camionera* and the third Figueroa's *camarilla* in the state of Guerrero. The fourth and final section will cover Figueroa's

governorship of Guerrero, the crowning achievement of his political career and, perhaps paradoxically, the moment when his national influence began to disintegrate.

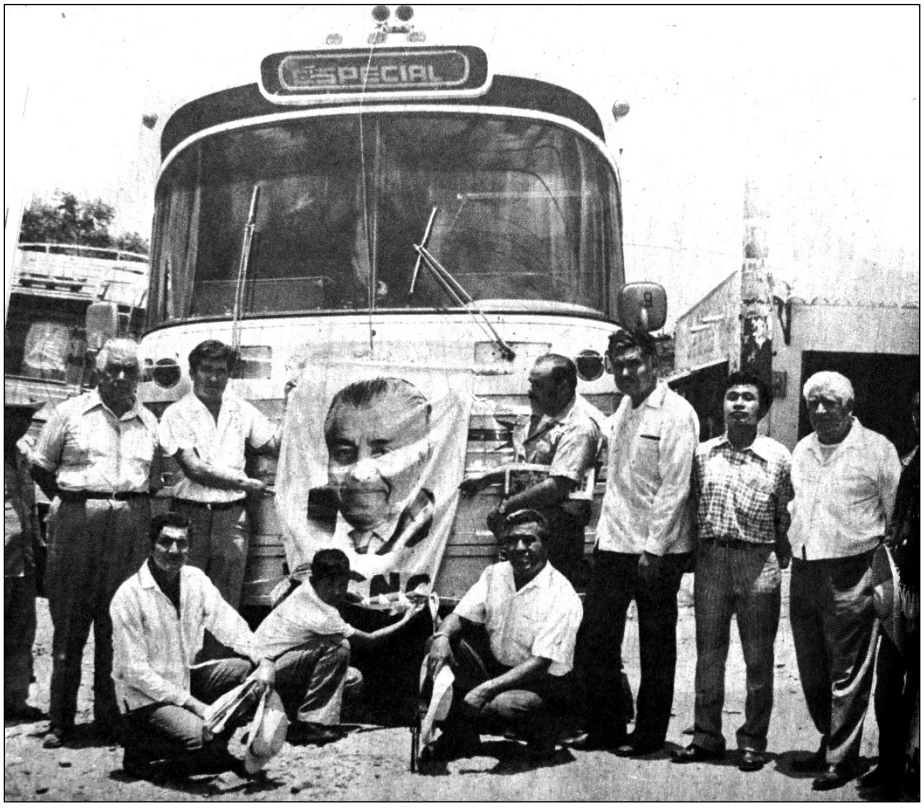


**Figure 13:** Buses to transport peasants in support of Rubén Figueroa's gubernatorial campaign. *El Informador Camionero,* June 1974.

## THE LIBRARIANS

Rubén Figueroa was unmistakably a child of the Revolution. Born in the *tierra caliente* lowlands of Guerrero in 1908 to lower middle-class parents, he spent his childhood weathering the civil war.[4] If his parents were humble, his relatives were well known ranchers in the region, and indeed the town of his birth bore the family's name: Huitzuco de los Figueroa. Those *ranchero* relatives were early joiners of the Revolution,

[4] By one account, his childhood stint as an altar boy ended when he was caught stealing the hosts; *Proceso*, March 23, 1991, "Cacique, monopolista, senador, gobernador, majadero."

firing, as Ian Jacobs notes, the first shots of the *maderista* revolt in the state.[5] Rómulo, Ambrosio, Andrés, and Francisco Figueroa all participated in the fighting and gained both fame and power. Francisco, the family's intellectual, briefly served as interim governor of Guerrero in 1918 and by 1921 was working in the Public Education Ministry in Mexico City. Andrés, by Jacobs' account, "carved out for himself a distinguished [official] military career" during the 1920s and 1930s, culminating with his designation as Minister of War under Cárdenas.[6] Rubén and his brother Rufo, elder by three years, were merely witnesses to the Revolution, however, and they would follow much different paths than their uncles.

In 1921, Rufo emigrated to Mexico City in search of better prospects. Rubén followed not long behind. Through Francisco's connections at the Public Education Ministry, Rufo obtained a job as a librarian's assistant in the Ministry's public libraries.[7] Although he had never received formal education past primary school, Rufo was a dedicated autodidact and quickly rose to the directorship of the José Rodó public library in Mexico City. When a bureaucratic shuffle cost him that position and sought to demote Rufo back to menial work at the Ministry of Public Education library, he refused to accept the transfer and instead passed the job to Rubén. The brothers shared an entrepreneurial intellectuality and Rubén made good use of his time in the libraries, training himself at the National Library and eventually entering the UNAM where he

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[5] Jacobs, *Ranchero Revolt*, 28.
[6] Jacobs, *Ranchero Revolt*, 136.
[7] *El Informador Camionero*, June, 1968, "Semblanza Biográfica de Rufo Figueroa Figueroa." Much of this biography is compiled from this source, Roderic Camp, and José C. Gutiérrez Galindo, *Rubén Figueroa: Permanencia de una Revolución en Guerrero* (México, D.F.: Costa-Amic, 1974).

completed a degree in topographical and hydrological engineering.[8] Both brothers participated in politics in these years, but Rubén—by virtue of his education—tended to occupy appointments as a government engineer, while Rufo established himself as a leader of the bureaucrats' union. While their lives remained intertwined, their divergent paths tell a fascinating story about the importance of Mexico City connections to political careers.

By dossier alone, Rubén appeared the more fortunate of the two during the 1930s. After graduating UNAM in 1932, he served as a member of the Mixed Agrarian Commission of Guerrero tasked with planning *ejidos*, and in 1934 was named head of the state ministry of public works.[9] In 1933, Rubén was designated one of the 34 delegates from the state of Guerrero to the PNR convention that nominated Lázaro Cárdenas as the party's candidate for the 1934 presidential elections, suggesting he had some stature as a *guerrerense* political up-and-comer.[10] During those same elections, he was designated the PNR's alternate candidate for a congressional deputyship in Guerrero's fourth district.[11] He meanwhile continued to develop a career in the Mexico City bureaucracy, serving in 1935 on the commission that recommended the nationalization of the railroads to SCOP head Francisco Mújica. From 1936 to 1940 he worked in the sanitation department of the public health ministry. But if Rubén had succeeded in maintaining close ties to Guerrero while simultaneously establishing himself in the capital, it was his family's legacy that proved his most valuable asset. When he received the PRM's nomination for the

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[8] Rubén had the benefit of schooling at the National Preparatory School.
[9] DFS, VP RFF L1 H54, sin fecha.
[10] PRI, *Historia Documental*, vol. 2, 52.
[11] *Suplente* or alternate deputies only served if the primary seat holder (*proprietario*) was unable to fulfill their duties.

congressional deputyship in Guerrero's second district in 1940, the local DGIPS agent remarked that, on the reputation of his uncle Andrés, Rubén had been recommended for the post by none less than Manuel Ávila Camacho.[12]

Like most elections in Guerrero in these years, the 1940 balloting proved exceptionally messy.[13] The state was riven by personal and political conflicts between *agraristas* and ranchers, between *avilacamachistas*, supporters of opposition candidate Juan Andreu Almazán, and those tied to sitting governor Alberto Berber.[14] Figueroa's candidacy was hardly immune to the reigning tumult. In the second district, the *agrarista* precandidate Pablo Padilla held the support of the region's *campesinos*, but the PRM had intervened prior to the election, forcing him to leave the race and awarding the official party nomination to Figueroa.[15] This created considerable resentment prior to the July 7 voting, and created great sympathy in the region for the *almazanistas*, who were seen as more pro-agrarian. Election day brought predictable turmoil throughout the state. In numerous instances the competing factions established their own polling stations, and violence was frequent. DGIPS agents monitoring the vote were alarmed by the chaos, and dryly catalogued extensive violations of electoral law. According to one report, "the operation of marking the ballots was carried out under the eyes of polling station officials and the general public, in a manner such that the voting was not secret."[16] The same

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[12] AGN, DGIPS C.773 Exp.13, July 18, 1940, PS-10 to IPS. Andrés was also Manuel Ávila Camacho's uncle, and Rubén and Rufo benefited greatly from Ávila Camacho's esteem for Andrés; Roderic Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies*.
[13] See Paul Gillingham, "Force and Consent in Mexican Provincial Politics: Guerrero and Veracruz, 1945-1953" (PhD diss., Saint Anthony's College – Oxford, 2005).
[14] Ian Jacobs notes that Rubén played a role in ousting Berber in 1941; *Ranchero Revolt*, 136.
[15] AGN, DGIPS C.773 Exp.13, July 18, 1940, PS-10 to IPS.
[16] AGN, DGIPS C.773 Exp.13, July 18, 1940, PS-10 to IPS.

account noted and that in urban areas "some individuals voted with credentials that obviously did not correspond to them, having arrived from other villages the night before in trucks… these were rural people, barefoot or wearing *huaraches*. Many of these individuals deposited ballots at two or more polling stations."[17] Rubén Figueroa was not out of place in this electoral scrum. According to subsequent DGIPS reports, the fifth polling station in his district was seized peacefully by *almazanistas* at 9:30 in the morning. A half-hour later, a group of gunmen, reportedly under the direction of Figueroa, opened fire on the unarmed *almazanistas* at the polling station and retook control.[18] If the DGIPS report was equivocal about the perpetrators of the violence, which left five dead and seven wounded, letters from Partido Agrarista representatives pinned responsibility squarely on "the nefarious Rubén Figueroa."[19] Bloodstains notwithstanding, the results stood.[20] Figueroa was duly seated as a deputy, though it was apparent that he lacked legitimacy: the intrepid DGIPS agent calculated that "in a clean vote," Figueroa would only have received a quarter of the ballots.

The beginning of Rufo's political career was no less murky than that of his brother although it developed in an entirely different milieu, far from the sun-baked polling stations of Guerrero. As a state employee in the 1920s and 1930s, working first in public libraries and subsequently in the Mexico City treasury, Rufo was forced to endure

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[17] AGN, DGIPS C.773 Exp.13, July 8, 1940, PS-10 to IPS.
[18] AGN, DGIPS C.773 Exp.13, July 15, 1940, PS-10 to IPS. The individuals identified as attackers were Salustio Salgado, Genaro Salgado, "a Mr. Jaimes, brother-in-law of General Castrejón, a '*costeño*' who is Inspector of Markets, a police sergeant claimed to be Rubén Figueroa's cousin, and a Mr. Bravo." A subsequent report noted that "While [Figueroa's] involvement in the armed assault cannot be completely proven, it is undeniable that after the events he endeavored to cover up actions of the cowardly *berberista* assassins."; AGN, DGIPS C.773 Exp.13, July 18, 1940, PS-10 to IPS.
[19] AGN, DGIPS C.773 Exp.13, July 11, 1940, PS-10 to IPS.
[20] Regardless of the outcome in 1940, the events may have slowed Rubén's career, since it would be 20 years before he again held elected office in the state.

the vicissitudes of public employment, particularly frequent furloughs, transfers, and layoffs.[21] Whether galvanized by such struggles or motivated by keen political ambition, Rufo quickly became involved in early attempts to organize public employees and by the mid-1930s was a prominent leader of the Mexico City Employees' Union (SUTDDF).[22] From there, Rufo moved to the recently founded Federation of State Employees (FSTSE), the union representing the interests of all government bureaucrats and workers.[23] By 1943, Rufo had risen to the Secretary Generalship of the FSTSE, reportedly with the backing of Mexico City regent Javier Rojo Gómez.[24] In that same year, Rufo was a delegate from the D.F. to the founding convention of the CNOP, and was elected Secretary of Bureaucratic Action of the new sector. By the early 1940s he had thus established himself as a key leader of government employees, a sector that the official party was increasingly interested in controlling.[25] Rufo inhabited a world filled with powerful political fixers: the FSTSE and CNOP brought him into close contact with PRI leaders during the 1940s. It was a prime setting for someone interested in forming alliances and building connections, and Rufo proved adept at this, cultivating relationships with Rojo Gómez as well as PRI leaders Rómulo Sánchez Mireles and Alfonso Martínez Domínguez.[26] He would, moreover, attain such political stature that he served as a presiding secretary at the 1946 convention that transformed the PRM into the

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[21] *El Informador Camionero*, June, 1968, "Semblanza Biográfica de Rufo Figueroa Figueroa."
[22] The Sindicato Único de Trabajadores del Departamento del D.F. (SUTDDF).
[23] The FSTSE was founded in 1938 as a *cardenista* initiative.
[24] AGN, DGIPS C.809 Exp.11, "Antecedentes."
[25] For more on the CNOP, which played an important role in the political life of the Alianza, see Chapter Two.
[26] Most accounts link Rufo to Sánchez Mireles, who was something of a gray figure in 1940s politics and was involved in the messier aspects of public employee politics, though it was later rumored that the two were at odds; DFS, Versión Pública del Expediente de Rufo Figueroa Figueroa L1 H10, 21 July 1955, Agent 104 (Pedro Vázquez Torres) to DFS.

PRI. At the same time, Rufo shared his brother's take-no-prisoners approach to politics, and DGIPS agents remarked that "he has a reputation for honesty in economic matters, but is a fan of violence when it comes to achieving his political ambitions."[27] On at least one occasion it was rumored that he had used thugs from Mexico City's trash and sanitation service to enforce his victory in union elections.[28]

Also like Rubén, Rufo benefited from his familial prominence and Ávila Camacho's esteem for uncle Andrés Figueroa. In 1943 Rufo was named the PRM's candidate for a congressional deputyship but significantly the nomination was for the seat representing Mexico City's fourth district rather than any region of Guerrero. Both Rubén and Rufo were mentioned as possible pre-candidates for the governorship of the state in 1944, and although Rufo's odds appeared better, neither saw their aspirations bear fruit. An DGIPS report would later note that Rufo was "*desvinculado*"—detached—from his home state, since he had "spent the majority of his life in Mexico City."[29] Such detachment, however, did not prevent Rufo from receiving the PRI's nomination to one of Guerrero's senatorial seats in 1946. That he had effectively led the FSTSE's enthusiastic support of Miguel Alemán—and forged a friendship with the candidate—was apparently qualification enough to represent the state. While he was duly elected to the seat, family habits died hard: DFS subsequently reported that during the campaign,

[27] AGN, DGIPS C.119 Exp.70, October 11, 1949. "Antecedentes de Rufo Figueroa," Delegado del IPS (JCB).
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.

Rufo had "with pistol in hand, ensured that the vote was respected, leaving several people dead."[30]

The Figueroas were hardly unique in being distant stewards of their family's regional power. Indeed, most of the state's potentates absented themselves from Guerrero—it was simply too dangerous, too downtrodden, and most importantly, too far from the center of power. It is instructive, though hardly surprising, that of the nine precandidates for Guerrero's governorship mentioned in a 1962 DFS report, more than half lived outside the state. As Paul Gillingham has shown, that expatriate network had tremendous sway over the fortunes of the state in the 1940s and 50s.[31] While he may have been a legacy candidate, as senator Rufo apparently dedicated himself to pushing for the construction of dams and other public works in the state, using his Mexico City connections to channel resources into policies that might build a clientele capable of supporting his gubernatorial ambitions. In one case, it appears that Rufo worked with the *cacique* of Huitzuco, Jesús Figueroa (whose familial relationship was unclear) to arrange for the electrification of the town.[32]

By the 1950s Rufo was consistently mentioned as an important player in Guerrero state politics but remained politically tied to the Mexico City bureaucracy. From 1952 until 1964 he served as the sub-director of the bureaucratic pension fund, the ISSSTE, before a one-year stint as CNOP head in 1964-1965. He collected powerful friends, including Adolfo Ruiz Cortines and Miguel Alemán, and served in congress with

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[30] DFS, Versión Pública del Expediente de Rufo Figueroa Figueroa L1 H58, 25 May 1962, "Panorama del Estado de Guerrero."
[31] Gillingham, "Force and Consent."
[32] AGN, P ARC 523.4/349, April 4, 1955, Jesús Figueroa to Ruiz Cortines.

Gustavo Díaz Ordaz and in the senate with Adolfo López Mateos.[33] He enjoyed a sterling reputation by most DFS reports, which described him as "…honest and upright. Well-off financially. Well known and liked in his hometown and in [Guerrero] in general. Esteemed in the national bureaucracy. Long-time militant in the PRI. Considered a discrete and experienced politician."[34] But these credentials were still insufficient to gain what the Figueroas sought. In what appears to have been a consolation prize, in 1965 Rufo was named the PRI candidate for the governorship of Quintana Roo. He would only serve two years of his term, however, felled by a fatal illness at age 62.[35] That Rufo should have failed to achieve the governorship of Guerrero speaks to the perils of absentee careers. Nevertheless, that after 1943 Rufo should have become the standard bearer of the Figueroas' ambitions to rule their home state, suggests the importance of participation in Mexico City party politics to regional careers. Rufo rose faster than Rubén largely because of his political skill, connections, and the power he had as a leader of the bureaucracy.

In truth, the brothers' careers diverged in the early 1940s. While Rufo became a union leader, Rubén became a *camionero*. At some point after his election to congress, Rubén founded the Autotransportes Figueroa cargo trucking company in 1940 with a route running from Mexico City to Acapulco.[36] This was not the random investment it may have appeared: On occasion Rubén had apparently driven a cargo truck owned by

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[33] It is intriguing that DFS agents included notable "*compañeros de Cámara*" as part of their dossiers, suggesting that congress perhaps served as an important place of networking.
[34] DFS, Versión Pública del Expediente de Rufo Figueroa Figueroa L1 H90, "Antecedentes," undated.
[35] In what was perhaps a bit of sentimental politics, Javier Rojo Gómez was appointed to finish Rufo's term.
[36] Though the exact year of the founding is unclear, Figueroa claims that the line was founded in 1940; *Apuntes*, Rubén Figueroa Figueroa, 169. Hereafter *Apuntes*, RFF.

his father in the area of Huitzuco during the 1920s, suggesting the fortunes of his immediate family had turned around, and he had also worked sporadically for the San Angel Inn bus line in Mexico City in those same years.[37] Perhaps as a result of Figueroa's earlier experiences the cargo line flourished, though much of its success seems to have been tied to political connections, as the company received the lucrative postal concession to carry mail from Mexico City to Morelos and Guerrero.[38] In 1951, Rubén also became the president of a struggling intercity bus line running from Mexico City to Nuevo Laredo, Autobuses Blancos "Flecha Roja."[39] A member of the Alianza, that line provided Rubén an entrée into *camionero* politics, although it is unclear how he arrived at the company. According to Figueroa's own account, Díaz Lombardo had intervened to place Figueroa at the head of the line after Figueroa had boasted of his plans to modernize its service.[40] By 1952, Rubén had established new offices for the line in Mexico City, inaugurating them in an event attended by the Alianza's entire executive committee, and he successfully established ties with a U.S.-based line in Laredo—the first such trans-border connecting service.[41]

When the Alianza began to fracture following Díaz Lombardo's loss of power, Figueroa became involved in the group's leadership struggles in March 1954 and headed a slate of candidates opposed to the Contreras-led faction. The city government's

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[37] See *Apuntes*, RFF, 163-164. Other accounts suggest that Figueroa had first purchased trucks to aid in gathering linaloe essential oil from farms, work that he had begun doing with pack animal; *Proceso*, March 23, 1991, "Cacique, monopolista."
[38] *Proceso*, March 23, 1991, "Cacique, monopolista."
[39] It is unclear whether he assumed leadership in 1951 or 1952, but he was certainly a member of the line's leadership in 1951 when he appeared at an Alianza assembly; *El Informador Camionero*, July 1, 1951.
[40] *Apuntes*, RFF, 173. Given that bus lines elected their directorates, Díaz Lombardo would have been able to use any number of techniques to pressure owners on Autobuses Blancos 'Flecha Roja' to vote Figueroa into the presidency.
[41] He remained president of Autobuses Blancos 'Flecha Roja' through the 1970s.

intervention a few months later to install Valdovinos as the Alianza's Secretary General prompted Figueroa to defect from the group and join Martín Ruiz in founding the ACRM in 1955. According to one later account, after Uruchurtu had backed Valdovinos in taking the Alianza offices by force, the rival Ruiz-Contreras-Rodríguez Ruiz committee took refuge in the offices of Autobuses Blancos "Flecha Roja," where Figueroa sheltered and supported their efforts.[42] In the ACRM's first assembly, Figueroa was elected to the organization's second-ranking position. When Alonso Lazcano, the ACRM's first president, died in 1957, Figueroa became the group's president, having risen from novice to leader in six short years.

The Figueroa brothers were not unique figures. Their careers from the 1920s to the 1950s were typical for men of their generation. Indeed, Jacobs describes them as following "classic careers," remarking that their "comeback was possible because they had abandoned the role of autonomous local caciques and learned the rules of the political process of the new Mexico."[43] They moved upward, trading on their family's Revolutionary legacy and establishing political connections to powerful patrons. If their home was Guerrero, their world was Mexico City politics. They cultivated their own clienteles outside of their home state, principally in the capital, using corporatist organizations as an entrée to national politics. Yet effective political networks formed neither naturally nor easily, and required constant maintenance and this emerges clearly through the history of Figueroa's *camarilla camionera*.

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[42] *El Informador Camionero*, February, 1971, "Como nació la Alianza de Camioneros de la República Mexicana."
[43] Jacobs, *Ranchero Revolt*, 137.

## THE MOGUL

What the FSTSE was for Rufo, the ACRM would be for Rubén. The organization allowed Figueroa not only to escape the politically fraught world of Mexico City politics and the tight control Uruchurtu exercised over it, but also to cultivate an increasingly powerful national clientele of truck- and bus-industry entrepreneurs in need of a patron for lobbying the federal government. It is unclear if Figueroa originally set out to make the *camioneros* into a political base. He did not dive into the nasty 1954-1955 leadership struggles, expressing in a letter to Isidoro Rodríguez Ruiz that he could not condone the naked ambitions of aspiring leaders and declaring that he would remain on the sidelines until four conditions were met: the absence of demagogy, industry unity, term limits for leaders and the end of bossism, and the end of clientelistic privileges.[44] These vague principles seem at first to have been authentic, untainted by cynicism, and were largely a rejection of Díaz Lombardo-era Alianza politics. Figueroa did, certainly, have a strongly held vision of the industry, one that was nationalistic and entrepreneurial, based around small owners, and valued a collaborative—if independent—relationship with the government. It is notable that Figueroa never seems to have built an economic empire among the *camioneros* in the way that Díaz Lombardo or Isidoro Rodríguez Ruiz did, and his interests were perhaps more political than financial. He acquired stature as a leader in part because he proved adept at distributing political patronage in the form of policy influence, using his connections to intercede on behalf of the *camioneros*. In the process, he built an impressive network of loyalties.

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[44] AGN, P ARC 437.3/109, Rubén Figueroa Figueroa to Isidoro Rodríguez Ruiz.

Yet constructing the *camarilla camionera* would be a slow process. During the ACRM's first years the organization struggled to project much authority. Some prominent regional *camioneros* who had participated in founding the group in 1955, such as the Hernández Loza clan of Guadalajara, defected to Valdovinos's Alianza a few years later. Figueroa also spent many of the years between 1955 and 1957 deferring to Martín Ruiz whose longstanding prominence in the industry kept him at the forefront of *camionero* politics. When the ACRM convened a national convention in 1957, the number of delegates was only 500, down from 800 in 1955, and when a commission attempted to gain an audience with candidate Adolfo López Mateos they were turned away.[45] This failure to gain traction seems to have pushed Figueroa to pursue a more muscular approach to acquiring political strength. Where he had declined to participate in intra-Alianza feuds in 1954, he actively patronized Isidoro Rodríguez Ruiz's efforts to undercut Valdovinos in 1958, reportedly providing advice and financial assistance as described in Chapter Four. Figueroa appears to have offered Rodríguez Ruiz legal support when permits for his bus line were canceled in the summer of 1958, helping Rodríguez Ruiz retain Octavio Sentiés, a prominent PRI politician and experienced transportation lawyer.[46] There is also reason to believe that Primo F. Reyes, the student leader who protested against Valdovinos in the Chamber of Deputies, may have had ties to the Figueroas, as he was a classmate of Rubén's son at the UNAM law school. At any rate, Reyes later went on to serve as Figueroa's personal secretary.

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[45] DFS, 45-1-57 L3 H108, 14 November 1957.

[46] DFS, VP JVR L1 H144, 29 July 1958. Sentiés had been active in Alianza legal matters since the early 1950s and, according to some accounts, had become Figueroa's trusted ally after winning an important *amparo* to save Figueroa's bus line in the 1940s; David Esteban Rodríguez, *Derecho de sangre: historias familiares de herencia del poder público en México* (México, D.F.: Grijalbo, 2005).

If the struggle against Valdovinos and Uruchurtu helped cement his relationship with Rodríguez Ruiz, events quickly conspired to earn Figueroa the loyalties of many Mexico City *camioneros*. The government's decision to form the Unión de Permisionarios in late 1958 immediately altered the political equation and left new Alianza Secretary General Rodolfo Solís Soto in a weakened position. Predictably, difficulties soon followed. Early in 1959 Pemex announced that it intended to stop producing the variety of gasoline, called Mexolina, that was subsidized for use in urban buses. Despite Alianza petitions, the Unión was unable to reverse Pemex's decision, either because the Unión was ineffective at lobbying or because it was unwilling to challenge an official decision. The second blow came in the fall of 1960 when Alianza leaders learned that Julio Serrano Castro, the president of the Unión, intended to force a legal restructuring of the industry. Serrano Castro ordered the city's bus lines to organize as *sociedades mercantiles* (mercantile societies—a form of variable capital shareholding) in order to facilitate financial transactions in purchasing new vehicles through the Banco Nacional de Transportes.[47] Though Solís Soto's group frantically petitioned President López Mateos, they failed to gain the upper hand and were forced to file a constitutional *amparo* against the decision.

As the conflict intensified, Figueroa stepped in. On November 12, 1960 *camioneros* from across the country gathered at an ACRM convention in Torreon,

[47] The lines were to be constituted as SA de CVs, implying that owners would have held stock in a line rather than the traditional format of voluntary associations where the physical bus constituted a member's share in a line; *Transportes y Turismo*, October, 1960. ACM broadside. The original, organic form of organization in Mexico City's industry had been Civil Societies, built on top of Sindicatos Patronales. Intercity lines, however, were organized as mercantile societies, since the nature of that industry removed bus owners from the day-to-day administration of their property; *Transportes y Turismo*, December, 1960, "Ponencia de Manuel Soto Ponce."

Coahuila. Out of political options, Solís Soto and Carlos Dufoo had brought the Alianza into the ACRM's fold. That afternoon, they sat at the head table with Figueroa as he announced that López Mateos had intervened and "this very morning, an agreement has been signed that will put an end to all the *camioneros'* difficulties."[48] The arrangement, presumably between Uruchurtu, Serrano Castro, and the Alianza, had been brokered by the president and overturned the order for the *camioneros* to form *sociedades mercantiles.* That month, *Transportes y Turismo* lauded Figueroa as the "genuine representative" of all the country's *transportistas*.[49] The following month, the magazine declared that Figueroa's "decisive and definitive intervention had been relevant and significant in supporting the morale of Federal District *camioneros*," praising his "his personal labor" and "dynamism."[50] In coming to the aid of the battered Alianza, Figueroa finally cemented his stature as a national *camionero* leader and ensured the political relevance of the ACRM. Effective intervention on issues such as the 1960 conflict was the fundamental patronage that Figueroa dispensed to *transportista* clients in these years.

Professional alliances also mingled with personal relationships: Solís Soto, Dufoo, and Isidoro Rodríguez Ruiz became Figueroa's collaborators and friends. While soft connections such as loyalties and friendships often defy easy measurement, *camionero* social events provide useful evidence. In 1961, Figueroa, Solís Soto, Dufoo, and Sentíes all attended Rodríguez Ruiz's March 4 Saint's Day celebration, a sumptuous event filled with elaborate toasts and, judging by the stains on the tablecloth, ample

[48] DFS, VP RSS L1 H80-81, 12 November 1960.
[49] *Transportes y Turismo*, November, 1960.
[50] *Transportes y Turismo*, December, 1960.

wine.[51] A few years later, Figueroa and Rodríguez Ruiz together would jet off to Europe for vacation, a committee of 50 Alianza notables gathering at the airport to wish them well.[52] If the traditional model of a *camarilla* suggests a highly vertical structure of loyalty and reciprocity, during the 1960s Figueroa's relationships among the *camioneros* display a great deal of horizontality. Rodríguez Ruiz was undoubtedly a client of Figueroa, but also cultivated connections with other potential patrons, as did Dufoo and, to a lesser extent, Solís Soto. Sentíes was a PRI operator in his own right, having served as a congressman from 1943 to 1946.

Figueroa's greatest advantages were possessing sufficient political acumen and force of personality to consolidate a *camarilla camionera*. Ongoing tensions with the Unión de Permisionarios helped his cause, and Serrano Castro's imposition of Francisco Eli Sigüenza in 1962 encouraged urban *camioneros* to rally to Figueroa and Rodríguez Ruiz's Comité Politico in 1963. That group, which would do so much for Rodríguez Ruiz's career, seems to have been largely of Figueroa's creation, and the attendance of PRI notables at the founding ceremony a testament to his rising political profile. Perhaps even more than Rodríguez Ruiz, Figueroa drove the integration of the *camioneros* into the party structure, and in doing so was able to distribute favors to clients such as positions within the CNOP and access to politicians. The complete leadership of the Comité Político in 1963 was Rodríguez Ruiz, Dufoo, Abelardo Matamoros, Solís Soto,

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[51] *Transportes y Turismo*, January, 1962. In 1963, in an almost unprecedented display of industry unity, Figueroa, Díaz Lombardo, Valdovinos, and Eli Sigüenza all participated in the honor guard at the funeral of one of the Alianza's oldest members; *Transportes y Turismo*, May, 1963.
[52] DFS, VP RFF L1 H66, 22 March 1965.

and José Suárez. The first three would all subsequently hold party positions and Dufoo would be elected to congress.[53]

By 1965, Figueroa had arrived. He had been elected to a congressional seat representing Guerrero in elections the previous year, and was quickly consolidating his control over the *camioneros* through the ACRM.[54] Luis Ortiz Revilla, Eli Sigüenza's successor in the Alianza top post, was an old guard *camionero* and not a Figueroa client, but he quickly cast his lot with the emerging national leader. When the year concluded, Figueroa penned an editorial describing Ortiz Revilla as "a good friend and *compañero*" and acclaiming his "discreet, tenacious, and solid efforts to restore the prestige of the Alianza de Camioneros."[55] During the summer of 1965, the Alianza and ACRM coordinated to resurrect *El Informador Camionero* and to organize a massive national autotransport congress, a display of industry unity rivaled only by the conventions of the Díaz Lombardo years. In orchestrating the reunification of the country's *camionero* organizations, Figueroa acquired new prestige: he was able to attract high-ranking PRI leaders to events and encourage dialogue between the *camioneros* and officials. In May, PRI president Carlos Madrazo attended a private breakfast hosted by Figueroa and Rodríguez Ruiz, and both Madrazo and the president of the CNOP, Renaldo Guzmán Orozco, attended the 1965 Alianza-ACRM convention.[56] In September, Figueroa hosted another *camionero* banquet for party notables, including Guzmán Orozco and PRI

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[53] DFS, 45-1 L7 H211; 213, 14 November 1963.
[54] The timing of Figueroa's consolidation of power suggests that his growing influence was tied to Díaz Ordaz, but there is no concrete evidence from 1965 or 1966 that the President was directly supporting Figueroa.
[55] *El Informador Camionero*, February, 1966.
[56] *El Informador Camionero*, June, 1965.

legislative leader Alfonso Martínez Domínguez.[57] When Lauro Ortega assumed the presidency of the PRI in January 1966, Figueroa and Rodríguez Ruiz led a delegation to congratulate him.[58]

The clearest sign of Figueroa's newfound political strength was the sudden rapprochement between the revitalized Alianza and a defanged Unión de Permisionarios, which no longer appeared to be setting the policy agenda for urban transportation or controlling the *camioneros*' political access. This subtle shift was primarily visible in the extent to which it was Alianza lawyers who addressed the question of the industry's legal structure after 1965, rather than representatives of the Unión de Permisionarios. Less than a decade after its creation, the government had apparently abandoned the Unión, a change likely tied to the warm relationship between Figueroa, Rodríguez Ruiz, and Díaz Ordaz. That Uruchurtu had lost power and would be forced out of the city's regency by 1966 likely contributed to the weakening of the Unión and Alianza's recuperation of power as well. What is clear is that Uruchurtu's decline and fall took the starch out of erstwhile Unión leader Serrano Castro, who quickly reconciled with the group and became a regular fixture at Alianza social events.

The Mexico City Alianza was not the only group to fall under Figueroa's sway, either: many regional groups, from Nayarit to Guanajuato, formed affiliated organizations of the ACRM and often requested Figueroa's intervention in local matters ranging from fare disputes to intra-industry factionalism. In one example, *El Informador Camionero*

[57] *El Informador Camionero*, October, 1965.
[58] *El Informador Camionero*, January, 1966.

published a letter from a *camionero* leader in Guaymas, Sonora thanking Figueroa for resolving a dispute over route invasions there.[59]

These were also times of intense socialization among the *camioneros* as Figueroa continued to cultivate personal loyalties at banquets and ceremonies. The leadership of the Alianza and ACRM organized monthly meals beginning in the spring of 1965. One held May 21 to celebrate Figueroa's designation as Transportation Secretary of the PRI, was typical. Though the appointment had little to do with any concrete improvements in either the lives of average *camioneros* or urban service, it was commemorated in lavish fashion. Dufoo served as master of ceremonies for the dinner, held at Mexico City's Centro Asturiano restaurant and attended by approximately 20 *camioneros*, including Rodríguez Ruiz, Solís Soto, Ortiz Revilla, Carlos Blando López, and other members of the groups' executive committees. In flowery orations, speakers applauded Figueroa's unification of the industry and congratulated him on the nomination. Predictably, photographers for *El Informador Camionero* were on hand to capture the festivities and to document Figueroa "in friendly conversation" with the attendees.[60] Similar events were held for the Saint's Day celebrations of notables—Ortiz Revilla, Rodríguez Ruiz, Figueroa, and Sentiés, among others—and occasionally for no particular reason whatsoever, such as one October banquet in Figueroa's honor held by the president of Mexico City's Colonia Peralvillo-Tlalnepantla line in September of 1965.[61] Other typical events included holiday parties. In December 1968, for example, Figueroa attended a pre-Christmas *posada* held at Rodríguez Ruiz's Rancho El Progreso and another hosted by J.

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[59] *El Informador Camionero*, February, 1966.
[60] *El Informador Camionero*, June, 1965.
[61] *El Informador Camionero*, October, 1965.

Guadalupe López Velarde, president of the intercity Omnibus de México line.[62] At such events, the main event was not the exchange of gifts, but the exchange of personal loyalty.

In these years Figueroa's *camionero* camarilla took shape. At the upper levels, Rodríguez Ruiz and Sentíes were friends and supporters, and as noted before had connections to powerful patrons beyond Figueroa, as well as with their own cliques.[63] More than clients, they were allies. Rodríguez provided an important link to the entrepreneurial world, while Sentíes provided legal guidance as an official advisor to the ACRM.[64] Others were perhaps more beholden to the ACRM's leader. Dufoo was becoming a successful *priísta* operative as head of the Comité Político and during the late 1960s often served as Figueroa's liaison with regional *camionero* groups. It was revealing that Dufoo penned the hagiographic biographical sketch of Figueroa published in the January, 1966 edition of *El Informador Camionero*.[65] A number of other Mexico City-based Alianza members became Figueroa's clients, including Ortiz Revilla, Solís Soto, Abelardo Matamoros, Manuel Soto Ponce, and Héctor Hernández Casanova, who was emerging as a candidate for leadership in the late 1960s. On a national level, the ACRM brought into Figueroa's *camarilla* men such as Enrique Pacheco Larrondo and J. Guadalupe López Velarde, *camionero* leaders from Yucatán and Aguascalientes, respectively.[66] Figueroa also had especially strong ties to *transportistas* in Guerrero,

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[62] *El Informador Camionero*, January, 1969.
[63] Rodríguez Ruiz, for instance, was godfather to one of Solís Soto's daughters; *El Informador Camionero*, September, 1968.
[64] Sentíes also published a regular column in *El Informador Camionero* on legislative and juridical matters.
[65] *El Informador Camionero*, January, 1966.
[66] See Figueroa's attendance at a holiday party thrown by Guadalupe López Velarde and Omnibus de México; *El Informador Camionero*, January, 1969.

Morelos, Jalisco, and Puebla. Because transportation entrepreneurs often played important roles in state politics, particularly through the CNOP—Pacheco Larrondo would serve as a congressman and López Velarde as an alternate senator—Figueroa's connections to *camioneros* across the country were of no small value. Inter-city bus entrepreneurs also aligned with Figueroa, none more so than Eduardo Peynetti and Graciano Angeles Cuevas, whose lines ran through the country's southwest, Figueroa's home turf. All these men benefited from the political protection Figueroa was able to provide their organizations and from his ability to negotiate the resolution of problematic policies.[67] He, in turn, would benefit from their allegiance and resources as he increasingly flexed his political muscles on the national stage.

Part and parcel of *camarilla* formation appeared to be the interlinking of financial interests, and in the late 1960s Figueroa launched an entrepreneurial venture that would serve both personal and political ends.[68] Mexicorama, as the new company was called, sought to capitalize on a growing tourist market in Mexico City around the 1968 Olympic Games by offering sightseeing trips on specially outfitted buses. The enterprise was likely a rebranding of a business that Rodríguez Ruiz had founded in March of 1966, called Panoramas de México. By October to Mexicorama, the name had changed and its offices were set up in the ACRM's headquarters in Mexico City.[69] Figueroa was predictably Mexicorama's first president, and its board of directors included Rodríguez

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[67] In 1966, for example, Figueroa intervened to mediate Pemex's decision to stop selling liquefied butane gas to *transportistas*, though the fuel was popular for its low price.
[68] Although Figueroa had established his entrepreneurial credentials with the success and growth of Autobuses Blancos 'Flecha Roja' and Autotransportes Figueroa, both flourishing by the late 1960s, neither venture offered ties to prominent *camioneros* in his social network.
[69] *El Informador Camionero*, March, 1966; *El Informador Camionero*, October, 1966.

Ruiz, Ortiz Revilla, Soto Ponce, Solís Soto, and Enrique Aguirre Harris, a longtime *camionero* journalist and the editor of *El Informador Camionero*.[70] Other *camioneros* were invited to purchase stock in the company, which did not operate under the owner-driver model of standard bus lines, but rather was a corporation with shareholders.

When Mexicorama inaugurated its service in July of 1968 in a ceremony attended by new Mexico City regent Alfonso Corona del Rosal, it offered six tour circuits on comfortable, air-conditioned vehicles with headphones providing commentary in English, French, Italian, Portuguese, Japanese, and Spanish. In tourism, Figueroa's interests aligned with those of the government, which was increasingly concerned with ensuring the quality of tourist services and projecting a favorable international image. That partnership was perhaps most eloquently illustrated when, alongside Figueroa, Interior Minister Luis Echeverría inspected the Mexicorama fleet in August of 1968.[71] The blossoming friendship between the two men was in no small part based on a shared commitment to the development of Mexican tourism.[72] During these years, Figueroa moved himself and the *camioneros* into the good graces and the political network of the second most powerful politician in the country.

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[70] Rodríguez's business interests, including his automotive distribution agencies, also worked to inter-link the financial interests of *camarilla* members. Intriguingly, in 1967 Figueroa was made a councilor on the board of Rodríguez's FIASA holding company. Other ventures, such as bus terminal construction projects, also sold shares to *camioneros* and served to foster group cohesion through financial integration.

[71] *El Informador Camionero*, August, 1968.

[72] To wit, when Echeverría hosted a round-table meeting on tourism early in his presidential campaign, Figueroa and Sentíes were among the several *transportista* speakers; *El Informador Camionero*, December, 1969.

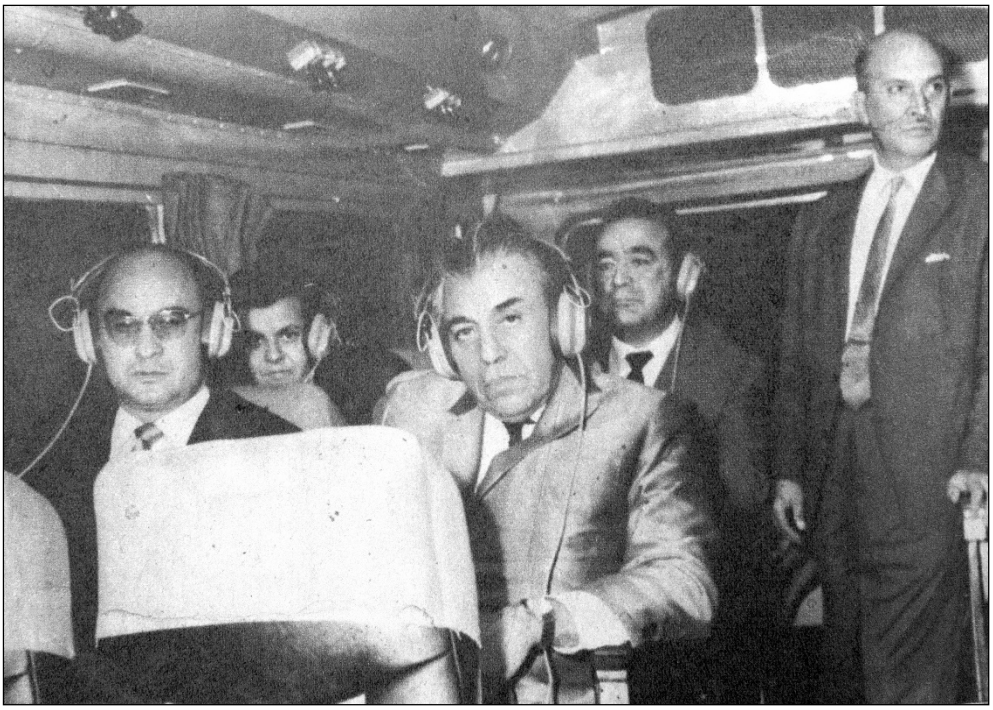

**Figure 14:** Rubén Figueroa and Luis Echeverría inaugurate Mexicorama's tourist bus service. *El Informador Camionero*, August, 1968.

In the fall of 1969, after Echeverría received the PRI's official presidential nomination, Figueroa threw the entire weight of the Alianza and ACRM behind him in an impressive display of personal and organizational strength. Once again, Dufoo swung into action with the Comité Político, trailing the candidate around the country with a bus filled with a *camionero* cheering section and countless ACRM banners. When the candidate arrived in Mexico City, the Alianza erected triumphal arcs proclaiming *"Arriba y adelante,"* "onwards and upwards," Echeverría's slogan.[73] In March 1970, Figueroa hosted Echeverría at a working breakfast with transportation industry leaders in Acapulco. Shortly thereafter, Figueroa was named candidate for senator from Guerrero. As Echeverría undertook a campaign marathon, a 30,000 mile effort that touched every

[73] *El Informador Camionero*, December, 1969; *Transportes y Turismo*, April, 1970.

state in the nation, he counted on the *camioneros*' assistance. The extent and significance of that support cannot be understated, as it surpassed even that of the 1945-46 campaign of Miguel Alemán. If Díaz Lombardo's marshalling of the Alianza behind Alemán allowed him access to the halls of power, Figueroa's success in mobilizing a national network of *camioneros* similarly ensured his ascent to the national political stage. As he would later remark, although he had been a congressman before, "the Senate seat I owed to the Alianza and the intervention of the *gremio* in Echeverría's campaign."[74]

Figueroa's political good fortune was a boon for the *camioneros* generally, and for members of his *camarilla* in particular. Sentíes was elected to congress from Mexico City's fourth district in 1970, but he would serve less than half of the term, since when Alfonso Martínez Domínguez resigned the regency of the city in 1971, Echeverría named Sentíes to replace him. It was a stroke of political fortune for Figueroa, who secured his control of Mexico City's *camioneros*, as Sentíes appointed his son, Rubén Figueroa Alcocer, an advisor on transportation policy and that same year Figueroa's ally, Héctor Hernández Casanova, assumed the presidency of the Alianza.[75] It was an exceptional victory for the Alianza, which had long disagreed with city government on transportation policy and could now hope for better days ahead.

Over the following years the urban bus transportation industry underwent profound changes that were, on the whole, positive. The legal restructuring of the

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[74] *Apuntes*, RFF, 165. The statement is intriguing precisely because Figueroa does not attribute most of his political successes to his position in the Alianza, but specifically the senate seat, suggesting his assessment was more than just a platitudinous nod to his corporatist clientele.

[75] HHC AP "We cannot ignore or forget that behind the warm relations with the president and regent was *Ingeniero* Figueroa Figueroa and of course his son Rubén Figueroa Alcocer, who regardless of his youth had ample experience in political battles, both through his father and through all he learned from his uncle Ruffo."

industry—the dream of every regent since Uruchurtu—was now possible under Sentíes, as the old anarchic system of lines was transformed into twenty mercantile societies. Simultaneously, the city's vehicle stock also underwent a dramatic round of upgrading, as the government subsidized the implementation of Alianza-designed diesel vehicles.[76] The subsidy for diesel fuel was also increased in 1974.[77] In 1973, fares increased by 66 percent on second-class buses and by 100 percent on newer first-class buses, and two days before his term was to end in 1976, Sentíes authorized another fare increase. Hernández Casanova's annual report in 1974 is illustrative of the optimism reigning in the industry during these years:

> It is worth special mention the liberty that we have been granted by the government to adjust the prices of new vehicles without outside intervention, the ease with which we have been able to set the routes of the new buses, the ease of establishing new short routes…and freedom we have obtained to design our own buses… It is clear, however, that the Executive committee could have not achieved this alone. It is here where our good fortune appears in the person of Rubén Figueroa, who has not only concerned himself with plans and programs, but also in key moments used his political position to achieve the progress of the industry…[78]

This influence over Mexico City's transportation policy proved vital for Figueroa, however, as his grip on his national *camarilla camionera* weakened significantly following his 1975 split from Rodríguez Ruiz. Paradoxically, perhaps, that defeat occurred at the same moment that Figueroa's political star reached its apogee with the realization of his long-held dream: the governorship of Guerrero.

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[76] The "Delfines" and "Ballenas" were specially designed by the Alianza's leadership to meet the needs of urban transport—a contrast to the officially ordered vehicles in the 1950s. Figueroa played a large role in the process, helping negotiate with the parastatal Diesel Nacional (DINA) assembly plant.
[77] *El Informador Camionero*, March, 1974.
[78] Ibid. "Informe de Héctor Hernández Casanova."

## THE CACIQUE

Figueroa did not arrive at the governorship by accident. Rather, during the many years he spent building his *camarilla camionera*, he also established an overlapping network of *transportistas*, politicians, and relatives in Guerrero during the mid-1960s and early 1970s. Over time, he came to wield increasing political and economic influence in the state. Such was Figueroa's reputation that by the time he was nominated for the governorship, opponents would already label him "the foremost *cacique* in the state."[79] Suggesting an abusive political and social omnipotence, the label certainly seemed to apply in some respects. But Figueroa was a distant *cacique*, his power exercised through proxies and his influence through intermediaries. He could shape the fortunes of Guerrero and its people because his network allowed him to hit the state's political pressure points.

The Revolution had left the Figueroa family with a powerful legacy in Guerrero, particularly in the hot lowlands around Iguala known as the *tierra caliente*. Even as Rufo and Rubén built their careers in Mexico City, they retained ties to prominent players in state politics. No small part of this was owed to the family's sheer size and strategic intermarriages. There was, however, no predictable career path for relatives. Rubén's nephew, Febronio Díaz Figueroa, left his hometown near Huitzuco and followed his uncle to Mexico City where he obtained a degree in economics from the UNAM in 1965 and subsequently taught courses in Marxism at the university.[80] It seems he followed the path of a populist-leftist intellectual, dabbling in radical ideology but ultimately

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[79] DFS, 100-10-1 L47 H164-166, 12 June 1974. *Cacique*, originally an Arawak word indiscriminately applied by Spanish colonizers to identify indigenous leaders, by the twentieth-century had come to suggest local leadership of a coercive variety and was widely used in a pejorative sense.
[80] *Proceso*, May 12, 1979, "El alcalde Díaz Figueroa."

moderating his views and pursuing political ambitions.[81] He moved into Rubén's orbit, serving as an ACRM advisor, and returned to Guerrero in the 1970s when his uncle gained power there. Others remained in the state, typically in the *tierra caliente*, where they often acted as local powerbrokers. In the family's ancestral hometown of Huitzuco de los Figueroa, Jesús Figueroa Alcocer remained the town's petty *cacique* well into the late 1960s and possibly beyond.[82] He was Rómulo Figueroa's son, and his name suggested deep kinship ties: Rubén's wife was Lucía Alcocer.[83]

Another relative would play perhaps an even more active role in the state's politics and eventually became Rubén's connection to several key sectors. Victorico López Figueroa, son of Isabela Figueroa Marbán, remained in the *tierra caliente* region around Iguala where he became a teacher and subsequently a leader in the teachers' union during the 1940s. He was an unsympathetic leader, however, and was accused of killing a fellow teacher. In 1946 only two percent of the state's teachers reportedly supported his bid for a seat in the state congress.[84] He won the election anyway. By 1960, López Figueroa was head of police in Iguala and was reportedly rather effective in suppressing the growing political protest movement led by Genáro Vázquez, himself a teacher.[85] Three years later, he became head of the local PRI, his reputation for overweening

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[81] He seems to have had a similar personality to Luis Echeverría, with whom he was friends.
[82] DFS, 100-10-1 L7 H249, 27 May 1960; AGN, DGIPS C.1981 Exp.26, 12 December 1965; *El Informador Camionero*, March, 1968.
[83] Jacobs, *Ranchero Revolt*, 137.
[84] *Tiempo*, November 22, 1946.
[85] DFS, Versión Pública del Expediente de Victorico López Figueroa L1 H38, 2 January 1964. Hereafter DFS, VP VLF. The history of Vázquez and the protest movement, known as the Asociación Cívica Guerrerense is discussed in Alex Aviña's work, "Insurgent Guerrero"

political ambition clearly evident.[86] He was involved with both the conservative Liga de Comunidades Agrarias and the state chapter of the CNC, and was himself a rancher owning various properties around his hometown of Tepecoacuilco. López Figueroa was also the president and major stakeholder in the Autobuses 'Estrella Roja del Sur' bus line running on the Mexico-Iguala-Acapulco route. Naturally, Estrella Roja del Sur and López Figueroa were members of Rubén Figueroa's ACRM, and López Figueroa served as Rubén's emissary to many of the state's transport industry leaders.

Transportation became something of a family business not only because it provided a steady source of low-effort income, but also because it offered control on various levels. Of particular importance was the ability to deny or restrict mobility. This was true both nationally and locally. In February 1968, protesting students had rented buses from a small local line in Guanajuato, and as the DFS reported, "although the line was outside the control of the Alianza, nevertheless Rubén Figueroa plans to intervene to prevent any line from renting to the students."[87] In Guerrero, the Figueroas' ability to restrict access to transportation, whether to political opponents seeking to rally supporters or to dissident groups, of which there were many, was a boon. Likewise, raising rates or limiting cargo transport could be used to control rural producers who needed to move products to market.[88] In 1967, the CNC sponsored the formation of a peasant

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[86] DFS, VP VLF L1 H43, undated "Antecedentes." Not only was López Figueroa a relative of Rufo and Rubén, but also a friend of Donato Miranda Fonseca, a prominent *guerrerense* politician and personal secretary to Adolfo López Mateos; DFS, VP VLF L1 H38, 2 January 1964.

[87] DFS, RFF VP L1 H146-147, 3 February 1968.

[88] It is somewhat unclear, beyond rumors and suspicions, whether such coercive control of peasants' access to transportation was common or not. It seems, from the history, to have been possibly in theory, but difficult in practice. After the 1950s, unlicensed transportation flourished, and a description of cargo transport in the state in 1972 painted a rather messy picture—Figueroa clearly didn't have strong control over low-level transportation at this point; DFS, 100-10-1 L1 H298, 21 June 1972. If Figueroa did attempt to control peasants by controlling their transportation, I have no evidence for it.

transportation union, noting that the effort "attempts to lower the cost of transport, which is monopolized by the ACRM under Rubén Figueroa, and which gives rise to the exploitation of *campesinos* since scammers and intermediaries hamper the possibility of transportation."[89] Figueroa's own freight line, connecting Acapulco and Mexico City, certainly controlled a large portion of the traffic on that vitally important commercial route, as well as offering the most efficient postal service.[90] Nevertheless, transport in the state remained highly fragmented, rife with unlicensed, unregulated "pirate" trucks, local small bus and freight companies, and a powerful group of taxi owners working in Acapulco's tourist market.

Crucial to Figueroa's attempt to control transport in Guerrero was an effort to gain control over the state's fragmented *camionero* and *taxista* organizations. To that end, Figueroa attempted to bolster the Alianza de Camioneros del Sur (ACS), a group founded in Acapulco in 1961. Although the group originally had no affiliation with Figueroa, he presided over its assembly in November 1967 to push for the unification of the state's *transportistas*.[91] Rodríguez Ruiz and Figueroa's son were also in attendance, suggesting that the *camionero* network as a whole was involved in the effort. At an assembly the following spring, 1,500 *guerrerense transportistas* met to reorganize the ACS and elect new leadership. They also voted to affiliate with the ACRM. The man chosen to lead the organization, Jesús Hernández García, also led the group representing Acapulco's *taxistas*, the Organizaciones Unidas de Autos de Alquiler (Organizaciones Unidas), and

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[89] DFS, VP RFF L1 H131, 4 May 1967. The awkwardness of the language is still worse in the original.
[90] See *Ultimas Noticias*, February 3, 1977, clipped in AGN, DGIPS C.1934B Exp.3.
[91] DFS, VP RFF L1 H133-134, 9 November 1967. Curiously, Figueroa's involvement in Guerrero's transport industry seems largely oriented around cargo transportation and taxi owners and drivers in Acapulco. Hence, I prefer the broader term "*transportista*" to the more narrow "*camionero*" here.

had a long-standing feud with state authorities over operating permits issued to car rental agencies that he claimed intruded on the exclusive rights of *taxistas* to transport tourists.[92] Over the following years, Figueroa took an increasing interest in the struggles of Acapulco's *transportistas*, showing particular concern for the taxi owners struggling against the legally irregular rental car concessions.[93] In April, Figueroa organized a meeting between the governor and the *transportistas*, and during a strike in July an DGIPS report noted that Figueroa was advising the Hernández García-led *taxistas* in their protests.[94] When *camioneros* and *taxistas* from across the state issued a broadside in the Mexico City newspaper *Excelsior* attacking Governor Raymundo Abarca Alarcón in 1969 over his administration's transportation concession policies, DFS reported that Figueroa was behind the publication.[95]

By the early 1970s, his leverage bolstered by his place in the Senate, Figueroa became something of a powerbroker in Acapulco transport. In cultivating Hernández García and becoming the patron of Acapulco's besieged *transportistas*, Figueroa showed his political craftiness: he now controlled a group whose protests could create serious political difficulties in the state's most important city. In 1971, when internal disputes threatened Hernández Garcías's control over the *taxistas*, Figueroa intervened to keep his client at the head of Organizaciones Unidas, sending Isidoro Rodríguez Ruiz and

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[92] Hernández García did not appear to have a prior connection to Figueroa, however. In July 1967 he had attempted and failed to enlist Victorico López Figueroa, then a local congressman, to serve as an emissary to Rubén; DFS, Versión Pública del Expediente de Jesús Hernández Garcia L1 H5, 4 March 1967. Hereafter DFS, VP JHG.
[93] He also intervened in problems with pirate transporters of construction materials, but by far the biggest issue in Guerrero's transportation industry was that of tourist taxi and rental car concessions in Acapulco.
[94] DFS, VP JHG L1 H39, 19 April 1968; AGN, DGIPS C.1488B Exp.5, 2 July 1968.
[95] DFS, VP RFF L1 H153, 6 March 1959.

Abelardo Matamoros to oversee the group's assembly.[96] A few months later, as local elections approached, the ACS and Organizaciones Unidas published a broadside attacking the state's transit director over rumored legal changes to operating concessions. A DGIPS report noted that the "veiled threats" in the letter "in reality can be considered the first demonstrations of Rubén Figueroa's group, which aspires to place…Jesús Hernández [García] in the state congress," noting that Hernández García was "characterized by his involvement in the innumerable problems that the industry has created for diverse authorities."[97] Moreover, the report observed, the state's Transit Director had never been popular with the *transportistas*, who now aspired to replace him with Acapulco's transit officer (*delegado de transito*), José Ríos Larios. Ríos Larios also happened to be married to Figueroa's niece and was thus his "political nephew."[98] A year later, a DFS agent reported that the politicking had not abated, with Ríos Larios, who allegedly received instructions from Figueroa by telephone, using the cynical tactic of issuing irregular permits for cargo transportation to provoke numerous conflicts among *transportistas* in Acapulco.[99] Such conflict inevitably undermined the governability of the state and persistently undercut the administration of governor Israel Nogueda Otero.[100] This unrest was the product, the agent noted, of the struggle for position in the

[96] AGN, DGIPS C.1488B Exp.5, 14 August 1971.
[97] AGN, DGIPS C.1488B Exp5, 9 September 1971.
[98] Ibid; DFS, 100-10-1 L40 H55, 26 May 1972.
[99] DFS, 100-10-1 L40 H55, 26 May 1972; DFS, 100-10-1 L40 H133, 27 June 1972.
[100] Nogueda Otero was from the coast, and no friend of the Figueroas. He had come into office after Caritino Maldonado, an ally of the Figueroas, was killed in a plane crash in April 1971. Thanks partially to Figueroa's machinations, Nogueda Otero would be forced from office only months before his term was to conclude.

run-up to the 1975 state elections, in which Figueroa had assured followers he would win the governorship.[101]

During these same years, Figueroa's political capital in Guerrero grew as a result of his activities in the federal Senate. In 1970, Echeverría designated him head of the Rio Balsas Commission (CRB), a legislative body concerned with public works in the Balsas river watershed.[102] The commission had been created in 1960 to develop the hydrological resources of the Balsas drainage, which ran through parts of Mexico State, Puebla, Guerrero, and Michoacan. The CRB was responsible for several major dams on the river that reduced flooding and produced hydroelectric power, particularly the Infernillo dam near the end of the Balsas on the border between Guerrero and Michoacán. Lázaro Cárdenas had been the first president of the Commission, but Figueroa was hardly a random pick to succeed the famous former president, as he had, after all, studied hydrological engineering at UNAM. The Commission's broad mandate included not only hydroelectric dam projects, but involvement in rural road construction, agro-industrial promotion, flood mitigation, tourist development, and social projects such as schools.[103] At the CRB, Figueroa channeled his energy into encouraging fruit cultivation on *ejidos* and improving the management of forest resources.[104]

Heading the Balsas Commission meant more than simple prestige, however. As the CRB's chairman, Figueroa controlled substantial government resources that could be

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[101] DFS, 100-10-1 L40 H133, 27 June 1972.
[102] The benefits of the designation could hardly have been lost on Echeverría, who, in tapping Figueroa, gave his friend the perfect platform from which to reach for the governorship.
[103] Gutiérrez Galindo, *Rubén Figueroa*, 133.
[104] Ibid, 134-135. Figueroa also pushed through the construction of a ring road around Iguala that required negotiation for *ejidal* land.

used to cultivate *campesino* clienteles throughout Guerrero. Significantly, because the river and its tributaries ran near Huitzuco and Iguala, he was also able to reinforce his authority there. Since the CRB served as a clearinghouse for everything from agricultural credit to charitably donated candy to irrigation and road projects, Figueroa had a ready source of patronage that could be extended or withdrawn as his political ambitions required.[105] For example, in 1974 Figueroa inaugurated a dam and irrigation system in the *tierra caliente* near Ciudad Altamirano, Guerrero that reportedly allowed 62,000 hectares to be planted twice per year, dramatically increasing the productive potential of the land as well as the diversity of crops there.[106] The works benefited nearly 21,000 people, 40 percent of whom were small-holders, while the rest were *ejidatarios.* The dam also happened to be named after Rubén's illustrious relative, Andrés Figueroa. If such projects did not always produce local benefits—residents of one area reported that Figueroa's forest agency paid low rates for timber and simply resold it in Mexico City for huge profits—Figueroa did establish himself as an important rural patron.[107]

The endgame of all this was clear. Primo F. Reyes, erstwhile congressional protestor, Figueroa's former personal secretary, had become the delegate from the Department of Agrarian and Colonization Affairs to Guerrero and used the position to support Figueroa's ambitions. A DGIPS report in summer 1973 noted that Reyes had been so successful in resolving agrarian grievances that it was creating friction with the Nogueda Otero government and undercutting typical channels for addressing

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[105] Ibid, 147.
[106] *Excelsior*, May 18, 1974, clipped in AGN, DGIPS C.1934C Exp.2.
[107] AGN, DGIPS C.1934C Exp.2, 13 May 1974.

*campesinos*' problems.[108] By the end of the year, another DGIPS agent remarked that Reyes was coordinating efforts to ensure that all the state's *campesinos* supported Figueroa, so that when the PRI began investigating the popularity of potential candidates for governor—the famous process of *auscultación*—it would be clear that Figueroa had the backing of the rural sector.[109] He certainly gained the support of certain local politicians, such as Herón Varela, the local CNC's secretary of hydraulic resources and irrigation.[110]

If such maneuvering was an intrinsic part of Mexican regional politics, some of the finest displays were to be found in Guerrero. The state's deserved reputation for ungovernability—Guerrero *bronco*—and its tendency to buck unfamiliar or unsteady governors helps explain Figueroa's efforts to strengthen his political hand well before the pre-campaign began. Although the formalized *auscultación* occurred only in the months immediately preceding the party's designation of candidates, DGIPS agents maintained running tally sheets of regional influence, and presidents and PRI leaders were well aware who held sway in any given state. In a very real sense, however, both this constant monitoring and the periodic *auscultación* were exercises in calculated delusion. DGIPS agents seem to have had little means for ascertaining the actual popularity of pre-candidates, often relying openly upon local journalists or other equally partial informants when they did not simply report pure rumor. Party delegates carrying out the

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[108] AGN, DGIPS C.1934C Exp2, 13 June 1973.
[109] AGN, DGIPS C.1934C Exp2, 21 December 1973. For more on *auscultación,* see Paul Gillingham, "'We Don't Have Arms, but We Do Have Balls': Fraud, Violence and Popular Agency in Elections," in *Dictablanda*, eds. Gillingham and Smith.
[110] AGN, DGIPS C.1934C Exp.2, 28 February 1974; DFS, Versión Pública del Expediente de Israel Nogueda Otero L1 (IPS) H307, sin fecha. Hereafter DFS, VP INO.

*auscultación* spoke with local leaders and perhaps had a better sense for grassroots opinion, but the process was on whole an easily manipulated paternalistic simulacrum of democracy.[111] Diodoro Rivera Uribe, the PRI delegate in Acapulco in 1974, also happened to be the head of the Unión de Permisionarios and an ally of Figueroa.[112] If these various physicians of authoritarianism could not realistically take the temperature of an electorate—since the absence of effective franchise meant that one did not exist—what they could determine was the muscle of political actors as measured in *acarreados.*

Agents were well aware of their unreliable diagnostics, remarking on rare occasions that crowds had turned out "spontaneously, without the customary *acarreo*," but more frequently simply noting the size of a rally, which they easily equated with the strength, the "*fuerza*" of its organizer.[113] And if *acarreo* was the norm across time and space in *priísta* Mexico, in Guerrero's rough and tumble political world it was particularly rampant. In one revealing account, an DGIPS agent complained that in order to "present a massive attendance" for Echeverría's 1971 visit to Tixtla, residents of nearly every nearby town were trucked in. The agent declared that "those *acarreados* not only cause the familiar fights and jealousy between the different local sectors of the party, but have also provoked various unfavorable commentaries regarding the inability of the state government to overcome the antiquated and negative system of pointless *acarreo*."[114] But

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[111] One of the PRI's delegates to Guerrero in 1974 was Diodoro Rivera Uribe
[112] Rivera Uribe had replaced Serrano Castro by 1971. On another occasion, in 1970 Figueroa nearly came to blows with another PRI delegate, effectively intimidating the man charged with monitoring the campaign for senator; AGN, DGIPS C.1488A Exp.4, 23 June 1970.
[113] AGN, DGIPS C.1701B Exp.5, 15 August 1973; DFS, 100-10-1 L43 H53-54, 22 June 1973; AGN, DGIPS C.1488A Exp.4, 6 October 1974.
[114] AGN, DGIPS C.1488A Exp.4, 22 September 1971.

even if the flaws were obvious, there was little incentive for change, particularly when the underlying calculus valued power over popularity.

In this context, Figueroa's maneuvers over the preceding years were aimed at ensuring that by 1974 he could demonstrate impressive "political strength." He commanded a certain degree of loyalty from many *campesino* groups, controlled the state's *transportistas*, and had countless clients among aspiring local politicians. One DGIPS report on presumptive aspirants for the governorship in 1974 noted that nearly every political force in the state had allied with Figueroa, some explicitly in exchange for future positions.[115] That list of supporters included Hernández Garcia and Rios Larios, and CNC leader and local congressional candidate Herón Varela, who had backed Rufo's aspirations to the governorship in 1962.[116] Also aligning with Figueroa were popular Acapulco politician Virgilio Gómez Moharro, and the state's other senator, Vicente Fuentes Díaz.[117] Clientelistic links served as tentacles of local control. In one instance during the late 1970s, Varela apparently gathered 2,500 *campesinos* for a political demonstration.[118] Figueroa could thus rally supporters at will, launching an aggressive pre-campaign that included transporting 6,000 *guerrerenses* on Hernández García's buses to the PRI's offices in Mexico City for his official designation as candidate on May 14, 1974.[119] Moreover, he had successfully weakened the authority of the Nogueda Otero

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[115] AGN, DGIPS C.1934C Exp.2, 28 February 1974.
[116] DFS, Versión Pública del Expediente de Rufo Figueroa L1 H40, 11 January 1962.
[117] AGN, DGIPS C.1934C Exp.2, 28 February 1974. Varela also had served as Acapulco's transit official in the early 1970s and was, intriguingly, the local CNC's secretary of hydraulic resources and irrigation, suggesting a connection to Figueroa's CRB.
[118] DFS, 100-10-1 L77 H107, sin fecha.
[119] Newspaper reports on the event varied, some wildly suggesting 45,000 people were present, others a more modest—but still unrealistic—20,000. The official press release put the attendance at 15,00. Newspapers were likely paid to inflate the numbers, adding another layer to the *acarreo*. The 6,000 number comes from an IPS report on the event; AGN, DGIPS C.1934C Exp.2, 14 May 1974.

administration, ensuring that he appeared to be the only candidate with sufficient political capital to govern the troublesome state. Scant months before his term was to end, Nogueda Otero impeached by the national congress after charges of defrauding *campesinos* in an Acapulco land deal became public.[120] If Figueroa's steamroller drive to the governorship was a display of raw political power, it was only possible because of his friendship with Echeverría. That relationship had not only placed him in the Senate and the CRB, but also protected Figueroa from the party's possible censure for overreaching naked ambition—he would not be cut down to size.

Figueroa's nomination did nothing to calm the discontent bubbling in Guerrero. The civic movement that had begun in the 1960s had grown by the early 1970s into a full-fledged guerrilla insurgency questioning the legitimacy of the entire PRI regime.[121] Figueroa was nothing if not an avatar of that authoritarian system. Early in his campaign he had promised to meet with the leader of the guerrillas, Lucio Cabañas, to discuss an end to the conflict. On May 30, 1974, along with Febronio Díaz and four others, Figueroa traveled into the mountains of Guerrero to meet Cabañas.[122] It was a bold, even bizarre decision fueled by machismo and an unflinching belief in his own powers of persuasion. That Cabañas' worldview was so radically different from his own that dialogue would

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[120] The official process of congressional impeachment was known as *desaparición de poderes*, however in this case Figueroa—by that point governor-elect—had apparently employed extra-constitutional maneuvers to remove Nogueda Otero at Echeverría's request. An account of the scandal can be found in *Proceso* March 23, 1991, "Cacique, monopolista." The details of the charges against Nogueda Otero can be found in AGN, DGIPS C.1701B Exp5, "Boletin de Prensa."

[121] The history of Genaro Vázquez, Lucio Cabañas, and the Asociación Cívica Guerrerense has been ably recounted elsewhere, along with sharp analyses of the dirty war both before and after Figueroa's governorship. Alex Aviña, "Insurgent Guerrero"

[122] Figueroa apparently thought that Díaz Figueroa's Marxist training would allow him to communicate with Cabañas; *Proceso*, November 28, 1992, "La investigación de la CNDH, 'hasta illegal, no llegó a fondo.'"

prove impossible apparently never crossed Figueroa's mind. When the group arrived at the meeting place, Cabañas, at the head of an armed squad, promptly kidnapped the candidate.[123] Figueroa would spend three difficult months in captivity, while the PRI carried out a remarkable in-absentia campaign on behalf of the missing candidate, whose whereabouts were unknown. After he was finally freed in a military operation in early September, Figueroa was duly elected governor of Guerrero the following year.[124]

**THE GOVERNOR**

When he took office in 1975 at age 67, Figueroa reached the pinnacle of his political career, realizing his family's fifty-year aspirations of returning to reign supreme in Guerrero. When a French documentary film crew visited him in 1981, their cameras captured a man waxing fat on his own power, truly "*el Señor Gobernador*."[125] During his term, he rewarded his clients with prestigious new posts, expanded his own financial interests in the tourism industry, and attempted forcefully to pacify the unquiet state. Yet the governorship, paradoxically, also marked the beginning of his decline. After 1975, Figueroa struggled to retain control of the *camarilla* he had so assiduously constructed during the previous two decades. His national influence began to wane as external forces limited his ability to shape transportation policy, and his administration proved unable to overcome Guerrero's chronic political infighting. In the French documentary's almost

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[123] Political kidnappings, it must be noted, were an increasingly common tactic of leftwing rebel groups during these years. Figueroa's however, was unique in that he practically kidnapped himself by agreeing to meet Cabañas under those circumstances.

[124] Many aspects of the kidnapping story are murky and it is unclear exactly what happened. Figueroa, who was certainly prone to embellishment, later described running through a hail of bullets to freedom during the rescue. The whole episode, Figueroa's decision to meet Cabañas, the kidnapping and rescue, and the PRI's campaign without a candidate, was one of the more bizarre moments of Mexican political life.

[125] The motivations for the documentary are unclear, though Figueroa certainly was an entertaining character; *Un Voyage au Mexique: El Señor Gobernador!*, prod. and dir. Jean-Émile Jeannesson, 1981.

poignant depiction, he appears the last of a dying breed, the paternalistic PRI *cacique* whose time was coming to an end.

The first indication that the governorship could have unforeseen consequences came shortly after Figueroa received the nomination. It was rumored that Echeverría's powerful Interior Minister, Mario Moya Palencia, was attempting to maneuver Figueroa out of the ACRM by giving him the governorship.[126] Whether or not that was wild speculation, the fundamental prediction came true a year later when Figueroa lost control of the ACRM following the rupture with Isidoro Rodríguez discussed in Chapter Four. As previously noted, Figueroa's willingness to engage in such a destructive struggle over the organization suggested the immense value he placed on his *camarilla camionera.* Nevertheless, after 1975 the industry unity that Figueroa had forged a decade earlier fractured spectacularly, and the disputed ACRM quickly ceased to be a meaningful organization by 1976. Apart from Graciano Angeles Cuevas and Eduardo Peynetti, whose lines ran through Guerrero, Figueroa lost most of the national *camioneros* to Rodríguez and Dufoo. That Rodríguez had close ties with José López Portillo, who was elected president in 1976, further weakened Figueroa's national influence. López Portillo favored Rodríguez's CNTC, and launched a major transportation development program that consulted closely with the CNTC but completely cut Figueroa out of the process.[127]

Figueroa was bruised but yet not bested. His clients in Mexico City remained loyal, and the Alianza under Héctor Hernández Casanova retained close ties with the governor—in 1974 the Executive committee had renamed the assembly hall at the

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[126] DFS, VP RFF L4 H232-248, 23 July 1984, "Antecedentes."
[127] AGN, P, JLP 1876, "Programa de Desarrollo de Autotransporte Federal, 1977-1982."

group's offices after Figueroa.[128] The Alianza's executive committee in 1977, including Hernández Casanova, Solís Soto, and Abelardo Matamoros was wholly *figueroaista.* In 1976 Figueroa helped Hernández Casanova win election to congress from Mexico City's seventeenth district, and attended the Alianza's 1977 meeting with López Portillo, continuing to advocate on the group's behalf during the following years. But Figueroa's ability to sustain dual bases in Guerrero and Mexico City was slipping. It hardly helped that the city's regent after 1976, Carlos Hank González, was a friend of neither the Alianza nor Figueroa. After 1976 the *camioneros* struggled, often in vain, against unfavorable policy on fares and route restrictions, and in 1981 Hank González declared the Federal District government's municipal takeover of urban transport services, effectively dissolving the Alianza. In that final moment, Figueroa stood as both the group's last patron and a witness to its demise, his lack of influence with López Portillo on open display.[129]

In Guerrero, Figueroa's fortunes fared better. He was able immediately to reward those who had supported him, appointing Victorico López Figueroa to the state transit agency and eventually naming Febronio Díaz Figueroa mayor of Acapulco.[130] He named one nephew, Jacinto Castrejón Figueroa, a police commander in Acapulco despite Castrejón's total lack of police training.[131] He supported Hernández García's power grabs in Acapulco's taxi industry, reportedly allowing the police to provide Hernández García

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[128] *El Informador Camionero*, September, 1974.
[129] He never reconciled with Hank González, though he remained on good terms with López Portillo. Both would attend his funeral in 1991; *Proceso* March 23, 1991, "Cacique, monopolista."
[130] Figueroa had broken with Primo Reyes, however, and it is unclear if Ríos Larios received a new post under Figueroa's administration. Febronio Díaz Figueroa would reportedly leave Acapulco 157 million pesos in debt; *Proceso* April 11, 1981, "El Grupo Monterrey compra los hotels más caros del Puerto."
[131] DFS, 100-10-1 L63 H134-139, 14 May 1976.

weapons for an attempt to seize the offices of Organizaciones Unidas in 1977.[132] Herón Varela, the leader of the state legislature, brought the body firmly under Figueroa's control and in 1979 would win election to the national congress.[133] Figueroa also pursued his opponents, chasing Nogueda Otero's supporters from office and often forcing them to leave the state.[134] In one case, Nogueda Otero's unpopular transit director, the victim of Hernández García and Ríos Larios' attacks in 1971, was arrested in Mexico City on charges of fraud.[135] None of this, it should be said, was particularly shocking in the context of Guerrero. Most former governors had persecuted their opponents, and nearly all had installed friends and family in government jobs that offered opportunities for personal enrichment.[136] And for Figueroa's clients there were plenty of chances to line their own pockets. López Figueroa allegedly held eighteen permits for taxis in Acapulco and distributed 81 more to "journalists, bureaucrats, and friends and family," including Herón Varela.[137] By the end of his term, the head of the PRI in Acapulco would complain

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[132] AGN, DGIPS C.1488B Exp.5, 14 May 1977.
[133] AGN, DGIPS C.1701B Exp.5, sin fecha.
[134] DFS, 100-10-1 L63 H134-139, 14 May 1976. It does not appear there was any ideological content to the persecution, though there might have been a regional component to the personal feud, since Nogueda Otero was a *costeño* with a political base in Acapulco.
[135] That arrest, according to DFS agents, was reportedly arranged by Mario Arturo Acosta Chaparro, the military officer who likely oversaw Figueroa's rescue in 1974. Arturo Acosta Chaparro was also the regime's chief prosecutor of the dirty war in Guerrero during the 1970s and 80s, and had close ties to Figueroa, serving in various official police capacities in the state. Arturo Acosta Chaparro also reportedly made tidy sums through "*manejos turbios*" and was protected, of course, by Figueroa; DFS, 100-10-1 L63 H134-139, 14 May 1976; DFS, VP RFF L4 H232-248, 23 July 1984 "Antecedentes."; *Proceso*, September 3, 2000, "Las andanzas de Acosta Chaparro: de contrainsurgente a presunto narco."
[136] See description of the extreme nepotism and corruption that existed under Raul Caballero Aburto's administration (1957-1961) in DFS, 100-10-1 H174-185, 11 June 1960. The report lists no fewer than 32 of Caballero Aburto's relatives who received official positions.
[137] AGN, DGIPS C.1488B Exp.5, 19 April 1977; AGN, DGIPS C.1934B Exp.3, 23 March 1977. The report mentioned that Herón Varela was among the recipients of a permit.

not only of Figueroa's nepotistic distribution of taxi permits, but also of questionable land sales to friends and the blatant enrichment of many officials.[138]

Figueroa also benefited from the governorship personally, consolidating his control of tourism and strengthening his cargo transportation business. In 1977, the head of national postal services complained that insufficient funding had resulted in poor service in Guerrero and as a result, Figueroa's cargo and bus lines—which admittedly provided better service—had "monopolized" mail delivery in the state.[139] Whether or not that was a fair assessment, it likely reflected the reality of Figueroa's commercial strength. Where tourism was concerned, Figueroa certainly expanded his interests. Mexicorama had by the mid-1970s become something resembling a parastatal enterprise, charged with issuing permits for the ground transportation of tourists.[140] This legal and administrative control over who was allowed entrance to the tourist transportation industry effectively allowed Figueroa to exercise monopolistic control over the charter bus industry in the entire country, though there is little evidence he did so.[141] As governor, however, Figueroa ensured that charters without the requisite Mexicorama permits within the borders of Guerrero were detained and their owners fined up to 13,000 pesos.[142] As governor of a state that depended heavily on tourism, Figueroa's control

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[138] DFS, VP RFF L4 H148, 28 July 1981.
[139] *Ultimas Noticias,* February 3, 1977, clipped in AGN, DGIPS C.1934B Exp.3.
[140] *El Universal*, July 29, 1976, clipped in AGN, DGIPS C.1934B Exp.3.
[141] AGN, DGIPS C.1934B Exp.4, 7 November 1979. Again, on the topic of charter buses, there is little evidence to support allegations that Figueroa had a commercial empire. Indeed, while he enforced Mexicorama's exclusive operating concession in Guerrero, outside of the state he seemed to care little about who ran charter buses.
[142] DFS, VP RFF L4 H232-248, 23 July 1984, "Antecedentes."

over the charter transportation was both predictable and self-serving and he was a tireless promoter of the tourist industry in Acapulco.

Unsurprisingly, Figueroa's actions as governor provoked a backlash, so that from the outset he was embroiled in conflict. Throughout the course of his administration he would struggle with Acapulco's *taxistas*, who resented both the imposition of Hernández García as the leader of the Organizaciones Unidas and the ongoing irregularity in permits. When the *taxistas* arranged a meeting with the governor in 1977, they did not receive a warm welcome from Figueroa, who promptly declared that "I am a governor, not a *gobernadorcillo* [softy]… I gave birth to the law and I can give permits to whomever I like."[143] Figueroa also fought publicly with tourism groups, particularly tour guides, who suffered from restrictive policies on charter vehicles and were forced to work for the sole Mexicorama concessionary in Acapulco.[144]

Compounding these problems was Guerrero's continued violence and instability, and Figueroa's haughty attitude often exacerbated the difficulties. Within scant weeks of taking office, in an attempt to improve the image of both the state and his administration, Figueroa attempted to suppress the *nota roja*—the gory scandal-sheet crime pages in local newspapers. This infringement of press freedom prompted local and national journalists to savage the governor, with the Mexico City paper *Ovaciones* declaring him "drunk with power" after he reportedly threatened local editors.[145] The spat blew over quickly since, according to the DFS, a 5,000 peso-per-month subsidy to the editors of

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[143] AGN, DGIPS C.1488C Exp.9, 16 May 1977.
[144] AGN, DGIPS C.1934C Exp.4, 21 January 1979; *Diario de la Tarde*, January 22, 1979, clipped in AGN DGIPS C.1934C Exp.4.
[145] *Ovaciones*, June 2, 1975, clipped in AGN, DGIPS C.1934A Exp.4; DFS, VP RFF L2 H143-144, 2 June 1975.

Acapulco's newspapers resulted in a "radical change" in their content by July.[146] But if he could suppress the news, Figueroa could not change the reality, as the state continued to experience an ongoing wave of crime and insecurity. In October 1975, a DGIPS report summarized the situation, observing that "a serious increase in crime," primarily kidnappings, had combined with police and military abuses to create "a climate of social uncertainty and distrust toward the government of the state."[147] In May of 1976, a DFS agent would remark that the atmosphere in the state was "tense," commenting that "where security is concerned, the citizenry has been left in second place, and crime, assaults, murders, robberies, and rapes have all multiplied," and that Figueroa's expansion of the police force had done little to improve the situation.[148] Troublingly, the agent described the existence of a "*grupo de represión*" reporting directly to Figueroa and dedicated primarily to avenging insults to the governor, settling scores for the military, and pressuring drug traffickers to reach an understanding with the government. The governor certainly did not have a light touch, either in policy or personality. One DFS agent commented that he had a reputation for "rude, vengeful, capricious, and rough treatment of citizens," recounting one story that when a group came to his office to request that drinking water be provided in their town, Figueroa replied that he would "come piss in their fountain" so that they would have plenty to drink.[149] In another alleged episode, when a supplicant asked for a truck permit to help support her family, Figueroa brusquely offered instead "a bit of cock" to help make ends meet.[150]

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[146] DFS, VP RFF L2 H182, 15 July 1975.
[147] AGN, DGIPS C.1934A Exp.4, 11 October 1975.
[148] DFS, 100-10-1 L63 H134-139, 14 May 1976.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid. The original phrase, "u*n cacho de verga*" is perhaps even cruder than my translation.

*El Señor Gobernador* was more than a title—it was a mindset. In his rule of the state, Figueroa became a classic arch-macho, paternalistic and domineering, secure in his authority. His power had a visceral quality, stretching beyond his control of the state's politics to grasp at its soul. It was naked and constantly on display. It was, in part, the power of impunity: Figueroa did as he wished because no force in the state could check him. As he told the *taxistas* in 1977, the law came from him. There was, too, the power of ego, captured in the governor's humble *sarape* with "Rubén Figueroa" woven across its front. It was a self-satisfied power, one that relished the gifts of jaguar pelts sent by *campesinos*, seeing them as genuine tokens of affection, which perhaps they were. Figueroa's was not a distant power: he toured the state, met with its citizens, personally rewarded their loyalty—handing out pesos to supplicants—and savored the defeat of his opponents. In its paternalism, it was a gendered power, one that relied on Figueroa's aggressive assertions of masculinity.[151] There was also violence to this power, built of clandestine goon squads and the pistol always theatrically strapped to Figueroa's side. Legitimacy was not the goal, for this power sought neither legitimacy nor popularity because it needed neither. But in the end, power had a purpose, and Figueroa wielded it well. He finished his term, one of Guerrero's few governors to do so. When the French documentary crew asked him how he felt, he quickly replied "satisfied… satisfied of having served the citizens of my state, and satisfied for having reached my political goal."[152]

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[151] Descriptions of Figueroa's leadership in *camionero* magazines frequently used the adjective "viril," which would not be a linguistic oddity in Spanish (it is a common adjective) were it not for the fact that the modifier was never used in connection with any other Alianza leader. The concept of a masculine "virility" was often employed to describe the Alianza as a group, however.

[152] *Un Voyage au Mexique: El Señor Gobernador!*, prod. and dir. Jean-Émile Jeannesson, 1981.

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Even years after his term ended, Figueroa continued to loom large in the national political imaginary. His 1991 obituary in *Proceso* labeled him a "model of Mexico's political dinosaurs."[153] He was the stereotypical PRI *cacique* in the waning years of the regime's golden era, a man rumored to have an empire of buses and a fiefdom in Guerrero. If none of the legends about Figueroa were was precisely true, they nevertheless spoke to important facts of mid-century Mexican political life. Politicians were often both economic entrepreneurs, founding businesses such as Autotransportes Figueroa, and political entrepreneurs, creating or colonizing groups such as the ACRM and establishing clientelistic *camarillas* as a means of building political strength. Those who succeeded were those who built broad networks of loyalties that spanned geography and industry, as Figueroa did with Guerrero's *campesinos* and Mexico City's *camioneros*. The creation of those networks relied on intermediaries such as Herón Varela and Isidoro Rodríguez, men with their own aspirations and networks. Because those "hingemen" were thus self-interested political actors as well, the *camarillas* were often extremely fluid, difficult to maintain, and prone to rupture as members established ties with other patronage networks. Clients were central to success, allowing for the massive mobilizations that were the regime's imperfect metric of political strength. With strength came influence, and the ability to perhaps shape policy, as Figueroa did for the *camioneros*. With strength also often came power, and power, if exercised well, tended to

[153] He himself felt that Mexican politics had shifted around him, telling a reporter in 1984 that "I am one of the dinosaurs, who are not identified with the [current] regime, we are not children of some university, we do not have refined tastes or pedigrees… the new politicians think we are of another mentality, that we have passed into history." His perceptions support the arguments advanced in the conclusion that a political culture shift occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s; *Proceso*, March 23, 1991, "Cacique, monopolista."

increase. In the arc of Figueroa's career we see patterns that gave stability to the regime, as participants in the *camarilla* system built networks that encouraged personal loyalty and provided predictable outcomes.

In 1993, Rubén Figueroa Alcocer won the governorship of Guerrero on the strength of networks in part inherited from his father, who had died two years earlier. But Rubén *fils* lasted only three years in office, forced out over his involvement in a 1996 massacre of peasants in Aguas Blancas. During the latter years of the decade, PRI calculations of strength and conceptions of power seem to have remained relatively unchanged even as the country moved toward democracy and the world of Figueroa *père* became part of its past. In 2012, years after leaving the governorship, Figueroa Alcocer remained active in *guerrerense* politics, managing a network of personal loyalties and attempting to influence the destinies of the state.

## CONCLUSION:

### HÉCTOR HERNÁNDEZ CASANOVA AND THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF PRI RULE

*I feel, furthermore, that a public service such as the one we provide, by its very nature, cannot conceivably be managed by individuals belonging to opposition parties and if we take into consideration that our concessions have flourished under revolutionary governments, I must conclude that out of both belief and recognition, we should affiliate with the Partido Revolucionario Institucional.*

- Héctor Hernández Casanova[1]

Writing to President López Portillo in the fall of 1981, Héctor Hernández Casanova was at turns defiant and subdued. In his October letter, the Alianza's president lamented that the *camioneros* "are still unable to comprehend what we have done to deserve such poor treatment."[2] Less than two weeks earlier, on September 25, Carlos Hank González, the city's regent, had decreed the municipal takeover of all bus services within the Federal District. With that, Hank González ended the Alianza's 54-year existence, expropriated the capital stock of thousands of *permisionarios*, overturned an even older system of private transport concessions, and most significantly, fractured a system of negotiation, understanding, and reciprocity that had bound *camioneros* and politicians in a comfortable embrace. It was hardly surprising, then, that Hernández Casanova's letter conveyed the sentiment of a profound betrayal, of an agreement broken, and the sense that an era had ended.

The system of understandings ruptured in 1981 constituted what I have referred to throughout this dissertation as part of the "political culture" of the PRI. In the preceding

[1] *Transportes y Turismo*, September, 1966.
[2] Carlos Grados García Personal Archive, abbreviated here as CGG AP. Alianza de Camioneros de México to López Portillo, October 5, 1981.

chapters, I have showed that by the 1950s a set of shared understandings lubricated the relationship between the Alianza, politicians, and the public, as it did with other corporate groups whose fates were intertwined with the postrevolutionary regime. That system, I argued, served to create cohesion among a broad group of intermediate elites and tie them to the regime, providing a solid foundation for soft authoritarian rule. In 1981, there is an indication that the political culture of PRI rule began to break down and that the repercussions were serious.

The political culture of the PRI heyday was neither ahistorical nor inevitable. Chapter One suggested that after 1920 the nascent postrevolutionary state increasingly brought *camionero* entrepreneurs into its orbit through a shared conservative, middle-class vision for constructing the country's future, though that vision did not go unchallenged. Chapter Two concludes that such a partnership did not truly take form until 1945, when the Alianza first collaborated with the ruling party's political machine and *camionero* leaders, in turn, moved into politics. It was during those years that the political "styles" of the PRI emerged and became institutionalized, particularly informal varieties of corporatism, systems of informal negotiation on policy, and tight bonds between businessmen and the regime. In Chapter Three, I examined how shifts in the country's political economy during the 1950s concerning how the state managed public pressure led to a renegotiation of the Alianza's relationship with the regime. Chapter Four discusses mid-century practices of corporatism, revealing how expectations regarding leadership of groups such as the Alianza worked to maintain the group cohesion of a wide strata of intermediate elites. In Chapter Five, I examine how successful *priístas* constructed vast networks of personal loyalties, participating in a system that measured

"political strength" through the size of clientelistic groups. Through the lens of the municipalization, this extended conclusion and epilogue will attempt to offer an overarching assessment of these political culture features of the Alianza's relationship with the regime, an exploration of the "rules of the game" as it was played from the 1940s until 1981. In doing so, I offer a broader appraisal of how the soft authoritarian system as a whole managed to endure, and suggest how the breakdown of that political culture would have catastrophic consequences for political stability.

Political culture is, admittedly, an imperfect heuristic for understanding the longevity and relative success of the PRI regime.[3] To begin with, political culture is difficult to circumscribe. It must be both disambiguated from the broader concept of culture and not overstretched to explain every decision of free-thinking historical actors.[4] These problems are if anything compounded when the subject is twentieth-century Mexico, where regime practices were often shrouded in secrecy. In speaking of the political culture of the PRI, it is thus easy to fall back on old tropes, essentializing and simplifying the behavior of those involved. The patronage-dispensing governor or the bribe-paying businessman can become flattened versions of themselves, historical stick figures in a crudely drawn schematic of the PRI system. Yet for all its potential imprecision, as employed here a political culture framework also affords a means of approaching the nuanced, contingent behavior of the complex actors who populated and

[3] As discussed in the introduction, this is not to say that a political culture approach is not a *popular* one, nor that it lacks power.

[4] If this seems a nod to rational choice theory, it is because I believe that oft-demeaned approach to have humanizing merit when not constrained by a narrow economic definition of rational self-interest. Historical actors, such as the ones in this study, did not make choices blindly, guided by religion, culture, or class alone. Rather, their decisions were overdetermined, shaped by all those things, but always made with the intention of achieving what, through that thick web, they believed to be in their best interest.

supported the regime, offering an explanation for continuity in the face of change. Such a fluid, historically grounded approach to political culture allows for an understanding of why individuals chose to participate in the PRI system not just once, but repeatedly, over a sweep of history that included dramatic social, economic, and political change.

During the PRI's mid-century heyday, a broad group of intermediate elites remained strikingly loyal to the system. Their participation in the regime forms a sort of historical "negative space," defined by the remarkable absence of one phenomena: from the early 1950s to the 1980s, intermediate elites almost never broke from the system. That micropolitical stability defied expectation. Neither the PRI nor the country it governed remained static, yet the basic "rules of the game" proved remarkably durable and their durability did much to ensure the larger macropolitical stability of the regime. By the mid-1980s, however, the PRI's rule was less solid, shaken by economic stagnation and declining popular support. By the late 1990s, after a decade of cyclical crises, the PRI had collapsed, torn apart by competing factions and an epidemic of party defections.[5] In 2000, the PRI lost the presidency. It is revealing, therefore, that in 1981 the Alianza so plainly felt that those rules had been broken.

In many ways the 1981 decision was the product of specific personal feuds, political ambition, and administrative projects. It was not, by most lights, indicative of a broader collapse of the authoritarian regime. Yet, that no similar conflictual conjuncture had previously resulted in such a rupture should give us pause: something had indeed changed. The story of the municipalization offers insights into those changes, suggesting

[5] Sebastián Garrido's work on PRI defections around the 1996 electoral reform offers a fascinating perspective on the party's decline and loss of power in 2000; "Eroded Unity and Clientele Migration. An Alternative Explanation of the Demise of the PRI Regime" (PhD diss., UCLA, forthcoming).

that a breakdown of political culture predated, and perhaps presaged, the economic and political crises of the 1980s and 1990s that brought about the PRI's downfall, weakening the foundations of the regime just before the first tremors were felt.

## THE BIRTH AND DEATH OF THE PULPO

The tensions that would lead to the 1981 dénouement were not new. Official frustration with the Alianza-managed system of public transportation in Mexico City dated from the 1930s, and there had been periodic dust-ups between the *camioneros* and the government, such as the Ley Múgica in 1939 and the Unión de Permisionarios in 1958. Similarly, public discontent with the quality of urban service had simmered for decades, and as Chapter Three demonstrated, buses were targeted as visible, immediate symbols of the regime's administrative failings. Labor conflicts on bus lines had also been on the rise since at least the mid-1950s, and non-CTM unions were among the most vocal critics of the Alianza. All of these groups had reason to label the Alianza the *pulpo camionero*, and indeed the term had been used sporadically since the 1930s, when José Maria Dávila had described the group as a "*pulpo monopolizador*." By the late 1970s, however, the label was in wide use, and the Alianza struggled to counter the ever more negative publicity.[6] Among the *camioneros* it was rumored that behind this wave of press

[6] As discussed earlier, the trope of the *pulpo* is an interesting one. It was a part of Progressive Era rhetoric in the United States, most notably applied to the Southern Pacific Railroad by Frank Norris, but was also used to describe Standard Oil and United Fruit. As Marcelo Bucheli notes, in Colombia (and elsewhere in Latin America) the latter two companies were popularly labeled as "pulpo."; "Confronting the Octopus: United Fruit, Standard Oil, and the Colombian State in the Twentieth-Century" (paper presented at the International Economic History Conference, August 21-25,2006). In Mexico, the trope of the octopus was also common, and not limited to Mexico City. Although it seems to have been most frequently applied to transportation and the bus industry in particular, it was also a standard feature in political cartoonists' depictions of the PRI; Eric Zolov, "Jorge Carreño's Graphic Satire and the Politics of 'Presidentialism' in Mexico during the 1960s," *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de América Latina* 17:1 (2006), 19. The trope

attacks was Carlos Hank González, who had repeatedly clashed with the Alianza over fares and routes since taking office in 1976.

The man charged with defending the Alianza was Héctor Hernández Casanova, the group's president since 1971. By his own account a *camionero* since childhood—his grandfather had acquired buses on the Mexico-Coyoacan-San Ángel line in the 1920s—he had grown up with the industry. In 1954 he had become president of the Villa Madero-Clasa-Coyoacan line and gradually built his interests around lines in the southern part of the city. Having studied history at UNAM, he was the Alianza's most intellectual leader, he taught for a time at the Colegio Sefaradí secondary school in Mexico City, was a prolific writer in Alianza magazines, and also published a series of columns in El Nacional during the 1960s.[7] A loyal ally of Rubén Figueroa, he rode the national leader's coattails to a seat in congress in 1976. He was a committed *priísta*, organizing Alianza participation in the 1970 presidential campaign and attempted to support López Portillo in 1976 even as his group was outmaneuvered by Isidoro Rodríguez. A lifelong insider, Hernández Casanova intimately understood the PRI system and knew by heart the rules governing the Alianza's relationship with the regime.

Nearly as soon as he took office, however, Hank González broke with the past. As Hernández Casanova reflected years later in his unpublished memoirs, "we never imagined that Hank González would not treat us the same way; from the beginning his posture toward us was radically oppositionist."[8] The difficulties began with Hank

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commonly appears in contemporary discussions of the bus system in Oaxaca, as well as in descriptions of narcotrafficking.

[7] DFS, VP HHC L1 H103, 22 April 1976, "Antecedentes."

[8] Héctor Hernández Casanova Personal Archive, History abbreviated here as HHC AP, History. This fascinating source was shown to me by Hernández Casanova's daughter, Eva. Part Alianza history and part

González's refusal to cosign the Alianza's loan application to the Banobras development bank for the acquisition of 1,500 new buses to replace vehicles "best suited for junk."[9] Previous regents had "always" willingly underwritten such applications, Hernández Casanova noted.[10] Without Hank González's endorsement now, however, Banobras would not approve the loan, and it was only López Portillo's intervention that forced the regent to provide the necessary signature to make the city government the guarantor of the *camioneros*' debt. Over the following years a series of subtle aggressions further soured relations between the Regent and the Alianza. These included Hank González's apparently haughty attitude in refusing to consult with the *camioneros* on a new transit plan for the city that created *ejes viales*—major traffic arteries—by widening and connecting already existing avenues.[11] That the city government subsequently banned Alianza buses from operating routes on some of the *ejes* while promoting the expansion of the city-owned electric trolleybus system only exacerbated the conflict.[12]

By June 1979, the tension between Hank González and Hernández Casanova seemed to come to a head. At an Alianza-organized breakfast banquet attended by president López Portillo, Hank González, Figueroa, and before an audience of

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memoir, it is of incalculable value in tracing the breakdown in the relationship between Hank González and the group. Though it likely presents a self-serving and one-sided account of events, it is useful for three reasons. First, it offers an inside perspective on feuds that would not have been on public display and are not documented in the national archival record. Second, Hernández Casanova was not incapable of measured reflection and the account is at least self-aware even as it is one-sided. Third, and most importantly, it is most useful as a source of perceptions, not of facts, and such perceptions are vital to a discussion of political culture. In chronicling the events of 1977-1981, I will thus rely on it heavily.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] The project was popularly considered a boondoggle that destroyed a number of beautiful medians on avenues such as Xola yet did little to ameliorate the city's traffic congestion. Peter Ward's retrospective analysis suggests that the *eje* project did meet its goals, however; *Mexico City*, 150.

[12] *El Universal*, June 28, 1979.

*camioneros*, Hernández Casanova took the opportunity to address publicly the group's difficulties with the regent. This open critique was a serious breach of decorum, as Hernández Casanova did not mince his words in directly asking the president "to instruct Hank to do us the favor of defining his policy toward us," before detailing a litany of offenses that had unsettled the industry, from the credit episode to the trolleybuses and *ejes viales*, concluding that "we must know if we are plowing a barren field."[13] The riotous applause from the assembled *camioneros* compounded the affront. Reporters at the breakfast noted Hank González's visibly rising ire at the "impudence," and when Hernández Casanova concluded the regent requested the president's permission to respond. His scorching rejoinder silenced the room, as he accused the Alianza of willfully misrepresenting his policies and of several outright lies. He blamed the group's anarchic and poor service for the rising use of private vehicles that were dangerously close to choking the city's streets, noted the Alianza's inability to meet growing demand for transportation, and stressed its failure to address problems of air pollution and excessive noise. But if Hank González concluded by denying there was an anti-*camionero* master plan, observers sensed an impending showdown: *El Universal* titled its report on the breakfast "Hank Wins the First Round Against *Camioneros*."[14]

If Hernández Casanova's public confrontation was a breach of the rules, it only came in response to what the Alianza clearly felt was unfair treatment, and the exchange added flame to the heated passions. Throughout 1980 and 1981 the problems in urban transport intensified, and with them the friction with Hank González. Rapid inflation—

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[13] *El Universal*, June 28, 1979.
[14] Ibid.

27% between 1980 and 1981—led the Alianza to push for a fare raise, as the last increase had been in 1976.[15] Predictably, this led the Alianza to clash with the regent, who staunchly refused the request for an adjustment. Unable to garner the regent's support for a fare increase through any traditional method, in 1980 Hernández Casanova approved the *camioneros*' decision to take "the path of the students," painting their buses with slogans and posting flyers explaining their dire economic situation.[16] This strategy only aggravated relations with the city government, which promptly ordered that the paintings be removed.[17]

Cosmetic disputes aside, there was no agreement on how best to save the city's failing transportation network. The existing vehicle stock was both insufficient and inefficient, as the average daily commute took as long as four hours on poorly maintained and overcrowded buses traveling on traffic-snarled streets.[18] Moreover, some twenty percent of *camioneros* were financially unable to maintain buses in service, creating further shortages.[19] Popular sentiment held that the *pulpo camionero* was squeezing the life out of Mexico City by making travel around the metropolis miserable. And by the early 1980s, that metropolis was becoming an urban nightmare. The population of the Federal District had grown from around 5.2 million in 1960 to 7.3 million by 1970, and

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[15] Hector Aguilar Camín and Lorenzo Meyer, *In the Shadow of the Mexican Revolution: Contemporary Mexican History, 1910-1989* trans. Luis Alberto Fierro (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), 211.
[16] HHC AP, History; DFS, VP HHC L1 H135-139, 9 July 1980. The simple posters noted a 90% increase in the cost of living since the last fare increase and a 300% increase in the cost of the buses over the same time, while rebutting the popular notion that the buses received a government subsidy. That last claim was only true inasmuch as fares were not subsidized, the group did receive preferential deals on diesel, loans, and parts.
[17] DFS, VP HHC L1 H144, 17 September 1980.
[18] Calculated from Octavio Loyzaga de la Cueva, who reported that workers spent an average of 45 days per year commuting; *El estado como patrón y árbitro: el conflicto de la ruta 100* (Azcapotzalco, Mexico: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana; Ediciones de Cultura Popular, 1987), 13.
[19] DFS, VP HHC L1 H155-156, 29 October 1980.

the city added another 2 million residents by 1980. Physically, the metropolitan area sprawled and the population in the larger urban zone outside of the Federal District—only 200,000 in 1960—had rocketed to 2 million in 1970, reaching over 5 million by 1980. Poverty, often extreme, was found less in small pockets than pooling on the edges of the city. Ciudad Netzahualcóyotl, the largest slum, was technically in Mexico State to the east of the Federal District, and its residents were forced to travel on multiple buses and pay multiple fares to reach destinations in the city. Fare rates on suburban buses, moreover, were often high, sometimes in violation of regulations. As one *La Prensa* columnist described it, transportation problems were helping to turn Netzahualcóyotl into a "time bomb."[20] The outcry was not limited to the city's lower classes either. As Peter Ward notes, a group of Atzcapotzalco industrialists complained to Hank González "that they were losing 224,000 worker hours a day due to the long distances and journeys to work of the 120,000 workers engaged in their 900 firms."[21] The pressures for change were tremendous.

To address the situation, in early 1981 municipal authorities announced plans to restructure urban transport around direct, straight line routes running clear across the city. The Alianza opposed this scheme wholeheartedly, citing both technical issues with mapping the new routes, and economic concerns over the wear-and-tear such long trips caused on vehicles.[22] By the summer of 1981, faced with complaints about unauthorized fare increases and poor service, the city government canceled the concessions of one line

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[20] *La Prensa*, September 18, 1981.
[21] Ward, *Mexico City*, 157.
[22] Beyond the unpublished history, the Hernández Casanova personal archive contains several other documents, such as the text of a speech given on this issue; HHC AP, Hernández Casanova speech, May 19, 1981.

and embargoed the buses of six others. The sense of crisis was palpable. To the *camioneros* it seemed that Hank González was determined to drive them not simply into submission, but out of the urban transportation market entirely. Facing withering attacks in the press and intense public frustration, after more than fifty years the Alianza finally faced a storm it could not withstand, and in June 1981 the group took the unprecedented step of offering to sell their concessions and buses to the city if no other resolution could be found.[23] What followed, however, was unexpected.

On September 21, 1981, as President López Portillo traveled in the Caribbean, Hank González called Hernández Casanova and Figueroa to his office to inform them of the presidential decision to revoke the concessions for urban transport and seize the facilities and equipment that had previously belonged to the Alianza. Though the sentence came from the president, there was no question that the verdict had belonged to Hank González and that the regent would also carry out the execution with startling vigor. Four days later, on September 25, the Regent announced the municipalization publicly and sent police to occupy the Alianza's buildings and buses. In his decree, Hank González cited the city government's legal obligation to ensure the provisioning of public services and its legal power to revoke concessions in the sake of the "public interest."[24] The expropriation of all transportation equipment and facilities was immediate, with the decree containing only a vague mention of later indemnification due to the *camioneros.* Old Alianza foe *La Prensa* declared it was "The End of 60 Years of Suffering."[25] Other

[23] HHC AP, History.
[24] CGG AP, September 25, 1981, *Municipalization Decree*.
[25] *La Prensa*, September 26, 1981.

metropolitan press outlets similarly celebrated the death of the *pulpo*. The Alianza was left to wonder what had gone wrong.

**Figure 15:** *La Prensa* reacts to the municipalization of urban bus transportation. *La Prensa*, September 29, 1981.

Why Hank González shattered a relationship that had effectively served the regime's political and administrative ends since the 1940s is unclear. No outsider to the political system himself, he had come up through the PRI's ranks in Mexico State and his life was as deeply intertwined with the PRI system as was Hernández Casanova's.[26] That

[26] See Rogelio Hernández's work on Hank González; *Amistades, compromisos, y lealtades: Líderes y grupos políticos en el Estado de México, 1942-1993* (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 2010).

he found himself so squarely at odds with the Alianza was the result of strains caused by unchecked urbanization and his own Uruchurtu-esque ambition to confront the growing crisis in metropolitan transportation aggressively. But the dispute over urban policy alone does not explain the municipalization. Rather, it was the result of a decay in the bonds and practices that had secured the relationship between the *camioneros* and the regime, and allowed presidents, regents, and Alianza leaders to avoid conflict. Reciprocity no longer held, backroom mediation no longer worked, a paternalistic president no longer intervened, and the predictable PRI system was weakened by crisis, ambition, and the appearance of a new political "style." The culture of the PRI was breaking down and the Alianza's leaders felt this rupture profoundly. As they saw it, they had played by the rules.

## THE RULES OF THE GAME

Hernández Casanova's October 1981 letter opens with a simple but firm reminder that a month prior, on September 1, when López Portillo passed by an Alianza banner and cheering section during his ceremonial procession to deliver the annual *informe* speech, "we reaffirmed, once again, our unbreakable support for the actions of your government."[27] That was why, the letter continued, the municipalization and subsequent seizure of property "seemed to us an act as drastic as it was hasty, and incongruent with our open and sincere willingness to negotiate."[28] Over six pages, those central themes of "unwavering support" for the president, the Alianza's "serene" and "correct" attitude, and

[27] CGG AP, Alianza de Camioneros de México to López Portillo, October 5, 1981.
[28] Ibid.

Hank González's "incongruent" actions underscore the sense of a moral and political contract that had been broken.

Over the previous five decades, the *camioneros* had forged a close relationship with the PRI regime, becoming insiders in a system that achieved remarkable macropolitical stability during the middle of the twentieth century. In this picture, the *camioneros* appear as yet another group that predictably aligned with regime, "huddle[d]," in Alan Knight's phrasing "in cozy and comfortable collusion."[29] But at the same time, the partnership between the Alianza and the dominant-party state was also constantly tested and strained, and subject to frequent renegotiation. To understand the surprising durability of the relationship between *camioneros* and the PRI, and indeed the robustness of the regime itself, we must look to political culture.

Since Frank Brandenburg discerned a "Revolutionary Creed" maintaining the coherence of the "Revolutionary Family" in 1964, scholars have studied elite political culture to help explain the longevity of the *dictablanda*. Yet even as the regime's years of mid-century dominance have received increasing historical attention, we have lacked a nuanced portrait of the "rules of the game" as it was understood and played by the mid-level elites. These intermediate actors were vital cogs in corporatist machines and their unwavering loyalty to the PRI contributed to the system's survival. These hingemen managed the incorporation of diverse groups into the regime and articulated its rule. Their support was crucial. The regime endured not through broad consensus to its authority, nor through open repression, but because a regularized set of political

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[29] Alan Knight, "The Modern Mexican State: Theory and Practice" in *The Other Mirror: Grand Theory Through the Lens of Latin America*, eds. Miguel Angel Centeno and Fernando López-Alves (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 193.

relationships helped perpetuate power. In its examination of the *camioneros*, this dissertation has shown how mutually understood codes of conduct stabilized the relationship between politically active middle-class transportation entrepreneurs and the regime, ensuring elite cohesion and by extension the durability of PRI rule.

The overarching rules of the game, as the *camioneros* understood them, were fairly simple. The first was that the group was to offer enthusiastic collaboration with the regime's displays of political theater. Since the 1920s, the Alianza had participated in ruling party demonstrations, ranging from floats in celebratory parades to mobilizations as part of the Ortiz Rubio campaign in 1929. Though the group remained distanced from political activity during the tumultuous 1930s when they struggled with Cárdenas, with Miguel Alemán's 1945-1946 campaign the *camioneros* were incorporated into the PRI and began to function as the party's transportation wing. This political activity acquired an air of inevitability in the following years as the Alianza, regardless of the leadership group controlling it, provided buses for campaign events during every subsequent presidential election. As the group threw its enthusiastic support behind Luis Echeverría in 1969, *El Informador Camionero* published a retrospective of the Alianza's political activities, reminding members that "the *gremio camionero*…has always collaborated, without limit, with all the governments of the Revolution. We have been the most effective messengers of their ideology and programs."[30] When Hernández Casanova alluded to the Alianza's banner in his 1981 letter to López Portillo, it was an oblique reference to this rule. It was clear that the Alianza's leaders saw such collaboration as

[30] *El Informador Camionero*, November, 1969.

both expected and productive, and that the group's members also understood its significance, using non-participation in PRI events as a weapon to undermine unpopular leaders such as Valdovinos and Eli Sigüenza.

That linkage of political activity and the Alianza's internal struggles points to a second important rule of the political game, that of corporatist organization. While the PRI's structure was in theory one of sectoral representation of officially recognized corporate groups, and the Alianza belonged to the CNOP, the *camioneros*' interests were articulated most commonly through informal channels. Yet the Alianza was, nevertheless, a group that operated in the broader framework of social corporatism, and interacted with the regime as such. Since their first dealings with Álvaro Obregón, the *camioneros* had approached the regime as a group, and throughout the Alianza's existence they continued to represent themselves collectively. Most meetings with politicians involved the organization's entire executive committee, while ceremonial banquets such as the one in 1979 were attended by hundreds of prominent *permisionarios*. For 50 years the Alianza spoke of the "*gremio camionero*" as both a rhetorical device and a negotiating tool; corporate strength and legitimacy was vital for successful negotiation with the regime. Dissidents within the Alianza, failing to take control of the group, founded schismatic organizations such as the ACRM and CNTC that made competing claims on corporate representation. The regime, in turn, closely monitored the numerical strength and political leverage of such groups, while employing a wide range of tools to influence their internal politics and control their leaders. Such corporatist practices ensured that opportunities for dissent were limited and policies could be negotiated in an orderly fashion.

When problems did arise in policymaking, however, the *camioneros* relied on the third rule of the game: a benevolent, paternalistic president would dependably intervene on their behalf. This had been the case in 1939, when appeals to Cárdenas had blunted the Ley Múgica; in 1960, when López Mateos overruled Serrano Castro on *sociedades mercantiles*; and in 1976, when López Portillo had ordered Hank González to underwrite the Alianza's loan application. Policy was flexible, open to negotiation and appeal, and if the mystically omnipotent figure of the president was a central trope of the soft-authoritarian system, for the *camioneros* it was based on reality. It was precisely this tradition that made 1981 such a rude shock. Hernández Casanova could never fully comprehend López Portillo's unwillingness to soften the municipalization, reflecting in his memoirs that "since we had always received [the President's] attention and generous and rapid assistance on so many prior occasions, we could not conceive that his treatment would turn against us so quickly in such extreme circumstances."[31] But their faith in presidential intervention was ruptured, just as the other rules seemed less sturdy by 1981.

The more complex and less explicit beliefs and values that shaped those practices of collaboration, corporatism, and negotiation were fundamentally constitutive of the political culture of mid-level *priísta* elites. It was a political culture that had roots in the years of post-revolutionary reconstruction when the *camioneros* built their organization alongside the regime, intertwining their entrepreneurial objectives with the conservative political project. Demonstrating an almost apolitical stance of constructiveness and cooperativeness, the Alianza emphasized the social worth of entrepreneurial activity—the

[31] HHC AP, History.

the notion that theirs was an industry of "emancipated workers," beneficiaries of the revolution.[32] Yet their loyalty to the regime was not due to some long-past economic emancipation, but grounded in middle-class upward mobility, government support for private sector interests, and the feeling that "the business of the Mexican Revolution is…business."[33] Their collaboration with the regime stemmed from this perception of investment in a shared national project, a sentiment that ran deeper than simply an "extended coincidence of interest."[34] The tone of *camionero* magazines and the nature of their participation in party activities suggests a deep commitment to the PRI's conservative project.

Participation in the regime's political life was thus far from cynical, even as it was consciously linked with the belief that such collaboration should be rewarded. This was a political culture that believed in the meaningfulness of political mobilization, even as it acknowledged the occasional absurdity of *acarreo*. The *camioneros* became cogs in the PRI machine because they understood the regime's penchant for mass demonstrations and political stagecraft to be something more than a figleaf for authoritarianism. Rather, such events were important symbolic displays of loyalty that reaffirmed political ties. As

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[32] Throughout the twentieth-century the Alianza's leaders underscored those themes, as Eli Sigüenza did in 1962: "The Alianza's objectives have always been noble and constructive, including the social and economic improvement of its men and the constant perfection of the services that are entrusted to it… Our political ideals are the same as those of the [PRI] and they could not be other, because 90% of those who form the Alianza are workers who achieved their economic emancipation with the fruit of their labors, channeled and guided by the Alianza, within the programs of the Revolutionary Governments."; *Transportes y Turismo*, August, 1962.

[33] John Womack, "The Spoils of the Mexican Revolution" *Foreign Affairs* 48:4 (1970), 677.

[34] Alan Knight remarks that "…for an acute critic like Roger Bartra, Mexico came to possess 'the most highly perfected bourgeois state machinery in Latin America.' While intrabourgeois sectoral differences no doubt counted, these were secondary to the 'mutually beneficial partnership,' the 'extended coincidence of interest,' which united the state and the bourgeoisie as a whole during the heyday of the PRI. The latter provided a capacious umbrella under which a variety of elites—entrepreneurial, syncial, bureaucratic—could huddle in cozy and comfortable collusion."; "The Modern Mexican State," 192-193.

a revealing *El Informador Camionero* editorial noted in 1967, "for many, many years the *camioneros* have offered their buses to provide free transportation to the contingents attending civic, political, and social acts…and they have always done so with pleasure, considering it their small collaboration with the revolutionary governments."[35] Yet neither did such an earnest investment in the PRI's political theater imply blindness. That same 1967 editorial went on to complain about the party's wasteful abuse of the free buses, describing how "in some cases, a ministry will tell the driver 'this woman is in charge of this bus, follow her instructions' and the woman will order the driver '…we are going to Colonia Bondojito' where she will go door to door inviting every so-and-so to the parade or rally, and in the end only two or three people attend."[36] Ultimately, for the *camioneros* participation in the praxis of the regime was an end in itself, though there were also moral boundaries, a code, to such engagement.

[35] *El Informador Camionero*, August, 1967.
[36] Ibid.

**Figure 16:** Acarreados and housewives from Colonia Bondojito transported on Alianza buses. Author's Personal Collection.

One such code involved a firm belief in reciprocity. The *camioneros* expected adherence to the rule of collaboration to be rewarded, although the precise terms of the deal were flexible. Rather than a vulgar quid pro quo, the *camioneros* felt that the corporate or individual benefits they received from the regime were an acknowledgement or "recognition" of their organization's contributions to the political project. Their steadfast support of the regime, they believed, earned them fair treatment even when policy decisions were unfavorable, and in difficult times they never wavered from their obligations. The system thus ran on a moral economy structured around collaboration and reciprocity that, like E.P. Thompson's English crowds, "operated within a popular

consensus as to what were legitimate and what were illegitimate practices."[37] This was evident in 1963, when Alianza members opposed Eli Sigüenza's efforts at political organization, declaring that they "would only participate under the condition that no *camionero* director obtained political positions, especially seats in Congress or the Senate, as supposed compensation for having managed the sympathies of the *gremio*, since their only desire in [supporting the campaign] is to attain a greater comprehension of their efforts as an important factor in the country's economic life."[38] As late as 1987, a rump group still using the ACRM's name complained to President Miguel de la Madrid that their leaders had unfairly levied dues on them to support political campaigns resulting in personal benefits for the leaders but not responsible policies. Yet such seats in congress or appointments to party positions that *camioneros* sometimes received were widely known rewards for playing by the rules, and a recognition of effective corporatist leadership. Though these were common tokens of exchange within the political system, Alianza leaders had to be cautious about appearing overly ambitious since they risked offending the sensibilities of their constituents. Just as Díaz Lombardo had denied seeking any personal gain from the organization's support of Alemán, and Eli Sigüenza had failed to convince the *camioneros* that he had no ulterior motives, other leaders sought to appear disinterested both to placate supporters and avoid offending the sensibilities of regime officials.

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[37] E.P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 50:1 (1971), 78-79.
[38] DFS, VP EPU L1 H122, Gabriel Guarneros Mendoza to Director of Security, November 29, 1963.

This was a political culture involving strong associational values that underpinned a system of "social" corporatism.[39] The *camioneros* understood the collective nature of their interaction with the regime, which in turn kept close accounting on the popularity, influence, and strength of leaders. Rather than an ossified system of representation within the party serving to moderate social demands, there was both bottom-up corporatism and "middle-up" corporatism as upwardly mobile leaders built portfolios of loyal groups. If the *camioneros* successfully resisted colonization by ambitious outsiders, they relentlessly promoted the careers of their own, and despite its negative connotations, many Alianza leaders used the group as a "political trampoline."

Successful leaders were those who not only understood the moral economy of collaboration and corporatism, but those who could also project masculinity as part of a political culture inescapably and relentlessly gendered. If few leaders other than Figueroa conformed to the image of an arch-macho, the *camioneros* expected that their representatives would defend their interests with valor and loyalty, masculine values in the man's world of politics. Reflecting on the municipalization, the only conclusion Figueroa could offer an inquiring *La Prensa* reporter was that the Alianza had lost for lack of valor. The *camioneros*, according to Figueroa, had faced two options, "one, fight bravely, as they always had, and the other, to order pants with two openings, one in the front and one in the rear. The one in front, for you-know-what, and the other, as well."[40] Politics, both in the abstract and in the flesh, was something to be seduced and conquered

[39] See Chapter Four.
[40] *La Prensa*, October 7, 1981.

by forceful men. As the always candid Figueroa told the French film crew, "I am fascinated by women… and politics… because politics is a woman."[41]

If the *camioneros* lived in a world where masculinity was linked more to political prowess than traditional marksmanship, it was because theirs was a political culture of distinctly middle-class civic virtue. They saw themselves as technical advisors to the regime on matters of transportation, and were proud of their entrepreneurial accomplishments. They lived in middle-class *colonias*, traveled to the United States and Europe, and sent their children to private schools. Political stability was among their dearest values and they abhorred conflict that deviated from the regime's norms of orderly negotiation. When students riotously protested fares they offended those sensibilities and the *camioneros* saw the regime as a defender of their way of life.

This was the political culture of *priísmo*. In the Alianza's members, we find men who were the regime's supporters, whose beliefs and values shaped and sustained the practices of soft-authoritarianism. They were, perhaps, agents of it, but they did not see themselves as such because they did not perceive the system to be authoritarian. Rather, it was contractual, predictable even in its turns and contortions. They were *priístas* because it served them well to be *priístas*, and their unwavering support for the regime helped it thrive. They collaborated and facilitated, ensuring that the machinery of PRI politics ran smoothly. They were, at the end of the day, the people who had made the system work.

Their loyalty was part of the "rules of the game." Once they took shape in the 1930s and 1940s, those rules provided the basis for the PRI's mid-century heyday, a

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[41] *Un Voyage au Mexique: El Señor Gobernador!*, prod. and dir. Jean-Émile Jeannesson, 1981.

period when economic inequality, political opposition, and policy disagreements did not shake the overall stability of the regime. The robustness of PRI rule from the 1950s to the late 1970s owed much to the way a thusly institutionalized political culture kept intermediate elites like the Alianza's leaders from exiting the system. The *camioneros* bought into the PRI regime completely, following the rules and expecting predictable returns. For them, the municipalization was more than a sudden rupture, it was the total collapse of the compact and it was world-shattering. The PRI's rule lasted nineteen more years after 1981, but the breakdown of the political culture of *priísmo* visible in that moment revealed a system that had changed and one that would not be able to weather the economic crises of the coming years.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1

Based on lists of bus lines published in the Alianza's magazines, I have been able to plot the approximate extent of the bus network. Bus line names frequently indicated their destinations, and most ran to the city's center, marked on the following schematics as a dark grey square. Based on line names, I have made educated guesses about the extent of the network: the black lines are a conceptual schematic of where buses ran, not a precise map of actual routes. It is approximate, and not complete. The names of certain lines were either uninformative or impossible to pin to specific areas, though most lines are represented. Coverage was also broader and more extensive than indicated, since most lines operated feeder routes, yet the general picture would remain the same.

**Figure 17:** Mexico City's bus network, ca. 1931. Solid line indicates limits of the Federal District.

**Figure 18:** Mexico City's bus network, ca. 1949. Solid line indicates limits of the Federal District.

**Figure 19:** Mexico City's bus network, ca. 1969. Solid line indicates limits of the Federal District.

# APPENDIX 2

**Table 1:** Commonly appearing words and phrases from the 1939 and 1958 congressional debates over autotransportation.

| **Word or Phrase** | **1939** | **1958** |
|---|---|---|
| *Servicio Público* | 17 | 13 (+4 in bill preamble) |
| *Interés Público* | 6 | 9 (+2 'intereses del público) |
| *Opinión Pública* | 10 | 1 |
| *Pueblo* | 23 | 13 |
| *Trabajadores* | 90 (+ 1 '*Trabajador'*, +2 '*clase trabajadora'*) | 18 (+ 1 '*Trabajador'*) |
| **Approximate Total Words** | 37,000 | 8,500 |

# APPENDIX 3

**Table 2:** Conventional vs. *Chato* bus income and expenditure, per day. Study presented to the Comisión Mixta de Estudio en el Conflicto Obrero-Patronal de las Lineas de Transporte de Pasajeros del D.F., reprinted in *El Informador Camionero*, February, 1958.

| | **Conventional (first-class)*** | **Conventional (second-class)** | ***Chato*** ** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fare | 0.30 | 0.20 | - |
| Passengers | 700 | 820 | - |
| **Income** | 210 | 164 | 187.60 |
| Gas and lubricant | 39.98 | 56.46 | 34.08 |
| Parts, Tires, and Repairs | 55.80 | 46.55 | 63.31 |
| Driver Salaries*** | 32.50 | 41.75 | 33.48 |
| "Administration Costs" | 25.35 | 19.97 | 14.57 |
| Social Security/Accidents | 3.46 | 6.88 | 5.03 |
| Depreciation of Equipment**** | 39.67 | 36.83 | 62.44 |
| Initial Cost | *70,000* | *65,000* | *111,000 (subsequently 120,000)* |
| **Total Expenditures** | 203.96 | 208.44 | 210.91 |
| **Net** | 6.04 | -44.44 | -23.31 |

*The study calculated data calculated for conventional buses based on one year of operation, during which a bus would work an average of 300 days.
**As *chatos* were new, the study was based on only two months of data from the line Lomas de Chapultepec, "Servicio Expreso." It is entirely possible that *chatos* did, in the long term, turn a profit.
***Based on two drivers earning monthly salaries of $406.25 for conventional first-class buses, $521.80 for conventional second-class buses, and $426.80 for *chatos*.
****Calculations of depreciation are not equivalent to debt payments but rather represent a vehicles loss in value.

## APPENDIX 4

**Table 3:** List of Congressional Deputies with ties to the Alianza de Camioneros de México.

| Term | Aspirant | Alianza Rank |
|---|---|---|
| 1940-1943 | Rubén Figueroa Figueroa* | Srio. Gral |
| 1946-1949 | Manuel Peña Vera | - |
| 1949-1952 | Rafael Sánchez Pimentel | Srio. Trabajo |
| 1952-1955 | Narciso Contreras | Srio. Interior |
| 1964-1967 | Rubén Figueroa Figueroa* | Srio. Gral |
| 1973-1976 | Carlos Dufoo López | Srio. Interior |
| 1976-1979 | Héctor Hernández Casanova | Srio. Gral |
| 1979-1982 | Carlos Dufoo López | Srio. Interior |
| 1979-1982 | Rubén Figueroa Alcocer** | - |
| 1979-1982 | Jesús Alcántara Miranda*** | - |
| 1985-1988 | Jesús Alcántara Miranda*** | - |

*Rubén Figueroa Figueroa's influence was less tied to the Alianza's corporate strength than other leaders. See Chapter Five for more.
**Rubén Figueroa Alcocer worked in the Alianza but like his father had influence outside of the group.
***A leader of Mexico State transportation interests with ties to Isidoro Rodríguez, Jesús Alcántara also seems to have exercised important non-camionero influence in the state.

## APPENDIX 5

**Table 4:** Mexico City c*amioneros* serving as CNOP Transportation Secretary

| Year | |
|---|---|
| 1946 | Narciso Contreras |
| 1952 | Rafael Sánchez Pimentel |
| 1957 | Rodolfo Solís Soto |
| 1965 | Isidoro Rodríguez Ruiz |
| 1971 | Abelardo Matamoros |
| 1973 | Carlos Dufoo López |

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