

LYNCHING ON THE BORDER:
THE DEATH OF ANTONIO RODRÍGUEZ AND THE RISE OF ANTI-AMERICANISM
DURING THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION

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Abstract

This thesis examines the lynching of Antonio Rodríguez along with the incident's aftermath. Analysis interjects the narrative at crucial points throughout, and especially in chapter conclusions. The use of a transnational historical framework attempts to explain the intricacies of both nations' diplomatic efforts. Similarly, both Mexican and American newspapers are used to stress differences in the respective publics' opinion of events. Historians have often described the lynching of Antonio Rodríguez as an isolated incident, and one relegated to the sidelines of history as the Mexican Revolution unfolded. This thesis aims to reassess the significance of Rodríguez's death, suggesting that the incident became a symbol of the failure of President Porfirio Díaz to provide for his citizens (at home and abroad). Furthermore, Rodríguez's murder was not subsumed into the greater event of the Mexican Revolution; rather, the death of Antonio Rodríguez altered the initial phase of the Mexican Revolution.

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Preface

“Poor Mexico—so far from God, so near the U.S.”
-Mexican adage circa 1900

The murder of Antonio Rodríguez, a Mexican national, in November 1910 sparked a fire of anti-American sentiment across Mexico and portions of the U.S.-Mexico border. Rodríguez’s death at the hands of a lynch-mob in Rock Springs, Texas, reflected the racialized atmosphere of South Texas that dehumanized the Mexico-Tejano population to the point of justifying the lynching. The treatment of Mexican-Americans during the period highlights the hypocrisy of foreign policy between the United States and Mexico: while Mexicans in America were relegated to second class citizenship marked by working class subordination and segregation, Americans in Mexico received preferential treatment with government policies often benefitting Americans at the expense of Mexicans.

The horrific death Rodríguez suffered unleashed pent up anger harbored by segments of the Mexican population. The response of the Mexicans in Mexico City, Guadalajara, and certain portions of the border reflected the dissatisfaction with Mexican President Porfirio Díaz which had smoldered for decades during the Porfiriato (1876-1910)—finally enflaming the anti-Díaz elements throughout Mexico and the Southwest United States to the point of igniting active protests against President Díaz. The disillusionment with Díaz, however, took many forms and cannot be adequately characterized as monolithic. Therefore, this study denotes the different reactions from various cities across Mexico in response to the Rodríguez incident. In general, the rioting owed to pent-up anti-Americansim, but the initial motivation behind the demonstrations remained the slaying of Rodríguez. The manner in

which the incident so perfectly symbolized multiple groups' anger with Díaz and Americans rests at the core of the argument that Rodríguez's death deserves more attention than what historians have traditionally given it.

This thesis details what happened to Antonio Rodríguez, why it happened, and how his death became a symbol around which Mexicans rallied. In this manner, the lynching provided the Mexican Revolution with a dramatic moment that helped malcontents to recruit and retain Mexicans to fight against what Rodríguez's death symbolized: the failure of Díaz to provide for and protect ordinary Mexicans. Moreover, Rodríguez's death will be analyzed in terms of the event's contribution to the rise of anti-Americanism as an important element of the Mexican Revolution. The diplomacy surrounding the event, attempts to control the resulting riots, and the impact of the incident upon the greater diplomacy of the unfolding Mexican Revolution will be addressed in an effort to contextualize the event. The evidence marshaled will support one broad conclusion: the events surrounding the death of Antonio Rodríguez influenced the diplomacy between the United States and Mexico and the platform of the unfolding Mexican Revolution.

The issue of Antonio Rodríguez's death has been cited as an example of the Mexican populace's discontent with the regime of Porfirio Díaz—which Mexicans believed pandered to American business interests. Consequently, the Mexican public was outraged over the obvious lack of justice given to Antonio Rodríguez, as well as the blatant hypocrisy of foreign and domestic policies which allowed Americans tremendous influence with Díaz, while Mexicans possessed little ability to influence American domestic affairs. This

argument has been used to explain the incident, particularly by John Mason Hart and Alan Knight—two preeminent historians of the Mexican Revolution.¹

However, Knight concludes that the incident did not influence the greater revolution, which began only days after riots broke out in Mexico over Rodríguez's death. Rather, Knight views the incident as an isolated episode that primarily reflected the interests of the urban middle-class (mostly students). Knight concludes that such protests were “not the stuff of armed revolution.”² I maintain otherwise—arguing that the incident did have an impact on the greater trajectory of the Mexican Revolution. For Francisco I. Madero, the principle instigator of the revolution, the spread of anti-Americanism overwhelmed his relatively docile agenda for the revolt, bringing an untold number of volunteers to his cause. Thus, Rodríguez's agency should not be lost within the headline story of Madero's fight for Mexico.

The two most prominent works on the Mexican Revolution, those of Knight and Hart, fail to trace the incident through to its conclusion. This thesis will follow the path of the incident in its entirety. Moreover, only one scholarly article exists regarding the lynching: “Seventeen Days in November: The Lynching of Antonio Rodríguez and American-Mexican

¹John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2002). Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2 Vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).

²Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, I: 171-172.

Relations, November 3-19, 1910,” by Gerald Raun.³ Raun’s article concluded that the incident was subsumed into the greater Mexican Revolution and the matter forgotten.⁴ I find, however, that the issue altered the context of U.S.-Mexico foreign relations. In the process, several diplomatic precedents were set which laid the groundwork for suppression of citizens’ rights on both sides of the border in an attempt to prevent the Revolution.

Additionally, I maintain that the incident caused the Revolution to adopt a tone of anti-Americanism which had hitherto remained subdued. While the episode does not overshadow the realities of anti-foreign sentiments which were already present throughout Mexico, the case did serve as the immediate catalyst for the rise of this latent anti-American sentiment which then was incorporated into the greater Mexican Revolution. Anti-Americanism may never have become such an important part of the revolutionary agenda without the incident.

Finally, the only other significant historical attention devoted to the incident was that of Harvey Rice’s 1990 Master’s thesis, which accurately depicted the death of Rodríguez and the subsequent rioting, but in his zest to prove that the incident was the true beginning of the Mexican Revolution, Rice failed to notice the totality of the consequences of Rodríguez’s death, including the effect it had on diplomacy. Furthermore, the study contained factual

³Gerald G. Raun, “Seventeen Days in November: The Lynching of Antonio Rodríguez and American-Mexican Relations, November 3-19, 1910,” *Journal of Big Bend Studies* VII (January 1995).

⁴*Ibid*, 175-177.

errors that necessitated its careful scrutiny.⁵ In general, historians' lack of attention to the incident prompts this study.

⁵ Harvey F. Rice, "The Lynching of Antonio Rodríguez" (Master of Art's Thesis, The University of Texas, 1990).

Chapter I: The Origins of Anti-Foreignism in Mexico

Mexican history is riddled with episodes submission to foreign interests. Between 1846 and 1848, the U.S.-Mexican War was fought to settle the disputed portions of Texas which the Texas Revolution had stripped from Mexico. After losing the war, the humiliating Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo forced Mexico to cede gigantic land holdings, totaling some 55% of Mexican territory. Afterwards, filibustering expeditions continued to challenge Mexicans for their own land. The Gadsden Purchase of 1854 dealt the final blow to Mexican territorial integrity, releasing lands south of the Gila River and west of the Rio Grande to America for the purpose of constructing a southern transcontinental railroad. Thus when Mexican President Porfirio Díaz established control over Mexico in 1876, he was forced to cut a controversial deal with Mexico's historical enemies, foreigners, to achieve his goal of boosting investment.

Díaz's modernization efforts between 1876 and 1910 resulted in dramatic changes to Mexican society. Díaz and his advisors needed to secure foreign capital to underwrite economic development, and as historian Ramón Eduardo Ruíz observed in *The Great Rebellion*, Díaz and his advisors turned to their rich, northern neighbor—the United States. Few alternatives existed to American capital. European creditors, leery of Mexico's inability to meet payments on its foreign debt, had already scaled back their support. With other nations refusing to invest, Díaz endorsed the only country willing, indeed eager, to invest:

America.¹ The union between the two nations gave rise to the adage that Mexico was the “mother of foreigners and stepmother of Mexicans.” The decision to turn to the Yankee neighbor relied heavily upon the assumption that at some point in the future, Mexicans would benefit from a robust economy.

Porfirio Díaz assumed power in 1876 during a period of extreme political uncertainty. His first priority was to stabilize the political system. His slogan was “*pan o palo*” meaning bread or stick, implying that the Mexican people could either have food, or continue to war against themselves. According to Paul Garner, one of Díaz’s biographers, Díaz combined repressive tactics with politically pragmatic accommodations to establish and maintain his power. Contemporary detractors characterized him as a brutal tyrant, while his supporters hailed him as a beneficent patriarch. Realistically, Díaz employed all means necessary to maintain his political dominance—control he believed necessary for the good of the country and crucial to enticing foreign investors to bring their capital into Mexico. Garner catalogued Díaz’s abuses of power, noting the president’s culpability in “repression, coercion, intimidation and, in at least one celebrated case, in Veracruz in 1879, the assassination of political opponents.”² Additionally, Díaz maintained an anti-Indian bias which evinced itself in Díaz’s brutal dealings with the Yaqui tribes of northern Mexico. At

¹Ramon Eduardo Ruíz, *The Great Rebellion: Mexico, 1905-1924* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1980), 101.

²Paul Garner, *Porfirio Díaz* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2001), 68-70.

times, however, mediation, manipulation, and conciliation tempered his authoritarian tendencies.³ Díaz was a complex man tasked with maneuvering Mexico into modernity.

By the early 1910s, however, the Mexican populace, after enduring three decades of economic policies beneficial only to elites, lost the hope that ordinary Mexicans would *eventually* see economic benefits from heavy foreign investment. Winds of change began to blow as the 1910 election neared. To bolster his support with Mexicans, Díaz hesitantly conceded that the middle-class deserved greater participation in the electoral process. His hollow gestures failed to appease political challengers. Worse, his talk of political openness did nothing to enhance the quality of life for ordinary Mexicans. Francisco I. Madero, the wealthy landowner from Coahuila and Díaz's foremost political opponent, called Díaz on his bluff—daring to run against the President himself—and the political battle that eventually morphed into the Mexican Revolution began. This struggle, however, represented only a small portion of what stirred the Mexican Revolution as the political fight to oust Díaz evolved into the goal of creating a government more attentive to Mexicans' needs—rather than the wishes of foreign capital. Perhaps the greatest enticement the revolution offered was the idea that ordinary Mexicans deserved more from their leaders. This goal secured a cross-class coalition capable of carrying out a revolution.

Antonio Rodríguez, a Mexican migrant working across the border, died at the hands of a lynch-mob in the small town of Rock Springs, Texas, only weeks before Madero's anticipated revolt. Rodríguez was accused of murdering a rancher's wife. His death, mired in controversy over the blatant lack of justice, gave rise to many protests and riots throughout

³*Ibid.*

Mexico in the immediate period just before the beginning of armed revolt. The American and Mexican administrations attempted to quickly dismiss the incident as an isolated occurrence. Both sets of leaders understood that tensions ran high, as Díaz's political opponents prepared to take advantage of any missteps by the Díaz administration. The actions of officials on either side of the border reflected their misunderstanding of public opinion. At the beginning of the Porfiriato, most people favored stability at all costs; now, however, the Mexican public intended to overthrow any policy which relegated the mass of the Mexican public to second-class citizenship. As the process of supplanting the status quo unfolded, Rodríguez's lynching became a symbol of Díaz's inability to provide for his citizens both in Mexico and abroad—a failure which many believed was inherently connected to the government's policy of cultivating a friendly environment for American investment at the expense of Mexican interests.

Díaz's failure to attend to the needs of ordinary Mexicans can be partially attributed to his success in obtaining huge amounts of foreign investment to modernize Mexico. The modernization of Mexico, however, wrought tremendous social changes along with the economic advances. Historians frequently begin their analyses of the Mexican Revolution with startling assessments of the conditions across Mexico at the height of American investment, achieved at the fin-de-siècle. The following observations highlight the degree of change that Díaz's policies produced across Mexico. These developments provide the appropriate context within which Rodríguez's death and the consequent outpouring of anti-foreign sentiment may be understood.

By 1910, American entrepreneurs comprised the single largest body of investors in Mexico. The value of U.S. investments exceeded the sum of those of all other foreign nations. American household names such as Hearst, Guggenheim, United States Steel, the Anaconda Corporation, Standard Oil, McCormick, Doheny, J.P. Morgan and others owned sugar plantations, finance companies, enormous cattle ranches, and a majority of the mines and oil fields. According to historian Edward P. Haley, their investments probably topped one billion dollars—exceeding the total capital owned by Mexicans themselves.⁴ U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Henry Lane Wilson presciently noted on the eve of Rodríguez’s lynching that:

...it seems to me from my observations of the situation that we are rapidly approaching a crisis in the affairs of this nation, the result of which must be of vital importance to the American Government, to American commerce and to American capital invested here.⁵

While Americans comprised the greatest percentage of foreign companies, other nations exacerbated the problem of foreign dominance by competing for shares of the Mexican economy. After the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 in the U.S., Chinese laborers began coming to Mexico, their numbers swelling to more than 60,000

⁴Henry Bamford Parkes, *A History of Mexico*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960), 306. Quote is from Edward P. Haley, *Revolution and Intervention: The Diplomacy of Taft and Wilson with Mexico, 1910-1917* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1970), 12.

⁵Wilson to Secretary of State, October 31, 1910. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Record Group No. 812.00/ Document No.1126, hereafter, *FRUS*. For Wilson’s personal memoir of the events, see Henry Lane Wilson, *Diplomatic Episodes in Mexico, Belgium, and Chile* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1971).

during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁶ Meanwhile, the English invested in oil, precious metals, public utilities, and agribusinesses such as sugar and coffee. The French established dominance in the textile industry, and the Spanish—with the highest foreign population—nearly monopolized retail trade and tobacco production.⁷

The influx of international business intensified social stratification. Americans quickly made their way to the top of Mexican society. Foreigners in general felt little need to assimilate into the Mexican culture which they typically deemed as inferior to their own: they isolated themselves into colonies, reserved the more highly paid positions in their industries for men of their own nationality, and accumulated wealth which they intended to take back to their home countries. At times, foreigners openly voiced their contempt for Mexicans.⁸ Foreign investors dominated the entire economy, whether urban or rural, agrarian or industrial, in a manner that squeezed out revenue at the expense of Mexicans and the domestic Mexican economy.

The sheer number of Americans moving to Mexico on a daily basis visibly altered the composition of Mexico, forcing demographic and social changes in the wake of economic development. By 1910, more than 40,000 Americans resided in Mexico; 12,000 lived in Mexico City alone. At the turn of the century, Mexico's population stood at a mere 13.6

⁶Robert Chao Romero, *The Chinese in Mexico: 1882-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010), 1.

⁷Edward P. Haley, *Revolution and Intervention: The Diplomacy of Taft and Wilson with Mexico, 1910-1917* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1970), 12.

⁸*Ibid*, 12.

million.⁹ Americans concentrated themselves into colonies in urban centers throughout Mexico, most notably in Mexico City and Guadalajara, causing their numbers to appear greater than reality as they competed with Mexican businessmen and relegated Mexican labor to near peonage as they sought to extract revenues with the least possible expenses. According to historian John Mason Hart, U.S. property owners, businessmen, miners, petroleum engineers, railroad workers, farmers and ranchers immigrated to Mexico in excess of 3,000 per year in the early 1900s.¹⁰

The actions of American business leaders in Mexico developed out of the example of the Mexican *hacendado* class, composed of wealthy land owners who frequently demanded the labor of nearby peasants (*peones*). These *hacendados* competed against foreign interests for dominance of wage-laborers throughout the country during the Porfiriato. As historian John Mason Hart observed, Díaz's opponents, including the Flores Magón brothers, viewed Mexican elites with a similar skepticism as Americans. Indeed, Hart argued that "the emerging revolutionary consciousness" believed that the problems with Mexico's modernization were "internal in origin but inextricably linked to American interests."¹¹ Magón's anti-government newspaper, *Regeneración*, opposed wealthy Mexicans while also

⁹Jorge Durand, "From Traitors to Heroes: 100 Years of Mexican Migration Policies," *Migration Information Source* (March 2004). Available from: <http://www.migrationinformation.org>; internet, accessed March 15, 2012.

¹⁰Hart, *Empire and Revolution*, 271-272.

¹¹*Ibid.*

espousing the slogan “Mexico for the Mexicans,” in an effort to draw awareness to the incongruous wealth and power achieved by foreigners.¹²

The immigrants created economies of scale which generated wealth in the Mexican mining, oil, timber, farming, and ranching industries that provided hope for economic growth and the expectation for a greater economic good for the many.¹³ For ordinary Mexicans, this prospect fell short of reality. Economic conditions for most Mexicans declined, and foreigners quickly assumed roles as business leaders—relegating Mexicans to working class status. Moreover, foreign acquisition of many of the best properties sent land values skyrocketing out of the reach of ordinary Mexicans.

The social interactions between foreigners and nationals quickly produced resentment. Ruíz quoted a contemporary observer who noted that:

At the start, the newcomers were few and useful; but later, when they arrived in droves, with every 100 honest men 1,000 rascals appeared, boasting of talent and money, and claiming to speak for large industries, but who in the long run, turn out to be scoundrels in frock coats of no help to anyone.¹⁴

The social confrontation was more complex than a simple binary conflict between Mexicans and Americans. Within the Mexican working classes, two broad categories existed: the first consisted of industrial workers, the second of agrarian peasants. By 1910, both groups held deep reservations about the impact of foreigners, causing Mexicans to

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴Ruíz, *The Great Rebellion*, 107-108.

rethink the arrangement their government struck with external capital. Historian Alan Knight argues that the workers of the new industrial complexes, represented in the mines, the textile sector, and the railways, constructed their own unique vision of how industrialization should benefit them. Laborers advanced claims about the rights of workers and made demands for greater political action—typically in the form of unionization.¹⁵ These new perceptions of workers’ and citizens’ rights ran counter to Díaz’s policy of generosity toward foreign ownership.

A second subset of the working classes, the agrarian peasantry, exhibited a reactive stance that typically exuded communal association rather than any special occupational relation. Knight notes that many artisans, agricultural workers, and some miners more closely identified with the agrarian peasantry than they did with industrial workers, and that their potential for collective violence “underwrote the Revolution.” According to Knight, popular agrarian revolt was specifically associated with “the changes taking place since the 1870s...”¹⁶ In terms of the Rodríguez incident, both groups of working classes responded with protest; the peasantry became immediately incensed over the injustice while the industrial workers saw an opportunity to advance their claims about the inequality of the double standard which favored Americans over Mexicans. In this unique manner, the Rodríguez incident served to motivate both the reactionary agrarian peasantry and the industrial worker visionaries. Revolutionary leaders, frequently coming out of the upper-

¹⁵Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2:150-153.

¹⁶*Ibid*, 150-153.

classes, took advantage of the incident to motivate both strands of the working classes by propagating the news of Rodríguez's death and the administrations' (both American and Mexican) inadequate responses.

For those Mexicans wealthy enough to remain above the working classes, their dissatisfaction with the conditions in Mexico were no less pronounced than those of the ordinary peasantry. Mexico's bourgeoisie felt pressured between foreign competition and economic nationalism. While a few profited from successful collaboration with foreign investors, most suffered an economic squeeze.¹⁷ Well-to-do Mexicans blamed their setbacks on the failures of the political process—placing pressure on Díaz to loosen his political straightjacket on Mexico.

By the turn-of-the-century, the Mexican population faced both political and economic uncertainty. Díaz's hollow overtures at increased political participation resulted in outright political opposition; meanwhile, ordinary Mexicans became easily incited to open defiance under the leadership of various upper-class political agitators. The political opposition, most forcefully represented in the person of Francisco I. Madero, needed the support of the ordinary Mexican peasantry if a revolution was to be fought and won. Revolutionary leaders gained the peasantry's support by exploiting a series of grievances that culminated with the death of Antonio Rodríguez. However, as the working classes joined the effort to overthrow Díaz, they also advanced their own claims about ending the double standard that favored Americans at their expense. Thus, Hart aptly suggested that:

¹⁷James D. Cockcroft, *Intellectual Precursors of the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1913* (Austin: Institute of Latin American Studies by the University of Texas Press, 1968), 19.

The revolutionary challenge in Mexico began as a call for a more participatory government and agrarian reform, but it quickly deepened into a broad-based cultural, political, and nationalist rejection of the political elites in the nation's capital, the great estate owners, and the foreign capitalists—for the most part, Americans.¹⁸

The American presence impacted all classes of Mexicans; by 1910, most citizens of Mexico expressed unease with their position relative to that of Americans in Mexico. Two episodes highlight the tensions building between Mexicans and Americans: the strike at Cananea (Sonora) in 1906, and the Río Blanco company fray (Orizaba, Veracruz) in 1906-1907. In both instances, Mexican workers organized in outright opposition against American ownership. At Cananea, miners struck demanding better pay, promotion, and Mexicanization of the labor force. The strike resulted in a violent confrontation that brought American Rangers from across the Arizona border to defend the American owners. Mexicans and Americans died in the ensuing fight, and yet the workers returned to work quickly. The instance remained isolated to the region and failed to incite further unrest elsewhere.

Similarly, textile workers at Río Blanco, numbering 30,000, struck over bread and butter grievances: low pay, long hours, fines and harsh regulations. Mexican Federal troops eventually broke the strike, killing between fifty and seventy workers. Within a couple of days of the violence, the fearful workers returned to their jobs. Knight suggests that both incidents made little contribution to the armed revolution in 1910, rather, they eroded the

¹⁸Hart, *Empire and Revolution*, 271.

image of the Díaz regime.¹⁹ Locally, the events at Cananea and Río Blanco caused workers to resent the Mexican government's defense of American interests. On a broader scale, the workers failed to gain general sympathy from ordinary Mexicans because their plight did not easily relate to others outside their region.

Rodríguez's death was not the first instance of blatant disregard for Mexican life (not to mention rights) where Americans and Mexicans clashed. In the cases of Río Blanco and Cananea, the Díaz regime appeared on the wrong side of public opinion—supporting American owned businesses at the expense of Mexican workers.²⁰ Ultimately, Cananea and Río Blanco caused only small chinks in the armor of Díaz's legitimacy. While his administration escaped from those instances rather unscathed, Díaz failed to recognize the importance of the changing tide of public opinion. The lynching of Antonio Rodríguez, on the other hand, became catalytic to changing popular expectations of the government. The evolution of ordinary Mexicans' beliefs about the role of government represented an ominous social transition that boded poorly for Díaz.

Other social changes contributed to general dissatisfaction as well. The modernization of Mexico created a middle class of skilled artisans, government bureaucrats, scribes, clergymen, low-ranking army officers, a few businessmen and professionals. This new cadre of professionals, while very small, benefitted from economic development. With increased opportunity came heightened expectations of certain rights, privileges, and material

¹⁹Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, I: 134-137, 145-150.

²⁰Rodney Anderson, *Outcasts in Their Own Land: Mexican Industrial Workers, 1906-1911* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976), 284.

benefits. Amenities such as better diets and indoor plumbing caused lifestyle changes not easily relinquished during poor economic times.²¹ But modernization also produced economic irregularities in the form of boom-and-bust cycles. The benefits of economic expansion made the middle class all the more doubtful of the dictator's ability to steer the economy. The instability of the apparent prosperity caused working professionals to doubt the value and durability of Porfirian progress.

Additionally, important historical events concerning foreign involvement remained in the minds of Mexicans. The brief reign of the French-imposed Emperor Maximilian from 1864-67 taught Mexico that foreign dominance might easily extend beyond businesses to political control. Moreover, some remembered filibustering expeditions into Mexico, such as those of William Walker. From the mid-nineteenth century up to the revolution (and indeed throughout the revolution!), American expansionist impulses ran high, and local and national authorities did little to stop expeditions organized in the United States. As the diplomatic scholar Joseph Stout observed in his study of filibustering, the success of such expeditions was less significant than the diplomatic repercussions of filibusters who recruited, organized, and planned their possible incursions within full view of the U.S. government even as newspapers in both countries published dozens of articles about the endeavors. Rumors surfaced in 1903 and again in 1907 about nascent filibustering parties which sought to steal Mexican lands in the northern states. While no actual incursions took place, the rumors

²¹Michael C. Meyer and William L. Sherman, *The Course of Mexican History*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 472-473.

forced diplomats to respond and order thorough investigations (highlighting the fact that foreign involvement in Mexico remained controversial).²²

Discontent—while somewhat subdued—remained present in the minds of Mexicans, weighing on their thoughts and actions in the period just before the Rodríguez incident in November 1910. State department officials recalled that civic events, such as the 1906 *fiestas patrias*, sometimes adopted anti-American tones in their expressions of Mexican patriotism. The American Consul at Tampico, Mexico, aptly noted that the poorer classes of Mexicans resented Díaz, believing that he had “sold out the country to the Americans.”²³ Similarly, Consul Samuel E. Magill, of Guadalajara, remembered that at the commemoration of Hidalgo's *Grito de Dolores* on the night of September 15, 1910, Mexican mobs paraded through the streets crying "Death to the Americans."²⁴

The uncertainty of the possible outcome of the Revolution, along with the tendency of revolutionaries to adopt nationalistic, rather than pro-American ideas, fueled frustrations of diplomats such as Consul Magill. Americans stood to lose the most if strident Mexican nationalism succeeded in altering the status quo. Thus Mexican resentment posed a serious risk to the American presence in Mexico, a fact which led to violent clashes in the wake of Rodríguez's lynching and continued throughout the Mexican Revolution. After Rodríguez's

²²Joseph A. Stout, *Schemers & Dreamers: Filibustering in Mexico, 1848-1921* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 2002), x-xvii, 96-97.

²³Muller to Assistant Secretary of State, September 6, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/342.

²⁴Samuel E. Magill to Philander C. Knox, March 20, 1911, *FRUS*, 812.00/1126.

death, as the Revolution began in earnest in the spring of 1911, Consul Magill noted that “the anti-American sentiment is almost universal among rich and poor alike.”²⁵

Peasant and bourgeoisie malcontents fused, creating an alliance that allowed the Mexican Revolution to succeed in overthrowing Díaz with the signing of the Treaty of Ciudad Juárez on May 21, 1911. This merger of discontents made the case of Antonio Rodríguez particularly important and complex. Both classes seized upon Rodríguez’s lynching as an example of Díaz’s stubborn insistence on placing American interests ahead of Mexicans’ needs. By 1910, any hope of justifying pro-American policies with the argument that Mexicans would soon see the benefits of foreign investment faded. Political reformers united with frustrated workers (both agrarian and industrial) to protest Rodríguez’s treatment along with Díaz’s failure to pressure the United States for justice. Increasingly, ordinary Mexicans began calling for their government to stand up to the mistreatment of an ordinary Mexican citizen.

A unique blend of anti-Díaz and anti-American sentiment emerged in the wake of the Rodríguez lynching. The melding of the two feelings confused American and Mexican officials who found themselves unable to anticipate the depth and animosity of the protests. The Mexican government responded to the protests with typical suppressive actions, shutting down papers and jailing protesters. As Díaz attempted to appease American officials by dispersing the protestors, he once again fell on the wrong side of public opinion—as at Cananea and Río Blanco. Underestimating the extent of animosity, Mexican and American officials failed to respect legal rights and justice as they pursued a singular goal of stopping

²⁵*Ibid.*

anti-American demonstrations. Díaz continued to undermine his image as he suppressed free speech throughout Mexico. However, in stark contrast to Cananea and Río Blanco, Mexicans all across Mexico sympathized with the lynched Rodríguez—helping to propel the issue into a diplomatic crisis that Díaz proved incapable of resolving.

Revolutionaries capitalized on the incident by bringing Rodríguez's death to the forefront of ordinary Mexicans' minds. While only a few Mexicans identified with the striking miners at Cananea or the textile workers at Río Blanco, most Mexicans empathized with Rodríguez, a poor man trying to find work on the other side of the border. The reactions to his death forced Mexican nationalism to be defined in terms of anti-Americanism—a development that changed the hopes and expectations Mexicans held for the budding Mexican Revolution.

Chapter II: Francisco I. Madero's Revolutionary Agenda

The heightened levels of popular discontent aroused by the lynching of Antonio Rodríguez owed partly to the ability of Francisco I. Madero to carefully articulate the shortcomings of President Díaz so that the murder of Rodríguez appeared the last straw in a long line of abuses. Madero's challenge to Porfirio Díaz's presidency initially seemed hollow, yet within a few months, Madero became the frontrunner for the *antireelectionista* movement. Madero's rich family provided him the resources necessary to carry out an active campaign in a legitimate effort to gain popular support. Díaz, the aging dictator, quickly realized that more than just the presidency hung in the balance; Díaz knew that without a smooth transition to a new successor, Mexico might be flung back into the political chaos which had marked the nation's history for so many years before the Porfiriato.¹ This political uncertainty prompted Díaz to employ his traditional tactic of pacification through suppression of opposition.

Political uncertainty threatened the understandings which gave American businesses advantages throughout Mexico. Shared borders and linked economies kept diplomatic officials in a mode of constant collaboration to keep border commerce operating as smoothly as possible. An environment conducive to foreign business, however, rested upon the Mexican government's continual deference to the wishes of foreign investors. When the Díaz regime failed to completely suppress Madero and the *antireelectionistas*, American officials threw their support behind Díaz and his plan to retain Vice President Ramón Corral

¹Garner, *Porfirio Díaz*, 194-196.

as his eventual successor. U.S. support for Díaz, however, put the American population residing inside Mexico at odds with the budding popular movement which aimed to replace the old order.

As President Díaz approached his eightieth year amid the organized political opposition of Francisco Madero, he failed to exhibit the shrewd, political acumen which helped him consolidate and maintain his power in the first place. The political arena changed and the old dictator failed to adapt to the new demands of ordinary Mexicans who increasingly dared to openly defy public officials. Additionally, as Paul Garner noted, “internal schisms progressively undermined the self-confidence of the regime and the fragile equilibrium of elite consensus.”² This breakdown of the internal dynamics of Díaz’s administration resulted in rivalry, conflict, factionalism and division where cohesion previously existed. Alan Knight metaphorically described Díaz’s administration as a monster that “lacked a political brain commensurate with its swollen economic muscle: hence its extinction.”³

In a bizarre episode indicative of Díaz’s political ineptitude, the famous Creelman Interview accelerated the regime’s decline. In the surprisingly candid conversation, published in the March 1908 *Pearson’s Magazine*, Díaz suggested to U.S. journalist James Creelman that he intended to retire before the next election. The article portrayed Díaz as a frustrated, much-aged dictator no longer capable, nor willing, to lead Mexico. Díaz intended

²*Ibid*, 194-196.

³Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, I: 36.

the interview to appease American politicians concerned about the future of the political leadership in Mexico, but few in the U.S. expected Díaz to announce his resignation. Some hoped for Díaz to outline for the American business community a plan for a peaceful succession to a new executive with similar policies. The hope was for an orderly succession, not for outright democracy where challengers could potentially throw Mexican politics into disarray. In the wake of the interview, Díaz downplayed the significance of his statements and appeared to ready himself for another term. His opponents were further disheartened when Díaz refused to concede a popular vote on the vice president. Not surprisingly, Díaz's backtracking provided fuel for the *antireelectionista* platform. Garner characterized the Creelman Interview as "richly ironic" in that Díaz intended it to smooth the transition to new leadership but in fact the event caused political chaos which the regime had worked so diligently to preserve.⁴

Perhaps Díaz truthfully intended to step down, believing that with a robust economy, democracy would follow. Maybe the ensuing political backlash scared him back into his old conservatism. More sardonically, however, some believed that his intention was only to draw out political opponents so that he could have them removed.⁵ The old dictator responded to the political defiance the only way that he knew, by clamping down on opposition. Díaz's principal opponents were Bernardo Reyes, from within his administration, and Francisco Madero, who intended to wage an active campaign against

⁴Garner, *Porfirio Díaz*, 212-215.

⁵*Ibid.*

Díaz. Reyes was banished to Europe on assignment, and Madero arrested.⁶ Reyes accepted his assignment, only to return later in an effort to take control of the Revolution for himself.⁷ Madero broke jail and fled to the United States.

Madero escaped to the relative safety of San Antonio, Texas, in October 1910. His popularity soared as newspapers propagated the dramatic story of his escape—casting Madero as the heroic defender of Mexican rights and liberties. The *San Antonio Express* carried the story of his arrival in theatrical fashion, remarking on his “spectacular escape to American soil.”⁸ To be sure, Madero remained under strict U.S. surveillance, but Americans tended to view the revolutionary with piqued interest rather than suspicion. Newspapers openly published his whereabouts, and even celebrated the arrival of his wife, whom the paper deemed “a cultured woman.”⁹ The couple stayed at the Hutchins House, along Garden Street, and upon their arrival a mariachi band of twelve serenaded them.¹⁰ If Madero was concerned about being arrested or harmed, he did not display it. Rather, he seemed at ease promoting himself and his revolutionary call to arms. For the Americans’ part, they too seemed quite comfortable, if no less interested, with the situation.

⁶Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War with Mexico: Europe, The United States and the Mexican Revolution* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 32-35.

⁷Artemio H. Benavides, *El General Bernardo Reyes: Vida de un Liberal Porfirista* (Monterrey, México: Ediciones Castillo, 1998), 333-335.

⁸*San Antonio Express News*, San Antonio, Texas, October 9, 1910.

⁹*San Antonio Express News*, October 11, 1910.

¹⁰David Nathan Johnson, *Madero in Texas* (San Antonio: Corona Publishing Company, 2001), 21-22.

The border region's Mexican-American population sympathized with Madero. Several revolutionary newspapers operated within U.S. borders, including the *Monitor Democrático*, printed in San Antonio, Texas. The papers targeted the Mexican audience, but also sought the sympathy of the American public. Appealing to the virtues of liberty enjoyed by Americans, the *Democrático* declared in early 1910 that the revolution was necessary, "[B]ecause public liberty has disappeared..." in Mexico.¹¹ The *Democrático* dared to openly criticize the Díaz regime, explicitly requesting that the Mexican people to rise up in revolution. Moreover, the paper helped remind the public of Díaz's past suppressions: Cananea, Río Blanco, and the forced removal of the Yaquí tribe of northern Mexico.¹² In late August 1910, the paper concluded that: "When the people suffer under the weight of tyranny...and do nothing to correct their condition, they the people are to blame."¹³ Tellingly, the editorial also encouraged that each Mexican obtain a rifle, for "an unarmed man is of no value."¹⁴ Encouraging armed rebellion toward an administration diplomatically recognized by the United States constituted sedition, yet in San Antonio the paper operated

¹¹*Monitor Democrático*, San Antonio, Texas, February 5, 1910 in *Documents on the Mexican Revolution*, Vols. I-III (Salisbury, N.C.: Documentary Publications, 1976), I: 5-7, hereafter, *Mex. Rev. Docs.*

¹²*Ibid*, I: 5-7.

¹³*Monitor Democrático*, August 31, 1910, in *Mex. Rev. Docs.*, I: 8-9.

¹⁴Luther T. Ellsworth to Secretary of State, 20 September, 1910, in *Mex. Rev. Docs.*, I: 10-12. Ellsworth often relayed pertinent information from revolutionary newspapers to the State Department.

freely under the protections of free speech. This contradiction posed a serious challenge for State Department officials accustomed to lax diplomacy.

Madero became well known throughout the area and his popularity increased as the *Monitor Democrático's* editor, Paulino Martínez, boosted circulation to what State Department officials estimated to be as high as 20,000 subscribers.¹⁵ The *Monitor Democrático* was among many revolutionary newspapers that Madero utilized with astonishing success to promote the *antireeleccionista* cause. Indeed, as one scholar noted, “success marked almost every phase” of Madero’s journey to organize local clubs, press campaigns, and increase readership of supportive newspapers.¹⁶ In Mexico, *El Antireeleccionista*, the weekly party organ, became a daily circulation, while the former *reyista* publication *México Nuevo* joined Madero’s cause, in addition to *El Diario del Hogar* and *El País*—two other papers that encouraged opposition to Díaz.¹⁷ In the waning days of October, *El Diario* frequently advertised Juan Sánchez Azcona’s revolutionary book, *Suum Cuique*, in addition to running pieces about Madero’s actions (Azcona was closely associated with *El Diario*). Incidentally, *Suum Cuique* was also published in San Antonio, by the Herz

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶Johnson, *Madero in Texas*, 8-9.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

Publishing Company, with citations throughout the book to the *Monitor Democrático* and Francisco Madero.¹⁸

On October 15th, *El Diario del Hogar* ran two separate pieces to update Mexicans about the events in San Antonio. One article happily informed readers about Madero's escape, and his new residence at the Hutchins House. *El Diario* also noted that various spies and officials "passed day and night in front of the house."¹⁹ Mexicans viewed Madero with hopeful interest, but as of October 1910, few realized the importance of Madero's time in San Antonio. Madero thrived in the South Texas climate where he enjoyed the freedom to foment his rebellion. He also benefitted from the Mexican-American population which received him with open arms, providing him shelter, food, aid, and potential recruits. During Madero's time in San Antonio, the Mexican League, a *mutualista* organization, held a conference aimed to help some "7,000 Mexicans in misery" then residing in South Texas.²⁰ These disgruntled Mexicans on the American side of the border provided support and a steady stream of future revolutionaries.

In a story filled with intrigue, San Antonio became a headquarters for the revolutionaries, even as detectives hired by the Mexican government, Mexican consular officers, United States government agents, and Texas Rangers watched their movements.

¹⁸*El Diario del Hogar*, México D. F., México, October 15, 1910, *Revolutionary Mexico in Newspapers, 1900-1929*, Reel 215 (Austin: University of Texas, 2001), author's translation.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰*Ibid.*

Moreover, private agencies, such as Furlong's Secret Service Company of St. Louis, also arrived to harass Madero and his associates.²¹ Nevertheless, streams of revolutionaries poured into San Antonio. Historian David Johnson noted in his study of Madero's time in San Antonio that an organized structure emerged, and the planning of the revolution followed a rather orderly process:

Most exiles had specific duties. Madero charged some with local buying of arms and ammunition. Others had responsibility for shipping these purchases to border caches or to Mexico. Former army officers planned campaign strategy and trained recruits in deserted pastures south of the city. Journalists, such as Francisco Múgica, wrote articles for Spanish language newspapers along the border. Many men acted as couriers, carrying instructions to groups organized and waiting for the day of the uprising.²²

Eventually, Madero completed the revolutionary plan, titled the *Plan de San Luis Potosí*, after the city where Díaz had jailed him. In Paulino Martínez's shop on North Santa Rosa Street, sometime between October 26-27, 5,000 copies of the plan were printed—each signed by Madero and then immediately commissioned to be distributed to regions across Mexico and the border.²³ Madero's diligent attention to building a mechanism to disseminate information appeared to be paying off. He possessed the communication tools, through loyal couriers and fervent printers, necessary to motivate people to stay the course of the planned revolution.

²¹Johnson, *Madero in Texas*, 22-23.

²²*Ibid*, 31-33.

²³*Ibid*, 31-33.

Despite the intrigue permeating the atmosphere, Madero remained safe and relatively comfortable. Careful not to wear out his welcome, Madero issued a separate proclamation, prior to the release of the *Plan de San Luis Potosí*, to his American audience. His “Manifesto to the American People” requested only “the hospitality which free people offer those who seek freedom.” Madero wanted Americans to understand his goals; he neither expected nor asked for assistance.²⁴

Despite developments north of the border, the Mexican press seemed more concerned in late October about the revolution in Portugal than they did about any plot to overthrow President Díaz. Thirty years of political consistency caused many to dismiss the prospect of a revolution in Mexico, even if dissatisfaction with the regime persisted. Buried beneath the headlines, however, disruptive issues remained. On October 4th, the Catholic paper *El País* noted that in Florida, Americans had lynched two Italian-Americans the day before. Their lynching sparked a debate over their citizenship, and the issue remained at the crux of the investigation rather than the crime itself. Within a day, the U.S. Department of State quickly terminated the inquiry after verifying the American citizenship of the two victims.²⁵

The quick resolution neutralized the meaning of the incident. Mexicans, however, felt that the lynchings violated basic human rights and that the U.S. government upheld policies that allowed the horrific crimes to continue. Within Mexico, a similar tradition existed: the infamous *Ley Fuga* which enabled police to kill any person fleeing from them.

²⁴*San Antonio Express News*, October 11, 1910.

²⁵*El País*, México D.F., México, October 4, 1910, *Revolutionary Mexico in Newspapers, 1900-1929*, Reel 293, author’s translation.

This pretense justified killing otherwise innocent civilians. After the conclusion of the Italian-American lynching controversy, several instances of inappropriate uses of force in Mexico caused *El País* to denounce the *Ley Fuga* alongside American lynchings as acts that “raised a wave of indignation in the honorable consciences...” leading to a “cry of protest.”²⁶

Mexicans drew parallels between lynchings in the United States and the *Ley Fuga* in Mexico. Both traditions allowed law enforcement officials to justify, or ignore, otherwise heinous crimes. In a forceful editorial on October 25th, *El País* accused both nations of maintaining barbaric practices: “the first, for tolerating the ‘lynch law’; accusing the second of sustaining, the imposition of the ‘ley fuga’...the ‘Ley Lynch’ and the ‘ley fuga’ are the two greatest blots on the modern government.”²⁷ The article lambasted both governments in a seven point summary of the negative aspects of both “laws” and how they represented blatant acts of murder by officials, concluding that because of the damage the *Ley Fuga* and *Ley Lynch* caused ordinary Mexicans, “Mexico presents the largest and worst blot on the modern world.”²⁸

Other actions of leading officials sparked complaint as well. On October 5th, *El País* broke the news of the expulsion of ten students from the State College in Puebla for chanting “Viva Madero.” The suspensions prompted further unrest on the campus as other youths

²⁶*El País*, October 24, 1910, author’s translation.

²⁷*El País*, October 25, 1910, author’s translation.

²⁸*El País*, October 25, 1910, author’s translation.

protested the actions of the school administrators.²⁹ Headlines about the school's decisions overshadowed the realities of pro-Madero sympathies among the students. Similarly, when Gustavo Madero, Francisco's brother, was detained for attempting to bribe the military into joining Madero's cause, the press focused more on the law enforcement's response—the actions of Police Inspector Félix Díaz—while downplaying Gustavo's overtures.³⁰

The unrest in Puebla only contributed to the already simmering resentment over education issues. Months before, the Mexican public became enraged when the Texas state government refused to allow Mexican children to attend public schools. A July editorial in *El País* had condemned the actions of Texas officials while also blaming the Díaz government for failing to stand up for Mexicans.

The reason is obvious: The truth is that fraternity is incompatible with the pretensions of racial superiority in the United States. The problem is that they have no confidence or friendship for the rest of the American nations. We are referring to the exclusion of Mexican children from schools in the state of Texas. For a long time many of our countrymen, especially the working classes, have been lured by the traffickers in human misery, and without the hard lessons of experience, cross the border with their families to work in a strange land...The bread of learning is better than the bread of material for the spirit, but his is reserved only for one race in that nation...We don't want to discuss this famous superiority; we are limiting ourselves to discussing and protesting against the fact (of discrimination), hoping that our government will open an investigation and energetically raise this question with the White House...Americans in this country receive aid, courtesy and respect that they do not receive in their own country. The just and legal imprisonment of a yankee millionaire in Mexico has been sufficient cause for a problem

²⁹*El País*, October 5, 1910, author's translation.

³⁰*El País*, October 11, 1910, author's translation.

in diplomatic relations. Should not the outrages and prejudices against our own brothers merit something similar?³¹

The unease about the situation on the other side of the border caused Mexicans to demand more from their own government. Citizens desired that their leaders defend Mexican rights just as the American government demanded protections for Americans within Mexico.

Despite the growing drama on both sides of the border, few traces of anti-Americanism appeared prior to Rodríguez's death, as Madero attempted to keep tight controls on the developing revolution to prevent angering the United States. Others, however, expressed serious misgivings about the future the revolutionaries might create. Luther Ellsworth, the American consul at Ciudad Porfirio Díaz (the city was later renamed Piedras Negras after the revolution's conclusion), remarked that he hoped "the better element among the Mexican exiles...will be able to so control the extremists, that rashness will not prevail and invasions be made" but, he concluded, "I doubt their ability to accomplish it."³²

Ellsworth, along with other American leaders, hoped the whole *antireelectionista* issue would end when Díaz either continued into another term or appointed a new successor. However, Madero's influence failed to dissipate, and he continued to gain momentum. One large reason for his success was that the foundation for the revolution rested in the myriad of grievances ordinary Mexicans held against Díaz, rather than their outright support for Madero. Indeed, Madero's Plan barely mentioned land reform, and omitted entirely the issue

³¹*El País*, July 28, 1910, author's translation.

³²Luther T. Ellsworth to Secretary of State, 12 October 1910, in *Mex. Rev. Docs.*, I: 38-40.

of labor disputes. For his part, Madero deliberately aimed to propagate a justification for revolution rather than a full-blown plan for reform. The Plan, for instance, required respect for foreigners and their interests. He tempered his call to arms with promises to fulfill all government obligations—an implicit nod toward American businesses which he knew he could ill afford to alienate.³³

The *Plan de San Luis Potosí's* limited scope, however, left ample room for ordinary Mexicans to read into it what they wished. In this inadvertent shortcoming, Madero laid the foundation for the revolution to evolve as the peoples' expectations changed. While Madero created the mechanisms by which the Revolution might begin, and hopefully succeed, he made few provisions for how it might be controlled once underway. In his zeal to gain converts, he left the door open for endless interpretations of what the Revolution *should* be. Madero's principal biographer, Stanley Ross, summarized the following about Madero's position vis-à-vis the unfolding expectations of the Revolution:

He came to symbolize the deep desire for a change—a social and economic, as well as a political, change. That he did not appreciate fully the depth, the breadth, and, most important, the urgency of the problem may be explained in part by the fact that the desire for fundamental changes was ill-defined, often unconscious. Considering the difficulties that would have to be overcome and the developments which would have to transpire before the demands of the revolution became conscious, expressed, and defined, not to mention placed in a legal framework and applied, Madero's limitations as a revolutionary may be condoned.³⁴

³³Stanley R. Ross, *Francisco I. Madero: Apostle of Mexican Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), 116-117.

³⁴*Ibid*, 116-117.

Thus Madero's call to action proved somewhat enigmatic for diplomatic officials. Meanwhile, his platform of change ignited the hopes and dreams of Mexicans who aimed to redress all sorts of issues that had been allowed to fester throughout the Porfiriato. Madero's success hung precariously on the balance between fostering Mexicans' hopes for change without alienating the Americans whose resources and eventual support he needed desperately. While Madero tried to juggle the evolving expectations of revolutionaries without offending his American hosts, events in the small town of Rock Springs, Texas, propelled the nascent revolution into conflict with Americans. The death of Antonio Rodríguez sent the revolutionary platform in yet another direction: anti-Americanism.

Chapter III: The Lynching of Antonio Rodríguez

Hitherto, the analysis has primarily focused on the atmosphere within which Antonio Rodríguez, and many others in Mexico, lived: the inconsistencies in foreign policy, Díaz's unsatisfactory economic strategies, and the social developments that accompanied rapid modernization. These underlying conditions, however, failed to serve as a sufficient catalyst to push ordinary Mexicans into actions to change their government. While fundamental causes remain at the core of the argument that ordinary Mexicans possessed latent dissatisfaction with their government, pacific conditions generally marked *Porfiriato* Mexico—testifying to Díaz's ability to maintain control despite widespread discontent.

The narrative which follows is the story of the event that encouraged thousands of ordinary Mexicans to begin the process of openly opposing their government through rebellion. Antonio Rodríguez's unlawful murder has frequently been omitted in discussions of the *Porfiriato* and the Mexican Revolution.¹ His death defies conventional analysis and categorization because it marked the bridge between the two historical phases. As such, the incident is vital to understanding the rise of popular protest against the status quo—symbolized by President Díaz—at the beginning of the Revolution.

¹The one scholarly article dedicated to the incident concluded that the lynching was subsumed into the more important events of the Mexican Revolution. See Gerald G. Raun, "Seventeen Days in November: The Lynching of Antonio Rodriguez and American-Mexican Relations, November 3-19, 1910," *Journal of Big Bend Studies* VII (January 1995). The only other study of the episode was the aforementioned Master's thesis by Harvey F. Rice, "The Lynching of Antonio Rodríguez."

Great historical moments are sometimes born out of seemingly unimportant events. While immediate catalysts should not supplant underlying factors in any discussion of momentous change, they remain nonetheless important in their own right. The proverbial *straw-that-broke-the-camel's-back* exists. The beginnings of the American Revolution have been attributed to the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party; the American Civil War to the election of Abraham Lincoln as president; World War I to the assassination of the Archduke and heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary and for the U.S., the sinking of the *Lusitania*; and the Spanish-Cuban-Filipino-American War to the yellow-press' coverage of the atrocities of General Valeriano Weyler's *Reconcentración* policy and the mysterious sinking of the *USS Maine*. These historical events moved people to pursue redress of grievances and fulfillment of national aims. For the Mexican Revolution, one of the most important events that stirred ordinary Mexicans to action was the lynching of Antonio Rodríguez. If not for Rodríguez' gruesome death and the subsequent publicity it received, Madero's November 20th call to overthrow President Díaz may have failed for lack of popular support.

On November 3rd, 1910, the San Angelo *Standard Times* reported that an "unknown Mexican" had killed the wife of a prominent rancher, Lem Henderson, in Rock Springs, Texas.² According to the *Standard Times*, "the Mexican rode up to the house, called 'Halo,' and when Mrs. Henderon [sic] came to the door he shot and killed her instantly." Although reports avoided speculating on motive, the citizens of Edwards and Val Verde counties

²*Standard Times*, San Angelo, Texas, November 3, 1910.

appeared in no mood to investigate. Drawing their own conclusions, a posse filled with “great indignation” set out to find the perpetrator. In dramatic fashion, the article suggested one of two outcomes: “If the Mexican is crowded, it is believed he will open fire, in which case a pitched battle will result” or, “if the fugitive is overtaken he may be summarily dealt with.” The headline ominously concluded that the murderer “May be Lynched If He Is Caught By The Poses Now In Pursuit. [sic]”³

The *San Antonio Express* picked up the story as well, detailing the unfolding of events the next day. Twenty-year old Antonio Rodríguez, whom reporters thought lived in Las Vacas, Mexico, allegedly shot Mrs. Henderson after she “spoke mean” to him. Officials surmised that Rodríguez rode up to the house at about 2 o’clock in the afternoon, and the two began arguing while Mrs. Henderson was sewing in her gallery. During the argument, Rodríguez supposedly fired two shots at her, one striking her in the head and the other piercing her heart. Mrs. Henderson’s young child was the only witness on the premises. Rodríguez then fled the ranch. Upon arriving at his home, Mr. Lem Henderson discovered his wife’s dead body, and his little girl told him “a Mexican shot mamma.” Henderson then rode to the nearest neighbor’s house and began to recruit volunteers to scour the countryside for the murderer. The posse trailed someone into the night, discovering along the way that their prey had exchanged horses. As darkness set in, the searchers halted their pursuit until the next morning.⁴

³*Ibid.*

⁴*San Antonio Express News*, November 4, 1910.

A description of the murderer went out to local ranches, although the newspaper did not say how it was obtained. A nearby rancher, Jim Hunter, found Rodríguez the next day after Rodríguez arrived at his ranch seeking food and water in exchange for work. Apparently Rodríguez had already commenced working around the ranch before Mr. Hunter “suspected from the description” that Rodríguez was the sought-after Mexican. Hunter did not clarify how long Rodríguez had been working. During a water break, Mr. Hunter “drew down on him and ordered him to surrender.” Several men then transported Rodríguez to the nearest city—Rock Springs, Texas—and incarcerated him.⁵

Some of the details of the murder were apparently obtained during an interrogation at the jail. Under duress, Rodríguez supposedly admitted to the murder. Meanwhile, a crowd gathered outside the police station at four o’clock in the afternoon. The mob quickly overpowered the one extra guard the local sheriff placed on-call, and took Rodríguez half a mile outside of town, “where he was tied to a mesquite and wood piled around him.” In a gruesome scene, the mob poured oil on him and set fire to the makeshift pyre. To make sure that Rodríguez endured the full suffering, “not a shot was fired” to put him out of his misery. Witnesses remarked that “Rodriguez struggled a few minutes, but never whimpered.” One headline noted that he died “like a stoic” at the hands of “grim men.” In a typical Jim-Crow style cover-up, the coroner crassly concluded that the body was found “burned to a crisp,

⁵*Ibid.*

lying in the ashes” and the local judge quickly issued a verdict rendering that “Rodríguez came to his death at the hands of parties unknown.”⁶

The judge’s hasty proclamation might have been the end of the grisly Rodríguez affair if not for the response of the Mexican community. In Mexico City, three major newspapers—*El País*, *El Debate*, and *El Diario del Hogar*—headlined the atrocity. Their editorials struck the consciences of literate Mexicans, whom historian Alan Knight estimated at approximately 20% of the population—mostly comprised of the middle and upper classes.⁷ These relatively well-to-do Mexicans understood the impact of Díaz’s policies and recognized the double standards in foreign policy which valued Americans within Mexico without granting similar protections to Mexicans residing in the U.S. The articles written in the days after Rodríguez’s death testified to the connections Mexicans drew between the shortcomings of their government and the lynching in Texas.

The story broke in Mexico City on November 5th, one day after the U.S. press reported the episode. *El País* spread the news of Rodríguez’s death, noting the blatant hypocrisy of lynchings when compared to how Americans were treated within Mexico:

By cablegram, exclusive for El País, Rock Springs, Texas, Nov. 4-Official confirmation of the lynching of Antonio Rodríguez. Rodríguez was accused of murdering Mrs. Henderson, a rich American who lived here. Despite the fact that there was no proof, the crowd, for simple dislike of Mexicans, took him from the jail and burned him alive in a tree. This savage act by Americans confirms this fact: In the United States Mexicans have no rights and immigration is very

⁶*San Antonio Express News*, November 4, 1910.

⁷Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, I: 41.

dangerous. It is almost certain that if Americans were killed in Mexico under the same conditions, there already would be raining down from our neighboring country numerous threats and demands for compensation. There is indignation among Mexicans here over this lynching.⁸

El País had a history of frequently addressing contemporary social problems. Moreover, the paper boasted the highest circulation of any newspaper in Mexico—helping to propagate Rodríguez’s story across Mexico.⁹ The newspaper debated issues such as illiteracy, alcoholism, peonage, working-class pay, and labor conditions. *El País*’s rhetoric often encouraged government officials to take greater responsibility for addressing such problems, advocating for remedies such as night schools, recreation centers, and mutualist societies.¹⁰ Earlier in the summer, the paper had urged the Díaz administration to oppose a policy in the state of Texas that prevented Mexican children from enrolling in public schools. Writers for *El País* hoped that a similar demand for the government to act against the lynching of Rodríguez might instigate a forceful protest by the Mexican government.

Another Mexico City paper, *El Debate*, owned by Luis de Toro, ran a passionate front page editorial titled “Dollarism” (Toro was later linked to President Díaz, giving rise to a conspiracy theory that Díaz actually ordered the press to publish virulent articles against the lynching):

Antonio Rodriguez, alleged to be guilty of homicide, was taken by brute force out of the jail at Rock Springs by a law-defying

⁸*El País*, November 5, 1910, author’s translation.

⁹Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, I: 40.

¹⁰*Ibid*, 40.

mob, who dragged him to a bon-fire, where this unfortunate compatriot met his death with the imperturbable calmness of his heroic race. The iron hoof of the Texas ‘Yankee,’ in his barbarous and savage sentiments of race-hatred, is not trampling upon the negro, but the rottenness of its core has spread out so as to wound and even kill a Mexican by the iniquitous method of lynching. Lynching is not practiced by the blond ‘Yankee’ except upon beings whom, for ethnic reasons, he considers his inferiors.¹¹

The polemic went on to call for Mexicans to oppose American interests:

In the face of humiliations and affronts like that to which we refer, it is of the utmost necessity to retaliate with just and legitimate wrath. We must cry out for justice from the heart of the nation so that we may be heard throughout the Republic, that our compatriots may not visit the land of the DOLLAR, which, according to its moral latitude, is situated in the center of Africa. We are sons of a proud and noble race, and if, on account of numbers and poverty, we cannot compete with the pig-stickers of Dollarland, let us at least keep the same distance between ourselves and them as does the great lord, even when he has lost his estate, between himself and the puffed-up, simple bourgeois.¹²

El Debate's aggressive rhetoric struck a chord with upper-class Mexicans who resented their lack of social, political, and economic gains in comparison to Americans. Similarly, *El Diario del Hogar* attacked Americans as “Giants of the dollar; pygmies of culture and barbarous whites of the north,” calling into question the supposedly superior

¹¹*El Debate*, México D.F., México, November 5, 1910, *Revolutionary Mexico in Newspapers, 1900-1929*, Reel 178, author's translation. Also, *FRUS*, 812.00/385, enclosure 1, translation supplied.

¹²*El Debate*, November 5, 1910, author's translation.

“Yankee civilization.”¹³ The editorials of *El Debate* and *El Diario del Hogar*, however, with their racial references and class-based grievances, marginalized the papers’ influence.

El País expressed a more balanced, well-articulated, position. The paper was the first to break the story in Mexico and its prose aimed to instigate an aggressive response from officials. After no such action occurred, *El País* ran a frustrated editorial on the morning of November 8th, titled “The Cursed,” which lambasted the hypocritical foreign policy of America vis-à-vis Mexico and the lack of response by the Mexican administration:

The publication of this horrible news that was sent to us exclusively by our telegraph service was made solely with the purpose of informing our government and those who form the legislature that with sorrow, deep sorrow, we must acknowledge that as of yesterday, no voice was raised in the House of Deputies to address the Secretariat of Foreign Relations about an act not only terribly cruel, brutal, iniquitous and profoundly humiliating for the Mexican people; since, as we know, this criminal act, which in the land of the yankee they call lynch law, only is applied to inferior and degenerate races....¹⁴

The editorial referenced the fact that lynchings symbolized American superiority over other races—a fact that middle and upper class Mexicans resented. Moreover, the article suggested that Americans, guilty of murder in Mexico, suffered no penalties, let alone dying at the hands of a lynch-mob:

Yes, indignation is the strongest sentiment in this case, because each day it is clearer that we stand between the already special considerations that keep the yankee on Mexican soil and the degrading, cruel system faced by the sons of Mexico on the

¹³*El Diario del Hogar*, November 8, 1910, author’s translation.

¹⁴*El País*, November 8, 1910, author’s translation.

other side of the Rio Bravo [sic]. This is a form of slavery even more frightening than the Roman conquest. Yankees are given every consideration when they break the law in Mexico. The authorities are obsequious and usually send them on their way. For example there was the case of Mr. Hampton, who shot a negro in the head who had entered a bar. “This is how we kill them in my country,” he said. The Mexican authorities said, “That’s fine. Did you say that you wouldn’t conform to the law? Nor will we. Return to be judged.” He was pardoned quickly. Two other Yankees committed murder and escaped without penalty. One killed an American in Oaxaca. The other in Tehuantepec killed various persons in their homes. For a criminal to believe he is the king of creation he needs two things! First, to be a yankee. Second, to commit a crime, at least an atrocity, in the Republic of Mexico, and especially in the Federal District, where he will be very close to the government...he is guaranteed safety.¹⁵

While the Mexico City newspapers lamented the sad state of affairs that allowed lynchings to go unpunished, their American counterparts limited their coverage. Few papers in the northern states even noticed the incident, and almost no papers in the south cared to address the issue. One exception was the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* which dared to criticize the lynching, albeit after the rioting across Mexico began, editorializing on November 11th that “[w]ithout stopping to inquire about whether he was guilty or innocent, the mob at Rock Springs, with incredible barbarity, burned him alive.”¹⁶

Frequently, American versions of the issue expressed complete dismay as to the cause of the protests and indignation at any instances of anti-Americanism. In at least one instance, the *Express* published statements of “leading citizens” who said that Rodríguez’s death was

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶*Philadelphia Public Ledger*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November 11, 1910, quoted in Rice, “The Lynching of Antonio Rodríguez,” 21.

justified and that the “same degree of punishment would have been meted out had the murderer been of any nationality.”¹⁷ Articles of this nature—critical of the Mexican response to the lynching—reinforced the notions many Mexicans held that America failed to understand the plight of ordinary Mexican. Furthermore, since President Díaz had consistently defended American interests within Mexico, overthrowing Díaz’s regime was the only way to alter the status quo for the better.

Hill Country and West Texas people read that on the afternoon of November 3rd, “the Mexican who yesterday shot and killed Mrs. Lem Henderson at her ranch home near here this afternoon paid the penalty at the stake. He was taken from the jail and burned alive.”¹⁸ The same day, the *San Antonio Express* informed readers that Gustavo Madero, Francisco Madero’s younger brother, had arrived in San Antonio. The two stories, juxtaposed in the same printing, showed how the Rodríguez incident pervaded discussions of the burgeoning Mexican Revolution. Almost daily, newspapers across Texas published fascinating stories of revolutionary preparations. For example, as Mexico City residents protested the lynching, the *Express* broke the story of two Mexicans, both “well dressed and one fluent in the English language,” purchasing all of the 30-30 caliber rifles in San Antonio with cash.¹⁹ The concurrent events highlighted the difficulty Francisco Madero faced in maintaining control

¹⁷*San Antonio Express News*, November 13, 1910.

¹⁸*San Antonio Express News*, November 4, 1910.

¹⁹*San Antonio Express News*, November 13, 1910.

over the revolutionary agenda as public opinion quickly associated anti-Americanism with Madero's revolutionary platform.

Madero's potential success rested on his ability to prevent America from intervening to squash the potential rebellion. Massive shipments of arms, dissemination of revolutionary correspondence, and even Madero's safety relied heavily upon the non-intervention of U.S. authorities. Anti-American demonstrations, however, continued to erupt across Mexico. Within days of Rodríguez's death, Mexico City, Guadalajara, Ciudad Porfirio Díaz, and many other smaller locales across Mexico witnessed serious civil unrest. The *San Antonio Express* headlined pointedly: "Revolutionists blamed." Madero watched helplessly as newspapers in America and Mexico credited revolutionary sentiment with instigating anti-American protests in the wake of the Rodríguez lynching.

Despite the potential for Madero to capitalize on the incident and recruit even more people for the revolution, Madero chose to appease Americans by distancing himself from the lynching and the riots that occurred afterward. When questioned about the blatantly anti-American protests occurring in response to Rodríguez's death, Madero told the *Express* that the demonstrations were simply "misnamed" and were really anti-Díaz rather than anti-American.²⁰ The Rodríguez incident, however, occurred too closely to the *Plan de San Luís Potosí's* declared start date of November 20th for Madero or anyone else to stop anti-American sentiment from becoming a part of the revolutionary movement. In the minds of many Americans, the uprisings in response to Rodríguez's unlawful treatment were closely

²⁰*San Antonio Express News*, November 12, 1910.

linked to Madero. There was little that Madero could do to convince the public (on either side of the border) otherwise. In juxtaposition to President Díaz's obvious intimate links with American interests, Madero's revolution adopted an anti-American tone as thousands of protesters took to the streets of cities across Mexico to protest the death of Antonio Rodríguez.

Chapter IV:
The Anti-American Demonstrations in Mexico City

El País's frustrated November 8th editorial prompted Mexico City residents to organize a demonstration against the lynching. The protest intended to pressure the Mexican government into demanding that America open a legitimate investigation into Antonio Rodríguez's case. A crowd, "composed largely of university students, small shopmen and the better class of artisans" gathered in front of the medical school and then moved to the offices of *El País*. The paper characterized the group, led by a medical student, Ricardo Alduvín, as mostly "from the cultured class." Indeed, *El País*' account of the events included a picture that showed groups of men in suits and tailored hats. Alduvín gave an initial speech to the crowd, outlining the goals of the demonstration in denouncing the Rodríguez incident as an "insult to Mexican pride." The government, Alduvín declared, should "act promptly to demand the rights of the victim and national dignity." The director of *El País* praised the group's patriotism and encouraged them from a balcony above.¹

As the crowd grew, it moved from *El País* to another sympathetic newspaper's headquarters, those of *El Diario del Hogar*. After more speeches, the crowd hastened toward Calle del Aguila—passing the Chamber of Deputies and the postal station in route to their next destination: the offices of the *Mexican Herald*, an American-owned newspaper that catered directly to the American colony in Mexico City. As the demonstrators passed the government building, a few hotheads tried to break in, and an unlucky guardsman was chased

¹Wilson to Secretary of State, November 10, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/385. *El País*, November 9, 1910, author's translation.

away—losing his club, pistol, and lantern as he fled. As the protestors arrived at the *Herald*, they exhibited an anti-American tenor. The throng stoned the *Herald's* building while shouting *vivas* and chanting “Down with the Gringos,” and “*mueran los yanquis*” (Death to the Yankees.) In stark contrast to their behavior at the supportive papers of *Diario del Hogar* and *El País*, the protestors hurled objects at the *Herald's* manager as he tried to calm the angry group with a sympathetic speech. Meanwhile, someone in the crowd delivered a speech denouncing the failure of the *Herald* to protest the Rodríguez lynching. Just as the attack seemed about to spin out of control, the night editor calmed the demonstrators with evidence that the *Herald's* Spanish paper had already condemned the lynching.²

The *Herald*, however, was not the only target of the fuming protest. While the paper represented American interests, the citizens were even angrier with the failure of the Díaz administration to vigorously denounce the incident and demand justice. The crowd's frustration with their government quickly found an outlet in the government-controlled newspaper, *El Imparcial*. The rowdy students continued their speeches and chants, lingering at the *Imparcial* before moving on to the office of the Secretary of Foreign Relations. All the while, group leaders tried to maintain control of the demonstration to prevent any violent eruptions.

At the Plaza de Armas, the police dispersed the crowd, arresting eleven people—eight of whom were students.³ Despite the arrests and ultimate dispersal of the students, U.S.

²*El País*, November 9, 1910, author's translation. *El Diario del Hogar*, November 10, 1910, author's translation.

³*Ibid.*

Ambassador to Mexico Henry Lane Wilson argued that “during all this time the police remained absolutely inactive.” Wilson complained that “at the conclusion of the demonstration some arrests were made, but those arrested were liberated, without exception, a few hours afterward.”⁴ Wilson’s observations proved incorrect, however, as all the students had not been released; their continued detention provided further cause for protest the next day. Wilson’s focus on the Mexican government’s response, however, did not prevent him from realizing that the unrest, which was “immediately evident in the cafés and public places,” came as the result of editorials “in connection with the burning of a Mexican citizen, Antonio Rodríguez, for the murder of an American woman.”⁵ Wilson did not have all of his facts straight (he attributed the “acts of violence” to *El Debate* rather than to *El País*), but he did concede that frustration over the Rodríguez incident remained the primary motive behind the march.⁶

For the most part, the first day of protests passed without fanfare—despite Wilson’s estimation that the participants numbered “more than 1,000 persons.” Wilson decided not to address the occurrences with Mexican officials, and the newswires generally ignored the incident. However, for the disgruntled demonstrators, the issue underlying their cause—the lack of government response to the Rodríguez lynching—still required attention. The Mexican government did not move to address their concerns. No positive news came out of

⁴Wilson to Secretary of State, November 10, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/385.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*

the U.S. regarding the status of the investigations (or lack thereof) into Rodríguez's unlawful murder to pacify the demonstrators. Furthermore, a few protestors remained in jail. Thus notices went out from several newspapers—most notably in *El Diario del Hogar*—to plan for further rallies the next day.⁷ Wilson later lamented that “[n]otwithstanding this public notice—the reliability of which was confirmed by the Embassy's private advises—no precautions were taken by either the government or Municipal authorities....”⁸

As promised, protestors organized again the next day. Students came from the Medical School, the School of Arts, the School of Engineering, the School of Agriculture and Veterinary, and the School of Mines, along with pupils from most of the preparatory schools.⁹ The crowd consisted of more than just students, however, as Wilson estimated that the second day of protests drew “a mob of 5,000.”¹⁰ While the first day's crowd may have been somewhat marginal, their raucous protest had succeeded in drawing enough attention to the crime to multiply the number of supporters who turned out the second day.

The group again showed signs of order, rather than chaos, as they formed a nine-member committee tasked with petitioning the police chief, Felix Díaz, for the release of the remaining students still in custody. In a similar manner as the day before, the assemblage moved throughout town, stopping to press their demands at key offices. The first stop was the Municipal Palace, where the crowd was disappointed to find the police chief unavailable.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*El País*, November 10, 1910, author's translation.

¹⁰Wilson to Secretary of State, November 10, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/385.

Inspector General Celso E. Acosto spoke in the chief's place, explaining to the students that their friends' incarceration remained a judicial matter. The committee thus chose to appeal the issue to the Governor of the Federal District, D. Guillermo de Landa y Escandón. The committee, represented by Medical student Prado Romaña, presented the students' argument to Landa y Escandón: Romaña blamed the police for the trouble rather than the students, noting that their protest was mostly peaceful and the real issue was with the administration's failure to seek justice for Rodríguez. But, the governor dodged conversations of the lynching in an effort to halt the demonstration.¹¹

Romaña further pressed the governor at the meeting, threatening continued demonstration if the jailed students were not released. Issuing a statement to the committee and the press, the governor tried to appease the crowd without giving in to their demands:

There is one fact that to you and all the world is clearly evident, that the most important thing is to love our flag and always guard the honor of General Díaz, who represents our government...Your protest is worthy of praise and I sympathize with you, but you should understand that the authorities are obliged to keep order...if you didn't break the law you wouldn't be arrested. These demonstrations are clearly against the law. Last night several policemen were beaten and stripped.¹²

The governor then asked the committee to cease the protest and await the outcome of a 2 o'clock court hearing. Dissatisfied with the decision, they refused to leave. The governor then took more direct action. Speaking specifically to the demonstrators, he told

¹¹*El País*, November 10, 1910, author's translation.

¹²*Ibid.*

them that the fate of the imprisoned students remained in the hands of the courts, and that a hearing would resolve their status within two hours. The throng responded with chants of “No”—to which the governor offered to speed up the hearing by one hour. At this, the people applauded; the governor, meanwhile, left hastily.¹³

After the showdown with the governor, the assemblage continued its march “in tumultuous order up San Francisco Street” where “[n]o less than a dozen American citizens were insulted and maltreated, some slightly, some severely” —according to Ambassador Wilson’s report.¹⁴ Indeed, *El País* noted that as the mass proceeded, it gained momentum and became more raucous. The throng, fast becoming a mob, pelted Americans with newspapers while insulting them “with epithets”—angrily chanting “*mueran los yanquis.*” Ominously, the ranks of the unruly students swelled with “large numbers of members of the middle class and a few from the lower.” As they encountered the Imperial Restaurant—a business owned by an American (and perhaps ironically titled)—the crowd destroyed an American flag hanging on the front of the diner.¹⁵ Ambassador Wilson expressed keen disappointment with the incident, again frustrated that the police did not intervene to stop the protestors:

Certain individuals in the mob pulled down this emblem, tore it into pieces, trampled and spat upon it. This act of vandalism was witnessed by many American citizens, including the chief clerk of this Embassy, and during the occurrence no less than

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴Wilson to Secretary of State, November 10, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/385.

¹⁵*El País*, November 10, 1910, author’s translation.

ten Mexican policemen stood by, mute and inactive witnesses of the outrage.¹⁶

Others suggested, however, that the “flag” was only a piece of red, white, and blue bunting from the recent Centennial celebrations.¹⁷

The multitude eventually made its way back to the Municipal Palace, where the student committee again met with the governor. This time, the governor promised to release the jailed students if the leaders would suspend the demonstration. The students agreed, and their imprisoned friends were released and driven to their homes by the police. In spite of the agreement with the governor, however, the protest continued as the group’s leaders began to lose control of the demonstration. Later, some citizens regrouped outside the offices of *El Diario Del Hogar*, where several people supposedly took pictures with a torn American flag. Along the way, rowdies broke windows of American houses.¹⁸

Ambassador Wilson sought to quickly halt the demonstrations. Not content with how the police handled the disorder, Wilson sent a dispatch to the Foreign Office that afternoon. Fearing that “further outrages might occur in the evening,” Wilson tried to convey the seriousness of the situation from the American perspective. The Subsecretary of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Gamboa, responded and went immediately to meet with Wilson. The Ambassador relayed the substance of the meeting, stating that he:

¹⁶Wilson to Secretary of State, November 10, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/385.

¹⁷*Mexican Herald*, November 14, 2010, quoted in Rice, “The Lynching of Antonio Rodríguez,” 34-35.

¹⁸*El País*, November 10, 1910, author’s translation. *El Diario del Hogar*, November 10, 1910, author’s translation.

talked very clearly and emphatically to him about the inertness of the authorities, the strong feeling of resentment in the American colony, and the danger of allowing matters to take their course, apparently with the acquiescence, if not with the sympathy, of the guardians of law and order.¹⁹

Wilson expected that his conversation would force the Mexican police to immediately suppress the protests.

Mexican authorities moved slowly; meanwhile, the crowd's ranks swelled.

According to Wilson, "[l]ater in the night the mob assumed dangerous proportions and malignant character, resisting the police and committing further acts of vandalism."²⁰ As evening fell, the real fury of the protestors poured out on the government-sponsored paper, *El Imparcial*. Afterwards, Police Chief Félix Díaz remarked that "the exhibition of hatred and resentment against *El Imparcial* was stronger than against the Americans themselves."²¹

According to Rafael Reyes Spíndola, *El Imparcial's* owner, the damage was quite severe:

An infuriated mob of over one thousand persons gathered before the *Imparcial* about 9:30 o'clock tonight, and after a short period of haranguing and stone-throwing, hurled themselves against the heavy zagman door (the door had been closed and locked at the first appearance of the mob), and after several minutes of battering, succeeded in effecting an entry. This accomplished, they proceeded to set fire to the lower parts of the building. The fire company responded promptly, however, to the emergency call, went in and the blaze was quickly extinguished. In the meantime an employee of the paper was making a desperate effort to get police headquarters over the telephone, but failed. He then climbed over an

¹⁹Wilson to Secretary of State, November 10, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/385.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*El Diario del Hogar*, November 14, 1910, author's translation.

adjoining roof and succeeded in reaching a neighboring house and from this place obtained connection with the authorities, who immediately sent a squadron of mounted police to the spot. By energetic effort these soon had the mob dispersed; not, however until two persons were killed, one of whom was crushed to death in the jam. There were several shots fired but not one injured them.²²

Controversy surrounded the damage done to the *Imparcial*. *El País* questioned Spíndola's account, suggesting that the firemen botched their duties and bore primary responsibility for the damages. Moreover, the death of one person, Juan Mejía, might have resulted from a police beating; others argued that he died after passing out from smoke inhalation and then being trampled by the crowd.²³ Nobody, however, questioned the resentment the protestors obviously felt towards *El Imparcial*. Mexicans harbored deep-rooted antipathies toward the paper that was widely known to be a mouthpiece for President Díaz. The demonstrators' anger was more toward their own government's failure to press for justice for Rodríguez and his family than against Americans. The *Imparcial* reflected the government's stance on the Rodríguez issue—failing to denounce (or at least not to the degree the public felt necessary) the lynching. The protestors knew that the difference between the passionate denunciations issued from *El Debate*, *El País*, and *El Diario del Hogar* differed from *El Imparcial* in that the latter did not have the interests of ordinary Mexicans in mind.

²²Spíndola issued the statement to the *Mexican Herald*, November 10, 1910. Quoted in Rice, "The Lynching of Antonio Rodríguez," 36.

²³*El País*, November 17, 1910, author's translation.

Ambassador Wilson ignored the violent clash at *El Imparcial* in his dispatches back to Washington. Perhaps he wanted to avoid alarming President Taft before he could prove that necessary measures had been taken to end the unrest. His primary concern remained with the anti-American wrath of the demonstration. By the end of the night, a number of tense clashes between Americans and the protestors broke out. At one point, a car from the American school was pelted with stones—injuring a child. Apparently the rowdies had not intended to harm any children, as several Mexicans barricaded themselves around the car and stopped the crowd from causing any further harm. Ambassador Wilson’s son, John Wilson, accidentally stumbled into the angry demonstrators and as a result, he “was subjected to some indignities.”²⁴

The most memorable encounter happened when Jack Davis, an American businessman, drove his car squarely into the mass of demonstrators. People immediately recognized Davis, and began stoning his car such that he injured his hand protecting his head. Davis, however, did not flee. Instead, he rammed his vehicle into several protestors. The *Herald* reported that rioters tried to rip away the top of his car and that Davis threw off one man by the throat. Davis fled to his nearby office where a group of brawlers surrounded him. Davis “was so full of fight by this time, after tackling the crowd single handed, that he begged them to pick out six or eight who really desired combat and would stand up close

²⁴*El País*, November 14, 1910, author’s translation. Wilson to Secretary of State, November 10, 1910, FRUS 812.00/385, enclosures, translations supplied.

enough for him to reach them.”²⁵ Whatever Davis’s disposition, the crowd moved on and left Davis alone.

While Ambassador Wilson and President Díaz focused their energies on shutting down the anti-American protests, other diplomats recognized the need to address the core issue of the public’s outrage: Rodríguez’s lynching. A diplomatic struggle ensued in which Mexican diplomats repeatedly tried to make justice for the unlawful death of Rodríguez the main priority while American diplomats focused their efforts almost entirely on stopping the anti-American protests. Ambassador Wilson sent a threatening note to Enrique Creel, the Foreign Affairs Minister, on the afternoon of November 9th—before the burning of *El Imparcial*—demanding that “those guilty of the vandalism of this morning may be sought out and punished.”²⁶ By the time Creel received the message, however, the insult to the American flag paled in comparison to the destruction done to *El Imparcial*.

Wilson wanted Creel to understand that the highest diplomatic importance needed to be placed on ending the riots, as Wilson was “with the greatest regret communicating the events which are occurring to the Government in Washington.”²⁷ Creel responded to Ambassador Wilson’s demands that he “immediately take the precaution to prevent a

²⁵ *El País*, November 14, 1910, author’s translation. Wilson to Secretary of State, November 10, 1910, *FRUS* 812.00/385, enclosures, translations supplied.

²⁶ Wilson to Secretary of State, November 10, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/385, enclosure 1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

recurrence of insults...” in a note that put justice for Rodríguez’s death back at the core of the issue²⁸:

...the disturbance by such mob was due to the indignation caused among the people by the report that a Mexican citizen, presumably guilty of a crime, was burnt alive by a mob in the adjoining State of Texas before he had first been brought to any sort of trial.²⁹

Minister Creel condemned the violence exhibited during the protests, assuring Wilson that “the authorities will proceed without delay to ascertain who are the persons guilty of the criminal acts of to-day, so that they may be duly punished.” Creel did not simply pander to Wilson’s desire that the violent demonstrators be punished, however. He also pointed out the inaccuracy of Wilson’s belief that no arrests occurred. Correcting Wilson, Creel noted that “the governor of the Federal district has just informed me that 12 of those who appear to be guilty were arrested and other arrests made this afternoon.” Finally, Creel also implied that justice should be sought for those responsible for the unlawful murder of Rodríguez:

I trust that similar action will be taken by the authorities of the Government which you so worthily represent against those who are guilty of burning alive in Texas the Mexican Antonio García [sic].³⁰

Meanwhile, the demonstrators—after the burning of the *Imparcial*—regrouped at the city’s square, the Zócalo. From there, they proceeded down San Francisco Avenue, smashing in windows and knocking a trolley car off its wires. Policemen arrived in full force

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹Minister of Foreign Affairs to the American Ambassador, November 9, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/385, Enclosure 2, translation supplied.

³⁰*Ibid.*

to end the protest which by then had devolved into a riot. The crowd scattered as the mounted police drove them away with drawn sabers. A preparatory student, Elías Soriano, died from a saber stab to the neck. The dispersed rioters continued to destroy homes and businesses as they fled in all directions. The American Furniture Company, American Candy Company, Prendes Restaurant, Sanborn's drug store, Kingman's Saloon, and other establishments—both American and otherwise—suffered damage. Remnants of the crowd wounded several policemen as officers tried to arrest anyone remaining on the streets. By the end, authorities had jailed approximately 217 rioters. Finally, police were stationed in front of all American businesses and the U.S. Embassy—effectively ending any remaining protest.³¹

The police chief summarized his efforts to definitively halt the riots and prevent any further disturbances in a statement published in *The Herald*:

When these demonstrations first started Tuesday night, we believed that it was only a demonstration by a few students, but after the disturbances of today and tonight we have received order to treat the matter in a rigorous manner, and all those who have taken part in any of the rioting will be punished according to the law. We treated the matter lightly at first, not believing it had any serious aspect, but from now on no groups of students will be allowed to congregate or parade the streets. ... Tonight, the entire police force was placed on duty and have handled the crowd in an excellent manner.³²

³¹*El País*, November 10, 1910, author's translation. The death of the student was confirmed at a later date in *El País*, November 14, 1910.

³²*Mexican Herald*, November 10, 1910, quoted in Rice, "The Lynching of Antonio Rodríguez," 42.

Ambassador Wilson telegraphed the Secretary of State, Philander C. Knox, that “[n]o less than a dozen American citizens were insulted and maltreated, some slightly and some severely.” Moreover, after two consecutive days of unrest, the American Colony—approximately 10,000 strong—began to take offense at the protests. Wilson relayed his concerns back to Washington:

Last night I discovered that many members of the American colony, resenting the outrages to which they and their families had been subjected, were in an ugly mood, and in the absence of police protection were preparing to protect themselves.³³

Wilson worried that the American Colony might retaliate and exacerbate the anti-American tensions. He met with the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs, Enrique Creel, who informed him of President Díaz’s response:

[T]he Government proposed, from now on, to take the most vigorous measures not only in the repression of disorders but in seeking out and punishing the authors and instigators of the riots, including the publishers who by their violent and incendiary articles are in a large measure responsible for the events which have occurred.³⁴

President Díaz responded the only way that he knew: pressuring the papers to halt their virulent editorials. In past occurrences of civil unrest, Díaz had used such methods with precise effectiveness. At Cananea and Río Blanco, his suppressive measures successfully ended disruptive strikes without inciting the public to further disruptions. This time,

³³Wilson to Secretary of State, November 10, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/385.

³⁴*Ibid.*

however, the discord was broadly based across Mexico, and repressive tactics only stirred the fires that motivated the protestors.

Ambassador Wilson felt the need to address the American Colony in a more direct way to prevent vengeful Americans from instigating further hostilities. He decided to issue a statement. “Anticipating that unfortunate incidents might result from this feeling of resentment,” Wilson explained, “I sent for a reporter of the Mexican Herald[*sic*] and gave an interview which was intended to allay the feeling of hostility which was rapidly fomenting in the minds of the unprotected and abused American citizens.” Wilson’s primary goal seemed harmless if not for his secondary motive: “...and at the same time to serve as a note of warning to the Mexican public.”³⁵ Wilson erred in his judgment, naively assuming that his warning would scare the demonstrators into dispersing.

The next day, *The Herald* published the Ambassador’s statement in full:

I am deeply shocked at the outrages committed against Americans in Mexico City in an anti-American spirit. Hotels and business houses have been attacked and damage done; American men, women, and children insulted on the streets for no other reason except blind and savage resentment against the acts of a mob in the State of Texas. The spirit that animates the mob in the City of Mexico seems to be similar to that of the miscreants who, outside of law, burnt a Mexican citizen for murdering an American woman. For an outrage against a Mexican citizen neither the American Government nor the American people are responsible, nor do they sympathize in the least degree with that spirit of barbarism. Proper redress for outrages committed against citizens of any country residing in another country is obtained through diplomatic channels, and not by acts of vandalism and outrages to persons and property, which place the perpetrators on a level with those against

³⁵*Ibid.*

whose crimes they are protesting. The mob which has infested the streets of Mexico for the last day and a half has perhaps inflicted some injury on American citizens in Mexico, but it has inflicted far greater damage on the reputation of Mexico throughout the world as a civilized, peace-loving, and progressive power. It is to be regretted that the police authorities have, during the occurrence of these events, shown themselves wantonly neglectful of their duties, and have stood idly by while the American flag was outraged and American persons and property were attacked.³⁶

Wilson failed to address the root cause of the unrest: the lynching of Antonio Rodríguez. Moreover, the statement implied that the lower classes bore the sole responsibility for the rioting, despite the fact that reports—including several pictures published in the papers—indicated that the majority of the demonstrators were students and employed businesspeople:

Neither the Mexican Government, which is always dignified, patriotic, and quick to respond to just complaints, nor the better class of Mexican people can be held responsible, and it can not be doubted for a moment that the representations which have been made by this embassy will receive sympathetic consideration and procure prompt action.

Trying to scare the demonstrators out of any further protests, Wilson, with a thinly veiled threat, promised that those responsible would certainly be punished:

The unfortunate affairs which have occurred have been duly reported to Washington, and it may be relied upon that the action taken there, while just and conceived in the spirit that should animate a friendly nation, will leave nothing undone which should be done.³⁷

³⁶Wilson to Secretary of State, November 10, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/385, Enclosure 3, translation supplied.

³⁷*Ibid.*

Finally, Wilson pleaded with the American colony to resist the urge to counter-demonstrate and refrain from instigating further conflict:

In the meantime I beg to advise all American citizens to go quietly about their business and refrain as far as self-respect will permit them from such words or deeds of resentment as would place them on the same plane with the violators of the law. The purpose of this interview is to allay agitation and to advise the American colony, of whom there are 10,000 in the City of Mexico, that they should refrain from acts which might further embarrass a situation already difficult.³⁸

The *Herald* published the Ambassador's statement in both the Spanish and English versions. Wilson prided himself on his efforts, concluding that his actions: "[H]ad the desired effect as it not only caused the abandonment of a public meeting of protest of the American colony but also caused the formation of an active Mexican public opinion in condemnation of the demonstrations."³⁹

Unfortunately, his statement also indicated to perceptive Mexicans that the protests fell on deaf ears. His choice of outlet—the *Herald*—showed that he did not recognize the frustration Mexicans felt toward the American presence in Mexico. Furthermore, Wilson ignored or misunderstood why the protestors targeted the *Imparcial*: ordinary Mexicans expected their officials to defend their interests over those of foreigners. The Ambassador's presumption that an "active Mexican public opinion" against the malcontents existed proved entirely wrong. Moreover, Wilson further angered the already incensed community by

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹Wilson to Secretary of State, November 10, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/385, Enclosure 1.

releasing his threat through an American-owned paper. An apology for the Rodríguez incident that promised to seek justice for those responsible may have had better effect—especially if it were released through an independent Mexican paper. Unfortunately, the Ambassador’s intent, along with President Díaz’s, obviously did not include procuring justice for Antonio Rodríguez and his family.

Despite Wilson’s statement in the *Herald*, other Mexico City papers continued to fume over the lack of response by the administration. *El País* and *Diario del Hogar* ran harsh editorials in addition to their coverage of the previous day’s demonstrations. *El País* accused the government of exhibiting “an imperious attitude about information it should provide the public” due to the lack of public statements about Rodríguez.⁴⁰ *Diario del Hogar* ran a political cartoon featuring Uncle Sam being beaten by a man labeled “the people” while Rodríguez, tied to a tree, burned to death as a crowd observed in the background.⁴¹ *El País* issued a call for a boycott against all American goods and set up a meeting to discuss the embargo, along with a demand for actions against the “representatives of the government.” The employees signed the boycott declaration and also began taking donations for the family of Antonio Rodríguez. The paper subsequently published individual’s contributions to aid Rodríguez’s family in each edition until authorities censored it at the outbreak of the revolution.⁴²

⁴⁰*El País*, November 10, 1910, author’s translation.

⁴¹*El Diario del Hogar*, November 10, 1910, author’s translation.

⁴²*El País*, November 10, 1910, author’s translation.

By mid-day on November 10th, news of the previous two days' protests leapt to the headlines of American newspapers. Harvey Rice's study of the incident noted the fallacies that American newspapers reported regarding the demonstrations:

The news of the demonstrations rocketed around the world by telegraph. In the United States, newspapers erroneously reported that the mob had killed an American child, tried to kill the ambassador and that Americans had been lynched in retaliation for the Rodríguez lynching.⁴³

Indeed, three different interpretations of the protests seemed to take form. Ambassador Wilson considered them as expressions of revolutionary sentiment, denying any significance to Rodríguez's lynching. Mexican newspapers saw them as outbursts of indignation over Rodríguez's unlawful death and the egregious lack of response on the part of the Mexican and American governments. Finally, American newspapers sounded the alarm at the disorder in Mexico, regarding the turmoil as a harbinger of the treatment Americans might expect throughout Mexico if revolution occurred.

Headlines indicated that a bomb was thrown at the Ambassador, three Americans were killed, and that Mexico City was under siege.⁴⁴ One outlandish report from El Paso, Texas, indicated that a hostage situation had developed:

...Mexican bandits have captured a young American girl and are holding her hostage in the mountains over the protest of the U.S. Ambassador and Mexican authorities are doing little, Mexicans are making strenuous protest about Rodríguez, who killed a Texas woman for "talking back to him."⁴⁵

⁴³Rice, "The Lynching of Antonio Rodríguez," 45-46.

⁴⁴*Ibid*, 45-46.

⁴⁵*El Paso Herald*, El Paso, Texas, November 10, 1910.

Among American newspapers, a consistent theme emerged that emphasized the desecration of the American flag. The Chicago *Record-Herald* most accurately epitomized the tendency to focus on the flag to fuel the anger of Americans:

Hurling imprecations at all citizens of the U.S. and threatening the lives and property of those living in the city, a howling, maddened mob of Mexicans this afternoon tore down an American flag, trampled it in the dust of the street, spat upon it and pulled it to shreds.⁴⁶

The myopic focus on the American flag incident supported Mexicans' notions that Americans intended to gloss over the glaring injustice done to Antonio Rodríguez. Ambassador Wilson erred in the same manner as the American newspapers: he concentrated on stopping anti-Americanism rather than addressing the source of the protestors' concerns. Obviously, many Mexicans possessed valid reasons for harboring anti-American sentiment, but the fact remained that for years, their feelings persisted in a benign fashion. The reason that anti-Americanism overflowed into active protest began with Antonio Rodríguez, and in the immediate days after his death, along with the time surrounding the protests in Mexico City, the government missed key opportunities to seek justice for the blatant hatred unleashed in Rock Springs, Texas. In comparison to the brutal murder of Antonio Rodríguez, the desecration of the American flag appeared an unimportant detail on which Americans focused. And, given Ambassador Wilson's awareness of anti-American feelings prior to the

⁴⁶ Chicago *Record-Herald*, Chicago, Illinois, November 10, 1910. Quoted in Rice, "The Lynching of Antonio Rodríguez," 46-47.

Rodríguez incident, his response in the *Herald* seemed provocative and out-of-touch with the demonstrators' concerns.

The fallacious reports emanating from the United States exacerbated the protestors' frustrations with Americans who failed to understand how Mexicans could be so incensed by an incident in Rock Springs, Texas. Years of pent up resentment toward the Americans' favorable treatment within Mexico unwound in the days surrounding Rodríguez's horrific death, and opportunities to appease the public's appetite for justice were missed. The fact that Rodríguez died by lynching made the issue sensitive enough, but the failure of officials on both sides of the border to pursue a fair investigation afterwards made the double-standard too much for ordinary Mexicans to stomach any further. The nature of the demonstrations in November showed that people wanted President Díaz, or his government officials, to stand up for Mexicans suffering at the hands of Americans. The failure of the administration to seek these measures ensured that the rioting continued.

Chapter V: Diplomacy and the Spreading Riots

As reports of the rioting in Mexico City leapt to headlines across the U.S., the Rodríguez incident became a major diplomatic issue. Vitriolic editorials published in *El País*, *El Debate*, and *El Diario del Hogar* continued to expose the inconsistencies between American foreign policy vis-à-vis Mexicans and *vice versa*. Unfortunately, the diplomatic community charged with resolving the issue failed to satisfy the Mexican public's appetite for justice. Instead, key leaders—President Díaz, Foreign Minister Enrique C. Creel, and Ambassador Wilson—focused on repressing the outbursts of protest rather than dealing with the core issue of the lynching of Antonio Rodríguez. They also blamed revolutionaries for the disturbances, granting no credence to legitimate anti-American discontent. As each day passed without news of progress on the investigation into the lynching, the Mexican public became more frustrated with their government officials who seemed unable, or perhaps unwilling, to recognize the depth of animosity aroused from the burning of Antonio Rodríguez.

The intensity of the demonstrations exacerbated the challenge in Mexico City of balancing American interests with the public outcry against the lynching. Mexican officials responded with a tepid condemnation of the murder of Rodríguez while simultaneously assuaging American fears of further anti-American demonstrations. Enrique C. Creel

assured Ambassador Wilson that the agitators responsible for the attack on the *Herald*, along with the flag desecration, would be “duly punished.”¹

Meanwhile, the Mexican consul at Eagle Pass, Texas, accepted orders from Mexican Ambassador to Washington, Francisco León de la Barra, to begin a formal investigation into the lynching. De la Barra seemed to understand the public’s desire for some form of justice. Ambassador de la Barra followed with a demand to the U.S. for indemnification for the murder of Rodríguez. Texas Governor Thomas M. Campbell also received instructions from the State Department to review the incident.² The protests in Mexico City had thus provided the impetus for an inquiry previously deemed unnecessary. Only three days earlier, Adjutant General Phelps of Texas, told the press that Texas state authorities did not intend to press for the arrests of members of the mob responsible for the Rocksprings lynching.³ With the protests across Mexico garnering national attention, Texas officials were forced to reverse their course of action and begin a probe that the Mexican public hoped would result in arrests of those responsible for the lynching.

Despite the diplomatic talk of investigations, the public received no semblance of progress. November 10th witnessed further unrest in Mexico City, where the demonstrators railed against the sheepishness of Mexican authorities. *El País* reported that the discontent was “against the conduct of the police”—a result of the use of suppression throughout the

¹Minister of Foreign Affairs to the American Ambassador, November 9, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/385.

²*El Paso Morning Times*, November 13, 1910.

³*El Paso Herald*, El Paso, Texas, November 10, 1910.

city. Indeed, authorities prevented innocent students from gathering, guards remained at the U.S. Embassy, educators closed all professional and preparatory schools, and an organized group of students aborted their planned march in the face of 200 police.⁴ Several days later, *El País*, recognizing the potential for terrible violence between the police and protestors, and perhaps facing political pressures from Díaz, recommended that public demonstrations cease in order to give the diplomatic community time to act. The paper suggested that Rodríguez's family would benefit from the diplomacy then underway, and that further protests would be exaggerated by the American press.⁵

Ambassador Wilson's frustration with inert police subsided as law enforcement continued to suppress any further unrest in Mexico City. His mind then focused on the cause of the recent disruptions. Wilson agreed with Díaz that revolutionaries had incited the rioting:

Thorough investigation convinces me that recent anti-American demonstrations are simply a convenient cloak for attacks on the Diaz Government...Nearly all of the rioters in this city are opponents of the government and their utilization of the Rodríguez incident makes it difficult for the government to proceed with that vigor which it otherwise could.⁶

The seriousness of the riots, along with the possibility that revolutionary sentiment lurked at the heart of the protests, prompted President Taft to initiate communication with President Díaz on November 11th. Taft sent Díaz a message via the Secretary of State,

⁴*El País*, November 11, 1910, author's translation.

⁵*El País*, November 14, 1910, author's translation.

⁶Wilson to Secretary of State, November 11, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/365.

Philander C. Knox, expressing confidence in the Mexican President's ability to suppress the anti-American outbursts. Moreover, Taft—aware of Ambassador de la Barra's request for an accelerated formal investigation—reassured Díaz that U.S. officials “will use all efforts to punish those guilty of the crime recently committed against Antonio Rodríguez in Texas.”⁷

Taft's comments proved hollow, however, as the official investigation produced little in the way of justice. The inquiry into the lynching degenerated into a debate over Rodríguez's nationality. Just as the lynching of the Italian-Americans had been written off months before due to their nationality (American, thus precluding any foreign nation from demanding justice), some suggested that Rodríguez was not really from Mexico and that he was born in Texas. Other reports focused on Rodríguez's political persuasion—submitting that he was an *antireelectionista*.⁸ One intriguing, but false report, declared that Rodríguez fled Mexico to escape “persecution” because of his supposed *antireelectionista* beliefs. The report characterized Rodríguez as a “furious mexican *antireelectionista [sic]*.”⁹ The initial news from the investigation only served to bolster the idea that the Mexican government under President Díaz was no longer capable of defending the interests of its citizens.

El País conducted its own investigation into Rodríguez's background, sending a reporter to Guadalajara, where Rodríguez's wife and mother lived. The paper embarrassed the U.S. investigators when it broke the news that Rodríguez's identity had been verified.

⁷Secretary of State to the Mexican Ambassador, November 11, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/362.

⁸*El País*, November 11, 1910, author's translation.

⁹*Ibid.*

Rodríguez, 23 years old, previously resided in Guadalajara at Calle de Angulo No. 100 with his mother Francisco Estrada, and his wife Geneva Rangel de Rodríguez, along with a daughter and a sister. *El País* publicized the plight of his widow, noting that she sold tortillas in the streets for money. According to the report, Rodríguez left for Texas on August 29th because “the family is very poor and Rodríguez intended to send money.”¹⁰

Meanwhile, the American investigation failed to indict anyone involved in the murder for fear of instigating a backlash among the American population along the border. Officials in charge of the investigation deemed legal action against the posse an unviable course-of-action. The public in Mexico seemed to prefer paying an indemnity to Rodríguez’s family over any other option—including legal redress against the lynch-party. Since a formal indemnity would take time, however, Mexicans implemented their own support network while waiting for the investigations in Texas to conclude. *El País* began a daily column that publicized donations to aid Rodríguez’s family, beginning with a \$100.00 (peso) contribution from the paper itself.¹¹

U.S. officials’ attention to Rodríguez’s personal life actually helped the *antireelectionista* cause by giving them yet another example of the failed leadership of Díaz and his tendency to employ dictatorial tactics in the form of repression. Mexicans remained focused on the atrocity inflicted upon Rodríguez, however. Even if Rodríguez did harbor *antireelctionista* beliefs, Mexicans remonstrated, that would not have justified his lynching!

¹⁰*El País*, November 14, 1910, author’s translation.

¹¹*El País*, November 11, 1910, author’s translation.

The U.S. accounts of the incident and the rioting also showed to Mexicans the propensity of Americans to express outrage at the slightest insult towards them while ignoring legitimate depredations against Mexicans. *El País* noted presciently that the news reports emanating out of the U.S. caused “infinite sensations” that would continue to fuel the unrest.¹²

The American public’s fascination with the *antireelectionistas*—evinced by their keen interest in Francisco I. Madero’s stay in San Antonio—helped the *antireelectionistas* take ownership of the Rodríguez incident. There may have been no connection between Madero and Rodríguez at all, but the fact that a serious diplomatic incident involving a Mexican citizen occurred in Texas while Madero resided in San Antonio proved too intriguing for newspapers and officials to ignore. While officials attempted to mitigate the seriousness of Rodríguez’s death by labeling him an *antireelectionista*, their spin gave the revolutionary cause a boon; unwittingly, officials on both sides of the border handed Madero a convenient martyr with whom ordinary Mexicans empathized.

As diplomats struggled to mitigate the influence of the Rodríguez incident, an unexpected wave of anti-Americanism broke out in Guadalajara, Mexico. Scholars Avital H. Bloch and Servando Ortoll provide the most complete version of the events in Guadalajara.¹³ According to Bloch and Ortoll, whose research rests on extensive findings in consular reports and personal papers, the students followed a similar course as their counterparts in Mexico

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³Avital H. Bloch and Servando Ortoll, “¡Viva Mexico! ¡Mueran los yanquis! The Guadalajara Riots of 1910” in Silvia Marina Arrom and Servando Ortoll (eds.), *Riots in the Cities: Popular Politics and the Urban Poor in Latin America, 1765-1910* (Wilmington: Delaware, Scholarly Resources, 1996), 195-223.

City. They organized a planned demonstration to oppose the Rodríguez incident by adopting nationalistic demands for greater action from the Mexican government.¹⁴ However, as in Mexico City, the demonstrations quickly disintegrated into rioting with their principal targets being American businesses and residences.

Due to the Mexico City riots, both Mexican and American officials in Guadalajara received intelligence about potential demonstrations. Believing that the outbursts were truly nationalistic and therefore justified, the commander of the military in Guadalajara, General Clemente Villaseñor, “in view with his experiences with mobs” chose to allow the planned demonstrations.¹⁵ The American Consul at Guadalajara, Samuel E. Magill, recalled that “the authorities presumed it would amount only to smashing a few windows,” so the police “acted as if they were instructed to permit that much and to intervene only to prevent bodily harm.”¹⁶ To be sure, however, General Villaseñor dispatched special protection to the American consulate and important residences.¹⁷

Consul Magill believed that the people “had been prepared for a revolt by antireelection emissaries” and that a “deep-seated jealousy or hatred of all things and persons American” caused the rioting to break out in Guadalajara.¹⁸ Unfortunately, Magill failed to

¹⁴*Ibid*, 199.

¹⁵American Consul at Guadalajara to the Secretary of State, December 24, 1910, *FRUS* 812.00/615.

¹⁶*Ibid*.

¹⁷*Ibid*.

¹⁸*Ibid*.

realize the significance of the Rodríguez incident, relegating the lynching to “incidental” status: “The lynching of an alleged Mexican was only incidental, and a large proportion of the populace engaged in the riots knew little and cared less about it.”¹⁹

According to Bloch and Ortoll, the demonstrations began when local students called for a meeting to present a formal protest against the Rock Springs incident. The students easily recruited ordinary citizens into the protests since “many thought that it was their duty to respond to the call.”²⁰ The meeting was well known throughout the city and officials permitted it to take place. The protest began at the Plaza de Armas on the evening of November 10th, winding its way through the streets. Passing by the American consulate, the marchers shouted “Viva Mexico” and “*mueran los yanquis*” while stoning a few businesses. The group broke the windows of the office of an American dentist named George Purnell, but Bloch and Ortoll concluded that the vandalism represented “the isolated action of individual protesters and did not yet define the character of the demonstration as a whole.”²¹ The crowd then passed by the *jefe político*’s office, where they received the admonition to behave as civilized people. Apparently the officials at the Government Palace believed that the demonstration was simply another round of the yearly anti-American displays that frequently accompanied national shows of pride.²²

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹ Bloch and Ortoll, “Rioting in Guadalajara,” 200-203.

²²*Ibid.*

The demonstration then moved to San Francisco Street, where participants harassed several American residences. The main targets were successful American businesses such as the American Candy Company, the West End Realty Company, the Hotel Cosmópolis, and the *Jalisco Times*—the city’s English-language newspaper. These companies received the full anger of the throng. After lengthy protests outside the American establishments, the crowd moved toward the mansion of Mr. Carothers (a leader of the American Colony in Guadalajara) where the military intervened to prevent further violence.²³

Interestingly, the Guadalajara protestors seemed to take offense at the religious affiliations of Americans. Bloch and Ortoll noted that the rioters targeted two Protestant schools in the colony, yet they ignored the American school, perhaps because of its non-denominational affiliation. The marchers also damaged the *Instituto Colón* (a Southern Methodist girls’ school), and the *Colegio Internacional* (a Congregationalist school for boys).²⁴

The rioting on the second day proved much worse than the minor disturbances the day before. Hundreds of Guadalajarans began a disorderly procession that the police quickly broke up. Unfortunately, the smaller, dispersed bands of rioters caused even more havoc as the police could not corral them all at one time. Outright violence erupted when a small group of hotheads attacked the mansion of Mr. Carothers once again. In fright, Carothers fired over the heads of the crowd. The angered masses backed off temporarily, only to return

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴*Ibid.*

once again with more fury. This time, Carothers shot directly into the people, killing Jesús Loza and wounding a policeman, Prudenta Chávez. (Some mystery surrounded the wounded policeman, as to whether he was part of the rioters or helping to stop them.) Luckily for Carothers, the police then intervened. The *Mexican Herald* reported that “the mob cried out for revenge, and made a rush at Carothers’s residence, but the soldiers held the infuriated crowd at bay and prevented the lynching of Carothers, and, probably his family.”²⁵ (The investigation afterwards revealed that several shots had been fired at Carothers’s home.) For his own protection, Carothers was given security at the penitentiary; authorities later released him. In the meantime, the military stood by at his mansion to prevent the incensed mob from destroying the home and possibly lynching his family. In addition to the tense scene at the Carothers residence, rioters repeatedly attempted to attack the Consulate, where federal cavalry held their line of protection throughout the night.²⁶

After the fierce rioting of the second day, officials imposed a military curfew throughout Guadalajara. Magill believed that:

[T]he cessation of rioting after Friday night was due to a proclamation issued by the local police authorities in which it was announced that if any further demonstration was made and more property damaged or lives threatened, the perpetrators would be summarily dealt with.²⁷

²⁵*Mexican Herald*, November 13, 1910. Quoted in Bloch and Ortoll, “Rioting in Guadalajara,” 208.

²⁶Bloch and Ortoll, “Rioting in Guadalajara,” 207; The American Consul at Guadalajara to the American Ambassador, November 17, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/110. *El Paso Herald*, November 12-13, 1910.

²⁷Magill to Secretary of State, Guadalajara, November 15, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/438.

Authorities closed all places of amusement, including the theater and bullfights, and even forbade the ordinary *serenatas* in the plaza.²⁸ American news sources indicated that the police jailed at least 117 people, and officials shut down the Guadalajara newspapers.²⁹ The military curfew effectively ended the protests, although repressive actions made the Mexican government seem further out of touch with the popular resentment over the Rodríguez lynching.

Newspaper coverage of the Guadalajara unrest mirrored that given to the demonstrations in Mexico City. Reports again focused on trivial incidents: one man, González Olivares reportedly purchased two American flags for the purpose of burning them; a circular called for a boycott on all American goods; and even the musicians of the city became involved, signing an agreement not to play any American music.

Magill tried to downplay the conflict between Americans and Mexicans in a report to the Secretary of State, stating that: “Some Americans claim to have been insulted on the streets during those days; none has cared to make specific charges, doubtless deeming them too trivial to justify formal complaint.”³⁰ Magill’s account contradicted itself, however, as he also indicated that eleven American residences had broken windows. Among businesses, hotels, and churches, nine had been similarly vandalized. More important, however, were the

²⁸Bloch and Ortoll, “Rioting in Guadalajara,” 208.

²⁹*San Antonio Express News*, November 11, 1910. See also, The American Ambassador to the Secretary of State, November 15, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/450.

³⁰American Consul at Guadalajara to the Secretary of State, December 24, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/615.

“actions of misguided Americans who bragged of how many Mexicans they would kill, and who openly demanded some counterdemonstration.”³¹ Magill’s mention of misguided Americans referred to the attack on the residence of Mr. Carothers, which according to Ambassador Wilson, “became so violent that he[Carothers] was obliged to use firearms in protecting his life and property.”³²

Ambassador Wilson encouraged Minister Creel to take the situation seriously:

It is a source of regret to me to find myself compelled to call your excellency’s attention thus officially to conditions prevailing in Guadalajara which are a menace to the life and property of Americans residing there. Yesterday afternoon I had the honor to say to your excellency that anti-American demonstrations had taken place, and that I had wholly trustworthy information to the effect that rioting would again break out last night. I indicated the serious results that would follow from such a state of affairs. Notwithstanding this warning, to which I do not doubt your excellency immediately responded, a mob was permitted to gather...³³

Wilson could scarcely contain his frustration with the inability of Mexican officials to prevent anti-American displays. Wilson believed, moreover, that Americans were innocent targets. In contrast to Magill’s confession that “misguided Americans” provoked confrontations, Wilson characterized Mr. Carothers as “an unoffending American”:

I feel therefore that I must again most urgently caution your excellency as to the state of affairs at Guadalajara, and insist that every possible step be taken to prevent a recrudescence of

³¹*Ibid.*

³²American Ambassador to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, November 12, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/450.

³³*Ibid.*

the lawlessness which resulted in the deplorable attack upon an unoffending American citizen and the consequently unavoidable but useless death of last night.³⁴

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Enrique Creel, responded to allay Wilson's fears that the situation had spun out of control:

I take pleasure in informing your excellency that the Government profoundly regrets such lamentable happenings, and with a view to preventing a repetition of the disorders has issued all necessary orders...Notwithstanding this, I have again cautioned the said governor to take all the precautions possible.³⁵

Exaggerated reports of anti-Americanism in Mexico spread to America quickly. The *El Paso Herald* indicated that Mr. Carothers was unlawfully incarcerated on charges of murder.³⁶ Another paper reported that Guadalajarans were preparing for war with the U.S. (Incidentally, this report contained some basis as a few Mexican citizens requested that the military send instructors to help Guadalajarans protect themselves from the American Colony).³⁷ The *San Francisco Call* implied that U.S. citizens were fleeing Mexico "as fast as

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵Minister of Foreign Affairs to the American Ambassador, November 12, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/450.

³⁶*El Paso Herald*, November 12-13, 1910.

³⁷*Los Angeles Times*, November 16, 1910. Available from Proquest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times (1881-1987) <http://search.proquest.com.easydb.angelo.edu/hnplatimes?accountid=7011>; Internet, accessed November 10, 2010.

trains can take them.”³⁸ Meanwhile, the *Mexican Herald* fueled the tensions with its own inflammatory report of events:

Americans, and in fact, most of the foreigners, have been buying arms and ammunition all day today [Saturday, November 12]. Several meetings have been held quietly, by the foreigners, to discuss what steps should be taken for defense, in case of another attack, which all fear is coming tonight.³⁹

The root cause of the demonstrations—the lynching in Texas—was lost amid the spreading riots across Mexico. Reports from Texas boldly claimed that no ill will existed in the state, that the citizens of Edwards county “simply punished a murderer,” and most absurdly, that “Mexicans favored the burning.”⁴⁰ American public opinion focused acutely on the treatment of Americans residing in Mexico—evinced the racial double standard which favored Americans while allowing Mexicans to suffer from unlawful lynchings.

Despite the inaccuracy of some reports emanating from Mexico, the Guadalajara rioting clearly demonstrated that popular protest against the Rock Springs incident was widespread. The depth of the demonstrations also indicated the general dissatisfaction with the government’s inappropriate response to the situation. True that the chosen targets of the mobs at Guadalajara and Mexico City owed to pent up anti-Americanism, but the initial motivation behind the demonstrations remained the slaying of Rodríguez. Ordinary

³⁸*San Francisco Call*, San Francisco, California, November 11, 1910, quoted in Harvey F. Rice “The Lynching of Antonio Rodriguez,” 68.

³⁹*Mexican Herald*, November 13, 1910, quoted in Bloch and Ortoll, “Rioting in Guadalajara,” 208.

⁴⁰*San Antonio Express News*, November 13, 1910.

Mexicans identified with the lynched victim, and they desired some form of resolution.

Díaz, however, failed to understand the symbolic power of Rodríguez's lynching. The only "progress" on the Rodríguez matter came in the form of efforts to stop the public outcry.

As repressive efforts were still underway in Mexico City and Guadalajara, officials began to receive word of numerous outbreaks of anti-American demonstrations across Mexico. In each case, the impetus behind the unrest came from the public frustration over the government's handling of the lynching. Furthermore, disgruntled Mexicans continued to associate Americans with Díaz and his representatives.

On November 10th, in Ciudad Porfirio Díaz, Consul Luther T. Ellsworth waited out an attack on the American Consulate. Earlier in the night, the Mayor of the city dispatched his interpreter to the Consulate to inform Ellsworth that they anticipated no disturbances. Within hours, however, the "doors and windows had been broken in...and glass was scattered about all over the tables, desks, etc..." of the Consulate. Ellsworth, like other American consuls across Mexico, expressed frustration at the inability of police officials to adequately protect American property. Ellsworth summarized his feelings of the incident in a dispatch to the Secretary of State:

I only condemn the Mexican officials of this locality for their failure at such a time, to provide adequate protection to the Consulate, which is located near the police station.⁴¹

Unlike Ambassador Wilson, who hypothesized that the police were actually in collusion with the rioters, Consul Ellsworth had his own theory of why the police failed to

⁴¹Ellsworth to Secretary of State, November 11, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/386.

prevent the damage to the consulate, which amounted to stoning and some overturning of desks and files inside:

I have ascertained that there was on duty last night but four policemen and that they were “all night” in the location of the houses of prostitution, which is about one mile from the center of the city, where our Consulate is located.⁴²

The mayor of the city met with Ellsworth the next day and reassured him that the police were to be out in full force. Ellsworth, incidentally, was one of the officials charged with investigating the Rodríguez incident, as well as monitoring the surveillance of revolutionary activity along the border. With the American and Mexican officials working together, Ellsworth suspected the trouble would end, “unless the many, many anti-administration Mexicans rise up.”⁴³

El País caught wind of students protesting in Morelia, Michoacán, on the evening of November 11th. Following the pattern set by Mexico City and Guadalajara students, a group met in the city’s center; police dispersed them amid the usual student shouts of “*mueran los yanquis*.” The paper reported that “it became an anti-government demonstration against the principal functionaries and the prefect, who received a rain of insults...the multitude would have fought had they had arms.” The next day, disorder reigned in the local school as students continually derided the only American student there, 14-year old Robert Mahon, with references to the Rodríguez incident and to prior episodes of Mexican children being banned from classrooms in Texas. Meanwhile, administrators from the law and medical

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³*Ibid.*

academies suspended some of their students for their participation in the demonstration the day before. This news caused uproar with the readership of *El País*.⁴⁴

Other regions also witnessed public responses to the lynching. In the cities of Oaxaca, Oaxaca, and Tampico, Tamaulipas, local police repressed planned anti-American demonstrations.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, a peaceful protest occurred in Chihuahua that passed without violence.⁴⁶ Newspapers also indicated “outbreaks” in San Luis Potosí and Vera Cruz that prompted Ambassador Wilson to circulate instructions to consulates throughout Mexico “instructing them to advise Governors and authorities that they will be held responsible for outrages to persons or property of Americans and to act energetically and discreetly.”⁴⁷

After officials broke up an organized demonstration in San Luis Potosí, “[s]ome forty Mexican employees” of the National Railway Lines met on November 11th and declared a boycott against all goods proceeding from the United States. The Consul, Wilbert Bonney, noted that “there is much animosity towards the Americans, a feeling which seems to be entirely impersonal and directed against the American Colony as such.” Furthermore, Bonney suggested that “it is not believed to be acute enough to lead to disturbance unless untoward events should occur in which an American should appear to be culpable.” As to

⁴⁴*El País*, November 14, 1910, author’s translation.

⁴⁵Wilson to Secretary of State, November 14, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/329.

⁴⁶Keena to Secretary of State, November 13, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/367.

⁴⁷Wilson to Secretary of State, November 12, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/366.

what might occur if such another lynching occurred, Bonney concluded that “such event might be very unfortunate in the present state of feeling.”⁴⁸

Bonney’s fears appeared to be confirmed when reports surfaced of another potential lynching in the United States.⁴⁹ Allegedly, a Mexican man had shot and killed a police chief in Anadarko, Oklahoma. The suspect, Oscar Opel “had trouble with some companions at a saloon.” After fleeing the bar, Opel ran into the Police Chief who ordered him to stop—Opel then allegedly shot the chief. A manhunt began immediately, and officials from the state penitentiary brought dogs to aid the search. The mayor of Anadarko put up a \$500 reward alongside the governor’s \$300 bounty for Opel’s capture.⁵⁰ Fearing another lynching, Ambassador Wilson ordered that all efforts be directed at the security of the fugitive in the event of his capture. Mexican Ambassador de La Barra also investigated the identity of the suspect, concluding that he probably was not Mexican.⁵¹

If the Oklahoma manhunt did not disturb diplomats, simultaneous reports from Texas of a large posse from Mexico, numbering 300-500, heading toward the state probably did. The Texas Governor ordered Rangers to the border to stop the alleged vigilantes—

⁴⁸Bonney to Secretary of State, November 14, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/396.

⁴⁹Wilson to Secretary of State, November 14, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/379.

⁵⁰*El País*, November 15, 1910, author’s translation. *Los Angeles Times*, November 14, 1910. Available from Proquest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times (1881-1987) <http://search.proquest.com.easydb.angelo.edu>; Internet, accessed January 31, 2011.

⁵¹*El Paso Times*, November 14, 1910. See also, Rice, “Lynching of Antonio Rodríguez,” 85.

presumably intent on avenging Rodríguez's murder.⁵² Ultimately, the reports proved entirely false. *El País* derided the erroneous reports:

The American press, dedicated to exploiting and exciting, has published the rumor of Mexicans ready to attack Rock Spring from Del Rio...they didn't arrive and the U.S. press looks ridiculous...the sheriff looks stupid for warning of danger.⁵³

In the days following the conflicts in Mexico City, Guadalajara, and elsewhere, *El País* continued to fuel the discontent across Mexico by publicizing reports of planned demonstrations across Mexico. The newspaper frequently printed letters of support for its editorial position, with backers writing from Guadalajara, Morelia, Toluca, Catorce, San Martin Texmelucan, Puebla, San Luis Potosí, Pachuca, Oaxaca, and Zacatecas. The paper reported that citizens of Mérida, Yucatán, planned another demonstration while the population of Irapuato, Guanajuato, was "indignant."⁵⁴ From Mexico City, Ambassador Wilson concluded that although "there is a state of calm here today...popular feeling continues in a dangerous state which may find expression at any time. Anti-American riots seem to be spreading to provincial cities and isolated spots."⁵⁵

The continuous reports of discontent caused officials across Mexico to strengthen security and issue assurances to President Díaz that the situation was under control. But

⁵²Campbell to Secretary of State, November 16, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/382.

⁵³*El País*, November 16, 1910, author's translation.

⁵⁴*El País*, November 17, 1910, author's translation. The letters of support were continuously published from November 11-19, 1910.

⁵⁵Wilson to Secretary of State, November 12, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/366.

Harvey Rice's analysis of the consular reports shows that officials differed in their interpretations of the conflict and the potential for further unrest. In San Luis Potosí, the consul indicated extreme levels of animosity toward Americans while his counterpart in Oaxaca confessed that the unrest amounted to little more than anti-government sentiment. Tampico diplomats feared the immediate outbreak of hostilities between Mexicans and Americans, while the consul at Hermosillo stated definitively that the feeling was strongly pro-American.⁵⁶ Although conditions varied from city to city, all across Mexico protests developed in the wake of the lynching of Antonio Rodríguez that drew strength from the lack of government response and the publicity that the incident received through papers like *El País* and *Diario del Hogar*.

⁵⁶Rice, "The Lynching of Antonio Rodríguez," 75.

Chapter VI: Resolving the Rodríguez Lynching

Within a week's time, the death of Antonio Rodríguez developed into a diplomatic imbroglio begetting two problems: anti-American riots throughout Mexico, and revolutionary agitation along the border. Ambassador Wilson did not fully know the extent to which the two were linked, or if any connection existed at all, but he nevertheless moved quickly to urge President Díaz to suppress the rioting while Wilson strengthened enforcement of neutrality violations. As members of the diplomatic community struggled to minimize the significance of Rodríguez's lynching, their efforts set precedents that laid the foundation for the diplomacy conducted throughout the revolution.

On November 14th, after the spread of the riots across Mexico, Wilson met directly with President Díaz to hash out plans to contain the crisis. Díaz approached the meeting with deference to his American guest. Wilson's agenda was clear: stopping the riots and clamping down on agitated newspapers and planned demonstrations. During their discussions, however, Díaz expressed concern that the recent anti-American demonstrations "were simply a convenient cloak for Mexican revolutionists..." whom Díaz estimated "are active in every part of the Republic." To stop the clamoring of the supposed revolutionists, Díaz impressed upon Wilson that "[i]f any manifestations occur in the future they will be mercilessly suppressed." Díaz told Wilson that he "felt confident that the agitations had been brought about by persons antagonistic to the Government." Furthermore, as to the depth of the anti-Americanism expressed in the riots, Díaz believed "that the students had been used as a tool

to discredit the Government and that the crime committed in Rock Springs, Tex., had served as a pretext to arouse the young men into unlawful action.”¹

Díaz impressed upon Wilson his belief that revolutionary agitators had taken advantage of “young students and men of the laboring classes.” Since revolutionary sentiment might lurk at the bottom of the disturbances, Díaz recommended that the Americans take steps “to prevent the unlawful acts of the revolutionists who are purchasing arms and ammunition in the United States.”² Wilson and Díaz discussed the actions of known anti-government dissidents, and Díaz revealed that his police had recently discovered that American arms dealers had sold at least 100 rifles to “an enemy of the government.” The investigation also uncovered documents sent by Francisco Madero, which Madero signed as “President *ad interim* and Commander of the Revolutionary Army of Mexico.” Díaz encouraged Wilson to relay this information to American officials in hopes that they might stop any activity on their side of the border which might aid “men known to be adverse to the Government.”³ Tellingly, President Díaz failed to address the Rodríguez investigation—the one discernible issue the anti-American demonstrations repeatedly highlighted.

¹American Ambassador to the Secretary of State, November 16, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/447: Enclosure-Memorandum-Extract.

²American Ambassador to the Secretary of State, November 14, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/379.

³American Ambassador to the Secretary of State, November 16, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/447: Enclosure-Memorandum-Extract.

Díaz argued that in San Antonio, Texas—the known whereabouts of Francisco Madero—purchases of arms “made by the followers of Madero” constituted a breach of neutrality laws. Therefore, Díaz wanted:

[S]uch energetic action as the American Government may take to stop this unlawful practice of men who seek refuge in the United States for no other purpose than to conduct a relentless revolutionary campaign against the Government of a friendly nation.⁴

In exchange for America’s cooperation in stopping his opponents, Díaz readily agreed to Wilson’s suggestion that Díaz silence newspapers known to be instigators of the protests.

Wilson recalled what Díaz said:

[H]e had given the press strict orders to stop any further comments on the anti-American demonstrations, and that one of the journals which had disobeyed these instructions, namely, *El Debate* [*sic*], had been suppressed.⁵

Thus, Wilson and Díaz set precedents for suppressing anti-Díaz elements under the guise of stopping the spread of anti-Americanism. They employed two tactics to this end that became typical actions during the revolution: silencing of newspapers and selectively enforcing neutrality violations. These actions emanated directly from the Rodríguez lynching.

Muting *El Debate* did not fully appease Wilson, however, as he pressured Díaz to stop other papers as well, asking the president, “why it was, then, that the more serious journals did not come right out in terms and denounce the so-called anti-American movement

⁴American Ambassador to the Secretary of State, November 16, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/447: Enclosure-Memorandum-Extract.

⁵*Ibid.*

as a disturbance caused for political motives and not because of the lynching of a man in Texas.”⁶ No such denunciations occurred because there was no tangible link between the papers’ interpretations of the lynching and anti-government dissidents at that time.

Furthermore, not a shred of evidence linked revolutionaries to the protests. To the contrary, the facts indicate that the anti-American demonstrations began as legitimate protests against the lack of governmental response to Rodríguez’s death. Madero actually tried to distance himself from the outbursts in a deliberate effort to maintain American sympathies. Díaz, however, failed to empathize with his peoples’ concerns in his relentless pursuit to maintain his own position. Díaz readily assured Wilson “that such papers as the Government could control” would issue formal denunciations and apologies “in a day or two.” Díaz concluded the discussion by reminding Wilson that “he had always looked with satisfaction upon the friendly relations of Mexico and the United States” and that Díaz would do anything “to bring the countries to a still closer understanding.”⁷ Indeed, Díaz’s success and longevity as the ruler of Mexico owed partly to the consistent backing of American politicians and investors.

Díaz brought the press under control within two days. On November 16th, the government paper, ironically named *El Imparcial*, headlined the end of the international difficulties between Mexico and the United States. The article was pure propaganda, even going so far as to print a picture of Rodríguez alongside a laudatory obituary. *El Imparcial*

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Ibid.*

also declared that an agreement was reached for payment of an indemnity. According to the article, both the disturbances in Mexico and the diplomatic negotiations “by reason of the lynching of Antonio Rodriguez...may be said to be concluded.” In an interview with *El Imparcial*, Foreign Minister Creel stated that the American diplomats showed “a friendly disposition...for doing justice and in payment of the indemnity.” Creel also thought the issue ended, remarking on “the final point of the negotiations which happily have proceeded to the entire satisfaction of both governments, without changing in the least the good international harmony of the two countries.”⁸

On November 17th, the editor of *El Diario* found himself jailed for failing to heed Díaz’s dictates to the press.⁹ Meanwhile, the most virulent of the papers, *El País*, refused to recant—continuing to run both anti-Díaz and anti-American pieces until November 19th, when the issue became less important after Aquiles Serdán’s shootout with police in Puebla began the Mexican Revolution. Incidentally, that same day Wilson reported that the paper “which continues to publish violent and incendiary articles will be suppressed at my request.”¹⁰ As to whether the paper dropped the issue due to suppression or because the Rodríguez story was supplanted by the Revolution, the evidence remains unclear.

Some scholars have surmised that President Díaz actually conspired with the newspapers to allow them to fuel the protests, and that only *after* the revolution broke out did

⁸*El Imparcial*, November 16, 1910, *U.S.-Mexico Relations*, 712.11/12.

⁹*El Diario del Hogar*, November 18, 1910, author’s translation.

¹⁰Wilson to Secretary of State, November 19, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/390.

Díaz move to quell *El Diario del Hogar* and *El País*.¹¹ This theory holds that the government possibly saw the demonstrations as a chance to divert public attention away from Díaz's shortcomings and onto revolutionary activity in the United States. Moreover, *El Debate*, one of the most strident papers, appeared to be connected to one of Díaz's cronies—Rosendo Pineda. Why, conspiracy theorists ask, could Díaz not suppress a paper that was already under his control? Rice's study of the incident took this theory one step further—arguing that the inactivity of the police actually proves that the government tacitly approved of the riots.¹² This theory implies that Díaz still maintained the power to manipulate the dealings within his country, which Wilson himself doubted.

While an interesting proposition to entertain, the evidence indicates that Díaz felt nothing but the highest confidence in America's support, and that Díaz consistently sought to eradicate anti-American demonstrations as soon as they broke out. Rice's assumption that Díaz allowed the protests to spin out of control to enlist the help of Wilson and the American criminal justice authorities in clamping down on revolutionary activity¹³ is simply too far-fetched. Again, there is little to indicate that Díaz felt unsure about his backing from America. The mounted police who repeatedly broke up the demonstrations in Mexico City and in Guadalajara certainly seemed purposeful in their efforts to stop the rioting. Wilson consistently gave Díaz his approval and full support—despite acknowledging the array of

¹¹Rice, "Lynching of Antonio Rodríguez," 87-88.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³*Ibid.*

troubles across Mexico. Ultimately, the failure of Díaz to either stamp out the protests or seek measures satisfactory to the public demonstrates Díaz's declining ability to respond adequately to the crisis. His efforts to censor the papers and control riots only alienated him further from his people.

Wilson relayed two versions of his meeting with Díaz to the Secretary of State. The first version contained specific details of the conversation while the second memorandum summarized the meeting. In his initial account, Wilson said that he "brought to the attention of the President the great source of annoyance caused by the continued publication in *El País* of articles of a violent character." Wilson was referring to the virulent editorials that denounced the Rodríguez lynching and Díaz's failure to demand justice from America. Wilson asked that Díaz "use his good offices toward suppressing these articles." Wilson specifically referenced *El Diario del Hogar*, noting that the discussion was "for the purpose of enlisting his [Díaz] cooperation in modifying the tone of the more violent portion of the press, notably *El País* and *El Diario del Hogar*."¹⁴ During the discussions of gagging the press, Díaz revealed his penchant for heavy-handed tactics, stating that "the matter before the public eye ought to be strongly reprimanded and forced to discontinue a policy with which the Government is not in accord." Wilson left the meeting satisfied that Díaz intended to stop the anti-Díaz newspapers from instigating further protests, concluding that he "had a most interesting and profitable conversation with him [Díaz]."¹⁵

¹⁴American Ambassador to the Secretary of State, November 15, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/450.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

Wilson and Díaz employed a second means (aside from stifling the press) to deal with anti-Díaz opposition: arbitrary enforcement of the neutrality laws. Díaz maintained that anti-Americanism by itself remained a lesser issue to revolutionary agitation. In a darker tone, Díaz pointed out that anti-government dissidents operating within the U.S. posed a special threat, and that American officials maintained some culpability for the problem. Díaz asked Wilson to intensify neutrality enforcement, divulging knowledge of Francisco Madero and Ricardo Flores Magón, who had been able to buy “arms and ammunition in the United States without being in the least molested by the authorities.” Unconcerned about the significance of the Rodríguez incident, or the anti-American protests, Díaz argued that “unless the American Government prevents these men from making an open revolutionary propaganda against the Mexican Government and accumulation of arms and ammunition,” Díaz predicted “a more serious disturbance might be expected.”¹⁶

Wilson had already anticipated that Díaz’s opposition would continue to cause unrest throughout Mexico. Harkening to his October 31st dispatch, Wilson noted that “its conclusions anticipated in a very large measure the events which have recently occurred.”¹⁷ The October 31st dispatch to which he referred was a lengthy analysis of the prevailing conditions across Mexico as the country headed into the fall elections. In it, Wilson surveyed the political landscape of Mexico, noting the many issues facing Díaz’s aging regime. The

¹⁶American Ambassador to the Secretary of State, November 15, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/450: Enclosure-Memorandum-Extract.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

report accurately identified many of the social and political troubles which came to face Mexico. In the note to the Secretary of State, Wilson outlined several key areas of potential crisis, including: the consolidation of Díaz's power in the executive, dissatisfaction amid the army, unequal land distribution, consolidation of wealth among the upper classes and particularly among the foreign population, poverty, abusive tax systems, the corrupt judiciary, and a growing anti-American sentiment. Wilson also suggested that Díaz's ability to adequately assess situations and make sound decisions had faltered:

The President is eighty three years of age and has many of the infirmities which come with advanced years. Physically and mentally he is suffering in various ways, visibly in his hearing, in failing memory, in a tendency to maudlin sentimentality, and in senile vanity about his place in history.¹⁸

Wilson, along with the American investment community, overlooked Díaz's shortcomings and continued to support the dictator for his policies that gave American businesses advantages within Mexico. Not everyone within Mexico agreed with such policies, however, as Wilson's dispatch revealed that a conflict had developed between Wilson and the advisors closest to Díaz, who recognized the need for Mexico's administrative structure to change to meet the expectations of a growing middle class. Wilson claimed that they tried to "take advantage of weakness of age [Díaz] for their own selfish purposes."¹⁹ Wilson also accurately observed that Díaz's advisors were some of the most corrupt officials in all of Mexico. Notwithstanding their questionable character, some

¹⁸Wilson to Secretary of State, October 31, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/355.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

of these Díaz confidants understood that the issues which faced Mexico could no longer be ignored. Despite the presence of contrary viewpoints within Díaz's inner circle, Wilson expressed confidence in Díaz's record of supporting American interests, recalling that he could not "record a single instance since I have had charge of this post when an appeal to his sense of justice and fair dealing have not met with prompt response."²⁰

Wilson's endorsement of Díaz did not prevent him from addressing the legitimate concerns over anti-American sentiment. Wilson wrote:

Another serious and dangerous phase of the situation here is the pronounced anti-American feeling which exists throughout the Republic and is not confined to any class, though naturally finding its most violent expression where the restraints of custom, courtesy and education are weakest. This sentiment of hostility is partially due to the memories of the war of 1846, partially to race antipathy, but in a larger measure to resentment of American commercial aggression [sic] and envy of American property and thrift.²¹

Wilson predicted that anti-American outbursts would target American businesses, property, and perhaps Americans themselves. Wilson's analysis even identified specific companies and people who might be victimized. Wilson noted that the Continental Mexican Rubber Company, the San Juan de Taviche Mining Company, and the Ganahl ranch had been attacked in the past, either through the nefarious legal attempts to expropriate American holdings, or through outright violence. Wilson also cited a long list of individuals who had been incarcerated, beaten, or harassed in what Wilson deemed instances of anti-

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*Ibid.*

Americanism.²² Wilson's suggested course of action was to stay the course with President Díaz and protect American interests at all costs; he gave no credence to Mexicans' legitimate grievances with U.S. companies. American violations were to be overlooked while instances of Mexican misbehavior to be dealt with seriously for they posed a more serious threat. The only caveat to the arrangement was that periodically, Americans might be required to intervene to maintain Díaz's power.

To justify intervention against anti-government revolutionaries, however, Wilson needed a legitimate correlation between dissidents residing in the U.S. and a specific plot to overthrow Díaz. During their discussion on November 14th, Díaz provided Wilson with enough evidence to link Madero's camp to revolutionary activity. Furthermore, Díaz craftily set aside the issue of widespread anti-American feeling by asserting that revolutionists lurked at the heart of the protests. Wilson's acceptance of Díaz's interpretation of the anti-American displays absolved Díaz of any culpability for the unrest and put the onus of responsibility on American law enforcement to stop further turmoil.

Thus, when Wilson met with Díaz to discuss the anti-American riots, no discussion of solving Mexico's issues occurred. Nobody suggested pressing harder to arrest those responsible for the lynching to sate the public's appetite. There was only discussion of repression. Díaz argued that Americans needed to intervene on their side of the border to stop the *antireelectionistas*. Díaz's insistence that American officials clamp down on Mexican dissidents living in the United States set another important precedent that America

²²*Ibid.*

was willing to intervene in Mexican political affairs under the guise of enforcing neutrality. This became a difficult example for American diplomats to follow after Díaz's defeat only six months after his discussion with Wilson.

President Díaz's request for American aid in neutralizing the growing anti-government forces came with at least one antecedent. American officials proved only days before the meeting that they were willing to suppress U.S. actions deemed hazardous to the situation in Mexico. On November 11th, Professor J. H. Francis, the Director of Polytechnic High School in Los Angeles, California, had received a letter from the Acting Secretary of State, Alvey A. Adee, suggesting that he cancel an upcoming debate at the school. The intended topic of discussion centered on the question of "whether the United States ought to annex Mexico?" Adee questioned the need for such a debate, and feared that although the issue remained "purely academic in its nature, might nevertheless result just at this time in unnecessarily increasing the intensity of the feeling now unfortunately prevalent in certain sections of both countries."²³

The letter achieved its intended purpose, as the Secretary of State afterwards reported to President Taft that:

[n]o request was made, either on behalf of Mexico or the United States, that the debate be stopped, or even postponed, but Mr. Francis seems to have considered that the discussion of such a question was, at that particular time, inopportune, and to have taken steps accordingly.²⁴

²³Alvey A. Adee to Professor J.H. Francis, November 11, 1910, *U.S.-Mexico Relations*, 712.11/7.

²⁴Secretary of State to President, December 20, 1910, *U.S.-Mexico Relations*, 711.12/14.

At least one concerned citizen of California found the U.S. government's meddling inappropriate. F.D. Hopkins sent a letter to the President on December 2nd—after he learned through press coverage of the State Department's involvement in the controversy and the subsequent cancellation—in which he complained that constitutional rights protected the integrity of the debate. Californians might have wondered what was worse, the topic of the debate, or the suppression of the event. Hopkins believed the government's intervention represented “a violation of the spirit if not the letter of the Constitution of the United States, and under which the right of free speech is guaranteed...” The letter expressed disappointment with the situation, which he regarded as “sufficient to thoroughly exasperate any American citizen worthy of the name and should be severely condemned.”²⁵ Hopkins presented a rather thoughtful case to President Taft, exploring the hypothetical arguments which might justify cancelling a debate. The note concluded that:

Such interference with the constitutional right of free speech of the citizens of this country leads only in one direction, and if followed to its natural end will eventually insure for the citizens of this country a term in jail if the individual even dares to criticize a foreign government or its ruler.²⁶

While Hopkins may have been in a minority of vocal opposition to the ill-fated debate, he certainly was not the only person to recognize that the tensions after the lynching of Antonio Rodríguez affected ordinary citizens in both nations as the high level diplomats

²⁵Secretary of State to President, December 20, 1910, *U.S.-Mexico Relations*, 711.12/14, enclosure: F.D. Hopkins to William H. Taft, December 2, 1910.

²⁶*Ibid.*

exercised their powers of suppression to stop further discord. Suppressing perfectly legal actions to prevent social unrest, however, set a dangerous precedent. The topic of the debate probably would have led to further conflict between the two nations and from a diplomatic standpoint, shutting it down seemed a facile solution. But, from an ordinary citizen's vantage point, the government responded inappropriately.

The debate controversy, along with President Díaz's request to arrest Mexican dissidents residing within the U.S., beget the question of the extent to which American officials intended to buttress Díaz's aging regime via suppressive actions in America. Díaz fully intended to test those boundaries as he demanded further action against the dissidents residing in Texas. Merely weeks before, American officials watched Francisco I. Madero living—and operating—in San Antonio, Texas. As a result of the Rodríguez incident, Díaz wanted—and perhaps needed—greater action from the Americans to keep his government in firm control. In San Antonio, the Mexican consul complained to American officials that Madero's supporters had recently purchased “a certain number of arms.” In response, the American officials acted, seizing the weapons cache. The raid did not appease Díaz, however, as he expressed frustration with the Americans' failure to arrest the arms merchants and their clients, whom he considered to be violating international neutrality laws.²⁷

A diplomatic morass emerged in the wake of Wilson's November 14th meeting with President Díaz over how to best define and implement neutrality in light of Mexican dissidents openly purchasing arms within the United States. Did the Justice Department

²⁷American Ambassador to the Secretary of State, November 16, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/447: Enclosure-Memorandum-Extract.

intend to prosecute every Mexican who sought to purchase arms within the U.S.? Or did only dangerous revolutionaries deserve harsh scrutiny? Did American officials intend to take their directives from Díaz—whose interests might not align fully with the State Department’s? Furthermore, numerous revolutionary newspapers operated across the Southwest United States; did suppressing one paper justify (or require?) suppressing others? Wilson seemingly had accepted Díaz’s assumptions that the anti-government forces had instigated the protests across Mexico. His second memorandum to the Secretary of State regarding the meeting omitted the discussion of the protests across Mexico or the Rodríguez incident directly; instead, Wilson only relayed the information pertaining to Madero and his supporters, whom he assured Díaz he would bring “to the attention of the Department.”²⁸

Díaz correctly discerned that American officials would not stand by idly while revolutionaries overthrew the regime that supported American interests across Mexico. What few realized, however, was that intervening against these revolutionaries would not be as simple as suppressing a newspaper, or even a person. As the Revolution wore on, taking first Díaz, then Madero, then Huerta, and others, the American government would be forced to change its stance and support whoever could bring stability out of revolution. None foresaw such a scenario, or they might not have encouraged Díaz down the path of obstinacy that alienated him further from his people. While the future may have been difficult to predict, Ambassador Wilson bore much culpability for failing to pursue justice—the legitimate complaint of the protestors angered over Rodríguez’s lynching—and instead encouraging Díaz’s suppressive measures.

²⁸*Ibid.*

Wilson's mind became clouded with conspiracy theories of revolutionists run amok. Wilson thought that strict enforcement of neutrality violations would stop the revolutionaries in their tracks. He constantly relayed unsubstantiated information to various departments and ordered his consular officials to investigate everything. The interplay among Mexican officials and U.S. State Department and Justice Department officials appeared chaotic as all operated without procedures and precedents for dealing with neutrality violations.²⁹ At times, officials failed to agree on consistent policy for relaying confidential information. The American consul in Mexico City, Arnold Shanklin, received several reprimands during the anti-American riots for breaching protocol when he quoted a message previously sent in cipher. Wilson, operating from Shanklin's consular area, constantly blamed Shanklin for leaking information to the press. Meanwhile, Shanklin consistently defended his memoranda.³⁰ Clearly, the diplomats operating throughout Mexico found themselves unprepared to deal with the repercussions of the Rodríguez lynching.

In late November, the U.S. army sent a team from the War Department to Texas to clamp down on the supposed neutrality violations. The group indicated upon arrival that the "situation on border is much exaggerated in papers."³¹ Their report suggested that the border intrigue was "merely to draw attention of the Mexican Government away from real points of

²⁹For an overview of the various agencies' efforts, see W. Dirk Raat, *Revoltosos: Mexico's Rebels in the United States, 1903-1923* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1981), 175-199.

³⁰See *FRUS*, 812.00/356,363,368,378.

³¹Commanding General, Department of Texas, to the Adjutant General, November 23, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/454.

danger.”³² After all, most of the rioting took place in areas away from the border, with the exception of Ciudad Porfirio Díaz. Wilson countered that the army’s assessment was “erroneous...the real point of danger is on the border...”³³ Meanwhile, Mexican officials continued to provide the State Department with multiple instances of neutrality violations.

An ensuing debate developed over whether the activities of Mexican exiles actually constituted neutrality violations. Mexican officials claimed attempts by refugees in Texas to incite rebellion, whether through the press or the purchase of arms, represented blatant violations of neutrality. Conversely, Justice Department officials responded that such actions were constitutionally protected under free speech. Moreover, since no state of war existed, officials held no authority to impede the commerce of weaponry. A series of desperate dispatches from Mexican officials to the State Department culminated in a frustrated Mexican Ambassador to the U.S., Francisco León de la Barra, barely concealing his annoyance at American officials’ failure to take Madero and his men into custody, exasperating that he “would be glad if the competent authorities of the United States would arrest these men or at least keep them under strict surveillance.”³⁴ Secretary of State Philander C. Knox, irritated at the Mexican Ambassador’s continual prodding, replied: “since no state of war exists in Mexico...it can scarcely be regarded that the parties named, no

³²*Ibid.*

³³American Ambassador to the Secretary of State, November 23, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/461.

³⁴Mexican Ambassador to the Secretary of State, November 28, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/499.

matter what their actions may be, are violating the rules of international law regarding neutrality...” Furthermore, Knox stated, “since under the American Constitution liberty of speech and of the press is guaranteed, mere propaganda in and of itself would probably not fall within these statutes and would not therefore be punishable...”³⁵

The diplomatic impasse spilled into 1911, as Madero continued to arm himself with weaponry from the U.S. and travel back and forth across the Rio Grande. When Mexican officials learned of Madero’s whereabouts, they quickly notified American officials. In late January, 1911, Ambassador De la Barra reported to Knox that Madero was “soon to go to San Antonio, Tex., where many of the Mexican agitators whom he encourages and urges...now are.” Furthermore, De la Barra also pointed to various other violations of the neutrality laws by Madero.³⁶ Knox simply reiterated the position that Madero’s actions failed to constitute a violation.³⁷

The U.S. State Department did not question the supposed link between anti-American protests and the revolutionists. In fact, the two countries found a common enemy in the revolutionists: President Díaz conveniently used the revolutionists as a scapegoat for the anti-American sentiment expressed in the wake of Rodríguez’s lynching while the American government identified the revolutionists as the primary obstacle to maintaining their long-

³⁵Secretary of State to the Mexican Ambassador, December 1, 1910, *FRUS*, 812.00/499.

³⁶Mexican Ambassador to the Secretary of State, January 19, 1911, *FRUS*, 812.00/655.

³⁷Secretary of State to the Mexican Ambassador, January 23, 1911, *FRUS*, 812.00/647.

standing position as the investor of choice for Mexico. In reality, neither judged the outbursts correctly. The real threat to the American position in Mexico remained the deep-seated resentment at the Mexican government's favorable treatment of Americans at the expense of ordinary Mexicans. President Díaz had failed to fulfill his implicit promise of redeeming what was lost thirty years prior when he decided to rely on foreigners for a quick modernization.

In the waning days of 1910, Díaz's attempts to blame the revolutionists for the anti-American rioting only served to demonstrate the Díaz administration's detachment with reality. Díaz's censorship also failed to achieve the desired results, as each round of suppression was followed by an outbreak of demonstrations and rioting in another Mexican city. The old dictator appeared blind to the dissatisfaction of his people, focusing his remaining energies on preserving his power as the chief of Mexico rather than addressing the core problem of the double-standard that favored Americans in Mexico over Mexicans themselves.

American officials' own skewed interpretation of the Rodríguez incident owed to several miscalculations. First, believing censorship of the newspapers could stop the anti-American demonstrations, American officials strongly encouraged Díaz to suppress journalists. Consequently, Mexican officials demanded the same considerations of America, requesting stifling of American newspapers, events, and especially the revolutionary papers operating within the safety of American borders under free speech guarantees. Further censorship exacerbated the tense political situation in Mexico and pushed more of the Mexican citizenry into Madero's ranks.

Second, the diplomatic corps assumed that anti-American sentiment was simply a front for revolutionary nationalism and had nothing to do with the Rodríguez episode. While some undoubtedly hoped the revolution would redress anti-American grievances, revolutionary feeling did not necessarily equate to anti-Americanism. This point was evinced clearly by Francisco Madero's own pro-American position, and the inability of the disturbances at Río Blanco and Cananea to garner widespread support. In their efforts to link anti-Americanism with revolutionists, officials dismissed legitimate grievances emanating from Rodríguez's death. By downplaying the significance of the lynching, America betrayed whatever confidence the Mexican populace placed on American integrity and indeed American liberal democracy. Censorship of the incident further outraged those demanding justice. Additionally, American officials engaged in an active role in the Mexican Revolution by continually blaming revolutionary sentiment for anti-Americanism. This stance obligated America to defend its interests in Mexico by stopping (or at least controlling) the Mexican Revolution. The perceived need to stop the unfolding Mexican Revolution also placed Americans squarely opposite ordinary Mexicans who wanted to change their government. Thus the diplomatic response to the anti-American protests actually distanced Americans further from their Mexican hosts—a fact that demonstrated the failure of the diplomacy.

Finally, American officials failed to thoroughly investigate the murder of Rodríguez: a fact that pitted Mexican officials against their American counterparts. The surprisingly shrill public outcry against the incident forced Mexican officials to demand justice for those responsible for the lynching, but American leaders drug their feet. Since lynching was not a

federal offense, the incident remained under the jurisdiction of local authorities, effectively ensuring a free pass to those responsible. The only form of closure came from the pro-American government newspaper *El Imparcial*, which ran a piece of propaganda declaring the end of hostilities between the two nations. The article vindicated Rodríguez, noting that “in a very tragic way his life of adventures in the United States ended.”³⁸

American investigations failed to ascertain the identities of the culprits responsible for the lynching, and only succeeded in inventing a debate over the nationality of Rodríguez himself. The American inquiry was reduced to fictitious speculation into Rodríguez’s personal history and identity. A proposal requested that the U.S. pay an indemnity to Rodríguez’s family members for his death, but records are unclear as to whether restitution was ever actually provided.³⁹ Mexican officials supposedly conducted their own investigation of the lynching by sending Consul Villasana. Predictably, he reported back to Mexico that he was “satisfied with existing conditions” in Rock Springs and that there was “no animosity between the races there.”⁴⁰

Both sides downplayed the incident: the Americans to avoid confronting the messy domestic policies protecting Jim Crow behavior, and the Mexicans to appease American officials. The Mexican populace, especially along the border, continued to clamor for justice over the lynching. A fearful situation developed when reports surfaced indicating that armed

³⁸*El Imparcial*, November 16, 1910, quoted in, *U.S.-Mexico Relations*, 711.12/12, translation supplied.

³⁹*U.S.-Mexico Relations*, 711.12/12.

⁴⁰*San Antonio Express News*, November 18, 1910.

Mexicans were headed to Rock Springs, presumably to carry out retribution on those responsible for the lynching. Governor Campbell, of Texas, ordered the Texas Rangers to patrol the area.⁴¹ No fighting occurred, but the murder of Rodríguez had clearly altered the border atmosphere for the worse.

Francisco Madero, living in San Antonio throughout the episode, watched the Rodríguez incident unfolding. He benefitted most from the outrage. Mexicans increasingly viewed the injustice as another example of the corrupt relationship between the United States and the Díaz regime. Latent anti-Americanism existed before the lynching in the form of resentment of American business interests, and Rodríguez's burning proved too much for the Mexican citizenry to tolerate; his death showed that the corrupt relationship between the Díaz regime and America could result in the death of Mexican peasants while the two governments idly watched. The savagery at Rock Springs exposed the blatant inconsistencies between the preferential treatment of Americans in Mexico and the blatant abuse of Mexicans in America. The realization of this double-standard, combined with the deep-rooted antipathy to foreign interests, caused full blown anti-Americanism to come to the forefront of the revolutionary platform.⁴²

On November 18th, Madero slipped out of San Antonio, headed to Carrizo Springs, Texas, just north of the border. Realizing that the American government's response to the

⁴¹*San Antonio Express News*, November 14, 1910.

⁴²For an overview of anti-American displays during the first phase of the Mexican Revolution, see Frederick C. Turner, "Anti-Americanism in Mexico, 1910-1913," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 47, No.4 (November 1967): 506.

rising tide of anti-Americanism was to blame the revolutionists, he sped up his plans after Díaz busted the Mexico City conspirators.⁴³ Madero needed to avoid becoming a scapegoat for American and Mexican officials intent on placing the blame of the anti-American uproars squarely on the shoulders of the revolutionaries. He planned to ignite the Mexican Revolution with a quick capture of Ciudad Porfirio Díaz, just across the border from Eagle Pass, Texas. Capturing the city with the old dictator's name seemed a fitting start to what Madero hoped would be a quick coup.

Madero's personal dreams of an easy victory, however, proved chimerical as he touched off one of the world's longest and bloodiest civil conflicts. Madero's inability to fully empathize with ordinary Mexicans' demands ensured that his revolutionary vision fell short of appeasing the masses' appetite for a new form of government. Along with countless other leaders of the Revolution, Madero later fell victim to the civil warfare as it ebbed and flowed between politicians' need for suppressive order and the expectations of Mexicans. Ironically, Madero might have fared better in siding with the protestors in their demands for justice over the lynching. In the end, Madero's efforts to maintain his American allies resulted in a double failure: his American friends deserted him, and perhaps worse, he alienated himself from the ordinary people who fought the Revolution.

⁴³Johnson, *Madero in Texas*, 60-61.

Epilogue:
Anti-Americanism after Rodríguez

As the Mexican Revolution supplanted discussions of the lynching in Texas, the memory of Antonio Rodríguez waned. Mexicans' pent-up frustration toward their own government and the special treatment it afforded Americans, however, continued to influence the course of Mexican history. Rodríguez's lynching unleashed a wave of frustrated protests that resulted in the incorporation of feelings of anti-Americanism into the revolutionary platform. Ordinary Mexicans interpreted Madero's call to arms on November 20th as an excuse to redress grievances with well-to-do Americans. National pride, for some, meant reducing the American position within Mexico.

Nervous Americans throughout Mexico anticipated that serious violence would erupt on November 20th. In Guadalajara, the rioting earlier in the month left the American colony hoping that the U.S. military might intervene to protect their interests. Citizens connected with Mr. Carothers, whose estate the rioters repeatedly attacked, felt especially threatened. One woman, writing to her family in the United States, noted that since the riots, conditions between Americans and Mexicans in Guadalajara had worsened. Tensions in the schools also reflected the unease, as well as the general belief in the inevitability of revolution. Mexican children derided Americans, telling them that “[w]hen Pres. Díaz dies—there wont [sic] be an American left in this country.” Other threats against Americans included the

possibilities of releasing the prisoners from the penitentiaries, poisoning the water supplies, cutting telegraph lines, and tearing up the railroads.¹

One of the reasons for such heightened anxiety in Guadalajara was that Mr. Carothers, who had shot and killed a boy during the rioting, held a position as treasurer of the American school—making the school a target because of its association with Carothers. Rumors circulated that a bomb was discovered at the girls' school. The letter also stated that during the rioting, Carothers's wife—a Mexican woman—tried to call for help from a policeman, who responded that “you married an American you don't deserve protection.” Later, Mr. Carothers reported the incident to the authorities, who arrested the policeman the next day. Some believed that the policeman's apprehension prompted the vicious attack on Carothers's residence during the second night of rioting. Finally, the worried American also remarked that Mexican officials across the country were trying to downplay the seriousness of anti-American sentiment, but that “troops rushed to Orizaba & Zacatecas yesterday prove the real condition.”² The concerns emanating out of Guadalajara might have been slightly exaggerated, but given that Guadalajara witnessed some of the most violent rioting, tensions were certainly high between Americans and Mexicans. Few questioned the intention of Mexican citizens to target the American position in the event of revolution.

In addition to paving the way for violence against Americans, the Rodríguez incident put a wedge between Madero's original platform of revolution and the expectations of

¹E.B. Leigh to Secretary of State, December 1, 1910, Enclosure, *Mex. Rev. Docs.*, Vol. I, 79-82.

²*Ibid.*

ordinary Mexicans. Without the lynching of Rodríguez, Madero might have successfully maneuvered a *coup d'état* while maintaining American sympathies. Unfortunately for Madero, however, Rodríguez's murder occurred just as Madero reached his zenith in popularity—the simultaneous events forced Madero to choose between incorporating anti-Americanism into his agenda to gain the allegiance of ordinary Mexicans, or eschewing foreign xenophobia to maintain American support.

From a political standpoint, Madero's decision proved easy: he opted for the later as he needed U.S. backing to succeed *militarily*. As Madero quickly became a de facto option for U.S. officials searching for a Mexican leader to end the political instability, Madero made clear his intention to avoid radical changes. By May of 1911, the revolution threatened to send the entire country into civil strife. Rather than permitting the wholesale destruction of the former system, Madero aimed to control the situation and regain stability by entering into compromise—principles highly valued by American officials. On May 21st, Madero assumed control of Mexico with the signing of the Treaty of Ciudad Juárez. Instead of dismantling the principal targets of the revolution, much of the old order remained: Madero kept De la Barra, Díaz's former ambassador to the U.S., as interim president; key positions in the new administration went to supporters of the military—not revolutionists; and finally, Madero left in place the federal army, ostensibly to stop radical peasant movements in their tracks.³ Madero's biographer, Stanley Ross, said of Madero that he “wanted cordial relations

³Katz, *Secret War with Mexico*, 39-42.

with the United States. In his first contact with the secretary of state he promised to honor all treaties...and to assume responsibility for damage to U.S. property.”⁴

Ambassador Wilson, along with others, became convinced that Madero would protect American interests. Wilson wrote: “I am now of the opinion that Mr. Madero will change his ideas of government, and that, as time passes he will be compelled by the forces of circumstances to revert more and more to the system implanted by General Díaz.”

Furthermore, Wilson was convinced Madero would “do justice to American interests.”⁵ By September of 1911, Wilson confidently asserted that anti-American sentiment had been completely eradicated by Madero, and that Madero’s opposition was dissolving.⁶ Since Madero no longer threatened American interests, President Taft wanted to make a strong showing of his support for Madero by enforcing neutrality along the border—such actions would help stop Madero’s opponents, who challenged his legitimacy after he failed to pursue the social goals most Mexicans sought via the revolution.⁷ Preeminent among those hopes was establishing a new social order wherein Mexico would belong primarily to Mexicans, rather than Americans. But by siding with America, Madero ensured his eventual demise. His platform ultimately proved myopic in lieu of the spread of anti-Americanism after Antonio Rodríguez’s lynching.

⁴Ross, *Madero*, 134-135.

⁵Katz, *Secret War with Mexico*, 46.

⁶Wilson to Secretary of State, September 22, 1911, *FRUS*, 812.00/2384.

⁷Raat, *Revoltosos*, 244-245.

In 1915, long after Madero’s demise, Americans uncovered a radical Mexican plot to take over Texas and the U.S. Southwest. The *Plan de San Diego (PSD)*, distributed via a handbill, specifically mentioned racial crimes and atrocities as the justification for overthrowing European-American dominance in the Southwestern U.S. The issue sparked a race war between members of *La Raza*—composed of portions of the Mexican-American community of South Texas—and Texas Rangers. Tejanos were disgusted at the number of discriminatory lynchings, among other things. During the *PSD* episode, hundreds of persons of Mexican origin died—some by lynching. Historian Cynthia E. Orozco highlighted this racialized atmosphere as one of the key factors that motivated leaders of the Mexican-American civil rights movement during the 1920s. Attorney J.T. Canales, one of the principal actors in the effort, called the race war a “wholesale slaughter” of Mexico-Tejanos. The sheer number of deaths prompted Canales in 1919 to initiate legislative hearings that exposed the racial crimes of the Texas Rangers—leading to significant changes in their authority and operations.⁸ Among the many lynchings, none was more well-known than the burning to death of Antonio Rodríguez.

The Mexican (and the Mexican-American) community developed extreme animosities toward Americans in the wake of Rodríguez’s death.⁹ After his death, ordinary Mexicans began to demand that their government remedy the deeply imbalanced systems that

⁸ Cynthia Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 26-28, 45-47.

⁹ *Ibid.* During the *PSD* episode (1915-1917), numbers of deaths range from 300-5,000.

afforded preferential treatment to Americans. Their progress was by no means a straight line of success, but through halting, begrudging changes, Mexicans sought to craft a government in such a way as to ensure that Mexico never again belonged to foreigners. The idea persisted throughout the duration of the Revolution.

Unfortunately, no single leader proved capable of articulating these hopes into practical government. Yet the people continued to push for policies that reflected the notion—most notably land reform and nationalization of key industries. While the roots of these concepts went further back than Rodríguez, the traumatic event in November 1910 propelled anti-American sentiment to the forefront of the revolutionary agenda—where it remains to this day in conspicuous demonstrations of nationalistic, Mexican pride. From illegal immigrants residing within American borders who consistently eschew legal routes to nationalization for pride of losing their Mexican identity, to the logo “*Hecho en México*,” Mexican nationalism is presently displayed in an anti-American fashion that stems from the days following the lynching of Antonio Rodríguez.

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