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NATIONALISM AND EDUCATION IN MEXICO, 1821-1861

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

JAMES H. LEE, B.A., M.A.

**************

The Ohio State University
1974

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The research for this study was conducted principally in the Mexican national archives (Archivo General de la Nación), the archives of the former ayuntamiento of Mexico City, and the Latin American Collection of The University of Texas. Despite the unquestionable value of these sources, I make no claim to have exhausted all available material on early nineteenth-century Mexican education. State and municipal archives throughout the country, unfortunately, remained beyond my reach. Although consultation of the books on provincial education listed in the bibliography will raise doubts as to the worth of some of these archives, the fact remains that this study suffers from a lack of data on school systems outside the capital. The information available to me, however, was adequate to trace general trends and to sustain the limited conclusions contained in this essay.

The preparation of the dissertation has created a number of obligations, and I should like to take this opportunity to acknowledge them. The Department of History at Ohio State University aided with a grant that permitted a summer of preliminary research and then arranged my teaching
schedule to enable me to do the work in Mexico. My mother, Mrs. Walter W. Lee, graciously consented to type several drafts of the paper and even pretended to find the material interesting. Professor Donald Cooper far exceeded the duties of an adviser and generously gave of his time at every stage of the research and writing. I of course remain solely responsible for all factual errors and wrongheaded conclusions.
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INTRODUCTION

The four decades bracketed between the achievement of independence and the French intervention formed a seminal period in the emergence of modern Mexico. The opportunism which shaped the political process has encouraged some historians to treat the so-called "era of Santa Anna" with thinly veiled disdain, but in fact the confusion and chaos of these years reflected in part the search for a new national identity. The break from Spain forced Mexican leaders to assume direct responsibility for the future course of national development, and the lack of consensus on this vital issue inaugurated a generation of frantic experimentation. Gradually, however, the options narrowed to a political system modeled on the liberal Anglo-American examples or a society patterned after the more aristocratic structure of the colonial regime. The denouement of the struggle between these two strategies of national development helped to determine the character of twentieth-century Mexico.

One approach to improved understanding of these critical decades involves the study of government educational policy, because virtually every prominent Mexican considered
the schools a key to his country's future progress. The present essay thus attempts to measure the extent to which political and intellectual leaders sought to use the schools to mold the population in accordance with their perception of the country's future course of development. Josefina Vázquez de Knauth asks similar questions in her book, *Nacionalismo y educación en México*, but she focuses on the kind of national image transmitted to students through the history they studied in school. She merely touches on the period before 1860, moreover, for the very good reason that few Mexican schools taught national history during those years. I have chosen to emphasize administrative structure and general curricular trends, although these educational developments are examined only in their relationship to political goals and policies. This is not a study of Mexican education as such.

The essay falls into three parts. The first section discusses societal attitudes toward mass education and the official policies devised to implement those attitudes, with emphasis on the structure of the school system and the content of the curriculum. The next part examines

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reforms in higher education, with concentration on the process of secularization in the curriculum and the administrative apparatus. The final chapter deals with official educational efforts on behalf of the Indians, to provide a necessary added dimension to the general discussion of the political uses of the schools.
CHAPTER I

SOCIETAL ATTITUDES TOWARD MASS EDUCATION

Despite the factionalism that characterized Mexican political life in the period after independence, intellectual and governmental leaders of the new country did achieve a basic consensus on some important issues, including that of mass education. Research in both published and archival materials failed to uncover a single skeptical remark concerning the value of popular instruction. Such unanimity doubtless reflected in part the social pressure generated by general agreement on an important issue, but there is no reason to question the essential authenticity of the consensus. Even the ideological conflicts of the 1850's failed to disrupt it; both liberals and conservatives continued to urge the elimination of illiteracy.¹

¹The following are examples of support of education not cited elsewhere in this chapter: Archivo General de la Nación, Ramo de Instrucción Pública, Vol. 7, foja 86; Vol. 9, ff. 112, 279; Vol. 31, f. 2; Vol. 82, f. 60; Vol. 91, f. 220 (cited hereafter as AGN; unless otherwise noted, all citations from this source are from the Ramo de Instrucción Pública); Memoria leída ante el augusto congreso extraordinario de Yucatán, por el secretario general de gobierno, el día 18 de Setiembre de 1846 (Mérida: Imprenta
The movement for popular education commanded widespread support because men believed that instruction of the masses would contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of the country. Vocational training would convert a potential lumpenproletariat into a useful segment of society, while political and moral instruction would create 'virtuous' citizens who understood and supported the established system of government. Although both functions of primary education received considerable emphasis from commentators, the latter is of more importance for the purposes of this essay.²

²The following are examples of references to the economic advantages of education: AGN, Vol. 9, f. 45; Vol. 31, f. 154; Vol. 46, f. 25; Ramo de Gobernación, legajo 18, expediente 2, f. 7; Memoria, que sobre el estado que guarda en Michoacán la administración pública en sus diversos ramos, leyó al honorable congreso del mismo el secretario del despacho lic. Francisco G. Anaya. En los días 2 y 3 de Enero de 1850 (Morelia: Imprenta de I. Arango, 1850),
Most observers linked the establishment of a stable political system to the success of the campaign for popular education. The liberal theoretician José María Luis Mora captured the essence of this view when he argued that only an educated populace could responsibly participate in politics on the scale required in a republic. To some commentators the need for a 'republican' education appeared especially urgent because of Mexico's monarchist traditions.

It would be foolish, Governor Angulo of Jalisco declared, to expect people to support a form of government about which they knew nothing. A majority of editorialists and politicians did not, however, specifically focus on the value of instruction in the mystique and institutions of representative government. In their generally brief statements they confined themselves to vague references to the need for

pp. 18, 19; Manuel Dublán y José María Lozano, Legislación mexicana o colección completa de las disposiciones legislativas expedidas desde la independencia de la república (Edición oficial; México: Imprenta del Comercio, 1876), IV, p. 510; El sol, July 17, 1825; December 27, 1831; La educación pública en México a través de los mensajes presidenciales desde la consumación de la independencia hasta nuestros días, Prólogo de J. M. Puix Casauranc (México: Publicaciones de la Secretaría de Educación, 1926), pp. 3, 6, 7; Plinio D. Ordóñez, Historia de la educación pública en el estado de Nuevo León, 1592-1942; su evolución, sus instituciones y los hombres que la organizaron y orientaron, Vol. I: Educación primaria (Monterrey, 1942), pp. 110, 111.
training in social rights and duties, a phrase that in many cases, to be sure, served merely as shorthand for the more sophisticated form of political education. For an undetermined number of men, on the other hand, the narrow focus reflected a conviction that good citizenship for the mass of the population consisted principally in dutiful obedience to constituted authority. Although the panic induced by chronic political crisis probably tended to strengthen the popularity of this latter view, its long-term adherents betrayed an elitism that crossed party lines in its conception of the nation as a small ruling class.\(^3\)

\(^3\)AGN, Vol. 7, ff. 177-179; Vol. 31, ff. 153, 154, 157; Vol. 45, f. 13; Archivo del ex-Ayuntamiento de la Ciudad de México, Vol. 2478, exped. 291; Memoria de la secretaría de estado y del despacho de relaciones interiores y exteriores, presentada por el secretario del ramo a las camaras del congreso general, en cumplimiento del artículo 120 de la constitución, y leída en la de diputados el día 26 y en la de senadores el 30 de Marzo de 1835 (México: Imprenta de Águila, 1835), pp. 39, 40; Memoria del ministerio de justicia e instrucción pública, presentada a las camaras del congreso general por el secretario del ramo. Año de 1845 (México: Litog. de Cumplido, n.d.), pp. 42, 43; Memoria, que sobre el estado que guarda en Michoacán la administración pública en sus diversos ramos, leyó el honorable congreso del mismo el secretario del despacho lic. Francisco G. Anaya, pp. 18, 19; Memoria con que dió cuenta a las honorables camaras del estado de Yucatán, el secretario del despacho, el 10 de Enero de 1852, en cumplimiento del art. 160 del reglamento interior del h. congreso de 28 de Setiembre de 1850 (Mérida: Tipografía de Rafael Pedrera, 1852), p. 17; Memoria en que el gobierno del estado libre
One of the most complete expositions of the political function of primary education appeared in a Michoacán newspaper in 1831. The author of the editorial directed the thrust of his argument against domestic or tutorial instruction as opposed to that given in public or private institutions. Only in public schools, he pointed out, could the State shape education to serve the goals of society.
Teachers in these schools, following the guidelines of legislators, could implant in their students those ideas and attitudes that conformed to the established political system. At the same time, he continued, the instructors would serve as models for the children, and in this way they would contribute to the formation of a national character. Through instruction and example, moreover, the teachers would exert a beneficial influence over public opinion. The result would be a generation of citizens useful to society.  

Most members of the intelligentsia believed that moral and religious instruction also formed a necessary component of a sound education. A number of commentators, in fact, stressed the value of this kind of training more than that of political instruction. The nuance was in some cases accidental or insignificant, but for many men it evidenced a conviction that the Catholic Church expressed more accurately the character of the Mexican people than did the newly adopted republican system of government. Although only minor importance attached to the difference in emphasis

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*Registro oficial del gobierno de los Estados-Unidos Mexicanos, June 16, 1831. The article appeared in this paper as a reprint.*
initially, in an imperfect way it did foreshadow the rigid ideological positions of the 1850's.\(^5\)

Despite these signs of nascent conflict, the fact remains that political and intellectual leaders of the new country tended to agree that the school was one of the key institutions for the inculcation of moral, religious and political values. Several writers declared that lower-class parents had failed to instill a sense of morality in their children, and many others implicitly agreed that the family alone could not prepare young people for participation in society. Society itself, in other words, would have to

\(^5\)AGNM, Vol. 9, f. 100; Vol. 92, ff. 234, 322; Ramo de Gobernación, leg. 243: Memoria presentada por el c. Martín Quezada secretario del gobierno de Chiapas, al honorable congreso del estado, 1851 (Imprenta del Gobierno, n.d.), pp. 11, 12; Archivo Municipal, Vol. 2481, exped. 530; Memoria leída ante la excma. asamblea del departamento de Yucatán, por el secretario general de gobierno el día 7 de Mayo de 1845 (Mérida: Imprenta de Castillo y Compañía, n. d.), pp. xix, xx; Memoria leída ante el honorable congreso del estado libre de Yucatán por el secretario de gobierno en 20 de Julio de 1857 (Mérida: Tipografía a cargo de Mariano Guzmán, 1857), pp. 6, 7; Noticia del estado en que se encuentra el colegio del Espíritu Santo, leída por el rector y regente de estudios del mismo, en la solemne distribución de premios, el día 30 de Noviembre de 1851 (Puebla: Imprenta de J. M. Rivera, 1851), pp. 12, 13; El sol, July 17, 1825; November 17, 1825; Moises González Navarro, El pensamiento político de Lucas Alamán (México: El Colegio de México, 1952), p. 33; Historia de la educación pública en México a través de los mensajes presidenciales, p. 5.
assume a larger role in the production of the kind of citizens it needed. This was particularly important in the case of political instruction, because the State had to reorient the attitudes of a traditionally monarchist population. It is hardly surprising, consequently, that several educators and officials favored enactment of compulsory attendance laws. For these men primary education was no longer merely a privilege or even a right; it had become an essential requirement for the proper functioning of society.\(^6\)

The emphasis on political and religious instruction demonstrates that most members of the intelligentsia viewed the schools as transmitters of national culture. A few individuals, however, made more explicit references to this function of primary education. Teachers occasionally warned that students who had to travel to Europe for their schooling, or those who attended local institutions under the charge of foreigners, received at best superficial

\(^6\)It should be noted, however, that some teachers justified education of girls on the grounds that when they became mothers they would have the principal responsibility for the moral training of children; other educators were willing to exempt from the compulsory attendance laws those children who received proper training at home. AGN, Vol. 7, ff. 177-179; El sol, July 17, 1825; June 11, 1826; June 18, 1826; December 27, 1831; Ordóñez, Historia de la educación pública en el estado de Nuevo León, I, pp. 40, 111.
instruction in national customs and culture, especially religion. In some cases fear of competition motivated such critics, but they would not have used the cultural argument had they not believed it would appeal to the government. More important than these self-interested statements, however, is the evidence that at least some officials recognized the special cultural role of the schools in those northern frontier areas where proximity to the United States created a threat to Mexican sovereignty.\(^7\)

Another potential value ascribed to mass instruction related to its impact on class structure. The very concept of universal education implies some increase in social mobility as a consequence, but a few commentators expressed the hope that public schools would provide points of contact for children of all classes. One newspaper editor maintained that all children, even those who planned to enter the Church, should attend the same schools, a practice which he hoped would foster egalitarian attitudes and the formation of common customs and habits. Another writer asserted that attendance at public schools would demonstrate to children of different social strata their interdependence. Middle-class parents might not have subscribed to this view,

but they could have found more acceptable the argument of other writers that mass education would remove some of the barriers between the classes, especially those of a political nature. Most commentators did not dwell on the possibility that education of the lower social strata might foster a sense of community through a reduction of class tensions, but neither did the idea encounter much overt opposition.\(^a\)

The ideological struggles of the 1850's strained but did not destroy the educational consensus discussed above. Even in the 1850's some first-generation liberals claimed that their adversaries opposed popular enlightenment, and by the 1850's this charge had achieved the status of a cliche. A conservative editor correctly replied, however, that the desirability of mass education was not the issue; the debate between the two groups actually centered around the proper content of instruction. The conservative party that emerged in the years after the American war dedicated itself to the restoration, in modified form, of the social and political institutions characteristic of the colonial era, while its opponents committed themselves to the transformation of Mexico into a model of the nineteenth-century

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\(^a\)Archivo Municipal, Vol. 2480, exped. 464; Gaceta del gobierno superior de la federación mexicana, June 29, 1826; Registro oficial del gobierno de los Estados-Unidos Mexicanos, June 16, 1831; El sol, June 19, 1826; José María Mora, Obras sueltas (Segunda edición; México: Editorial Porrua, 1963), p. 110.
liberal society. The conservatives accordingly maintained that religious instruction should form the basis of education, largely because the Church provided the moral underpinnings of the society they desired to restore. At the same time they accused the liberals of using the schools to diffuse the secularist political principles of Enlightenment philosophy. The latter countered that the clerically dominated educational system envisioned by conservatives could not prepare students to participate economically or politically in modern society. In effect, therefore, each group sought to employ the schools to ensure the triumph of its principles, and in so doing both demonstrated that, like their predecessors, they regarded popular education as a vital factor in the creation of a national character.\(^8\)

\(^8\)Archivo Municipal, Vol. 2479, exped. 437, ff. 1, 2; Vol. 2481, exped. 585, f. 2; Dublán, Legislación mexicana, III, pp. 66, 67; Leyes, decretos y circulares del estado de Veracruz Llave, Año 1855 (Jalapa: Imprenta del Gobierno del Estado, 1889), p. 94; Memoria de la junta directiva de enseñanza pública, sobre el estado que guarda este ramo en fin del año de 1861 (Guadalajara: Tip. del Gobierno, 1862), 3-6; El constitucional, November 14, 1851; Diario oficial del supremo gobierno, September 23, 1858; September 24, 1858; Mora, Obras sueltas, pp. 116, 117, 121, 122; Escuelas laicas, p. 102; Clemente Munguía, Los principios de la iglesia católica comparadas con los de las escuelas racionalistas, en sus aplicaciones a la enseñanza y educación pública, y en sus relaciones con los progresos de las ciencias, de las letras y de las artes, la mejora de las costumbres y la perfección de la sociedad. Seguida de una memoria sobre el orígen, progresos y estado actual de la enseñanza y educación en el seminario tridentino de Michoacán (Morelia: Imprenta de I. Arango, 1849).
CHAPTER II

PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THE FEDERAL DISTRICT, 1821-1842

The most important test of the educational consensus examined in the previous chapter would occur at the primary level, because only through the elementary schools could the country's new leaders hope to touch the lives of people from all social classes. These men could not, however, automatically translate that consensus into effective systems of primary education. Serious financial problems impeded such an achievement, as did the questions of who would control the schools and what would be taught in them. The resolution of these latter two issues, if only by default, would reveal far more accurately than speeches or editorials the true character of society's educational goals.

Colonial Origins of the Educational System

Throughout most of the colonial period of Mexican history the Spanish government left responsibility for primary education to the Church and to private individuals. In the years immediately following the conquest, to be sure, royal
officials did attempt, through the missionary orders, to convert primary instruction into a tool of acculturation for marginal groups in colonial society. The Colegio de San Juan de Letrán, for example, enjoyed the support of Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza (1535-1550) because he hoped that the school could transform mestizo foundlings from pariahs into useful members of society through primary and vocational training. This initial effort on behalf of disadvantaged groups, however, failed to mature into a consistent policy, and for more than two centuries after 1550 the crown exhibited only occasional interest in nonreligious instruction.¹

The schools that began to appear by the middle of the sixteenth century, accordingly, owed their existence to the efforts of the Church and private individuals. The best ones catered solely to creoles (whites), whom they often instructed in Latin (a prerequisite for entrance into the

¹Evelyn Blair, "Educational Movements in Mexico: 1821 to 1836" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas 1941), pp. 268, 269: Joaquín García Icazbalceta, La instrucción pública en la ciudad de México durante el siglo xvi, Discurso leído por Joaquín García Icazbalceta en las juntas de la academia mexicana correspondiente de la real España, celebradas los días 6 de Junio, 20 de mismo, y 4 de Julio de 1882 (México: Oficina Tip. de la Secretaría de Fomento, 1893), pp. 23, 24. For a brief discussion of crown educational efforts on behalf of the Indians, see Chapter VII.
university) as well as the Three R's and religious doctrine. The secular authorities made no real effort to establish effective control over these institutions, but in 1600 the viceroy nevertheless ratified the first Ordinance of Primary Teaching.²

Available evidence indicates that the viceroy acted at the behest of members of the teaching profession. He did not, in any case, draw up the ordinance himself, and he deleted from the first draft a provision which would have closed the teaching profession to Indians and Negroes. The version he approved required that all teachers pass an exam in reading, writing and arithmetic administered by authorized members of their profession. Through this licensing requirement supporters of the ordinance apparently hoped to eliminate competition from less competent individuals. If so, they failed to achieve their goal, for the ordinance never became an effective tool for control of the teaching profession. The ordinance applied equally to both clerical and lay teachers, but the government neglected to enforce it. One examiner claimed in the late seventeenth century that no teacher had taken the qualifying exam in the previous

²Icazbalceta, La instrucción pública en la ciudad de México, pp. 25, 26.
twenty years. In later years the ordinance itself encountered criticism from some royal officials who wanted to establish more effective government control over education. In the view of one official writing in 1817 the teacher's guild should not administer the test, because this method forced the government to perpetuate the faulty techniques practiced by those who dominated the profession.\(^3\)

Several decades before this individual filed his report, however, the royal government had begun to assume a more active interest in primary education. During the viceroyalty of the second Conde de Revillagigedo, (1789-1794), crown officials started to use royal funds to establish public schools in some towns. The government also required all monasteries to open free schools. The royal schools remained few in number, but the escuelas pías, where students

received instruction only in reading and prayer, offered serious competition to the numerous private schools that charged tuition. The latter declined sharply in number at the end of the colonial period as a result, but nonetheless it is clear that at no time did the Church monopolize the field of primary education.⁴

These modest beginnings of a free educational system do not indicate any official commitment to popular instruction, but at the end of the colonial period the Spanish government did take that final step. In 1812 power rested in the hands of the Spanish liberals, men dedicated to a transformation of the empire. Miguel Ramos Arizpe, a Mexican delegate to the constitutional cortes of that year, verbalized the feelings of the liberals when he declared that "Public education is one of the principal duties of every enlightened government, and only despots and tyrants sustain the ignorance of peoples in order more easily to abuse their rights." In

⁴Chávez Orozco, La educación pública elemental, pp. 20-23; Jesús Romero Flores, Historia de la educación en Michoacán (México: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, n.d.), p. 10; El Archivo del ex-Ayuntamiento de la Ciudad de México, Vol. 2478, exped. 297, f. 57. (Cited hereafter as Archivo Municipal.) The date of the royal order requiring establishment of free schools in convents is uncertain, but the escuelas pías began to appear in the late eighteenth century.
accordance with this reasoning, the cortes wrote into the empire's first constitution a provision that required the establishment of primary schools in every town. The minimum curriculum was to include, in addition to the Three R's, a religious catechism and instruction in civil duties. The liberals ensured State control of this educational system through creation of a bureau endowed with authority to inspect all schools. When the liberals briefly returned to power in 1820 they made another effort to politicize the schools. Over Fernando VII's reluctant signature they issued a proclamation that required all priests and teachers to discuss favorably the constitution, in order "... to inspire love for the fundamental law among the young of all classes who are presently being educated and who are the hope of the country. ..." In the liberals' view the schools were unquestionably instruments of the State.5

Their legislative efforts on behalf of education are chiefly important, however, because they contrast so sharply

with previous crown policy. Mass religious instruction had always commanded support among royal officials, because both the Habsburgs and the Bourbons relied heavily on the Church to instill loyalty in the people. But other forms of education seemed less important for individuals who did not plan to enter the Church, the professions, or the service of the crown. The liberals, on the other hand, drew many of their ideas from the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, and they believed that mass education of the "proper" kind could contribute to governmental stability in a world where popular sovereignty had replaced the divine right of kings as the main justification of political power. The leaders of newly independent Mexico also faced the task of inculcating loyalty to novel political principles, and they too turned to the schools for help.

The Legal Framework of the Educational System

Government officials initially focused their efforts on the formulation of a new definition of the State's legal relationship to the educational system. This seemed a prerequisite to the development of a coherent educational policy. The Emperor Iturbide (1822-1823) remained in power
too briefly to take effective action along this line, but
the plural executive which temporarily replaced him in 1823
quickly declared its intention to draw up a general plan for
the organization of educational systems throughout the repub-
lic. These men left little doubt as to their motives when
they expressed the hope that education would produce eco-
nomically productive and politically responsible citizens.
This 1823 circular inaugurated a decade of attempts to pro-
duce a basic educational law, at first for the entire repub-
lic, and later only for the federal capital. Congress and
special commissions that boasted some of the country's most
prominent citizens, drafted at least five bills (called
study plans) designed to achieve this goal. The four pro-
posals which included sections on primary education closely
resembled each other in most important respects, and thus
may be examined together.⁶

In each case the bill provided for some measure of
State control over both public and private schools. Three
of them stipulated that a special board of education or
corps of inspectors would visit the schools to ensure that

⁶*El sol, November 30, 1826; Archivo General de la
Nación, Ramo de Gobernación, leg. 18, exped. 2; exped. 10.
(Cited hereafter as AGN.)
teachers possessed the necessary skills and that their lessons conformed to religious and political orthodoxy. The fourth plan left responsibility for inspection of schools to the city council (ayuntamiento). Each proposal also provided for the creation of as many free public schools as available resources would permit, and required uniformity in the texts and teaching methods used in these schools. Without exception, finally, the study plans included minimum curricula that provided for religious, moral, and political instruction. In only one instance, however, did the latter form of instruction explicitly entail a study of the country's system of government. In other respects, the plans differed from each other. Not all, for example, required teachers in private institutions to secure a license, and only two provided for creation of a normal school.  

Congress enacted none of these bills into law. The first two plans applied to the schools of the entire country, and in at least one case President Guadalupe Victoria (1824-1829) opposed this feature on the grounds that the Constitution of 1824 left responsibility for education to

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7El sol, November 30, 1826; AGN, Ramo de Gobernación, leg. 18, exped. 2, ff. 123-127; exped. 10, ff. 28-30; Blair, "Educational Movements in Mexico," pp. 101-104.
the states. An elaborate section on higher education under-
mined support for one bill among men who doubted its feasi-
bility. The proposals of 1828 and 1832, finally, came up
for consideration during periods of abnormal political in-
stability, and this fact may help to explain their fate.
Research uncovered no evidence, however, to indicate that
congressional inaction reflected disapproval of the impor-
tant provisions of any of the bills. The lack of an organi-
zational law, nevertheless, left the government's relation-
ship to the capital's educational system uncertain, and
forced municipal authorities to assume full responsibility
for creation of public schools.8

8 Blair, "Educational Movements in Mexico," pp. 77, 80,
81; La educación pública en México a través de los mensajes
presidenciales desde la consumación de la independencia
hasta nuestros días. Prólogo de J. M. Puiz Casauranc
(México: Publicaciones de la Secretaría de Educación, 1926),
p. 5; José María Mora, Obras sueltas (Segunda edición;
México: Editorial Porrúa, 1963), p. 112; Memoria present-
tada a las dos cámaras del congreso general de la federa-
ción, por el secretario de estado y del despacho de rela-
ciones esteriores e interiores al abrirse las sesiones del
año de 1825. Sobre el estado de los negocios de su ramo
(México: Imprenta del Supremo Gobierno de los Estados Uni-
dos Mexicanos, n.d.), pp. 31, 32; Memoria del ministerio de
relaciones interiores y exteriores de la república mexicana.
Leída en la cámara de diputados el 10, y en la de senadores
el 12 de Enero de 1827 (México: Imprenta del Supremo
Gobierno, 1827), pp. 25, 26.
The Evolution of the Capital's School System

The city council achieved only minimal success in its attempts to establish and support an adequate number of free public schools. Four such institutions existed in 1823, and over the next eight years the regidores (councilmen) managed to increase that total by two, while the number of students enrolled remained about the same, between three and five hundred. Critics of the ayuntamiento considered this performance deplorable, and several of them used the letters' column of El sol (and probably other dailies) to demand an expansion of the number of public schools. These men repeatedly stressed the need for mass education to convert idle lower-class children into productive and obedient citizens, and asserted that the council had the responsibility to provide schools to accomplish these goals. The critics did not explicitly advocate the establishment of a predominantly public school system; rather, they turned to the ayuntamiento because it was the only body on which they could hope to exert effective pressure. It remains clear, nonetheless, that these men too had adopted the idea that the government had a definite duty in the field of education.9

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9 Blair, "Educational Movements in Mexico," pp. 42-66; El sol, July 17, 1825; February 21, 1830; May 15, 1830;
Their pressure eventually had an effect, for at the end of the 1820's the federal government passed a tax measure designed to provide more money for primary education. The law earmarked some of the money for an industrial arts school, but the ayuntamiento convinced officials of the president's office that the money appropriated was inadequate for this purpose. The regidores then countered with the plan drawn up in late 1832 by a prominent educator, Agustín Buenrostro, that provided for establishment of nine new public schools. Buenrostro, according to a spokesman for the council, planned the location of the additional schools so that a maximum number of lower-class children could attend them. The federal government approved the plan in April, 1833, on the eve of the country's first important educational reforms.¹⁰

The only other schools in the Federal District that enjoyed government financial support were the two institutions

¹⁰Archivo Municipal, Vol. 2478, exped. 297, f. 10; 41-44, 54; Vol. 2479, exped. 386, f. 7; AGN, Ramo de Instrucción Pública, Vol. 7, ff. 246, 247, 250, 252, 253. (All subsequent citations from the AGN are from the Ramo de Instrucción Pública.)
under the control of the Lancasterian Company. The schools, as the name indicates, employed the teaching method popularized by the English educator, Joseph Lancaster. His system aroused considerable interest throughout Latin America during this early period because it appeared to make mass education feasible for economically backward countries. Through the use of student monitors, who transmitted to groups of pupils what the instructor taught them, a single teacher could reach far more students than through traditional methods. There was, to be sure, a severe limit on the kinds of materials that could be taught in this manner, but even so, the Lancasterian method offered a realistic hope for a reduction in the rate of illiteracy.

A number of eminent educators, including Agustín Buenrostro, formed the Mexican company in February, 1822. Although the organization depended on the dues of its numerous members to support its first school, El Sol, it also requested aid from Emperor Iturbide, in the form of a building in which to hold classes. He granted the request but later broke with the founders over their antigovernment activities. While several of them languished in jail for their opposition to the emperor, Iturbide established a degree of control over the school, forbidding its director
to instruct the students in politics. The establishment of a republic in 1823 eliminated the restrictions on the Lancasterian Company, but the organization's relationship to the government remained uncertain until near the end of the decade. At that time, after repeated requests, congress voted a regular subsidy for the company's two schools, which together accommodated about five hundred students. The need for this additional support stemmed from the fact that the company waived the small tuition for those students (the great majority) who could not afford to pay.^^

Despite the fact that the government repeatedly fell behind in its payments, the very existence of the subsidy demonstrates that officials regarded the company's schools as a valuable adjunct of the public school system. The company, in fact, possessed important assets lacking in the

^^Irma Wilson, Mexico: A Century of Educational Thought (New York: Hispanic Institute in the United States, 1941), p. 123; Blair, "Educational Movements in Mexico," pp. 213, 216; El sol, July 2, 1825; February 5, 1827; AGN, Vol. 31, ff. 8, 27; Vol. 33, ff. 209, 211, 218, 227; Discurso inaugural que en la abertura de las escuelas mutuas de la filantropía, establecidas por la compañía lancasteriana de México en el que fue convento de estinguídos Belemitas, dijo el ciudadano Manuel Codorniu y Ferreras, presidente actual y socio fundador de la misma, en el día 16 de Noviembre de 1823, tercera de la independencia y segunda de la libertad (Imprenta a cargo de Martín Rivera, n.d.), p. 3.
administration of the public schools. In the first place, it operated a normal school which trained aspiring teachers in the Lancasterian method. The initial enthusiasm over the method had declined somewhat by the end of the 1820's, because the lack of trained teachers had sharply limited the results of its adoption. The opening of a normal school in 1824, however, promised to improve this situation. Equally important, the company could boast members from all political factions, and seemed to enjoy genuine neutrality amidst the struggles of the period. Although it selected its officers through election, furthermore, the organization possessed the kind of administrative continuity essential to any degree of efficiency; the same could hardly be said of a political entity such as the city council. The Lancasterian Company, in short, performed a vital service during a time when the government proved unable to devote adequate attention to the establishment of an effective system of mass education.\textsuperscript{12}

The balance of the schools in the capital operated under the direct control of either the Church or private

\textsuperscript{12}Blair, "Educational Movements in Mexico," p. 264; El _sol_, July 2, 1825; AGN, Vol. 31, f. 27; Vol. 33, f. 105.
individuals. Statistics for this period are very incomplete, but by 1830 there were probably a total of nearly one hundred primary schools in the capital, with a combined student body of perhaps 3,000. The various municipal governments in the Federal District supported less than a dozen of these institutions, including the two which the Lancasterian Company operated. While most private schools had relatively small student bodies, moreover, probably two-thirds of all pupils attended them. It is impossible to determine how many children studied under priests or nuns, but the Church itself administered only about a dozen schools. The royal order requiring establishment of free schools in all convents remained in force, but at least half the monasteries and parishes failed to maintain a school. The educational role of the Church, in other words, had entered a period of decline despite official pressure from the government. Foreigners directed perhaps as many as a dozen of the private schools, and some Mexicans apparently harbored suspicions of their moral uprightness. The city council, in any case, ordered an inspection of these schools on the basis of reports that they used "immoral" books. On the whole, however, it does not appear that foreign teachers confronted much prejudice on nationalistic grounds.13

13 Archivo Municipal, Vol. 2478, exped. 297, ff. 57, 71, 72; exped. 298; exped. 299. This paragraph utilizes data
The absence of any organizational law injected considerable uncertainty into the relationship between these private schools and the government. The federal government frequently aided the directors of these institutions through rental of classroom space, and prominent officials demonstrated their support of primary education by attendance at public exams in some of the schools. The federal government avoided the delicate issue of control, however, and thus responsibility fell to municipal officials, who proved willing to assert their authority over private schools despite the absence of explicit legal sanction for their actions. In a somewhat haphazard manner they visited the capital's schools, both public and private, and administered qualifying exams to as many teachers as possible. As Agustín Buenrostro pointed out in a highly critical report (1832), however, the council's efforts to improve education enjoyed limited success.¹⁴

Buenrostro claimed that corruption and favoritism characterized the licensing procedure. This was due, he said, to the political disturbances and accompanying administrative disruptions of recent years, which made it easy for most teachers to secure a license. Bureaucratic failings, however, did not constitute the central problem. The absence of standard criteria for determining competence, the educator noted, introduced chaos into the examining process. The severe shortage of trained teachers, in any case, eliminated the possibility that the requirement of a license could ensure that all schools had qualified instructors. Buenrostro also pointed to the lack of legal support for the council's efforts to establish control over private schools. Not only did councilmen visit these schools and examine their teachers; they also attempted to force the latter to use the Lancasterian method and in some cases to use designated texts. Buenrostro concluded his report with the recommendation that the ayuntamiento cease its intervention into private schools and concentrate on the creation of an effective system of public education.15

The council, predictably, failed to follow the educator's advice. It seems clear, however, that Buenrostro had

accurately pinpointed the weaknesses in this early attempt to establish State control over primary education. The council could not perform adequately in its educational role partially because it lacked both the time and resources to do so. Effective control, in other words, appeared to require the establishment of a special board whose sole responsibility related to educational problems.\(^6\)

In the absence of such control, however, most primary schools still included basically the same subjects in their curricula. Data of this nature is unavailable for most schools, and consequently conclusions must remain tentative. Reading, writing, and arithmetic constituted the staple courses, although most schools also included some form of social (i.e., behavioral) instruction, especially of a religious nature. Social instruction of the political variety, on the other hand, appears in the curricula of perhaps half the schools for which such data are available, and a few others doubtless included this kind of training in reading class. It is unfortunately impossible to determine how many of these courses entailed a study of national institutions. A number of writers published political catechisms during

\(^6\)Ibid.
the 1820's, several of which were designed to explain the country’s system of government to school children, but two of the more popular primers contain no discussion of Mexican institutions.17

One of these, the Treatise on the Obligations of Man deals solely with the social and religious duties of the individual. The book was written by Juan de Escoiquiz, an adviser to Fernando VII, and accordingly reflects somewhat conservative sentiments. Its value as a tool of nationalism was decidedly limited, except in the general sense that it stresses the individual's obligations to his country. It is in essence a book on personal and political etiquette.18

The same cannot be said of the primer published by José Gómez de la Cortina in 1833. Cortina's catechism, which the Lancasterian Company adopted in 1835 for use in

17El sol, November 17, 1825; December 15, 1825; September 3, 1827; September 22, 1827; May 2, 1827; July 16, 1828; December 6, 1830; January 5, 1832; December 13, 1832; AGN, Vol. 7, ff. 86, 203, 204; Vol. 8, f. 32; Archivo Municipal, Vol. 2479, exped. 362; exped. 366; Vol. 2478, exped. 262; exped. 267; exped. 291; exped. 297, ff. 71, 72, 80-85; exped. 298; exped. 299; exped. 326; exped. 334; exped. 344; exped. 352.

18Guillermo Furlong, "Rousseau y Escoiquiz en la revolución de Mayo. ¿Los derechos del hombre contenidos en el contrato social de Rousseau o las obligaciones del hombre, contenidas en el tratado de Escoiquiz?" Revista de Estudios Hispánicos, I (1954), 15-20, 22.
its schools throughout the country, consists primarily of a brief examination of the origins and varieties of social organization, combined with an exposition of the rights and obligations of man in society. Although much of the material in the book could apply to the Mexican political system, at no point did Cortina specifically discuss the institutions of that system. Instead he delineated the three traditional categories of political organization (monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy) on the somewhat controversial premise that each is theoretically benign. In all three, he maintained, the people could achieve the twin social goals of liberty and security. Although he subsequently qualified that assertion in favor of democracy, Cortina was no propagandist for the republican form of government.  

In most respects the catechism conforms to the spirit of the Constitution of 1824, a product of nineteenth-century liberalism. In his defense of religious freedom and implicit

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19 Tullia Valencia Funatsu, "Una polémica histórica en el siglo xix, Lacunza-Cortina" (unpublished Master's thesis, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1963), p. 161; José Gómez de la Cortina, Cartilla social, o breve instrucción sobre los derechos y obligaciones de la sociedad civil, Publicala para el uso de la juventud mejicana (México: Imprenta de Galván, 1833), pp. 3-17, 20, 21. This book went through eight editions between 1833 and 1849, one indication of its popularity.
criticism of religious and military *fueros*, however, Cortina demonstrated that he thought it more important to inculcate what he considered universally valid principles than to create a sense of identity with Mexico's system of government. He stressed a man's duties to his country, but on the whole his primer seems of little more use for nationalistic purposes than that of Escoiquiz.  

Despite the use of such books as the above, the prevalence of political instruction in the schools remains an important fact. It demonstrates that Mexican educators as well as governmental leaders considered it important to employ the schools to produce responsible (or perhaps just obedient) citizens. Without effective State control, nevertheless, the political potential of primary education remained unexploited. And in 1833 an administration entered office that had both the power and determination to alter this situation.

**The Reforms of 1833**

The presidential and congressional election of 1832 delivered control of the federal government into the hands

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20Cortina, *Cartilla social*, pp. 44, 45, 48, 49, 51.
of men who believed that only basic economic and political reforms could enable Mexico to achieve a position of equality with the most advanced liberal societies of Europe and America. The leader of this group was Vice-President Valentín Gómez Farías, who functioned as the chief executive for much of the year after April, 1833 because President Antonio López de Santa Anna chose to remain at his country home. The chief targets of Gómez Farías and his advisers, who included the liberal theoretician, José María Luis Mora, were the Church and the Army, whose special privileges these men considered incompatible with the demands of a modern society. Important reforms in the capital's educational system also ranked high on their list of priorities, partially because the liberals hoped to use the schools to consolidate support for the republican political system.\(^{21}\)

The vice-president delegated responsibility for the latter portion of the reform program to a special commission of his advisers (including Mora), and congress enacted the group's proposals in late October, 1833. The laws which dealt with primary education provided for the creation of a

\(^{21}\)Wilfrid Hardy Callcott, Church and State in Mexico, 1822-1857 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1926), p. 89. For a list of the reformers' goals, see Mora, Obras sueltas, p. 122.
General Board of Public Instruction for the Federal District and Territories, with comprehensive authority over education. The board would administer all public funds appropriated for education; appoint all instructors assigned to public schools; and designate the elementary texts for use in these schools. The laws also required establishment of public schools for children of both sexes in all wards of the capital, and designated a basic curriculum of the Three R's and the religious and political catechism for these schools. To provide a trained corps of teachers, the laws authorized the establishment of two normal schools, one for prospective teachers of each sex. In the section on private schools the laws confirmed the royal order that required convents to open free schools. At the same time the reform measures eliminated the licensing requirements for teachers but ordered them to follow the *reglamento* on political and religious instruction issued by the bureau of education.  

Although these reforms resembled in many respects the various proposals of the 1820's, they exceeded the latter in authority delegated to the government-appointed board of

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education. Mora later maintained that the numerous powers entrusted to the board were necessary in order to ensure the uniformity of teaching methods and doctrines indispensable in public institutions. For Mora and Gómez Farfás, as one modern commentator has noted, the purpose of this State-imposed uniformity was to produce people who subscribed to their liberal ideals. For this reason the board's power to structure the content of religious and political instruction in both the public and private schools more than counterbalanced the elimination of the licensing requirement. With such authority an anticlerical administration could confidently order the Church to establish schools in all convents, as part of its campaign to reach as many children as possible. But these men did not desire to politicize education at the expense of academic training. It appears rather that Mora and Gómez Farfás believed that a "modern" education would foster liberal tendencies in most people. "The most necessary element for the prosperity of a people," Mora later wrote, "is the good use and exercise of its reason, which is achieved only through the education of the masses, without whom there can be no popular government."23

It is impossible to determine conclusively how well the reforms would have worked over an extended period of time, because they remained in force only nine months. At one point the board of education and School Inspector Agustín Buenrostro had increased the number of public schools to fifteen, and their combined student body to about 1200. By the fall of 1834, however, for obscure reasons only seven of the schools remained operational, and the number of students who regularly attended class had declined to 600. In addition to these schools for children, the board had established two adult institutions, which had a regular attendance of nearly 400 artisans. Repeal of the primary education laws, in any case, occurred for reasons not directly connected with the reforms themselves.²⁴

These laws failed to achieve permanence because they formed part of a reform program that deeply antagonized some of the most powerful groups in Mexican society. The measures which affected the Church not only aroused the antipathy of the clergy; they also offended religious moderates who considered the attack on the Church too extreme. The reforms in higher education came under attack partially

²⁴Mora, El clero, la educación y la libertad, p. 97; AGN, Vol. 12, ff. 3, 4; Vol. 44, f. 349.
for the same reason, because they entailed a sharp curtail-
ment of the clergy's educational role. In April, 1834, Presi-
dent Santa Anna returned to the capital as the leader of
the antireform forces, and once his position was consoli-
dated he rapidly repealed some of the most offensive laws.
On July 31, 1834 he issued the decree which cancelled the
educational reforms. 25

The July law contains several criticisms of these
measures, but at no point did Santa Anna's spokesman refer
to the sections on primary instruction. The changes made
in higher education had formed the heart of the laws, and
had attracted the most attention, a fact which helps to
explain the lack of critical reaction to the other sections
of the acts. An official of the Lancasterian Company, it
is true, subsequently leveled a rather vague charge against
the reforms' impact on primary education; but this criticism
formed part of an appeal for governmental aid. It seems at
least possible, therefore, that the reorganization of the
public school system might have endured, with a few changes,

25Dublán y Lozano, Legislación mexicana, II, pp. 713-
715; Robert Frederick Florstedt, "The Liberal Role of José
María Luis Mora in the Early History of Independent Mexico"
(unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of History, Univer-
had it not been carried out as part of a controversial legislative program.\textsuperscript{26}

Post-1834 Developments

The repeal of the 1833 reforms generated efforts to find an acceptable replacement for them. In the decree of July 31, Santa Anna appointed a commission to execute this task, and over the next seven years he and other presidents repeated this action a number of times. The pattern of failure established before 1833, however, remained unbroken.\textsuperscript{27}

At least one plan did receive some consideration in congress, but in most respects it resembled earlier proposals. The one significant difference was the provision which made attendance at some school compulsory. Although in practice local officials had on occasion forced parents to send their children to school, the 1835 study plan marked the first attempt to write such a requirement into law. Despite the fact that congress did not enact the bill, the

\textsuperscript{26}Dublán y Lozano, \textit{Legislación mexicana}, II, pp. 713-715; AGN, Vol. 33, f. 104.

The existence of this article furnishes more evidence of the critical importance that some public leaders assigned to mass education.28

Congressional failure to write a new organizational law reflected both internal politics and a change in the capital's legal status. In early 1835 the chief executive requested permission to draft and enforce provisionally a new educational law, with final approval reserved to congress. A number of congressmen accepted the president's argument that congress was too busy to write and examine such a measure, but some wanted to establish guidelines for executive officials to follow. This proposed amendment precipitated a debate that prevented both houses of congress from acting favorably on the president's request. The issue lost importance after the middle of 1837, because Mexico City (in accordance with the centralist Constitution of 1836) became part of the Department of México. Subsequent educational bills confronted the potent legal argument that the constitution reserved responsibility for education to the departments.29

28Ibid., ff. 7-9, 11, 13, 14; 4, 5; Dublán y Lozano, Legislación mexicana, III, p. 295; Memoria de la secretaría de estado y del despacho de relaciones interiores y
Despite congressional inaction in the area of education, the executive branch did use its own powers to advance the cause of mass instruction. In so doing, however, the president did not entirely ignore the political implications of popular education. In 1835 the president created primary schools in the army, in order, as the announcement stated, to provide soldiers the education necessary for advancement and for a knowledge of their rights, which would prevent them from serving any faction in the country's discords. It would be difficult to link political stability more closely to mass instruction. 30

The inability of the national government to enact a new educational law after 1834 initially caused serious problems for the capital's public schools. The repeal of the 1833 reform statutes temporarily caused financial chaos, because the July 31st decree designated no means to meet the expenses of the schools. Appeals from unpaid teachers and from school officials poured into government offices, but

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interiores, presentado por el secretario del ramo a las camaras del congreso general, en cumplimiento del artículo 20 de la constitución, y leída en la de diputados el día 26 y en la de senadores el 50 de Marzo de 1835 (México: Imprenta de Águila, 1835), pp. 39, 40.

30Dublán y Lozano, Legislación mexicana, III, pp. 66-70.
the national authorities delayed action in anticipation of
rapid enactment of a new law. The municipal government,
however, with control of the public schools restored to it,
moved to implement a modified version of Buenrostro's 1832
plan for the establishment of new schools. The new plan
provided for a total of twelve schools, and by 1839 at
least eleven of these had in fact opened. At the same time
municipal authorities expanded their efforts to gather data
on the capital's educational system. For the entire decade
before 1833 there are only two or three reports in the
municipal archives on inspection visits made to public and
private schools. After 1834, however, there is a report of
some kind for every year, as well as more complete statisti-
tical data on the number of private schools.\(^{31}\)

This increased activity did not, unfortunately, pre-
vent a sharp deterioration in the number and condition of
the public schools after 1838. Financial problems forced
a steady attrition over the next four years, until in 1842

\(^{31}\) AGN, Vol. 8, ff. 181, 182, 200-202, 210-212; Vol.
11, ff. 255, 256 Vol. 12, ff. 2, 15, 23, 25, 27, 47, 65,
79, 81, 84, 85, 97; Archivo Municipal, Vol. 2479, exped.
366; exped. 399; exped. 408; exped. 410\(^{1/2}\); Vol. 2478, exped.
297, ff. 61-63, 73; exped. 326; exped. 327; exped. 334;
exped. 338; exped. 344; exped. 350; exped. 352; exped.
362.
only four schools remained open, all of them exclusively for girls. Even these schools, according to official reports, lacked the basic supplies necessary for education. These difficulties sparked efforts to shift responsibility for popular education to private groups.\textsuperscript{32}

In the fall of 1837, before the decay of the public school system had progressed very far, a group of private citizens which included José Gómez de la Cortina proposed to the departmental government of Mexico that it assume responsibility for establishment and administration of nine free schools in the former Federal District. In addition to these institutions, which were to replace the municipal schools, the group pledged itself to open a normal school and a school for adults. It reserved to itself complete control over teachers and methodology, and required that the government provide it an annual subsidy to meet its expenses. The advantage of the plan, inspired perhaps by the example of the Lancasterian Company, presumably lay in the fact that the schools would profit from a unified administration, and that they would operate under the control of men who could devote their full attention to education.

\textsuperscript{32}Archivo Municipal, Vol. 2479, exped. 374; exped. 379; exped. 386, ff. 1, 3, 4.
The city council advised against its adoption, however, on the grounds that the subsidy would exceed current educational costs, which the department could not meet.\footnote{33}{Ibid., exped. 361.}

The second proposal originated in the city council itself, and appeared in 1842, when the public schools seemed on the verge of collapse. The council appealed to the departmental authorities to revive the royal order that required all convents to maintain free schools. Although the officials complied with the request, about half the convents claimed they could not obey the order, due to a shortage of friars or money. The council refused to accept these explanations, but statistics on convent schools open in 1843 indicate that several monasteries did not in fact establish schools.\footnote{34}{Ibid., exped. 386, ff. 5, 10-12, 19, 20, 25, 31, 32, 34, 35, 38-40, AGN, Vol. 44, f. 391.}

While the number of public schools declined to 1823 levels, private institutions flourished. Although complete statistics are unavailable, it appears that by 1842 there were at least 140 private schools in the former Federal District. Attendance figures, unfortunately, do not accompany the statistical reports, but presumably some
increase in combined student body had occurred. Thus in 1842, even more than earlier, Mexico City's school system remained an essentially private one, in which educational opportunity formed a correlate of financial well-being. It is necessary now to determine whether similar conditions prevailed in the states.³⁵

CHAPTER III

PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THE STATES, 1824-1842

The Constitution of 1824 carved Mexico into nineteen states and implicitly empowered each of these political subdivisions to formulate its own educational policies. The centralist charter of 1836, although it reduced the states to the status of departments and stripped them of their autonomy in many areas of public administration, left control of education in provincial hands. During the first two decades after independence, consequently, the political and educational leaders in each state legally enjoyed considerable freedom to shape the local school system to serve their own goals.

The Constitutional and Legal Background

Through the state constitutions legislators provided the first indication of the nature of those objectives. In

the preliminary sections which defined citizenship, all but four of the original nineteen states included articles that suspended political rights (principally those that related to the suffrage and officeholding) for illiteracy; only Mexico, Puebla, Oaxaca and San Luis Potosí did not do so. It is true that the authors of these state charters weakened the provision with a stipulation that the suspension would not take effect until some future date, usually ten or fifteen years after ratification of the constitution. In subsequent laws or revisions of the constitution, moreover, they sometimes either eliminated the article or further postponed its implementation. The existence of the provision, nevertheless, indicates that most state political leaders believed a minimal degree of education formed a pre-condition for responsible membership in the new nation.  

This article was not intended, however, to exclude the lower classes from citizenship. Fourteen of the original constitutions also included special sections on education, in which the authors exhorted the state or local governments to establish as many primary schools as possible. In eleven cases the section contained a minimum curriculum which listed a course in political socialization (generally instruction in rights and obligations of the citizen). These two sections, considered in conjunction, defined pretty well the political function of popular instruction, but it remained to the state legislatures to implement this concept of education.®

(Saltillo: Imprenta del Gobierno, 1852), p. 8; Constitución política del estado libre de Durango, reformada por el h. congreso del mismo en al año de 1847 (Victoria de Durango: Imprenta del Gobierno, 1847), p. 5; Constitución política del estado soberano de Chihuahua. Impresa por Cayetano Ramos en la oficina del gobierno (1848), not paginated; Constitución política del estado libre y soberano de Nueva León (Monterrey: Imprenta del Supremo Gobierno, 1850), p. 7; Constitución política del estado de México; sancionada por el congreso constituyente en 14 de Febrero de 1827, y reformada por las leyes constitucionales de 2 de Junio de 1831, 20 de Mayo de 1853, 12 de Mayo de 1854 y 9 de Octubre de 1856 (n.d.), p. 6; Constitución política del estado de Michoacán, expedida por su congreso constituyente en 21 de Enero de 1858 (Morelia: Imprenta de Octaviano Ortiz, 1858), p. 11; Constitución política del estado de Yucatán, sancionada el 16 de Setiembre de 1850 ( Mérida: Tipografía de Rafael Fedrera, 1850), p. 4.

Contrary to the record of the national government, most states experienced little difficulty in their efforts to write educational laws. In fact laws of this kind seemed to proliferate as legislators struggled to establish a system of popular education amidst the problems created by poverty and political instability. In some cases these statutes are merely commandments (of dubious effectiveness) to local public officials or prominent citizens to establish primary schools; but at least thirteen states did enact one or more basic organizational laws. The majority of the laws conform to one of several similar patterns, and they may, therefore, be examined as a group.

One of the principal purposes of most of the major acts was to create a uniform system of public education through the establishment of some degree of State control over the schools. Responsibility for public schools ordinarily rested in the hands of the local ayuntamiento, and some of the laws merely confirmed this arrangement. Nine legislatures, however, authorized formation of special educational councils, in most cases with direct control over only the public schools in each council's own municipality. Only five states specifically empowered the board to appoint teachers or select textbooks, but the other four either ordered it to
examine and license instructors or transferred this authority to the director of the public normal school. In a further effort to ensure uniformity in teaching methodology, at least six states provided for establishment of the latter institution, in which prospective teachers would receive instruction in the Lancasterian system.  

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*Recopilación de leyes, decretos, bandos, reglamentos, circulares y providencias de los supremos poderes y otros autoridades de la república mexicana. Formada de orden del supremo gobierno por el lic. Basilio José Arrillaga. Comprende este tomo de Enero a Diciembre de 1829 (México: Imprenta de J. M. Fernandez de Lara, 1838), pp. 1-4; Colección de decretos de los congresos constitucionales del estado libre y soberano de México, que funcionaron en la primera época de la federación; contiene también, por vía de apéndice, las disposiciones expedidas en la época del centralismo (Toluca: Imprenta de J. Quijano, 1850), II, pp. 285-305, 413-417; Recopilación de leyes, decretos, reglamentos y circulares expedidas en el estado de Michoacán, I, pp. 107-115; IV, pp. 32, 33, 35; Colección de decretos y ordenes, dictadas por el honorable congreso constituyente de Veracruz, desde su instalación en 9 de Mayo de 1824, hasta 19 de Junio de 1825 en que cerró sus sesiones (Jalapa: Imprenta del Gobierno, 1826), I. pp. 108, 109; Colección de decretos y ordenes dictadas por el honorable congreso primero constitucional de Veracruz, desde 1 de Noviembre de 1825, hasta 31 de Diciembre de 1826 en que cerró sus sesiones (Jalapa: Imprenta del Gobierno, 1827), pp. 104-109; Colección de decretos y ordenes dictadas por el honorable cuarto congreso constitucional de Veracruz, pp. 2-8, 65, 66; Recopilación de los decretos y ordenes expedidas en el estado de Veracruz desde el 4 de Diciembre de 1840, al 24 de Diciembre de 1852 (Xalapa-Enríquez: Tipografía del Gobierno del Estado, 1907), I. pp. 3-31; Frontuario de leyes y decretos del estado de Coahuila de Zaragoza, arreglado por Cosme Garza García, autor del Manual de los presidentes municipales y de los índices de
Each of the major organizational laws included a minimum curriculum for public schools. Beyond the standard primary subjects, at least one of the laws of eleven states incorporated some form of political instruction into this curriculum. Three other legislatures approved civil primers for use in the schools or authorized establishment of a free public class for study of the constitution. Only about half these laws, however, specified the type of political instruction which teachers were to provide. An early (1826) Veracruz statute stipulated that the teacher was to instill in his pupils a love of independence and the federalist system, but a law of the same state passed in 1840 designated Escobíquez’s primer as the text for the course. Laws of Nuevo León and Coahuila provided that students would study the state constitution and fundamental laws, and in Yucatán the legislature required instruction in “liberal principles.” In 1831 the Chiapas lawmakers approved a catechism that

los códigos civil y de procedimientos. Contiene, en extrato, todas las disposiciones que en cada ramo de la administración pública, ha expedida el poder legislativo desde el 15 de Agosto de 1824 en que se instaló el primer congreso de Coahuila y Texas con el nombre de constituyente, hasta el 31 de Diciembre de 1900 que terminó el siglo xix, y un apéndice en que se insertan íntegras las que están vigentes hasta el presente (Saltillo: Oficina Tipográfica del Gobierno en Palacio, 1902), pp. 227, 228.
justified the federalist form of government, while in Chihuahua the legislature appropriated money for a primer that contained a more general discussion of the individual's social rights and obligations. In one case where the law did not list political instruction as part of the basic curriculum the legislators did stipulate that on September 16, independence day, students were to receive awards for outstanding academic achievements. In this way the legislators of Tamaulipas obviously hoped to impress the importance of the day on the consciousness of the students.\(^5\)

\(^5\)Colección de leyes, decretos, y ordenes del augusto congreso del estado libre de Yucatán, Vol. II: Que comprende las de las seis primeras legislaturas constitucionales desde 20 de 1825 hasta 5 de Marzo de 1832, Redactado por una comisión nombrada por la sexta legislatura (Mérida, 1832), pp. 41, 42, 77, 78, 202, 203; Colección de leyes, decretos y ordenes o acuerdos de tendencia general, del poder legislativo del estado libre y soberano de Yucatán. Formada por Alonso Azans Pérez y publicada por Rafael Pedrera con autorización del gobierno, Vol. II: Que comprende todas las disposiciones legislativas, desde 1\(^{o}\) de Enero de 1841, hasta 31 de Diciembre de 1845 (Mérida: Imprenta del Editor, 1850), pp. 162-165; Decretos del primer congreso constitucional [de Guanajuato], expedidas desde 1\(^{o}\) de Octubre de 1828, hasta 15 de Diciembre de 1828 (n.d.), pp. 40-42; 125-144; Decretos del tercer congreso constitucional, expedidos desde 31 de Diciembre de 1830, hasta 28 de Diciembre de 1832, pp. 10-19; Colección de los decretos y ordenes más importantes que expidió el primer congreso constitucional del estado de Puebla en los años de 1826, 1827 y 1828 (Puebla: Imprenta del Gobierno, 1828), p. 62; Colección de decretos y ordenes de la primera legislatura constitucional del estado libre de San Luis Potosí,
The effort to standardize primary education in the areas of administration, teaching methodology and curriculum did not, in most states, extend to private schools. Nine legislatures did authorize either the ayuntamiento or board of education to inspect private schools, but in all except four cases the laws empowered officials merely to prohibit the teaching of illegal religious or political doctrines. Only Tamaulipas, Veracruz and Mexico exceeded this negative effort to structure the curriculum and required all schools to instruct students in Catholic doctrine. Seven states required private teachers to secure a license, but none except México, San Luis Potosí and Guanajuato (which in a subsequent law eliminated this provision) linked the issuance of the permit to the competence of the instructor. In the great majority of states, therefore, private schools operated independent of all but the most general governmental supervision.

desde su instalación en 1° de Enero de 1827, hasta 16 de Setiembre de 1828, en que cerró sus últimas sesiones (San Luis Potosí: Imprenta del Estado, 1829), p. 228; Colección de las leyes y decretos expedidos por el segundo, tercero y cuarto congresos constitucionales del estado libre y soberano de Durango. Desde 1° de Septiembre de 1827, hasta 11 de Febrero de 1833. Comprende también las leyes y decretos que se han declarado subsistentes de las legislaturas que existieron en los años de 30 y 31 (Victoria de Durango: Imprenta del Estado, 1833), pp. 75-78.
In an attempt to secure the widest possible diffusion of primary education, some states took the ultimate step and required children to enroll in either a private or public school. Most of the eight legislatures that included the compulsory attendance article in their laws allowed exceptions in cases of economic hardship, an exemption that probably embraced over half the potential student population. The provision nevertheless furnishes more evidence of the close connection many political leaders drew between mass education and the welfare of society.\(^6\)

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These provincial laws do not form any pattern of State domination of the educational system. In most cases legislatures entrusted governmental officials with only minimal authority over private schools, and they designed political control over public institutions to achieve as much uniformity as possible in methodology and curriculum. But a standardized system of public education did have political implications, especially when civil instruction so often formed a part of the basic curriculum. It remained to be seen to what extent the dictates of the legislators would shape reality.

The Development of the School System

The creation of a relatively uniform system of public education obviously depended on the material and human resources available. Success required a measure of political
stability, adequate funds, trained teachers and competent administrators. Probably no state could satisfy all these prerequisites during the period under study, and several could not meet even one. The fate of some of the major organizational laws testifies eloquently to this fact.

In 1826 Veracruz enacted a measure that converted the local Lancasterian Company into the board of education, with complete authority over public schools. Six years later, however, the governor admitted that the law had never gone into effect because the state lacked the money to pay the company the necessary subsidy. In 1832, therefore, Veracruz confirmed local responsibility for public schools with a much less ambitious law. Nuevo León's major educational law, also passed in 1826, suffered a similar fate, apparently because the elaborate curricular provisions were too expensive. The State of México enacted its first basic educational statute in 1834, on the premise that a temporary reduction in the number of schools might permit an improvement in the quality of those that remained. The law's success depended on the proper functioning of an elaborate hierarchy of educational councils and the voters' acceptance of higher tax rates. The taxpayers, however, revolted against the increased levies, especially in towns that were
to lose their schools, and the system of councils collapsed for lack of funds. Within six months of its enactment the legislature repealed the 1834 law, and six years passed before the assembly passed a new one. Sonora and Durango, too, passed laws which, due to political disturbances or negligence on the part of local governments, remained merely testaments to the educational goals of their authors.  

Economic problems and political instability did not, however, prevent all states from enforcing their laws. Puebla, Michoacán and Jalisco created educational boards which, available evidence indicates, did have some impact on the school system. In Jalisco's case the achievement

7Memoria en que el gobierno del estado libre de México, da cuenta al honorable congreso de todos los ramos que han sido a su cargo en el último año económico. Presentado el día 26 de Marzo de 1834. Se imprime de orden del mismo honorable congreso (Toluca: Imprenta del Gobierno, 1834), pp. 26, 27; Memoria que el secretario del ejecutivo del estado libre de México encargado de las secciones de gobierno y guerra leyó al h. congreso en los días 26, 27 y 28 del mes de Abril de 1835 (n.d.), pp. 61-63; Eligio Ancona, Historia de Yucatán desde la época más remota hasta nuestros días (Segunda edición; Barcelona: Imprenta de Jaime Jepús Rovisalta, 1889), IV, pp. 361, 362; José Jerónimo Reyes Rosales, Historia de la educación en Veracruz (Xalapa, 1959), pp. 53, 54; Ordóñez, Educación pública en Nuevo León, I, pp. 33-36; AGN, Ramo de Instrucción Pública, Vol. 8, ff. 96, 323, 324; Vol. 87, ff. 323-325, 336, 365-369, 371; Vol. 88, ff. 363, 370; Vol. 89, ff. 82, 126, 128; Vol. 91, f. 220; Vol. 92, ff. 199-201; Vol. 45, f. 253; El Sol, April 29, 1828; June 13, 1828; June 13, 1831.
was due in part to the influence of the prominent educator, Manuel López Cotilla, who enjoyed a close relationship with the governor. This state enacted four educational laws between 1826 and 1837 in an effort to find an effective formula for public support of primary schools. The last act, largely the handiwork of Cotilla, converted the legislative assembly into the departmental board of education, with authority to standardize teaching methodology, select texts and appoint instructors. Responsibility for examination of the capital's teachers, however, was assigned to a special council of instructors. The law and a subsequent statute of 1841, which provided for the appointment of school inspectors in all the districts of the department, could not solve Jalisco's fiscal problems, but they did create a workable administrative apparatus for the public school system. Unlike the majority of states, Jalisco's government was able to distribute books to the principal public schools.8

Despite the myriad obstacles which inhibited educational progress, some children did attend school. Relatively

8Alatorre, Memoria general de la educación pública primaria en Jalisco, pp. 7, 10, 13, 15-17, 19, 20, 30; AGN, Ramo de Instrucción Pública, Vol 84, ff. 167, 171, 179, 182; Vol. 89, f. 82; Vol. 90, f. 68. (All subsequent citations from the AGN are from the Ramo de Instrucción Pública, unless otherwise noted.)
complete statistics are available for only México, Jalisco, Nuevo León, Zacatecas, Coahuila, San Luis Potosí and Oaxaca, but the records of these seven states provide a reasonably accurate picture of conditions throughout the country. In this group of states the percentage of the total population in school ranged between .6 (Jalisco) and 2.8 (Coahuila). In Mexico, a high figure of four percent was achieved in 1828, but financial difficulties forced a decline over the next six years to two percent. Oaxaca, the only state for which population statistics for school-age children are available, enrolled 2.4 percent of its total population and fifteen percent of its youth in school in 1835. These figures, although not unimpressive, demonstrate that, despite compulsory attendance laws in some states, the majority of children remained beyond the formative influence of primary education. Poverty provided a partial explanation for this situation, but public officials correctly placed some responsibility on apathetic or antagonistic parents. Lower-class families might permit their children to attend class occasionally, but predictably the deferred value of education impressed them less than the immediate rewards of even the most menial jobs. The statistics used in this paragraph thus probably exaggerate the number of children who
actually received an education. Evidence for Mexico City indicates that often less than half the pupils enrolled in a school attended class on a regular basis.\textsuperscript{9}

The structure of the school system in most of the above seven states, unfortunately, remains obscure. Private schools, as a general rule, outnumbered public ones, but this did not necessarily mean that the majority of students received their training in the former. On the contrary, in both Zacatecas and Jalisco, the only two states for which this evidence was uncovered, more children attended the free

\textsuperscript{9}Memoria en que el gobierno del estado libre de México, da cuenta al primer congreso constitucional, de todos los ramos que han sido a su cargo en el año económico corrido desde 26 de Octubre de 1826, hasta 15 de igual mes de 1827. Presentada el día 13 de Marzo de 1828. Se imprime de orden del mismo honorable congreso. (n.d.), pp. 26, 27; Memoria en que el gobierno del estado libre de México, da cuenta al honorable congreso, de todos los ramos que han sido a su cargo en el último año económico (1834), estado 8 (doc. section); Vito Alessio Robles, Coahuila y Texas desde la consumación de la independencia hasta el tratado de paz de Guadalupe Hidalgo (México, 1945), I, p. 331; Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, IV, p. 362; Longinos Banda, Estadística de Jalisco, formado con vista de los mejores datos oficiales y noticias minutiadas por sujetos idóneos, en los años de 1854 a 1863 (Guadalajara: Tipografía de T. Banda, 1873), p. 196; Alatorre, Memoria general de la educación pública primaria en Jalisco, p. 11; Carrasco, Historia de la educación en Oaxaca, p. 28; AGN, Vol. 823, ff. 172, 173, 176-179; Vol. 44, f. 383; Ordóñez, Historia de la educación pública en Nuevo León, I, pp. 33, 34; El cosmopolita, June 13, 1838.
public schools. The educational role of the institutional Church had declined as sharply outside Mexico City as inside the capital. A report on conventual schools open in 1843 lists only a handful throughout the country. The clergy continued to teach in both private and public institutions, but the Church itself operated few schools.\textsuperscript{10}

Regardless of the type of school students attended, the instruction most of them received was rather poor. The shortage of trained teachers posed a serious obstacle to the creation of a uniform system of public education, and several states attempted through their laws to correct this situation. Predictably, however, the provision that required instructors to secure a license and pass an exam could not command rigid enforcement. In both Jalisco and San Luis Potosí, for example, the authorities virtually ignored the licensing requirement. In the former state only four teachers obtained licenses during the first two years after passage of the 1826 law. A more promising approach involved the establishment of normal schools, which at least

six states authorized. Several of these institutions failed to open, for lack of funds or qualified instructors, but the school in Jalisco did contribute to an improvement of the state's teaching corps. Even better training, however, could solve only part of the problem. Obviously low salaries lay at the root of the difficulty, but, as some writers recognized, so too did the rather low social status of the profession. Although more highly trained teachers would presumably command greater respect in the community, the lack of prestige associated with primary education almost certainly reflected the failure of the country's leadership to transfer to the people its own expressed concern for education.\footnote{Memoria en que el gobierno del estado libre de México, da cuenta al primer congreso constitucional, de todos los ramos que han sido a su cargo en el año económico corrido desde 26 de Octubre de 1826, hasta 15 de igual mes de 1827, p. 26; Alatorre, Memoria general de la educación pública primaria en Jalisco, pp. 7, 8-10, 21, 22; Wilson, Mexico: A Century of Educational Thought, p. 141; Ordóñez, Historia de la educación pública en Nuevo León, I, p. 74; Muro, Historia de la instrucción pública en San Luis Potosí, pp. 46, 47; AGN, Vol. 8, ff. 323, 324; Registro oficial del gobierno de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, July 28, 1832; El sol, December 12, 1830.}

Most states achieved little more uniformity in curriculum than in other areas. Fragmentary data indicate that
the Three R's and Catholic doctrine comprised the staple courses in most states. But less than half the schools for which course lists were obtained included some form of political instruction in their curricula, although some doubtless simply incorporated it into reading class. Some schools did, however, use the Escolquiz text, and in Guanajuato and Chiapas students studied more standard political primers, one of which has been preserved and merits examination.12

In 1831 the legislature of Chiapas approved for use in the schools a catechism written by a local citizen. This booklet differs from Cortina's primer in that it does contain an exposition of both the state and federal constitutions, which the author attempted to place in the most favorable light possible. Thus, although he discussed the

12 Memoria en que el gobierno del estado libre de México da cuenta de los ramos de su administración al congreso del mismo estado, a consecuencia de su decreto de 16 de Diciembre de 1825. Impresa de orden del congreso (México: Imprenta a cargo de Rivera, 1826), p. 17; Memoria en que el gobierno del estado libre de México, da cuenta al primer congreso constitucional, de todas los ramos que han sido a su cargo en al año económico corrido desde 26 de Octubre de 1826, hasta 15 de igual mes de 1827, pp. 26, 27; Muro, Historia de la instrucción pública en San Luis Potosí, pp. 26-29, 35, 56, 62, 63; Reyes Rosales, Historia de la educación en Veracruz, pp. 55-57; Ordóñez, Historia de la educación pública en Nuevo León, I, pp. 35, 56; AGN, Vol. 82 1/2, ff. 172, 173, 176-179, 298; Vol. 92, ff. 199-201, 288; Vol. 86, ff. 230-235; El sol, March 11, 1826; June 20, 1826; July 23, 1826; August 9, 1826; November 8, 1826; March 17, 1827; August 11, 1831.
federalist and centralist system in an objective manner, he concluded with the statement that the former was superior. Unlike Cortina, moreover, he approved the constitutional prohibition on freedom of worship, arguing that the religious monopoly of the Catholic Church was a condition of political unity. The catechism, in short, was designed to inculcate loyalty to the established political system.¹³

The Chiapas primer is an excellent example of a text for what today would be called "civics." A group in Chihuahua, however, devised a more imaginative way to foster support and understanding of the federalist political system. In 1826 a group of students (probably with adult aid) drew up a constitution for a "Juvenile Republic of Chihuahua," patterned after the Constitution of 1824, and restricted citizenship in it to outstanding students. The "republic" closely resembled the modern "Boys' State" organizations in the United States, and had considerable potential for training students in the operation of their system of government¹⁴

¹³ The catechism, and the law adopting it for use in the public schools of the state, are bound with the constitutions of Chiapas and San Luis Potosí under 'C' in a collection of miscellaneous documents in the library of the Archivo General de la Nación. The catechism has no title page.

¹⁴ El sol, November 7, 1827.
Despite the examples of Chiapas, Chihuahua and Guanajuato, most students in public schools probably did not receive regular political instruction. Successful enforcement of the state laws that required this form of education depended largely on the government's willingness and ability to finance distribution of a standard text. At least five states (Mexico, Jalisco, Chihuahua, Guanajuato and Chiapas) did attempt at various times to do this, although in only three cases were political primers included among the books distributed. In general, however, the same problems of financial insolvency and political instability that undermined efforts to achieve uniformity in other areas of primary education also worked against standardization of the curriculum. The problem of stability was particularly significant, because the schools could not promote within students a sense of identification with the country's political system if no such feeling existed in the community at large. Thus the adoption of a centralist constitution in 1836, which merely exposed more clearly the schisms in Mexico's political leadership, immediately outdated Chiapas' civil primer (or any other based on the federalist system) and Chihuahua's "Juvenile Republic." The enduring popularity of the books by Cortina and Escoiquiz stemmed in part from
the fact that these two general discussions of politics and social duties could survive every turn of the revolutionary wheel.\textsuperscript{15}

An undue emphasis on the issue of political instruction can obscure the fact that for most Mexicans religion formed the basis of a sound education. Although some of the poorer schools neglected regular catechismal studies, doctrinal instruction appeared in the curriculum of virtually every institution. The political implications of religious unity assumed paramount importance only after the American war, when the collapse of the republic seemed imminent to many. But even in the 1830's fear of heresy sometimes appeared to combine with a desire to prevent the infiltration of one more element of discord. Thus in 1840 the national government issued a circular to all governors which ordered local authorities (accompanied by a priest) to visit the schools

\textsuperscript{15}Memoria en que el gobierno del estado libre de México, da cuenta al primer congreso constitucional, de todos los ramos que han sido a su cargo en el año económico corrido desde 26 de Octubre de 1826, hasta 15 de igual mes de 1827, pp. 26, 27; Banda, Estadística de Jalisco, p. 198; Alatorre, Memoria general de la educación pública primaria en Jalisco, p. 21; AGN, Vol. 87, ff. 365, 366; Vol. 89, ff. 82, 83; Vol. 90, f. 68; Vol. 92, p. 152. It is perhaps of some significance that by 1839 the only public school in the capital of Chiapas no longer used a political primer.
within their jurisdiction once a month, to determine what the instructors taught and whether they set bad examples. The inspectors were to pay special attention to foreign teachers, who would have to present proof that they were Catholics and naturalized citizens. Those who failed to satisfy the second condition would have a specified time to apply for naturalization papers, but teachers who could not demonstrate that they were Catholics would have to close their schools. The educational system might not yet be an effective instrument of nationalism, but government officials appeared determined that at least it should not become the means for destruction of Mexico's religiously based social unity.16

The predictable inability of the states or the national government (in Mexico City) to systematize either the administration or content of primary education reduced the impact of the schools that did manage to remain open. The reformers of 1833 had attempted to remedy this situation within the confines of the capital. In 1842 less ideologically motivated men applied essentially the same formula to the schools of the entire country. Centralization invaded the field of education.

16Muro, Historia de la instrucción pública en San Luis Potosí, pp. 52, 53.
CHAPTER IV

PRIMARY EDUCATION, 1842-1861

Antonio López de Santa Anna regained the presidency for the second time in October, 1841, in the wake of a federalist-inspired revolt against the centralist administration of Anastasio Bustamante (1837-1841). The general temporarily governed without a congress, although he did convene a constituent assembly to write a new constitution for the country. Even that restraint on Santa Anna's authority disappeared in December, 1842, however, when his minister of war dispersed the assembly (whose federalist proclivities displeased the president) following an attempt to insert a provision on religious freedom into the draft constitution. The minister thereby extended the period of executive rule for nearly an additional year, while the cabinet and a special commission drew up a constitution. This two-year interim of presidential government created an unusual opportunity for legislative action in the field of education, an opportunity which Santa Anna and his advisers did not fail to exploit.¹

The Centralist Experiment

Their efforts produced a new educational policy, implementation of which required the national government for the first time to assume some responsibility for public schools throughout the country. This sharp departure from prior practice resulted largely from the application of centralist ideas about public administration to the serious problems related to the maintenance of numerous poorly coordinated municipal school systems. Santa Anna's advisers hoped to create a more unified and efficient system of administration through the establishment of a hierarchy of local and departmental boards of education, capped by a central junta in Mexico City. The prototype of such a "super" council in fact already existed, in the form of the capital's Lancasterian Company, whose current president, José María Tornel, doubled as minister of war and close associate of Santa Anna. Equally important, the company was the chief propagator of the teaching method which most Mexican leaders hoped would transform the dream of universal literacy into reality. Not surprisingly, therefore, this organization formed the nucleus around which the president and his cabinet constructed
the administrative framework of the new national system of primary education.²

Santa Anna issued the relevant decrees on October 26 and December 7, 1842. The measures converted the Lancasterian Company of Mexico City into the Bureau of Primary Instruction and required establishment of subordinate councils in each department, staffed by the directors of the local Lancasterian Company. The central bureau received specific authority to collect academic statistics from the departments, to operate a national normal school, and to determine the teaching methods and textbooks used in public as well as convent schools. The departments, however, were to finance the normal school, as well as publication and national distribution of the textbooks, through remittance of 1 percent of their annual educational budgets. The departmental bureaus and provincial political officials also would bear prime responsibility for the creation, administration, and financial support of public schools. The laws stipulated that, for each ten thousand people, these authorities were to establish at least two schools, one for children of each

²Archivo General de la Nación, Ramo de Instrucción Pública, Vol. 32, ff. 227, 228. (Cited hereafter as AGN. All subsequent citations from this source are from the Ramo de Instrucción Pública, unless otherwise noted.)
sex. All children would have to attend either these schools, private institutions, or the schools which the law required every convent to support.

With respect to private schools, the decrees did not broaden the scope of State control over them. The traditional prohibition on the teaching of illegal or heretical doctrines remained in force, as did the requirement that directors of private institutions secure a license or permit from local authorities. Existing departmental statutes, however, would continue to govern the issuance of these licenses, and the lawmakers of 1842 made no real attempt to force private schools to adopt the teaching methods or books used in public institutions. Beyond instruction in the basic mechanical skills (Three R's) and Catholic doctrine, in fact, the legislators did not even try to create a uniform curricular structure for public schools, whose local administrators retained the prerogative to expand the minimum course list.³

Although a certain vagueness characterizes some articles of the October 26 law, the measure clearly did not centralize

³Manuel Dublán y José Marfa Lozano, Legislación mexicana o colección completa de las disposiciones legislativas expedidas desde la independencia de la república (Edición oficial; México: Imprenta del Comercio, 1876), IV, pp. 310-312, 347-351.
all administrative authority in the Bureau of Primary Instruction. The bureau enjoyed undefined supervisory powers over the departmental councils, but practical responsibility for operation of public schools remained in the hands of provincial officials. The law did not, in fact, eliminate the educational role of even the ayuntamientos. Rather it superimposed a new layer of bureaucracy, the principal purpose of which was to coordinate the administrative tasks of local school systems, a function assigned to the Bureau of Primary Instruction on the national level. While this quest for administrative uniformity did not delimit the bureau's mission, as the articles on teaching methodology and textbook selection demonstrate, the fact remains that the law's authors exhibited only minor interest in the content of education. Thus they neglected or declined to exploit the political potential of a national system of public education, an action that other governmental leaders subsequently attempted to "rectify."

In March, 1844, a committee of the congress elected under the new constitution submitted to the president a proposal for the adoption of a civil primer in the public schools. Santa Anna's surrogate, Valentín Canalizo, requested an opinion from the Council of Studies, the governing board
of higher education established under an executive decree of August 18, 1843. The council replied, after some deliberation, that the value of any effort to "make uniform and to correct the opinion of the nation concerning its most vital interests" could not be doubted. It cautioned, however, that any author would encounter difficulty in his attempt to incorporate all the correct ideas in a short primer; he might even include "transitory" or "false" opinions rather than immutable truths. Such a danger could be averted, the council believed, if the government opened authorship of the catechism to competition and permitted the council to judge the quality of the entries submitted. Canalizo approved the report, but congress took no action before the cuartelazo of November, 1844, toppled the Santa Anna administration. Thus died the first recorded attempt to provide uniform political instruction in public schools throughout the country.  

Long before this occurred, however, the new centralized educational system had failed to justify the hopes of its creators. Success depended in part on the willingness and ability of the departments to cooperate in the establishment

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\( ^{4}\text{AGN, Vol. 9, ff. 20, 22, 24.} \)
and support of the necessary educational bureaucracy, a requirement that few met. At least thirteen of the then twenty-one departments established the subordinate bureaus of primary instruction, but another five (Yucatán, Michoacán, Tabasco, Tamaulipas, and Sonora) refused or failed to do so.\(^5\)

Yucatán's noncompliance initially conformed to a general pattern of defiance of the national government. The department seceded from the republic in 1840, pending reestablishment of the federalist system, and accordingly government officials ignored all national laws. After three years of stalemate, however, Yucatán voluntarily ended its rebellion, on the condition that local officials would retain much of their autonomy in internal affairs. Departmental authorities repeatedly issued requests for copies of national laws passed since 1840, but as late as February, 1845, officials in the capital had neglected to send the documents.\(^6\)

\(^{5}\)Ibid., Vol. 32, f. 77; Vol. 84, ff. 223, 226, 317, 323; Vol. 85, f. 275; Vol. 87, ff. 183, 354; Vol. 90, f. 119; Vol. 91, ff. 21, 233, 329.

\(^{6}\)Ibid., Vol. 84, f. 326; Vol. 88, f. 87; Eligio Ancona, Historia de Yucatán desde la época más remota hasta nuestros días (Segunda edición; Barcelona: Imprenta de Jaime Jepús Rovisalda, 1889), III, pp. 410-441.
The government of Michoacán also deliberately refused to obey the new educational law. The governor bluntly informed national authorities in February, 1845, that his predecessor had sent the law to the legislature, for a ruling on whether he should enforce it. On constitutional grounds, he continued, the decree probably could not supersede departmental statutes, because the Organic Bases of 1843 delegated control over education to the provincial assemblies. The governor also expressed the fear that the new law might disrupt Michoacán's "excellent" system of primary education, a perhaps questionable claim in view of earlier reports that the department's schools suffered from extremely serious financial problems. Although the assembly had not yet rendered a decision on the validity of the law, the governor assured officials in the capital that he had encouraged it to do so promptly. 7

In the other three departments nullification of the law resulted from political instability and/or the shortage of necessary resources. Sonora's governor reported in early 1845 that the Indian rebellions had occupied most of his time, and that anyway the department lacked men of administrative ability to staff the bureau of primary instruction.

7AGN, Vol. 84, f. 288; Vol. 89, ff. 82, 83.
In Tabasco, where frequent political upheavals had decimated the archives, the governor claimed in October, 1844, that he did not have a copy of the 1842 law on primary education. Authorities in Tamaulipas received a copy of the decree, but they neglected to publish it until a year after its promulgation. The governor reported in November, 1844, that he still had not appointed the members of the bureau, partially because the capital lacked an adequate number of competent administrators. Even if this were not the case, he continued, these men would be unable to do much to improve the department's extremely poor educational system, which could boast only one relatively good public school. Grinding poverty, a dispersed population, and the absence of any trained teachers, he concluded, combined to create a desperate situation from the standpoint of education. The governor requested that the national authorities grant him permission to move the seat of the bureau to the port of Santa Anna de Tamaulipas, where lived enough qualified individuals to staff it. A marginal notation on the letter indicates, however, that he never received a reply.®

Most of the other departments established the bureau, but even in those areas enforcement of the law fell considerably short of expectations. In México, for example, one of the more important articles of the decree suffered emasculation even before the new administrative apparatus began to function. Departmental officials interpreted the compulsory attendance section of the law to mean that children whose families required a supplemental income from their labor had to attend schools only on Sundays and other religious holidays, when they were to receive instruction in Catholic doctrine, as well as other subjects if time permitted. Members of the subordinate bureau of public instruction disputed the necessity of this concession to lower-class poverty, but they nevertheless accepted its incorporation into the bureau's reglamento, which the national government then approved. This modification reduced education for many of the very poor to little more than religious training, and it reflected fully as much the lack of solid support for primary education among the poor as it did the grim living conditions of those people.®

Equally serious problems quickly emerged once the departmental bureau in México attempted to set up its local

®Ibid., Vol. 32, ff. 2-8, 9, 25, 186, 190.
subordinate councils in the principal municipalities. These boards were to collect school taxes and ensure enforcement of the departmental bureau's directives, but reports from two prefects indicate that these boards functioned inefficiently or not at all. The bureaucratic breakdown, according to the prefects of Tula and Toluca, resulted largely from the shortage of educated citizens who could competently staff the local councils. Most board members, who often accepted their positions merely to satisfy the legal requirement of government service, lacked any understanding of their responsibilities and consequently wasted time with pointless disputes. Tax officials, the prefects continued, received such low salaries that reliable individuals would not accept the position, and some small towns lacked even an incompetent tax collector. More confusion resulted from the reglamento's imprecise definition of each official's responsibility under the law. Under the new system, it appeared to the prefect of Toluca, the condition of public education had actually regressed.\(^{10}\)

Probably he exaggerated, but the experience of other departments suggests that the new educational bureau at the _

\(^{10}\text{Ibid.}, \text{Vol. 32, ff. 159, 160, 164, 168, 177; Vol. 84, ff. 237-239, 301, 303.}_
very least exerted little positive influence over the public school systems. The governments of both Sinaloa and Coahuila reported in February, 1845, that the bureaus there had failed even to establish local councils or to collect data on the financial condition of existing schools. Those in Nuevo León (where the bureau opened a normal school) and Veracruz performed somewhat better, but neither made significant progress towards creation of a uniform system of public education. A spokesman for the Veracruz bureau candidly admitted this fact, but he maintained that the lack of public reports on the activities of other boards indicated that they had not accomplished much more.  

The problems of the provincial bureaus inevitably affected the performance of the central board in the capital. The law required that each department remit 1 percent of its annual educational budget to Mexico City, to finance a normal school and the publication of elementary textbooks. Reports extracted from the archives indicate, however, that at least eight of the departments which established the educational

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bureaus either temporarily or permanently failed to comply with this article of the law. The number was really much larger, for a member of the central board claimed in 1845 that few departments ever dispatched any money. Most departments, previous to 1842, lacked an educational budget, a complication that forced the bureaus to collect extensive data on municipal school expenditures. The latter were no better equipped to execute this task than the others assigned to them, and consequently the Bureau of Primary Instruction did not receive the necessary funds with which to promote the standardization of primary education.\(^\text{12}\)

By early 1845 officials both in the capital and in the departments recognized that the policy of centralization had not achieved its authors' goals. Minister of Justice Mariano Riva Palacio, in his annual report to congress (March, 1845), blamed this result on the dispersed character of the Mexican population, inadequate means of communication (or geographical barriers) and the lack of financial resources. The minister had unquestionably identified part of the problem, but he overlooked the equally serious obstacles created by political instability and the shortage of

\(^{12}\text{AGN, Vol. 31, f. 180; Vol. 32, f. 105; Vol. 34, ff. 223, 226, 252, 272, 280, 287; Vol. 87, f. 357.}\)
qualified administrative personnel. He also ignored (at least publicly) the distinct possibility that provincial opposition to the law had undermined the chances of success. For one member of the Bureau of Primary Instruction, however, departmental dislike of centralization provided a partial explanation for failure of the experiment.¹³

Luis Ezeta wrote in February, 1845, that virtually no departments enforced any section of the law without explicit orders from the national government. Provincial officials, he claimed, opposed the Lancasterian Company in its new role either because they viewed the educational organization as the agent of a leviathan that sought to concentrate all power in Mexico City or because they considered it the instrument of impractical reformers. Under these conditions Ezeta could see no chance of future success, and he implicitly favored abandonment of the experiment. Other sources confirm the claim that the 1842 law created considerable discontent on the departmental level. Michoacán, as already noted, pointedly ignored the decree, and in 1844 both Zacatecas and Coahuila petitioned congress for repeal.

The lack of zeal with which officials in other departments implemented the law, moreover, suggests at the very least that they did not believe in the system it created.  

Minister Riva Palacio's report to congress preceded by only a few months official cancellation of the 1842 law. In July, 1845, his ministry issued a circular to departmental governors in which he announced the government’s intentions in the matter, and he sent a copy of the document to the Lancasterian Company, accompanied by a letter of thanks to the directors for their efforts on behalf of education. The minister added that the directors themselves doubtless recognized the wisdom of repeal, considering the diversity of conditions that prevailed in the various departments. Congress finally acted on December 2, 1845, when it simply declined to ratify the executive decree of October 26, 1842.

Some sentiment had existed within the Lancasterian Company for modification of the law rather than repeal, but this minority view could not stem the mounting demand for a restoration of federalism. Several of Ezeta's colleagues

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14AGN, Vol. 31, ff. 179-181; Vol. 82-1/2, ff. 323, 324; Vol. 84, f. 324; Vol. 91, f. 102; Vol. 92, f. 313.

15Ibid., Vol. 84, ff. 21, 22; Dublán y Lozano, Legislación mexicana, V, pp. 94, 95.
had appended a plea for moderation to his report in which they advised that the government convert the Bureau of Primary Instruction into a national advisory board in the areas of teaching methodology and textbook selection. The proposal was realistic, but it appeared to undermine local control of the schools, and anyway even the centralists had exhibited only secondary interest in the standardization of teaching methodology and curricular content. The three-year experiment with centralization ended therefore without bequeathing any significant alterations in the public school systems of México.16

The Evolution of Primary Education, 1846-1861

The termination of this experiment coincided with a return to political federalism and the approach of the war with the United States. Neither the reestablishment of the Constitution of 1824 nor the invasion of a foreign army contributed to national unity, and in fact the decade after 1846 witnessed a deepening of the political crisis that eventually culminated in the bloody War of the Reform (1858-1860). In contrast to the opportunism that characterized

16AGN, Vol. 31, f. 182.
most of the conflicts prior to 1846, however, authentic ideological issues divided the participants in the climactic struggle of the 1850's. The conservatives, who emerged as a well-defined group only after 1847, interpreted defeat in the American War as conclusive evidence that Mexico's political leaders had fatally weakened the country when they abandoned Hispanic traditions and institutions in an effort to emulate the United States and England. Liberals, on the other hand, tended to argue that the disaster had sprung from Mexico's comparative political and economic backwardness. Although each side controlled the national government and various state governments for at least short periods during the decade of the 1850's, however, neither attempted a radical reorganization of the elementary school systems.  

The salient characteristic of most educational legislation after 1846, in fact, was the lack of noteworthy innovation. Specialized boards of education thus remained popular instruments for the improvement of public schools. At least eight states (Yucatán, Mexico, Nuevo León, Michoacán, Jalisco, Querétaro, Sonora, and Oaxaca) and the federal capital

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either authorized establishment of such boards or restored those in existence before 1842. The principal duties of the juntas, as before, related to the inspection of public schools and the examination of their teachers, although Sonora and Oaxaca vested the councils with authority in the areas of curriculum and textbook selection. Only in Mexico City, however, did the relevant legislation place private schools under the strict control of the board.\(^{18}\)

\(^{18}\)Ordóñez, Historia de educación en Nuevo León, I, pp. 63-65; Manuel R. Alatorre, Memoria general de la educación pública primaria en Jalisco, y su legislación escolar. De 1810 a 1910 (Guadalajara: Tip. de la Escuela de Artes y Oficios del Estado, 1910), pp. 35-37, 38, 39; Ley orgánica de instrucción pública decretada por el h. congreso del estado (Oaxaca: Imprenta de Ignacio Rincón, 1861); AGN, Vol. 82-1/4, ff. 249, 250, 256, 257; Vol. 92, f. 235; Periódico oficial del supremo gobierno de los Estados-Unidos mexicanos, December 4, 1850; December 11, 1850; Recopilación de leyes, decretos, reglamentos y circulares expedidas en el estado de Michoacán. Formada y anotado por Amador Corominas, oficial 4º de la secretaría de gobierno (Morelia: Imprenta de los Hijos de I. Arango, 1886), IX, pp. 57-58; Leyes, decretos y circulares del estado de Veracruz Llave. Año 1855 (Jalapa: Imprenta del Gobierno del Estado, 1889), pp. 94-100; Colección de leyes, decretos y ordenes o acuerdos de tendencia general, del poder legislativo del estado libre y soberano de Yucatán. Formada por Alonso Azán Pérez y publicada por Rafael Pedrera con autorización del gobierno, Vol. II: Que comprende todas las disposiciones legislativas, desde 1° de Enero de 1841, hasta 31 de Diciembre de 1845 (Mérida: Imprenta del Editor, 1850), pp. 268-275; Colección de decretos, circulares y ordenes de los poderes legislativo y ejecutivo del estado de Jalisco (Guadalajara: Tip. de Isaac Banda, 1872), I, pp. 231-273. This paragraph is based on the laws of only nine states (Mexico, Nuevo León,
The stimulus for this rare departure from previous policy was more educational than political, although promulgation of the decree (March 31, 1853) coincided with Santa Anna's return to power as the representative of the nascent conservative party. The commission of teachers that authored the law charged, in the manner of Agustín Buenrostro twenty years earlier, that many private institutions failed to teach a number of the courses listed in their curricula, and that in some cases these schools emphasized peripheral subjects at the expense of the basics. To correct these abuses Santa Anna's representative, General Lombardino, issued the March 31st decree, which required that all schools teach the Three R's, Catholic doctrine, "sacred" history and social obligations (using Escoiquiz's primer). Once a teacher had grounded his pupils in these fundamentals, he could proceed to other subjects, but even in secondary schools students were to receive daily instruction in religion. Any instructor who committed "errors" in the teaching of the fundamentals, especially Catholic doctrine, would have to pay a fine or (if he repeated the offense three times)

Sonora, Querétaro, Oaxaca, Jalisco, Yucatán, Veracruz, and Michoacán), but the conformity of these acts to pre-1842 legislative patterns suggests that the laws of other states did not differ significantly from them.
close his school. The decree entrusted enforcement of these provisions to a Council of Public Instruction comprised partially of members of the teaching profession. Although the emphasis on religious instruction and the adoption of the Escoiquiz book conformed to the conservative orientation of the new national administration, the real significance of this law lay in the unprecedented expansion of State control over private schools. No government had previously attempted to impose curricular uniformity on all schools, and in so doing authorities in Mexico City attacked one of the chief obstacles to the eventual creation of a fully standardized system of primary education.¹⁹

State legislatures continued, however, to restrict application of their legal minimum curricula to public schools. This section of the laws enacted after 1846 also closely resembled the measures passed before the era of centralization. Those six states (Nuevo León, Mexico, Veracruz, Jalisco, Querétaro, and Michoacán) which wrote a standard curriculum into their laws all included the familiar Three R's, Catholic doctrine, and political instruction, although in

¹⁹AGN, Vol. 9, ff. 103-107, 109; Archivo del ex-Ayuntamiento de la Ciudad de México, Vol. 2478, exped. 303 (cited hereafter as Archivo Municipal); Dublán y Lozano, Legislación mexicana, VI, pp. 351-354.
only three cases did the legislators specify the orientation of the last course. Authorities in Nuevo León enacted a law in 1850 that required use of a primer favorable to the federalist system, while their conservative successors altered the law three years later to provide for adoption of a book more in line with their own principles. A Mexican statute of 1848 stipulated a similar emphasis on federalist doctrines in the book adopted for use in that state's schools. Apart from these variations, however, few legislatures changed the basic structure of the primary curriculum. Despite the growth of nationalism after the American war, for example, Jalisco in 1861 became one of the first states to require the study of Mexican history in the public primary schools. The laws of the post-1846 period, in short, reflect few new departures in the campaign to convert the ideal of mass education into reality or in the effort to use the schools to produce loyal, responsible citizens.  

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20Ordóñez, Historia de educación en Nuevo León, I, p. 63; AGN, Vol. 82-1/4, f. 257; Periódico oficial del supremo gobierno de los Estados Unidos mexicanos, December 4, 1850; December 11, 1850; Colección de decretos del congreso extraordinario del estado libre y soberano de México, que funcionó en la segunda época de la federación. Contiene también los expedidas por el gobierno provisional del ecsmo. sr. d. Francisco M. de Olaguibel, los de la junta legislativa, y por vía de apéndice el código fundamental de la república.
The deepening political crisis of the period nevertheless coincided, ironically enough, with some improvement in the condition of primary education. This was particularly the case in the Federal District. The formal public school system of the center city did not, however, participate in this improvement, for only in 1861 did the city council open its sixth school, which like the others enrolled only girls. The condition of these schools, moreover, never really stabilized, and repeatedly their continued existence seemed in doubt. Poorly paid teachers, unsanitary facilities, inadequate or nonexistent supplies, condemned the public schools to a subordinate position in the educational system of the capital. But despite this fact more children than ever before received some education in the years after 1846, and most of them attended school free.\(^{21}\)

\(^{21}\)Archivo Municipal, Vol. 2479, exped. 429, ff. 1-8, 35; Vol. 2480, exped. 456, ff. 1, 3, 9, 18-21; exped. 468,
A relatively small number benefited from efforts of the ayuntamiento to persuade private schools to accept poor students. The municipal archives contain little information on the origin or mechanics of this program, although one cryptic report indicates that the council attempted to use its licensing power to exert pressure on schools. By late 1846, in any case, some twenty-seven private institutions had agreed to admit free of charge a few students selected by the city council, and seven years later the number of schools that participated in the fee-waiver program had risen to more than fifty. It is important to note, furthermore, that this number included both small neighborhood schools of mediocre quality and the major prestigious institutions that catered to children of the wealthy. In this way the political leadership made some effort to prevent the emergence of an educational system whose structure mirrored that of society.  

Inevitably, however, this scholarship program helped only a handful of lower-class children. Most of the students

\[\text{ff. 2-4; Vol. 2481, exped. 541, f. 3; exped. 568; exped. 574; exped. 611; exped. 615, ff. 5-10, 11.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., Vol. 2479, exped. 436, ff. 1, 21, 22; Vol. 2480, expedientes 487, 488; exped. 500, f. 1; exped. 508.}\]
from this large group attended one of the schools operated under the auspices of charitable organizations, chief among which ranked the Lancasterian Company and the Charitable Society for the Education of Destitute Children. The former had, by the late 1840's, expanded its number of schools for children to four, with a combined student body in excess of seven hundred, an achievement that still left it far behind the Charitable Society in terms of number of children reached. The latter organization, which drew its membership from among both the clergy and laymen, announced its formation in 1846 with an appeal for financial aid from both the national and municipal governments. After some delay the society did receive the desired subsidy, and the combination of this money and dues from members permitted the organization to achieve its original goal of twenty-eight schools within the short period of nine years. Two years later the total enrollment at these schools surpassed 6500, although only about half that number attended class daily, partially for lack of space. Society officials candidly admitted the poor quality of instruction in their institutions, but they argued that the training provided there was superior to no education at all. They could have added that the society helped graduates to find jobs. The schools suffered financially,
however, from the disruptions that accompanied the Three Years' war (1858-1860), and by 1861 only twenty of them remained open.\(^{23}\)

In contrast to the expanded activities of these private charitable organizations, the institutional Church continued to withdraw from its formal operation of primary schools. Although at least five convents did support schools, directors of the rest of the capital's religious houses persisted in their refusal to do so, pleading lack of the necessary human or financial resources. The Church fought tenaciously to retain its direct role in secondary education, but even official governmental pressure could not avert its voluntary retreat from participation on the primary level.\(^{24}\)

\(^{23}\)Ibid., Vol. 2479, exped. 389; exped. 437, ff. 1-5, 7, 11, 22, 23; Vol. 2480, exped. 472-1/2; exped. 486; exped. 510; Vol. 2481, exped. 561; exped. 615; Diario oficial del gobierno de la república mexicana, December 30, 1853; Memoria de la primera secretaría de estado y despacho de relaciones interiores y exteriores de los Estados-Unidos mexicanos, leída al soberano congreso constituyente en los días 14, 15, y 16 de Diciembre de 1846, por el ministro del ramo, c. José María Læfragua. Impreso por acuerdo del soberano congreso (México: Imprenta de Vicente García Torres, 1847), pp. 117, 118.

\(^{24}\)Archivo Municipal, Vol. 2480, exped. 482, ff. 9-19; Vol. 2481, exped. 576-1/2 (unnumbered foja following foja 7). The decline of the convent schools was not necessarily accompanied by the exit of priests from the teaching profession. Teacher lists rarely include data on the lay or
The balance of the schools in the Federal District operated under private control, and in most cases they charged students tuition. The majority of these institutions differed from the overcrowded free schools principally in the size of their student bodies, but perhaps as many as two dozen, to judge only by the formal curricula, offered middle and upper class children a liberal education. The latter, typified by the Liceo Franco-Mexicano, combined primary and secondary instruction in their curricula, and they offered wealthy parents an alternative to the tradition of a foreign education for their children. Schools that charged tuition outnumbered free institutions, even in the 1850's, but by the end of the previous decade they had fallen far behind in total enrollment. In 1856 enrollment in district schools topped 11,500, a figure equivalent to 4.6 percent of the capital's population. Of this total, more than 9,000 attended free schools. Education remained beyond the reach of most children, for even those of the lower classes who enrolled frequently failed to graduate. But in the Federal

religious status of the individuals, but it is reasonable to suppose that the relatively advanced education of most priests kept them in demand in public and free private schools.
District at least, primary education had ceased to rank as an exclusive privilege of the rich.²⁵

This expansion of the school system paralleled and resulted partially from the greater ability of the municipal authorities to handle their educational responsibilities. In the 1850's the capital's ayuntamiento finally compiled essentially complete data on the schools within the Federal District, their curricula, number of students, and date of opening. At the same time it strengthened its control over teachers in private schools, for most now had licenses. The council even partially enforced the 1853 curricular law, which teachers of an earlier generation might simply have ignored. Although the public schools continued to suffer financially, moreover, both the municipal and federal governments

²⁵José María Pérez Hernandez, Estadística de la república mejicana. Territorio, población, antiguedades, monumentos, establecimientos públicos, reino vegetal y agricultura, reino animal, reino mineral, industria fabril y manufacturer, artes mecánicos y liberales, comercio, navegación, gobierno, hacienda y crédito público, ejército, marina, clero, justicia, instrucción pública, colonias militares y civiles (Guadalajara: Tip. del Gobierno, 1862), p. 63; Claude Dumas, "Justo Sierra y el liceo franco-mexicano. Sobre la educación en México, 1861-1862," Historia Mexicano XVI (Abril-Junio, 1967), 534; AGN, Vol. 9, f. 112; Archivo Municipal, Vol. 2480, exped. 479 (the prospectus of the Liceo franco-mexicano contained in this expediente, which is unnumbered); exped. 480; exped. 482; exped. 485; exped. 508, ff. 34, 36, 38-40; Vol. 2481, exped. 550.
provided fairly reliable subsidy payments to the Lancasterian Company and the Charitable Society for the Education of Destitute Children, a critically important source of income for the schools of both these organizations. This improved performance reflected in part accumulated administrative experience, painfully acquired over a period of thirty years, and the gradual professionalization of the capital's teaching corps. The Ayuntamiento, for its part, had slowly developed methods for the collection of statistical data and the visitation of schools, while at the same time leading teachers had spearheaded efforts to establish an organization that would prescribe standards for the profession and protect its members from financial difficulties. These attempts proved abortive in the 1820's and 1830's, but the law of March, 1853, provided legal sanction for another try. No historical inevitability forced these activities of the city council and educational leaders toward the eventual creation of a fully organized and State-controlled educational system. In fact, however, they did mark the initiation of a trend in that direction.28

Few states could match the record of the Federal District, but the student populations of at least some did expand slightly. In Michoacán, Yucatán, Jalisco, San Luis Potosí, and Guanajuato, the total number of children enrolled in school continued to oscillate around 1 percent of the entire population. Querétaro and Durango, however, achieved a level of 2 percent, and Nuevo León reached 3 percent. Oaxaca was ahead of all the states for which figures were available, with 5.7 percent. Of these states only the last two surpassed the national average of 2.2 percent (1862), equivalent to nearly 12 percent of the school-age population.27

27Ordóñez, Historia de educación en Nuevo León, I, pp. 62, 63; Pérez Hernandez, Estadística de la república mejicana, pp. 70, 273; Benito Juárez, Exposiciones (Cómo se gobierna). Biografía por Anastasio Zerecero. Notas de Angel Pola (México: F. Vázquez, 1902), p. 385 (n); Notas estadísticas del departamento de Querétaro, formadas por la asamblea constitucional del mismo, y remitidas al supremo gobierno, en cumplimiento de la parte primera del artículo 135 de las bases orgánicas. Año de 1845 (México: Imprenta de José Mariano Lara, 1848), pp. 88, 89; Alatorre, Memoria general de la educación pública primaria en Jalisco, p. 42; Memoria, que sobre el estado que guarda en Michoacán la administración pública en sus diversos ramos, leyó al honorable congreso del mismo el secretario del despacho lic. Francisco G. Anaya. En los días 2 y 3 de Enero de 1850 (Morelia: Imprenta de I. Arango, 1850), doc. section, estados 1, 3; Memoria con que el gobierno del estado libre y soberano de San Luis Potosí, en cumplimiento del artículo 113 de la constitución, dió cuenta
Data on the structure of the state educational systems were available in only four cases. In Jalisco, Durango, and Yucatán the majority of students attended free schools, and this was almost certainly true also in Michoacán, where a degree of vagueness in the classification of schools precludes a firm conclusion. Contrary to the situation in the Federal District, furthermore, most of these free schools operated under direct public control. Both Jalisco and Michoacán (whose state government supported many of the schools) numbered among the few states with well-organized public educational councils, and the effectiveness of government control over their schools may have approached the level

\[\text{a la setima legislatura constitucional en el primer período de sus sesiones ordinarios (Imprenta del Estado, 1849), doc. section, estado 6; [Memoria del gobierno del estado de Durango, March 4, 1850], doc. section, estado 7; Memoria del estado que guarda la administración pública de Yucatán, escrita por el secretario general de gobierno, c. Antonio G. Rejón, y leída por el mismo ante la legislatura constitucional, en la sesión del día 8 de Setiembre de 1862 (Mérida: Imprenta de José Dolores Espinosa, 1862), pp. 21, 22; Memoria en que el gobierno del estado de Durango da cuenta al h. congreso de la marcha de la administración pública en el año de 1847; presentada el día 10 de Marzo de 1848 (Victoria de Durango: Imprenta del Gobierno, 1848), pp. 38-41, 86; Memoria del gobierno del estado de Guanajuato. Presentada a su honorable legislatura en 10 de Enero de 1852 (México: Imprenta de Lara, n.d.), doc. section, estado 8. For the purposes of this paper, "school-age population" is defined as children between the ages of five and fifteen.}\]
of the Federal District. It is significant to note also that in areas such as Durango schools had begun to penetrate the rural areas, for in that state some nine hundred children attended institutions supported by hacendados. The extent of Church involvement in the educational process is impossible to pinpoint, although probably no reverse had occurred in the decline noted for an earlier period. A historian of San Luis Potosí claims, in any case, that convent schools in that state remained open only as long as the government applied pressure. Educational trends in at least some states, in short, differed from the pattern of the national capital principally in the greater extent to which public authorities assumed formal responsibility for the operation of free schools.28

28 Alatorre, Memoria general de la educación pública primaria en Jalisco, pp. 40, 41; Manuel Muro, Historia de la instrucción pública en San Luis Potosí. Escrita por acuerdo del señor gobernador del estado ingeniero don Blas Escontría (San Luis Potosí: Imprenta de Esquivel y Compañía, 1899), pp. 120, 121; Memoria de la junta directiva de enseñanza pública, sobre el estado que guarda este ramo en fin del año de 1861 (Guadalajara: Tip. del Gobierno, 1862), pp. 8-11; Memoria sobre el estado que guarda en Michoacán la administración pública en sus diversos ramos, leyó al honorable congreso del mismo el secretario del despacho lic. Francisco G. Anaya. En los días 2 y 3 de Enero de 1850, doc. section, estados 1, 3; Memoria leída ante el honorable congreso del estado libre de Yucatán por el secretario de gobierno en 20 de
The content of education in the 1850's varied little from that of previous decades. Laws of the period added no new subjects, and in any case most schools lacked both the teachers and the equipment to offer much more than the standard courses. A few observations on some of these courses are nonetheless in order. Many schools, especially in the Federal District, continued to include some form of social instruction in their programs, but in all but a few documented cases this instruction focused on the individual's obligations toward God and other men. Escoiquiz remained a favorite author, and books designed for reading classes also featured moral and religious lessons. The broader variety of political education, which combined this type of instruction with a discussion of the country's governmental system, received far less emphasis. Mexican authors continued to publish books on the domestic political system intended for use in the classroom, but such primers could not compete with the popularity of Escoiquiz's catechism.29

29Ordóñez, Historia de educación en Nuevo León, I, pp. 58, 62, 63, 69, 70, 83-87, 90-92; Muro, Historia de la instrucción pública en San Luis Potosí, pp. 99-101; Ildefonso
Primary students may not have learned much more about their country's culture than they did about its system of government. It is at least certain that several of the more common books used for reading class in schools throughout the country had foreign rather than Mexican authors. These

Villarello, Breves noticias históricas sobre el desarrollo de la educación en el antiguo estado de Coahuila y Texas (Saltillo, 1944), pp. 48-50; Informe que presenta el inspector general de instrucción primaria a la junta directora de estudios del estado de Jalisco, manifestándole lo que convendría hacerse en este importante ramo (Guadalajara: Tipografía de Dionisio Rodríguez, 1851), pp. 22, 23; Memoria sobre el estado que guarda en Michoacán la administración pública, leyó al honorable congreso en Enero de 1850, doc. section, estados 1, 3; Memoria de Querétaro presentado por el gobierno del estado al honorable congreso del mismo en 19 de Febrero de 1849 (n.d.), doc. section, estado 5; Diario oficial del gobierno de la república mexicana, October 27, 1854; Diario oficial del supremo gobierno, July 18, 1858; AGN, Vol. 9, f. 174; Vol. 82-1/2, ff. 302-312; Vol. 82-1/2, f. 147; Vol. 88, ff. 67-69, 77, 78-86; Vol. 89, f. 132; Vol. 90, f. 320; Vol. 91, ff. 368-370; Vol. 92, ff. 157, 159, 162, 168-171, 173, 174; Vol. 64, f. 293; Ramo de Gobernación, Leg. 243: Memoria presentada por el c. Martín Quezada secretario del gobierno de Chiapas, al honorable congreso del estado, 1851 (Imprenta del Gobierno, n.d.), document 8; Archivo Municipal, Vol. 2480, exped. 476; exped. 480; exped. 503; Vol. 2481, exped. 550; exped. 561. A discussion of a civics primer published after the American war may be found in Ordóñez, Historia de educación en Nuevo León, I, pp. 98-101. This and the next two paragraphs are based on essentially complete statistics from the Federal District and scattered data from about ten states. Thus any claim to completeness would be impossible, but the well-documented backwardness of most primary schools suggests that most students actually received a worse education than indicated in the text. The majority of schools probably offered no political instruction whatsoever.
included Simón de Mántua, El amigo de los niños, and one edition of a pair of readers entitled simply Libro dos and Libro tercero. The authorship of other books remains in doubt, but in only one case was a reader clearly the product of domestic scholarship. Although foreign books could help to preserve Mexico's cultural links with Europe, it is doubtful that they could contribute to the effort to define a national identity. Courses in Mexican history might have met this need, but only a handful of schools in the capital or elsewhere incorporated the study of this subject into their formal curricula. The Juárez government attempted to fill the gap in 1861, when it offered a prize to the author of the best primary reader that included historical and geographical information pertaining to Mexico.  

One aspect of national culture did receive considerable attention in primary schools. Religious instruction had

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30 Alatorre, Memoria general de la educación pública primaria en Jalisco, p. 21; Guillermo Furlong, "Rousseau y Escoquiz en la revolución de Mayo. ¿Los derechos del hombre contenidos en el contrato social de Rousseau o las obligaciones del hombre, contenidas en el tratado de Escoquiz?" Revista de Estudios Hispánicos, I (1954), 16; El sol, April 15, 1832; Archivo Municipal, Vol. 2480, exped. 508, unpaged section and foja 44 for two different versions of the Libro 2 and Libro 3 series, one by the Spanish Academy, the other by Mexican authors. The books referred to in the text were used by relatively good schools. Many (perhaps most) schools throughout the country used no official text.
always formed a basic part of the elementary curriculum, and mention has already been made of its value as a source of cultural unity. In the 1850's, however, the Church's deep involvement in the political crisis placed a severe strain on this cultural bond. In the heat of the passions aroused by the struggle both liberals and conservatives lost any capacity to distinguish the institutional Church from the religion it espoused, and as a consequence the victorious Juaristas attacked both. Thus in their educational law of 1861 they eliminated religious instruction from the basic curriculum of the capital's public primary schools. This dramatic innovation constituted but the first step, for thirteen years later the federal government prohibited catechismal studies in public schools throughout the country. In the 1861 law the Juaristas coupled banishment of religious education with restoration of the broader form of political instruction, which included a study of the country's constitution. For the liberals the Church could no longer serve as an institutional symbol of national unity; perhaps the State could replace it.

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Conclusion

Independence from Spain confronted the first generation of Mexican political leaders with the staggering problem of how to mold an ethnically diverse people into a relatively cohesive nation. During the colonial era a religiously based loyalty to the monarchy had undergirded social unity, but that centripetal force disappeared with the establishment of a republic. This act weakened slightly the unifying power of even the Catholic Church, because the republican principle of popular sovereignty reduced somewhat the importance to governments of ecclesiastical support. These conditions helped to persuade Mexican politicians to turn for aid to the primary schools, on the assumption that through the proper kind of education the people would learn to identify with the new republican political institutions and to perform the duties which that form of government imposes on its citizens. From the very beginning, therefore, the new country's leaders planned to convert primary education into a process that would serve political as well as intellectual goals.

This commitment prompted the national and state governments to intervene more extensively in the operation of local educational systems than royal officials had ever done. They
did so principally through legal establishment of a system of free public schools, for only in this way could the legislators bring education within the reach of all classes, even the poor. Equally important, however, the lawmakers utilized the authority inherent in the public nature of these schools to prescribe the curricula and teaching methods to be adopted in them. Such a practice followed logically from the premise that primary education served the interests of the State, as did also the occasional inclusion of compulsory attendance provisions in the laws. With respect to private schools, on the other hand, government control operated within basically narrow limits. Most laws applied only in part to these institutions, and rarely did legal restrictions on their activities extend beyond licensing requirements and the prohibition of teachings contrary to the constitution. Harbingers of more comprehensive controls did exist, however, most notably the 1853 law that required adoption of a common curriculum and textbooks in the schools of the Federal District. This measure, though hardly typical of the period before the French intervention, reflected the growing conviction of some legislators that their quest for a truly uniform system of primary education, with its nationalistic implications, must involve all schools rather than only the public ones.
In practical terms, however, the issue hardly mattered, for experience demonstrated that most state and local governments lacked the capacity to administer effectively even the schools they founded. Initially city councils bore the main responsibility for enforcement of the educational laws, but most of them had neither the time nor the expertise to perform competently. Consequently some states transferred a portion of the duties to specialized boards of education, and on several occasions both the national and a few state governments even experimented with semiprivate control of the public schools, through utilization of the administrative talents of the Lancasterian Company. Although these reforms tended to improve conditions slightly, especially in a few states such as Michoacán and Jalisco, the basic situation remained unchanged. The laws assumed a stable political environment, a trained cadre of educational bureaucrats with well-developed habits of obedience to superiors, and adequate material resources. The educational laws of the early national period, in short, conformed to the Hispanic tradition of the interventionist State, but they contradicted the contemporary reality of chronic political instability, widespread poverty, and the absence of a professional middle class.
The consequences for public education were predictable. A cohesive, uniform system in each state remained an unattainable goal, and in most cases the system splintered into a multitude of poorly coordinated schools whose untrained teachers used whatever methods and books happened to be available. Issuance of licenses tended to lose its relationship to professional qualifications, as political officials reluctantly concluded that poor teachers were better than none at all. More than the quality of education suffered, however, for the inadequacy of tax revenues prevented the public schools from reaching more than a small minority of children. Private charity organizations such as the Lancasterian Company attempted to fill the gap through establishment of free schools, and in a few areas these institutions accommodated more students than public schools. Charity schools in the national capital, for example, benefited from more competent management than public institutions, and partially for this reason the government subsidized them rather than use the money to rejuvenate the moribund municipal schools. The Church itself received the strongest official encouragement to continue support of its convent schools, which formed another source of free education for the poor. This official support of free private institutions involved
a tacit admission of the weakness of the public schools, coupled perhaps with a recognition that under these conditions the latter could as yet exert only a limited influence over the formation of the Mexican character.

Nor could they or the other free schools foster social unity. Children of the lower classes who received an education at private institutions, but the poor quality of instruction typical of those schools tended to drive the wealthy, especially in Mexico City, into a handful of exclusive academies. No laws fostered this trend, and in fact municipal officials in the Federal District developed a fellowship program partially to counteract it. In its small way, nevertheless, this dichotomy in the educational system perpetuated class distinctions and inhibited the emergence of a national sense of community.

In most cases the content of education did not counteract these unfavorable conditions. Mexican schools often tended to rely on foreign books, and consequently most students probably learned little about their own country in the course of acquiring reading skills. The use of these books thus impeded the growth of a national awareness on the part of students, an especially important side effect because of the absence of Mexican history from the curriculum.
Although secondary schools began to offer this course in the 1840's, most Mexican educators did not stress its value as a possible source of cultural unity, and it remained a rarity in the primary curriculum. Catholicism comprised the one element of indigenous culture which the schools transmitted to students, for virtually all primary institutions included religious instruction in their curricula. The Church's deep involvement in the political crisis of the 1850's, however, raised serious doubts about the unifying power of this form of education.

Many political leaders wanted the schools also to foster identification with the new political culture embodied in the national and state constitutions. A large number of schools did in fact incorporate political instruction into their curricula, but questions as to its effectiveness arose from the varied forms it took. Some politicians and intellectuals favored an emphasis on the country's new system of government, and primers on the subject proliferated in the years after independence. The endless struggles between centralists and federalists, however, negated the impact of these books and the courses that used them, for neither students nor teachers could identify with political institutions that continually oscillated between antagonistic forms.
Such uncertainty, coupled with the fears aroused by the constant upheavals, reduced political instruction in many schools to a study of general social duties, which a number of political figures had always desired anyway. The popularity of another foreign book (Escoiquiz's primer) further limited the slight nationalistic potential of even this variety of social education. By the 1850's, in any case, the form of political instruction had lost practical importance, because the schools could not hope to bridge the chasm that separated the warring ideological groups. Conflicting nationalisms, one based on the Church and the other founded on the State, divided the conservatives and the liberals, and under these conditions political education could not contribute to national unity. But neither any longer could religious instruction.

The primary schools themselves did not, however, become important battlegrounds in the war of ideologies. This dubious honor was reserved to the institutions of higher learning, where many of the country's future leaders received their training. These schools too would play roles of potential importance in the formation of the Mexican nation.
CHAPTER V

HIGHER EDUCATION: ADMINISTRATION AND CONTROL

Most of the critical factors which shaped the development of higher education in Mexico related to the central issue of secularization. The locus of administrative control, the composition of the instructional staff and the structure of the curriculum all involved in some measure the competition between Church and State for a dominant role in education. In the Mexican context, however, secularization implied more than the establishment of government control and the elimination of a few theological courses. The process involved also the demise of academic autonomy and the addition of new fields of study to the curriculum. The trend thus promised to have a profound impact on the country's system of higher education, which before independence had operated under the de facto control of the clergy.

The Colonial Origins

From its inception the colonial system of secondary education functioned under the dual aegis of Church and State.
In 1551 Carlos V authorized his representatives to found a university, and four decades later the pope officially approved the degree programs of the institution. This Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico derived most of its financial support from the crown, which in turn reserved the right to rule on all changes in the school's curriculum or constitution. On a less important level the viceroy, as the king's representative, enjoyed the authority to settle disputes between the university and religious orders, and in certain situations he could also appoint the rector. The Church, for its part, also possessed means to influence the operations of the university. Officially the chancellor represented the pope, but this individual merely conferred academic degrees and served as a dean of students. Of far more significance the clergy supplied a majority of the university's student body and teaching staff, although the establishment of theological seminaries in the seventeenth century may have reduced the proportion somewhat. The crown made an apparent effort to neutralize the administrative consequences of this imbalance through a seventeenth-century cédula that ordered the university to alternate the rectorship between lay and ecclesiastical professors. At the same time, however, the government restricted candidature
for the position to single professors, in accordance with
the "ecclesiastical orientation" of the institution. That
proviso effectively disqualified most lay teachers, and con-
sequently clerical influence remained dominant.¹

Despite these avenues of outside intervention, the
University of Mexico enjoyed a substantial measure of formal
and effective autonomy. The colonial university, like its
sister institutions in Spain, governed itself through the
cloister of professors and graduates. A portion of this
council annually elected the rector, and in the eighteenth
century the crown granted it the right to alter the school's
constitution without prior approval. The rector, as chief
administrative officer of the university, wielded consid­
erable power. In addition to his academic responsibilities
he exercised jurisdiction over all nonviolent crimes com­
mitted within the confines of the university, as well as a
more limited jurisdiction over offenses of academic person­
nel perpetrated outside that area. Administrative control
over students extended even further, for in most cases they
had to obtain permission to venture into the city alone. On
occasion, to be sure, viceroys violated the university's

¹José Luis Becerra López, La organización de
los estudios en la Nueva España (México: Editorial Cultura,
Julio Jiménez Rueda, Historia jurídica de la universidad de
México (México: Imprenta Universitaria, 1955), pp. 67,
119, 120.
autonomy through illegal interventions that short-circuited the process by which the cloister appointed professors or admitted students. These infrequent transgressions, which Madrid repeatedly forbade, did not, however, seriously undermine the independence of the academic community.²

The importance of this autonomy stemmed largely from the fact that the University of Mexico initially monopolized higher education in New Spain. Only this institution, according to the Laws of the Indies, could establish academic chairs valid for degree programs. This legal patent on higher education in effect reduced the colegios of the capital to boarding houses for students, at least in the beginning. More importantly the monopoly imposed unity on the colonial system of higher education and helped to preserve the quality of the instructional programs. In the process, however, it limited the diffusion of education, both geographically and in terms of social class. The king founded the university for creoles and Indians, and formally at least the school's constitution excluded mestizos.

mulattoes, and students born out of wedlock. In practice the rapid decline of official enthusiasm for education of the Indians further restricted the composition of the student body, and most of the thirty thousand baccalaureate degrees awarded during the university's first two centuries belonged to the creole minority. In the case of advanced degrees the financial factor further sharpened the class bias of the system. Although the costs connected with the minor degrees remained minimal, officials purposely attached high fees to the licentiate and doctorate in an effort to exclude candidates from the lower social strata. The University, in short, performed a dual function. It provided New Spain with many of the colony's legal and ecclesiastical leaders and at the same time contributed to the stability of the traditional class structure.\(^3\)

This institution's dominant position in the academic world, however, declined somewhat as the colony's educational needs expanded more rapidly than the university's capacity to satisfy them. The first small crack in the

monopoly appeared early, when the university discovered that it could not eliminate the multitude of private tutors who taught Latin grammar, the school's main preparatory course. Administrative officials eventually yielded the task of teaching the subject to the satellite colegios of the capital, and these institutions also began to provide unofficial instruction in other areas, as a study aid. A far more critical challenge to the academic monopoly issued from schools outside the capital that successfully sought a measure of independence from the university's control. In 1592 Felipe II signed a decree that authorized establishment of theological seminaries in various parts of the country, in accordance with a decision of the Council of Trent, and the monarch explicitly delegated control of the schools to the local bishops. These conciliar seminaries enjoyed the right to create academic chairs and to confer degrees, although the one located in Mexico City had to send its students to the university for their advanced training. During the same time period religious orders, most notably the Jesuits, began to found colegios throughout New Spain, and the directors of these institutions sustained a long campaign to secure curricular independence. The university successfully resisted these efforts, for by the early
eighteenth century the crown had required both the Jesuit colegios and the seminaries to seek incorporation to that school, as a condition of validation for their courses. This ruling forced the colegios and seminaries to secure prior approval from the university for addition of new courses, but the fact remained that the University of Mexico no longer provided the only source of higher education in New Spain.  

The crown further weakened the academic monopoly when it opened new universities and institutes that operated beyond the control of the institution in Mexico City. The nominal authority of this school extended over such a broad area (Guatemala to California) that royal and ecclesiastical officials in the remote regions of Guatemala and Nueva Galicia (Jalisco) eventually persuaded Madrid that their people needed universities of their own. Guatemala opened its university in 1676 and Nueva Galicia followed suit a century later, in 1774. These institutions possessed no

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authority outside their regions, and they never achieved
equality with the University of Mexico. Within their juris-
dictions, however, they controlled the educational system.
These regional universities, nevertheless, did not alter
the structure of the colonial educational system, as did the
three institutes founded in Mexico City at the end of the
eighteenth century. The Enlightenment had aroused interest
in fields of study largely ignored by the academic "establish-
ment," and the crown decided to promote them through inde-
pendent schools rather than through new departments within
the university. Accordingly it helped to found San Carlos
(fine arts) in 1785, the Botanical Gardens in 1788, and the
Royal Seminary of Mining in 1792. Each of these institutes,
although located in Mexico City, controlled its own degree
program and administration. The University offered little
resistance to their independent status, but the establish-
ment of the institutes did augur a partial shift away from
the ecclesiastical orientation of traditional higher educa-
tion. Contrary to the colonial pattern, laymen dominated
the instructional staffs of the new schools, and empiricism
rather than scholasticism characterized their approach to
learning.\(^5\)

\(^5\) Becerra López, La organización de Nuestr es estudios, pp.
281-284, 313-327, 335.
These trends within the educational community coincided with a dramatic change in the relations between the university and the royal government. From the beginning academic autonomy had thrived on the alliance between Church and State, and conflict between these two power centers inevitably affected the independence of the universities. Cooperation characterized the Hapsburg era, but conditions began to change with the accession of the Bourbons in the eighteenth century. The new line of kings sought to expand royal power as part of their campaign to strengthen and unify the empire, and consequently they tended to view the privileges and immunities of the clergy as obstacles in their path. This dissatisfaction with the temporal power of the Church reached a climax during the reign of Carlos III (1759-1788), and in the struggle that ensued academic freedom suffered more than the clergy. In 1770 a student in the University of Valladolid's law school submitted a thesis in defense of clerical immunities, and the crown used the incident to assert tight control over higher education. The government dismissed both the student and the dean of the law school, and then ordered Valladolid to arrange for new theses favorable to royal prerogatives. At the same time
the king installed royal censors in all Spanish universities, to protect the crown's "rights" against clerical attacks.®

The applicability of these orders to the colonial universities remains unclear, but the Bourbons did reaffirm royal control over New Spain's institutions of higher learning. In 1709 the first monarch of this line, Felipe V, issued a cédula that confirmed his administrative authority over all "merely secular" colegios. Although the decree referred specifically only to Santa María de Todos Santos of the capital, the king evidently intended the vague term, "secular," to encompass virtually all important colegios in the colony except the conciliar seminaries. Felipe based this authority on his "right of universal patronage," and in fact many colonial colegios did list the king as their patron. The cédula did not deprive religious orders of their practical control over colegios founded by them, but it served to remind both the clergy and the educational community that ultimate authority rested in royal hands.

In this sense it foreshadowed the more drastic measures of Carlos III.7

Even though the events of the late colonial period weakened the traditional system of higher education, the University of Mexico, as the symbol and foundation of that system, retained a measure of its autonomy and authority. It also continued to enjoy important support. The institution's ecclesiastical bias obviously served the interests of the Church, but at the same time the university could boast prominent lay and clerical graduates who would defend the school for its own sake. The active participation of graduates in the government of the university, coupled with the prestige associated with its degrees, contributed to a loyalty rarely enjoyed by modern institutions. The fact remained, however, that the school's autonomy and power inhibited basic academic reform, and individuals who intended to define educational goals in political rather than

religious terms could not really avoid a confrontation with the university and its supporters. Mexican independence, in short, was not likely to eliminate the threat of political intervention posed by the Bourbon kings.

Anticlericalism and the Control Issue

The struggle for independence and the political reorganization that followed had a profound effect on higher education. The depredations that accompanied the war temporarily forced several colegios to close, and the adoption of the federalist form of government after the conflict sharply curtailed the university's curricular authority. The Constitution of 1824 implicitly delegated responsibility for education to the state legislatures, and thus no law could force these bodies to adhere to the dictates of the central university in Mexico City. Independence also raised the issue of the State's relationship to the Church and the semiautonomous educational institutions which the latter's clergy dominated. ⁸

The political leaders of the newly independent country claimed that the republic inherited all the powers of the

⁸Bonavit, Historia del colegio de San Nicolás, p. 112; Agustín Lanuza, Historia del colegio del estado de Guanajuato (México: M. León-Sánchez, 1924), p. 70.
Spanish crown, which in their view formed inherent elements of State authority. Church officials, on the other hand, argued that those powers subsumed under the title **Patronato Real** expired with the dissolution of the empire. The pope, in their view, had delegated control over the colonial Church specifically to the Spanish monarch, and accordingly this power did not inhere in the State itself. The dispute generated some bitterness, partially because the ecclesiastical hierarchy had opposed establishment of a republic, a form of government they tended to associate with anticlericalism and the French Revolution. Although temporary truces occasionally broke the pattern of disharmony, this fundamental issue continued to plague relations between the Church and political authorities throughout the period before the French intervention.  

In the field of education, however, the ecclesiastical leadership did not actively resist the confirmation of government authority. In the 1820's several states, among

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them Jalisco, Guanajuato, Puebla, Zacatecas, Yucatán and San Luis Potosí, enacted laws that directly or indirectly placed the major colegios within their jurisdictions under the government's supervisory control, and in at least one case Church leaders collaborated in the action. Religious orders had founded these institutions, although in a few instances the crown may have assumed control following the expulsion of the Jesuits. During the same period federal authorities also initiated measures designed to clarify their relationship to the university and colegios of the capital. Congress considered at least four educational proposals in the 1820's, and each of them confirmed a minimal degree of public control over these institutions. Most of the bills listed only the power to prescribe the curriculum of each school, but one introduced in 1826 provided for an educational council with administrative authority over both the elementary schools and the institutions of higher learning. Congress enacted none of the plans, one of which exceeded the financial resources of the government and another of which violated federalist principles. It does not appear, however, that the Church actively opposed any of the proposals.¹⁰

¹⁰Lanuza, Historia del colegio de Guanajuato, pp. 70, 74, 75; Francisco Canton Rosado, La instrucción pública en
The educational community, on the other hand, did contribute to the defeat of a measure introduced in 1830. This plan, the brainchild of Minister of Relations Lucas Alamán, provided that each major colegio of the capital (except San Gregorio, which would close) would specialize in one or two related academic fields. In this way Alamán hoped to eliminate redundancy and expand the curriculum without increasing costs, hardly revolutionary goals. José María Luis Mora maintained, however, that the proposal encountered opposition from the university and a lack of...
united support on the part of the colegios. Congressional graduates of the university, according to Mora, feared that Alamán's plan jeopardized the position of their school. One could hardly include Lucas Alamán in the ranks of the university's enemies, but his proposal did excite legitimate concern as to the fate of the institution. One of its provisions transferred responsibility for implementation of the reforms to an educational council, a change which might well have deprived the university of its authority as curriculum coordinator, the very heart of its academic monopoly in the capital. The fact, moreover, that Alamán omitted the university from his brief sketch of the distribution of fields among the colegios merely added further substance to the suspicions of the university's defenders. Administrators of the capital's colegios, on the other hand, scrambled to ensure a redistribution of courses and academic fields most in accordance with the interests of each school, and in the process they generated considerable confusion and discord. Under these conditions the plan died in congress.11

11 Memoria de la secretaría de estado y del despacho de relaciones interiores y exteriores, leída por el secretario del ramo en la camera de diputados el día 12 de Febrero
This incident undermines the view that resistance to the establishment of political control over higher education involved a simple confrontation between Church and State. The ecclesiastical hierarchy, in fact, tended to accept governmental control of institutions over which the Church did not formally exercise authority. Any effort to convert conciliar seminaries into civil institutes, on the other hand, doubtless would have provoked bitter resistance from the bishops. The educational community in Mexico City, for its part, could not really hope to avoid government supervision. Its leaders would probably oppose any plan, however, that appeared to pose an immediate threat to the educational institutions themselves. Alamán aroused their anxiety unintentionally, but in 1833 a group of reformers wove important strands of his basic idea into a plan that involved destruction of the capital's colegios and university as part of a general strategy to laicize the teaching profession. The reformers viewed political authority as a tool to revolutionize higher education, but this use

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of State control inevitably aroused the united resistance of the Church and the educational "establishment."

The authors of this educational reform program belonged to a loose liberal coalition that began to form in the early 1830's. Although the alliance did not constitute a genuine political party, its members found some unity in opposition to the extensive economic and political influence of the Church and the Army. The most articulate retrospective statement of their general views issued from the pen of José María Luis Mora, the anticlerical priest who eventually assumed the intellectual leadership of the liberals. He spoke for only the more radical liberals during this early period, but his ideas did provide the philosophical foundation for the Gómez Farías reforms.¹²

Mora analyzed contemporary Mexico with the tools forged by the Spanish Bourbon reformers and the English laissez-faire theorists. He thus focused on the impact of the corporate spirit in Mexican society and related that impact to current economic and political problems. The Church, the Army and the Indian community represented some of the

most powerful manifestations of this spirit, and Mora in effect charged that they contributed to a splintering pro-
cess that threatened the viability of the new republic. These corporate entities, in his view, tended to command
the primary loyalty of their members (the clergy, soldiers,
Indians), and in the process they inhibited the growth of
a national unity based on the State. The religious and
military fueros lay at the root of the problem, because
these constitutionally sanctioned privileges exempted the
Church and the Army from effective civil control and en-
couraged the members of those organizations to identify
with their small group rather than with the rest of society.
Mora believed, however, that the survival of traditional
attitudes also played an important role, and this convic-
tion added force to his sharp criticisms of higher educa-
tion.\(^\text{13}\)

The university system attracted Mora's attention both
as an example of the corporate evil and as a disseminator
of harmful and antiquated ideas. He condemned the elitist
orientation of the system, symbolized in the distinctive

\(^{13}\text{Ibid., pp. 113-115, 123, 124, 171-173; José María Luis Mora, Méjico y sus revoluciones (Paris: Librería
de Rosa, 1836), I, pp. 85, 97, 109, 124, 134.}\)
student uniforms of the colegios, largely because it created artificial barriers between the educational community and the rest of society. Mora maintained repeatedly, however, that the central defect in higher education stemmed from clerical domination of the instructional staffs. He distrusted his fellow priests partially because they emphasized the primacy of religious duties over civil obligations, a practice that merely exacerbated political disunity. In more general terms Mora claimed that the ecclesiastical bias of the education provided by these men fitted their students only for cloistered lives rather than for careers of political or economic value to the nation. His criticism in this respect applied both to the curriculum and to the academic environment, for he believed that the university and its colegios resembled monasteries more than educational institutions. Mora favored religious instruction, but at the same time he wanted to introduce new courses and teaching methods that he hoped would promote utilitarianism, a philosophy which tended to conflict with that blend of aristocratic Hispanic and Catholic values that currently dominated Mexican society. Success of the reforms which he envisioned, however, required secularization of higher education, and in the Mexican
context the achievement of this goal entailed the use of State power to curtail academic autonomy.\(^{14}\)

Political power, in fact, provided the leverage without which the liberals could hardly hope to institute any of the structural changes their most radical members considered necessary. As early as 1825 the liberals, in the person of Prisciliano Sánchez, secured control of the government of Jalisco. Sánchez used his authority to close the University of Guadalajara, which he replaced with a civil institute. The governor at least partially secularized the teaching staff of the new school and introduced new methods and courses, actions which eventually aroused considerable discontent among the university’s supporters. Sánchez’s successors permitted the institute to decline through lack of proper support, but it remained in existence eight years later when a liberal administration assumed power in the national capital.\(^{15}\)


\(^{15}\)Mora, Obras sueltas, p. 113; AGN, Ramo de Instrucción Pública, Vol. 90, ff. 202, 203. (All subsequent citations are from the Ramo de Instrucción Pública, unless otherwise noted.)
The general elections of 1832, which followed the overthrow of the conservative Bustamente government, delivered control of congress to the liberals. The opportunistic Antonio López de Santa Anna captured the presidency, but the general's decision to remain on his estate during most of the first year of his term (April, 1833-April, 1834) transferred effective executive authority to Vice President Valentín Gómez Farías, a political leader of the liberals. These favorable circumstances did not result from any coordinated campaign on the part of the new vice president and his allies, nor did Gómez Farías enter office with a prefabricated grand design. Despite an inevitable degree of improvisation, however, the reforms he introduced did conform to the coherent set of goals later developed by his most prominent adviser, Mora. The most publicized reforms directly affected the Church, whose power the liberals proceeded to attack on several fronts. Congress struck at the clergy's economic strength through laws that secularized mission lands in California and placed the collection of tithes on a purely voluntary basis. The vice president also approved measures that reestablished State control over ecclesiastical patronage and eliminated legal sanctions in support of monastic vows. At the same
time, however, the administration did not neglect the Army, whose monopoly on force it undermined through creation of a civil militia for the Federal District. These actions generated the most controversy, but in October, 1833 congress passed a series of laws designed to revolutionize higher education in the capital.\textsuperscript{16}

Even before enactment of these laws, some liberal educators began to chip away at the university's control over the capital's educational system. Thus in April, 1833, Juan Rodríguez Puebla, the rector of San Gregorio, guided through congress a measure that authorized the colegios to confer minor degrees without the university's prior approval. University officials protested that the new law would undermine academic standards and weaken the unity of the educational system, but they made no serious effort to defeat the bill. This law was merely the first step, however, for in September Gómez Farías appointed a commission to draw up proposals for more basic reforms.

The six-man commission included Mora, Rodríguez Puebla,

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\textsuperscript{16}Mora, Obras sueltas, pp. 53, 54; Calcott, Church and State in Mexico, pp. 89, 91, 92, 93; Cecil Alan Hutchinson, "Valentín Gómez Farías. A biographical Study" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of History, The University of Texas, 1948), p. 177.
\end{flushright}
Bernardo Couto and Andrés Quintana Roo, and its mandate, in Mora's words, involved the reform of education "in conformity with the necessities determined by the new social state." The commission finished its work in less than a month, and by October 26 all of its proposals had become law.17

The October laws established a government-appointed Board of Education and vested it with direct control over a new system of six secondary institutions. The new schools replaced the capital's principal colegios (San Gregorio, San Ildefonso, and San Juan de Letrán) and the university, which the laws abolished, along with their semiautonomous governing councils. Henceforth only the Board of Education and the institutes under its control would confer academic degrees in the Federal District. The board also received authority to appoint the first set of professors for each institution, although in the future competitive exams were to govern the selection of teachers. Additional powers of the board included control over all public funds earmarked

for education and authority to dictate a set of guidelines for religious and political instruction (doctrinas) which all schools, public or private, would have to follow. The laws also abolished certification requirements for teachers, and stipulated that students in the public institutes would not wear uniforms.¹⁸

These laws leveled the colonial educational "establishment." Previous reformers had envisioned changes grafted onto the existing structure, but Mora and his colleagues regarded the university-centered system as hopelessly antiquated. They also feared, as Mora later pointed out, that administrators and teachers at the old colegios and the university might frustrate the implementation of some of their reforms. The most important reason for their action, however, related to the semiautonomy of the university and colegios, which made basic reform extremely difficult. The new schools would operate under the direct control of the government, and even private institutions would no longer act with complete freedom in the area of curriculum. Mora

¹⁸Manuel Dublán y José María Lozano, Legislación mexicana o colección completa de las disposiciones legislativas expedidas desde la independencia de la república (Edición oficial; México: Imprenta del Comercio, 1876), II, pp. 563-566, 571-575.
later justified the extraordinary powers vested in the Board of Education on the grounds that the success of the new system depended on them. Without such sweeping authority the board could not prevent the return of "old abuses," nor could it ensure the uniformity of method and "doctrine" necessary in public institutions. For Mora, in other words, the need to reorient higher education in accordance with liberal principles required the sacrifice of even the semblance of academic autonomy.\textsuperscript{19}

That reorientation involved the termination of clerical domination. The new laws provided the mechanism to accomplish this goal, in the form of the bureau's power to select teachers from a list of nominees submitted by directors of the institutes (whom the board appointed). The anticlerical nature of that provision, however, stemmed from the fact that Gómez Farías staffed the board with his political allies, the same men who wrote the laws. Mora later stated that, although some nineteen priests applied for teaching positions in the institutes, the government favored more "suitable" instructors, from all social classes and political factions. The board did appoint at least three clerics

\textsuperscript{19}Mora, Obras sueltas, pp. 116, 117, 120, 121; Mora, El clero, la educación y la libertad, p. 88.
(in addition to Mora himself), including José María Puchet, the ex-rector of the university, but these minor concessions to the Church could not conceal the liberal determination to secularize the teaching corps in the capital. This biased method of enforcement predictably tended to forge an alliance between clergymen as a class and the specific individuals and corporate entities whom the laws had already dispossessed.\footnote{Mora, Obras sueltas, pp. 121, 122; Mora, \textit{El clero, la educación y la libertad}, pp. 103, 104; Florstedt, "The Liberal Role of José María Luis Mora," p. 345; AGN, Vol. 44, ff. 349, 350.}

The ecclesiastical hierarchy reserved its sharpest attacks, however, for those reform measures that more directly threatened the Church as an institution. Its bitter denunciation of these laws sparked a positive response not only from the more conservative elements of society but also from disenchanted liberals, some of whom apparently considered the reforms too radical. Military discontent equalled that of the clergy, and in the year following his inauguration the vice president had to suppress at least one major rebellion against his government. President Santa Anna initially backed Gómez Farías, but in early 1834 he
concluded that the reforms had generated too much resistance. The constant struggle disillusioned and fatigued the vice president also, and he began to develop legitimate fears for the safety of his family and himself. In April, 1834, therefore, Gómez Farías petitioned congress for a year's leave of absence, during which he could travel abroad. Had he resorted to military measures, as Mora recommended, Gómez Farías might have preserved his liberal reforms, for the laws did command support in the capital and elsewhere. He declined to do so, however, and thus Santa Anna's return to Mexico City at the end of April presaged the repeal of many of the acts.21

Although Santa Anna resumed control of the government as the leader of a reaction against the liberals, he did not dismantle all of their reforms. The president abrogated the law on ecclesiastical patronage and recalled several bishops banished by Gómez Farías, but he neither restored State support for the collection of tithes nor revived the legal sanction for fulfillment of monastic vows. In June, 1834, however, he appointed a new board of education, and

21Hale, Mexican Liberalism, pp. 146, 147; Mora, Obras sueltas, pp. 47, 49-51, 54, 152, 153; Calcott, Church and State in Mexico, p. 96; Hutchinson, "Valentín Gómez Farías," pp. 185, 186, 242, 286, 300, 201, 306.
On July 31 he issued the decree that suspended the institutes created under the October laws. At the same time he reopened the university and old colegios and appointed their rectors to commissions that were to draw up a new study plan. That plan, completed in November, restored the pre-1833 system essentially intact, even with respect to the university's curricular authority over the colegios. The educational reforms thus disappeared without a trace.\textsuperscript{22}

Santa Anna's mixed record as a defender of the Church complicates any analysis of the pressures that produced the July 31st decree. The government itself focused on the alleged scholastic deficiencies of the new schools, but the refusal to permit them a reasonable trial period of operation arouses substantial doubts as to the sincerity of the criticism. Despite the fact, however, that the prologue to the decree barely alluded to the secularist tendencies of the reforms, the president probably did act at least partially in response to clerical demands. Several teachers at one of the new schools referred angrily to official

charges that they had served as instruments of impiety and libertinage, and Mora later maintained that priests had led the attack on the institutes. The liberal theoretician also pointed to another probable cause of repeal, when he admitted that the consolidation of the educational fund, which forced closure of the university and colegios, had generated some opposition even within the council of education, specifically from Juan Rodríguez Puebla. The rector of San Gregorio would not defend the university (the power of which he had earlier helped to curtail), but he did seek to preserve his own institution. Although Mora denounced such loyalty as a vestige of the corporate spirit, he conceded that even some educators in the new institutes evidenced a form of it. The Santa Anna government, for its part, charged that the consolidation had illegally deprived the university and colegios of capital that belonged to them. Thus both defenders of the clergy and supporters of the old educational institutions played some role in the successful reaction against the 1833 reforms, but at this distance one cannot be sure that such opposition would have achieved its goal had those reforms not formed part of a concerted attack on virtually every vested interest in Mexican society.  

23Mora, Obras sueltas, pp. 131, 152, 153; Mora, El clero, la educación y la libertad, pp. 89, 96; Florstedt,
The return of Santa Anna in April, 1834 signalled the temporary exhaustion of anticlerical liberalism as a national force. The reaction against it transcended the capital, for in Jalisco the government closed the civil institute and reestablished the University of Guadalajara. Disagreements among liberals contributed to this decline as much as resistance from the unorganized conservative elements in society. Opposition to the extensive temporal powers of the Church united most liberals, but they divided sharply over the proper measures to curb that influence. Even Mora refused to support some of his cohorts in their attacks on the Catholic religion. He inveighed against the clergy as bitterly as any of them, but in his later years he tended to view Catholicism as a cultural bulwark against the expansionist United States. Political opportunism and disputes over the scope of reform would continue to plague the liberals until the conservative challenge of the 1850's finally provided the catalyst for unity.24


The hiatus between these two peaks of liberal activity, however, witnessed a gradual increase in government control over higher education. In the first decade after independence, as already noted, at least six states (Jalisco, Guanajuato, Puebla, Zacatecas, Yucatán and San Luis Potosí) formally asserted authority over the universities or principal colegios within their jurisdictions, and in 1845 the government of Michoacán followed suit. A parallel trend involved the establishment of civil institutes in a few states which lacked colegios or which had to rely on the conciliar seminaries. Thus Mexico, Oaxaca, Chihuahua and Coahuila all created State-supported colegios before the end of the thirties, and Jalisco and Aguascalientes followed suit during the next decade. Financial problems plagued several of these schools, at least initially, but even so by the early 1840's government authorities exercised supervisory control over virtually all major colegios and universities in the country except the conciliar seminaries. In at least a few cases, moreover, that control extended beyond the level of supervision. In Oaxaca, for example, the 1826 law that established the institute authorized the government to appoint the rector and to select the professors from candidates who had competed in a public exam.
The constitution of Puebla's colegio contained a similar provision, but in the State of México the 1846 law limited the governor to appointment of the school's first faculty. The reglamento (1842) of Jalisco's Colegio de San Juan assigned the power of appointment to a council on which the governor sat with the school's director and several professors. In Yucatán, finally, the reglamento (1851) of the University of Mérida authorized the governor to select the rector from a list of three nominees chosen by the cloister. These examples do not necessarily define a national pattern, but they do underscore the fact that the trend towards administrative secularization sometimes entailed more than the decline of ecclesiastical intervention.²⁵

²⁵Collección de decretos y ordenes de la primera legislatura constitucional del estado libre de San Luis Potosí, pp. 225, 228; Collección de decretos del congreso extraordinario del estado libre y soberano de México, que funcionó en la segunda época de la federación. Contiene también los expedidos por el gobierno provisional del ecsmo. sr. de. Francisco M. de Olaguibel, los de la junta legislativa, y por vía de apéndice el código fundamental de la república y varias leyes generales (Toluca: Tip. de I. Quijano, 1850), III, pp. 55-80; Raul Mejía Zúñiga, Raíces educativas de la reforma (Biofrafía de una generación liberal) (México: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1965), p. 73; Enrique González Flores, Chihuahua de la independencia a la revolución (México: Ediciones Botas, 1949), pp. 42, 43; Mora, El clero, la educación y libertad, p. 74; Bonavit, Historia del colegio de San Nicolás, pp. 194, 207; El sol, September 17, 1826; AGN, Vol. 85, ff. 307, 314, 315; Vol. 88, f. 114; Vol. 90, ff. 149, 150; Vol. 92, ff. 274, 275.
The trend itself stemmed from more complex causes than merely the ideological goals of one political faction. Clerical poverty frequently facilitated the transfer of control from a religious order or ecclesiastical cabildo to the government. Thus the governments of Zacatecas, Guanajuato and San Luis Potosí assumed responsibility for colegios that had ceased to exist in all but name. The colegio in Michoacán, San Nicolás Obispo, had suffered a similar fate as a result of the Hidalgo uprising, but in this case the ecclesiastical cabildo that operated the school staunchly resisted the state government's initial attempt to reopen the colegio as a civil institute. Anticlericalism played no apparent role in the dispute, but the government did assert that supervisory authority belonged to it as the beneficiary of the royal patronato. The cabildo and the government did not settle the issue on its legal merits, however, for in 1847 the former ceded its rights over the school on the practical grounds that the cabildo lacked the resources to support a colegio.28

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A second force behind secularization involved the narrow focus of the seminaries' curricula. Although these schools admitted lay students, some government officials felt that their religious mission precluded the introduction of new courses important to the economic and political development of the country. Civil institutes furnished the solution to this problem, and it is quite possible that supporters of the secular colegios hoped that they would also contribute to an expansion of educational opportunity. Throughout the period before the French intervention state governments enacted a number of laws designed to defray the educational expenses of disadvantaged students, but the seminaries also sometimes furnished scholarships for needy individuals. At least a few conciliar seminaries, however, retained the entrance requirement of a baptismal certificate, and this qualification inevitably excluded potential students from the lower classes. The secular colegios, so far as could be determined, did not refuse admission to students born out of wedlock, and in this way their founders brought higher education within the potential reach of a new segment of the population.27

27 The statement concerning the admissions policy of the seminaries is based on the example of the institution
Despite the decline of ecclesiastical control over the institutions of higher learning, the clerical role in education remained significant throughout the period under study. The vague character of available teacher lists precludes definitive conclusions, but adequate evidence exists to indicate that clergymen in substantial numbers served as instructors and administrators in secular colegios.

Equally important, the eight conciliar seminaries that

in Mexico City. Colección de decretos de los congresos constitucionales del estado libre y soberano de México, que funcionaron en la primera época de la federación; contiene también, por vía de apéndice, las disposiciones expedidas en la época del centralismo (Toluca: Imprenta de J. Quijano, 1850), pp. 51-54; Decretos del tercer congreso constitucional del estado libre de Guanajuato, expedidas desde 31 de Diciembre de 1830, hasta 28 de Diciembre de 1832 (n.d.), pp. 54-56; Colección de leyes y decretos del estado libre de Oaxaca [1823-1850] (Oaxaca: Imprenta del estado, 1879), 68-75; Memoria en que el gobierno del estado de Durango da cuenta al h. congreso de la marcha de la administración pública en el año de 1847; presentada el día 1 de Marzo de 1848 (Victoria de Durango; Imprenta del Gobierno, 1848), pp. 43-45; Tullia Valencia Funatsu, "Una polémica histórica en el siglo XIX, Lacunza-Cortina" (unpublished Master's thesis, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1963), pp. 148, 149; AGN, Ramo de Gobernación, leg. 243: Memoria presentada al honorable congreso por el gobierno de Nuevo León sobre el estado que guardan los negocios públicos, y leída por el secretario del despacho en la sesión ordinaria del día 27 de Febrero de 1851 (Monterrey: Imprenta del Gobierno, 1851), chart 5; leg. 124, packet of laws for 1847-1848, f. 27; Ramo de Instrucción Pública, Vol. 9, f. 272; Vol. 88, f. 339; Vol. 46, ff. 251, 252; Vol. 86, f. 129.
reported attendance statistics in 1844 boasted a combined student body larger than the twelve main secular colegios. The average colegio enrolled slightly more than 150 students, while the seminaries matriculated twice that total. Although it is not possible to determine the number of laymen who studied in the seminaries, several states (Sonora, Yucatán, Nuevo León, Durango, among others) offered potential students no local alternative. A handful of convents in various parts of the country, moreover, offered a limited education to a small number of students, mostly laymen. The Church, in short, continued to exert a powerful influence over higher education even after the State had assumed formal control of the country’s universities and major colegios.²⁸

²⁸Memoria en que el gobierno del estado de Durango da cuenta de la marcha de la administración pública en 1847, pp. 43-45; Memoria del secretario de estado y del despacho de justicia e instrucción pública, leída a las cámaras del congreso nacional de la república mexicana en Enero de 1844 (México: Impresa por Ignacio Cumplido, 1844), doc. section (not paginated); Memoria en que el gobierno del estado libre de México da cuenta al congreso constitucional, de todos los ramos que han sido a su cargo en el año económico corrido desde 16 de Octubre de 1830, hasta 15 de igual mes de 1831. Presentada el día 12 de Marzo de 1832. Se imprime de orden del mismo honorable congreso (Toluca: Imprenta del Gobierno, 1832), pp. 12, 13; Mejía Zúñiga, Raíces educativas de la reforma, p. 74; González Flores, Chihuahua de la independencia a la revolución, pp. 42, 43; AGN, Vol. 88, f. 187; Vol. 91, ff. 55, 56; Vol. 92, ff. 96, 249; Vol. 45, f. 253.
The Era of Educational Centralism

The consolidation of that control during the twenty years after 1840 involved two attempts to organize the country's public colegios and universities into a unified national system of higher education. Secularist goals motivated the authors of neither experiment, and in fact the influence of clerical educators remained stable. In both cases, however, centralization involved the further curtailment of academic autonomy, and this process opened new avenues for State intervention into the educational system. The planners differed from each other, nevertheless, with respect to the objectives of that intervention. Ideological considerations helped to shape the second plan, but they played little part in the origins of the first experiment, which began in 1843. Ratification of the Constitution of 1836 had confirmed the temporary dominance of political centralism, and in part the educational plan of 1843 merely reflected the current approach to public administration. On another level the new policy represented an effort to adjust to the University of Mexico's decline as a national educational institution. Chronic financial problems and uncoordinated degree programs had plagued higher education
since independence, and Santa Anna's advisers hoped that administrative consolidation might improve conditions.\textsuperscript{29}

Santa Anna inaugurated the first centralist experiment on August 18, 1843, when he issued the appropriate enabling decree. The law and its reglamentos established uniform sources of income for the universities and public colegios and prescribed their degree programs and curricula. The decree also provided for a general educational council, which was to enforce its provisions and designate texts for all courses. The government later decided that the measure also empowered the junta to appoint the instructors and chief administrators of public colegios. Permanent members of this powerful council were to include the rectors of the capital's university and five public colegios, the president of the Lancasterian Company and professors selected from each major field of study. In a significant departure from past practice, finally, the decree abolished the requirement that students in the capital take any courses at the university, whose professors were to write elementary text books.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{29}Dublán y Lozano, \textit{Legislación mexicana}, IV, pp. 514-523; AGN, Vol. 83, f. 233.

Santa Anna' dictatorial powers precluded immediate legal resistance to this law, but the measure nevertheless reflects an attempt to obviate criticism from groups which previous reforms had antagonized. Thus its authors took care not to threaten the educational leadership in the capital or elsewhere. They preserved existing colegios (as well as their governing councils) and vested enforcement of the law in the hands of the capital's educational establishment. At the same time they eschewed curricular specialization, which might have generated discontent through elimination of jobs. Equally important the law extended the central university's lease on life. Those in Guadalajara, Yucatán and Chiapas continued to offer courses, but the institution located in Mexico City remained as a monument to tradition. Minister of Justice Baranda admitted in 1844 that the law had stripped the university of its educational functions, but he maintained that the government resisted pressures to close it in order to preserve its great traditions, as well as the academic honors and distinctions open to individuals who desired incorporation
to the institution. Perhaps so, but the government probably also wanted to avert opposition from the school and its influential graduates.\textsuperscript{31}

The planners likewise sought to avoid difficulties with the Church. The level of government control over education incorporated into the 1843 decree equalled that written into the controversial Gómez Farías reforms, but the new law posed no threat to the clergy's diminished role in education. The difference lay in the educationally conservative orientation of the council, which included at least one cleric (Dr. Puchet of the university). Even though the law filtered political control of the colegios and universities through a council of educators, however, the success of the new system would confirm the State's position of dominance in the academic world. Should the liberals come to power, moreover, they might transform the law into a tool of anticlericalism. From the clergy's viewpoint, nevertheless, the immediate future

\textsuperscript{31}\textit{Memoria del secretario de estado y del despacho de justicia e instrucción pública, leída a las camaras del congreso nacional en Enero de 1844}, p. 41.
held a promise of continuity guaranteed by a friendly educational council.32

Departmental political and educational leaders comprised the one group that the planners proved unable to conciliate, and as a result the new system ultimately collapsed. The sources of friction varied with the department, but a pattern of fairly widespread discontent emerged within about two years of the decree's publication. In some cases departmental officials resented their loss of control over local educational institutions, and in others they complained about enforcement of the financial sections of the law. Ideology, however, did not appear to furnish the grounds for opposition. Even congressional critics of the law merely employed the stock federalists political arguments when they recommended its repeal in 1845. They ridiculed the idea that a commission in Mexico City could adequately administer colegios located throughout the country, but the congressmen did not allege that the council had employed its authority to further the interests of any political faction.33


33Informe del instituto literario al gobierno superior del departamento por lo relativo al año escolar concluida
By early 1845 the national government had also concluded that the centralized system could not survive in its present form. Lack of the necessary financial cooperation from the departments had undermined enforcement of the law, and thus Minister of Justice Mariano Riva Palacio recommended that congress restore administrative control of the colegios to the departments. But the national government, he urged, should retain the authority to coordinate the degree programs of all public colegios. The confusion engendered by another palace revolt and by the outbreak of war with the United States delayed action until October, 1846, when President Mariano Salas formally repealed the law. The October decree contained no mention of the federal government's authority over the degree programs of state colegios, but even so Salas did not completely dismantle the system created under the 1843 law. The educational council remained in existence, its name changed and its jurisdiction reduced to the colegios of the Federal District. The junta's chief function, according to official sources, involved the coordination of these institutions'
curricula. The first centralist experiment had failed, but it left behind as a residue the mechanism for permanent State control over higher education in the capital. The eclipse of the central university, as a dominant force in the academic world, seemed final.\(^{34}\)

Educational federalism survived less than eight years. Santa Anna regained the presidency for the last time in March, 1853, and during his final two years in power the general and his allies centralized complete administrative authority in Mexico City, in the process of which they paid special attention to higher education. The distinguishing characteristic of this new extreme brand of centralism derived from the ideological goals of its authors. The nascent conservative party provided the administration

\(^{34}\)Dublán y Lozano, Legislación mexicana, V, p. 186; Memoria del ministerio de justicia e instrucción pública, presentada a las camaras del congreso general por el secretario del ramo. Año de 1845 (Litog. de Cumplido, n.d.), pp. 35-40; Memoria de la primera secretaría de estado y del despacho de relaciones interiores y exteriores de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, leída al soberano congreso constituyente en los días 14, 15 y 16 de Diciembre de 1846, por el ministro del ramo, c. José María Lafarguía. Impresa por acuerdo del soberano congreso (México: Imprenta de Vicente García Torres, 1847), pp. 104, 105; Memoria del ministerio de relaciones interiores y exteriores, leída al congreso general en Enero de 1850 (México: Imprenta de Vicente García Torres, 1850), pp. 13, 14.
its principal organized support, and this group hoped that an executive dictatorship would facilitate the fundamental reforms it deemed necessary. The ultimate goal of the conservatives and their intellectual leader, Lucas Alamán, involved the restoration in modified form of those colonial institutions (a strong Church and a constitutional monarchy) which they believed could rescue Mexico from chronic social and political chaos. The importation of democratic ideas, in their view, had eroded respect for constituted authority and created a favorable environment for demagoguery, results that actually threatened individual liberties. Alamán thus perceived the same social disintegration that had worried Mora, but the two men placed their trust in sharply different solutions. The educational implications of the conservative position appeared to include a halt to the secularization of academic institutions, although not necessarily the elimination of State control over them. Academic autonomy potentially could frustrate conservative goals as effectively as it had those of the liberals. 

35 Lucas Alamán, Historia de México desde los primeros movimientos que prepararon su independencia en el año de 1808 hasta la época presente. Parte segunda, que comprende desde el plan proclamado por d. Agustín de Iturbide en Iguala, en 24 de Febrero de 1821, y sucesos de España
Unfortunately for the conservatives, the immediate success of their endeavor depended on the mercurial Santa Anna, a man who lacked any deep commitment to their goals. The president willingly promoted their interests, but at the same time he shaped the conservative program to maximize his personal power and prestige. Thus he coupled the abolition of all legislative bodies with an indefinite extension of his personal dictatorship (December, 1853). The president invited the Jesuits to return to Mexico and attempted to manufacture an aristocracy through a revival of Iturbide's discredited Order of Guadalupe, but the latter action in particular served to lay the foundation for a corps of personal supporters. In the same way Santa Anna's official adoption of the monarchical form of address, Most Serene Highness, tended merely to debase the conservative cause. Although these actions formed a pattern that

agonized liberal adversaries of the regime, it seems
doubtful that they measurably advanced conservative goals.\textsuperscript{38}

In the field of higher education, on the other hand, Santa Anna apparently made no attempt to corrupt the ob-
jectives of his allies. The government centralized more academic authority in Mexico City than at any time since
independence, but the exercise of that authority rested in the hands of an educational council rather than in those of the president himself. The process of centralization began in early 1854, with the issuance of circulars that established national control over public universities and colegios; it culminated on December 19 of that year, when Santa Anna promulgated the major decree that confirmed such control and prescribed the degree programs and curricula for all public institutions. These measures created a Council of Public Instruction comprised of the minister of justice, the rector of the central university, the inspector general of education, and a professor from each major field of study. The extensive powers of this council embraced financial control over public colegios, approval of their

\textsuperscript{38}Johnson, The Mexican Revolution of Ayutla, pp. 16, 18-20, 94; Dublán y Lozano, Legislación mexicana, VI, pp. 671, 672, 752-766, 816; Hale, Mexican Liberalism, p. 32.
degree programs, selection of all text books, and the appointment of teachers for preparatory courses. Upper-level instructors, however, would earn their positions through competitive exams. The law also restored the University of Mexico to its position of dominance in the academic world, and in fact the council theoretically merely represented that institution. The law incorporated the conciliar seminaries as well as the universities in Yucatán and Guadalajara to the institution in the capital, and stipulated that only the latter three schools could confer advanced degrees. Exams for even the baccalaureate degree would henceforth require the supervision of university officials. As a part of its restoration the University of Mexico would again offer courses on the advanced level, although colegios could include such courses in their curricula, too. The decree also provided that students would wear special uniforms and, in a remarkable departure from current practice, required that they present proof of baptism upon matriculation. Although the law did not apply directly to private schools, through an oblique maneuver the centralists did bring such institutions within their jurisdiction. The law limited to public colegios and universities the conferral of degrees, but it did provide that the preparatory
courses of private schools would count for credit if the latter abided by the curricular requirements applicable to public institutions, to which they would have to incorporate themselves. One of the most important of these requirements involved the inclusion of religious instruction in each of the six years of preparatory studies.\(^{37}\)

This rather complex law represented a sophisticated attempt on the part of the conservatives to serve both their ideological goals and the educational needs of the country. The curricular section, for example, evidences a desire to promote specialization in accordance with the particular needs of each department (state) and a determination to restore a religious orientation to higher education. From an organizational standpoint, however, the law seems to reflect an effort to preserve important features of the colonial educational system within the framework of public control. The revival of the baptismal certificate requirement, coupled with the provisions on the central university, betray the influence of the clergy, but at the same time

\(^{37}\)DUBLÁN Y LOZANO, Legislación mexicana, VII, pp. 344-369; AGN, Vol. 82-1/2, f. 303; Vol. 82-3/4, ff. 284, 287, 289, 290; Vol. 83, f. 46; Vol. 64, f. 372; Vol. 84, f. 201; Vol. 82-1/2, f. 258.
the law did not relax State control over higher education. The conservatives, in other words, had come to recognize as fully as Mora earlier that government power formed the best guarantee of an educational system responsive to their objectives. Thus the incorporation of the seminaries potentially enabled the conservatives to transfer sensitive courses from the more liberal public colegios to the safer atmosphere of these institutions. Appropriately enough, therefore, Teodosio Lares, who had protested the 1843 law while rector of the public colegio in Zacatecas, directed enforcement of the more comprehensive 1854 study plan in his capacity as minister of justice. \(^{38}\)

That enforcement did not in any crude manner, however, politicize higher education. The council and its capable inspector general, Urbano Fonseca, forced schools in Chiapas, Guanajuato, Michoacán and Yucatán to curtail some of their degree programs, but educational rather than political considerations normally shaped such decisions. Fonseca maintained his balance even during the War of the Reform (1858-1860), when the 1854 law enjoyed a brief resurrection in the areas under conservative control. In 1859 the governor

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\(^{38}\)Informe del instituto literario al gobierno superior del departamento (Zacatecas), p. 5.
of Guanajuato recommended the temporary closure of his
department's colegio, on the grounds that the faculty had
corrupted the students with liberal ideas. Fonseca per-
suaded the president to veto the suggestion and pointedly
implied that the governor and his advisers had exaggerated
the importance of a few student demonstrations. The en-
forcers of the law, nevertheless, did betray a conservative
bias. The inspector general himself sought to ensure that
texts used in the colegios contained no religiously un-
 orthodox material, and on one occasion he noted that the
authors of the 1854 law had restricted university curricula
to advanced courses in order to ensure that only mature
students were exposed to the relatively free learning en-
vironment of those institutions. Young students, he feared,
might engage in questionable activities (including free
discussions) that could corrupt their minds. On a quite
different level President Santa Anna used his dictatorial
powers to remove teachers whom he suspected of disloyalty
to his government. Whatever the professional restraints
of conservative educators, by the 1850's the academic world
had become an important battlefield in the ideological war.38

38AGN, Vol. 82-1/4, ff. 326, 327; Vol. 82-1/2, ff. 78,
80, 334-336, 344, 352; Vol. 82-3/4, ff. 284, 287, 289, 290;
Vol. 86, ff. 143-147; Vol. 88, ff. 23-25, 229, 232; Vol. 89,
ff. 232, 234, 237, 239; Vol. 90, ff. 16, 17; Vol. 92,
ff. 164, 187; Vol. 87, f. 108.
The national leadership of the liberals, however, initially made some effort to insulate higher education from partisan politics after the overthrow of Santa Anna in the summer of 1855. Although the provisional government that replaced him cancelled his educational law in September, a month later the minister of justice stated that the nullification applied only to areas outside the Federal District, an indication perhaps that the major objection to the law stemmed from its violation of federalist principles. More important evidence of moderation issued from the liberal-dominated congress convened in 1856 to write a new constitution. This body voted by a wide margin (69-15) to insert a provision in the new charter abolishing the licensing requirement for teachers, one of the government's principal tools for the control of education.40

Most of those who objected to the article argued that it would subject the profession to an invasion of incompetents, but at least one delegate expressed the fear that it would prevent the exclusion of the "fanatics" among clerical educators. The article's chief defender, Manuel

Fernando Soto, maintained in effect however that the liberals could not bar prospective teachers on political grounds and remain true to their principles of individual freedom, which included the right of parents to entrust the education of their children to whomever they desired. Besides, Soto continued, he did not fear open competition between liberal and "reactionary" ideas, because the people would quickly perceive the superiority of the former. Soto's oratory reflects the optimistic idealism of many of the liberals, but it also suggests a change in the structure of the teaching profession. A generation earlier Mora had favored abolition of the licensing requirement in an effort to destroy clerical domination, but his heirs probably adopted a similar position because they believed that recent educational trends had accomplished that objective. Even the brutal War of the Reform did not totally dispel this optimism. Thus in April, 1861, President Juárez included in his major educational decree for the Federal District a provision that restored the competitive exam as the mechanism for selection of all teachers in the capital's colegios. No federal law since independence had so completely
removed the government from the appointment of all instructors.\footnote{Francisco Zarco, Historia del congreso extraordinario constituyente de 1856 y 1857. Estricto de todas sus sesiones y documentos parlamentarios de la época (México: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1857), II, pp. 129-143; Dublán y Lozano, Legislación mexicana, IX, pp. 150-158; Leopoldo Zea, Del liberalismo a la revolución en la educación mexicana (México: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1956), pp. 21, 22.}

These signs of moderation did not, however, typify permanent liberal policy. Some liberals might argue for the free competition of ideas in the academic arena, but their colleagues in the capital and the states converted such eloquence into mockery through a series of attacks on conservative educational institutions. Thus in September, 1857, President Comonfort closed the University of Mexico, despite the fact that an investigatory commission appointed by him had recommended reform rather than destruction of the institution. The laconic language of the decree itself provided no explanation for the president's decision, but other official sources branded the university as a center of clerical propaganda and a disseminator of pernicious doctrines. Although the university twice obtained short reprieves when the conservatives controlled the capital,
Comonfort's action eliminated it as a force in the academic world. His successor, Benito Juárez, delivered the coup de grace to the capital's educational establishment through his 1861 decree, which consolidated the educational fund and thereby destroyed the individual identity of the capital's colegios, a feat first attempted by Mora in 1833.\textsuperscript{42}

Jalisco's liberals acted even more quickly than their coreligionaries in the capital, for Governor Santos Degollado replaced the University of Guadalajara with a civil institute in September, 1855. This institution also enjoyed a brief restoration during the War of the Reform, but in 1860 the liberals closed both it and the state's conciliar seminary permanently. The administrations of both schools, according to the executive decree, had opposed liberal reforms and the governments that enacted them, which opposition they had expressed through a rebellion of their students. Almost as an afterthought the author of the decree dismissed the schools as useless educationally because of

the poor textbooks and antiquated teaching methods they used. The liberals in Yucatán duplicated their cohorts' action in 1861. They abolished the conciliar seminary and converted the state's university into a civil institute, although two years later President Juárez restored control of the seminary to the ecclesiastical authorities. In Michoacán, finally, where no university existed, the liberals contented themselves with closure (1859) of the conciliar seminary. The appropriate decree again suggests the primacy of political factors, for the author accused the institution's directors of opposition to liberal reforms and of conspiracy against the government. The official spokesman also asserted that the political and social doctrines taught in the seminary conflicted with current thinking and in so doing contradicted the ideas and principles emphasized at San Nicolás, the public colegio. This lack of academic uniformity, according to the government, adversely affected the public welfare, and thus the decree provided for the transfer of the seminary's theological courses to San Nicolás, which official circles regarded as a center for the education of men with "liberal" ideas.43

43Larroyo, Historia comparada de la educación, p. 263; Memoria de la junta directiva de enseñanza pública, sobre
These actions stemmed in part from the anticlerical bitterness generated by the War of the Reform, but they also reflected the liberal determination to destroy the remnants of the old educational "establishment" represented by the universities. Although these institutions had long since lost the autonomy that enabled them to slow the pace of reform, they continued to symbolize an approach to education that liberals considered antiquated. The universities' alleged identification with conservative ideas and principles, moreover, prevented the educational uniformity desired by many liberals who wanted to use the country's institutions of higher learning to promote national unity on the basis of their political ideology. The idealistic among Mora's heirs could still accept individual conservative professors, but the political leadership proved unwilling to tolerate influential public educational institutions dominated by the "reactionaries."

el estado que guarda este ramo en fin del año de 1861
(Guadalajara: Tip. del Gobierno, 1862), p. 5; Colección de los decretos, circulares y ordenes de los poderes legislativo y ejecutivo del estado de Jalisco, Vol. I: Comprende la legislación del estado desde Octubre de 1860 en que triunfó la revolución de reforma, hasta 31 de Diciembre de 1862 (Guadalajara: Tip. de Isaac Banda, 1872), pp. 8-8; Bonavit, Historia del colegio de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, pp. 245-251, 254; Canton Rosado, La instrucción pública en Yucatán, pp. 20, 21; AGN, Vol. 90, f. 19.
The issue of administrative control, as the ideological struggles of the 1850's demonstrated, inevitably involved in some measure the more basic question of curricular reform. In this case, however, the lines of conflict remained blurred until the fifties, and even then the struggle focused narrowly on the issue of religious instruction.
CHAPTER VI

HIGHER EDUCATION: CURRICULUM

Theology, jurisprudence, religious philosophy and medicine dominated the curriculum of the colonial university. Medieval scholasticism, a rigid methodology that emphasized rote memorization and deductive logic, complemented this narrow focus. Although these facts underscore the decisive educational influence of the clergy, they also reflect an essentially static environment in which the concept of "progress" had little meaning. Neither the interests of crown and Church, nor the relative isolation and political stability of colonial Mexico, encouraged the kind of research and experimentation associated with modern universities. The educational process, under these conditions, tended to involve primarily the ingestion of ancient truths, not the development of inquiring minds.¹

The Bourbons initiated some change in this intellectual climate, however, through efforts to revitalize the economically moribund empire. Their receptivity to restricted

¹José Luis Becerra López, La organización de los estudios en la Nueva España (México: Editorial Cultura, 1963), pp. 149, 174-177, 189; Julio Jiménez Rueda, Historia jurídica de la universidad de México (México: Imprenta Universitaria, 1955), pp. 119, 120.
experimentation in economic policy created an opening through which a part of the current European zeal for cultivation of the arts and sciences penetrated the court at Madrid. But the academic community failed to participate in this intellectual awakening, at least partially because the training of most educational leaders limited their responsiveness to novel ideas and ways of thinking. Although empiricism and rationalist philosophy did achieve some acceptance in Mexico's educational community, especially among Jesuit professors, the university itself retarded rather than promoted academic reform. The crown thus opened new colegios, the Botanical Gardens (1788) and the Royal Seminary of Mining (1792), as part of its campaign to advance the empirical study of the physical and natural sciences.²

The Bourbons proved less eager to encourage innovations in the study of political ideas and institutions, because in this case change could threaten their despotism. During the Napoleonic Wars, however, the Spanish liberals

² Becerra López, La organización de los estudios, pp. 313-324, 327, 331, 335; Pablo Martínez del Río, "La real y pontífica universidad de México; bosquejo histórico," Ensayo sobre la universidad de México, ed. Pablo Martínez del Río, et al. (México: Imprenta Universitaria, 1951), pp. 9, 10, 24, 26, 28, 29, 31; Samuel Ramos, Historia de la filosofía en México (México: Imprenta Universitaria, 1943), pp. 41, 47, 48, 60-62, 64, 77, 78, 80, 81, 89, 90, 98, 99.
briefly held power, and they did introduce one significant curricular reform. They included a provision in Spain's first constitution which required the study of that document in all schools of the empire, and in 1821 the University of Mexico complied with the order through establishment of a chair of constitutional law. Neither this reform nor the ones instituted by the Bourbons radically altered the structure of traditional education, but they did chart the direction of curricular evolution during the post-independence period.³

The Focus of Curricular Reform

The years following independence witnessed the emergence of a small unorganized movement for revision of the secondary curriculum, a minor crusade that drew its strength from among some of the more influential leaders of Mexican society, including José María Mora and Lucas Alamán. Although Mora later remarked that the reformers lacked clear

Objectives, their sometimes vague criticisms and proposals indicate an impatience with the abstract, theoretical character of most higher education. Thus they variously demanded a reduced reliance on Latin; elimination of some theology and philosophy courses; greater emphasis on the natural sciences, commerce and agriculture; and the introduction of courses in politics and history. Several of the critics also sharply attacked scholasticism, a methodology which Mora believed produced sterile casuists instead of individuals capable of creative contributions to the economic and political welfare of the country.4

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4Memoria de la secretaría de justicia e instrucción pública del estado de México, leída ante su honorable legislatura en la sesión del 27 de Marzo de 1852 (Tip. de Quijano, n.d.), pp. 10-11; Memoria del secretario de estado y del despacho de justicia e instrucción pública, leída a las camaras del congreso nacional de la república mexicana en Enero de 1844 (México: Impresa por Ignacio Cumplido, 1844), pp. 27, 28, 30-32; Memoria en que el gobierno del estado libre de México, da cuenta al congreso constitucional, de todos los ramos que han sido a su cargo en el año económico, corrido desde 16 de Octubre de 1829, hasta 15 de igual mes de 1830. Presentada el día 2 de Marzo de 1831. Se imprime de orden del mismo honorable congreso (Toluca: Imprenta del Gobierno, 1831), p. 9; Memoria en que el gobierno del estado de Durango da cuenta al h. congreso de la marcha de la administración pública en el año de 1847; presentada el día 10 de Marzo de 1848 (Victoria de Durango: Imprenta del Gobierno, 1848), pp. 43-45; Manuel Dublán y José María Lozano (eds.), Legislación mexicana o colección completa de las disposiciones legislativas expedidas desde la independencia de la república (Edición
Basically the reformers envisioned a curriculum that would both terminate the former colony's intellectual isolation from contemporary Europe and promote the country's economic growth. These goals implied the need for at least some secularization of higher education, because the narrow, authoritarian character of the colonial system derived largely from its religious orientation. Even Lucas Alamán championed methodological (empiricism) and curricular (courses in agriculture and commerce) innovations that tended to weaken the ecclesiastical bias of traditional education. Mora defined the rationale behind secularization, however, when he argued that classroom instruction prepared students for a cloistered existence rather than for the lives most of them would actually lead after

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graduation. The reformers believed, to put it another way, that an education designed to train governmental and religious leaders for the relatively static environment of the colonial era (or the Church) could not prepare men to handle the political and economic challenges posed by independence.\(^5\)

Despite this agreement, the issue of secularization exposes the divergence of goals that underlay the surface unity of the reform movement. Mora and the liberals advocated curricular reform as part of their comprehensive plan to transform the attitudes of the next generation of Mexican leaders. The aristocratic Hispanic culture which Mexico had inherited from Spain required modification (but not abandonment), in Mora's view, because it fostered a degree of scorn towards utilitarianism and its tendency to

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\(^5\)Mora, El clero, la educación y la libertad, pp. 81, 82; Moises González Navarro, El pensamiento político de Lucas Alamán (México: El Colegio de México, 1952), pp. 30, 32; Lucas Alamán, Historia de México desde los primeros movimientos que prepararon su independencia en el año de 1808 hasta la época presente. Parte segunda, que comprende desde el plan proclamado por d. Agustín de Iturbide en Iguala, en 24 de Febrero de 1821, y sucesos de España que dieron motivo a su formación, hasta la muerte de este jefe y el establecimiento de la república federal mejicana en 1824. Continuada hasta la época presente para terminar la historia de las tres garantías de aquel plan, y dar idea del estado actual de la república (Méjico: Imprenta de J. M. Lara, 1852), V, pp. 910-913.
measure progress in terms of material advancement. Many of the liberals argued that this bourgeois philosophy, from which England and the United States appeared to reap such benefits, provided the key to their country's future prosperity and political stability. That conviction in turn inspired Mora's impatience with scholasticism and ecclesiastical education, for the colonial system perpetuated the attitudes he considered anachronistic. For Mora, in other words, secularization of the teaching profession and reform of the curriculum represented opposite sides of the same coin.®

The same did not hold true in the case of Lucas Alamán. He ranked as the period's chief advocate of balanced economic development, and his curricular recommendations centered on the need for more courses in agriculture, commerce and similar fields. In contrast to Mora, however, Alamán's proposals did not form part of a coherent program for social reform. The future conservative leader may not, in fact, have ever thought systematically about the possible social and political consequences of the economic changes

he championed. In the period of his active involvement with the economy he borrowed freely from the theories of such liberals as Adam Smith, and for awhile he even subscribed to some utilitarian ideals. After the American war, when his instinctive identification with Hispanic culture and institutions hardened into a conservative ideology, Alamán made few adjustments in his economic thinking. He never ceased his advocacy of curricular reform, just as he consistently resisted the trend towards secularization of the teaching profession. Alamán's position typified that of most of his philosophical allies, because changes in the curriculum never achieved the status of a major issue, although the reformers could not completely avoid the ideological controversies of the 1850's.7

The Course of Reform

The standard curriculum which the reformers sought to modify included, on the preparatory level, Latin, ethics, rhetoric, logic, metaphysics, math and theoretical physics.

Before the addition of constitutional law at the end of the colonial period, the study of jurisprudence rarely involved more than Roman law and general courses in canon and civil law. Reformers in the national capital began their efforts to expand these meager offerings shortly after independence, although initially they achieved only minor successes.

Each of the three official commissions which drew up study plans in the twenties proposed noteworthy additions to the secondary curriculum. All of the plans listed courses in political economy, public constitutional law and history; at least one of them incorporated literature, statistics, Mexican antiquities, agriculture and experimental physics. The financial impracticality of some of the plans contributed to their defeat in congress, but even so the capital's colegios did add a few new courses to their curricula before the major reforms of the 1830's. Thus San Juan de Letrán established a chair in French, and San Ildefonso opened courses in political economy and constitutional law (which was already taught at the university).®

®Memoria presentada a las dos cámaras del congreso general de la federación, por el secretario de estado y del despacho de relaciones exteriores e interiores al abrirse las sesiones del año de 1825. Sobre el estado de los negocios de su ramo (México: Imprenta del Supremo
The financial issue directly influenced Alamán's 1830 proposals, which introduced the concept of academic specialization on an unprecedented scale. The seminary and the colegio of mining had always specialized in a few related fields, but Alamán recommended the extension of this approach to all the capital's colegios, in an effort to expand the curricula without inordinately increasing costs. Under his plan the seminary would continue to devote itself to theological studies; San Ildefonso would specialize in law, the political and economic sciences, and classical literature; San Juan de Letrán would concentrate on medicine; and the colegio of mining would restrict itself to the physical and mathematical sciences. Alamán did not include a list of courses in his brief presentation, but at the very least the plan entailed a sharp curtailment of theological studies and an expansion of courses in the "political and economic sciences." Mora liked the proposals for these reasons, and thus when congress failed to enact them he

Gobierno de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, n.d.), pp. 31, 32; Mora, El clero, la educación y la libertad, pp. 72, 73; El sol, November 30, 1826; AGN, Ramo de Gobernación, leg. 18, exped. 2, ff. 21-25, 128, 129, 136, 157; exped. 10, ff. 28-30, 34-39; exped. 12, f. 4; unnumbered exped. (on financial conditions of colegios, 1829), ff. 5, 9, 14, 16; another unnumbered expediente (1833 data on San Ildefonso and San Gregorio), ff. 3-5, 12.
and his liberal allies incorporated Alamán's basic idea into their 1833 reforms.9

The Gómez Farías administration refined Alamán's plan through the addition of a special preparatory school and the expansion of the number of advanced schools to five. The fields of study divided among the latter consisted of the political sciences and humanities; the physical sciences and mathematics; medicine; jurisprudence; and theology. The October laws deleted few of the traditional courses but balanced them with subjects that satisfied the reformers: modern foreign languages (German, French, English), political and statistical economy of Mexico, literature, ancient and modern history, geography, political constitutional law, commerce and agriculture.10

9Memoria de la secretaría de estado y del despacho de relaciones interiores y exteriores, leída por el secretario del ramo en la cámara de diputados el día 12 de Febrero de 1830, y en la de senadores el día 13 del mismo (México: Imprenta del Aguila, 1830), pp. 40-42; Mora, Obras sueltas, pp. 114, 115.

The "new" education designed by the liberal reformers represented a virtually inevitable blend of innovation and tradition. The language courses reflected the effort to end Mexico's intellectual isolation, and the value of several of the other courses derived from their connection with economic development. At the same time, however, the laws established no new degree programs. Professors in the medical school, Mora claimed, emphasized practice and experimentation over theory, and those in the school of theology replaced scholasticism with an historical/critical approach. He admitted, however, that in most cases teaching methods failed to improve much. Students in the history course, for example, read Bossuet's outdated account of the rise of Christianity, a book that violated the very empirical methods championed by the reformers.11

The incomplete character of the changes, however, should not obscure the fact that Gómez Farías and his allies temporarily created the foundation for a "modern" approach to education in the capital. The distinguishing feature of Medieval education derived from the reliance on religious

11Mora, El clero, la educación y la libertad, pp. 96, 97; AGN, Ramo de Instrucción Pública, Vol. 12, f. 196. (Unless otherwise indicated all subsequent citations from this source are from the Ramo de Instrucción Pública.)
doctrine as the ultimate judge of all forms of knowledge. Mora and the liberals did not remove religious instruction from the colegios, but they did attempt to subject even theological truth to empirical tests. In so doing they challenged the colonial concept of education, despite the fact that many professors did not practice the new methods.

The curricular reforms did not survive long, however, for the same decree that closed the new institutes also appointed a commission to draw up a study plan for the reestablished colegios. Santa Anna did not directly attack the curricular reforms in his July, 1834 decree, except to imply that the new system had cost too much money. Financial considerations thus guided his commission, but the interests of the professors displaced by the reforms also probably influenced the rectors of the colegios who sat on it. The new study plan omitted several of the courses favored by reformers, and the commission blamed the cutback on a shortage of funds. Limited resources did not, however, encourage the commissioners to eschew duplication. Thus the curricula of San Juan de Latrán, San Ildefonso and San Gregorio all included Latin and Castilian grammar, rhetoric, philosophy (logic, principles of mathematics, physics, metaphysics and ethics), canon and civil law. In addition
French appeared in the curricula of San Juan de Leetrán and San Gregorio, and the latter school and San Ildefonso also offered courses in theology. Although the university retained its course in constitutional law, the fact remains that this study plan abandoned the reformist trend, a reversal that protected the interests of the professors displaced by the 1833 laws. Reformers in the capital had to await the national educational law of 1843 for the next major modification of the traditional curriculum.\textsuperscript{12}

A similar pattern of minor reforms prevailed in the public colegios and universities outside the federal capital. The laws of only three states, for example, provided for the study of courses in fields outside the traditional degree programs of law, theology and medicine. The legal curricula of the colegios in Oaxaca, Guanajuato and Zacatecas included mineralogy, but only the schools in the latter two states actually offered the course. The law establishing the institute of Oaxaca also listed courses in agriculture and commerce, but the school had ceased to offer them by 1843, if indeed it had ever done so.\textsuperscript{13}

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Even within the established academic fields most schools did not depart significantly from the standard colonial curriculum. Although at least three (in Guanajuato, México and Oaxaca) initially offered courses in political economy, only the colegio of Guanajuato continued to list the course by 1843. Similarly the latter school and the colegio in Puebla incorporated history into their curricula, and several institutions also provided for the study of modern foreign languages, especially French. On the advanced level the colegios in Guanajuato and Oaxaca listed courses in constitutional law. Research uncovered only one other notable deviation from the traditional curriculum. The institute in Oaxaca constituted perhaps the only school offering advanced studies that did not include courses in theology, although the law establishing the colegio did provide for one such course. The minor character of most of the changes mentioned in this paragraph testifies eloquently to the stability of the colonial curriculum during the first two decades after independence. In some cases ambitious legislators attempted important reforms, only to

49-53 (appendix); Agustín Lanuza, Historia del colegio del estado de Guanajuato (México: M. León-Sánchez, 1924), pp. 84, 85; AGN, Vol. 82 3/4, f. 45; Vol. 87, f. 198; Vol. 89, f. 14.
have financial problems force deletion of most of the new courses. This factor, coupled with the inertia created by the interests of professors trained in the older methods and subjects, blunted the force of the reform movement.\textsuperscript{14}

Mora maintained that the most dramatic changes in curricular structure occurred in the private schools that began to appear in the years following independence, and available evidence supports his argument. Several of the major private institutions did not open until after the American war, by which time public colegios had also introduced notable reforms, but even the early private schools established a pattern of independence from the traditional curriculum. These schools generally included some standard courses such as Latin in their curricula, and a few even offered theological studies. In most cases, however, they

\textsuperscript{14}Colección de leyes de Oaxaca, pp. 49-53 (appendix); Memoria en que el gobierno del estado libre de México, da cuenta al primer congreso constitucional, de todos los ramos que han sido a su cargo en el año económico corrido desde 26 de Octubre de 1826, hasta 15 de igual mes de 1827. Presentada el día 13 de Marzo de 1828. Se imprime de orden del mismo honorable congreso (n.d.), p. 28; Memoria que el secretario del ejecutivo del estado libre de México encargado de las secciones de gobierno y guerra leyó al h. congreso en los días 26, 27 y 28 del mes de Abril de 1835 (n.d.), estado 7 (doc. section); Lanuza, Historia del colegio de Guanajuato, pp. 84, 85; AGN, Vol. 82-3/4, f. 143; Vol. 85, f. 330; Vol. 87, f. 198; Vol. 89, f. 14.
emphasized the social sciences (history, political economy), modern foreign languages, the physical and mathematical sciences, literature and geography. Some of them also provided more "practical" instruction in commerce, agriculture, bookkeeping, surveying and navigation. Although Mora correctly noted that these schools could promote reform most easily because they did not have to overcome the inertia created by academic tradition (rutina), other factors also intervened. The government never exercised more than nominal control over the curricula of private schools, and consequently they enjoyed considerable freedom to innovate. At the same time, however, the private colegios rarely served as more than preparatory schools for public institutions.

Both the federal educational law of 1833 and the national decree of 1854 forbade private colegios to award any diplomas, and at other times the state legislatures and universities regulated the conferral of academic degrees. Under these conditions private schools lacked the official leverage which might have enabled them to influence the educational system as a whole. Meaningful reform would thus have to originate within the public educational establishment.\(^{15}\)

\(^{15}\)Memoria leída en las camaras en 1851, por el secretario de relaciones interiores y esteriores (México: Imprenta
The centralist decrees of 1843 and 1854 initiated the first permanent movement in this direction. The policy behind the former measure involved an effort to standardize requirements for the four major degree programs, partially in order to end an anomalous situation in which the education provided by provincial colegios frequently failed to prepare students for any career. This process entailed an expansion of the curriculum to include a number of the courses supported by reformers: modern foreign languages (French and English), political economy, geography, history, literature, constitutional law, criminal law, and principles of legislation. Although the law itself established no new degree programs, moreover, coincidental with its promulgation the national government opened a school of agriculture and another of industrial arts in Mexico City. The law did not, however, alter the structure of higher education outside the national capital. Substantially

de Vicente G. Torres, 1851), estado 5 (doc. section); Dublán y Lozano, Legislación mexicana, II, pp. 564-566; VII, pp. 344-369; Mora, El clero, la educación y la libertad, pp. 76, 77; José Jerónimo Reyes Rosales, Historia de la educación en Veracruz (Xalapa, 1959), p. 57; El sol, October 11, 1829; El constitucional, April 1, 1852; AGN, Vol. 9, ff. 35, 42-52, 56, 57, 112; Vol. 87, ff. 9, 26, 34, 37; Archivo del ex-Ayuntamiento de la Ciudad de México, Vol. 2479, exped. 407; Vol. 2480, exped. 479.
complete reports for 1844 indicate that only the colegios in Guanajuato and Oaxaca made successful efforts to reform their curricula in accordance with the law's requirements. The rector of the University of Chiapas probably echoed a common complaint of provincial educators when he maintained that his institution simply lacked the money to hire enough teachers to offer the new courses.  

The authors of the 1854 educational law could not solve this intractable problem, but they did rectify some of the avoidable errors of the earlier planners. Thus they created the office of inspector general, to provide the educational council with an effective instrument of enforcement, and they abandoned the procrustean effort to force all provincial colegios and universities to adopt the same curricula and degree programs. The 1854 decree formally established only one new field of study, literature, but it did stipulate that the careers emphasized in the colegio of a given state would depend on the needs of that particular state. Another article provided that the government

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1 Dublán y Lozano, Legislación mexicana, IV, pp. 514-523; Memoria del secretario de justicia e instrucción pública, leída a las cámaras del congreso nacional en Enero de 1844, doc. section (not paginated); Jiménez Rueda, Historia de la universidad de México, pp. 155, 156; AGN, Vol. 87, ff. 381, 389.
would issue separate decrees to regulate special studies (those not requiring a degree), courses in which would be established as the needs of the country required. Within the standard degree programs the new planners also made a few changes. The preparatory curriculum retained most of the new courses, and the planners added a three-year course in history. At the same time they attempted to restore religion to its traditional position of dominance by requiring that students study it each of the six years of preparatory school. On the advanced level they increased the growing emphasis on modern jurisprudence through the following courses: administrative law, history of treaties, international law (law of nations), commercial law, political economy, comparative legislation and philosophy of law.¹⁷

This law's most visible impact, especially outside the capital, involved curricular specialization and diversification more than expansion per se. Even in Mexico City the government founded a school of commerce and added veterinary medicine to the program of the agricultural institute. Although the colegios of San Ildefonso and

¹⁷Dublán y Lozano, Legislación mexicana, VII, pp. 344-369.
San Juan de Letrán continued to offer a complete list of preparatory and law courses, moreover, both ceased to include theological studies in their program. Outside the capital Inspector General Urbano Fonseca and the new council attempted with some success to force colegios to tailor their curricula in accordance with both the needs and available resources of their departments. In Michoacán, for example, the national government required San Nicolás to drop its law courses in favor of new degree programs better designed to meet special local needs. Minister Lares noted that the seminary in Morelia (which the 1854 decree incorporated to the university) already offered law courses, and that San Nicolás lacked the money to pay its law professors. In Guanajuato, likewise, Fonseca recommended the deletion of the law and theology courses at the main colegio, in order to save money and to avoid duplication of the efforts of other colegios in the department. He advised the retention of courses in mining technology, on the other hand, because they served Guanajuato’s economic interests. Fonseca also persuaded the government of Veracruz to abandon an unrealistic curriculum for one that concentrated on the fields of commerce, navigation and surveying. Even in Zacatecas, whose colegio Minister of
Justice Lares had served as rector, the government required the financially troubled school to close its law courses, which the council assigned to another institution.18

Provincial educators sometimes resisted this kind of reform, because the loss of advanced courses affected the status of their schools. Even without prodding from the national government, however, several institutions attempted to modify their curricula in the 1850's to emphasize new fields of study, as well as to add courses in the traditional programs. These reforms, to be sure, often remained only paper ones, but they nevertheless demonstrate that support for "modernization" of the curriculum extended throughout much of the country. In Yucatán the University of Mérida added studies in surveying and navigation to its program (1851), and at the same time broadened its law curriculum to include political economy and courses in constitutional and statutory law. Michoacán's San Nicolás also established an ambitious program following the overthrow of Santa Anna, adding degree plans in civil and

agricultural engineering to its curriculum. Its preparatory studies included French, experimental physics, history and geography, while the law program featured political economy and public law. Neither Mérida nor San Nicolás immediately opened classes in most of these new subjects, and Mexico's civil institute likewise failed to implement reforms that authorized courses in agriculture, several crafts (carpentry, metalworking) and constitutional law. The school did, however, offer studies in French, English and geography. Guanajuato's colegio, moreover, found the money to broaden its program in mining technology and to incorporate courses in political economy, Mexican constitutional law and administrative law to its curriculum in 1860.  

The 1854 planners had not intended to contribute to the secularization of public higher education, but their efforts on behalf of economically oriented degree programs at the expense of law and theology confirmed a trend that originated with the 1833 reforms. A handful of liberal laws enacted in the wake of the Three Years War carried

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19Lanuza, Historia del colegio de Guanajuato, p. 233; AGN, Vol. 82-1/2, f. 147; Vol. 88, ff. 104, 105, 251, 255; Vol 89, f. 16.
this trend to its logical conclusion. The 1861 decree issued by Juárez refined the now popular concept of specialization through the conversion of San Juan de Letrán into the capital's preparatory school. The other public institutions, according to the measure, would concentrate on one of the following: law, medicine, mining, industrial arts, fine arts, agriculture and commerce. Since Juárez had closed the university, this division of fields left theological studies to the nonpublic conciliar seminary. Laws enacted in Jalisco and Oaxaca also omitted theological studies from the state colegio's curriculum, although the Oaxacan institution had never offered courses in that field. The law curricula listed in each measure likewise reflected the current trend towards the study of modern, secular law. The traditional courses in Roman and canon law remained, but most of the courses involved the study of statutory and international law. The most notable changes, however, occurred on the preparatory level. Courses in history, political economy, statistics, geography and foreign languages coexisted with Latin, rhetoric and logic; but in both the Federal District and Oaxaca religion disappeared from the curriculum. Although Jalisco retained catechismal studies, the federal and Oaxacan laws accurately forecast the future trend. In 1874 President Sebastián Lerdo de
Tejada formally excluded religious instruction from public schools and colegios throughout the country.\textsuperscript{20}

Despite the fact that curricular reform since independence had not followed any rigidly consistent line, the general trend involved incorporation of Mexico into the modern European intellectual community. Mexicans had abandoned their political heritage through establishment of a republic, and in a sense their intellectual leaders used educational reform to free themselves of a tradition that trapped them in the Middle Ages. This intellectual awakening, however, entailed more than an outreach to Europe. It also focused a new interest on Mexico itself, through the study of domestic institutions and the national past.

\textbf{The Study of Mexican Institutions and History}

During the colonial period the academic community in Mexico tended to neglect the study of indigenous culture

\textsuperscript{20}Dublén y Lozano, \textit{Legislación mexicana}, IX, pp. 150-158; XII, p. 683; \textit{Ley orgánica de instrucción pública decretada por el h. congreso del estado} (Oaxaca: Imprenta de Ignacio Rincón, 1861), pp. 7, 9, 10; \textit{Colección de los decretos, circulares y ordenes de los poderes legislativo y ejecutivo del estado de Jalisco}, Vol. I: \textit{Comprende la legislación del estado desde Octubre de 1860 en que triunfó en Jalisco la revolución de reforma, hasta 31 de Diciembre de 1862} (Guadalajara: Tip. de Isaac Banda, 1872), pp. 231-273.
and institutions, with the exception of some of the principal Indian languages. Mora noted that the university failed to include even the study of Spanish grammar in the basic curriculum, a reflection perhaps of the Medieval dependence on Latin as the universal academic language. This situation began to change after independence, and by the 1840's Castilian grammar and Mexican law had become standard parts of the secondary curriculum. Other courses also occasionally focused on Mexico or at least contained a section on domestic conditions. Thus the federal law of 1833 listed a course in the political and statistical economy of Mexico, and an 1855 Michoacán law provided for a similar course in that state's colegio. Geography courses sometimes used Juan Almonte's two-volume work, which contained a major section on the political geography of Mexico. The legislature of Oaxaca adopted a different approach in 1835, when it created a literary order composed of the state colegio's professors. The government, according to the law, would award the professors prizes for works in science, history, poetry and elocution, some of which compositions would deal with the lives of deceased national figures. The order did not survive long, if indeed it ever materialized, but in 1856 Guanajuato borrowed the idea and founded an academy
of literature in the state colegio, to stimulate local writers.  

The field of history, however, eventually attracted most of the Mexican-oriented academic interest. Even before this happened both the state and federal governments had begun to encourage investigations into the national past. Thus in 1824 Minister of Relations Lucas Alamán secured creation of a national archives, and during this same period he also persuaded congress to establish a national museum for the collection of (among other things) Mexican antiquities. Then in 1835 the president founded the National Academy of History, to promote, according to the official announcement, the objective study of the colonial era. He appointed a number of prominent citizens as members of the academy, but as late as 1854 political vicissitudes continued

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21 Colección de decretos de la legislatura del estado de Oaxaca de los años de 1828, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, y 35 (n.d.), law of August 14, 1835 (volume not paginated all the way through); Memoria del secretario de justicia e instrucción pública, leída a las camaras del congreso nacional en Enero de 1844, doc. section (unpaginated), curriculum of San Gregorio; Dublán y Lozano, Legislación mexicana, II, pp. 571-574; Lanuza, Historia del colegio de Guanajuato, p. 193; Juan Nepomuceno Almonte, Catecismo de geografía universal para el uso de los establecimientos de instrucción pública de Mexico (México: Ignacio Cumplido, 1837), pp. 85-116; AGN, Vol. 87, f. 198; Vol. 86, f. 199; Ramo de Gobernación, leg. 18, exped. 2, f. 22.
to hinder its effective organization. Better results followed the establishment, in 1833, of the National Institute of Geography and Statistics, an organization that eventually published a periodical and promoted the study of a variety of topics related to Mexico. On the provincial level the State of Mexico approved (1841) the statutes of a private society named the Mexican Atheneum, which served as a kind of free university for its members and their invited guests. The directors assigned lecture topics in various academic fields to eminent scholars, and three of the designated "courses" dealt with national history. Throughout the first twenty years after independence, finally, the federal and a few state governments subsidized the research and publication of some of the small number of historical works produced by indigenous writers.22

22 Colección de leyes, decretos, y ordenes del augusto congreso del estado libre de Yucatán, Vol. II: Que comprende las de las seis primeras legislaturas constitucionales desde 20 de Agosto de 1825 hasta 5 de Marzo de 1832. Redactada por una comisión nombrada por la sexta legislatura (Mérida, 1832), p. 85; Colección de las leyes y decretos expedidos por el segundo, tercero y cuarto congresos constitucionales del estado libre y soberano de Durango. Desde 1\textsuperscript{er} de Septiembre de 1827, hasta 11 de Febrero de 1833. Comprende también las leyes y decretos que se han declarado subsistentes de las legislaturas que existieron en los años de 30 y 31 (Victoria de Durango: Imprenta del Estado, 1833), p. 8; Dublán y Lozano, Legislación mexicana, III, pp. 13, 36, 37; VII, pp. 21, 22; González y Navarro, El
The government fostered academic involvement in the study of national history through the law of August, 1843. That measure required all advanced students to enroll in their institution's Academy of Humanities, where they would study world and Mexican history, as well as ancient and modern literature. Although Minister of Justice Manuel Baranda claimed, somewhat extravagantly, that the country's colegios had ignored history and related subjects, the law did incorporate Mexican history into the standard curriculum for the first time. This section of the centralist statute, however, did not enjoy much better success than the rest of the law. By 1845 only the colegios of the capital, the institutes of Oaxaca and Zacatecas and two conciliar seminaries had definitely established the academy. Over the next nine years at least two other institutes (in México and Aguascalientes) also created the academy or temporarily added the course in Mexican history to the curriculum.  

pensamiento político de Lucas Alamán, p. 34; Diario del gobierno de la república mexicana, January 6, 1841; June 17, 1841; Diario oficial del gobierno de la república mejicana, September 30, 1853; AGN, Vol. 31, ff. 74, 75, 88; Vol. 46, ff. 184-189.

23Memoria del ministerio de justicia e instrucción pública, presentada a las camaras del congreso general por el secretario del ramo. Año de 1845 (Litog. de Cumplido,
Even those schools that established the academy did not achieve uniformly satisfactory results. Minister of Justice José María Lafragua complained in 1846 that instructors in the capital's colegios had, with the exception of José María Lacunza, limited themselves to a short course in history, and that moreover they had stressed facts at the expense of philosophy. These shortcomings, he continued, doubtless helped to explain poor class attendance. Lafragua argued that the authors of the 1843 decree had designed the academy to produce more eloquent and effective lawyers, a goal that he believed required more emphasis on the study of literature. In Zacatecas Institute Director Teodosio Lares maintained that the two years assigned to the academy imposed severe limits on the amount of material that the instructor could cover. He thought that students should

n.d.), doc. section, statistical charts on national colegios and conciliar seminaries; Memoria del secretario de justicia e instrucción pública, leída a las camaras del congreso nacional en Enero de 1844, p. 32; Dublán y Lozano, Legislación mexicana, IV, pp. 514-523; El constitucional, August 16, 1852; AGN, Vol. 87, f. 278; Vol. 92, f. 26; Colección de decretos del congreso extraordinario del estado libre y soberano de México, que funcionó en la segunda época de la federación. Contiene también los expedidos por el gobierno provisional del ecsmo. sr. d. Francisco M. de Olaguibel, los de la junta legislativa, y por via de apéndice el código fundamental de la república y varias leyes generales (Toluca: Tip. de J. Quijano, 1850).
attend the academy for three years, and he advocated the addition of history, elocution and poetry (courses "full of noble inspiration") to the preparatory curriculum.\(^24\)

Lares enjoyed an opportunity to implement his own recommendations when he entered office as Santa Anna's minister of justice. In the 1854 law he thus expanded the study of Mexican history and introduced reforms in methodology. That measure listed a three-year course in history as a part of the preparatory curriculum, and the course included the study of the national past. On the advanced level Lares and his colleagues inserted Mexican history into the degree program for a doctorate in philosophy. The minister also drew up guidelines for history teachers in which he stressed the use of interpretative techniques as a prerequisite for coherence in the study of culture and institutions.\(^25\)

\(^{24}\)Memoria de la primera secretaría de estado y del despacho de relaciones interiores y exteriores de los Estados-Unidos mexicanos, leída al soberano congreso constituyente en los días 14, 15 y 16 de Diciembre de 1846, por el ministro del ramo, c. José María Lafragua. Impresa por acuerdo del soberano congreso (México: Imprenta de Vicente García Torres, 1847), pp. 106, 107; Informe del instituto literario al supremo gobierno del estado por lo relativo al año escolar concluida el 27 de Agosto de 1847 (Zacatecas: Imprenta de Gobierno, n.d.), p. 5; AGN, Vol. 91, f. 66.

\(^{25}\)Dublán y Lozano, Legislación mexicana, VII, pp. 344-369.
It remains unclear how many schools abided by this section of the decree, although scattered evidence suggests that few outside the national capital did so. The official interest in Mexican history, nevertheless, continued to flourish, despite the disruptions attending the overthrow of Santa Anna and the subsequent Three Years War. President Comonfort added national history to the curriculum of the capital's normal school in 1857, and the federal law of April, 1861 confirmed that order. The latter measure also included a course in general and Mexican history in the preparatory curriculum on the secondary level, although the course did not appear in the advanced program or serve as a prerequisite for any degree. In Jalisco, too, the postwar educational law confined the study of Mexican and general history to the preparatory level. Oaxaca's law, on the other hand, provided for study of this subject only on the advanced level for both law and medical students.26

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26 Colección de los decretos de Jalisco, I, pp. 231-273; Ley orgánica de instrucción pública del estado (Oaxaca), pp. 7-10; Dublán y Lozano, Legislación mexicana, IX, pp. 150-158; Manuel Muro, Historia de la instrucción pública en San Luis Potosí. Escrita por acuerdo del señor gobernador del estado ingeniero don Blas Escontría (San Luis Potosí: Imprenta de Esquivel y Compañía, 1899), pp. 117, 118; AGN, Vol. 82 1/2, ff. 147, 251; Vol. 82 3/4, ff. 284, 287, 289, 290; Vol. 87, ff. 108, 216; Vol. 88, ff. 37, 251; Vol. 89, f. 16; Vol. 92, f. 164; Vol. 86, ff. 169, 170, 198, 199.
Despite these laws and their predecessors, most colegios and universities did not offer courses in Mexican history in the period before the French intervention. The impact of its study in the institutions where it was taught, however, depended largely on the approach adopted by the instructor. Although overtly nationalistic impulses probably did not guide the men who incorporated the course into the secondary curriculum in 1843, the slowly growing interest in Mexico's past does reflect the early stages of a search for national identity among the educated classes. The role played by historians in this search would depend in some measure on whether they achieved a basic interpretative consensus. If they failed to reach substantive agreement on the meaning of the national experience, or on the composition and character of the Mexican nation, then their efforts could hardly contribute to the development of a sense of community.

Minister Lafragua's charge that most of the capital's early history instructors limited themselves to an arid recitation of facts suggests that they did not probe the sensitive issues raised by the data. Even José María Lacunza, who proved the exception, did not attempt to construct a coherent interpretation from his observation of the facts.
His didactic goals, however, shaped Lacunza's lectures and saved him from the sterile approach of his colleagues. In essence he sought to provide the next generation of political leaders with the conceptual tools necessary to rescue Mexico from its condition of perpetual semianarchy. Lacunza hoped that the study of history would enable his students to perceive how stable societies function, and that their observations would prove useful in the search for solutions to national problems. In the same spirit he searched Mexico's past for insights that would unite rather than divide the still embryonic nation.27

The majority of Lacunza's lectures concerned European history, but he devoted the last five to that of his own country. In these the professor refused to adopt any dogmatic position on currently sensitive issues; he strove instead to present a balanced view. He termed the Spanish conquest a holy war and implicitly regarded it as the first step in the creation of the Mexican nation. At the same time, however, Lacunza argued that the future of that nation rested with the mestizo, who represented the fusion

of the country's two original ethnic groups. Nor did he exhibit any bitterness toward Spain in his discussion of the war for independence, although he considered that struggle justified. Morelos, in Lacunza's view, emerged as the true hero of the war, for he supplied both the order and coherent liberal ideals that the insurgency lacked before his rise to power and after his death. Neither Hidalgo nor Iturbide, the traditional symbols of independence, exemplified for Lacunza the virtues required of Mexican statesmen. Despite his dislike for Iturbide, however, Lacunza praised the Plan of Iguala, because it formalized independence through the reconciliation of the dominant groups in society. He sought to impress such an approach on his students as the one best designed to cure their country's current political problems. In sum Lacunza argued that Mexico should not abandon the culture and institutions it had inherited from the past but instead should reform the latter in accordance with the needs of its new republican political system.\^\footnote{Ibid., pp. 69-76.}

Lacunza attempted to use history as a tool of national reconciliation and unification, but his colleagues declined
to emulate this approach. Most Mexican historians of the period refracted the national past through the prism of political or ideological bias, with the result that their studies rarely transcend a partisan defense of one faction against all its enemies. In the 1850's, especially, conservative historians converted their studies into powerful weapons for the ideological debates with the liberals. Although that conflict occurred mostly outside the formal academic world, through the medium of books, it sheds considerable light on the function of historical studies in the period before the French intervention.28

The liberal interpretations of the Mexican past appeared early, in two works published by José María Luis Mora (Méjico y sus revoluciones) and Lorenzo de Zavala (Ensayo histórico

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28 Robert A. Potash, "The Historiography of Mexico Since 1821," Hispanic American Historical Review, XXXII (February, 1952), 389. Potash mentions only Alamán and implies that most other writers of the period produced political tracts. The books of two historians not listed elsewhere in this chapter: José María Tornel y Mendival, Breve reseña histórica de los acontecimientos más notables de la nación mexicana, desde el año de 1821 hasta nuestros días. Edición de la ilustración mexicana (México: Imprenta de Cumplido, 1852); Juan Suárez y Navarro, Historia de México y del general Antonio López de Santa-Anna. Comprende los acontecimientos políticos que han tenido lugar en la nación, desde el año de 1821 hasta 1848 (México: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1850-1851). Both books are defenses of Santa Anna.
de las revoluciones de México) in the thirties. Neither man consciously attempted to develop a liberal theory of history, and in fact their semihistorical books differ on some points with later liberal writers. Their works do contain, nevertheless, most of the central ideas criticized by conservative historians when the latter countered with their own interpretation of the past. Both Mora and Zavala regarded the severance of political ties with Spain as merely the first prerequisite for the creation of a strong, progressive, independent nation. Mora, however, patterned his own reform proposals after those of the Bourbon, Carlos III, while Zavala dismissed the entire colonial era as a period of Stygian darkness. In each case, nevertheless, the writer argued that some of the political and social institutions (particularly the Church) inherited from the colony required substantial reform before Mexico could hope to progress. They maintained, furthermore, that these colonial legacies formed the root of the country's contemporary problems. Despite this conviction, however, they overlooked a fundamental cleavage in the movement for independence. Neither Mora nor Zavala distinguished between the goals of Hidalgo and the Insurgents and those of the eventual liberator, Agustín Iturbide, who defended the very
ecclesiastical and military privileges the two liberals wanted to abolish. This lack of precision resulted in part, probably, from a reluctance to identify with Hidalgo. Although both men considered him a necessary element in the revolutionary movement, Mora especially heaped scorn on this hero of the masses and the later liberals. The liberal theoretician regarded the creole middle class as the core of the new Mexican nation, and he therefore despised Hidalgo for the latter's attempt to ignite a social revolution that would have established the predominance of the Indian.®®

Conservative writers did not fully develop their own interpretation of national history until the trauma of defeat in the American war forced intellectuals to reflect on the causes of Mexico's failure to realize its potential. Luis Cuevas and Lucas Alamán, the period's premier historian, quickly emerged as the most eloquent spokesmen for the conservative position. Their argument rested on the central premise that the country's problems stemmed mainly from the liberal attempt to discard colonial institutions in favor

®®Hale, Mexican Liberalism, pp. 22-25, 120, 121; José María Luis Mora, México y sus revoluciones (Paris: Librería de Rosa, 1836), III, pp. 1, 190; IV, pp. 1, 2, 8, 23, 24, 156, 157; Zavala, Ensayo histórico de las revoluciones de México, I, pp. 9, 20, 21-23, 64-66; II, pp. 282-289.
of alien ideas. Through their attacks on the Church and Hispanic values, these writers charged, the liberals had undermined the unity and stability of the nation. This situation had enabled political opportunists to exploit the new ideas of popular sovereignty in their struggle for power and the spoils of office. To support their thesis Cuevas and Alamán undertook the first systematic defense of Spanish colonial policy. They contrasted the peace and relative prosperity of the colonial period with the chaos of the years since 1821, and attempted to demonstrate that the cohesive forces in Mexican society originated during those three centuries that some liberals dismissed as the dark ages. Alamán then turned to the war for independence and argued that Hidalgo and the Insurgents had sought to destroy those forces through their attacks on the Church and the colonial social structure. The conservative historian underscored the difference in goals ignored by Mora and Zavala and in so doing treated the break with Spain as an essentially conservative action.\(^{31}\)

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\(^{31}\)Luis Gonzaga Cuevas, *Porvenir de México, o juicio sobre su estado política en 1821 y 1851* (México: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1851), I, pp. 7-9, 13-15, 29-31, 37-48, 128, 129, 138, 139; Vol. II: *Comprende el período desde la ocupación de la capital de Nueva-España por el primer*
These contrasting interpretations reveal a measure of agreement as well as irreconcilable differences. Both liberals and conservatives tended to equate the nation with the creole minority, and this identity of outlook underwrote a very real sense of community within the governing classes. At the same time, however, the dispute over the meaning of the colonial experience revealed bitter differences over the political future of the country. The conservatives believed that the three centuries of colonial rule had forged the definitive character of the nation, while the liberals intended to use political, educational and economic reforms to create a new nation in their own image. The moderate interpretation developed by Lacunza would hardly have appealed to either group.

It would be a mistake, however, to exaggerate the impact of the historical debate. Partisans of Hidalgo and...
Iturbide had celebrated independence on different days (September 16 and 27, respectively) for years, but the anniversary of the "grito de Dolores" remained the official day of independence. Alamán's scholarly efforts, moreover, could do little to dislodge Hidalgo from his position as the popular hero of independence. Even some conservatives refused to adopt the historian's harsh view of the revolutionary priest. In the midst of the Three Years War, for example, the editor of the conservative government's official newspaper refused to expel Hidalgo from the pantheon of national heroes, although he reserved most of his accolades for Iturbide. A few historians, finally, eschewed the ideological debate and wrote books for young people that ignored the controversial issues.  

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32 Alamán, Historia de México, II, pp. 213, 214; Diario oficial del supremo gobierno, September 16, 1858; September 27, 1858; September 16, 1859; September 27, 1858; Carlos María de Bustamente, Mañanas de la alameda de México. Publicada para facilitar a las señoritas el estudio de la historia de su país (México: Imprenta de la Testamentaria de Valdés, 1835); Epitacio J. de los Ríos, Compendio de la historia de México desde antes de la conquista hasta los tiempos presentes, estratizada de los mejores autores para la instrucción de la juventud. Adornada con diez y seis estampas litográficas, que representan los hechos más interesantes de la historia. Publicada Simón Blanquel (México: Imprenta de la Voz de la Religión, 1852). Despite the title of the latter book, both of these works concentrate almost exclusively on pre-Columbian Mexico and the Spanish conquest.
The impression remains, nevertheless, that the ideological controversy weakened the nationalistic potential of historical studies. The growing interest in history evidenced an enhanced self-awareness on the part of Mexicans, but those intellectuals who searched the past for a national identity merely uncovered the roots of a bitter dispute which obscured that identity.

Reform and the Ideological Controversy

The conservative offensive in the field of history roughly coincided with the appearance of signs of serious discontent over the general direction of curricular reform. Changes in the secondary curriculum did not become an important political issue in the 1850's, but a few conservative writers and educators did begin to protest the secularist tendencies of the reform movement. Although several of them also charged that politically liberal textbooks had corrupted governmental leaders, they expressed most concern over the decline of religious education in the colegios. The implicit recognition, however, that the process of secularization involved much more than the deletion of courses in theology and religion spurred one of the more articulate conservative critics to analyze the modern
The critic in question was Clemente Munguía, who served as rector of Morelia's conciliar seminary in the 1840's. Although Munguía originally (1845) cast his ideas in the form of a speech designed to counteract the increasing attacks on ecclesiastical schools, his statement transcended a merely partisan diatribe against the civil colegios. He argued forcefully that the "theological principle" (i.e., Catholic doctrine) must form the basis of all knowledge, and that modern philosophical systems failed as guides to truth because their practitioners refused to accept this cardinal principle. Thus the sensualists denied the reality of the spiritual world and attempted to explain human psychology in terms of nerve impulses. Munguía praised the contributions of early scientists such as Isaac Newton and Francis Bacon, but he maintained that only through subordination to religious truth could their successors avoid the fallacies of the sensualists. The rector likewise confirmed the value of reason, but at the same time he

33Diario oficial del gobierno de la república mejicana, May 8, 1854; Diario oficial del supremo gobierno, September 23, 1858; September 24, 1858; Archivo Municipal, Vol. 2481, exped. 585.
condemned the rationalists for their refusal to rely partially on faith in the search for knowledge. This approach, he argued, fostered intellectual anarchy, because each individual transformed his own mind into the ultimate judge of truth. The study of law and political philosophy, Munguía continued, could yield valid results only if the "theological principle" governed the learning process. As negative evidence for this assertion the educator pointed to the political and philosophical instability of the past century, which he attributed to a decline in the influence of Catholic doctrine. 34

Munguía’s criticisms struck at the very heart of the reform tradition, because he in effect advocated a return to a modified form of scholasticism. Mora and the liberals had spearheaded an early attack on this learning method through the 1833 reforms, but the academic popularity of books on sensualism (Condillac and Destutt de Tracy) and

34 Clemente Munguía, Los Principios de la iglesia católica comparadas con los de las escuelas racionalistas, en sus aplicaciones a la enseñanza y educación pública, y en sus relaciones con los progresos de las ciencias, de las letras y de las artes, la mejora de las costumbres y la perfección de la sociedad. Seguida de una memoria sobre el origen, progresos y estado actual de la enseñanza y educación en el seminario tridentino de Michoacán (Morelia: Imprenta de I. Arango, 1849), preface (not paginated), pp. 10-12, 22, 28-31, 33-36, 46, 47, 54-72, 109-112, 114, 115, 116, 143.
rationalism (Heineccio) demonstrates the nonpartisan character of the revolt against the colonial tradition. The unrepresentative character of Munguía's views, however, should not obscure the fact that he clearly perceived the dimensions of the process of secularization. For him it involved essentially the removal of intellectual development from the traditional subordination to the "theological principle," and not merely the deletion of courses in religious doctrine.35

In the eyes of most Mexicans, nevertheless, the decline of religious instruction probably symbolized the secularist trend. By the forties theology courses had begun to disappear from the curricula of some civil colegios, and the authors of the 1843 educational law inadvertently neglected even to require catechismal studies on the secondary level. The conservatives then attempted to reverse this trend, partially in response to the demands of men such as Munguía

and the handful of other vocal critics. The law of 1854 thus restored religious instruction to a position of dominance in the preparatory curriculum, although most of the other courses listed in the measure conformed to the reform pattern. A limited gesture of this kind could not, however, really halt secularization. Nor could the formal exclusion of religious instruction from public institutions in 1874 do more than punctuate the educational trend initiated by the changes in methodology and intellectual outlook described by Munguía.

Conclusion

The four decades after independence witnessed a fundamental reorientation of Mexico's system of higher education. In 1821 the ecclesiastical authorities dominated that system, both administratively and in the classroom; forty years later the State controlled the most important colegios and lay instructors had terminated the clergy's virtual monopoly of the teaching profession. At the time of independence the standard curriculum focused on the study of theology, classical or Medieval philosophy, and theoretical law; but during the next generation reformers shifted the emphasis through curtailment of theological
studies and addition of courses in the economic and political sciences, statutory law, the physical sciences and humanities, among others. The impact of these changes transcended the formal academic world, because they involved an effort to modify the political and cultural character of the former colony.

The ecclesiastical monopoly in education, which dated from the early days of the colony, depended on an intimate relationship between Church and State that failed to survive the transition from monarchy to republic after independence. Although the process of estrangement actually originated under the Bourbons, due to crown efforts to restrict clerical autonomy, the secularist implications of the republican form of government sharply increased the level of hostility in this struggle over State sovereignty. The relative weakness and instability of Mexico's early governments, combined with a profound reverence for the Church, precluded any effective challenge to that institution's position, but both state and federal authorities did exercise the power inherent in the royal patronato to establish their administrative control over many colegios formerly operated by religious orders. In so doing they responded to a fairly widespread consensus that the narrow
curriculum and authoritarian methodology of the colonial university poorly served the needs of a republic, with its relatively fluid political environment. They also betrayed the influence of the Enlightenment's emphasis on secular and practical learning, which encouraged a belief that the quasi-ecclesiastical character of Mexico's colegios required substantial modification. Church leaders, for their part, rarely protested the loss of formal control, at least partially because the schools normally could not have survived without government financial aid.

This limited form of secularization, however, failed to satisfy a small group of men who viewed education as a key to the reform of Mexican society. These individuals, among whom José María Mora and Valentín Gómez Farías figured prominently, defined reform in terms of nineteenth-century liberalism, and thus they envisioned a loosely knit society in which loyalty to the civil government served as the basis of national unity. The Church, in their view, represented the principal barrier to the evolution of such a society, because its constitutionally sanctioned autonomy weakened State sovereignty and encouraged clergy-men to regard themselves as a special caste within the Mexican community. Clerical professors compounded the
problem through their emphasis on the primacy of religious
duties over civil responsibilities, and partially for this
reason liberals such as Mora considered most of them unfit
to teach Mexican youth. This specific criticism formed
part of a general indictment against clerical instructors
which questioned their capacity and inclination to provide
students a modern education. Such an education, according
to Mora, entailed exposure to utilitarian values, which he
believed promoted the individualistic attitudes characteris-
tic of a liberal society. Hispanic culture, the liberals
maintained, required an infusion of these secular values,
to destroy the aristocratic contempt for many forms of
economic activity. Both politically and culturally, there-
fore, the Church and its educational representatives sym-
bolized an outlook which the liberals condemned as anach-
ronistic. Academic autonomy, from this vantage point,
merely blocked modernization of the educational system.

Liberal efforts to implement these reform ideas added
an ideological dimension to the process of secularization,
but they also hastened the expansion of government interven-
tion into higher education. Thus the use of political power
in 1833 to destroy the ecclesiastically dominated university
and to expel clerical teachers from the capital's colegios
ultimately generated a successful counterattack on the part of the clergy, the educational "establishment," and their allies. The liberals, however, had helped to set a precedent for closer State control over the academic system, in the form of authority to select text books and teachers, and later centralist administrations confirmed the new pattern through the subordination of even provincial colegios to a government council located in the capital. Such intervention in the educational process may have counteracted some of the inertial resistance to curricular reform generated by an academic leadership trained in the traditional methods and courses. In the Mexican context, however, it did not solve chronic financial problems, and thus most public colegios only gradually added the courses championed by reformers.

The reformist agitation of the liberals, although muted after 1834, coupled with Mexico's uneven progress in the direction they desired, ultimately evoked a contradictory response from men who tended to view the Church rather than the State as the central institution in Mexican society. This group, of which Lucas Alamán assumed the leadership, exhibited a strong attachment to aristocratic Hispanic values, as well as to the more stratified class structure
of the colonial period, and their devotion to the Church stemmed partially from the latter's identification with these social and cultural attitudes. Conservative views did not spontaneously develop in the 1840's, but the catalyst of humiliating defeat in the American war did harden them into an ideology that rejected both the republican political system and liberal secularist ideals, in favor of a return to a modified version of the colonial political and social structure.

The conservatives made no effort, however, simply to reverse the course of Mexico's evolution, for they had absorbed too much of the change in intellectual outlook initiated by independence. Thus Alamán and his allies did not reject curricular reform, which they considered necessary for economic progress. Instead they skillfully used the new academic interest in Mexico, itself, to engage their adversaries in a bitter debate over the meaning of the national past. In the educational law of 1854, moreover, the conservatives attempted ambitiously to combine elements of the colonial academic system with the one that had emerged since independence, although in most important respects the result conformed to the pattern favored by their liberal adversaries. Echoes of the colonial system
appeared in the baptismal certificate requirement and in the formal restoration of the University of Mexico to its position as the country's central educational institution. Despite their identification with the Church, however, the conservatives further increased State authority over the colegios and even incorporated the seminaries to the public system. With respect to the curriculum, too, although they sought to correct its secularist bias through the addition of more courses in religion, the conservatives ignored Clemente Munguía's warning that teaching methods which encouraged philosophical doubt undermined the foundation of a Catholic education. Conservative educational reform, in short, reflected some of the ambiguities inherent in the general attempt to restore a "modernized" version of the society Alamán and his cohorts believed had existed before 1810.

The liberals, for their part, trapped themselves into similar inconsistencies. Intellectual freedom ranked as a cardinal principle of the liberal philosophy, but Mora's emphasis on the urgency of educational reform through the use of State power endangered the survival of that principle in the academic world. Thus the closure of the university and removal of clerical professors served as a guide for
a later generation of liberals embittered by a long civil war in which the Church supported their enemies. Men who suppressed the country's universities and several of its seminaries on the grounds that these institutions propagated dangerous or anachronistic ideas may have lacked some of Mora's sophistication in his justification of a similar action, but in both cases the move seemed to imply that the government should determine the course of academic evolution. The liberals sought to replace the Church with the State as the institutional symbol of national unity, but in the successful struggle to achieve that goal they progressively abandoned many of their other principles. The Díaz dictatorship formed the logical result.

One other aspect of Mexico's educational policy remains for examination. Thus far the discussion of that policy has focused on the general administrative structure and instructional content of the academic system, but it would be a mistake to ignore the ethnic implications of official efforts on behalf of education. The impact of those efforts on the Indian would help to define the boundaries of the Mexican nation.
The Indians presented a special challenge to Mexican educators because of the formidable barriers that separated many of them from the rest of society. Outside the large urban areas the members of the country's principal ethnic group usually lived in their own communities and frequently did not learn to speak Spanish. Although the Indians lived on the fringes of white society, however, the nationbuilders could not ignore them because of their large numbers. The designers of an educational policy that neglected the special needs of these people trapped in a cultural limbo could expect little success in their efforts to create a truly national spirit.

The Colonial Background

Colonial educational policy subserved the crown's general social and political goals. In the immediate aftermath of the conquest royal officials advocated a rapid Hispanization of the Indian nobility, whose members they planned to use as intermediaries between Spanish authority
and the native masses. At the same time the crown had not yet developed a firm policy on the Indian's position in colonial society, a position which the encomienda only temporarily defined.¹

These conditions favored those who advocated a vigorous educational effort on behalf of the native races. The crown itself initiated this effort in 1526 when it ordered officials in the colony to send a group of young Indian nobles to Spain for their education, after which they were to return to their people. The order proved impracticable, but in 1536 royal officials accomplished the same purpose through the establishment of a colegio for Spaniards and Indian nobles, Santa Cruz de Tlaltelolco. The school's Franciscan directors designed the curriculum to prepare students for an ecclesiastical career, an indication that they hoped to create an Indian priesthood. A few of the native graduates secured teaching positions with their alma mater, where their duties included instruction of creole as well as Indian students. In Michoacán Vasco de Quiroga established the Colegio de San Nicolás in 1540, another advanced school that

accepted Indians as well as Spaniards. In this case, however, the founder opened his colegio to Indians of all classes, who thus obtained the opportunity to receive a humanistic education free. In addition to these two institutions of higher learning, most Franciscan monasteries maintained schools for children of the nobility, who received the religious and secular instruction necessary to prepare them for positions of leadership among their people. Children from lower-class families also attended these schools, but catechismal studies usually defined the limits of their education. This educational campaign on behalf of the native races reached its climax in 1551, when royal and ecclesiastical officials secured the king's permission to found a university for creoles and Indians.²

The second half of the sixteenth century, however, witnessed a sharp decline in Spanish concern for the education of the peoples they had conquered. The original plan to govern the Indians through their nobility proved to be a temporary expedient, devised to facilitate the transition from the native to the Spanish political system. Hispanic institutions and elected Indian officials (who in practice could come from any social class) soon replaced the hereditary rule of the nobility, and this shift in policy eliminated the need for an educated upper class. The collapse of the nobility's power coincided with a struggle between defenders and exploiters of the Indian over the legal status of the conquered peoples. The crown achieved a rough compromise by converting the Indians into wards of the State while continuing to permit Spaniards to exploit their labor. The philosophical justification of this eminently practical arrangement rested on the assumption of native intellectual inferiority, which in turn assured that the Indians would remain in a permanently subordinate status. The Church, too, modified its initial enthusiasm for the education of the Indians. Some clerics had never advocated theological training for them, for fear of the alleged dangers connected with the initiation of new Christians into doctrinal
subtleties unknown to even life-long Catholics outside the priesthood. Archbishop Zumárraga, himself, one of the founders of Santa Cruz de Tlaltelolco, experienced doubts after 1540, when the recrudescence of clandestine human sacrifice among some Indians demonstrated the tenacity of pagan religious customs. Fifteen years later a Church council resolved the issue, when it forbade the creation of an Indian clergy. A few friars continued to favor higher education for capable Indians, but clearly the movement had lost its momentum.

The condition of the Indian colegios soon reflected this change in official attitudes. Santa Cruz reduced its course offerings to primary subjects after the ruling of the Church council, and subsequently the viceregal government began to withdraw financial support from the institution. In the eighteenth century a group of Indians petitioned royal authorities to restore the school's advanced curriculum, but without success. In the 1580's prominent native leaders helped the Jesuits to found the Colegio de San Gregorio, but the school never offered courses above the primary level. The colegio suffered constantly from financial

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3Gibson, Aztecs Under Spanish Rule, pp. 153-165, 382, 383; Icazbalceta, La instrucción pública en México, pp. 20, 21; Rincón, La instrucción pública en Nueva España, pp. 77-79.
problems, moreover, and could furnish scholarships for only about twenty Indian students. The condition of the school reached a nadir in 1767, when the expulsion of the Jesuits forced a temporary shutdown of operations. The University itself remained officially open to native students, and indeed the crown attempted intermittently to aid them through waiver of graduation fees. But few Indians attended the institution. Despite the fact, therefore, that the Bourbons opened careers in the army, Church and government to educated Indians, full integration into colonial society remained a chimera for all but a few.⁴

Acculturation of the lower social strata stalled at an even more primitive level because of the absence of an effective language-training program. At the beginning of the

colonial period, (1513), Fernando VI issued the Laws of Burgos, in which he ordered encomenderos to instruct their charges in religious doctrine and reading and writing. The first two Hapsburgs, however, made language training optional, and perhaps as a consequence many friars taught the Indians to read only in their own language. Royal concern for linguistic uniformity revived in the seventeenth century, and both the later Hapsburgs and their Bourbon successors issued repeated cédulas instructing priests to teach the Indians Spanish. But despite the support of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the clergy failed to execute these orders. As Carlos III himself noted, many priests who worked with the Indians refused to teach them Spanish because to do so would have eliminated the value of their own linguistic skills. In some cases, moreover, the clergy felt that Indians behaved more subserviently when they spoke their native language. Near the end of the eighteenth century the crown attempted to circumvent this passive opposition through introduction of lay teachers supported by the Indian communities. Initially the viceregal government itself frustrated this plan with various delaying tactics, but by the end of the century schools had begun to appear
in some native towns. Lack of time and resources, however, limited the impact of even this educational effort.\(^5\)

The meager results of the crown's attempts to acculturate the native races reflected the influence of the dominant economic and social interests in colonial society. The Indians furnished the cheap labor that the *hacendados*, local royal officials and the clergy required, and accordingly these groups desired to preserve the subordinate status of the conquered peoples. Education of the Indians would have exploded the myth of intellectual inferiority that justified this system of race relations, at the same time that it would have seriously undermined the stratified class structure of the colony. Acculturation therefore remained incomplete, and the Indians found themselves condemned to a kind of limbo, somewhere between their ancient cultures and the Hispanic variant of Western civilization. The collapse of the colonial regime, however, prepared the way for a redefinition of their relationship to the rest of society, the first step of which involved elimination of the legally sanctioned aspects of the Indians' subordinate status.

Equality and Education After Independence

The long struggle for Mexican independence generated a remarkable interest in the country's Indian heritage. In their frantic search for a new national identity many creole insurgents attempted to associate their struggle with the ancient Aztec empire. The war against Spain, in their view, represented the Mexican nation's reassumption of its sovereignty after three hundred years of slavery. This curious Indianist movement did not, however, reflect any intention to define the new nation's culture in terms of its Indian past. Once the collapse of Spanish power had ensured the triumph of independence, therefore, identification with Moctezuma's empire quickly vanished. Traces of indigenismo survived in occasional references to Mexico as "Anahuac," and in the adoption of the Aztec eagle-and-snake symbol as part of the national coat of arms. But most creoles exhibited very little real interest in the contributions of the native races to Mexico's hybrid culture, and instinctively regarded their country as an integral part of the Hispanic world. Writers of the period, accordingly, tended to treat Indian civilization as an exotic precursor of Mexican national culture, not as an important element in
the formation of the latter. Despite its ephemeral nature, however, the Indianis movement did help to inspire a widespread campaign to eliminate the legal barriers to racial equality.\(^6\)

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Efforts along this line originated during the war for independence, as each side maneuvered for at least passive support from the Indians. Thus both Hidalgo and the Spanish viceroy abolished the ancient Indian tribute in the areas under their control, and the cortes on repeated occasions between 1811 and 1820 decreed the removal of all legal distinctions based on race. The conclusion of the war merely accelerated this trend. In 1822 Iturbide confirmed the abolition of the Indian tribute and established a common tax for all Mexicans. Over the next few years all the states approved constitutions that admitted the Indians to full citizenship. Most of these instruments of government, however, suspended the exercise of political rights for vagrancy (that is, the lack of a fixed abode), lack of gainful employment, status as a "body" servant, or illiteracy (at some specified future date). Although these exceptions unquestionably affected the Indians and mestizos most directly, the basis of discrimination related more to class than to race. Several state legislatures also attempted to encourage individualism among Indians with laws that

diez y seis estampas litográficas, que representan los hechos más interesantes de la historia. Publicala Simón Blanquel (México: Imprenta de la Voz de la Religión, 1852).
provided for the division of communal lands and removed the prohibition on their alienation (except, in some cases, to the Church or large landholders). 7

A genuine concern for the welfare of the native races partially motivated enactment of some of these measures, but they also reflected the new liberal attitude towards society, as expounded in the writings of José María Luis Mora. Despite the partisan character of most of his ideas, many political leaders outside Mora's political faction accepted at least some of the ethnic implications of his analysis. Mora defined society as a collection of individuals loosely bound together by their loyalty to the State, and he maintained accordingly that no artificial legal distinctions

based on race or interest group should be permitted to undermine this political foundation of national unity. Colonial Indian legislation, in his opinion, had violated this axiom, and in so doing had prevented the Indians from playing their proper role as competitive units in a laissez-faire economy.

According to this liberal view, therefore, full incorporation of the Indians into society involved an essentially negative process. The government would remove all restrictions on their freedom of action, but the individual would have to create his own place in society. Mora recognized that the mere alteration of the Indians' legal status would not solve the problems created by poverty and cultural deprivation, but his hostility to special State intervention on behalf of any group precluded a positive response to these social conditions. Many creoles, moreover, supported the liberal Indian legislation in the hopes that abolition of the colonial safeguards would facilitate their efforts to exploit native labor and to incorporate the best communal lands into their own holdings. Such men had slight interest in the welfare of the Indians. At no time did the liberal view of the race problem command unanimous
agreement, but it did shape government policy throughout the period before the French intervention.\(^8\)

This attitude also informed official efforts to extend the benefits of education to the Indians. A number of men expressed the belief that education would improve the social and economic position of the Indians, and several of them recognized the special cultural obstacles created by linguistic diversity. But few fully appreciated the magnitude of the problem or attempted to devise an effective solution. Contemporary authorities estimated that about thirty-eight percent of the population spoke more than a hundred different native languages, although many of these Indians doubtless also understood Spanish. This critical fact did not, however, provoke any widespread demand for an ambitious language-training program. In general it appears that most political leaders viewed the educational challenge of the native communities in the context of the national campaign to eliminate illiteracy among the lower classes. The Indians

would receive the same attention as children from other
groups, but no government would design special laws to meet
their unique needs.⁹

This is the conclusion suggested by a reading of state
and national education laws. At least seven states (Yucatán,
Veracruz, Mexico, Zacatecas, Sonora, Durango and Michoacán)
provided for the establishment of primary schools in Indian
towns and/or large haciendas, an order clearly intended to

⁹Francisco Pimentel, Memoria sobre las causas que han
originado la situación actual de la raza indígena de México
y medios de remediárlos por Francisco Pimentel autor del
quadro descriptivo y comparativo de las lenguas indígenas
de México; socio de número de la sociedad mexicana de
geografía y estadística; vicepresidente de la sección de
arqueología y lingüística en la comisión científica, li-
teraria y artística de México (México: Imprenta de Andrade
y Escalante, 1864), p. 217; Dublén y Lozano, Legislación
mexicana, IV, p. 310; Wilson, Mexico: A Century of Educa-
tional Thought, p. 141; González Navarro, "Instituciones
indígenas en México independiente," Memorias del Instituto
Nacional Indigenista, p. 136; Francisco Zarco, Historia del
congreso extraordinario constituyente de 1856 y 1857. Es-
tracto de todas sus sesiones y documentos parlamentarios
de la época (México: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1857),
I, p. 859; Lorenzo de Zavala, Ensayo histórico de las re-
voluciones de México, desde 1808 hasta 1850 (México: Im-
prenta a cargo de Manuel N. de la Vega, 1845), pp. 282-289;
Memoria leída ante la excm. asamblea del departamento de
Yucatán, por el secretario general de gobierno el día 7 de
Mayo de 1845 (Mérida: Imprenta de Castillo y Compañía,
n.d.), pp. xix, xx; Archivo General de la Nación, Ramo
de Gobernación, leg. 243: Memoria presentada por el c.
Martín Quezada secretario del gobierno de Chiapas, al
honorable congreso del estado. 1851 (Imprenta del Gobierno,
n.d.), pp. 11, 12. (This source cited hereafter as AGN).
benefit chiefly native and mestizo children. Only the ephemeral state of Occidente (Sonora and Sinaloa), however, developed a plan to ensure that these schools could promote cultural integration. This measure provided that literate Indians from each tribe would attend the Lancasterian normal schools in Guadalajara or Mexico City, after which they were to return to their towns as teachers.\textsuperscript{10}

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\textsuperscript{10}González Navarro, "Instituciones indígenas en México independiente," Memorias del Instituto Nacional Indigenista, pp. 135, 139; Colección de decretos y órdenes dictadas por el honorable congreso tercero constitucional de Veracruz en todo el tiempo de su duración (Jalapa: Impreso en la oficina del Gobierno por Aburto y Blanco, 1831), [VII], pp. 164, 165; Colección de decretos y órdenes dictadas por el honorable cuarto congreso constitucional de Veracruz, VIII, pp. 2-8; Colección de leyes, decretos, y órdenes del augusto congreso del estado libre de Yucatán, Vol. II: Que comprende las de las seis primeras legislaturas constitucionales desde 20 de Agosto de 1825 hasta 5 de Marzo de 1832. Redactada por una comisión nombrada por la sesta legislatura (Mérida, 1832), pp. 41, 42; Recopilación de leyes, decretos, reglamentos y circulares expedidas en el estado de Michoacán. Formada y anotada por Amador Coromina, oficial 4° de la secretaría de gobierno, Vol. XV: De 15 de Marzo de 1858 a 27 de Abril de 1861 (Morelia: Imprenta de los Hijos de I. Arango, 1887), pp. 33-36; Recopilación de leyes, decretos, bandos, reglamentos, circulares y providencias de los supremos poderes y otros autoridades de la república mexicana. Formada de orden del supremo gobierno por el lic. Basilio José Arrillaga. Comprende este tomo todo el año de 1838 (México: Imprenta de José M. Lara, 1842), pp. 1-4; Registro oficial del gobierno de los Estados-Unidos mexicanos, July 4, 1831; AGN, Ramo de Gobernación, leg. 89, folder 91, decree 73; Ramo de Instrucción Pública, Vol. 91, f. 190; Vol. 92, f. 235.
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Nor did state legislators require that children of all races attend the same schools, although they probably assumed living patterns would determine the composition of student bodies. In Veracruz, however, the legislature did stipulate that Indian communities which lacked sufficient funds to support schools would send some of their children to institutions attended by whites and mestizos. It is worthwhile to note, moreover, that official efforts to weaken the cohesiveness of Indian communities, through the repeal of the special colonial laws and the revision of land tenure statutes, were designed in part to promote the kind of physical integration that probably would have reduced racial segregation in the schools. In at least two cases (Yucatán and Mexico), finally, legislators attempted to foster integration on the secondary level through laws that encouraged or required the allocation of a certain number of scholarships to native students.¹¹

¹¹Recopilación de los decretos y ordenes expedidos en el estado de Veracruz desde el 4 de Diciembre de 1840, al 24 de Diciembre de 1852 (Xalapa-Enríquez: Tipografía del Gobierno del Estado, 1907), pp. 3-31; Colección de leyes, decretos y ordenes o acuerdos de tendencia general, del poder legislativo del estado libre y soberano de Yucatán. Formada por Alonso Azán Pérez y publicada por Rafael Pedirera con autorización del gobierno, Vol. II: Que comprende todas las disposiciones legislativas, desde 1 de Enero
This state legislation impresses mainly for its omissions, but the record of the national government is even more revealing. The single important legislative action on this level related to the education of the Indians typified the negative approach of the liberals. In 1833 the government dismantled the already moribund mission system of the north, one of whose purposes had been to acculturate the migratory tribes of the frontier areas. Although a certain degree of anticlericalism informed this measure, it reflected also the dominant conviction that special racially oriented institutions no longer served the national interest.\textsuperscript{12}

Other official sources of information betray a similar determination to deny the importance of ethnic differences. Statistical reports on primary-school attendance rarely list students according to ethnic origin, although this

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\textsuperscript{12}González Navarro, "Instituciones indígenas en México independiente," \textit{Memorias del Instituto Nacional Indigenista}, pp. 135, 139.
omission was perhaps due primarily to the rather primitive nature of even the most complete reports. The fact remains, nevertheless, that it is impossible to estimate the number of Indian children who received a primary education during this period. Government ministers and educators did not often refer to Indian schools, except to note their poor quality or the problems created by poverty and the diversity of languages. This reticence perhaps betrayed a lack of deep concern, but the fear of Indian revolt could arouse at least temporary interest. In 1849, during the two most serious rebellions of the entire period under study, the Ayuntamiento of Mexico City urgently recommended that the educational authorities of the capital make a greater effort to reach Indian children. Racial discrimination, in the council's view, had contributed to the present discords, and their termination required a sound religious education for all the people. These proposals achieved no practical results, and they stand as an exception to the general official silence on the special educational problems of Indian children. That silence in itself suggests the absence of any firm national commitment to the acculturation of the native races through primary education.13

13Memoria en que el gobierno del estado libre de México, da cuenta al primer congreso constitucional, de
Official data on higher education of Indians is equally scarce. All colegios and universities admitted Indians as students, but the number who actually matriculated in the country's various institutions remains unclear. The troubled history of San Gregorio, one of the few remaining Indian colegios, does, however, shed considerable light on the practical impact of government educational policy. This school had operated under religious control during the colonial period, but in 1825 the national government
appointed a council to superintend its affairs. The board immediately initiated a thorough reorganization of the colegio which involved an expansion of the curriculum and a significant change in admissions policy. San Gregorio had not risen above the level of a primary school during the colonial period. In the late 1820's, however, the board began to add advanced courses, and by 1835 the colegio boasted essentially the same curriculum as San Juan de Letrán and San Ildefonso. At the same time the board revived the original Jesuit policy and admitted non-Indians to the school on a paying basis, although it reserved the few available scholarships for native students. Some officials had hoped in 1821 that the school would support two Indians from each state, but this proved financially unfeasible; by 1844 thirty-two Indians attended San Gregorio on scholarship.\(^{14}\)

The governing junta implemented its program of reorganization amidst periodic attempts to abolish San Gregorio,

Although the specific proposals to this end always appeared in general reform plans designed to improve the capital's educational system, they originated in the liberal hostility to the formal preservation of ethnic distinctions in society. Luis Gonzaga Gordo captured the essence of this view as it applied to education: ". . . it is well known that the establishments designed solely for them are backward; if the youths called Indians are placed in the regular colegios, they will advance more through rivalry, better teaching, and education . . . ."15

In accordance with this reasoning a deputy introduced a bill in January, 1828 that provided for the consolidation of the capital's three principal colegios. Minister of Relations Lucas Alamán followed this proposal two years later with his plan for reorganization that entailed the elimination of San Gregorio as a separate school. In both cases petitioners who claimed to be Indians heatedly attacked the indirect threat to the colegio. The tone and content of the broadsides suggest that at least some native intellectuals resisted the liberal demand for complete

15Quoted in Wilson, Mexico: A Century of Educational Thought, pp. 95, 96.
cultural assimilation of the Indians. In their view separate schools for Indians performed a necessary function. They maintained that people of their race who attended school with the whites suffered from discriminatory treatment. Furthermore, they continued, the property of San Gregorio belonged to the Indians, who had originally helped to finance the school. Although these men regarded people of their ethnic group as intellectually equal with the whites, they rejected the officially accepted view that the distinction between Indian and non-Indian was meaningless.16

The struggle to preserve San Gregorio met a temporary setback in 1833 as a result of the Gómez Farías reform program. José María Mora later explicitly stated that the administration abolished San Gregorio, together with the other colegios of the capital, partially in an effort to promote integration of the Indians into society. This action, however, helped to undermine the liberal alliance

16 Memoria de la secretaría de estado y del despacho de relaciones interiores y exteriores, leída por el secretario del ramo en la cámara de diputados el día 12 de Febrero de 1830, y en la de senadores el día 13 del mismo (México: Imprenta del Águila, 1830); El sol, January 17, 1828; AGN, Ramo de Instrucción Pública, Vol. 1, ff. 292, 293. (All subsequent citations are from the Ramo de Instrucción Pública.)
that supported Gómez Farías. The rector of San Gregorio, Juan Rodríguez Puebla, initially enjoyed a position in the administration's inner circle, but he joined the opposition when he learned of his school's fate. Mora later accused the native educator of seeking the "exaltation of the Aztec race," but Puebla's subsequent behavior does not support this assertion. It is more likely that his defense of a separate school for Indians, of communal landholding, and of some of the protective features of colonial legislation, originated in a conviction that these institutions provided a safeguard against creole exploitation during the process of acculturation. Puebla's attitude, in any case, furnished additional evidence that liberal Indian policy did not always enjoy the support of the people it was purportedly designed to help.17

The collapse of the reform movement in 1834 ended for nearly two decades the threat to San Gregorio. The school remained, however, the storm center of another controversy that had developed soon after the creation of the governing junta in 1825. In both cases the central issue concerned

17Mora, Obras sueltas, pp. 121, 152, 153; Hale, Mexican Liberalism, pp. 218, 219; Dublán y Lozano, Legislación mexicana, II, pp. 571-574.
San Gregorio's character as an ethnically oriented colegio. The school's governing council shared the liberal goals of Mora and Gómez Farías, but it attempted to achieve them through reform. In so doing the junta made itself the target of criticism from the same groups that resisted efforts to close San Gregorio. In 1829, for example, several students and teachers at the school protested the appointment of non-Indians to professorships. They argued that the colegio was supposed to serve Indians, and that therefore the council should favor native candidates for teaching positions. The junta noted the absence of any legal basis for this claim, and declared that similar "contemptible" petitions appeared every time a vacancy occurred on the school's teaching or administrative staff.\(^{18}\)

This cryptic charge referred to the controversy that surrounded the board's nomination of a new rector that same year. Through the letters column of *El sol* and several printed petitions, groups of Indians advocated the appointment of the colegio's vice-rector, José Calixto Vidal, an Indian ecclesiastic. The council, however, considered Vidal a troublemaker and instead advised the government to

select José M. Guzmán, who was neither a priest nor an Indian. This decision unleashed a remarkable torrent of denunciatory petitions. The highly organized critics of the junta maintained that the statutes of San Gregorio required selection of a priest as rector. As a result of Guzmán's appointment, they contended, money that could have financed the education of more Indians would have to pay the salary of a chaplain. Although most of the petitions stressed the new rector's secular status rather than his ethnic origins, the critics insisted that the council's decision had racial overtones.\(^{19}\)

Presidents Victoria and Guerrero refused to respond to the petitions, but finally in 1830 Vice-president Bustamente ordered the governing junta to draw up a new list of nominees. The council again pointedly ignored Vidal, and this time advised the selection of Juan Rodríguez Puebla, an Indian but not a priest. This appointment failed to satisfy the petitioners, who continued to agitate in favor of Vidal, ostensibly on the grounds of Puebla's lay status. The council eliminated its chief antagonist in 1834, when

it fired Vidal as vice-rector. The nativist attacks on Puebla continued, however, and in 1839 President Bustamente again responded with orders for a new nomination. But this decision created such an uproar among students that the president rescinded his order, and Puebla remained rector of San Gregorio until his death in 1848.20

The struggle over the rectorship of San Gregorio illuminates the complexity of the problems involved in cultural assimilation. The nativist intellectuals who wrote the petitions may not have represented anyone but themselves, but their efforts to secure the rectorship for one of their own (Vidal) suggest that at least some Indians spurned incorporation into creole society on the terms offered by the liberals. In these documents they repeatedly asserted that the council's rejection of Vidal formed part of a pattern designed to perpetuate the Indians' degraded social status. On the surface this accusation seems absurd, but it does reflect a conviction that the council desired to pervert the true mission of San Gregorio. That mission, in the view of the petitioners, apparently involved the creation of a strong sense of cultural identity among Indians. This

is the grain of truth in the council's charge that Vidal and his associates planned to use the colegio as a revolutionary tool, to stir up hatred of whites among Indians.  

The junta's actions, on the other hand, followed closely the guidelines of liberal thought. The council boasted that it had opened the school to creoles, an action the members hoped would promote respect for Indians through integration. In their hiring policies, moreover, these men clearly showed no favoritism towards native applicants. The board itself, finally, represented for the nativist intellectuals a loss of control to the whites, although Indians sometimes sat on the council. Only a few of the petitioners openly demanded the board's abolition, but through their pressure tactics all of them attempted to usurp the council's effective decision-making power.

Hostility to the board's policies helps to explain the nativists' attitude towards Juan Rodríguez Puebla. Initially most of the petitioners did not criticize Puebla, but merely argued that his lay status disqualified him for the position of rector. By 1834, however, they had begun

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to attack him, and one group denounced him as a traitor to his people. Puebla had defended San Gregorio against the Gómez Farías reforms, but his long and harmonious relationship with the school's governing junta indicates that he accepted the latter's plan to convert the colegio into an instrument of cultural assimilation. In the view of the nativists, accordingly, Puebla had betrayed the Indians.\textsuperscript{23}

San Gregorio flourished under the rectorship of Juan Rodríguez Puebla, and by the time of his death in 1848 it had become the wealthiest colegio of the capital, no longer dependent on government subsidies. Its curriculum, like those of the capital's other colegios, continued to expand. Controversy did not disappear, but the bitter struggles of the first two decades seemed over. In August, 1853, however, President Santa Anna indirectly abolished the colegio by turning its property and funds over to the school of veterinary medicine. The archives, unfortunately, contain no clue to the circumstances surrounding this decision. After the fall of Santa Anna in 1855, a delegate to the constituent congress attempted to secure the reopening of the school, on the grounds that such an institution would

contribute to the "civilization" of the Indians. But the proposal achieved no positive result, and San Gregorio was not reestablished. 24

The closure of this colegio requires no special explanation, because the action represented the logical culmination of official Indian policy. In its later years San Gregorio symbolized the effort to assimilate the native races on a basis of social as well as legal equality, but in many minds the school nevertheless retained its old association with other ethnically oriented political and social institutions. The demise of San Gregorio, however, perhaps reflected as much the decline of optimism over the prospects for rapid acculturation as it did the triumph of liberal principles. Abolition of the school, in any case, roughly coincided with a change in mood caused partially by the outbreak of the two most serious Indian rebellions of the entire period between 1821 and 1861. The revolt of the

24 Memoria leída en las camaras en 1851, por el secre­ tario de relaciones interiores y esteriores (México: Im­ prenta de Vicente G. Torres, 1851), pp. 16, 17; Zarco, Historia del congreso extraordinario, I, p. 413; AGN, Vol. 83, f. 27; Vol. 3, ff. 418-423, 526; Colección de las leyes, decretos y ordenes expedidas por el exmo. sr. presidente de la república, d. Antonio López de Santa-Anna, desde 1º de Setiembre de 1853 [a 31º de Diciembre del mismo]. Primera parte del semanario judicial (México: Imprenta de José Mariano Fernández de Lara, 1853), V, pp. 46-55.
Sierra Gorda (1848-1849) and the caste war of Yucatán (1847-1850's) generated considerable panic in the creole community and reminded men that large numbers of Indians remained beyond the reach of even the most casual cultural contacts. For, although agrarian grievances underlay both wars, the alternative of violent resistance appealed most strongly to Indians who had enjoyed little contact with white men (whom they often still referred to as "Spaniards").

Creole response to these rebellions did not indicate an abandonment of the policy of assimilation but rather a shift in emphasis. Liberals tended to attribute the revolts to colonial abuses or the continuation of exploitation since independence, while conservatives ascribed them to the repeal of the paternalistic Spanish Indian legislation. In both cases, however, leaders coupled renewed calls for acculturation through education with demands for European colonization. Miscegenation as a solution to the race problem had always appealed to liberals such as Mora, but in the wake of Yucatán's bloody caste war its adoption

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assumed a new urgency for them. The conservatives, too, favored the importation of European colonists, although Alamán and his coreligionaries relied mainly on the restoration of the colonial system to create a "suitable" niche in society for the Indian.26

The differences that divided liberals and conservatives on this point, however, should not obscure the fact that the proposals of each reflected a racial concept of the nation. Mora and Alamán formally advocated assimilation of the Indians, but both considered the creoles the core of the nation. Under the pressure of native revolt each man turned increasingly to policies designed to eliminate the Indian through intermarriage or to create a permanently subordinate status for him. Neither viewed the native races as an integral part of the nation.27

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27Hale, Mexican Liberalism, pp. 13, 14, 35, 223, 237-239, 242, 243, 244, 296; Mora, México y sus revoluciones, I, pp. 64, 65, 70, 75; Alamán, Historia de México desde los
This attitude helps to explain the negative educational policy of the government. Political leaders, in accordance with liberal principles, opposed the retention of all formal legal distinctions based on race, but at the same time their ethnic prejudices prevented them from developing measures to promote effective acculturation. This somewhat contradictory approach occasionally destroyed instruments of cultural assimilation such as San Gregorio, and it inevitably set severe limits on the prospects for creation of a united nation. Some men recognized this fact. In 1864 Francisco Pimentel declared that "While the natives remain in their present condition, Mexico cannot aspire to the rank of nation, properly speaking. A nation is a group of men who profess common beliefs, who are dominated by the same idea, and who tend to the same end." Yet for Pimentel, as for so many other creoles, European colonization and miscegenation offered the ultimate answer to

primeros movimientos que prepararon su independencia en el año de 1808 hasta la época presente. Parte segunda, que comprende desde el plan proclamado por d. Agustín Iturbide en Iguala, en 24 de Febrero de 1821, y sucesos de España que dieron motivo a su formación, hasta la muerte de este jefe y el establecimiento de la república federal mejicana en 1824. Continuada hasta la época presente para terminar la historia de las tres garantías de aquel plan, y dar idea del estado actual de la república, V, pp. 928, 929.
the disunity created by cultural diversity. In the view of these men the principal way to solve the Indian "problem" was to eliminate the Indian.  

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28 The quotation is from Memoria sobre la situación actual de la raza indígena de México, p. 217.
GENERAL CONCLUSION

The achievement of Mexican independence in 1821 ultimately involved more than the severance of relations with Spain, because within three years the new leaders of the former colony had opted to reject their political heritage through the establishment of a republic. This basic change in the structure of government, the handiwork of a small elite, implied an equally fundamental transformation of social attitudes. Thus a diverse population which had traditionally enjoyed a degree of unity through identification with the monarch would have to transfer its allegiance to impersonal political institutions. The success of the republican experiment also seemed to require a broader sense of community than had characterized colonial society, because the concept of "popular sovereignty" now provided the theoretical justification for political power. Mexico's new leadership, in short, had set for itself the task of nationbuilding.

These men, as heirs of the Enlightenment, turned to the schools for help, but the architects of the colonial educational system had intended it for a more elitist
function. Before independence the mass of the population received at most religious instruction, and thus illiteracy defined the condition of all but a tiny minority. An admissions policy based on race and baptismal certificates, moreover, barred all but a handful of the poor from the colegios and universities, where future ecclesiastical and political officials received an intellectually authoritarian training in theology, law and philosophy. This educational system reflected the relatively closed society in which it had evolved, but it also mirrored the corporate character of the colonial sociopolitical structure. The educational community formed one of a number of powerful, semiautonomous interest groups that typified colonial Mexico, and although it served the ultimate goals of Church and State, the academic "establishment" exhibited slight interest in the needs of society as a whole.

The political and intellectual leaders of republican Mexico perceived that this system could not contribute to their objectives, and therefore they initiated a protracted campaign to eliminate the contradiction between the educational structure and the country's new form of government. Although a few individuals explicitly defined reform in these terms, the very nature of the changes made suggests
the purpose behind them. Thus both the state and federal governments authorized establishment of a network of free primary schools, through which they sought to make citizenship (i.e., membership in the nation) a reality for all segments of the population. On the secondary level they abolished the legitimacy requirement and set up scholarship programs for needy students, in an effort to undermine the elitist character of the country's future leadership. This formal democratization of the student population coincided with related changes in the curriculum. In the elementary schools the introduction of political instruction promised to promote popular identification with the new republican institutions, at the same time that it could underwrite governmental stability through the study of social rights and duties. On a subtler level the reformers hoped that expansion and modification of the advanced curriculum, through the use of empirical methods and a new emphasis on applied knowledge (as in the new science and law courses), would prepare future leaders to operate in a more open, less authoritarian environment. The addition of economically oriented courses, moreover, seemed designed partially to attract a broader range of students, a result that might further democratize the structure of the student population.
A second dimension of this reform process, which interlocked with the antielitist campaign, involved secularization of the educational system through the agency of State control. Clerical poverty contributed to the trend, but State intervention also underscored the deep dissatisfaction over the kind of education provided under ecclesiastical auspices. Thus the liberals especially tended to ascribe the narrow, authoritarian character of colonial education to clerical influence. The establishment of a system of public primary schools, moreover, reflected in part the official conviction that a government based on secularist principles (popular sovereignty) could not rely principally on the Church as guarantor of popular loyalty, particularly not when that institution's leadership tended to identify with the colonial political structure. Secularization, nevertheless, complicated the reform process, because most Mexicans deeply revered the Catholic Church, which embodied their cultural traditions and furnished what many political and intellectual leaders considered the strongest bond of national unity. For this reason highly visible attempts to eliminate clerical educators, as in 1833, often failed. Not even the conservatives, however, really attempted to reverse the decline
of ecclesiastical influence in the academic system, mainly because all but a small minority of these men defined a modern education in largely secular terms. In this one respect, at least, they implicitly conceded the liberal argument that the State rather than the Church should play the dominant role in Mexican society.

In practice, nevertheless, the general issue of ecclesiastical power and influence interacted with other negative forces to blunt the impact of educational reform. The most obvious problems related to a shortage of financial resources and a dearth of trained teachers, which largely frustrated efforts to democratize educational opportunity and thus sharply limited the formative influence of the primary schools. In a more subtle manner the dispute over the Church, which eventually culminated in a civil war between liberals and conservatives, stunted the potential of even a well-financed and competently staffed school system. Political instruction and catechismal studies, for example, represented the twin pillars on which Mexican leaders had originally intended to build the nation, but the ideological struggle at least partially neutralized the value of this kind of education. On the advanced level, likewise, the new interest in national history merely added a new dimension
to the debate over the authentic character of the Mexican nation.

The survival of elitist attitudes among prominent Mexicans raised another obstacle to educational reform. In the view of some, for example, political instruction should focus narrowly on the inculcation of social duties rather than on the study of republican institutions, and in practice many schools conformed to this approach through the use of foreign books as the Escoquiz primer. Both liberals and conservatives, moreover, tended to define the nation in terms of the creole minority, and thus Mexican governments neglected to devise any policy to handle the special educational problems of the Indians, many of whom remained outside the country's Hispanic culture. European colonization and miscegenation, not education, appeared to Mexican leaders to offer the best hope for national integration.

The educational consequences of this restricted vision of the nation underscore the limited achievements of Mexico's first generation of reformers. The most visible result of their efforts involved a reorientation of the secondary curriculum and the establishment of a public educational system. Even these reforms, however, would
not fully justify all the expectations of their authors. Thus reformers had hoped that a modern (i.e., secular), scientific education, based on empirical methods, would produce "good" republicans, but the Porfirian generation would discover that such training could foster a new variety of elitism as prejudicial to national unity as the religious strain. A State system of education, moreover, did not necessarily promote a national sense of community. The final defeat of the conservatives, to be sure, paved the way for greater unity within the national leadership, but the achievement of this goal required the suppression of universities and seminaries. Under Díaz this subordination of the academic community to the State would convert the new educational system into the instrument of a regime as elitist in orientation as the colonial monarchy. The fact remains, nevertheless, that the reformers had created the foundation for an educational system that future generations, with a broader vision of the nation, would use more effectively than they had proven able to do.
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