

Royalist Counterinsurgency in the Mexican War for Independence: The Lessons of 1811

HUGH M. HAMILL, JR.*

MOST HISTORIANS of the Mexican independence period have focused upon the insurgents. As a result we know a great deal about that group's leaders, campaigns, organizations, ideology, constitutions, press, uniforms, *machismo*, and martyrdom. Although some significant recent scholarship has been directed to economic factors, corporate bodies and social sectors of the time without special regard for political alignment, the traditional emphasis on the rebels continues unabated, and its very volume tends to warp our understanding of what actually happened.¹ In spite of the celebrated heroics of the insurgents and of their often admirable experiments with free institutions, it is plausible to argue that the royalist factions managed to meet with tenacity and ingenuity each crisis from Viceroy Iturrigaray's flirtation with criollism in 1808 to Iturbide's triumph in 1821. If such continuity can be demonstrated, there is all the more reason to examine The Other Side in Mexico's war for independence.²

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1. The following are among the most noteworthy recent contributions which explore topics that are not primarily insurgent related: N. M. Farriss, *Crown and Clergy in Colonial Mexico, 1759-1821: The Crisis of Ecclesiastical Privilege* (Oxford, 1968); Romeo Flores Caballero, *La contrarevolución en la independencia: Los españoles en la vida política, social y económica de México, 1804-1838* (México, 1969); Doris M. Ladd, "The Mexican Nobility at Independence, 1780-1826" (Ph.D. Diss., Stanford University, 1971) (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1972); D. A. Brading, *Miners and Merchants in Bourbon Mexico, 1763-1810* (Cambridge, Eng., 1971); Brian R. Hamnett, *Politics and Trade in Southern Mexico, 1750-1821* (Cambridge, Eng., 1971); and Enrique Florescano, *Precios del maíz y crisis agrícolas en México, 1708-1810* (México, 1969).

2. Nettie Lee Benson has pointed out another shortcoming, which she and her

This preliminary study of the question sketches the context within which the major royalist leaders operated and explores their efforts to thwart rebel goals especially during 1811, a year that proved to be a formative period for the counterinsurgency methods which were to become fundamental throughout the rest of the war.

The essay will not attempt systematic inquiry into the nature and values of those sectors which found common cause in active defense against the movement associated with Hidalgo, López Rayón and Morelos. This subject will be treated fully in a later study. For the present one can say that this anti-insurgent society was complex and that its composition was fluid through the decade. To identify simple social divisions like *criollos* and *gachupines* with contending sides in the conflict is clearly inadequate. *Criollos*, for example, were divided in many ways before as well as during the struggle. Indians and castes were deeply riven, as Hidalgo discovered when the appearance of his horde outside the viceregal capital in October 1810 failed to provoke a sympathetic mass uprising in the sedentary population of the Valley of Mexico. On the other hand, not all *peninsulares* were royalists. The abortive effort to revive the insurrection in 1817 was, after all, the work of a Spanish liberal, Xavier Mina. There were also multitudes of individuals of all ranks, origins, functions and degrees of sophistication who were disaffected with both sides in the war and who found themselves alienated from insurgent as well as royalist objectives.³

From the discussion of counterinsurgent leaders which follows it will be observed that, as with the royalists generally, easy social categorization is difficult. Consider place of birth. The viceroy and the majority of field commanders who developed anti-insurgent military strategy and tactics in 1811 were peninsular Spaniards. The pamphleteers who published propaganda counterattacks on the rebellion in the same year, however, were largely *criollos*. Among those psycho-

students have done much to overcome. "The new generation of creoles followed two routes to independence. . . . A great deal of study and writing has been devoted to the insurrectionists and their ephemeral Constitution of Apatzingán, whereas little attention has been given to those Mexicans who followed the route of parliamentary or congressional debate in the Spanish Cortes during the period 1810-1822, although they were the ones who laid the real foundations for constitutional government in Mexico." *Mexico and the Spanish Cortes, 1810-1822: Eight Essays* (Austin, 1966), p. 208.

3. For earlier treatments of Mexican social organization and group responses to the insurrection in 1810, see Lyle N. McAlister, "Social Structure and Social Change in New Spain," *HAHR*, 43:3 (August 1963), 349-370; Eric R. Wolf, "The Mexican Bajío in the Eighteenth Century," *Middle American Research Institute Publications*, 17 (1955), 177-200; and Hugh M. Hamill, Jr., *The Hidalgo Revolt* (Gainesville, 1966, 1970), esp. chs. 3 and 6.

logical warriors whose origins are known thirteen were criollos and only four were gachupines.

Defenders of the status quo, of the Establishment if you will, were certainly in dire circumstances on many occasions throughout the independence struggle. In late 1812, with Oaxaca lost to Morelos and the subversive society of "Los Guadalupes" exultant over the criollo victories in the cabildo and provincial delegation elections, the royalist outlook was bleak indeed.⁴ It was so bleak, in fact, that Félix María Calleja, the general who had thrashed the insurgents at Calderón and Zitácuaro, even contemplated the role of turncoat before star billing as viceroy ended that possibility.⁵ Several things indicate, nevertheless, that the initiative remained more often with the royalists in Mexico City than with the rebels in their peripatetic capital.

It is axiomatic that control of the Valley of Mexico is essential for sustained power in the nation. To hold the capital alone is not enough, as the mid-nineteenth century Conservatives discovered in the War of the Reform, but it is fundamental to any successful combination of Middle American regions.⁶ From the moment of gachupín initiative in September 1808, control of the viceregal seat was the ultimate focus of the contending factions. Not until Iturbide adroitly isolated the valley by ringing it with occupied cities like Valladolid, Querétaro and Puebla was the insurgent objective won. By that time, however, "the insurgents" were of a different stamp, and many of the same interests represented in the coup of 1808 were reflected in the harmonious independence movement of 1821.

Closely associated with royalist control of Mexico City was the ability to transfer leadership on the Establishment's terms. The removal of Iturrigaray got New Spain's gachupín faction through the first crisis of authority after Napoleon had junked the house of Bourbon. Once triumphant, the Audiencia manipulated two puppet viceroys in a row and tried its own hand at rule before the timely arrival of Viceroy Venegas on September 14, 1810. As will be seen, Venegas and his successor, Calleja, to whom he passed on the government *pro forma* in March 1813, were the principal architects of counter-

4. Ernesto de la Torre Villar, *Los "Guadalupes" y la Independencia* (México, 1966), pp. xliii-xlv; Wilbert H. Timmons, "Los Guadalupes: a Secret Society in the Mexican Revolution for Independence," *HAHR*, 30:4 (November 1950), 464-465; Nettie Lee Benson, "The Contested Mexican Election of 1812," *HAHR*, 26:3 (August 1946), 349.

5. Carlos María de Bustamante, *Campañas del General D. Félix María Calleja* (México, 1828), pp. 91-92.

6. Eric R. Wolf, *Sons of the Shaking Earth* (Chicago, 1959), pp. 1-10.

insurgency. They were successful to the degree that Viceroy Apodaca, who in turn received command in 1816, faced only a moribund insurrection thoroughly atomized and effectively leaderless. Apodaca ruled an almost pacified kingdom until 1821. When he did lose his seat in a barracks revolt, it was barely two months before Marshal Novella, leader of the *golpe*, surrendered the city to the Army of the Three Guarantees. By this time, of course, the Establishment had found independence palatable and Iturbide's victory desirable.⁷

What, then, was the nature of this royalist capacity to control power? Was criollo society so traumatized by Hidalgo's horde in 1810 that the viceregal government had only to pose as the defender of law and order and the opponent of anarchy in order to attract most criollos to its standard? Were new rebel outrages after the collapse of the Hidalgo revolt sufficient to sustain the backlash? Or was an effective antiguerrilla program devised which combined with other factors to stem the tide of revolution?

Any attempt to explain how the rebellion was contained must acknowledge regionalism. Unlike colonial Chile, which was marked by homogeneity, New Spain abounded in diversity, rivalry and suspicion bred of an absurdly wrinkled topography.⁸ Terrain, great distances, and fickle weather often hampered government operations but, at the same time, poor communications and consequent localism played havoc with insurgent efforts to coordinate campaigns against the royalists. When most of the government's effective forces were tied down besieging Morelos at Cuautla during the spring of 1812, petty local jealousies among rebel commanders in the Huasteca and the Bajío prevented a concerted effort which might have toppled Venegas from power. There was, too, an important polarization. The countryside provided sanctuary for insurgent bands, especially in southern and western precincts, but the vital urban centers were most often royalist. "Containment" of the insurrection must be understood in the context of a vast and difficult geography.⁹

7. Timothy E. Anna, "Francisco Novella and the Last Stand of the Royal Army in New Spain," *HAHR*, 51:1 (February 1971), 92-111. Benson has made it clear that definition of authority was a difficult matter for Venegas, Calleja, and Apodaca during those periods of their rule when the Constitution of 1812 was in effect. See *Mexico and the Spanish Cortes*, pp. 8-9.

8. Simon Collier comments that "Chile in 1810 was socially and geographically compact, and this must help to account for the brevity of political disorder and the speedy transition to orderly government." "Chile never saw the dangerous racial rivalries or regional tensions that affected the post-revolutionary performances of some of the other American provinces." *Ideas and Politics of Chilean Independence, 1808-1833* (Cambridge, Eng., 1967), p. 7.

9. Robert W. McColl, a geographer and student of national revolutions, has cautioned against a too literal reading of the process which Mao Tse-tung calls

These geographic conditions have persuaded me to use the term "counterinsurgency," which may be defined as the gamut of techniques, military, political and psychological, employed to quell a guerrilla movement. After the great massed battles at Las Cruces and the Bridge of Calderón, most engagements were, by comparison, skirmishes. From 1811 onwards, counterinsurgency, the obverse of the rebels' guerrilla war, is the best descriptive term available for royalist activity.

For a close examination of the turmoil in New Spain and the development of counterinsurgency techniques, the year between Hidalgo's defeat at Calderón in January 1811 and Calleja's destruction of the rebel base at Zitácuaro in January 1812 is a useful period. Because Hidalgo's heirs were still in disarray and brighter years lay ahead for the insurgents under Morelos, 1811 may seem a curious choice. But it is a year in which the "affluent society" disappeared and the character of the conflict took on a new and persistent shape.

Destruction of the horde at Calderón, the swift pacification of the West and North, and the climactic capture of Allende and Hidalgo in March suggested that the triumph of the Establishment and a return to the *status quo ante* was at hand. But 1811 was not the decisive year that the royalists had imagined it would be. Calleja wrote the viceroy on August 20 from Guanajuato that "the insurrection is far from over; it sprouts up like the Hydra as fast as its heads are cut off."¹⁰ This apt allusion suggests that the revolution had become atomized; a change had occurred which meant trouble for responsible rebel leadership quite as much as it did for the government.

Throughout the Bajío, Michoacán, the valley of Toluca, the Huasteca and other regions, the disappearance of Hidalgo and dispersal of his horde triggered the emergence of autonomous mounted bands of rebels. The vicar of a mining camp in the Huasteca described one of these *gavillas* which attacked his village in April. Forty royalist troops stationed there were surprised by a "multitude of Indians of the insurgent party" and were carried off together with their arms. Houses were sacked, including that of the curate, and three leading citizens

"surrounding the cities with the countryside." McColl says that while this is "often misconstrued as a rural-based and rural-oriented policy, the main objective is the capture and control of the important cities and market towns. Control of the countryside is merely the means to that end and not an end in itself." "The Insurgent State: Territorial Bases of Revolution," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 59 (December 1969), 630. For a recent and provocative discussion of tensions between rural regions and the urban core in Mexico see Octavio Paz, *Posdata* (México, 1970), pp. 86-92.

10. Quoted by Lucas Alamán, *Historia de Méjico* (México, 1849-52), II, 286-287.

were killed and decapitated, their heads borne away as trophies.¹¹ Archives are full of accounts of raids amounting to banditry, but there were also some singularly responsible insurgents among the hundreds operating. When another Huastecan hamlet was invaded in May 1811, the rebels freed prisoners from the jail, divided up local stores, and then assembled to worship in church. As they withdrew, their leader, Antonio Senteno, left behind a receipt for funds confiscated from the coffers of the administrator of the tobacco monopoly. He signed himself "Captain Commander of the Royal Forces of America," a title which suggests the continued effort to link the insurgent cause to Ferdinand VII.¹² As is well known, Morelos took special pains to prevent his own troops from looting: individual soldiers were shot for theft; parties of marauders were decimated and the rest sent to chain gangs.¹³ Rebel activity ranged from anarchy to statesmanship. The overall situation, however, was a savage and brutalized conflict to which the royalists made their own sanguinary contributions. By the end of this period, January 1812, General Calleja had carried retaliation and war to the death so far that he ordered the obliteration of the captured city of Zitácuaro, which had been Rayón's capital. Calleja left no doubt about his intent, demanding that "esta infiel y criminal villa" must be "arrazada, incendiada y destruida."¹⁴

The implications of such a state of anarchic and merciless warfare were profound. Not only was public safety threatened, but populations were uprooted. Trade, agriculture and industry were disrupted. Some areas, especially in the Intendencies of Valladolid (Michoacán), Guanajuato, and México, experienced persistent warfare and attendant dislocation of economic infrastructure. Lucas Alamán recalled 1811 as a time when

The insurgents lived completely off the land: royal tax receipts and tithes were exhausted in the towns which they dominated; haciendas belonging to Spaniards were consumed . . . and even

11. José María Martínez to Cabildo Eclesiástico, Archdiocese of México. Actopan, April 8, 1811. MS. Archivo Histórico, Museo de Antropología, I.N.A.H. (hereafter, AMA), Antigua Colección, Vol. 381, No. 23, f. 49r, v. Martínez was vicar of El Real del Cardonal. For a vivid description of insurgent tactics, including the use of the lariat, see José María Luis Mora, *México y sus revoluciones*, (México, 1950), III, 202-203.

12. José Mariano Zimbrón y Ortiz to Cabildo Eclesiástico, Archdiocese of México. Zinguilucan, May 12, 1811. MS. AMA, Antigua Colección, Vol. 381, No. 36, f. 68r, v. Zimbrón y Ortiz was curate of what is today Singuilucan, Hidalgo.

13. José María Morelos to Coronel D. Valerio Trujano. Tehuacán, September 30, 1812. J. E. Hernández y Dávalos, *Colección de documentos para la guerra de independencia de México de 1808-1821* (México, 1877-82), IV, 487.

14. Proclamation of Calleja. San Juan Zitácuaro, January 5, 1812, in Bustamante, *Campañas*, p. 144.

the goods and properties of those committed to the revolution were commandeered. . . . In place of extensive districts covered with a wealth of grain and numerous herds only ruined buildings and deserted and uncultivated fields could be found. . . .¹⁵

The impact of the insurrection in 1811 was, however, quite uneven. Some regions, like the Interior Provinces and the immediate vicinity of the Capital, did not see much physical destruction of productive capacity. Agricultural production actually increased on some haciendas. Regular transport suffered, however. Consequently marketing systems were crippled, and unravaged districts felt the impact of economic depression. Viceroy Venegas could take little joy in the fall of Zitácuaro when he saw the Capital's communications with Querétaro and the North "annihilated so far as internal commerce is concerned, accompanied by the absolute impossibility of shipping mercury, gunpowder and other indispensable supplies for working the silver mines."¹⁶ Many mines, although they escaped destruction at the hands of enraged mobs, fell into disrepair and were flooded for want of such supplies. Perhaps most damaging to the mining sector was the disruption of capital investment. Indeed all economic sectors tended to atrophy as royalist demands for contributions soaked up elite wealth, specie disappeared from circulation, and credit systems failed. The royal lottery, one indicator sensitive to economic dislocation, was so badly hit that its funding sank more than 30% from 1810 to 1811.¹⁷

Although the uppercrust of pre-war Mexico had enjoyed affluence, privation began to haunt even the elite by the end of 1811. As for the general population, their misery was the greater as a result of the deprivations caused by the insurrection. Just over a year later, in 1813, the Indians and castes of Mexico City became the principal victims of a typhus epidemic. Scarcity of food weakened resistance, and public officials and private charities were left with inadequate financial resources to meet the health crisis. Fiscal shortages were critical. The *Hospital Real de Indios*, which had enjoyed an annual income of 52,000 pesos before the Hidalgo revolt, had only 15,000 pesos with which to care for the sick in 1813. Emergency funding for the hospital was not to be had from diocesan sources outside Mexico City, according

15. Alamán, *Historia*, II, 231-32; see also pp. 241-242.

16. Order of Venegas. México, February 8, 1812, in Bustamante, *Campañas*, p. 160.

17. José María Cordoncillo Samada, *Historia de la Real Lotería en Nueva España, 1770-1821* (Seville, 1962), pp. 101-104. For the most judicious estimate of the complex and uneven effects of the insurrection on the Mexican economy, see Ladd, "The Mexican Nobility," pp. 249-279.

to contemporaries, because of agricultural paralysis. Over 20,000 lives were lost in what was to be the worst calamity to strike Mexico City in the nineteenth century.¹⁸

Although many rural aristocrats, both gachupín and criollo, fled to urban sanctuary to escape the rebellion, others remained to organize local defenses. Mateo Musitú, a wealthy Spaniard, mustered a private army of 200 retainers, gathered four cannon (including one he named "Mata-Morelos"), and fortified himself in a former Augustinian convent at Chiautla, southwest of Puebla. There he held off part of Morelos's army in early December until the insurgents stormed the monastic fortress.¹⁹ In April 1811, a priest near Huichapan won a letter of praise for his "honor, zelo, y patriotismo" from the metropolitan *cabildo eclesiástico* because he raised a troop at his own expense to resist the insurgent caudillo Villagrán.²⁰ Such local initiative emphasized a trend away from Bourbon efforts to centralize and helped prepare the way for those personalist local caciques who would later dominate Mexican politics. Derring-do on both sides became associated with men who posed as soldiers, including many who started out as clerics. The adulation, respect and fear which they aroused among local populations created a new atmosphere which enhanced the military caste. The hero's welcome which Calleja received when he entered Mexico City just after his victory at Zitácuaro leaves little doubt that *Santanismo* arrived in New Spain well before Santa Anna himself emerged from obscurity.²¹

For the leaders of the opposing factions 1811 was a year of adaptation to guerrilla warfare. In a joint letter written to Calleja in April, Hidalgo's immediate heirs Ignacio López Rayón and José María Liceaga tried to define the goals of the crippled but not extinguished rebellion. The main problem which they faced was to develop sufficient moral authority and adequate communications to reverse the process of atomization.²² For the royalists, on the other hand, recognition that the Hydra had replaced the horde meant that counterinsur-

18. Donald B. Cooper, *Epidemic Disease in Mexico City, 1761-1813* (Austin, 1965), pp. 159-182, 191; esp. 177-178.

19. Alamán, *Historia*, II, 429-430.

20. Domingo de Soria Bustamante to Cabildo Eclesiástico, Archdiocese of México. Huichapan, April 1, 1811. MS. AMA, Antigua Colección, Vol. 381, No. 24, f. 51r, v. The curate of Landa provided his account in this report to which the Cabildo replied, [México], April 13, 1811. MS. Ibid., No. 27, f. 54r, v.

21. Bustamante, *Campañas*, p. 167; *Cuadro histórico de la revolución mexicana* (México, 1961), I, 246.

22. For the text of the correspondence see Ignacio Rayón and José María Liceaga to Félix Calleja. Zacatecas, April 22, 1811. Reprinted in Bustamante, *Campañas*, pp. 108-111, and *Cuadro histórico*, I, 161-163. Alamán included Bustamante's transcript in *Historia de Méjico*, II, Appendix No. 16, pp. 37-38.

gency techniques must be developed to prevent recovery of rebel momentum, to protect towns and cities and to subdue the rural bands which menaced lives, property and communications.

Elaboration of royalist counterinsurgency techniques in 1811 set the pattern of response to the atomized revolt for the next decade. Vigorous leaders with a fund of experience were in greater supply than either troops or money, and their expertise was crucial in adjusting to the rebellion. Viceroy Venegas had proved himself resourceful in meeting Hidalgo's challenge and he could now draw upon his accumulated knowledge of guerrilla warfare gained fighting the French from 1808 until 1810. Although cast in the opposite role, Venegas could nevertheless understand the guerrilla mentality. Significantly, he preferred to deal with isolated and uncoordinated bands, and insisted upon the destruction of Rayón's citadel at Zitácuaro lest the insurrection coalesce once more about a central authority. In this he was staunchly supported by Calleja, his principal field commander.²³ Calleja had come from Spain in 1789 with Revillagigedo but had since become thoroughly Mexicanized as a landowner in San Luis Potosí, married into the criollo aristocracy. Such identification gave Calleja a subtle sense of criollo anxieties and aspirations, an advantage which he exploited in the development of strategy and tactics to foil the rebellion. Moreover, his family connections helped him to recruit and to finance his army in 1810. Although Venegas and Calleja cordially detested one another and quarrelled over details, their skills were complementary, and they agreed on basic approaches to the task of pacification.²⁴

It was the field commander Calleja, in June 1811, who developed the fundamental plan which ultimately helped frustrate his rebel adversaries. In a fourteen-point *Reglamento* prepared in Aguascalientes, Calleja opted for local defense with considerable regional autonomy. Aware that there was a calculated risk in arming the kingdom, he still felt that after his experience with the Hidalgo revolt, and given the relative paucity of regular troops, the gamble was both wise and necessary. As he wrote Venegas, by such measures "the towns may

23. Proclamation of Calleja. Guanajuato, September 28, 1811, in Hernández y Dávalos, *Colección*, III, 390.

24. Calleja's real estate acquisitions are discussed in the biography of his Potosí wife: José de Núñez y Domínguez, *La virreina mexicana: Doña María Francisca de la Gándara de Calleja* (México, 1950), p. 44. Calleja had had long experience in the problems of mobilization. For details, see María del Carmen Velázquez, *El estado de guerra en Nueva España, 1760-1808* (México, 1950), 180-183, esp. notes 312 and 315. Brading, *Miners and Merchants*, p. 345, explains the military advantages of his family links. For a discussion of the rival factions which developed around Venegas and Calleja, see Romeo Flores, pp. 71-72.

not only be held in obedience and confidence, but they will also pledge themselves to pursue the insurgents who will become their natural enemies, as has happened in León, Irapuato, Real de Catorce and other [towns], and it will be difficult, once they have successfully fought the enemy and suffered the consequences of his evil actions, for them to resolve to join him."²⁵ Every town was to have its corps of armed residents mustered by companies from the barrios, equipped with confiscated weapons and drilled on Sundays. Likewise, large haciendas were to maintain companies of fifty men; smaller haciendas were to provide thirty men, and ranchos six or eight men. Each component would have its *comandante de armas*, named by a division general and responsible to him. The *vecinos honrados* or citizens who served in these corps would hold commissions to carry arms; all others caught with weapons would be fined or exiled fifty leagues from their homes. The hacienda companies were expected to patrol the roads and to report to the urban commanders any *gavillas de bandidos* encountered. To make efficient use of regular regiments, these were to be stationed at strategic intervals and available to support local defense contingents.²⁶

Such a thorough scheme for decentralized defense was an ideal only irregularly achieved; Venegas appears to have been loath to accept a subordinate's proposal *in toto*. Yet there is evidence that it was adopted successfully in some localities in 1811.²⁷ Calleja was so convinced of the plan's value that he reissued it two years later when he became viceroy, and urged it on his successor when he left office in 1816.²⁸ The *Reglamento* thus remained the basic blueprint for royalist counterinsurgency, and the insurgents themselves recognized

25. Quoted by Bustamante, *Campañas*, p. 119.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 119-22; also in Hernández y Dávalos, *Colección*, III, 289-290. My translation of the complete document is in H. M. Hamill, "The Consequences of Spanish American Independence," in Joseph S. Tulchin, ed., *Problems in Latin American History* (New York, 1973), pp. 43-46. For a summary of royalist military operations province by province, see Mora, *México*, III, 196-239.

27. Proclamation of Gil Angulo. San Juan del Río, August 7, 1811. MS. Archivo General de la Nación (hereafter, AGN), Ramo de Historia, Vol. 105, f. 111r-12v. Angulo, formerly "capitan de fragata," was appointed "Comandante político y militar" of San Juan del Río. His *bando* includes the text of Calleja's *Reglamento*. In Aguascalientes the subdelegado Felipe Terán successfully employed his urban companies against "numerosas gavillas de bandoleros" during July. Calleja to Venegas. Guanajuato, August 12, 1811. Wagner Collection, Yale University.

28. "Reglamento político militar. . . ." México, March 5, 1813. In Ernesto Lemoine Villicaña, *Morelos: su vida revolucionaria a través de sus escritos y de otros testimonios de la época* (México, 1965), pp. 271-275. See note, p. 271. "Estado que manifiesta la fuerza . . . del Ejército de Nueva España. . . ." México, August 31, 1816. MS. AGN, Ramo de Historia, Vol. 485, f. 19.

its importance. Morelos took pains to counter this "impious policy" with detailed regulations of his own.²⁹ Carlos María de Bustamante, the rebel journalist, gave it grudging respect. In 1828, he wrote that through the plan's provisions "the nation quickly found itself enchained and its sons made executioners of their own brothers."³⁰ The plan also accelerated militarization of the society and encouraged the emergence of local caudillos.

In addition to the development of semi-autonomous local defense zones, royalist strategists during the last half of 1811 came to recognize that they must prevent the establishment of fixed insurgent bases near the kingdom's core. For this reason, the deliberate offensive begun by Calleja in November and ardently supported by Venegas, breaking the rebel hold on Zitácuaro on January 2, 1812, marks a critical and perhaps definitive juncture in the struggle. Rayón's Junta was thereby deprived of a political and military base which might have served to help legitimize the movement, to cut royalist communications with the western intendencias, and even to threaten the security of the Capital. Proof that Venegas understood the strategy thoroughly came when he ordered Calleja to move against Cuautla almost immediately after the destruction of Zitácuaro. Venegas planned the attack on Cuautla "so as to deny the enemy a place where he can concentrate all his forces." Although the miraculous escape by Morelos from Calleja's grip at Cuautla in May 1812 has been celebrated in patriotic annals, it must be recognized that the insurgents failed to maintain a stronghold there as a substitute for the one lost at Zitácuaro. Subsequently the rebels were unable to provide for themselves that centrally located guerrilla base which would have posed a real danger to Mexico City. Such a policy of denial was certainly the most important strategy adopted by the royalists during 1811.³¹

29. "Contra plan de Calleja." Acapulco, July 7, 1813. Copy. Maquilapa, October 20, 1813. Lemoine Villicaña, *Morelos*, pp. 331-335.

30. *Campañas*, p. 122.

31. Ernesto Lemoine V. argues that the physical location of the Junta's capital was of much less strategic importance than the Viceroy assigned to Zitácuaro. Of greater importance, for Lemoine, was the creation of the institution of the Junta which served as "un foco de infección que atacaba la discutible sanidad del organismo colonial" and this survived in nomadic fashion after Zitácuaro was destroyed. My conclusion is based on Robert McColl's analysis of the insurgent state in which he demonstrates that fixed military-political bases close to the enemy's vulnerable communication lines and urban centers, especially the capital, are requisite for the success of a national revolution. See Ernesto Lemoine Villicaña, "Zitácuaro, Chilpancingo y Apatzingán: tres grandes momentos de la insurgencia mexicana," *Boletín del Archivo General de la Nación*, 2nd. Ser., 4:3 (1963), 407; McColl, "The Insurgent State." See esp. his discussion of the failure of the Greek commu-

Aware that urban centers were the ultimate rebel objectives and faced with plots and subversives within the very Capital itself, royalist commanders made internal security in cities and towns a major concern. Preservation of order through restrictions upon individual freedom of movement, increased police forces, and simplified legal procedures in cases involving sedition were the principal measures of this facet of counterinsurgency. Although security had been a constant concern, the acceleration of interest in it by Venegas in the wake of an abortive plot to capture the Viceroy himself on August 3, 1811, is wonderful to behold.³²

Very quickly Venegas felt obliged "to take all possible steps and precautions in order to assure myself that the most faithful inhabitants of México are not exposed again to such consternation."³³ Chief among these was the elaboration of a new police system for the Capital, funded by donations from corporations and from patriotic and presumably frightened individuals. The lengthy decree established a hierarchical police force under the *Oidor* Pedro de la Puente as Superintendent of Police and Public Tranquility. Divided into precincts, the barrios of the city were henceforth to be subjected to close scrutiny and control. Citizens "no matter what class, condition or *fuero*" were prohibited from changing abode, taking on new servants, having overnight visitors, or spending more than two nights away from home without permission of the authorities. The passport system established in February was refined so as to control the movement and identity of those who left or returned to the city through official ports of entry. Indian bearers who brought goods into the city were specifically included.³⁴ There was much subsequent tinkering with the

nist insurgency (1946-1949), due in part to its "limited access to major political targets," p. 620. For a discussion of royalist and rebel strategy just prior to the Cuautla siege, see Luis Chávez Orozco, *El sitio de Cuautla: La epopeya de la guerra de independencia* (México, 1962), pp. 7-24. The Venegas quote is from p. 22.

32. "Aviso al público." Proclamation of Venegas. México, August 3, 1811. Hernández y Dávalos, *Colección*, III, 332. Proclamation of Venegas. México, August 6, 1811. *Ibid.*, 332-334. For a description of the plot and its repercussions, see Timothy E. Anna, "Mexico City in the War of Independence, 1810-1821" (Ph.D. Diss., Duke University, 1969) (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1970), pp. 331-339.

33. Venegas. Circular letter. México, August 1811. AMA, Antigua Colección, Vol. 381, No. 67, f. 234. This specific copy, addressed to the Deán y Cabildo Sede Vacante, is dated August 18.

34. *Reglamento de policía*. Venegas. México, August 22, 1811. Hernández y Dávalos, *Colección*, III, 342-351. A detailed defense of the system, with a discussion of European models, is given in the Report of the *Junta de Policía y Tranquilidad* to Venegas. México, December 25, 1811. *Ibid.*, IV, 715-739.

passport arrangements by de la Puente, which suggests a not wholly successful effort "to reconcile public security with the interests and convenience of good citizens."³⁵

Objection to the police regulations and the passport system was expressed by the Ayuntamiento, which felt its prerogatives usurped. The vigorous viceregal program was correctly held to be an imposition of martial law. The regidores appealed to the Cádiz Regency for a restitution of their authority over internal security matters, and were eventually successful when the Regency decreed, in September 1812, that the police force was inconsistent with the new Constitution.³⁶

Meanwhile, however, violators or suspected dissidents were swept up in substantial numbers by the police net. During the last third of 1811 some 350 were hauled before the *Junta de Seguridad y Buen Orden*.³⁷ This extraordinary tribunal, established under a different name in 1809, came into its own after the Hidalgo revolt had erupted. Composed of only four judges (a fifth was attached from the archdiocese when clerics were in the dock) who were drawn from among the most faithful *peninsulares*, the Junta was equipped with streamlined procedures. Defendants were denied appeal and other simple rights. Such formalities, explained contemporary crown prosecutors, were "inconsistent with the Junta's primary objective, which is prompt conviction."³⁸ The zeal of the tribunal in its efforts to ferret out suspects and convict them on flimsy evidence made it another engine of royalist control. Its ruthless efficiency is borne out by the fact that it processed five times as many cases from 1810 to 1812 as did the traditional *Sala del Crimen*.³⁹

Other regions under royalist control experienced similar application of martial law. The Intendancy of San Luis Potosí, for example, was put under a set of stringent regulations by Calleja in March 1811. A citizen, again no matter what his class or station, might expect summary execution if he were apprehended armed and without a passport, or if he withheld information about a cache of arms or a secret junta. He could expect rough treatment, short of "el último suplicio" or the death penalty, if he went abroad without a light after ten o'clock or if he refused to turn in money coined by the insurgents.

35. Pedro de la Puente. Circular letters. México, September 4, September 11, October 9, 1811. AMA, Gómez de Orozco Collection. Papales Varios, Vol. 60, XII, nos. 1, 2, 3. De la Puente, *Instrucción para los cabos de policía de las garitas de entrada de esta capital* (México, September 15, 1810), *ibid.*, XIII, No. 2. Quote from letter of September 4.

36. See Anna, "Mexico City," pp. 462-467.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 339.

38. Farriss, *Crown and Clergy*, p. 207.

39. For the best description of the Junta, see *ibid.*, pp. 206-209.

In all, Calleja laid down some twenty-two provisions to prevent local violence and to deny urban support to insurgent bands. Venegas saw fit to have Calleja's decree reprinted in the *Gaceta* in May. As far as justice was concerned, provincial versions of the *Junta de Seguridad* were established in much of the viceroyalty beyond the Capital by the end of 1811.⁴⁰

Cultivation of civil defense and restoration of responsible local government in areas cleared of insurgents were among those measures most apt to advertise the advantages and righteousness of the Establishment's cause. As a complement to these military-political programs, the defenders evolved an elaborate set of counterinsurgency practices which combined coercion and persuasion.

Although Calleja's dramatic torchlight executions, held in Guanajuato's crowded plaza in November 1810 after he had recaptured the city, set the example for grim object lessons, it was the commander in Nueva Galicia, José de la Cruz, who became master of reprisals. Cruz wrote Calleja in April 1811 that "we must spread terror and death everywhere so that not a single perverted soul remains in the land. . . . These bandits will learn what war to the death really means."⁴¹ Some of the refinements which Cruz developed were based upon his earlier encounter in Spain with the French practice, starkly recorded by Goya in his *Desastres de la Guerra*, of hanging victims, or pieces of them, in trees. His unusually sanguinary tactics were accompanied by voluminous published descriptions of military engagements, rewards for captured rebels, a sagacious use of the *indulto* or pardon, and resort to the provisions of Calleja's *Reglamento*. Such measures helped make Cruz one of the most successful of royalist commanders. Jalisco became his bailiwick and, as *jefe político*, he mastered Guadalajara for the next decade.⁴²

Viceroy Venegas himself employed shock effects with enthusiasm. It was he who established the policy in April 1811 which later resulted in the display of the heads of Hidalgo, Allende, Aldama and Jiménez in cages on the four corners of the Alhóndiga in Guanajuato.⁴³ Calleja had earlier proposed that the leaders of the revolt be conducted under heavy guard to Mexico City "by way of the middle of the

40. *Gaceta del Gobierno de México*, II (May 14, 1811), 427-431; Farriss, *Crown and Clergy*, p. 209.

41. Cruz to Calleja. Guadalajara, April 18, 1811. Extract quoted by Bustamante, *Campañas*, p. 107. For the Guanajuato episode, see Alamán, II, 58-61.

42. For a good example of one of Cruz's decrees, see "Habitantes del Reyno de Nueva Galicia." Guadalajara, June 25, 1811. In Hernández y Dávalos, *Colección*, III, 291-293.

43. Venegas to Calleja. México, April 13, 1811. MS. AGN. Ramo de Operaciones de Guerra, Vol. 181, Calleja papers, f. 273.

Kingdom and the principal cities along the route to demonstrate to everyone the certainty of their capture.”⁴⁴ Under orders from Venegas, however, Calleja wrote to the *comandante* of the Interior Provinces in Chihuahua to the effect that the transfer of the prisoners to the Capital “posed many obstacles.” Instead they were “to be judged and sentenced immediately to death” in Chihuahua. He ordered “that the heads of the said principal prisoners be sent along so that they might be exhibited in the communities where they began their crimes. . . .”⁴⁵

The psychological importance of the spectacle of public executions was also well understood by Venegas. In September 1811, he issued a decree ostensibly to show his concern for public safety by protecting crowds from horses and carriages during executions in the plaza. The viceroy, however, was primarily anxious that as many people as possible would have an unobstructed view of the gory proceedings. In what was clearly an appeal to lower class support for his government, Venegas spoke of the “excessive gathering of coaches and horses” which occurs, so that a certain “few persons come [to the executions] in comfort which the rest do not enjoy. He went on to order that in the future “no person, no matter what his class or dignity,” might watch a public execution from a coach or on horseback. This was, perhaps, the closest thing to social leveling which might have occurred in that sharply stratified society.⁴⁶

It cannot be argued that royalist counter-terrorism and harsh repression by themselves brought about the desired goal of a pacified realm. On the contrary, there is evidence that the arbitrary and vicious reprisals by some royalist commanders occasionally drove previously neutral Mexicans into the insurgent camp and thus prolonged the conflict. While successful in the main, José de la Cruz was charged by the Audiencia of Guadalajara with having so enraged the Indians near Lake Chapala by the destruction of their villages that in 1813 they fortified themselves on the Island of Mezcala under the leadership of the insurgent priest Marcos Castellanos. From their island redoubt these new rebels harassed royalist forces and supply lines until a blockade and an epidemic forced their surrender in 1816.⁴⁷

44. Calleja to Nemesio Salcedo. San Luis Potosí, April 4, 1811. MS. Contemporary copy. AMA. Papeles Sueltos, 2nd. Ser., Leg. 15-1-11.

45. Calleja to Nemesio Salcedo. San Luis Potosí, April 20, 1811. MS. Contemporary copy. Ibid. 15-1-13. It was Calleja who made the actual decision to hang the heads on the Alhóndiga. See the inscription by Intendant Fernando Pérez Maraón, Guanajuato, October 14, 1811, in José María Liceaga, *Adiciones y rectificaciones a la Historia de México por Don Lucas Alamán* (México, 1944), I, 207.

46. Proclamation of Venegas. México, September 19, 1811. AGN, Ramo de Bandos, Vol. 31, f. 30.

47. See the discussion of this event and of the counterproductive effect of royalist atrocities in Farriss, *Crown and Clergy*, pp. 227-229.

Moreover, shortages of seasoned troops lessened the effectiveness of the royalist adaptation to the guerrilla war. In the earliest stages of the rebellion, for example, an unruly crew of sailors from Spanish ships in the harbor at Veracruz had been organized into two battalions under the command of naval captain Rosendo Porlier.⁴⁸ Such expedients were constantly sought by Venegas during 1811 and the years which followed.

Given such limitations, it is not surprising that the royalists depended heavily on additional methods to defeat the insurrection. Among these the ability to manipulate public opinion stood paramount. Calleja, for his part, took pains to include in his *Reglamento* for local defense a provision to appoint in each barrio "an ecclesiastic who inspires confidence by his virtue and patriotism . . . [who] shall exhort and animate [the troops] on all occasions."⁴⁹ Moreover, the viceroy and other leaders encouraged printed propaganda, much of which was designed to be read aloud or, in the case of dialogues, performed as a sort of counter-guerrilla theatre in order to reach individuals in an overwhelmingly non-literate society.

Aware that psychological warfare had been instrumental in Hidalgo's defeat, propagandists continued some themes from the fall of 1810, and elaborated new motifs. Especially characteristic of royalist propaganda in 1811 was patriotic association between New Spain and the mother country. Identification with Spain's defiance of Napoleon after three years' occupation was encouraged by frequent publication of military news and by reprints of peninsular pamphlets. Mutual patriotism was further reenforced by heavy stress upon the third anniversary of the *Dos de Mayo*, Madrid's heroic uprising against the French in 1808.⁵⁰ Finally, when the Cádiz Regency took pains to applaud the Mexican armies for having tranquilized the kingdom, Venegas circulated the decree widely to encourage further efforts to hold the whole empire intact for Ferdinand VII.⁵¹

Closely linked to such common cause was the old question of criollo-gachupín rivalry. Much printers ink was devoted to eliminating antagonisms between the two parties. The tack taken by royalist pamphleteers after the Hidalgo revolt was, however, different from their desperate appeals for criollo support in 1810. Mexicans as well as Spaniards had now fought and died for the Establishment in battles

48. Bustamante, *Cuadro histórico*, I, 34-35.

49. Bustamante, *Campañas*, p. 121.

50. *El Consejo de Regencia a la nación española en el aniversario del Dos de Mayo*. (Cádiz, May 2, 1811) (Reprinted: México, 1811). Sutro Library.

51. Proclamation of Venegas. México, July 30, 1811. Incorporates Proclamation of the *Consejo de Regencia*. Cádiz, May 30, 1811. AGN, Ramo de Bandos, Vol. 31, f. 26.

with the insurgents. One criollo alcalde from Querétaro wrote a ringing exhortation to the American armies of Ferdinand VII. He described a future Valhalla for "those valiant Warriors of 1810, who for our God, for our King and our Country fought against the Insurgents. . . . Their sweat and their blood alone were able to fertilize this America, withered as it was in those days by the sacrilegious and traitorous hands of Hidalgo and Allende."⁵²

Appeals for union did not, however, extinguish the low esteem in which criollos held *peninsulares*. There is evidence that those terror-stricken Spaniards who fled to the Capital in the fall and winter of 1810-1811 were coldly received and accused of cowardice. Some criticism even came from their compatriots who, like Calleja, deplored the example of the refugees, while they praised those criollos who fought actively against the rebels.⁵³ A fund established to help dispossessed gachupines in Mexico City drew embarrassingly little support, whereas more than 50,000 pesos were quickly subscribed to aid the widows of martyrs like Juan Antonio Riaño, Manuel Flon and lesser royalist figures, both Mexican and Spanish, who had died fighting Hidalgo. Lucas Alamán observed that it was such "acts of generosity which excited the enthusiasm of the army and confirmed its loyalty. . . ."⁵⁴ Dedication to the cause rather than one's birthplace tended, then, to win applause. Many criollos who had committed themselves grudgingly to defend the government as the lesser of two evils in 1810 now found themselves honored in the press and relied upon by the old gachupín hierarchy.

It was news of the rebellion's destructive activities which had deterred most criollos from supporting Hidalgo in 1810. It is not sur-

52. Ramón Esteban Martínez, *Parabien que da el alcalde ordinario de primer voto de Querétaro, a los ejércitos americanos de Fernando VII.* (México, 1811), pp. 2, 10-11.

53. Calleja wrote to Venegas the following: "¿No debe causar la mayor admiración que siendo ésta una guerra cuya divisa es el exterminio de los europeos, se hayan mantenido éstos en la inacción á vista del peligro, huyendo cobardemente en vez de reunirse, tratando solo de sus intereses; y se mantengan ahora pacíficos espectadores de una lucha en que les toca la mayor parte, dejando que los americanos, esta porción noble y generosa que con tanta fidelidad ha abrasado la buena causa, tome á su cargo la defensa de sus vidas, propiedades é intereses?" Guadalaraja, January 28, 1811. Bustamante, *Campañas*, p. 93.

54. Alamán, *Historia*, II, 237-238. Another contemporary observer described how "this revolution . . . has made many Europeans seek asylum in [Mexico City], where with their families they suffer the greatest misery for having their possessions confiscated by the rebels, and in truth they have found very few compatriots who will help them or be disposed to lend them a hand to reestablish themselves." Fermín de Reygadas, *Discurso contra el fanatismo y la impostura de los rebeldes de Nueva España. Dedicado a todos los hombres de bien.* (México, June 10, 1811), p. 12. Sñtro Library.

prising, therefore, that tales of physical ruin became the drone bass of royalist propaganda in 1811. The first anniversary of the *Grito de Dolores* gave pamphleteers a special opportunity to berate the insurgents for a year in which "the demon of discord distributed torrents of fatal venom" over the land.⁵⁵

The possibility that rebels themselves might become disillusioned with the movement and abjure it was used to royalist advantage. In August Calleja circulated a *bando* in the Interior Provinces which publicized the purported retraction of Miguel Hidalgo before his execution. In it the priest of Dolores appears to have disavowed the insurrection because of the devastation it had produced. The retraction was also reprinted in the official *Gaceta* on August 3.⁵⁶

If death and destruction were favorite negative themes in royalist psychological warfare, appeals to the Virgin Mary were predominant positive arguments. But appeals to which image of the Virgin? Two stand out in these years: the Virgin of Remedios and the Virgin of Guadalupe.

Remedios had garnered the credit for Hidalgo's astonishing retreat without an assault on Mexico City in 1810. Consequently propaganda in 1811 overflowed with paeans of praise for the Virgin of Remedios, and anniversaries of her purported exploits were assiduously celebrated. Such was her reputation for saving "the [Mexican] people from savage fanaticism" that her powers were now beseeched to protect the Cortes of Cádiz and to free Spain from the "impious Corsican."⁵⁷

The Virgin of Guadalupe has traditionally been associated with the insurgents. That Guadalupe was exploited ever more adroitly by the rebels should not, however, obscure her importance to the Establishment. Guadalupe's history of three centuries in the Valley of Mexico (not to mention her link with preconquest Tonantzin) and the physical presence of the image in the Basilica at Tepeyac made her naturally desirable and accessible to the royalists in Mexico City. Little wonder, then, that counterinsurgency propaganda reveals a

55. *El diez y seis de septiembre. Breve recuerdo que hace un individuo del ilustre y real colegio de abogados de esta corte, sobre los males que ha causado la rebelion concitada en esta fecha el año de 810* [sic] (México, September 16, 1811), pp. 1-2. Sutro Library.

56. Josef Ruiz de Aguirre to Gobernador de la Provincia de Coahuila [Antonio Cordero]. San Luis Potosí, August 18, 1811. MS. Wagner Collection, Yale University. For a discussion of the authenticity of the retraction, see Hamill, *Hidalgo Revolt*, pp. 213-216. For the text, see *ibid.*, pp. 253-255.

57. *México a su Generala María Santísima de los Remedios en la procesión solemne del día 24 de febrero con que concluyó el novenario de acción de gracias por la prosperidad de las armas del rey contra los rebeldes* (México, 1811), p. 3. Sutro Library.

strenuous effort to belittle the replicas of Guadalupe employed by the rebels and to deplore their use of her name to attract recruits. An anonymous poem in 1811 contrasted the invocations of *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* by the contending forces:

Ellos ¡ay! para ofenderte,
y para fraguar engaños,
traiciones, muertes y robos,
mil *vivas* te tributaron:
mas nosotros, Madre amante,
fuente de amor, te invocamos,
para llamar à la vida
y à la paz, al pueblo indiano.

Tú eres el iris de paz,
tu eres, gran Señora, el astro
de la mar, que al marinero
enseña a huir del naufragio.
Tú eres la Madre de Dios
la puerta del cielo santo,
y eres en fin la alegría
del imperio mexicano.⁵⁸

Appeals not only to *both* the famous Virgins but also to lesser images were important to the propaganda aspects of counterinsurgency. The governor of Coahuila saw fit, for his part, to commission the local Virgin of Zapopán “Generalísima” as an act of thanksgiving for the capture of Hidalgo and Allende in March.⁵⁹

Besides these primary motifs of counterinsurgent propaganda, there were dozens of other arguments recorded in pamphlets, poems, songs, dialogues, pastoral letters, *bandos*, handbills, and newspapers. We must imagine, furthermore, how such common themes as the French threat, the spectre of class war, fear of agrarian reforms, and the promises of the Cortes of Cádiz were manipulated in those exhortations, sermons, rumors, *chistes*, catcalls and graffiti which have been lost in time. Propaganda was clearly a vital aspect of the total counterinsurgency effort.

58. *Justo desagravio a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* (México, 1811), pp. 2-3, 4. Sutro Library.

59. Proclamation of Antonio Cordero and the *Junta de Gobierno*. Monclova, Coahuila, April 13, 1811. MS. copy for circulation. Monclova, June 22, 1811. Certification of publication in Rosa (June 24), San Fernando (June 29), San Andrés (July 6), Presidio de Río Grande (July 8), and Candela (July 14) attested by local officials. 2 leaves. Wagner Collection, Yale University.

It should be apparent from this exploration of royalist responses to the dynamics of the post-Calderón insurrection that Establishment leaders were able to adjust to the demands of an atomized guerrilla struggle. By early 1812 they had designed semi-autonomous local defenses and had denied the rebels fixed operational bases near Mexico City. They had also tightened police security, extended martial law, elaborated macabre counterterrorist tactics and developed their propaganda offensive. Prepared now for a war of attrition, the royalists were further prepared to meet the extraordinary challenge posed by a population which, if we can believe Calleja, was largely convinced of the advantages of independence for New Spain. The Hydra remained after the destruction of Zitácuaro. The sentiment which favored the cause of independence, or at least of autonomy, was powerful in Mexico City itself, as the elections of November 1812 would soon demonstrate. Yet 1811 proved that the revolution could be contained. Threatened as the Establishment might be, it was possible for its leaders to elaborate a complex counter-guerrilla program which could thwart the ultimate insurgent objectives. These were the lessons of 1811, and they were to sustain the royalists through the desperate years which lay ahead.