



SCCR

STANFORD CENTER FOR CHICANO RESEARCH
STANFORD UNIVERSITY

CASA in the Chicano Movement: Ideology and
Organizational Politics in the Chicano Community
1968-1978

by

David G. Gutiérrez

Working Paper Series, No. 5

David G. Gutiérrez is currently completing
his doctoral dissertation in the Department of
History, Stanford University

August, 1984

The purpose of the SCCR Working Paper Series is to publish works that significantly increase our knowledge about Chicanos and other Latinos. We invite your comments and your critique. Please address your comments directly to the author.

In the mid-1960s, Mexican American participation in the American political process underwent dramatic changes in California and other parts of the Southwest.²² Partly in response to the profound social disruptions of the times—the Civil Rights Movement, urban race riots, protest against the war in Vietnam, the student movement, to name but a few—Chicanos in many areas increasingly turned to more militant forms of political mobilization and action. Facing persistent discrimination in employment, housing, health care and education, Mexican Americans by 1968 had formed a variety of organizations to articulate their grievances and voice their demands.

One of the important groups founded during this era was the Centro de Acción Social Autónoma, Hermandad General de Trabajadores (CASA-HGT, or simply, CASA).*

Founded in Los Angeles in 1968, CASA played a central role in the new style political activity that characterized other organizations in what became known as the Chicano movement. CASA was unique, however, in that the organization represented two generations of Mexican American activists and two distinct forms of political action. CASA's evolution from a grass-roots social service/advocacy association to a radical Marxist-Leninist "vanguard" in many ways reflected the political history of Chicanos in the post-World War Two era. The problems CASA faced as an organization—internal conflicts over such factors as leadership, program goals, and political ideology, as well as external pressures arising from police harassment and conflict with other Chicano groups—are obstacles that Mexican American political organizations have faced historically. Similarly, the process of internal fragmentation over fundamental issues of goals and tactics, which more than any other factor led to CASA's ultimate dissolution, is a process that has characterized the Chicano movement as a whole.

* Center for Autonomous Social Action, General Brotherhood of Workers

The Emergence of the Chicano Movement

CASA's development can only be understood within the context of the major historical forces which influenced its establishment. Although an extensive survey of Chicano political history is beyond the scope of this paper, some discussion of major political developments in the Mexican American community helps clarify CASA's activities. The phenomenon that became known as the Chicano movement coalesced as such only after a series of localized protests erupted in widely separated communities. The earliest protests concerned the issues of land reform and labor organization. Later protests were centered in various urban barrios and addressed a wide array of issues ranging from civil rights to community control of educational policy to advocacy of the rights of undocumented persons from Mexico. Chicano organizations founded during the 1960s reflected both the range of issues confronting Chicanos, and their heterogeneity as an ethnic group.

Perhaps the best-known of early Chicano protests were the campaigns of Reies Lopez Tijerina in New Mexico and Cesar Chavez in California. In New Mexico the dominant issue was land reform. In 1962, Tijerina founded the Alianza Federal de Mercedes (The Federal Alliance of Land Grants) to press for the return of lands he argued had been illegally appropriated by individuals and the government in violation of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Tijerina's irredentist organization argued that under the terms of the treaty between the United States and Mexico, the heirs of the original Hispano holders of Spanish land grants held legal title to disputed lands in northern New Mexico. Using the widely publicized land grant issue as a central theme, Tijerina was also able to tie in issues of general discrimination and injustice against Hispanos in New Mexico.³³

In the Central Valley of California, the right of agricultural workers to organize and negotiate contracts were important issues to Chicanos. In 1965, Cesar Chavez gained national prominence as he led the fledgling National Farm Workers Association (later the United Farmworkers Union) strike and boycott in Delano. Although primarily a struggle for union recognition, Chavez' activities had much broader political implications. Chavez skillfully employed emotionally-charged symbols such as the UFW's stylized black Aztec eagle and banners of the Virgen of Guadalupe to inspire solidarity among the farmworkers. The UFW's struggle, dramatized by the national media, also inspired Chicanos across the country, who came to view the farmworkers' efforts as part of a campaign for social justice for all Chicanos.⁴ as part of a campaign for social justice for all Chicanos.

Although Tijerina and Chavez' movements addressed very different issues and served different constituencies, their influence was felt beyond the borders of New Mexico and California. The two activists' ability to link their specific causes to broader issues affecting Mexican Americans served to encourage Chicanos throughout the country. Although an increasing political awareness was most apparent among relatively young, educated urban Chicanos, many other Mexican Americans were politicized during this period. Historian Juan Gomez-Quiñones argues that Chicanos saw such protests as challenges to oppressive institutions, and as such, were "attractive to many Mexicans, cutting across class, regional and generational lines since most Mexicans in some way or another had directly or indirectly experienced economic or social discrimination and racism."⁵

Ironically, both 'Tijerina and Chavez' influence waned considerably by 1967 and 1968. Tijerina was convicted for his part in the famous Tierra Amarilla courthouse raid and was in prison by 1969. Chavez decided to eschew direct political involvement and concentrated his efforts in more traditional labor union organizing among the farmworkers. However, by the end of the decade, two new

Chicano leaders had risen to national prominence—Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales in Colorado, and Jose Angel Gutiérrez in South Texas. Both played vital roles as widespread protest activities in Chicano communities began to take on the characteristics of a cohesive political movement.

Gonzales, a former professional boxer, had been active in Democratic politics in Denver for some years and had directed several War on Poverty programs in the Denver barrios. In 1966, disillusioned with the Democratic party, he established the Crusade for Justice as a self-help civil rights organization. From the onset, the Crusade for Justice emphasized the need for Chicanos to develop a positive self-image and sense of ethnic solidarity. Gutiérrez, on the other hand, became active while a student at Saint Mary's College in San Antonio. In 1967, Gutiérrez and several Saint Mary's students founded the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO), which while similar to the Crusade for Justice in many respects, placed special emphasis on the need for local Chicano community political education and organization.⁶⁶

Gonzales and Gutierrez' rise to prominence as regional Chicano leaders occurred in the context of an increasing assertion of ethnic pride by young Chicano activists. By late 1967 and 1968, Chicanos had mounted spontaneous protests and school walkouts (which they called "blowouts") in a number of communities including Denver, San Antonio, Crystal City, Texas, and Los Angeles. Numerous student organizations such as Young Chicanos for Community Action (YCCA), the Mexican American Student Association (MASA), and the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA), among others, played catalytic roles in the nascent Chicano movement.⁷⁷ The rising ethnic consciousness among Chicanos was further reflected by the emergence of such organizations as the Brown Berets, a militant paramilitary youth group patterned after the Black Panthers.

One of the prominent effects of this process of politicization was the

development of two concepts which greatly influenced the course of non-traditional Chicano politics over the next several years. These two concepts—"Chicanismo" and "Aztlán"—both concerned the issue of Chicano identity and together formed the cornerstones of the movement's early ideology. Defining the terms precisely is difficult in that they referred to an amalgam of factors which varied from one group or individual to another. Nevertheless, during the 1960s an increasing number of Mexican Americans began to refer to themselves as "Chicanos" rather than Mexican Americans or Latin Americans. Once considered derogatory, the term Chicano became a term that set the group apart—a positive assertion of ethnic pride which at once stressed the importance of a shared language, culture, and history, while rejecting the notion of Anglo-American superiority. The term implied solidarity against what was perceived as a shared history of racial oppression and discrimination. In a sense, group identity as ~~Chicanos~~ ~~was~~ ~~an~~ ~~inherently~~ ~~unified~~ ~~position~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~face~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~Mexican~~ ~~American~~ ~~'~~ ~~politically~~ ~~and~~ ~~economically~~ ~~marginalized~~ ~~position~~ ~~in~~ ~~American~~ ~~society~~.⁸

This historical sense of group solidarity was carried one step further in the concept of Aztlán. To many Chicano activists, Aztlán referred to the symbolic, mythical homeland—the American Southwest—to which the "bronze mestizo" descendants of the Aztecs had returned. The concept received wide attention at the historic First National Chicano Youth Conference held in Denver in 1969. Sponsored by Corky Gonzales' Crusade for Justice, the conference marked a new stage in the Chicano movement. The conference attracted over 2000 delegates representing a wide variety of Chicano students, community activists, and political organizations from all over the country. For the first time, activists involved in widely scattered protests converged to discuss the goals and tactics of a broader based movement.⁹

The plan adopted by the conference participants was called, significantly,

"El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan," which, in addition to its symbolic imagery, also set forth a specific ideology and plan for political action. The conference participants drew inspiration from the various protest activities in Chicano barrios and from such influential expressions of ethnic pride as Gonzales' epic poem "Yo Soy Joaquin" (published in 1968). The Plan of Aztlan set the foundations for a ethnic separatist ideology which dominated the movement's rhetoric into the 1970s. Although the Plan baldly stated that "social, economic, cultural and political independence is the only road to total liberation from oppression, exploitation, and racism," much of the rhetoric was intended primarily to instill a greater sense of community among Chicanos. As Gomez-Quinones has commented, Chicano nationalism was seen as "the key to organizing, but not necessarily the end goal...Nationalism provided the rationale and psychological substance for a collective Mexicano identity through the vehicles of symbols and sub-concepts which had the possibility for wide acceptability."¹⁰

Despite the enthusiastic proclamation of the Plan of Aztlan, this early expression of Chicano nationalism was in some ways a high water mark for the nascent movement. Although the Plan held high symbolic value for many of the young Chicano activists, the movement remained fragmented and dispersed. This was due in part to the difficulties inherent in attempting to unite a geographically and socially diverse population behind a single ideology or program, and in large part to disputes among the leadership over the best course of action. One of the main planks of the Plan of Aztlan was the establishment of a separate Chicano political party to meet the needs of a population many felt had been ignored by the two major parties. By 1970, both Gonzales and Gutiérrez had established local chapters of the new party which was called La Raza Unida Party (the United People's or United Race Party).

From the onset, Gonzales and Gutiérrez held different conceptions of the new party's proper role. Although the Raza Unida Party (LRUP) had run candidates

in local elections in 1970 and 1971, with the exception of Gutierrez' success at Crystal City, Texas, the party was able only to split what traditionally had been a solidly Democratic vote in the Chicano community.^{11 11} The essential difference between Gonzales and Gutierrez' view of LRUP was that Gutiérrez saw the party as an immediately viable vehicle for electoral political change, while Gonzales saw it more as a tool for community organization.^{12 12} In an effort to build a united party, Gonzales and Gutiérrez met in the fall of 1971, and although the two still disagreed, plans were set for a national convention of LRUP in 1972.

The first national La Raza Unida Party convention marked another significant turning point for the Chicano movement. On one level the convention was a strong demonstration of resolve. Hundreds of delegates came from Chicano communities throughout the Southwest and Midwest. The apparent unity at the convention, however, masked the growing conflict for leadership between Gonzales and Gutiérrez. In a recent article on the development of LRUP, Muñoz and Barerra point out that while the struggle between the two leaders represented personal conflict as well as regional rivalry the crucial issue facing the convention was the continuing debate over the movement's ideology and political strategy.^{13 13} By the time of the El Paso convention, the question of the future direction of the movement had come down to a choice between planning a national (or at least regional) third-party challenge for community control within the existing electoral framework; and a more radical program which incorporated Marxian notions of class struggle with existing concepts of Chicano nationalism. Gonzales, one of the prime framers of the Plan of Aztlan, advocated a program of what one scholar has termed "nationalistic socialism," which emphasized a strongly ethnocentric separatist approach to community organization.^{14 14} Jose Angel Gutiérrez, on the other hand, while also supporting continued militant Chicano protest, advocated third-party politics as

as the *best* means to achieve meaningful social change in the barrios. Although Gutiérrez ultimately was elected national chairman of the party after a rather bitter behind-the-scenes struggle, the basic issue of the movement's guiding political philosophy went unresolved.

CASA AND THE CHICANO MOVEMENT

Although CASA was founded during this period of intense Chicano political activism, the organization ironically had ties to a much older tradition of labor and political activism. Both of CASA's primary founders, Bert N. Corona and Soledad "Chole" Alatorre, had long careers as labor union and political organizers in the Mexicano/Chicano community. Alatorre had spent many years organizing workers in a number of unions. Corona had been active since the 1930s as an organizer for the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, and had participated in the historic Congress of Spanish-Speaking Peoples in 1939. Corona was also a founding member and past president of the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA).

MAPA, organized in California in 1958, played a crucial early role in increasing effective Chicano political participation in that state. Although Chicanos had a long prior history of political organization and protest throughout the Southwest, MAPA set precedent by explicitly utilizing an ethnic designation and actively pursuing Chicano political interests.¹⁵ Unlike other contemporary Mexican American organizations such as the Texas-based League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the American G.I. Forum, which formally refrained from direct political involvement, MAPA aggressively mounted a political campaign which included voter registration drives, political seminars in the barrios, and lobby efforts on behalf of the Chicano community.¹⁶ MAPA's strident insistence in emphasizing its ethnic makeup and goals was even more remarkable in that it

followed a period of unusually intense nativism and xenophobia specifically directed at Mexicans. In the context of the passage of such legislation as the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952, and the mass deportations of Mexicans (and many U.S. citizens of Mexican descent) which occurred under Operation Wetback in 1954-57, MAPA's position in 1958 represented a radical assertion of ethnic pride. MAPA's political activism also flew in the face of the widely-held stereotype of Mexican Americans as fatalistic, lazy, non-participants in American politics.¹⁷¹⁷

Corona's experience in MAPA strongly influenced his political outlook and strategy, but he and Alatorre patterned CASA on an even older form of association in the Mexican American community. CASA was founded as a "voluntary...democratic mutual aid assistance social welfare organization," modeled closely after the Mexican mutualista.¹⁸¹⁸ Mexicans in Mexico and what later became the southwestern United States had formed these organizations since the mid-nineteenth century to provide themselves with services often denied economically-marginal people. Services provided by the mutualistas ranged from credit and insurance to legal defense, but the mutualistas also provided places for entertainment and the exchange of news.¹⁹¹⁹ In his recent study on mutual aid societies among Mexicans, Jose A. Hernández also argues that the mutualistas also provided the prototypes for labor organization and collective bargaining among Mexicano laborers in the Southwest.²⁰²⁰

CASA's establishment in 1968 as a mutual aid organization was notable in several respects. Corona has stated that CASA was founded partly as a self-conscious effort to provide an organizational apparatus in the urban barrios similar to that provided by the United Farmworkers Union in the rural areas.²¹²¹

Indeed, CASA's early activities attest to its strong working class and trade-unionist orientation. Utilizing contacts established in MAPA and in their labor organizing work, Corona and Alatorre were quickly able to forge a coalition of trade unionists and community activists (primarily members of MAPA) as CASA's core. Among CASA's major activities during 1970 and 1971 were the organization of strike support committees and the development of Chicano caucuses in union locals in the construction, shipyard, butcher, and cannery industries in the Los Angeles area.²²

The single factor that clearly distinguished CASA from other Chicano groups organized during this period was that from its inception CASA's main thrust was the organization and defense of undocumented Mexican workers. In 1968, the Mexican immigration issue had not yet achieved national prominence, and CASA's effort represented a significant departure among contemporary Chicano organizations. Although virtually every important Chicano and Hispanic organization was advocating the rights of immigrants by the mid-1970s, CASA had anticipated the issue by several years.

During its first years of operation CASA acted essentially as a social service and legal defense association primarily assisting indocumentados. By 1972 CASA had affiliated (though autonomous) chapters aiding Mexican workers in San Diego, Santa Ana, San Jose, and Oakland in California, San Antonio and the Rio Grande Valley areas of Texas, Greeley, Colorado, and Chicago. In Los Angeles, a fifteen dollar fee served both as dues in the organization and as a fee for any legal assistance provided CASA offices.²³ CASA provided its members with services ranging from visa and immigration counseling, divorce consultations, and notary, to legal defence. CASA also held weekly meetings where members were instructed as to their legal rights in the United States. No comprehensive membership lists exist, but historian Rodolfo Acuña estimates

that by 1972, CASA had a nationwide core membership of over 2000, and had assisted several thousand more Mexican and Chicano workers, who were therefore also nominally members.²⁴ Case files from the Los Angeles office indicate that CASA assisted at least 6000 indocumentados between 1969 and 1973.²⁵

The organization's working-class character began to change, however, by early 1973—reflecting political developments within CASA and in the larger Chicano community as well. In 1973, however, CASA began to expand its advocacy and protest activities in response to raids by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in the Los Angeles area, and to changes in federal immigration law proposed by Representatives Joshua Eilberg and Peter Rodino.²⁶ Eilberg and Rodino's legislation would be introduced in various forms in successive Congresses throughout the 1970s. The main provisions of the proposed legislation—sanctions against employers who "knowingly" hired undocumented aliens, increased INS border enforcement, strict numerical ceilings on annual legal immigration, and the development of a national worker's identification card—set the parameters of debate on the contemporary immigration issue. Hispanic organizations across the country immediately protested against the proposals, arguing that they were inherently discriminatory against all persons of Mexican descent. CASA, for its part, sponsored a conference on immigration policy attended by over 450 delegates representing a large number of Hispanic organizations. The conference passed a series of resolutions denouncing the Eilberg and Rodino plans, and CASA was instrumental in forming the National Coalition for Fair Immigration Laws and Practices, an umbrella organization it would direct until 1978.²⁷

While CASA's programmatic emphasis was changing, the organization's membership also began to change. As CASA's influence grew in the Los Angeles

Chicano community, the organization attracted increasing numbers of young Chicano students and community activists. These new CASA members were strongly influenced by the nationalistic ideologies which had emerged in the previous few years, and in contrast to the older CASA members, they had little or no previous union or organizing experience.²⁸ ²⁸ Most of the new activist members were affiliated with the Los Angeles-based Casa Carnalismo and the National Committee to Free Los Tres (CFLT). Casa Carnalismo was a militant Chicano community organization ostensibly formed to combat drugs in the barrios. The CFLT was formed after three members of Casa Carnalismo were convicted of assaulting a federal narcotics officer posing as a drug dealer in East Los Angeles.²⁹ ²⁹ In 1973, thirty-five members of the CFLT formed a collective within that organization for the formal study of Marxist-Leninist political philosophy. This proved significant in that the CFLT members who eventually joined CASA came largely from the study group.³⁰ ³⁰

The integration of members of the CFLT had a profound impact on the organization. By 1974, the infusion of a Marxist-Leninist perspective into CASA's internal organization had opened serious rifts among the leadership. The essential conflict revolved around the question of the nature and future direction of the organization. The old-line MAPA leadership represented by Corona and Alatorre, while working closely with the young activists, nevertheless continued to emphasize direct organization and assistance to unorganized, undocumented workers. In addition, it was their view that CASA's political activities should focus on reform-oriented electoral politics. Although Corona himself had by this time repudiated participation in traditional two-party politics and advocated strong Chicano support of the new La Raza Unida Party, he continued to emphasize the efficacy of participation in electoral and issues-oriented politics.³¹ ³¹ By 1974, however, the spectrum of political views within CASA had shifted so that

Corona's stance essentially represented the moderate position. The CFLT also emphasized the importance of CASA's working class "base" but their views were informed by more theoretical Marxist-Leninist class analyses. The CFLT faction sought to deemphasize the social-service aspect of the organization, hoping to transform CASA into a "revolutionary vanguard" dedicated to the "liberation of the Mexican people."³²³² Corona and Alatorre, while encouraging the younger CASA members to pursue their goals, continued to believe that their skills were best suited to direct organizing efforts. Thus, in early December 1974, after ensuring that CASA's outstanding debts had been cleared, Corona and Alatorre called for new elections and resigned from the organization.³³³³

CASA as a Marxist-Leninist "Revolutionary" Organization

The old leadership's departure, along with the elections that were held later that December, radically transformed the organization. CASA's new leadership was now composed primarily of college students, law students, and a few professionals. Significantly, at least two active and two ex-members of the CFLT collective were elected to office.³⁴³⁴ The new leaders quickly developed a plan of action which included general reorganization, consolidation of internal political education, study of new means of financial support, and most importantly the continuation of CASA's immigration work. Not surprisingly, the thrust of CASA's immigration efforts was substantially altered. As far as the new leadership was concerned, CASA's efforts should not be expended on social services to individual undocumented workers, but on the mass organization and political education of these workers in preparation for a "revolution of the proletariat." One member of CASA's Political Commission commented on the new position:

We have gone from a defensive organization to an offensive and potentially clandestine organization prepared for a protracted

struggle. An organization which can multiply itself geometrically according to the base it has established for itself and the integration of its ideology in the mass consciousness of that base.³⁵

The changes occurring within CASA during this period were in many ways influenced by a general process of ideological flux within the Chicano movement. After the experiences of the LRUP convention in 1972, movement leaders (and a few Chicano academics) began to reassess the nationalism represented, for example, in the Plan de Aztlán, and instead began to focus their analysis based on Marxian notions of class competition and exploitation. Gomez-Quinones interprets this period as one in which, "Political activists became increasingly concerned with understanding how economic and class exploitation and racism had shaped the Mexican experience in the United States."³⁶ Although by no means causally related, the ideological shift within CASA reflected a general broadening of the range of political perspectives in the Chicano movement.

Similarly, CASA's evolving position on the Mexican immigrant worker contained implications that were not confined exclusively to the organization itself. While CASA was in effect stepping back from its earlier policy of direct aid to immigrant workers, its new policy was an attempt to politically educate those workers for fuller participation in the coming socialist revolution. Breaking from what Gustavo Segade has described as the movement's "racist and culturally exclusive" concept of a "bronze mestizo nation," CASA advanced a class position strongly influenced by the notion that advanced capitalism had created an international proletariat.³⁷ CASA's ideology stressed the working-class solidarity of the "Mexican population on both sides of the border," and in this manner did not distinguish between "Chicanos" and "Mexicanos."³⁸ CASA advanced manner did not distinguish between "Chicanos" and "Mexicanos."³⁹ CASA advanced

the innovative concept "sin fronteras" (without borders) which differed from that of Aztlan in that the former proposed a socialist revolution led by the working classes from both the United States and Mexico. In contrast, the nationalistic concept of Aztlan, while recognizing the historical and mystical bonds existing between the two peoples, nevertheless was committed primarily to the advancement of Chicanos in the United States.

It is not surprising that the political line advanced by CASA's Los Angeles leadership caused controversy within the organization. In addition to having immediate impact on the Los Angeles membership, this shift also sparked dissension among CASA's autonomous affiliates. The issue was discussed inconclusively in national meetings held in Chicago, Los Angeles, and Oakland during the early months of 1975, but it was not until the National Reunion meeting held in Los Angeles that July that the issue finally came to a head.³⁹ The ensuing debate centered on the future direction and ideology of the organization, with the delegates from San Diego, San Jose, and Greeley strongly dissenting against CASA's new stance as a revolutionary vanguard. Though the Los Angeles position was finally accepted by a majority vote of the delegates, opposition was strong enough that the San Diego and San Jose centers withdrew from the national organization. The Greeley group withdrew six months later.⁴⁰

Despite the dissension which surfaced openly at the summer national meetings, CASA's leadership was able to institute a plan of action to consolidate the organization along its new ideological lines. Although several structural changes were instituted at the national meetings, one of the most important decisions had been made tentatively the previous December following the change of leadership.⁴¹ At that time a decision was reached to move operations of Sin Fronteras, the official "organ" of the National Coalition for Fair Immigration Laws and Practices, from CASA-San Antonio to Los Angeles.⁴² At the time of its creation in 1974,

Sin Fronteras was staffed in San Antonio largely by members of the CFLT faction within CASA. For the first year of publication out of CASA-San Antonio, Sin Fronteras' articles primarily concerned immigration news and the activities of the National Coalition. With the decision to move the newspaper's operations to Los Angeles, however, Sin Fronteras became more explicitly CASA's official voice.

The newspaper played an increasingly important role in propagandizing CASA's political line within the Chicano movement, and served as the primary mode of communication to the "unorganized masses." The publication of Sin Fronteras became a calculated effort to promote CASA's reformed ideological position, while also discrediting rival positions within the movement. Carlos Vasquez, a member of CASA's Political Commission and National Coordinating Commission, commented on the role of the paper in an internal document,

we must carry out mass education through our mass actions to all of the working class but keeping in mind our strategy for this historic period and concentrating on our people. This is not the narrow nationalist approach to organizing the working class, but rather a realistic and correct position considering the amount of division and ideological confusion which still exists among our people. (43)

Although Sin Fronteras was clearly a vehicle for the dissemination of CASA's political ideology, the newspaper (especially after the move to Los Angeles) was also a rather professionally conceived and executed political newspaper. It differed from the MAPA paper, The Voice, in its emphasis on revolutionary politics, but it provided coverage on a much broader spectrum of issues, as did other radical Chicano papers published in the Los Angeles area during the period.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the primary function of the paper was to communicate CASA's vision

of socialist revolution to Mexican and Chicano workers. All informational articles were written from CASA's new political perspective, while CASA's ideology was developed further in Sin Fronteras editorials and in a regular political commentary column written by members of the Political Commission. It was in these editorials and commentaries that CASA's leaders attempted to systematically assess the Chicano movement and offer CASA's alternative to the courses of action presented by other Chicano organizations.

CASA's growing conflict with other leftist Chicano organizations stemmed from a number of factors which affected the entire Chicano movement during the mid-1970s. As the catalytic anti-war and Civil Rights movements died down, much of early impetus for immediate social and political reform in the Chicano movement also waned. In CASA's view, however, much of the responsibility for the movement's decline rested with Chicano leaders themselves. A draft of CASA's new Reglamento (by-laws) written during this period made clear that although the movement had raised "many correct democratic demands," it had not developed the "political strategy and tactics to consolidate the mass activity. It was unable to achieve the goals it so idealistically set for itself in the Spiritual Plan of Aztlán."⁴⁵

In 1976 and 1977, a scathing critique of the Chicano movement appeared in Sin Fronteras. CASA argued that the ideology of Aztlán provided only a "narrow and chauvinistic nationalism which excluded anyone not born in the United States," and thus obscured the real issue facing Chicanos and Mexicanos alike—their mutual exploitation under "American imperialist domination."⁴⁶ According to CASA, the key to the movement's malaise was the false consciousness imposed on the Mexican people who were exploited and alienated from their "true" class interests. Writing in the June 1976 issue of Sin Fronteras, Carlos Vasquez attacked the concept of Aztlán because it falsely distinguished working people "according to where we happen to be born, how well we speak the national language, and what our

immigrant status is defined by an imperialist state which knows no borders in its exploitation of human labor power or its suppression of human rights."⁴⁷⁴⁷

The movement had been undermined further because its goals had been defined by elements of the Mexican people "with no direct ties of participation in the working force."⁴⁸⁴⁸ CASA's leaders argued that it was this critical lack of class consciousness that explained the movement's "regionalism, cannibalism, and cuadillismo" which had stifled its growth in the years following the mass mobilizations during the Vietnam war.⁴⁹⁴⁹

The crucial issue underlying CASA's ideological offensive was in essence the persistent and troublesome question of Chicano identity or "nationality." Indeed, by 1976 the so-called "national question" was the essential issue facing the Chicano movement itself. How did a movement based in large part on its members' sense of ethnic identity reconcile the increasing tendency of many of its leaders toward a class analysis of Chicanos' position in American society? The contradiction which had been submerged in the rhetoric of the movement since the First National Chicano Youth Conference now more and more became the focus of the movement's internal debates. In early 1976, for example, attacks by a rival group known as the August Twenty-Ninth Movement (ATM) prompted CASA to elaborate its position as to the "correct political line" for the Chicano movement.⁵⁰⁵⁰ The ATM, which also claimed to be a Marxist-Leninist organization, was founded in 1975 after the Labor Committee Chapter of the Los Angeles area LRUP split from that group.⁵¹⁵¹ The essential ideological difference between CASA and the ATM concerned the increasingly crucial issue of nationality. The ATM's position (which was somewhat illogical considering its professed Marxist-Leninist ideology) was that Mexican-stock people residing in the American Southwest (for however long) constituted a distinct, oppressed "Chicano nation."⁵²⁵² CASA, which, as we have seen, recognized no distinction between "Mexicans" (to use CASA's terminology) on either

side of *the* border, rejected the ATM's position as an opportunistic attempt to further subvert the movement.

Yet other groups were even more vocal in their attacks on CASA. One prominent organization, the Trotskyist Socialist Workers' Party, dismissed CASA's stance of the national question as a mere imitation of positions developed elsewhere. In a speech delivered to the 1976 SWP convention, Olga Rodriguez commented,

the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP) has had an influence on the Chicano movement, especially on the leadership of CASA. An example of this is CASA's evolving position on the Chicano nationality. Its position that there is no such thing as a separate Chicano nationality, but that Chicanos are simply part of the Mexican nationality, appears to be nothing more than a mechanical application of the PSP's position on Puerto Ricans in the United States vis-a-vis Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico. (53)

Olga Rodriguez' comments to the SWP convention were true, in part, since CASA did maintain strong ties with the PSP and other radical organizations. Antonio Rodriguez, CASA's National Coordinator since the 1975 reorganization and an influential member of the Political Commission, corresponded regularly with leaders of the PSP, and on several occasions addressed meetings of that organization. CASA's ideology and position on the national question, however, was much more than an emulation of the PSP position. Evidence from the CASA files clearly demonstrates that CASA's evolving ideology was strongly influenced by their readings of Marxist theoreticians such as Lenin, Stalin, Che Guevarra, Le Duan, and Ho Chi Minh.⁵⁴ CASA's ideology represented a sophisticated world-view which reflected a sincere dedication to the view that a vanguard organization

led by committed, disciplined revolutionaries would bring about the successful socialist revolution.

In the long run, however, CASA's preoccupation with such sweeping ideological questions exacted a severe toll on both the organization's political efficacy and its credibility in the Chicano/Mexicano community--and this was also true of a great many other radical Chicano organizations. Although CASA members were highly visible in the international socialist movement during this period, one must question how relevant these activities appeared to the working-class members of the Chicano and Mexicano communities. CASA, for example, while cutting back its direct social services to undocumented workers, sent delegations to the PSP's convention in 1975, to Cuba in March 1976 and again in 1978, and to the World Federation of Trade Unions Congress in Cyprus in March 1977.⁵⁵

Many CASA members were concerned about such developments. A memo circulated among members in late 1976 or early 1977 clearly demonstrates this concern: "We have concluded that the lack of an organizational presence had been one of the main limitations to our organizational expansion...In almost all of the geographical areas (with CASA offices) there is no consistent work in community issues such as the struggle for equal education and housing."⁵⁶ The memo goes on to provide a telling insight as to the organization's real effectiveness in the community at this juncture:

We must play an active role in the struggles of our people, they must see us as fighters. At present, there is practically no organizational presence: San Jose, Chicago and San Antonio do not have offices and the offices of the local committees of Los Angeles are almost always closed. This gives us the image of an underground organization.(57)

In addition to its internal organizational difficulties, CASA's

revolutionary ideology and activities attracted the attention of federal agencies and local police. Jose Jacques Medina, a prominent member of the organization, was arrested in 1976 for violating the terms of his visa, and spent the next several years fighting deportation by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. More serious to the organization was evidence that government agencies had illegally wiretapped CASA's telephones and had broken into CASA's Los Angeles office.^{58 58} Under provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, Antonio Rodriguez and CASA's legal staff obtained documents which proved CASA had been under intense surveillance by the FBI, CIA, and local police since the organization's founding. The documents also indicate that CASA had been infiltrated by police informants.^{59 59}

Despite these rather serious pressures, perhaps no other factor demonstrates CASA's growing crisis more tellingly than its activities on the issue that continued to form a large part of the group's raison d' etre. By 1976, the immigration issue had become perhaps the most pressing issue in Chicano politics. When Jimmy Carter, with the overwhelming support of Chicano voters, defeated Gerald Ford in the 1976 presidential elections, Chicanos had reason to expect a fresh approach to the increasingly volatile issue. However, when Carter sent his proposed immigration legislation to Congress the following summer, Chicanos across the country were outraged to learn that the so-called Carter Plan contained many of the same objectional components advocated by previous Republican administrations.^{60 60}

CASA, for its part, proceeded along programmatic lines similar to those pursued by the organization under Corona. In 1976 and the early part of 1977, CASA sponsored several immigration conferences, and Sin Fronteras continued to provide extensive coverage on the issue. Arguing from its distinctive ideological perspective, CASA demanded the basic right of all workers to organize, and for an end to right-to-work legislation and discrimination in employment.

Moreover, the organization demanded that the INS cease its factory raids and neighborhood sweeps. And consistent with its position on the national question, CASA also vigorously opposed Bracero-type programs which provided for temporary foreign contract labor in the United States.⁶¹

CASA's many activities could not ameliorate, however, the serious weaknesses within the organization. Mass membership in CASA had declined steadily since Corona's departure in 1974. While Corona had claimed dues-paying membership of more than 5000 in Los Angeles alone in 1972, available records indicate that this number had dipped below 1000 nationwide by 1977.⁶² The decline in membership had a severe impact on the operations of Sin Fronteras, since the newspaper was funded largely on income received from sales, subscriptions, and donations from CASA members and sympathizers. By 1977, Sin Fronteras was consistently running a deficit.

Despite growing fissures within the organization, CASA was able to maintain national prominence in the Chicano movement largely because it succeeded in keeping its internal problems from becoming public knowledge. CASA's highly visible participation in the landmark 1977 National Chicano/Latino Conference on Immigration and Public Policies, however, changed this situation. The conference, organized in response to the Carter Plan through the efforts of Jose Angel Gutiérrez and the Texas LRUP, attracted over 2600 delegates from a broad spectrum of Chicano/Latino organizations including: LULAC, the American G.I. Forum, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), LRUP, the SWP, CASA, and representatives of various members of Congress and government agencies.⁶³ On the surface, the conference was an unprecedented display of unity among Chicano/Latino groups from across the political spectrum. Beyond this, however, the San Antonio conference was crucial in that it marked the convergence of the volatile issues that had long simmered just below the surface of Chicano politics.

Discussion of the immigration issue itself in this forum forced articulation, or at least recognition of, the various conflicting views on both Chicano nationalism and the status of Mexican immigrants in the United States. Moreover, it soon became clear that several groups, including CASA, were attempting to use the conference to further their own ideological positions within the Chicano movement. Thus, despite the veneer of unity, the conference ultimately demonstrated just how variegated and fragmented the movement was.

Among the numerous organizations represented at the conference, CASA, the SWP and Gutierrez' LRUP were most active in attempting to influence the course of events. Well before the conference, which was held October 28-30 1977, Gutiérrez attempted to strengthen his position vis-a-vis CASA and the SWP. He was well aware of the deep animosities between the two groups and he expressed concern prior to the conference that "CASA and the SWP would use the conference as their battleground." In a letter apparently written to another member of the RUP, Gutiérrez concluded, "we must not allow this divisiveness to infect us."⁶⁴

Indeed, prior to the conference CASA took steps to undercut the SWP's position at San Antonio. In pre-conference maneuvering at several regional planning meetings, CASA was instrumental in discrediting SWP positions, and in several cases united with other groups to oust the organization from planning sessions.⁶⁵ In a thinly-veiled editorial attack against the SWP in Sin Fronteras CASA commented,

We must be aware of any deviations which will disperse the focus of the conference and make it ineffective...there have been many instances where just as our people achieve political unity, self-appointed vanguards whose practices expose them as opportunist try to get a free ride by manipulating the struggles of our people to serve their own sectarian interests. (66)

The striking irony of CASA's attack on the SWP here is, of course, that CASA itself was more and more taking on the characteristics of a "self-appointed vanguard" which it so stridently criticized.

This became clear at the conference itself, where CASA was burdened with the task of convincing other groups to accept its political line. The conflicts which emerged at the San Antonio conference were not, as Richard Garcia has argued in a recent article, strictly those of organizational competition. Ideology remained an important implicit issue—especially with regard to CASA. Garcia's assertion that CASA attacked the SWP in San Antonio "not because of any real political difference vis-a-vis the undocumented workers and the immigration resolutions but because of CASA's desire to control the conference's resolution on the strategy for action," is partially true, but diminishes CASA's genuine concern with the ongoing ideological dispute.⁶⁷ CASA from the onset suspected that the SWP and the Texas RUP were allied behind the scenes and continued in their attempts to expose what they considered the SWP's opportunism. However, according to one delegation at the conference, CASA "only succeeded in presenting themselves as provocateurs and just another sectarian group pushing their position. They were criticized for being arrogant, refusing to dialogue, and for their abrasive tactics... As a result, coalitions of LRUP, the SWP, and more moderate Hispanic groups consistently outvoted CASA on key conference resolutions.

Once again, like the 1972 LRUP convention and many national conferences after it, the National Chicano/Latino Conference on Immigration symbolized the fundamental disunity of the Chicano movement. Organizations and individuals at the San Antonio conference were once again torn by factional in-fighting, and the conference did not even present the image of a united front. Although conference delegates passed resolutions calling for full amnesty for the undocumented worker, guarantees of their full constitutional rights, and the right to unionize and

claim unemployment compensation, even sympathetic media commented on the conference's fragmentation.⁶⁹⁶⁹

The National Chicano/Latino Conference thus marked another major turning point for the Chicano movement and for CASA. It was not that CASA had been crushed by rival organizations in the Chicano movement. According to Garcia, quite the contrary was true; he felt that CASA had proven it could be "a viable vehicle for attempting to gain control of the Chicano/Latino movement."⁷⁰⁷⁰ Yet CASA's performance at San Antonio had the effect of intensifying the organization's internal conflicts. In the only article to appear on the conference, Sin Fronteras reported that CASA's lack of success there merely demonstrated "the political immaturity of the Mexican people's organizations that permits our manipulation and division by a 'pseudo' leftist 'Party,' formed by the North American middle sectors."⁷¹⁷¹ But beyond the post-conference diatribe publically expressed in the newspaper, evidence indicates that CASA's indecisive performance at San Antonio brought the group's internal conflicts to the surface. A draft memo apparently composed by Antonio Rodriguez shortly after the conference provides a clear indication that a crisis was growing within the organization. In Rodriguez' assessment,

the lack of a well-defined program, strategy and tactics, anti-imperialist positions...began eventually to create confusion. Despite our pronouncements it became impossible to collectively, clearly and positively, define ourselves as a Marxist-Leninist pre-party formation fighting for socialism or national liberation, or a mass democratic organization fighting for equality and democratic rights of the Mexican people. In the midst of that confusion, members began to develop their own individual versions of our strategic objectives. (72)

As Rodriguez' memo indicates, the basic issue over the nature of CASA as an organization and its development of a well-articulated political line once again arose to divide the group. By this time, however, the ideological and programmatic issues combined with the organization's internal problems of finance, morale, and the growing differences among the leadership to cause its eventual demise. When Carlos Vasquez, a member of the Political Commission and Director of Sin Fronteras resigned from the organization in December 1977, CASA began its rapid decline. CASA's leadership attempted to minimize the event, but Vasquez' resignation severely polarized the organization into factions that supported him and those who censured him as a "divisionist element."⁷³ Dissension increased until in February 1978, the entire Political Commission resigned en bloc. Frantic attempts were made to repair the damage, but the resignation of many of CASA's most influential leaders signaled the end of the organization as an effective force in Chicano politics.

Summary and Conclusions

In many respects unique, CASA's organizational history nevertheless resembles the experiences of a great many other Chicano political organizations. Indeed, the general malaise which has characterized the Chicano movement since the San Antonio conference, particularly among radical or socialist organizations, is indicative of the common problems faced by all groups which have sought to address the critical issues facing the Chicano community. CASA, like Chicano organizations preceeding and following it, ultimately could not overcome the formidable challenge of organizing the extremely dispersed, heterogenous Chicano community. In spite of widespread recognition that Chicanos represent a significantly underprivileged segment of American society, the Chicano population's geographic, political, and class heterogeneity has undermined virtually all efforts to unite this population under the leadership of a single organization.

CASA's strategy under Corona and Alatorre was to address this fundamental problem in the tradition of the mutualistas by serving the Chicano/Mexicano community privately as a social service agency and political lobby. CASA's trade-unionist, working-class orientation contributed greatly to its success in building a decentralized, broad-based membership in Los Angeles and many other American cities. CASA's early successes, much like those achieved by its predecessors (notably the CSO and MAPA), rested largely on CASA's ability to provide visible, immediate assistance to significant numbers of the community, while also effectively lobbying on the community's behalf. As CASA grew, however, the divisiveness which has historically plagued Chicano-oriented groups—from the Crusade for Justice to the Congressional Hispanic Caucus—began to erode CASA's internal cohesion and political effectiveness.

CASA's eventual decline centered not so much on Corona and Alatorre's departure, but rather on the new leadership's failure to develop a realistic program or cohesive philosophy that attracted the allegiance of more than a few educated, socialist-minded Chicano activists. Composed primarily of young intellectual community activists, students, professionals, and aspiring journalists, CASA's new leaders were in effect estranged from the mass membership which they claimed to represent. Although CASA's new leaders groped for a viable plan for the organization's consolidation and expansion following the 1975 elections, their growing preoccupation with developing the "correct" political position on various key issues ironically prevented further growth, and alienated the organization from much of its former community support. In theory, CASA's revolutionary rhetoric was necessary to prepare the way for the type of social change envisioned by the new leaders. In practice, however, dogmatic adherence to CASA's vision of socialist revolution lost them the popular support critical for the organization's survival. CASA's strident ideological positions also made

it increasingly difficult to forge and maintain linkages with other Chicano-oriented political organizations. CASA's clashes with the SWP and LRUP at San Antonio clearly indicate the difficulties imposed on the organization by its own inflexible ideology. And, of course, CASA's rhetoric eventually attracted the attention of local police and federal authorities, who legally and extralegally, constantly harrassed CASA members. All these factors, when combined with the internal conflicts which developed among CASA's leaders over the organization's proper ideology and program, contributed its rapid slide toward dissolution.

In the end, CASA's leadership was unsuccessful in developing an appropriate political strategy and organization to face the complex and difficult task of mobilizing the Chicano community in the present period. CASA's experiences were not unique, however, and speak to the common obstacles faced by the Chicano movement generally during the 1960s and 1970s. The inability of CASA and the other leaders of the movement to achieve consensus on the best strategy—from traditional reform politics to democratic socialism to socialist revolution—perhaps most characterizes the movement historically. The closely related issues of ethnic identity and political ideology continued throughout the period to foil concerted action across a broad front. Antonio Rodriguez' own reflections on CASA's disintegration could easily be applied also to the Chicano movement as a whole. In notes apparently written to himself, Rodriguez asked,

do we all agree that the strategy of CASA is to unite the Mexican people to struggle for its democratic rights within the U.S.A?...Or is it the strategy to unite the Mexican people in the USA to struggle to recover the stolen lands? Or is it to struggle for socialism in this territory of the Southwest?...When we talk about struggling for socialism, are we talking about socialism throughout the United States

for all the working class? Or are we talking about socialism
for Mexicans only?....⁷⁴ 74

The present state of the Chicano movement is a clear indication that such
fundamental questions have not yet been satisfactorily addressed.

NOTES

1. The author would like to acknowledge and thank Professors Albert Camarillo, Stanford University, and Tomas Almaguer, University of California, Berkeley, for their comments and criticism of earlier drafts of this essay.

2. In this essay the terms "Chicano" and "Mexican American" are used interchangeably to describe people of Mexican descent in the United States. It should be noted, however, that significant regional and political differences exist in the self-designation of this ethnic group. Mexican Americans define themselves variously as: Mexicans, Mexicanos, Chicanos, Latinos or Latin Americans (primarily in Texas), Spanish, Hispanic, Hispano or Hispanoamericano (primarily in New Mexico and Southern Colorado), or collectively as La Raza (the race or the people). For discussion of the importance of what historian Juan Gomez-Quiñones has termed the "controversy over nomenclature," see: Gomez-Quiñones, "Toward A Perspective on Chicano History," Aztlan (Fall 1971), 2(2):2-4; Fernando Peñalosa, "Toward an Operational Definition of the Mexican American," Aztlan (Spring 1970), 1(1): 1-12; Rudolfo Alvarez, "The Unique Psycho-Historical Experience of the Mexican-American People," Social Science Quarterly (June 1971), 52: 15-29; and Jose Hernández, Leo Estrada, and David Alvarez, "Census Data and the Problem of Conceptually Defining the Mexican American Population," Social Science Quarterly, (March 1973), 53(4): 671-687.

3. For discussion of Tijerina's activities in New Mexico, see: Richard Gardner, Grito (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970); Peter Nabokov, Tijerina and the Courthouse Raid (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969); and Frances L. Swadesh, "The Alianza Movement of New Mexico: The Interplay of Social Change and Public Commentary," in Henry J. Tobias and Charles E. Woodhouse, eds., Minorities and Politics (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969): 53-84.

4. Chavez' activities with the UFWU are discussed in detail in Peter Matthiessen, Sal Si Puedes: Cesar Chavez and the New American Revolution (New York: Random House, 1969); and Jacques Levy, Cesar Chavez: Autobiography of La Causa (New York: Norton, 1975).

5. Juan Gomez-Quinones, Mexican Students por La Raza; The Chicano Student Movement in Southern California 1967-1977 (Santa Barbara: Editorial La Causa, 1978): 13.

6. Gonzales' and Gutierrez' activities are discussed in: Christine Marin, A Spokesman of the Mexican American Movement: Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales and the Fight for Chicano Liberation, 1966-1972 (San Francisco: R&E Research Associates, 1977); and John Staples Shockley, Chicano Revolt in a Texas Town (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974). See also: Rodolfo Acuña, Occupied America: A History of Chicanos (2nd ed.), (New York: Harper & Row, 1981): 360-365.

7. Gomez-Quinones, Mexican Students, provides the best discussion of Chicano student protest in California. For developments in other areas, see: Acuña, Occupied America, chapter 11.

8. Exact definition of the concept of "Chicanismo" is subject to almost as many variations as those who have attempted to define it. For the range of conceptions of the term, see: Alfredo Cuellar, "Perspective on Politics" in Joan W. Moore with Alfredo Cuellar, Mexican Americans, 1st ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1970): 148-156; Fernando Peñalosa, "Recent Changes Among the Chicanos," Sociology and Social Research (Oct. 1970), 55: 47-52 ; Gerald Paul Rosen, "The Development of the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles from 1967 to 1969," Aztlan (Spring 1973) 4(1): 155-184; and Rosen, Political Ideology and the Chicano Movement (San Francisco: R&E Research Associates, 1975): 51-66; and Gustavo Segade,

"Identification and Power: An Essay on the Politics of Culture and the Culture of Politics in Chicano Thought," Aztlan (1978) 9: 85-100.

9. See: Acuña, Occupied America, 364-365; Rosen, Ideology, 80; and Armando Navarro, "The Evolution of Chicano Politics," Aztlan (Spring, Fall 1974) 5 (1&2): 76.

10. Gomez-Quiñones, Mexican Students, 28.

11. The development and early successes of LRUP in Texas are discussed in Shockley, Chicano Revolt. See also: Shockley, "Crystal City: La Raza Unida and the Second Revolt," in Renato Rosaldo, Robert A. Calvert, and Gustav L. Seligmann, Jr., eds., Chicano: Evolution of A People (Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co., 1982): 290-302.

12. The distinctions between Gonzales' and Gutierrez' political philosophies are most apparent in their own works. See, for example, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, "Chicano Nationalism: The Key to Unity for La Raza," in Wayne Moquin, ed., A Documentary History of the Mexican Americans (New York: Bantam Books, 1972): 488-493; and Jose Angel Gutiérrez, "Toward a Theory of Community Organization in a Mexican-American Community in South Texas," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, Austin, 1976).

13. The best analyses of the 1972 LRUP convention are: Carlos Muñoz and Mario Barrera, "La Raza Unida Party and the Chicano Student Movement in California," Social Science Journal (April 1982) 19(2): 101-120; and Richard Garcia, "The Chicano Movement and the Mexican American Community, 1972-1978: An Interpretive Essay," Socialist Review (July-October 1978) 40-41: 117-136. See also: Acuña, Occupied America: 386-391.

14. Garcia, "The Chicano Movement," 119.
15. Several studies provide general overviews of Chicano political history. See, for example: F. Chris Garcia and Rudolph O. de la Garza, The Chicano Political Experience: Three Perspectives (North Scituate, Mass.: Duxbury Press, 1977); Miguel David Tirado, "Mexican American Community Political Organization, The Key to Chicano Political Power," *Aztlan* (Spring 1970) 1(1): 53-78; and Tirado, "The Mexican-American Minority's Participation in Voluntary Political Associations," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Claremont Graduate School, 1970); Ralph C. Guzman, The Political Socialization of the Mexican American People (published dissertation, R&E Research Associates, 1976); and John R. Martinez, "Leadership and Politics," in Julian Samora, ed., La Raza: Forgotten Americans (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966): 47-62.
16. See: Tirado, "Mexican-American Community," and Acuña, Occupied America, Chapter 12, passim.
17. For brief historiographical discussions of the development of this stereotype, see: Ralph C. Guzman, "The Functions of Anglo-American Racism in the Political Development of Chicanos," in F. Chris Garcia, ed., Chicano Politics (New York: MSS Information Corporation, 1973): 21-37; and Richard A. Garcia, Political Ideology: A Comparative Study of Three Chicano Youth Organizations (San Francisco: R&E Research Associates, 1977): 14-21.
18. CASA, Articles of Incorporation (1969), Article II, CASA Papers Collection, Box 7, Folder 14, Department of Special Collections, Green Library, Stanford University; hereafter cited as CASA Papers.
19. For treatment of the important historical role played by the mutualistas

in Chicano/Mexicano society, see: Jose Amaro Hernández, Mutual Aid for Survival: The Case of the Mexican American (Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co., 1983); Carlos G. Velez-Ibanez, Bonds of Mutual Trust: The Cultural Systems of Rotating Credit Associations Among Urban Mexicans and Chicanos (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1983); and Francisco E. Balderrama, In Defense of La Raza: The Mexican Consulate and the Mexican Community, 1929 to 1936 (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982).

20. Hernández, Mutual Aid, Chapter 2.

21. Interview with Bert N. Corona, January 16, 1984. See also: "History of CASA," (draft, ca. 1978, hereafter cited as "History"), p. 9, CASA Papers, Box 4, Folder 4.

22. "History," p. 10. CASA provided substantial strike support throughout its existence. For examples of editorial strike support CASA provided, see: Sin Fronteras, September 1975, p.2, and Sin Fronteras, December 1975, p. 3.

23. Bert N. Corona, Bert Corona Speaks! (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972), p. 20 [first published in two parts in The Militant, April 7 & 28, 1972]. See also: Acuna, Occupied America: 169.

24. Occupied America: 169.

25. This estimate is based on remaining case files in the CASA Papers. See: CASA Papers, Box 15.

26. "History," pp. 11-12, CASA Papers, Box 4, Folder 4.

27. National Coalition for Fair Immigration Laws and Practices, "A Call to

Action," (newsletter: December 1973—in author's personal files). See also; "History of the National Coalition," (ca. 1977-78), Box K, CASA Papers.

28. Interview with Antonio Rodriguez, January 18, 1984. See also: "History," pp. 12-13, CASA Papers, Box 4, Folder 4; CASA Papers, Box 13, Folder 1, and Acuña, Occupied America: 169-170.

29. The National Committee to Free Los Tres (CFLT) was formed after three members of Casa Carnalismo in Los Angeles were convicted of assaulting a federal officer. The CFLT argued that the three men "were entrapped into a shootout" with the agent, and they were therefore "political prisoners" sentenced to unreasonable jail terms. See: CASA Papers, Carton 13.

30. "History," pp. 19-20, 20a, CASA Papers, Box 4, Folder 4.

31. In a speech delivered in January 1972 to the Mi Raza Primero Conference in Muskegon Michigan, Corona lambasted the Democratic Party while urging Chicanos to support the new La Raza Unida Party. He argued that, "On the basis of [this] experience, on the basis that these two parties have been nothing but promises—purely love of words and not of deeds—there is only one way out, and that is to form our own party...if our party develops on the basis of political independence, with the determination that we are going to control our own lives...then we will have a weapon that can authentically represent our vital interests." Bert N. Corona, Bert Corona Speaks!: 12-13.

32. "History," p. 19, CASA Papers, Box 4, Folder 4.

33. Corona interview, January 16, 1984; Rodriguez interview, January 18, 1984.

34. "History," p. 19, CASA Papers, Box 4, Folder 4.

35. Carlos Vasquez, Internal Document, "Our Work in the Coalition for Fair Immigration Laws and Practices," November 1976, CASA Papers, Box 14, Folder 3.
36. Gomez-Quiñones, Mexican Students, p. 13. Both Anglo and Chicano scholars began utilizing class analysis in attempts to explain Chicanos' historical experience. Robert Blauner's, "Internal Colonialism and Ghetto Revolt," Social Problems (Spring 1969) 16:393-408; and Joan W. Moore's, "Colonialism: The Case of the Mexican Americans," Social Problems (Spring 1970) 17(4):463-471; are early examples of new perspectives on ethnic relations in the United States. For examples of Chicano scholarship in the area, see: Mario Barrera, Carlos Muñoz, Jr., and Charles Órnelas, "The Barrio as an Internal Colony," in Harían Hahn, ed., People and Politics in Urban Society (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 1972); Tomas Almaguer, "Toward the Study of Chicano Colonialism," Aztlan (Spring 1971) 2(1): 137-142; and Carlos Muñoz, Jr., "Toward a Chicano Perspective of Political Analysis," Aztlan (Fall 1970) 1(2):15-26. A more recent study which revises and expands earlier work is Barrera, Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979).
37. Gustavo Segade, "Identification and Power," p. 90.
38. Carlos Vasquez, "Our Work," p. 2.
39. CASA Papers, Box 3, Folders 1, 2, 3. These records include transcriptions of minutes of the National Reunion Meeting (1975), and provide the basis for discussion of that event.
40. CASA Papers, Box 3, Folder 3.
41. Until July 1975, the structure of CASA was, in ascending order of authority: the nucleii, which were composed largely of rank-and-file members;

the local committees, composed of the leadership of various affiliated centers; and the Political Commission, a national body of five elected members, and the highest authority in the organization. At the reunion meeting, CASA's structure was expanded to include a body above the Political Commission, the National Coordinating Commission (NCC) to oversee national operations. Antonio Rodriguez was elected National Coordinator; Carlos Vasquez, Commissioner of Information and Propaganda; and Felipe Aguirre Commissioner of Finance. Carlos Chavez was elected Director of Sin Fronteras. See: CASA Papers, Box 2, Folder 10, and Box 3, Folder 20.

42. Rodriguez interview, January 18, 1984. See also: "History," p. 21, CASA Papers, Box 4, Folder 4.

43. Carlos Vasquez, "Our Work," p. 3.

44. Until it ceased publication in 1978, Sin Fronteras provided quality reportage on such issues as nationwide strike activities, Mexican politics, and social and political movements in the Third World. Rosen emphasizes the important role underground community newspapers played during the 1960s in voicing Chicano discontent, promoting group solidarity, and coordinating mass protests. Publications such as Inside Eastside, Chicano Student News (later Chicano Student Movement), and La Raza, played central roles during the Los Angeles high school "blowouts" in 1968 and 1970. See: Rosen, "The Development of the Chicano Movement," pp. 163, 177-179; and Gomez-Quiñones, Mexican Students, p. 37 and passim.

45. "Reglamento," (draft) p. 9, CASA Papers, Box 2, Folder 10.

46. Carlos Vasquez, "The Chicano Movement, A Step, Part V," Sin Fronteras, July 1977, p. 10.

47. Carlos Vasquez, "On National Consciousness," Sin Fronteras, June 1976, p. 7.
48. Carlos Vasquez, "On National Consciousness," Sin Fronteras, June 1976, p. 7. See also: "Political Commentary of the Political Commission of CASA," Sin Fronteras, December 1975, p. 7; and Carlos Vasquez, "August 29—What It Means," Sin Fronteras, August 1976, p. 8.
49. Internal memo, [n.d.], CASA Papers, Box 1, Folder 13.
50. "Memo on Recent Attacks on CASA by the August Twenty-ninth Movement (ATM/ML)," [n.d.], CASA Papers, Box 14, Folder 9.
51. Carlos Muñoz and Mario Barrera, "La Raza Unida Party and the Chicano Student Movement in California," p. 114.
52. See: Revolutionary Cause: Political Organ of the August Twenty-ninth Movement (Marxist-Leninist), (October 1977), 2(7): 2. I am grateful to David Montejano for bringing this article to my attention. See also: Antonio Rios Bustamante, Mexicans in the United States and the National Question: Current Polemics and Organizational Positions, (Santa Barbara: Editorial La Causa, 1978).
53. Olga Rodriguez, ed., The Politics of Chicano Liberation, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1979), p. 136. For further elaboration of the ideological positions of CASA's rival organizations, see, for example: Antonio Camejo, "A New Ideology for the Chicano Party," in Camejo, ed., La Raza! Why A Chicano Party? (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970); and Antonio Rios Bustamante, Mexicans in the United States.
54. The CASA Papers include extensive manuscript notes, draft articles, and other materials which indicate that CASA members regularly studied Marxian theory.

See: CASA Papers, Box 3, Folders 14, 15, 17.

55. CASA Papers, Box 11.

56. Internal memo, "Expansion and Consolidation of CASA-HGT," [n.d.],
CASA Papers, Box 1, Folder 17.

57. Ibid.

58. Sin Fronteras, July 1977, p. 9. See also: Josie Carrillo, "Infiltration
into the Chicano Movement," Regeneración (1972) II(2): 20.

59. See: CASA Papers, Box 4; and "History," p. 24, CASA Papers, Box 4, Folder
4.

60. Organizations ranging from the American G.I. Forum and LULAC to MALDEF
and the National Council of La Raza argued forcefully against Carter's immigration
proposals. See: Hispanic Ad Hoc Coalition on Immigration, "Response by Hispanics
to Changes in Immigration Law Proposed by President Jimmy Carter," (Washington, DC,
February 15, 1978) (in author's personal files).

61. For brief discussions of recent labor practices and immigration policy,
see; Peter Baird and Ed McCaughan, Beyond the Border (New York: NACLA, 1979); and
Wayne A. Cornelius, Leo R. Chavez, and Jorge G. Castro, "Mexican Immigrants and
Southern California: A Summary of Current Knowledge," Working Papers in U.S.-
Mexican Studies, 36 (Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California,
San Diego, 1982).

62. Corona, Corona Speaks!, p. 12. Estimates on CASA's declining membership
are based on financial records in the CASA Papers. See: CASA Papers, Box 4, Folders
1, 2; Box 7, Folder 13; Box 8, Folders 16, 17; and Box 20, Folder 15.

63. See: Richard Garcia, "The Chicano Movement;" and Acuña, Occupied America,
p. 181.

64. Quoted from Gutierrez' letter to "Mario." CASA Papers, Box 2, Folder 6.
65. Tomas Almaguer describes the pre-conference maneuvering between CASA and the SWP in: "Chicano Politics in the Present Period: Comment on Garcia," Socialist Review, (July-October 1978) 40-41: 137-142. See also: Antonio Rodriguez, "The National Immigration Conference: Unity and Opportunism," Sin Fronteras, November 1977, pp. 11-12.
66. Sin Fronteras, October 1977.
67. Garcia, "The Chicano Movement," p. 124.
68. Berkeley Foco minutes, (November 8, 1972), p. 2. (In author's personal files).
69. See, for example: Frank del Olmo, "Chicanos Will Fight Carter Plan," Los Angeles Times, October 31, 1977.
70. Garcia, "The Chicano Movement," p. 129.
71. Antonio Rodriguez, "The National Immigration Conference," p. 11. For a contrasting interpretation of events, see: Jose G. Pérez, "The Politics of Red-Baiting," The Militant, December 2, 1977, p. 28.
72. Antonio Rodriguez, "On Strategy and Tactics," (draft memo, /n.d./), CASA Papers, Box 2, Folder 7.
73. "History," pp. 38-39, CASA Papers, Box 4, Folder 4.