

October 30, 1957

Dear Fellow Hispanist:

In June and July of this year occurred a series of small events with a large human import and a larger significance for us as mediators between Americans and the peoples who speak Spanish.

Five young Spanish sailors decide that they have had enough of hardships and injustice in their homeland, and that their future lies in the unconfined air of Mexico. They learn that others like them have made their way to freedom. As these did, in San Diego harbor they take leave of their ships and go to Lower California. After a succession of mishaps, three surrender to the Mexican authorities, and all eventually are held at the disposition of the local chief of Immigration.

On the American side, the captain of one of the Spanish vessels enlists the aid of the American commandant. Word comes that the five are in Tijuana. An American shore patrol visits the Mexican immigration station to secure permission for a visit by the captain. A day or two later an American naval officer escorts a ship's commander from a foreign country into a third country foreign to them both, to assist in the recapture of foreign nationals. The Spanish captain wears a U. S. insignia. Without it, a Mexican immigration inspector says later, he would not have been admitted.

The boys are brought from jail. The captain makes his plea. But some of the five, before their desertion, have heard his threats on the occasion of an earlier escape of part of his crew: "To get them back we'll go easy on them here, but later..." One replies, "We would rather die in Mexico than go back to Spain." The captain and his escort return to the American side, and the boys are taken again to the Mexican jail.

One step over the line deserves another. In a few days the Mexican authorities learn that American Immigration is receptive to the return of the five. Mysteriously, the order comes for them to be put across.

These are not American citizens. There is no legal basis for surrendering them to the United States. If Mexico wants to deport them, there is no more justification for sending them to the United States than to Pakistan, and least reason of all for routing them directly or indirectly toward Spain, for Mexico has no diplomatic relations with the present Spanish government.

To every convention its circumvention. The young men cannot be forced to come back. They cannot be deported by Mexico without due process. Suppose, however, they should ask for the privilege? To accord them this opportunity, they are spirited over to the American side. A paper is pushed in front of one of them. "Sign here," he is told. He obeys. He reads no English. So much the worse for him, for the document to which he has just put his name is a request that he and the others be paroled into the United States for the purpose of being sent back to the ship from which they have just escaped.

There is more to this story; not all Americans have accommodated their views to body-snatching. The American courts will decide whether the Spanish government may take custody and punish the five in its peculiar fashion not only for their desertion but for the words that they have uttered in those very courts in defense of it, or whether they shall be free to go once more to Mexico, whose government is now prepared to welcome them. We cannot advise the judges of their decision, but we can take steps to insure that the defense is not slighted, and to protect the defendants even if the courts fail:

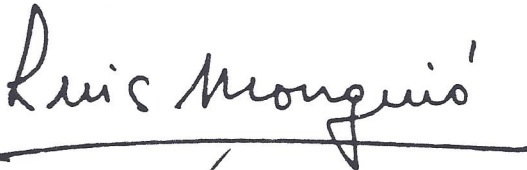
1. We can contribute to the legal expenses. A fund of at least seven thousand dollars must be raised to cover these and associated costs. Your check, payable to D. L. Bolinger and marked "for the Committee to Free the Five Spanish Sailors," may be mailed in the enclosed envelope.
2. We can remind our Government that the good will of Spain is the good will of the Spanish people, not of a bureaucracy, and is all ours for an act of kindness, but not to be bartered for fortunes in arms or protocol. Letters should be written to John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State, and to William P. Rogers, our new Attorney General, Washington 25, D. C., urging that our Government facilitate the early return of the five men to Mexico.
3. We can urge support of legislation in Congress permitting the five to go to Mexico. Write your Senators and Congressman asking them to investigate the facts in the case and to use their influence to return the men to Mexico.

To give asylum to refugees by the hundreds from Iron Curtain countries and to deny it to five hapless youths from a dictatorship of the West is, to say the least, inconsistent. We either believe in political freedom or we do not. We cannot, as Hispanists, turn our faces away from this decision, for it has been thrust upon us as a test of how sincerely we mean those *gritos de libertad* that we admiringly quote to our classes from Hidalgo, Marti, Bolivar and San Martin.

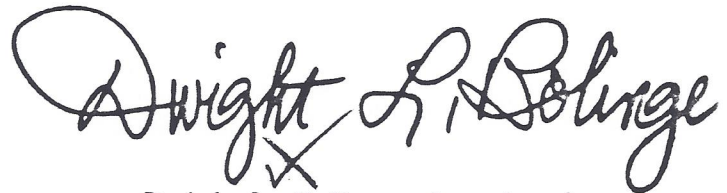
Some of the signers of this appeal have spoken to the five young men, Two of the signers have talked with those in Mexico who tried to help them, and have interviewed the Mexican police and immigration officials who were involved in the case. The facts stated here are first-hand, or from direct testimony of those immediately concerned. There is no reason to doubt their essential truth.

The most hopeful truth of all is the heartfelt sympathy and unaffected eagerness of the Mexican people, her government in the person of its president, and her Church in the person of the Apostolic Vicar of Lower California, to welcome these wayfarers home. This is Mexico at her democratic best. We can be no less.

Sincerely yours



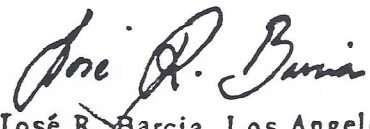
Luis Monguio, Berkeley



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(See page 3 for additional signatures)

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Stanley L. Robe
Stanley L. Robe, Los Angeles

BULLETIN:

Since this letter was drafted, word has been received that \$2176 of the needed \$7000 has been contributed, one thousand from the savings of friends in Mexico, and some from as far away as Venezuela.

Word also comes of the death, in Spain, of the mother of one of the boys, Manuel Fernandez, and the prayers of all their families that they be spared the imprisonment or execution that awaits them in Spain.