The front page of *El Regidor*, May 13, 1909. Edited by Pablo Cruz, the San Antonio-based newspaper reflect-ed and contributed to the transborder nature of opposition to the regime of Porfirio Díaz.
Frontier of Dissent: El Regidor, the Regime of Porfirio Díaz, and the Transborder Community

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On September 26, 1891, San Antonio’s El Regidor, a Spanish-language weekly newspaper edited by Pablo Cruz, informed its readers that American authorities had arrested Paulino Martínez, editor of Laredo’s El Chinaco newspaper, for violating American neutrality laws. Days earlier Martínez, a revolutionary and an ardent adversary of Mexican president Porfirio Díaz, defended Catarino E. Garza’s border rebellion against Díaz and encouraged Mexicans to rise up against the president-turned-dictator. Colleagues of Martínez denounced the arrest as unjust. As the publication had done in other cases where it perceived injustice against Tejanos—and people of Mexican descent in general—El Regidor defended Martínez, claiming that under the neutrality law, journalists could not be prosecuted for penning their views of a foreign government.1

While El Regidor did not openly advocate insurrection, its defense of Martínez and the right of journalists to criticize foreign administrations indicated support for Díaz’s critics. As Díaz secured his authority during the 189os, opposition—both in Mexico and in Texas—to his governance increased. El Regidor’s criticism of the policies and actions of the Díaz regime during the 189os reveals a transborder community of journalists and editors who increasingly condemned the Mexican administration. El Regidor’s reportage on Mexican politics and its support for the rights of Tejanos and Mexicans illustrate the bonds of the transborder Tejano and Mexican community in the decades immediately before the 1910 Mexican Revolution.

By 1910 resistance to the Porfiriato (as Díaz’s 1876–1910 regime has

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come to be known) rooted in the 189os transborder opposition movements erupted in bloody revolution. The 189os not only marked an increase in antagonism towards the Díaz regime but also witnessed the emergence of a transborder coalition of liberal journalists who condemned Díaz for violating the Mexican Constitution of 1857. This article explores El Regidor’s 189os rhetoric as part of the growing transborder opposition to Díaz. Significant collaboration occurred between El Regidor and the liberal Mexican press, reflecting a cross-border relationship. While providing its own perspective and reporting on the Díaz government, El Regidor also reprinted pieces from liberal Mexico City papers such as Diario del Hogar and El Independiente on issues related to government persecution of the press and Díaz’s consecutive reelections. El Regidor’s use of opposition newspapers rather than pro-administration publications further reflected its liberal perspective.

El Regidor’s founder and editor, Pablo Cruz, was a prominent San Antonio leader. Unlike many other members of the liberal Mexican press who settled in Texas during the Porfiriato, Cruz was not a political refugee. He came to Texas at the age of ten, moving from the city of Monclova, in southeastern Coahuila, along with his younger siblings, his paternal grandmother, and his uncle in the summer of 1877 to reunite with his widowed father Abraham Cruz Valdez, who had settled in rural Lodi, Texas. The Cruz family moved to San Antonio in 1883, and by 1888, twenty-two-year-old Cruz established El Regidor, which continued publication until 1916. Cruz emerged as a prominent entrepreneur running a successful print shop in conjunction with his newspaper. In addition, he owned several properties in San Antonio, participated in local politics, and served as trustee on the San Antonio Independent School Board in 1907. His Spanish-language weekly kept readers informed of local, national, and international news. In addition, Cruz utilized El

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2 Several works have used Spanish-language newspapers to examine the transborder nature of communities along the U.S./Mexico border. See for example, Richard Griswold del Castillo, “The Mexican Revolution and the Spanish-Language Press in the Borderlands,” Journalism History, 4 (Summer 1977), 42-47. After comparing Spanish-language newspapers in New Mexico, Texas, and California, Griswold del Castillo found that local concerns and the political beliefs of the editors and proprietors determined how the newspaper covered and portrayed the revolution. In “The Chicano Immigrant Press in Los Angeles: The Case of ‘El Heraldo de Mexico,’ 1916-1920,” Journalism History, 4 (Summer 1977), 48-50, 62-63, Ramón D. Chacón analyzed the content of El Heraldo de Mexico and found that coverage fell into the following categories: reports from Mexico, coverage of local concerns, and news affecting immigrants. In “Deconstructing La Raza: Identifying the Gente Decente of Laredo, 1904-1911,” Southwestern Historical Quarterly, 98 (Oct., 1994), 227-250, Elliott Young used Laredo’s Spanish-language newspapers to explore the complexity of identity by examining the role of the press in creating and reinforcing class, gender, and religious distinctions within the Mexican identity. The continual arrival of Mexican immigrants and the mounting revolutionary activities along the border influenced the press’ social construction of identity in Laredo. Young’s work also exposes the transborder nature of the role of Spanish-language newspapers in Texas.
Regidor to defend Tejano rights, thus establishing his newspaper and himself as a protector of the Tejano community.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an increasing number of liberal newspaper proprietors and editors like Cruz used the press to expose the abuses Tejanos suffered. These self-appointed guardians utilized their newspapers as vehicles to demand justice and encourage action from the Tejano community. Cruz, like many of his cohorts, couched arguments against discrimination and injustice in terms of violations of democratic values and impediments to social and economic progress. He defined democracy and progress as political participation and free elections, while also emphasizing economic opportunity and educational instruction. In 1892, El Regidor condemned The San Antonio Light for accusing Tejanos of corrupting local elections by selling their vote. The English-language newspaper, according to Cruz, claimed Tejanos did not have the right to the vote because of their race. During elections Cruz endorsed candidates he believed would assist the community and encouraged Tejanos not only to exercise their right to vote, but also to form voting blocs to demonstrate their political potential. El Regidor joined Laredo’s La Crónica and El Aldeano of Uribeño, a small community in Zapata County, in calling for justice for Tejano children. The proprietors and editors of these newspapers demanded that children of Mexican heritage receive an education equal to that of their white cohorts. As early as 1893 Cruz criticized Mexican schools in Texas as inadequate and called for the integration of Tejano children into white schools:

When we see . . . a first-rate school for American [Anglo] youngsters, schools that have a large number of professors . . . we lament the absolute lack of instruction for Mexicans. . . .[A] great number of youths of our race, notable for their intelligence . . . reach the age of maturity without having received the light of instruction. . . . What’s more we should keep in mind the illegality and injustice by which Mexicans are deprived of instruction; well, they have the complete right to attend the American school. . . In fact, in almost all Texas towns Mexicans suffer this hateful injustice for they are not permitted to study with American children.

El Regidor was just one of the Spanish-language papers in the state to protest this state of affairs. Clemente Idar of La Crónica echoed Cruz’s
sentiments in 1910 when he noted that Tejanos paid taxes supporting public education, and yet Tejano children were excluded from schools or forced to attend segregated schools. Everardo Torres, editor of *El Aldeano*, also called for the establishment of schools in all Tejano communities. This criticism of education in Texas was just one of many examples of *El Regidor*’s activism on behalf of the Tejano community.

*El Regidor* challenged racist policies, raised funds for the legal defense of Tejanos, and promoted education as essential to the political and economic advancement of Tejanos. Cruz particularly emphasized legal and constitutional violations in his arguments against discrimination and injustice. On occasion Cruz used *El Regidor* to raise funds for the legal defense of Tejanos. He argued that poverty and inadequate legal representation prevented Tejanos from receiving a fair trial as guaranteed by the American Constitution. In 1901, Cruz established a legal defense fund for alleged horse thief and murder Gregorio Cortez. After Cortez’s conviction, Cruz, who believed the trials were tainted by prejudice and false evidence, continued to raise funds and lobby on Cortez’s behalf declaring that “we must make the society of this illustrious nation see that we know how to defend our civil rights.”

In 1911, *El Regidor* campaigned against the state poll tax, calling it a political ploy and a violation of the American Constitution. The $2.50 poll tax deprived “the most humble citizens of the state,” among them Tejanos who could not afford the tax, of an “inalienable privilege.” Cruz applied the same reasoning to his criticism of Díaz’s prosecution of the Mexican liberal press and the president’s continual reelections.

Cruz’s concern for the Mexican community did not stop at the Rio Grande. Cruz inhabited an environment in which the border was fluid, reinforcing a brotherhood based on culture and heritage. South Texas communities also depended on commerce with Mexico. Furthermore, travel to and from Mexico was common. In articles, Mexicans were referred to as “brothers” emphasizing a cultural and historical bond.

For example, to commemorate the Diez y Seis de Septiembre (September 16, the day on which Mexico celebrates its independence from Spain), *El Regidor* published the Mexican national anthem, celebrated the history of Mexico, and referred to the day as “our independence.”

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8 *El Regidor*, May 19, 1911.
10 *El Regidor*, Sept. 26, 1907, Sept. 9, 1909, May 19, 1911.
In addition, the violence and racism Tejanos suffered reflected Anglo views of individuals of Mexican heritage as members of the same group of cultural “others,” regardless of place of origin. Anglos rarely distinguished between Mexican nationals and American citizens of Mexican ancestry. 12

Pablo Cruz put this idea of transborder “brotherhood” into action through coordinated efforts with the press in Mexico. In 1905, the lynching of Mexican nationals in Texas led El Regidor, El Contemporáneo of San Luis Potosí, Renacimiento of Monterrey, and two Mexico City newspapers, El Paladín and El Tercer Imperio, to establish a transborder coalition to demand action from the Mexican government. Correspondence with various Mexican officials and articles on the lynchings condemning the Mexican government for turning a blind eye to the violence against Tejanos resulted in investigations of the incidents. Cruz called this a triumph for all people of Mexican heritage. 13

El Regidor’s readership further demonstrates the existence of a transborder relationship between Tejanos and Mexicans. El Regidor had readers throughout South Texas, Southern New Mexico, and Arizona as well as northern Mexico and Mexico City. Residents from various locations sent letters to the editor and donated money to the funds Cruz established. When Nuevo León and Tamaulipas suffered a series of floods in 1909 that devastated the northern regions of both states claiming hundreds of lives and leaving hundreds more homeless and starving, Cruz established a relief fund through El Regidor. Donors from Texas, the Southwest, and Mexico heeded Cruz’s call on behalf of “our brothers.” 14

Archbishop Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores of Linares, Nuevo León, thanked Cruz and El Regidor for raising $849 in relief funds for flood victims. Further reflecting the transborder concerns of its readers, the weekly regularly reported on the political scene in Mexico and ran the column Noticias de México (News from Mexico). The column offered readers updates on national, state, and municipal activities. In addition, birth, death, anniversary, and travel notices were also printed in this column. Noticias de México provided brief glimpses into occurrences in Mexico and kept Tejanos connected to Mexicans. Pablo Cruz’s deep concern for

13 El Regidor, Feb. 23, Mar. 9, Apr. 20, 1905.
14 El Regidor, Sept. 9, 1909.
the future of Mexico infused his heavy criticism of the regime of President Porfirio Díaz.15

Coverage of the Díaz government by El Regidor was not always negative; for example, Cruz recognized the significant achievements the administration made in improving the nation’s infrastructure and economy. The weekly reported on the modernization of various segments of the nation from the construction of railways and hospitals to the installation of telephone lines. When Díaz took office in 1876, he and his advisors inherited a bankrupt and underdeveloped nation that had been plagued with internal political strife, economic depressions, and foreign intervention. Mexico’s import expenditures exceeded its export revenue, and industry and railroads were almost nonexistent. To revitalize the national economy and create economic development, the Díaz administration attracted foreign investment. With the use of foreign capital the government supported railroad construction, revitalized the mining industry, and promoted the growth of commercial agriculture and manufacturing, triggering export growth. Economic expansion continued until the early twentieth century, when some industries experienced a decline and labor unrest increased.16

In order to attract foreign interest and facilitate economic development, the Díaz administration sought to establish political stability. In Mexico, regionalism prevailed, and often discordant relations existed between the states and the central government. Throughout the Porfiriato, the administration tried to ensure a general sense of national stability by employing a combination of strategies, including patronage, negotiation, manipulation, and repression. State governors and local caudillos, for example, capitalized on the patronage system. Díaz rewarded supporters with bureaucratic and military positions, extended political favors to the family members of associates, and offered allies economic opportunities. To extend national control over the states, Díaz established himself as mediator between rival factions that he manipulated and played off one other. By the 1890s, as Díaz continued to centralize

his power through repression, manipulation, and fixed reelections, opponents of the Porfiriato as well as supporters started to doubt Díaz’s motives and considered the president’s extended stay in office detrimental to the nation.17

*El Regidor* and others in the transborder liberal press denounced Díaz’s reelections as contradictions of his earlier political philosophy and actions. In 1854, Díaz supported the Revolution of Ayutla against the rule of Gen. Antonio López de Santa Anna. The Revolution of Ayutla called for the removal of Santa Anna and the creation of a liberal democratic government. The Constitution of 1857, which was based on the Proclamation of Ayutla, created a democratic republic that extended basic freedoms to the Mexican people that “all authorities of the country must respect and maintain the guarantees which the present Constitution grants.”18 The constitution guaranteed Mexicans inalienable rights that included freedom of assembly, expression, press, and petition and it provided for popular elections. Although the original constitution did not forbid consecutive reelections, it was amended to prohibit the indefinite reelection of the president. In 1871, Díaz had led a failed revolt against President Benito Juárez after Juárez won a fourth term. Díaz proposed limiting the president to a single term because indefinite reelections repudiated the ideas of the Revolution of Ayutla and the Constitution of 1857. When Díaz led a revolt against President Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada in 1876, he once again proclaimed that the president could not seek consecutive reelections in the Plan de Tuxtepec. The Plan de Tuxtepec accused the president of infringing on state sovereignty and manipulating the voting process. The 1876 rebellion proved successful, and Díaz was elected to the nation’s highest office in 1877. As a result of the revolt a constitutional amendment was added in 1878 prohibiting consecutive reelections. After completing his first term Díaz stepped down, complying with the anti-reelection principle he had championed since 1871. However, his return to the presidency in 1884 marked the beginning of subsequent reelections. To consolidate authority, the government amended the Constitution twice, in 1887 then again in 1890, removing all obstacles to consecutive terms.19 In reaction

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to Díaz’s third consecutive reelection campaign in 1892 *El Regidor* published articles that were cynical in tone and that questioned the president’s decree that the people’s will kept him in office:

Is General Díaz so popular among our countrymen that only his desire to remain in charge of the country’s destiny is considered by the nation a supreme order? Does he [Díaz] possess the love of the nation, that no one dare nominate another man . . . Is he so superior to other Mexicans that no other man in our Republic compares to him? . . . [W]e would like to say of General Díaz that this soldier imitated the conduct of George Washington, who believed that providing liberty to the nation was not enough to justify a third reelection.\(^\text{20}\)

*El Regidor* further declared that the president’s extended stay in office violated the principles of democracy and prevented Mexico from evolving into a true republic. The newspaper stated that Díaz and his political allies remained in power because of their continual use of force: “In our republic, according to them [government leaders] liberty exists but 40,000 bayonets are needed to uphold it.”\(^\text{21}\) During election years, the paper persistently pointed out the contradictions of such actions. The president, *El Regidor* noted, not only campaigned against presidential reelectations in 1871 and 1876, but also fought to liberate Mexico from the monarchy of Maximilian von Hapsburg in the 1860s. These rebellions sought to prevent despotism by establishing a constitutional republic in which leaders were chosen by popular vote. Articles emphasized the irony that the man who repelled French troops from Puebla on May 5, 1862, and crusaded for single presidential terms, had become an iron-fisted dictator who used political manipulation and military force to deprive Mexicans of honest elections. Protest against Díaz’s continual reelectations mounted with each campaign as allegations from both sides of the border accused the administration of voter and ballot manipulation.\(^\text{22}\)

To ensure reelection, the Díaz regime manipulated elections, at times placing federal troops at voting sites to intimidate voters and keep opponents away from voting sites. The most common form of electoral manipulation, however, was not intimidation of votes but the direct selection of candidates at all levels of government and negotiation with local caudillos to ensure a favorable outcome. The regime’s manipulation of elections and candidates undermined the democratic spirit of the Con-

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\(^{20}\) *El Regidor*, Feb. 27, 1892.

\(^{21}\) *El Regidor*, Jan. 30, 1892.

\(^{22}\) *El Regidor*, Jan. 30, Feb. 27, June 4, June 11, July 2, July 23, July 2, 1892, May 7, July 2, 1896.
stitution of 1857; indeed, Cruz referred to Díaz’s election by “popular vote” as a farce. Mexico, he argued, was not a democratic republic, but a nation controlled by an authoritarian regime that “maintained itself by force and deprived [citizens] of a legitimate freedom [to choose their leaders].”

The architects of the Constitution of 1857 also guaranteed Mexicans freedom of expression and press with Articles 6 and 7. While Article 6 protected expression of ideas, Article 7 guaranteed freedom of the press except when information threatened public order and morality. In 1883, Article 7 was amended, moving prosecution of the press from the popular courts to the ordinary courts. The transfer allowed for the political manipulation of the proceedings through the Minister of Justice, who was appointed by the president and influenced the selection of ordinary court judges. Cruz believed freedom of the press, like popular elections, was a fundamental element of true democracy.

In Barbarous Mexico, based on his tenure in Mexico and interviews with opposition journalists, muckraking American writer John Kenneth Turner declared that “[t]here is no publication in the country so strong that it would not be suppressed at once did it directly criticize the head of the government.” While Turner’s condemnation of government censorship may have exaggerated its strength, the Díaz regime did attempt to suppress opposition publications through such techniques as harassment and imprisonment. The government fined, arrested, and imprisoned proprietors, editors, and journalists for disrupting public peace, citing Article 7 of the 1857 Constitution. The Mexican leadership during the Porfiriato believed that political order had to be attained through the creation of a strong central government, a policy that justified this repression and referred to in El Regidor as “peace at all cost.”

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23 El Regidor, Jan. 30, 1892; Garner, Porfirio Díaz, 102–110.
24 El Regidor, Jan. 30, 1892.
26 El Regidor, Aug. 8, 1891.
28 El Regidor, Nov. 11, 1897.
government attempts to control the press, the number of independent newspapers that openly criticized the government continuously increased.29

*El Regidor* denounced the harassment of the independent press by the Diaz administration. The paper’s politics were evident in its editorials, which elevate the role of the press to that of a guardian of democracy and society:

We always tell the truth, we notice the contradictions between promises of yesterday and deeds of today, and this is unforgivable because in present times it is a great crime to tell people the truth and open their eyes. . . . Next we complain of the constant violation of the Constitution . . . in reality this is also a dreadful crime because as journalists we should have eyes and not see, we should have ears and not to hear, and we should have a tongue and not speak . . . many are the sufferings that await us if we continue our work to save liberty, justice, and democracy . . . persecution, misery, prison, or death can destroy our body . . . but nothing and no one can ever dominate our free and independent spirit to defend, while our strength allows us, the sacred principles of freedom . . . as citizens we have the ability to exercise our full rights, after all we are members of this nation or is this a crime?30

While the independent press fought to uphold democratic values and expose injustice, the pro-government press, according to *El Regidor*, had the sad duty of defending an immoral and tyrannical government. The paper referred to alleged atrocities that José María Garza Galán, governor of the northern Mexican state of Coahuila had committed, including election manipulations, theft, and homicide. Garza Galán, along with others listed by *El Regidor*, enjoyed the support of Diaz. For instance, in 1886, Diaz, with the assistance of Gen. Bernardo Reyes, commander of the Third Military Zone, placed Garza Galán on the governor’s seat, ousting Governor Evaristo Madero, Francisco Madero’s father and a political opponent of the president. Garza Galán’s actions, which ranged from appointing relatives and allies to political positions to privatizing the state’s communal lands and then facilitating foreign acquisition of them, created resentment toward both the governor and the president. In the editorial “Pobre Pueblo de Coahuila!” [Poor State of Coahuila!], *El Regidor* revealed that Garza Galán and other government leaders not only assisted foreign acquisition of Mexican land, but also benefited as board members of and investors in foreign companies operating in Mexico. In 1893 a revolt in Coahuila accompanied Garza Galán’s bid for

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reelection, resulting in his removal. Such rebellious activities continued to plague Coahuila, the birthplace of *El Regidor*’s editor and proprietor, into the twentieth century. Pro-government newspapers, according to *El Regidor*, ignored or defended the actions of Garza Galán and others, portraying them as honorable men contributing to the prosperity and honor of the Mexican nation.\textsuperscript{31}

To offset criticism from the opposition press and to ensure loyalty, the Díaz regime provided subsidies to some newspapers, such as Mexico City’s *El Partido Liberal*. Pro-government publications provided patriotic rhetoric and helped legitimize the actions of the Díaz government. While pro-government newspapers received the protection of the government, the opposition press suffered harassment. On December 5, 1891, *El Regidor* announced that Inocencio Arriola, editor of Mexico City’s *El Diario del Hogar*, was returning to Mexico City’s notorious Belén prison, from which he had recently been released, for reporting abuses in Díaz’s justice administration. *El Diario del Hogar* began publication in 1881 under the editorial leadership of Filomeno Mata. The paper emerged as an ardent critic of the Díaz administration and the president’s perpetual reelection. As a result, *El Diario del Hogar* and its staff became targets of government prosecutions. Mata, who left the paper in 1892, had been imprisoned several times, and harassment continued when he returned to the paper in 1907. *El Regidor*’s use of *El Diario del Hogar* drew transborder attention to the struggle of the press in Mexico.\textsuperscript{32}

As independents continued to criticize government officials, retaliation from the administration increased. On May 20, 1893, *El Regidor*, relying on information from the Mexican press, told its readers that the Mexican government had imprisoned the owners, editors, and directors of six independent newspapers. The previous month the director, Joaquín Clausell, and the editor, Francisco R. Blanco, of Mexico City’s *El Demócrata*, had been imprisoned in Belén. *El Regidor* condemned Díaz, claiming that opposition to the administration was the sole reason for the arrests:

> Within the short time of a week, SIX INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERS have died under the brutal blow of General Díaz’s government. The printing houses have


been closed, the presses have been thrown into the street, and the directors, editors, regents, etc., etc., have been jailed in the cells of Belén prison. And all this why? Because those newspapers freely expressed their opinions, which were not favorable to the present administration. [Díaz] fears the complete liberty the independent press could possess because they’ll judge the acts of his administration.33

On June 17, 1893, El Regidor reprinted an article from Mexico City’s El Diario del Hogar, “Visita a Los Presos Políticos,” that identified several political prisoners housed at Belén, including journalists arrested in May and April. An unidentified reporter from El Diario del Hogar wrote that political prisoners, several of whom were journalists, were paying a high price for the freedoms of expression and press. The paper described the hopelessness on the part of some of the inmates. Clausell of El Demócrata, according to the article, “does not beg or plead, resigned to his situation, he suffers from the great and shameful infamies that he has to witness in Belén.”34 The reporter also found his colleagues from El Diario del Hogar, Víctor Becerril and Antonio Rivera, gravely ill.35

In addition to reprinting opposition articles from El Diario del Hogar, El Regidor also published material from other independent papers. A satirical piece from Mexico City’s El Hijo del Ahuizote claimed Díaz was in the process of establishing an “independent” government-funded newspaper. The Mexican president, referred to as “el Caudillo,” edited the rumored paper, El Lucas Gómez, while a host of officials, including Garza Galán, served in different capacities ranging from reporter to foreign correspondent. The decline in readership of the subsidized press, according to El Hijo del Ahuizote, was the reason for the creation of El Lucas Gómez. Using tongue-in-check rhetoric, the paper declared that the persecution of the independent press was in actuality an attempt to eliminate El Lucas Gómez’s competition. The editors of El Hijo del Ahuizote, like those of El Diario del Hogar, saw the inside of Belén prison on numerous occasions. By 1903, revolutionaries Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón, founders of the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM), took over the publication of El Hijo del Ahuizote because its editor, Daniel Cabrera, remained incarcerated.36

The persecution of adversaries, such as liberal journalists, led to mounting opposition against the administration, and according to an editorial published by El Regidor, revolution in Mexico was unavoidable:

33 El Regidor, May 20, 1893.
34 El Regidor, June 17, 1893.
35 El Regidor, May 20, June 17, 1893; El Demócrata (Mexico City), Apr. 2, 1893.
36 El Regidor, May 20, 1893; Hart, Revolutionary Mexico, 87–82.
Our nation’s political situation could not be more alarming. Peace which has been sustained for years, is crumbling like an old building. The maintenance of peace can be accomplished either by revolt or by an administrative change. . . . One, we will place a bet, leads to unfavorable results [for those benefiting from government policies], the other leads to the path of disaster, revolution. . . . General Díaz has demonstrated . . . that he will not step down unless driven out by the same force that elevated him [revolution].

During the later years of the Porfiriato, anti-Díaz activity plagued the border, much of which was organized by opposition newspaper editors in exile in Texas. Tejanos and Mexicans involved in this activity risked punishment from both American and Mexican officials. In the summer of 1890, Francisco Ruiz Sandoval, an exiled opponent of Díaz, organized a rebellion in Laredo. The unsuccessful insurrection resulted in the arrest of Sandoval and other alleged participants for violating U.S. neutrality laws. Authorities transported Sandoval and his companions to San Antonio to stand trial. Cruz used El Regidor to raise money for the defense of Sandoval and his cohorts. Donations to the defense fund ranged from twenty-five cents to two dollars. Cruz not only collected money for the defense of the accused but he also donated to the fund. Although not publicly advocating insurrection, Cruz demonstrated opposition to Díaz by establishing a fund for the defense of the president’s enemies. El Regidor’s defense of the Mexican liberal press and its defense of rebels further highlighted the transborder perspective of the weekly.

A year after the failed Sandoval uprising, El Regidor once again reported on armed insurrection along the Texas-Mexican border. In 1891, Díaz faced a border insurrection when Catarino E. Garza, editor of two anti-Díaz newspapers published in Texas, led a rebellion from South Texas against him. In 1877, Garza, a native of Matamoros, Tamaulipas, migrated to Texas where he published El Libre Pensador (Eagle Pass) and El Comercio Mexicano (Corpus Christi). Garza used the newspapers to protest Diaz’s reelection campaigns, arguing, “Mexico is not a republic. What it is is unknown, but we’ll say it is a dictatorship with all its imperfections.”

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57 El Regidor, June 11, 1892.
60 Catarino E. Garza, “La lógica de los hechos: O sean observaciones sobre las circunstancias de los mexicanos en Texas, desde el año de 1877 hasta 1889” (Unpublished manuscript; The Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin), 224.
On September 16, 1891, Garza, accompanied by Sandoval, led a group of armed men across the border into Tamaulipas and issued El Plan Revolucionario. Mexican communities in Texas were unaware that, as they celebrated the Diez y Seis de Septiembre, an insurrection was underway. The chosen date proved symbolic because September 16 was the day in 1810 when Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla initiated the long struggle for Mexico’s independence from Spain. Garza proclaimed, “The last of the independent journalists, the most humble of all, abandons today the pen to grab the sword in defense of the people’s rights.”

The rebels denounced Díaz as a traitor both to the Constitution of 1857 and the 1876 Plan de Tuxtepec, in which Díaz called for a rebellion against President Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada and championed single presidential terms. El Plan Revolucionario called for a mass rebellion against Díaz and the governors who supported him for corruption and violating the rights of the people.

Among the violations listed was “the complete death of freedom of the press and the treacherous assassinations of many dignified and liberal writers.”

Rebels also criticized the government for selling Mexican territory to American companies. The policies of the Díaz administration, according to the proclamation, allowed foreign corporations to rob Mexicans of their birthright: the land for which their ancestors fought and died.

The same month that Garza initiated his rebellion, El Regidor, in response to an article in the St. Louis Globe-Democrat that had raved about the investment opportunities available to Americans in Mexico as a result of the policies and actions of the Díaz administration, simply added, “Mexico progresses for the benefit of our cousins [Americans] . . . leading industries are owned by foreign companies . . . Mexicans will never be the owners of that progress.”

Dr. Ignacio Martínez, former Mexican general and opponent of Porfirio Díaz, greatly inspired Garza’s actions. In 1876 Martínez supported Díaz’s revolt against Lerdo de Tejada but later found himself at odds with Díaz. In 1886 Martínez fled Mexico and settled in Brownsville, Texas, where he established the anti-Díaz newspaper El Mundo. Four years later Martínez relocated to Laredo where he continued his journal-

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41 Young, Catarino Garza’s Revolution on the Texas-Mexico Border, 1.
43 Young, Catarino Garza’s Revolution on the Texas-Mexico Border, 113.
44 Saldivar, Documentos de la rebelión de Catarino E. Garza, 14–16; Young, Catarino Garza’s Revolution on the Texas-Mexico Border, 111–117.
45 El Regidor, Sept. 26, 1891.
istic crusade against Díaz and assisted Sandoval in the failed 1890 uprising. On the morning of February 3, 1891, two gunmen mortally wounded Martínez as he left a patient’s home, giving rise to rumors that Díaz commissioned the assassination. El Regidor speculated, as did others, that the murder was a result of Martínez’s attacks on Díaz. “The unfortunate General Martínez fiercely criticized the tyrant Porfirio Díaz exposing all his abuses and the outrages committed against this nation . . . called a republic.”46 Although the Mexican government denied involvement in Martínez’s murder, supporters of the slain editor demanded justice. Despite the fact authorities identified potential suspects, the case ultimately remained unsolved.47

During September 1891, Garza rode to the Santa Lucia ranch, located in Mexico, where he recruited men and continued his journey to Jabali, Tamaulipas. Mexican troops tracked Garza and his band of rebels, referred to as garzistas, but failed to apprehend them. As rumors spread of Garza’s whereabouts, El Regidor, using reprinted articles and telegrams, reported on the activities of the rebels, detailing accounts of military encounters between garzistas and both Mexican and American troops. In early October El Regidor, while claiming neutrality, castigated the Mexican government for placing a price on Garza:

A person from this city [San Antonio] who we have the utmost confidence in has assured us that the Mexican government has offered various prominent Texas employees the sum of $30,000 if they capture and return Catarino Garza to Mexico . . . While being impartial on this matter [the rebellion] we must censure . . . the vile methods that the leaders of Mexico have employed.48

Two months later Capt. John Bourke led a group of soldiers toward Retamal, a ranch along the Texas border, because a rumored group of garzistas attempted to cross the border into Mexico to attack Camargo, Tamaulipas. Bourke intended to prevent the crossing and to arrest the men, charging them with violating United States neutrality laws. Although shots were exchanged, Bourke was unsuccessful in capturing the insurrectionists. Garza and his followers continued their border crossings in an attempt to rally the Mexican population against Díaz.49

Despite El Regidor’s claims of impartiality regarding Garza insurrec-

46 El Regidor, Oct. 14, 1891.
48 El Regidor, Oct. 4, 1891.
tion, the newspaper defended the rebellion and the reputation of the editor turned rebel. Citing pro-administration articles in which the Díaz administration referred to the border uprising as insignificant and insisted that the Mexican population supported its government, El Regidor ridiculed Díaz’s claims, noting that the garzistas’ border crossings forced the Mexican government to post troops along the border.\textsuperscript{50} El Regidor stated:

Garza’s conduct with neighboring ranches located near his base of operation has been nothing but gentlemanly and irreproachable . . . he respects the dignity of the home and . . . [demonstrates] a conduct diametrically opposite of many government leaders who in the name of sacred liberties leave trails of death, terror and crime every where they go.\textsuperscript{51}

The San Antonio Daily Express, San Antonio’s leading English-language newspaper, gave American readers a negative depiction of the rebels. In an interview with the paper, J. C. Harrison, an American miner living in Mexico, described Díaz as a great leader and referred to the rebels as bandits and assassins. To further condemn the insurrection and undermine American sympathy for it, L. Lameda Díaz, the Mexican consul in Laredo, told newspapers that the garzistas were waging war against the United States, not Mexico. To support his claims, Lameda Díaz cited the rebel’s organization on American soil, their destruction and theft of property belonging to Anglos, and battles between the rebels and American troops. He insisted, moreover, that the garzistas only crossed into Mexican soil when they were pursued by Bourke and his army regiment or the Texas Rangers. Offering a different view of the rebels, El Regidor maintained that the Mexican government’s actions of dispatching troops to search for the insurrectionists and the price on Garza’s head contradicted government reports that the Garza revolution was insignificant. The administration’s inability to capture the insurrectionists led the Mexican government to request American intervention because the rebels launched their military expeditions from American soil.\textsuperscript{52}

In response to the Díaz administration’s request, the American government dispatched troops to the Texas-Mexico border; however, they too were unable to suppress revolutionary activities. El Regidor asserted

\textsuperscript{51} El Regidor, Jan. 9, 1892.
that the success of the *garzistas* in evading capture was in large part the result of assistance the rebels received from the Spanish-speaking population. Sympathizers on both sides of the border refused to cooperate with authorities, donated supplies and money, and sheltered the *garzistas*. The paper reported that rebels treated Tejanos with respect and courtesy, unlike the American soldiers who terrorized and murdered them. The behavior of the *garzistas*, according to *El Regidor*, generated a sense of loyalty from the border residents. Individuals from both sides of the border supplied the *garzistas* with ammunition, money, food, and horses. Such aid not only impeded capture but also demonstrated grassroots dissatisfaction with Díaz and his policies.53

Failure to capture Garza or his armed followers led to the harassment and prosecution of Mexicans suspected of aiding the insurrectionists. Bourke allowed his men to harass border residents, whose homes were burned and property confiscated in an effort to obtain information. The American government charged Garza’s alleged supporters with violating neutrality laws. In response, *El Regidor* fiercely criticized the prosecution of Spanish-speaking people:

Injustice. Presently in the federal court of San Antonio numerous Mexicans [nationals and naturalized citizens] stand accused of actively participating in the Catarino Garza rebellion and as a consequence violated neutrality laws. . . . [M]any of them were unaware that they were violating an American law by aiding the revolutionary movement and those who knew did nothing more than imitate the actions of the present leader [Díaz].54

In various editorials, *El Regidor* criticized the inconsistent actions of the American government in enforcing neutrality laws. The paper reminded its readers that Díaz had organized and led his revolutionary campaign against President Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada from Brownsville, Texas, in 1876, and the American government did not intervene or seek to prosecute the rebels for violating neutrality laws. It posed a serious question: why did the American government prosecute in 1892 what it ignored in 1876?: “If a friendly power is supposed to recognize the constitutional government of another nation, then the Americans should have punished Don Porfirio and prevented him from defeating the administration of that epoch.”55 When Díaz led the revolt against Lerdo de Tejada
in 1876 he had the support of American financial and political leaders, as well as influential white Texans such as ranch baron Richard King and Brownsville real estate developer and investor James Stillman. Díaz received American support because he welcomed American investment in Mexico, unlike Lerdo de Tejada. Also unlike Díaz and his insurrection, Garza and his rebellion were generally considered a disruption to American investment in Mexico and a threat to an administration accommodating to Americans.\(^\text{56}\)

*El Regidor*’s defense of Garza pitted it against the *San Antonio Daily Express*, which continuously discredited the rebellion and its leader. The *Daily Express* characterized *garzistas* as desperate and anti-American. In response, during the early months of 1892, *El Regidor* criticized the *Daily Express* for printing articles refuting the existence of discontent in Mexico and the border region. *El Regidor* also censured the *Daily Express* for slandering Garza’s character. On November 29, 1891, the *Daily Express* printed an exclusive interview with J. A. Robertson, general manager of the Monterrey & Mexico Gulf Railroad, in which he blamed the *garzistas*’ violent raids for the decline in American investment in Mexico. Robertson asserted that Garza’s activities were stifling Mexico’s economic growth and hurting the Mexican population. After the publication of the Robertson article, the *Daily Express* printed additional pieces describing the leader of the rebellion as a murderous bandit. *El Regidor* countered the attacks made by the *Daily Express* against Garza’s revolution, maintaining that the actions of the *garzistas* benefited all of Mexico, because the removal of Díaz’s despotic reign would usher in an epoch of democracy as intended by the 1857 Constitution.\(^\text{57}\) Articles in *El Regidor* elevated Garza and his band from the gun-toting desperados the *Daily Express* portrayed them to be to purveyors of freedom and democracy.

Although Garza’s movement is not justified before the Americans, it is necessary to state that Garza is a brave and honorable man . . . dedicated to the campaign against General Díaz’ despotism. It is very unjust to refer to Garza as a bandit and ruffian for his excursions to Mexico are not are the result of greed for booty.\(^\text{58}\)

When Garza issued *El Plan Revolucionario* on the anniversary of Mexico’s independence, he hoped the Mexican population would rise up against Díaz and declare its freedom from his reign. However, the  


\(^{58}\) *El Regidor*, Nov. 28, 1891.
inability to inspire a general uprising and the continual harassment of supporters by the United States military forced Garza and his followers to accept failure. Continual persecution by American authorities compelled Garza to flee first to Cuba and then to Costa Rica. Although the insurrection proved unsuccessful, it served as an outlet for discontent and inspired other rebellious activities, including a revolt in San Ignacio, a South Texas border town, in the winter of 1892. After Garza fled the country, former garzistas joined an 1893 uprising against Coahuila Governor Garza Galán and participated in other rebellious movements along the border.59

*El Regidor*’s strong interest in Mexican political affairs, such as the Díaz regime’s crackdown on opposition journalists or the perpetual reelections of the president, demonstrates a transborder awareness and connection. *El Regidor*’s editorials and articles provide numerous examples of camaraderie between the Tejano press and the Mexican press. In its condemnation of violations of freedom of the press *El Regidor* connected to a brotherhood of journalists that transcended national boundaries. Because of their feelings of responsibility to a shared transborder public, these journalists agitated, fought, and suffered for their constitutionally guaranteed freedoms. *El Regidor*’s use of articles from opposition newspapers, such as *El Diario del Hogar*’s piece “Visita a Los Presos Políticos,” which detailed the misery imprisoned journalists suffered, along with its own editorials criticizing the regime’s violation of freedom of the press shows an ideological and political association between *El Regidor* and Mexican opposition papers. In this literary forum *El Regidor* demanded adherence to the original concept of the Constitution of 1857 that Porfirio Díaz had once stood for, and warned of revolution if Díaz continued to seek reelection. Pablo Cruz’s opposition to the Díaz regime was not restricted to rhetoric: using *El Regidor* Cruz raised funds for the defense of Francisco Ruiz Sandoval and other alleged participants of a failed 1890 anti-Díaz rebellion. *El Regidor* warned that the removal of Díaz and the establishment of democracy in Mexico might only be possible through revolution. Transborder movements like the rebellion led by newspaper editor Catarino Garza seemed to demonstrate the strength of this possibility.

By the turn of the century opposition to the Porfiriato steadily increased. With each of Díaz’s reelections *El Regidor* predicted a grim future for Mexico. In 1906 *El Regidor*, yet again condemned the government for violating the spirit of the Constitution of 1857:

Is revolution possible in Mexico? Is there discontent in the country? . . . [T]he form of government in Mexico is a monarchy even though in name it is called a democratic, federal, representative and popular republic. How does the government justify this deceit? By saying that the nation is not prepared to make use of the rights their liberal Constitution has granted. [By saying] that the nation after 70 years of consecutive revolutions needs unity by means of a monarchy, like Bonaparte consolidated France, Victor Manuel [Vittorio Emmanuel II] and [Giuseppe] Garibaldi did in Italy, so then a man would come unite Mexico.60

El Regidor continued in the early twentieth century to call for the fulfillment of liberal principles in Mexico as established by the Constitution of 1857 while chronicling the mounting discontent as it had done in the 1890s. In 1910 civil war erupted, forcing the president into exile.61 Following Díaz’s resignation, El Regidor’s front page headline read: “THE TRIUMPHANT REVOLUTION ELEVATES MADERO TO THE CATEGORY OF HERO. Step toward Democracy! Down with Despotism!”62 The long-predicted revolution had come.

60 El Regidor, Aug. 9, 1906.
62 El Regidor, June 1, 1911.