

# THE FIRST CENTURY OF MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE

*Stan Shadle*  
*College Misericordia*

- ALWAYS A REBEL: RICARDO FLORES MAGON AND THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION.* By Ward S. Albro. (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1992. Pp. 219. \$24.95 cloth.)
- MEXICO SINCE INDEPENDENCE.* Edited by Leslie Bethell. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. Pp. 453. \$54.50 cloth, \$18.95 paper.)
- THE ENORMOUS VOGUE OF THINGS MEXICAN: CULTURAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICO, 1920–1935.* By Helen Delpar. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992. Pp. 274. \$38.95 cloth.)
- THE COURSE OF MEXICAN HISTORY.* Fifth edition. By Michael C. Meyer and William L. Sherman. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. Pp. 723. \$49.95 cloth, \$24.95 paper.)
- VOLUNTEERS: THE MEXICAN WAR JOURNALS OF PRIVATE RICHARD COULTER AND SERGEANT THOMAS BARCLAY, COMPANY E, SECOND PENNSYLVANIA INFANTRY.* Edited by Allen Peskin. (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1991. Pp. 342. \$35.00 cloth.)
- MAXIMILIAN AND JUAREZ.* By Jasper Ridley. (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1992. Pp. 353. \$24.95 cloth.)
- THE LOST CAUSE: THE CONFEDERATE EXODUS TO MEXICO.* First paperback edition. By Andrew Rolle. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992. Pp. 252. \$14.95.)
- A MEXICAN VIEW OF AMERICA IN THE 1860s: A FOREIGN DIPLOMAT DESCRIBES THE CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION.* Edited by Thomas Schoonover. (Cranbury, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1991. Pp. 271. \$39.50 cloth.)
- ORIGINS OF INSTABILITY IN EARLY REPUBLICAN MEXICO.* By Donald Fithian Stevens. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991. Pp. 184. \$29.95 cloth.)
- PERSISTENT OLIGARCHS: ELITES AND POLITICS IN CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO, 1910–1940.* By Mark Wasserman. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993. Pp. 265. \$35.00 cloth, \$16.95 paper.)

Read history. Go back a thousand years. What is the use of interfering with its worthless stupid course?

Like a barranca, a ravine, choked up with refuse, that winds through the ages, and peters out in a—  
What in God's name has all the heroic resistance put up by poor little defenceless peoples all rendered defenceless in the first place for some well-calculated and criminal reason—

Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*

During its first century of independence from Spain, Mexico experienced political chaos, social dislocation, economic turmoil, and revolution. Yet out of this crucible, Mexico forged a proud, independent nation recognized worldwide for its unique culture and artistic heritage and in Latin America for its unique political stability during the twentieth century. The ten books under review here analyze the sources of Mexico's problems in the first century of independence and in doing so give testimony to the courage of the Mexican people in facing these challenges.

Why did Mexico experience so much political chaos following independence? Michael Meyer and William Sherman's *The Course of Mexican History*, the text used most for introductory survey courses on Mexican history, captions this period as "The Trials of Nationhood, 1824–55." They point out that between 1833 and 1855, "the presidency changed hands thirty-six times" (p. 324). Meyer and Sherman recount the political struggles between federalists and centralists along with budgetary problems, but they finger *caudillo* Antonio López de Santa Anna as mainly responsible for the early years of political chaos in Mexico (p. 332).

Jan Bazant's contribution to *Mexico since Independence*, part of the Cambridge University series on Latin American history edited by Leslie Bethell, blames the early political chaos of Mexico's Independence years on the lack of meaningful social and economic change following independence. The unfinished social and economic revolution left Mexico with all the tensions and problems that originally unleashed the wars of independence, which began under the leadership of Fathers Miguel Hidalgo and José María Morelos as a war of dispossessed mestizos and indigenous peoples rebelling against the Spanish elite. The war between royalists and independents thus became a struggle between conservatives and liberals over ending the old colonial order. Central to the struggle was the issue of the Catholic Church and its extensive property, with conservatives fighting to preserve the church and its holdings and liberals proposing that the church's property be disentailed.

Bazant implies that racial divisions also animated the struggle between liberals and conservatives. For example, he mentions in a note that the conservatives executed liberal President Vicente Guerrero after a 1831 revolt because he was a mestizo who represented the racial dimen-

sions of the wars of independence. Was there any real racial or social basis for Mexican political conflict in the early years of independence? Donald Stevens takes up this question in assembling an impressive array of statistics on the background of Mexican politicians of this era.

Stevens's task in writing *Origins of Instability in Early Republican Mexico* was to disprove the traditional explanation of Mexican political instability as arising from *caudillismo*, or strongman rule, as personified in Santa Anna. Stevens stresses instead the severe clash of ideas between liberals and conservatives as the basis of political instability. He argues, "The time has come to move beyond the myth which blames the crisis of early republican Mexico on the personalities of politicians, economic crises, and short-term fiscal fluctuations. Instability requires an explanation that takes political differences seriously" (p. 27).

At the heart of Steven's discussion is his "positional analysis" of leading Mexican politicians during the early years of independence. He categorizes politicians in power from 1821 to 1867 into conservative, moderate, and radical political factions. At one point, Stevens finds social class and geographic origin to be keys to political affiliation. But after analyzing such factors as household size, number of servants, and monthly rent paid for housing in Mexico City, Stevens finds no direct relationship between social differences and political differences because all national politicians came from the upper one-fifth of the Mexican population in terms of wealth. These contradictory conclusions are confusing. Yet social conditions in the capital could have created the objective differences underlying political conflict. For example, radicals and moderates tended to pay more rent, and because the church owned half the property in the city, it became a target of these groups for both personal and ideological reasons.

After devoting most of *Origins of Instability in Early Republican Mexico* to "positional analysis," Stevens shifts gears in a conclusion that develops the basic ideological differences that he believes caused most of the political instability. Paradoxically, Stevens employs statistics to disprove the importance of quantifiable data in explaining instability. In his conclusion, Stevens argues that Bourbon policies in the years leading up to independence sowed the seeds for subsequent Mexican instability. Given this conclusion, one wonders why Stevens did not devote more of his book to proving this thesis rather than to showing why statistics do not explain instability adequately. Even in the chapters using the "positional analysis," Stevens cautions that the limited number of politicians surveyed (around two hundred) makes the analysis subject to error.

If the Spanish Crown's policies of shifting political control during the colonial era created the precedent for the instability Stevens seeks to explain, why did he not devote his book to this issue? In fact, after dismissing conventional political narrative at the beginning, he demon-

strates that most of these narratives arrived at the same conclusions he reached using statistics. Perhaps Steven's dilemma lies in the difficulty inherent in history of grouping individuals into social classes or political classes and then attempting to create generalizations based on these groupings. To prove his thesis fully, Stevens needs to explain how Porfirio Diaz overcame the contradictions of the colonial era, albeit temporarily, to become the strongest caudillo in Mexican history.

This people must cease to hold slaves,  
and to make war on Mexico, though it  
cost them their existence as a people.

Henry David Thoreau,  
*Resistance to Civil Government*

As Stevens notes at the end of *Origins of Instability*, chronic Mexican instability created the conditions for the great problems experienced from 1848 to 1870. Mexico had the misfortune to be living next door to the aggressive imperialist United States. The loss of half of Mexico's territory during the Mexican American War created a crisis of national humiliation for the entire country. Yet U.S. politicians of the era justified this action in the name of "Manifest Destiny."

At least two common U.S. foot soldiers involved in the war seconded this justification. Allen Peskin presents their viewpoint in *Volunteers: The Mexican War Journals of Private Richard Coulter and Sergeant Thomas Barclay, Company E, Second Pennsylvania Infantry*. In contrast with the generals' reports on war strategy, the war journals of Richard Coulter and Thomas Barclay of Pennsylvania provide real insight into the war as experienced by common U.S. soldiers. When not complaining about their officers ("ignorant jackasses"), the men fought exhaustion, diarrhea, colds, and filthy living conditions. According to Barclay, the only respite from the boredom and trouble was liquor: "Liquor is the sine qua non of existence, the great elixir which drives away all cares and gilds and delights the hardships, trials and wants of the soldier" (p. 228). Elsewhere, Barclay comments, "When worn down with fatigue, hungry, wet or cold, how often has a draught from the Bottle infused energy and comfort" (p. 189).

Thoreau's loftier sentiments notwithstanding, the journals make it clear that the average U.S. soldier in Mexico believed in the war's "Manifest Destiny." For Barclay, the war represented "the Anglo-Saxon race . . . on the move" (p. 181). In his eyes, Mexico's "downfall is inevitable" for the "protection" of the Stars and Stripes because of the corruption endemic in that country. For both these Yankees, the Catholic Church was the key to the corruption of Mexico.

Both Coulter and Barclay were Protestants on a mission ordained by God. Catholics—Irish as well as Mexican—are disparaged throughout

the journals. Barclay opines, “The holy fathers . . . like the locust of Egypt darken the land . . . with treasures amassed by a system of robberies for centuries” (p. 181). He describes the Dominicans in silk gowns and stovepipe hats as “a fat greasy jolly-looking set of fellows” but oppressors of the people (p. 196). In the mind of these soldiers, religion served as a significant justification for the war. Later Barclay mentions that a British chaplain came into Mexico City during the U.S. occupation to baptize some British children. According to Barclay, this chaplain “no doubt has the honor of being the first Protestant divine who ever declared the truths of Christianity in Mexico” (p. 194).

In addition to the insights afforded by these journals on U.S. attitudes toward Mexicans, they also offer descriptive accounts of the country, especially Mexico City during the war. Pulque held special interest. Barclay details its production from agave as well as pulque trade and admits to having enjoyed a pint or two. The true sociologist of the two journal keepers, Barclay even explains the political significance of the *leperos* and *ladrones* in Mexico City among Santa Anna’s supporters (p. 214).

The journals of Coulter and Barclay confirm Meyer and Sherman’s assessment of the Mexican American War in *The Course of Mexican History*: “The war reinforced the worst stereotypes that each country held about the other, and these stereotypes in turn contributed to the development of deep-seated prejudices” (p. 353). Like Barclay, later historians came to justify the war as an attempt to uplift a backward people. Although Thoreau sat in jail a few days for refusing to pay a poll tax in protest against the war, he apparently had little impact on the thinking of the average U.S. citizen of the nineteenth century, whether soldier or historian.

For Mexico, the defeat ushered in more years of chaos. In the immediate aftermath of the war, the country experienced lawlessness and indigenous social revolutions in the Yucatán and in the North. In the elites’ search to restore order, they even recalled Santa Anna, the perennial caudillo. His attempt to roll back the clock to the conservative colonial era led to the liberal *Revolución de Ayutla*, based in the state of Guerrero. Juan Alvarez, the regional caudillo of Guerrero, became president in the wake of the successful liberal overthrow of Santa Anna and appointed a radical liberal cabinet. The radicals in Alvarez’s cabinet—Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, Benito Juárez, and José María Iglesias—oversaw the passage of legislation directed at reducing the power and wealth of the Catholic Church. But when the liberals drafted a new constitution that solidified the attack against the church, the conservatives rebelled. The resulting *Guerra de Tres Años* allowed the liberals to emerge triumphant but presiding over a massive public debt. When the country could not satisfy its European creditors, England, France, and Spain agreed to invade Mexico to collect the debt. But after England and Spain realized that the true aim of Napoleon III of France was to annex Mexico as a colony, they dropped

out of the enterprise, and the French eventually overran Mexican defenses. Exhausted by ongoing struggles between liberals and conservatives, Mexico lacked the unity to prevent the French from imposing Maximilian of Austria as Emperor of Mexico.

Jasper Ridley's new book, *Maximilian and Juárez*, tells the story of Maximilian's tenure. Ridley cites Victor Hugo's assessment in *Napoleon le petit*: "It is not France that makes war on you, it is the empire. . . . Valiant men of Mexico, resist. . . . The empire, I hope, will fail in its infamous attempt, and you will conquer" (p. 127). Ridley's study of the French Intervention focuses on the international politics that caused and eventually ended the affair. Given this focus, the title seems a bit of a misnomer in that Maximilian and Juárez are more players in a game of international intrigue that included Napoleon III, the Austrian emperor, and U.S. Secretary of State under the administration of Abraham Lincoln, William Henry Seward. But Ridley writes for the popular market (his book is refreshing in having no footnotes), and the title makes sense from a marketing standpoint. As a writer of popular history, Ridley can also be forgiven—or perhaps even praised—for choosing a focus that preoccupied professional historians in the mid-1960s.

Ridley's main purpose is to explain how the tensions between France and the United States over the French Intervention in Mexico played the major role in determining its initial success and eventual failure. According to Ridley, Napoleon III gained confidence in undertaking the Mexican expedition because Seward appeased France throughout the U.S. Civil War and even afterward. The Mexican Ambassador to the United States, Matías Romero, viewed Seward as the main impediment to U.S. support for Benito Juárez: "If Lincoln is reelected, Seward will continue as secretary of state for another four years. Under Seward this government's policy in regard to Mexico would not change in a single iota from what it has been recently. Thus, we want the election of any other candidate" (Schoonover, p. 159). Romero even construed the assassination of Lincoln as beneficial to Mexico because he believed it would result in ending the policy of appeasing France that Seward continued even after the Civil War was over (Schoonover, p. 194). In Romero's opinion, the attempt to prevent the French from recognizing the Confederacy led the Lincoln administration to abandon the Monroe Doctrine.

Beyond the international context of *Maximilian and Juárez*, Ridley also provides details on the individuals involved in the French Intervention, the anecdotes that make historical narratives such enjoyable reading. One learns of the sexual problems of Maximilian and Carlotta when he brought syphilis home to her after contracting it from a prostitute in Brazil. Or was it a prostitute in France? Maximilian made those who lost at billiards crawl on their hands and knees under the table. Unlike more academically oriented historical accounts, Ridley's takes the time to de-

velop portraits of stern French commanders and brave liberals facing firing squads. Such details can teach a lot, and Ridley's writing skill endows his book with special appeal for undergraduate students in Mexican or Latin American survey courses.

All three books dealing with Mexico in the 1860s illustrate the interconnections between the histories of Mexico and the United States in that era. Ridley in *Maximilian and Juárez* has to explain the politics of the U.S. Civil War in order to explain the course of the French Intervention. Matías Romero's detailed reports to Juárez on the Civil War point out the importance the Mexicans placed on events north of the border during the intervention. Finally, the Confederate exodus to Mexico would never have been possible without a sympathetic government in Mexico City and the French military presence.

In his first book, Thomas Schoonover focused on the development of U.S. hegemony in Central America.<sup>1</sup> In *A Mexican View of America in the 1860s: A Foreign Diplomat Describes the Civil War and Reconstruction*, Schoonover now provides English-speaking readers with the journal of Matías Romero, Mexico's ambassador to the United States. While reading Romero's journal, I reread James McPherson's brilliant synthesis of the Civil War, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, and found an amazing concurrence between Romero's assessments of the political and strategic situation in the United States during the war and McPherson's analysis.<sup>2</sup> Juárez was clearly well served by Matías Romero. Schoonover also provides readers with a synopsis for each year that offers useful context for understanding the journals.

Romero's journals may well be of more interest to historians of the U.S. Civil War than to historians of Mexico. The major information for Mexicanists is found in Romero's reports on international diplomacy surrounding the U.S. Civil War and the intervention. In fact, students could combine Ridley's account and Romero's journal as two main sources for analyzing diplomacy of the era. During the war, Romero's main fear was the possibility of a French-Confederate alliance. After the South was defeated, Romero warned of the possibility of a French-Texan alliance. This threat quickly evaporated, however, when General Ulysses Grant (Romero's chief ally in Washington) ordered General Philip Sheridan to the Texas-Mexican border with thirty-five thousand troops.

Like Romero's journal, Andrew Rolle's *The Lost Cause: The Confederate Exodus to Mexico* pertains more to Civil War history than to the history of the French Intervention in Mexico. First published in 1965 and now finally in paperback, Rolle's book reveals some profound biases. He

1. Thomas D. Schoonover, *The United States in Central America, 1860–1911: Episodes of Social Imperialism and Imperial Rivalry in the World System* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991).

2. James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine, 1991).

portrays Juárez's forces as "bands of cutthroats, brigands, beggars in rags, and escaped convicts . . . [i]ntent upon pillaging, laying waste, and destroying French forces" (p. 140). Rolle also states that after the Civil War, "the South was at the mercy of radicals and carpetbaggers" whose "impetus . . . was hate, and their goal to see to it that the South held as many black voters as possible and as few white ones" (p. 125). *The Lost Cause* begins with a melodramatic description of General Joe Shelby leading the remnants of his Missouri cavalry across the Rio Grande into Mexico. This and other instances suggest that Rolle oversympathized with his subjects of study.

Much of the book is devoted to describing the political conditions in the South and elsewhere in the United States that precipitated the exodus of some five thousand "rebs" to Mexico after the war ended. There the Southerners played a marginal role, most of them languishing in an agricultural colony near the road between Vera Cruz and Mexico City, which was renamed for Carlotta. The colony failed for want of hard work on the part of the former Confederates. Rolle found no evidence that the Southerners planned to introduce slavery into their colony, apparently unaware of Maximilian's decree allowing forced labor on lands held by Confederates in Coahuila and Sonora (a fact mentioned by Ridley).

Of the three books on the 1860s reviewed here, Ridley's *Maximilian and Juárez* stands out. Any student and most Latin Americanists would likely enjoy and learn more from Ridley than from the other two books by academic historians. Lively writing makes the difference.

Under a government which imprisons  
any unjustly, the true place for a just  
man is also a prison.

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden Pond*

Political chaos in nineteenth-century Mexico finally ended with the rise of Porfirio Díaz. Frederick Katz analyzes the rise and fall of the Díaz regime in "The Liberal Republic and the Porfiriato," his contribution to Bethell's *Mexico since Independence*. Katz isolates three factors as key to the Porfirian strategy of development: making foreign concessions, playing off the European powers against the United States, and establishing and maintaining stability (p. 69). These factors complemented each other in creating the basis of the Pax Porfiriana. For instance, Díaz's development of railroads with foreign capital provided the means for repressing provincial revolts quickly (p. 83). Unfortunately the Díaz formula for solving Mexico's economic backwardness and political turmoil ultimately led to profound contradictions that hurt the entire population save the small oligarchic clique surrounding the president. The result was the Mexican Revolution.

Katz uses a social-class analysis similar to the theories of Georges



Lefebvre to construct a regional overview explaining the effects of the Porfirian strategy of development throughout the country. Prosperity fell to the financial and political elites in Mexico City, the Científicos, while Mexican peasants paid the price for the export-led development. In the southern part of the country, peasants were reputedly reduced to slavery on coffee and henequen plantations. And regional elites in the North were alienated by the foreign concession system by 1900. As the economy contracted, the middle class finally rose against the regime.

The problem with social-class analysis is that it simplifies complex processes. Neither the Porfiriato nor the revolution is easily subjected to such reductionism. How can historians be sure about “increasing middle-class bitterness” in Chihuahua over Díaz’s appointment of Luis Terrazas as governor? It is hard to believe that none of the Chihuahuan middle class benefited from the Terrazas regime, especially given what is known about patron-client relations in Mexico. Moreover, Chihuahua is surely the most extreme case of a family monopoly sanctioned by Díaz. Similarly, can industrial workers be considered nationalistic, as Katz asserts? Alan Knight believes that workers in foreign-owned factories tended to care more about their well-paying jobs than about who signed their paychecks.<sup>3</sup> In addition, Katz’s assertion that the Partido Liberal Mexicana played a major role in the growing opposition to Díaz is questionable. The bourgeoisie proper, the Científicos, come out as the villains in Katz’s analysis, having successfully alienated every other social class or group in the entire country on the eve of the revolution.

Katz indicates that older studies oversimplified the impact that land concentration had on class formation in the countryside during the Porfiriato. He points out that instead of the simple dichotomy of landless peasants versus land-rich *hacendados*, a thriving agrarian middle-class developed in various regions of the center and south. And it was one of these Mexican “kulaks,” Emiliano Zapata, who led the peasants of Morelos into agrarian revolution. Therefore neither the Porfiriato nor the revolution can be explained without this added complexity. Perhaps the complexity of the urban sector has likewise been reduced to a too simple categorization. Even within the limits of a small overview essay, Katz could have devoted a paragraph to explaining why the peasants most exploited in the South remained largely nonrevolutionary while peasants in the center region rose up in revolution. By explaining these differences, Katz could have reemphasized the importance of village autonomy (even in reduced form) vis-à-vis the Zapatistas as a precondition of revolution.

Katz is stronger when he focuses more on the regional effects and responses to the Porfirian system at the turn of the century. The case of a

3. See Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, vol. 1, *Porfirians, Liberals, and Peasants* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 145.

disgruntled northern region rising in a revolt that included people from all social classes hits the mark. As Katz states, "The científico offensive and the economic crisis of 1907 created an unprecedented and unique situation in the northern triangle of Sonora, Chihuahua, and Coahuila. What was unique to this region was that substantial portions from all classes of society ranging from hacendados and the middle classes to industrial workers to the dispossessed former military colonists were united in their opposition to the Díaz regime" (p. 117). Thus Katz indicates the importance of region over class in his analysis. The growing power of U.S. capital made the difference for the Mexican North. Northern elites were angered at being passed over for land, water, and mineral concessions that favored U.S. citizens. The North also had a long tradition of multiclass mobilization dating from the Apache wars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Norteños had rifles and knew how to use them. The North consequently became the vanguard of the revolution, and Norteños eventually dominated Mexico via the Sonoran dynasty of Presidents Alvaro Obregón and Plutarco Elías Calles. Given this outcome, the revolution was clearly drawn more along regional lines than according to social class.

Indeed, the entire historiography of the Mexican Revolution has taken on a regional focus. Mark Wasserman, noted for his research on Chihuahua during the revolution, offers an analysis of its aftermath in Chihuahua in *Persistent Oligarchs: Elites and Politics in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1910–1940*. Wasserman takes as his model revisionist histories of nineteenth-century Europe and the French Revolution that point out the survival of elites after the "Age of Revolutions." He finds the same outcome in postrevolutionary Mexico. Although Wasserman concentrates on the state of Chihuahua in his final chapter, he compares other regions to the Chihuahuan case. Federal political centralization provides his theoretical framework for making these comparisons.

Wasserman finds that the Terrazas family (the one characterized by Katz as embodying the regional Porfirian elite) survived and even prospered after the revolution. While the family was subject to land reform when Pancho Villa controlled the state from 1914 to 1916, its members were able to buy back their best lands in the 1920s and 1930s. The Sonoran dynasty allowed this buyback because of the desirability of reestablishing a cattle industry in the state. Later, the Terrazas family even experienced social rehabilitation in the press and among the elites in Chihuahua.

As Wasserman notes, the survival of elite wealth and status in the postrevolutionary decades brings up the question of whether the Mexican Revolution was a true revolution. The Chihuahua elite survived because its wealth was needed to rebuild the state after the violence of the revolution. But the federal government used its new power, especially

regarding land reform, to check the political power of regional elites. In fact, land reform accelerated during each major political crisis in the 1920s, as in the revolt led by Adolfo de la Huerta. The revolution in effect became a battle between regional and national elites for control of the masses. Political centralization meant the destruction of the political power of regional caudillos—and in the process, the peasantry won land.

Wasserman's conclusion places great importance on popular involvement as an index of revolution. He stresses the conflict over land reform as central to understanding the politics of Chihuahua in the 1920s and 1930s. He also notes, "We need to know more about the formation of peasant leagues and labor unions" at both regional and national levels (p. 67). Given Wasserman's conclusion about the importance of popular involvement in the revolution and its accounting for the persistence of elites, perhaps he should have devoted more research to the issue he raises.

Despite his own conclusion, Wasserman describes in detail how the struggle over control of wealth played an important role in the conflict among elites in Chihuahua and among regional and national elites. As he explains, political instability in the 1920s revolved around family factions attempting to gain political office in order to gain control of land, tax collection, public works, and illegal operations along the border. Moreover, control of gambling, prostitution, and drug smuggling in Ciudad Juárez (especially during Prohibition in the United States) generated great conflict among all elites. In this sense, the revolution meant only a scramble among new and old elites for corrupt and illicit gain. As Científico Francisco Bulnes maintained, "The Revolution is to be understood only in its relation to theft, and when there is no longer anything to steal, the Revolution will die."<sup>4</sup>

Given Wasserman's findings, it is hard to believe that the Mexican Revolution represented anything more than a reshuffling of elites with minimal change in social relations. It is therefore difficult to follow his conclusion that the revolution was a genuine one. Perhaps the data on peasants and workers that Wasserman claims we need would make this point more forcefully.

The case against the revolution being genuine can be strengthened by understanding the PLM, reputed by most historians to be one of the great precursor movements of the revolution. As Ward Albro points out in *Always a Rebel: Ricardo Flores Magón and the Mexican Revolution*, the dismal support Flores Magón found in most of Mexico for his revolutionary program highlights the point that from the beginning, few in Mexico supported true revolution.

4. Francisco Bulnes, *The Whole Truth about Mexico: The Mexican Revolution and President Wilson's Part Therein as Seen by a Científico* (Detroit: Blaine Ethridge, 1972), 297.

In fact, Flores Magón became marginal to the revolution precisely because of his profession of anarchism. Even before he declared himself an anarchist, his radicalism had alienated most of the bourgeois supporters of the PLM. As Albro explains, "The growing concern for worker and peasant causes reflected in the writings of Flores Magón and the plans for revolution eventually drove away most of the upper class or 'high status' liberals and intellectuals, such as Arriaga and Madero" (p. 30). As a true revolutionary, Flores Magón had no support. Instead, he found himself jailed by both the Mexican and U.S. governments. Neither country wanted revolution in Mexico. Flores Magón "did time" as a political prisoner in the highest security prisons in Mexico and the United States. He refused to ask the U.S. government for a pardon he probably would have been granted rather than betray his desire "to destroy Capitalism in order to put in its place a system based on the free association of workers to produce and consume" (p. 148). Flores Magón died in Leavenworth Prison on 21 November 1922.

The persecution of Flores Magón and his failure to incite a genuine revolution reveals the nonrevolutionary nature of events occurring in Mexico from 1910 to 1920. His ideas threatened the leaders of the so-called revolution and were therefore suppressed. Only after his death was Flores Magón honored in Mexico as the one-party system attempted to legitimize its hegemony. This fate befell many other Mexican revolutionaries, including Emiliano Zapata, Pancho Villa, and Andrés Molina Enríquez.

During Flores Magón's political persecution by the U.S. government, leftists around the country came to his support. During extradition hearings in 1908 in Los Angeles on trumped-up Mexican charges of robbery and murder, socialist lawyers Job Harriman and A. R. Holston defended Flores Magón. Later, at a 1911 meeting supporting the right of the PLM to belligerent status in the United States following PLM attacks on Baja California, popular writer Jack London sent a note declaring, "We socialists, anarchist, hoboos, chicken-thieves, outlaws and undesirable citizens of the United States are with you heart and soul in your effort to overthrow slavery and autocracy in Mexico" (p. 127). Subsequently, U.S. leftists flocked to Mexico in the 1920s in the belief that Mexico had experienced a profound revolution.

Helen Delpar chronicles the relationship of U.S. citizens to the Mexican Revolution in *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations between the United States and Mexico, 1920–1935*. Delpar divides her subject of study into two periods: the first wave of U.S. political pilgrims from 1920 to 1927 and the second wave of cultural pilgrims from 1927 to 1935.

Delpar's political pilgrims became the first U.S. interpreters of the Mexican Revolution, and they did so to defend it. Delpar recounts the experiences of Ernst Gruening, Frank Tannenbaum, Carleton Beals, all of

whom became important interpreters of Mexico in the 1920s.<sup>5</sup> These three sympathizers with the revolution were duly denounced in the United States as radicals who “worked on behalf of the Mexican government” (p. 50). Tannenbaum’s major books portrayed the revolution as a populist uprising of the Mexican peasantry seeking land and liberty, a process he thoroughly approved. In Delpar’s opinion, the political pilgrims saw in revolutionary Mexico, with its mural art movement and indigenismo, an alternative to the crass materialism of U.S. society during the gilded age.

By the mid-1920s, however, the political pilgrims had fallen out of love with the revolution, and their debates on the subject came to resemble the ones currently evident in the historiography of the revolution. U.S. leftists argued over the regime of Venustiano Carranza, some perceiving it as a revolutionary regime while Michael Gold characterized it as “a bloody and sinister gang under the bourgeois Carranza who are wrecking the labor movement of Mexico” (p. 21). Although the political pilgrims hesitated to criticize the Mexican government for fear of giving ammunition to U.S. conservatives and business interests, most of the sympathizers had found the revolution wanting by the end of the 1920s. Tannenbaum admitted in *Peace by Revolution: An Interpretation* (1933) the limits of land and labor reform in Mexico, but Beals felt it “inexcusable” that Tannenbaum had not emphasized the death of the revolution by 1926 under the Calles regime (p. 60). After their disillusionment, U.S. leftists gave up on Mexico and abandoned it to the cultural pilgrims.

Delpar focuses in *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican* on the cultural exchange going on between Mexico and the United States in the 1920s and 1930s. Under the auspices of the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico and his wife, Dwight Morrow and Elizabeth Cutter Morrow, various efforts at cultural exchange encouraged better relations between the two countries. The Morrows even cultivated the “Marxist muralist” Diego Rivera by subsidizing his mural on the Palacio de Cortés in Cuernavaca (p. 65). The Guggenheim Foundation helped institutionalize cultural exchange. Delpar also narrates the experiences of Mexican artists in the United States, especially the muralists.

Every Latin Americanist would find Delpar’s book useful in understanding the roots of U.S. attitudes toward Mexico and Latin America. She analyzes both high and popular culture to explain how the images projected in art, popular books, and film formed long-lasting images of Mexico in the United States. For instance, the image of the “Mexican greaser” first appeared in U.S. films in the 1920s. The Mexican govern-

5. Gruening published articles in *Collier’s Magazine* based on trips to Mexico as well as *Mexico and Its Heritage* (1928). Tannenbaum wrote two of the most influential books on Mexico during this period, *The Mexican Agrarian Revolution* (1929) and *Peace by Revolution: An Interpretation* (1933). Beals gave speeches on Mexico and its revolution and wrote *Mexico: An Interpretation* (1923) and *Mexican Maze* (1931).

ment found these portrayals so offensive that it banned films considered derogatory. Delpar also mentions how the romanticized concept of picturesque Mexico developed during the era of the cultural pilgrims. Such images are still being evoked to promote U.S. tourism south of the border. As Delpar concludes, "the years 1920–1935 were the basis for permanent linkages between the United States and Mexico that became a routine although valuable part of the relations between the two countries" (p. 208).

"And you say first, Spaniard exploits Indian, then, when he had children, he exploited the halfbreed, then the pure-blooded Mexican Spaniard, the criollo, then the mestizo exploits everybody, foreigners, Indians, and all. Then the Germans and Americans exploited him; and now the final chapter, the exploitation of everybody by everybody else."

Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*

The disillusionment felt by the political pilgrims about the revolution by the end of the 1920s has reemerged in the histories of the revolution written according to revisionist orthodoxy over the past fifteen years. Two essays on the revolution by John Womack and Jean Meyer in *Mexico since Independence* make this point evident.

Womack, author of the pro-*agrarista* monograph *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution*, contributes a revisionist essay entitled "The Mexican Revolution, 1910–1920." It portrays the revolution as a civil war that ended with the emergence of a new regime. Headed by the northwestern bourgeoisie, members of the regime were dedicated to entrenching themselves in "the highest levels of the state and ready to manage a flexible, regionalized 'reconstruction' through deals with factions from other classes." The goal of the new regime was "to evade, divide, diminish, and restrain threats to Mexican sovereignty and capitalism from abroad and from below" through a series of Bismarckian reforms from above (p. 153).

Jean Meyer concurs with Womack's assessment of the revolution in his own contribution to the Bethell edited volume, "Revolution and Reconstruction in the 1920s." Meyer finds basic continuities between the Porfiriato and the new "revolutionary state" of the 1920s. The Sonoran dynasty's basic goals were to recentralize the state and foster economic growth. Recentralizing meant eliminating "Mexico's warring groups . . . by fire and sword" (p. 193). Economic growth followed the same lines the Porfiriato had taken: dependence on foreign capital and export production for the world market. In fact, foreign penetration of the Mexican economy grew to greater proportions during the 1920s than during the Porfiriato.

Womack explains why historians have reassessed the revolution. Until the 1970s, the revolution was portrayed as an inevitable class war that led to “sweeping social and economic reforms” as mandated by the Constitution of 1917. According to this scenario, the masses had triumphed. But from the 1940s onward, historians could not ignore the sense “that Mexico was developing along the lines more of the old regime than of the supposed Revolution” (p. 80). The pivotal turning point, in Womack’s view, came in 1968 when the government suppressed popular protest on behalf of civil rights. After this crackdown, it became hard for historians to maintain that the Mexican state embodied the aspirations of the masses.

Historians have tended to believe that they saw in the revolution the final solution to Mexico’s chronic instability since independence. Even without the triumph of the masses, the revolution still represents a partial accommodation of mass desires. Through it, the Mexican government has built the country’s much vaunted stability. Even after the open repression of Tlatelolco in 1968, most historians still believed that Mexico had outgrown its violent past. As Meyer and Sherman wrote in 1991 in the fourth edition of *The Course of Mexican History*: “One need not excuse the unconscionable excesses of 1968 and their aftermath, or disguise his outrage, to suggest that in Mexico, as elsewhere, ahistorical notions of revolution, by their limited vision are often romanticized. Posters of Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata may well symbolize resistance to oppression, but they are too quixotic to portray the ghastly suffering and devastation of a real revolution. . . . the need for violent change had not reappeared” (Meyer and Sherman, 4th ed., p. 717).

In their fifth edition, Meyer and Sherman now conclude their account by emphasizing how in light of the events of 1994, “the path towards modernization and democratization” might be treacherous. Will 1995 have the impact that 1968 had on reassessments of the revolution? Only the future will reveal the final outcome of Mexico’s second century of independence.