

M A N Y M E X I C O S :
Tradition and Innovation in the Recent Historiography

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- THE WIND THAT SWEEPED MEXICO: THE HISTORY OF THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION OF 1910–1942.* By ANITA BRENNER and GEORGE R. LEIGHTON. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984. Pp. 310. \$12.95 paper.)
- REVOLUTION IN MEXICO: YEARS OF UPHEAVAL, 1910–1940.* Edited by JAMES W. WILKIE and ALBERT L. MICHAELS. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1984. Pp. 300. \$8.95.)
- THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION IN YUCATAN, 1915–1924.* By JAMES C. CAREY. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1984. Pp. 251. \$22.50.)
- LA PEQUEÑA GUERRA, LOS CARRERA TORRES Y LOS CEDILLO.* By BEATRIZ ROJAS. (Mexico: Colegio de Michoacán, 1983. Pp. 155.)
- REVOLUCION Y CACIQUISMO: SAN LUIS POTOSI, 1910–1938.* By ROMANA FALCON. (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1984. Pp. 306.)
- TEXAS AND THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION: A STUDY IN STATE AND NATIONAL BORDER POLICY, 1910–1920.* By DON M. COERVER and LINDA B. HALL. (San Antonio, Tex.: Trinity University Press, 1984. Pp. 167. \$15.95.)
- FRAGMENTS OF THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION: PERSONAL ACCOUNTS FROM THE BORDER.* Edited by OSCAR J. MARTINEZ. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983. Pp. 316. \$24.95 cloth, \$12.50 paper.)
- THE HOLY WAR IN LOS ALTOS: A REGIONAL ANALYSIS OF MEXICO'S CRISTERO REBELLION.* By JIM TUCK. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982. Pp. 230. \$15.95.)
- AGAINST ALL ODDS: THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN MEXICO TO 1940.* By ANNA MACIAS. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1982. Pp. 195. \$27.50.)
- VENUSTIANO CARRANZA'S NATIONALIST STRUGGLE, 1893–1920.* By DOUGLAS W. RICHMOND. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983. Pp. 317. \$26.95.)
- THE SECRET WAR IN MEXICO: EUROPE, THE UNITED STATES, AND THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION.* By FRIEDRICH KATZ, with portions translated by Loren Goldner. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981. Pp. 659. \$30.00.)

Recent publications on Mexican history from 1910 to 1940 encompass many facets and illustrate the prevailing historiographical trends. The two older, reprinted works retain the power to illuminate traditional themes, while the more recent studies characteristically engage in microcosmic analyses of specialized subjects, such as the inception and development of the revolution in regions and localities, the impact of feminism, and relationships among internal and external elites. Vivid in detail and sophisticated in methodology, these books well represent a fascinating body of historical literature.

The reissue in paperback of *The Wind That Swept Mexico* will interest many readers as a remarkable introduction, with its terse 106-page account by Anita Brenner and the 184 photographs assembled by George Leighton. A classic of sorts, this book appeared in 1943 as one of the first such volumes in English. Drawn from eyewitness accounts, published works, and Brenner's own experiences in Mexico, the sparse narrative is ironic in tone and epigrammatic in style. It follows the course of events from the fall of President Porfirio Díaz to the inauguration of President Manuel Avila Camacho.

Brenner depicts the Mexican Revolution as a struggle for liberty and equality, and she also demonstrates the issue's centrality for the United States. As Brenner explains, the "interdependency" between the two countries meant that whatever happened south of the border necessarily affected regions to the north and in the remainder of Latin America. She understands the deep social and economic divisions underlying the struggle but often personifies them with striking sketches of the dominant leaders. She characterizes Díaz as "the stern wise parent of his people," Huerta as an "elderly Indian saloon tough," and Carranza as "a cold-eyed, sensual, stubborn old patriot." Madero was "an idealist, an innocent": "The Ouija board had told him, 'Francisco, one day you will be president of Mexico'." It did not foretell his death as the consequence.

Brenner's themes center on factional strife, land, labor, and the nationalization of mineral resources. They also focus on the difficulty over peaceable transfers of political power. For Brenner, "the basic pattern of Mexican politics" consisted of "a series of zig-zags" reflecting the conflict between those who wanted more change and others who wanted little or none. In consequence, she concludes that "the distance between the haves and the have-not-yets is still appalling" and that "the government remains fundamentally a military dictatorship." The photographs provided by George Leighton convey powerful and reinforcing visual impressions.

The volume edited by James Wilkie and Albert Michaels, *Revolution in Mexico: Years of Upheaval, 1910–1940*, first appeared in 1969. Designed as supplemental reading for courses in Mexican history, it con-

tains samples of useful primary and secondary sources and a new preface with an up-to-date bibliography. Representing works by Frank Brandenburg, Raymond Vernon, Stanley Ross, Ernest Gruening, Lyle Brown, John Reed, Carlton Beals, Robert Quirk, Howard Cline, and others, its topics include the causes of the revolution, the violent phase, the ascendancy of the Sonoran dynasty, and the Cárdenas presidency. Overall, these well-chosen selections provide effective coverage. The University of Arizona Press was wise to put this book back into print.

Carefully focused recent studies have overturned easy generalizations and illuminated the whole by scrutinizing the parts. Many of these have centered on states and localities, thus demonstrating the magnitude of regional differences and the complexity of shifting factional and class alignments. Another issue has been the relationships among internal and external elites, notably between state and federal authorities in Mexico and their connections with the emissaries of foreign businesses and governments. Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, and Morelos—all critical in the events of 1910 and after—have figured prominently. The books under review broaden the scope of inquiry.

James Carey's *The Mexican Revolution in Yucatán, 1915–1924* draws comparisons and contrasts. A Westview Replica edition, it utilizes accessible archival sources in Mexico City and Mérida, an array of printed documents, newspapers, and appropriate secondary works. Carey's goal was "to see what took place in revolutionary Yucatán starting in 1915, when Salvador Alvarado entered the scene, through 1924 and the partial restoration of the Socialist Party following the assassination of Felipe Carrillo Puerto."

Yucatán differed from other Mexican states in its greater isolation from the capital city and the immensity of its class cleavage. Drawn primarily along racial lines, this split made Maya and Yaqui Indians special victims, indeed, virtual slaves, while a handful of influential families, *la casta divina*, monopolized power and wealth. Because henequen constituted the main commodity for export, the rulers also cultivated an economic dependency on U.S. markets under the auspices of the International Harvester Company. *The Mexican Revolution in Yucatán* traces the efforts to overturn such conditions.

The revolution came late to Yucatán and then assumed radical proportions, taking hold from outside the state in 1915 when Carranza sent General Salvador Alvarado to suppress counterrevolutionary tendencies. A self-styled socialist, Alvarado set his administration against the oligarchy; successor Felipe Carrillo Puerto, who identified closely with the Mayas, governed for twenty-two months in 1922–23 and pursued even more ambitious designs. "Socialism" in Yucatán had more lyrical than doctrinaire implications, but it meant liberating peasants and workers, moderating social ills, expanding women's rights, and

establishing public education. Although neither Alvarado nor Carrillo attained all of these goals, each aspired to make Yucatán a model of change for the rest of Mexico.

Carey tells the story straightforwardly and with proper regard for the mythologizing polemicism inherent in many of the Spanish-language sources. Although favorable toward the two main characters, he tries to sort out the evidence fairly. Interested readers also will want to consult *Revolution from Without: Yucatán, Mexico, and the United States, 1880–1924* (1982) by Gilbert M. Joseph, which Carey appropriately acknowledges. Joseph's study takes a social science approach in employing a demanding theoretical and methodological apparatus.

Two recent books in Spanish bear on the state of San Luis Potosí, *La pequeña guerra, los Carrera Torres y los Cedillo* by Beatriz Rojas and *Revolución y caciquismo: San Luis Potosí, 1910–1938* by Romana Falcón. Although similar in subject, they employ differing analytical strategies. *La pequeña guerra*, a kind of primer, provides a lean chronicle of events followed by a somewhat impressionistic explanation. *Revolución y caciquismo* more ambitiously develops a full-blown account of causes, consequences, and implications. Originally a doctoral dissertation at Oxford, it serves as a model for this kind of professional history.

Rojas and Falcón both explore the advent of the revolution, the collapse of central authority, and the onset of factional strife. Two rebel groups, the Carrera Torres and Cedillo clans, conducted guerrilla campaigns. Although usually operating independently, their efforts on behalf of agrarian reform often ran a parallel course, first supporting Madero and then rejecting him, next following Carranza and then opposing him. Their methods of hit-and-run terrorism successfully warded off Constitutionalist incursions until 1920, when the outcome of the Obregón revolt transformed Saturnino Cedillo into the dominant regional cacique.

While based on substantial reading in Mexican sources, Rojas's *La pequeña guerra* is a sketch arguing that differences of status divided the more cosmopolitan and broadly nationalist Carrera Torres clan from the more provincial and localistic Cedillos. "Para los Carrera, la revolución era la ocasión de hacer progresar al país, para los Cedillo en gran medida, era la ocasión para vengarse y tomar la revancha." In contrast, Falcón's impressive *Revolución y caciquismo* develops a comprehensive account, incorporating effectively social science theory and a vast amount of research into primary sources. Despite the nonexistence of personal archives for either clan, Falcón mined all the pertinent manuscript collections available in Mexico in the Archivo General de la Nación, the Archivo Histórico de la Defensa Nacional, the Archivo Secretaría Reforma Agraria, and the Archivo Histórico del Estado de San Luis Potosí.

Falcón begins with a historiographical note, explaining that recent studies have subverted the long-established view of the Mexican Revolution as a peasant uprising in which Zapatismo was the norm. In *Revolución y caciquismo*, she seeks to illuminate regional variations and explore the question of continuity and change—the degree to which the structures of the old regime were destroyed, modified, or absorbed by the new. A related problem of theoretical significance concerns the process resulting in the disintegration of the Porfiriato, the dispersion of political power after 1910, and the gradual reconstruction of a new centralized system after 1920. Falcón builds her narrative around these issues and examines the role of local caciques within each phase. Her aim was to “recreate” the revolution in San Luis Potosí, clarifying its effects on the major groups of combatants, peasants, workers, professionals, landowners, and entrepreneurs and also tracing the affiliations of each group with political and military bosses.

To elucidate the issue, Falcón employs a theoretical construct called *clientelismo*. This term connotes a set of relationships based less on formal requirements, coercion, or manipulation than on informal and reciprocal exchanges of benefits and obligations among individuals at different levels of power, status, and wealth. This approach clarifies the intricate networks linking elites with other groups and also the reasons why middle-class dissidents, who led the revolt against Díaz, succeeded so ably in winning the support of peasants and workers. Saturnino Cedillo, the prototypical *cacique*, became a masterful player of the game. Combining military and political authority, he filled the power vacuum in San Luis Potosí and resisted centralizing impulses until he was destroyed by Cárdenas in 1939. This splendid book recounts how and why he rose and fell.

Another state study, *Texas and the Mexican Revolution* by Don Coerver and Linda Hall, covers the action on the other side of the border. Actually a study of ambiguities within the U.S. federal system, this brief work effectively describes the impact of the Mexican Revolution on Texas and the ensuing difficulty of maintaining peace and security. The problems cut two ways. During the Madero revolt and after, various groups of Mexican exiles mounted forays into Mexico from Texas, thereby raising perplexing questions about U.S. neutrality laws. At the same time, overspills of violence from Mexico into the United States produced alarm and reprisals from Texas Rangers and vigilantes. As many as three hundred Mexicans may have been killed in this aftermath.

In the United States, the question of border policy produced divergent tendencies within the federal system. Texas leaders such as Governors Oscar Colquitt and James Ferguson characteristically favored a tough position, including the use of force and large-scale interven-

tion. In contrast, federal officials under Taft and Wilson preferred to proceed more prudently because they viewed the border issue within the larger context of national aims and ambitions. Coerver and Hall deftly follow the course of the controversy, attributing it to personality differences, bureaucratic competition, and the divergent perspectives of state and federal officials on the question.

Oscar Martínez's *Fragments of the Mexican Revolution* also contributes significantly to understanding border affairs. This edited collection of primary sources shows how the upheaval affected "ordinary people" in the conduct of "their everyday lives." Drawn from letters, newspapers, documents, memoirs, official testimonies, and oral history interviews, these vignettes serve up chilling tales of civilians caught in the crossfire of rampaging armies. This chronicle of calamity conveys stark impressions as it underscores the magnitude of human suffering.

The two remaining monographs, Jim Tuck's *The Holy War in Los Altos* and Anna Macías's *Against All Odds*, address significant themes: Tuck portrays the violent response to the anticlerical impulses of the revolution, and Macías describes the struggle for women's rights. Both subjects represent a kind of deviation from the main tendencies of the revolution. The Cristero revolt implied repudiation while the advocacy of feminist causes moved in new directions, yet both episodes revealed significant aspects of the Mexican consciousness. Tuck's regional study focuses on Los Altos in eastern Jalisco, "barren, red-clay and mesa country . . . the Republic's most fervently Catholic enclave." The ethnically distinct inhabitants of Los Altos included Spanish creole, Basque, French, and possibly German families, some of whom could trace their lineage back to Maximilian. Clannish, provincial, and uncompromising, they practiced a fanatical European-style Roman Catholicism without Indian embellishments and without any tinge of puritanism. As Tuck explains, "the 'right' attitude toward such hated enemies as Freemasons and anti-clericals" held far more importance than "prissy concerns about temperance and chastity."

With the journalist's keen eye for telling details and illuminating anecdotes, Tuck treats the uprising in Los Altos between 1926 and 1929 as unique within the context of the much-studied Cristero rebellion. First, purely religious incentives inspired the insurgents here more than in other areas, where personal, political, and economic motives figured prominently. Second, the magnitude of resistance in Los Altos to the anticlerical provisions of the Constitution of 1917 and to President Calles's ill-advised attempts at enforcing them resulted in a particularly savage, almost genocidal conflict waged with guerrilla tactics. Tuck's book is really a satisfying military history, a precise account of operations replete with distinctive sketches of the leading figures, such as Victoriano Ramírez ("El Catorce") and Anacleto González Flores. Based

on extensive research into many Cristero sources, *The Holy War in Los Altos* portrays the appalling effects of religious sensibilities outraged by the secular aims of the revolution.

Anna Macías's ground-breaking study holds some surprising implications. Contrary to the impression of most Mexican males, a feminist movement has existed in Mexico since the 1890s, but the influence has never extended very far. As the title of *Against All Odds* aptly suggests, the almost overwhelming obstacles included the prevailing attitude of machismo, opposition by the Roman Catholic hierarchy, divisions over programs and tactics among women activists, indifference of government officials, and ridicule by the press. The movement's leadership, almost exclusively middle class in origin, consisted largely of elementary school teachers who had to spend their days working for a living.

Against All Odds carefully records organizational efforts between 1910 and 1940 to assert full equality for women. Macías points out that to achieve this goal, unfortunately "a Mexican woman must act like a man" because "to be female is to be reticent, subordinant, and self-sacrificing. To be male is to be decisive, dominant, and courageous." Nevertheless, outspoken feminists such as Hermila Galindo obtained a hearing during the Carranza presidency and won support from leaders such as Salvador Alvarado and Felipe Carrillo Puerto in Yucatán, where two feminist congresses took place in 1916. Macías gives credit where it is due but suggests that the political incentive of winning women's votes also played a part. Feminists had most success in converting radical men; but in the 1930s, the rift between reformers and revolutionaries debilitated the movement, and despite Cárdenas's interest, the drive for women's suffrage failed. Women then had to wait until 1958 to obtain full political rights. A substantial scholarly achievement, Macías's excursion through one of the byways of the Mexican Revolution successfully writes women into the course of Mexican history.

The two remaining books are works of synthesis with ambitious aims. Douglas Richmond's *Venustiano Carranza's Nationalist Struggle: 1893–1920* fills a gap in the history of modern Mexico and adds controversy to its historiography. No other scholar has studied Carranza more extensively than Richmond, a distant kinsman. He describes his work as an effort "to dig up some of [Richmond's] roots and learn about Mexico." Defined as something other than biography, the volume examines "the nationalist regime of Carranza" by emphasizing "social and economic phenomena in order to explain historical change" and by employing "a thematic as well as chronological organization to allow the tightest analysis of what happened between 1913 and 1920."

The Carranza question has always resulted in divisions. Whether to regard the Primer Jefe, later the president, as a champion of change

or as a conservative stalking horse has puzzled scholars and occasioned polemics for over sixty years. Richmond's appraisal favors the former view in depicting Carranza as a genuine "nationalist reformer." Although certainly not radical, Carranza's appeal combined nationalism with social justice and cut across class lines, thereby accounting for his success in consolidating power. Richmond characterizes Carranza as a practitioner of "political populism," meaning in Latin America "a multi-class movement . . . led by a patriarchal caudillo." Anticipating Juan Perón and Getúlio Vargas, Carranza developed support in urban regions and in the countryside through his advocacy of labor and land reform. But nationalism held the key, especially among the middle classes. By insisting on independence for Mexico, Carranza engaged in an intense struggle against the United States.

The demand for self-determination pitted Carranza against Woodrow Wilson, whose erratic behavior posed a constant threat. First in the war against Huerta, later in the conflict with Villa and Zapata, and finally in the controversy over the Constitution of 1917, Carranza upheld national prerogatives and refused to play the role of toady. Richmond correctly depicts Carranza's diplomacy as "the most consistently radical feature of his ideology." Indeed, it "represents a significant and unequalled departure in Mexican history." But Carranza could not maintain himself in the end. After 1917 his preoccupation with international issues, his neglect of workers and peasants, and his unwise attempt to impose a successor precipitated a rebellion that resulted in his assassination.

Venustiano Carranza's Nationalist Struggle displays the virtue of exhaustive research. Richmond worked through the Carranza archives and other repositories in Mexico and knows them as well as anyone. The book's flaws consist of peculiarities in its thematic approach, a touch of repetition, a degree of conceptual fuzziness, and a tendency toward overstatement. Nevertheless, the work deserves accolades for treating Carranza and his regime more fully than any previous publication.

The last volume under consideration, Friedrich Katz's *The Secret War in Mexico*, ranks among the most significant books yet published on the subject. A wonderfully provocative synthesis, it also displays a depth of research seldom achieved. Katz delved into archival repositories in ten different countries. He cast the study in international terms by examining the impact of Great Power maneuvers on the internal developments of the Mexican Revolution. A secondary goal was to determine the impact of business concerns on governmental policies, and Katz finds consistent congruence.

The term "the secret war" marks a shift away from the techniques of "old-fashioned nineteenth-century imperialism" toward "the

more flexible strategems" devised in the twentieth century by the Great Powers and the business interests linked to them. Applied successfully by the United States in Cuba in 1898, "The new strategy of exploiting social conflicts and anticolonial struggles was not adopted by the European powers until World War I, when each side tried to aid revolutionary movements that were directed at its rivals." During the great violence between 1910 and 1920, Mexico became a central issue. Indeed, it constituted "a case study not only of how local rifts can be exploited for global ends, but of how global rifts can be exploited for local ends." While the Great Powers indulged in manipulation in pursuit of their own purposes, the competing Mexican factions responded with emulation (the sincerest form of flattery) by seeking to enlist outside support in their own behalf.

This book provides a comprehensive examination of the internal dynamics of the Mexican Revolution as well as a thorough discussion of the policies of Great Britain, the United States, and Germany. As the outgrowth of an earlier work published in 1964 under the title *Deutschland, Díaz und die Mexikanische Revolution*, Katz's analysis centers on Germany, placing the more familiar U.S. policies "within the broader context of European and Mexican developments." Laid out in four main parts, it focuses attention on the Madero and Huerta periods, the ensuing factional struggle, and the Carranza presidency. Articulated persuasively, Katz's thesis illuminates the nature of the Mexican Revolution, viewed both from within and without.

While attributing the upheaval generally to the prevailing effects of underdevelopment and dependency in Latin America, Katz also seeks to explain the reasons for "Mexico's unique historical experience." This approach places Katz in the vanguard among historians who have repudiated the old view of the Mexican Revolution as a peasant uprising. A greatly oversimplified summation of the contrary view is that the Mexican Revolution expressed middle-class dissidence over the political and economic constraints of the Porfiriato. Additional causes for distinctiveness included "the expropriation of the free-village lands in central and southern Mexico," "the transformation of the country's northern frontier into 'the border'," by which he means "its political and economic integration into the rest of the country, as well as into the U.S. sphere of influence," and finally "the emergence of Mexico as the focal point of European-American rivalry in Latin America."

The exploration of these themes results in a balanced and carefully nuanced discussion of ramifications and implications. Katz shows acute sensitivity to regional differences and class disparities. His examinations of the Madero, Zapata, Villa, and Carranza movements in the critical states of Coahuila, Morelos, Chihuahua, and Sonora demonstrate scrupulous regard for ideological and programmatic expressions

as affirmations of social origin and political interest. His analysis of the shifting impact of international rivalries on factional alignments in Mexico, although admittedly hard to measure, elicits some striking conclusions. Great Britain, steadfastly committed to racist assumptions and the status quo ante Madero, accomplished only one positive outcome in intercepting and deciphering the Zimmermann telegram. German policy, although inspired by "cold-blooded realpolitik," fundamentally lacked realism and repeatedly misjudged both Mexico and the United States. The miscarriage of the Zimmermann telegram provides a glaring example, and Katz provides the most complete version in print. Finally, the United States under Taft and Wilson behaved in "the most contradictory" fashion of any of the Great Powers. As Katz observes, "Every victorious faction in Mexico between 1910–1919 enjoyed the sympathy and in most cases the direct support of U.S. authorities," only to have the Americans turn vehemently against them in the end, a turnabout that befell Madero, Huerta, and Carranza. Katz attributes this "consistent American inconsistency" to "one common denominator: the fact that every Mexican faction once it assumed power carried out policies considered detrimental by both the administration in Washington and U.S. business interests."

The Secret War in Mexico exemplifies the state of the art in studies of the Mexican Revolution. By means of prodigious research, methodological rigor, and a free-ranging historical imagination, Friedrich Katz conveys higher levels of insight and understanding. His laudable effort establishes a formidable standard against which other students of Mexican history can measure their scholarship. Microcosmic analysis in this instance enhances immeasurably the comprehension of the larger whole and affirms unquestionably the utility of recent tendencies in Mexican historiography.