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Caught in the middle: Mexico's relationship with Cuba and the United States 1959-1969

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in

Latin American Studies (History)

by

Rafael Ancona

Committee in charge:

Professor Michael Monteón, Chair
Professor Christine Hunefeldt
Professor Eric Van Young

2013

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2013

DEDICATION

Thanks must first go to my family, especially mom and papá. Thank you for everything. I'd also like to thank my friends for keeping it real. Finally, thank you to Professors Monteón, Hunefeldt, and Van Young. It was an honor to work with such knowledgeable and distinguished scholars.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Caught in the middle: Mexico's relationship with Cuba and the United States 1959-1969

by

Rafael Ancona

Master of Arts in Latin American Studies (History)

University of California, San Diego, 2013

Professor Michael Monteón, Chair

When Cuban revolutionaries triumphantly rolled into Havana in January 1959, Latin America was thrust onto center stage in the Cold War. The volatile and antagonistic relationship that developed between Cuba and the United States, in which violence was often threatened and sometimes realized, put the Mexican government in a precarious position; they were caught in the middle of their feuding neighbors

geographically and politically. How could Mexico manage its relationship with its feuding neighbors, each of which it considered an ally? The ruling *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) responded by aligning itself more closely with its northern neighbor while simultaneously becoming increasingly repressive, but scholars differ as to why. Many contend that the Mexican government bowed to U.S. pressure in order to stimulate economic development via foreign investment and to ebb communist influence, while others argue that the Mexican government acted on its own aegis to protect its political power.

My contention is that it was a combination of both domestic and foreign pressure; the Mexican government sought to simultaneously encourage foreign investment to appease its neighbors to the north and to retain their control of the country. My thesis first analyzes the Mexico-U.S. relationship in order to determine what Mexico had at stake in this ordeal. I then visit Mexico's deep revolutionary history in order to understand the appeal of the Cuban Revolution among wide segments of the Mexican population. Finally, I analyze the ways in which the Mexican government, taking into account U.S. pressure out of fear of communist "contagion" of the western hemisphere, responded to the delicate situation.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

On April 17, 1961, former Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas boarded a plane in Mexico City in order to travel to Havana and lend his assistance to the besieged Cuban revolutionary government. The Bay of Pigs invasion had begun just hours earlier when United States-trained and funded Cuban exiles began an assault to topple Fidel Castro regime in Cuba. At Mexico City's *Aeropuerto Central*, authorities prevented Cárdenas's plane from taking off citing orders from President Adolfo López Mateos. With travel to Cuba forbidden during the invasion, Cárdenas proceeded to Mexico City's central square, the *zócalo*, where he delivered an improvised and impassioned speech denouncing the United States and pledging his full support for Castro. Despite being out of office for over two decades, Cárdenas was still held in high regard by Mexicans, and people listened. But his position on Cuba drew the ire of the current Mexican government. As it was, Mexico's most beloved president of the 20th century was back in the spotlight, to both the delight and consternation of the Mexican public.

The Bay of Pigs invasion took place barely two years after Fidel Castro's dramatic rise to power. Few, if any, events in 20th century Latin America compare in significance to Castro's and his *Movimiento 26 de Julio's* (26th of July Movement) victory in the Cuban Revolution in January 1959. The fall of the Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista and Castro's ascension ushered in an era of antagonism that heated up the Cold War and transformed Cuba from a pseudo U.S. colony into its northern neighbor's principal enemy in the hemisphere. Cuba's embrace of the U.S.S.R. led to

a further deterioration of east-west relations, culminating with threats of near nuclear war between the world's superpowers. The Cuban Revolution did not simply help foment Cold War hostilities, however. It also initiated a process that tried bringing democracy and social justice to Latin America through armed struggle (Rabe, 1988, p. 123). Castro's revolutionary victory motivated guerrilla movements indignant about corruption, social injustice, and underdevelopment in virtually every country across the hemisphere. Guerrilla movements in several countries, inspired by the success and charisma of its iconic bearded leaders, Castro and Ernesto "Che" Guevara, and some even acting with direct material support from Castro's regime, changed Latin American politics and society and further complicated U.S.-Cuban relations.¹ In effect, the 26th of July Movement's success redefined revolutionary possibilities in Latin America (Wickham-Crowley, 1991, p. 32). Caught in the middle of this tense relationship between Cuba and the U.S. – both geographically and diplomatically – was Mexico. How could Mexico, one of Latin America's largest and most powerful countries, juggle its relationship with its feuding neighbors? On the one hand, Mexico and the U.S. had a strategic relationship crucial to Mexico's prosperity, including the nearly 2,000 mile border. The close economic, political, and social ties between the countries, partly due to the close proximity, made geography more important to Mexico than to other nations (Astiz, 1969, p. 81). The U.S. also knew Mexico's

¹ From 1960 to the end of the 20th century, guerrilla movements had sprung up in virtually every Latin American country including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela, all at least partly influenced by the success of the Cuban Revolution, its ideals, and the charisma of its outspoken and peculiar-looking leaders. Some, most notably Bolivia and Venezuela, received direct support from Castro's government including arms, training, and even soldiers. In the case of Bolivia, Cuba went as far as sending Che Guevara to instigate guerrilla activities. It was in Bolivia that Guevara was killed by U.S.-trained and directed Bolivian special forces in 1967.

stability was critical to its Cold War efforts. On the other hand, Mexico and Cuba shared a unique cultural, historical, and political relationship. As stated at a joint Mexican-Cuban conference at the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* (National Autonomous University of Mexico, or UNAM) in 2002, “the friendliness, admiration, and mutual respect between our peoples have been the main banner and the strongest link between Mexico and Cuba” (Hansberg, 2003, p. 9). Further uniting the two Latin American countries was their shared sense of history, which was defined in terms of their mutual resistance to imperial oppression first from Spain and then from the U.S. Mexican foreign policy with the island nation constituted an exceptional element within the general perspective of the countries of Latin America (Pellicer de Brody, 1972, p. 9). Mexico had aided Cuba during the Caribbean country’s formative struggles like the Ten Years War and the Cuban War for Independence, as well as providing asylum to Cuban national heroes like Julio Antonio Mella, Fidel Castro, and José Martí. Lastly, the Mexican Revolution, similar to the Cuban Revolution in many respects, had ended only a few decades earlier and was still fresh in the minds of Mexicans. The Mexican government even proclaimed itself to be a revolutionary entity. Its most radical president, Lázaro Cárdenas, who led the nation in the 1930s, was still alive and openly supported Castro and his revolution in Cuba. Could the Mexican government really distance itself from the Cuban Revolution taking place slightly more than 100 miles from its shores? After all, the Mexican Revolution’s tenets of agrarian, labor, political, and economic reforms formed the closest model to socialism Latin America had ever seen and, according to Castro and other Cuban revolutionaries, greatly influenced the Cuban

Revolution. As Fidel Castro said in a 1959 interview that appeared in the Mexican magazine *Siempre!*, "You could say that the Mexican Revolution influenced the Cuban Revolution very much" (as cited in White, 2007, p. 43).

Also, did Mexico's geographic location pose any problems for Mexico in the Cuba-U.S. context? As mentioned, Cuba lies approximately 100 miles from Cancun, Mexico and as a result, Cuba and the Yucatan peninsula have developed deep cultural and historical ties. In fact, before railroads connected Yucatan to Mexico City, travel to Cuba was much easier for *Yucatecos* than traveling to their country's capital. It is for this reason that many commented that Merida, the capital of the state of Yucatan, was more similar to Cuba than to the rest of Mexico. Due to these close ties, did *Yucatecos* see Fidel Castro's movement any differently than other Mexicans? Did the *peninsulares* see their own government's relations with Cuba differently than the rest of the country? These questions are vital because as Lorenzo Meyer (2004) points out, "with a socialist Cuba, the Cold War stationed itself in the Caribbean, a stone's throw from Yucatan" (p. 110).

Research Objectives and Goals

The objective of this research is to answer these questions and to analyze the competing factors affecting Mexican diplomacy with Cuba and the United States. In short, what factors influenced Mexico's policies with the two countries between 1959 and 1969? All in all, the issue reveals the tensions between idealism and realism or realpolitik. Based on the historic and cultural relationship between Cuba and Mexico, and the widespread sympathy for the Cuban Revolution among Mexicans, an idealistic

policy would lead Mexico to favor Castro over the U.S. Was this policy realistic, however? Could Mexico break from the U.S. on this issue at the height of the Cold War?

The years 1959 to 1969 are significant because they encompass the time from which Castro's victory in Cuba to the end of Mexico's "special" relationship with Cuba, a period in which it held the distinction of being the only Latin American country to maintain diplomatic ties with the island nation. By 1964, the U.S. and all countries of Latin America, with the exception of Mexico, had severed diplomatic ties with Castro's socialist government. When Salvador Allende's socialist government was democratically elected in Chile in 1970, however, his government re-established ties with Cuba, thus ending Mexico's role as the only intermediary between Castro and the rest of the hemisphere.

The goal for this research is twofold: to provide better historical understanding of Mexican diplomacy with Cuba and the U.S. during the Cold War and to explore some of the deeper cultural elements that shaped foreign relations in the period. While this study cannot an outline for future Mexican or U.S. policy, I hope to sensitize readers about why U.S. policy makers often make a mess in dealing with liberal and left-wing sentiment in Latin America. Currently, we are in another moment of Latin American importance in the world, characterized by a leftward shift in attitudes and broad resistance to obsequious support of U.S. goals. The ascendancy of Brazil and Venezuela to the world stage, as well as the leftward shift of their governments and the governments of Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Peru, and Uruguay illustrate this phenomenon, known as the "pink tide" (Birns and Lettieri,

2006). The former leader of this movement, Venezuela's late President Hugo Chávez, often paid homage to the Cuban Revolution. In a 1994 speech at the Universidad de La Habana, Chávez, who had recently been released from prison after a failed coup attempt, said that although that it was his first time in Cuba, he, along with many of Latin America's youth, had traveled to revolutionary Cuba countless times in their dreams. He went on to say that many years before he had decided to give his life for a revolutionary and transformative project (Chávez, 1994). It is also important because of the tension between Mexico's neighbors to the north and south and the similar "in the middle" situation in which Mexico continues to find itself with respect to the U.S. and Latin America. The relatively recent diplomatic spats Mexico's former President Vicente Fox had with Castro and Chávez are overt examples, ever exacerbated by Mexico's increasingly close economic and security ties with the U.S., a result of the country's struggling economy and drug war which the government relies heavily on North American military aid to fight. Thus, special circumstances that do not apply as broadly to other countries of Latin America continue to shape relations between Mexico and the U.S. Even though the Cold War has thawed, the left-wing government in Cuba remains a domestic and international problem for U.S. politicians.

This narrative will by providing economic, political, and social factors that shaped Mexico's relationship with its northern neighbor. Next, in order to fully understand the effect of the Cuban Revolution on Mexican consciousness, one must understand Mexico's long revolutionary history. Beginning with the Mexican Revolution, the world's first successful revolution of the 20th century, I will trace its

effect on Mexican society as well as the impact it would come to have on the Cuban Revolution, its leaders, and other Latin American countries. Then, I will outline Mexico's foreign policy with Cuba and the U.S. – both explicit and secret – and identify Mexico's foreign policy concerns in regards to its neighbors. Finally, I will analyze the Mexican government's relationship with Cuba's revolutionary government, their response to revolution on their doorstep, and examine the ways in which Cuba proved to be an irritant to the Mexico – U.S. relationship.

Chapter 2 – Geography Makes Strange Bedfellows

Mexico and the United States have a long, complicated history. Ranging from the United States' imperialist invasion in 1846, to Abraham Lincoln's support of Benito Juárez, to the multiple U.S. military interventions in Mexico in the early 20th century, the turbulent history of the neighboring countries has had many highs and lows. Coupled with the economic might of the U.S., it is easy to see why it is impossible for Mexico to ignore its northern neighbor. During the early 1940's, however, the governments of both countries ushered in an era of unprecedented cooperation and friendship that continues, in part, to this day. This cooperation can most easily be analyzed when divided into three categories of factors: political, economic, and social.

Political

At the time of the Cuban Revolution, Mexico was enjoying relative stability and prosperity after suffering years of revolution, quasi-civil war, foreign intervention, and violence as a result of the decade-long Mexican Revolution and subsequent *Cristiada*. Political stability was finally achieved when the *Partido Nacional Revolucionario* (PNR), later named the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), consolidated national power in 1929. The PRI, as it came to be known in 1946, would hold power until 2000, a period of more than 70 years of uninterrupted executive rule. This political consolidation transformed Mexico from violent and unstable into the region's most stable country. In describing Mexico's political makeover and its effect on the country, Eric Zolov (1999) writes, "Out of the chaos of revolution - and a

history of caudillo uprisings throughout the nineteenth century - Mexico proved to be the stablest among Latin American nations...the unifying strength of Mexico's revolutionary nationalism was unquestionably a defining feature of the nation's political stability and economic growth into the 1960s" (p. 3). This newfound stability proved attractive to foreign investors weary of the instability, violence, coups, uprisings, and revolutions that all too often characterized Latin America. President Adolfo López Mateos summarized this when he declared in his inaugural address, "Liberty is fruitful only when it is accompanied by order" (Morley, 2008, p. 91).

Only a year after the ruling party was formed, the seminal foreign policy doctrine of 20th century Mexico was established. Named for Genaro Estrada, the *Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores* (Secretary of Foreign Relations) during the administration of Pascual Ortiz Rubio, the Estrada Doctrine was adopted in 1930 and would shape Mexican foreign policy until the early years of Vicente Fox's *sexenio* (six-year presidential term), a period of over 70 years that roughly corresponded with the rule of the PRI. Stemming from the numerous foreign invasions Mexico had suffered in the roughly 100 years since independence was achieved from Spain and the bitter memory of those historical experiences, the doctrine's core tenets were self-determination and non-intervention (Astiz, 1969, p. 93). The Doctrine opposed using military means to resolve international issues and was also against using diplomatic recognition as a means of legitimizing or de-legitimizing a government, as the U.S. had done against Mexico as recently as the years of the Mexican Revolution. In short, the Estrada Doctrine embraced a belief that each country was entitled to determine its foreign and domestic policy independent of the opinion of other countries. It was this

doctrine that would frame Mexico's foreign policy during the 1960's in regards to Cuba and the U.S.

While Mexico did in fact desire the independence espoused in the Estrada Doctrine, it also sought to foster closer political ties with the U.S. in order to achieve advantageous outcomes in certain border-related issues. For example, Mexico sought a favorable resolution to the Chamizal dispute concerning land between El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. Following the Mexican-American War and the annexation of Mexico's northwest, constituting almost half of the country's territory, the two countries signed in 1848 the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo stipulating that the new international border be the Rio Grande (known in Mexico as the Río Bravo). However, the channel of the river shifted north multiple times over the next several years with both countries claiming the land between the river's old and new channel, a 600 acre section of desert known as the Chamizal. In 1910, the countries agreed to settle the land dispute via arbitration, but despite a ruling in Mexico's favor, the U.S. refused to recognize the decision, maintaining control of the Chamizal and fueling deep resentment among Mexicans. In 1964, however, Presidents López Mateos and Lyndon Johnson reached a peaceful agreement with the U.S. recognizing the arbitrator's decision and awarding control on the Chamizal to Mexico, thus ending the more than century-old ordeal.

Another border dispute that arose was the issue of the Colorado River's water flow and salinity. Increasing development in the U.S. southwest had diverted much of the water from the river, reducing the river's flow and water quality by the time it

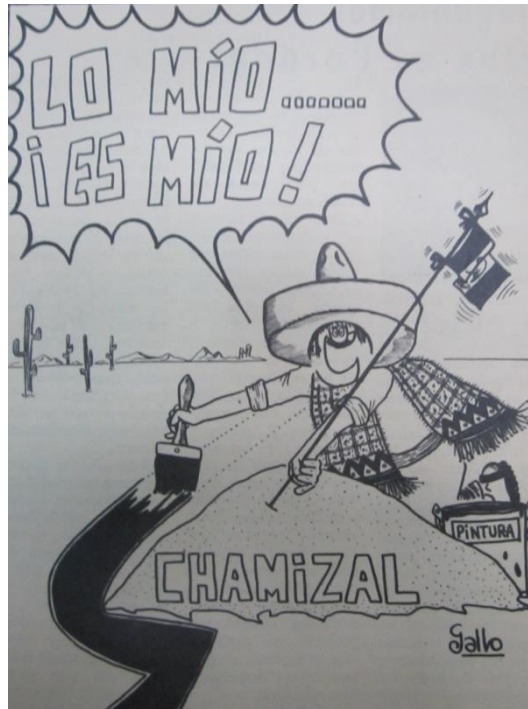


Image 1 – “What’s mine is mine!” Cartoon by Mexican artist Alberto Beltrán in 1962.

reached northwest Mexico, an area whose agriculture was dependent on the Colorado River for irrigation. The water’s increased salinity rendered it unusable to Mexican farmers, damaging the region’s industry and angering many Mexicans who argued that the U.S. did not comply with a 1944 water utilization treaty between the neighboring countries. Angered with the U.S. reluctance to remedy the issue, thousands of protestors marched to the U.S. consulate in Mexicali, Baja California on June 8, 1964 demanding action in the issue of the Colorado River salinity, which they blamed on Arizonan politicians. As was the case of the Chamizal, Mexico’s efforts were rewarded when the two countries signed a treaty in 1974 guaranteeing the river’s water quality and flow.

Perhaps most illustrative of Mexico and the U.S.’ deepening political ties throughout the 1960s was the building of the \$78 million Amistad Dam (known in

Mexico as the Presa de la Amistad) along the Coahuila-Texas border. The joint project between the neighboring countries was undertaken in order to provide irrigation and hydroelectric power to both sides of the border. At the dam's inauguration in September 1969, U.S. President Nixon declared that the dam was a demonstration of "the spirit of understanding and cooperation which binds our two countries." He went on to say that, "As we dedicate this dam, we also dedicate ourselves to the furtherance of an ideal friendship." At the conclusion of the ceremony, President Nixon and Mexican President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz embraced; a fitting symbol of the country's deepening political ties.



Image 2 – Presidents Díaz Ordaz and Nixon hug at the dedication of the Amistad Dam in 1969

Economic

After the hostilities of World War II had subsided, the United States emerged as one of the world's two economic and military superpowers and the hegemon of the western hemisphere. For this reason, Astiz (1969) asserts that, "geography is probably more important to Mexico than to any other nation" (p. 81). Mexico's proximity to the world's primary economic superpower proved to be an opportunity for the Mexican government to strengthen ties with the U.S. in order to encourage investment which would modernize the country and stimulate development. Following the relatively radical leftist administration of Lázaro Cárdenas from 1934 – 1940, the ruling Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) decided that economic objectives should prevail over social ones (Wynia, 1990, p. 155). Beginning with Manuel Ávila Camacho's administration, the country embarked on a three decade surge of sustained economic growth in which the government unofficially encouraged foreign investment, a drastic departure from the original tenants of the Revolution. Known today as the "Mexican Miracle," it was a time in which industrialization became one of the, if not *the*, primary aspirations of the nation. "Without abandoning a rhetorical commitment to the social objectives of the 1910 revolution, the presidents of Manuel Avila Camacho onward sacrificed those objectives in practice to the goal of economic growth" (Halperín Donghi, 1993, p. 274). In order to fuel industrialization and make the "miracle" a reality, Mexico had to obtain considerable technical and financial resources from abroad.

The goal of industrialization made the need for U.S. foreign investment crucial to foreign and domestic politics. Astiz (1969) asserts that because "Mexican

administrations of the last three or four decades have identified national development, particularly in the economic sphere, as the most important objective of the national policy,” they have “subordinated their foreign policy to it” (p. 85). U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower expressed this view in 1953 when he noted that the “primary economic objective of the U.S. was to encourage ‘Latin American governments to recognize that the bulk of the capital required for their economic development can best be supplied by private enterprise and that their own self-interest requires the creation of a climate which will attract private investment’” (Rabe, 1988, p. 65) Less than a decade later, U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Thomas Mann pointed out in a cable to Secretary of State Dean Rusk, “Mexico needs...all the private foreign investment it can obtain. As The Department [of State] knows, Mexico has been seeking 400 million for refinancing short term dollar obligations and new development. This asking figure will probably rise. Prospects of receiving substantial aid from European sources are not good.” From 1950 to 1979, foreign investment in Mexico increased eleven-fold to \$6.9 billion, of which 70 percent came from the U.S. (Wynia, 1990, p. 156). Mexico’s economic links to U.S. bank and corporations grew stronger as the 1950s turned into the 1960s.

Emblematic of the U.S.’ impact on the Mexican economy was the Bracero Program. Created in 1942 between Mexico and the U.S. through the signing of the Mexican Farm Labor Program Agreement, the Bracero Program was a temporary worker program that lasted until 1964 in which 4.6 million Mexicans participated (Sherman, 2000, p. 593). The program allowed Mexican laborers to travel to the U.S. to work primarily in agriculture and railroads to offset the labor shortage caused by

World War II. For the U.S., the program had ambitious goals. The program depicted Mexican braceros as gaining greater income as they helped their home country develop, fought communism and fostered international solidarity. Daniela Spenser asserts that the program was cast as a “model of anti-Communism and hemispheric unity” in which “Mexican guest workers were taught the methods of modern agriculture that would serve to build a more modern and democratic Mexico” (Spenser, 2008, p. 389). The work conditions were not easy, however. Despite the program’s guarantee of “humane treatment,” many laborers faced an array of injustices and abuses, including substandard housing, discrimination, and unfulfilled contracts or being cheated out of wages” (Bracero History Archive). Although initially intended as a temporary solution to a shortage of workers as a result of WWII, U.S. business owners who benefitted from the cheap labor lobbied Congress to continue the program after the war’s end. These employers in the southwest of the U.S. benefitted from the cheap Mexican labor, as braceros were initially paid only 30 cents per hour, far less than what domestic workers demanded (Spenser, 2008, p. 389). Braceros’s hard work and little pay became so beneficial to farmers that they came to represent “94.5 percent of the seasonal labor force harvesting lettuce; 97.6 percent of the labor force in tomatoes, and 81.1 percent in strawberries. From being a supplementary labor force, the braceros became *the* labor force” (Pedraza, 1985, p. 66). When the program was finally discontinued in 1964 under U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson, the U.S. invested in another project to help deal with unemployment along the border – the Border Industrialization Program.

In what was the birth of the *maquiladora*, a factory in which low-wage workers assembled goods from raw materials brought from the U.S. and returned the finished product to the U.S. duty-free, the Border Industrialization Program was created to “create jobs, attract capital, introduce modern methods of manufacturing in assembling, processing, and exporting, and to increase consumption of Mexican raw materials” (Acuña, 2002, p. 696). Begun in 1965, 20 plants were operating along the border by 1966, and by 1970, the number jumped to 120 (Acuña, 2002, p. 696). Only a decade after its inception, the Program exploded to include over 450 *maquiladoras*. Despite the poor working conditions and the severe environmental damage they caused to the borderlands, the *maquiladoras* became an integral part of the Mexican economy. As the name suggests, these *maquiladoras* were concentrated along the U.S.-Mexico border in order for U.S. companies to take advantage of the cheap Mexican labor while simultaneously keeping transportation costs relatively low because of the geographic proximity. In addition, the Mexican government relaxed restrictions on U.S. capital within 12 miles of the border and waived regulations and duties on imported raw materials (Acuña, 2002, p. 696). The Project also led to a rapid increase in Mexican border city population. For example, Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, El Paso, Texas’s neighbor, had a population of only 49,000 in 1940. By 1970, the population of the border city exploded to over 400,000, an increase of more than 800% (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía, 2013).

Additionally, the automobile industry made great strides in Mexico during the 1960’s and was pivotal in establishing Mexico’s domestic manufacturing capacity. As Bachelor (2008) asserts, “the auto industry served as the centerpiece of Mexico’s

model of import substitution industrialization, an economic strategy widely adopted across Latin America that aimed to reduce dependence on foreign industry through the promotion of domestic manufacturing” (p. 254). In order to reduce the risk of the uncertainty stemming from global trade, Mexico sought to reduce its trade deficit through a strategy of import substitution industrialization (ISI), which increased its exports and decreased imports. Mexico turned to the auto industry to do so. In fact, to further bolster domestic production, the Mexican government wanted to evolve from simply assembling automobiles to manufacturing them. In 1962, the Mexican government issued a decree saying that by 1964, at least 60% of each car assembled in Mexico must consist of domestically-manufactured parts (Appel Molot, 2004, p. 25). To further stimulate manufacturing, Chrysler, Ford, and G.M. all opened plants in Toluca, Mexico in the first half of the 1960’s, with each facility being the respective company’s most technologically advanced auto making facility in Latin America. G.M.’s Toluca plant, opened in 1964, was capable of producing twenty thousand vehicles a year (Bachelor, 2008, p. 261). In sum, the goal of the Mexican government was to stimulate a manufacturing revolution like Detroit had experienced four decades before (Bachelor, 2008, p. 256).

Similar to the moral pronouncements of the Bracero Program, dubious claims were made about the virtuous effects of the automobile industry on Mexican society. In 1961 GM President Frederick Donner claimed that “‘multinational corporations represent a new kind of capitalism’ that would usher in ‘social progress’ and ‘elevate the Mexican nation’” (Bachelor, 2008, p. 254). In addition, when Ambassador Mann became head of the Automobile Manufacturers Association in 1967, he claimed that

his primary goal was to “help promote economic and social progress in Mexico” (Bachelor, 2008, p. 254). The industry also funded an extensive public relations campaign to tout its virtue. As Bachelor (2008) points out, G.M. “underwrote the nightly news on the state-owned television channel and sponsored an annual ‘Parade of Progress’ at Chapultepec Park, during which visitors were treated to festivities and the company’s latest lineup of automobiles. Ford established a manager of civic affairs to publicize its ‘good corporate citizenship’ and oversee its multiple outreach projects” (p. 258). The automobile industry was not just important to Mexico, though. Conversely, Mexico was also of great importance to the automobile industry. U.S. automakers concluded that the Mexican market (and Latin America’s in general) was critical to their global strategy of increasing market share in the face of lagging domestic sales (Bachelor, 2008, p. 257). Mexico was in the midst of a population boom, and with many of the country’s citizens moving into the middle class and looking to purchase their first automobile, Chrysler, Ford, and G.M. strove to seize those opportunities.

Another increasingly important Mexican economic sector was tourism from the U.S. Previously a minor industry, tourism to Mexico increased exponentially after the end of World War II. From 1945 until Batista’s fall in Cuba, the number of U.S. tourists to Mexico rose nearly five-fold, from 165,000 per year to 719,000 (McPherson, 2006, p. 32). These tourists, which made up roughly 90% of the foreign tourism to Mexico, took millions of dollars south of the border and ignited a tourist industry that developed into what is today the largest in Latin America and one of Mexico’s largest and most important industries. The industry became so important to

Mexico that President Adolfo López Mateos named former president Miguel Alemán as head of the Consejo Nacional de Turismo (National Tourism Council), which he would head until his death in 1983. It was during this time that some of Mexico's most famous tourist destinations were developed, the first being Acapulco. Located 450 kilometers south of Mexico City in the state of Guerrero, Acapulco attracted droves of visitors with its tropical weather, lush mountains, and picturesque beaches and transformed it from a small fishing village to an "international playground." After the completion of the Mexico City – Acapulco highway in 1927, travel to the Pacific beach town skyrocketed and hotel construction accelerated to accommodate the visitors. In 1952, Acapulco boasted 2,423 rooms in 123 hotels. A decade later, the number of hotel rooms more than doubled to 5,474 (Sackett, 2002, p. 504). Among the hotels built during this surge was El Presidente, a world-class high-rise hotel built by oil magnate J. Paul Getty and subsidized by the Mexican government (Sackett, 2002, p. 505). By 1960, it had become a world-famous destination that attracted many of the world's rich and famous. Hollywood personalities Rita Hayworth, Errol Flynn, Cary Grant, Frank Sinatra, and John Wayne all visited the posh tourist destination in the 1950's (Sherman, 2000, p. 586). Not only was Elizabeth Taylor married in Acapulco, she also owned a house in Puerto Vallarta, another burgeoning tourist destination along Mexico's Pacific coast. A decade later, Elvis Presley starred in the 1963 hit film, *Fun in Acapulco*. Even prominent politicians were lured to Acapulco's beautiful beaches. Freshman U.S. Senator and future President John F. Kennedy and his wife, Jacqueline, honeymooned in Acapulco in 1953. President

Eisenhower also stayed in Acapulco in 1959 for a series of meetings with President López Mateos.

The Mexican government helped sustain and even increase this tourism boom with the creation of the Banco Nacional Hotelero, Turístico y de Fomento (National Hotel, Tourism, and Promotion Bank). Writing to the Mexican Congress, the Consejo Nacional de Turismo said the Bank would “resolve banking, credit, and promotional problems of the tourism industry.” The Bank would also work towards “sustaining and improving tourism centers that already exist and studying and developing new tourism centers” and to “stimulate the influx of domestic and foreign tourism in coordination with government, state organizations, and private businesses associated with the tourism industry.” Among the new areas that were considered for development were Baja California and the Yucatan peninsula, both of which would also depend on tourism from the U.S. In an April 1965 memo to Secretario de Gobernación (Secretary of the Interior) and future president, Luis Echeverría, Alemán wrote about the “means that should be introduced in order to increase tourism from California, United States, to the Baja California peninsula and the improvement of airports and runways in the southern portion of Baja California.” Also, in regards to the Yucatan peninsula, Alemán wrote to Echeverría that he had completed a preliminary study regarding the incorporation of Mexico’s southeast and the Caribbean to Mexico’s overall tourism strategy.

The success of Mexico’s tourist destinations and the influx of visitors propelled the country into the position as one of the world leaders in the industry. As a result, Mexico was chosen to host the 19th General Assembly of the International

Union of Official Travel Organizations (IUOTO), now known as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), in October 1965. Furthermore, writing to Echeverría in April 1967, Department of Tourism chief Agustín Salvat informed the Secretario de Gobernación that he “submitted a proposal to the United Nations that 1967 be named ‘Year of International Tourism’ and ‘Tourism: Passport for Peace.’” Afterwards, the 21st General Assembly of the United Nations that took place in New York last November approved this proposal. Our motivation for the proposals was to promote better understanding between the peoples of the world.” Clearly, Mexico’s leaders sought to increase global exposure of international tourism and were successful in doing so. This exposure would surely increase global travel and therefore benefit Mexico, home to some of the world’s most famous tourist destinations

In order to facilitate travel to Mexico and as a consequence bolster the tourism industry, the administration of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz issued a new visa specifically for tourists that was valid for a longer period of time and allowed the card-holder to re-enter Mexico multiple times. As the Mexican newspaper *El Dia* explained, “the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores will issue a very important new immigration document: the tourist card, which will be valid for five years and for multiple entries, with constitutes a great incentive to increase the number of foreign visitors to our country...the aforementioned document came as a result of a request from the Departamento de Turismo (Department of Tourism) to various organizations related to the entrance of foreigners to the country.” The government was also concerned with training a sufficient number of people to work in the tourism industry. In order to

“resolve the problem of a lack of trained people to work in tourism,” the Departamento de Turismo planned the “First Education Seminar in the Field of Tourism, which would discuss development of a wide-ranging program to train personnel that the industry requires.” A training program was needed in order to accommodate the influx of visitors the government hoped to attract and staff the dozens of new hotels. The government also invested heavily in marketing tourism. In fact, *El Día* said that “the Departamento de Turismo will spend \$12.5 million pesos on international advertising during 1969 primarily in the U.S. and Canada” to attract individuals from those countries to vacation in Mexico. The article went on to say that the “Consejo Nacional de Turismo will spend \$34 million pesos on promotions, \$8 million in direct insertions in newspapers in the aforementioned countries.” One such promotion, named “Get to Know Mexico Better,” had a budget of \$7.7 million pesos and a goal to “increase tourism to Mexico” by awarding prizes to consumers of certain products in the U.S. Coupons for free vacations to Mexico were hidden inside boxes of Fab detergent, Colgate toothpaste, and Palmolive soap, but customers could also enter a raffle for a free vacation by mailing in proof of purchase of one of these products. These efforts seem to have been effective because today, Mexico ranks in the top ten of the most visited tourist countries in the world.

In order to further promote Mexico-U.S. cooperation in matters of industry and tourism, the governments of both countries convened a conference to discuss many of the issues affecting each country, especially those relating to the border. In a memo from New Mexico Governor Jack Campbell to the Governor of Coahuila, Braulio Fernández Aguirre, Governor Campbell invited his Coahuilan counterpart to the

Primera Sesión General de la Asamblea de Estados Fronterizos de la República de México y los Estados Unidos (First Session of the General Assembly of Border States of Mexico and the United States) to take place in Albuquerque, New Mexico in June 1966 in which the governors of Arizona, California, New Mexico, Texas, Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas would participate. Writing to Secretario de Gobernación Echeverría notifying him of the invitation, Governor Fernández Aguirre noted that the conference's goal was to "create a permanent organization" at a "governmental level" that would work to improve "tourism, commercial relations, student and academic exchange, and industrial relations." These matters reached the highest level of the Mexican government when President Díaz Ordaz approved the creation of the *Comisión Mexicano-Estados Unidos de América para el Desarrollo y la Amistad Fronterizos* (Mexico-United States Commission for Border Development and Friendship) in 1967. As stated in the memo signed by President Díaz Ordaz, the Commission was formed to "study the ways in which to improve the relations between border cities of both countries, with the goal to improve the quality of life of each respective population, both in material and social and cultural ways."

U.S. agricultural companies also saw vast opportunities in Latin America. San Francisco, California's Del Monte Corporation was especially active in Mexico and Latin America. "After World War II, multinational corporations moved to dominate the marketing of Mexican agricultural products. Del Monte alone by 1967 had offices in 20 Latin American countries and ranked as the world's largest canning corporation" (Acuña, 2002, p. 694). Conversely, Mexico saw in its northern neighbor an enormous

market for its agricultural exports. As Acuña (2002) highlights, “by 1964 Mexico shipped 334 million pounds of vegetables north; 13 years later, the flow increased to 1,108 million pounds, supplying, at certain seasons, 60 percent of U.S. fresh vegetables” (p. 694). Thus, the “Mexican Miracle” was not simply limited to industrial development, but included other sectors as well.

Perhaps nothing was more indicative of the Mexico-U.S. economic relationship than the Inter-American Development Bank and the Alliance for Progress. Shortly after the Cuban revolutionaries defeated Batista, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) was created in 1959. The largest source of development financing for Latin America, the IDB channels funds from the U.S., the main source of the IDB’s lending resources, to its southern neighbors. In 1961, the Kennedy administration instituted that bold new initiative named the Alliance for Progress, a U.S.-funded aid program aimed at combating communism by unleashing the power of U.S. capitalism and reasserting a positive U.S. presence in Latin America. As Halperín Donghi (1993) writes, the goals of the Alliance were “the pursuit of land reform, rapid and broad-based industrialization, and expansion of the functions and resources of the state” (p. 294-295). Furthermore, the Alliance hoped to “reach a 2.5 percent annual growth rate in the per capita gross national product of the participating Latin American countries” and to implement “major tax reform to make the collection of public revenues more effective and shift the burden to wealthier social groups who had long avoided paying their share” (Halperín Donghi, 1993, p. 295). Brands (2010) continues, “Kennedy announced ‘a vast cooperative effort, unparalleled in magnitude and nobility of purpose, to satisfy the basic needs of the American people for homes,

work and land, health and schools.’ This ‘Alliance for Progress’ was to be a ten-year program in which over \$22 billion would be doled out to aid committed Latin American leaders in stimulating economic growth and better distributing benefits. The Alliance would ‘complete the revolution of the Americas,’ redressing the region’s pervasive underdevelopment and inequality and, in the space of only a decade, transforming it into a stable, prosperous area.” (p. 45). This was a dramatic shift from the relatively miniscule aid the U.S. offered Latin America the previous decade. Rabe (1988) points out that even though the “per capita income of Latin Americans was about one-eighth that of North Americans” in the early 1950s, “the United States allocated only about 1 percent of its development assistance to Latin America” (p. 67). This lack of attention did not go unnoticed to Latin Americans, who were upset at their lack of a “Marshall Plan,” referring to the U.S.’ aid program to rebuild Europe after World War II. Mexico did not want to miss out on this unprecedented opportunity for economic aid from the Alliance for Progress by distancing itself from the U.S. In an address to the nation, President Adolfo López Mateos endorsed the Alliance for Progress "as a movement in which all the Republics of this hemisphere that desire to participate in it have responsibility" because it was "not just a unilateral program of aid from the United States of America" (Morley, 2008, p. 124).

On many levels, the “Mexican Miracle” proved to be a success. The government’s management of the economy from 1940 to 1970 allowed Mexico to enjoy economic advances unparalleled in Latin America (Halperín Donghi, 1993, p. 277). Over the course of the three decades, Mexico’s economy grew at a remarkable average annual rate of 6.5 percent and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased

by more than 700 percent. Furthermore, between 1949 and 1955, the country's (GDP) grew by an astounding 18 percent (Bachelor, 2008, p. 254). In fact, Mexico's Gross National Product (GNP) in the 1960s grew faster than that of any other Latin American country (Acuña, 2002, p. 694). Moreover, during the 30 years of Mexico's miracle, the number of factories more than doubled from 56,000 in 1940 to over 118,000 in 1970 (Kandell, 1988, p. 495). During the 1960s the manufacturing sector experienced its greatest dynamism of the century with an 8.2 percent annual growth rate (Garza, 2003, p. 44). Impressively, by 1974 Mexico had become the largest foreign assembler of items for re-export to the United States – surpassing places like Hong Kong, Taiwan, and other Asian localities less stable by American interests” (Ehrlich, Bilderback, & Ehrlich, 1979, p. 160). In addition, the economic changes spurred by ISI led to the growth of Mexico's middle class and transformed the country from a predominantly agricultural economy to one in which industry accounted for more than one-third of overall production. These advances in economic productivity and growth of the middle class meant Mexicans were able to purchase more modern amenities and the country's biggest cities began to resemble many of the world's modern cities. Davis (1994) notes that by the end of the 1960s “Mexico City boasted Latin America's first skyscraper, rising standards of living, a sophisticated cultural life, and some of the developing world's most modern urban amenities, including a gleaming new rapid transit system” (p. 2). Further contributing to Mexico's economic success was the monetary stability it enjoyed for over two decades. Beginning in the early 1950s, the value of the Mexican peso relative to the dollar remained stable,

which ended in 1976 with the peso devaluation resulting from Echeverría and José López Portillo's actions (Garza, 2003, p. 45).

The success of the "Mexican Miracle" was displayed on the world stage when Mexico hosted the 1968 Summer Olympics, making it the first, and to this day the only, Latin American or Spanish-speaking country to do so. The López Mateos administration was ecstatic when they were named the host country in October 1963. When Díaz Ordaz assumed the presidency in 1964, recognizing the significance of the responsibility as host, he named López Mateos chairman of the Olympic Organizing Committee (although health issues would force López Mateos to step down a year later). The government viewed it as an excellent opportunity to exhibit "its cultural, political and economic progress; to stand before the world as a nation very much in development; to promote Mexico as a great location to visit; a viable place in which to invest; a model of Latin American achievement and stability; a champion of the Third World, non-aligned countries; the representative of the Spanish-speaking world; and, above all, a peaceful country that was at ease with itself" (Brewster, 2010, p. 45). As the Organizing Committee's public relations director, Roberto Casellas, stated:

Mexico wishes to show its true image to the world. We want to do away with the picture of the Indian sleeping his eternal 'siesta,' and with the dramatic representation of a country plagued by revolutions. While both of these images may have been representative of Mexico's past, they are no longer true in the present. We want to make known our progress in the fields of science and technology. We want to show the inspired works of our artists, the charm of our cities, the great natural beauty of our countryside and our achievements in modern architecture. (Brewster, 2010, p. 37-38)

Mexican officials not only wanted to project their country as a modern and efficient leader of the developing world, it wished to project the entire region and Spanish-

speaking world in a favorable light. In 1967, world-renowned architect and Committee Chairman Pedro Ramírez Vázquez pointed out, “Our responsibility in hosting the Olympic Games is one we share with Latin America and the entire Spanish-speaking world, because we know that the rest of the world will judge the Spanish-speaking world by how the Olympic Games proceed” (Brewster, 2010, p. 38). The Games were viewed as an overall success and despite some issues (like the student protest movement), demonstrated the government’s ability to host a world-wide event. In addition to the Olympics, Mexico also hosted the 1970 and 1986 soccer World Cups, further demonstrating its credentials on the global stage as a leader of the developing world. The necessarily close relationship between the Mexican economy and that of the United States was therefore an advantage to the PRI (Halperín Donghi, 1993, p. 275). Abroad, Mexico was seen as a stable, impressive example of growth, casting the PRI as modern and competent. At home, many Mexicans were enjoying unprecedented prosperity and the benefits of modernity, and many thanked the PRI for these advances. The rapid rise of living standards was uncommon enough in Mexico’s history that it proved to legitimize the PRI to a certain extent. As many middle-class Mexicans thought, the PRI must have been doing something right. And the PRI was not shy about boasting about its middle class successes. As Zolov (1999) observes, “the PRI manipulated a discourse that combined a revolutionary mythology with the promises of modernity, all aimed at sustaining a middle-class consensus and thus preventing any direct questioning of the PRI’s authoritarian politics (p. 7). Thus for the entirety of Mexico’s “miracle,” the PRI remained in power.

While the country did enjoy robust economic growth during the “Mexican Miracle,” there were also many shortcomings. For one, “foreign investment did not guarantee sound economic development. Although the infusion of capital helped create modern cities – such as Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, and Mexico City – with efficient and public utility and transportation systems, it also seemingly left Latin America’s economic destiny in the hands of foreigners” (Rabe, 1988, p. 73). Nationalists argued that these foreign entities were not interested in developing the country’s economy, but rather to facilitate access to cheap labor and the country’s raw materials. Furthermore, the advancements were not as impressive in relative terms. For example, the real wages of workers in the country’s primary industries in 1963 were the same as they were during the last years of the Cárdenas administration, slightly more than 20 years before (Pellicer de Brody, 1972, p. 55). Not only did real wages not increase, job creation was not as profound as advocates of the “miracle” argued. As Acuña (2002) points out:

Contrary to popular myth, North American and other foreign investors did not create jobs. During the decade, over 60 percent of the new foreign investment went to purchase already existing corporations. Between 1963 and 1970, the workers employed by foreign corporations increased by 180,000; however, 105,000 of these jobs already existed. In fact, foreign companies controlled 31 percent of the total value of Mexican industrial production and employed only 16 percent of the industrial workforce. (p. 695)

Many were also critical of the Border Industrialization Program and its perceived job creation, the lack of employment security granted to *maquiladora* employees, and the draining of capital from Mexico. Acuña (2010) stated that:

Although these maquiladoras did create jobs (20,327 in 1970), they did not ameliorate the unemployment problem, since they hired mostly

from a sector of Mexican labor that was not previously employed. The BIP [Border Industrialization Program] workforce, over 70 percent women, was paid minimum Mexican wages. North American employers gave no job security and the maquiladoras could move at the owner's whim. The BIP failed miserably as a strategy for development. The BIP left relatively little capital in Mexico. (p. 696)

In regards to the draining of Mexican capital, it is estimated that total profits of \$1.8 billion in the form of payments abroad in interest, royalties, and patents were taken out of the economy on a yearly basis (Acuña, 2010, p. 694).

In addition to criticisms of the Border Industrialization Program, critics also highlighted the shortcomings of import substitution industrialization (ISI). While ISI did help grow the middle class, it failed in its goal to reduce dependence on imports. Brands (2010) contends that "ISI had been at best a partial success. Despite accelerated industrialization, most of the region's economies remained highly dependent on commodity exports. Between 1955 and 1958 prices for Latin American exports dropped by nearly 10 percent, and the region's terms of trade fell by somewhere between 10 and 20 percent" (p. 20). Additionally, prosperity was not equally shared among the country's citizens. Rabe (1988) observed that "the private and public capital which had flown bounteously into Latin America had failed to benefit the masses" and that "the demand for social justice was still rising" (p. 136). In fact, Mexico "had one of the world's most unequal patterns of income distribution" during this time period (Joseph & Henderson, 2002, p. 461). As Wynia (1990) points out, the richest 10 percent of the Mexican population controlled over 40 percent of the national income whereas the poorest 40 percent received less than 10 percent (p. 157). Only Brazil, where the top 10 percent controlled over half of the country's income and

the bottom 40 percent controlled only 7 percent, fared worse than Mexico among Latin America's major countries. Conversely, the richest 10 percent in the U.S. controlled only 23 percent of the nation's income (Wynia, 1990, p. 157). Furthermore, while Mexico's urban middle class enjoyed unprecedented prosperity, the wealth of the country's rural poor was actually diminished. In rural areas, where 61% of the population lived, things were even worse as the growth rate was a mere 3%, far below the national average. As Morley (2008) points out, "although the economy was growing at the rate of 6 percent, industry was reaping investment profits of 15 to 20 percent, and the middle class was growing, the benefits to campesinos were minimal" (p. 123). But not only was this explosive growth disproportionately borne by labor and the peasantry, their real incomes actually declined during this period" (Zolov, 1999, p. 7). Sadly, this was nothing new for Mexico or Latin America. Similar to the Latin American colonial past of the *latifundia* or Porfirio Díaz's Mexico, a small group of wealthy people wielded disproportionate power. Even Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs from 1953-1954 John Moors Cabot "worried about the vast disparities of wealth in Latin America, with the upper classes 'exercising an almost feudal control'" (Rabe, 1988, p. 67). The PRI was well aware of the discontent growing within the large segment of the population that did not benefit from party's development plan. The Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) 1962 National Intelligence Estimate titled "Security conditions in Mexico," states that "Most of the PRI's leaders are seriously worried over the government's failure to make more rapid progress with social and economic reform in the countryside, where about half the population still lives under substandard conditions"

(Morley, 2008, p. 123). Analysts even warned that in 1967 “Mexico was failing in some basic ways that might not be visible to the power elite in the capital. Of the country's 45 million people, 40 percent were landless peasants. Thirty-five percent lived on what were known as ejido lands and desperation was breeding violent rebellion” (Morley, 2008, p. 262). As it was, Mexico's urban and rural proletariat found themselves squeezed between a rapacious capitalist sector and the lack of democratic recourse (Zolov, 1999, p. 7).

Moreover, while thousands of Mexicans were legally working in the U.S. under the Bracero Program, the Eisenhower administration implemented in 1954 Operation Wetback, an effort to repatriate undocumented workers of mostly Mexican descent. The deportation program became infamous not only because of its bigoted name, but also because of its racial profiling its often harsh treatment of those detainees. In addition to the harsh treatment and racial profiling, the operation even incorrectly deported U.S. citizens of Mexican descent. Stacy (2003) describes the operation:

Those seized were deported by bus, truck, or train, and later by ships, to the Mexican interior to discourage their return. American-born children, who were U.S. citizens, were deported along with their parents. The operation drew criticism in both the United States and Mexico. Mexico objected when seven deportees drowned jumping ship. Mexican Americans protested that they were routinely being asked for identification simply on the basis of their look. The INS [United States Immigration and Naturalization Service] claimed to have forced 1.3 million illegal aliens to leave the United States, either by deporting them directly or by making them too afraid of being apprehended to remain. It rode roughshod over human rights. (p. 609)

These harsh and sometimes illegal methods led to severe bitterness not only among ordinary Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, but also among many in the Mexican

government, upset about the treatment of their fellow citizens. In effect, this militarized repatriation of undocumented workers became a vast source of public resentment that damaged relations between the two countries (Fein, 2008, p. 180).

Further adding to the issues of Mexico's rapid modernization, economic growth began to stall in the early 1960s and fears of recession and reduced foreign investment became widespread in Mexico. "When López Mateos took power – in December 1958 – the threat of stagnation was felt on the Mexican economy. The growth rate, which has reached very high levels until 1955, began to decline; the prospects of an improvement of the economic situation seemed limited, and businessmen began to ask themselves if the 'Mexican Miracle' could be maintained" (Pellicer de Brody, 1972, p. 54). With the prospect of economic calamity on the horizon, the Mexican government turned to even more foreign investment to help avert a crisis.

Beyond the lack of shared and real economic gains of the "Mexican Miracle," the country's rapid population growth posed a drastic problem to the ruling PRI. "In 1950 Mexico had a population of 25.8 million, jumping to 34.9 million ten years later, and rushing toward 50 million by the end of the 1960s" (Acuña, 2002, p. 694). Not only did overall population increase, the rate of growth increased as well. "Mexico's annual population growth had dramatically increased from an average of 1.75 percent (1922-1939) to 2.25 percent (1939-1946) to 2.8 percent (1947-1953) to well over 3 percent after 1954" (Acuña, 2002, p. 694). With the country's population nearly doubling in only two decades and the growth rate accelerating, enormous pressure was placed on the government to accommodate this new generation of Mexicans with

employment opportunities. The country's labor market was simply not large enough nor was job growth fast enough to absorb millions of new job-seekers. This was not an issue that Mexico alone faced, however. In fact, the entire region experienced extraordinary population growth as well. Brands (2010) asserts that, "Latin America experienced a population boom in the mid-twentieth century, growing from 125 million inhabitants in 1940 to more than 200 million in 1960" (p. 21).

As the Mexican government's development plan focused on urban industrialization around the likes of import substitution industrialization and the Border Industrialization Program, Mexico's rural population suffered from underemployment. The economy was steered toward the establishment of a modern, capitalist regime which meant, among other things, that rural areas would be sacrificed in order for the accumulation of capital, and that foreign investment would play a key role in the growing manufacturing industry (Pellicer de Brody, 1972, p. 14). As economic opportunities diminished in the countryside, urban populations swelled, increasing by roughly 5 percent annually between 1940 and 1960" (Brands, 2010, p. 21). Considering Mexico's development plan, this was to be expected. As Garza (2003) states, "there has existed a relation between the development of the productive forces and the concentration of the population in cities, which is most evident in the capitalist system" (p. 10). Unfortunately however, as rural employment disappeared and many of the country's rural inhabitants flocked to cities for work, the city and federal government were unprepared to absorb this influx. The problem was exacerbated by the country's population explosion, and nowhere was the problem more pronounced than in Mexico City. As Nobel laureate Octavio Paz (1985)

observes, “[a]s they [the government] were intent on ‘modernizing’ the country, none of [Mexico’s] rulers – all of them surrounded by ‘expert’ counselors and ideologists – realized in time the perils of the population’s excessive and uncontrolled growth. Nor did they take measures against the demographic, political, economic, and cultural centralization that has converted Mexico City into a monstrous inflated head, crushing the frail body that holds it up” (p. 343). Mexico City was indeed attracting droves of Mexicans drawn to the employment opportunities of their nation’s capital. In 1940, the population of the Mexico City metropolitan area was less than 2 million. By 1970, the population had ballooned to over 9 million, a 424 percent increase (Davis, 1994, p. 329). “In the 1960s alone, nearly two million migrants from the countryside flocked to the capital, making housing one of the working people’s most prominent concerns” (Bachelor, 2008, p. 262). The unprepared government was unable to accommodate these rural migrants with the proper infrastructure, public services, or affordable housing.

Nowhere was this of greater concern than Ciudad Nezahualc6yotl. Located on the eastern outskirts of Mexico City, *Neza*, as it is commonly known, became home to thousands of Mexico’s rural poor who had migrated to the capital in search of employment. Named after the 15th century Aztec king, Neza was infamous for its makeshift houses constructed out of sheet aluminum and cardboard, crime, and its lack of public services like running water, electricity, or trash collection. As migrants increasingly fled to Mexico City, the squatter neighborhood’s population rose sharply from roughly 10,000 in the 1950s to over 3 million by the 1980s (Vallarino, 2002, p. 536). Roberto Vallarino describes the issues surrounding Mexico City’s urbanization

and Neza's "Federal District: two words that the middle class keeps within strict parameters, a place they identify with their own everyday social customs. Federal District: the monster of concrete that has grown uncontrollably, creating around itself strips of misery that spring up at a dizzying pace. Matrix of power, but also the matrix of misery, loathing, and the complete lack of identity found in places like Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl" (p. 536). Swelling squatter neighborhoods like these began to pose serious problems that further industrial growth alone could not solve (Astiz, 1969, p. 255). Mexican national development was defined in terms of industrialization and modernization of the urban areas, but little thought was given to the country's rural population, or what effect this development strategy would have on them.

Further complicating the successes of the Mexican Miracle were the inequalities surrounding Mexico's tourism industry. For example, while sparkling tourist destinations sprung up along Mexico's coasts, many of the residents working and living in those areas lived a life very different from the glamour projected by the Consejo Nacional de Turismo. Perhaps no city illustrates this disparity better than Acapulco. While the city was home to world-class hotels and a favorite destination of celebrities and politicians, the Acapulco of the average Mexican was a world apart. According to a report by the Delegacion Federal de Turismo, "outside of the tourist and the residential zones of Acapulco, the rest of the city causes dismay and is a challenge to the intelligence, will to serve, and revolutionary passion of our government." Many of Acapulco's residents lacked even basic services like clean water and sewage. The report goes on to say that, "the daily growth of Acapulco accentuates this problem. Acapulco's water is visually non-potable as when you open

the faucet, reddish-colored water with impurities comes out. A multitude of neighborhoods, like Barrio de Los Naranjos, completely lack drainage and running water.” Unfortunately, clean water, sewage, and trash collection were not the only problems Acapulco’s residents had to deal with; crime was also a major concern. As the Delegación Federal de Turismo reports, “One of Acapulco’s most serious problems is the lack of personal safety and protection of property. This problem results from a lack of education, political problems, and the lack of organized policies.” In addition to a lack of public services, the tourist city’s residents also had to endure an insecure environment. But perhaps the shortcoming of Mexico’s tourist industry most illustrative of the problems of the Mexican Miracle was the issue of the small farmer and landowner in tourist areas. In the development of tourist destinations, rarely, if ever, were the location’s *ejidatarios* (small farmer on a communal plot of land) or small land owners consulted. As a result, they were often displaced by hotel development and construction, much of which was foreign-owned. Fearing this fate in their own town, on June 29, 1967 Zihuatanejo’s civic leaders urged Secretary of the Interior Echeverría to consider small landowners when planning for tourism development in the Pacific beach town in a letter that stated, “Experience has shown that in cities that have experienced substantial tourist and demographic expansion, the *ejidatario* and the small landowner have been displaced (for example: Acapulco, Cuernavaca, and Mexico City). Other tourist zones are also at risk (Zihuatanejo, Puerto Vallarta, etc.) despite legal prohibition because of the lack of planning which incorporates the *ejido* into the tourism industry.” In lieu of developing Zihuatanejo in the vein of Acapulco in which large companies would control

development, marginalizing those already living in the area, these civic leaders proposed it be a “*ejidal* tourism zone” that would “diversify investment sources, which would benefit the quality of life of those living on *ejidos* and also prevent tourism and the population increase from negatively affecting the Agrarian Reform.” Just like the federal government, these civic leaders, among them Zihatanajo’s mayor, the *ejidal* commissioner, and various union leaders, wished to develop the area’s tourism industry and attract domestic and foreign visitors, but wished to do so in a manner that did not disenfranchise the area’s poor.

Social

The economic opportunity in the United States and ease of access to U.S. markets owing to the vast land border eventually led to greater interaction between Mexico and its neighbor to the north. As mentioned, the Bracero Program sent millions of Mexicans north to fill the workforce void World War II had created and strengthened Mexican ties to the U.S. Further, increased Mexican immigration to the U.S., especially in the southwest, was slowly creating strong cultural ties between both countries. As a result of the Border Industrialization Program, Mexican immigration, often of undocumented Mexicans, increased substantially. From 1969 to 1975, the number of U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service apprehensions nearly tripled (Sherman, 2000, p. 606).

What is more, Mexicans were increasingly adopting North American ways of life, often mimicking cultural trends in the U.S. In no aspect was this more prevalent than with mass media. On the eve of the 1960s, a growing middle class led to

television sets becoming more common in Mexican homes. Between 1956 and 1958, the estimated number of Mexican television sets in operation more than doubled from 170,000 to 375,000, and as a result, the audience they served doubled as well (Fein, 2008, p. 176). This surge in the number of Mexicans watching television coincided with the creation of the United States Information Agency (USIA) in 1953, an organization aimed at creating and disseminating pro-U.S. propaganda in Latin America and influencing public opinion. Eric Zolov (1999) points out that:

According to policy guidelines established in a 1963 memorandum by President John F. Kennedy, the agency could perform a twofold function within the U.S. government: “[T]o help achieve United States foreign policy objectives by a) influencing public attitudes in other nations, and b) advising the President, his representatives abroad, and the various departments and agencies on the implications of foreign opinion for present and contemplated United States policies, programs, and official statements.” (p. 235)

As it turns out, the USIA was indeed effective in Latin America, but especially in Mexico. Zolov (1999) continues:

[A] 1964 USIA report entitled "Media Usage by Latin American University Students" compared "opinions and media habits of university students" in Venezuela, Peru, Mexico, and Chile. This report found that there "are variations in the inherent advantages of print, movies, and radio" in conveying USIA messages. "Apparently," the report continued, "the United States can gain through both overt and covert information actions." The effectiveness of USIA activities in Mexico - the location for eleven different USIA installations - was singled out for special praise: "The United States has been fairly effective in building up the image of credibility in Mexico." (p. 236)

The USIA was not the first organization of its kind, however. In fact, the USIA is the successor to the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA), an organization created by the U.S. government in 1940 in response to German influence in Latin America. After the hostilities of World War II had begun, the Nelson

Rockefeller-run OCIAA produced propaganda films sought to garner Latin American support for the Allied war effort. Rockefeller and the OCIAA successfully convinced the Walt Disney Company to produce animated films to be distributed in Latin America, agreed to reimburse them for any losses they may incur from these movies, and even sponsored a goodwill tour of Latin America by Walt Disney himself (Decherney, 2005, p. 144). Among the OCIAA's productions were *Saludos amigos* and *Los tres caballeros*, films that became widely popular in Latin America because they featured characters José Carioca and Panchito Pistolas and showed their travels around the region. Similarly, as World War II ended and the Cold War took shape, the U.S. government feared Mexican neutrality, and therefore used the USIA to help sway Mexicans against the Soviet Union and Cuba and in favor of the U.S. (Fein, 2008, p. 172).

Interestingly, the penetration of U.S. media in Mexico also served to benefit the ruling PRI. As Mexico's burgeoning middle class adopted U.S. consumption patterns, shifting their interests, concerns, and way of life away from that of traditional Mexico and revolutionary justice to U.S. consumer capitalism, less pressure was put on the PRI to adhere to its revolutionary principles. As Zolov (1999) observed:

Alan Knight has proposed that 'a tide of cultural Americanization' - in which U.S.-influenced mass media forms redirected the shape and content of revolutionary culture - took place after 1940 and ultimately served the interests of the PRI. Knight's assumption is that a 'dominant Western culture of commercialism and consumerism, of mass media and mass recreation' depoliticized Mexico's populace, rendering a national culture linked more by a shared appreciation of comic books and television than by revolutionary activism. (p. 8)

These changes were clear to any visitor to the country's capital. Jonathan Kandell (1988) maintains:

These vestiges of a slower-paced traditional life, however, were being overwhelmed by Americanization. Throughout the capital, fast-food outlets serving hamburgers, hot dogs, and pizza vied with taco stands. Baseball crowds rivaled those at bull-fights and soccer matches. Supermarkets stocked their shelves with Kellogg's Rice Krispies, Campbell's soups, Coca-Cola, Heinz catsup, and Van Camp's Boston baked beans. Neon signs flashed a lexicon of U.S. corporate names: Ford, General Motors, Chrysler, Zenith, General Electric. Blue jeans became the uniform of the younger generation, rich and poor. A hit parade of rock 'n' roll competed with Mexican "corridos" on the radio. Ozzie and Harriet, Leave It to Beaver, Mannix, Dragnet, The Lone Ranger, and many other American television series had a loyal following. Hollywood relegated Mexican films to the more decrepit movie houses. Even Christmas became Americanized: in department stores, adoring youngsters sat on the lap of a red-coated, white-bearded Santa Claus; at home, stockings were hung over the fireplace, and gifts were piled under fir trees festooned with pulsing lights and cotton snow fluffs. (p. 486)

Likewise, Mexico's industrialization often adopted a distinctly U.S.-flavor. While the new consumer culture was shaped by Mexican industry, it was also deeply engraved with the trademarks and imagery emanating from the corporate culture in the United States (Zolov, 1999, p. 6). Not only were Mexicans' consumption habits mimicking those of their northern neighbors, entire communities were created in the image of a typical U.S. suburb. Steven Bachelor (2008) highlights how in northern Mexico City, a *colonia* of GM autoworkers:

[B]oosted a Pizza Hut, a Tastee Freez, a Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise, a Lions Club, and a U.S.-style supermarket. Worker's plans called for single, unattached homes on large lots, with front and back yards, two-car garages, and spacious greenbelts. Further reflecting the workers' cosmopolitan sensibilities, the colonia's tree-lined streets bore names such as Calle Washington, Calle California, and Avenida Norteamérica; the neighborhood as a whole was dubbed Colonia Las Américas. (p. 263)

Indeed, the vast cultural, economic, consumption, and demographic shifts during the Mexican Miracle ushered in an era in which Mexico and the U.S. experienced an unprecedented degree of cultural harmony between large segments of the populations.

Chapter 3 – The Beginning of a Long Revolutionary Tradition

Revolution has had a profound impact on the collective memory of Mexico. The Mexican Revolution, considered the most important sociopolitical event in Mexico's history and one of the greatest social upheavals of the 20th century, had a far-reaching impact not only in Latin America, but in many other parts of the world as well. As Ross (1972) explains:

Not only was the Mexican Revolution the first of the twentieth century upheavals, but the conditions it fought to destroy and the problems it sought to resolve anticipated many of the conditions and needs which are provoking ferment throughout the hemisphere and other segments of the globe. Mexico, at the turn of the century, groaned under political dictatorship which intensified the burden of an institutional heritage dating back to the Spanish empire and aggravated problems by superimposing an exploitive foreign capitalism. Neglect and suppression of the masses and disdain for the Indian population found their rationale in foreign ideologies, while the regime's policies perpetuated a neo-colonial structure and intensified an externally dependent economy in a nation which theoretically had achieved independence a century before, when it severed its connection with Spain during the War for Independence. (p. 7-8)

The social, agrarian, and nationalistic promises of the Mexican Revolution made it impossible for the United States to adhere to the political and economic assumptions and practices that had previously guided nearly half a century of unrestrained dollar and gunboat diplomacy in Latin America (Joseph, 2010, p. 404). Beyond its own revolution, however, Mexico has been intimately tied with social upheavals across the world. From the Bolshevik Revolution to the Cuban Revolution, from the country's acceptance of political exiles from India to Nicaragua, Mexico has been a cradle of global revolution in the 20th century.

The Mexican Revolution exploded in 1910 when Francisco I. Madero challenged the legitimacy of President Porfirio Díaz, whose dictatorial rule in Mexico had spanned three and a half decades. After running against Díaz in the presidential election of 1910 on a platform of “no re-election,” Madero was jailed. He managed to escape and fled to the U.S. where he labeled the reign of Díaz illegitimate and called on Mexicans to rebel, thus beginning the Revolution. The ensuing ten years were characterized by punitive violence, bloody power grabs, U.S. military interventions, and lofty ideals in a Revolution in which figures like Francisco “Pancho” Villa and Emiliano Zapata and slogans such as *tierra y libertad* became cultural and political mainstays in Mexico. Outlining the aim of his efforts and those of the Mexican Revolution, Zapata wrote to a friend in 1918 that, “we will win much, human justice will win much, if all of the people of our America and all of the countries of Europe understood that the cause of the Mexican Revolution and the cause of Russia are and represent the cause of humanity, the utmost interest of all of the oppressed peoples” (as cited in Spenser, 2009, p. 67).

During the Revolution and in its wake, various leftist organizations began to take shape in Mexico. In September 1912, the *Casa del Obrero Mundial* (COM) was founded, the first national labor union in Mexico. This was followed in March 1918 and November 1919 with the founding of the *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana* (Regional Confederation of Mexican Workers, or CROM) and the *Partido Comunista Mexicano* (Mexican Communist Party, or PCM) (Carr, 1996, p. 30). In 1949, Vicente Lombardo Toledano formed the *Partido Popular Socialista* (Popular Socialist Party, or PPS), which resonated with the intellectuals and students

disillusioned by the coziness between the PRI and the U.S. in a Cold War context and the vitriolic anticommunism of the previous administrations (Zolov, 2010, p. 251). When announcing his candidacy for the 1952 presidential elections as the PPS candidate, Lombardo Toledano made a rousing appeal to Mexicans's nationalism and historical memory when he declared, "father Cuauhtémoc you have left us, with your actions and sacrifice, the eternal mandate to defend Mexico from external oppression. I promise you, in my name and in the name of the Popular [Socialist] Party, to faithfully carry out your mandate" (Carr, 1996, p. 203). Even the Communist International (Comintern), the Moscow-based organization that sought to expand communism's global reach, began to make inroads in Mexico. Japanese Comintern member, Sen Katayama, even remarked that Mexico was especially "ripe" to receive the communist organization's propaganda (Spenser, 2009, p. 170). When Lázaro Cárdenas ascended to the presidency in 1934, his administration embodied revolutionary ideals like never before (or since). The country's peasants and workers were able to mobilize to a scale never before seen in Latin America (Carr, 1996, p. 61). Emiliano Zapata's goal of land reform for the poor was realized to its greatest extent when Cárdenas's law redistributed more than 450 million acres of farmland to Mexico's peasantry, surpassing the combined total of all previous efforts to give peasants land (Gonzales, 2002, p. 258). He also broke with tradition and refused to live in the ostentatious Chapultepec Castle (which he converted into the National History Museum), opened the National Palace to visits by ordinary citizens, including barefoot peasants, and refused to use the presidency to enrich himself, as had most, if not all, of Mexico's other presidents. Furthermore, during the Spanish Civil War, the

Cárdenas government sent arms and munitions to the Spanish Republicans. In 1936, twenty thousand weapons and twenty million ammunition cartridges left Veracruz bound for Spain to aid in the fight against Francisco Franco (Lajous Vargas, 2012, p. 204). In the same year, the *Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos* (Confederation of Mexican Workers, or CTM), the country's largest confederation of labor unions, was created with the essential support of Cárdenas and initially led by Lombardo Toledano until he left to create the PPS (Zolov, 2010, p. 251). The PCM, declared illegal in 1929, was again recognized as a legal political party during Cárdenas's *sexenio*. Cárdenas's greatest achievement came in 1938 with the expropriation of the assets of the foreign oil companies in Mexico and the creation of the government-owned oil company, *Petróleos Mexicanos* (PEMEX). This expropriation constituted an unprecedented example of Third World nationalism and a challenge to international capital (Knight, 1994, p. 87). Predictably, the nationalization of the country's oil resources triggered severe international repercussions, especially from the owners of the expropriated assets in Great Britain and the U.S., but the Mexican government was successfully able to withstand international pressure and maintain its sovereignty. As Astiz (1969) asserts, "the nationalization [of oil in Mexico] has also had a salutary and widespread effect on the foreign policy of the country. Mexico acquired confidence in her capacity to act internationally" (p. 151).

President Cárdenas also worked to make Mexico's 1917 Constitution even more radical when he took office in 1934. Adopted in the midst of revolutionary violence, the document limited land ownership by foreigners, restricted the rights of

the Catholic Church, and established free and secular education for all Mexican children. Upset with the Constitution's religious restrictions and religious violence stemming from the *Cristiada* in the late 1920s, Pope Pius XI issued three letters to the Church in Mexico denouncing what the Vatican viewed as Catholic persecution. On September 29, 1932 the Pope issued his second letter, titled "Acerba animi," in which he wrote, "From the beginning of Our Pontificate, following the example of Our Venerable Predecessor, We endeavored with all Our might to ward off the application of those constitutional statutes which the Holy See had several times been obliged to condemn as seriously derogatory to the most elementary and inalienable rights of the Church and of the faithful" (Pope Pius XI). He went on to say, "Add to this that not only is religious instruction forbidden in the primary schools, and not infrequently attempts are made to induce those whose duty it is to educate the future generations, to become purveyors of irreligious and immoral teachings, thus obliging the parents to make heavy sacrifices in order to safeguard the innocence of their children" (Pope Pius XI). When Cárdenas became president, he strove to make public education not only secular, but socialist as well. As Soberanes Fernández (2002) writes:

In 1934, as a result of the rise to power of the regime headed by General Lázaro Cárdenas, Article 3 was amended from its concept of generalized secular education to the idea of 'socialist education,' as discussed above. The text read as follows: 'The education that the State provides shall be socialist, and in addition to removing all religious doctrine, it will combat fanaticism and prejudices, for which the school shall organize its teachings and activities in a manner that builds in the youth a rational and exact concept of the universe and of social life. [The State] will be able to grant authority to those who desire to provide education...according to, in every case, the following norms...they must comply with the precepts in the first paragraph without any exceptions.' (p. 440-441)

Indeed, Cárdenas sought to implement notions of social justice, not only by economic means, but also through the country's educational system.

Paralleling Cárdenas's administration was that of Franklin D. Roosevelt in the U.S. Despite their rocky history, relations between the U.S. and Latin America improved during Roosevelt's tenure as president. In 1933 Roosevelt announced the Good Neighbor Policy, a radical restructuring of U.S.-Latin American relations which was cast as a policy based on respect and nonintervention as opposed to interference and abuse. This constituted a dramatic shift from the strategies of previous presidents, who from 1898 to 1934 intervened militarily in Latin America a total of more than thirty times (Smith, 2008, p. 54). The policy also embodied an economic side in which the U.S. sought to increase trade with Latin America, especially improving its exports and creating closer ties. By 1938, only five years after announcing the U.S. intentions of being a "good neighbor," the U.S. had become the leading overall trade partner for every major country of Latin America with the exception of Argentina (Smith, 2008, p. 74). While the policy may have reflected certain desires of the Roosevelt administration to respect the sovereignty of its southern neighbors, it is more accurately described as a pragmatic strategy to garner Latin American support against the rising tide of fascism in Europe. Washington could now extract cooperation from Latin American governments through diplomatic and economic means as opposed to its traditional route of force and coercion. After the war, the U.S. continued to strengthen its ties with the region with the Rio Treaty in 1947 and the creation of the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1948. With the OAS, Latin Americans would have a forum to voice their concerns and influence the United

States, a treaty that guaranteed the nonintervention principle, and a vehicle for transferring economic aid (Rabe, 1988, p. 13). As a Mexican delegate said at the 1954 OAS meeting in Caracas, Venezuela, “if we want the unity of America, it is not possible to leave the door open so that at any time intervention may be attempted” (Astiz, 1969, p. 121). The sentiment was reiterated by Mexico in 1959 at the meeting of the foreign relations ministers of the OAS in Santiago, Chile when Mexican *Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores* (Secretary of Foreign Relations) Manuel Tello Baurraud stated, “it is clear that the OAS was not made for, nor should it ever serve to create, sustain, or topple governments” (Reyes, 2006, p. 137). Indeed, Latin Americans were suspicious of the authenticity of the “goodwill” of its northern neighbors.

However, the budding friendliness between Latin America and the U.S., regardless of its authenticity, was altered as the Cold War intensified in the 1950s. In 1952, Fulgencio Batista seized power in Cuba via a military coup and ushered in an administration defined by corruption, repression, and nepotism. Incensed by Batista’s usurpation of power, a 27 year old lawyer named Fidel Castro led an attack on the Moncada Barracks in 1953 in an attempt to overthrow Batista and return the island to democratic rule. The attack proved disastrous and Castro was arrested and put on trial, where he defended himself and delivered his now famous “History will absolve me” speech. Despite being sentenced to 15 years in prison, Castro was released in 1955 and sought exile in Mexico. Castro’s exploits at Moncada and his exile in Mexico coincided with a time in which the Cold War was becoming increasingly hostile and the priority for American officials in Latin America turned from “good

neighbor” to combating communist influence from the Soviet Union. As the U.S. needed Latin American support to combat the Axis powers during World War II, it now needed Latin America in its fight against communism.

The Cold War would lead to a much greater interference by the U.S. government in Latin American affairs, including an intensified effort to shape popular thought. As Astiz (1969) asserts, victory in the Cold War would be decided, not on the battlefield, but in the minds of men (p. 97). For the United States, Latin America's geographic proximity, along with its historic, economic, and political connections, gave it a position of paramount significance in its struggle with the Soviet Union (Immerman, 1982, p. 7). The U.S. decided to increase propaganda to Latin America, but also to coerce governments to “behave.” This policy came to a head in 1954 when the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) organized and led a coup to overthrow Guatemalan President Jacobo Árbenz for fear of his communist sympathies and those of his top officials. Only the second democratically elected president in the more than 130 years since the country won its independence, Árbenz was leading the country through *Diez años de primavera* (Ten Years of Spring), a decade of democratic rule and social justice brought on by the overthrow of dictator Jorge Ubico during the October Revolution of 1944. Following many of the policies of President Juan José Arévalo, Árbenz was characterized as an ardent nationalist and populist devoted to improving the lives of ordinary Guatemalans (Schlesinger & Kinzer, 2005, p. 9 and Gleijeses, 1991, p. 174). To do so, his administration, influenced by the likes of Zapata and Cárdenas, initiated a bold agrarian reform program to distribute land to the country's poor. In doing so, however, Árbenz provoked the U.S. when it expropriated

land of the United Fruit Company (UFCO), a U.S.-owned corporation with extensive land holdings in Central America and close ties to the U.S. government. The Árbenz government's "mistreatment" of UFCO, coupled with communist sympathizers within the Guatemalan government – a cardinal sin in the Cold War context – led to the Eisenhower administration's decision that Árbenz had to go. While the CIA-backed coup was successful in removing Árbenz from power, it plummeted the Central American country into more than 30 years of bloody civil war and gravely damaged American interests in Latin America over the long term (Schlesinger & Kinzer, 2005, p. 229). It was especially damaging to Mexican perceptions of the U.S. Following the coup, thousands took to the streets in Mexico City to protest the CIA's actions. Among the protestors were artists and activists, Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, in what proved to be Kahlo's last public appearance before her death soon after. Anderson (1997) describes the scene:

It was a cold, damp day, and the pneumonia-stricken artist [Kahlo] left her bed to join a protest against the overthrow of Árbenz by the CIA. Kahlo's husband, Diego Rivera, pushed her wheelchair through the streets to the rally, which was held outside the pantheon of Mexican culture, the Palacio de Bellas Artes. There, for four long hours, Kahlo joined in the crowd's cries of "*Gringos Asesinos, fuera!*" and held aloft her glittering, ring-festooned hands. In her left hand was a banner depicting a dove of peace. Her clenched right fist was raised in defiance. Eleven days later, at the age of forty-seven, she died. (p. 153).

Also showing their contempt for U.S. policies in Latin America where the members of the recently formed *Consejo Nacional Estudiantil de Solidaridad con el pueblo de Guatemala* (National Student Council of Solidarity with the People of Guatemala), which counted Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, son of the former president, among its

members. The group, including Cárdenas, laid a wreath in front of the U.S. embassy in Mexico City, “in memory of the Good Neighbor Policy” (Zolov, 2010, p. 255). Clearly, the U.S.’s direct involvement in toppling a democratically elected government on Mexico’s southern border angered and alarmed many Mexicans.

The coup also proved critical to the calcification of the anti-American political views of Ernesto “Che” Guevara. The young Argentine doctor had been living in Guatemala as a first-hand observer of Árbenz’s social reforms, in which he saw his dreams for the poor across Latin America being turned into reality (Forster, 2010, p. 221). His first-hand experience during the CIA’s bombing of Guatemala City and the overthrow of Árbenz led to his conviction that the sole way to achieve social justice in Latin America was through armed struggle. As Jon Anderson notes, “what [Che] had seen in Guatemala had added weight to his convictions, and at this moment he had begun to *believe*” in violent revolution (Anderson, 1997, p. 157). The young idealist was searching for a revolution to commit himself to, and the Guatemalan coup proved crucial to him finding just that in Mexico. After fleeing the violence brought on by the CIA-backed insurgents in Guatemala, Che arrived in Mexico City where he was soon introduced to Fidel Castro and other Cuban exiles living in the neighboring country planning their revolution. In addition to its proximity to Cuba, Fidel had chosen Mexico as his country of temporary residence in order to study the Mexican revolutionary process under the presidency of General Lázaro Cárdenas (Szulc, 1986, p. 330).

During their encounter, Che was immediately impressed with Fidel’s passion, photographic memory, and revolutionary experience. Che learned that the exiled

Cuban was planning an invasion of his home country and after only a night of discussion, decided to join Castro's revolutionary movement (Anderson, 1997, p. 167). The rebels finally sailed from Tuxpan, Mexico to Cuba in 1956 to begin their transformative crusade. After a disastrous landing in which the rebels were nearly decimated, a handful of survivors – including Fidel Castro, Raúl, and Che – miraculously escaped and made their way to the rugged terrain of the Sierra Maestra to begin what became more than two years of guerrilla warfare. Unable to route the small group of guerrillas and even suffering military defeats at the hands of the small group of rebels, Batista resorted to increasingly punitive measures to combat dissent within Cuba. In March 1958, the increasing number of civilian deaths from Batista's military forces caused the U.S. to suspend arms sales to Batista, a crucial blow to the regime not only militarily, but symbolically as well (Sweig, 2002, p. 111). The writing was on the wall, and after Batista fled Cuba at the end of 1958, the 26th of July Movement entered Havana as liberators on New Year's Day in 1959. It was a victory in a struggle that many believe had begun long before. As Hilda Gadea, Che's ex-wife pointed out, "the struggle in Cuba was part of a continental struggle against the Yankees that Bolívar and Martí had already foreseen" (Szulc, 1986, p. 337). Castro's victory and ability to withstand American hostilities would soon make him to appear like a "Caribbean David who had bested the American Goliath" (Morley, 2008, p. 109).

The presence of political exiles in Mexico was nothing new; Mexico has a long history of welcoming persecuted individuals. The Mexican Revolution launched Mexico into the role of Latin American revolutionary leader and proved to other Latin

Americans that change was possible, converting the country into an incubator of revolution. As Anderson (2007) maintains, “Mexico had earned widespread popularity among anti-imperialist Latin American nationalists” (p. 153). Soon political exiles from all over Latin America found refuge there (White, 2007, p. 39). So accepting of political exiles was Mexico that it became known as an incubator of vanguard revolutionary ideas and a bulwark against further U.S. expansionism (Zolov, 2010, p. 250). For example, after his ouster in 1954, Árbenz fled to Mexico, where he died in 1971. Peruvian Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre also sought exile in Mexico City, where he founded the *Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana* (APRA), Peru’s principal leftist political party, which counted Hilda Gadea, Che Guevara’s ex-wife, among its ranks. Augusto César Sandino, the famous Nicaraguan rebel who led a guerrilla war against U.S. Marines occupying Nicaragua, also fled to Mexico. While in Mexico, he drew considerable influence from the militant worker struggles in Tampico, Tamaulipas and the progressive publications of the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (Secretariat of Public Education) under José Vasconcelos (Becker, 1993, p. 92-94). In addition, Mexico City also became the adopted home of Peruvian Laura Meneses, the wife of Puerto Rican *independentista* leader, Pedro Albizu Campos, who was serving a long prison sentence in the U.S. and who was regarded by Fidel Castro as a hero. Meneses and Castro quickly became friends and the Peruvian participated in the Cuban rebels’ activities in Mexico’s capital (Szulc, 1986, p. 333). Also, the members of Castro’s *26 de Julio* revolutionary group were not the first Cubans who sought exile in Mexico. By 1870, thousands of Cubans had fled the island to escape violence from the Ten Years War and sought exile in Mexico (White, 2007, p. 33).

José Martí, the writer and national hero as father of Cuban independence, was among those Cubans who fled to Mexico to escape Spanish persecution. In addition, the young Cuban communist leader Julio Antonio Mella escaped to Mexico City, only to be gunned down by hitmen of Cuban dictator Gerardo Machado in 1929. While in Mexico, Mella became deeply involved in the PCM and worked as the secretary-general of the *Liga Antiimperialista de las Américas* (Anti-imperialist League of the Americas). The *Liga Antiimperialista*, which also counted among its members Haya de la Torre and the muralists, Diego Rivera, David Álfaro Siqueiros, and Xavier Guerrero, was formed in order to create a Latin American network of Communist intellectuals and progressive activists (Spenser, 2009, p. 225). He also collaborated with Rivera as co-editor of the *Liga's* newspaper, *El Libertador* (The Liberator), and participated in the anti-interventionist Hands-Off Nicaragua Committee. The Committee not only advocated for Nicaraguan independence and respect for Latin American sovereignty, but also collected medical aid for Sandino and his troops (Becker, 1993, p. 59-60). Mexico was also refuge to various members of India's anti-colonial movement between 1917 and 1918 (Carr, 1996, p. 33). Among these anti-imperialists was M.N. Roy, founder of the communist parties in India and Mexico and delegate to the Comintern. Furthermore, hundreds of U.S. citizens fled to Mexico after their country entered World War I. This group of "slackers" included notable figures such as Irving Granich (known later as Mike Gold, a famous communist writer), Carleton Beals, Charles Phillips (later, the U.S. Communist Party's Latin America expert who wrote under the pseudonym, Manuel Gómez), and the cartoonist for *The Masses*, Henryd Glintenkampf (Carr, 1996, p. 33). Another notable exile was

Leon Trotsky, the Soviet revolutionary who was murdered by a Stalin agent at his home in Mexico City. Lastly, the Cárdenas administration opened Mexico's doors to between twenty and thirty thousand Spanish Republicans fleeing the violence in Spain under fascist dictator Francisco Franco (Lajous Vargas, 2012, p. 204). Mexico was in fact proud of its long tradition of harboring the politically harassed (Astiz, 1969, p. 95). Aside from its pride, Mexico's acceptance of political exiles was viewed as a benefit to the country. As Katz (2004) writes, "Mexico, thanks to its generous asylum policy, took in a large part of the intellectual elite of Latin America which surely contributed, in my opinion, to making Mexico the intellectual capital of Latin America" (p. 28).

Exiles were not the only foreigners flocking to Mexico. Drawn by its muralist movement of the 1930s and 1940s, a time in which the country became the global center of artistic production and creativity, artists of all stripes sought to experience Mexico's artistic ingenuity first-hand. "From the French writers Antonin Artaud and Andre Breton to the Beat poets and writers Jack Kerouac and William S. Burroughs, foreigners flocked to seek nourishment in Mexico" (Anderson, 1997, p. 152). Photographers Edward Westin and Tina Modotti also reveled in Mexico's creative atmosphere. This unique combination of artists and political exiles proved to be an interesting combination, as many of the artists were politically active and often interacting with the political exiles. As Anderson (1997) observes, "[t]he political and creative worlds had always intermingled in Mexico City (p. 152). For example, Frida Kahlo had an affair with the Bolshevik, Trotsky. Modotti was Julio Antonio Mella's lover and by his side when he was gunned down on a Mexico City sidewalk, a crime

for which she was later and charged (Anderson, 1997, p. 152). Also, the most famous artists of Mexico's muralist movement including Rivera, Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco, were all politically active in leftist causes. This political activism had a profound impact not only on the muralist movement, but also on Mexican radicalism. As Spenser (2009) asserts, "the identification of some muralists with communism and of the Mexican communists with the muralists helped transcend Mexican communism beyond its number of members" (p. 255). This influence is clear, as communist imagery and the likes of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin appear in their murals. Furthermore, Siqueiros, who was also one of the founders of the PCM, founded the communist newspaper, "*El Machete*" ("The Machete") along with Rivera, Orozco, and Guerrero. A staunch Stalinist, Siqueiros even attempted to assassinate Trotsky in Mexico City (Carr, 1996, p. 196). Speaking of the need of artists to be civically active, Rivera said, "[i]f the artist can't feel everything that humanity feels, if the artist isn't capable of loving until he forgets himself and sacrifices himself if necessary, if he won't put down his magic brush and head the fight against the oppressor, then he isn't a great artist" (as cited in "Diego Rivera: About," 2006). Writer José Revueltas was also active in the PCM, leading a cell named "Friedrich Engels" in the *Facultad de Filosofía y Letras* (Department of Philosophy and Arts) at the UNAM (Carr, 1996, p. 215).

Revolution and radicalism had an especially profound impact on the memory of Yucatecans. Before the outbreak of Revolution, Yucatan had witnessed decades of internal fighting between the region's Mayan population and European descendants. Known as the *Guerra de Castas* (Caste War), the conflict stemmed from mistreatment

of the indigenous population by the European-descendant *hacendados* (plantation owners). Yucatan's Mayan citizens drew considerable influence and inspiration from leftist theorists like Karl Marx. As Daniela Spenser (2009) observes, "Marx's statement that the emancipation of the proletariat was the responsibility of the proletariat themselves resonated in the Yucatecan plazas" (p. 185). Marxist influence in Yucatan reached its height with the formation of the *Partido Socialista de Yucatán* (Socialist Party of Yucatan) and the state's subsequent socialist governors. "In August 1919, various regional parties with influence in the worker and peasant movement existed. Without doubt the most important was the *Partido Socialista de Yucatán*, formed in 1916 as a result of the combination of activities of the *Casa del Obrero Mundial* [House of the Global Worker] and the regional government of Salvador Alvarado and led, beginning in 1917, by Felipe Carrillo Puerto" (Taibo, 1986, p. 37). Perhaps Yucatan's most famous politician, Carrillo Puerto served as governor from 1922 until his execution in 1924 to members sympathetic to Adolfo de la Huerta's revolt. Known by his supporters simply as "Felipe," Carrillo Puerto's sincerity, compassion, and charisma won him the affection of poor and working-class Yucatecans. Writing about Carrillo Puerto, Comintern member Charles Francis Phillips said, "this man, Carrillo, is a very important person. Extremely sincere and with a magnetism that seems to emanate from his simplicity, he has completely won the affection of the indigenous peasants. He is a leader in all senses of the word. The Mayans would start a revolution tomorrow if 'Felipe' said so, and Felipe would do it (as he's said he would time and time again), if only he had weapons and ammunition" (Spenser, 2009, p. 184). As socialist governor of Yucatan, he carried out extensive

land reform, implemented a minimum wage, expanded women’s rights, and allied the *Partido Socialista del Sureste* with the Comintern. So influential was Carrillo Puerto that Joseph Freeman, when writing about the Mexican Revolution, said, “you can say that Eugene Debs [union leader and Socialist Party of America candidate for U.S. president] led us to Zapata and Carrillo Puerto, Zapata and Carrillo Puerto, at the same time, led us to Lenin” (Spenser, 2009, p. 68). Even when faced with death, the socialist leader remained committed to Yucatan’s indigenous, when, seconds before his assassination, he proclaimed, “*No abandonéis a mis indios*” (“Don’t abandon my Indians”). These famous last words remain with Yucatecans to the present day.



Image 3 – Statue of Carrillo Puerto in his hometown of Motul, Yucatán

Chapter 4 – A Storied Friendship

Cuba and Mexico have shared a profoundly close relationship. In addition to being bound geographically, the two countries have experienced similar histories, speak the same language, and share similar cultures. At a 2002 conference at the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* (UNAM) in Mexico City celebrating 100 years of Cuban independence, one writer asserted that, “the friendliness, admiration, and mutual respect between both peoples has been the principal symbol of and strongest connection between Mexico and Cuba” (Hansberg, 2003, p. 9). The writer went on to say that, “for Mexicans, Cuba is a distinguished reflection of their history, just as Mexico’s history is a reflection for Cubans (Hansberg, 2003, p. 9). An affinity between both countries developed partly as a result of their shared experiences against foreign powers. Each country won its independence from Spain and each suffered repeated interventions, military and otherwise, from the United States. As Mexico had won its independence decades before Cuba, there existed deep sympathies among many Mexicans for Cuban freedom. For this reason, the Mexican government discussed with Colombia the possibility of working together to help liberate Cuba from Spanish control (Astié-Burgos, 1995, p. 141). Mexico even went as far as considering annexing Cuba in order to secure the Caribbean country’s independence (White, 2007, p. 37-38). Mexicans eventually took up arms for Cuban independence during the Ten Years’ War. Begun in 1868, the war began after Carlos Manuel de Céspedes issued the *Grito de Yara* calling on Cubans to rebel against Spanish rule. In Mexico, the Céspedes uprising enjoyed wide support in the government, press, and

general public. This support reached its pinnacle when prominent Mexican officers Ramón Cantú, José Medinas, Rafael Estéves, Felipe Herreros, and José Inclán Riasco, filled with confidence from their successful expulsion of the French under Benito Juárez, fought under Céspedes with valor (White, 2007, p. 31). The Cuban rebels also received diplomatic support from President Juárez, leading Céspedes to comment in a letter to the Mexican President that “I am highly satisfied that Mexico has been the first nation of [the Americas] that has demonstrated its generous sympathies like this to the cause of the independence and liberty of Cuba” (as cited in White, 2007, p. 32-33). As mentioned, Mexico’s “generous sympathies” also included opening its doors to thousands of Cuban exiles during their country’s struggle for independence during the latter third of the 19th century. A few decades later, Cuba would return the favor. Thousands of Mexicans escaped to Cuba to avoid violence from the 20th century’s first revolution. As White (2007) explains:

[T]he advent of the Mexican Revolution in 1910 brought a wave of human and economic desperation to Mexico, and the level of destruction of the war from 1911 to 1917 forced a mass exodus during which more than double the number of people left Mexico for Cuba than had left between 1904 and 1910. The Mexicans who emigrated to Cuba from 1910-1927 included businessmen, laborers, domestic servants, politicians, artists, and journalists, totaling at least 5,680 documented cases. Mexicans were second only to the Spanish in immigration to Cuba between 1910 and 1927. (p. 40)

It is this close connection that leads White (2007) to assert that “the relationship between Cuba and Mexico is an example of a transnational ‘imagined community,’ promulgated through anti-imperialist, revolutionary rhetoric of mutual affiliation throughout a history of ‘resistance’ to ‘oppression’” (p. 16).

Perhaps nowhere is the connection between the two countries deeper than in Yucatan. Slightly more than 100 miles from Cuba's Pinar del Rio province, the Yucatan peninsula shares many cultural similarities with its Caribbean neighbor. Because of its close proximity, travel between the two was relatively simple, much more so than for Yucatecans traveling to their country's capital. As Sweeney (2001) contends, "at the end of the nineteenth century, before Mexico possessed modern roads, residents of the town of Merida could more easily reach Havana than Mexico City" (p. 132). Many of the Cubans who travelled to Mexico to escape violence in their home country between 1875 and 1895 chose to settle in Yucatan. These Cubans formed revolutionary clubs in Merida and the port city of Progreso and produced two newspapers, *La Estrella Solitaria* (The Lone Star) and *La Bandera Cubana* (The Cuban Flag), to promote the interests of Cuban exiles in Mexico and to form the basis for the future revolutionary struggle to oust the Spanish crown from Cuba (White, 2007, p. 35). Among these notable Cubans who traveled to Yucatan was José Martí, who also spent much time living in Mexico's capital. The "apostle of Cuban independence" established close ties with Yucatan, which he visited three times between 1875 and 1877 (Bojórquez Urzaiz, 2008, p. 10). During his longest stint in the state's capital, Merida, which lasted more than a month, Martí developed an affinity for "*la ciudad blanca.*" Writing about the state's capital in *The American Economist* in 1877, Martí remarked, "Merida, pretty as a dream, with hammocks for family seats; the table always available for a stranger" (as cited in Menéndez Quintero, 2007). Decades later, Yucatan's appeal was not lost Cuban revolutionaries. In fact,

Che Guevara and his first wife, Hilda Gadea, honeymooned in Yucatan in 1955 (Anderson, 1997, p. 173).

Among the Mexicans who fled to Cuba during the Mexican Revolution were members of Yucatan's Catholic Church. Fearing anti-clerical reprisals, those who escaped to Cuba included ordinary priests as well as the state's Catholic leadership, including Archbishop of Yucatan Martín Tritschler y Córdova. Pérez Sarmiento (2008) describes his departure:

The seriousness of the events [of the Revolution] contributed to Archbishop Tritschler's decision to abandon Yucatan, mainly because it was rumored that a military leader would arrive to take charge of the state's government and implement a series of radical reforms. On August 24, 1914, the cleric boarded the U.S. steamship *Esperanza* in the port city of Progreso with destination of Havana, Cuba, accompanied by Bishop Carlos de Jesús Mejía and Fathers Crescencio A. Cruz, Miguel Gutiérrez, José Ros y Gili, and Carlos J. Molina Castilla. (p. 248)

From Havana, the religious exiles published a Pastoral Letter to Mexican Catholics denouncing religious violence and threatening excommunication against any who persecute Catholics (Pérez Sarmiento, 2008, p. 250-251).

This extensive travel and immigration between Cuba and Yucatan encouraged a vast cultural interchange between the neighbors. Even entire cities began to resemble one another. For example, "trolling through Merida [Yucatan], one has the feeling of walking through the streets of Matanzas, Cuba, and the Cuban guayabera shirt has become more commonplace in Yucatan than in Cuba" (White, 2007, p. 33). Indeed, "Cuban culture became so prevalent in Yucatan that even today 'Yucatan is similar to Cuba, like no other region'" (White, 2007, p. 33). Music was another unmistakable area of affinity between the neighbors. Zolov (1999) explains that,

“Mexicans were raised on close cultural ties to the Caribbean and a passion for *música tropical* that emanated from places like Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico (p. 18). The Cuban bolero became widely popular in Mexico, which was introduced to the country via Yucatan by Cuban musicians traveling with theater companies in the peninsula (Sweeney, 2001, p. 132). Although the bolero originated in Cuba, Yucatecan Guty Cárdenas became one of the most prominent figures in the genre. But Yucatecans were not the only Mexicans to rise to prominence singing boleros. Veracruz native Agustín Lara joined Cárdenas among the famous Mexican bolero singers. So prevalent did the bolero become in Mexico that the country became a center of equal importance to Cuba, as both consumer and producer of boleros (Sweeney, 2001, p. 133). Mexico’s importance in the success of Cuban music is further evidenced by the fact that famous Cuban musicians Miguel Matamoros, Beny Moré, and Pérez Prado all enjoyed their first years of commercial success in Mexico (Sweeney, 2001, p. 133). Pérez Prado, known by many as the “King of Mambo,” lived much of his life in Mexico City, where he died in 1989. In fact, the Pérez Prado Orchestra, now led by the late band leader’s son, continues to be based in Mexico City.

Further evidence of the close connection between Cuba and Yucatan is the mutual love of baseball. In fact, *béisbol* was first introduced to Yucatan by Cubans escaping violence in the island nation stemming from the struggle for independence from Spain. Gilbert Joseph (1988) points out that, “Fleeing the turbulence of their homeland, many Cubans sought a haven in neighboring Yucatan or the Gulf port of Veracruz, bringing their passion for the game [baseball] with them” (p. 33-34).

Yucatecan myth even describes the exact day in which Cuban immigrants introduced baseball to Merida. Joseph (1988) continues:

According to local tradition, the origins of regional baseball might well be traced back to a June day in 1890 when three homesick Cuban teenagers – Juan Francisco, Fernando, and Eduardo Urzáiz Rodríguez – fresh off the boat from Havana, unpacked their suitcases in Merida and made some friends on their new block: ‘The other kids their age were gathered to play *toro*...The Urzáiz boys began to play ball with a bat and an old ragged Spaulding, astonishing their new friends with the strange game. Within a short time, the neighborhood kids joined in and street baseball began in Merida at the corner of 61st and 68th.’ (p. 34)

The game caught on quickly and soon became the peninsula’s most popular sport, further distancing Yucatan from the rest of Mexico culturally and creating yet another link between Yucatan and its Caribbean neighbors. Joseph (1988) asserts that:

While Mexicans have embraced a variety of sports as participants and spectators – boxing, bullfighting, baseball, basketball, and distance track come most readily to mind – unquestionably, *fútbol* has traditionally been Mexico’s most ‘popular’ sport. There is, however, one notable exception. In the remote southeastern Yucatan peninsula, baseball has been and seems certain to remain the chief pastime, or, as *yucatecos* proudly refer to it, ‘*el rey de los deportes*’ (“the king of sports”). In this regard, Yucatan (and certain other parts of the Mexican Gulf) would seem to conform to a larger circum-Caribbean pattern, having more in common sportswise with such Antillean baseball bastions as Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic, and with isthmian Nicaragua and coastal Venezuela, than with the rest of Mexico. (p. 29)

Yucatan’s baseball connection with Cuba continued well into the 20th century as many Cubans like José María García, often referred to as the “Cuban Ty Cobb,” Luis Tiant Sr., and the legendary Eusebio Cruz, known as “*Quince y medio*,” played in Yucatan on teams with names like “Cuba,” “Habana,” and “Matanzas” (Joseph, 1987, p. 79-81).

Mexican sympathies for Fidel's revolution

When Fidel Castro and his band of revolutionaries triumphantly rolled into Havana in January 1959, euphoria was plentiful in Cuba, Latin America, and many parts of the world. It was this profound euphoria that led famed Mexican historian Enrique Krauze to remark, “[f]or the ‘Generation of the Midcentury,’ Cuba was not a historical event. It was a religious revelation” (Krauze, 1997, p. 651). The *26 de Julio*'s success and the charisma of its young leaders captured the imagination of many and demonstrated to the world's poor that social change was in fact achievable and lead to an increase in demand for economic development and social justice. The U.S. government was gradually becoming aware of this reality, causing concern among many. In a report issued in 1959 by the Center for Information on America, the authors acknowledged that, "Latin America is a continental area in ferment. A high degree of illiteracy, poverty, and dependence on one-commodity economies with consequent wide fluctuations in income still characterize most of this vast area. But the people generally, including the most humble now know that two standards of living are neither universal nor inevitable, and they are therefore impatiently insistent that remedial action be taken."

The stirring rhetoric and vivid vocabulary of Casto and Ernesto “Che” Guevara struck a nerve with many of these Latin Americans tired of corruption, poverty, and inequality. In the *Segunda Declaración de La Habana* (Second Declaration of Havana) delivered on February 4, 1962 at a rally of more than one million Cubans, Castro pronounced:

The duty of every revolutionary is to make the revolution. It is known that the revolution will triumph in America and throughout the world, but it is not for revolutionaries to sit in the doorways of their houses waiting for the corpse of imperialism to pass by. The role of Job doesn't suit a revolutionary. Each year that the liberation of America is speeded up will mean the lives of millions of children saved, millions of intellects saved for culture, an infinite quantity of pain spared the people. Even if the Yankee imperialists prepare a bloody drama for America, they will not succeed in crushing the peoples' struggles, they will only arouse universal hatred against themselves. And such a drama will also mark the death of their greedy and carnivorous system... This epic before us is going to be written by the hungry Indian masses, the peasants without land, the exploited workers. It is going to be written by the progressive masses, the honest and brilliant intellectuals, who so greatly abound in our suffering Latin American countries. Struggles of masses and ideas. An epic which will be carried forward by our people, despised and mistreated by imperialism, our people, un-reckoned with until today, who are now beginning to shake off their slumber. Imperialism considered us a weak and submissive flock; and now it begins to be terrified of that flock; a gigantic flock of 200 million Latin Americans in whom Yankee monopoly capitalism now sees its gravediggers. (Castro, 1994, p. 33-34)

Following the Cubans' lead, armed revolutions began to spring up across Latin America, drastically altering the region's relationship with the hemisphere's superpower. "The Cuban Revolution profoundly reshaped the relations between the United States and Latin America by making tangible a revolutionary alternative that previously had seemed an almost mythical object of dread or yearning" (Halperín Donghi, 1993, p. 258). Rather than waiting for change, the Cubans urged Latin Americans to be proactive. Among Cuba's new leaders, the most vocal advocate of the need to initiate revolution was Ernesto "Che" Guevara. In a 1963 speech, Guevara echoed Castro's *Segunda Declaración* by saying that, "[i]nstead of waiting for the miracle of a social revolution in Latin America to arise from this change in the balance of forces, the task of all revolutionaries, and the revolutionaries of Latin

America in particular, is to make full use of all factors favorable to the revolutionary movement in this balance of forces and to make revolution" (as cited in Johnson, 1970, p. 157). This was a profound shift in attitude towards violence that challenged U.S. perceptions of regional stability. Johnson (1970) argues that, "they [the U.S. and Latin American governments] had not, until Castro's triumph, fully appreciated the revolutionary potential of Latin America" (p. 5).

Further adding to the Cuban Revolution's appeal was that it embodied principles of many earlier Latin American heroes and revolutionaries and advanced these principles to a level never before seen in the region. "The Cuban Revolution became a conduit which transferred, refined, and legitimized the revolutionary ideals, examples, and theories of Martí, Sandino, [José Carlos] Mariátegui, and other early revolutionary heroes to the realities of Latin America in the 1960s (Becker, 1993, p. 89). The revolution's proximity to the U.S. and Castro's victory despite the long history of U.S. intervention in Cuba also provided inspiration for Latin Americans longing for equality and improved living conditions. Peter Smith (2008) summarizes this sentiment by pointing out that, "[i]f it could happen in Cuba - where the United States had maintained a virtual protectorate until 1933, only ninety miles off the coast of Florida - it could happen anywhere (p. 193). Additionally, for those living in Latin American countries further away from the U.S., Castro's victory on the hemispheric hegemon's doorstep provided potential revolutionaries with additional confidence. The popular sentiment was that "if Cuba can carry out a socialist revolution under the very nose, and against the resistance, of yanqui imperialism, then why not here as well, where the U.S. presence is so much less pervasive?" (Wickham-Crowley, 1992,

p. 32). The influence of Fidel Castro's success and charisma was not lost on Mexicans. Less than four decades after the end of its own revolution, many Mexicans felt rejuvenated and motivated to resuscitate revolutionary fervor in their country. "The newsreel footage of bearded young rebels forging a new political order on the island, said one historian, 'made Mexicans of the same age feel uncomfortable with their old and moldering revolution.' Mexico seemed energized by Castro's example" (Morley, 2008, p. 93). The similarities between the principles of both revolutions also moved many Mexicans. As White (2007) writes, "the fact that these two revolutions [the Cuban and the Mexican] stood, above all other revolutionary movements, for ideals that spoke to disillusioned, poor, disenfranchised, and progressive Latin American masses considerably strengthened Mexican-Cuban transnationalism" (p. 53).

Even the Mexican government seemed supportive of the *26 de Julio*. After Castro's forces triumphed in early 1959, Mexico was the first country to recognize the new revolutionary government in Cuba (Anías Calderón, 2003, p. 55). Mexican *Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores* Manuel Tello went further, favorably comparing Castro's movement to the earlier Mexican Revolution (Rabe, 1988, p. 166). Moreover, President López Mateos invited Cuban President Osvaldo Dorticós, yet another Cuban who sought exile in Mexico during Batista's dictatorship, to Mexico for a five-day official state visit in 1960 (Doyle, 2003a). At the Organization of American States (OAS) meeting in Punta del Este, Uruguay in January 1962, the U.S. pressured the hemisphere's countries to have Cuba expelled from the organization. While the U.S. succeeded in persuading two-thirds of the members to vote in favor of

Cuban expulsion, Mexico was one of only a handful of countries that resisted U.S. pressure and abstained from voting (Halperín Donghi, 1993, p. 301). Also, by 1964, all Latin American countries, with the notable exception of Mexico, had broken diplomatic relations with Castro's government. Furthermore, in a 1965 list of instructions sent to Mexican ambassador to Cuba, General Fernando Pámanes Escobedo, the *Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores* told the new ambassador that "Mexico is characterized as a nation which vigorously affirms its independence. It is, nonetheless, an independence conscious of the fact that no country, rich or poor, big or small, weak or strong, can survive being isolated. This conviction, united with the Mexican spirit of friendliness, leads us to offer our friendship to all of the world's countries" (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 1965). These policies did not go unnoticed to Cuba's revolutionary government. In 1967, Castro expressed his appreciation for Mexico's solidarity with Cuba when he declared, "[Mexico is] the only Latin American state whose rulers have maintained a worthy attitude; a decent attitude, an independent attitude; the only state whose government has systematically resisted that inglorious, indecent and shameful imperialist policy against our country. This is why the Mexican state and its leaders have really earned the respect of our country. It is the only government, the only state in Latin America for which our government feels sincere and profound respect" (as cited in Covarrubias, 1996, p. 129).

Quite possibly the most prominent Mexican who openly embraced the Cuban Revolution was former President Lázaro Cárdenas. Cárdenas' sympathies for the revolution and its young leaders should not be surprising, however. As mentioned,

Cárdenas's *sexenio* was the most radical of 20th century Mexico. Further bolstering the former Mexican president's leftist credentials was his being awarded the Stalin Peace Prize – the Soviet equivalent to the Nobel Peace Prize (now known as the International Lenin Peace Prize) – in 1955 and his meeting with Mao Zedong in 1959. Cárdenas's policies, specifically agrarian reform and the oil expropriation, had a profound impact on future Latin American revolutions, namely the Cuban Revolution. These programs provided significant inspiration for Fidel Castro who stated, "I credit Cárdenas with our freedom. I credit Cárdenas with our inspiration" (White, 2007, p. 59). In addition to being an inspiration to the Cuban revolutionary, Cárdenas enjoyed a close relationship with Fidel Castro that dated back to the mid-1950s. Due to pressure from Cuba's Batista administration, Mexico City police had been monitoring Castro and his revolutionary activities and arrested him in June 1956. With Castro in tow, the Mexican officials also raided the ranch on the outskirts of Mexico City which the Cubans had been using for guerrilla training and arrested over 40 of Castro's men, including his brother, Raúl, and Guevara. Sympathetic to the Cuban's cause, Cárdenas intervened and successfully negotiated with President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines for the rebels's release. Cárdenas was impressed with Castro, stating that the young lawyer was an "intellectual with a vehement temperament and the blood of a fighter" (Zolov, 2010, p. 270). After the rebels' release, planning and training for the invasion continued in Mexico, albeit at a quicker pace due to the possibility of future run-ins with Mexican authorities. In November 1956, Castro and his 81 men departed from Tuxpan, Veracruz under the cover of night aboard the *Granma*, the leaky old yacht whose maximum capacity was far fewer than the number of revolutionaries on board.

They set out for Cuba's eastern coast to begin the armed rebellion against Batista. In sum, Cardenas's efforts on Castro's behalf were crucial to the successful launching of the Cuban Revolution (Keller, 2012, p. 103). Castro expressed his gratitude to Cárdenas in a letter sent from the rebel camp in the Sierra Maestra mountains in 1958, in which Castro conveyed his "eternal gratitude for the incredibly noble support you provided when we were persecuted in Mexico, thanks to which we are now fulfilling our duty in Cuba." He ended by calling Cárdenas a "great revolutionary," signing the letter with a heartfelt "your sincere admirer" (Zolov, 2010, p. 270). Months after the triumph of Castro's forces in 1959, and when Castro declared himself premier of Cuba during the July 26th celebrations in Havana, Cárdenas was conspicuously next to the guerrilla leader and delivered a speech touting Castro and the Cuban rebels.

Lázaro Cárdenas's support of the Cuban Revolution was most ardent during the Bay of Pigs invasion. The CIA used Guatemala, under the command of fervent anti-communist President Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes, who came to power with the help of the U.S. after the CIA overthrew Árbenz, to train hundreds of anti-Castro Cubans to topple the revolutionary government in their home country (Smith, 2008, p. 155). The ease with which the CIA was able to topple Árbenz in Guatemala partially led to the American hubris in which it thought it could do the same in Cuba less than a decade later (Gleijeses, 1991, p. 376). What the U.S. government forgot, however, was that Fidel Castro was very different from Jacobo Árbenz; the Cuban leader was decisive and vigorous, and he had a military force that was faithful to him and to the Cuban Revolution (Rabe, 1988, 173). Known to Cubans as the *Invasión de Playa Girón*, the four-day effort in April 1961 proved to be disastrous for the CIA and the U.S.

government. At a cost of \$45 million, it was a humiliation for the U.S., boosted Castro's political stature within Cuba and other parts of Latin America, and helped drive him and his revolution to the Soviet Union (Smith, 2008, p. 156). The same day the invasion began, after being denied the ability to fly to Havana to lend his support to the besieged Cuban government, Cárdenas hurried to the *zócalo* and made an impassioned, impromptu speech in front of as many as fifty thousand spectators. In the speech, he denounced U.S. imperialism and called on Mexicans and all Latin Americans to unite in support of Castro and his government (Keller, 2012, p. 105). The Cuban newspaper *Revolución* quoted Cárdenas during his spontaneous speech as saying, "all of the countries will demand justice for those responsible for this great crime [the Bay of Pigs]: aggression against a small country by a powerful country with many resources...the North Americans have an interest in defending their monopolies and properties" and that they "don't attack directly" but "send dark-skinned blood, blood of our Latin American brothers" ("Lázaro Cárdenas viene a pelear," 1961). He went on to say, "what Cuba urgently needs is the moral support of Mexico and of all Latin America. We must give her that, because Cuba is in the midst of a struggle of great impact for all of the nations of this continent" (Zolov, 2008, p. 218). Coming from one of the country's most revered revolutionary leaders, Cardenas's words amounted to nothing less than marching orders for Mexicans (Zolov, 2008, p. 218).



Image 4 - April 18, 1961 article in the Cuban newspaper, *Revolución*

Cardenas stated that the Cuban Revolution was the way forward to ending U.S. domination in the region. After all, the complete lack of U.S. economic and political influence in Cuba led many to label the Caribbean island the “first truly free country of the Americas” (Ubieta Gómez, 2003, p. 31). Opposition to the Bay of Pigs did not simply end with Cárdenas; hostility towards the U.S. for its intervention in Cuba was widespread among Mexicans. The Bay of Pigs symbolized for Mexicans its country’s “own ideological battleground as the nation disputed the proper course of its revolutionary project, the nature of its leadership role vis-á-vis Latin America, and its relations with the United States at a decisive moment in the Cold War” (Zolov, 2008, p. 215). On April 18th, students protesting “U.S. intervention in Cuba” paraded a

cardboard figure of Uncle Sam through Mexico City's streets and burned the effigy in the *zócalo*. In addition to in Mexico City, protests erupted in Guadalajara, Puebla, and other provincial cities where those participating adopted the battle cry of, "¡Cuba sí, yanquis no!" (Zolov, 2008, p. 214).

This sympathy for the revolution was especially deep in Yucatan. Support groups in Yucatan and the neighboring state of Campeche collected medicine and other "useful items" that they supplied to the Cuban revolutionaries (Bojórquez Urzaiz, 1988, p. 115). When various members of the *Movimiento 26 de Julio* visited Yucatan in 1959, they awarded a certificate to Yucatan Governor Agustín Franco Aguilar, which expressed the Cubans' gratitude to the people of Yucatan for their help and sympathy (Bojórquez Urzaiz, 1988, p. 115). The Bay of Pigs Invasion also elicited Yucatecan support for Castro. In an April 18, 1961 telegram to *Secretario de Gobernación* Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, the *Comité Yucateco por la Soberanía Nacional, la Emancipación Económica, y la Paz* urged Díaz Ordaz to "prohibit public acts of support from the Cuban counterrevolutionaries and agents of Yankee imperialism that threaten the climate of peace in our country." Yucatecan artists also expressed their solidarity with their Caribbean neighbor under siege. Writing to Díaz Ordaz, the *Escritores y Artistas de Yucatán* (Writers and Artists of Yucatan) expressed their concern that "the grave situation in Cuba threatens world peace" and urged the Mexican government to "respect the ideals of the Cuban Revolution and no intervention in the internal affairs of our sister republic." Writer and director of the *Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes en Yucatán y Campeche* (National Institute of Fine Arts in Yucatan and Campeche) Juan Duch Colell also published a book of poems

titled, *Poemas de Cuba sí y otros de Yanquis no*, which were sent to Cuban revolutionary leader Haydeé Santamaría. Santamaría expressed her appreciation to Duch Colell in a letter in which she wrote, “we are sincerely grateful for your favorable statements regarding Cuba, which refer to our high ideals” (as cited in Bojórquez Urzaiz, 1988, p. 117). In addition, writing about Yucatecan support for the Cuban Revolution in 1974, Cuban Consul in Yucatan Daniel Ferrer wrote, “[t]he progressives of Yucatan, along with the most resolute revolutionaries, from the very first years gave all their warmth and support to the noble task of friendship and solidarity with the Cuban Revolution” (as cited in Bojórquez Urzaiz, 1988, p. 117). Certainly the close ties between Cuba and Yucatan persisted among many during the Cuban Revolution.

Cuba’s effort to win Mexican sympathy

While sympathy for the Cuban Revolution came easily to many Mexicans, moved by Castro and reminded of their country’s own rich revolutionary history, Cuba staged an effort to become even more popular among them. As Cuban Foreign Minister Raúl Roa stated in 1960, “Cuba and Mexico are not only united by geography, but also by the history of each country and having shared experiences, heroic deeds, and eagerness for the lofty ideals of political redemption and social justice. The Cuban Revolution of today and the Mexican Revolution of 1910 constitute exceptional upheavals that unite our countries to an even greater degree.” Even before the *26 de Julio* defeated Batista, Castro was conscious of the value of Mexican support for his movement. An effective way to do so was to appeal to the

historic ties between the countries and Mexico's revolutionary past. For example, while in exile in Mexico, Castro and other members of his movement laid a wreath at the monument to the *Niños Héroes* (Boy Heroes) in Mexico City (Szulc, 1986, p. 330). The *Niños Héroes*, viewed by Mexicans as national heroes, were six military cadets who valiantly fought the invading U.S. army in Mexico City. Once in power, Castro's government saw it as a priority to influence Latin American public opinion in its favor. In 1959, Castro sent Mexican union leader Demetrio Vallejo a telegram congratulating him on his early labor victories (Keller, 2012, p. 110). In 1958, railroad workers began to organize around Vallejo and Valentín Campa and carried out successful strikes until Vallejo's imprisonment the following year.

Revolutionary propaganda was also disseminated to Cubans by diplomatic units in Mexico. One common source was the *Boletín de Información de la Embajada de Cuba* (Information Bulletin from the Cuban Embassy) issued quarterly from the country's Mexico City embassy. One notable example of the Cuban government seizing on the countries' historic ties and friendship was the third *boletín* of 1961, issued in September. The cover featured a portrait of Miguel Hidalgo, the father of Mexican independence, in the background, with the flags of Cuba and Mexico and with two shaking hands in the foreground. On the inside cover, the *boletín* featured an 1889 article by José Martí titled, *El héroe Hidalgo* (The hero, Hidalgo), which originally appeared as part of a larger work, *Tres Héroes* (Three Heroes), that compared Hidalgo with Latin America's two other great *libertadores*, Simón Bolívar and José de San Martín. In the article, Martí says, "A sculptor is admirable because he can make a figure out of jagged rock, but the men that make countries are more than

men...The heart fills with tenderness when one thinks of those great founders. Those are heroes; those that fight to make free countries, or those that endure poverty and disgrace to defend a great truth. Those that fight for ambition, to make slaves out of other countries, to gain more control, to take land from other countries, are not heroes, but criminals.” One can imagine that by including the passage, the Cuban government hoped Mexican readers would picture Castro alongside the *Tres Heroes* and the U.S. as one of non-hero “criminals.” Cuba’s *Revolución* newspaper printed another interesting example on August 16, 1960. Featuring pictures of Martí and Bolívar alongside former Mexican President Benito Juárez, the caption says, “Nikita Khrushchev did not say this” and is accompanied by quotes by the three distinguished

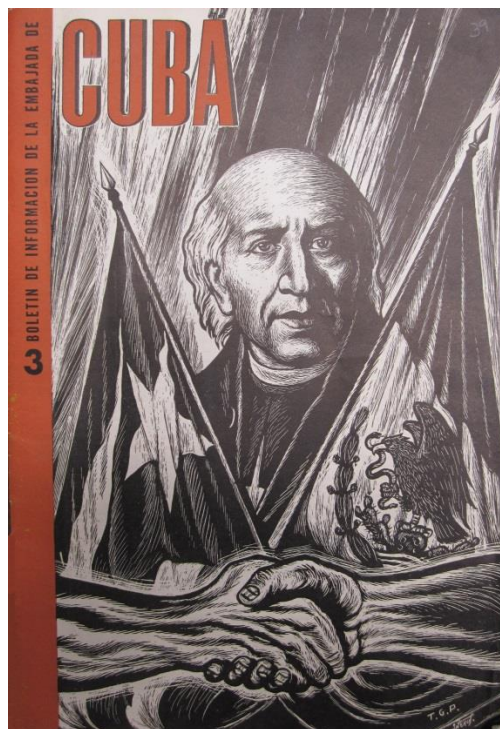


Image 5 – September 1961 *Boletín de Información de la Embajada de Cuba*

Latin American leaders. The quotes of the three champions of Latin American sovereignty were critical of imperialism, specifically from the U.S. Again, editors of *Revolución* clearly wanted to highlight the historic links between Cuba, Mexico, and the rest of Latin America in a united stance against the U.S.

Cuban propaganda was especially prevalent in Yucatan. Building on the historic ties between the peninsula and the neighboring island and the sizeable number of Cubans living in Yucatan, Castro's government disseminated information from its Consulate in the state's capital, Merida. As was the case of the information coming from the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City, the *Boletín Informativo del Consulado de Cuba en Mérida, Yucatán, México* was distributed on a quarterly basis. Like the Mexico City *boletín*, Merida's version also sought to highlight the region's ties to



Image 6 – The Cuban Consulate in Merida's 1960 *boletín*

Cuba as well as educate its Mexican readers of issues facing the Cuban Revolution. For example, the *boletín* issued in the spring of 1960 highlighted the March 4, 1960 explosion of the cargo ship, La Coubre, while it was docked in Havana's harbor. The explosion, which is widely agreed to have been caused by a bomb planted by the CIA, left dozens dead and hundreds more injured (Miller, 1989, p. 75). Again, the goal was to encourage Yucatecan sympathy for the Cuban revolutionary cause.

Chapter 5 – Mexico Walks a Fine Line

The advent of the Cuban Revolution, coupled with Mexico's storied revolutionary memory, did more than just arouse sympathies for Castro's cause. Many social movements, inspired by Fidel Castro's objectives and his audacity to achieve them, began to take shape in Mexico and were deemed as threats by the ruling *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI). As Lajous Vargas (2012) points out, "[u]nder the influence of the international environment in favor of the Cuban Revolution, leftist groups...attempted to initiate an anti-imperialist political movement (p. 271).

After stepping down from the presidency in 1940, Lázaro Cárdenas played a minor role in domestic politics, but the overthrow of Guatemala's Jacobo Árbenz in 1954 marked the beginning of the return of Cárdenas to prominence in the domestic and international political scene (Zolov, 2010, p. 252). This was particularly significant because Cárdenas was "one of the few [presidents] whose prestige outlasted his government" (Grandin, 2010, p. 61). It was this political reemergence that led to Zolov (2008) remarking, "throughout Mexico, if not all of Latin America, Cárdenas's name once more became synonymous with the defense of revolutionary principles and a defiance of U.S. policies toward the region" (p. 215). In addition to Cárdenas's overt support for Castro and the Cuban Revolution, the former Mexican president convened the *Conferencia Latinoamericana por la Soberanía Nacional, la Emancipación Económica y la Paz* (Latin American Conference for National Sovereignty, Economic Emancipation, and Peace) in March 1961 in Mexico City. The conference, which among the attendees included Vilma Espín, Raúl Castro's wife,

promoted Latin American unity, self-determination, and opposed U.S. domination in the region. At the Conference's opening speech, Cárdenas appealed to Latin American revolutionary memory by stating, "[l]et us remember the liberator, Simón Bolívar, who in convoking the Congress of Panamá, indicated this road for our America: 'Solidarity, defense, union of the Latin American republics, not to fight or conquer anyone, not for making war on anyone, but for defense against common dangers, to instill respect for their sovereignty, for solving differences in an amicable way, and for struggling for their prosperity and progress'" (as cited in "Documents of the Latin American Conference," 1961). Taking place only a month before the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Conference was among the most important international efforts to harness the momentum of the Cuban Revolution and extend its perceived achievements throughout Latin America, alarming many in the U.S. (Keller, 2012, p. 124). For this reason, Professor Thorning, who testified in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee in a series of hearings titled, "Communist Threat to the United States through the Caribbean," concluded his testimony by suggesting that the outcome of the conference could ultimately be that "the Castro-Soviet forces" would take over all of Latin America, isolating the U.S. in a sea of Communist Latin American states (White, 2007, p. 80). Later in 1961 and in the wake of the Bay of Pigs invasion, Cárdenas helped found the *Movimiento de Liberación Nacional* (National Liberation Movement, or MLN), an association of leftists and intellectuals that sympathized with Castro and challenged the PRI to return the country to the principles of the Mexican Revolution. In addition to Cárdenas, another notable member of the group was writer and diplomat Carlos Fuentes (Carr, 1996, p. 243).

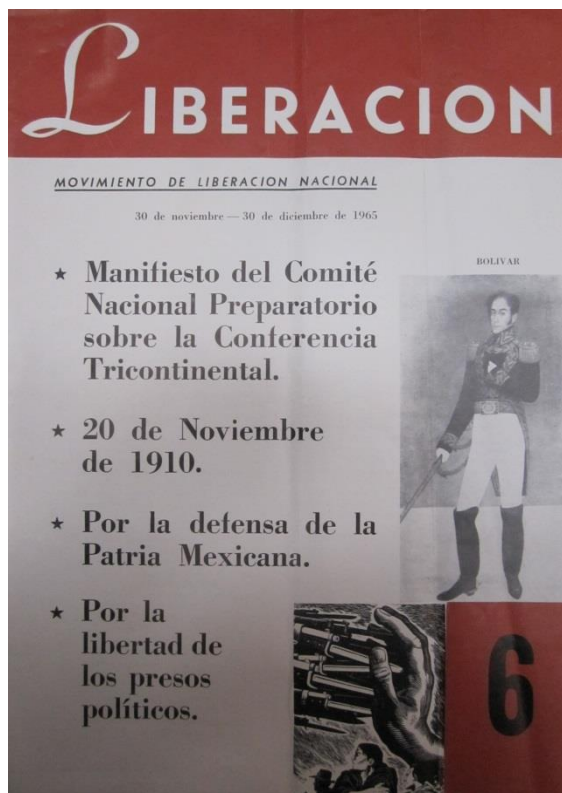


Image 7 – The MLN’s December 1965 issue of *Liberación*

The MLN also propagated the idea of Latin American solidarity, much the same as the Cubans and other revolutionaries before them had done. The December issue of *Liberación*, the organization’s magazine, featured a picture of Bolívar, once again using the appeal of Latin America’s “libertador” to generate sympathy for a cause. Moreover, the MLN took a firm anti-U.S. stance. As Cárdenas stated, “[t]he main force that impedes the development of Latin America is U.S. imperialism” (as cited in White, 2007, p. 62). During an MLN meeting on February 21, 1966, one speaker railed against the U.S. when he declared, “I had the honor to attend the ‘Tricontinental Conference’ [held in Cuba with the goal of building solidarity between the people of Africa, Asia, and Latin America] where I shouted to the representatives of 82 countries what imperialism has stolen from Mexico and the blood they made

Mexicans spill defending their fatherland, because now they're spilling blood in the Dominican Republic, and our *Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores* [Antonio] Carrillo Flores has suffered from amnesia and does not inform Mexicans that the [U.S.] Marines are killing defenseless people [in the Dominican Republic]. Two months later on April 28, 1966, the MLN hosted a conference titled "First Anniversary of the Yankee Invasion of the Dominican Republic" at which a speaker said:

April 24th marked the one year anniversary of the imperialist aggression against the people of the Dominican Republic, and the [U.S.] Marines continue to occupy the country. We should be very careful since the U.S. Secretary of State [Dean Rusk] said "we reserve the right to invade any country if we deem it appropriate and if it aligns with our interests." It is not that we are against the U.S., but that we are against its government, since we have seen that it has attacked various Latin American countries like Guatemala in 1954, Cuba, and it has attacked Mexico in various ways: in Mexicali, with the issue of water salinity that has ruined vast tracts of land used for cotton cultivation. Of the 400 largest companies in Mexico, 240 are of imperialist capital, which means that the money leaves the country and they do not do it to help us, but because it benefits them.

Certainly, in the wake of Castro's triumph in Cuba, the MLN was able to attract significant support, alarming the PRI, Mexican conservatives, and the U.S.

Less than two years after the formation of the MLN, defenders of the rights of *campesinos* and proponents of further agrarian reform created the *Central Campesina Independiente* (Confederation of Independent Farmers, or CCI) in Mexico City. Once again, Lázaro Cárdenas played a prominent role in the group's creation. At the CCI's inaugural meeting in 1963, he delivered a speech in which he said, "needless to say, you are aware of the respect I have for the farming class; but before the presence of old fighters for agrarian reform, authentic farmers that I have seen drive plows and tractors, and the youth that places its future on reaching the ability to own land, I could

not refuse to attend this noble and patriotic meeting” (as cited in “Declaración de principios,” n.d.). David Álfaro Siqueiros, Demetrio Vallejo, and Valentín Campa also voiced their support for the CCI in messages and speeches with “strong pro-Castro flavor” that attacked “U.S. imperialism.” One speaker even went as far as saying that “peasants could and should take by force what rightfully belongs to them if [the] government fails [to] satisfy their demands [for agrarian reform].”

The CCI also had the support of other *campesino* groups, such as the group formed by Rubén Jaramillo (Carr, 1996, p. 231). Hailing from Morelos, the home state of Emiliano Zapata, Jaramillo “stands out as the single most important keeper-of-the-flame of the Zapatista tradition” (Hodges & Gandy, 2002, p. 40). Influenced by Zapata, the anarchism of the Flores Magón brothers, and the writings of Marx, Jaramillo had taken up arms against the government twice in the twenty years before the creation of the CCI in support of *campesinos* and as a response to increasing government repression (Hodges & Gandy, 2002, p. 42). Jaramillo even ran for president twice as candidate for the *Partido Agrario Obrero Morelense* (Agrarian Labor Party of Morelos, or PAOM). In 1960, frustrated with the legal obstacles of agrarian reform, the charismatic Jaramillo led an occupation of unused lands by one thousand *campesinos*, the vast majority of which were armed, and in 1961 followed with a second “invasion” with hundreds more *campesinos* (Hodges & Gandy, 2002, p. 52). The agrarian leader and strong supporter of the Cuban Revolution even planned to accept a personal invitation from Fidel Castro to travel to Cuba to receive economic support and military training for his supporters (Hodges & Gandy, 2002, p. 53).

In addition to politicians and *campesinos*, Mexico's students were also intimately involved in leftist movements throughout the 1960s. Moved by the *26 de Julio*, groups like the *Vanguardia Estudiantil* (Student Vanguard), *la Juventud Comunista* (Communist Youth), and *la Juventud Popular Socialista* (Socialist Popular Youth), *Frente Estudiantil de Defensa de la Revolución Cubana* (Student Front for the Defense of the Cuban Revolution), and the *Brigadas Pancho Villa* (Pancho Villa Brigades) sprung up around the country. In addition, the Coordinating Committee of the Resistance Groups of UNAM and *Instituto Politécnico Nacional* (National Polytechnic Institute, or IPN) issued a flyer stating, "July 26. We will never forget. Stop the repression. Freedom for the political prisoners. We will win." During 1968 protests, students carried signs that read, "A man: Castro. An island: Cuba. An ideal: Communism" and were instructed to hang posters bearing the portraits of Che Guevara and Fidel Castro on the walls of the National Palace (Keller, 2012, p. 112-113). Mexico's students were not simply influenced by the Cuban Revolution, however; they also had direct contact with and support from Cuba's revolutionary government. For example, the Cuban consul in Mexico City, Mariano García Pérez often held meetings at the Cuban consulate at which they learned about accomplishments of Castro's administration and were shown films regarding revolutionary Cuba. In addition, the Cuban government offered all-expenses paid trips to Cuba to distinguished students for a first-hand experience of Cuban communism. In addition, in February 1968, students organized the *Marcha Estudiantil por la Ruta de la Libertad* (Student March for the Route to Freedom) with help from the PCM and the Cuban Embassy. Some groups even advocated for guerrilla warfare in the vein of

the Castro-led revolution. The *Movimiento Obrero Estudiantil Campesino 7 de enero* (January 7th Rural Worker and Student Movement) distributed a document titled, "*150 Preguntas a un Guerrillero*" ("150 Questions for a Guerrilla Fighter"). In it, the group gives instructions as to why one should take up arms and how to react in different circumstances one could potentially encounter during guerilla warfare. It even included instructions to make explosives and other materials used for sabotage.

During the latter half of the 1960s, following in the footsteps of Rubén Jaramillo and Fidel Castro, armed uprisings sprung up around Mexico. In 1965 in the northern state of Chihuahua, guerrillas led by Arturo Gámiz, local head of the *Unión General de Obreros y Campesinos de México* (General Union of Mexican Workers

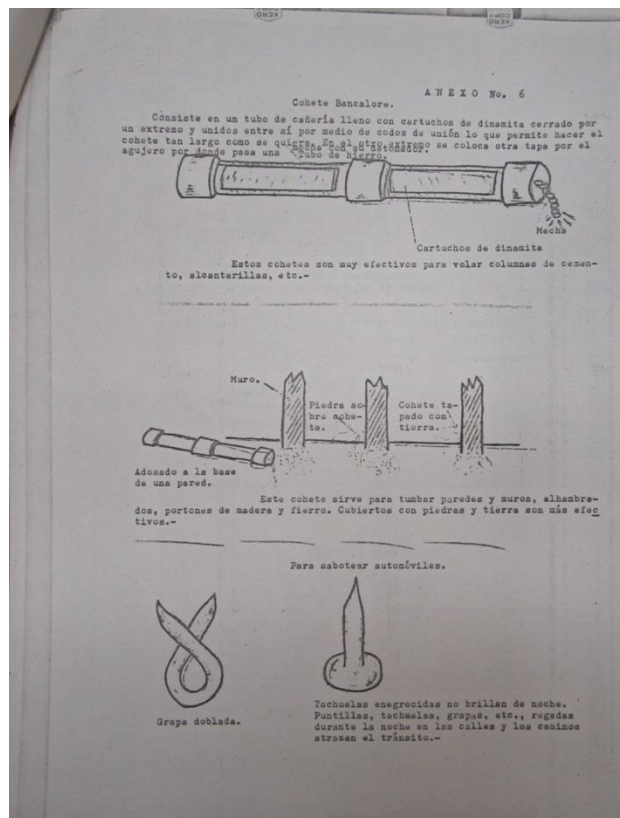


Image 8 – Bomb-making instructions in “150 Preguntas a un Guerrillero”

and Farmers) with ties to the PPS, attacked the army barracks in Ciudad Madera in the early hours of September 23rd (Hodges & Gandy, 2002, p. 88). Influenced by Castro's attack on the Moncada Barracks in 1953, Gámiz and his small band of guerrillas took up arms after failing to peacefully solve the issue of land tenancy. Much like the Moncada attack, the Madera attack ended in failure for the guerrillas with the army easily routing the rebels. Later in the decade, a small but influential guerrilla movement began in the mountains of Guerrero. Led by teacher-turned-rebels Lucio Cabañas and Genaro Vázquez Rojas, who also took part in the creation of the CCI, the *Partido de los Pobres* (Party of the Poor) sought to challenge the brutal and unresponsive PRI in order to improve life for Mexico's *campesinos*. The movement also had ties with other rebel struggles, as many of the first combat-tested guerrillas to join Cabañas and Vázquez Rojas were survivors of the failed Madera Barracks assault in 1965 (Hodges & Gandy, 2002, p. 120). Cabañas became so influential that the CIA called him "Mexico's best known guerrilla" and noted that he "enjoys widespread support and sympathy among the peasants" (as cited in Doyle, 2003b). So much support that it worried officials that "impoverished Mexicans were waking up to the oppressive bonds of a stultified one-party system that no longer offered hope for change" (Doyle, 2003b).

Mexico's PRI: Simultaneously revolutionary and counterrevolutionary

Although the PRI was the official political party of the Mexican Revolution, leftist groups and individuals were increasingly claiming the status as the country's "real" revolutionaries and were poised to jeopardize the party's hold over the country

(Keller, 2012, p. 103). To help cement its power, the PRI went beyond identifying itself with the revolution, but also to be seen as synonymous with Mexican identity. Actions such as adopting the colors of Mexico's flag as the party's own colors led renowned writer Carlos Monsiváis (1987) to label the PRI's tactics as "state control of what it means to be Mexican." As the PRI became more conservative, it also became more outwardly nationalistic, which can be explained as a direct reflection of the party's strategy of channeling left-wing mobilization to demobilize and contain opposition politics (Zolov, 2010, p. 259). PRI leaders often touted the party's founding ties to the revolution and claimed itself as heirs to Miguel Hidalgo and Benito Juárez. This is to be expected, however, as "[t]he founding myth of nearly every society or state,' the historian Arno Mayer tells us, 'romanticizes and celebrates its primal bloodshed'" (as cited in Olcott, 2010, p. 62). For this reason, French philosopher Georges Sorel thought it necessary to create a revolutionary myth to fight the effects of cynicism and rationalism (Becker, 1993, p. 42).

PRI propaganda often featured revolutionary imagery to link the PRI with progressive causes. For example, the PRI's May 1968 *Boletín Mensual* in Taxco, Guerrero featured photographs and articles about Juárez and U.S. civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, Jr. Under the photograph of King in bold red letter it reads, "and they think he has died," implying the PRI continues to carry on the civil rights leader's revolutionary legacy. The *Boletín* also featured a full-page reprint of Zapata's historic "Plan de Ayala" in which the revolutionary leader presented his vision for agrarian reform. Also, a booklet handed out during Gustavo Díaz Ordaz's presidential campaign stop in the state of Puebla in June 1964 titled, "Mexico's revolutionary

progress,” featured an image of a *campesino* holding a machete alongside reasons why Pueblans should vote for Díaz Ordaz. The PRI’s Mexico City governing committee also used revolutionary imagery to attempt to win support of the capital’s youth. For instance, the committee founded a youth soccer league named “Youth and Revolution” in which the PRI sought to “promote discipline, confidence, and the spirit of collaboration” among the capital’s youth and draw them into the ruling party’s ranks. The committee also sponsored a writing contest with all participants required to submit a paper analyzing Mexican independence hero “Don José María Morelos y Pavón and his influence on Mexican Revolutionary doctrine.” Even PRI rhetoric sought to reinforce the party’s revolutionary image. In a 1960 speech, President López Mateos declared, “you are aware of the origin of our constitution that emanated from a popular revolution, which aspired to guarantee for Mexicans the ability to achieve a better quality of life in all aspects...in this sense, our Constitution is in fact a Constitution of populist leftist origin, in the sense of what ‘leftist’ means in Mexico. Now, my government is, within the Constitution, on the far left” (as cited in Pellicer de Brody, 1972, p. 23). The Mexican regime also used the Cuban Revolution to bolster its revolutionary credentials. As mentioned, Mexico invited Cuban Revolutionary President Dorticós for a state visit, opposed Cuba’s expulsion from the OAS, and maintained diplomatic ties with Castro’s government. López Mateos even declared during his 1962 *Informe* that Mexico would represent Cuban interests in Costa Rica, Honduras, Peru, Panama, and Colombia and represent Honduras, Peru, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, and Paraguay in Cuba (White, 2007, p. 98).

But while the PRI was touting its revolutionary credentials, it was simultaneously expanding domestic surveillance of leftists, sympathizers of the Cuban Revolution, and those critical of the PRI. As Morley (2008) points out, “[t]he Mexican leadership especially appreciated the daily report on ‘enemies of the nation.’ The ‘daily intelligence summary’ included sections on activities of Mexican revolutionary organizations that helped the Mexican security forces ‘in planning for raids, arrests, and other repressive action’ (p. 259). One of the government agencies charged with carrying out much of the surveillance was the *Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales* (General Directorate of Political and Social Investigations, or IPS). The most notorious agency, however, was the *Dirección Federal de Seguridad* (Federal Security Directorate, or DFS). Created in 1947 during the Miguel Alemán administration, the DFS was assigned the duty of preserving Mexico’s internal stability against all forms subversion and terrorist threats (The University of Texas, n.d.). Leftist and opposition groups were a favorite target for the DFS, as Director Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios put Miguel Nazar Haro in charge of a secret group within the DFS to monitor “subversive” groups and individuals. Torres (2008) explains that, “the attack on the Madera Barracks shocked the country’s internal security structure; the captain [Gutiérrez Barrios] decided to create a special group to hunt subversive movements” with Nazar Haro, a vehement anti-communist who was trained in counterinsurgency at the U.S. government-run International Police Academy, at the group’s helm (p. 26). Nazar Haro’s secret group – C-047 – conducted surveillance, espionage, and counter-espionage against “enemies of the regime” (Torres, 2008, p. 27).

For example, in a single memo, the DFS reported on the activities of the PCM, *Liga Comunista Espartano* (Spartan Communist League), *La Liga Obrera Marxista* (Marxist Worker League), *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana* (Regional Confederation of Mexican Workers), *Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria T xtil y Similares de la Rep blica* (Union of Mexican Textile Workers), *Sindicato de Trabajadores Ferrocarrileros de la Rep blica Mexicana* (Union of Mexican Railway Workers), *Federaci n Obrera Revolucionaria* (Workers Revolutionary Federation), *El Comit  Mexicano de Solidaridad con Vietnam* (Mexican Committee of Solidarity with Vietnam), and student groups at UNAM and the IPN. The DFS also monitored the CCI recommending that state police should be deployed to "exercise special vigilance" in Tamaulipas in regards to events in June 1965 at which hundreds of the group's members participated. The Mexican surveillance agency also reported seemingly innocuous events such as the vandalism of PRI posters and other propaganda featuring the party's leaders. Fearing the influence of the Cuban Revolution, a passenger list was created to monitor Mexicans traveling to and from the island country. In addition to the list, the Mexican government required that these travelers be photographed. Amazingly, the government attempted to implement this photograph policy with foreign diplomats. The newspaper *Novedades* reported that in February 1966, Mexican officials attempted to photograph 21 Chilean senators traveling from Mexico to Cuba, causing a diplomatic spat between the two Latin American countries. The Mexican government also kept tabs on Cubans traveling to and from Mexico. One report explains that from January 1, 1960 to December 31, 1968, 27,285 Cubans entered Mexico, 14,098 left, and 13,187 remained in the country.

Espionage regarding Cuba did not end there, however. In fact, Mexico's embassy in Havana was used to collect intelligence on the island country. As White (2007) asserts:

A highly decorated Mexican general, Fernando Pámanes Escobedo (as ambassador to Cuba) passed information later characterized as "intelligence" to the Mexican Foreign Relations Secretariat (SRE) from 1966-67. His regular correspondence to the SRE covered the Cuban and sometimes Soviet militaries, Fidel and Raúl Castro's activities, waning Cuban public enthusiasm for the regime, shortages, and other information related to Castro's regime that represented an international security concern to both Mexico and the United States. Some of this information made its way directly to the desk of President Johnson as well as to President Díaz Ordaz. (p. 114)

Indeed, the Mexican government displayed a surprising level of enthusiasm and willingness to act against its Caribbean neighbor.

Surprisingly, the DFS even closely monitored Lázaro Cárdenas. In addition to wiretapping his phones, it was reported in detail with whom he met, talked with, and where he traveled. The fact that Cárdenas was being monitored by the DFS at the PRI's behest is made even more curious because on the cover of the PRI literature celebrating the 30th anniversary of the oil expropriation appeared a picture of the former president delivering the radio address in which he announced the expropriation (Morley, 2008, p. 93). In effect, the PRI was simultaneously promoting the revolutionary credentials of one of its most respected members while keeping an eye on his revolutionary activities behind the scenes. Morley (2008) explains that Mexico's presidents would speak of revolution and independence to reinforce their

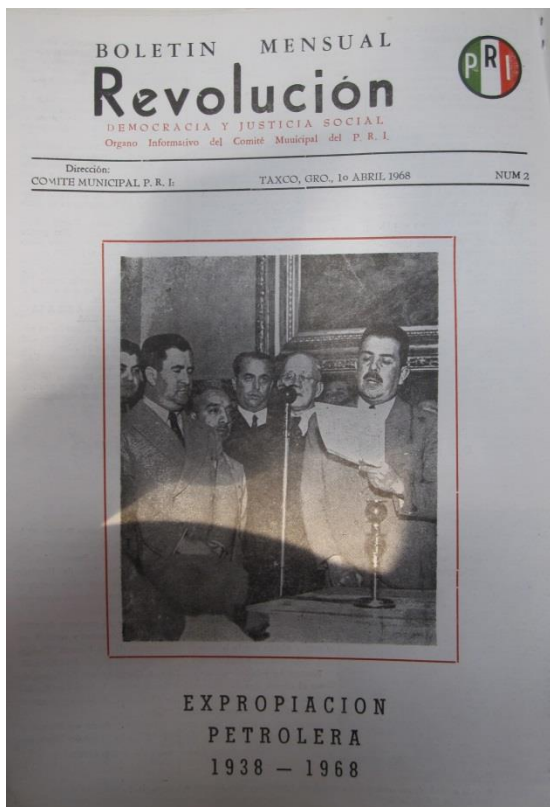


Image 9 – The PRI featured Cárdenas in its propaganda while simultaneously spying on him

credentials knowing all the while that they were one step ahead of those who wanted to push Mexico's government to the left (p. 93).

In order to carry out its vast domestic surveillance program, members of the Mexican government worked closely with the U.S., most notably the CIA. The U.S. intelligence agency's Mexico City station chief, Winston Scott, was intimately involved in wiretapping operations throughout the country. Morley (2008) points out that in addition to expanding wiretapping of the Soviet embassy, Scott wiretapped phone lines used by Vicente Lombardo Toledano, Lázaro Cárdenas, and David Álfaro Siqueiros (p. 93). In addition, senior CIA officials and Mexican government officials monitored domestic groups through the LITEMPO program, a spy network which

featured high-ranking members of the Mexican government as paid CIA agents. This shocking discovery revealed that presidents Díaz Ordaz and Luis Echeverría, DFS chief Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios, and Emilio Bolanos, Díaz Ordaz's nephew, had all been LITEMPO agents and on the CIA's payroll. This collaboration naturally led to a close relationship between the CIA agent and Mexican leadership. Scott's relationship with Díaz Ordaz and López Mateos became so close that Díaz Ordaz even acted as chief witness at Scott's 1962 wedding (Morley, 2008, p. 261). Also, "[e]very Sunday, Win's chauffeur delivered him to *Los Pinos*, the Mexican presidential house nestled in Chapultepec Park, to have breakfast" with the president (Morley, 2008, p. 112). Not only did Scott's power and relationships make him the U.S.'s most powerful man in Mexico, even surpassing the ambassador, by the mid-1960s Scott was the second most powerful man in all the country, outranked only by the president (Morley, 2008, p. 260).

Cooperation between Mexican security officials and U.S. agents was widespread in Yucatan as well. This close relationship was responsible for uncovering Cuban influence and potential direct assistance to leftist groups in Mexico's southeast. White (2007) explains that:

One report, entitled "Cuban Involvement in Recent Civil Disturbance in Yucatan," told of an intelligence link between Mexican police and a U.S. consular officer that helped uncover the pro-Cuban roots of several civil disturbances in Yucatan that year. The report stated that "identification by police elements was facilitated by long-standing and efficient cooperation between a Consulate officer (in Merida) and a local police official." This effort to thwart Cuban influence was particularly significant given the proximity of the Yucatan peninsula to Cuba and demonstrates how the international threat that Castro's influence posed forced Mexico and the United States to further align themselves along national security lines. The report even gave the

names of the three pro-Cuban Mexicans captured by the police as well as their backgrounds. For example, it provided information on when they had traveled to Cuba and noted the three men's deep connections with the Cuban-Mexican Cultural Center in Merida and that their financing came from the Merida Cuban Consul and the Cuban embassy in Mexico City. (p. 110)

In addition, Mexicans were concerned of the possibility of Castro sending aid and munitions to anti-PRI groups. In fact, a CIA cable from August 30, 1968 spoke about an unnamed Mexican CIA informant, saying, “[h]e knew that the Cuban government would try smuggling weapons to Mexico to be used by students during a protest planned for September 15th or 16th...the [Mexican] Navy has been alerted. Three gunboats and two minesweepers have been dispatched to patrol the Yucatan coast from August 21st until the end of September. Military ground forces have also been ordered to be on alert from a possible infiltration of weapons” (as cited in Jardón, 2003, p. 30).

But while Mexico did receive considerable assistance and encouragement from the U.S., much of the surveillance was carried out under its own aegis. Mexico was just as afraid of communism as the U.S. and felt compelled to help limit the influence of the Cuban and Soviet governments in the region. When surveillance was not enough to curtail opposition movements, however, the Mexican government turned to violence. The PRI's familiar protocol for crushing dissent was to first ignore, then try to co-opt, and finally, if necessary, violently repress (Bachelor, 2008, p. 254). This is not necessarily unique to the Mexican government. In the face of the revolutionary threat, conservatives shift their support from freedom to order, change to stability, and preventive repression to exemplary terror (Grandin, 2010, p. 17). As happened

elsewhere in Latin America from the 1960's through the 1980's, repression became the favored tool of Mexico's elite to suppress popular efforts to democratize industrial and urban life (Bachelor, 2008, p. 255). As a signal of what was to come, López Mateos, during his inaugural address in 1958, proclaimed that "liberty without order is anarchy" (López Mateos, 1959). To help keep order, Mexican authorities often utilized harassment and imprisonment to intimidate and silence their critics. In fact, government kidnapping of communists happened regularly (Carr, 1996, p. 196). Under the dubious crime of *disolución social* (social dissolution), the government locked up many of its most vocal critics, often in the famed Lecumberri Prison in Mexico City. Among those who spent time in the *Palacio Negro* (Black Palace) were José Revueltas, Demetrio Vallejo, Valentín Campa, Filomeno Mata Alatorre, Adolfo Gilly, Víctor Rico Galán and famed Colombian writer Álvaro Mutis. Even David Alfaro Siqueiros was imprisoned from 1960 to 1964 for his vociferous criticisms of the PRI and actions on behalf of political prisoners. Imprisonment of the regime's opponents became so widespread that in 1968 the *Consejo Nacional de la Huelga* (National Strike Council) published a list of the 85 political prisoners in Mexico City alone and called for their immediate release. But when intimidation and prison did not work, the government turned deadly.

One of the most notorious cases of violent political repression took place against Mexico's railroad workers. In March 1959, railroad workers, led by Campa and Vallejo and the *Sindicato de Trabajadores Ferrocarrileros de la República Mexicana* (Mexican Railroad Workers Union), implemented a general strike. It was the culmination of a series of smaller strikes and negotiations with the government for

higher wages and better working conditions that had begun in 1958. In response to the general strike, López Mateos mobilized several army battalions to savagely repress the strikers, leading to the deaths of many workers, thousands placed under arrest, and thousands more fired from their jobs (La Botz, 1992, p. 71). The government's use of the army to suppress a popular movement in a violent and very public way shocked many and set an ominous precedent. Five hundred workers were eventually tried, with many of the leaders receiving sentences of 11 years in prison (La Botz, 1992, p. 71). In another case, in August 1959 a well-known communist and secretary of the communist party in the northern state of Nuevo León, Román Guerra Montemayor, was arrested, tortured, then "brutally assassinated by the [Mexican] army" (Carr, 1996, p. 212). It was also during López Mateos's *sexenio* that Rubén Jaramillo and his family were viciously killed. Hodges & Gandy (2002) point out that "his project had become a threat not only to the big landowners in the area, but also to the political authorities. Jaramillo and his peasants had succeeded in questioning the government's commitment to reform and the basis of its popular support. By choosing to operate within the legal system, Rubén had exposed the government's hypocrisy and resistance to social change" (p. 53). Seeing Jaramillo as an increasing dangerous threat, government forces raided his home in Morelos in the spring of 1962, took him and his family to a nearby Toltec ruin site, and shot them dead. Considered to be one of the nation's most infamous examples of government brutality, Mexicans of all walks were outraged. Even celebrated writer Carlos Fuentes decided to take part in an investigation of the *campesino* leader's murder (Carr, 1996, p. 243).

Under López Mateos's successor, however, things only got worse. Carr (1996) maintains that, "repression notably increased when Gustavo Díaz Ordaz took office in December 1964" (p. 251). One of the most disliked presidents in modern Mexican history, Díaz Ordaz emphasized a policy of *desarrollo estabilizador* (stabilizing development) in which political and social order went hand-in-hand with economic progress. The conservative Díaz Ordaz viewed social movements as a threat to the country's stability and therefore to its economic development, and his administration responded by increasing its harassment of "agitators" and social movements. In April 1965, various PCM leaders were arrested and the offices of the party, of the *Frente Electoral del Pueblo* (Electoral Front of the People), and the CCI were broken into and sacked by authorities (Carr, 1996, p. 252). The DFS also increasingly utilized severe tactics such as torture and murder to combat the regime's opponents. Known as Mexico's *Guerra Sucia* (Dirty War), the DFS kidnapped, imprisoned, tortured, and "disappeared" hundreds of political opponents, though the exact number is unknown. A report prepared during the Vicente Fox administration explains, "[t]he authoritarian attitude with which the Mexican state wished to control social dissent created a spiral of violence which...led it to commit crimes against humanity, including genocide" ("Mexico 'dirty war' crimes," 2006). The report goes on to the abuses of the government saying, "units detained or summarily executed men and boys in villages suspected of links to rebel leader Lucio Cabañas. Detainees were forced to drink gasoline and tortured with beatings and electric shocks. Bodies of dozens of leftists were dumped in the Pacific Ocean during helicopter 'death flights' from military bases in Acapulco and elsewhere ("Mexico 'dirty war' crimes," 2006). While not as severe

as Dirty Wars in other corners of Latin America, Mexicans estimate that 650 civilians were “disappeared” in Guerrero alone during the unofficial war (Doyle, 2003b). Violent repression of dissenters reached its most visible point in October 1968 on the eve of Mexico hosting the Summer Olympics. Students upset with injustices, PRI corruption, and increasingly undemocratic rule held a series of protests in the months leading up to the Olympic Games, angering the government. Díaz Ordaz, worried about how the protests and turmoil would affect international perceptions of Mexico and subsequent foreign investment, announced in his annual address to the nation on September 1 that “continued agitation would be suppressed” (Morley, 2008, p. 267). Despite the threat, students again took to the streets in protest in Tlatelolco, a neighborhood in northern Mexico City. Díaz Ordaz, committed to showing his government’s stability in the eyes of the world in the lead up to the Olympics, sent the Mexican military to break up the protest. A declassified U.S. intelligence estimate declared, “after talking to Echeverría and Gutierrez Barrios, Winston Scott reported that the government was ‘not seeking compromise solution with students but rather seeking to put [an] end to all organized student actions before Olympics... Aim of Gov[ernment] believed to be to round up extremist elements and detain them until after the Olympics’” (Morley, 2008, p. 268). Instead of simply arresting the agitators, members of the Mexican army opened fire on those assembled in Tlatelolco’s *Plaza de la Tres Culturas* (Plaza of the Three Cultures). While the exact number of those killed is not known – estimates range from several dozen to several hundred – the massacre led to catastrophic alienation that most young middle-class Mexicans felt towards their government after this tragedy (Halperín Donghi, 1993, 329).

It was not only Mexicans pursuing leftists within Mexico, however. Anti-Castro Cubans were also active in violence against leftists and Castro sympathizers within Mexico. In response to the Mexican government's superficial support of Castro, the Cuban exile group, the *Movimiento Nacional Cristiano* (National Christian Movement, or MNC), intimidated and threatened Mexicans and their government with violence over Mexican-Cuban connections (White, 2007, p. 123). The MNC's mission was to battle communism in all its forms, which included anyone who defended Castro's government (White, 2007, p. 123). MNC commando chief Henry Agüero, a Cuban living in Miami, Florida, was implicated in an attack on the editor of Mexican newspaper, *El Día*. In retribution for what the MNC deemed as sympathy for Castro and communism, Agüero threw a grenade under the car of the newspaper's editor. Interestingly, it was the same type of grenade that was used in an attempt to kill the Cuban ambassador in Mexico outside the Cuban embassy in Mexico City. In addition to Agüero, other anti-Castro Cubans living in Miami planned attacks in Mexico. Luis Posada Carriles, along with other members of the *Representación Cubana en el Exilio* (Representation of Cuban Exiles) planned to blow up a Cuban or Russian steamship in the port of Veracruz in 1965. While the plan did not come to fruition, Posada Carriles, who currently resides in Miami, carried out other acts of violence against Cuba which earned him the dubious title as one of the world's most notorious terrorists. The U.S.-based anti-Castro *Comité Pro-Libertad de Cuba* (Cuban Freedom Committee) was also active in disseminating propaganda in Mexico. In one pamphlet advertising the group's radio station, *Radio Cuba Libre* (Free Cuba Radio), the group compared the characteristics of "democratic" and "communist" leaders, listing the former as

“believers in God and freedom of thought, normal and compassionate, peaceful, and respectful of the law,” while the latter are “atheists that deny freedom of thought, are odd and cruel, violent, and traitors.” In order to deal with communists, the pamphlet instructs readers to “prohibit your family from interacting with families of communists, keep an eye on them at night to see how they spy on decent people and to see where they hold their secret meetings, and not to hire them or do business with them.”

Members of the Catholic Church also engaged in anti-communist fear mongering. For example, the Bishop of Nayarit denounced the World Peace Conference in Mexico City in a pastoral letter to be read in every church throughout the diocese. In the letter, the Bishop urged Catholics in the small state along the Pacific coast "not to listen to the voice of these *criollos rojos*." He also condemned the conference for its communist links and called the attendees "traitors to Mexico" (Zolov, 2010, p. 259). In fact, my father, a Catholic seminarian in Merida during the time of Castro's revolution, was put on alert for a potential communist invasion of the peninsula. Fearing that anti-Catholic Cubans would invade the neighboring peninsula and sack Yucatan's churches, the pastor instructed the seminarians to "stand guard" at the church to repel a nighttime communist invasion (F. Ancona, personal communication, 2012). Despite possessing no weapons that could be used to repel an invasion, my father spent many nights with his fellow seminarians on the watch for Cuban communists.

Chapter 6 – The Story Continues

Caught in the middle of one of the Cold War's most intense struggles, the Mexican government was forced to walk a fine line between Cuba and the U.S. and the competing interests of the world's two superpowers. Mexico was viewed by the U.S. as a crucial Cold War battleground and as a potential conduit for dangerous subversive ideology to the rest of Latin America. While the Mexican economy relied heavily on its northern neighbor, requiring it to maintain an environment friendly to foreign investment, the Cuban Revolution awakened various segments of Mexico's population to the nationalistic characteristics of the Mexican Revolution that equated foreign capital with foreign domination. In an attempt to deal with these competing interests, the government resorted to, alternatively, the iron fist and 'institutional-revolutionary' rhetoric (Paz, 1972, p. 88). "On the one hand, it promoted an image of itself as a courageous and independent leader, eager to take the side of the beleaguered island nation - however unpopular that made Mexico in the eyes of its most powerful ally. On the other, the Mexican government back channeled intelligence and assurances to U.S. officials in an effort to ingratiate itself and win favor in delicate bilateral negotiations with the United States over issues it deemed more important" (Doyle, 2003a). Paz (1972) aptly summarizes Mexico's predicament:

During World War II, Mexico's revolutionary period ended and the phase of economic development had begun. The process has been similar, although not identical, in every country in which revolutionary movements have triumphed that lacked a pre-existing economy capable of sustaining, without going bankrupt, the weight of social reforms. This is the great limitation – more accurately labeled, condemnation – of all revolutions in underdeveloped countries, including those in Russia and China: there is an inescapable contradiction between

development and social reforms, a contradiction that has always favored the former. In Mexico's case, the evolution to a priority of development can be attributed to, among others less influential, these three factors: the regime's decision to emphasize industrialization, even though we could only realize it on a modest scale, as the only remedy for the country's problems; the influence of the United States; and the birth of a new capitalist class. (p. 97)

Many deemed this double-dealing as a definitive sign that the tenants of the Mexican Revolution were dead. In fact, when Che Guevara arrived in Mexico City in the mid-1950s, he wrote, "the Mexican Revolution is dead - and has been for a while, without us realizing" (as cited in Zolov, 2010, p. 248). But were these critics measuring Mexico's revolutionary process with impossible expectations? "Luis Cabrera, one of the intellectual giants to emerge from the Mexican Revolution, commented on the inevitable temporality of social upheavals: 'Revolutions are not chronic; they are transitory by their very nature; and they are destined to end after a brief period. A nation cannot support a revolutionary regime indefinitely'" (Ross, 1972, p. 7). Perhaps critics were using unrealistic metrics to measure Mexico's revolutionary trajectory.

While maintaining a revolutionary spirit over several decades may be unreasonable, it is important to analyze the factors affecting the Mexican government's actions. What was behind Mexico's duplicitous actions throughout the 1960s in regards to Cuba and the U.S.? Many scholars attribute Mexico's actions solely to its dependence on the U.S. to fuel Mexico's economic engine. As Olga Pellicer de Brody (1972) points out, "the influence of the U.S. on the economic activities of Mexico is strong enough to call into question the idea of a Mexican government able to act completely independent in an international context" (p. 51).

The country's leaders saw Mexico as tantalizingly close to joining its northern neighbor among the world's industrialized nations. For example, President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz pronounced that his country's economy had reached "its take-off stage" (Bachelor, 2008, p. 260). He therefore did not tolerate movements that threatened to derail his *desarrollo estabilizador*. Mexico's unique political stability - in contrast with the populist swings, revolutionary insurrections, and military coups that characterized much of the rest of Latin America during the same period - clearly provided breathing room for a consumer-driven youth movement to flourish (Zolov, 1999, p. 11). Castro's socialist revolution happened to erupt in the middle of Mexico's economic "miracle," however. The Mexican government worried that supporting the Cuban Revolution and alienating the U.S. would harm the Mexican economy and thus adopted a stance favorable to U.S. investment. Mexico simply had too much to risk economically from aligning itself with Cuba and alienating the U.S., one of the world's two superpowers.

Other scholars, on the other hand, attribute the PRI's actions as primarily motivated by domestic issues. Calling it a "foreign policy for domestic consumption," Keller (2012) asserts that the PRI was concerned with the "frightening picture of domestic left activism" and that "[c]utting relations with Cuba could potentially unite the disparate leftist groups and individuals in opposition to the government's foreign policy" (p. 118). Rather than pressure from the U.S. and prospect of reduced investment, the Mexican regime's primary motivating factor was containing domestic activism in order to maintain its power.

My contention is that the PRI was motivated equally by U.S. pressure and by the domestic threat to its power. For Mexico to ignore the U.S., a world superpower and economic giant with which it shares a 2,000 mile border, would be unrealistic and unwise. Conversely, ignoring domestic issues and solely focusing on pressure from its northern neighbor would be equally unlikely and foolish. Rather, I believe Mexico's motivation lay somewhere in the middle. Due to the country's population boom and the need to accommodate these citizens with jobs and homes, cultural and demographic ties with the U.S., the worldwide spotlight on the 1968 Summer Olympics and 1970 FIFA World Cup coming to Mexico City, Mexico relied heavily on its northern neighbor to successfully manage these challenges. These issues were balanced with the domestic challenges stemming from popular sentiment aroused by the Cuban Revolution.

By 1970, however, Mexico welcomed a new president and a new focus from the federal government. After six years of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz's *desarrollo estabilizador*, 1970 marked the beginning of the Luis Echeverría administration and his hallmark policy of *apertura democrática* (democratic opening). After a decade of social upheaval, government repression, and frustration with one-party rule, Echeverría, who served in Díaz Ordaz's cabinet as Secretario de Gobernación, marketed a policy of increased democratic opportunity. He combined repression against Cabañas in Guerrero with a new round of land reform for the rural labor force and new universities and bureaucratic positions for the middle class. Despite playing a prominent role in the repressive events that marred the Díaz Ordaz administration, the new president's piecemeal measures helped quell the anti-PRI tide and helped the

party retain control of the presidency for another 30 years. The new decade also brought an end to Mexico's unique position as mediator between Cuba and Latin America. In Chile, voters democratically elected socialist Salvador Allende to the presidency. The new president and his Popular Unity party put the country on the road to socialism, not through bloody revolution but through democratic, constitutional means – the *vía pacífica* (peaceful path) or the “Chilean Way to Socialism” (Halperín, 1993, 344). Naturally, Allende sought to re-establish his country's ties with Cuba, with whom they shared many ideological similarities as the only socialist-led countries in the Western hemisphere. Allende did so at the end of 1970, thus bringing an end to the symbolic role of Mexico's diplomatic monopoly. It was not long before the CIA launched another coup in Latin America, this time against Allende.

But despite Latin American countries slowly re-establishing diplomatic ties with Cuba, many of the issues Mexico faced in the decade following the Cuban Revolution remained even decades later. The Central American wars in the 1980s once again thrust Mexico into the center of a Cold War struggle. Nicaraguan rebels from the *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* (Sandinista National Liberation Front, or FSLN), acting with Cuban support, led the first revolution since Castro's triumph to take power in Latin America when they overthrew the U.S.-backed Somoza dictatorship. Once again, Mexico was put in a delicate position between the U.S. and its Latin American ally. Mexico was also involved in El Salvador's civil war, which ended when the warring sides signed the Chapultepec Peace Accords in Mexico City. And while enthusiasm for Castro's revolution has waned, it has far from disappeared. In a widely publicized and highly controversial spat, Mexican President Vicente Fox



Image 10 – Banners in Mexico City in 2012 supporting of the Cuban Revolution

upset Mexicans and Latin American alike when he pressed Fidel Castro to “eat and leave” following lunch at the 2002 United Nation’s International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico. Feeling pressure from the U.S. delegation, Fox was expected to have Castro gone by the time U.S. President George W. Bush arrived. When Castro released the secretly recorded telephone conversation in which Fox asked the Cuban leader to leave, scores of Mexicans and people from around the region erupted in anger at Fox, calling him a “lapdog” of the U.S. Furthermore, while trolling the streets in Mexico City today, one will occasionally find overt support for the *26 de Julio*. This past summer, I came across banners advertising a march and dance on July 26th and 27th to commemorate the 51st anniversary of Castro’s triumph in Cuba. Also, while witnessing the protests of supporters of Manuel López Obrador during the 2012 presidential elections, several supporters of the leftist candidate carried signs bearing images of revolutionary Cuba.



Image 11 – Poster at a 2012 rally in support of presidential candidate Manuel López Obrador

Among my favorites was an image of Che Guevara in the Uncle Sam recruitment pose, not urging people to join the U.S. Army, but to rebel. Nor have expressions of Cuban-Mexican friendship disappeared. To this day, if one visits Havana's *Parque de la Fraternidad* (Fraternity Park), the statue of Benito Juárez stands out as one of the most prominent figures in a park full of Latin American heroes. In Merida, Yucatan, the Centro Cultural José Martí and a library also bearing the name of the Cuban independence hero are prominent features of the *Parque de la Américas*.

But despite these overtures, Mexico continues to be reliant on the U.S. In addition to the impact of the world's largest economy, immigration and security have surfaced in recent years as issues increasingly vital to Mexico and its citizens. While Mexicans continue to harbor a deep-seeded sense of fraternity with its Caribbean

neighbor, it seems likely to be caught in the middle of these opposing forces for the foreseeable future.

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