



COMMENTARY

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Within the limits which he has set for himself, Professor Liss has done an excellent job of identifying the writings of Mexican and United States historians in the area of Mexico's international relations since the beginning of this century. After excluding from his survey those works which deal mainly with United States-Mexican diplomacy, international law, and foreign economic relations and development, he observes that *los yanquis* have failed to make significant contributions to the body of historical literature concerning Mexico's recent relations with other nations. At the same time, however, he has made imaginative suggestions regarding important targets for research that should be attacked by diplomatic historians on both sides of the Río Bravo.

We can agree, I am sure, that there is a need to learn more of Mexico's twentieth century relations with Great Britain, France, Germany, Cuba, Guatemala, the Soviet Union, and many other countries. Certainly, those *yanquis* with special interests in United States-Mexican relations can come to understand their subject better as they extend investigation to all matters embraced by Mexico's foreign policy. Nevertheless, we are reminded that diplomatic history is a relatively new field; even the popular subject of United States-Mexican relations began to receive needed attention only in the World War II period. No doubt it was logical that citizens of the United States should first study the history of their own country's relations with the neighbor to the south before attempting to become authorities on Mexico's dealings with other nations. After all, vision is first developed by identifying big objects near at hand before straining the eye to identify things of lesser magnitude which are more distant. Our border problems, an expanding volume of trade, the growing tourist traffic, and the importance of United States-Mexican financial ties—all of these seem to have justified a preoccupation with United States-Mexican diplomacy.

At this time, are *los yanquis* prepared to undertake the investigation of Mexico's relation with other countries? An examination of abstracts of doctoral dissertations recently completed at universities in the United States reveals that among thirteen studies dealing with Mexico's international relations, only one writer has concerned himself with Mexico's total involvement in world affairs;¹ the others have confined their attention to matters involving Mexico and the United States. Hopefully, some of these young scholars will respond to Professor Liss's challenge and will focus future research efforts on Mexican relations with other countries in this hemisphere or with the nations of Europe, Africa, and Asia.

¹ David Anthony White, "Mexico in World Affairs, 1928-1968" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 1968).

Although not the work of a *yanqui*, mention must be made of a book which deals in part with Mexican foreign policy and which has been published in the United States this year. It is *Latin American International Politics* edited by Professor Carlos A. Astiz, an Argentine citizen who received B. A., M. A., and Ph. D. degrees at Pennsylvania State University and who is a member of the faculty of the State University of New York at Albany. As an introduction to Section II of his book, which includes four previously published articles on Mexican foreign policy, the *gaucho* scholar has written a brief essay which suggests that he will have more to offer us on this subject in the future.²

Professor Liss has pointed out that in this past decade there has been a conspicuous lack of published biographical and autobiographical literature concerning Mexican diplomats. Miguel A. Marín's article on the life and work of Isidro Fabela (1882-1964) indicates the great need for a biography of this statesman and man of letters, who played an important role in Mexico's international affairs for half a century.³ Fabela has been described by Jesús Silva Herzog as "el internacionalista con preocupaciones literarias"⁴ and "uno de los mejores mexicanos de su tiempo".⁵ Another example of biographical writing, which suggests the need for more extensive scholarly treatment of the lives of persons who have formulated and administered Mexican foreign policy since 1900, is a recently published article dealing with the diplomatic activities of Victoriano Salado Álvarez (1867-1931), who served during the later years of the Díaz era and under De la Barra, Madero, and Huerta.⁶ Emilio Portes Gil's second

² Carlos A. Astiz (ed.), *Latin American International Politics: Ambitions, Capabilities and the National Interest of Mexico, Brazil and Argentina*. Notre Dame, Ind., University of Notre Dame Press, 1969, pp. 81-88. Two of the articles included in this collection have been noted by Liss: John R. Faust and Charles L. Stansifer, "Mexican Foreign Policy in the United Nations", pp. 100-110 (originally published in *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly*, XLIV [September, 1963], 121-129); and Jorge Castañeda, "Revolution and Foreign Policy: Mexico's Experience", pp. 137-165 (reprinted from *Political Science Quarterly*, LXXVIII [September, 1963], 391-417). The latter is essentially a translation of the author's "México y el exterior" in *La política*, vol. III of *México: cincuenta años de la Revolución* (4 vols.) México, D. F., Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1961-1962, pp. 267-289. Also included are two articles by Mexican writers which are printed in English for the first time: Luis Padilla Nervo, "The Presence of Mexico at the United Nations: The Cuban Case", pp. 89-99 (originally published as "Presencia de México en las Naciones Unidas. El Caso de Cuba", *Cuadernos americanos*, xx [May-June, 1961], 72-83) and Javier Rondero, "Mexico at Punta del Este", pp. 111-136 (originally published as "México en Punta del Este", *Ciencias Políticas y Sociales*, VIII [January-March, 1962], 49-72).

³ Miguel A. Marín, "Isidro Fabela", *Foro Internacional*, v, October-December, 1964, pp. 151-182. Also see Comité de Amigos de Isidro Fabela, *Homenaje a Isidro Fabela* (2 vols.). México, D. F., Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1959.

⁴ Jesús Silva Herzog, *El pensamiento económico, social y político de México, 1810-1964*. México, D. F., Instituto Mexicano de Investigaciones Económicas, 1967, p. 616 and pp. 635-651.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 651.

⁶ José Rojas Garcidueñas, "Don Victoriano Salado Álvarez como diplomático", *Historia Mexicana*, xvii, April-June, 1968, pp. 569-586.

autobiographical work appeared only five years ago,⁷ but the former President (1929-1930) and Secretary of Foreign Relations (1934-1935) gives us very little information about Mexico's international affairs during his years in office, except for an account of the breaking of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in January, 1930.⁸ On the other hand, publication of the memoirs of Juan Manuel Álvarez del Castillo has provided us with a detailed account of a diplomatic career that extended from 1923 to 1955 and involved service in Europe and the Western Hemisphere.⁹ Also, within recent weeks the autobiography of Genaro Fernández MacGregor (1883-1959), a distinguished writer and international affairs specialist, has been published.¹⁰

The paucity of autobiographical literature indicates the importance of the oral history technique which has been employed by James W. Wilkie and Edna Monzón de Wilkie. To date they have conducted interviews with twenty-eight prominent Mexicans, thus accumulating 158 hours of tape recordings which have produced an archive of 3,500 pages of typescript.¹¹ Recently the recorded interviews with Ramón Beteta, Marte R. Gómez, Manuel Gómez Morín, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra, Emilio Portes Gil, and Jesús Silva Herzog have been published in a well-indexed volume entitled *México visto en el siglo XX*.¹² Although the interviews are focused mainly on Mexican political history, this book offers much interesting testimony concerning Mexico's twentieth century international relations. Some of the Mexicans interviewed by the Wilkies have written autobiographical works, while others have not but still may find time to do so; nevertheless, the typescript of a tape-recorded interview constitutes a unique personal document. For those people who have neither the time nor the inclination for autobiographical

⁷ Emilio Portes Gil, *Autobiografía de la Revolución Mexicana: un tratado de interpretación histórica*, México, D. F., Instituto Mexicano de Cultura, 1964. The third edition of his *Quince años de la política mexicana*. México, D. F., Botas, 1954; had appeared a decade earlier.

⁸ Portes Gil, *Autobiografía de la Revolución Mexicana*, pp. 607-610.

⁹ Juan Manuel Álvarez del Castillo, *Memorias*. Guadalajara, Talleres del Instituto Tecnológico de la Universidad de Guadalajara, 1960.

¹⁰ Genaro Fernández MacGregor, *El río de mi sangre*. México, D. F., Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1969. Also see Genaro Fernández MacGregor, "Las relaciones exteriores de México y el derecho internacional" in Arturo Arnáiz y P'reg *et. al.*, *México y la cultura*. México, D. F., Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1961, pp. 961-1005.

¹¹ The twenty-eight persons interviewed are Salvador Abascal, Aurelio R. Acevedo, Juan Andreu Almazán, Silvano Barba González, Clementina Batalla Bassols, Ramón Beteta, Juan de Dios Bojórquez, Alfonso Caso, Luis Chávez Orozco, Daniel Cosío Villegas, Carlos Fuentes, Francisco Javier Gaxiola, Jr., Marte R. Gómez, Manuel Gómez Morín, Martín Luis Guzmán, Luis L. León, Germán List Arzubide, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, Aurelio Manrique, José Muñoz Cota, Melchor Ortega, Ezequiel Padilla, Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra, Emilio Portes Gil, Manuel J. Sierra, Jesús Silva Herzog, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and Jacinto B. Treviño.

¹² James W. Wilkie and Edna Monzón de Wilkie, *México visto en el siglo XX: entrevistas de historia oral*. México, D. F., Instituto Mexicano de Investigaciones Económicas, 1969.

writing, such tape-recorded interviews represent the only possibility for first-person accounts by men who have influenced the course of public affairs and who have made history. These records provide important supplements to the printed documents, official records, manuscript materials, statistical data, and other sources commonly used by historians.¹³ Thus, if better Mexican diplomatic history is to be written, many of us must undertake a portion of the task of tape-recording interviews with diplomats and other government officials who may never write the memoirs that we need.¹⁴

¹³ For examples of effective utilization of oral history materials in the writing of Mexico's political history, see quotations from Ramón Beteta in James W. Wilkie, *The Mexican Revolution: Federal Expenditure and Social Change Since 1910*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1967, pp. 8-9, 90-91; also see quotations from Daniel Cosío Villegas and Manuel Gómez Morín in James W. Wilkie and Albert L. Michaels (eds.), *Revolution in Mexico: Years of Upheaval, 1910-1940*. New York, Knopf, 1969, pp. 4-7 and pp. 257-261, respectively.

¹⁴ For description of the Wilkies's oral history methodology and explanation of concepts on which their program is based, see their *México visto en el siglo XX*, pp. 3-18. Also see James W. Wilkie, "Postulates of the Oral History Center for Latin America", *The Journal of Library History*, 11, January, 1967, 45-55; and James W. Wilkie, "Oral History of 'Biographical Elitelore' in Latin America", unpublished paper presented at the Social Science Research Council Conference on Folklore and Social Science, New York City, November 10, 1967.