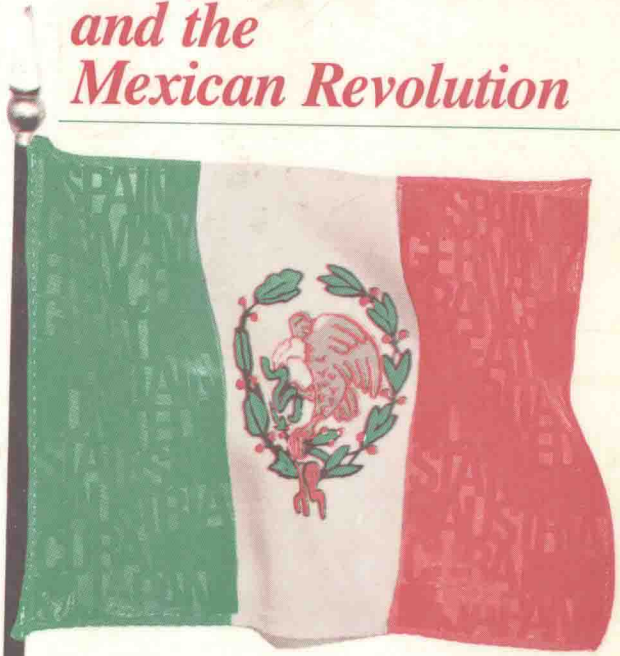


Friedrich Katz

The Secret War in Mexico

*Europe, the United States,
and the
Mexican Revolution*



*Awarded the Bolton Prize
for the best book in
English on Latin American Studies*

Friedrich Katz

**The Secret War in
Mexico**

*Europe, The United States
and the
Mexican Revolution*

With portions translated by
Loren Goldner



The University of Chicago Press

Chicago and London

The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 60637
The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., London
© 1981 by The University of Chicago
All rights reserved. Published 1981
Paperback edition 1983
Printed in the United States of America

00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 4 5 6 7 8 9

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Katz, Friedrich.

The secret war in Mexico.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Mexico—Politics and government—1910–1946.
 2. Mexico—Foreign relations—1910–1946.
 3. Mexico—Politics and government—1867–1910.
 4. Mexico—Foreign relations—1867–1910.
- I. Title.

F1234.K27 972.08 80-26607

ISBN 0-266-42588-6 (cloth)

0-226-42589-4 (paper)

Acknowledgments

Parts of this book were published in 1964 in the German Democratic Republic as *Deutschland, Díaz, und die mexikanische Revolution* and were made possible by a grant from the Humboldt University in Berlin. The major part of the work is new, and the funds, time, and other means to carry it out were provided by the University of Chicago. I would like to express my thanks to the heads and collaborators of the following archives and libraries for allowing me to use their holdings.

Austria	Haus, Hof u. Staatsarchiv, Wien Kriegsarchiv, Wien Verwaltungsarchiv, Wien
Cuba	Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Havana
France	Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris Archives du Ministère de la Guerre, Vincennes Archives Nationales, Paris
German Democratic Republic	Deutsches Zentralarchiv, Abteilung Merseburg Deutsches Zentralarchiv, Abteilung Potsdam Sächsisches Landeshauptarchiv, Dresden Deutsches Wirtschaftsinstitut, Berlin Deutsche Buecherei, Leipzig Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, Berlin Universitätsbibliothek, Berlin
German Federal Republic	Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Bonn Bundesarchiv, Koblenz Bundesarchiv, Abteilung Militärgeschichte Freiburg im Breisgau Staatsarchiv, Hamburg Staatsarchiv, Bremen Hauptstaatsarchiv, München Kommerzbibliothek, Hamburg Iberoamerikanisches Institut, Berlin Iberoamerikanisches Institut, Hamburg Bibliothek der Freien Universität, Berlin

Great Britain	Public Record Office, London British Science Museum, London
Mexico	Archivo General de la Nación Archivo de la Secretaría de Asuntos Exteriores Fundación Condumex Archivo del Departamento Agrario Biblioteca de Chihuahua, Chihuahua El Colegio de Mexico Archivo de la Palabra
Spain	Archivo del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
United States	National Archives, Washington, D.C. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Regenstein Library, Chicago Lilly Library, Bloomington, Indiana Sterling Library, Yale, New Haven, Connecticut Library of Claremont Colleges, Claremont, California Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California Netty Lee Benson Collection, University of Texas at Austin Newberry Library, Chicago

I want to thank the following people in Mexico who have given me access to their private papers: Lourdes González Garza for allowing me to see the papers of Roque González Garza; the family of Martín Luis Guzmán for allowing me to see his papers.

I would like to express my appreciation to Richard Estrada and William Meyers, who worked as research assistants for me; to Linda Greenberg and Carlos Rizawy, who translated parts of the sources in chapter 7; to Paul Liffman for his work correcting the text; and to Celia Wittenber for typing large portions of the manuscript.

I must also express my gratitude to my many colleagues and friends who read parts or all of the book and provided valuable help. Manfred Kossok and Walter Markow of the Karl Marx University, Leipzig, had read the manuscript of the German book and provided valuable suggestions. I owe a special debt of gratitude regarding the German book to Don Daniel Cosío Villegas and his collaborators at the Colegio de Mexico in the years 1962–67. Don Daniel made it possible for me to be one of the first foreigners to gain access to the archives of the Mexican Foreign Ministry. His collaborators, Luis González y González, Moisés González Navarro, Luis Muro, Fernando Rosenzweig Hernández, Berta Ulloa, generously allowed me to consult the sources they had accumulated for the *Historia Moderna de Mexico*.

With respect to this publication, I received important criticisms and suggestions from Robert McCormick Adams, who read the first and last chapters; Paul Friedrich, who read the first chapter; Akira Iriye, who read my description of Mexico and Japan; and John Coatsworth and Hans Zeisel, who read the whole manuscript. Parts of this book were written in German and translated into English by Loren Goldner, and I wish to express my gratitude to him. I would like to express a special debt of gratitude to my son Leo for his untiring and valuable help in the completion of this book.

Chicago
October 1980

Friedrich Katz

Introduction

My interest in various aspects of the Mexican Revolution is of long standing. It began during the years of emigration I spent in that country and bore its first fruits in 1964, when I published *Deutschland, Díaz und die mexikanische Revolution* in the DDR, where I served as Professor of Latin American History at the Humboldt University in Berlin. That book covered the history of German policies in Mexico from 1870 to 1920. It consisted of two distinctly different parts. The first was a study of what might be called old-fashioned nineteenth-century imperialism. It described Germany's efforts to gain a foothold in Mexico in both the economic and political fields and to utilize that country for its global aims. The second part analyzed the transition in German diplomacy to what might be called the more flexible stratagems of twentieth-century imperialism. It dealt with Germany's attempt to forge an alliance with Mexican revolutionaries; the aims were much the same, but the methods and instruments were new and, to say the least, unconventional.

In the 1970s, both American and Mexican publishers asked me to revise the book and to prepare English and Spanish language editions. At first, I intended merely to spruce it up with some sources that had not been previously available to me and to write a new postscript describing the research carried out since the book was first published in 1964. I felt that the main thesis developed there, the analysis of German policies toward Mexico, had held up well under the scrutiny of time and new sources. Nevertheless, as the process of revision proceeded, I found that I was writing a very different book. My growing awareness of the complex interplay of the great foreign powers with Mexico and among each other made it impossible to limit the narrative to the relationship between Germany and Mexico. The whole fabric of international policies, the interplay between business interests and their governments, and their role in the political and social turmoil of the emerging revolution would have to be told. I became more and more interested in the effect these outside forces had on the course of the Mexican Revolution and how they influenced not only the foreign policies but the internal social and economic programs and policies of the revolutionary factions. The integration of social and diplomatic history became the aim of this new work.

Its title, *The Secret War in Mexico*, conjures up images of cloak-and-dagger agents in hushed-up fights along dark alleys. The reader will find sufficient material in the latter part of this book for a number of espionage

novels although, should they be written, no master spy would emerge in their pages. The term "secret war," however, refers to a new strategy of alliances and understandings that the great powers and the business interests linked to them developed early in the twentieth century as a response to the wave of revolutions that swept some of what are now called the developing countries. The United States applied this strategy with great success in Cuba in 1898, when it used elements of the Cuban independence movement to obtain the expulsion of Spain's forces from Cuba and to establish American supremacy in their place.

The new strategy of exploiting social conflicts and anticolonial struggles was not adopted by the European powers until World War I, when each side tried to aid revolutionary movements that were directed at its rivals. The Germans attempted to support revolutionary liberation movements against the British in Ireland and India; and they allowed Lenin to return to Russia through Germany. The British sent Lawrence to Arabia to lead an Arab revolt against Germany's ally, Turkey; and together with the United States, the British supported nationalist movements, above all the Czech nationalist movement led by Thomas Masaryk, against the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

What makes Mexico an especially interesting case in that international game is that so many of the great powers were involved and the methods they used embraced both classical nineteenth-century and more "modern," twentieth-century strategies in response to the revolutionary movements. Direct and indirect military intervention, diplomatic and economic pressures, destabilization, attempts to play off one faction against the other—all these tactics were used by at least one of the great powers in Mexico between 1910 and 1920.

The policies of the great powers were not uniform. In each of the countries, policy toward Mexico became the subject of bitter debate and conflict. These debates took place both within the governmental bureaucracy and between government ministries and various private institutions with interests in Mexico. After the outbreak of World War I, the military establishments in each country demanded a greater role in the formulation of the policy to be followed in Mexico. At the same time, policy conflicts arose between various business interests in Mexico as well as between some of those interests and their respective governments. The result was a complicated interplay involving many nations and many forces within each nation.

The turbulent setting in which these events took place makes Mexico a case study not only of how local rifts can be exploited for global ends, but of how global rifts can be exploited for local ends. It became clear in the course of my research that this study would be incomplete and one-sided

without dedicating as much attention to Mexico's revolutionaries as to the great powers. Like the Russian, Czech, Indian, and Irish revolutionaries, the Mexicans attempted to use the rivalries of the great powers for their own ends. The favor of one or more of the great powers became a weapon used by contending revolutionary factions, but a weapon that necessarily altered the posture of its possessor. The core of this work is thus an assessment of the influence of external pressures on the programs and policies of Mexico's revolution.

What has emerged from the revisions of *Deutschland, Díaz und die mexikanische Revolution* is thus a new book. It contains extensive analysis of the internal development of the Mexican Revolution as well as new chapters dealing with the policies of Great Britain, France, and the United States. The parts of the former book dealing with Germany's policies toward the revolutionaries have been revised and broadened. Those dealing with Germany's economic policies and its political expansion into Mexico in the nineteenth century have been greatly abridged and condensed.

The United States had the greatest impact on Mexico's revolutionary movements. I have given more space and attention, however, to the policies of the European powers. United States policy toward the Mexican Revolution has been the subject of considerable research, while Europe's relations with Mexico have received less attention. I have tried to correct this imbalance. I have by no means neglected the American role. On the contrary, in some places I was able to update its history with the aid of hitherto unknown European and Mexican sources and some recently declassified American documents. Also, perhaps more than other authors, I have focused on the activities of U.S. business interests and intelligence agencies in Mexico. Above all, I have attempted to place United States policies within the broader context of European and Mexican developments.

This book is divided chronologically into four parts. The first part deals with the Porfirian period and the first phase of the revolution up to the fall of Madero in February 1913. The second comprises the Huerta period, 1913 to 1914. The third part deals with the years 1914 to the beginning of 1917, the period in which the revolutionary factions waged their civil war and in which the United States mounted its punitive expedition into Mexico. The fourth part of the book covers the period from the United States' entry into World War I until its end in 1918. An epilogue examines the period from the end of the war to the fall of Carranza. Each part is subdivided into chapters on the development, during that period, of the Mexican Revolution, and on the policies of the United States, Great Britain, France, and Germany.

The search for new sources has taken me to state and private archives in both German states, Austria, France, Great Britain, Mexico, the United States, Cuba, and to some extent Spain. I have also used some microfilms from Japanese archives photographed by the National Archives after World War II and translated for me by Mr. Shimomura.

Contents

	Acknowledgments	vi
	Introduction	ix
Part 1. From Díaz to Madero, 1910–13	1. Origins, Outbreak, and Initial Phase of the Revolution of 1910	3
	2. Germany and Mexico	50
	3. The United States, Germany, and the Fall of Madero	92
Part 2. The Huerta Dictatorship and the European-American Confrontation, 1913–14	4. Huerta and His Internal Opposition	119
	5. The United States, Great Britain, and Huerta	156
	6. Germany and Huerta	203
Part 3. Fragmentation from Within, Intervention from Without, 1914–17	7. The Split among the Revolutionary Factions	253
	8. The United States and Mexico	298
	9. Germany and the Revolutionary Factions	327
Part 4. The Politics of Brinkmanship: The Carranza Presidency, 1917–20	10. Germany and Carranza, 1917–18	387
	11. The Allies and Carranza	460
	12. Carranza and World War I	511
Part 5. Epilogue	13. Carranza and the Great Powers, 1919–20	527
	14. Conclusion	550
	Notes	579
	Note on Archival Sources	637
	List of Archival Sources	644
	Index	655

Part 1

**From Díaz
to Madero,
1910–1913**

***L* Origins, Outbreak, and Initial Phase of the Revolution of 1910**

The advent of some revolutions can be seen from afar. The last French king to complete his reign peacefully prior to the French Revolution of 1789, Louis XV had clear forebodings of the troubles ahead. The mischievous joy with which he bequeathed these troubles to his successor is embodied in the phrase “après moi le déluge.”

Few people in Porfirio Díaz’s administration, least of all Díaz himself, had any such forebodings about the Mexican Revolution of 1910 just a few months before it actually broke out, and no one then could have sensed just how much of a deluge it would turn out to be. “I consider general revolution to be out of the question as does public opinion and the press,”¹ the German envoy in Mexico, Karl Bünz, had written to his government on the eve of the revolution, and he reiterated that opinion nearly a month after its outbreak. Undoubtedly he was still under the influence of the lavish celebration the Mexican government had just staged for Mexico’s then one hundred years of independence, but his view was in fact shared by most other foreign and domestic observers. Even the small minority of dissenters who had hopes of overthrowing Díaz, including Francisco Madero, the leader of the coming revolution, did not know that they were bringing on a social revolution.

It cannot be said that they were all being obtuse. With very few exceptions, none of the innumerable “revolutions” which had come to epitomize Latin American politics to the outside world ever since that continent had gained its independence from Spain had represented genuine social upheavals. And even when it came to pass, the Mexican Revolution for many years remained an isolated instance of such a social upheaval in Latin America. What made for the unique and unforeseen developments in Mexico? Very generally it was the impact of certain developments in the late nineteenth century that changed the face of most of Latin America but were to have a special effect on the unique social landscape of Mexico.

During the final decades of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth, the countries of Latin America were pulled increasingly into the frenetic development of world capitalism. By 1914, \$7,567,000,000 worth of foreign capital had flooded the Latin American economies, and there appeared to be no end to this wave of investment.²

In no sense did this transform those nations into industrial societies on the model of the United States or Western Europe. On the contrary, it solidified foreign dependency and intensified the characteristics of underdevelopment that lingered on as the legacy of Spanish and Portuguese colonial rule. The export of cheap raw materials, the import of expensive industrial goods, the control of some of the most important sectors of the economy by foreign firms, enormous disparities in wealth, concentration of land in the hands of a small group of owners of large estates, an overall per capita income far lower than that of the industrialized countries, a backward educational system with resultant widespread illiteracy—all of these elements, to varying degrees, prevailed in most of Latin America.

One of the main transformations effected by integration into the world market was a strengthening of the centralized power of the state. The state now had sufficient revenues to organize, maintain, and buy the loyalty of a reinforced army and police, as well as a more efficient bureaucracy. State power was enhanced enormously by a communications revolution (construction of railroads and roads, installation of telephones and telegraph) and by the provision of modern equipment for the armed forces. The consequences of these transformations were particularly noticeable in those Latin American countries run by dictators, for they now had the means to maintain themselves in power for far longer spans of time than their predecessors had in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The most outstanding of these dictators, especially in terms of longevity, was Porfirio Díaz, who ruled Mexico for thirty-one years.³ But, while lack of democracy, coupled with symptoms of underdevelopment and dependency, created profound dissatisfaction in many parts of Latin America, the Díaz regime was the only Latin American dictatorship to fall victim to a large-scale popular revolution in the years before the 1930s.

It would be a mistake to seek to explain this unusual situation in terms of greater underdevelopment in Mexico. In comparison with much of the rest of Latin America, its dependence on the export of raw materials was less overwhelming: Mexico, for instance, did not develop a monoculture and hence was less affected by the fluctuations and cycles of world market prices. Nor was Díaz any more unpopular than the common run of Latin American dictators; on the contrary, Don Porfirio could claim considerable popularity because of his widely touted bravery in the war against the Napoleonic invasion of Mexico.

What unique circumstance, then, apart from the symptoms of underdevelopment and dependency prevailing in most of Latin America, accounts for Mexico's unique historical experience?

The explanation that first springs to mind is that the Mexican Revolution was part of a more general trend occurring in the most rapidly devel-

oping nations of Latin America, a trend which in other countries of the continent only took on different forms. This trend, or movement, consisted in the rapid development of a middle class which began to seek more political and economic power as its size and economic importance increased.

In other Latin American countries of comparable size and growth rate, traditions of parliamentarism made it far easier for the middle classes to achieve their goals with a minimum of violence or none at all. In Argentina in 1916 the radical party led by Hipólito Yrigóyen, with a largely middle class constituency came to rule as a result of an electoral victory. In Brazil similar results were somewhat more difficult to achieve. It took a military coup staged by an army under largely middle class influence to transform the political structure of the country in a way more favorable to the middle classes. Nevertheless, traditions of parliamentarism and consensus politics were so strong in Brazil that the coup was achieved without violence and remained completely bloodless. Only in Mexico, as a result of its long tradition of violent upheavals, and because it was governed by an autocratic dictator, was a violent revolution necessary to obtain the incorporation of the middle classes into the political process.

While this explanation has some merits, it is not sufficient to explain the uniqueness of the Mexican Revolution. The victory of middle-class-inspired political forces introduced a relatively long period of political stability and parliamentarism both in Argentina and Brazil, but in Mexico it ushered in one of the most profound social revolutions in the history of Latin America. The motives for this outcome are to be found, I believe, in the convergence of three developments on the eve of the revolution, each initiated early in Díaz's reign and brought to near-completion toward its end: the expropriation of the free-village lands in central and southern Mexico; the transformation of the country's northern frontier into "the border," that is, its political and economic integration into the rest of the country, as well as into the U.S. sphere of influence; and the emergence of Mexico as the focal point of European-American rivalry in Latin America.

The Expropriation of Free-Village Lands in Central and Southern Mexico

Part of the legacy the Spanish colonial power bequeathed to all those regions of Latin America—Mexico, Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador—in which there had been a concentrated and socially differentiated Indian population before the arrival of the Europeans was the so-called free villages. Even though much Indian land had been expropriated by the conquerors and transformed into large estates, a substantial portion remained under the direct control of the Spanish crown. The oppression of

the peasants living in those villages often exceeded that of the peons on the haciendas. In contrast to the hacendados, the *corregidores* (the Spanish officials in charge of overseeing the Indians) were only temporary appointees and as a rule interested only in squeezing what they could from their “wards” for as long as their stay lasted. Nonetheless, the free villages were able to preserve some features of their traditional organization and a degree of internal autonomy never known by the peons on the large haciendas. The free villages outlasted the colonial power, and, in the aftermath of independence, with the weakening of the central government, even improved somewhat their economic and political position.⁴

With the strengthening of the state under Díaz and the construction of railroads, which drastically increased land values, however, the free villages soon came under attack. In its effort to “modernize” the country, the Díaz regime embarked on a radically new agrarian policy. Joining ranks with local hacendados, it launched a campaign of large-scale expropriation of village lands and political subordination.⁵

The regions most affected by this new policy were central and southern Mexico, first, because increased market production and new railroads had caused land values there to soar, and, second, of course, because most free villages were concentrated there. Initially, the campaign proved successful, for it left the villages in possession of only a minimal amount of land and a modicum of political autonomy. Some land was left them as a token of their former status as well as for a sound economic reason: to keep a large enough labor force in the vicinity of the plantations and to tide them over the seasons in which the planters had no need of them. Some political autonomy was left them as well, but only because they managed to cling to it with unyielding tenacity.

Ultimately, however, the campaign bred considerable discontent. At first, it had elicited only sporadic unrest in various parts of central and southern Mexico, which federal troops quelled with little effort. When the expropriations spilled over into Morelos and Guerrero, however, the foundation was laid for the largest peasant revolt in the history of independent Mexico. Many circumstances made those regions a hotbed of peasant unrest. One was their proximity to the capital city, which had prevented their succumbing to provincialism, with its attendant reduction in material expectations and its constriction of the cultural horizon. Another was the easy availability of arms. The mountain ranges favored guerrilla warfare and complicated the movement of the federal troops; the density of population prevented the fragmentation of peasant forces, which had often proved their undoing. Thus, the expropriations not only engendered unrest but did so in regions where the unrest was likely to become virulent.

Through its agrarian policies, then, the Díaz regime had managed to