A Canadian Woman Takes and Interest in Troubled Mexico:

Agnes C. Laut's Journalistic and Philanthropic Work in Revolutionary Mexico,

1913-1921

by

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Abstract

Agnes Laut (Ontario, 1871 - New York, 1936) was a Canadian journalist, novelist, financial advisor, and a farmer who became closely involved with United States-Mexico relations during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1921). This research analyses Agnes Laut's editorial work, travels, and publications about Mexico and its social strife. Furthermore, it explores her role as coordinator among US civic and religious associations aiming to relieve Mexico's social troubles through humanitarian aide. This thesis is a first approach to the study of the impact of foreign civic society and philanthropic organizations in revolutionary Mexico.

Résumé

Agnes Laut (Ontario, 1871 - New York, 1936) était une journaliste canadienne, romancière, conseillère financière et une fermière qui était étroitement engagé dans les relations entre les États-Unis et le Mexique pendant la Révolution mexicaine (1910-1921). Cette investigation analyse les travaux éditoriaux, les voyages et les articles publiés d'Agnes Laut sur la problématique de Mexique. En plus, cette recherche étudie son rôle comme liaison entre les organisations civiques et religieuses des États-Unis et son but de améliorer la situation troublé de la population au Mexique à travers de la philanthropie. Cette thèse est un premier effort pour étudier l'effet des organisations civiques étrangères dans le Mexique révolutionnaire au début du XXème siècle.

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Para Jessica Solt

con el amor incondicional de tantos años de amistad

Introduction and Acknowledgements

Some years ago, having been granted a scholarship by Mexico's *Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana*[1], I worked in the translation of a huge document: the records of the investigation on Mexican affairs that was conducted by a senatorial committee presided by Senator Albert B. Fall. The "Fall Committee", as it is commonly referred to, was in charge of assessing the situation experienced by U.S. citizens in Mexico and reporting to President Wilson. The investigation was based on the testimonies of individuals who, to some extent or other, were linked to revolutionary Mexico. Of all the depositions I read, one seemed outstanding to me: that of Agnes Christina Laut, a Canadian journalist.

At the beginning of 1919, Agnes Laut crossed the U.S.-Mexican border. During her two-month stay in Mexico she traveled in trains that were blown up soon after she got off them; gathered financial information from members of the foreign community in Mexico City; held talks with teachers and union leaders; visited Indian villages, urban slums, hospitals and orphanages; observed the conditions of provincial ranches; and explored the Gulf of Mexico's oil country. Back in the U.S., her country of residence, Laut's Mexican experience triggered her

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[1] The *INEHRM*, was created in 1953 with the official purpose of fomenting academic research on the Mexican Revolution. In 2006, the institute changed its name and widened its scope of research; the *Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de las Revoluciones de México* currently carries out historical research on Mexican revolutionary movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

publication of magazine articles, presentation of lectures, and organization of charity programs.

This thesis is devoted to Laut's involvement with revolutionary Mexico: it examines her Mexican obsession from its inception, when Laut worked as an editor for *Forum* magazine during World War I, to its zenith marked by the creation of the Children Conservation League in 1920. Unlike other foreign journalists and writers, such as John Reed, Laut, and her corpus of texts concerning Mexico, has not been studied. Moreover, her national background, her feminine condition, her links to both religious and civic U.S. associations, and her active participation in philanthropic projects pose particular questions that differentiate her case from others. How did her Canadian background affect her perspective on the Mexican issue? Did Canada-U.S. and U.S.-Mexican interactions forge her perception of the region in a particular way? Are her arguments in favour of direct U.S. involvement in Mexico similar to those of her male counterparts; if not, what is the difference?

Despite the fact that Agnes Laut's connection to Mexico has mostly remained in obscurity, much historical research about the diverse foreign interactions with Mexico during the revolutionary period has been carried out. An event of such epic proportions, combined with the vast and varied sources available, encourages multiple approaches of historical research on the subject. Of course, the intense bilateral relations between revolutionary Mexico and its Northern neighbor provide particularly attractive research topics for Mexican and U.S. historians alike.

Government records, not only in Mexico but also -- and in considerable number -- in the U.S., were the first documentary mine avidly exploited by historians. Furthermore, the preservation of the

personal documents and files of prominent politicians in national archives and universities of both countries enhanced the initial boom of political and diplomatic approaches that exploded in the 1970s. Berta Ulloa's *La revolución intervenida: Relaciones diplomáticas entre México y Estados Unidos* (1971) was a pioneering learned work in terms of documentary research: the Mexican historian analyzed U.S.-Mexican relations using Mexican and U.S. archival material. U.S. historians, like Mark Gilderhus, also profited from archival material: in 1977, he published *Diplomacy and Revolution: U.S.-Mexican Relations under Wilson and Carranza.*

The historical context also contributed to this trend in diplomatic history. The hostile panorama of the Cold War constantly posed the question of U.S. direct involvement in foreign, revolutionary contexts. U.S. historians, moved by their present concerns, undertook the task of analyzing previous, similar scenarios, such as the Mexican Revolution. A case in point is Edward Haley's *Revolution and Intervention: The Diplomacy of Taft and Wilson in Mexico* (1970).

Diplomatic relations between revolutionary Mexico and other countries have also been explored, for example, in Friedrich Katz's classic *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States, and the Mexican Revolution* (1981). Josefina McGregor recently turned her attention to Spain: her research in Mexican and Spanish archives produced *Revolución Mexicana y diplomacia española* (2003). Historian Lorenzo Meyer is focusing part of his historical work on Great Britain; his book *Su Majestad Británica contra la Revolución Mexicana* (1991) is an example of the more recent, comprehensive historiographic approach that amalgamates international relations interpretations with economic, social and cultural explanations.

Indeed, the political-diplomatic perspective was followed by a wave of historical research focused on economic and commercial foreign interests in Mexico during the revolutionary years. Oil, mining, agricultural and other financial ventures have been the center of attention for historians. Just to mention a few works on the subject: Linda Hall's *Oil, Banks and Politics: The United States and Post-revolutionary Mexico* (1995) and *Oil and Revolution in Mexico* by Jonathan Brown (1993).

Lately, cultural approaches have added new dimensions to the study of the Mexican Revolution and its interactions beyond Mexican borders. The study of artistic and intellectual dynamics between foreigners and the Mexican Revolution has been a prolific field for research: *American Writers, Mexico, and Mexican Immigrants, 1880-1930* (2004) by Gilbert González and *The Enormous Vogue of all Things Mexican* (1992) by Helen Delpar dwell on the topic. Visual and audiovisual sources provide material for iconographic and representational analyses, for example, John Britton's book *Revolution and Ideology: Images of the Mexican Revolution in the United States* (1995).

Among the studies of cultural interactions, little research, however, has been done on foreign philanthropic enterprises in Mexico during the Revolution, Armando Solórzano's PhD dissertation "¿Fiebre dorada o fiebre amarilla? La Fundación Rockefeller en México, 1911-1924" (1997) being one of the few in this vein. Following the same thematic line, this thesis contributes to the study of cultural relations between Mexico and the outside (specifically North America) by examining humanitarian projects aimed at revolutionary Mexico. In what

ways did Agnes Laut's philanthropic arguments and humanitarian projects differ from interventionist discourses?[2] What arguments did she use to promote this kind of foreign involvement in a sovereign country? What were her goals and methods in organizing the projects? What role did she play in civic associations? What was the nature of interaction among the individual (Laut in this case), civic organizations and the U.S. government? What was the dynamic among different civic associations, and did their ideological, religious or political orientations interfere with or facilitate their cooperation for philanthropic ends?

Due to the limited nature of the sources available to me and limited time, this study, of a very particular case, is planned as the first step toward future research. My thesis is based exclusively on Canadian and U.S. sources; the inclusion of Mexican documents would give a more complete analysis. In terms of research lines, this thesis also leaves questions in the air, for example, the differentiated responses of the Mexican public to these humanitarian activities initiated from abroad. Other questions for further investigation are: What other U.S. philanthropic and humanitarian enterprises became involved during Mexico's revolutionary period? Where they similar in their ideological bases and aims? How were they formed, and how did they interact with

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[2] The term "intervention" within the context of U.S.-Mexican relations during the revolutionary years can be misinterpreted if not clarified. While philanthropic involvement or official policies such as trade embargoes can be defined as interventionist actions, in this thesis, the use of the term intervention and interventionist will refer exclusively to U.S. military incursion in Mexico; other terms, euphemisms to be more exact, will be used to depict both President Woodrow Wilson's and Agnes Laut's stances. I choose to do so because I want to stick to the same semantic meaning as was understood by the U.S. public during the 1913-1919 juncture. Nonetheless, throughout this thesis, the ambiguities, contradictions, agreements, similarities and clashes among different positions will be examined.

both the U.S. public and governmental authorities? How did they operate in Mexico, and how successful were they?

Intended for Canadian readers and, in general, for everyone who is not deeply familiar with the intricate development of the Mexican Revolution, Chapter I provides the contextual frame required to understand Agnes Laut's first contacts with Mexico. Because the Revolution in Mexico was such a multi-layered and long lasting event, my narrative, of necessity, focuses exclusively on the diverse interactions between revolutionary Mexico and the exterior. The bilateral relation between Mexico and the U.S. receives particular attention due to its particular intensity. Commercial, diplomatic and cultural dealings, from the Porfirio Diaz dictatorship to Venustiano Carranza's de facto government are examined. Meant as an overview, this chapter emphasizes certain critical episodes that express the tension the Mexican internal struggle engendered in the outside, such as the 1914 U.S. occupation of the Mexican port of Veracruz and Francisco Villa's 1916 raid against Columbus, New Mexico.

The first chapter closely relates to Chapter II, in which the time period previously covered on a large scale is reviewed once more from the individual's perspective, following Agnes Laut's particular experience. A look into her personal background (professional passions, life-long obsessions, geopolitical perceptions, among others) permits deeper understanding of the nature of Laut's interest in Mexico. This enterprise is completed by relating Laut to her native Canadian milieu, as well as by analyzing her conception of and immersion in the dynamics among Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. This chapter studies the first phase of Laut's encounter with Mexico, from initial second-hand references to deeper knowledge due to her work as a magazine editor in New York.

Chapter III is devoted to the last key juncture in the inside-outside interactions in the history of revolutionary Mexico: the year 1919. That year witnessed a powerful wave of pressure from diverse sectors of U.S. society that demanded military intervention in Mexico. Concurrently, Laut's involvement in the issue grew in intensity when she embarked on a two-month research trip to Mexico. This chapter analyzes both features and links them together by analyzing Laut's connections to interventionist pressure groups, in particular the National Association for the Protection of American Rights in Mexico, both before and after her Mexican expedition. A description of the trip, from its inception to its undertaking, precedes an analysis of Laut's public viewpoints on the intervention - non intervention debate based on her deposition before the U.S. Senate subcommittee that in 1919 launched an investigation of Mexican affairs.

The final chapter, Chapter IV, continues to scrutinize Agnes Laut's reflections on Mexico. The content of her published articles sheds light on her perception of the Mexican social struggle, her evaluation of its means and outcomes, and her thoughts about external involvement in the matter. Not limited entirely to her discourse, this fourth section attempts a close observation of Laut's activities in favour of a peaceful solution to Mexican social discontent: her arguments in support of the humanitarian option, and her endeavours to organize her charitable enterprise, in particular her negotiations aimed at getting the sponsorship of the National Civic Federation.

Tracing Laut's Mexican adventure has been difficult as far as primary sources goes. The document that originally attracted my attention to Agnes Laut and her involvement with Mexico during its revolutionary years is the testimony she rendered before the Fall

Committee. Her deposition provided not only crucial information about her trip to Mexico but also much needed leads to other documentary material on the subject, for example her published articles. Thus, Chapter III is mostly based on Agnes Laut's records in the files of Fall's Subcommittee. As much as consultation of the files of the National Association for the Protection of American Rights in Mexico would have completed the research, I was not able to locate them. Another set of missing material is that documenting Laut's personal involvement with the religious movement of united churches that ultimately were to administer her charity project.[3]

Concerning Laut's efforts to launch a humanitarian program to relieve Mexico's social problems, my attempt to examine her specific role, her discursive arguments, and her strategic actions relies exclusively on the National Civic Association's records in New York, in particular the files on both Mexico and Laut. These documents support a considerable part of Chapter IV, along with news reports from several U.S. newspapers such as the *New York Times*.

Agnes Laut's published articles on Mexico (1919-1921) provide facts about her trip, as well as information regarding her perceptions of the Revolution itself. Those texts complement Chapters III and IV, while articles discussing Mexican issues published between 1913 and 1916

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[3] Agnes Laut envisioned the cooperation of Protestant and Catholic churches in both Mexico and the U.S. to carry out her humanitarian project in Mexico. See "Investigation of Mexican Affairs", United States Senate, Subcommittee of the Committee of Foreign Affairs, Monday, September 15, 1919, p. 378. She specifically refers to the Latin American Division of the Interchurch World Movement as the ideal organization for this mission. The Interchurch World Movement of North America (1919-1920) was an attempt by thirty U.S. Protestant Denominations to raise funds in order to fulfill missionary and humanitarian world programs. See Eldon Ernst, "The Interchurch World Movement of North America, 1919-1920" (New Haven: Yale University PhD Dissertation, 1968).

in the journal *Forum* under her editorial supervision are fundamental sources for Chapter II. The data concerning historical context (Chapter I) and Laut' s biography (Chapter II) are based on secondary sources.

Finding first hand information about Laut' s endeavours in Mexico was difficult during the preliminary stages of this research project. The aid of my supervisor, Prof. Catherine LeGrand, led me to contact Prof. Valerie Legge of Memorial University in Newfoundland. Professor Legge, who has devoted her career to studying the life and literary work of Agnes Laut, provided me with invaluable information on primary sources about Laut' s Mexican adventure. My research is indebted to Prof. Legge.

Above all, I owe much to Prof. Catherine LeGrand, chair of McGill' s History Department and a professional in Latin American history. Her interest, patience, suggestions, editing, and advice made this work possible.

A fundamental part of this research was funded by McGill' s Faculty of Arts. The Arts Graduate Student Travel Award allowed me to do research in New York City, where the National Civic Association Records are found. This thesis, as well as my M.A. studies at McGill University, were partially funded by a fee waiver granted by the *Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport of the Province of Quebec*, as part of its bilateral agreement with the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores de México*).

Finally, the life changing and intellectually enriching experience of studying abroad would never have been possible without the absolute support of the entire Jiménez family. I want to close this foreword with two very affectionate and sincere acknowledgments: first, to my uncle Gabriel Jiménez who unconditionally backed this project of mine in every

possible way, and last to my friends Mercedes González and Hugo Olivares who helped me during the last phase of this process.

CHAPTER I

The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1917: Internal Questioning and External Strains

In his celebrated compilation of essays, *El laberinto de la soledad,* Octavio Paz defines Mexican history as a dialectical clash between periods of openness and periods of introspection.[4] Published for the first time in 1950, the text can be considered as a cultural expression of the nationalist policies enforced by Mexico, and most Latin American countries, since the 1930s, as well as a clear example of the chief intellectual worry of the moment: the quest for the true national self, for "*mexicanidad*". The poet regards the interaction of Mexico with the world beyond national boundaries, and its receptiveness to foreign influences, as a way of putting a mask on the "authentic" Mexican self. This self-repression, according to Paz, can not be bottled up forever: it inevitably explodes in a spontaneous, and often violent, fashion that turns attention from the outside world to an internal questioning.

The history of Mexico after the definitive break with Spain in 1821 followed a painful path of national consolidation; the diverse and opposed projects developed by factions in confrontation were inspired by external models of political organization, economic administration, and

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[4] The book consists of nine essays that reflect upon multiple aspects of Mexican identity. Although national history is addressed throughout the work, the historical analysis is mostly concentrated in chapters five and six: "Conquest and Colonial Life" and "From Independence to Revolution". Octavio Paz, *El laberinto de la soledad,* (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1981), pp. 81-134. This collection of essays was published in English under the title *The Labyrinth of Solitude* by Grove Press (New York) in 1961.

cultural trends. The chaotic first half century of independent life finally devolved into the long lasting dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1910).

Díaz' s pragmatic administration had a clear goal and followed particular strategies to achieve it. In order to include Mexico in the admired clique of modern, industrialized nations, stable conditions and financial soundness were required. Based on an imported positivist philosophy and carried out with the influx of foreign capital combined with the underpaid labour of the Mexican workforce, the Porfirian project benefited both a small Mexican oligarchy and external investors. The marginalization of the incipient middle class and the vast lower layers of society, however, provoked, in the early twentieth century, the abrupt crumbling of the Díaz regime.

Porfirio Díaz was forced out of power in 1911, after less than a year of armed revolt. The violent movement that focused its demands on political reforms gave the cue to multiple actors who sought social and economic improvements. With the end of the Díaz regime, a devastating civil war that would last more than ten years was inaugurated. If the Mexican nineteenth century appears as an attempt to imitate and welcome foreign concepts, capital, and settlers, the Revolution can be perceived, in Octavio Paz' s words, as "a sudden dip of Mexico into its own self. […] Our Revolution is Mexico' s other face, the one that was ignored by the *Reforma* and humiliated by the Dictatorship. […] With whom does Mexico bond? With itself, with its own self" .[5]

Octavio Paz certainly identifies Mexico' s perennial tension between internal balance and external thrusts; however, this interaction must

[5] Paz, p. 134. The translation is mine.

not be thought of as the contraposition of two distinct facets. On the contrary, the revolutionary impetus to express and solve internal conflicts was decisively affected by the relationship with the exterior. The contrasting presence of the outside element was vital to the quest for self recognition and identity. Moreover, this explosive exercise of introspection was not an experience that concerned only Mexico; it had effects upon the outer world and took place within specific international contexts that influenced its development. In sum, the Mexican Revolution was not, could not have been, an absolute enclosure.

The connections between Revolutionary Mexico and the world beyond its territory were, at the same time, heterogeneous and closely tied to one another. Financial interests oriented diplomatic stances; scientific and literary works enhanced the penetration of foreign investment; and educational projects tried to close the socio-cultural gaps that resulted from these business ventures.

Indeed, the multiple contacts between Mexico and the outside show different dimensions and constant reconfigurations. The nature of the Revolution itself imbued these interactions with diverse shades: the broad range of revolutionary factions and programs, as well as the ever changing balance of power called for different strategies of adapting to the context. Specific regional conditions also played an important part in these relations. The weight of distinct foreign nationalities in Mexico varied depending on geographical locations, economic activities and cultural relations. Finally, the international juncture, marked by the First World War, had a prominent influence on the external response to the Mexican issue.

The Shock of 1910

The year 1910 marked the centennial commemoration of the start of the Mexican war of Independence from Spain. In the eyes of Porfirio Díaz, the celebration was the ideal showcase to display the country's material progress to the world. In fact, what the ruler had to do was simply confirm the generalized perception of Mexico shared by the international powers at the time. During his three decades of de facto control, Díaz had cleverly managed to transform the negative image of Mexico into an optimistic one.

Back in 1876, when General Díaz first took the presidency, he inherited a chaotic economic situation: public employees were not receiving their salaries; public works had been stopped due to the shortage of funding; smuggling activities had increased, while foreign trade diminished; the small Mexican group of entrepreneurs was uneasy because of constant rumours of tax hikes; and the Republic had unpaid debts with several countries, mainly Great Britain, Spain, France, and the United States.[6] The quick consolidation of Don Porfirio's political power enabled him to launch policies aiming to order public finances, mainly by drastically reducing expenses.

Hoping that this stability and order would attract the foreign investment needed to build infrastructure, Díaz confronted the debt issue. The Díaz administration astutely negotiated Mexico's outstanding debts with Great Britain and Spain. His forceful attitude not only

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6 Stephen Bodayla, "Financial Diplomacy." PhD diss., New York University, 1975, p. 10.

accomplished the significant reduction of the debt but also projected the image of security needed obtain new international loans.[7]

The official program of modernizing through foreign capital was in motion. The creation of infrastructure was a priority of the regime, and, thus, a special effort fomenting investment in that area was carried out by granting concessions, promoting the exploitation of the country's natural resources, and lowering taxes. This open-door policy achieved its goal of providing Mexico with basic infrastructure, the railroad system being of utmost importance.

At the same time, the possibility of moving throughout Mexico on the newly built railroads encouraged foreigners, fundamentally U.S. natives, to explore the country as tourists, missionaries, and scientific researchers. Their publications, which attracted a broad readership, tended to highlight the picturesque cultural peculiarities encountered. They also surveyed the actual state of foreign business in Mexico, affirmed its positive nature, and informed of potential fields for investment. In particular, the authors from the United States "focused great attention on the supposed benefits that U.S. capital and American know-how brought to Mexico and were not shy in explaining in substantial detail why Mexico needed the United States' guidance and its expertise in order to modernize."[8]

The conviction that the presence of external elements in Mexico would not only bring profit to the outsiders but also would mean betterment for the host nation was shared by foreigners and the Díaz government. Díaz sought to match his open investment policy with an open

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[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

[8] Gilbert González, *Culture of Empire: American Writers, Mexico and Mexican Immigrants*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), p. 47.

migration policy. Whether attracted by official migratory schemes or by the favourable conditions for investment, the arrival of external elements was indeed welcomed.

Spanish investors were the major foreign presence in Diaz's Mexico.[9] Despite Mexican resentment against this community because of their association with the colonial era, the integration of Spaniards was easier due to sharing a common language, religion, and cultural practices. Assimilation to the host country was not that simple for other foreign communities.

By the start of the twentieth century, the British colony living in Mexico totalled 2,799 people: ten years later, at the time of the revolutionary outburst, the number had risen to 5,274. In terms of investment, a big chunk of British capital invested in Mexico went into the railroads. Other enterprises that attracted British investment were public services, mining, real estate, public debt, banking, and oil. In terms of social interaction, the British community led a somewhat isolated life in Mexico: in Mexico City, they had their own social spaces the British Club, the Christ Church, the Sports Club, and the British Society, and established relations only with the Mexican elite.[10]

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[9] Pablo Yankelevich, "Hispanofobia y revolución", *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 86:1 (2006), p. 32. For statistics on the nationalities and the investing fields of foreigners in Mexico in the last years of the *Porfiriato*, see also Moisés González Navarro's article "Xenofobia y Xenofilia en la Revolución Mexicana," *Historia Mexicana*, 18:72, April-June 1969, pp. 569-614.

[10] Lorenzo Meyer, *Su Majestad Británica contra la Revolución Mexicana*, (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1991), pp. 61-62. In a similar way, the U.S. colony in *Porfirian* Mexico consolidated an enclosed community. William Schell studies U.S. associations in Mexico (social clubs, hospitals, and religious organizations) in Chapter IV of his book *Integral Outsiders: The American Colony in Mexico City, 1876-1911* (Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 2001).

As important as British investment was in Porfirian Mexico, US capital surpassed it. The US presence in Mexico at the end of the twentieth century's first decade was varied and numerous:

> The influx of American emigrants, which exceeded 3,000 each year in the early 1900s, alarmed a growing number of Mexicans. The foreigners came as property owners, businessmen, miners, petroleum engineers, railroad workers, farmers, and ranchers. By 1910, more than 40,000 Americans resided in Mexico. Most colonists chose rural settings, but significant numbers, perhaps 20,000, opted to live in cities and towns.[11]

This flow of US business to Mexico illustrates that, come 1910, the relationship between foreign entrepreneurs and the Mexican regime was as sweet as ever; and there was nothing but optimism and generalized confidence concerning their business in the country.[12]

The 1910 celebration of the first hundred years of Mexico's formal independence was an event that underscored for the international community this positive perception of the country. This commemoration, however, was not the only incident that sketched Mexico's image in the eyes of the world on the eve of the revolution. Almost simultaneously, in 1909, a series of articles that would depict quite a different picture of Porfirian Mexico were published in *The American Magazine*.

John Kenneth Turner's *Barbarous Mexico* contested the general image of Porfirio Díaz as a ruler popularly admired for his endeavors to establish order and progress in Mexico. Instead, "Turner's articles

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[11] John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 271.

[12] For more information about the economic and cultural role of the U.S. colony in Mexico during the *Porfiriato*, see Schell, *Integral Outsiders*.

described the superficiality of Mexico's alleged peace and prosperity and the misery and misfortune of the common man at whose expense, in Turner's view, Díaz had created his 'modern' and 'progressive' state. Moreover, Turner implicated American business interests and the United States government in the sordid situation he described." [13] Widely read and favourably reviewed by the U.S. press, the articles brought up a debate that encouraged Díaz's supporters to put into printed word their point of view.

The other Anglo-power highly involved in Mexico, Great Britain, also showed a reaction to journalistic accounts. The same year that Turner's articles appeared, Arnold Channing and Frederick Frost published the text *The American Egypt*, in which they narrated their travels through the Yucatan Peninsula. The authors argued that the labour system on Yucatecan plantations was equivalent to a slave system. This work provoked public rejection and protest from British anti-slavery societies who successfully pushed the British Ambassador in Mexico, reluctantly, to inform the Mexican government of his country's objection to peonage labour systems. [14]

By the end of the Porfiriato, the work of foreign journalists laid bare Mexico's extreme social inequalities. Mexican nationalist discourse did something similar: "Mexican critics noted that the benefits of industrialization were going principally, if not entirely, to the Americans and a handful of rich Mexicans. The opposition saw the small group of Mexicans who made up the nation's economic and political

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[13] Tommie Sessions, "American Reformers and the Mexican Revolution: Progressives and Woodrow Wilson's Policy in Mexico, 1913-1917," PhD diss., American University, 1974, p. 47.

[14] Meyer, p. 92.

elite as 'sellouts'." [15] Despite the evident, increasing hostility toward foreigners in Mexico, no one within the foreign community expected the eruption of a social revolution. In a way, their disbelief in a popular insurrection -- despite the increasing nationalist feeling -- proved to be correct.

The spark that initiated the collapse of the regime of Porfirio Díaz was not lit by peasants or exploited workers, though these groups quickly raised their voices following the revolutionary call. Francisco I. Madero, a prosperous landowner from the northern Mexican province of Coahuila, candidly dared to face Díaz. Expressing the discontent of an emerging middle class that had benefited economically from the regime's policies but lacked political representation, Madero ran in the 1910 presidential election against General Díaz.[16]

Despite his old age and the generalized anxiety, in Mexico and abroad, about securing a peaceful transference of power, Díaz refused to step aside. The dictator ordered Madero's temporary arrest. After his release, the "Apostle of Democracy", as Madero was later to be popularly known, fled to the U.S., but not before launching a revolutionary program, the Plan de San Luis, in which he called on Mexicans to rebel against the decadent patriarch.

The response to Madero's appeal to start the uprising on November 20, 1910 was a true disappointment, but surprisingly, support mounted

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[15] Hart, p. 272.

[16] The Mexican Revolution, as previously stated, is a complicated process that, in this thesis, will be partially covered. For more information on the Mexican Revolution see the series *Historia de la Revolución Mexicana* (México, D.F., El Colegio de México). This compilation is formed by 23 volumes -- written during the past two decades by prominent Mexican historians such as Luis González y González, Berta Ulloa, Enrique Krauze, and Álvaro Matute -- that analyze Mexico's contemporary history (from the beginning of the revolutionary movement to the 1960s).

gradually and ultimately the revolution exploded. The conflict unleashed by Madero would outlast the abdication of Porfirio Díaz and would reconfigure Mexican society from its very foundations. Not less importantly, the decade of civil war that followed would also disrupt the international love affair with Mexico and challenge the interaction between this country and external forces. The revolutionary introspective reaction, expressed in nationalistic terms, was necessarily paired with hostility towards the foreign element.

"Tan lejos de Dios y tan cerca de los Estados Unidos" [17]

Great Britain, Spain, and France were undoubtedly concerned about the Mexican conflict; all these nations not only had financial interests and profitable enterprises at stake, but fellow nationals also demanded protection and saw their lives threatened by the violence. Although these countries' diplomatic representatives played a significant role in providing both official and monetary support to the revolutionary groups each considered the most suitable to look after their interests, the nation whose response to the Revolution was decisive was the "Colossus of the North", the United States.

Despite occasional disagreements between the European powers and the U.S. regarding Mexican policy [18], some European countries rallied around the United States, seeking help to solve their own grievances

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[17] This is an anonymous and popular Mexican quote that emphasizes the historically difficult relationship between Mexico and the U.S. A literal translation of the complete phrase would read: "Poor Mexico, so far from God and so close to the United States".

[18] The main disagreement between European governments and the U.S. concerning diplomatic stances towards Mexican revolutionary governments occurred during the *Huertista* period. *See* pp. 23-24.