

Mexico and the United States
in the Oil Controversy, 1917-1942
by Lorenzo Meyer

Translated by Muriel Vasconcellos



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Note on the English Edition

A sharp reader, on comparing the second Spanish edition with the present one, would find here and there differences that are the result not of translation but of interpretation. The reason is that since I wrote the book I have been dealing with problems of Mexico's recent history, and I could not resist the temptation to modify some of my previous ideas about the political processes that constitute the background of the oil controversy between Mexico and the United States. However, there has been no alteration in regard to the facts and interpretations of the controversy itself. A second but important group of changes has been the result of the zealous and sensitive translation of Muriel Vasconcellos, who found some errors and inconsistencies in the Spanish edition. She also decided very wisely to present a chart listing the main diplomatic actors of the drama in order to save the reader from unnecessary mistakes and confusions (see Appendix).

I am quite aware that there is no possibility of objectivity in the social sciences and that this is especially true in a study like this one, involving the relationship of a strong nation and its weak neighbor. The study of the U.S.-Mexican relationship has been a very emotional one on the Mexican side. I have tried to be as objective as I could, but I am quite aware that the oil controversy—which for me is important because it shows the distinctive characteristics of the unequal relations between the two countries—is presented here from the Mexican side. Nevertheless, I hope that the sense of balance is still sufficiently strong to allow foreign readers to form their own opinions about this event of contemporary history.

This book does not pretend to be the "definitive work" on the nationalization of the Mexican oil industry. There are still possibilities of exploring new fields through the analysis of the oil companies' archives; the memoirs of or interviews with former managers or employees of the companies, as well as any of the other actors; and diplomatic archives of other nations that had some interest in the exploitation of Mexico's oil. However, I am confident that the reader of this book is being presented with the central themes and basic facts of the problem.

Mexico City, 1976

