Foreword

The Mexican Revolution, now past its fiftieth year, is an established historical fact. It has had many successes, despite frustrating obstacles to the attainment of the broad goals its leaders have set. A remarkable political system has achieved stability and an economic system has been painfully devised to produce an increasing volume of goods and services for a rapidly expanding population. The Mexican nation has made notable contributions in artistic and intellectual realms. In short, Mexico has achieved many of the aspirations common to what now are termed "newly emergent" countries, whose present is not unlike the Mexican past.

In this study of Mexico's recent history, James Wilkie separates social development from economic, and asks how successive presidents have allotted federal revenues to achieve change in different ideological phases of the Revolution. He analyzes the rate and direction of social change, using as measures the stated national goals: elimination of poverty, illiteracy, and malnutrition. Wilkie's methods, I think, are adaptable to the analysis of other emergent countries in their course toward similar goals.

The first problem that Wilkie set for himself was an analysis of Mexican national budgets as indicators of the actual, rather than the projected, amounts spent to alleviate poverty. As one who some years ago attempted the same thing, I can attest to the difficulties the author has faced and the unseen amount of drudgery that lies behind his revealing tables.¹ Merely to glean actual expenditures from scattered sources, much less to reduce them to a common measure (as Wilkie has done) is a tremendous task.

¹ Howard F. Cline, *Mexico: Revolution to Evolution, 1940-1960* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 237-241.

Equally impressive is his analysis of these figures as allotted to various fields by each president. Here the "style" of the various presidents emerges, as does the fact that, until Lázaro Cárdenas, negligible sums were apportioned for the social benefits long promised by the Constitution of 1917. Quite striking is the rate at which Cárdenas's successors exceeded his pioneering efforts, both relatively and in the aggregate. It may come as a shock to the detractors of Miguel Alemán, for example, to note the remarkable results his policies achieved in the social field.

The second part of this volume charts the heartbreakingly slow process of upgrading a whole society, virtually decapitated during the violent phases of the Revolution (1910–1917). Wilkie's main device—a Poverty Index—is an innovation. He explains it sufficiently to obviate summary here. The Index can be extended and its trajectories statistically gauged as later figures become available, especially at decennial census intervals. Whatever its limitations, the Index does give us one measure of how the national investment in social improvement has produced net gains in welfare, even in the face of a population explosion.

To the historical elements treated in Part I, Wilkie adds geographical elements in Part II by applying the Poverty Index to the regions of Mexico. In common with other investigators (like myself), he found that the statistical regions into which Mexican officials traditionally have divided the Republic are inadequate for socio-historical research; hence he had to devise subdivisions that are historically more coherent and likely to yield more valid findings.²

The application of the Poverty Index to regional units (again a massive and arduous series of calculations) reveals not only the general gains but the depth of penetration of the Mexican Revolution's social aspects in various parts of the Republic. Important inferences can immediately be drawn from his summary Table 9–11: all regions have improved since 1940, and a majority have accelerated their rates of such improvement over the decade 1950–1960. The same table provides an interesting statistic for the

² Howard F. Cline, *The United States and Mexico* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), pp. 88–111; Cline, *Mexico*, pp. 49–59. Wilkie's scheme provides more regional units, especially in the North and Central portions.

students of urbanization: the Federal District, the recipient of the bulk of internal migrants, remained static.

Wilkie's data and conclusions have wide-ranging implications. What will be the future policy for expenditures on social change? Wilkie has indicated that substantial outlays of funds now over a relatively extended period are making visible if still only modest progress. But, as he stresses, the widespread feeling that their government continues to strive to achieve the goals of the Revolution satisfies most Mexicans.

Beyond the statistical matters I have stressed here, readers will find much that is new and exciting in this study. In the course of his research, the author interviewed many participants in the Revolution and its governments. Their frank and often revealing remarks about how Mexico is governed form a contribution in themselves.

Anyone interested in present-day Mexico and documented social change can profitably read and enjoy this work.

Howard F. Cline

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