

**The Dilemma of Revolution and  
Stabilisation: Mexico and the  
European Powers in the Obregón-  
Calles Era, 1920-28**

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*To my loving parents Ana María García López† and Miguel Toledo Velázquez, whose commitment to knowledge and education has been a source of inspiration throughout my academic journey.*

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## **Abstract**

This thesis seeks to offer a comparative analysis of Mexican-European Powers relations from 1920 to 1928. These were dominated by the dilemma of revolution and stabilisation. While the Mexican governments of Adolfo de la Huerta, Álvaro Obregón and Plutarco Elías Calles were committed to defend the national revolutionary programme, embedded in the Constitution of 1917, they also wanted to continue the modernisation project of the country, for which foreign economic interests and intellectual discussions on modernity, social democracy and national identity were primordial. For their part, German, French and British governments needed to weigh whether to defend their economic and cultural presence with regard to revolutionary Mexico and the disruptions caused by the Great War, by having friendly relations, accepting the new conditions or pressuring to reverse changes. Besides, the contact between Mexico and the European Powers was profoundly influenced by the new international reconfiguration in which the United States, Soviet Russia and the League of Nations played a prominent role.

The ways in which politicians, diplomats, businessmen, intellectuals, artists and journalists worked to improve bilateral links in regards to politics, economy and culture will be presented. This will be achieved through a diplomatic history approach and taking into consideration the interactions of international relations.

The thesis first problematises the question of diplomatic recognition which was related to the negotiations of the debt, Article 27 of the Constitution and claims by foreigners. Afterwards, governmental and transnational efforts to increase economic relations are explored. These were as varied as the establishment of more consulates, the creation of chambers of commerce, and negotiations for new treaties of Amity, Commerce and Navigation. Lastly, diplomatic attempts to increase cultural understandings are discussed. These ranged over topics such as representations in the press, theatre and films, as well as cooperation in technical and military education.

## Introduction

The objective of this dissertation is to explore the relationship between Mexico and European Powers from 1920 to 1928. My hypothesis is that it was through the dilemma of revolution and stabilisation that these interactions took place. The period marks the aftermath of the armed struggle in the Mexican Revolution (1910-20), during which a major political issue became evident: the question of how to put into practice the Constitution of 1917, which expressed fundamental revolutionary goals. At the same time, Mexican governments had to find ways to re-establish stability at the national level and in international relations. Furthermore, the core challenge for Mexico's foreign policy remained, as it had in the nineteenth century, to discover how to balance the presence of economic and political interests of the United States with those from Great Britain, France and Germany. Those three European Powers along with the United States used to be the most important economic partners during the Porfirian regime and once the Mexican Revolution extended in 1913.<sup>1</sup> It could be questioned whether those three countries can be characterised as powers in the 1920s, I consider they should because these were the countries that defined the discussions and agendas of that continent and were a referent for the world. In the case of Mexico, these were the most powerful European countries concerning economy,

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<sup>1</sup> In 1876 Porfirio Díaz (1830-1915) gained power through the Tuxtepec revolt against President Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, who aimed to be re-elected. This was the beginning of the historical period known as the Porfiriato, which ended in 1911 when Díaz went into exile to Paris after losing against Madero's revolution that started in November 1910. Two were the presidents of this era: Porfirio Díaz (1876-1880 and 1884-1911) and Manuel González (1880-1884). The aim of the Porfiriato was to modernise the Mexican economy through foreign investment and the encouragement of a national industry, for which political order was necessary. Phrases such as "order and progress" and "more administration, fewer politics" are good examples of the goals and practices of this period. The revolution was due to various reasons: the regime grew old and new generations had almost no participation in politics, a new middle class arose, and economic interdependence with the US occurred with the increase of railways and trade, the system of the hacienda (enormous land properties) was strengthened, which implied bad living conditions for peasants, labour workers and the poor urban class. See Daniel Cosío Villegas, *Historia Moderna de México, El Porfiriato* (Mexico: Hermes, 1983) and Paul Garner, *Porfirio Díaz. Del héroe al dictador: una biografía política* (Mexico: Planeta, 2003).

politics and culture. Spain remained prominent for Mexico because of cultural affinity and the fact that many Spaniards and Mexicans with Spanish origin owned landed property implied that Mexico had to deal with Spanish diplomatic requests not to affect those agricultural interests. However, there was no Spanish business that could be attractive for its economy. Besides, Spain did not play a crucial role in European discussions. Other European nations such as Italy and Belgium were not as relevant for Mexico although they did play a stronger role in European discussions than Spain.

Russia, whether one considers it European, Asian or Eurasian, was of no relevance for Mexico in economic terms and politically the shadow of the Russian Revolution became a problem. While a friendly relation was desirable between the revolutionary governments, too much rapprochement could mean a challenge to foreign interests in Mexico and the stability of the country in the world stage. Internationally, the Russian Revolution was also a challenge. Among the European Powers, post-War Germany, itself isolated, was willing to have a political and economic rapprochement with Soviet Russia to challenge France and Great Britain. By its part, the British government extended recognition to Soviet Russia by 1924 in order to have fruitful economic links. However, it needed to be careful when dealing with a revolutionary government. For France, a German-Russian rapprochement became an important concern and led to cooperation with Weimar Germany by the second half of the 1920s.

Even if I use the generalisation of European Powers, I understand they cannot be ranked equally. While France and Great Britain continued to be imperial powers, Germany was not so anymore.<sup>2</sup> Besides, these powerful nations were facing reconstruction processes after the Great War, but as victors, the first two, and as the

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<sup>2</sup> On an interesting discussion of the use of the terminology of powers see Edward Keene, "The Naming of Powers", *Cooperation and Conflict*, 48: 2 (2013), pp. 268-282.

main loser, the latter. Great Britain, among the three European Powers the less affected in economic and political terms, had several changes in government from 1919 to 1929.<sup>3</sup> In that decade, the primary concern was to continue stability and sustain the Empire with the aim of maintaining its former international economic importance, for example through the League of Nations. In this sense, South America was important as it was in countries such as Argentina and Chile where British economic interests remained strong, but Mexico only represented a major economic concern in regards to oil during the first third of the 1920s in which the production continued to be important.

France had to recover after the war and in particular for the occupation of part of its territory by German troops. The Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations were seen as means of achieving reconstruction, along with maintaining good relations with Great Britain and the USA. During the Great War, Latin America had become less important in French political and economic calculations. In Mexico, the French government followed US diplomacy and encouraged French capital to collaborate with US and other European businessmen. For French diplomacy, it was primordial to maintain its presence in Asia and Africa. During the 1920s this trend did not change dramatically and only French cultural presence in Mexico was a major objective.

The case of Germany, at the time the Weimar Republic, was in some sense the most similar to Mexico. As the Great War was leading towards the triumph of the Allies, Germany passed through (a shorter) revolutionary process in 1918 and 1919, following the collapse of the Monarchy. As a consequence, in the 1920s the German

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<sup>3</sup> The coalition of Liberals and Conservatives led by David Lloyd George (December 1916-October 1922), Conservatives Andrew Bonar Law (October 1922-May 1923) and Stanley Baldwin (May 1923-January 1924), Labour Ramsay MacDonald in 1924, and Baldwin again from November 1924 to June 1929.

government needed to apply the goals of the revolutionary ideas in a social-democratic sense and foster social integration. However, in contrast to the Mexican Revolution, in Germany imperial elites remained as part of the political and economic systems since Social Democrats believed in change through reform so there was only a radical shift in the system of government: from monarchy to a democratic republic but not in the bureaucracy or army command.

Just to offer an example of similarities, both countries promoted a profound educative reform that intended to equalise opportunities for everyone, reduce the influence of the Church and prepare the people for a republican democratic life. For both countries, the radio was seen as a tool for education and they created national broadcasts: *Deutsche Welle* (1924-33) and the CZE-XFX (1924-37).<sup>4</sup>

An important difference was that Weimar Germany was not concerned with the question of recognition as Mexico was, but primarily with the impact of the Treaty of Versailles, which obligated it to pay the costs of war. Therefore, the Weimar Republic was being watched by the whole international community and did not join the League of Nations until 1926 (Mexico only entered in 1931). Hence, German and Mexican foreign policies shared the common goal of integrating their countries in the international scene.

In Latin America, Weimar Germany needed to restore diplomatic relations with those countries that joined the war supporting the cause of the Allies and breaking ties with the Central Powers. Moreover, those Latin American countries that joined the war confiscated many German properties and companies. Therefore, the Weimar Republic needed to restore its economic interests in the Americas. In this sense, it was necessary to improve political relations now being a country that had

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<sup>4</sup> Eugenia Roldán Vera, “Los orígenes de la radio educativa en México y Alemania: 1924-1935”, *Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa*, 14:40 (January-March 2009), pp. 17-19.

lost its imperial power and, as Stefan Rinke has demonstrated, also needed to find cultural affinities.

For its part, Mexico had just passed through a continuous revolutionary upheaval from November 1910 onwards, beginning with Francisco I. Madero's revolution (1910-13), Victoriano Huerta's counterrevolution (1913-14), Venustiano Carranza, Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata's counter-counterrevolution (1914-15) and Carranza's control of power (1915-20) while Villa and Zapata continued their insurgencies. In 1920, the Agua Prieta rebellion became the last such upheaval to achieve success in Mexico's modern history.<sup>5</sup> The rebellion was led by three Sonoran politicians: Adolfo de la Huerta (Interim President, May-November 1920), Álvaro Obregón (December 1920-November 1924) and Plutarco Elías Calles (December 1924-November 1928). This group rejected Carranza's decision to support Ignacio Bonillas (Mexican ambassador in Washington) in the presidential succession, instead of Obregón who had helped Carranza achieve power by winning important battles against other revolutionary groups. The Sonoran group represented the new bourgeoisie which had arisen in the last years of the Porfirian regime and obtained political power during the revolutionary years. Thereafter, it controlled power in Mexico until 1934.

In 1923, however, there was a division in the Sonoran group because Obregón supported Calles's presidential campaign instead of De la Huerta. In 1924, Calles's election was possible thanks to Obregón's military superiority against the *Delahuertista* rebellion which had 60% of senior officers on its side.<sup>6</sup> While the triumph of Obregón against De la Huerta showed that the new State was strong, it

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<sup>5</sup> Agua Prieta is a town in the north-western state of Sonora that shares 588 kilometres of border with the state of Arizona.

<sup>6</sup> Jürgen Buchenau, *Mexican Mosaic: A Brief History of Mexico*, (Wheeling, Illinois, Harlan Davidson, 2008), p. 93.

also highlighted that presidential successions continued to be an opportunity to question the legitimacy of power. The problem of legitimacy had been a constant issue since the nineteenth century. Since Independence from Spain in 1821 until the 1870s there were many internal problems caused by *caudillos'* revolts which did not accept the results of elections. Díaz seven re-elections had 'resolved' the problem on a *de facto* basis but the Mexican Revolution reactivated it.

A similar crisis occurred in 1928. On 1 July, Obregón won the presidential election, but he was assassinated on the 17 in the restaurant *La Bombilla* in Mexico City.<sup>7</sup> In order to solve the political crisis, one *obregonista* commission was installed to investigate who had killed the great *caudillo*. According to the commission, the *cristero* José de León Toral assassinated Obregón in order to prevent the continuation of the war against religion. This murder was said to have been projected by Concepción Acevedo de la Lata "Madre Conchita". Nonetheless, Calles continued to be accused of plotting Obregón's death.

With the object of resolving the problem of the presidential succession definitively, Calles used the political crisis as the opportunity to open a new period of the Revolution from 1928 onwards by establishing an official Party. The National Congress designated Emilio Portes Gil provisional President and the *Partido Nacional Revolucionario* / National Revolutionary Party (PNR) was created which led the basis for the era of institutionalisation of the Mexican Revolution. This party would be the institutional method of resolving the question of presidential succession but avoiding military interventions. At the same time, General José Gonzalo Escobar

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<sup>7</sup> In the elections for the new presidential period (1928-1932), Obregón presented his candidature through a change in the Constitution which did not allow for immediate re-election, but for re-election after another politician had been in charge of the executive power. Hence, a process of alternation in power was promoted.

called for a rebellion against President Portes Gil and Calles, whom he considered practically governed the country. However, the *escobarista* rebellion did not succeed.

The party had no clear ideological definition; the objective was to unify all revolutionaries so that those of the Left could work with those of the Right on the same platform. The aim was to incorporate peasants, the labour movement, middle classes and proprietors in one party.<sup>8</sup> After the Obregón-Calles era, the role of strong men was supposed to end and now the party would be the most important institution in Mexican politics. Nonetheless, from 1928 to 1936 when Calles was expelled by President Lázaro Cárdenas, Calles acted through a powerful position in the PNR and he was characterised as the *jefe máximo de la revolución/ maximum chief of the revolution* while there were three presidents: Emilio Portes Gil (provisional President from 1 December 1928 to 5 February 1930), Pascual Ortiz Rubio (5 February 1930- 2 September 1932) and the Sonoran Abelardo L. Rodríguez (4 September 1932-30 November 1934).<sup>9</sup>

Clearly, during the 1920s, European Powers and Mexico were in a period of national reconstruction. Besides, all encountered some form of threats of new rebellions at the national contexts. Mexico by other revolutionaries with the *Delahuertista* rebellion in 1923, Obregón's assassination in 1928 and the *escobarista* rebellion in 1929; Germany's inflation of 1923 and the problem of the Ruhr led to the coup done by Adolf Hitler in Munich in 1923; in France and Great Britain with resistance within their overseas Empires namely in Egypt, Iraq and India, and continued social conflict at home which increased with the Great Depression of 1929.

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<sup>8</sup> This party, with changes in the name and organisational structure, was in power for seventy-one years (1929-2000), and then only twelve years as the opposition (2000-12), and again in power (2012-18).

<sup>9</sup> Buchenau accepts Calles's political importance, but also demonstrates that the three Presidents were not his puppets and made the most of Calles's absence in the capital. See Jürgen Buchenau, "Plutarco Elias Calles and the Maximato in Revolutionary Mexico: A Reinterpretation", *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Lateinamerikas*, 43 (2006), pp. 229-253.

Moreover, all of these countries needed to restore economic stability and at least recover the rhythm of international economic relations that had been achieved from the late nineteenth century until the conflicts of the 1910s started. Consequently, it is valuable to explore how the revolutionary governments of the Obregón-Calles era dealt with European Powers and vice versa.

This thesis will do the analysis from a diplomatic history approach with the goal of understanding efforts to improve relations and the ways in which a country portrays itself in the international arena. While looking at the efforts done by different branches of governments, international organisations and private actors, for example businesspeople or intellectuals, would be ideal for understanding international relations, I shall concentrate on the endeavours by diplomats and non-official actors which were related to foreign offices. Hence, alongside diplomatic historians, I have

discarded the traditional conception of the state as an autonomous actor in history—long the underlying assumption of most traditional diplomatic history—in favour of a redefinition of the state as a political entity that is originally and inextricably linked to the larger society over which it exercises authority.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, like the members of the Network of New Diplomatic History (NNDH), I consider “the study of individuals and groups of individuals who perform diplomatic roles [official and non -official actors], rather than at international relations as a whole”.<sup>11</sup>

The nodal point of this thesis is Mexico’s foreign policy towards the European Powers. I am conscious that taking a “national” approach to understand international relations can be reductive in focus and can tend to a unilateral perspective, but this will not be the case since I shall try to balance information from various points of view. As Marc Trachtenberg explained

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<sup>10</sup> William R. Keylor, “The Problems and Prospects of Diplomatic/International History”, *H-Diplo Essay* No. 126, 10 April 2015 [<https://networks.h-net.org/system/files/contributed-files/e126.pdf> accessed 24 January 2016, p. 7.]

<sup>11</sup> New Diplomatic History “About” [<http://newdiplomatichistory.org/about/> accessed 24 January 2016]. The emphasis is mine.

The key to understanding international politics is to see it as an active process- to understand that what one state does is very heavily influenced by what other states do, that foreign policy is not something that just well up from deep within a society, but rather is to be understood in terms of the environment in which a country finds itself.<sup>12</sup>

However, I will cover in more detail Mexican history than European history in the 1920s for constraints of space and time, and also because I am writing this thesis in the United Kingdom where there is a general historical understanding of European history but not of Mexico. If I had written this thesis in Mexico, I would have done it the other way around. In the following sections, I will familiarise the reader with the relevant puzzles of Mexican-European Powers relations in the 1920s which I shall explore in more depth throughout the thesis.

### *Recognition and constraint*

In order to succeed with national reconstruction after the tumultuous years of conflict, having international relations was primordial as a source of political legitimacy and economic resources. Hence, the Sonora group rapidly encountered the challenge of obtaining international recognition and assuring diplomatic relations were maintained, although the Agua Prieta rebellion had led to President Carranza's overthrow and death.

Recognition was perceived as essential, not only because it reinforced governmental power and access to armament, but it also assured businesspeople that it was safe to remain in Mexico and it could encourage foreign capital to invest in the country. Nevertheless, foreign governments needed to be certain that there was political stability to offer recognition. The problem for Mexican foreign policy was

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<sup>12</sup> Marc Trachtenberg, "The State of International History, 9 March 2013 [<http://www.e-ir.info/2013/03/09/the-state-of-international-history/> accessed 20 January 2016].

how to demonstrate that political stability had been achieved in order to be recognised as legitimate at the national level and conversely be able to assure economic recovery.

After ten years of revolution, foreigners' claims had increased because they had been robbed of their properties, money, products, cattle, machinery and sometimes even lost their lives. In this context, capital fled from Mexico and many Europeans sold their assets to US citizens while European governments focused on the 1914-18 war instead of maintaining their economic positions in Latin America. Besides, at the beginning of the 1920s, there was economic devastation in the sector of raw materials while oil, in the hands of US, British and Dutch businessmen, became very productive.

Hence, in the 1920s it was urgent to reorganise the economy. The goal was to establish continuity of the modernisation project started during the Porfirian regime, which had increased productivity in industrial and agro-export sectors. This was complicated because the Sonorans were obliged to take into consideration that the Constitution of 1917 reflected the objectives and aspirations of Mexican economic nationalists who sought better conditions for labour, more control over subsoil resources, and a fair distribution of land. All of these revolutionary goals seemed to put foreign interests under risk. This was strengthened by the fact that while the armed conflict took place (1910-1920) it was common for revolutionaries to criticise the Díaz administration's "blind" position toward foreigners, especially the intense foreign presence in all economic sectors through which the "fatherland was being sold", for example by foreign companies owning and exploiting subsoil, foreign workers obtaining better wages, foreigners owning huge properties and exploiting peasants.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> For example, it was the Spanish who had the biggest land interests as they were landlords and estate managers of large properties, which were located in the regions of high tension: Morelos and central

The governments of the US and European Powers were aware of the relevance international recognition had for the Sonora group to consolidate their control of power. In the thesis, I will explore how the US, France and Great Britain used this opportunity to ask for conditions to offer recognition, something the German government did not ask for. These pressures recall the challenges faced by Díaz in order to attain recognition in 1876-78, which I will explain in detail in Chapter 1, and which led to the Porfirian strategy to balance the political power and economic presence of the US with stable relations with Europe and European investment in the sectors of railways, mining, oil industry, the banking system and trade.

The tensions caused by the lack of recognition from 1920 to 1923 implied that the Sonoran group had to defend its position in power and refuse conditioned recognition or offences to its national sovereignty. It also opened the question of whether to repeat the Porfirian strategy of finding a counterbalance to the US. However, the options were not realistic as Germany, which recognised Obregón in August 1921 after Spain and Italy had also done it, was not robust enough to counterweight the US and any other European Power was not willing to challenge its hegemony in the Americas. Looking to replace European Powers with another actor such as the Soviet Union or Japan was neither economically viable. Hence, the new strategy would become to diversify relations as much as possible which will be explained in Chapter 1.

### *The controversial nature of geopolitics*

Revolutionary Mexico faced various challenges in order to form part of the international scene. It was the first country in the world to experience a social

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Mexico. Alan Knight, *U.S.-Mexican Relations, 1910-1940* (San Diego, California, Center for U.S. Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1987), p. 57.

revolution in the twentieth century; hence, the decisions of Mexican revolutionary governments could settle precedents for other nations regarding property rights, banking systems, subsoil, etc. Additionally, the Russian Revolution led to a paranoia against revolutionary governments, not differentiating whether these were liberal reforms or socialist attempts. Therefore, the Western Hemisphere was cautious when dealing with Post-Revolutionary Mexico.

In the newly reconfigured world, revolutionary Mexico did not represent a primordial problem such as revolutionary Russia that aimed to extend its programme. However, the US was deeply concerned with the situation in its neighbour Mexico. Apart from challenging particular economic interests, it could be the door for communism to enter into US territory.

Mexico's geopolitical importance also resided in being a transition route between the Atlantic and the Pacific. During the Great War, the US government was preoccupied by the idea of a Japanese station on Mexican territory. However, it was never materialised. Similarly, nothing came of Carranza's approach to the Japanese as a counterbalance to American influence. Consequently, in the 1920s, the US paid close attention to Mexican-Japanese relations and to the rise of Japan. It was even able to persuade the British government to dissolve the Japan-UK naval alliance (1902-23) in the Pacific Rim.

In the 1920s, Mexican governments needed to accept US gigantic presence in the Mexican economy and politics by being able to support revolts and condition recognition. European Powers for their part, had to decide if they would accept the hegemonic role of the US or try to remake their economic and political presence, diminished during the armed conflicts in the 1910s. Challenging the US in Mexico offered a way of stopping US expansion throughout the Americas. In some countries,

especially in the Southern cone such as Argentina and Chile, Europeans had major economic influence. Even when the governments of the US decided to remain isolated with respect to the entry to the League of Nations, it had passed from just being a debtor country to a creditor one and had a tradition of increasing its hegemonic power in the Americas.

Through the Monroe Doctrine (1823) the USA had sought to discourage any European military intervention which might result in a neo-colonial tutelage in the Americas. This Doctrine accompanied the idea of a Manifest Destiny that aimed for territorial expansion. The rise of the USA to the hegemonic power in the Americas began with the acquisition of half of the territory of Mexico (1848) and the protectorate over the Philippines, Cuba and Puerto Rico (1899), all as a consequence of the Spanish-America war (1898). President Theodore Roosevelt added a corollary to the Monroe Doctrine in December 1904, affirming “U.S. responsibility for warding off threats of European intervention in the Western Hemisphere and for taking corrective action whenever Latin Americans reneged on international debts, in which case he prescribed the use of preventive intervention.”<sup>14</sup> Besides in the 1900s and 1910s the United States engineered the separation of Panama from Colombia (1903), and undertook interventions in Haiti (1915), the Dominican Republic (1916) and Nicaragua (1926). During the 1910s Mexico felt its territorial sovereignty in danger various times with the presence of US warships in the shores and more explicitly with the intervention of the port of Veracruz in 1914, the most important port since the colonial period, and in 1916/17 with the Pershing expedition that was looking for Pancho Villa after he attacked Columbus, New Mexico.

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<sup>14</sup> Mark T. Gilderhus, “The Monroe Doctrine: Meanings and Implications”, *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 36:1 (March 2006), pp.10-11.

It is worth mentioning that the Monroe Doctrine was included in the Peace Conference in Paris – mentioned in Article 21 of the Covenant of the League – although Mexico expressed its opposition because “the [Mexican] Government has not recognized and will not recognize the Monroe Doctrine or any other doctrine that attacks the sovereignty and independence of Mexico.”<sup>15</sup> This had been done with the idea of securing the US’s entry into the League of Nations, which did not happen. Hence, in the 1920s members of the League, for example France and Great Britain, were expected to recognise US hegemony in Latin America. But Germany, not being a member of the League until 1926, did not have any responsibility to accept it. Comparing Mexican-European Powers links reveals how the Great War changed the relation of European Powers towards the Americas in a broader transatlantic context. Did Germany, France and Great Britain attempt to play important roles for Mexico? If so, in which areas?

### *Revolutionary Mexico and economic reconstruction*

Mexico is a country benefitting from large natural resources; Alexander von Humboldt had talked about the vast natural resources of New Spain which was the “joya de la corona” the jewel of the crown and this had impelled many Europeans to view this country as a land of economic opportunities for them. In the 1910s, Mexico became the second producer of oil worldwide, just after the US, and it was only after 1923 that its production descended. Oil was relevant for the “roaring twenties” around the world and it in the hands of the US could mean even stronger strategically significant power.

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<sup>15</sup> Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs to certain governments in Philip Marshall Brown “Mexico and the Monroe Doctrine”, *The American Journal of International Law*, 26:1 (January 1932), p.117.

At the same time, the Constitution of 1917 granted the Mexican government more control over the exploitation of oil by reaffirming the Spanish colonial legal tradition which specified that subsoil deposits belonged to the Crown; in this context, the Mexican national state could offer concessions to private interests for them to exploit, but the subsoil was property of the Mexican nation. European governments needed to decide how to protect their economic interests in this context, should the British government defend private oil interests from the application of Article 27 even when the company *El Águila* was not anymore in the hands of British magnate Weetman Pearson but of the Royal Dutch Shell Company?

While German and French governments and industrialists had no interest in Mexican oil, nationals from both countries faced rivalry against US businessmen in the areas of commerce, the banking system, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, energy and others. Some areas were of the interest of European citizens living in Mexico who had established some business in the country, and others of Europeans who lived in their respective countries and invested capital or installed branches of their companies in Mexico. Hence, the French and German governments had to decide if they would try to maintain their economic interests. While taking these questions into consideration the European governments were not solely thinking about their bilateral relations, they had to consider their presence in Latin America, the risk of hearing complaints from the US, but also ponder that the other European countries could benefit if they did not achieve good relations. What was more important: economic interests or national pride?

### *Changing perceptions and self-perception of Mexico in the 1920s*

As a consequence of the Mexican Revolution, the issue arose, as it had at Independence, of establishing what Mexico was, what it meant to be Mexican, and what the Mexican State represented. All these questions were worked on during the 1920s and 1930s. This was evident with the creation of a strong national identity for which a cultural enterprise was fundamental. The Mexican cultural project faced the puzzle of being Mexican while being Western. Being Mexican was being revolutionary, a parallel process to the Soviet programme, though not identical at all.

In this national cultural project, the chief “director of orchestra” was José Vasconcelos, especially during Obregón’s administration.<sup>16</sup> Vasconcelos increased the number of schools since he saw education as the medium through which to offer a distinct national identity to the Mexican people. For example, classic works of literature were printed massively. Vasconcelos also encouraged the Mexican State to support intellectuals in the creation of the national project, as this had to be total. For example, Diego Rivera painted murals in the Ministry of Public Education from 1923 to 1928 and from 1929 onwards the murals in the National Palace. The intention of the murals was to show the Mexican people its history - themes such as Conquest, Colonial period, Reform and the great revolutionaries appear, but also a projection of the future and the process in which the revolutionary nation was being built.

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<sup>16</sup>Vasconcelos is recognised for his idea of a *raza cósmica/cosmic race* (1925). According to him, Latin America was the last stage in humanity under the Hegelian idea of the end of history. He understood the *raza cósmica* as the perfect mixture of different races and cultures set in opposition to Anglo-American culture, with which he was familiar from residence on the northern border of Mexico during his childhood. He distanced himself from governmental activities during the administration of Calles and was a presidential candidate in the 1929 elections, in which Ortiz Rubio won. He went into exile to the US, Latin American countries such as Colombia and Argentina for one year, and from 1933 onwards again in the USA, claiming that he was the legitimate President. Hence, his role as an active promoter of the national cultural project diminished, but different politicians, intellectuals and artists continued it. See John Skirius, *José Vasconcelos y la cruzada de 1929* (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1978).

Therefore, in the Obregón-Calles era, there was an introspection process of the national cultural project. This project was in contact with Europe, especially in Paris, the centre of the international avant-garde and where many Latin Americans lived and discussed on modernity and national identity. For example, diplomat Alfonso Reyes was keen to improve intellectual links between Mexican artists and French-Latin American circles in Paris. It was only after the Great Depression that the Mexican cultural project internationalised, for example in the 1930s the Museum of Modern Art in New York acquired different works of Mexican artists such as Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros. Later, more contact was established with the national cultural project of the US in the context of the “good neighbor” policy.<sup>17</sup>

As part of a general cultural reconfiguration under the Constitution of 1917, the government of Calles sought to deepen secularisation. Opinions divided over this issue and thereby affected Mexico’s image abroad. In the Catholic press in the USA, Latin America and Europe there appeared complaints against the “Bolshevisation” of the country. In this scenario, the French government, itself secular, faced the dilemma of defending French Catholic interests in Mexico or accepting the loss of cultural presence. This was particularly challenging since France had experienced a bitter Church-State conflict over similar issues at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Besides, the Great War marked a breaking point for German and French hard power in Latin America and pushed these countries into embracing soft power. In this context, cultural diplomacy, promoted by official and non-official actors, started to become appreciated. Nowadays cultural diplomacy is a common practice. In 2016,

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<sup>17</sup> Mauricio Tenorio Trillo, “The Cosmopolitan Mexican Summer, 1920-1949”, *Latin American Research Review*, 32:3 (1997), pp. 234-240 and Museum of Modern Art “MoMA at El Museo: Latin American and Caribbean Art from the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art” [<https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/126?locale=es> accessed 8 November 2016].

the webpage of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Developments states that “France’s overseas broadcasting is an essential component of its policy of soft diplomacy as a means of disseminating its values and culture overseas, of sharing its vision of the world but also of engaging in dialogue with other cultures.”<sup>18</sup>

This also explains the importance of celebrations such as the dual years Mexico-UK (2015) and Mexico-Germany (2016). Dual years embrace fashion-shows, academic conferences such as the International Conference “Mexico and the United Kingdom, Past and Present Perspectives” at the University of St. Andrews, the exhibition “Mientras no mirabas” of Turner Prize-2013 artist Laure Prouvost curated by Ana Sol González Rueda, Mexican food months in the London-based department store Selfridges, Mexican music conducted by Alondra de la Parra in the Beethoven Hall in Bonn, the ‘Cuauhtémoc’ steamship visiting the port of Hamburg, and many other events which “promote better understanding between the two countries focusing on commerce, industry and tourism; education, science and innovation; and culture, art and creative industries.”<sup>19</sup> Clearly, cultural diplomacy allows countries to boost self-perceptions abroad.

### *General theme and periodization*

After setting the contextual relevance of studying Mexican foreign policy when meeting with European Powers, I will now explain the necessity of concentrating in the thematic-temporality I am focused on. At the beginning of the PhD, my idea was

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<sup>18</sup> French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, “Media and broadcasting” [<http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/cultural-diplomacy/the-fields-of-action-for-cultural-diplomacy/article/media-and-broadcasting> accessed 4 October 2016].

<sup>19</sup> The Latin News Service, “Latin American Regional Reports: Mexico and NAFTA Report”, May 2016-RM-16-05, p. 11.

to study Mexican diplomats in Europe during the 1920s. However, with the passing of the years, the project became a comparative analysis of Mexican foreign policy towards the European Powers having in mind the dilemma between revolution and stabilisation. Instead of only looking at “proper” diplomatic aspects such as recognition, reception of credentials, negotiation of treaties and conventions; my interest became wider looking at diplomacy and economy and diplomacy and culture.

In this dissertation, I shall offer a comparative study of the Mexican-European Powers relationship from 1920 to 1928 in regards to the topics of recognition, diplomatic efforts to improve economic links and increase cultural collaboration. During these eight years the Sonorans exercised power, although by the end of 1923 De la Huerta, Obregón and Calles were not considered to be one unified group since De la Huerta was the leader of the unsuccessful rebellion. Hence, I use the terminology Obregón-Calles era in the title of my work instead of “the Sonorenses / Sonoran era”.

Ending the study in 1928 allows to have as one of the main lines of comparison the relevance of diplomatic recognition by the European Powers: Germany (1921), France (1921/23) and Great Britain (1925) and the immediate consequences (three years for the British case) in a context in which the country was still stabilising.

During these eight years, British-Mexican relations passed from tension to a break and to a restoration of relations. The French government continued to follow US diplomacy while also struggling with the idea of a strong German cultural presence in Mexican universities and the Press. The French also strove to recover economic links dating from the pre-1910 situation. Germany and Mexico were able to

continue the tradition of a stable relationship that was not even affected by the Great War.

In these eight years, it became definitive that Europe could not and did not want to counterweight US influence in Mexico. Also in this period, new channels of relations were opened with the Soviet Union although in the long run unsuccessfully, and there was more interest paid in the links with Latin American nations; symbolised in the upgrade of Legations of Brazil, Argentina and Chile to Embassies.

Therefore, Obregón and Calles faced the dilemma of achieving a balance between a diversification policy and economic nationalism that asked to maintain sovereignty to be able to deliver the promises of the continuing process of the project of the Mexican Revolution, meaning to apply the directives of the Constitution of 1917. At the same time, it was necessary to demonstrate to private interests that the Mexican Revolution did not adopt the Marxist-Leninist pattern of the Soviet Union. There is a struggle to balance revolutionary claims and demonstrate continuities with the liberal modernisation project to obtain the injection of foreign capital needed to achieve the economic reconstruction of the country.

As said earlier, 1928/29 marks a turning point in Mexican national history. Obregón's assassination in July 1928 represents the end of an era as he was the strongest *caudillo* from the Revolution. Calles had political but not military power and lacked a charismatic personality. The PNR became the basis for the institutionalisation of the Mexican Revolution. Moreover, from an international perspective with the Great Depression of 1929 ends the first era of globalisation.

It is worth mentioning that in the period known as *El Maximato* (1928-34) many of the negotiations started by the governments of Obregón and Calles were continued. For example, there was another restructuration of the debt (1931); Mexico

joined the League of Nations (1931); negotiations of the Commissions of Mixed Claims were ended in 1932, and the negotiations for treaties of Amity, Commerce and Navigation continued. In addition, and a consequence of the difficulties lived in regards to foreign relations during the 1920s, Genaro Estrada established the famous Estrada Doctrine (27 September 1930). It ruled Mexican foreign policy throughout the twentieth century and was characterised by the defence of national sovereignty and self-determination which implied governments had not the right to recognise a particular government but to maintain or retire its diplomats in foreign legacies and embassies if considered appropriate.<sup>20</sup>

#### *Official and non-official actors*

After defining the thematic and temporality context of this thesis, I am now going to explain the actors I am going to look at. I will mainly concentrate on relations between governments, economic interests and cultural sectors. These were promoted by diplomats and non-official actors connected to national foreign offices. In this sense I will look at the individuals who represent the governments I am studying, especially Mexican diplomats and consuls in Berlin, Paris and London and the contact of the *Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores* (Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations), with German, French and British representatives in Mexico City; and the reports of European consuls to their respective representatives in the capital and to their respective Foreign Offices. The role of European and Mexican diplomats in Washington will also be included when necessary.

Hence, with this thesis I want to contribute to the understanding of the role of diplomats and consuls in the reconfiguration of bilateral relations. It is important to

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<sup>20</sup> Modesto Seara Vázquez, *Síntesis del derecho internacional público*, [<http://biblio.juridicas.unam.mx/libros/2/591/42.pdf> accessed 20 November 2015].

mention that while European diplomats in Mexico came from and continued in diplomatic careers, this was not the case for Mexican diplomats. While some of them always had a career in the diplomatic or consular services, others had important roles as politicians for example President Pascual Ortiz Rubio; or as intellectuals such as Alfonso Reyes or men of economy like Alberto J. Pani. These multifaceted experiences permitted them to have a wider understanding of the revolutionary project from the 1910s until their deaths.

For men in charge of Mexican international relations it was important to open channels of cooperation through the creation of Chambers of Commerce, Exhibitions of Mexican products in European countries and participation in fairs; it was them who promoted the visits of businessmen. Moreover, they asked for the acceptance of Mexicans in the army to be educated in European institutions; fostered the exchange of plants or animals between countries; looked to establish links between European and Mexican intellectuals; and took care of the propaganda of their country abroad. In all these efforts they dealt with Foreign Offices, but also with foreign colonies, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists. I will also explore how these non-official actors encouraged cultural, economic and political relations. Those efforts were useful for the reconfiguration of the Mexican State which was interested in other examples, for instance in the French Third Republic and the Weimar Republic, which as Post-revolutionary Mexico, were making experiments, social-democratic ones, to achieve reconstruction.

### *Historiography*

The history of Mexico's relations with Europe in the era of the first globalisation (1870s-1920s) has been recently covered in general terms by Antonia Pi Suñer, Paolo

Riguzzi and Lorena Ruano in *Europa* as part of the series on the history of Mexico's international relations<sup>21</sup> and Roberta Lajous *Las relaciones exteriores de México (1821-2000)*.<sup>22</sup> The role of Mexican diplomats has been studied in *Artífices y operadores de la diplomacia mexicana* edited by Agustín Sánchez Andrés.<sup>23</sup>

The relations I am interested in comparing have been studied in a disproportionate way, a detailed research of sources has been done by a vast historiography on Mexican-British relations by authors such as Lorenzo Meyer,<sup>24</sup> Alan Knight<sup>25</sup> and Paul Garner.<sup>26</sup> The same has not occurred for Mexican-French relations, while cultural aspects have been studied by the project "México-Francia" mainly coordinated by Javier Pérez Siller, there is not a lot done for the 1920s. Camille Foulard has worked on the question of the *Cristero* War,<sup>27</sup> Abdiel Oñate has studied French interests in the Mexican banking system,<sup>28</sup> and Paulette Patout has analysed Alfonso Reyes's work as Minister of the Mexican Legation in Paris.<sup>29</sup> There

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<sup>21</sup> Antonia Pi Suñer Llorens, Paolo Riguzzi and Lorena Ruano, *Europa in Historia de las relaciones internacionales de México, 1821-1910* (Mexico: Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Roberta Lajous Vargas, *Las relaciones exteriores de México (1821-2000)* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 2012).

<sup>23</sup> Agustín Sánchez Andrés *et al.* (coords.), *Artífices y operadores de la diplomacia mexicana, siglos XIX y XX* (Mexico: Porrúa/UMSNH/El Colegio de San Luis/UNAM, 2004).

<sup>24</sup> Lorenzo Meyer, "El ocaso británico en México. De las causas profundas a los errores políticos", *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, 11:1 (Winter 1995), pp. 25-4; "La Revolución Mexicana y las potencias anglosajonas: El final de la confrontación y el principio de la negociación, 1925-1927", *Historia Mexicana*, 34:2 (October-December 1984), pp. 300-352; Meyer, Lorenzo and Lorena Murillo, "Las potencias extranjeras y la Revolución mexicana. Una reacción en siete etapas" *Foro Internacional*, 40:4 (162) (October-December 2000), pp. 577-593; *México para los mexicanos. La revolución y sus adversarios* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 2010); and *Su Majestad Británica contra la Revolución Mexicana. El fin de un imperio informal, 1900-1950* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1991).

<sup>25</sup> Alan Knight, "British Attitudes Toward the Mexican Revolution 1910-1940" in W. M. Roger Louis (ed.), *Adventures with Britannia. Personalities, Politics and Culture in Britain* (Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Press, 1996), pp. 273-290. Brown, Jonathan C. and Alan Knight, *The Mexican Petroleum Industry in the Twentieth Century* (Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Press, 1992).

<sup>26</sup> Paul Garner, *British Lions and Mexican Eagles. Business, Politics, and Empire in the Career of Weetman Pearson in Mexico, 1889-1919* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

<sup>27</sup> Camille Foulard, "Las ambigüedades francesas ante el conflicto religioso mexicano: pragmatismo del discurso político y movilización de la opinión pública católica" in Jean Meyer (comp.), *Las naciones frente al conflicto religioso en México* (Mexico: Tusquets Editores, 2010), pp. 133-146.

<sup>28</sup> Abdiel Oñate, "French Bankers in Revolutionary Mexico: Exploring the Limits of Informal Empire, 1917-1928", *French Colonial History*, 12 (2011), pp. 143-166.

<sup>29</sup> Paulette Patout, *Francia en Alfonso Reyes* (Monterrey, N.L.: UANL/Capilla Alfonsina Biblioteca Universitaria, 1985).

is even less for Mexican-German relations, Jürgen Buchenau has studied the Calles-Ebert friendship<sup>30</sup> and Stefan Rinke explored German cultural propaganda in Latin American countries<sup>31</sup> as well as German-Mexican relations from 1918 to 1933 from a transnational perspective looking at actors such as the German Colony in Mexico and businessmen as well as its social spaces.<sup>32</sup>

I aim to help in the understanding of some historiographical gaps that still need to be worked on to analyse the role European Powers had for Mexico in the reconstruction process in the aftermath of the revolution. These will allow us to comprehend better Mexican-European relations, which shall be connected to the studies on Mexican-Spanish and Mexican-Italian relations, the former have been studied by Josefina MacGregor<sup>33</sup> and Lorenzo Meyer,<sup>34</sup> and the latter by Franco Savarino.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, a comparative study that concentrates on the relations of Mexico with these three European Powers has not been done yet. This comparison will allow us to understand the different goals German, French and British governments had in Mexico and vice versa. It will be interesting to compare the relevance of cultural relations for Germany and France while the British did not concern themselves with this aspect. Moreover, while President-elect Calles visited Hamburg, Berlin and Paris (August-October 1924) there were no British-Mexican formal relations despite to open new channels of understanding between nations under governments which had a

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<sup>30</sup> Jürgen Buchenau, "Plutarco Elías Calles y su admiración por Alemania", *Boletín 51*, (January- April 2006), (Fideicomiso Archivos Plutarco Elías Calles y Fernando Torreblanca), pp. 1-32.

<sup>31</sup> Stefan Rinke, *"Der letzte freie Kontinent": Deutsche Lateinamerikapolitik im Zeichen transnationaler Beziehungen, 1918-1933* (Stuttgart: Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1996).

<sup>32</sup> Stefan Rinke, "Alemania y México entre la Primera Guerra Mundial y la gran depresión 1918-1933", *Dimensión Antropológica*, 14:39 (January-February 2007), pp. 35- 67.

<sup>33</sup> Josefina Macgregor, *México y España del Porfiriato a la Revolución* (Mexico: INEHRM, 1922).

<sup>34</sup> Lorenzo Meyer, *El cactus y el olivo. Las relaciones de México y España en el siglo XX* (Mexico: Océano, 2001).

<sup>35</sup> Franco Savarino Roggero, *México e Italia. Política y diplomacia en la época del fascismo, 1922-1942* (Mexico: Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 2003).

substantial labour basis.<sup>36</sup> It is relevant to mention that Calles was the first Mexican President-elect to visit Europe before assuming office, something other presidents have been doing afterwards, and he was the first candidate to use the radio in the presidential campaign.<sup>37</sup>

I should mention that this dissertation is based on a multi-archival method: “it entails the examination of available documents to reconstruct past dealings of governments with one another as reflected in the evidence”.<sup>38</sup> The research in various archives was useful to cross-examine information and have a wider understanding of the multilateral framework of the three bilateral relations. The gathering of all these materials allowed me to comprehend eight years of diplomatic relations from the perspective of diplomats, consuls, journalists, chambers of commerce, etc.

The primary sources are from three archives belonging to the ministries of foreign affairs in Mexico City, Berlin and Paris. Secondary sources in regards to the British relation have already studied in detail the information from the National Archives in Kew, London. Also, resources have been used from the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) and the Fideicomiso Archivos Plutarco Elías Calles y Fernando Torreblanca (FAPECYFT). The information on Press has been found in clippings included within diplomatic correspondence and also in the following libraries: Ibero-American Library (Berlin) and the Nettie Lee Benson Collection of the University of Texas at Austin. I have consulted secondary sources from those libraries and the Albert Sloman Library, the Biblioteca Central and the Biblioteca Rafael García Granados of the Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas from the UNAM and the

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<sup>36</sup> Georgette José Valenzuela, “El viaje de Plutarco Elías Calles como presidente electo por Europa y Estados Unidos”, *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, 57:3 (July-September 1995), pp. 191-210.

<sup>37</sup> Jürgen Buchenau, *Plutarco Elías Calles and the Mexican Revolution* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), p. xxiv.

<sup>38</sup> Akira Iriye in Watt, D. C. *et al*, “What is Diplomatic History?”, *History Today*, 35:7 (July 1985), p. 40.

British Library. I also took advantage of many articles available in jstor.org and sometimes for free on the internet.

I am aware that more research could have been done in private archives of the different non-diplomatic actors, efforts done by other official actors (the ministries of finance for example) and looking at German, French and British newspapers to have a wider balance. This I think would have taken me one or two more years of research and plenty of economic resources which I, unfortunately, cannot afford.

### *Structure of the dissertation*

I first decided to divide the thesis by bilateral relations, looking at Mexican-German, Mexican-French and Mexican-British ties with the idea of making the comparison at the end of the thesis. However, half way through the third year, I changed from a geographic to a thematic structure as suggested by my Board members to surpass my problem of description and be more analytical. With this approach in mind, this thesis is organised in four chapters.

In the first chapter, I will set the historical antecedents of Mexican-European relations, I shall explain the Mexican-US-European triangle achieved diplomatically and economically during the Porfirian regime (1876-1911) and how this was undermined during the 1910s with the Mexican Revolution and the Great War. In that decade each of the bilateral relations changed, German economic presence was diminished but there was a friendly relationship that was not broken since Mexico did not enter but remained neutral during the Great War. Many French-Mexican businesses were sold to US businessmen and the French government followed US diplomacy towards Mexico. Great Britain diminished the grade of its Legation in Mexico, from a Minister Plenipotentiary in 1910 to a person in charge of the archives

by 1917 and after Weetman Pearson sold *El Águila* to Royal Dutch Shell lost its most relevant economic interest in the country.

Also, I will set the context of the 1920s in which the Sonorans arrived in power and how they related to the new relevant international actors: the US, Soviet Russia and the League of Nations, and how they looked for diversification of relations with Latin American countries. While focusing on aspects of international relations, I will also consider the problems the Sonorans faced at the national level to continue the modernisation of the country and achieve political stability always trying to balance economic nationalism with pragmatic interests.

The second chapter will answer the following question: what is the relevance of obtaining diplomatic recognition for bilateral relations? For this I will look at the recognition of the governments of De la Huerta, Obregón and Calles. It shall be interesting to explore how the interaction of US and Europe influenced German, French and British recognitions. Thus, I will try to answer the following question: did European Powers follow the US diplomatic line? I also aim to elucidate whether the tour Calles made in Europe, before starting his presidential period, was a determining factor in the German-Mexican and French-Mexican relations, during his period in office. This chapter will allow me to analyse the relevance recognition in fact has for diplomatic relations. Several historians have said that it is the lack of US recognition until 1923 what eventually led Estrada to declare the famous Doctrine Estrada. In my judgement the lack of French and British recognition might have been also relevant.

In the third chapter, I explore the pragmatic and symbolic efforts done by diplomats to improve economic relations which would be useful for European Powers to participate in the reconstruction of the Mexican economy. For this I shall use secondary sources to understand the Mexican-European commerce in the 1920s, the

negotiations of the debt, attempts to apply Article 27 and the negotiations of mixed-claims conventions. Debt, oil and conventions were explicitly linked with the question of recognition and they demonstrated Mexico's will to solve the dilemma of revolution and stabilisation.

Afterwards, with the use of primary sources, I shall portray how Mexican consuls and diplomats worked to achieve a stronger contact of Mexican-European economic links through the exhibition of Mexican products in European cities, the creation of Mexican Chambers of Commerce and the promotion of visits of European businessmen to Mexico and vice versa. By doing so, I want to elucidate the contacts between official and non-official actors to improve economic relations and achieve bilateral rapprochements.

Moreover, this chapter investigates whether there was in some degree solidarity between Mexico, the German Republic, France and Great Britain in the face of the United States' interests and strength in Mexico, or whether on the contrary, the European governments preferred to create a diplomatic network with the US to combat Obregón's and Calles's policies, as they did through the 1910s. For example, in economic matters was there collaboration? With regard to the question of the debt, the British and French were working with US interests in an International Committee. This committee was led by US bankers, although the French had greater debt quantities (65.8% in 1910 and this did not change drastically), with 12 American members, 5 French, 1 Swiss, 5 British and 1 Dutch in the committee.<sup>39</sup> This chapter shall help clarify how Mexico *saw* Europe in the 1920s: as an opportunity to expand foreign economic presence and lessen dependence on the United States or as weak partners that were not useful anymore to counterbalance US economic and political

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<sup>39</sup> Pierre Py, *Francia y la Revolución Mexicana 1910-1920 o la desaparición de una potencia mediana* (Mexico: FCE, 1991), p. 228.

interests in Mexico. It should also help me understand how Europeans *saw* Mexico in this decade and how they understood their economic role.

It is important to remember that this is not an economic history chapter, but has a diplomatic history approach. Hence, instead of looking at the results and usefulness of both pragmatic and symbolic efforts in economic terms, the chapter focuses on the decision-making processes of foreign policy-makers, which includes the state but also non-governmental elites and interest groups.

The fourth chapter focuses on cultural diplomacy. I shall study the role of three Mexican representatives that had an outstanding job in protecting and expanding Mexican-European intellectual links: Pascual Ortiz Rubio, Alfonso Reyes and Alberto J. Pani by taking care of the image of Mexicans portrayed in European media, by endorsing students that wanted to make apprenticeships or study abroad, by promoting the work of Mexican scientists at European universities, and by establishing links with the community of musicians, painters and writers.

Moreover, I will portray the role of non-official actors to improve relations by creating libraries or bookstores, promoting the establishment of a Mexican House in Paris and those intellectuals and artists who worked on cultural relations. Furthermore, I will mention how there was a French-German rivalry in Mexico to expand their propaganda in the Mexican Press. In this chapter, relations of Mexico with France and Germany will be present since these European Powers were exercising soft power in Mexico, but not Great Britain. This section will allow us to look at varied topics such as health, environment and education which have not been of great concern for diplomatic history during various decades and that are being explored by “new” diplomatic historians. Lastly, this thesis will present final remarks

comparing Mexican-European Powers relations and the ways in which it was marked by the dilemma of revolution and stabilisation.

## **Chapter 1 Mexico and the World from the Porfirian Regime to the 1920s**

### *1.1 Introduction*

The purpose of this chapter is to set the historical antecedents and context for Mexican-European Powers relations in the Obregón-Calles era which will be explored throughout the rest of the thesis. First, this chapter aims to set the historical background of Mexican-European Powers relations during the Porfirian regime (1876-1911). Great Britain, France and Germany became the main economic partners of Mexico and counterbalanced the increasing importance of the US in political and economic terms. The process of counterbalancing was the primary strategy of the Mexican government with regard to its foreign policy and political economy. This was understandable since there existed a clear predominance of the US in the Caribbean and Central America. In the period 1910-1920, I discuss how the Mexican Revolution and the Great War (1914-1918) reshaped Mexican relations with the European Powers by undermining the existing balance of power between them in economic and political conditions, while the US became more important in the multilateral framework.

The second intention is to establish the context of the 1920s explaining changes at the national level as well as the relations of Post-Revolutionary Mexico with other relevant partners such as the US, Soviet Russia, Latin American countries and the position towards the recently established League of Nations. Looking at these will allow the reader to understand how the dilemma of achieving revolutionary goals while aiming at stability in political, social, cultural and economic terms was the essential characteristic of Mexico's international relations in the Obregón-Calles era. For Mexico, it was urgent to achieve a diversification of relations while defending national pride and sovereignty.

Before starting, it is important to mention that in order to look at the historical antecedents and context of the 1920s, this chapter is based on secondary sources that allow the analysis of Mexico's international relations from the 1870s to 1930.

### *1.2 The counterbalance project: Mexican-US-European triangle, 1876-1910*

The Porfirian regime started in 1876 with the Tuxtepec revolt which finished the era of the Restored Republic (1867-1876)<sup>40</sup> and established Porfirio Díaz in the presidency (1876-1880), then Manuel González (1880-1884) and Díaz again (1884-1911). During this period, Mexican politics finally achieved a stable centralised balance that facilitated economic modernisation with the goal of achieving national development. Díaz became the strongest figure in the political process as he negotiated with various *caudillos* throughout the country and with various groups which had opposed the liberals from the 1850s onwards. For example, he invited individual conservatives to be in the political sphere and allowed the Church to continue in the area of education although its properties were not returned and the Reforma Laws of 1855-60 remained in force.<sup>41</sup>

Regarding foreign policy, the diversification of relations, but especially the counterbalance project between European and US influences contributed to the goal

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<sup>40</sup> The main historical figures of this period were Benito Juárez, the President of the Mexican Republic against the Second Mexican Empire led by Maximilian of Habsburg (1864-67), and his successor Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada (1872-1876). The Second Mexican Empire was established after the French intervention installed the moderates in the centre of political power. The Intervention was the result of the suspension of payments for two years declared on 17 July 1861 because Juárez's government needed to restructure finances after the Reforma civil war and for that reason, the debt would not be paid for two years. The general debt was of 157,000,000 pesos and the foreign debt was of 51,208,250 pesos. See Brian Hamnett, "La Reforma, 1855-1876, una respuesta liberal a los problemas del México Independiente", in Josefina Zoraida Vázquez (coord.), *Interpretaciones del periodo de Reforma y Segundo Imperio* (Mexico: Grupo Editorial patria, 2007), p. 97.

<sup>41</sup> In 1856/57 there was a debate whether the new constitution should add religious tolerance, in order to avoid problems no article about it was included in the final draft but it was mentioned that the State did not sustain the Catholic religion as an official religion. However, the Leyes de Reforma (Reforma Laws) of July 1859 dealt with the question of secularisation and nationalised the properties of the clergy, ecclesiastic corporations were extinguished, the civil registry was established for birth, marriage and death, and cemeteries were also secularised. On December 1860, tolerance of worship was established. See Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, "Los partidos y la consolidación del Estado Mexicano. Reforma y Segundo Imperio" in Vázquez (coord.), *Interpretaciones del periodo de Reforma...*, p. 26.

of modernisation. As Paul Garner explained, the goal was to build a modern, progressive and industrial Mexico, which “was to be achieved through a partnership between overseas expertise, capital, and technology- as represented by [Weetman] Pearson- and a coherent policy of fiscal reorganisation, the codification and regulation of commerce, and the construction of a national communication and transportation network.”<sup>42</sup> Hence, Lorenzo Meyer has argued, it became necessary to create “a triangle with Mexico in the central vertex and the US and Europe in each of the other two”.<sup>43</sup> In my judgement this process acquired a chronology of its own; the diversification project in the first period of the Porfirian regime (1876-1884) was political, but from the second period (1884-1895) onwards the primacy became economic.

In political terms, the pressure of the United States to offer diplomatic recognition (1877-April 1878) made urgent to attain a wide range of diplomatic relations. The government of the US tried to condition recognition to the following aspects: the payment of the debt, the question of the payment of damages caused by the revolt of Tuxtepec, the rectification of the frontier in the Bravo River,<sup>44</sup> the elimination of the free zone of Tamaulipas and the signature of a treaty to allow the free passing of troops in the frontier to avoid robbing of cattle and to follow native Indians.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Garner, *British Lions and Mexican Eagles*, pp. 235-236.

<sup>43</sup> Lorenzo Meyer, "México en un triángulo. México, Estados Unidos y Europa", in *Diplomacia y Revolución. Homenaje a Berta Ulloa* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 2000), p. 123.

<sup>44</sup> In 1864 the area of El Chamizal, which was Mexican territory, moved to the United States because of the current changes in the river Bravo. Hence, Washington argued that this territory was American. After bilateral negotiations had led to no solution because the American government disapproved Mariscal's proposals, the case went to arbitration and on June 1911 it was decided that the territory was Mexican. Nevertheless, the US did not accept the decision. See María de Jesús Duarte Espinosa, "Las relaciones fronterizas entre México y Estados Unidos 1900-1910", *Tzintzun. Revista de Estudios Históricos*, 288 (July-December 1998), pp. 153-172.

<sup>45</sup> Diana Corzo González and Carlos Cruzado Campos, *El difícil inicio de las relaciones entre Estados Unidos y Porfirio Díaz* (Mexico: Instituto Mora, 1999).

In January 1877, Porfirio Díaz was able to send 300,000 pesos as payment of the debt but this did not lead to recognition, neither did the friendly disposition to negotiate a treaty for the passing of troops in the frontier. It was only after various pressures of the Press and businessmen to the Congress in Washington that the government of the US decided to recognise Díaz, without the signature of any treaty, in April 1878. By then, the governments of the three European nations with which Mexico had stable relations (the German Empire, Italy and Spain) had already recognised Díaz.

The lack of US recognition from December 1876 to April 1878 allowed the Mexican government to assess the usefulness of the Juárez Doctrine<sup>46</sup> and while this continued to be the official position of the Mexican government, Díaz was able to restore relations with Belgium (1879) and France (1880), while González did it with Great Britain (1884), and the following Díaz administrations with the governments of Sweden and Norway, Austria-Hungary, Denmark, Russia and the Netherlands. Moreover, treaties of Amity, Commerce and Navigation, treaties of Extradition and treaties of Postal Service were signed with those European countries from 1882 to 1910. Besides, Mexico renegotiated the debt in 1886 which alongside the restoration of relations gave investors and contractors “the reassurance that their investments and their contracts would be backed by diplomatic and government protection, however ineffective this might be in practice.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> This doctrine was established after the Liberal government of Juárez triumphed against the Second Mexican Empire. According to it, diplomatic relations with European Powers were considered broken since they had recognised and economically supported the Second Mexican Empire through loans. As a consequence, relations would be restored when European governments requested to renew relationships and if the conditions were fair for both parties. As relations were considered as non-existent, treaties were also cancelled and debts were not recognised as having any official character, although the government was still committed to the service of the debt. Daniel Cosío Villegas, “La doctrina Juárez”, *Historia mexicana*, XI: 4 (April-June 1962), pp. 527-545.

<sup>47</sup> Garner, *British Lions and Mexican Eagles*, p. 235.

Furthermore, Mexico established diplomatic relations and treaties of amity, commerce and navigation with China and Japan. The country also participated in different International Exhibitions, for example in the International Exhibition of New Orleans (1884) and the Universal Exhibitions of Paris (1889 and 1900).<sup>48</sup> Moreover, Mexican representatives took part in Latin American forums refusing US interventionism.<sup>49</sup> Diplomatic relations and participation in several forums allowed Díaz's regime to have an active international presence, which culminated with the celebration of the Centenary of the start of the Mexican Independence in September 1910 in which representatives of different countries attended several anniversary parties.<sup>50</sup>

With the diversification of diplomatic relations achieved from 1879 onwards, the next step was economic. The main goal in political-economic terms was to achieve a balance between US and European pressures to avoid dependence on the northern neighbour. The relationship increased a lot in the 1880s with the establishment of more railroads connecting the two countries.<sup>51</sup> Previously, trade between the two neighbours was done via steamships and was not so relevant. The railroad system created stronger communities in the north of the Mexican territory and a connection between cities in the frontier. Thus, more than 50% of Mexican

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<sup>48</sup> See Clementina Díaz y de Ovando, "México en la exposición universal de 1889", *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas*, XVI:61 (1990), pp. 109-171 and Sebastián B. de Mier, *México en la Exposición Universal Internacional de París-1900* (Paris: J. Dumoulin, 1901).

<sup>49</sup> For example, Díaz's government did not agree with US interference in Central American policies that was driven by the Roosevelt corollary (1904) according to which European intervention in Latin America had to be avoided, but US intervention was justified to end chronic unrest. In diverse forums, Mexico maintained that the US should not take the leadership in defending the American continent from European intervention, but that every country in the continent should always protect national sovereignty from any interference.

<sup>50</sup> See Virginia Guedea (coord.), *Asedios a los Centenarios (1910 y 1921)* (Mexico: FCE/ IIH- UNAM, 2009).

<sup>51</sup> Whereas in 1880 Mexico had 1,100 km of railroad tracks, in 1910 there were approximately 19,000 km. Roger Hansen, *La política del desarrollo mexicano*. Tr. Clementina Zamora. (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1971), p. 26. John Coatsworth mentioned 18,521 km. John Coatsworth, "El Estado y el sector externo en México 1800-1910", *Secuencia*, 2 (May-August 1985), p. 50.

products were exported to the US.<sup>52</sup> Even the lack of ratification of the negotiated treaty of commercial reciprocity (January 1883) did not have a negative consequence for trade between countries. This eventually led to the chain reaction that crisis in the US affected the northern Mexican states. The 1907 economic crisis, for example, left many Mexicans in the US unemployed after the closure of industries, creating social tensions.

The idea of the balance of foreign interests was championed by Ignacio Mariscal, Secretary of Foreign Relations (1880-1910) who wanted a closer relation with Europe, and Matías Romero, Mexican representative in Washington D.C., who encouraged a rapprochement with the United States. The balance was due to their positions:

nationalist Mariscal, who remained close to military circles, held a profound mistrust of U.S. intentions and advocated stronger efforts to attract European capital. The pro-business Romero, on the other hand, regarded the United States as the main potential source of the capital needed to build up Mexico's infrastructure. Whereas Mariscal feared that the flow of U.S. investments might one day amount to a "Pacific Conquest" no less dangerous than the U.S.-Mexican War, Romero thought that the existence of strong economic links would make U.S. aggression much less likely.<sup>53</sup>

In this context, José Yves Limantour, Minister of Finance (9 May 1893- 25 May 1911) and the group known as the *científicos*, a political group that maintained that all policy actions needed to have scientific reasons based on August Comte's positivism, promoted diverse European interests in different sectors of the economy. Moreover, different laws made it attractive to US and Europeans businessmen to invest in

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<sup>52</sup> Paolo Riguzzi, "La gestión política de las relaciones comerciales de México con Estados Unidos. Una perspectiva histórica" in Schiavon, Spenser y Vázquez Olivera (coord.), *En busca de una nación soberana: relaciones internacionales de México, siglos XIX y XX* (Mexico: CIDE/SRE, 2006), p. 235.

<sup>53</sup> Jürgen Buchenau, *Mexican Mosaic: A Brief History of Mexico* (Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, 2008), p. 67.

Mexico. One example was the change of legislation Manuel González did in questions of commerce and land property.<sup>54</sup>

The diversification project meant competition between Europeans and US businessmen living in Mexico to remain in or gain more consistent positions in economic terms. But also for European and US companies that intended to have a greater role in the Mexican economy. For example, with the lack of diplomatic relations between Mexico and France and Great Britain from 1867 to 1880 and 1884, respectively, German Commercial Houses became the most relevant among European Houses which meant that 24% of Mexican imports came from Germany in 1871.<sup>55</sup> After the restoration of relations between Mexico and France (1880), however, the French restored their role and trade with Germany was reduced to 6.6% of total commerce.<sup>56</sup> Since 1905 Germany was again the most important European trade partner for Mexico, second only to the US, with 12.4% of imports.<sup>57</sup> For its part, Mexico was the 20<sup>th</sup> commercial partner for Germany.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> As a consequence of the Spanish legacy, the Mexican state had assumed that soil and subsoil were the patrimony of the nation and therefore applied a distinction between ownership of land and ownership of mineral resources. Therefore, foreigners did not own the subsoil of the land, but had concessions of mines and paid high taxes for exploiting these resources. Nevertheless, in 1883, new laws allowed the government to sell land that was not being in use, which affected plenty of villages, and foreigners to own and exploit freely mineral resources in the subsoil of their properties. Buchenau, *Mexican Mosaic*, p. 66.

<sup>55</sup> Friedrich Katz, *La guerra secreta en México* (Mexico: ERA, 2004), pp. 126-127.

<sup>56</sup> During the 1870s, more than 50 German storehouses resided in Mexican territory, 30 of these in Mexico City. German merchants imported into Mexico products from other European countries, especially textiles, and German hardware products needed for modernisation, also chemical and pharmaceutical products, dyestuffs, glass and chinaware, jewellery, musical instruments, and products for textiles (for example the machines 'Singer'), beer fabrication and the fertilisation process. However, by 1885 only 18 German commercial houses remained in the capital. Brígida von Mentz, Verena Radkau, Daniela Spenser and Ricardo Pérez Montfort, *Los empresarios alemanes, el Tercer Reich y la oposición de derecha a Cárdenas Tomo I* (Mexico: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios de Antropología Social, 1988), pp. 25-26.

<sup>57</sup> Kuntz Ficker, *Las exportaciones mexicanas durante la primera globalización, 1870-1929* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 2010), p. 69; and Riguzzi, "Las relaciones de la banca alemana con México, 1887-1913. ¿Deuda, inversiones y poder financiero?" in Sandra Kuntz Ficker and Reinhard Liehr (editors), *Estudios sobre la historia económica de México. Desde la época de la independencia hasta la primera globalización* (Madrid: Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2013), pp. 109-144.

<sup>58</sup> Silke Nagel, *Ausländer in Mexiko. Die Kolonien der deutschen und US-amerikanischen Einwanderer in der mexikanischen Hauptstadt 1890-1942* (Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert, 2005), p. 78.

Furthermore, German companies entered into the electricity market, competing with Canadian counterparts. For example, Siemens-Halske installed an electrical plant in Mexico City, the *Compañía Mexicana de Electricidad* (1898), which was sold to the Canadian *Mexican Light & Power Co.* in 1903. They also helped in the construction of the electrical plant in Nexaca. *Siemens* and the *Allgemeine Elektrizitätsgesellschaft* (AEG) sold motors, cables and other materials. German citizens living in Mexico created small industries of soaps, beers, paper, hats, hardware stores, and were relevant for coffee plantations;<sup>59</sup> these were German-Mexican companies.

French-Mexican business was important in distinct sectors as well. The ‘Barcelonettes’ had the strongest place in the textile industry; only the Spaniards represented competition.<sup>60</sup> Another important group of Alsatian origin was located in Atlixco, Puebla which held a strong position in agroindustry in the states of Hidalgo, Veracruz, and Michoacán and the cities of Tampico, Veracruz, Campeche and Mérida. There was also an agricultural colony dedicated especially to vanilla and coffee, although other products cultivated were cacao, tobacco and caucho in Jicaltepec-San Rafael, Veracruz, where the *Maison Gras & Ricaud* was the main international exporter for vanilla.<sup>61</sup> Another example is the sugar plantations in Pánuco.

Additionally, French capital was part of mining companies; for example, *El Boleo* in Baja California, *Sociedad de Inguarán* in Michoacán, *Compañía Minera de Peñoles* in Durango. French capital was also invested in railways, tramways and

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<sup>59</sup> Von Mentz *et. al.*, *Los empresarios alemanes*, pp. 32-33 and pp. 54-58.

<sup>60</sup> By 1910 the French-Mexican textile industry had 145 factories and 32,147 workers and it was mainly owned by Barcelonettes. Py, *Francia y la Revolución Mexicana*, p. 30.

<sup>61</sup> Pérez Siller, “Historiografía general”, pp.49-51.

industries through the Paris stock exchange. French capital also had substantial interests in the Mexican debt.<sup>62</sup>

Regarding British citizens resident in Mexico, different authors have demonstrated that most of them were part of the upper class and were businessmen, legal advisors of foreign companies, diplomats, associated or bureaucrats of companies and only the minority were at the service of the wealthy Mexican class.<sup>63</sup> An interesting case is that of Richard Bell, an English clown that became an icon for popular identity and humour working for the Orrin Circus. Bell's cartoons were used in the boxes of French-owned *El Buen Tono* cigars.<sup>64</sup>

British businessmen, some resident in Mexico and others in Great Britain, were concerned mainly with “railways (40.6%), mining (11.9%), real estate (9.2%) and public debt (8.3%), the investment in banks, trade and manufacturing industries was insignificant, while that of oil just started (5.8%).”<sup>65</sup> British citizens also owned some haciendas dedicated to wood, cattle, caucho and cotton. By 1910, the three most important British-Mexican companies were: *Ferrocarril Mexicano* (7.8 million pounds), *Ferrocarril Interocéánico* (5.5 million pounds) and S. Pearson & Son, Ltd. (5 million pounds).

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<sup>62</sup> Py, *Francia y la Revolución Mexicana*, pp. 27-29.

<sup>63</sup> Meyer, *Su Majestad Británica*, p. 61.

<sup>64</sup> Steven B. Bunker, “Ricardo Bell, and How an English Clown Became an Icon of Mexican National Identity and Humour” in “Mexico and the United Kingdom: Past and Present Perspectives International Conference”, University of St. Andrews, Scotland, 24 October 2015.

<sup>65</sup> “La mayor parte de la inversión británica se encontraba en los ferrocarriles (40.6%), minería (11.9%), bienes raíces (9.2%) y deuda pública (8.3%); la inversión en bancos, comercio e industria manufacturera era insignificante, en tanto que la petrolera apenas empezaba (5.8%). El panorama de la inversión norteamericana no era muy diferente; como el británico, la mayor parte del capital norteamericano estaba en ferrocarriles (41.3%), seguido por la minería y la metalurgia (38.6%), pero a diferencia de aquél, los empresarios de Estados Unidos casi no tenían nada invertido en servicios públicos y, al igual que los ingleses, tampoco se interesaron mayor cosa en el comercio y las manufacturas; la propiedad en bienes raíces tuvo una importancia secundaria (6.3%), en tanto que el petróleo apenas empezaba a adquirirla (3.1%)” Lorenzo Meyer, “La Revolución Mexicana y las Potencias Anglosajonas. El final de la confrontación y el principio de la negociación, 1925-1927”, *Historia Mexicana*, 34:2 (October-December 1984), p. 306.

It was Weetman Pearson, owner of the last mentioned company, who was “without doubt the most influential British businessmen in Mexico”<sup>66</sup> during the Porfirian regime. After coming to Mexico as a public works contractor for the construction of a drainage canal (‘Gran Canal del Desagüe’) he became an influential British investor. He was in charge of railways like the Tehuantepec National Railway and Mexico North Western Railway; but he also had real estate, plantations, electric energy companies and textiles. Even more relevant, he obtained properties that would allow him to become the strongest oil businessman with the Eagle Oil Company “El Águila”, registered as a Mexican company,<sup>67</sup> the biggest competition for US oil interests, especially Standard Oil’s monopoly and the increasing presence of Edward L. Doheny.<sup>68</sup> It is calculated that British properties and loans had the value of 100 to 150 million pounds, second only to the US. Nevertheless, interests in Mexico were only “equivalent to 14 to 16% of its investment in Latin America, and for this, between 2.5 and 3.0% of the general external investment”.<sup>69</sup>

Furthermore, citizens of different European nationalities invested in the same sectors. For example, in the case of the banking system we see that whereas the British established the London Bank of Mexico and South America in 1864, this institution was in the hands of Frenchmen and Mexicans by 1910. Moreover, the *Banco Nacional Mexicano* was established with French capital and also British had some assets. It was only the Bank of Montreal (1906) which had a more prominent presence of British interests.

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<sup>66</sup> Garner, *British Lions and Mexican Eagles*, p. 230.

<sup>67</sup> Garner, *British Lions and Mexican Eagles*, p. 4.

<sup>68</sup> Edward L. Doheny was the owner of the Mexican Petroleum Company, which was founded in 1900, and had the previous experience of oil fields in California; the company started with 162,000 acres and by 1911 had 212,467 acres. Joel Álvarez de la Borda, *Crónica del petróleo en México. De 1863 a nuestros días*. (Mexico: PEMEX, 2006), <http://petroleo.colmex.mx/index.php/component/content/article/85>

<sup>69</sup> Meyer, *Su Majestad Británica*, p. 62.

Regarding foreign credit, in 1888 the German House Bleichröder was the first one to offer a loan to Mexico, since the imperial loan of 1864-65 offered to Maximilian of Habsburg's Empire.<sup>70</sup> With the Bleichröder loan, the Mexican government paid the majority of debts with *Banco Nacional de México* since 1885 and reduced the foreign debt from £22 million to £10.5 million as floating debt. Hence, the German loan benefitted British and French investors. In 1890, Bleichröder gave another loan of £6 million and a new loan was assigned in 1893.<sup>71</sup>

According to Katz, the 1888 loan included a secret clause that gave Bleichröder a monopoly for future loans in Mexico. After thorough archival research, Riguzzi explained that there was no secret clause, but a lateral clause that was not published in which the Mexican government agreed to ask the German House for the loan and to accept it, if it applied the same conditions that could be achieved from other loaners. The monopoly was never effective; already in 1889 two loans were given by other banks, one for Mexico City by Trustees Executors and Insurance Company and the other one for the Tehuantepec National Railway by Dresdner Bank. Hence, by 1910 it was not only the German Bleichröder House the one who owned the total public debt of Mexico, it had to compete with the German Dresdner Bank and also British had 8,276.000 pounds of the total public debt (16.5%).<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> The director of this House was Gerson Bleichröder, Bismarck's personal banker, who gave loans to governments worldwide. The Bleichröder loan was assigned to Mexico and "the nominal value of this loan was £10.5 million, with a yield of approximately £8.2 million." Carlos Marichal "Las estrategias de la deuda durante el Porfiriato: la conversión del empréstito de 1888 y el papel de BANAMEX como la banca del gobierno" in Romana Falcón and Raymond Buve, *Don Porfirio presidente..., nunca omnipotente: hallazgos, reflexiones y debates. 1876-1911* (Mexico: Universidad Iberoamericana, 1988), p. 53. See also Fritz Stern, *Gold and Iron, Bismarck, Bleichröder and the Building of the German Empire* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1981), pp. 275, 288-89, 426-27; von Mentz *et al*, *Los empresarios alemanes*, p. 31 and Paolo Riguzzi, "Las relaciones de la banca alemana con México", pp. 119-122.

<sup>71</sup> See Carlos Marichal, "La banca alemana y los empréstitos para Argentina y México en la temprana globalización financiera, 1880-1900" in Kuntz and Liehr (eds.), *Estudios sobre la historia económica de México*, pp. 83-108.

<sup>72</sup> Meyer, *Su Majestad Británica*, p. 80.

While different European interests had to compete to gain a stronger position we also see examples of cooperation. Katz explored this from 1904 to 1907, when German businessmen decided to associate with American interests in companies such as *Compañía Minera Peñoles*, *Mexican Petroleum Company* and *Ferrocarril Central Mexicano*. Nevertheless, according to Katz, from 1907 through the Great War, the rivalries between German and American businessmen increased in the area of railroads and the banking system with the entry of the *Deutsch Südamerikanische Bank* in Mexico.<sup>73</sup> Another example of cooperation is British citizens investing in US companies of the railway system; in total of the sector, the investment was of 34 million pounds (13 million in British companies and 20 million in foreign companies) which represented 35.5% of foreign capital invested in the railway system.<sup>74</sup>

Hence, there was a rivalry but also cooperation between nationals from different European countries. Moreover, some businessmen were more interested in economic gains than in national loyalties. For example, the successful German House Boker, a hardware store, was cautious to achieve a balance in the products it sold and by 1900 –the year in which it inaugurated a brand new departmental store- the offer of US, British and German products was in equilibrium. This made the German minister in Mexico complain about the small percentage of German merchandise in the catalogue.<sup>75</sup>

The interest of foreign capitals and nationals to install themselves in Mexico was applauded by the Mexican government since it had the strategy to obtain the most from all European economic interests instead of giving priorities to nationals from just one nation and build a dependency link. The balance was indeed achieved

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<sup>73</sup> Katz, *La guerra secreta en México*, p. 78.

<sup>74</sup> Meyer, *Su Majestad Británica*, p. 73.

<sup>75</sup> Jürgen Buchenau, “Una empresa mercantil alemana en la ciudad de México, 1865-1900: la casa Boker, la globalización y el inicio de una cultura de consumo” in Kuntz Ficker and Liehr (eds.), *Estudios sobre la historia económica de México*, p. 157.

in diverse sectors and by 1910 practically half of foreign investment (direct and indirect) came from the US and the other half was divided between British, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Belgian interests. By 1910, as Buchenau summarised:

The French established the nation's first department stores, and they controlled large finance and industrial textile production. The Germans dominated the sale of hardware and kitchen items, and they owned numerous coffee plantations in the state of Chiapas. The British owned many of the mines, and Lord Cowdray held the country's largest oil concession.<sup>76</sup>

While the strategy of counterbalance was successful in general terms, the Porfirian regime was aware that the equilibrium was unachievable in all sectors and that it was important to have some control of the companies. Hence, the Mexican government decided to create *Ferrocarriles Nacionales* in 1906 which would control several railways throughout the country such as *Interoceánico*, Central and Mexican Southern Railway. From that moment on the Mexican State owned more than half of the actions.<sup>77</sup>

While there was a balance of Mexican-US-European political and economic links, the same did not happen in cultural terms. There was a Frenchification of the Mexican upper class. Many elite families talked fluent French, food menus were written in French, there were French wine and liquor storehouses, and the *chefs de cuisine* were French citizens in restaurants such as 'Maison Dorée', 'París', 'La Bella Unión', 'La Casa de Paisant', 'Silvain' and 'Chapultepec'. Those were visited by politicians and the upper-class, also bakeries like *Pastelería Francesa Maison Deverdun* and Italian owned French schooled *El Globo*.<sup>78</sup> However, Mexican elites

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<sup>76</sup> Buchenau, *Mexican Mosaic*, p. 71.

<sup>77</sup> Meyer, *Su Majestad Británica*, pp. 72-73.

<sup>78</sup> Javier Pérez Siller, "Una contribución a la modernidad. La comunidad francesa en la ciudad de México", Puebla, El Carmen, Mexico, November 1999, p. 17 [in <http://www.mexicofrancia.org/articulos/p7.pdf> accessed 13 March 2015]. See Raquel Ofelia Barceló Quintal, "Los cocineros y pasteleros franceses en la ciudad de México: la modernidad en la mesa durante el Porfiriato", *Cuadernos de nutrición*, 35:2 (March – April 2012), p. 48.

also sent their male children to British boarding schools.<sup>79</sup> Also after considering between French and German options, the Mexican army imitated French uniforms and bought French armament.

Additionally, department stores *Ciudad de Londres*, *Fábricas de Francia*, *Gran Oriental*, *El Puerto de Liverpool* and *El Palacio de Hierro* sold the latest European fashion products imported from abroad but also products that were manufactured in Mexico by the Barcelonette-owned textile factories, which were sometimes reproduction of European designs. These stores were the most iconic spaces of the modernising consumer culture in Mexico City and “served as tangible evidence of Mexico’s general march towards progress”,<sup>80</sup> especially in Latin America as Brazil established the first one by the end of the century and Chile and Argentina did the same until 1910.

Furthermore, French social and constitutional models were adopted in the construction of the Mexican State. For example, at the beginning of the Porfirian regime, Gabino Barreda reformed education under the lines of Comte’s positivism.<sup>81</sup> This ideology, which was also mixed with Spencer’s ideas, was the source for phrases such as “order and progress” and “more administration and less politics” that characterised the Porfirian regime. It led to socio-political tensions caused by strong social inequalities and political repression to the Press and groups such as social

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<sup>79</sup> Víctor M. Macias-Gonzalez, “Learning the rules of the game. Informal empire and the Mexican experience at Stonyhurst College, 1805-1920”, Martin Hewitt (ed.), *The Victorian World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), pp. 691-707.

<sup>80</sup> Steven B. Bunker, “Transatlantic retailing. The Franco-Mexican business model of *fin-de-siècle* department stores in Mexico City”, *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, 2:1 (2010), pp. 42-43, 44.

<sup>81</sup> Gabino Barreda (1818-1881) studied law and medicine; he participated in the war against the US invasion in 1847 and later studied in Paris under Auguste Comte. When he came back to Mexico City, he was a professor of Medical, Physical and Natural History Medicine. He was Juárez’s medical doctor and was in charge of restructuring Mexican public education. Barrera founded the Escuela Preparatoria (Preparatory School) in 1867, he defended education as the basis for civil society that had to be separated from religious principles. See Charles A. Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

Catholics, liberals-magonistas<sup>82</sup> and reyistas.<sup>83</sup> Positivism assured investment, properties and lives of foreigners in Mexico's modernisation project; but it also offered ideas for political criticism towards the Porfirian regime through the masonic lodge, liberal clubs and spiritualist circles, which were the basis for Madero's revolution in 1910.

### *1.3 The reconfiguration of the Mexican-US-European triangle*

The events of the Great War and the Mexican Revolution during the 1910s weakened Mexican-European Powers links; in contrast the relationship with the US became more important. The US gained political power mostly to the detriment of Britain, but economically of France and Germany too. In the following pages, I will portray how the paradigmatic change happened in the multilateral framework as a consequence of the volatile internal context in Mexico, but also in European affairs.

On 20 November 1910, Francisco I. Madero appealed for a revolution with the *Plan de San Luis* to end the Porfirian regime and establish a democracy with the

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<sup>82</sup> Ricardo Flores Magón founded the *Partido Liberal Mexicano* (PLM) that in 1906 established a programme that promoted labour rights, protection for Indian communities, abolition of military service and suppression of the death penalty. This led to the creation of liberal groups throughout the country that discussed about the regime. In 1911 the PLM adopted anarchist ideals like the destruction of capital, government and church. Both in Mexico and the United States members of the PLM were persecuted and arrested several times. The persecution made many liberals go to the United States in the 1900s and they were persecuted there in the 1910s. In 1918, for example Ricardo was put in jail for criticising the role of the United States in the Great War and he died in the federal prison at Fort Leavenworth on 21 November 1922. In the 1920s the *Grupo Cultural Flores Magón* was created and it reprinted propaganda and the written work between 1906 and 1920 of *Regeneración*. See Juan Gómez Quiñones, "Sin frontera, sin cuartel. Los anarcocomunistas del PLM, 1900-1930", *Tzintzun Revista de Estudios Históricos*, 47 (January-June 2008), pp. 161-196.

<sup>83</sup> Bernardo Reyes (1850-1913) was a military commander who fought the Second Mexican Empire and became a famous politician during the Porfirian regime. He was Provisional Governor (December 1885- October 1887) and constitutional Governor of Nuevo Leon (October 1889-24 October 1909) promoting the industrial development of this state. He was also Minister of War and Marine (January 1900-22 December 1902), but due to conflicts with the *científicos* (the group of Limantour) he resigned to this position. In 1904 and 1909 a political group chose him as a candidate to succeed Díaz, but he did not accept this candidature and in 1909 he decided to exile himself in Europe. The group that supported him became to be known as the *reyistas* and they wanted a change at the Executive. Reyes returned to Mexico to fight against Madero's revolution and was killed during the *Decena Trágica*.

respect of vote in elections and the avoidance of re-elections.<sup>84</sup> He initiated this appeal from San Antonio, Texas after having escaped from jail in San Luis Potosí where he had been imprisoned due to his presidential campaign. That illustrated the lack of freedom of opinion during the Porfirian regime. The government of the US, already disappointed by Díaz's decision to counterbalance the presence of US interests in Mexico, did not attempt to stop Madero in Texas.

In Mexico, Madero's call was heeded by many liberals and popular leaders across the entire country and after the fall of Ciudad Juárez, President Díaz resigned and went into exile in France after signing the Treaty of Ciudad Juárez (12 May 1911). Nevertheless, Díaz's departure was not the end of the revolution, but the start of a decade of armed conflict. With the revolution in Mexico, new questions arose with regard to the country's model of development: would there be a continuation of the Porfirian type of regime under another name or something different? Would the members of the previous regime have a role in the new government and the economic reconstruction? In international political terms, recognition of the new governments represented a crucial problem, since it implied the access, among many other things, to armaments which could be used against rival revolutionary forces inside the country. How to obtain recognition? Should there be a closer rapprochement with the United States or was it better to continue seeking for a counterbalance in Europe?

The difficulties in Mexico were accompanied from 1914 to 1918 by the Great War. This global conflict implied that the question of the participation of Mexico

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<sup>84</sup> Madero was part of a business family with political experience. His grandfather, Evaristo Madero, engaged in different agricultural, farming, industrial and mining activities from the 1850s onwards. In 1892 he was a co-founder of the *Banco de Nuevo León*. He connected through marriage with important families of the region forming the Madero Group. Evaristo was Governor of Coahuila in Manuel González's (1880-1884) period where he expanded education, increased taxes for businessmen, railroad lines were inaugurated and telegraphic lines installed. During his period the Constitution of Coahuila was also promulgated (1882). When Díaz came back to the executive, he monitored Madero and allowed every action to diminish his political power. María Larrazolo, "Evaristo Madero: de sus orígenes a la gubernatura de Coahuila", *Tzintzun Revista de Estudios Históricos*, 21 (January-June 1995), pp. 40- 60.

became an issue in bilateral relations. Hence, European representatives were now not only concerned with maintaining their economic interests, but they wanted the Mexican government to support their cause in the war. This opened the opportunity for discussing the creation of alliances; this was especially important for Germany which considered an alliance with Mexico could be useful to divert US attention to Latin American instead of European affairs.

Distinct Mexican revolutionaries were able to secure their particular links with the US and European governments in this decade. While the US government did not stop the organisation of the revolution against Díaz, US Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson supported, along with the representatives of Great Britain and Germany, the counterrevolution of Huerta against Madero at the beginning of 1913.<sup>85</sup> This was an answer to the continuous state of war which led foreign governments to send warships to Mexican coasts in an attempt to protect their interests. The US government disapproved of Madero's reluctance to subordinate Mexico to its particular interests, and the French government was disappointed when he broke the French monopoly in the sale of armament to the army and granted special treatment to the *Deutsch-Südamerikanische Bank*.

Huerta was recognised by Great Britain on 21 March 1913, because he was seen as the opportunity to go back to the status quo of the Porfirian regime. He was not able to secure US recognition because he did not show a pro-US attitude and was perceived as a dictator that arrived in power through non-constitutional ways. However, the acceptance of Huerta as the President by the British government led to the recognition of other European, such as Germany on 15 May 1913, Latin

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<sup>85</sup> For example, Madero was pressured when the German government sent the warship *Victoria Luise* to Mexican coasts and the German representative in Mexico, Hintze, warned that if the state of chaos continued German nationals would leave the country. Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States, and the Mexican Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 88- 89.

American and Asiatic Countries (24 in total). Clearly, British recognition had relevance for the position of a Mexican government in the international arena.

Diplomatic recognition had internal economic consequences as well, Huerta applied to obtain a loan needed to pay Madero's debt, restructure the federal army and fight against revolutionaries. Between 1913 and the beginning of 1914, Huerta was able to emit and place bonds equivalent to 17.5 million pounds through the *Banco Nacional de México*. Frenchmen bought half of the bonds, British and German 19% and the rest US citizens.<sup>86</sup> In order to pay the new loan the government was supposed to use 38% of customs entries, but it failed to do so.

On the other side, diplomatic recognition and the loan by Europeans were seen by the government of the US as an attack on its interests in Mexico. Moreover, Mexican revolutionaries, such as the *constitucionalistas* led by Venustiano Carranza, did not admit this financial operation was constitutional and declared that they would not pay it once they won power.<sup>87</sup>

Carranza published the *Plan de Guadalupe* in March 1913, which disavowed Huerta, called for this overthrow and the restoration of the legal order. Why did the British government decide to recognise Huerta and to keep supporting him? Was Mexico so important to Britain not to follow US diplomacy? Oil interests in Mexico became stronger for Great Britain while Huerta was President, especially with the decision to use oil as the principal combustible for the British Navy. Pearson, who

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<sup>86</sup> Meyer, *Su Majestad Británica*, p. 127.

<sup>87</sup> In the northern state of Sonora, Álvaro Obregón, Salvador Alvarado, Plutarco Elías Calles, Manuel Diéguez and Adolfo de la Huerta made alliances with the working class while attacking Huerta. In Chihuahua and Durango, Francisco Villa emerged as the leading actor against Huerta and he was supported by tradesmen, *peones* from haciendas, mining workers, cowboys and railway-men. In Morelos, the Zapatistas reformulated the *Plan de Ayala* not recognising Huerta.

controlled more than half of oil production in Mexico, supported Huerta, and the British government followed. This led to criticism in the US and Mexico.<sup>88</sup>

In contrast, on 15 August 1913, John Lind, representative of the US, presented Huerta with a document explaining that diplomatic relations would only be normalised if hostilities were concluded between federal troops and the *constitucionalistas* through an armistice, elections were held soon, all revolutionary groups could present candidates, and preferably Huerta would not be a candidate, and the results were accepted by him.<sup>89</sup> Huerta explained that such a project could only be discussed after the US recognised his government and sent an ambassador.

In order to undermine Huerta's position and months of tension, Wilson imposed an embargo of armament. Hence, the government and revolutionaries had the same conditions regarding weapons coming from the United States. Furthermore, the British Foreign Office decided that it became impossible to continue defending Huerta against the US and even though relations continued with Huerta, he did not obtain more material support to balance the US and revolutionary pressures.

The US invasion of the port of Veracruz along with the increase of power by the revolutionaries weakened Huerta. He resigned in July 1914 and went into exile.<sup>90</sup> In Mexico the war continued between *constitucionalistas* and *convencionalistas*,<sup>91</sup> but

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<sup>88</sup> Garner, *British Lions and Mexican Eagles*, p. 237.

<sup>89</sup> Meyer, *Su Majestad Británica*, p. 139.

<sup>90</sup> The cause for the invasion was an erroneous attack of the Mexican Navy to US Marines that wanted to buy oil in Tampico; the US asked that the US flag to be saluted by the Mexican navy, but this was refused. The intervention also allowed to block the entry of European armament to support Huerta's regime.

<sup>91</sup> In October 1914, Carranza called a Convention in Mexico City with the idea that all revolutionary movements would decide what to do with the government. The Zapatistas did not attend, given that they did not recognise Carranza as an authority, and Villa the same. The Convention was moved to Aguascalientes and Carranza did not attend. The Convention was led by Villistas and Eulalio Gutiérrez Ortiz was nominated as President. The Villistas with the Zapatistas, then known as the *convencionistas*, entered Mexico City on 6 December 1914. Nevertheless, the Convention of Aguascalientes was unable to create a project for the nation and this led to its failure allowing Carranza to win popularity and Obregón gave Carranza great military triumphs.

eventually the *convencionalistas* retreated and Carranza was recognised as *de facto* President in December 1915 by the US, Great Britain, Belgium and Italy.

While the *de facto* recognition did not imply that Washington supported Carranza's project, *constitucionalismo* was considered better than Villa's or Zapata's programmes. This led to Villa's attack of Columbus, New Mexico. It was assumed that only *de jure* recognition would be given to Carranza once it was certain that property rights were secured. Foreign interests in Mexico felt insecure for several decisions taken by his faction; for example, in December 1914 railways were confiscated and one month later it was established that new activities were prohibited in oil properties so that the government could check production. Another sector affected was that of banks, by the end of 1916 Carranza asked banks to give deposits of metals (silver) to the government.<sup>92</sup> On the other hand, Carranza also intended to ameliorate the situation for foreigners and in this sense he prohibited state governors to put new taxes on oil production –so needed by the British Navy and in which there were more than 20 British companies involved.

Furthermore, after facing the invasion of the Port of Veracruz in 1914 and the Pershing Expedition (April-December 1916),<sup>93</sup> Carranza looked for opportunities to establish political alliances to counterbalance US political power in Mexico. Given that Great Britain was the first to recognise Huerta and France did not seem to have its own foreign policy independent from British or US decisions, none of the Allies was seen as an option to counterbalance the US.

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<sup>92</sup> Meyer, *Su Majestad Británica*, p. 214.

<sup>93</sup> The government of the United States sent an expedition in charge of John J. Pershing with 10,000 soldiers to follow Villa after his activities of invasion in Columbus, New Mexico on 9 March 1916. The expedition finished in February 1917. Villa was not found and the government of the U.S. decided to take the troops out of Mexico as it was evident that Carranza would not offer any concessions regarding security for foreigners' properties or investment.

The Mexican minister in Berlin proposed to the German Foreign Office that it should send officers or military instructors, sell ships and submarines to Mexico, create armament industries and install a radiotelegraphic station, all these to deter further US interventions in Mexico. This led to the notorious Zimmermann telegram on 17 January 1917, according to which the German government invited the Mexican government to attack the United States as soon as this country declared war against Germany and also proposed that Japan shall enter into a German-Mexican alliance.

The message was intercepted by British intelligence and made public in the United States, which scuppered any possibilities of a German-Mexican alliance.<sup>94</sup> Given that there was no Mexican-American war, the German government stopped looking for an alliance with Mexico and appreciated its neutrality in the war. As part of its neutrality, the Mexican government opposed measures affecting German nationals and firms on the American and British blacklists. Hence, German properties and businesses in those lists were not confiscated as a consequence of the Great War.<sup>95</sup>

Besides, of all Latin American countries, it was in Mexico where the German government had the opportunity to do the major labour of propaganda in newspapers such as *El Demócrata* and *La Patria* and also in regards to espionage.<sup>96</sup> While German propaganda intended to secure Mexico's neutrality, French propaganda attempted to make Mexico join the Allies.<sup>97</sup> German propaganda in Mexico was criticised by the

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<sup>94</sup> Katz, *La guerra secreta en México*, p. 549.

<sup>95</sup> An interesting parallel to the Mexican-German relation is the Guatemalan-German relationship. On 20 April 1918, Guatemala declared war against Germany and many German companies and properties were confiscated, most of which were returned by 1921, but not the electrical plant. Hence, while Guatemala did not have a revolution like the one in Mexico during the 1910s, it confiscated German property. In contrast, revolutionary Mexico did maintain a neutral relation with the German government and businessmen. Regina Wagner, "Actividades empresariales de los alemanes en Guatemala, 1850-1920", *Mesoamérica*, 13 (June 1987), pp.87-123.

<sup>96</sup> Katz, *La guerra secreta en México* Pp. 448-449, 478-489.

<sup>97</sup> Stefan Rinke, "Propaganda War (Latin America)", in: 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene,

French, British and US representatives;<sup>98</sup> also by the pro-Allies newspaper based in Mexico City and owned by Félix Palavacini *El Universal*.

Moreover, German and French colonies had their newspapers in which they wrote in their respective language which meant they mainly read them, but they tried to approach a bigger public by publishing supplements in Spanish. On the one side, the *Deutsche Zeitung von Mexiko* published a Spanish supplement every three weeks and German resident Carl Duems established a news agency in 1918 called the Atlas Service which sold news to Mexican newspapers with a pro-German perspective. On the other side, *Le Courrier du Mexique* and *L' Echo Français de Mexico* published a section written in Spanish and also a supplement every week to support the cause of the Allies.<sup>99</sup> The French government also used the French Alliance in Mexico City as a source for propaganda by establishing a room for publicity and propaganda in 1918 where the public could read newspapers and pamphlets that portrayed the French perspective in regards to the Great War.

At the same time, Carranza's government established the basis for the new revolutionary Mexico with the re-establishment of the Constitution of 1857. Besides, on 5 February 1917, a new Constitution was promulgated. With it, Mexico was intended to be a democratic, representative and federal republic with a strong executive that was missing in the previous Constitution. In the tradition of the Reforma movement, the State was to promote secular education, but the social dimension of the Revolution could be seen in provisions for the State to intervene in the economy and labour relations.

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<sup>98</sup> Antonia Pi Suñer, Paolo Riguzzi and Lorena Ruano, Europa (Mexico: SRE, 2011), p. 251.

<sup>99</sup> Pi Suñer, Riguzzi and Ruano, *Europa*, p. 225, 266-267; Von Mentz *et. al.*, *Los empresarios alemanes*, p. 93; Centro de Estudios Mexicanos y Centro Americanos, "La prensa francesa en México de 1849 a 1892", [[http://cemca.org.mx/files\\_biblio/files/53\\_descrip\\_esp.pdf](http://cemca.org.mx/files_biblio/files/53_descrip_esp.pdf) accessed 10 February 2016].

The Constitution incorporated the claims of Zapatistas, Villistas and other revolutionaries who did find injustice in foreigners exploiting the resources of Mexico and nationals obtaining a small or no profit from it. Hence, the innovative legal framework reasserted in the basics of Spanish colonial legislation regarding subsoil deposits and water resources as federal property (Art. 27).<sup>100</sup> Moreover, the executive was granted permission to expel any foreigner (Art. 33); foreigners not being allowed to be ministers of religious cults; only nationals being permitted ownership of property and foreigners who were owners were to be treated as nationals; the government could expropriate property to give it to towns, communities and ranchers which led to the impulse of agricultural reform; and labour obtained rights.<sup>101</sup>

For Thomas B. Hohler, the British representative at that time, the Constitution of 1917 was not valid since he considered the Congress that elaborated it had been fraudulent and had not respected the Treaty of Amity and Commerce of 1888. From that moment on, British complaints continued against Article 27 which affected property rights, Article 33 that allowed expulsion of foreigners, and Article 123 which would increase the cost of labour. For its part, the government of the USA considered the Constitution on the whole legitimate but regarded particular articles as invalid since they violated Mexico's international obligations. Hence, pressure would be put on the revolutionary government to defend the economic interests of US citizens and businesses in Mexico.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Brian Hamnett, *A Concise History of Mexico* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 222.

<sup>101</sup> Pablo Yankelevich, "La inmigración: el ocaso de una utopía modernizadora" in Ignacio Marván Laborde (coord), *La Revolución mexicana 1908 - 1932* (Mexico: CIDE/FCE/Conaculta/INEHRM/Fundación Cultural de la Ciudad de México, 2010), pp. 207-255.

<sup>102</sup> Meyer, *Su Majestad Británica*, p. 228.

Also in February 1917, Carranza sent a proposal to the US, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Switzerland asking that as neutral countries, together they put pressure on the European belligerents to end the war, suggesting that if they did not do so, neutral countries should stop exports of products used in the war. For example, Mexico would not allow the exportation of oil. This proposal was ignored, but it made Great Britain and the United States feel threatened regarding their use of Mexican oil.<sup>103</sup>

Carranza won the Presidential elections of 11 March 1917, and from that moment on he focused on maintaining peace and recovering economic production. He decided not to apply the Constitution to the letter as he considered the political and economic situations needed to be stabilised. This policy was strongly criticised by the revolutionaries throughout the country who continued fighting. In August 1917 the US recognised Carranza as *de jure* President, but the British government did not and relations between both countries remained ambiguous.<sup>104</sup>

Given that Carranza had been recognised *de jure* by European countries, Pearson and Vincent York, President of the *Ferrocarril Mexicano*, asked the British government to also recognise him. They considered that this would be the only way to protect their private interests. Instead of hearing the comments of important British economic interests in Mexico, the British government was following Cunnard Cummins' position against Carranza. Cummins was in charge of the archives of the British Legation in Mexico City and there was no proper British diplomat which was a signal of the adverse conditions in the relationship.

Before this position, the Mexican government decided that in order to improve relations it would nominate a minister to Great Britain: Alfonso S. Siller. The Foreign

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<sup>103</sup> Meyer, *Su Majestad Británica*, p. 231.

<sup>104</sup> Meyer, *Su Majestad Británica*, p. 250.

Office answered that he would not officially be received until Mexico demonstrated its neutrality in the Great War and guaranteed the life and property rights of British nationals in Mexico. Mexico did not accept such a condition and recalled that it had been the British government which had captured two steamships with Mexican flags and merchandise: 'Oregón' and 'Leonor', which meant they were not respecting Mexican property.<sup>105</sup>

While Mexican-British relations deteriorated, links with the US and other European countries were stabilised, although there was tension. For example, in February 1918, Carranza established that companies had to ask for concessions in order to exploit minerals in what they considered their properties. The governments of the USA, Great Britain, France and the Netherlands complained. It was decided that only those companies which had property without use would need to ask for concessions for territories which they previously owned.<sup>106</sup> Later on, in August 1918 the Foreign Office complained again because the taxes were too high. In this context, and after realising that the British government would not defend his economic interests, Pearson decided to sell *El Águila* to Royal Dutch-Shell in 1919, but it continued to be mainly a company in the hand of British interests and of concern for British diplomacy.

The pressures Carranza experienced as a consequence of the Great War and especially after the promulgation of the Constitution led to the establishment of a new doctrine for international relations in September 1918: equality of the sovereignty of all nations, non-intervention in national politics, equality between citizens and

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<sup>105</sup> Meyer, *Su Majestad Británica*, p. 263.

<sup>106</sup> Garner, *British Lions and Mexican Eagles*, pp. 211-212.

foreigners regarding the law, and diplomacy should not defend particular interests but general interests.<sup>107</sup>

Regarding the economy, trade between Mexico and European countries decreased as an effect of the lack of maritime transport during the war and the fact that European countries were concentrated in stabilising their economies and needed investment and products to stay inside their respective countries once the war finished. In contrast, trade between Mexico and the US increased during these years thanks to the proximity allowed by different types of transport.<sup>108</sup> The first three years of the 1910s, Mexico imported almost 55% from the US and less than 40% from Europe, by the beginning of the 1920s, nearly 80% from the US and 20% from Europe, clearly the Great War implied changes in Mexican imports.<sup>109</sup> From the end of the Porfirian regime to the 1920s, Mexican exports were mainly sent to the United States; for example, in the 1920s the US was the market for almost 70% of Mexican exports, while Europe, Asia and Latin America received the rest.<sup>110</sup>

Likewise, European investment in Mexico suffered from the diminution of agricultural and mining production. Furthermore, when banks were forced to lend money and all revolutionary groups issued money, the currency destabilised affecting the economy.<sup>111</sup> While manufacturing only diminished by 9%<sup>112</sup>, owners of the textile industries feared for their lives and assets and some left Mexico.<sup>113</sup> Nonetheless, the

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<sup>107</sup> Lajous Vargas, *La política exterior de México*, pp. 168-171.

<sup>108</sup> Paolo Riguzzi, "México y la economía internacional, 1860-1930" in Sandra Kuntz Ficker (coord.), *Historia económica general de México. De la Colonia a nuestros días* (Mexico: El Colegio de México/Secretaría de Economía, 2010), pp. 397-401.

<sup>109</sup> See Chart 2 in Sandra Kuntz Ficker, "El patrón del comercio exterior de México, 1870-1929", *Estudios sobre la historia económica de México. Desde la época de la independencia hasta la primera globalización* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 2014), p. 58.

<sup>110</sup> Kuntz Ficker, "El patrón del comercio exterior de México", p. 67.

<sup>111</sup> Emilio Zebadúa, *Banqueros y revolucionarios: la soberanía financiera de México, 1914-1929* (Mexico: COLMEX, 1994), p. 334.

<sup>112</sup> Hansen, *La política del desarrollo mexicano*, pp. 42- 43.

<sup>113</sup> For example, while their house was robbed as an act of hate against foreigners Théophile Desoche died on the night of 6 January 1913, Jean Desoche died on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 1913, also in December 1916 Alexandre Ricaud –who had been partner of Desoche in Veracruz and who moved to Parral

oil industry doubled production which increased the significance of British interests in Mexico given that the British Navy used this oil and the rest was sold to the US, which at the same time was selling its reserves to the Allies. Besides, oil territories owned by businessmen from the US and Great Britain were protected by Manuel Péláez in Tampico and Veracruz.<sup>114</sup> The case of oil production reveals another aspect of economic relationships between businessmen and local authorities.

By the end of the 1910s, it became evident that the US was the most important partner for Mexico and it was the primary country which could give international legitimacy to Mexican governments. The weight of the US was economic, geopolitical and military as it was from within US territory where rebellions in Mexico could gain support: let us remember that it was in Texas that Madero called the revolution, and where the source of armament could come from. Additionally, the intervention of Veracruz helped in debilitating Huerta and the *de facto* recognition of Carranza in 1915 debilitated Villa.

In the process of these changes, the government of France, as Pierre Py has explained, became a less important country for Mexico and started to follow US diplomacy regarding Mexican affairs. Nevertheless, in this decade France was of great importance, as we shall see in Chapter 4, for Mexican intellectuals such as Alfonso Reyes and Diego Rivera who lived in Paris for some years and established contact with artists and writers from the European and the American continents.

During the same years, the German government attempted to establish good relations with all Mexican revolutionaries in power and appreciated Mexico's neutrality during the war years. In contrast, Great Britain lost its relevance for Mexico

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where he created the *Fábricas de Francia* was assassinated by order of Villa and his department store was plundered, in 1915 Villa took 10,000 piastres (5,000 dollars from the time). Campario, "Savoyards et Bas-Alpins à Jicaltepec", pp. 121-127.

<sup>114</sup> Garner, *British Lions*, pp. 212-216.

because of its support for Huerta's counterrevolution and its hostility towards Carranza. The fact that the Great War and the Mexican Revolution were chronologically parallel, meant that the Mexican economy lost its triangular balance between the US and Europe.

#### *1.4 Post-Revolutionary Mexico and the diversification of relations in the 1920s*

For the 1920 presidential elections, Carranza backed the candidacy of Ignacio Bonillas (Mexican Ambassador in the US) instead of Obregón, who was renowned as the principal military leader from the revolution and who had helped shape Carranza's triumph. Carranza argued that Obregón had no principles, no plan to govern and no understanding of national problems.<sup>115</sup> Moreover, Carranza sent troops to the state of Sonora where the *obregonistas'* main supporters were: Adolfo de la Huerta and Plutarco Elías Calles.<sup>116</sup> This led to the Agua Prieta Rebellion. Once the rebellion became stronger, Carranza decided to move to Veracruz to militarily reorganise the government; but he was assassinated on the way on 21 May 1920.

The Electorate College on 24 May 1920 nominated De la Huerta as Provisional President. De la Huerta pacified revolutionary Villa and counterrevolutionary Félix Díaz, and also persuaded the Indian Yaquis in Sonora, who had fought for their territories since the Porfirian regime and supported Madero and Carranza, to sign peace. Lastly, the Zapatistas who fought in Morelos for the restoration of their land were incorporated into the Mexican army. It meant the ending of the armed conflict period of the Mexican Revolution and led to the stabilisation of political life and the economy. For example, De la Huerta promised to respect the

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<sup>115</sup> Linda B. Hall, "Obregón y Carranza: personalidad en el desenlace de la Revolución mexicana", *Secuencia*, 3 (September-December 1985), p.33.

<sup>116</sup> The north-western state of Sonora shares border with the states of Chihuahua, Sinaloa and Baja California and the Gulf of California, and with the US states of Arizona and New Mexico.

freedom of worship and established a rapprochement with the Church which was so fundamental for Mexican society.

De la Huerta secured the balancing of revolution and stabilisation and this would also be aspired to in the Obregón-Calles era by continuing the modernisation project of the Díaz era, but assuring that the claims of different sectors of society would be respected. For this, it was fundamental to bear the 1917 Constitution in mind, but how much to apply it would be a problem.

President Obregón (December 1920-November 1924) was able to maintain peace through the control of other *caudillos* by integrating them into the system as governors, diplomats or ministers. Land was given to peasants and labour leaders were incorporated to the government. Military agrarian colonies were created so that soldiers left the army and occupied themselves with agriculture; soldiers were rotated in various areas to avoid personal loyalties (*caudillismo*) and to create institutional loyalties. As part of the reconfiguration, the *Colegio Militar* was reorganised: soldiers were alphabetised and educated, and bursaries were given to officials and majors for them to go to Europe and learn modern military techniques. The idea was that the Ministry of War and Marine would control the armed forces so that new revolts would not put the State at risk. As a matter of fact, Obregón reduced the army from 200,000 to 40,000 men. The percentage of the budget dedicated to the military decreased from 61% to 36% by 1924.

For his part, President Calles (December 1924-November 1928), who was not an influential military figure, had a civilian political basis through the labour movement, especially the good relationship with Luis Morones, leader of the *Confederación Regional de Obreros Mexicanos* (CROM, created 1918). Calles's government decided actions to avoid deficit problems such as the creation of *Banco*

*de México* on 31 August 1925, which allowed the State to control the emission of money. The taxing system was reorganised, and the salaries of secretaries and some departments at the Ministry of Finance (*Secretaría de Hacienda*) were eliminated. To improve agriculture, the *Comisión Federal de Irrigación* was created (1925) and 2,600,000 hectares were distributed. 6.5% of the budget was used for irrigation (46 million pesos) and the *Banco Nacional de Crédito Agrícola* was founded in 1925 to give short-period credit to peasants.<sup>117</sup>

Evidently, Obregón and Calles were determined to maintain peace and not allow new revolts to destabilise the state. However, this was impossible with the *Delahuertista* rebellion in December 1923 over the presidential succession. De la Huerta was the principal figure of the rebellion against Obregón's decision to back up Calles's presidential campaign instead of his own. De la Huerta was convinced by his supporters that waiting for democratic elections was useless and that it was better to rebel.

The rebellion started in Veracruz on 5 December and two days later the "Revolutionary Declaration of Adolfo de la Huerta" was published in newspapers stating that Obregón was supporting with the money of the state the candidature of Calles, which De la Huerta considered a violation of sovereignty. He also criticised acts against the legislative and judicial powers in the previous three years. While the *Delahuertista* rebellion had the support of two-thirds of the Armed Forces and the *cooperativistas*, members of the *Partido Nacional Cooperativista* established in 1917, Obregón and Calles were able to defeat it with their military tactics and with the

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<sup>117</sup> See Mario Ramírez Rancaño, *Crecimiento económico e inestabilidad política en México* (Mexico: UNAM, 1977), pp. 62- 63; <sup>117</sup> Luis Medina Peña, *Hacia el nuevo Estado* (Mexico: FCE, 1995), p. 29. Zebadúa, *La política del desarrollo*, p. 36. Enrique Krauze, Jean Meyer y Caetano Reyes, *Historia de la Revolución Mexicana 1924-1928. La reconstrucción económica* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1977), p. 19. Fernando Benítez, *Lázaro Cárdenas y la Revolución Mexicana II. El caudillismo* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1977), p. 165.

support of labour movement and peasants. By February 1924, the rebels moved to the port of Frontera (Tabasco) after failing to control Veracruz, and in March De la Huerta was in the United States. The rebellion in Mexico collapsed in April 1924.<sup>118</sup>

Another conflict that frustrated the endeavour to stabilise Mexico's political life was the *Cristero* Rebellion between 1926 and 1929. Tensions between Church and State started in 1923 with the expulsion of Monsignor Filippo, commissioned as the delegate by Pope Benedict XV, after he blessed the first stone for the Cristo Rey sanctuary in the Cubilete Hill in Guanajuato. Tensions increased in 1925, when it became clear that Calles would apply Article 3 of the 1917 Constitution, which gave the government the power to intervene in matters of worship and external discipline and allowed the states of the Federation to decide the number of priests and the spiritual requirements of each locality. The Constitution also denied the Church any legal personality and the right to own property, or teach and deprived priests of the vote. Moreover, public worship outside of the confines of Church buildings was banned, monastic vows and religious Orders were prohibited. Furthermore, the Constitution required all primary, elementary and superior education to be secular and religious associations were prohibited from establishing or directing elementary schools.

Calles' commitment to apply the law led to the movement known as the *Cristero* rebellion in which Catholics decided to fight to defend the church's right to remain dominant in education and refused state control over clergy after the Mexican episcopate stopped offering mass as a sign of protest. The rebellion included diverse set of claims coming from radical Catholicism, labour Catholicism, agrarian Catholicism and political liberalism which refused the secularisation imposed by the

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<sup>118</sup> Medina Peña, *Hacia el nuevo Estado*, p. 43. See Pedro Castro Martínez, "Adolfo de la Huerta: imágenes de su penúltima rebelión (1923-1924)", *Secuencia*, 45 (September-December 1999), pp. 101-130.

Constitution and the revolutionary project applied by Obregón and Calles. The conflict only ended with the agreement between representatives of the Holy See and the Mexican State in 1929 which allowed the reestablishment of mass in religious buildings and *cristeros* laid down arms.<sup>119</sup>

Both the *Delahuertista* and *Cristero* rebellions shook the political project by questioning the application of revolutionary claims, but also affected the economic situation, especially agricultural production. The triumph against these rebellions showed the strength of the post-Revolutionary Mexican State. It also demonstrated the importance of the Mexican-US relationship as the US government did not permit the selling of armament to *delahuertistas*, but allowed *obregonistas* to transit US territory to combat the rebellion and offered armament, loans and planes to the government. Moreover, it was US Ambassador Dwight W. Morrow who became the principal mediator in the negotiations for peace between the Holy See and the Mexican government in 1929.

Along with the idea of achieving political stability to allow the economic reconstruction of the country, the governments of Obregón and Calles encouraged the development of Mexican cultural life. They used as a basis the project of José Vasconcelos, Rector of the National University from June 1920 to October 1921 and in charge of the Ministry of Public Education from December 1921 to July 1924. Vasconcelos was committed to applying Article 3 of the Constitution. He understood education as the tool for social improvement. For this, he promoted a national discourse in science and arts in order to create a better country proud of its origins

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<sup>119</sup> See Jean Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion. The Mexican People between Church and State 1926-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); David C. Bailey, *¡Viva Cristo Rey! The Cristero Rebellion and the Church-State Conflict in Mexico* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1974); Marta Eugenia García Ugarte, “Los católicos y el presidente Calles”, *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, 57:3 (1995), pp. 131-155. Jean Meyer, “¿Cómo se tomó la decisión de suspender el culto en México en 1926?”, *Tzintzun. Revista de Estudios Históricos*, 64 (July-December 2006), pp. 165-194.

and with the resources to be a powerful nation.<sup>120</sup> As part of his educative project, the number of schools and libraries in urban and rural areas increased, classic books were printed and analphabetism was reduced. Education was a national priority, in 1900 there were 9,363 schools and in 1921 the number had increased to 11,041 and 16,701 in 1928.<sup>121</sup> The Obregón-Calles era also promoted Mexican artists with a nationalist discourse such as the Muralists. Revolution provided the incentive with which to stimulate a new Mexican cultural identity which balanced the indigenous and Spanish past looking for a brighter future. Without doubt, the cultural project of the 1920s is still part of Mexican identity and nationalism in the 2010s.

In international terms, the Sonoran group needed to achieve diplomatic recognition, but this was difficult given that Carranza's assassination opened a window of opportunity for foreign governments to condition recognition as will be explored in the next chapter. In the meantime, it suffices to say that the main problem was to remain strong against American and British oil companies' opposition to the idea that subsoil deposits were legally the property of the nation as Article 27 of the Constitution specified.

It is important to take into consideration that the Mexican Revolution was, in a broader context, part of a tendency towards economic nationalism in Latin America and Europe: in Argentina, for example, the state participated in the oil industry and consolidated its position in the 1920s; in Bolivia, conservatives opposed the entry of Standard Oil; and in Venezuela the industry was controlled and supervised by the

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<sup>120</sup> For more detail on Vasconcelos's educative project see Javier Ocampo López, "José Vasconcelos y la educación mexicana", *Revista historia de la educación latinoamericana*, 7(6), pp. 137-157; Federico Lazarín Miranda, "José Vasconcelos: Apóstol de la educación", *Tiempo* [[http://www.uam.mx/difusion/casadeltiempo/25\\_iv\\_nov\\_2009/casa\\_del\\_tiempo\\_eIV\\_num25\\_11\\_14.pdf](http://www.uam.mx/difusion/casadeltiempo/25_iv_nov_2009/casa_del_tiempo_eIV_num25_11_14.pdf) accessed 1 October 2015]. Vasconcelos also fought for the Presidential campaign in 1928/29, once he lost he went into exile to the US and South America. See Pablo Yankelevich, "El exilio argentino de José Vasconcelos", *Iberoamericana Nueva época*, 6: 24 (December 2006), pp. 27-42.

<sup>121</sup> Buenfil Burgos, *Revolución Mexicana, mística y educación*, p. 109.

government with the 1920 regulations. In parallel, in their respective spheres, Spain and Romania also aimed to control distribution and production.<sup>122</sup>

A second problem in regards to foreign relations was to demonstrate to the international community that the post-Revolutionary Mexican State was not Bolshevik. This was difficult to demonstrate because even if there was no attempt to achieve socialism, but to continue with a liberal programme, the Mexican government had labour as an important source of political support. Besides, the state wanted to diminish the power of the Church which was similar to what the Russian Revolution attempted to do.<sup>123</sup> The Mexican Revolution was never anti-capitalist. The criticism was more against the proprietors of large estates than that of the proprietors of industries. As a matter of fact, most of the industries created in the Porfirian regime survived the armed conflict of the revolutionary decade. This also means that foreigners that were involved in agricultural activities were more affected than those who had established industries.<sup>124</sup>

Hence, there was a problem of self-presentation in the international arena. It was necessary to deal with the dilemma of achieving stabilisation while the claims of the revolution needed to be fulfilled which could affect foreigners' assets, lives and properties. Moreover, the main point was to centralise power again to continue the modernisation project. This project was not directed against foreigners; on the contrary, it wanted and needed to include capital, machinery and knowledge from abroad.

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<sup>122</sup> Alan Knight, *U.S.-Mexican Relations, 1910-1940* (San Diego, California: Center for U.S. Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1987), p. 74.

<sup>123</sup> Catholic syndicalism was strong in Coahuila, Jalisco, Michoacán, Guanajuato, Puebla and Oaxaca. See Aurelio de los Reyes, *Cine y sociedad en México, 1896-1930. Volumen 2. Bajo el cielo de México (1920-1924)* (Mexico: UNAM/INAH, 1981), pp. 343-350.

<sup>124</sup> Stephen Haber, "Mercado interno, industrialización y banca, 1890-1929", en Sandra Kuntz Ficker (coord.), *Historia económica general de México. De la colonia a nuestros días* (Mexico: El Colegio de México/Secretaría de Economía, 2010), pp. 411-436.

In the following sections, I will portray the relations of post-Revolutionary Mexico with new important international actors of the 1920s: the US, Soviet Russia and the League of Nations. Moreover, I shall bring into the discussion the relations between Mexico and Latin America as these also epitomised a form to diversify Mexican foreign policy, particularly in cultural terms.

#### 1.4.1 Mexico and the US

During the Obregón-Calles era, relations between Mexico and the USA were beset by controversy. The assassination of Carranza in May 1920 provided an opportunity for the United States to require the Mexican government to fulfil certain conditions in return for diplomatic recognition. Knight highlights three issues that made it hard to provide acknowledgement: “Mexico’s international debt, in default since 1913; foreign claims for damages incurred during the Revolution; and the status of the oil industry and other U.S. interests whose property rights were affected by reformist legislation.”<sup>125</sup>

All these pressures will be analysed in the following chapters. For now, it is sufficient to note that Albert Fall, Interior Secretary, and the combined oil interests in the Association of Producers of Petroleum in Mexico of 1918 and the National Association for the Protection of American Rights in Mexico influenced President Warren G. Harding (March 1921-August 1923) to secure protection of American economic activities before extending official recognition. At the same time, the question of the debt was negotiated in Mexico City and New York by De la Huerta and the Bankers of the International Committee. The De la Huerta-Lamont agreement was signed in 1922 and will be explored in Chapter 3, for now it is necessary to understand that in it Mexico assumed a debt of 1,000 million dollars, some of the

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<sup>125</sup> Knight, *U.S.-Mexican Relations*, p. 131.

loans given to Huerta were not included, only those that were given to pay the foreign debt. This negotiation aimed to stabilise the finances of Mexico and permit the diplomatic recognition, which would activate the economy and would allow the country to pay its debt.<sup>126</sup> Moreover, the US government considered it necessary to establish a commercial treaty first than offering recognition.<sup>127</sup>

From December 1920 to June 1923, Obregón refused the conditions of the US government, which took as a basis oil interests and not the pressures by other groups, namely the Commerce Department, Henry Ford, William Randolph Hearst, Samuel Gompers, chambers of commerce and state governors of the border states that favoured recognition.<sup>128</sup> However, in the middle of 1923 the Bucareli Agreements were negotiated.<sup>129</sup> These established two mixed-claims commissions, one regarding damages from 1868 onwards, and the other only considered claims from 1910 to 1920. Furthermore, the government of Obregón agreed not to fully apply Article 27 and to reduce taxes on oil companies. They would continue to exploit oil and there would only be a juridical substitution of their property rights, which meant that they had to change their documents as owners for concessions. Clearly, the US had a major role in the dilemma of revolution and stabilisation; it had a strong position to move the balance towards stabilisation and to neutralise revolutionary objectives.

Once recognition was offered in September 1923, relations between Obregón and the US were stable. Nonetheless, this situation changed with the accession to

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<sup>126</sup> Manuel González Ramírez, *Política diplomática del presidente Obregón* (Hermosillo, Sonora: Impr. Cruz Gálvez, 1950), p. 8.

<sup>127</sup> To forestall Obregón's goal of recovering national resources, the United States proposed a trade agreement which aimed to reduce the application of Article 27 and diminish taxes for American products in Mexico. Ramírez Rancaño, *Crecimiento económico e inestabilidad política en México*, p. 64.

<sup>128</sup> Spenser, *The Impossible Triangle*, p. 25.

<sup>129</sup> The Bucareli Agreements were negotiated by Charles Beecher Warrend and John Barton Payne from the United States (the former had been ambassador in Japan and the latter had been Interior Secretary), and from Mexico Fernando González Roa and Ramón Ross. Benítez, *Lázaro Cárdenas y la Revolución Mexicana II*, p. 137; Luis Aboites and Engracia Loyo, "La construcción del nuevo Estado, 1920-1945" in *Nueva Historia General de México* (México: El Colegio de México, 2010), p. 602.

power of Calles. The fact that the Bucareli Agreements were not constitutional implied Calles had no obligation to commit to the promises made by Obregón's government. Instead, he promoted a petroleum law in Congress, which was approved on 31 December 1925. It stated that oil concessions would only be recognised if they were acquired before 1917, and would only last if the properties were productive.<sup>130</sup> Concessions would last 50 years. Also applying the 1917 Constitution, foreigners would not be allowed to own property 50 km near the coast and 100 km near the border (this law still remains in force).<sup>131</sup> These laws outraged foreign owners. US businessmen for example, wanted their government to break diplomatic relations with Mexico or even embark on a military intervention. However, Mexican oil production had reached a peak in 1923 and began to decline thereafter.

Nonetheless, US and British oil firms knew that this law could be an example for other countries to assert their sovereignty to own their subsoil deposits. Therefore, they were keen to stop it as the oil issue in Mexico was crucial to avoid future situations in other countries which could argue for similar claims. As mentioned above, Mexico was part of a trend of these nationalistic policies regarding oil. Calles was not willing to curtail this law, but thought this issue could be resolved through international arbitration; something firms did not accept. Besides, even when there were tensions in this period with oil companies, other areas of production started to recover and new industries came too. For example, Henry Ford established an assembly plant in 1926. Furthermore, trade in Mexico continued to depend on the exchange with the US by two-thirds.

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<sup>130</sup> Lorenzo Meyer, "El espionaje mexicano al servicio del antimperialismo", *Boletín* 55 (May-August 2007), (Fideicomisos Archivos Plutarco Elías Calles y Fernando Torreblanca), p. 4.

<sup>131</sup> "En diciembre de 1925 y enero de 1926 se emitieron las leyes reglamentarias de los párrafos I y IV del artículo 27 constitucional. El primero afectaba las posesiones extranjeras en una franja de 100 kilómetros a lo largo de las fronteras y 50 de las costas. Pero mayor oposición suscitó la ley reglamentaria del párrafo IX, relativo a los derechos petroleros, que estipulaba que las empresas con derechos anteriores a 1917 deberían cambiar sus títulos de propiedad por concesiones con duración de 50 años." Aboites and Loyo, p. 606.

Additionally, US Press company Hearst criticised Calles for attacking the Church and portrayed him as a Bolshevist. It is interesting to note that the holdings of William Randolph Hearst were not used for land distribution and when he visited Mexico in 1921 he was received with special courtesies. For Mexican diplomats, Hearst News, along with Catholic propaganda in the US and European countries, presented a major problem. However, it was with the help of US citizens that conversations to end the conflict were held and finally achieved in 1929 under the government of Portes Gil.

Moreover, US Ambassador Sheffield became more aggressive when the United States discovered that Calles was supporting Juan V. Sacasa's liberal rebellion in Nicaragua against Adolfo Díaz, who had been sponsored by the Americans and was also recognised by the British government. Evidently, the US did not accept Mexico's right to have a distinct position towards the Nicaraguan situation to that of American foreign policy.<sup>132</sup>

The oil controversy mixed with the Nicaraguan issue almost developed into an intervention. Calles's subalterns acquired documents of the American embassy in Mexico City that proved the United States had been planning an intervention for some years. This diplomatic correspondence was sent to Washington to let the American government know that the aggressive approach would lead to the publication of the documents which would expose United States interventionism to the world.<sup>133</sup> Evidently, Calles was neither willing to have a weak foreign policy nor to follow US actions regarding third parties. This crisis was resolved when Sheffield was removed and a new ambassador assigned: Dwight Morrow. He had a friendly

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<sup>132</sup>This was similar to the last years of the Porfiriato, when the United States condemned Díaz's friendly reception of José Santos Zelaya, former Nicaraguan president with an anti-American position, the reason for which the United States helped to dismiss him. Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico*, p. 32.

<sup>133</sup> Friedrich Katz, "El gran espía de México", *Boletín* 20 (September- December 1995), (Fideicomiso Archivos Plutarco Elías Calles y Fernando Torreblanca), pp. 1-32.

approach and achieved a working relationship with Calles, which allowed him to write a draft of a new law regarding oil. This new legislation (17 November 1927) modified the law of 1925. According to the modification oil companies were asked to agree to the legal change from property rights to concessions given by the State. The 1927 law did not establish a 50-years limit of use to oil properties owned before 1917. Besides, the positive act of the properties had to be demonstrated.<sup>134</sup> Moreover, Morrow at the same time participated (unofficially) in the negotiations to end the war against the *cristeros* in 1929.<sup>135</sup>

All the moments of tension between Mexico and the United States are clear examples of disrespect from US politicians towards revolutionary and post-Revolutionary Mexico.<sup>136</sup> This explains the need to find a counterbalance against US hegemony in the region, which was a major challenge with the reconfiguration of world politics after the Great War. Obregón and Calles were aware of the difficulties, but they still needed to try to find solutions when dealing with the neighbour since it was politically and economically crucial for Mexico's reconstruction. In this sense, Mexico's leaders decided to diversify its relations with Latin America and the Soviet Union, but also to regain a stable diplomatic relation with European Powers.

#### 1.4.2 Mexico and Soviet Russia

From 1917 onwards, contacts between revolutionary Mexico and Russia went through a slow process that led to the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1924

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<sup>134</sup> Meyer, "La Revolución Mexicana y las potencias anglosajonas", p. 340.

<sup>135</sup> Matthew A. Redinger, "Burke, Lippman, Walsh: Diplomacia privada en la crisis entre Iglesia y Estado en México, 1927-1929" in Jean Meyer (comp.), *Las naciones frente al conflicto religioso en México* (Mexico: Tusquets Editores, 2010), p. 135, pp. 321-339.

<sup>136</sup> Mattias Iser argues that "A state is disrespected if somebody speaks of it or- even more importantly acts toward it with a certain disrespectful attitude. Such disrespect would most clearly be expressed if it were directed against the rights of a state, against its basic structure or its general (foreign) policies." Mattias Iser, "Recognition between States? Moving beyond Identity Politics" in Christopher Daase, Caroline Fehl, Anna Geis and Georgios Kolliarakis (eds), *Recognition in International Relations. Rethinking a Political Concept in a Global Context* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 31-32.

and later a break in 1930. Both revolutions shared similar challenges such as obtaining diplomatic recognition which would solidify their position in the international arena. Yet, they also had some common projects such as the fight for secularisation, labour and peasant rights, and the need to educate a large part of their population.<sup>137</sup> However, the Mexican Revolution was a social-liberal project while the Russian Revolution had in mind a Marxist-Leninist socialist-communist ideal. Furthermore, while the Russian version led for a time to Soviet internationalism, Mexico did not have a special mission in global terms, but tried to focus on national economic, political and social problems. Mexican nationalism and Soviet internationalism clashed, and both projects also clashed with US imperialism.<sup>138</sup>

Carranza, De la Huerta, Obregón and Calles were careful not to be represented as just another Bolshevik government since that presented a problem in achieving the desired stabilisation of the balance between economic development and the Mexican revolutionary objectives. Mexican governments were aware that the relationship between revolutionary Russia and Mexico was carefully observed by the Great Powers of the period, but especially by the government of the US. This occurred because the Russian Revolution and Bolshevism cast a shadow that was seen as a threat to worldwide stability. Thus, opposition to the Soviet regime was followed by businessmen, the American Federation of Labour and public opinion.<sup>139</sup>

As already said, obtaining diplomatic recognition in order to secure economic reconstruction and international survival was a common struggle. In both cases, the US tried to ensure the recognition of the debt and that citizen's claims would be taken into consideration. Also, the US government proposed the establishment of a treaty of

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<sup>137</sup>Daniela Spenser, *The Impossible Triangle. Mexico, Soviet Russia, and the United States in the 1920s* (Duke: Duke University Press Books, 1999), p. 1.

<sup>138</sup> Spenser, *The Impossible Triangle*, pp. 191-192.

<sup>139</sup> Spenser, *The Impossible Triangle*, pp. 12-15.

commerce before offering recognition. Even though the Bolshevik government had established a firm control of power after 1922, and that there were antecedents of recognising a revolutionary government notably in regard to France in 1792, 1848, 1852 and 1870,<sup>140</sup> the government of the US delayed recognition to the USSR for several years. In 1926, the Governor of Maryland Albert C. Ritchie explained in regards to the recognition of Soviet Russia that

Our position has been that no matter how extensive and satisfactory business relations between the people of the two countries may be, still diplomatic recognition cannot come until the Soviet government acknowledges Russia's pre-Revolution debts, agrees to adjust the claims of American citizens whose property has been confiscated and in general demonstrates a willingness to conform to our ideas of her obligations as a nation.<sup>141</sup>

Meanwhile, relations between revolutionary Mexico and Russia were under construction. By the end of 1919, Soviet and Comintern agents arrived in Mexico with the goal of creating the *Partido Comunista Mexicano*.<sup>142</sup> Carranza was aware of the activities of the Soviet agents in Mexico and was in contact with them “with the intent of controlling the process and using it to legitimise himself as anti-American.”<sup>143</sup> Nonetheless, Carranza did not establish official relations with Soviet Russia although Mikhail Borodin, representative of the Russian government, attempted to do so while in Mexico.<sup>144</sup>

The next attempt to establish diplomatic links happened in 1922, when a trade delegation was sent to Mexico to create a commercial treaty. This also failed, but

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<sup>140</sup> Amos S. Hershey, “Recognition of New Governments”, *The American Journal of International Law*, 15: 1 (January 1921), p. 59.

<sup>141</sup> Albert C. Ritchie, “Some Facts Underlying the Relationship between the United States and Russia”, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political Science and Social Science*, 126 The United States in Relation to the European Situation (July 1926), p. 99.

<sup>142</sup> The Comintern (1919-1943) was the Third International that claimed leadership of the worldwide socialist movement. During the first half of the 1920s, the Comintern was used by the Party to instigate revolutions throughout the world having in mind that Soviet Russia could only survive if there was permanent revolution throughout the world, especially in advanced countries such as Germany. In the meantime, the Soviet government would try to establish formal diplomatic relations with countries.

<sup>143</sup> “en el intento de controlar el proceso y usarlo para legitimarse como antiestadounidense” Pi Suñer, Riguzzi and Ruano, *Europa*, p. 256.

<sup>144</sup> Spenser, *The Impossible Triangle*, p. 21.

D.E. Dubrovsky attended ceremonies in Yucatán supporting Felipe Carrillo Puerto. Carrillo was a promoter of socialism and unionisation in Yucatán, and translated and spread the rights of citizens to Mayans. He organised the *Partido Socialista Obrero de Yucatán* /Socialist Labour Party of Yucatán and supported the rebellion of Agua Prieta which allowed him to gain power during Obregón's presidential period.<sup>145</sup>

Another attempt to establish Mexican-Soviet relations was made in 1923. Miguel Álvarez del Castillo presented his credentials at the German Foreign Office and he visited representatives from around the world in Berlin. He met with the Russian ambassador, Nikolay Krestinsky, who said that the Soviet Union would be able to stop trade with the United States (who he censured) if relations with Mexico existed.<sup>146</sup> However, this news did not have diplomatic effects.

New negotiations were opened by the representatives of Mexico and the Soviet Union in Washington one year later, “on August 4, 1924, Mexico City announced through its ambassador in Berlin that it had agreed to accept the nomination of S. S. Pestkovsky as ambassador. Mexico thus became the first New World nation to extend diplomatic recognition the Soviet Union.”<sup>147</sup> Daniela Spenser explained that by establishing relations, both governments expressed solidarity as countries that had been considered pariahs in the international community at the beginning of the 1920s and as threats to US national security.<sup>148</sup> Besides, “[e]stablishing relations with the USSR was an act of autonomy vis-à-vis the powerful neighbor to the north and at the same time served to demonstrate the

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<sup>145</sup> Gilbert M. Joseph, “The Fragile Revolution: Cacique Politics and Revolutionary Process in Yucatán”, *Latin American Research Review*, 15:1 (1980), pp. 39-64.

<sup>146</sup> Miguel Álvarez del Castillo to Obregón, 2 May 1923, AGN, Fondo Obregón-Calles, 104-R-18, Ministro de México en Alemania, f. 3.

<sup>147</sup> William Harrison Richardson, *Mexico through Russian Eyes, 1806-1940* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988), p. 101.

<sup>148</sup> Spenser, *The Impossible Triangle*, p. 1.

government's capacity to incorporate points of the radical elite's agenda as its own."<sup>149</sup>

The Soviet government established by the fall of 1924 an embassy in Mexico City, the first one in the Western hemisphere.<sup>150</sup> With the establishment of diplomatic links, both governments shared the idea that this relationship could grow stronger by sharing revolutionary ideas and programmes, but this did not happen. Mexican representatives criticised the Soviet government while Russian diplomats and travellers did not consider the governments of Mexico as truly revolutionary.

Stanislav Pestkovsky, Alexandra Kollontai and Alexander Makarr were ambassadors in the period of 1924 to 1930. The first two were prominent revolutionaries that were opponents of Stalin while Makarr was a Stalinist interested in espionage.<sup>151</sup> Pestkovsky was received in Mexico City at the 'Hotel Regis' by a crowd that proclaimed support for the Russian Revolution. He presented diplomatic credentials to Obregón on the seventh anniversary of the October Revolution (25 October 1924);

[h]is speech emphasized his gratification at being chosen "to represent Russia's workers and peasants" in Mexico. He stressed the feeling of solidarity he believed the working people of Russia felt for their Mexican comrades, and he concluded by promising to do his best to maintain good and friendly relations between their two countries.<sup>152</sup>

As ambassador, he achieved to work in a cooperative manner with the Mexican government and promote trade. As a matter of fact, Mexican exports to Russia doubled.

However, tensions arose when Georgy Chicherin, in charge of Soviet foreign relations, called Mexico a base for political activities (March 1925). Besides, Luis

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<sup>149</sup> Spenser, *The Impossible Triangle*, p. 2.

<sup>150</sup> Richardson, *Mexico through Russian Eyes*, p. 98.

<sup>151</sup> Friedrich Katz, Foreword to Spenser, *The Impossible Triangle*, pp. x-xi.

<sup>152</sup> Richardson, *Mexico through Russian Eyes*, p. 108.

Morones and the CROM saw Soviet activities in Mexican labour as potential competition mainly because Pestkovsky helped with the organisation of the rail workers strike. Therefore, opposition towards these activities arose. Meanwhile, Basilio Vadillo was Mexican representative in Moscow. His excitement about the Mexican-Soviet relationship diminished in few months because of the lack of political and civil liberties and the bad conditions most people lived in the Union.<sup>153</sup>

Pestkovsky was succeeded by Kollontai; she presented diplomatic credentials to Calles on 24 December 1926 highlighting that relations between Mexico and the Soviet Union were fraternal and talked about the shared experience between both countries:

In all the world there are no two other countries which have as much in common as modern Mexico and the new Russia. This resemblance lies in the role which the working people play in the policies pursued by their countries, it can be noted in their major social and economic concerns, and in the direction of the foreign policy which protects the independence of the nation and is opposed to imperialist tendencies: all these tie our two countries together closely.<sup>154</sup>

The response of Calles to these words intended to avoid problems and misunderstandings at the international level by clarifying that the revolutionary governments had different forms. He stated that Mexico had a revolutionary government that respected the right of the Soviet Union to its unique form of government in the world, as Mexico respected the right of every sovereign nation to choose the political, social and economic system according to the wishes of its people.<sup>155</sup>

Kollontai stayed six months in Mexico and she left for health reasons. During her presence, relations were in general stable. However, no agreement was achieved to improve the economic links. There was no increase in trade and no steamship link

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<sup>153</sup> Pi Suñer, Riguzzi and Ruano, *Europa*, p. 287.

<sup>154</sup> The discourse of Alexandra Kollontai when presenting diplomatic credentials to Plutarco Elías Calles, 24 December 1926, in Richardson, *Mexico through Russian Eyes*, p. 145.

<sup>155</sup> Richardson, *Mexico through Russian Eyes*, p. 145-146.

was created, even when she suggested this would lead to a closer relationship. Her success was in the cultural area: Soviet films and exhibitions appeared and she established contact with intellectual circles.

While Kollontai was in Mexico, Soviet agents continued to work in the *Partido Comunista* and intended to recruit labour support, for example in a strike of railroad workers. As a consequence, Morones and the CROM started a campaign against Kollontai and Soviet activities in Mexico. By his part, Calles continued to express a friendly attitude for this diplomatic relation.<sup>156</sup> This was a brilliant strategy, since there were too many tensions with the US, breaking relations with Russia would have been seen as a triumph for the Americans.<sup>157</sup>

Once Kollontai left, the Soviet Union assigned Alexander Makarr as Ambassador and tensions increased as a consequence of Soviet activities in Mexican labour. In 1929, Jesús Silva Herzog was appointed to be Representative of Mexico in Moscow. His correspondence was censored and was considered to represent a capitalist government that worked for imperialism; he regarded the Soviet-Mexican relation as a failure and concluded the two parties could not find compatibility.<sup>158</sup>

Similarly, the three Soviet ambassadors wrote about Mexico in a disappointed manner. They were constantly criticised and observed by the US State Department, the Mexican government and Press.<sup>159</sup> A similar opinion was expressed by the writer Vladimir Mayakovsky who visited Mexico in 1925 for five months. He described the Mexican situation as violent, corrupted and backward.<sup>160</sup>

In 1929, the activities of the Comintern in Mexico were in collision with President Portes Gil's government, which was accused of being fascist, reactionary

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<sup>156</sup> Richardson, *Mexico through Russian Eyes*, p. 149.

<sup>157</sup> Spenser, *The Impossible Triangle*, p. 4.

<sup>158</sup> Pi Suñer, Riguzzi and Ruano, *Europa*, p. 288.

<sup>159</sup> Richardson, *Mexico through Russian Eyes*, pp. 98 and 103.

<sup>160</sup> Pi Suñer, Riguzzi and Ruano, *Europa*, p. 287.

and capitalist by the Soviet Press and the Comintern itself.<sup>161</sup> Leaders of the *Partido Comunista Mexicano* were imprisoned after attempting to overthrow the president. It is worth noting that similar Comintern activities in Great Britain in 1927 had led to the deterioration of British-Soviet relations which were also established in 1924. In 1930, the Mexican government decided to break relations as a consequence of the Soviet activities and criticisms in the country.

Evidently, while both Revolutionary Mexico and the Soviet Union shared the experience of living a revolution, in practice they followed diverse projects which made them critical of each other. The government of Calles was cautious to assume similarities because he was conscious these could have adverse repercussions for Mexico's relations with the US, but also European countries that were vigilant of Soviet actions. Good relations with labour in Mexico, but also with Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labour (AFL), which held a banquet to celebrate the visit of Calles to the US as elected President, implied that Calles was seen by foreigners as a Bolshevik, regardless that his economic project was capitalist and that the AFL had a tradition of helping the US government and emitting anti-communist declarations.<sup>162</sup> These accusations were used to create nationalist anti-yankeeism in Mexico, but they were a risk for economic development.

The dilemma of revolution and stabilisation was present in the relationship with the Soviet Union since the shadow of the Russian Revolution was used as a parallel to understand revolutionary Mexico. For example, Alberto Soto Cortés sustains that Swedish investors were not sure of the future of their business in Mexico because of the political orientation towards the left as "the memory of the confiscation of Ericsson properties in Russia after the Bolshevik revolution started to

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<sup>161</sup> Richardson, *Mexico through Russian Eyes*, p. 102.

<sup>162</sup> Spenser, *The Impossible Triangle*, p. 12.

be present with the controls every time more constant and the interest of the political authority to orientate the economic activity, even those that were product of foreign investment.”<sup>163</sup>

#### 1.4.3 Mexico and the League of Nations<sup>164</sup>

Fabián Herrera León has thoroughly studied the position of Mexico towards and inside the League of Nations from 1919 to the 1940s.<sup>165</sup> For us it is important to take into consideration that during the Obregón-Calles era Mexico was not part of the League and in this sense it was an international outcast just as were Germany until 1926 when it joined the League as a consequence of the Treaties of Locarno or the Soviet Union which joined in 1934.<sup>166</sup> However, there were some contacts between Mexico and the League which were useful to demonstrate that even if Mexico did not form part of the League until 1931, it was recognised as an equal by some countries and formed part of international organisations connected to the League.

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<sup>163</sup> “El recuerdo de la confiscación de los bienes de Ericsson en Rusia tras la revolución bolchevique comenzó a estar presente con los controles cada vez más constantes y el interés de la autoridad política de orientar la actividad económica, aun la que era producto de la inversión extranjera.” Alberto Soto Cortés, *México en el imaginario de los países del Báltico y del Mar del Norte. Suecia, Noruega y Holanda frente al México ignoto, 1750-1950* (Mexico: UNAM-PhD thesis, 2011), p. 76.

<sup>164</sup> I have written on the entry of Mexico to the League of Nations in “La cuestión de la dignidad nacional en el ingreso de México a la Sociedad de Naciones, 1919-1931” in Stefan Rinke (ed), *Entre espacios: la historia latinoamericana en el contexto global. Actas del XVII Congreso Internacional de la Asociación de Historiadores Latinoamericanistas Europeos (AHILA)*, Freie Universität Berlin, 9-13 de septiembre de 2014 (Berlin: Freie Universität- Colegio Internacional de Graduados “Entre Espacios”, 2016), pp. 2992- 3001. See [http://edocs.fu-berlin.de/docs/receive/FUDOCS\\_document\\_000000024129](http://edocs.fu-berlin.de/docs/receive/FUDOCS_document_000000024129)

<sup>165</sup> Fabián Herrera León, *México en la Sociedad de Naciones: Modernización y Consolidación de una política exterior, 1931-1940* (Mexico: Colegio de México, PhD Thesis, 2010).

<sup>166</sup> The Treaties of Locarno were negotiated in October 1925 by representatives from France, Germany, Belgium, Great Britain and Italy. In different documents, a moral relief between nations was promoted and the documents normalised relations between the mentioned countries and the tensions in German western (France and Belgium) and eastern (Poland and Czechoslovakia) fronts. This was achieved thanks to Stresemann’s ability to take into consideration the question of revisionism in regards to the Treaty of Versailles (frontiers, Germans in newly established countries, occupation of the Ruhr and the Rhineland, reduction of troops, etc.) in the German political background, but with the conscience of the need of cooperation towards peace in the region. These accords were also influential for Germany to join the League of Nations and to obtain a permanent seat in the council. Manfred Weißbecker, *Weimarer Republik* (Cologne, Germany: PapyRossa Verlag, 2015), pp. 71-75; Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Die Weimarer Republik. Krisenjahre der Klassischen Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987), pp. 191-202; John Hiden, *Germany and Europe 1919-1939*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: Longman, 1993), pp. 72-80.

The League of Nations was included in the Treaty of Versailles and started its activities on 10 January 1920. When the League was created, the Mexican government led by Carranza did not receive an invitation to join and did not ask to receive one. Notable members of the Covenant of the League were the United States and Great Britain, and while the former had diplomatic relations with Mexico, the latter did not. In January 1919 the British draft invited Latin American states to join the institution but not Mexico because according to US lawyer David Hunter Miller such an invitation would be understood as a recognition by countries that had not yet offered it to Carranza.<sup>167</sup> France decided to accept the Anglo-American position and Latin American countries did not react towards the lack of invitation to Mexico.

Attention was put in the Mexican political sphere to see the leagues' propositions and actions in those years. Alberto J. Pani, Mexican representative in Paris, reported on the discussions and formation of the League. Hence, when the Monroe Doctrine was to be adhered in the Peace Conference in Paris by being mentioned in Article 21 of the Covenant of the League, Mexico expressed its refusal, because "the [Mexican] Government has not recognized and will not recognize the Monroe Doctrine or any other doctrine that attacks the sovereignty and independence of Mexico."<sup>168</sup> This was done following the Carranza doctrine which as has been mentioned stated that all nations were equal, national sovereignty and institutions were to be respected, no intervention was acceptable and no pressures should be made to achieve modifications in the law that could benefit foreigners coming from powerful nations. The lack of invitation along with the inclusion of the Monroe Doctrine meant that when the League asked to have information regarding Mexican

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<sup>167</sup> David Hunter Miller, *The Drafting of the Covenant*, Vol.1, p. 467 cited in Manley O. Hudson, "Mexico's admission to membership in the League of Nations", *The American Journal of International Law*, 26:1 (1932), p. 114.

<sup>168</sup> Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs to certain governments in Philip Marshall Brown "Mexico and the Monroe Doctrine", *The American Journal of International Law*, 26 (1) (January 1932), p.117.

laws, industry, production and other questions the Mexican government refused to share it and did not answer this request in 1919.<sup>169</sup>

In September 1923, Mexico finally received an invitation to join the League of Nations although it only was signed by the Latin American section. Pani, now Minister of Foreign Relations, rejected the call because of the particular situations the country was immersed, specifically not having relations with Great Britain, whose Delegate was a member of the League's Council. Let us remember that Obregón had been recognised by the US and French governments on that month. Besides, Pani explained that the fact that Mexico was not invited when the League was created as other neutral countries had been "a fault which profoundly affected national dignity and which has been repaired with the message I have the honour to answer [the letter of invitation]".<sup>170</sup> Furthermore, the invitation was expected to be by all members of the League, and not only the Latin American section. Evidently, the question of national pride was crucial for Mexico's foreign policy and no action would be done that could be seen as an attempt to create proximity with Great Britain that for so many years showed rejections towards the Mexican Revolution.

Even though Mexico did not join the League of Nations, by 1926 it was part of the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation in Paris.<sup>171</sup> In that year Reyes wrote to the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations mentioning that it would be good for Mexico to enter this institute "for Mexico to express -without political compromises of any type- a benevolent attitude towards the work of the League of

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<sup>169</sup> See *El Universal* and *El Demócrata*, 27 September 1919.

<sup>170</sup> APEC, expediente 10: SAENZ, Aarón, legajo 1/6, fojas 10-11, inventario 5210. Letter from Alberto J. Pani to Torriente, Edwards, Mello-Franco, Urrutia, Peralta, Bonamy, Gutiérrez, Caballero Guerrero, Guani, Fortoul (Office of the League of Nations), Mexico City, September 13, 1923.

<sup>171</sup> Planned by the Council of the League of Nations since 1921 to study ways to increase intellectual and education cooperation internationally. The budget for the Commission was small (5,000 pounds) so it was not sufficient; nevertheless, in 1924 the French government offered to give 2,000,000 French francs if the institute was established in Paris. Hence, this institution was linked to the League of Nations but was economically independent.

Nations. Besides, Mexico would have an excellent forum to make public the efforts it makes in pro of the national sciences, letters, the arts, and to show the interest for intellectual closeness.”<sup>172</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Relations explained that if the Institute formally invited Mexico then it would join this organisation. The invitation was extended and Reyes was designated in charge of the representation of Mexico in this institute. This was the most successful contact to the League during the Obregón-Calles era.

The governments of Portes Gil and Ortiz Rubio encouraged further attempts to make Mexico present in Geneva by sending a representative and establishing an office with the purpose of acquiring knowledge on the conferences of the League. Additionally, Mexico was invited to be part of the League. On 7 September 1931, after the delegations of Germany, Great Britain, Spain, France, Italy and Japan extended an invitation, the Mexican government agreed to join this international organism, but stated “that she has never recognized the regional understanding mentioned in Article 21 of the Covenant of the League”.<sup>173</sup> Mexico was admitted as a member of the League of Nations on 12 September 1931.

The relationship of Mexico with the League gives us interesting reflections of Mexican international relations. Germany was not a member of the League until 1926 so this could be a point of commonality between the two countries in the first half of the 1920s, but also with the Soviet Union. The League of Nations clearly had a position of caution regarding certain revolutionary countries. Evidently, the lack of recognition by Great Britain did also define Mexico’s entry to the League even when

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<sup>172</sup> “para que México manifieste- sin compromisos políticos de ninguna clase- una actitud benévola hacia la obra de la Sociedad de las Naciones. A la vez, México tendría una tribuna excelente para dar a conocer los esfuerzos que hace en pro de las Ciencias, de las Letras y de las Artes nacionales, y para demostrar el interés por el acercamiento intelectual.” Reyes citado en Herrera León, “México y el Instituto Internacional de Cooperación Intelectual 1926-1939”, p. 178.

<sup>173</sup> Cited in Philip Marshall Brown, “Mexico and the Monroe Doctrine, *The American Journal of International Law*, 26 (1) (January 1932), p.117.

it remained neutral during the Great War. This relation also permits us to highlight the negative position of different Mexican governments towards the inclusion of the Monroe Doctrine in this international organisation. Lastly, it is evident that there was an interest in Mexico to form part of international institutions, but national pride in regards to Mexican-British relations was considered significant as well. While a diversification of relations was desirable, the governments of Mexico during the 1920s showed interest in forming part of institutions connected to the League, but did not ask for an invitation. In the dilemma of revolution and stabilisation, the League of Nations did not become so relevant as to put into question national positions such as the Carranza doctrine.

#### 1.4.4 Mexico and Latin America

Lastly, it remains to take into consideration relations between Mexico and Latin American countries. These existed since the independence of Mexico in 1821 was recognised by the also new independent countries. While it was considered that Mexico should have a good relationship with her sisters in Latin America, the links did not develop beyond friendly diplomatic relations.

At the beginning of the Porfirian regime there was an attempt to improve relations and missions were sent to Central America and South America directed by Francisco Díaz Covarrubias and Leonardo López Portillo. The aim was to establish a counterbalance against the politics of the US, but there was no positive result and while relations remained friendly politically, there was no significant improvement in economic relations.<sup>174</sup> As part of the ambition to improve relations, in 1888 Mexico and Ecuador signed a Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation. However, this

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<sup>174</sup> Agustín Sánchez Andrés *et al.* (coords.), *Artífices y operadores de la diplomacia mexicana, siglos XIX y XX* (Mexico: Porrúa/UMSNH/El Colegio de San Luis/UNAM, 2004), p. 5.

was more a symbolic agreement than a source for economic rapprochement. Moreover, Mexico had an active participation in Pan-American conferences and was critical of the hegemonic position of the US throughout the continent. Furthermore, tensions with Guatemala in regards to the border and the ownership of Soconusco in the state of Chiapas, were solved in 1882 with a treaty of limits.

In the course of his leadership, Carranza started a tradition to send intellectuals to represent Mexico in Central and South America. Additionally, Isidro Fabela was sent in 1916 to Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, Montevideo and Santiago de Chile to explain the goals of the *constitucionalistas*. Once Fabela returned to Mexico he reorganised the Legations in Mexico and sent Amado Nervo as the representative to Argentina and Uruguay, Aarón Sáenz was sent to Rio de Janeiro, Fernando Cuén to Santiago, Alfonso M. Siller to Peru-Bolivia and Gerzayin Ugarte to Colombia-Ecuador-Venezuela.

Moreover, Carranza's foreign policy tried to promote neutrality during the war in Latin American countries, although he failed, and also encouraged the Carranza doctrine. With this latter goal in mind, Pedro González Blanco and Antonio Manero were sent to South America in 1919 to talk about the importance of equality between sovereignty of all nations, same rights for foreigners and nationals as well as the necessity that diplomacy defended general interests and not of particulars, for example, the interests of oil companies. During these visits, the Mexican representatives also explained the Mexican constitutional articles regarding land ownership, labour rights and secularisation. Apparently, there existed an attempt to make propaganda of the revolution in the continent.

In the course of the 1920s, the aim was to continue stable political relations but to improve economic links as well. The idea of a counterbalance in regards to the

political power of the US was still attractive, especially throughout international organisations such as Pan-American Conferences and the League of Nations, and also Latin America was seen as a source to counterbalance US economic power in Mexico which has been explored in the case of Mexican-Argentine relations in the 1920s and 1930s by María Cecilia Zuleta Miranda.<sup>175</sup>

Closeness was also promoted through journalism and intellectual contact. For example, Estela Morales Campos mentioned the relevance of regional visits from the north to the south or vice versa by intellectuals and politicians such as Mexican writers Vasconcelos and Reyes, Chilean Gabriela Mistral, Peruvian activist Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre and Argentine José Ingenieros establishing networks of shared interests that looked to understand aspects such as *Latinamericanness*, anti-imperial expressions and Hispanic culture, and in the case of Mexico also highlight the revolution.<sup>176</sup>

For example, in 1921 Antonio Caso, one of the most important Mexican philosophers of the twentieth century, held conferences in Santiago, Lima, Buenos Aires, Montevideo and Rio de Janeiro. In those cities, he obtained *honoris causa* doctorates and was well received with his conferences on the Mexican university reformation. Also, between 1920 and 1924 other prominent intellectual figures were in Latin American countries: Julio Jiménez Rueda in Montevideo and Buenos Aires; Enrique González Martínez in Chile, José Juan Tablada in Bogota, Antonio Castro Leal in Chile, Antonio Mediz Biolio was representative in Bogota, Buenos Aires, Nicaragua and Costa Rica while Juan B. Delgado was in charge of Central American

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<sup>175</sup> María Cecilia Zuleta Miranda, “Alfonso Reyes y las relaciones México-Argentina: proyectos y realidades, 1926-1936”, *Historia Mexicana*, XLV:4 (1996), pp. 902-904.

<sup>176</sup> See Estela Morales Campos, *La diversidad informativa latinoamericana en México* (Mexico: UNAM, 2001), p. 25.

cities.<sup>177</sup> Vasconcelos was also the representative of Mexico in the celebrations of the Centenary of Brazilian independence and used the opportunity to give conferences on his cultural project.

Moreover, by 1923 the Mexican government established a telegraphic connection with all Central American countries and an International Conference for North- and Central American Journalists took place in September in Mérida, Yucatán. Moreover, the Mexican government established strong links in the 1920s with the news agency Ariel that was focused in the news in Central America. Ariel along with Trens Agency which focused on the US and Duems Agency in Europe, was used to fight against US propaganda and position Mexico's project in the international press.<sup>178</sup> Also, editorials dedicated to promoting the work of Mexican and Latin American authors were created and expanded, for example in 1924 *Biblioteca Iberoamericana*.<sup>179</sup> This editorial enterprise is still an important factor in *Latinamericaness*.

In addition, in 1923 when the Mexican government was not invited to the organisation of the Fifth Pan-American Conference in Santiago de Chile (25 March-19 April 1923) because of the lack of recognition by the US, it did receive indirect support to fight the US powerful position in the conference when complaining about the United States regarding the question of recognition as perverse and unfair towards Mexico.

This was just the beginning of a campaign that criticised the United States influence in the Pan-American Conference as the Council was directed by the US Secretary of State and the centre of operations was Washington. As a matter of fact,

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<sup>177</sup> Lajous Vargas, *Las relaciones exteriores de México*, pp. 182-183.

<sup>178</sup> Sebastián Rivera Mier, ““Latin American News Agency Should be Formed...” Las agencias de noticias internacionales en el México posrevolucionario, 1920-1934”, en *Secuencia*, 92 (2015), p. 168 and 179.

<sup>179</sup> Morales Campos, *La diversidad informativa latinoamericana en México*, p. 30.

the delegation of Costa Rica started a campaign to reform the structure of the Conference which led to the following modification: every country had the right to attend the Conference and the Presidency and Vice-Presidency of the Council would be elected.<sup>180</sup>

Four years later, in the Sixth Pan-American Conference in La Habana, Cuba Mexico continued being critical towards the role of the US and promoted a campaign for democratisation to avoid the union became a power mechanism of the US. This democratisation attempted to have direct representation, rotation in the posts, more Latin American participation in positions and if possible to change the headquarters from Washington to somewhere else. Therefore, the Mexican post-Revolutionary government was careful of showing discontent towards US hegemonic power in the continent and tried to convince other Latin American countries to fight the status quo. However, it sought to have a pacifist image trying to balance Latin America and the US, but did not promote a Latin American unity separated from the US.<sup>181</sup>

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, Calles supported the liberal movement in Nicaragua in 1926-27 which led to tensions with the government of the United States. While he decided not to go further with the military help, this is a good example of Mexico's commitment to try to help other revolutionary projects in the region. In the dilemma of revolution and stabilisation in regards to the relations of Mexico with Latin America, revolution was promoted. However, if this became a threat to national stability because of US pressures, then stabilisation was preferred.

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<sup>180</sup> See Juan Manuel Salceda Olivares, "México y la V conferencia panamericana: un campo de batalla diplomática contra el intervencionismo norteamericano", *Tzintzun. Revista de Estudios Históricos*, 50 (July-December 2009), pp. 61- 104.

<sup>181</sup> Juan Manuel Salceda Olivares, "Salvador Martínez de Alva y el pragmatismo en la política exterior callista" in Sánchez Andrés *et al.* (coords.), *Artífices y operadores de la diplomacia mexicana*, pp. 235-245.

It is worth to highlight that Legations in some Latin American countries were upgraded to embassies, Zuleta mentions Brazil (1922), Guatemala (1926), Argentina (1927), Chile (1927) and Cuba (1927).<sup>182</sup> Our diplomats were part of those embassies too, for example, Ortiz Rubio was ambassador to Brazil (1926-29), while Reyes was ambassador in Argentina (1927-29), where he worked to establish a steamship line between the countries and was in constant contact with intellectuals in Argentina and Uruguay.<sup>183</sup> Hence, in the 1920s, Latin American countries represented a form to increase cultural relations with governments that shared a similar past: that of being Ibero-American colonies; but also a similar present: attempting to diminish US power in the continent and maybe even a closer future: seeking to obtain a relevant place in the international arena through institutions such as the League of Nations.

Therefore, links between Mexico and Latin America increased from the Porfirian regime throughout the Mexican Revolution and into the Post-Revolutionary years. These relations would vary from country to country, but in general the region became more significant. For this thesis, it is only necessary to take into consideration that the Mexican Post-Revolutionary State is looking for ways to expand its mosaic of international relations in a context in which revolutions are not gladly welcomed around the world. Latin America becomes a viable opportunity to increase Mexico's presence politically, culturally and economically. The 1920s offered the chance to play a major role in the region, and Mexican governments of the Obregón-Calles era

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<sup>182</sup> María Cecilia Zuleta, "La apertura al mundo. Altibajos en la consolidación de la soberanía, 1880-1930" in Mario Ojeda Revah (coord.), *México Contemporáneo 1808-2014 Tomo 5 La política internacional* (Mexico: El Colegio de México/Fundación Mapfre/FCE, 2015), p. 177.

<sup>183</sup> On the role Reyes played as ambassador in Argentina see María Cecilia Zuleta Miranda, "Alfonso Reyes y las relaciones México-Argentina: proyectos y realidades, 1926-1936", *Historia Mexicana*, XLV:4 (1996), pp. 867-905; Javier Garcíadiego, "Alfonso Reyes en la Argentina: desencuentros diplomáticos y amistades literarias" in *Autores, editoriales, instituciones y libros. Estudios de historia intelectual* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 2015), pp. 229-254, Javier Garcíadiego, *Alfonso Reyes. Embajador en Argentina* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 2000) and Pablo Yankelevich, "México-Argentina. Itinerario de una relación 1910-1930", *Tzintzun. Revista de Estudios Históricos*, 45 (January-June 2007), pp. 83-104.

aimed to find an ally against US pressures, if possible to support other revolutionary governments and become an example for social, labour and educative improvements.

### *1.5 Conclusions*

During the Porfirian regime, a balance between the US and European interests in economic and political terms was achieved. However, the balance was harder to succeed in some sectors than others which led to the nationalisation of Mexican Railways. Besides, the attempt to create the balance resulted in a mistrust of the US government towards Díaz. Culturally, Europeans –especially the French arts and culture of consumption- were more attractive to the elites in Mexico.

The parallel catastrophic events of the Great War and the Mexican Revolution implied the accomplished balance was set to pieces, while trade between Mexico and Europe was more difficult as a consequence of the maritime war, the one between Mexico and the US increased. Besides, Mexican oil became the second largest worldwide while national agriculture diminished and also the production of minerals.

The Mexican government refused to join any of the causes during the war. French propaganda failed in making Mexico support the efforts of the Allies, but Carranza's government remained neutral. There was some flirting with the idea of an alliance with the German Empire to counterbalance US aggressiveness (interventions of the port of Veracruz and the Pershing expedition), but there was no actual agreement.

Once the war ended and the Agua Prieta rebellion succeeded, Mexico needed to deal with new relevant international actors: on the one side, its neighbour the United States with which economic dependence had been reinforced and which was a definitive factor to assure the permanence of governments in internal politics. On the other, the Soviet Union which had experienced a revolution but was more drastic and

aimed to destroy the capitalist system while the Mexican Revolution did not, although it shared support of labour movement and peasants. In the relation with both countries the dilemma of revolution and stabilisation was present. According to the US, Mexico needed to stabilise by changing certain laws from the 1917 Constitution. For the Russian Revolution Mexico had to radicalise against capitalism and imperialism. The Obregón-Calles position remained sovereign in regards to both perspectives, although recognised that it was more useful to take the view wanted from the US than that of the Soviet Union because if the project of the revolution was to be applied, there was a need for stability that could only be achieved working with foreign interests.

Furthermore, the Mexican government in the Obregón-Calles era continued to criticise the position of the US in the Americas through Pan-American Conferences and this implied closeness with Latin American countries. This stance was a transparent attempt to find a balance in the continent of diverse forces. The attempt failed since the US was the hegemonic power in the region in the 1920s. Additionally, the cultural aspect became more important for Mexican foreign diplomacy towards this part of the world and relations were upgraded in some cases. It was assumed that strong political and cultural relations could improve economic links too; this was necessary for the diversification of Mexico's foreign relations in all areas. In regards to relations with Latin America, Mexico also experienced the dilemma of revolution and stabilisation but with fewer tensions. Mexico was a revolutionary project that supported other revolutions and insisted in respecting national sovereignty, but never tried to impose its project to others and preferred stable relations in the region.

Lastly, it is certain that national pride played a role. On the one hand, this was clear when Obregón refused conditioned recognition by the US and Calles rejected

communist influence in Mexican unions; on the other, refusing the invitation of the League of Nations by the Latin American section and not all of it. Mexico wanted to take part of international organisations because it was a way to show how the Mexican Revolution was a serious project and it was offering solid results. This is the reason for Reyes promoting the inclusion of the country in international forums linked to the League. However, the governments of Obregón and Calles refused to ask for an invitation to join the League since that would have been an offence for national pride.

It is with these historical antecedents and preoccupations of putting in practice the revolutionary ideas while also continuing the modernisation of the country, that the governments of Obregón and Calles met with three European Powers: Germany, France and Great Britain. Those European Powers shared with Mexico two aspects: the need for reconstruction and the fact of dealing with the new international actors.

Hence, it is important to do a comparative study on how the European Powers dealt with the question of recognising the government of Obregón and by doing so stabilise diplomatic relations and become examples for social-labour reforms in Mexico. Furthermore, it is important to consider the steps done by governments and transnational groups such as Chambers of Commerce to improve economic relations and the role of Presidents, news agencies and intellectuals to achieve a closer cultural and academic understanding. While trying to construct stable or stronger bilateral relations with each of the European Powers, the Mexican governments of the 1920s were aware of the stronger role the US played for all of them as well and also the cautious way in which they related to the Soviet Union, more importantly the dilemma of revolution and stabilisation will guide those relations.

## **Chapter 2 The question of diplomatic recognition**

### *2.1 Introduction*

The first and most relevant moment to solve the dilemma between revolution and stabilisation that characterised Mexican-European relations in the 1920s was when European governments offered recognition of Obregón and Calles. It was precisely through recognition that other aspects of bilateral ties could be improved. Recognition unlocked the dilemma. Hence, in this chapter I argue that diplomatic recognition or the lack of it was significant in the way in which Mexican-European Powers relations improved or diminished between 1920 and 1928. Given that European Powers offered official accreditation in different moments (1921 by Germany, 1923 by France few hours after the US and 1925 by Great Britain) the bilateral relations differed in significant ways. This chapter will precisely focus on this question.

The purpose is to explain the relevance diplomatic recognition had for Mexico's national and international survival and to discuss the different ways in which the governments of De la Huerta, Obregón and Calles tried to attain recognition from Great Britain, France and Germany. The question was influenced by the lack of US recognition and US pressures towards European Powers for them not to recognise Mexico until some conditions were obtained. These were related, as was explained in Chapter 1, to a commitment to pay the debt, the protection of the lives and properties of foreigners and most importantly to changes to Article 27. This article states that "[o]wnership of the lands and waters within the boundaries of the national territory is vested originally in the Nation, which has had, and has the right to transfer title thereof to private persons, thereby constituting private property."<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Const. art. 27, para. 1 (Mex.), translated in *12 Constitutions of the Countries of the World*, Mexico, at 23-32 (Albert P. Blaustein & Gisbert H. Flanz eds.).

This chapter will offer a historical reconstruction on the question of diplomatic recognition from 1920 to 1925 demonstrating the interactive dynamics of recognition and how international relations shaped diplomatic policies of different countries. This shall be done by analysing diplomatic correspondence drawn from multiple foreign services' archives and secondary sources. It is important to mention that there is a detailed and descriptive account of British recognition by Lorenzo Meyer,<sup>185</sup> Alan Knight<sup>186</sup> and Paul Garner.<sup>187</sup>

According to these historians the main concerns of the British government, colony and businessmen in Mexico during the 1920s can be summarised as reactions to Mexican nationalism regarding oil, the problem of the debt, land distribution and labour legislation.<sup>188</sup> These concerns implied that British interests, in general, did not recommend the recognition of De la Huerta and Obregón, it was only after 1922 that different British interests diversified their opinion on the question of diplomatic recognition. Nevertheless, by 1924 diplomatic relations between Mexico and Great Britain were broken after the expulsion of Cunard Cummins, who was in charge of the archives of the Legation and ended being unofficially His Majesty's Representative since there was no proper British diplomat at the helm of the Legation.

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<sup>185</sup> Lorenzo Meyer, "El ocaso británico en México. De las causas profundas a los errores políticos", *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, 11:1 (Winter 1995), pp. 25-4; "La Revolución Mexicana y las potencias anglosajonas: El final de la confrontación y el principio de la negociación, 1925-1927", *Historia Mexicana*, 34:2 (October-December 1984), pp. 300-352; Meyer, Lorenzo and Lorena Murillo, "Las potencias extranjeras y la Revolución mexicana. Una reacción en siete etapas" *Foro Internacional*, 40:4 (162) (October-December 2000), pp. 577-593; *México para los mexicanos. La revolución y sus adversarios* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 2010); and *Su Majestad Británica contra la Revolución Mexicana. El fin de un imperio informal, 1900-1950* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1991).

<sup>186</sup> Alan Knight, "British Attitudes Toward the Mexican Revolution 1910-1940" in W. M. Roger Louis (ed.), *Adventures with Britannia. Personalities, Politics and Culture in Britain* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1996), pp. 273-290. Johnathan C. Brown and Alan Knight, *The Mexican Petroleum Industry in the Twentieth Century* (Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Press, 1992).

<sup>187</sup> Paul Garner, *British Lions and Mexican Eagles. Business, Politics, and Empire in the Career of Weetman Pearson in Mexico, 1889-1919* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

<sup>188</sup> Knight, "British Attitudes Toward the Mexican Revolution", p. 284.

The rupture in relations implied that Mexico closed its Legation and Consulates in Great Britain (Liverpool, London and Glasgow), while Great Britain left its general consul in Mexico City and the archives were given to the US embassy.

From 1 November 1924

the despatch of neither goods nor ships to MEXICO will be permitted during the time when the Consulates are closed, and, in case attempts are made to make use of the services of the Consuls of friendly countries for this purpose, you will issue a warning that such despatches will not be recognised by the Mexican authorities.<sup>189</sup>

Moreover, in April 1925, the Mexican government decided to tax the building of the British Legation (in the corner of Río Lerma and Río Sena streets) since the Westminster City Council was asking the Mexican Legation to cover taxes “as if it were a private residence, arguing that there are no relations between countries”.<sup>190</sup> It was only on 28 August 1925 that relations were restored with the exchange of diplomatic letters in which *chargés d’affaires* were nominated: Consul Norman King for Great Britain and Alfonso Rosenzweig Díaz for Mexico.<sup>191</sup>

The case of French recognition has been mentioned by Pierre Py and Juan José de Olloqui, who differ on the dates in which recognition was offered. According to Py, the French government had a shift in its politics regarding Mexico. During the 1910s it followed US diplomacy towards Mexico, but in 1921 it tried to convince the United States to join in a simultaneous recognition of Obregón and recognised Mexico without the United States in March 1921 since “after losing its prominent place, France has nothing to lose and on the contrary a lot to win entering into a new

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<sup>189</sup> HW 12/64, Mexico, Doc. 18404: Mexican Foreign Ministry to Mexican Consul in London, Mexico City, 18 October 1924.

<sup>190</sup> “como si se tratara de una residencia particular, alegando que no existen relaciones entre ambos países” AHSRE, 42-26-131, Contribuciones que el gobierno mexicano cubre sobre el edificio que posee en Londres: Aarón Sáenz to the Governor of the Federal District, Mexico City, 1 April 1925.

<sup>191</sup> Lorenzo Meyer, “La Revolución Mexicana y las Potencias Anglosajonas”, p. 324.

game with the new Mexico”.<sup>192</sup> In practice, as De Olloqui explained, the French government did follow US strategic decisions towards Obregón as economic concerns for national reconstruction were influenced by the US and finally recognised Obregón in September 1923.<sup>193</sup>

Beyond the relevance of US pressures, these authors do not analyse other factors that influenced the question of recognition such as claims by French residents whose properties and lives had been victims of the revolution; the injury done to industrial and financial institutions (their metallic reserves had been confiscated) and the payment of the debt. Curiously, in a report from 21 October 1921 the damage to rail tracks was also mentioned although the French had no direct interest in the Mexican railway system. In that report, it was calculated that French capital engaged in Mexico were 2 million francs, 1.5 of French investment in diverse sectors and 500 million from French established in Mexico that held commercial and industrial enterprises.<sup>194</sup> Given that there were US pressures there was some concern about the damage to the railroad system and the 1917 constitutional dispositions in Article 27, although there was an awareness that there was a need to prioritise French concerns. All of these factors were considered when the French government discussed the question of diplomatic recognition which I will explore in the following sections of this chapter.

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<sup>192</sup> “Después de haber perdido su lugar prominente, Francia no tiene ya nada que perder y por el contrario mucho que ganar entrando en un nuevo juego con el México nuevo”, Pierre Py, *Francia y la Revolución Mexicana*, p. 239.

<sup>193</sup> See Py, *Francia y la Revolución Mexicana*, p. 238, also in Pi Suñer, Riguzzi and Ruano, *Europa*; Juan José de Olloqui, “La misión diplomática de México en Gran Bretaña: apuntes para la historia de las relaciones entre ambos países”, [<http://biblio.juridicas.unam.mx/revista/pdf/HistoriaDerecho/7/cnt/cnt8.pdf> accessed 14 March 2012].

<sup>194</sup> ADMAE, 22cpcom, Affaires politiques, Mexique 21 Reconnaissance du nouveau gouvernement du général Obregón: « Mexique : Gouvernement du General Obregon. Sa reconnaissance par le Gouvernement français » Report for the President of the Council written by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Direction of Political and Commercial Affaires-America. Paris, 22 October 1921, f. 12.

The German recognition has only been studied by Stefan Rinke. He explained that due to the difficulties Germany encountered between 1918 and 1919, it decided to have a friendly approach towards the US. Wilson asked the German government to remove from Mexico Heinrich von Eckhardt who had been the minister in Mexico City and had contributed in the espionage of Germany during the Great War. Moreover, in October 1919 the German government asked its diplomatic representatives not to allow any suspicious behaviour that could affect US-German relations. Rinke argues that this was also clear when the German government followed Washington policy regarding recognition and restored official ties with Mexico in 1923. Clearly, for Rinke the main aspect that stopped German recognition was the pressure of the US.<sup>195</sup> I agree with Rinke's interpretation of the relevance of US pressures, but as I will demonstrate recognition was given before the Bucareli Agreements were being negotiated. It suffices to say for now that the German government was not concerned with specific problems to offer recognition as I shall demonstrate.

Evidently, there are several studies that deal with the recognition of the Mexican government by European Powers. I aim to contribute to the discussion by showing evidence of the correct dates of recognition which has an impact on interpreting whether individual European governments followed US policy. I also aim to offer a comparative analysis of the recognition by the three European Powers.

This chapter is divided into the following sections: a discussion on the question of recognition of governments and an exploration of the relevance of diplomatic recognition for Mexican national and international survival, then I shall talk about the assumptions European Powers and Mexico held during the provisional

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<sup>195</sup> Stefan Rinke, "Alemania y México entre la Primera Guerra Mundial y la gran depresión 1918-1933", *Dimensión Antropológica*, 14:39 (January-April 2007), pp. 45-46.

presidency of Adolfo de la Huerta regarding the continuity of diplomatic relations without formal recognition. Afterwards, I shall present how the government of Obregón dealt with the pressures of European Powers in order to obtain recognition. In the first months of Obregón's administration European governments were waiting for US diplomatic recognition, but their attitudes changed from August 1921 to August 1923. Besides, they were pressured by different economic interests that were not always in agreement with those from the US. I will also present how German, US and French recognition allowed Plutarco Elías Calles to visit those countries before assuming office in order to increase political, economic and cultural links. Lastly, I will present the negotiations that lead to British recognition of Calles. I will conclude with a comparative analysis of the three recognitions, strengthening similarities and differences, summarising the main concerns of each country and each Mexican President.

## 2.2 *On recognition*

The Agua Prieta rebellion led by De la Huerta, Obregón and Calles, and the subsequent assassination of President Carranza (21 May 1920), implied that diplomatic recognition needed to be obtained since “[t]he question of recognition of a government arises only when it has come to power unconstitutionally.”<sup>196</sup> In such cases “[r]ecognition may then be withheld for political reasons, or may be limited to recognition *de facto*. Although the new regime may be all too clearly in effective control of the territory, with a reasonable prospect of permanence and with the obedience of the mass of the population, recognition may be withheld as a sign of

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<sup>196</sup> Anthony Aust, *Handbook of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 24.

political displeasure.”<sup>197</sup> In the language of the period, we have the words of international lawyer John Fischer Williams (1929):

If recognition is refused indefinitely to what claims to be a new Government, the reason for such a refusal must presumably be found in the conception that there is no State behind the new Government, that in fact there has been a relapse- presumably temporary- into barbarism. [...] If there is a State behind the new Government, the only question to be solved is the question of fact, whether the new Government can be expected to be sufficiently stable. A premature recognition may involve trouble later, if the old Government re-establishes itself. Equally a recognition too long delayed may mean strained relations with a new and vigorous Power. Within wide limits then the question is one for the statesman and not the lawyer, though the lawyer may be permitted to suggest that if and when no reasonable person can doubt that the new Government is stable, a refusal to recognise it is in fact to deprive an organised body of men of their international rights.<sup>198</sup>

As will be seen throughout this chapter, the Sonorans experienced the lack of *de jure* recognition as a clear sign of political displeasure and lack of belief in the stability of the State by foreign governments towards the revolutionary goals which had been institutionalised in the Mexican Constitution of February 1917. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this was a similar problem faced by the Russian Revolution.

Therefore, the lack of *de jure* recognition was an important issue for Mexican foreign and domestic policy. Diplomatic recognition would show internal strength vis-à-vis other revolutionary groups, assuring legal access to armaments from abroad while denying easy access to it to revolutionaries. Additionally, it prevented interventions by foreign countries and could allow Mexico to act as a player in the international arena in Pan-American Congresses or the League of Nations. Hence, recognition offered public legitimisation and the control of national security, and a place in international politics.

In economic terms, recognition would allow multilateral investment in industrial enterprises and infrastructure, global technology and the opportunity to ask

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<sup>197</sup> Aust, *Handbook of International Law*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>198</sup> John Fischer Williams, “Recognition”, *Transactions of the Grotius Society*, Vol. 1 Problems of Peace and War, Papers Read before the Society in the Year 1929 (1929), pp. 63-64.

for loans, all of which were relevant to the project of reconstruction of the Mexican economy. The economic reconstruction of the Post-Revolutionary State does not differ dramatically from the Porfirio Díaz modernisation model, but it does take into consideration the Constitution of 1917 which had a strong social dimension and promoted economic nationalism. While there was no clear and explicit ideology of the Mexican Revolution, different leaders had ideas that derived from the liberalism of the nineteenth century. Therefore, there was the project of modernising Mexico in a capitalist sense and there was no overall intention to try to lead Mexico into socialism and later communism. However, the question of recognition after the Agua Prieta rebellion represented an opportunity for foreign countries to try to reverse part of the revolutionary goals which were putting their interests at risk.

With the dilemma of revolution and stabilisation in mind, European Powers would condition recognition, although in different degrees. First, it was necessary that the government acquired power through constitutional means, through elections, and not after a coup d'état. The Agua Prieta rebellion had demonstrated that the historical problem of presidential succession had not yet been resolved. The lack of an institutional presidential succession gave the Revolution an image of chaos that damaged its perception abroad.

Second, it was necessary to ensure that the properties of foreigners in Mexico stopped being attacked or occupied by revolutionaries, to achieve commitments to solve the questions of the debt and claims, and ways to assure that some aspects of the Constitution would not be applied, especially Article 27. All of these concerns had been faced by Carranza, who, as previously mentioned, had decided to delay the application of the Constitution since stability was a priority, although he did tax oil interests. Moreover, he had promised to pay the debt but had not done so and while

he was interested in solving foreigners' claims he did not commit to creating conventions with this goal. Carranza did not return all occupied properties, only some haciendas but not vital interests such as the *Ferrocarril Nacional*.

Nevertheless, European Powers differed in the degree in which they considered all these factors significant, the three of them pondered the protection of their nationals' lives and properties relevant, but for German diplomacy the payment of the debt and changes in Article 27 were not significant as for French and British diplomacy. In the end, the economic interests of European Powers were concentrated in different areas and this was significant in the aspects they were concerned with, as had been the case during the Porfirian regime and the 1910s. There was strong investment in mining, oil and railways by British and US businessmen. The banking system was a concern of French and US capital, while electricity was owned by US, Canadian and German companies. Mexican trade was concentrated mainly with the US (75%) and was done by traders from the US, German and French colonies. Small industries such as coffee plantations, chemical products and breweries were dominated by Germans and the textile industry by the French Barcelonettes living throughout the Mexican territory. Moreover, Mexico's debt was mainly owned by citizens of the US, Great Britain and France. Clearly, these economic interests were sometimes of the concern of European nationals who resided in Mexico and others of European citizens that lived in Europe and had other global approaches.

The question of diplomatic recognition represented an opportunity for the US and European Powers to try to work together and create an alliance to stop revolutionary goals. Nonetheless, these powers' strategies changed in a short period and there was no alliance among them to condition recognition since the strategies adopted by these powers differed. The United States was the only power to succeed in

conditioning recognition and in pressuring other countries to delay it. France was uncertain of asking for specific conditions once the Mexican government showed commitment to resolve the question of the debt and mixed claims. Great Britain attempted, but ultimately failed to condition recognition to a mixed claims convention or some securities regarding subsoil properties or the debt. Germany was the only one that did not seek to condition by any means and did not follow US diplomacy in regards to recognition in 1921. It is understandable that Weimar Germany decided to be more independent in the context of the US retreat from European affairs. Likewise, *de jure* recognition of the Soviet regime was offered in May 1921 and a German-Russian provisional agreement was signed (a similar arrangement was signed between Russia and Great Britain in March 1921).<sup>199</sup>

By not working together, each country established different criteria in order to offer recognition and this implied that relations could be improved or damaged in diverse ways as will be explored in the following chapters. Moreover, France and Great Britain waited for US recognition, and they were implicitly reinforcing their commitment -through Article 21 of the Covenant of the League of Nations –of acknowledging the Monroe Doctrine as a regional understanding in the Americas. Nonetheless, the British government did not follow US recognition in September 1923, while France did.

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<sup>199</sup> Besides, in 1922 the Rapallo Treaty between Germany and Russia normalised bilateral relations and territorial and financial claims against each other were renounced, facilitating diplomatic links and economic contacts between these countries. Rapallo challenged the Genoa economic and financial conference to restore economic stability and assure the payment of Russian obligations on pre-war loans and the restitution of confiscated property. The German-Soviet rapprochement was maintained even when Germany achieved a better relation with western Europe. On 12 October 1925, while the Locarno accords were being negotiated, a commercial treaty was agreed between Germany and Soviet Russia and it was followed by an agreement of neutrality on 24 April 1926. Weißbecker, *Weimarer Republik*, p. 73. However, it is worth mentioning that just as in the case of Mexican-Soviet relations, the German government was careful of Soviet interference in German politics (which was practically secured from 1923 onwards). Hiden, *Germany and Europe*, pp. 68, 108-119.

The idea of conditioning recognition was not only a practical problem for Mexican national and international stability, but also represented a challenge since in Mexican foreign policy the tradition to refuse other countries to impose their interests on the nation through bilateral commitments existed and had been institutionalised in the Juárez and Carranza doctrines. Therefore, while there was urgency in obtaining recognition, De la Huerta argued conditions would not be accepted, especially the claim by the US that Article 27 should not be applied.<sup>200</sup> Obregón was more flexible with promising some conditions in the Bucareli Agreements. Calles first refused to take them into consideration but then refused to apply oil laws thanks to Ambassador Morrow's positive attitude towards his government. The pressures lived by De la Huerta, Obregón and Calles from 1920 to 1925 to attain recognition, along with the tradition of Mexican diplomacy in the Juárez, Díaz and Carranza doctrines, led to the establishment of the Estrada Doctrine (1930).

Furthermore, the case of diplomatic recognition allows us to see how a weak country like Mexico experiences the decline of Europe and the definitive rise of the United States as a global power, two decades before the Second World War. While it was clear for Mexican governments that US and European recognition was necessary, negotiations that could lead to US recognition were more relevant. Hence, special missions were sent to the US and Europe to explain the goals of the government, but to the US the Minister of Finance was sent while to European countries a journalist. Mexico signed Conventions of Mixed Claims with the US to obtain recognition, these were signed with European Powers only after recognition had been conceded. Besides, negotiations regarding the debt and Article 27 were done with US

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<sup>200</sup> PAAA, Mexiko, Politik 2, Politische Beziehungen Mexikos zu Deutschland, 1, April 1920- März 1924, R79598: Telegram from Adolfo de la Huerta to the Mexican representative in Berlin, Mexico City, 7 November 1920.

governmental and non-governmental representatives. All of these points will be discussed in the coming sections.

Therefore, the question of recognition demonstrates that the United States had an undeniable hegemonic role in the region that could not be challenged by European Powers. This also implied that the Mexican government made efforts to diversify its international relations as has been demonstrated in Chapter 1, establishing relations with the Soviet Union (1924), strengthening links with Latin American countries through the Pan-American Conferences in Chile and Cuba (1923 and 1928), increasing its presence in Scandinavia and less crucial European countries for example establishing diplomatic missions in Switzerland and the Netherlands, and starting relations with new countries such as Poland (1922).

### *2.3 The Agua Prieta Rebellion and its international relations*

Once the Agua Prieta Rebellion dominated Mexico City in May 1920, Obregón held a meeting with French diplomat Victor Ayguesparse.<sup>201</sup> In this meeting, Obregón explained that since presidential elections were still decided according to executive will, a rebellion had been necessary. Otherwise, Obregón knew he would not have been able to succeed in his presidential campaign because Carranza would have probably imprisoned him or have him killed. Clearly, the problem of transfer of presidential power was still significant by 1920 and a rebellion was still considered the most efficient manner to deal with it.

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<sup>201</sup> The French representative knew Obregón since 1914 as he had to negotiate with him (as with other four delegates of the diplomatic corps) the rendition of the city. According to him, Obregón "is incontestably a chef, he is intelligent, incredibly energised, courageous [...] he has occupied the most important military positions in the country and he has been Minister of War, he has not enriched himself. «c'est incontestablement un chef ; il est intelligent, extrêmement énergique, courageux [...] ait occupé les commandements militaires que le Général Obregon ait occupé les commandements militaires les plus importantes de ce pays et qu'il ait été Ministre de la Guerre, il ne s'est pas enrichi." ADMAE, 22cpcom, Affaires Politiques, Mexique 5 Correspondance générale politique, avril-septembre 1920: Victor Ayguesparse to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mexico City, 12 May 1920, f. 31.

Moreover, Obregón showed his awareness of foreigners' concerns for their properties and lives; he promised he would ask the rebel soldiers to respect them and offered to assign security forces to French business if this was desired. He also affirmed that he was not planning to have Carranza killed, something Ayguesparse asked about. Nevertheless, the French representative did not mention that Carranza's assassination could have consequences in the bilateral relationship.

Besides, Obregón stated that "if he was elected President he will look to become closer with European Powers, in particular France and England to counterbalance here the influence of the United States and that he will make efforts to repair the damages suffered here by our compatriots."<sup>202</sup> These words are a clear continuation of the Porfirian strategy to balance US and European interests. However, Obregón only mentioned two European countries, omitting important economic partners such as Germany or others such as Spain, Belgium and Italy.

The omission of a partner such as Germany is understandable for various reasons. First, Germany was living through a reconstruction process after defeat in the war that led to financial problems within, which later led to the rampant inflation in 1923. Germany could therefore not be helpful to Mexico in political or military matters. Second, the Agua Prieta rebellion was against Carranza, whose close relationship with Germany had occasioned the Zimmermann Telegram, and members of Carranza's family and government had also a friendly relation with the members of the German Legation.<sup>203</sup> Third, I consider Obregón was conscious of the French-

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<sup>202</sup> "s'il était élu Président il chercherait à se rapprocher des Puissances Européennes, en particulier de la France et de l'Angleterre pour contrebalancer ici l'influence des États-Unis et qu'il s'efforcera de réparer les préjudices subis ici par nos compatriotes. » ADMAE, Mexique 5: Victor Ayguesparse to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mexico City, 12 May 1920, ff. 32-33.

<sup>203</sup> The German Legation, unaware of the Obregón-Ayaguesparse interview, informed to the German Foreign Office on 27 May 1920 of these aspects: "the new men know very well that the German representation never interfered in internal politics, but they also know that the assassinated President believed in having a close relationship with Germany, and the friendly relation between members of the representation and the Carranza family and prominent citizens." "Die neuen Herren wissen sehr

German tensions and mentioning that Germany was an important partner to counterbalance the US could not have been beneficial in the eyes of the French representative.

The tensions between Germany and France were a consequence of the Great War and more specifically the difficulties in applying the steel scheme contained within the Treaty of Versailles. Germany refused to deliver to the Allies the 8 million tonnes of coal due between January and April 1920; instead, it only sent 5 million and of those, 3.7 million went to France.<sup>204</sup> Tensions regarding steel would lead to the Ruhr Occupation (1923-25), the Locarno Treaty (1925) and would finally be resolved with the establishment of the International Steel Entente created in September 1926 signed by participants from Germany, France, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Saar.<sup>205</sup>

Even if Germany was not considered in the interview, it is relevant to mention that for the German Legation it was clear that “all Mexican governments, that want to maintain from the heart the independence of the country, have to look for a foreign power or group of powers against the imperialist ambitions from the northern neighbour.”<sup>206</sup>

Once De la Huerta was designated as provisional President he worked to stabilise internal politics and international relations. Regarding the latter two actions were taken. First, the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs ordered its representatives

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wohl, dass die deutsche Gesandtschaft sich nie in die innere Politik dieses Landes eingemischt hat; sie kennen aber auch das Vertrauen, das der ermordete Präsident der deutschen Vertretung entgegenbrachte, die freundschaftlichen Beziehungen, die die Mitglieder der Gesandtschaft mit der Familie CARRANZA und den Hauptwürendenträgern der verflossenen Regierung unterhielten.” PAAA, R79598: Magnus to the German Foreign Office, Mexico, 27 May 1920, p. 3.

<sup>204</sup> Jacques Bariéty, “France and the politics of steel from the Treaty of Versailles to the International Steel Entente, 1919-1926” in Robert Boyce (editor), *French Foreign and Defence Policy 1919-1940. The Decline and Fall of a Great Power* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 35.

<sup>205</sup> “The five participants agreed to quotas on the production of basic steel as follows: Germany, 40.45 per cent France, 31.89 per cent; Belgium 12.57 per cent; Luxembourg, 8.55 per cent; the Saar, 6.54 per cent.” Bariéty France and the politics of steel”, p. 43.

<sup>206</sup> “Jede mexikanische Regierung, der die Erhaltung der Unabhängigkeit des Landes am Herzen liegt, muss gegen die imperialistischen Bestrebungen des nördlichen Nachbarn Anlehnung an eine fremde Macht oder Machtgruppe suchen.” PAAA, R79598: Magnus to the German Foreign Office, Mexico, 27 May 1920, p. 2.

in various countries to ask whether links were considered stable or broken. If by international law principles relations would continue and only recognition would be needed since De la Huerta achieved power through a coup d'état, in practice this was different. On the one side, De la Huerta was not sure of the status of relations after so many years of revolution; on the other, diverse European countries had different approaches. For example, the Italian government considered ties were not broken and therefore formal recognition would not be given. The British government decided that *de jure* recognition would be given soon and the Spanish government considered relations were *de facto*, which exists regardless of recognition. The German government assumed relations continued being stable.<sup>207</sup>

The French government also assumed relations were not broken, but recognition would have to be extended. According to Ayguesparse, the political situation had improved in comparison to Carranza's presidency and even if the Constitution of 1917 would be applied the economic situation was promising. Hence, according to Ayguesparse recognition *de facto* to the provisional Mexican government should have been extended soon, in his words:

I do not advise the Department that we precipitate and that we are the first to recognise it, but on the contrary I reckon that we must not be the last ones. On this subject, I believe it is my duty to highlight that in conversations that I had recently with my colleague from England, I had the impression that the "Foreign Office" was all disposed to start again its diplomatic relations with the Mexican Government and that in any case, Mr Cummins works on it with all his efforts. I believe then that it would be convenient to our general interests, in this country, to recognise this Government at the same time that this or that of the other Great Powers.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> PAAA, R79598.

<sup>208</sup> "Il va sans dire que je ne conseille pas au Département que nous nous précipitions et que nous soyons les premiers à le reconnaître, mais par contre j'estime que nous ne devons pas être non plus les derniers. A ce propos, je crois devoir vous signaler qu'au cours des conversations que j'ai eues récemment avec mon Collègue d'Angleterre, j'ai eu l'impression que le « Foreign Office » était tout disposé à reprendre ses relations diplomatiques avec le Gouvernement Mexicain et qu'en tout cas Mr. Cummins y travaillait de toutes ses forces. Je crois donc qu'il conviendrait à nos intérêts généraux, en ce pays, de reconnaître ce Gouvernement en même temps que telle ou telle des autres Grandes Puissances." ADMAE, Mexique 5: Victor Ayguesparse to the Président du Conseil, Mexico City, 15 June 1920, ff. 87-88.

Also, the French Ambassador in Washington, Jules Jusserand, informed that there was a positive reaction in the US towards Obregón and vice versa. Hence, recognition should be offered quickly.

By September 1920, the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cutberto Hidalgo, stated that France, Germany, Belgium, China, Chile, Argentina, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Salvador, Honduras and Cuba had said that diplomatic relations with Mexico were not considered as broken; hence, the Mexican government would continue the cordiality in those relations.<sup>209</sup>

The second action taken was that the government of De la Huerta sent special missions in July 1920. Minister of Finance Salvador Alvarado was sent to the United States and Félix Palavicini, Director of *El Universal*, a journal recognised for its support of the Allies during the Great War, was sent to European countries such as Great Britain, France, Belgium, Italy and Spain.<sup>210</sup> The choice of representatives of the missions demonstrates the importance of the United States for the provisional president. The US required explanations by a top-level government minister, while European countries were sent a friendly journalist with no administrative position. There is a clear difference in the political status and importance of diplomatic relations. This was also evident in the fact that from the end of the nineteenth century while embassies handled the US-Mexican relationship, Mexican-European relations had only Legations.

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<sup>209</sup> AHSRE, 17-12-24, Circular relaciones 1920: Cutberto Hidalgo to the Mexican Legations in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Japan, Tokio and Rome, Italy, Mexico City, 4 September 1920, f. 1.

<sup>210</sup> On the contrary, *El Demócrata* and *El Pueblo* were official newspapers that were pro-German during the Great War and according to Antonia Pi Suñer, Paolo Riguzzi and Lorena Ruano the German Representation in Mexico City paid 23 newspapers to talk in favour of Germany. See Pi Suñer, Riguzzi and a Ruano, *Europa*, pp. 255, 266-267. According to von Mentz, *El Demócrata* supported by orders of Carranza German propagandistic interests, “Empresas mercantiles y fincas cafeteleras en la década de 1910-1920” in von Mentz, Radkau, Spenser and Pérez Montfort, *Los empresarios alemanes...*, p. 93.

Both missions had the purpose of explaining the economic and political programme of De la Huerta: restore the service of the public debt, reopen the *Banco Nacional de México*, open four free ports, restore properties, secure religious tolerance, respect rights of nationals and foreigners, as well as neutral presidential elections, and resolve the question of oil.<sup>211</sup> All these promises covered the interests of diverse foreigners and De la Huerta wanted to secure its international relations on them.

Palavicini first visited Great Britain. The choice was wise. Since the British government had continuously adopted negative attitudes towards Carranza, it was worth trying to build a new friendly relationship. In London he met Rowland Sperling, chief of the American Section of the Foreign Office, who told him that only an elected government would be recognised by the British government (12 July 1920). Palavicini left London for other European countries, leaving Juan Francisco Urquidi in charge of the Legation with an unofficial character.

Moreover, in August 1920, Miguel Covarrubias was sent to London in order to assure relations were stable. After having a meeting with the Foreign Office's personnel, he argued that the British government did not recognise De la Huerta due to the lack of US diplomatic recognition and that the British government preferred to defer recognition of the Mexican government rather than run into problems with the United States.

Furthermore, as a sign of good will to the British, some properties were returned: two schools, the telephone company of Veracruz and the *Ferrocarril Mexicano*; also, Norman King –the consul general- was asked to present his

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<sup>211</sup> *La Revue Diplomatique. Politique. Littéraire-Finances-Commerce International*, 31 August 1920, p. 1. 43e Année, no 1964. Fondo Álvaro Obregón, serie 11030400, expediente VD-34/656: PRENSA: REVUE DIPLOMATIQUE, LA, foja 2, legajo 1, inventario 2672.

credentials.<sup>212</sup> Covarrubias left London in February 1921 and Urquidi was left as the first secretary of the Mexican Legation, he was considered as the person in charge of the archives, but not as *chargé d'affaires ad interim* since relations were not stable. This was the same position Cummins held.

De la Huerta clearly attempted to gain British favour, but the British government was willing to continue waiting to offer recognition as had been the case by never offering *de jure* recognition of Carranza. Meyer states that Great Britain was relevant for Mexico for two reasons, on the one side it could give more legitimacy to the post-Revolutionary regime and on the other London was the centre of capital.<sup>213</sup> This is a clear continuity of Porfirian assumptions since Great Britain was considered the ultimate possibility to counterbalance the increase of US economic interests in Mexico in 1884.<sup>214</sup>

After visiting London, Palavicini left for France in August 1920. French concerns were: the reconfiguration of the public debt, the respect of the banking system and the problem of the exploitation of oil which could be of interest for France since it was interested in this area since the end of the Great War. On 22 August, Palavicini was informed that in order to offer diplomatic recognition, the French government wished to know how the Mexican government was planning to compensate the interests of French victims during the armed conflict. Also, how it would return metallic reserves to financial institutions and when the interests of the

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<sup>212</sup> Meyer, *Su Majestad Británica*, pp. 325-327. Others' properties were not returned, for example Compañía "La Tabasqueña" de Aguas S.A. and Compañía "La Tabasquela" Electro Motriz, S.A. in Villahermosa (Tabasco); the House of Thomas Gilgan in Nuevo Laredo (Tamaulipas); the properties from L. Lillo de O'Hart "Hacienda Encinas" in Progreso (Coahuila); the ranch "San Juanito" in Huanimaro (Guanajuato); the Colegio del Sagrado Corazón in Guadalajara (Jalisco); the Sindicato Constructor de Teléfonos in Veracruz (Veracruz); or the Colegio de Milla Matel in Gómez Palacio (Durango).

<sup>213</sup> Meyer, "La Revolución Mexicana y las Potencias Anglosajonas", p. 313.

<sup>214</sup> Silvestre Villegas Revueltas, *Deuda y diplomacia, la relación México- Gran Bretaña. 1824-1884* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2005), pp. 207-258.

debt would start being paid again.<sup>215</sup> Since Carranza had already given promises, but nothing had been done yet, the French government was not asking for an immediate payment of debt interests, but an official commitment since promises were not enough. While Palavicini considered that recognition had to be offered if the government was constitutional and regular, he declared that the recognition of the government of De la Huerta was not as important to that of Obregón and he expected that as soon as he was elected, he would be recognised by France and Great Britain.<sup>216</sup>

France, just as Great Britain, was symbolically important as a source of securing legitimacy and while recognition was not obtained it was important to maintain a friendly approach. This country was also a crucial source of capital which was needed for the reconstruction period and a source of cultural and intellectual ideas. Nonetheless, just as Germany and in a lesser sense Great Britain, France was living a restoration process and capital was needed inside which made it in a weak position to provide capital for Mexican economy or to offer military help. In the meantime, Alberto J. Pani would continue having correspondence with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a matter of tradition and courtesy and would be treated with the same immunities, prerogatives and considerations of his diplomatic character as chargé d'affaires with the goal of maintaining economic relations between both countries.<sup>217</sup> In Mexico City, Ayguesparse would continue acting as chargé d'affaires as well.

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<sup>215</sup> AHSRE, 11-5-11 (I), Reconocimiento del gobierno de Don Adolfo de la Huerta y de don Álvaro Obregón 1920-21: Félix Palavicini to Mexican Secretary of Foreign Relations, Brussels, 22 August 1920, f. 183.

<sup>216</sup> ADMAE, Mexique 5: Report written by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Direction of Political and Commercial Affairs America, «Mission de M. Palavicini Reconnaissance du Gouvernement Mexicain», Paris, 30 July 1920, ff. 127-128.

<sup>217</sup> Alberto J. Pani (1878-1955) was a civil engineer and politician, he was minister of Industry, Commerce and Labour (1917-19), Foreign Relations (1921-23), Finance and Public Credit (1923-27 and 1932-33), and in charge of the Mexican Legation in France (1919-1920, 1927) and Spain (1932).

Palavicini continued his tour in Europe, visiting the governments of Spain, Belgium and Italy. I will not focus on these visits; in contrast, it is important to consider that De la Huerta did not send a representative to the government of the Weimar Republic. Does this mean that the provisional president might not have found German recognition as necessary as that of the United States and other European countries? Palavicini had not shown a positive attitude regarding the Central Powers so in the case of a visit to Germany he was not an appropriate visitor. In the archives I did not find an explanation for the lack of a special mission to Germany, it might have been that the Mexican government was not willing to give the impression of looking for a rapprochement with Germany making it equal to the interest in having good relations with the Allies. No matter the reason, the lack of a special mission did not affect relations between countries.

The German government decided that it would formalise its diplomatic presence with an official representative in Mexico: Graf Adolf von Montgelas, who had worked in the German Legation in Mexico City during the 1910s.<sup>218</sup> Montgelas had been given the diplomatic role as German representative in Mexico by Friedrich Ebert on 8 March 1920, while Carranza was still President. On 10 August 1920, Montgelas presented to De la Huerta his diplomatic credentials as Extraordinary Envoy and Plenipotentiary Minister of Germany to the government of Mexico. In this meeting, von Montgelas stated that the primary interest for the German government was to strengthen commercial relations and that he was very honoured to have the

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He was also interested in art and worked as a curator and a cultural promotor. More on Pani can be found in Chapter 4, section 4.2.

<sup>218</sup> Adolf von Montgelas (18.11.1872-22.4.1924) studied law and entered the diplomatic service in 1899, he worked in the legations in Constantinople, Belgrade, The Hague, Washington, Bucharest, Saint Petersburg, Tokyo, Bern and from February 1911 to February 1912 he worked in the section for the USA, Cuba, Mexico and the Philippines. Montgelas was officially Minister Plenipotentiary in Mexico from 10 August 1920 to 7 February 1924. *Biographisches Handbuch des deutschen Auswärtigen Dienstes 1871-1945* Band 3 L-R Bearbeiter: Gerhard Keiper und Martin Kröger (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008), pp. 286- 287.

opportunity to contribute to the intensification of this friendship that had never been affected, not even during the Great War. In his words:

[t]he absolute attitude of neutrality that the Mexican government and people adopted in the most critical times of the global fight will never be forgotten in Germany and the government and people of that country are highly thankful of so remarkable behaviour. At the same time, the German government remembers with cordial gratitude the support that numerous German citizens have found in this beautiful land that they call second fatherland.<sup>219</sup>

De la Huerta answered that for Mexico it was also a desire to strengthen the relation with Germany, a relationship that had increased as a consequence of “a growing commercial exchange and a close and reciprocal comprehension” between both people. He also highlighted the profound sympathy to see the new constitution of the German Republic “inspired in forms that are purely democratic and hopes that this transformation in the political life of Germany will be another motive of intelligence and friendship.”<sup>220</sup> From these words, it is evident that there was an interest in improving the economic links from both parties and a liberal revolution that took social-democratic ideas into consideration. There was also a feeling of gratefulness for the Mexican neutrality during the Great War and of similarity for the efforts both countries were undertaking in politics to become democratic.

While it might seem obvious that the fact that the German representative had been accredited implied that relations were stable, this was not the case. On 28

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<sup>219</sup> “La actitud de absoluta neutralidad que el Gobierno y pueblo Mexicanos adoptaron en los tiempos más críticos de la lucha mundial no serán nunca olvidados en Alemania y el Gobierno y el pueblo de este país se encuentran altamente agradecidos de tan noble comportamiento. Al mismo tiempo el Gobierno Alemán recuerda con agradecimientos cordialísimos el amparo que numerosos ciudadanos alemanes han encontrado en esta hermosa tierra que llaman segunda patria.” AHSRE, 27-11-32, Montgelas, Gesandten Grafen von. 1920 Enviado extraordinario y ministro plenipotenciario de Alemania en México (Cartas autógrafas): Discourse of Adolf von Montgelas when presenting his diplomatic credentials to Adolfo de la Huerta, 10 August 1920, Mexico City.

<sup>220</sup> “profunda simpatía la nueva Constitución del Imperio Alemán, inspirada en formas puramente democráticas, y espera que esta transformación en la vida política de Alemania sea un motivo más de inteligencia y amistad” AHSRE, 27-11-32: Discourse of Adolfo de la Huerta in reception of Adolf von Montgelas’s diplomatic credentials, 10 August 1920, Mexico City. It is remarkable that De la Huerta referred to “the German Empire’s constitution”, while he was actually referring to the Constitution of the Weimar Republic. This is only one of other diplomatic errors that were conducted during De la Huerta’s government and which were criticised by various Mexican career diplomats, for example Miguel Covarrubias, since it showed that the new administration did not have any understanding of the diplomatic protocol.

August 1920, Hidalgo sent a telegram to the Mexican Representation in Berlin to inquire whether relations between Germany and Mexico were understood as suspended or subsisting. On 30 August there was a verbal note explaining that relations “were not considered broken but ongoing”.<sup>221</sup>

For De la Huerta there was a clear interest in securing that diplomatic relations continued to exist between Mexico and diverse countries. In Europe, there was an apparent interest in restoring diplomatic ties with Great Britain, France, Spain, Belgium and Italy. Germany did not seem as relevant for him. This was clear when, on 1 September 1920, De la Huerta reported important aspects to the Mexican Congress, such as the opening of representations in The Hague and Bern as the Netherlands and Switzerland had recently recognised his government and he alluded that the governments of the US, France, Great Britain, Argentina, Spain, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Honduras considered relations with Mexico as unbroken. Nothing was mentioned regarding Germany.<sup>222</sup> Most probably the lack of mention of Mexican-German relations was a way to secure Western Powers friendship and to avoid the idea of Mexico looking forward to a rapprochement with a country that was seen as an international outcast at that point of time. Even if Germany could represent an attractive partner for political reasons, it was not worth to risk a rapprochement of relations with other countries.

Evidently, De la Huerta assumed power after a coup and this implied there was uncertainty on the understanding of diplomatic relations and the question of recognition. Different governments decided he would not be recognised since his government was provisional, but in general, he succeeded in assuring relations were considered as continuing by most countries with which Díaz had established

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<sup>221</sup> “nicht als unterbrochen sondern als bestehend”, PAAA, R79598: German Foreign Office to German Representation in -Mexico City, Berlin, 30 August 1920.

<sup>222</sup> “Las relaciones de México con el exterior” *Mercurio*, Mexico City, 18 September 1920, p. 2. BIAI.

diplomatic links. The fact that relations were ongoing was already an important step for when Obregón assumed office, he would then need to focus on obtaining official recognition.

However, in November 1920, De la Huerta stated that he was aware of the rumour that some governments wanted to establish conditions to be secured in treaties and protocols before offering recognition, but this would not be accepted since these would affect the respect of the fatherland. In his words: “Our attitude adjusted to moral and law will be the unique guarantee for our Republic to be considered in harmony with other civilised people in the world.”<sup>223</sup>

By then it became obvious that the United States was not willing to offer recognition without achieving some conditions, an attitude followed by French authorities as Palavicini reported and according to Covarrubias also by the British government. By November, the French government had already decided that it would follow US policy by recognising the Mexican government as soon as the US did, as long as French claims received the same treatment as those from the United States.<sup>224</sup> This was a decision that was not supported by Ayguesparse, who considered the Mexican government would, understandably, find the French distrustful if they followed US policy.<sup>225</sup>

Furthermore, the decisions of the governments of France and Great Britain had already been questioned in September 1920 by the *Daily Telegraph* which emphasised that the new context in Mexico was “a brilliant opportunity for European

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<sup>223</sup> “Nuestra actitud ajustándose a la moral y al derecho será la única garantía para que sea considerada nuestra República en armonía con los demás pueblos civilizados de la tierra.” PAAA, R79598: Adolfo de la Huerta to the German Foreign Office, Mexico City, 7 November 1920.

<sup>224</sup> “Je vous prie de continuer à vous tenir très au courant des négociations suivies entre M. Pesqueira et M. Colby. Veuillez faire savoir au Département d’Etat que nous nous disposons à conformer notre politique à la sienne et à reconnaître en même temps que lui le Gouvernement Mexicain étant bien entendu que les réclamants français seraient assurés du même traitement que les réclamants américains.” ADMAE, Mexique 5: French Minister of Foreign Affairs to the French chargé d’affaires in Washington, Paris, 2 November 1920, f. 40.

<sup>225</sup> ADMAE, Mexique 5: Ayguesparse, Mexico City, 25 December 1920, f. 88.

countries, especially Great Britain and France, to extend a helping hand to a small nation with an enviable future.”<sup>226</sup>

The decision of French and British authorities to follow US recognition became a serious problem for Mexico’s foreign relations since it made the idea of finding in European Powers a counterbalance to US pressures impossible. However, it was important to continue trying. With this in mind, before assuming office, Obregón was in contact with Cummins about his position towards British interests and businesses. He stated that his prerogatives were to achieve a decorous agreement to fulfil all legal commitments Mexico had with other countries, and that all civil servants would act according to morality and law, which guaranteed foreigners’ lives and properties.<sup>227</sup>

By the end of De la Huerta’s provisional tenure, it was clear that Mexico needed to diversify its diplomatic connections and have a good relationship with the US. This was also understood by von Montgelas who already in October 1920 stated that “since the outcome of the World War, Mexico has no other option than to make an effort to agree with its northern neighbour in one or another form. If it will succeed is another question.”<sup>228</sup>

#### *2.4 Diplomatic recognition of Álvaro Obregón*

On 1 December 1920, Obregón began his tenure as President. US and European diplomats attended his investiture as President without official character.<sup>229</sup> It was

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<sup>226</sup> APEC, expediente 72: TRADUCTORES DE PERIODICOS, FOLLETOS, ETC., legajo 1/16, foja 3, inventario 5654: Translation from Allan, *Daily Telegraph*, London, 10 September 1920.

<sup>227</sup> Fondo Álvaro Obregón, serie 11030400, expediente C-71/186: CUMMINS, H. A. Cunnard, legajo 1, fojas 3, inventario 2202. Álvaro Obregón to Cunnard Cummins, Nogales, Sonora, November 5, 1924.

<sup>228</sup> “Nach dem Ausgang des Weltkriegs hat Mexiko auch gar keine andere Wahl als den Versuch zu machen, sich mit seinem nördlichen Nachbar in der einen oder enderen Form zu verständigen. Ob es gelingen wird, ist eine andere Frage.” PAAA, R79598: Adolf von Montgelas to the German Foreign Office, Mexico City, 31 October 1920.

<sup>229</sup> The ceremony of investiture was attended by the representatives of Germany, Italy, Belgium and Spain; and the chargés d’affaires from France, the United States, Sweden and Japan, and Cummins in

clear that even when diplomatic recognition had not been offered, relations were considered as still existing. The main internal concerns Obregón had to resolve were political and economic stability: to remain in power, stop any revolutionary groups, restructure the economy and continue the modernisation project. Regarding external concerns, he needed to attain diplomatic recognition by the majority of governments since this had not been extended to De la Huerta. Recognition was related to, and would make it easier to negotiate, the questions of the debt, Article 27, land distribution and foreigners' claims after ten years of revolution which had led to the loss of properties, lives and profits.

Besides, Obregón would hold the celebrations of the centenary of Mexican Independence in September 1921 and this could be an excellent opportunity to connect with the world as the centenary of 1910 had demonstrated.<sup>230</sup> The European countries that attended the centenary parties of 1921 were Spain, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Sweden; the Latin American countries were Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, Venezuela, Nicaragua; and from Asia China and Japan.<sup>231</sup>

Regarding recognition, according to a list sent on 13 December 1920 to the Mexican representation in Paris, the following countries had already recognised Obregón: Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, China, Japan, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Chile, Argentina and Brazil. The United States, Great Britain and France were not mentioned. Hence, from the countries this thesis is focused on, only Germany did recognise Obregón at the start

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charge of the British archives. Also the Governors of Texas, Kansas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Alabama, Arizona, Indiana, North Dakota, Wyoming, Missouri, New Mexico, Colorado and Mississippi.

<sup>230</sup> Helen Delpar mentioned that the commemoration in 1910 allowed cultural links with other countries; for example, representatives from US universities participated in relevant events. See Helen Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations Between the United States and Mexico 1920-1935* (Tuscaloosa, The University of Alabama Press, 1992), pp. 12-13.

<sup>231</sup> *Bulletin quotidien de la presse sudamericaine*, 9 November 1921, ADMAE, Mexique 31, f. 84.

of his tenure. Was this the case? If so, what would this imply? That the victors of the Great War, maybe even working as Allies, were stronger and ready to condition diplomatic recognition while Germany did not?

When considering the case of German recognition, a confusion appears to exist. In the cited list and also in the book *Europa*, Obregón is mentioned to have been recognised by the Weimar Republic in December 1920,<sup>232</sup> but according to Rinke this happened after the Bucareli Agreements were signed. According to the documents in the *Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts*, the German government did not officially recognise Obregón immediately because it was indeed waiting for the US recognition, and other European Powers, mainly France and Great Britain. In January 1921, von Montgelas confirmed that recognition of Mexico was important for German business in Mexico, but this would be made public immediately so it was better to wait to avoid mistrust from other countries.<sup>233</sup> Hence, more than showing political displeasure with internal Mexican politics, another factor had influence: third countries' decisions not to recognise Obregón, mainly that from the US.

Also in December 1920, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked its Embassy in Washington to report any progress on the Mexican-US relationship and the question of diplomatic recognition. It was decided that France would offer recognition at the same time that the US government as long as the French claims received the same treatment than those from US citizens. Hence, there would be a

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<sup>232</sup> “para finales de 1920, cuando Obregón asumió la presidencia, en Europa era reconocido por los gobiernos de Alemania, Austria, Holanda, Italia, Suecia y España; con Francia, Gran Bretaña y Bélgica las relaciones, sin estar suspendidas formalmente, se mantenían en estado latente y bien al nivel más bajo, el de encargados de la legación, o bien al de representación consular” Pi Suñer, Riguzzi and Ruano, *Europa*, p. 273.

<sup>233</sup> PAAA, R79598: Adolf von Montgelas to the German Foreign Office, Mexico City, 21 January 1921.

“simultaneous recognition”.<sup>234</sup> Similar information was published in some journals on 24 December 1920, according to the Associated Press the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Georges Leygues, had declared that French decisions were being taken “in accord with the United States and England, that any way France would refuse to recognise the Mexican government (even though this could bring damages to French capital in Mexico) until the United States had recognised it.”<sup>235</sup> While Leygues denied he had said those words, it is important to consider that there is a vague consciousness in the public opinion of the French government taking decisions regarding Obregón’s recognition in the context of a network with the United States and Great Britain, although the government argued that this would be done as long as French claims were protected.

The Mexican government was aware of the French government’s decision. Rodolfo Nervo, Mexican chargé d’affaires in Paris, explained in January 1921 that the French government was pressuring the US government to make a simultaneous recognition of Obregón and that if this was not achieved the French government had decided to do it alone. Nevertheless, before offering recognition, it was necessary to have a Mexican manifestation regarding the restitution of reserves to banks.<sup>236</sup> This was quite important as French bankers were pressuring their government to help them regain their economic interests. As a matter of fact, the Mexican government had already started negotiations with bankers through Lamont and it was believed that

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<sup>234</sup>ADMAE, 22cpcom, Affaires Politiques, Mexique 6 Correspondance générale politique, octobre 1920-avril 1921: Minister of Foreign Affairs to the French Chargé d’Affaires in Washington, Paris, 2 November 1920, f. 40.

<sup>235</sup> "Que le Gouvernement français ne prendrait aucune décision quant à la réception de M. Caturegli, comme Ministre à Paris sans être mis d’accord avec les Etats-Unis et l’Angleterre, que de toute manière, la France se refuserait à reconnaître le Gouvernement mexicain (bien que cela puisse porter préjudice aux capitaux français placés au Mexique) jusqu’à ce que les Etats-Unis l’aient reconnu.“ ADMAE, Mexique 6 : Victor Ayguesparse to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico City, 25 December 1920, f. 88.

<sup>236</sup> AHSRE, 11-5-11 (I): Rodolfo Nervo to Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations, Paris, 22 January 1921, f. 172. Also mentioned in Py, *Francia y la Revolución Mexicana*, p. 238.

soon an arrangement would be achieved. However, De la Huerta had stated at the end of his provisional tenure that for Mexican diplomacy it was clear that no official statement would be made in order to attain diplomatic recognition. The negotiations were also attended by French and British bankers represented by Paul Reynaud and William Wiseman.<sup>237</sup>

In the case of Great Britain, recognition was also influenced by US decisions: in January 1921, the British Ambassador in Washington, Sir Auckland Geddes, recommended waiting for US recognition to avoid Anglo-American tensions as the British recognition would probably lead to Press criticism.<sup>238</sup> Anglo-American tensions already existed for example as a consequence of Great Britain wanting the US to join the League of Nations and it was not worth it to increase problems for a country like Mexico. There was an acknowledgement of the US being a Great Power and it was important to work with it, although having in mind that this was also a risk for British economic hegemony in various areas of the world. Another cause of tensions was the Washington Conference (12 November 1921-6 February 1922) with the negotiation of the disarmament of great powers to avoid another war.

Therefore, following US diplomacy was a clear way to signal respect for US hegemonic role in the area and could be an indirect leverage in bilateral US-British relations; this was also considered regarding the question of recognition of revolutionary governments in Central America.<sup>239</sup> According to Richard B. Salisbury, British interest in the Isthmian region was relatively modest, therefore

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<sup>237</sup> Py, *Francia y la Revolución Mexicana*, p. 238.

<sup>238</sup> Walter Scholes and Marie V. Scholes, "Gran Bretaña, los Estados Unidos y el no reconocimiento de Obregón", *Historia Mexicana*, 19:3 (January-March 1970), p. 388.

<sup>239</sup> Guatemala's revolutionary movement of Carlos Herrera that overthrew the dictatorship of Manuel Estrada Cabrera was recognised first by France, then by the United States and after by Great Britain in July 1920 following US decisions. In contrast, in the case of Costa Rica, when Julio Acosta constitutionally started his Presidency (May 1920) after calling to elections after the overthrow of dictator Federico Tinoco, the British government decided to recognise on 1 August since the State Department of the US did not expect the British to wait more and it was assumed that this would lead

Once Washington had established a policy, London usually supported it. At times, however, United States policy in Central America prompted the Foreign Office to adopt a contrary position. Such opposition, however, was relatively low key in nature and generally ended with the Anglo-American nations achieving an accommodation of their conflicting interests.<sup>240</sup>

Nonetheless, British-American relations were not only vital, but the British government distrusted the aims of the Mexican Revolution itself. It had not recognised Carranza as President after his elections in 1917 and had no diplomat in charge of the Legation, but only someone without diplomatic character in charge of the archives: Cummins, who along with the British colony and economic interests in Mexico, did not pressure the government to offer recognition quickly.

Evidently, in the change of the year 1920-21 there is an explicit acceptance of US pressures by all European Powers. The question of recognition is inserted in international dynamics where US-European relations are of greater importance. Each country had its reasons: Germany preferred to avoid confrontation, France desired a simultaneous recognition and Great Britain had not accepted the Mexican Revolution and its Constitution. Hence, there was a denial to accept Mexico's post-Revolutionary State. In the case of Great Britain, this was a clear sign of political displeasure. For France, it was a sign of distrust of the revolution and in the case of Germany it was not properly a sign of anything towards the Mexican government, but more a cautious move to avoid conflicts in its international relations just as De la Huerta had avoided an explicit rapprochement with Weimar Germany. Besides, the decision not to recognise Obregón sent a political signal to the US that the European Powers were

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to US recognition, something the State Department was willing to offer but President Wilson did not, as a matter of fact, US recognition followed. Although the British government recognised first this was done with accordance of the US State Department. Richard V. Salisbury, "Revolution and Recognition: A British Perspective on Isthmian Affairs during the 1920s", *The Americas*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (January 1992), pp. 331-349.

<sup>240</sup> Salisbury, "Revolution and Recognition", p. 348.

not prepared to prioritise their relationship with Mexico and risk alienating the United States.

The decisions of European Powers to follow the United States continued in the first half of 1921, although with nuances. For example, on 8 February 1921, the French Ambassador, Jusserand, was cabled that he should tell the State Department that since Italy had recognised Obregón, the French government wished to recognise Obregón following its national interests. The French government decided to wait for the change of government from President Wilson to President Harding and then President Alexandre Millerand<sup>241</sup> would write Obregón.<sup>242</sup> This happened on 12 March 1921, Millerand stated that:

With vivid interest have I received the letter through which Your Excellency has notified me your Presidential election of the United States of Mexico and the taking of office of your High functions and I hasten to send you my sincere congratulations. I receive with pleasure the security you give me of your desires of strengthening the links of friendship that unify France with the United States of Mexico and Your Excellency can count with my participation for the realisation of this happy result.<sup>243</sup>

After this letter had been received, the Mexican government and Press saw this as diplomatic recognition, although Millerand did not explicitly recognise Obregón only stated the reception of the message. Ayguesparse, was conscious of the confusion, but preferred not to clarify the situation so that the Mexican government had a

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<sup>241</sup> Alexandre Millerand (1859-1943), French Prime Minister from January to September 1920 and President from 23 September 1920 to 11 June 1924. Member of the Senate from April 1925 to July 1940. He was committed to improving labour conditions, educational resources, the mercantile marine and the postal system. He moved from socialism to conservative stands after the end of the Great War. He promoted the occupation of the Ruhr area along Prime Minister Raymond Poincaré. Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Alexandre Millerand", [<http://www.britannica.com/biography/Alexandre-Millerand> accessed 20 November 2015].

<sup>242</sup> ADMAE, Mexique 21 : « Gouvernement du General Obregon. Sa reconnaissance par le Gouvernement français », Paris, 22 October 1921, f. 12.

<sup>243</sup> "Con vivo interés he recibido la Carta por la cual Vuestra Excelencia me ha notificado su elección a la Presidencia de los estados Unidos Mexicanos y la toma de posesión de sus Altas funciones y me apresuro a enviarle mis sinceras felicitaciones. Recibo con placer la seguridad que me da de sus deseos de estrechar y desarrollar los lazos de amistad que unen a Francia con los Estados Unidos Mexicanos y puede contar Vuestra Excelencia con todo mi concurso para la realización de tan feliz resultado." APEC anexo, Fondo Presidentes, serie 0203, expediente 10: MILLERRAND, Alejandro 1921, legajo 1, foja 1, inventario 739.

favourable position towards French interests.<sup>244</sup> Jusserand was reproached in Washington for the offer of recognition, but he clarified this had not been the case. This is an obvious example of authorities assuming correspondence implying recognition and this, of course, has led to the historiographical confusion I mentioned earlier, Py explaining the French government recognised Obregón in 1921 showing an independent diplomacy from that of the US. Nonetheless, it is arguable that by sending the letter Millerand did recognise Obregón *de facto*. This was also accepted in a report on 22 October 1921 in which it was stated that Mr Clinchant was nominated to represent France in Mexico, but he was retained in Paris while the Legation would be taken care by the chargé d'affaires.<sup>245</sup>

The case of Germany is different. Von Montgelas explained to Obregón in April 1921 that the German government was afraid of offering recognition because this could have negative consequences for Germany's international position. For the German government, potential benefits from ties with Mexico were not as important

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<sup>244</sup> In his words: "Le général Obregón et M. Pani qui s'efforcent depuis plusieurs mois d'obtenir la reconnaissance des principales puissances m'ont dit que, bien que la presse des Etats-Unis ait prétendu le contraire, il se considéraient bien désormais comme reconnu par le Gouvernement français. Je me suis bien garde de la contredire mais j'ai cru préférable de ne formuler aucune appréciation à ce regard." ADMAE, Mexique 6: Victor Ayguesparse to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mexico City, 21 April 1921, f. 189. Besides, some months later an article in *Excelsior* (July 1921) mentioned that Millerand answered the message of Obregón in which he congratulated the French people for the anniversary of the storming of Bastille. The article emphasised that "In the [Mexican] Ministry of Foreign Relations, when the news we are referring to were proportionated, one more time it was noted that it is an error to believe that diplomatic relations between the governments of France and Mexico continued being interrupted, as it has been insisted in some circles, as the recognition of that government was announced when the autograph-letter of President Millerand was sent, a couple of months ago and since then there has been a constant exchange of diplomatic correspondence that indicate the existence of the most cordial relations." "En la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, cuando se nos proporcionó la noticia a que nos referimos, se hizo notar una vez más, que es un error creer que las relaciones diplomáticas entre los Gobiernos de Francia y de México, continúen interrumpidas, como se ha insistido en algunos círculos, pues el reconocimiento de aquel Gobierno fue anunciado al enviarse la carta-autógrafo del Presidente Millerand, hace unos dos meses y desde entonces ha habido un constante cambio de correspondencia diplomáticas, que indican la existencia de las más cordiales relaciones". "Autógrafo de su majestad D. Alfonso XIII", *Excelsior*, 21 July 1921, pp. 1, 4. AHSRE, L-E-1664, Álbum de recortes de prensa mexicana del año 1920: f. 175.

<sup>245</sup> "La response de Mr. Millerand a eté reminé à Mr. Obregon en Mars 1921, ce qui constitue une reconnaissance de principe des pouvoir présidentiel de celui-ci " ADMAE, Mexique 21 : « Mexique : Gouvernement du General Obregon. Sa reconnaissance par le Gouvernement français », Paris, 22 October 1921, f. 12.

as the relationship with the United States. According to von Montgelas, Obregón completely understood the German position and left the initiative to Germany to decide the best moment to express its sympathies to Mexico, which would be warmly received since “Even when the external form of the official relation is not yet restored, this does not change his feelings for Germany, that experienced several sacrifices in the last years. Germany and Mexico are good and affectionate friends (*amigos de corazón a corazón*).”<sup>246</sup> There is again a confusion on the role recognition had for relations, the German government considered that relations continued even without recognition while for Obregón without recognition relations were not officially restored but continued informally.

In any case, for the Mexican administration it was easy to understand the German government. Obregón himself felt pressures in May 1921 when the US government gave a proposal for a Treaty of Amity and Commerce, under which Article 27 would be cancelled.<sup>247</sup> Obregón rejected the treaty because he was not willing to accept a conditioned recognition since the Mexican Constitution did not allow agreements of that kind,<sup>248</sup> and he stated that a deal would only be negotiated after formal recognition was given. Knight highlights other issues that conditioned US recognition, among them the international debt, in default since 1913, and the claims for damages.<sup>249</sup> Nevertheless, these tensions were used by the Mexican government to reinforce the feeling of nationalism against external pressures that did

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<sup>246</sup> “Wenn auch die äussere Form der amtlichen Beziehungen noch nicht hergestellt sei, so ändere dies nichts an seinen Gefühlen für Deutschland, das in den letzten Jahren so ungeheuere Opfer gebracht habe. Deutschland und Mexiko seien gute und herzliche Freunde (*amigos de corazón a corazón*).” PAAA, R79598: Adolf von Montgelas to the German Foreign Office, Mexico City, 16 April 1921.

<sup>247</sup> Lorenzo Meyer, *México y Estados Unidos en el conflicto petrolero (1917-1942)* (Mexico: Petróleos Mexicanos, 1988), p. 110.

<sup>248</sup> AHSRE, 6-14-236, *Invitación a Francia para asistir a las fiestas del centenario de la Independencia de México*: Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations to the Mexican Legation in Paris, Mexico City, 13 June 1921, ff. 17-18.

<sup>249</sup> Knight, *U.S.-Mexican Relations*, p. 131.

not respect Mexican sovereignty. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Soviet government was under similar pressures.

Obregón's understanding of the situation and the fact that relations were assumed as not officially restored but informally ongoing, meant that in June 1921 invitations to the celebration of the Mexican Independence (10-30 September) were sent to various governments from around the world. For example, Pani, now Minister of Foreign Relations, invited the German government to designate a person or persons to represent it during the celebrations "given the cordial relations that happily link Mexico with that friendly nation."<sup>250</sup> On 1 July 1921, von Montgelas suggested the German Foreign Office accept the invitation and give him the position of "Special Agent *ad hoc*". By doing this, the Mexican government would not be formally recognised and other countries would not ask why Germany was recognising this government. By then, among European countries, only the Dutch government had confirmed it would send someone to represent it in the celebrations, so did Argentina, Brazil and Chile. The German government agreed to have von Montgelas as special German Agent for the Independence celebrations and for him to give Obregón a letter congratulating on the celebrations, wishing a content development for Mexico and guaranteeing the friendship of Germany.<sup>251</sup>

In the case of France, Nervo mentioned in June 1921, that the French government in principle accepted the invitation to attend the Mexican Centenary celebrations and that this would be considered as a new opportunity to insist to the US about recognition.<sup>252</sup> At that precise moment, the Mexican government was being actively pressured by the US after the Mexican Supreme Court of Justice gave

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<sup>250</sup> "en vista de las cordiales relaciones que felizmente ligan a México con esa nación amiga" PAAA, R79598: Alberto J. Pani to the German Foreign Office, Telegram, Mexico City, 5 June 1921.

<sup>251</sup> PAAA, R79598: Friedrich Ebert to Alvaro Obregón, Berlin, no date.

<sup>252</sup> AHSRE, 6-14-236: Rodolfo Nervo to Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations, Paris, 8 June 1921, f. 11.

favourable decisions to oil owners; paragraph IV of Article 27 would not be retroactive and properties would become concessions if they had already been in use. Nevertheless, US companies decided to work together and on the 1 of July 1921 they stopped, during two months, the extraction of combustible, it meant the government lost important revenues and 20,000 workers were out of a job.<sup>253</sup>

In July, Nervo reported that if the French government was not able –because of the lack of US recognition of Obregón- to send a mission for the celebrations of the Mexican independence, it could consider inviting the International Society France and America so that they sent political and scientific personalities, although Mexico would have to pay for the costs.<sup>254</sup> When answering, the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations said that

If the participation of the French government can cause the lowest risk or disruption in its relations with the American, given the international economic interdependence resulted from the last war, the Mexican government regrets, comprehends and excuses French official absence in Mexican festivities<sup>255</sup>

Nonetheless, it was not considered necessary to substitute the French mission with societies' participation. As a matter of fact, there was no French official involvement in the Centenary celebrations in Mexico City, but the French Aviation House Cuadron sent four aeroplanes, two pilots and two mechanics as part of the Centenary exhibition.<sup>256</sup>

However, in the celebrations the Mexican chargé d'affaires, Nervo, did in Paris, the Minister of Commerce Lucien Dior did participate as representative of the French government. He gave an address on the history of the independence

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<sup>253</sup> Spenser, *The Impossible Triangle*, p. 24.

<sup>254</sup> AHSRE, 6-14-236: Telegram, Rodolfo Nervo to Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations, Paris, 20 July 1921, f. 7.

<sup>255</sup> “si participación gobierno francés puede ocasionar el menor peligro o trastorno en sus relaciones con el americano, dada la interdependencia económica internacional resultante de la última guerra, Gobierno México lamenta, comprende y excusa ausencia oficial francesa en festividades mexicanas.” AHSRE, 6-14-236: Telegram of S R E to Mexican Legation in Paris, Mexico City, 23 July 1921.

<sup>256</sup> AHSRE, 6-14-223.

movement and mentioned that the French government appreciated the positive efforts of the Mexican government to improve its international problems, and to find the most respectful and friendly solutions in regards to the rights of legitimate interests.<sup>257</sup> According to *El Demócrata* these words would be useful for the normalisation of Mexico's relations with other countries and would influence the decisions in agreements with Great Britain and the United States where there was the idea of recognising Obregón.<sup>258</sup>

The British government did not participate in the celebrations of the Mexican Centenary of Independence, this was understandable since the last time the British government had recognised a Mexican government had been in 1913 with the recognition of Huerta's counter-revolutionary government.

Evidently, from the three European Powers only the German government was willing to participate in the celebrations. In July the decision was to use a "Special Agent" in order to avoid criticism of recognising Obregón, but attitudes changed only some weeks later. On 6 August 1921, the German Foreign Office wrote that "After Italy, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, Spain and Japan answered the notification note of President Obregón and that by doing so these countries, with exception of France, wanted to express recognition for President Obregón, we will not wait anymore for our recognition". Four days later, von Montgelas wrote a telegram saying "Rendered accreditation note today in a celebratory audience."<sup>259</sup> Hence, Obregón was accredited /recognised as President of Mexico.

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<sup>257</sup> "Le salud de la France au Mexique", *Le New York Herald*, 30 September 1921, Mexique 31, f. 74.

<sup>258</sup> *El Demócrata*, 2 October 1921, Mexique 31, f. 83.

<sup>259</sup> "Nachdem Italien, Frankreich, die Niederlande, die Schweiz, Österreich, Spanien und Japan das Notifikationsschreiben des Präsidenten Obregón beantwortet haben und diese Länder, ausgenommen Frankreich, damit eine Anerkennung des Präsidenten Obregón aussprechen wollten, werden wir mit unserer Anerkennung nicht länger zurückhalten und darauf warten dürfen, dass zunächst unsere Beziehungen mit den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika wiederhergestellt werden. Deshalb wird der Anregung des Grafen Montgelas ihn zu ermächtigen, noch vor Ankunft des neuen spanischen

Did German recognition of Obregón mean a rapid change in policy by the French and British governments? It did not, because it was necessary to wait for US recognition even if other European countries had offered recognition.<sup>260</sup> This led to Obregón regretting in his first presidential report, 1 September 1921, that some countries were waiting for US recognition to award it to his government, by which he meant Great Britain and France.<sup>261</sup>

The problem was not only that these European Powers were following the US, but that by doing so they were strengthening the position from the US towards Mexico. In contrast, obtaining recognition from France and Great Britain would probably strengthen Obregón vis-à-vis the government of the US and maybe make it less demanding. Therefore, it was necessary to divide national interests so that some groups could start pressuring their governments to offer recognition. This implied that the Mexican government negotiated separately from the middle of 1921 onwards with the most important economic groups: oil and debt owners, these pragmatic negotiations will be explored in more detail in the following chapter.

The talks were done in the United States, which strengthened its position, but made Europeans unrepresented so they could start pressuring their governments to offer recognition. Nonetheless, the governments remained willing to wait for US

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Gesandten in Mexico sein Beglaubigungsschreiben zu überreichen, zu entsprechen sein.” PAAA, R79598: Adolf von Montgelas to the German Foreign Office, Telegram, Mexico City, 10 August 1921.

<sup>260</sup> This had also been explained in the article “Nuestras relaciones diplomáticas” (“Our diplomatic relations”) that appeared in *El Universal* (July 1921). According to it, the French and British governments refused to restore formal relations because of the close economic ties with the United States, which were more relevant than those with Mexico. *El Universal*, 22 July 1921, AHSRE, L-E-1664: f. 181. Some months later, in December 1921 the French *Bulletin de la Presse Sud Américaine* did a similar explanation, arguing that recognition would only be done simultaneously by the ally countries. *Bulletin de la Presse Sud Américaine*, 20 December 1921, ADMAE, Mexique 21, f. 31.

<sup>261</sup> By the beginning of September, Obregón had been recognised by the governments of Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Salvador, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela, Germany, Austria, Spain, the Netherlands, Italy, Sweden, China and Japan. *Times*, 3 September 1921. Buckley, Other literary productions; transcriptions of newspaper articles, 1921 [part 2] 445.4 folder 16. Nettie Lee Benson Collection- Manuscripts and Rare Books, University of Texas at Austin.

recognition even if there were complaints by different national economic actors<sup>262</sup> or if this decision could affect their interests in Mexico and by consequence in Latin America.<sup>263</sup> Also, even after the De La Huerta-Lamont agreement, signed in June 1922, in which the Mexican government committed to pay the debt, the French government refused to change its position regarding recognition. This was also the case in May 1923 when Pani suggested the idea of negotiating a Mixed Claims Convention to provide an incentive for French recognition of Obregón; this was refused by the French government since US recognition had not been offered. Hence, from mid-1922 onwards, more than showing a political displeasure regarding the Mexican situation, the lack of French *de jure* recognition was associated with third countries' decisions.

On 15 May 1923, in Mexico City, US and Mexican representatives started the negotiations of the Bucareli Agreements, which were finished on 13 August. While negotiations were in progress, the French government decided to recognise Obregón the same day as the US government did, according to the idea of a simultaneous recognition mentioned in November 1920. On 3 September 1923, Blondel offered recognition and asked the permission for Jean Périer to be Minister in Mexico, only some hours later than US chargé d'affaires, George T. Summerlin, had recognised Obregón.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> For example, in March 1921 Urquidí reported that a Parliament member asked David Lloyd George's government why it had not recognised Mexico. The answer was that it would do it as soon as the Mexican regime was considered to be stable. Four months later, Vincent York, President of the *Ferrocarril Mexicano*, talked positively about Obregón and mentioned he hoped the British government would recognise him as this would assure the stability of the Mexican government given that British investment represented one-third of general investment in the country. "¿Reconocerá a nuestro gobierno Inglaterra?", *Excelsior*, 3 de julio de 1921, AHSRE, L—E-1664: f. 50. For French complaints see Abdiel Oñate, "French Bankers in Revolutionary Mexico: Exploring the Limits of Informal Empire, 1917-1928", *French Colonial History*, 12 (2011), pp. 143-166.

<sup>263</sup> AHSRE, 39-7-38, Reseñas políticas de la Legación 1922: "Informe político confidencial", Rodolfo Nervo, Paris, 22 March 1922.

<sup>264</sup> It is interesting to note that this time there were also confusions. On 4 September 1923, the Committee of the French Chamber of Commerce sent a letter to Obregón to celebrate this step and to wish a new era of prosperity in the relationship, but Obregón answered that he was not aware that

Evidently, the French government did follow US diplomatic lead, even if this had entailed that during one year and a half the French government had not been entirely capable of using diplomacy to protect its citizens. It is interesting that while the recognition was simultaneous, the French government showed more respect towards Mexico: instead of maintaining the chargé d'affaires, like the US decided, on the day of recognition it asked for the permission to send a minister plenipotentiary; there was an upgrade in diplomatic representation. The French government had followed the US regarding recognition, but not in the treatment offered to Mexico.<sup>265</sup>

In contrast, the British government did not make a simultaneous recognition. The Foreign Office decided to wait and offer recognition once Mexico was stable enough.<sup>266</sup> At the end of December 1923 recognition was considered as probable, but it did not occur. Therefore, the British government continued showing its political displeasure towards the revolution and continued to believe recognition would be a source for pressuring Mexico to change laws that could affect British interests. It is worth noting that by September 1922 the Mexican Legation had been closed and the only Mexican representation was consular.<sup>267</sup>

Besides, tensions between the British Legation and the Mexican government arose. In December 1923, in the context of the *Delahuertista* rebellion,<sup>268</sup> Cummins wrote to Minister of Foreign Relations, Aarón Sáenz to inform him that the hacienda of San Pedro Coxtocan, owned by US citizen Mrs Evans - who was the widow of Harry Evans (†1917) a British subject - was attacked and destroyed by fire, holding

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relations had been restored, but he was thankful because the letter had revealed the sincere desires of the French Chamber of Commerce for relations to be restored. AGN, Fondo Obregón-Calles, 104-R1-F1: Luis Magar and Graciano Guichard to Álvaro Obregón, Mexico, 4 September 1923; Álvaro Obregón to Cámara de Comercio Francesa, Mexico, 5 September 1923.

<sup>265</sup>ADMAE, Mexique 21: Poincaré to Jules Blondel, telegram, Paris, 23 July 1923, f. 145.

<sup>266</sup> T162/620/3 E 7493, Mexico City Minister Remuneration: Esq. Robinson to Esq. Craig, London, 28 September 1923.

<sup>267</sup> Delia Hidalgo, *Representantes de México en Gran Bretaña (1822-1980)* (Mexico: Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 1981), pp. 96- 103.

<sup>268</sup> Already explained in Chapter 1, section 1.4.

Mexican Authorities “responsible for the safety and wellbeing of Mrs H. E. R. Evans.”<sup>269</sup> Some days later, Cummins wrote another letter complaining about Federal Army Officers asking British estates for the delivery of horses, saddles and fodder, which, as he recalled, was against the Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation signed between Mexico and Great Britain in 1888. Hence, he asked to “recall these terms of agreement to military and State Officials and instruct them that demands of this character should not be made upon British nationals and their interests.”<sup>270</sup>

Sáenz considered both letters aggressive and demanded that British authorities take Cummins out of Mexico and to disapprove of his biased comments.<sup>271</sup> Nonetheless, British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin proposed to send as a representative Sir Thomas Hohler, who had been chargé d'affaires in Mexico during the Great War, and in the meantime, Cummins would continue being the contact between both countries. The British government was not willing to discredit Cummins's accusations.

In the first two months of 1924, the refusal of the British government to take Cummins out of the country, the fact that Labour government wanted to condition recognition to the signature of a Mixed-Claims Convention just like the ones achieved through the Bucareli Agreements and that Great Britain recognised the

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269 APEC, expediente 10: SAENZ, Aarón, legajo 1/6, foja 5, inventario 5210: Letter from the British legation to Aarón Sáenz, Mexico City, 19 December 1923. The underlined parts were like that in the document.

270 APEC, expediente 10: SAENZ, Aarón, legajo 1/6, foja 20, inventario 5210: Cunnard Cummins to Aarón Sáenz, Mexico City, 31 December 1923.

<sup>271</sup> This was not the first time the British representative had been considered a persona non grata. Ayguesparse informed to the French government in September 1919 that Cummins, instead of writing the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs, regularly wrote correspondence to Carranza making claims regarding British properties. Nevertheless, instead of leaving Mexico he decided to change his attitude and considered the Mexican government the best in the world. Already in 1919, according to Ayguesparse, British diplomats had shown a lack of comprehension to Mexican things, instead of waiting and observe revolutionary events, they held a personal policy: Carden defending Huerta, Hohler preaching for González Garza from the Mexican Convention in 1916, Turstain supporting one military that was fighting somewhere he could not remember anymore and Cummins supplying armament to such and such group boss. ADMAE, 22cpcom, Affaires Politiques, Mexique 4 Correspondance générale politique, mai 1919-mars 1920 : Victor Ayguesparse to Pichon (Minister of Foreign Affairs), Mexico City, 8 September 1919, ff. 185-186.

Soviet Union (1 February 1924) even if it had denied its national debt, made Obregón less concerned with British recognition.<sup>272</sup>

For Mexican diplomats, British recognition of the Soviet Union was an obvious example of the British assumption that Mexico was a US problem while the Soviet question directly affected the British area of power.<sup>273</sup> The US had not yet recognised the Soviet Union. This entailed a less friendly approach from Mexico to Great Britain and tensions increased. In contrast, US-Mexican relations were stabilised since the US government supported Obregón against the *Delahuertista* rebellion.

Furthermore, in May 1924, Cummins accused Obregón of having ordered armed people to act against Mrs. Evans. These comments led to Sáenz reminding the British government the necessity of discrediting Cummins' accusations and taking him out of the country. By then all communications with the British government were being done via the General Consul King. Again, the British government decided that Cummins would remain in Mexican territory until Hohler arrived in Mexico. For the Mexican government this was impossible and Cummins's expulsion was ordered. The British government considered this an act of incompatible discourtesy and decided that if Cummins was expelled, then Hohler's mission would be cancelled. The Mexican government proceeded with the expulsion and Obregón isolated Cummins physically by restricting the Legation's access to water, electricity and food. By June

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<sup>272</sup> By the end of January 1924, Rafael Nieto, Minister of Mexico in Sweden, held an interview with the new Secretary, Arthur Ponsonby, who affirmed he would talk to Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald of the Mexican-British relationship. At that moment, the Labour government wanted to negotiate conventions for mixed-claims before giving recognition, which Nieto refused. Besides, according to Emile Dillon, the government of MacDonald was ready in January 1924 to prepare a scheme for recognition but since Nieto lacked credentials to do so this was not possible. HW 12/60, Mexico, Doc. 17231: Emile Dillon to Álvaro Obregón, 28 June 1924.

<sup>273</sup> Even the newspaper *The Times* stated that as Mexico did not violate international treaties, did not publish propaganda against the British government, nor did it reject the national debt, the British government had to recognise the Mexican Revolution. APEC, expediente 10: SAENZ, Aarón, legajo 1/6, foja 45, inventario 5210: *El Universal*, 9 February 1924.

1924 Cummins left Mexico, the British archives were given to the US Embassy and the British interests were to be taken care of by the British General Consul in Mexico.<sup>274</sup>

Cummins's expulsion meant relations were broken and the Mexican Legation and Consulates in Great Britain remained closed. While Carranza and De la Huerta treated Cummins with a distinctive character even if he was not a diplomat but only the person in charge of the British Legation archives, Obregón became less accepting of the situation and expelled him. The Mexican Foreign Relations Ministry was aware that this could lead to international criticism, so letters were sent to Mexican diplomats around the world explaining the whole situation arguing that the government had done what was necessary in face of British discourtesies. It was also argued that the state of relations with Great Britain were in bad shape as a consequence of Cummins's prejudices and interest that informed with inaccuracy and bias about the situation in Mexico. For this reason, the Mexican government had previously asked the British to send another representative which had not yet happened and while it was willing to negotiate with Hohler the expulsion of Cummins had been necessary.<sup>275</sup>

Therefore, Obregón's administration failed in obtaining British diplomatic recognition. In contrast, it succeeded in obtaining German and French recognition which allowed relations to improve in diverse ways in the following years although there were some tensions. The *Delahuertista* rebellion did imply a problem in the Mexican-German relationship. German companies sold arms to the *delahuertistas* which were exported from Hamburg to Mexico. This happened although the Mexican

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<sup>274</sup> Meyer, "El ocaso británico en México", p. 38.

<sup>275</sup> APEC, expediente 62: SCHOENFELD, H. F. Arthur, legajo 1, fojas 27-30, inventario 5349: Ministry of Foreign Relations, "Circular telegráfica enviada a nuestros representantes en el extranjero", Mexico City, 14 June 1924.

Secretary of Foreign Relations explicitly asked the German Foreign Office to avoid these transactions, but it failed. In February 1924, Aarón Sáenz, Minister of Foreign Relations, said in an interview to von Montgelas that the Mexican government had expected more from Germany; Sáenz reminded that, by being neutral during the Great War, Mexico “put itself in the limits of risking its own existence”.<sup>276</sup>

Two months later, as activities to send the arms for the revolution continued in German territory, Ortiz Rubio insisted that the German government should take steps to stop the harmful activities against Obregón and impose an arms embargo in Hamburg.<sup>277</sup> The German government sustained that the purchase of armament in Germany had occurred because there had been confusions on who were consuls appointed by the government and who were not. On 24 April 1924, the armament was dispatched from Hamburg to New York to send it from there to Mexico, it contained different kinds of pistols: 140 Mauser Cal. 6.35 mm, 50 Parabell, 20 Luger pistols and 4 automatic pistols.<sup>278</sup>

Therefore, both the pressures of the Mexican Ministry and Ortiz Rubio failed to avoid the selling of German armament to the Mexican rebels. This led to diplomatic tensions but not to a rupture in relations. For this occasion, Rafael Cabrera, chargé d'affaires in Paris, asked the French government to avoid that the armament bought in Germany for the rebellion was sent to Mexico, but this was not possible as France had no control commissions in Germany anymore.

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<sup>276</sup> “Von einer befreundeten Nation wie Deutschland, für die Mexiko in seiner Neutralität während des Weltkrieges „bis an die Grenzen der eigenen Existenzgefährdung“ gegangen sei, habe man hier allerdings erheblich mehr Entgegenkommen erwartet.” PAAA, R79598: German Legation in Mexico to the German Foreign Office, Mexico City, 26 February 1924.

<sup>277</sup> PAAA, Mexiko, Politik 2, Politische Beziehungen Mexikos zu Deutschland, 2, April 1924-Dezember 1925, R79599: Pascual Ortiz Rubio to the German Foreign Office, 22 April 1924.

<sup>278</sup> “140 Mauserpistolen Cal. 6.35 mm, 50 Parabellumpistolen mit Ledertaschen, 50 Lugerpistolen (umgeänderte Parabellum), 4 automatische Pistolen, 85 Anschlagkasten und 25 Parabellumbretter“, PAAA, R 79599: Report of the President of the Police on 4 August 1924.

On the other side, an event that had no diplomatic disturbances was the fact that German national Julius Strathaus was shot when the agrarians killed Mrs. Evans in August 1924. Strathaus was her bodyguard. The consul of Puebla, Kocher, refused to ask for his personal protection as he had advised Strathaus not to work as Mrs. Evans's bodyguard and warned him that if he did it, he would not help him in the case of any problem. Kocher had helped Strathaus in a previous problem: on 22 December 1923 he was captured by the government troops when he was fighting with the *delahuertista* rebels. In that situation, thanks to Kocher he was freed and sent to a sanatorium. Hence, after Mrs. Evans' death and harm to Strathaus Kocher asked for the protection of Germans in general in the region, but not in particular for Kocher. In a report to von Montgelas, Kocher sustained that Germans had to deal with the damages that any other had in the context and the fact that no German had been killed by the agrarians was only remarkable.<sup>279</sup>

Therefore, this case had no drastic significance for the German-Mexican relationship. By his side, Strathaus said to Alberto Gayou on a train from Mexico City to El Paso, Texas that Alejo García and Francisco Ruiz convicted of murdering Mrs. Evans were not the real criminals, but it was Juan Moreno, a colonel from General Montes' troops. He affirmed to have declared this to the judges but he was not listened to and did not insist because a German representative in Mexico (the Plenipotentiary Minister or the Consul) did recommend him to "help the Mexican government as much as possible in his declarations for being always a good friend of Germany" and in change he would give him a compensation.<sup>280</sup> Strathaus was with the US Consul in Ciudad Juárez to provide a written declaration of this and planned

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<sup>279</sup> PAAA, R79599: Adolf von Montgelas to the German Foreign Office, Mexico City, 18 August 1924.

<sup>280</sup> "que en sus declaraciones ayudará en todo lo posible al Gobierno Mexicano por haber sido siempre un buen amigo de Alemania" AGN, Fondo Obregón-Calles, 104-E-35, Expulsión Encargado Archivos: Alberto Gayou to Plutarco Elías Calles, 4 September 1925.

to go to San Francisco to stay at the house of Mrs. Evans sister. In the archival research I did not find if the declarations had any consequence.

While a diplomatic turmoil in Mexican-German relations and even a rupture in relations could have been understandable, it did not occur. In contrast, the break in Mexican-British links happened as a result of years of tension in the bilateral contact from 1917 onwards. With France relations were stable, incontestably thanks to the *de facto* recognition of 1921 and then with the *de jure* recognition of 1923.

### *2.5 Recognition and the visit of Plutarco Elías Calles to Europe*

The visit of presidential candidate Calles in the United States, Germany and France has been studied by different historians.<sup>281</sup> I shall take this historiography into consideration in the next chapters, but for now it is necessary to analyse the visit with an explicit connection to the question of recognition. According to Jürgen Buchenau, Calles's presence abroad was important because it demonstrated the triumph of Obregón and Calles against the Delahuertista rebellion and sent the message of stabilisation in the country. This visit could also be seen as a celebration and a way to improve the bilateral relations after Obregón had been recognised unconditionally, in the end the visit was only possible as a consequence of stable diplomatic ties.

The Bucareli Agreements and the *Delahuertista* rebellion demonstrated that it was possible to cooperate with the United States, so it was wise to visit US territory and meet important labour figures and politicians to promote a friendly approach. When Calles started his tour he had been elected as President, but this was only made official by the Mexican Congress when he was in France. In Europe, Calles intended

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<sup>281</sup> See Georgette José Valenzuela, "El viaje de Plutarco Elías Calles como presidente electo por Europa y Estados Unidos", *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, 57:3 (July-September 1995), pp. 191-210. Mauricio Ortiz, "Un mexicano en París", *Boletín* 25, (May-August 1997), (Fideicomiso Archivos Plutarco Elías Calles y Fernando Torreblanca), pp. 1-32. Jürgen Buchenau "Plutarco Elías Calles y su admiración por Alemania", *Boletín* 51, (January- April 2006), (Fideicomiso Archivos Plutarco Elías Calles y Fernando Torreblanca), pp. 1-32.

to visit France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands and Belgium, but he remained six weeks in Germany and one week in Paris.<sup>282</sup> His goal was to learn social and educational programmes and reforms to apply them if possible in Mexico. Germany and France were countries in reconstruction after the Great War, both were Republics and were experimenting social-democratic ideas so there could be similarities to learn from.

As part of his activities, Calles visited museums, scientific centres, hygiene institutes, war memorials, hospitals and ports, and met with Presidents, businessmen, journalists and Union figures. His visit opened the opportunity to increase links in diverse areas such as politics, economy, public opinion, culture and education. Furthermore, Calles was able to talk with relevant European political and economic figures. For example, Ebert offered a gala dinner welcoming Calles, stating that this visit was seen as a great symbol of the traditional friendship between both countries which had been confirmed during difficult times. Ebert described a “friendship based on mutual admiration and reciprocal respect for old and glorious cultural traditions of both countries and strengthened by the community of democratic principles that are the base of our political institutions.”<sup>283</sup> He also thanked Calles and Obregón for accepting Germans who had found in Mexico a second motherland and the help given

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<sup>282</sup> This implied that when Alfonso Reyes met with King Alfonso XIII to discuss the offer of Mexico being an arbitrator in the Spanish-Moroccan conflict, he would tell him that it was not polite of Calles not to visit Spain as this would have been an excellent opportunity to improve the relationship and obtain authority in front of the Spanish colony in Mexico. *Genio y figura de Alfonso Reyes* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1976), p. 118.

<sup>283</sup> “amistad fundada en la mutua admiración y recíproco respeto por las viejas y gloriosas tradiciones de cultura de ambos países y fortalecida por la comunidad de principios democráticos, que son la base de nuestras instituciones políticas.” Friedrich Ebert’s welcome discourse in *Agencia Duems*, 22 August 1924, *El Demócrata*, FONDO 12, serie 010602, expediente 78: PRENSA, Recortes de, legajo 1, inventario 178, fojas 121.

in hard times; for example, money recollected for the children affected by the economic crisis of 1923.<sup>284</sup>

Calles answered, without official representation as he had not been formally declared elected President, that the Mexican people felt close to the German people by the traditional friendship and the same democratic principles. Calles highlighted that “Mexico, as well as Germany, after a long period of trial, works out to restore its national life on the same principles that Your Highness mentions, from liberty and social justice for all classes.”<sup>285</sup> Hence, the same ideas were shared as when von Montgelas presented his diplomatic credentials to De la Huerta in August 1920. For the German government, Mexico’s neutrality and the fact that Germans could find a second fatherland in Mexico were appreciated. For Mexico, Germany represented a country that could comprehend the challenges ahead.

In France, Calles and Millerand expressed the desire to continue a friendly relationship and to increase commerce, which was not as emotive as the German-Mexican understanding. According to José Valenzuela the difference in the visit of Calles to France and Germany is that the former is not only marked by historical relations, as in the case of Germany, but also by the current debt of Mexico to French bondholders, the payment of which was suspended by 1924. Additionally, I argue that difference is related to the way in which recognition was offered, while the German government had not tried to condition or had not shown political displeasure against Obregón, it had only waited to avoid problems with the Great Powers and especially the US. In the case of France, there was the constant of waiting for US recognition, but also the question of the debt had been important to increase political discontent.

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<sup>284</sup> Agencia Duems, 23 August, *El Demócrata*, FONDO 12, serie 010602, expediente 78: PRENSA, Recortes de, legajo 1, inventario 178, foja 121.

<sup>285</sup> Calles’s discourse in *Agencia Duems*, Berlin, 23 August 1924, *El Demócrata*, FONDO 12, serie 010602, expediente 78: PRENSA, Recortes de, legajo 1, inventario 178, fojas 121.

Now that the debt was not being paid, the debt retook a relevant place in Mexican-French relations, but not too deeply for Calles not to visit Paris.

In contrast, the British-Mexican diplomatic impasse drove Calles to refuse to visit Great Britain during his tour in Europe. The visit to London had been suggested by writer Emile Joseph Dillon, who had defended Mexico's revolution in the British Press and was a clear propagandist for the Mexican Revolution. For example, he explained to MacDonald

that neither the President nor Secretary Saenz had intended to offend the British nation in the person of Cummins, who was not an official representative of the British Government but a mere British subject, enjoying no immunity whatever and deserving the treatment which he had received. I added that, as a matter of fact, the dispositions of both President and Government towards Britain were friendly.<sup>286</sup>

Besides, Consul Carrillo in London let the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs know that MacDonald was willing to receive Calles personally if he decided to visit London.<sup>287</sup> Calles rejected the idea of having a private meeting with Labour Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald because the British government was offending Mexican national pride by not recognising Obregón. Unfortunately, similar political orientations, in this case favourable to labour rights by Obregón, Calles and MacDonald, do not lead to diplomatic rapprochements. Calles even sustained that once in charge of the Executive power he would not ask for restoration of relations, although he would consider British interests and movements in a warm light to encourage the renewal of the diplomatic tie.<sup>288</sup> These comments by Calles recall the Juárez Doctrine that guided the Mexican government during the diplomatic impasse from 1867 to 1884 already discussed in Chapter 1.

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<sup>286</sup> HW 12/60, Mexico, Doc. 17231: Emile Dillon to Álvaro Obregón, 28 June 1924.

<sup>287</sup> APEC, expediente 28: DECLARACIONES DEL GRAL. PLUTARCO ELIAS CALLES., legajo 2/3, foja 60, inventario 1353: Álvaro Obregón to Plutarco Elías Calles, Mexico City, 9 September 1924. See also HW 12/63, Mexico, Doc. 18040

<sup>288</sup> Plutarco Elías Calles, *Daily Express London*, 12 November 1924.

Nevertheless, in Berlin Calles did have a meeting with Edmund Dene Morel, Labour politician, journalist and pacifist. By his part, Dillon continued to have conversations with MacDonald regarding the Mexican-British relationship. In these interviews, MacDonald hoped for a very early renewal of relations and considered this would happen “when the proceedings against the murderers of Mrs Evans have been brought to a close”.<sup>289</sup> MacDonald still desired a visit of Calles to London and suggested this could be done with an invitation from the Labour Party since an official reception was impossible. Obregón answered that Calles would refuse a visit to England and stated:

I am sorry that MacDonald still lacks the vigour of character necessary to solve a problem regarding which we public men ought to consult our own consciences and our own consciences alone. A statesman who recognises the justice of a cause in private and refuses to recognise it in public, who sees a mistake yet lacks the energy and whose heartedness needed to correct it, is always dangerous.<sup>290</sup>

Obregón added that the case of Mrs Evans was still under procedure according to Mexican law. Thanking the services of Dillon, he asked him to stop efforts in order to achieve the restoration of relations.

Evidently, by the end of his tenure (November 30, 1924) Obregón had secured diplomatic recognition from the United States, Germany and France and many other countries. Nonetheless, from the most economically and historically important nations, only Great Britain was missing, because the British government considered Mexico not yet stabilised and, after moments of tension starting in December 1923, relations were broken since June 1924. For Obregón, the most crucial recognition was that from the United States, he failed in obtaining a recognition which was not conditioned, but this was useful to maintain his power in the face of the *Delahuertista*

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<sup>289</sup>HW 12/63, Mexico, Doc 18106: MacDonald cited by Dillon in a letter to Obregón, 24 September 1924.

<sup>290</sup> HW 12/63, Mexico, Doc 18142: Álvaro Obregón to Emile Joseph Dillon, Mexico City, 18 September 1924.

rebellion. In Europe, important recognitions were those from Germany and France, as was clearly demonstrated with Calles's visit to those countries. Recognition allowed relations to be wider, to make economic and cultural negotiations easier, as will be discussed in further chapters. It only remains to analyse how Great Britain recognised the Mexican Revolution under Calles in August 1925.

### *2.6 Plutarco Elías Calles and the British recognition*

Plutarco Elías Calles assumed office on 1 December 1924. Calles built on the information gleaned in Europe and on the experience he gained as Governor of the State of Sonora and Secretary of Industry, Commerce and Labour during Carranza's presidential period, as Secretary of War with De la Huerta and Secretary of Interior for Obregón. This enabled him to guarantee that the revolutionary project would be securely established in Mexican politics, economy and society throughout the following decades.

Given that Calles arrived at the Presidential office through elections, he did not need to look for international recognition according to the practice of International Law. On the contrary, several representatives attended his investiture ceremony as President and he received several letters congratulating him and wishing him a successful period.<sup>291</sup> The only important recognition that was missing was that of the British government and of course, this could only happen after relations were

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<sup>291</sup> For example, French representative Périet attended the ceremony of presidential investiture by Calles and President Gaston Doumergue also sent a letter in which he said "I am blessed to be before you the interpreter of the votes that formulate today the French government and people for the happiness and the prosperity of Mexico. The ties of great friendship that already united our two countries will not but narrow and strengthen in the course of your administration, and I for my part will do it with heart." "Soy dichoso de ser ante usted el intérprete de los votos que formulan en este día el Gobierno y Pueblo Francés por la felicidad y la prosperidad de México. Los lazos de grande amistad que unían ya a nuestros dos países no podrán sino estrecharse y fortalecerse en el curso de la administración de usted, y yo de mi parte lo haré de todo corazón." AHSRE, 11-6-221 (VI), Toma de posesión de Plutarco Elías Calles: Gaston Doumergue to Calles, 30 December 1924, f. 52. To this Calles answered thanking the comments and saying that he would also put his effort so that relations between both countries became closer and stronger. AHSRE, 11-6-221 (VI): Calles to Gaston Doumergue, Mexico City, 2 December 1924, f. 55.

restored. Nevertheless, Calles would wait for the British government to take the first step and show interest in the diplomatic link.

For Calles, Great Britain did not represent a source of internal legitimacy, because the British government had been disrespectful in the last decade. It had supported Huerta's counterrevolution in 1913/14, refused to recognise Carranza as *de jure* President, diminished its diplomatic representation and only took Cummins out of the country in a crisis which broke relations since 1924. I agree with Meyer who argues that in 1917, by refusing to recognise Carranza as *de jure* President, it was Great Britain and not the Mexico which was partially isolated and the lack of recognition meant the Mexican government could ignore complaints about the British Legation in Mexico which was supposed to defend British interests.<sup>292</sup> Although the attitude of the Mexican governments was friendly and willing to hear British complaints, this only stopped with the rupture of relations.

It is important to consider that even without formal recognition and diplomatic relations being weak, British interests had been able to survive in some sectors. For example, *El Águila* owned by oil magnate Weetman Pearson was protected by General Peláez from 1915 to 1920. In April 1919, *El Águila* was sold to Dutch Shell which meant that even when British businessmen had a slight majority of the interest, the company was not properly a British company in need of British protection. Besides, while Article 27 of the Constitution offered the legal framework for the Mexican government to reassert control of subsoil deposits, Carranza, De la Huerta and Obregón were cautious where direct enforcement was concerned. As a result, negotiations with the US indirectly were useful for *El Águila*. For its part, Great Britain was more interested in its Empire and European affairs; for example, its

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<sup>292</sup> Meyer, "El ocaso británico en México", p. 38.

relations with the Soviet Union. After all, British economic interests in Latin America were not as crucial as those it had in other regions of the world.

As a consequence, instead of focusing on obtaining British diplomatic recognition, Calles tried to improve other diplomatic ties to assure the diversification of Mexican international relations. Besides, it was important for his administration to resolve questions such as the debt, Article 27, land distribution and the establishment of the mixed-claims conventions, but also to improve economic and cultural exchange with others.

The debt negotiations undertaken during Obregón's government, known as the De la Huerta-Lamont agreement, had not been accomplished because the *Delahuertista* rebellion had made it impossible to fulfil the commitments. Therefore, Calles had to deal with debt owners, who were mainly organised by the New York firm, J. P. Morgan & Co. A new deal was signed in 1925: the Pani-Lamont agreement. Regarding Article 27, as explained in the previous chapter, Calles refused to take the Bucareli Agreements into consideration since these were not constitutional. The new laws stated that oil concessions would only be recognised if they were acquired before 1917, and would only last if the properties were productive, and foreigners were not allowed to own property 50 km near the coast and 100 km near the border.

In this tense scenario, Calles decided to continue the negotiations of Mixed Claims Conventions previously proposed by Carranza: for example, in January 1925 the committee for the US-Mexican Claims was created.<sup>293</sup> In March the Commission for Mixed Claims between Mexico and France started and in that month the

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<sup>293</sup> "México brinda amistad a las naciones que la acepten", *El Globo*, 25 February 1925, p. 1. Microfilm NLBC.

document of the convention of the Commission between Germany and Mexico was signed.<sup>294</sup>

By 1925, it had become evident to British economic interests that only through diplomatic recognition could they be defended from the government and US expansionism, since they were isolated in Mexico.<sup>295</sup> This was similar to the situation experienced in the 1867-1884 diplomatic impasse in British-Mexican relations, when Germans controlled Mexican-European trade and this diminished the British and French commercial positions.

It was not until 31 August 1925, that the British Conservative government under Stanley Baldwin recognised Calles and official relations were restored. This happened after the Mexican and British representatives in Washington negotiated the restoration of relations. Ultimately, the British government accepted that recognition had to be given unconditionally, which meant that a mixed-claims convention was not signed before the restoration of relations. British recognition of Calles did not provoke problems between Great Britain and the US because Washington officials promoted the recognition, since they thought that this would further stabilise the Mexican government and open areas of investments which could not only be covered by US businessmen. After so many signs of political displeasure towards revolutionaries and the 1917 Constitution, Great Britain did recognise a Mexican revolutionary regime. The decision was apparently criticised by George V who considered recognition had been done according to Mexican terms.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> “El licenciado Alfonso Reyes presentó sus credenciales”, *El Globo*, 10 February 1925, p.1, p.8. Microfilm NLBC.

<sup>295</sup> Meyer, *Su Majestad Británica*, p. 23.

<sup>296</sup> Meyer, *Su Majestad Británica*, p. 373.

With the restoration of relations, a new British representative was assigned to Mexico: Sir Esmond Ovey.<sup>297</sup> According to Roberta Lajous Vargas, Ovey had a new approach to the Mexican Revolution: he believed that the modernisation project, even when it was nationalist, could give advantages to Great Britain, offering a further place in which to invest. Meyer maintains that instead of being hostile, Ovey saw Calles's policy as "socialist" but moderate.<sup>298</sup> For Ovey, the short-term necessities were to secure that Mexico serviced the debt and this was being worked on with the renegotiation. Besides, he was aware that Calles was committed to making an arrangement regarding the Convention of Mixed Claims.<sup>299</sup> He went further and recognised that some of the revolutionary aims had positive effects: education and health security for example.<sup>300</sup> Ovey presented his diplomatic credentials on 23 December 1925, which opened a friendlier period in the Mexican-British relationship.

In a letter sent by the King George V to Calles presenting Ovey as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary, he mentioned "the lively interest which We take in everything that affects the welfare and prosperity of the United States of Mexico."<sup>301</sup> In the presentation of diplomatic credentials Ovey talked about the honour to represent His Majesty's government "and attach particular importance to the auspicious occasion of the resumption of diplomatic relations which will give full opportunity for the expression of the historic friendship which has always united the two countries"<sup>302</sup> and he mentioned that it was hoped "to arrive at an expeditious

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<sup>297</sup> Sir Esmond Ovey (23 July 1879-30 May 1962) was a British career diplomat. From 1920 to 1924 he worked in the Foreign Office and he went to Tehran, Rome and Mexico. He was the first British Ambassador to the Soviet Union (November 1929).

<sup>298</sup> Meyer, "La Revolución Mexicana y las Potencias Anglosajonas.", p. 327.

<sup>299</sup> Lajous Vargas, *Las relaciones exteriores de México (1821-2000)* (Mexico: COLMEX, 2012), p. 188.

<sup>300</sup> Lorenzo Meyer y Lorena Murillo S. "Las potencias extranjeras y la Revolución mexicana. Una reacción en siete etapas", *Foro Internacional*, 40:4 (162) (Oct.-Dec. 2000), p. 591.

<sup>301</sup> AHSRE,41-17-30, 41-17-30 Expediente personal de Ovey Esmond: King George V to Plutarco Elías Calles, London, 11 November 1925, ff. 15-16.

<sup>302</sup>AHSRE, 41-17-30: Esmond Ovey's presentation of diplomatic credentials, f. 17.

settlement of all questions outstanding between the two countries.”<sup>303</sup> To this Calles answered that he received with pleasure the diplomatic credentials “as an act of major significance because it evidences the happy restoration of our diplomatic relations.”<sup>304</sup> Calles also stated that the old links of friendship were not relaxed and that both countries would work together for a better understanding, fixing pending topics to be resolved.

From the research done by Meyer, it is evident that Great Britain accepted that Mexico was part of a US hegemonic area, but the fact that the British recognition of Obregón happened two years after the Bucareli Agreements shows that it was not willing to follow US diplomacy from 1923 onwards. On the contrary, the British government continued to display political hostility towards the Mexican Revolution. Meyer and Knight have explained that this also happened because British residents in Mexico, economic interests and Cummins did not believe Mexicans could civilise themselves or live democratically. Instead, they needed a steady hand on the model of Porfirio Díaz. This perception is clearly linked with John Fischer Williams’ explanation that the question of recognition was associated with “the conception that there is no State behind the new Government, that in fact there has been a relapse- presumably temporary- into barbarism.”<sup>305</sup>

According to Meyer, the British government did not think it would regain its past economic position, but it recognised Mexico with US governmental approval because in this way it thought it could protect British economic interests and reassure cooperation in the region. British diplomacy was pragmatic. Also, a good Anglo-American understanding was necessary in front of the restructuration of international relations in 1925. Germany was being reintegrated into international politics with the

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<sup>303</sup> AHSRE, 41-17-30: Esmond Ovey’s presentation of diplomatic credentials, f. 17.

<sup>304</sup> AHSRE, 41-17-30: Calles answers Esmond Ovey’s presentation of diplomatic credentials, f. 20.

<sup>305</sup> Fischer Williams, “Recognition”, pp. 63-64.

signature of the Locarno Treaty and its inclusion in the League of Nations. Great Britain promoted this inclusion considering both French concerns on its security and German pressures on the payment of reparations, reduction of troops and evacuation. The integration of Germany into Western politics was reinforced with a Franco-German commercial treaty in 1927 and the Kellogg-Briand Pact in 1928 regarding the outlaw of war which permitted the discussions on an earlier evacuation of the Rhineland and the solution on the question of reparations.<sup>306</sup>

Hence, in 1925 British officials changed their positions because the diplomatic impasse led to disadvantages of British interests in Mexican territory while the Mexican government was signing conventions with various countries and negotiating in the US aspects regarding the debt and oil. Furthermore, recognition by other countries had evidenced that the revolutionary project would not be destroyed easily and there would probably be no return to the Porfirian type of regime.

### *2.7 Conclusions*

The question of diplomatic recognition reveals the extent of US hegemony for Mexican international relations and the loss of a counterbalance through Europe. It also illustrates the capacity of the US to influence national decisions. US recognition of the Mexican government implied that the question of oil would have to be resolved by Calles, who in the end proved incapable doing so, and finally by Cárdenas with the expropriation in 1938 under article 123 of the Constitution. It was also the government of the US which was able to secure a convention of mixed-claims to US and Mexican citizens before recognition had been offered, a right not given to other governments in such a favourable fashion.

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<sup>306</sup> Weißbecker, *Weimarer Republik*, pp. 71-76. Peukert, *Die Weimarer Republik*, p. 198. Hiden, *Germany and Europe*, pp. 75-76.

This case study also illustrates that *de jure* recognition of governments is not only related to aspects of political agreement in bilateral relations, but can also depend on negotiations in multilateral frameworks. These are the global dynamics of recognition. From the triumph of the Agua Prieta rebellion in May 1920 until July 1921, there was a clear decision of the three European Powers to follow the US diplomatic lead rather than risk dissension. From January 1921 onwards, the governments of the US expected and pressured the governments of Great Britain and France to follow its diplomacy in the area. Although they were cooperating as allies, this was not on equal terms.

It would be more appropriate to think of a weak triangle of Allies in which the strong point was the US. While the French government gave a simultaneous recognition of Obregón, following US policy, the British government did not recognise him in September 1923. The French and British governments had communications with the US government regarding recognition, especially the French trying to pressure the US to recognise Obregón. There was no communication between British and French governments to try to solve the question of recognition together. Nonetheless, their representatives did inform on any progress as well as other countries' positions regarding recognition of De la Huerta and Obregón. In the case of Germany, there was a constant following of the progress regarding recognition by the US, France and Great Britain, but no direct communication with these countries to discuss recognition. Therefore, Germany was not part of the network and there was only a US-British-French triangle.

In offering recognition, the German government had no conditions, mainly because its traditional economic interests were not so important (small industries, coffee plantations and trade) and could recover easily once the Great War and the

Mexican Revolution were over. The Constitution of 1917 did not imply a substantial risk for these interests. Hence, German economic interests in Mexico did not ask to delay recognition. The German government, having lost the war, started to show an amicable position towards Mexico: equal countries concerning their common reconstruction processes and as outsiders of the international system, and with a relevant historical connection that not even war had stopped. The German government stopped following US diplomacy in August 1921 and recognised Obregón arguing that other countries such as Spain and Italy had done so and this would probably benefit their economic interests. Besides, the US was not explicitly requesting German cooperation in regards to recognition of the Mexican Revolution. Therefore, recognition was not withheld as a sign of political displeasure, but as a way of avoiding conflicts with other nations and to send a signal of accepting the position Mexico had for the US and that there was no intention to challenge this hegemonic role. In this sense, following US diplomacy in the first years was an indirect leverage in German-US relations. Clearly, *de jure* recognition was related to third countries' decisions.

France stipulated that in order to offer recognition certain conditions had to be established, mainly formal security that the debt would be paid on the basis of the reconfiguration of the debt in 1922. Likewise, the banking system needed to be respected after different revolutionary factions had printed money and destabilised the currency during the 1910s. Furthermore, a commitment to pay the victims of the revolution was crucial. These concerns were attended with the declaration that the government was willing to negotiate mixed claims conventions and the return of metallic reserves to financial institutions. All these are points which I shall discuss in

the following chapter, but it is important to note that all the French concerns were worked on in negotiations from 1921 to 1923.

The French government did have an interest in recognising President Obregón, but it took so long as a consequence of working in coordination with the United States for a simultaneous recognition. French recognition makes evident the different opinions of diplomats placed in diverse scenarios, while Jusserand was clear in the necessity of following US diplomacy, Ayguesparse did not agree; the October 1921 report also evidences that it was not considered as a good idea to follow US diplomacy since this could affect French interests. The French government saw the US as an equal partner before the menace of revolutionary movements around the world, so even when its claims were solved through the debt negotiations it still waited for the US to offer recognition. Therefore, recognition was withheld before debt negotiations as a sign of political displeasure after so many promises had been made during Carranza's government, but afterwards as a consequence of third countries' decisions.

After the Agua Prieta rebellion, British recognition was supposed to be given after presidential elections, but later on issues such as oil, land distribution and labour legislation resulted in the decision to defer recognition. Afterwards, the conditions to offer recognition were a modification of Article 27 in 1922-23 or a Mixed-Claims Convention in 1924. However, the British government was not able to condition recognition since Mexican presidents did not consider that this would be essential or represent a real opportunity for Mexico and would go against a tradition in Mexican foreign policy not to allow foreign governments to condition national politics.

I have found it interesting that it first seems that the British government decided to follow US diplomacy by not recognising Obregón in January 1921, but in

1923 refusing to do so because Cummins was able to convince the British government that Mexico was not stable enough, which is a clear reminder of the importance individuals had in the period to make a difference in bilateral relations. From the British perspective, it was not only internal conditions in Mexico which seemed to present a threat, but also the expansion of the US in the region eclipsing British interests in Latin America. In Mexico, however, the British were in no position to reverse this trend.

The decision of Obregón to expel Cummins was an obvious call of attention from the Mexican part that the country should be treated with respect and justice in the international community. This position was reinforced by Calles' interview stating that he was not going to visit London while in Europe and that he was not going to take the first step to restoring relations with Great Britain which had occasioned the injury to national pride. Clearly, during the 1920s there was a transformation in the Mexican-British relationship, slowly passing from lack of diplomatic links and the British opposition of the new post-Revolutionary Mexico to the reestablishment of relations in 1925 and a position of acceptance of the new political structures and practices in Mexico.

In the case of Mexico, it is clear that the *Sonorans* did want to obtain diplomatic recognition from European Powers, but were more concerned with the US, though they still wanted to diversify Mexican international relations in general. Hence, the European Powers were regarded as necessary in the strategy to expand Mexico's international relations. After 1918, however, Europe by itself ceased to represent an effective balance against the US in the region as a consequence of the transformation in the world stage after the Great War.

Each Sonoran had a different approach to the three European Powers. De la Huerta clearly attempted to gain the favour of the British government through the presence of Palavicini and Covarrubias, and by giving back many properties. In contrast, only Palavicini was sent to Paris and no special mission was sent to Germany. Obregón showed understanding towards Germany, assumed recognition from the French government in 1921, and finally obtained it in 1923, and supporting Calles's visit to these countries. In contrast, tensions with the British Legation became worse from 1922 onwards, leading to the rupture of diplomatic relations.

Calles's tour to the United States and Europe was a major step to strengthen relations once recognition had been obtained. In the case of France and Germany, these countries offered republican and social democrat examples to learn from and to widen Mexico's presence in the world, explicitly achieving a diversification of Mexican international relations. Regarding Great Britain, Calles took his stand on national dignity, refusing more attempts to obtain recognition or restore the diplomatic recognition, although happily embracing it when it finally happened in 1925.

The question of diplomatic recognition shows how in a period of peace after ten years of revolution and a Great War, Mexican governments tried to obtain legitimisation needed for stabilisation. They sent recognised figures to represent the country in Europe to achieve and celebrate recognition, such as Palavicini, Covarrubias and Calles. Mexico was represented in European cities by Pani and Nervo. Moreover, each president had different attitudes towards the three European Powers. There was not one Sonoran strategy towards Europe, although De la Huerta, Obregón and Calles concurred on the principle of diversifying international relations. In the case of Mexican-German and Mexican-French links, even in the period of no

*de jure* recognition contact was cordial and diplomats were treated with respect. The case of Great Britain is different, especially because there was no proper British diplomat in Mexico, but only Cummins in charge of the diplomatic archives.

Lastly, Mexico in the 1920s is an obvious example of the changes in the structure of international relations. Instead of European Powers dominating the Americas, the United States was definitely the hegemonic power in the region, something that had been becoming clearer from the Spanish War in 1898 onwards. Thus, there is a fundamental regional transformation that is an antecedent to what would happen after the Second World War when the USA became a Super Power in the international arena. In the 1920s, the Mexican governments are aware of the new historical significance of the US and how its professed isolationism did not apply in the Americas.

Besides, the case of recognition will be of high relevance for twentieth-century history, especially recognition of new states after decolonization processes. While there are differences between the recognition of states or governments, in both cases there are serious pressures felt by national political groups when facing the question of recognition since it is used to ascertain whether a country or government is civilised or politically acceptable.

Once recognition had been obtained, Mexican diplomacy was ready to establish projects of cooperation and exchange in different areas as could be seen in the visit of President-Elect Calles to Germany and France from August to October 1924. Cooperation succeeded with the creation of Mixed-Claims Conventions and the establishment of binational chambers of commerce, but it failed with the negotiation of new treaties of Amity, Commerce and Navigation. An exchange was established in cultural terms with annual lectures by academics, exchange of plants, study-abroad

opportunities for the military and others. Moreover, Calles was influenced by social-democratic projects for peasants and workers in France and Germany. All these examples of political, cultural, scientific and economic links would be useful to increase a positive image of Mexico in Europe and for the reception of European propaganda in Mexico. After recognition, possibilities increased for both economic diplomacy and cultural diplomacy. I shall concentrate on these economic and cultural activities in the two following chapters since they are other important ways in which the dilemma of revolution and stabilisation characterised Mexican-European Powers links.

## **Chapter 3 The diplomacy of economic relations**

### *3.1 On pragmatic and symbolic efforts*

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the efforts by state and non-state actors to improve Mexican-European Powers economic relations in the Obregón-Calles era, taking into account the dilemma between stabilisation and revolution. I shall focus on exploring the pragmatic and symbolic efforts done by ministries of foreign affairs, diplomats, consuls, chambers of commerce, bankers, industrialists and businessmen to find solutions that were both acceptable to foreigners' interests and the national reconstruction process. However, I will not focus on analysing the outcomes of those efforts in economic relations between the parties since that would require an economic history analysis (effects on trade, levels of investment, production of industries, etc.) which goes beyond the purposes of this thesis that is interested in offering a diplomatic history approach to the understanding of Mexican-European Powers relations between 1920 and 1928.

The goal of Obregón and Calles was to stimulate the reconstruction of Mexico's economy, not only with regards to agriculture, which had been deeply damaged during the 1910s but also to reinvigorate industrial production. Particularly important would be the production of oil which could be one of the central sources for Mexico's economic development since it had become a world strategic product. It was also regarded as essential to encourage further expansion of Mexican production of raw materials that could be of use for the creation of finished goods in Mexico and be exported to the world. Cotton was a good example, given the existence of textile industries in the region of Veracruz and elsewhere, already mentioned in Chapter 1, which were owned by nationals of French origin. As a matter of fact, Mexican cotton was only exported in small quantities to the United States.

In order to achieve economic reconstruction, political stability, renewed foreign investment and good trade links were necessary. For the representatives of the European Powers, the intention was to restore the economic ties that existed before the Mexican Revolution and the Great War modified trends in bilateral relations. This was especially the case for German and French interests, which were more affected than those of the British from competition by US interests.

During the 1920s, diverse negotiations regarding oil and debt were made both in bilateral and multilateral negotiations in which state actors and non-governmental representatives met. In these negotiations, the weight of US economic pressures was overwhelming in contrast to that of European interests. However, an important difference occurred. The debt was negotiated between the Mexican government and the International Banking Committee, whereas the question of Article 27 was discussed between the Mexican government and oil businesses but with the diplomatic support of the US administrations. The Conventions of Mixed Claims were discussed between governments, which would establish commissions to explore which claims should be paid by the Mexican government after ten years of revolution.

These three negotiations were pragmatic. Oil and debt talks were of immediate relevance to secure Mexico's international recognition by the Great Powers, while agreed conventions showed commitment to resolve problems after recognition. I shall discuss debt and oil negotiations mainly from secondary sources since various economic historians have studied these topics. In the case of the Conventions of Mixed Claims, I will use primary sources to explain how these were negotiated and shall use secondary sources to explain the results of each commission in the 1930s. Nevertheless, I will not analyse the economic impact of those pragmatic efforts.

Additionally, I will present the efforts made by different actors in order to improve economic ties once recognition had been achieved. Those efforts were more symbolic than pragmatic: negotiations to establish new treaties of amity, commerce and navigation; the visits of important political and economic figures; the exhibition of Mexican products in European cities and ports; and the establishment of chambers of commerce.

The actors involved in symbolic efforts were diverse. On the one side, the treaties were negotiated between governments by diplomats and foreign offices taking into consideration the opinion of ministries of finance, industry, labour, etc. On the other, the visits, exhibitions and chambers of commerce, which could be characterised as public relations and commercial propaganda, were promoted by European and Mexican businesspeople, diplomats and consuls.

Evidently, symbolic and pragmatic efforts could be formal and/or non-formal negotiations; these as well as cultural cooperation were designed to contribute towards the resolution of the dilemma of stabilisation and revolution. Formal negotiations referred to are the payment of the debt, discussions of Article 27, conventions of mixed claims and the signing of treaties of Amity, Commerce and Navigation. In all of these, Mexico's governments took part, but the Europeans only in the last two. Non-formal negotiations are the encounters through the creation of bi-national and multinational organisations that intended to stabilise and ameliorate economic relations. They would be chambers of commerce, Mexican products in exhibitions and fairs, along with visits of political figures and businessmen to a foreign country. Both negotiations allowed businesspeople and industrialists to feel more confident when investing, producing and trading with Mexico. Hence, these were relevant for a continuation and maybe amelioration of economic relations.

Both symbolic (treaties, visits and chambers) and pragmatic negotiations (oil and debt negotiations along conventions of mixed claims) are not to be artificially separated but seen as a totality in the way in which the post-Revolutionary Mexican State related to European Powers. Additionally, all of these interconnected, symbolic efforts were only possible as a sequence of pragmatic attempts that permitted the acquisition of recognition. After recognition had been offered, relations were stabilised enabling economic relations to be improved. Pragmatic and symbolic efforts represented the international ideological environment in which economic activity can be conducted. In other words, the political ideals behind the general bilateral relations affected economic activities and vice versa.

I will, therefore, offer a balanced view of symbolic and pragmatic economic diplomatic efforts to improve relations, even if these did not dramatically change financial and commercial ties between Mexico and the European Powers in the Obregón-Calles era. I do not consider it relevant to judge whether the efforts were fruitful in the short or long terms, since their symbolism was more important in the international context and in bilateral relations as other ways to resolve the dilemma and to allow Mexico's emergence on the new world stage. Given that symbolic efforts have not been discussed in the historiography, I intend in this chapter to put right the omission.

I shall first examine here the pragmatic efforts to solve the dilemma: negotiations regarding the question of Article 27 of the Constitution and the problem of the payment of the debt, which were primordial in the attainment of diplomatic recognition, and the conventions of mixed-claims. I shall then present different governmental and private symbolic efforts realised to make economic links stronger by covering commercial propaganda which might take the form of contact through

networks such as binational chambers of commerce and the efforts done by presenting Mexican products in consulates, fairs and exhibitions. I will also explore the drafts for the (failed) negotiations for new treaties of Amity, Commerce and Navigation. Later on, the visits of German businessmen to Mexico in 1925 and 1926 and of a Mexican group to Europe in 1926 will be presented. Hence, there will be a focus on how official and non-official, as well as individual and non-governmental actors worked to improve economic relations through formal and informal encounters while trying to protect their national and private interests. The challenges in including these non-state actors are that they are not bound to national statecraft and they can have other understandings of national interests and identity. I shall conclude with a comparative analysis of differences and similarities of all these efforts.

### *3.2 General Mexican-European Powers economic concerns*

The Great War and the Mexican Revolution modified the intensity of some of the bilateral economic relations between Mexico and the European Powers. In general, during the 1920s investment was minimal in mining and oil, and there was none for railways. These three sectors were the main areas of influence of British and US businesspeople. The situation was similar for the banking system, which was a concern of French and US capital, while electricity was for US, Canadians and Germans.<sup>307</sup> Trade was mainly conducted by Mexicans of German or French origin, while small industries such as coffee plantations, chemical products and breweries were dominated by families of German origin and the textile industry by Mexicans with French-Barcelonette origins (in the interior of Provence). Moreover, Mexico's debt was mainly held by citizens of the US, Great Britain and France. In contrast, land owning was mostly a concern of Spanish and US citizens.

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<sup>307</sup> Riguzzi, "México y la economía internacional, 1860-1930", pp. 397-401.

Given that each country had economic interests in different sectors, the necessities regarding diplomatic aid were diverse to every group focused on the Mexican economy, and this also influenced the position of European diplomats regarding the Mexican government. Both German representatives, von Montgelas and Will, had a friendly approach since German interests were not under much risk. Mexican-German industries concentrated on the production of “soap, matches, candles, or canning of foods, repair machines, elaborate simple chemical products, composts, fertilizers, acids, factories of footwear, tanneries, factories of passementerie, of crockery, etc.”<sup>308</sup> Moreover, coffee plantations owned by Germans continued their production in Chiapas and the presence of German industries of chemicals and energy was of great importance for the modernisation of the country. Therefore, representatives of transnationals arrived from 1924 onwards; for example, from Hugo Stinnes, Deutzmotoren, I. G. Farben, Merck & Schering, AEG, Siemens, Zeiss and Mannesmann. There was also German direct investment in Mexico, although it only represented 5.9% of the total.<sup>309</sup>

Mexican-German trade was not under pressures from the revolution and it improved. German exports to Mexico increased from seven million pesos in 1920 to 42 million pesos in 1922, and by 1923 Germany was the third source for Mexican imports only after the US and Great Britain.<sup>310</sup> According to Kuntz Ficker, Germany became Mexico’s second market for exports by 1929.<sup>311</sup> Products that Germans sold in Mexico were dyes, pharmaceuticals games, mirrors, paper, wood and wicker artefacts, porcelain, crystal, furniture, pencils, music instruments and printed

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<sup>308</sup> “Predominaban, sin embargo, el taller y la pequeña fábrica, cuyo capital no excedía los 20 000 pesos, y que se dedicaban a fabricar jabón, cerillos, velas o a enlatar alimentos, componer máquinas, elaborar sencillos productos químicos, abonos, fertilizantes, ácidos, fábricas de calzado, tenerías, curtiderías, fábricas de pasamanería, de loza, etcétera.” von Mentz *et al*, *Los empresarios alemanes*, p. 143.

<sup>309</sup> von Mentz *et al*, *Los empresarios alemanes*, p. 142.

<sup>310</sup> Rinke, “Alemania y México entre la Primera Guerra Mundial y la depresión”, p. 44.

<sup>311</sup> Kuntz Ficker, *op. cit.*, pp. 71.

music.<sup>312</sup> They were also interested in sending machinery for diverse kinds of industries, from butcheries to mining, passing through automobiles, construction, bakery and textiles.<sup>313</sup>

While Mexican-German economic links remained stable and trade increased, German representatives were aware of the financial difficulties Mexico was experiencing, comparable in general terms to Germany. In April 1921, the Mexican government felt able to send the German government, as well as other governments, a document which was intended to show the improvement of the political and economic situation of the country, and thereby, to boost foreigners' confidence in their business transactions. Von Montgelas was asked to comment on this document and he argued that promises given by Obregón would take a long time to be put into practice although it was true that the state of war was finished and that a new national revolutionary movement would most probably not rise up again. The promises he was referring to were the return of land, which he mentioned was already in progress but would still take a long time and changes in the law to improve the judicial system and assure nationals' and foreigners' guarantees. These latter were being planned, though nothing concrete had been achieved. With regard to a stable situation for banks, von Montgelas argued that this was better but still not entirely satisfactory. Furthermore, the damaged railway system delayed the improvement of the economic situation and the Mexican government had not enough resources to solve it short-term. Hence, for von Montgelas the reconstruction process was still taking place and this did not allow

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<sup>312</sup> "Septiembre se significó por las exportaciones de Alemania para México", *Revista de Hacienda*, Mexico City, 22 October 1923, p. 1. Bibliothek des Ibero-Amerikanischen Instituts Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Germany [BIAI onwards]-

<sup>313</sup> "México es considerado un buen mercado para efectos alemanes", *Revista de Hacienda*, Mexico City, 6 August 1923, p. 1. BIAI.

investors to be certain about their guarantees.<sup>314</sup> The comments von Montgelas made on these promises were accurate. The land redistribution process continued until the 1980s; the judicial system has been worked on continuously. Calles, however, stabilised the banking system when he commissioned the creation of the *Banco de México* in 1925, which has become one of the most reliable Mexican institutions.

The French representatives had different positions. As has been already mentioned, according to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the French position was guided by investment in railways, state funds, industrial and mining companies (1500 million francs) and commercial and industrial enterprises of French citizens in Mexico (500 million francs).<sup>315</sup> Mexico continued importing products such as wines, fish, jewellery, paper, crystal and perfumes. This implied that French diplomats were interested in the taxes that could affect French products such as pharmaceuticals and cotton, but primarily wines and perfumes.<sup>316</sup>

Besides, Mexicans of French origin were owners of textile industries such as the *Compañía Industrial de Orizaba* (founded 1880 in Río Blanco), *Compañía Industrial Veracruzana* (founded in 1896-8 in Santa Rosa) and the brewery *Moctezuma*. These Franco-Mexican companies tried to defend the interests of all French businessmen of the region and decided to deal directly with Obregón instead of using the Confederation of Industrial Chambers of Mexico or the Confederation of

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<sup>314</sup> PAAA, Mexiko, Politik 1, Politische Beziehungen Mexikos zu Deutschland, 1, April 1920- April 1936, R79597: "Die politische Lage in Mexico", Will to German Foreign Office, Mexico City, 30 April 1926.

<sup>315</sup> ADMAE, Mexique 21 : « Mexique : Gouvernement du General Obregón. Sa reconnaissance par le Gouvernement français, Paris, 22 October 1921, f. 11. There were no proper French investments in Mexican oil, the *Compagnie Navale de l'Ouest* embarked oil from Tampico and in 1920 it seemed this consumption would become regular. ADMAE, 22cpcom, Légations et Consuls, Mexique 2 Consuls et vice-consuls de France au Mexique, 1918-1939: Victor Ayguesparse to Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, Mexico City, 25 May 1920, f. 27.

<sup>316</sup> ADMAE, 88RC Mexique 1 Relations commerciales entre la France et le Mexique ; entre le Mexique et les autres pays ; questions douanières ; informations commerciales 1920-1928, dossier 3.

Commercial Chambers that were created to anonymously and collectively oppose administrative policies that were affecting them.

Before recognition was offered, chargé d'affaires Ayguesparse considered the situation in Mexico was better than during Carranza's period (1915-20) although not ideal, as it had been during the Porfirian regime.<sup>317</sup> He argued that in theory it was important to listen to labour claims, but these could become intolerable and would lead to businessmen closing their industries. In contrast, chargé d'affaires Blondel (1921-23) had a more critical position and this was reinforced by the fact that he did not speak Spanish and had more contact with British and US diplomats. Nonetheless, after 18 months of reporting about the agrarian policies in Mexico, Blondel explained the situation of French agricultural interests in 1923 as follows:

Only with exception are French interests in Mexico agricultural, only a small number of our nationals possess land here; those who have it are most of the times in matrimonial alliances with the rich families of the country or in one part of their economies; none of these have been deprived of an essential portion of their funds.<sup>318</sup>

Therefore, the French government did not need to ally with other countries to protect land interests. Minister Périer, who represented France in Mexico from 1924 to 1932, instead did have a friendly position towards the government and understood the goal to achieve stabilisation and to avoid international problems with regards to Article 27.

In general, we can see a consensus of the three French representatives; they agreed that the most relevant concerns were those of the payment of the debt and the protection of the textile industry from labour movements. For example, in 1922 there was a problem between the work force and the owners of the company *La Abeja* which produced textiles in Coyoacán and was owned by French citizens, but was a

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<sup>317</sup> ADMAE, Mexique 5: f. 87.

<sup>318</sup> «les intérêts français au Mexique ne sont qu'exceptionnellement agricoles ; que nos nationaux qui possèdent ici des terres sont en très petit nombre ; qu'ils les tiennent le plus souvent d'alliances matrimoniales avec de riches familles du pays ou du placement d'une partie de leur économies ; qu'aucun n'a été privé d'une portion essentielle de son fonds.» ADMAE, 22cpcom, Affaires politiques, Mexique 8 Correspondance générale politique, 1922-1923: Jules Blondel to Poincaré, Mexico City, 15 March 1923, f. 135.

Mexican-French company. Hence, in April, Obregón decided to confiscate the factory and one month later, after pressures from the French Legation in Mexico, it was given back to the French owners once they accepted to indemnify the strikers.<sup>319</sup>

Moreover, French diplomats paid attention to finding those areas of the economy which could be beneficial for French interests, for example that of the automobile industry where US Ford was expanding. Furthermore, French diplomacy lamented that French businesses were losing their place in the Mexican economy, especially in contrast to US interests, unless they had a lot of big capital with them,<sup>320</sup> and felt under threat from German and Italian competition. The threat felt so strong that according to Périer, the US government did not stop Bolshevism in Mexico because it was convenient for US businessmen since it allowed them to take over part of European economic interests.<sup>321</sup>

For Great Britain, Article 27 was the most difficult issue to resolve, followed by the protection of mining and railways interests as well as the payment of the debt, to continue its presence in Mexico. While British head of the archives Cummins was taken into consideration when he asked for the protection of British interests, the fact that he became more aggressive after defending Mrs Evans lead to his expulsion, which left British interests without proper representation. Minister Ovey changed completely to a friendly and understanding attitude. For Ovey it was clear that a friendly position was the only form to protect British investment which in May 1925 was calculated between 150 and 230 million pounds (768-1,150 million US

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<sup>319</sup>ADMAE, 22cpcom, Affaires Politiques, Mexique 7 Correspondance générale politique, mai-décembre 1921.

<sup>320</sup>ADMAE, 88RC Mexique 1, dossier 3: Lagarde to French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico City, 7 September 1916.

<sup>321</sup>ADMAE, 22cpcom, Affaires politiques, Mexique 9 Correspondance générale politique, janvier-avril 1924 : Jean Périer to Poincaré, Mexico City, 3 March 1924, ff. 161-163.

dollars).<sup>322</sup> Nevertheless, British oil interests refused his friendly attitude since they considered US foreign policy was able to protect their interests. This was clearly the case with Dwight Morrow being able to halt the application of the Oil Law proposed in 1925.

Furthermore, by 1930 British concern was to protect what was left of their interests in oil, electric energy, tramways and the payment of claims of business and individuals after the revolution.<sup>323</sup> The role of Great Britain regarding trade diminished slowly during the 1920s and this would continue for the following decades: according to Meyer by 1950 it was as if the British-Mexican economic relationship needed to start from zero.<sup>324</sup>

After mapping the different economic interests of the European Powers, now it is time to look at one particular area, that of commerce. While from 1920 to 1923 approximately 80% of imports to Mexico came from the US and 20% from Europe, from 1927 to 1929 70% came from the US, 25% from Europe and the rest from Asia and Latin America.<sup>325</sup> Regarding exports, Mexico exported the majority of its products to the United States (in 1910 66% and by 1910 approximately 90%, but 70% by the end of the 1920s), and the rest to Europe, Asia and Latin America.<sup>326</sup> Mexico exported to the US products from tropical agriculture (henequen and coffee), minerals, cattle, leads, fruits, peas, latex, cotton, sugar and oil. These were also sent to Europe as well as more traditional “exotic” products such as woods, natural dyes and vanilla.<sup>327</sup> Clearly, the diversification of Mexico’s international relations slowly

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<sup>322</sup> Meyer, “La Revolución Mexicana y las Potencias Anglosajonas”, p. 321.

<sup>323</sup> Meyer, *México para los mexicanos*, p. 40.

<sup>324</sup> Meyer, *Su Majestad Británica*, p. 20.

<sup>325</sup> Chart 2, Kuntz Ficker, “El patrón del comercio exterior de México”, p. 58.

<sup>326</sup> Kuntz Ficker, “El patrón del comercio exterior de México”, p. 67.

<sup>327</sup> To read more on the difference between traditional and products from the first and second waves of Mexican exports from 1870 to 1930 read Kuntz Ficker, “El patrón del comercio exterior de México”, pp. 71-75.

started to have economic consequences by the end of the 1920s and European interests were not as significant as those from the US.

In this context, the representatives of European Powers could only ask for the good will of the Mexican government to protect their remaining economic interests, but would not be able to go as far as to intervene in Mexico, which was in accordance with the treaties of amity, commerce and navigation established in the 1880s and the acceptance of the Monroe Doctrine in Article 21 of the Covenant of the League of Nations. Moreover, European diplomats could not do anything to stop the appointment of labour leaders to key administrative positions: socialist governors, for example in the Federal District, the state of Yucatán (Felipe Carrillo Puerto, 1922-1924) or Morones, leader of the CROM, as part of Calles's cabinet.

For its part, the Mexican government could only use this decrease of European interests in Mexico as evidence of the threat the US represented for them and how it was important to make efforts to challenge this situation. As was analysed in the previous chapter, the difficulties in obtaining recognition made it essential for the Mexican government to have a strategy to find support of different groups to ask for recognition of Obregón abroad. With this goal in mind, the strategy of the Mexican government was to differentiate foreign economic interests. It was, therefore, necessary to try to make progress in some areas that could benefit certain economic agents, making each nation's interests divide so that they would start pressuring to offer recognition independently of what other economic interests desired. While doing this, the Mexican government had the pressure of a tradition in Mexican diplomacy to look for fair relations (Juárez Doctrine) and to refuse changes in national laws that could benefit foreigners (Carranza Doctrine).

### *3.3 Pragmatic efforts*

This section will concentrate on the three themes that I consider were negotiated for pragmatic reasons: the debt, Article 27 and the conventions of mixed claims. These were the most crucial topics mentioned by US, French and British diplomacies in order to offer recognition of Obregón. However, their importance varied. For France, the question of debt was the most important, for Great Britain it was the topic of oil. For Germany none of those two were necessary. The question of the conventions of mixed claims was less important, but still significant. These pragmatic efforts were a way to show Mexico's commitment to international practices which could allow the reconsideration of offering loans to the country and maintaining or increasing investment in productive areas.

The question of the debt was a concern for citizens of different nationalities, most of them were represented by the International Committee of Bankers founded in 1919, a clear example of the capability of foreign private interests to negotiate together in a united front with the Mexican government. The committee was formed by US, British, French, Swiss, Dutch and Belgian banking interests. There were various negotiations regarding the debt because its payment was stopped as a consequence of Mexican internal affairs that did not allow the country to cover its international commitments. Nevertheless, the attempts to renegotiate showed the Mexican post-revolutionary government willing to assume its responsibilities in the long-term, even when there were difficulties to accomplish this in the short-term. Foreign governments took attention to the negotiations, but did not intervene in the discussions. Besides, the Mexican government restructured its banking system during the government of Obregón, which affected French institutions such as the *Crédit Foncier* which was dissolved according to the 1921 Law of Confiscation (*Ley de*

Desincautación) that suspended banks with aggregate assets lower than liabilities.<sup>328</sup>

In 1928 the French institution was finally liquidated.

The problem of Article 27 was mainly a concern for US and British diplomacy because oil interests were pressuring their governments to protect them, but US representatives negotiated the decisions regarding this topic. For the other two European Powers, Mexican oil was not a concern. At some point, British oil interests wanted to be defended by their government, since they believed it could protect them more than the US administration. However, this was not possible, first because of the lack of recognition of Obregón and then because Ovey did not consider an aggressive position was the best way to earn the goodwill of Calles's government. Given that there were no legal negotiations regarding Article 27, since this would have been an offence for national sovereignty, the issue of this article would continue to be problematic until the expropriation of oil companies in 1938. Nonetheless, the capability of the Mexican governments to balance foreign and national interests was clear on this topic during the 1920s, even if oil companies did not highly appreciate the efforts, these were accepted by the governments of the US and Great Britain. These negotiations were necessary for Mexico for two reasons, politically to assure diplomatic recognition and economically to avert the danger of a cessation of production in Mexico.

The signature of conventions to establish commissions to examine claims from foreigners as a consequence of the revolution, was a clear demonstration of Mexico's will to assume responsibility for damages. While the signature of conventions was successful during the government of Calles, the binational commissions took a long time to finish looking at claims and only small percentages

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<sup>328</sup> Oñate, "French Bankers in Revolutionary Mexico", pp. 143-166.

(less than 8.25% in the case of German claims and less than 3% of British and French claims) were actually paid in the 1930s. This allowed the Mexican state to show its responsibility towards foreign interests at a low economic cost by cooperating with foreign governments.

### 3.3.1 The renegotiation(s) of the debt

The Mexican government decided that to demonstrate its commitment towards stabilisation it was important to renegotiate the debt which had not been paid since 1914. Carranza had tried to achieve an agreement in 1919, but had failed. It was assumed that the start of payments would reassure foreigners in investing and remaining in business in Mexico. Pedro Castro explained that it was Obregón's obsession to attain recognition that led him to believe that the problem resided in Mexico's acceptance to pay financial obligations and once more get international loans.<sup>329</sup> Nonetheless, international loans were not as relevant as the problem of Article 27 and the consequences for oil property to achieve recognition.

In June 1921, Thomas Lamont, a banker of J. P. Morgan Company, in the representation of the International Committee of Bankers on Mexico (ICBM), was assigned to negotiate with the Mexican government concerning such problems as the payment of the debt, repairing damages to economic institutions and the reorganisation of the emission banking system. There were four rounds of negotiations in Mexico and New York before a treaty was signed on 16 June 1922. The De la Huerta-Lamont agreement recognised that Mexico owed 509 million U.S. dollars which would be paid in 40 years from 1923 onwards. It included the general and the railways' debt. The direct debt belonged to citizens of France (32%), the

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<sup>329</sup> Pedro Castro, "El convenio De la Huerta-Lamont de 1922: La diplomacia financiera como arma de la revolución" [<http://www.azc.uam.mx/publicaciones/etp/num7/a4.htm> accessed 6 March 2016].

United States (23%), Great Britain (20%) and others; the railroad debt to France (36%), Great Britain (36%), United States (13%) and others. In 1922, 15 million US dollars were paid and \$700,000 at the beginning of 1923. The Committee did not include all debt owners and even though J.P. Morgan renegotiated it, other American and European interests were expected to accept the treaty.

The De la Huerta-Lamont agreement implied that French and British businessmen related to the debt and banking system were interested in their governments offering recognition of Obregón. Nevertheless, debt negotiations were not sufficient to secure French recognition since this would only be achieved after the US decided to offer recognition. While debt was a central aspect, the question of claims by citizens and Article 27 were still important for that government. Moreover, the fact that Article 27 had not been clarified left British oil interests still critical of the Mexican government. Accordingly, the British government decided not to recognise Obregón.

As a matter of fact, this negotiation, along with the Bucareli Agreements, led to US and French recognition in September 1923, but the *Delahuertista* rebellion (December 1923-February 1924) stopped service payments. In October 1925, a new renegotiation was achieved in New York with the Pani-Lamont amendment. In it, the Mexican government recognised a reduced debt of 302.5 million U.S. dollars plus 132.5 million of interests. However, the railways debt was not considered.<sup>330</sup> The payments were done from 1925 to 1927, but a new renegotiation was necessary, with the Pani Amendment and then again with the Montes de Oca-Lamont Agreement (1930). Other renegotiations happened in the 1940s and only in 1948 the ICBM was dissolved. Therefore, the question of the debt remained open as a source of tension in

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<sup>330</sup> Lajous Vargas, *Las relaciones exteriores de México*, p. 189.

multilateral relations during the Obregón-Calles era. Nevertheless, foreign governments did not intervene in the negotiations between the Mexican government and the bankers.

Furthermore, the renegotiation of 1922 is a clear example of the network certain interests of different nationalities could achieve to solve their claims and also of the key position New York and US negotiators had for the banking system. Besides, the fact that debt issues were more easily resolved than oil controversies can be seen as an example of the importance of oil in the twentieth century, in contrast to the external debt question which during the nineteenth century had been the most important issue in Mexican foreign policy.<sup>331</sup>

### 3.3.2 The question of Article 27

With the promulgation of the Constitution of 1917, Mexican administrations started to face complaints by oil owners as well as US and British governments. From that moment on until 1938 when Lázaro Cárdenas expropriated oil, the question of Article 27 remained one of the most crucial problems in Mexico's political economy and international relations. As mentioned before, Article 27 stated that "[o]wnership of the lands and waters within the boundaries of the national territory is vested originally in the Nation, which has had, and has the right to transfer title thereof to private persons, thereby constituting private property."<sup>332</sup>

Foreign governments took advantage of the post-Agua Prieta need for international recognition. Hence, governments pressured to ensure that Article 27 would not be applied or at least to diminish its effects as much as possible. The attitude of foreign companies and governments was a problem for the Mexican

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<sup>331</sup> As shown by Silvestre Villegas Revueltas and Michael Costeloe for the Mexican-British relationship, and Antonia Pi-Suñer Llorens for the Mexican-Spanish relationship.

<sup>332</sup> Const. art. 27, para. 1 (Mex.), translated in *12 Constitutions of the Countries of the World*, Mexico, at 23-32 (Albert P. Blaustein & Gisbert H. Flanz eds.).

governments of De la Huerta, Obregón and Calles. It was a form in which the dilemma between stabilisation and revolution continued to be problematic throughout the 1920-28 period since companies desired the article to disappear or for the Mexican government to promise not to apply it retroactively. While the Agua Prieta rebellion declared that the Constitution of 1917 and its articles would continue to be valid, the most liberal interpretation would be made.<sup>333</sup>

Article 27 was particularly problematic for oil companies because from 1919 to 1923 Mexico was the second world oil producer. Oil represented an important source of income for the Mexican nation, in 1918 it represented 10.8% of the budget and 33.6% by 1922.<sup>334</sup> Besides, through the establishment of refineries, oil represented an excellent channel for employment, improving productivity and including Mexicans in the reconstructive process.<sup>335</sup> It was, therefore, important for oil companies to ensure their ownership status would not be changed so that they could continue enjoying a productive trend with low costs. Once production started to decline in 1923 because of the high percentage of water in oil extraction and with the companies' difficulties over Article 27, oil companies transferred production to Venezuela. Nevertheless, they continued fighting against Article 27 through diplomatic and economic channels.

As I already mentioned, during his provisional presidency, De la Huerta stated his refusal to allow foreign countries to condition recognition to issues such as Article

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<sup>333</sup> ADMAE, Mexique 5: Victor Ayguessparse to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mexico City, 15 June 1920, f. 87.

<sup>334</sup> Meyer, "El desarrollo de la industria petrolera en México" in *México y los Estados Unidos en el conflicto petrolero 1917-1942* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1981) Digitalised version, p. 18.

<sup>335</sup> In 1916 there were 4 refineries, in 1921 there were 14, in 1926 there were 20. In 1929 as a consequence of the crisis in production only 16 of 20 refineries were in use. In these refineries gasoline, kerosene and combustible oil was produced. Meyer, "El desarrollo de la industria petrolera en México", p. 21.

27, a commercial treaty, or claims conventions.<sup>336</sup> For him, it was clear that the Constitution would not be changed according to the will of foreigners. National sovereignty should be defended according to the Carranza Doctrine (respect of laws and sovereignty of each nation since all are legally equal). Nevertheless, he established a principle, but did not intend to transform it into immediate action.

For Obregón, as already discussed, the problem of Article 27 was one of the most relevant factors to delay his recognition and only after the Bucareli Agreements it was solved. Just to give an example of the difficulties, in 1921, the Mexican government was being actively pressured by the US after the Mexican Supreme Court of Justice gave a favourable decision to oil owners: paragraph IV of Article 27 would not be retroactive and properties would become concessions if they had already been in use. As mentioned earlier, US companies decided to work together and on the 1 of July they stopped, during two months, the extraction of combustible. This implied that the government lost substantial revenues and 20,000 workers were out of a job.<sup>337</sup> Their pressure was intended to block the project of transferring their properties into concessions.

In April –May 1922, oil industry taxes were reduced in order to improve the position of this industry regarding recognition. Since the problem of ownership continued, the oil group did not want the US government to recognise Obregón. Besides, De la Huerta went to New York in June-July 1922 and failed to promote the exploration of new oil areas in Mexico. Nevertheless, in this year relations between US oil owners and the Mexican government improved: for example, in a conflict regarding a property in the Huasteca, Doheny won. Another example is that an oil strike in Veracruz was criticised by the Mexican government and the leaders were

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<sup>336</sup> PAAA, R79598: Telegram from Adolfo de la Huerta to the Mexican representative in Berlin, Mexico City, 7 November 1920.

<sup>337</sup> Spenser, *The Impossible Triangle*, p. 24.

killed which was advantageous for the oil owners.<sup>338</sup> This attitude showed how the dilemma between stabilisation and revolution was being resolved by preferring stability, although promising at the same time to uphold the revolutionary ideals of the Constitution.

By withholding recognition, the US tried to secure the guarantees of private interests against the Mexican government. With the Bucareli Agreements (August 1923), it did manage to establish two Mixed-Claims Conventions and to have a promise that Article 27 would not be applied retroactively to the properties bought before 1917. Hence, the US was able to condition recognition. It also succeeded in protecting in the long term its interests by having the commitment of the Mexican government to pay damages and at least in the near future have the promise to protect oil interests. This implied that Obregón prioritised stabilisation over revolution. This was seen as treason by some politicians such as De la Huerta and along with the problem of presidential succession led to the *Delahuertista* rebellion in December 1923. Nevertheless, recognition implied the support of the United States to defeat the rebellion, a success for Obregón. However, this event made it difficult for Obregón's administration to pay the debt and a renegotiation was needed as was portrayed in the previous sections.

Since the Bucareli Agreements were not constitutionally binding, President Calles did not consider that he had to respect those negotiations. In December 1925, Calles supported a new law regarding the strict application of article 27. American, British and Dutch industries and their respective governments opposed Calles's position. If they accepted the Mexican perspective, it could imply a precedent for other countries, such as Venezuela which produced more than Mexico in 1925.

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<sup>338</sup> Meyer, *México y Estados Unidos en el Conflicto Petrolero*, p. 115.

Romania or Russia might try to do the same.<sup>339</sup> The new law established that all oil concessions emitted according with the terms of the old regime, before 1917, would last 50 years and foreign companies could not own properties in prohibited zones near the borders and seas.

The reaction of US and British foreign policies differed. According to Ovey the Law of Immigration (ley de extranjería), which asked foreign companies to sell their properties in the prohibited zones -50 km near the coasts and 100 km in the borders- and allowed individuals to maintain these but not to sell them to or leave them to foreigners; and the request to change their properties for concessions of 50 years were directed against the US owners and not against British ones.<sup>340</sup> This made sense since while in 1910 investment in the oil industry was 61.5% British and 38.5% from the US; by 1927, however, 77% of investment was controlled by US companies.<sup>341</sup> Nevertheless, the relevance of Mexico diminished also for the US; whereas in 1910 60% of US investment in foreign oil was in Mexican territory, by 1924 this represented only 24%.<sup>342</sup>

In the case of the US, there was first an atmosphere of hostility as Ambassador Sheffield complained about Calles's oil law. This led to a stressful relationship and he was dismissed after papers planning an intervention in Mexico were taken by a secret agent from the Embassy of the US in Mexico City. Calles's administration threatened the State Department to make these papers public, if Sheffield continued with his aggressive attitude.<sup>343</sup> In his place, ambassador Morrow followed Ovey's ideas and even became a good friend of Calles. This led Calles to ask the Mexican legislative to declare that the new oil law was unconstitutional and

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<sup>339</sup> Meyer y Murillo S. "Las potencias extranjeras y la Revolución mexicana", pp. 577-593

<sup>340</sup> Meyer, "La Revolución Mexicana y las Potencias Anglosajonas", p. 327.

<sup>341</sup> Meyer, "El desarrollo de la industria petrolera en México", p. 10.

<sup>342</sup> Meyer, "El desarrollo de la industria petrolera en México", p. 15.

<sup>343</sup> Meyer, "El espionaje mexicano al servicio del antimperialismo", p. 7.

the Congress to modify it according to the desires of the Ambassador. According to Meyer, the desires of Morrow were not the same as the ones the owners of oil companies wanted: to modify the law to avoid retroactivity.

Clearly, from 1920 to 1928 the problem of Article 27 was imperative for Great Britain, not so for Germany and France since these countries had no investment in oil properties.<sup>344</sup> Oil was the most relevant concern for the US to offer recognition and promises to stop Article 27 did lead to recognition, a rebellion in Mexico and the accusations of Obregón being a traitor. This pragmatic negotiation did have a major impact in Mexican-US relations, but also in Mexican-French because this allowed recognition even though the French had no interest in oil ownership. It also had an impact in Mexican-British relations since the oil owners wanted British recognition to secure they would have the same conditions as US owners and for this they considered recognition urgent. Nonetheless, when Ovey did not protect them, they waited for US pressures to be beneficial.

### 3.3.3 Conventions of Mixed Claims

On 14 July 1921, the Mexican government invited foreign countries to celebrate conventions and discuss damages caused by a *de jure* or a *de facto* government, by federal forces and by insurgents dating from 20 November 1910 to 31 May 1920. This decision demonstrated Mexico's readiness to act according to international standards. Moreover, it implied an action to solve the dilemma between stabilisation and revolution, by paying the foreigners that were affected by revolutionary actions

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<sup>344</sup> In June 1922 *Le Courrier des Pétroles* mentioned the visit of Alberto Cuatapero, a notable Mexican who presented to the Minister of Commerce Dior and Pineau, director of the service of oil, the idea of France exploiting Mexican oil. The newspaper mentioned that the lack of French presence in oil exploitation was regretted in Latin American countries. "France et Mexique", *Le Courrier des Pétroles*, 17 June 1922, f. 80. ADMAE, 22cpcom, Affaires politiques, Mexique 8 Correspondance générale politique, 1922-1923. Also, M. J. Salter Hansen presented the idea of obtaining a concession to exploit oil in Mexico, but Pineau did not consider this was feasible. ADMAE, Mexique 21: Ministère des Affaires Etrangères. Direction des Affaires Politiques et Commerciales. Amérique. Note pour le Directeur des Affaires politiques et commerciales, Paris, 30 April 1923, f. 102.

thanks to the stability of national politics and economy in the 1920s and 1930s when the negotiations finished. The intention to negotiate Conventions of Mixed Claims, signalled the will of the Mexican government to listen to foreigners' complaints even if national diplomatic tradition and the Constitution did not push the government to do it, it was purely an official friendly decision towards foreign governments.

The Mexican government started negotiations with the US and other European countries for this purpose from 1923 onwards. As a matter of fact, Mexico signed two Conventions of Mixed Claims with the US in order to obtain recognition in the Bucareli Agreements, one regarding damages from 1868 onwards, and the other considered claims from 1910 to 1920. Conventions were signed with European Powers after recognition had been conceded and only regarding revolutionary claims. Clearly, there was a distinction between US and European claims and the relevance this had as pragmatic efforts to improve diplomatic and economic ties.

The German government appreciated Mexico's position and negotiations to sign a Convention were undertaken during Obregón and Calles's presidency. On 18 December 1924, the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs officially announced that the Mexican government presented its project for the claims convention to the German government so that it could study it, and the German government did the same. It was the first time that the German government presented a petition to the Mexican counterpart regarding claims resulting from the Mexican Revolution, as it had respected the treaty of 1882 in which it had accepted not to make claims for damages suffered by its subjects as a cause of a revolt.<sup>345</sup> Negotiations for creating the convention were conducted by German plenipotentiary minister Eugen Will and

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<sup>345</sup> AMARO, serie 0313, expediente 95: Prensa: El Universal, foja 16, inventario 496, legajo 1/52. México, D.F. 19 de diciembre de 1924.

Minister for Foreign Affairs Aarón Sáenz. These were clearly government to government negotiations.

The convention was signed in Mexico City on 16 March 1925 and the exchange of the ratifications was done on 1 February 1926. A copy of the text of the treaty in Spanish and in German appeared in the *Reichsgesetzblatt* on February 1926. The agreement contained fourteen articles and established how the commission should be established with three members, one appointed by each government and the third one from a country with which Mexico was not negotiating similar commissions.

The Commission would work in Mexico City declaring the commitment to study carefully and being impartial towards claims from German citizens, societies, companies, associations or moral persons.<sup>346</sup> According to article IV, the damage could have been done by a government of *de jure* or *de facto*; revolutionary forces, by groups that were created from the dissolution of revolutionary forces, by forces that were created from the dissolution of the Federal Army, by riots, other rebels or bandits as long as it was evident that the authorities did not try to avoid those actions. Hence, German citizens could ask to obtain indemnity for attacks done by revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries throughout the country if this had before exhausted all legal resources. For compensations of damage to properties, the inland revenue would be considered, and reparations for personal damages would not be greater as those done by Germany in similar cases and the form of payment of settlements was to be established by both governments, it could be done in gold or an equivalent currency.<sup>347</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> FONDO ELIAS CALLES, serie 0902, expediente 10: GOULD SCHURMAN, Jacob, foja 6 (página 131), legajo 1, inventario 1451.

<sup>347</sup> A. H. Feller, "The German-Mexican Claims Commission", *The American Journal of International Law*, 27:1 (January 1933), pp. 62-79.

The Commission had two years to hear and resolve all claims, but on 20 December 1927 the period for this convention was extended as an additional convention. This was extended for the years 1928 and 1929.<sup>348</sup> The commission finished its work in March 1932. It dealt with 140 claims which implied 6,169 million of Mexican pesos, but only 508,909 pesos were given (8.25%).<sup>349</sup> According to Luis Miguel Díaz, the commission dealt with 139 claims that represented 6,169,086.02 pesos and the Mexican government was sanctioned with 508,912.50 pesos.<sup>350</sup>

Practically 30% of claims were related to a cause of gunfire in cities and 70% to rural properties: haciendas and cattle robbery; losses caused by owners or workers needing to abandon the properties because of the insecurity; warehouses were robbed or burned; and merchandise stolen in the roads.<sup>351</sup> The majority of claimers were not able to demonstrate that their losses occurred as a cause of the revolution between 1910 and 1920 and that it happened to German citizens or companies, since they were mostly Mexican companies.<sup>352</sup> This explains the low percentage of claims that were paid. Some claimers that succeeded were Ketelsen & Degetau hardware store in Ciudad Juárez obtaining half a million from the 5 million that they claimed; or Delires y Cía. that received 50,000 from the 370,000 that they claimed for being forced to lend money.<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Extensions granted in 1928 see AHSRE, 8-9-5 1928 Primera prórroga de 6 de diciembre de 1928 a la convención adicional entre Alemania y México. Extension granted in 1929 see AHSRE, 8-9-6. 1929 Segunda prórroga de 6 de diciembre de 1929 a la convención adicional entre Alemania y México.

<sup>349</sup> See Pi Suñer, Riguzzi and Ruano, *Europa*, pp. 282-283. Von Mentz *et al* have other numbers: 139 claims which represented 6,719,496 gold pesos and only 508,912 pesos, von Mentz *et al*, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>350</sup> Luis Miguel Díaz, "Reclamaciones México- Gran Bretaña" in *México y las comisiones internacionales de reclamación* Tomo II (Mexico: UNAM, 1983), pp. 1065-1066.

<sup>351</sup> Von Mentz *et al*, *Los empresarios alemanes.*, pp. 94-95.

<sup>352</sup> For example, Carlos Klemp was not able to demonstrate that he was German, he was on the list of the German Legation in Mexico, but this was not enough to prove his citizenship. Therefore, Klemp was not able to obtain compensation for the damages to his properties in the town San Gregorio Alapulco in Mexico City. Díaz, "Capítulo II. Reclamaciones México-Alemania", *México y las Comisiones Internacionales*, pp.1064-1065, 1082-1102.

<sup>353</sup> Feller, "The German-Mexican Claims Commission", pp. 77-78.

The result of the Commission was that the Mexican governments from 1921 to 1932 demonstrated their commitment towards the German government to put into action promises made, but this was done stopping any abuse from claimers. The German government saw in Mexico a respectable nation that committed to international standards and it accomplished to protect its interests even if this had not been a priority following the signature of the treaty of 1882 which by the end of 1925 was to be renegotiated.

While the French government did not see as one of the principal problems the question of damages suffered by French citizens during the war years of the revolution, since the focus was on the issue of the debt, the proposal of establishing a convention for mixed-claims was accepted after *de jure* recognition was offered. The French colony had 4540 members in 1910,<sup>354</sup> but in 1922 Blondel reported there were 1,881 French citizens<sup>355</sup> which allows to see how claims by French citizens could not be that important, but also that many left during the 1910s.

As was explained in Chapter 2, in May 1923, while the Mexican-US negotiations that led to the Bucareli Agreements were under way, Pani suggested the establishment of a French-Mexican mixed claims convention for the French government to recognise Obregón. The French government refused this idea and decided to wait for US recognition in order to do the same and later on sign a convention. In accordance, the Convention for the Mixed-Claims Commission between France and Mexico was negotiated only after recognition was offered and it was signed on September 1924, and in March of the following year the Mixed Claims

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<sup>354</sup> Most of them worked in the commercial sector. Pi Suñer, Riguzzi and Ruano, *Europa*, p. 218.

<sup>355</sup> Blondel reported the following numbers of foreigners in 1921: Americans: 10,825; Spaniards: 7,691; Central Americans: 2,494; Chinese: 2,388; Germans: 1,805; Italians: 1,703; English: 1,522, other Europeans: 1,588, South Americans: 799; Japanese: 345; Cubans: 151; other Asians: 814 and other nationalities: 2 with a total of 33,000. ADMAE, 22cpcom, Affaires politiques, Mexique 24 Immigration au Mexique, 1918-1940: Blondel to Poincaré, Mexico City, 20 March 1922, f. 7.

Commission was installed. The Mexican commissioner was Fernando González Roa and the agent Aquiler Elordouy, the French commissioner was Ernest Lagarde, Secretary of the Legation of France in Mexico.<sup>356</sup> One year before, Blondel had calculated that 200 French citizens had been affected between 1910 and 1920.

According to Périer, the commissioner and agent “will only present those claims that in our concept are absolutely fair, comprehended in the equity most unalterable and that, revisited and studied profoundly, convince ourselves that they are reasonable and that in justice proceed.”<sup>357</sup> Périer explained to *El Globo* that most of the claims represented small quantities of money and that they belonged to the widows of French citizens that were murdered by revolutionary groups and whose properties were destroyed or robbed. Those widows were of Mexican origin but as they married French citizens they acquired the rights of citizenship.

The Commission studied 348 cases of claims until November 1931 when it finished after a second convention was signed on 2 August 1930. In total Mexico paid 1,300,000 pesos, which represented 2.96% of the claimed 43883 million.<sup>358</sup> According to Díaz, the mission dealt with 251 claims of 6,169,086.32 pesos, 108 were retired, 50 refused and 93 accepted.<sup>359</sup> In comparison with the Mexican-German Mixed-Claims Commission, there were more claims in the French-Mexican case (348 instead of 140 cases) and also more money was paid (\$1,300000 against \$508909).

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<sup>356</sup> “Mañana se inaugura la comisión mixta de reclamaciones entre México y Francia”, *El Globo*, Mexico City, 13 March 1925. NLBC.

<sup>357</sup> “Precisamente por todo esto, debo decir a EL GLOBO que los representantes de Francia, es decir, el Comisionado y el Agente, presentarán solamente aquellas reclamaciones que en nuestro concepto sean absolutamente justas, comprendidas dentro de la equidad más inalterable y que, revisadas y estudiadas a fondo, nos convenzan a nosotros mismos de que son razonables y en justicia proceden. Interview with Jean Périer in “Francia hará a México su reclamación, con equidad”, *El Globo*, 14 March 1925, pp. 1, 8. NLBC.

<sup>358</sup> Pi Suñer, Riguzzi and Ruano, *Europa*, pp. 282-283.

<sup>359</sup> Díaz, “Reclamaciones México- Francia” in *México y las comisiones internacionales*, p. 1182.

Nevertheless, the percentage of German claims covered (8.25%) was higher than in the French claims (2.96%).<sup>360</sup>

Again, the Mexican government decided to show its good will and commitment towards international policies by establishing the convention of mixed claims with France. This formal pragmatic negotiation was a good way also for the French government to show that it was protecting its citizens. Since the Convention only focused on the revolutionary project, French diplomacy would continue to ask for protection if necessary, but an intervention was out of the question according to Article 21 of the Covenant of the League of Nations and the signature of the treaty of 1886, which, like that with Germany, was to be renegotiated from 1925 onwards, as will be explored in the next section.

The case of the British-Mexican Convention of Mixed Claims is different in relevance in comparison to the Mexican-German and Mexican-French conventions. For the British government, such a convention became a necessary condition to offer recognition in 1924 using as an example the Bucareli Agreements, while it recognised the Soviet Union that had denied the payment of the Tsarist debt. For the Mexican government such a condition was unacceptable and after the expulsion of Cummins, Calles refused to act to achieve recognition. Hence, when recognition was offered, a mixed-claims convention was rejected as a condition, and this was only signed on 19 November 1926. The British government ratified it on 8 March 1928.<sup>361</sup> In charge of the negotiations were Sáenz, Ovey and a referee. Ovey, following the orders of the Foreign Office, asked the Mexican government to pay compensations for the profits

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<sup>360</sup> Pi Suñer, Riguzzi and Ruano, *Europa*, pp. 282-283.

<sup>361</sup> Meyer, "La Revolución Mexicana y las Potencias Anglosajonas", p. 335.

not obtained as a consequence of the revolution, something the Mexican government refused to accept.<sup>362</sup>

The Commission met several times between 22 August 1928 and 21 August 1931, it got 108 claims for 138,605,063.97 pesos and 21 decisions were made. A new supplementary convention was signed in December 1930 in order to take into consideration other claims, but not the ones considering decisions taken by Huerta and his government. Now, in charge of the negotiation were Genaro Estrada and Minister Edmund Monson. 128 claims were registered, 18 eliminated because of anomalies, 60 denied and 50 accepted with an amount of 3,793,897.33 pesos (2.74%).<sup>363</sup>

Clearly, the Mexican government decided to create mixed-claims conventions to show its good will towards countries that recognised it, the three European Powers signed conventions and settled commissions to deal with this question. In the end the Mexican government paid less than 3% of the claims it was asked for in the cases of France and Great Britain. Hence, the conventions and the work of commissions left Mexico with a positive diplomatic and economic outcome. This pragmatic negotiation between official representatives demonstrated the commitment to international practices which of course implied a better image in the international arena. By the moment the commissions were finished, Mexico was already a member of the League of Nations and the Estrada Doctrine had been made public, which meant the Mexican government would defend national sovereignty and self-determination in international organisations. Furthermore, commissions of mixed claims between the governments of Mexico and the United States continued during the 1930s and the Second World War.

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<sup>362</sup> Meyer, "La Revolución Mexicana y las Potencias Anglosajonas", p. 327.

<sup>363</sup> Díaz, "Reclamaciones México- Gran Bretaña", p. 1245. According to Pi Suñer, Riguzzi and Ruano it was 122 claims, not 108. Meyer, "La Revolución Mexicana y las Potencias Anglosajonas", p. 335.

It is important to mention that while the Mexican government created the commissions to deal with the damages from 1910 to 1920, the losses from the *Delahuertista* rebellion in 1923-24 were not considered. Hence, Europeans and European-Mexicans that had business or landowning interests in Mexico had to deal with the reconstruction process from 1920 onwards. It could benefit them through the improvement of the infrastructure in order to increase trade or opportunities to expand such as the German coffee plantations that benefitted from new territory that was opened for production,<sup>364</sup> but also harm them through land distribution, the increase of consular rights, strikes in Mexican ports, for example by stevedores in Veracruz (1922), or labour demonstrations throughout the country, for example in Puebla (1922).

An event that disturbed the economic ties was the *Delahuertista* rebellion (1923-24). While the rebellion took place, nationals and foreigners could be asked to pay taxes, give food and cattle to the government or rebels. For example, German companies which had paid taxes to the revolutionaries were being asked to pay them to the government too, which meant double tax payment. Once the *Delahuertista* rebellion ended, the government had to return the Germans of the Soconusco region

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<sup>364</sup> German coffee plantations owners in Soconusco (Chiapas) became significant in Mexico during the Porfiriato and became the most productive in the state thanks to modern techniques and discipline. This also happened in Guatemala from the 1850s to the 1910s. In 1914, when the *constitucionalistas* arrived in the Soconusco region, the German owners were able to negotiate with the new regime of Carranza and coffee businesses' integrity was respected. While economic reconstruction was taking place during Obregón's presidential period, the coffee plantations in Chiapas had a stable position and there was interest in continuing the exploitation of this area if possible for other products such as mint, olives, tobacco, cotton, and sesame. German businesspeople of the region were aware of the latent risk of being expropriated as Governor Tiburcio Fernández promulgated a law to expropriate land from properties which had more than 8,000 hectares. Besides, the Socialist Party of Chiapas was created and it allied with the CROM. Nonetheless, during the 1920s German coffee plantations expanded because new territory was opened for production in the Sierra Madre. Daniela Spenser, "La economía cafetalera en Chiapas y los finqueros alemanes (1890-1950), *Diccionario Temático Ciesas* [<http://www.ciesas.edu.mx/Publicaciones/diccionario/Diccionario%20CIESAS/TEMAS%20PDF/Spenser%2056a.pdf> accessed 18 October 2013]. Manuel Efrén López Echeverría, "Las Fincas Cafetaleras Alemanas en el Soconusco: más de 150 años de experiencia" in Manuel de Jesús Moguel Liévano (coord.), *Reflexiones sobre experiencias de investigación en algunas organizaciones en Chiapas* (Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas: Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas/ UAM-Iztapalapa, 2007), pp. 6-20. For Guatemala: Wagner, "Actividades empresariales de los alemanes en Guatemala 1850-1920", pp.87-123.

\$39,729.00 that they gave, between January and March 1924, to the Customs Office of Tapachula for the 11<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Military Operations Headquarters. According to the 1882 treaty between Mexico and Germany this was not supposed to happen.<sup>365</sup>

A case that I find especially interesting is the one of German vice-consul of Colima, Arnold Vogel. He was a landowner that in 1921 complained that his property was to be divided as part of land distribution in the region as a way of recognition to the peasants who fought during the revolution and had as one of their goals the division of big properties such as haciendas. After the *Delahuertista* rebellion, Vogel lost his job as vice-consul, which he held since 1895, in order to avoid diplomatic problems between Mexico and Germany. In 1924 the Mexican government decided to remove Vogel's *exequatur* because he was accused of helping the rebels. Von Montgelas asked him to quit so that the *exequatur* would not be taken away and to avoid his expulsion, something that would affect diplomatic relations. Vogel asked for letters of recommendation stating that the accusations were false and he explained that he only gave arms, horses and paid taxes (\$1,526.63) to the rebels when they came with decrees to do so, as did other nationals and foreigners in the same situation.<sup>366</sup> Besides, Vogel mentioned that Higinio Álvarez, general brigadier in Obregón's army against the *Delahuertista* rebellion, tried to take 1,000 litres of water from his property and threatened to apply Article 33 if he did not. After all his efforts

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<sup>365</sup> For example, in Puebla, Sommer, Herrmann y Cía. Sucs. that concentrated in commerce of hardware, it also had cotton plantations in La Laguna, was forced to pay taxes to the rebellion. Mentz *et al*, *Los empresarios alemanes.*, p. 44. Other companies include Dorenberg Petersen y Cía. Sucs. in Puebla and Schauendurg y Meyer Sucs. in Chiapas. Livestock was taken away from the 'Hacienda El Fuerte' in Ocotlán, Jalisco, which was managed by German vice-consul Langenscheidt. Besides, other companies were not able to finish their trade transactions, for example Sückow-Düisberg was not able to sell machines.

<sup>366</sup> Vogel sent a letter signed by the Comité Ejecutivo de la *Confederación Colimense de Trabajadores* confirming he had nothing to do with rebels as wrongly accused, a letter signed by the Operations Chief in Jalisco, General Cárdenas and a letter signed by fifty neighbours confirming Vogel was not related with rebels. Karl Schulte remained in charge of the Consulate in Colima. PAAA, Mexiko 4/3, 000058-000061.

to prove that he was falsely accused, Vogel did renounce his position and diplomatic relations remained stable.

Another interesting case is the French consulate in Guadalajara. During some weeks of December 1923, no correspondence or newspapers arrived or could be sent out of the city, which meant Guadalajara was disconnected from the outside world. In this tense moment, businesses and citizens were pressured to pay extraordinary taxes to the rebel General Estrada. Just as the consuls from the US and Great Britain, the French Consul asked the French colony not to pay the taxes requested by the rebellion. Nevertheless, the French commercial interests decided to pay 50% of taxes in order to avoid attacks by the rebellion to their properties and businesses. As a consequence, in February 1924 French citizen Pinson, director of the Electricity Society of Guadalajara was expelled from Mexico as a measure against foreigners who had supported the rebellion.

Evidently, rebellions put under risk stable diplomatic relations, and it is interesting that while the Mexican state was willing to negotiate the effects of the ten years of revolution it did not commit itself to consider the establishment of commissions to deal with claims from the *Delahuertista* rebellion or later of the *Cristero* rebellion. European governments for their part, did not attempt to do this either. Clearly, the question of mixed claims was not as important as the debt or oil which did lead to renegotiations during the 1920s and 1930s.

#### *3.4 Symbolic efforts*

Apart from the pragmatic efforts to obtain recognition, there were some negotiations and contacts between state and non-state actors that intended to achieve an improvement in economic relations. These were not directly related with the goal to attain recognition and in this sense were not pragmatic, but these were only possible

because recognition had been achieved, they were sequential. Besides, these were symbolic since more than achieving an immediate amelioration of relations, these efforts put Mexican products and image in Europe to attract businesspeople. The efforts I refer to are the negotiations for new treaties of amity, commerce and navigation; the stay of Calles in Berlin and Paris in which he had contact with important economic actors; the visit of German businessmen in Mexico and of Mexican businessmen in Europe; the role played by chambers of commerce, exhibitions, fairs and newspaper articles. All of these public relations and cultural propaganda could contribute to industrial, commercial and financial ties. Nevertheless, I do not measure in which ways they did, but I consider it worth exploring these attempts as part of a way in which Mexican foreign policy in the 1920s tried to stabilise its image abroad through the use of an international economic discourse that also had into consideration the nationalist revolutionary project. These attempts were corresponded by the efforts of European businesspeople and governments.

#### 3.4.1 Negotiations for new Treaties of Amity, Commerce and Navigation

One of the most important ways in which the government of Calles decided to show its desire to continue stable relations taking into consideration the revolutionary project was through the negotiation of new treaties of amity, commerce and navigation. The talks intended to change the 1880s agreements in an important way, instead of admitting the liberal most favoured nation treatment which secured the guarantee to hold the most favourable terms available by another country in a treaty, the Mexican government wanted to use the idea of “a friendly nation” which allowed the government to decide when to offer certain privileges.

The decision to cancel and negotiate treaties makes it possible to see the relevance the signature of bilateral treaties had for the post-revolutionary government sharing a continuity with the Porfirian regime, but looking for a change in conditions since it was considered that the treatment of most favoured nation was not useful anymore. This is interesting since there was a division in Mexican diplomats on whether or not to include that clause during the 1880s. On the one side, in 1880 José Hipólito Ramírez when negotiating with Belgian representative Jules Greindl refused to include this clause which stopped the negotiations for a couple of years. Also, Ignacio Vallarta when signing the treaty between Mexico and Sweden and Norway considered it too vague and that it could risk future commercial interests of the nation so the clause was not included in the 1885 treaty. On the other side, Genaro Raigosa, who triumphed with the signature of the treaty with the German Empire in December 1882, did include this clause because it was something common in bilateral treaties from the 1850s onwards.<sup>367</sup>

On 21 October 1925, Calles's government cancelled the Treaty of Amity, Commerce of Navigation between Germany and Mexico signed in 1882 with the intention of negotiating a new one.<sup>368</sup> On that month, it was also announced that the treaties with Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, France and Honduras were to be cancelled; in November the treaties with Denmark, Norway and Nicaragua; and in December the treaty with Great Britain. For the Mexican government former settlements, which included the treatment of most favoured nation, were not appropriate with the new views of international and economic relations. The treaty of

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<sup>367</sup> See Itzel Toledo García, *La diplomacia mexicana, entre el orgullo nacional y los intereses económicos, 1876-1884* (Mexico: UNAM- BA Dissertation in History, 2010).

<sup>368</sup> On that month it was also announced that the treaties with Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, France and Honduras were also to be annulled; in November the treaties with Denmark, Norway and Nicaragua; and in December the treaty with Great Britain.

Amity, Commerce and Navigation with Japan (signed December 1924, ratified in May 1925) was seen as the basis for negotiating new treaties.

The Mexican-Japanese Amity, Commerce and Navigation Treaty was similar to the one signed in 1888 and through it, Japan renounced the formation of a Mixed-Claims Convention, which according to von Montgelas was not important since there were almost no claims from Japanese and those existing could be dealt directly between the legal authorities and the claimers. Besides, von Montgelas said that Japan accepted this condition as a symbol of gratitude to Mexico for help assistance after the 1923 earthquake.<sup>369</sup> It was seen as the basis for the negotiations of further economic treaties with other nations and this denotes the idea of Mexican diversification of relations and the attempt to treat all nations as equals. Japan was a partner to consider seriously for Mexico's foreign policy; this had been realised during the Porfirian regime, the Great War -when it was considered as a possible ally against the United States- and now as a clear actor in the Pacific Rim.

After the Mexican decision to cancel the treaty, the German Foreign Office replied, on the 28 of November, that it was interested in starting negotiations as soon as possible.<sup>370</sup> In December 1925, Ortiz Rubio sent the first draft of the treaty which was inspired by the treaty with Japan. The German draft was given in September 1926 to Ramón P. De Negri, who had replaced Ortiz Rubio as Mexican representative in Germany.<sup>371</sup> De Negri analysed this draft and mentioned that there were

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<sup>369</sup>PAAA, Mexiko, Politik 3, Politische Beziehungen Mexiko-Japan, 3, Oktober 1920 -Februar 1928, R79607: Köcher, "Abschluss eines Japanisch-Mexikanischen Freundschafts-, Handels- und Schifffahrtsvertrags." Mexico City, 18 October 1924.

<sup>370</sup> See AHSRE, III-1314-7 Arreglos y gestiones para concertación del tratado de amistad, comercio y navegación entre México y Alemania.

<sup>371</sup> Ramón P. De Negri had a diplomatic and political career. Before assuming the position of Mexican Representative in Berlin in 1926, he had been General Consul in New York, Chargé d'affaires in Washington D.C., President of Ferrocarriles Nacionales, Minister for Agriculture and Development, founder of the National School of Agriculture in Chapingo (Estado de México). After his position in Germany he was Minister for Industry, Commerce and Labour, Ambassador in Belgium, Chile, Turkey, Hungary and Spain, also Mexican Representative in Austria.

differences of style and signification regarding the treatment of the most favoured nation, and also that articles XXIV and XXV asked that marines could be detained two months. For De Negri, it was also essential that an article could be established to avoid claims and compensations for civil war damages. This had been accepted by the Japanese government in the treaty with Mexico and by the German government in the treaty of Rapallo with Russia. This is quite important, because it demonstrates that the Mexican government was willing to consider the claims against the Mexican Revolution, but was not ready to commit the Mexican state to have an obligation to do it always, therefore, it could avoid the pressures to create a new convention for claims regarding new rebellions. This had been relevant for the Juárez Doctrine and would continue to be for the Post-Revolutionary Mexican diplomacy.

De Negri also recommended to include articles to avoid taxes to Mexican raw materials and fruits that were largely consumed in Germany. In exchange, Mexico could give exemptions for German machinery which “would benefit not only the German trade and the Mexican consumer, but would also facilitate the already ongoing project of transplanting some German industries to Mexico, and it would also emancipate our foreign commerce.”<sup>372</sup> This idea could have implied a more pragmatic treaty since it could offer specific ways to increase trade, and not only a general framework as treaties of amity, commerce and navigation used to do.

During 1927 the Mexican government analysed the German draft and in 1928 and 1929 conversations continued.<sup>373</sup> Throughout these years, the German Foreign

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<sup>372</sup> “beneficiaría no solo al comercio alemán y al consumidor mexicano sino que así se facilitaría el proyecto ya iniciado de la trasplatación de algunas industrias alemanas a México, así como también nos independizaría un poco en nuestro comercio exterior.” AHSRE, III-1314-7: De Negri to de Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 10 November 1926.

<sup>373</sup> In 1931 the Mexican Consul in Berlin wrote a report about the importance of an economic treaty. AHSRE, III-181-1 Proyecto entre México y Alemania 1932. On 20 February 1933, Manuel J. Sierra wrote to the Comisión Consultiva de Tratados de Comercio a letter insisting in the benefits that a treaty with Germany could bring if it was signed rapidly, for example Mexican products could replace Argentinian products that would not pass easily because of commercial problems between Germany

Office studied the treaties Mexico was negotiating with other European countries, for example the Netherlands, Italy, Denmark, Great Britain, France, Sweden and with other nations like Turkey (25 May 1927), Honduras and Nicaragua.<sup>374</sup> When studying all these treaties, for Will it became clear that no foreign government was hurrying to establish a new commercial treaty with Mexico and that it had been an error of the Mexican government to assume that other countries would accept a similar settlement like the one signed between Mexico and Japan. Therefore, although the government of Calles wanted to sign new agreements, it would not have that diplomatic success.<sup>375</sup> While in the 1880s and 1890s the Mexican commercial diplomacy had succeeded in using the 1882 commercial treaty with the German Empire as the basis for new treaties, the attempt in the 1920s to have the treaty with Japan as a basis was a big failure.

In the case of France, the 1884 treaty ran out on 20 October 1925, but an extension was negotiated until the 20 of January 1927, a second one until 31 December 1927 and the last one on 20 June 1928. Besides, in 1930 it was decided that while Mexico only had one type of customs tariff, France would use the minimum customs in regards to products coming from Mexico.<sup>376</sup> Negotiations continued until the 1930s. The first round of talks was done by Alfonso Reyes

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and Argentina. And in 1936 the Mexican consul in Hamburg insisted of the importance of celebrating a commercial treaty with Germany. AHSRE, III-240-6 Tratado comercial entre México y Alemania. 1936. Gestiones.

<sup>374</sup> Nonetheless, on 30 June 1928, the treaties with Great Britain and Norway lost validity. On 30 November of that year, the agreements with the Netherlands and Denmark were also considered cancelled. In this last case, a project was sent from the Mexican government to the Danish government to continue the negotiations for a new treaty. In October 1928 the negotiations between France and Mexico were complicated because Mexico was not willing to give the most favoured treatment again, but the French government succeeded to maintain the treaty valid until 1930. In September 1928 Mexico received a counter-project by Belgium's government; also plans for commercial deals with Peru and Russia were received; there were two drafts for the Mexican-Swedish treaty the negotiations for the treaty with China were ongoing and the treaty was valid until November that year. See PAAA, Mexiko, Handel 12, Handelsbeziehungen zwischen fremden Staaten, November 1923—April 1936, R91200: Eugen Will to the German Foreign Office, Mexico City, 14 September 1928, p. 1.

<sup>375</sup> PAAA, R 91200: Eugen Will to the German Foreign Office, Mexico City, 14 September 1928, p. 2.

<sup>376</sup> ADMAE, 3 RC. B26 Accords commerciaux de la France No. 8: Jean Périer to Estrada, Mexico city, 8 October 1930.

because in January 1926 the French government asked him to send a draft and he did this taking as a basis the deal between Mexico and Japan. Reyes also took into account the recommendations of Alfonso Rosenzweig, counsellor at the Legation in Paris.<sup>377</sup> Those encouraged to establish advantages for Mexican shipping and that coastal trade be done by nationals; equality in mercantile trials; low tariffs for products and facilities for temporary importation of tobacco or a promise of buying by the State Monopoly; arbitration for mercantile conflicts and the application of the International Convention of Geneva (1923); admission of natural and manufactured samples for temporary exhibitions and commercial museums; and some kind of concession for capital exports to Mexico used for public infrastructure, industry, agriculture and the banking system. Regarding navigation, he suggested using as an example the Anglo-German treaty from December 1924.<sup>378</sup> Evidently, the ideas of Rosenzweig intended to promote benefits for national merchants and the presence of French capitals for the modernisation of the country, solving the dilemma between economic stabilisation and revolutionary nationalism.

On 16 September 1926, Reyes sent the first draft to the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations and from there it was sent to other ministries to receive feedback. The Minister of Communications and Public Works said that it looked good and accepted that reciprocity in the ports could not be done (November 1926). By his part, José Manuel Puig Casauranc, Minister of Public Education stated that the section concerning the exercise of professions was correct (November 1926). The Minister of Agriculture and Development also agreed with the draft (December 1926) in which there would be an exclusion for fishing and its products, stating the importance of the

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<sup>377</sup> Alfonso Rosenzweig Diaz (1886-1963) was a Mexican diplomat, he was ambassador in Guatemala, Sao Paulo, Bogotá, The Hague, San Salvador, Copenhagen, La Paz, Asunción, Panama, Caracas, London, Paris (16 March 1946- 30 June 1947), Managua and Moscow.

<sup>378</sup>AHSRE, III-181-3 Informes y arreglos para concertación del tratado de amistad, comercio y navegación entre México y Francia.

current legislation regarding dispositions of persons and properties from foreigners concerned with fisheries in national water. By his part, Luis N. Morones, Minister of Industry, Commerce and Labour, asked to include the same terms for foreigners as those applying to nationals, with the limitations of the percentage of Mexican workers in each industry and negotiation according to the legislations to the right to dedicate to work. This was a clear attempt to protect Mexican labour in relation to foreigners, following the goals of the Mexican Revolution.

Furthermore, Morones suggested that businessmen should be allowed to use agents or specialised commissioners to buy, celebrate agreements of purchase, establish agencies or admit orders with samples or without them having the same conditions as nationals concerning taxes and facilities (11 December 1926). This could increase trade opportunities between both countries. As will be seen in the next section, Mexican consuls promoted the idea of sending samples of products as a way to make these appealing to European businessmen.

Finally, in January 1927 the Minister of Foreign Relations asked Reyes to send the French government the draft and wait for a response. By October 1928, the French government had not written a draft and the Mexican government did not want to make more extensions of the treaty. Hence, it was agreed that the tariffs of 1886 would remain although the treaty itself was no longer valid. In November, an exchange of notes maintained the status quo.<sup>379</sup> In March 1929, it was decided that different representatives of secretaries would study with a member of Foreign Relations the draft: Finance and Public Credit designated Carlos Arroyo (president of the Tariffs Commission), Commerce, Industry and Labour designated Jesús B. Arechavala (sub-chief of the industry department).

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<sup>379</sup> AHSRE, III-181-3.

Some months later, Coulondre, sub-director of commercial relations in France, gave the French draft and asked for negotiations to take place in Paris, but after the refusal of the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations negotiations occurred in Mexico. Between November 1927 and June 1930 talks with Périer took place but were finally suspended. The suspension was caused because of the stipulation of the most favoured national clause regarding commercial rights. In January 1930, the French government decided to inform that it would not apply the general tariff to Mexican imports, but the *modus vivendi* could continue; the Mexican government was not able to accept this. Hence, the minimum tariff to Mexico could not be applied by France anymore.

In the case of Great Britain, the 1888 treaty was allowed to lapse on 22 December 1925 and the British government accepted the proposal to negotiate a new one in January the following year. In November 1926, a British draft was sent to the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations. It was in June 1927 that the Mexican government sent a counter-draft. In the meantime, a first extension was done in June 1927, the second in December 1927, and the third one in June 1928. On 8 December 1928, the British government explained that it considered the treaty would benefit bordering countries which was unacceptable since the British government had no doubt that this would lead to protest by British commercial interests who saw in the US its principal competitor in Mexico. Besides, the British government wanted to include the treatment of most favoured nation without any type of conditions. Nevertheless, the Mexican government wanted it to include in article V a stipulation so that the treatment of British articles in a foreign country would be subject to the condition that the United Kingdom granted to that foreign country an equal compensation as the one given to a third nation in the treatment of most favoured

nation. This condition would offer the opportunity to grant special reductions to certain foreign articles from a determined origin. Furthermore, the British government refused the Mexican idea of not guaranteeing foreign citizens, companies and ships the treatment of nationals in regards to taxes, but only the same conditions of another friendly nation.<sup>380</sup> Since negotiations did not prove fruitful, they did not proceed any further.

As suggested by von Montgelas, negotiations of treaties of Amity, Commerce and Navigation were not successful during Calles's administration as no foreign government was hurrying to establish a new commercial treaty with Mexico since it was not willing to offer the treatment of most favoured nations unconditionally. It had been an error of the Mexican government to assume that other countries would accept a similar treaty like the one signed between Mexico and Japan. Nonetheless, economic relations between these countries continued regularly. Pi Suñer, Riguzzi and Ruano argue that these treaties had no concrete economic significance because they did not stipulate customs and duty conditions, only the treatment of the most favoured nation.<sup>381</sup> Even if we consider these types of treaties as more symbolic than pragmatic, it is the case that the 1920s negotiations were a failure for Mexican diplomacy as an effort to show its willingness to maintain good economic relations since it refused to accept standard international practice in order to protect nationalist economic ideas.

#### 3.4.2 Mexican Consuls in Europe

During the first half of the 1920s, the consular presence of France and Germany in Mexico increased, while that from Great Britain remained in a small proportion since relations were only restored in 1925 when Great Britain had a general consul in

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<sup>380</sup> AHSRE, III-1314-6.

<sup>381</sup> Pi Suñer, Riguzzi and Ruano, *Europa*, p. 282.

Mexico City. For example, in 1922 the German government decided to establish consulates in Hermosillo, Sonora and Cuernavaca, Morelos. By then Germany already had the Legation in Mexico City and consulates and vice-consulates throughout Mexican territory.<sup>382</sup> For its part, the Mexican government also had a significant consular presence in Germany<sup>383</sup> and France; in Great Britain it remained only in three places: London, Liverpool and Glasgow, which were closed in any case from November 1924 until the restoration of relations.

The role of consuls was to facilitate commercial relations and to expand these as much as possible. For example, consuls promoted Mexican products so that these increased the trade between countries. This occurred on two levels, on the one side, consuls wrote to the Ministry of Industry and Work and some of their letters and reports were published in the newspaper *Revista de Hacienda* that belonged to the Ministry of Finance in which they signalled products that could be of interest for European markets so that Mexican businesspeople were aware of trade opportunities. For example, the Mexican consul in Cologne insisted that it was necessary to have samples of products that were of relevance for Germans, but also lists with prices in Free on Board (F. O. B.) or Cost, Insurance and Freight (C. I. F) systems used for the buying and selling of products transported in ships.<sup>384</sup>

According to the consuls in Cologne and Nuremberg, Germans could buy cacao in grains, toasted or in powder, coffee, henequen, tobacco, vanilla, oilcloth, walnuts and tropical fruits (banana, pineapple, etc.). Moreover, the Mexican consul in

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<sup>382</sup> In Chihuahua, Colima, Durango, Guadalajara, Guanajuato, Guaymas, Mazatlán, Mérida, Monterrey, Oaxaca, Puebla, San Luis Potosí, Tampico, Tapachula, Tepic, Torreón, Villahermosa and Veracruz.

<sup>383</sup> In Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen, Breslau, Chemnitz, Dresden, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt am Main, Hanover, Cologne, Leipzig, Munich, Nuremberg and Stettin. See PAAA, Mexiko 67216; Darstellung der Verhältnisse in den Auswanderungsländern. Heft nr. 11 Mexiko. Herausgegeben im Auftrage des Reichswanderungsamtes 1921, p. 31.

<sup>384</sup> “cacao en granos, tostado o en polvo, café, henequén, tabaco, vainilla, hule, nueces, coco, frutas tropicales (plátanos, piñas, etc.)”, “Negociantes de Colonia desean relacionarse con los de nuestro país”, *Revista de Hacienda*, Mexico City, 13 August 1923, p. 11. BIAI.

Nuremberg mentioned that the stencil industry in the Rhein area needed raw materials that Mexico could offer. He had an interview with directors of stencil-industries and he found out they were interested in trading with Mexico, but that the United States offered cheaper and better-produced graphite and smooth wood.<sup>385</sup>

The General Consul in Paris also sent a list of French Commercial Houses so that Mexican producers of henequen, leathers, coffee, cacao, vanilla, woods, copper and mineral oils could use it as a guide for establishing contacts for their businesses.<sup>386</sup> The mentioned products were according to Mexican consuls the ones which could be of interest in France.<sup>387</sup> In 1925 the list was sent again and was up for consultation in the Commercial Museum in Mexico City.<sup>388</sup>

Consuls also informed of important initiatives, for example, in May 1922, the consul in Paris, B. A. González wrote to Industry, Commerce and Labour about the creation of a National Office for Foreign Trade in France with the idea to “help the exporter supplying him the complete documentation that gives him efficient means to

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<sup>385</sup> “México podría abastecer de materias primas a las fábricas de lápices alemanas”, *Revista de Hacienda*, Mexico City, 5 January 1925, p. 7. BIAI.

<sup>386</sup> See “Los productores de México pueden hacer negocios en Francia”, *Revista de Hacienda*, Mexico City, 29 January 1923. BIAI.

<sup>387</sup> Just to illustrate, I will exemplify the different ways in which Mexican consuls mentioned France was a good market for Mexican wood: J. M. Alcaráz, consul in Marseilles, talked about the opportunities Mexican wood had in France; for example, in 1913 France bought 330,000 gold Francs in wood. He also explained that the destruction of forests and buildings during the Great War implied that the French needed lots of wood for the reconstruction. The Consul in Le Havre, Farías, sustained that wood shown in the Commercial Museum had been very well received by importers and recommended that producers sent examples of each type of wood with pieces of different sizes to be able to see the fibre, colour, density, etc. For its part, the Mexican consulate published in the *Journal du Havre* a report on the “Balsa” wood mentioning the advantages and applications of this type of wood and one House of Importation received a batch of Balsa pieces and was already looking for purchasers. See “Nuestras maderas pueden tener mercado en Francia”, *Revista de Hacienda*, Mexico City, 3 November 1923, p. 15. <sup>387</sup> “Interés en Francia por nuestras maderas finas”, *Revista de Hacienda*, Mexico City, 10 December 1923, p. 13. BIAI.

<sup>388</sup> “Artículos mexicanos que tiene demanda en el mercado francés”, *Revista de Hacienda*, Mexico City, 26 January 1925, p. 11. BIAI.

the development of his interests.”<sup>389</sup> According to him, the Mexican government could have this precedent to do a similar office.<sup>390</sup>

On the other side, consuls promoted Mexican products in European capitals, cities and ports so that businessmen could directly look at examples of these since they considered this would lead to an increase of commercial contact. The Mexican Consul in Berlin, Felipe Serrano, promoted an important project of commercial propaganda. In April 1922, he encouraged the establishment of a permanent exhibition of Mexican products in Berlin. It was established in three rooms at the Marinehaus (Brandenburger Ufer No. 1). The first room contained fibres, waxes, glues, guayule, medicinal plants, more than 200 different species of wool, insects to obtain lacquer, minerals, and fruits. The second had elaborated products such as essences of plants, wool, dehydrated vegetables, cigars, chemical and pharmaceutical products, animal products, wines, beers, leathers and preserves. In the third room there were wools, porcelain, pottery and crockery.<sup>391</sup> One year later, it celebrated its anniversary. The exhibition could be useful for industrial and trade circles in Germany to increase links and create new commercial exchanges.<sup>392</sup> It closed its doors after a second year because of economic difficulties regarding renting the space, many of the products were passed on to Mexican consulates and German museums to continue as commercial propaganda.

The Mexican consul in Nuremberg was aware of the importance of this sample in Berlin and he organised in 1923 an exhibition of Mexican products in the

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<sup>389</sup> AHSRE, 30-17-417 Consulado en Francia informa sobre el establecimiento de una Oficina Nacional De Comercio Exterior para desarrollar la labor de expansión comercial: González a la Secretaría de Industria, Comercio y Trabajo, 27 de mayo de 1922.

<sup>390</sup> For example, in the last third of the nineteenth century, the Belgian government was the first one in establishing commercial museums and this idea was repeated in various countries around the world, Mexico and France included.

<sup>391</sup> “Se exhiben artículos de nuestro país en Berlín”, *Revista de Hacienda*, Mexico City, 27 August 1923, p. 4. BIAI.

<sup>392</sup> “La exposición permanente de productos mexicanos en Berlín”, *Revista de Hacienda*, Mexico City, 30 April 1923, p. 5. BIAI.

Industrial Museum of Bavaria and then later in the Mexican Consulate in Nuremberg. The show concentrated in raw materials; minerals and vegetables. Samples such as graphite, woods, henequen and onyx were presented.<sup>393</sup> Besides, in 1927 the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Labour decided to organise a collection of products to exhibit in the permanent exhibition of national products that would be established in the *Instituto Mexicano* in Berlin, Germany.<sup>394</sup>

Furthermore, consuls attended fairs in European cities. For example, the Mexican consul in Berlin participated in the Autumn Fair in Leipzig where he installed an office with panoramas, maps, graphs and statistics in the walls; informative literature prepared by the Mexican Consulate in Hamburg and articles about the Mexican economy.<sup>395</sup> Large notices in the streets and entries in newspapers were paid to announce Mexican involvement in the Fair. According to the consul, the promotion of Mexico's participation was fruitful because industrialists, traders, financiers and businessmen attended the Mexican stand.

I have not looked for ways to measure if this commercial propaganda was useful to increase economic exchange; however, it is evident that the Mexican consuls in Germany made more efforts to improve the image of Mexico than consuls

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<sup>393</sup> "Exhibición de materias primas mexicanas en Núremberg", *Revista de Hacienda*, Mexico City, 3 September 1923, p. 8. BIAI.

<sup>394</sup> "Para que Alemania conozca nuestros productos", *Boletín Comercial de Nuevo León*, Monterrey, 19 March 1927, p. 8. BIAI.

<sup>395</sup> Description: "In the walls panoramas from Mexico, maps, plans, graphics, statistics, etc. were placed, looking to obtain in the combination certain harmony that gave a pleasant and artistic appearance. There was a stockpile of informative literature which was consulted with visible interest by the visitors, as well as a magnificent series of graphics, specially prepared for this occasion by the Mexican Consulate in Hamburg. The informative contingent was completed with a collection of several Mexican articles that was very prudent; in sum, the achieved ensemble and the initiated propaganda for our trade were satisfactory." "En los muros colocáronse vistas de México, cartas geográficas, planos, gráficas, estadísticas, etc, buscando en el conjunto cierta armonía que daba un aspecto agradable y artístico. Había acopio de literatura informativa que era consultada con visible interés por los visitantes, lo mismo que una magnífica serie de gráficas, preparadas especialmente para esa ocasión, por el Consulado de México en Hamburgo. Completaba el contingente informativo una colección de diversos artículos mexicanos que fue muy ponderada; en suma, el conjunto logrado, y la propaganda iniciada en favor de nuestro comercio fueron satisfactorios." "Fueron bien aceptados todos los artículos mexicanos en Leipzig", *Revista de Hacienda*, Mexico City, 17 December 1923, p. 13. BIAI.

in France or Great Britain. This is important since as mentioned in section 3.2 Germany did increase its role in Mexican commerce, being the second trading partner regarding the importation of products to Mexico, while the positions of France and Great Britain moderately declined. Moreover, what is important is that Mexican consuls were aware of the international practices regarding trade and promoted international economic discourse in Mexico and Europe with the goal of ameliorating commerce and Mexico's productive exports areas.

It is worth mentioning that, in January 1928, Ovey proposed the signature of a convention for the treatment of commercial travellers and samples, having as basis the treaty between the US and Guatemala. This proposal was studied and recognised as an excellent idea by the General Direction of Customs of the Secretary of Finances and the Secretary of Labour and Industry. However, the first instance declared there needed to be precaution that the convention could allow a simplification of custom processes in regards to the admission of samples that were not clearly indicated in the lists of products.<sup>396</sup> Clearly, after two years of the Mexican-British relationship being stabilised it was time to start pragmatic efforts to improve commercial relations.

#### 3.4.3 Chambers of Commerce

In October 1922, the project of General Consul in Brussels, Julio Pani, to establish a Chamber of Commerce of Mexico in Belgium was described in detail in the *Boletín Oficial de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores*.<sup>397</sup> The Mexican government expected this Chamber to achieve a rapprochement in trade between nations, considering that such institutions would benefit the interests of the nation it was seen as an example that could inspire similar projects in other countries. I have found

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<sup>396</sup> AHSRE, III-192-1 1928 Proyecto del convenio formulado por el gobierno inglés respecto a tratamiento de los viajeros comerciales y sus muestrarios.

<sup>397</sup> Estados Unidos Mexicanos, *Boletín oficial de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores*, XL:1 (October 1922).

through archival research that this was the case for Mexican-German relations, but not for Mexican-French or Mexican-British links during the Obregón-Calles era.

In November 1923, the *Deutsch-Mexikanischen Handelskammer in Nürnberg* (German-Mexican Chamber of Commerce in Nuremberg) was founded to increase and widen the trade between Mexico and Germany.<sup>398</sup> In a letter to the Mexican consul in Berlin, the council members of the newly created chamber asked him “to take into account the principle that now more than ever, all efforts have to be concentrated to establish a closer collaboration between Germany and those foreign countries that favour her with their sympathies.”<sup>399</sup>

A couple of years later, a new institution for promoting commercial relations between both countries arose: the *Deutsch-Mexikanischen Handelskammer in Berlin* (German-Mexican Chamber of Commerce in Berlin). It was created in January 1925 at the ‘Hotel Esplanade’ with an approximate from 90 attendees. Ortiz Rubio attended the inauguration and he was designated honorary president. Other prominent economic figures that attended were the directors of Siemens, the Hamburg Amerika Linie, A.E.G. and the *Banco Germánico de la América del Sur*.

This chamber intended to promote investment in Mexico, the transfer of German production to Mexico (i.e. the president of the Berlin Chamber intended to establish a Glassworks factory in Mexico), and it even considered to create a bank that would help with the exports and imports of products and to achieve discounts in exchanges. As part of its duties, it sent reports on economic sectors that could be of interest for Germans. For example, in January 1926, this organisation presented a

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<sup>398</sup> “En Nuremberg, Alemania, se constituyó la Cámara de Comercio Germano-Mexicana”, *Revista de Hacienda*, Mexico City, 31 December 1923, p. 7. BIAI.

<sup>399</sup> “Muy especialmente rogamos a Ud., se sirva tener en cuenta el principio de que hoy más que nunca, deben concentrarse todos los esfuerzos para establecer una colaboración más íntima entre Alemania y los países extranjeros que la favorecen con sus simpatías.” Cámara de Comercio Germano-Mexicana.- La Presidencia: (Firmado) Alfr. Guckenheimer, Consejero de Estado en Baviera.- v. Clauses, Excelencia, Teniente General retirado.” “En Nuremberg, Alemania, se constituyó la Cámara de Comercio Germano-Mexicana”, *Revista de Hacienda*, Mexico City, 31 December 1923, p. 7. BIAI.

report regarding opportunities for railways and banks in Mexico, and the situation of taxes for foreigners. In 1927 it informed of themes as varied as changes in taxes, schools in Mexico, exploitation of oil, debt payments, and Mexico's international commerce.

Both chambers informed their associates about commercial and investment opportunities, but also did relevant work of promoting the two countries. For example, the German-Mexican Chamber of Commerce in Nuremberg organised a party to celebrate the 600th anniversary of the foundation of Mexico City. The celebrations took place between 30 and 31 October 1925. The first day, conferences between the official agents and financial circles were planned to increase trade relations, the second day a party would start at 7 pm at 'Hotel Fürstenhof'. The Reichspräsident was invited. In the letter of invitation, it was said that the Chamber was interested in showing the Mexican government and people "that we have a keen interest to shape and to strengthen the relations between both countries".<sup>400</sup> Another example is that the chamber in Berlin helped in organising the visit of Mexican businessmen in Germany in March-April 1926.

However, there were considerable tensions between the Chambers when the Berlin branch was established. The problem was that it intended to delineate the German territory for both Chambers, asking the Nuremberg office to only deal for the South of Germany (Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg), while Berlin would be in charge of the North, West and East. Moreover, it asked for acceptance that in principle it would make all negotiations with Mexican authorities, to transfer the magazine *Das deutsche Magazin* to Berlin, to stop the advertisement of members through travels and its associations with other organisations from the south of the

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<sup>400</sup> "wir das grösste Interesse daran besitzen, die Beziehungen zwischen beiden Ländern noch enger zu gestalten und zu vertiefen." PAAA, R79599: Deutsch-Mexikanischen Handelskammer in Nuremberg to President Friedrich Ebert, October 1925.

country. These requests were rejected by the Nuremberg Chamber which even considered making a scandal regarding this attitude of the Berlin Chamber. Nonetheless, the German Foreign Office requested the avoidance of any squabbling between chambers, considering that cooperation was better.<sup>401</sup>

The information published by both Chambers was criticised on some occasions by the governments as well. In 1925, the German government considered that the Nuremberg Chamber was impeding the understanding of the real political and economic situation in Mexico and thereby putting German economic interests under risk.<sup>402</sup> On the other side, in September 1927, the Mexican government decided to stop recognising the work by the Berlin Chamber as a Mexican Chamber of Commerce since it considered it was against Mexico's interests. This happened after the Chamber sent its members a report mentioning that the crisis in Mexico could imply a backwardness in the commercial operations in Mexico (May 1927). At the same time, the Chamber complained in a letter to the Mexican representative in Berlin about the increase of fees for consular invoices from 5 to 10%. The Mexican Legation requested that such a statement should be retracted in national newspapers and that the general secretary of the Chamber would be dismissed.<sup>403</sup> In October 1928, a protocol was signed to restore the relation between the Mexican Legation and the German-Mexican Chamber of Commerce.

Besides, in order to increase the German presence in Mexico and trade between both parties, in 1926 an association was created independently of the *Liga de Ciudadanos Alemanes* (League of German Citizens): the *Union del Comercio Alemán México / Deutscher Handelsverband Mexico* (German Union of Commerce Mexico)

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<sup>401</sup> PAAA, Mexiko, Handel 20 Nr. 2, Fremde Handelskammern in Deutschland, Mai 1923—Juli 1933, R91208: Reports by Davidson, Berlin, 30 January and 23 April 1925.

<sup>402</sup> PAAA, R91208 Erythropel to the German General Consulate in New York, Berlin, 23 December 1925.

<sup>403</sup> R 91208, Kray to the Davidson, 13 September 1927.

which intended to separate political from economic questions. The director of the Union, Carl Reichert, offered his office for the exhibition of German business catalogues and samples. Years later, a Commission for Commerce was created that was related to the League.<sup>404</sup> This Commission became the *Cámara Alemana de Comercio* (1929) which was in charge of studying labour laws in Mexico to avoid losses in their interests, to work against any law that could affect German trade and to prevent anti-German propaganda in Mexico.<sup>405</sup>

Evidently, the German-Mexican relationship was promoted by non-state actors through chambers of commerce in Nuremberg, Berlin and Mexico City. The role of these chambers was to promote trade and investment opportunities by explaining the economic situation of the country, but also by reminding people of the existence of the other by celebrating or visiting it. Making Mexico's image in Germany more present in financial circles.

#### 3.4.4 Calles in Europe: contact with economic actors

As mentioned in the previous chapter, recognition allowed the visit and official reception of Calles in the US, Germany and France. When he started the trip, presidential elections had taken place and he had unofficially won, when Calles was in Paris he was officially declared President-elect by the Mexican Congress. I will now focus on the events he attended that could allow a symbolic link concerning economic factors. The fact that Calles did not visit Great Britain implied there was no symbolic economic effort to increase economic relations.

Calles arrived with the steamship 'Deutschland' from the *Hamburg-Amerika Linie* to Cuxhaven, Germany, the fact that he used a ship with the name of this

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<sup>404</sup> "La Actualidad del Comercio Alemán en México" en *Jueves de Excelsior*, Mexico City, 21 May 1925. BIAI.

<sup>405</sup> See Mentz *et al*, *Los empresarios alemanes*, pp. 147-149.

country was seen as a very fine act by the German authorities and also the fact that he came first to Germany than any other country in Europe.<sup>406</sup> It signalled the confidence of Calles in using a steamship from a German company. When Calles arrived in Cuxhaven, he was welcomed by Wilhelm von Schoen, representative of the German Foreign Office, Captain Stephan, representative of the Navy, Ortiz Rubio, Basilio Vadilla and Rafael Nieto Mexican representatives in Sweden and Norway, Enrique Liekens, the Mexican consul in Hamburg, directors of the *Hamburg-Amerika Linie* and other companies. Since he went out of the steamship “Viva México”s were heard various times according to different newspapers. He then took a train to Hamburg where he was received by the Bürgermeister of Hamburg, Carl Wilhelm Petersen, the President of the Senate of Hamburg, Max Schramm and other representatives of the German government.

In Hamburg, Calles stayed at the ‘Hotel Atlantic’ where he also got a reception organised by the Ibero-American Institute and Mexican-German societies residing in that port. Before this reception, on August 20, Calles was offered an official banquet by the City Council of Hamburg where Petersen talked about the long-term relations between Mexico and the port of Hamburg since 1822 and the constant hospitality of Mexico to German citizens. By his part, Calles affirmed that Mexico would continue offering cordiality to those nations that respected Mexican sovereignty and independence.<sup>407</sup> These events demonstrated Mexico’s desire and commitment to continue the traditional economic relationship between countries, especially from the most important German port. Moreover, during his stay in Hamburg, Calles visited scientific and educative institutions, but also the ‘Río Bravo’

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<sup>406</sup> Agencia Duems, Berlin, 16 August, in *Excélsior*, Mexico City, without date at FONDO 12, serie 010602, expediente 78: PRENSA, Recortes de, legajo 1, inventario 178, fojas 105- 165.

<sup>407</sup> Agencia Duems, Hamburg, 20 August in *El Demócrata*, Mexico City. FONDO 12, serie 010602, expediente 78: PRENSA, Recortes de, legajo 1, inventario 178, foja 114.

steamboat from the *Ozean Linie* which on 25 August would inaugurate a route between Hamburg, Veracruz and Tampico, putting in contact important ports for trade and business.<sup>408</sup>

On 22 August, Calles arrived in Berlin, he was welcomed by prominent functionaries such as Wilhelm Marx, German Chancellor, and Gustav Stresemann, Minister of Foreign Office and Eugen Will –the new designated German representative to Mexico. Ebert offered a gala dinner for Calles the same night, which I referred to already in Chapter 1, celebrating the traditional friendship between both countries. According to Buchenau, Calles saw in Ebert the ideal qualities of a social-democrat leader and “only six years younger than the German president, Calles considered himself a twin soul to Ebert.”<sup>409</sup>

While in Berlin, Calles had the opportunity to meet with political authorities, ambassadors and industrialists, such as a representative from Borsig in the Mexican Independence party in September 1924 which was held at the ‘Hotel Eden’.<sup>410</sup> Besides, after staying one week in that hotel, Calles spent five weeks recovering his health in the house of Enrico Schöndube, director of the A.E.G in Mexico City. Moreover, Calles gained access to different information on laws, instruments, techniques, rules of diverse industries and cooperatives which, according to Enrique Krauze, would allow him to decide that he would focus on the development of small properties of land organised by cooperatives instead of the ejido.<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> “La Actualidad del Comercio Alemán en México” en *Jueves de Excelsior*, Mexico City, 21 May 1925. BIAI.

<sup>409</sup> “Sólo seis años menos que el presidente alemán, Calles se consideraba un alma gemela de Ebert” Jürgen Buchenau, “Plutarco Elías Calles y su admiración por Alemania”, *Boletín 51*, (January- April 2006), (Fideicomiso Archivos Plutarco Elías Calles y Fernando Torreblanca), p. 13.

<sup>410</sup> APEC, expediente 86: LEGACION DE ALEMANIA, legajo 1, fojas 6-10, inventario 3144.

<sup>411</sup> Krauze mentioned that Calles had translations of “El reajuste de fincas rústicas en Prusia para su mejor explotación”, “Carreras domésticas para las campesinas de Prusia”, “Cooperativas agrícolas y crédito rural en Europa”, “La organización Raiffeisen” and *Los consejos obreros en las industrias y estudios sobre sociedades de consumo*. Enrique Krauze, *Biografía del poder. Caudillos de la Revolución mexicana (1910-1940)* (Mexico: Tusquets, 1997), p. 317.

Besides, Calles was in contact with the Mexican-German News Agency Duems since he was interested “in the development of efficient informative services between both countries, as one of the mediums more effective to systematically improve the cultural and economic relations and intensify the mutual comprehension between both peoples.”<sup>412</sup> For example, in an interview on August 27 Calles explored aspects regarding scientific and intellectual links, which I will explore in the next chapter, but for now is important to mention that after visiting various factories, he explained he planned to nominate a commission to study the German industrial and technical systems. Also, before continuing his trip to Paris, on October 3, Calles gave another interview to the representative of the *Agencia Duems* in which he highlighted the economic capability of Germany because of its intelligent, working and energetic people; the belief that the Mexican-German relationship would continue to be friendly to the German government and its population who respected Mexican laws and sovereignty. Hence, German immigration and industries would continue to be accepted in Mexico. He also made reference to the desire of Mexican labour to get closer with German and worldwide labour and he felt thankful with the attentions of the German working class.<sup>413</sup> He expected the interviews to be a source for German businessmen to continue or start investing and trading in Mexico. As a matter of fact, his visit increased the presence of the country in German press which mentioned important materials for Mexican international trade: oil, gold, silver, copper, coffee plantations, woods, tobacco, cacao, etc.

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<sup>412</sup> “El general Calles conversó con ambos caballeros de la manera más amable y dijo que tenía vivísimo interés en el desarrollo de eficaces servicios informativos entre los dos países, como uno de los medios más efectivos para fomentar sistemáticamente las relaciones culturales y económicas e intensificar la comprensión mutua entre ambos pueblos.” Agencia Duems, Hamburg, 20 August, in *El Demócrata*, Mexico City, without date at FONDO 12, serie 010602, expediente 78: PRENSA, Recortes de, legajo 1, inventario 178, foja 114.

<sup>413</sup> Interview to Calles by *Agencia Duems*, Berlin, 3 October 1924 published in *El Universal* (Mexico City), *El Demócrata* (Mexico City), *El Día Español* (Mexico City), *La Revista de Yucatán* (Mérida, Yuc.). FONDO 12, serie 010602, expediente 78: PRENSA, Recortes de, legajo 1, inventario 178, fojas 136.

Calles was next in Paris from 4 to 9 October 1924, apart from contact with high-rank French politicians, he was offered a Mexican lunch in Saint-Germain by the consuls of Mexico in France, Belgium and Switzerland and had the opportunity to signal the opportunities for French businessman in having an economic link with Mexico. Calles participated in cultural activities that I will cover in the next chapter, but for now I will only refer to the economic ones. The *Sociedad Económica Franco-Mexicana* and the *Comité France Amérique* organised some visits to the wireless station St. Assise, the Pasteur Institute, Fontainebleau, Versailles, Les Invalides, the Normal Superior School, the Trocadero Museum and a party. Calles said in that party that he felt highly honoured. He thanked André Honnorat for the organisation, the presence of General Fourud “symbol of the highest duties of the French soldier”, the Minister of Industry and Commerce, the Chancellor of the Paris Academy, the President of the Chamber of Commerce of Paris and representatives of the Americans societies. Calles hoped the owners of material interests would help in the program of his future government, “being a program of high ideal of humanity and justice [...] in this crusade of ideal that we have started in Mexico to follow the noble steps of equity and social justice that has distinguished this great country to the conscience of all the peoples”.<sup>414</sup> He referred to his interest in the labour movement, which was evident with his visit to the *Confédération Générale du Travail* where he was recognised for his support to the organised workers in Mexico.<sup>415</sup> Clearly, Calles succeeded in presenting himself as a promoter of Mexican economy with a revolutionary approach.

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<sup>414</sup> Calles in the party organised by the *Unión Económica Francia México* “siendo en sí ese programa un alto ideal de humanidad y de justicia [...], en esta cruzada de ideal que hemos emprendido en México para seguir los nobles pasos de equidad y de justicia social que ha marcado este gran país a la conciencia de todos los pueblos”. APEC, expediente 118: DISCURSOS VARIOS. NO INCLUYE DECLARACIONES DE P.E.C, legajo 2/4, fojas 60-61, inventario 1583.

<sup>415</sup> « Le président du Mexique rend visite à la C.G.T. », *Le Peuple*, 17 Octobre 1924. FONDO 12, serie 010603, expediente 78: PRENSA, Recortes de, legajo 1, inventario 203, foja 68.

Just as in the case of the visit to Germany, different newspapers mentioned all the activities of Calles in Paris.<sup>416</sup> In an interview published by *Excelsior*, Calles talked about the continuity of commerce between Mexico and France which was guided by the principle of absolute reciprocity. He also mentioned his ideal that intellectual relations were improved through the exchange of students and teachers and the diffusion of literature and scientific work.<sup>417</sup>

In the *Journal du Havre* an interview with Calles on 13 October was referenced. He regretted he was not able to visit Le Havre because of illness, for him this port shall become a fitting place for the Mexican-French trade.<sup>418</sup> Since coffee was already imported here, it could be an entry point for Mexican quality coffee as well as for cotton. In the interview, Calles determined that “During my four years as President, I will make all of my efforts to stimulate the development of the cotton cultivation; and I hope that Mexico will be able in measure to supply, in short term, to the worldwide textile industry the complement of raw material that is lacking.”<sup>419</sup> For Calles, this could only happen if representatives of Le Havre sent representatives to Mexico City, Tampico, Veracruz and Puerto México. Calles asked the interviewer, Jules Avril, to “say from my part to Havrians ship-owners and importers that during my Presidency I will facilitate and favour as much as possible the transactions between Mexico and France through the port of Le Havre.”<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>416</sup> *Telegramme* (Toulouse), *Progres de Lyon* (Lyon), *Eclaireur* (Nice), *Eclair de l'est* (Nancy), *Populaire* (Nantes), *Petit Provançe* (Marseille), *Lyon Républicain* (Lyon), *République de l'Isère* (Grenoble), *Messenger Normand* (Le Havre) and others.

<sup>417</sup> « Le Président Élu du Mexique á Paris », *Excelsior*, 5 October 1924. FONDO 12, serie 010603, expediente 78: PRENSA, Recortes de, legajo 1, inventario 203, foja 12.

<sup>418</sup> « Ce que m'a déclaré le Président Calles », *Journal du Havre*, Le Havre, 15 October 1924. FONDO 12, serie 010603, expediente 78: PRENSA, Recortes de, legajo 1, inventario 203, foja 98.

<sup>419</sup> Pendant mes quatre années de Présidence, je ferai tous mes efforts pour encourager le développement de cette culture ; et j'espère que le Mexique sera en mesure de fournir, avant peu, á l'industrie textile mondiale le complément de matière première qui lui fait défaut. Jules Avril, « Ce que m'a déclaré le Président Calles », *Journal du Havre*, Le Havre, 15 October 1924. FONDO 12, serie 010603, expediente 78: PRENSA, Recortes de, legajo 1, inventario 203, foja 98.

<sup>420</sup> « Dites de ma part aux armateurs et aux importateurs havrais que, pendant toute ma Présidence, je faciliterai et je favoriserai dans la plus large mesure possible, les transactions entre le Mexique et la

Calles's visit to Berlin and Paris worked both as a celebration of current relations thanks to recognition and as the opening stage for a wished stronger link in political, economic, social and cultural ties. Calles's visit was an act of public relations since it was the first time a Mexican president did a tour in Europe, a common practice nowadays, and promoted its national project. Mexico was portrayed as an exporter of raw materials, as a place that in order to achieve modernisation needed European capital and finished goods; a country that was interested in economic productivity with an awareness of labour rights. Just as France and Germany, a Republic interested in social-democratic ideas.

This visit allowed the President-elect to establish contact with industrialists that had already invested in Mexico, i.e. AEG and others that could be motivated to do so such as Borsig. The visit to the port of Hamburg was especially important to recall the historic and contemporary link of relations that, along with the long stay in Germany in contrast with the short stay in France, and the fact that he did not visit a French port, put the Mexican-French relation in a lesser significance than that from Mexico and Germany. However, in interviews Calles gave relevance to economic relations with both France and Germany. It is worth mentioning that economy was relevant as well as other aspects that I will cover in the following chapter, which is very understandable since the Mexican Revolution would include everything, it was totalising and it put in similar conditions the promotion of political, economic, cultural and social aspects.

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France par le port du Havre. Jules Avril, « Ce que m'a déclaré le Président Calles », *Journal du Havre*, Le Havre, 15 October 1924. FONDO 12, serie 010603, expediente 78: PRENSA, Recortes de, legajo 1, inventario 203, foja 98.

### 3.4.5 Visits by important figures

The visit of industrialists and merchants to Mexico was seen in the Obregón-Calles era as a good form to improve political and economic relations. For example, the Mexican government invited US businesspeople to visit Mexico to show the potentiality of bilateral ties and for them to pressure the US government to recognise Obregón.<sup>421</sup> In the case of Mexican-European relations, recognition had been already obtained when the visits of German businessmen, journalist and scientists happened. I have not found information on visits of French or British industrialists during the Obregón-Calles era.

More than 80 German businessmen and industrialists were expected to visit Mexico from the 29<sup>th</sup> of January to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March of 1925 to study the possibilities of establishing new industries in Mexico and increasing trade between both countries, but the visit was delayed for some months. In Mexico, Chambers of Commerce and the Secretary of Industry Commerce and Labour prepared data and statistics for the visitors so that they could decide how to increase the German presence in the Mexican economy. Additionally, visas were free, free travel in the railways was assured and facilities in hotels were arranged for the visitors. The cost was first to be of 1340 US dollars but lowered to 1200 USD. This visit was seen by the French General Consul in Hamburg as a precise measure of commercial and moral propaganda, arguing that the French should counterbalance such an initiative.<sup>422</sup> Mexican newspaper *El Globo* described it as a “result of the diverse conferences and

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<sup>421</sup> Guillermo López Contreras, *La diplomacia mexicana frente a Europa Central en el periodo de entreguerras, 1918-1940* (Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo-III, M.A. Dissertation 2008), p. 50.

<sup>422</sup>ADMAE, 22cpcom, Affaires commerciales, Mexique 42 Commerce et douanes; dossier général 1918-1929: General Consul in Hamburg to President of the Council, Hamburg, 18 September 1924, f. 89.

meetings that General Calles celebrated before assuming office of the Presidency of the Republic in its latest trip through Europe.”<sup>423</sup>

On 30 May 1925, German traders, bankers, industrialists, journalists and scientists went to Mexico in the “Río Pánuco” with the goal of improving relations between Mexico and Germany.<sup>424</sup> Some members of the delegation were representatives of Deutsche Bank, Bochum Association for Mining and Steel Fabrication, *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag* and from the cinematographic company UFA.<sup>425</sup> The delegation arrived on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June to Veracruz where they were called guest of honours, they were welcomed with discourses celebrating the relationship, visited the cigar factory “La Puebla”, and the new building of the Union of Stevedores where the sympathy of the Mexican workers towards the German brothers was mentioned. Afterwards they went to Puebla, where Professor Ibañez exclaimed the admiration Mexico hold for the great German nation and its immigration, but also of the great philosophers Kant, Schopenhauer and Taine. The erroneous mention of Taine as a German philosopher was stressed out by French minister Périer who also argued that the Mexican Press was more focused on the attitude of the Department of State and Mexican-US relations than in this visit.<sup>426</sup>

On 23 June, the delegation was welcomed in the train station of Mexico City by the German colony and the Secretary of Foreign Relations, who also offered a reception to the delegation. In it, Professor Max Apt, director of the Commercial School in Berlin and in charge of the delegation, celebrated the relationship that

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<sup>423</sup> “resultado de las diversas conferencias y pláticas que celebró el general Calles, antes de tomar posesión de la Presidencia de la República durante su último viaje por Europa” in “Nuevas industrias alemanas habrá en México”, *El Globo*, 30 January 1925, p. 1. NLBC.

<sup>424</sup> “La Actualidad del Comercio Alemán en México” en *Jueves de Excelsior*, Mexico City, 21 May 1925. BIAI.

<sup>425</sup> “Los excursionistas alemanes legaran a Veracruz el Día 20” *Excelsior*, 11 June 1925. BIAI.

<sup>426</sup> ADMAE, Mexique 42: Jean Périer to Briand, Mexico City, 29 June 1925, ff. 115.

lasted even in the most difficult of times. We see this again as a core part of discourses in Mexican-German encounters.

On 28 June, Calles received the visitors and celebrated that they could explain people abroad the real conditions of a young country whose sovereignty was under threat. The visitors went to different industrial establishments in Mexico City and continued their travels in the territory. As part of the mission, a German exhibition with approximately 70 exhibitors was shown which covered diverse areas of the German industry and trade for example from textiles, hardware and ironmongeries, paper and porcelain industries.<sup>427</sup> Clearly, the visit was an opportunity for commercial propaganda.

The visit was a success and according to US diplomat Alexander Weddel “there is no doubt that Germany has serious intentions of expanding its commerce in Mexico and this greatly influences its diplomatic attitude towards any questions that arise between our government and the administration of Calles”.<sup>428</sup> Clearly, US and French diplomacies saw the visit of Germans in Mexico as an attempt to ameliorate economic relations between countries.

In February and March 1926, a second German group visited Mexico. After arriving on 21 February in Veracruz, the visitors (industrialists, professors of technical schools and representatives of the chambers of commerce from Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Frankfurt, Stettin, Goslar and Dortmund) visited industrial areas of Veracruz and Orizaba. In an interview, Dr Grieme, general secretary of the German-Mexican Chamber of Berlin, stated that the visit intended to examine the possibilities of expanding the importation of German products in the Mexican

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<sup>427</sup> “Deutsche Musermesse in Mexiko”, *Industrie- und Handels-Zeitung*, Berlin, 9 July 1925.

<sup>428</sup> “No hay duda de que Alemania tiene miras serias de extensión de su comercio en México y esto influencia grandemente su actitud diplomática hacia cualesquiera cuestiones que surjan entre nuestro Gobierno y la administración de Calles” APEC anexo, Fondo Elías Calles, serie 030903, expediente 17: WEDDEL, Alexander W., legajo 2/2, fojas 79, inventario 1489.

markets; begin negotiations with Mexican producers to facilitate direct exportation of raw materials necessary for the German industry; study the perspectives for establishing industrial and commercial branches; and starting direct conversations with the commerce chambers in Mexico and with official organisms to improve commercial relations.<sup>429</sup> It was purely a form of public relations.

The group also went to the capital and the members were received by President Calles. They continued their visit in the industrial areas of the country. However, according to a report from the American Embassy in Mexico City, “this visit appears to have passed without causing particular comment beyond the usual exchange of assurances of the life-long friendship between the German and Mexican governments and peoples.”<sup>430</sup>

One year later, a group of 50 Mexicans went to Germany (15 women, 5 lawyers, 3 doctors, 2 university people, one delegate from each ministerial department and 20 businessmen) and were received in cordial form.<sup>431</sup> The idea was that Mexican administrative officers, politicians, intellectuals and businesspeople could see the potential Germany had and the cordial feelings the German people held for Mexico. Originally, this group would only travel through Germany, but they also went to other European countries such as France after French diplomats pressured for a wider coverage of visits.

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<sup>429</sup> ADMAE, Mexique 42: Spitalier to French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Veracruz, 2 March 1926, ff. 157-160.

<sup>430</sup> Alexander Weddel, “POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN MEXICO DURING MARCH, 1926”, prepared March 1-April 3, 1926 and mailed April 9, 1926, APEC anexo, Fondo Elias Calles, serie 030903, expediente 17: WEDDEL, Alexander W., legajo 1/2, foja 25, inventario 1489.

<sup>431</sup> The excursion was led by Lamberto Hernández, President of the Confederation of Mexican Chambers of Commerce; the Secretary of Industry, Commerce and Labour was represented by Fernando Sayago, Director of the Museum of Commerce and representing the Secretary of Public Education attended Alfredo Ramos Martínez, Director of the Arts Academy; the University of Mexico and the Ministry of Health sent Dr Rosendo E. Amor; The Ministry of Statistics sent Francisco de A. Benavides. Chambers of Commerce from Mexico City, Veracruz, Guadalajara, Mérida, Monterrey and León also sent representatives, so did different industrial and exports circles.

They arrived with the 'Río Pánuco' steamship and left with the *Cie. Generale Transatlantique*. In Germany, they visited Bremen, Hamburg, Kiel, Berlin, Essen, Cologne, Frankfurt, Heidelberg, Nuremberg and Munich. The visitors went to museums, diverse industries, and had various banquets in which discourses were exchanged highlighting the opportunities to improve the economic ties between Germany and Mexico.<sup>432</sup> For example, in a banquet in the Bremer Handelskammer, Vice-President Ed. Achelis told the guests that "everyone goes happily to your country, because all have the security that they will be friendly received and to find the long-term friendship, which has been proven from immemorial times and lastly during the period of war, when, where all the world was against Germany, Mexico showed itself as a strong bastion".<sup>433</sup> Nevertheless, according to the French commercial agent in Hamburg, German industrialists that sustained relations with Mexico were disillusioned by the Mexican Commission of Studies because they used the opportunity to learn the advantages German industries in Mexico had and not so much to improve links, for example only some drugs, machines and hardware were bought equivalent to half a million Reichsmark, which was not significant for the relation.<sup>434</sup>

After Germany, this group visited Italy, Switzerland, France, Belgium and Spain. In France, the group visited Nice, Lyon, metallurgy centres of the region and

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<sup>432</sup> For example, the Mexican group visited the Siemens Workshops and the Rummelsburg electric central built by AEG, the OSRAM house, the Goerz photometric workshop and the glass factory; the Weser-Weht turbine hall and the Hansa-Lloyd Werken concerned with automobiles in Bremen; and the Elbtunnel, the Hamburger Tropenkrankenhaus, the Hamburg-Amerika-Linie in Hamburg. In Cologne, they visited Farbenfabrik Bayer and the Gasmotorenfabrik Deuta. "Mexikanischer Besuch in Deutschland", *Latínamerika (D) Mitteilungen über Mexico-Mittelamerika-Westindien*, Berlin, July 1926, pp. 1142-1158. PAAA, Mexiko, Handel 11, Handelsbeziehungen Mexikos zu Deutschland, 1, Mai 1926—Februar 1936, R91194.

<sup>433</sup> "alle kommen gern in Ihr Land, weil sie die Sicherheit haben, dort freundlich aufgenommen zu werden und die alter Freundschaft zu finden, sie sich seit undenklichen Zeiten bewährt hat und nicht zuletzt in der Kriegszeit, wo, als die ganze Welt gegen Deutschland aufgebracht wurde, Mexiko sich als ein festes Bollwerk gezeigt hat" "Mexikanischer Besuch in Deutschland", *Latínamerika (D) Mitteilungen über Mexico-Mittelamerika-Westindien*, Berlin, July 1926, p. 1143. PAAA, R 91194.

<sup>434</sup> ADMAE, Mexique 42: French commercial agent in Hamburg to Lefevre, Commercial agent in Berlin, Hamburg, 7 June 1926, ff. 163-168.

Paris. In Paris, the group held meetings with economic organisms that were in charge of commercial relations such as the Foreign Commerce National Office and the Council for Foreign Commerce. Additionally, the group visited the facilities of news agencies, journals and newspapers, the radio-electric station of Sainte-Assise which had been inaugurated in 1921 and the only available Airport of Bourget which had commercial operations since 1919. Both visits intended to show Mexicans the latest technological progress of France in questions of aeronautics and radio-electronics.

Besides, the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Commerce offered a breakfast in the historical Salon de l'Horologie with notable guests such as Alfonso Reyes, Mario Roustand, Sub-Secretary of State to the Merchant Marine, Clementel, Honnorat, Loucheur, presidents of industrial groups, the sub-secretary of aeronautics, members of Foreign Relations and the Ministry of Commerce. Speeches celebrating and promoting the continuation of links between countries in political, economic and intellectual activities were mentioned. The Commerce Chamber of Paris also offered a breakfast in honour of the visitors and a reception was offered at the Hotel de Ville. In general, the idea was that the group visited commercial and industrial sites of different economic activities in France and to learn about sympathy towards the "Latin sister of the North of America".<sup>435</sup>

Evidently, the visit of the two German groups to Mexico intended to improve the economic relations between countries. The visits symbolised the good relationship and the stability of the countries as well as the future opportunities for which practices of public relations were needed. They were part of the economic discourse of Mexico that intended to have an economic stability taking into consideration labour rights. The visit of the Mexican group to Europe demonstrates the jealousy of

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<sup>435</sup> ADMAE, 88RC Mexique 1, dossier 3: Message for the Press "Mission d'étude économique mexicaine", 14 June 1926, p. 2.

French diplomacy towards the Mexican-German rapprochement and it permitted the Mexican group to establish contact with different sectors of European societies. Moreover, the fact that British-Mexican relations were already stable, did not imply the visit of this group to Great Britain. Clearly, recognition had short-term consequences that were not felt quickly in 1926. In which ways was this a success is something I might explore in other research projects, for now it is sufficient to see it as another symbolic effort of the economic discourse of Mexico in its relations towards European Powers.

### *3.5 Conclusions*

During the Obregón-Calles era, several efforts were made to maintain and improve Mexican-European Powers economic relations having into account the dilemma between stabilisation and revolution. These efforts varied between pragmatic and symbolic, the idea of a spectrum of these efforts might be more appropriate running from negotiations regarding oil and debt which were needed to obtain diplomatic recognition from the Great Powers to the excursion of delegations abroad which symbolised the intentions to have closer relations, and which also blur with cultural diplomatic encounters that will be analysed in the next chapter. We can talk about a sequence of events from pragmatic to symbolic efforts, all of which are related to the question of recognition; the former are a source to attain recognition and the latter are a consequence.

Pragmatic efforts were strongly connected with the question of recognition (renegotiations of the debt, securities regarding Article 27 and the payment of claims) and were of urgency. Symbolic ones were intending to promote the image of Mexico abroad as a stabilising and modernising economy through the work done by consuls,

chambers of commerce and significant political and economic figures. These were properly actions of public relations and commercial propaganda.

The efforts done by the Mexican government to improve economic ties were only disturbed by the *Delahuertista* rebellion (1923-24) and the *Cristero* War (1925-29), but these continued afterwards and succeeded in using a liberal-nationalistic economic discourse to improve the image of Mexico abroad. By its part, British, French and German governments participated in the efforts according to their financial interests. These were disturbed differently during the 1910s. Mexican-European Powers relations changed as a consequence of the Great War which permitted the US to become a stronger partner, which was evident at the start of the 1920s. This was especially relevant for German and French interests. However, the Mexican Revolution was more drastic for French and British interests in Mexico than those of Germans.

The British government was mainly concerned with the question of Article 27 and then with the convention of mixed claims. However, immediately after recognition, there was no clear attempt to improve economic contacts through the use of commercial propaganda or public relations between the Mexican government and British economic interests, this occurred slowly in the following decades. French diplomacy's main concern was the debt and it appreciated the convention of mixed claims. Afterwards, it was cautious of an increase in German-Mexican public relations and commercial propaganda. Hence, the government to government contact was quite relevant in economic terms both for pragmatic and symbolic efforts. Germany's main concern was to improve relations and therefore significant weight was given to efforts of commercial propaganda and public relations, but these were mainly organised by the Mexican government and German economic interests. It was

in the convention of mixed-claims and the visit of Calles to Europe that government to government links became more active from the part of Germany.

For Germany, symbolic negotiations would be attractive since its economic interests were not profoundly affected by the revolution in regards to other European nations, as is evident in the number of claims received by the Commission. In contrast, for France and Great Britain both pragmatic negotiations were necessary to improve economic links since these were more affected during the revolutionary years. However, while France was able to benefit from symbolic efforts since recognition was offered in 1923, for the period I am studying, Great Britain did not see many Mexican symbolic efforts and neither did this country attempt to make any, the only exception being the failed negotiations for a treaty of amity, commerce and navigation. In contrast, Great Britain sent a British Trade Delegation to Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil in 1929-30.<sup>436</sup>

The two most pragmatic efforts achieved recognition of the government of Obregón, solving the dilemma for stabilisation. While the signature of a commitment to pay the debt was not sufficient, with the oil question compromise in the Bucareli Agreements the government obtained recognition. However, the rebellions of De la Huerta and the *Cristero* movement implied that new negotiations regarding the debt were needed throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Besides, the question of the oil continued to be a reason for tension as the government intended to apply Article 27. Ultimately, stabilisation was achieved by the ongoing institutionalisation of the revolution as part of state politics from 1920 to 1940.

Efforts like the ones related to the question of claims allow us to understand that the Mexican government was willing to negotiate conventions of mixed claims

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<sup>436</sup> Gaynor Johnson presented her preliminary research on “Viscount D’Abernon and the British Trade Delegation to Argentina, 1929-1930” at the British International History Group Conference at the University of Edinburgh in September 2016.

and to pay damages in the cases that it was deserved. Nevertheless, it refused to include the idea of these conventions in the treaties of commerce and navigation which was in agreement with a tradition in Mexican diplomatic history. Besides, the negotiations of these agreements allow us to see that the Mexican government intended to find alternative contractual ways that were more appropriate for economic nationalism, but it failed to do so. Therefore, while trying to find a solution for the dilemma of stabilisation and revolution, the former succeeded in both conventions of mixed claims and treaties.

Lastly, symbolic efforts achieved throughout encounters permitted Mexico to be part of European Press and vice versa. It is not clear how effective exhibitions and visits of delegations abroad were. Europeans were able to recover a small part of their presence throughout the 1920s, especially Germany, and Mexico was also able to diversify its relations with Latin America and Asia as Kuntz Ficker has demonstrated. Most probably this happened independently from symbolic efforts that were creating cultural encounters and worked more like a clear example of how stabilisation was being preferred over revolution.

## **Chapter 4 Cultural Diplomacy- an international process**

### *4.1 On Cultural Diplomacy*

After looking at the question of diplomatic recognition and pragmatic-symbolic economic efforts to improve links between Mexico and the European Powers, this chapter will focus on a fascinating aspect of international relations in the 1920s: cultural relations. I will cover these from a diplomatic history approach, which means I will look at efforts done by and around diplomats to improve the understanding between peoples and increase the flux of ideas and knowledge. This implies looking at deliberate efforts by diplomats that were state-related, but also the cultural exchange achieved by intellectuals, scientists, military and artists which were reported by diplomatic actors. Those non-diplomatic actors, by acting independently from official channels, had different agendas and their efforts to improve cultural relations could be formal or informal. The diplomatic history approach will allow us to understand the process of cultural relations for national foreign policies in an international perspective.

It is necessary to include an analysis of cultural diplomatic ties between Mexico and the European Powers for several reasons. Cultural understanding could provide sources of political support in difficult situations, as the use of propaganda during the Great War had demonstrated and would be the case during the Ruhr Occupation. Proper utilisation of cultural diplomacy could also increase a positive image of a country abroad and avoid moments of misrepresentation in the international press, theatre and films, which was damaging for national dignity and could have an adverse impact on the economic attractiveness of a country. Hence, intentional cultural diplomacy would have repercussions in the general nature of bilateral relations.

Moreover, cultural relations could allow an exchange of ideas and a process of constructing new understandings and approaches of modernity as part of the redefinition of the national state after the Great War and the Mexican Revolution. Intellectuals and artists explored this problem; for example, German Expressionism and Mexico's national cultural project that revolutionised Mexico's intellectual and political discussions on Mexicaness. Furthermore, the exchange of ideas occurred in cities such as Paris, but also in new cultural centres such as New York and Berlin which attracted artists from diverse regions of the world, and Mexico City became an attractive city for revolutionaries in Latin America during the 'roaring' 1920s since it was dynamic and revolutionary. As Mauricio Tenorio Trillo mentioned, "[t]he issues discussed in Mexico in those days paralleled the ones debated in New York or the radical Parisian cafés: social revolution, cultural exhaustion of the West, the problems of industrialization, rural peoples and revolution, and the rediscovery of natives and non-Westerns in arts and politics."<sup>437</sup>

For example, Peruvian intellectual Raúl Haya de la Torre exiled in 1923, who became private secretary of Vasconcelos, later created the anti-imperialist Aprista movement. Other Peruvian political refugees such as feminist, Magda Portal, Jewish activist Jacobo Hurbitz and Aprista, Esteban Pavletich, were also exiles in Mexico during the 1920s. Other Mexican cities such as Mérida, Yucatán, attracted US journalist Alma Reed, Venezuelan Dr Carlos León who participated in the 1919 revolution and Nicaraguan Augusto C. Sandino in exile (1929-1930).<sup>438</sup> Besides,

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<sup>437</sup> Tenorio Trillo, "The Cosmopolitan Mexican Summer, 1920-1949", p. 225.

<sup>438</sup> Barry Carr, "La Ciudad de México: Emporio de exiliados y revolucionarios latinoamericanos en la década de 1920", *Pacarina del Sur. Revista de Pensamiento Crítico Latinoamericano*, 20 November 2015 [http://www.pacarinadelsur.com/home/mallas/338-la-ciudad-de-mexico-emporio-de-exiliados-y-revolucionarios-latinoamericanos-en-la-decada-de-1920#\_edn1 accessed 23 September 2016].

For an example of the reception of the Mexican Revolution in Peru see Guillemette Martin, "Una lectura andina de la revolución Mexicana desde la periferia. El caso de Arequipa, Perú (1910-1930)", *Secuencia*, 90 (September-December 2014), pp. 97-119.

Mexico was a centre for educative programmes such as alphabetism campaigns, art, philosophy and indigenism.<sup>439</sup>

The general questions that are the basis for this chapter are the following: What contacts do diplomats try to encourage with regards to culture? How do they face problems of representation by civil society, meaning what is their perspective when their country and its people are being represented in theatre, cinema and the Press? What are the implications of cultural relations in bilateral and multilateral perspectives? The specific question to solve is whether the three European Powers' foreign offices applied cultural diplomacy towards Mexico and vice versa. 'Cultural diplomacy' understood as "a course of actions, which are based on and utilise the exchange of ideas, values, traditions and other aspects of culture or identity, whether to strengthen relationships, enhance socio-cultural cooperation, promote national interests and beyond".<sup>440</sup> In the words of Martina Topić and Cassandra Sciortino, "cultural diplomacy entails many aspects such as art, the media, externally oriented cultural policies and tourism".<sup>441</sup> Governmental and non-governmental sectors manage cultural diplomacy.

Contacts achieved through cultural diplomacy allow understanding between countries and peaceful relations, but along with propaganda or what some historians call Public Diplomacy (information, communication, propaganda)<sup>442</sup> can also be interpreted as measures of soft power. "In international politics, the resources that

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<sup>439</sup> This attraction continued during the following decade when Sergei Eisenstein filmed '¡Que viva México!' (1931), Leon Trotsky exiled himself in Mexico City (1937) and André Breton visited the capital (1938).

<sup>440</sup> Definition of the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy [http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/index.php?en\\_culturaldiplomacy](http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/index.php?en_culturaldiplomacy) [accessed 13 June 2016].

<sup>441</sup> Martina Topić and Cassandra Sciortino, "Cultural diplomacy and Cultural imperialism: A Framework for the analysis", in Martina Topić and Sinisa Rodin (eds), *Cultural Diplomacy and Cultural Imperialism. European perspective(s)* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012), p. 34.

<sup>442</sup> Kenneth A. Osgood and Brian C. Etheridge, "The New International History Meets The New Cultural History: Public Diplomacy and U.S. Foreign Relations" in Kenneth A. Osgood and Brian C. Etheridge, *The United States and Public Diplomacy. New Directions in Cultural and International History*, E-Book p. 12. Topić and Sciortino, "Cultural diplomacy and Cultural imperialism", p. 10.

produce soft power arise in large part from the values an organisation or country expresses in its culture, in the example it sets by its internal practices and policies, and in the way it handles its relations with others.”<sup>443</sup> In contrast, hard power refers to economic and military strength to influence others. Some countries or international actors will use both hard and soft power, for example the United States during the Cold War, while others will only be able to use one of these in different bilateral relations.

Soft power can be interpreted in some cases as cultural imperialism, understood as “a domination that is enforced to impose values, culture and tradition of the dominator over the dominated.”<sup>444</sup> In my judgement, cultural imperialism did not occur in the case of Mexican-European Powers relations in the 1920s since none of those countries tried to dominate over Mexico. While there was a competition among the European countries to have a cultural presence in areas such as medicine, architecture, engineering and the arts, it was clear that Mexico was an independent state with its Indigenous-Hispanic tradition and the Mexican Revolution’s nationalism would not allow any type of overbearing external cultural influence. Therefore, it was a personal choice for a person to prefer certain scientific, academic or artistic influences from European and US options. In this context, none of the European Powers tried to use cultural diplomacy to achieve an informal cultural empire, but there was a desire to be seen as a source for examples.

France and Germany were interested in applying cultural diplomacy in Mexico as part of their need to have soft power in the Americas. Throughout the 1910s, with the events of the Mexican Revolution and the Great War, France and Germany lost their hard power (military and economic might) in the hemisphere.

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<sup>443</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power. The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014), p. 8.

<sup>444</sup> Topić and Sciortino, “Cultural diplomacy and Cultural imperialism”, p. 34.

Although their influence was not significant in the Americas, German and French military were seen as examples for the training and fashioning of the national military. On the other side, both nations had tried to remain dominant in economic terms and in general were in the top four of trade partners for the region alongside the US and Great Britain. However, European economic might declined in this region as a consequence of the Great War as already explained in Chapter 3.

While the United Kingdom's hard power diminished in regard to that of the US, this was not as dramatic as with the cases of France and Germany. British diplomacy did not attempt to ameliorate cultural relations with Mexico because it was centred on the problem of recognition from 1920 to 1925, and until 1929 in reassuring stable political ties in a context of difficulties regarding the application of oil laws, explored in the previous chapter, and the *Cristero* movement. Hence, there were no strategic attempts by the British government to apply cultural diplomacy or soft power. This is evident when consulting the National Archives in Kew and in Mexico City, but there is also a lack of reports by French and German diplomats mentioning British efforts. On the other hand, there was a clear awareness of what their German or French counterparts were attempting to do in this regard.

Cultural diplomacy was not only used by Europeans; Mexican diplomats protected the understanding of the Revolution abroad and took care of cultural links, especially in regards to the accusations of Bolshevism in the context of the application of oil laws and the conflict with the Catholic Church. Left-wing agendas in Mexico, but also in countries such as Germany and the United Kingdom under Labour, were criticised for resemblances with the Soviet Union.

The visit of Calles to Germany and France was a brilliant opportunity to make Mexico present in the European Press and to establish contact between diverse

sectors. The Mexican military was also keen to promote abroad study for students from the *Colegio Militar* which was created by Carranza in February 1920 in order to reconfigure the armed forces. Moreover, the National University was interested in the visit of academics to give lectures in Mexico. The government also promoted the idea of German and French specialists helping Mexicans with the learning of new technical knowledge. I did not find related initiatives of Mexican diplomacy to increase Mexican-British cultural relations. The lack of interest is understandable as there was no tradition of strong cultural relations and it can also be seen as an effect of the late recognition of the Mexican Revolutionary government by Great Britain.

Besides, cultural diplomacy was exercised by other non-diplomatic actors that did not form part of national foreign policy institutions. In the case of the Mexican-British relation, there were no cultural diplomats, but writer Joseph Emile Dillon made propaganda for Obregón and Calles. He published articles in the British press and two books *Mexico on the Verge* (1921) and *President Obregon: A World Reformer* (1922).<sup>445</sup> He defended the project of the Mexican Revolution in front of the British government and called for recognition as I already mentioned in Chapter 2. Modernist writer D. H. Lawrence visited Mexico three times between 1923 and 1925. Those visits, that put together were not larger than eleven months, allowed him to write *The Plumed Serpent*, published in 1926, and *Mornings in Mexico*, published in 1927, which were of the interest especially for non-American public since it described diverse sceneries, pre-Hispanic traditions and peoples, but it does not seem he was able to establish strong links with the Mexican literary milieu.<sup>446</sup>

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<sup>445</sup> Pi Suñer, Riguzzi and Ruano, *Europa*, p. 275.

<sup>446</sup> Armando Pereira, "D.H. Lawrence. Mexico, la utopía imposible", *Literatura Mexicana*, 24:1 (June 2013), [[http://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0188-25462013000100004](http://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0188-25462013000100004) accessed 1 September 2016].

In regards to the Mexican-French relationship, businessmen Auguste Génin continued exercising a role as a cultural agent.<sup>447</sup> Silvio Zavala explained that between 1923 and 1930, Génin wrote *Les Français au Mexique du XVIe. siècle a nos jours* (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Argos, 1933) in which he mentioned the historical development of the country as well as its richness, and the ways in which people from French origin had taken an important place in its history, economy, scientific knowledge and culture.<sup>448</sup> Moreover, in 1922 and 1929, continuing with the mission the French Public Instruction and Fine Arts assigned him in the 1890s, he sent collections to the Trocadero Museum in Paris. Also in 1922 he sent collections to the Natural History Museum in Paris.

In 1925, Génin was honoured by the French Academy and his work as a relevant figure for cultural relations was recognised by the French government which made him Official of the Legion of Honour.<sup>449</sup> Also, in the case of this relationship we have André Honnorat, a senator who visited Mexico and occupied himself with improving cultural relations. In the German-Mexican case, Dr Phil. Hermann B. Hagen was important since he established a Mexican Library in Mexico. Also, news agencies such as Havas and Duems were relevant institutions for cultural diplomacy.

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<sup>447</sup> Auguste Génin (1862-1931), born in Mexico from French and Belgian origin. Génin was an industrialist who was in charge of French-Mexican associations and a bank. He was interested in history, ethnology, literature, archaeology, arts, folklore and wrote poetry. He collaborated with French newspapers *Le Trait D'Union*, *Courrier Français*, *Petit Gaulois*, *Mexique* and *Journal Français du Mexique* also in French publications such as *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris* and the *Bulletin Officiel du Ministère de l'Agriculture*. He was part of the Mexican Commission for the Universal Exhibition of 1889. The French Public Instruction and Fine Arts Minister assigned him to do archaeological research in Mexico and to study the public instruction of the country. He sent collections to the Museum of Trocadero in Paris in 1893, 1895, 1922 and 1929. Moreover, in 1893, 1895 and 1922, he sent collections of botany, entomology, ornithology and mineralogy to the Natural History Museum in Paris. Paul Rivet, "Alexis Manuel Auguste Genin", *Revista de la Dirección de Estudios Históricos del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia*, 77 (September-December 2010), pp. 13-16 [http://www.estudioshistoricos.inah.gob.mx/revistaHistorias/wp-content/uploads/historias\_77\_13-16.pdf accessed 30 August 2016].

<sup>448</sup> Silvio Zavala, Auguste Génin mira a los franceses en México", *Diálogos: Artes, Letras, Ciencias humanas*, 17: 40 (100) (Julio- Agosto 1981), pp. 5-7.

<sup>449</sup> Rivet, "Alexis Manuel Auguste Génin".

I will look into these efforts in the sections looking at diplomacy and education and the strengthening of cultural ties.

Other aspects such as sports were promoted by private actors that did this without considering foreign policies; this was evident with the participation of Mexico in the Olympics of 1924 in Paris, where the country was present in six competitions.<sup>450</sup> Other sports such as football in Mexico were developed by Mexicans that studied in British boarding schools.<sup>451</sup>

In order to understand Mexican-European Powers cultural relations through the practices of cultural diplomacy encompassed by foreign policy, this chapter will first present a comparison of two Mexican diplomats who conducted cultural diplomacy: Alfonso Reyes and Alberto J. Pani, which will show that the ways in which cultural relations were increased depended on each personality. Afterwards, two aspects of cultural diplomacy will be analysed: the strengthening of intellectual links through education - more precisely technical and military - and the arts; and the strengthening of cultural ties through the visit of political figures and positive representations of a country and its people in the Press, theatre or films. The chapter will end with some final remarks on the ways in which cultural diplomacy was executed in the Obregón-Calles era and the implication this had for international relations in general.

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<sup>450</sup> In December 1923, Rafael Alducín, director of *Excelsior*, went to France to talk with Gaston Vidal from the Olympic Committee regarding Mexico's participation in the Olympics and had a successful outcome. Mexico participated in the 1924 Olympic Games, a way in which Mexico was not only improving its bilateral relations with France but also its international position by representing Mexico as a nation that took part of global activities. Mexico participated in polo, target shooting, fencing, athletics, lawn tennis and cycling competitions. Comité Olympique Français, *Les jeux de la VIIIe Olympiade Paris 1924 rapport officiel* (Paris: Libr. De France, 1924), p. 79. [<http://library.la84.org/6oic/OfficialReports/1924/1924part1.pdf> accessed 30 August 2016].

<sup>451</sup> Macias-Gonzalez, "Learning the rules of the game. Informal empire and the Mexican experience at Stonyhurst College, 1805-1920", pp. 691-707.

#### 4.2 A comparison of two Mexican cultural diplomatic approaches

Diplomats in the 1920s were occupied, along with many other things, with culture, but some paid more attention to cultural relations than others. Besides, other actors such as politicians and writers ended up being cultural diplomats. The reasons for the interest in practising what we nowadays call cultural diplomacy were mainly personal since governments were more preoccupied with military, political and economic concerns.

The person who exercised the strongest cultural diplomacy and can be described as a bridging figure between diplomacy and culture was Alfonso Reyes, recognised as one of the most important twentieth-century writers in the Spanish language and Mexican literature.<sup>452</sup> His father was General Bernardo Reyes, previously mentioned in Chapter 1, Governor of the state of Nuevo León (1885-1887 and 1889-1909), Minister of War of Mexico (1887-1889), who along with José Yves Limantour, became one of the strongest candidates to succeed Díaz but who was killed in the rebellion against Madero, the *Decena Trágica* in February 1913.

The Reyes family spoke fluent French, as various elite families of the Porfirian Regime did, and when General Reyes was made Minister of War they moved to the capital. Once there, Alfonso studied in the French school *Liceo Francés*, established in 1897, which allowed him to reinforce his language skills and have a closer contact with French culture. His education continued at the *Escuela Nacional*

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<sup>452</sup> According to Jorge Luis Borges, the writer who had the best domination of prose in Spanish, excluding the classics, was Alfonso Reyes. (“Si tuviera que decir quién ha manejado mejor la prosa española, sin excluir a los clásicos, yo diría inmediatamente: Alfonso Reyes. La obra de Reyes es importante, no sólo para México sino para América, y debería serlo para España también.”) Jorge Luis Borges, *Life* (en español), 11 March 1968, quoted in Jorge Luis Morales, *España en Alfonso Reyes* (Río Piedras, Puerto Rico: Editorial Universitaria Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1976). Octavio Paz, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1990, saw in Reyes an exemplary figure and established communication with him during many years. For Paz, without Reyes Mexican literature would have been half of what it was (“Basta decir que sin él nuestra literatura sería media literatura”). Anthony Stanton (ed.), *Correspondencia Alfonso Reyes Octavio Paz (1939-1959)* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1998), p. 219.

*Preparatoria* –the institution created by positivist Gabino Barreda- where Justo Sierra took care of Reyes’ studies. Afterwards, Reyes joined the *Escuela Nacional de Jurisprudencia* where he studied law, as his father thought it was better to have a practical career in a country like Mexico where so much had to be done for progress, instead of studying literature or philosophy, areas of his interest since he was a little boy.

In Mexico City, Reyes established communication with different thinkers and was part of the journal *Savia Moderna* where in contrast to positivism new philosophical ideals were discussed by Pedro Henríquez Ureña, Antonio Caso, José Vasconcelos and others. This was also the basis for the *Ateneo de la Juventud* of which Reyes formed part. After the death of his father and finishing his Bachelor in Law, Reyes moved to Paris on 12 August 1913.

From August 1913 to August 1914 Reyes worked for the Mexican Legation in Paris, which he left with the start of the Great War and the reduction of the Mexican Diplomatic Service by President Carranza. While in Paris he was the friend of numerous Latin American figures: the brothers García Calderón, Felipe Cossio del Pomar and Mexican painter Ángel Zárraga. Besides, thanks to Diego Rivera he established contact with Pablo Picasso, Amedeo Modigliani and he met the poet and art critic Guillaume Apollinaire.<sup>453</sup> During his stay, he published his work in different European and American journals, such as *Revista de América /Revue de l’Amérique*. Reyes was part of the Latin American scene in Paris, the city which Jens Streckert referred to as the capital of Latin America in his book *Die Hauptstadt Lateinamerikas* from 1870 to 1940.<sup>454</sup>

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<sup>453</sup> Patout, *Francia en Alfonso Reyes*, p. 14.

<sup>454</sup> Jens Streckert, *Die Hauptstadt Lateinamerikas. Eine Geschichte der Lateinamerikaner im Paris der Dritten Republik (1870-1940)* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2013).

In August 1914, Reyes moved to Spain where he lived for the following ten years. During the Great War, he wrote many articles in favour of France because for him it was clear that the loss of French culture to German militaristic imperial ambitions would be a great loss for universal knowledge since France was the bastion of fine arts. This was Francophile propaganda. Clearly, having cultural appeal leads to political support in conflicts.<sup>455</sup> During these years in Spain, Reyes wrote literature and poetry, and he also dedicated himself to philology, edition of books, literary journalism and translations.<sup>456</sup>

All these activities allowed him to economically support his wife, Manuelita, and his son Alfonso, and made him recognised in the Hispanic intellectual world; for example, in 1916 writer and journalist Genaro Estrada said he was “the most powerful talent and the most cultured spirit and of most dynamic force”.<sup>457</sup> Moreover, between 1914 and 1920 Reyes worked at the Centre for Historical Studies under the supervision of Ramón Menéndez Pidal and this allowed him to work with philologist and historian Américo Castro, philologist and literary critic Federico de Onís, philologist, librarian and Spanish linguist Tomás Navarro and philologist and medievalist Antonio Solalinde.

In 1920, Reyes re-joined the diplomatic service as the second secretary of the Mexican Legation in Madrid, and on 21 January 1921 he was designated First Secretary. As part of his diplomatic activities he organised and attended conferences such as the Sociological Conference in Turin in 1923 and continued having links with the cultural milieu in Spain, especially with intellectuals by his contribution in literary

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<sup>455</sup> See Stefan Rinke, “Propaganda War (Latin America)”, DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.10537>.

<sup>456</sup> Reyes, *Genio y figura de Alfonso Reyes*, p. 84.

<sup>457</sup> “el talento más poderoso y el espíritu más culto y de mayor fuerza dinámica.” From *Poetas nuevos de México*, Ed. Porrúa in Reyes, *Genio y figura de Alfonso Reyes*, p. 88.

journals and leisure activities, which can be seen in Jorge Luis Morales' *España en Alfonso Reyes*.

In May 1924, the Reyes family arrived in Mexico City as Alfonso was called to serve in Argentina from 1 June onwards, nevertheless the Legation was going to be upgraded to Embassy and Reyes was not appointed to be in charge of it. However, the embassy was established in 1927. In the Autumn of 1924, Reyes returned to Spain with a special mission to offer Mexico's mediation in the conflict between Spain and Morocco. Reyes did not consider this was adequate since Europeans would not see Mexico as fit to intervene in an African question which was mainly an imperial problem.<sup>458</sup> King Alfonso XIII refused this mediation and complained that General Calles did not visit Spain in his visit throughout Europe.<sup>459</sup> While Spain was an interesting cultural model for Mexican writers, the country was not attractive for Calles' revolutionary government, which intended to promote land reform and improve the labour situation while continuing with the modernisation of the country. Once the special mission was finished, Reyes went to France because from there he would return to Mexico. Estrada, who now worked in the Ministry of Foreign Relations as Major Official, asked him to remain in Europe as he would be assigned to a Legation in the continent. On 10 December 1924, he was nominated as Plenipotentiary Minister of Mexico to the French government, which meant he was in charge of the Mexican Legation in a higher diplomatic degree.

Reyes presented his diplomatic credentials in February 1925 and used this occasion to talk about the profound sympathy and the desire of President Calles that

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<sup>458</sup> Interview between Alfonso Reyes and Aarón Sáenz, Mexico City, 18 September 1924, quoted in Reyes, *Genio y figura de Alfonso Reyes*, p. 115.

<sup>459</sup> Reyes, *Genio y figura de Alfonso Reyes*, p. 118.

the friendship should become wider and more robust.<sup>460</sup> Reyes explained that French art, literature and laws were admired around the world and that the Mexican people saw in this country an example of ideals and practical impulse. He also mentioned that the Mexican-French relationship was founded both “by the benefits of commerce and the seductions of thought.”<sup>461</sup> President Doumergue expressed the satisfaction to see that relations between these two Latin peoples were getting closer.

It would be Reyes’ aim in the following two years to maintain good relations and strengthen the intellectual links between nations, but also between the Hispanic world and France as will be explained in more detail in the following sections. For all these reasons, Reyes is described by Patout as a new type of Francophile:

he was not only concerned with the knowledge of French culture; at the same time, with the lucidity of an unheard demand, he observed France and the French. To know France better, enter in contact with the French, reveal the originality and beauty of his Mexican fatherland to his friends, contribute, finally, to the development of the friendship between Mexico and France.<sup>462</sup>

After France, Reyes was assigned as ambassador to Argentina (1927-30), later in Brazil (1930-36), Argentina (1936-38) and Brazil (1938).<sup>463</sup> After these positions, Reyes returned to Mexico where he resided and continued his career as writer and intellectual, for example in 1939 he became president of *La Casa de España* which became *El Colegio de México* in 1940. Reyes was president of *El Colegio* from 1940 until his death on 27 December 1959.

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<sup>460</sup> Alfonso Reyes to President Doumergue in Alfredo Aragón, “El Licenciado Alfonso Reyes presentó sus credenciales”, *El Globo*, Mexico City, 10 February 1926, pp. 1 and 8. Microfilm NLBC.

<sup>461</sup> “[...] a la vez sobre las conveniencias del comercio y las seducciones del pensamiento.” Alfonso Reyes to President Doumergue in Aragón, “El Licenciado Alfonso Reyes”, p. 8.

<sup>462</sup> “que no se restringía al conocimiento de la cultura francesa; y al mismo tiempo se dotaba, para observar a Francia y a los franceses, de una lucidez muy nueva, de una exigencia inaudita. Conocer mejor a Francia, entrar en contacto con los franceses, revelar a sus amigos franceses la originalidad y la belleza de su patria mexicana, contribuir, en fin, al desarrollo de la amistad entre México y Francia” Patout, *Francia en Alfonso Reyes*, p.11.

<sup>463</sup> Regina Crespo, “Entre porteños y cariocas. Alfonso Reyes embajador”, Instituto Cervantes: Centro Virtual Cervantes [http://cvc.cervantes.es/literatura/escritores/a\_reyes/entorno/crespo.htm#npas accessed 1 September 2016].

During the 1920s and 1930s, while being abroad and during his stay in Mexico, Reyes continued having contact with the literary scene in Mexico, especially with “el grupo sin grupo” the members of what was labelled as “Los Contemporáneos”.<sup>464</sup> The *Contemporáneos*, despite their diverse ages, interests and approaches, were seen as a unified group. They were interested in discussing cultural identities through the use of a cosmopolitan perspective, which meant they rejected the idea of nationalism that lacked universal discussions. The prominent cosmopolitan group antagonised with the nationalist revolutionary literature for being inward looking instead of seeing Mexico as part of the universal and the universal as part of the national. The members of this group had common characteristics such as being critical and perfectionist, and were influenced by French Surrealism and the Spanish Generation of 1927.

In contrast to the relevant role of Reyes with regards to cultural relations, other diplomats did not demonstrate such a profound action but did consider the cultural and intellectual links as necessary. One example is Alberto J. Pani, originally from Aguascalientes, who was a civil engineer from the National School of Engineering and would occupy diverse political roles during the post-revolution. Just as Reyes, Pani was part of the 1900s Anti Re-election Movement and supported Madero’s campaign. After the *Decena Trágica*, Pani did remain in Mexico as part of the opposition to Huerta. He was in charge of the Mexican Legation in Paris while Carranza had been President and during the provisional Presidency of De la Huerta (February 1919 -August 1920).

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<sup>464</sup> Including authors such as Jorge Cuesta, Gilberto Owen, Xavier Villaurrutia, José Gorostiza, Jaime Torres Bodet, Carlos Pellicer, Enrique González Rojo, Bernardo Ortiz de Montellano and Salvador Novo. Guillermo Sheridan, *Los Contemporáneos Ayer* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1985). David Murrieta Flores, “Contemporáneos” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism*, forthcoming publication.

Pani established a friendly bilateral relationship by promising Carranza's commitment to attend to French concerns such as that of the debt. As part of his success, Pani was offered the *Cravate de Commandeur de la Legion d'Honneur*. This one was the first offered after 25 years by the French government to a Mexican diplomat for his merit in the bilateral relation and the sympathetic position towards France.<sup>465</sup> Apart from the bilateral relation, Pani focused on other aspects such as the Peace Conference, but he also collected art from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.<sup>466</sup>

After his diplomatic role, Pani went back to Mexico where he was in charge of Foreign Relations (1921-23), which he restructured. Appointments were decided according to merit, distributing personnel according to the needs of each area. Pani later became Minister of Finance and Public Credit (1923-27).<sup>467</sup> As part of his role, he was in charge of the debt negotiations in 1925 and the modifications of 1927, which were of relevant concern for French nationals. In 1927, Pani replaced Reyes as Plenipotentiary Minister in Paris. He did not have a strong connection with the intellectual milieu in Paris, but he took care of the establishment of the Mexican House and the new building of the Legation that were suggested by Honnorat and Reyes. Both buildings were intended to be the meeting places for cultural representation and relations. The interest of Pani in art continued once he returned to Mexico (1931). Even when he had no administrative position in culture or education,

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<sup>465</sup> ADMAE, 22cpcom, Protocole, Mexique 35 Décorations, mars 1916-avril 1927 : “M. le Chargé d’Affaires a remis hier à M. Alberto Pani la Cravate de Commandeur de la Légion d’Honneur”, *Courrier du Mexique*, Mexico City, March or April ? 1921, f. 53.

<sup>466</sup> In 1926, Pani sold his art collection to the Mexican government. The decision to sell it instead of donating it, as well as the fact that the government paid a large quantity for the artworks that were not artistically relevant was criticised in the art world. Furthermore, as Minister in 1927, Pani collected more artworks; he bought art from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Pani did not manage to sell this collection to the Mexican government, but a private gallery bought it. Ana Garduño, “Patrimonialismo y poder: Alberto J. Pani, coleccionista institucional (1917-1934)” in Víctor Mínguez Cornelles (ed.), *Las artes y la arquitectura del poder* (Castellón, España: Universitat Jaume I, 2013), p. 1807.

<sup>467</sup> Salceda Olivares, “Salvador Martínez de Alva”, p. 233.

Pani was in charge along with architect Federico E. Mariscal of the building of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* / Fine Arts Palace and he dedicated himself to do an inventory of state heritages.<sup>468</sup>

Moreover, he obtained a budget for the purchase of European art and, with this goal in mind, he visited Madrid in 1933 where he bought eight fifteenth-century paintings of the Catalan, Valencian, Aragonese and Castilian schools.<sup>469</sup> Evidently, “Pani focused his capacity of management, as an active cultural agent, in the acquisition, exhibition and promotion of post-Renaissance painting, which he defined as the sole source of beauty capable of building eternity. Hence, he made patent his limited interest in the artistic ideas that were contemporary”.<sup>470</sup> This allows us to understand Pani’s lack of interest in establishing or continuing the intellectual links Reyes built with French and Latin American writers and painters during his years in Paris.

Comparing the actions of these two figures allows us to see that even if the approach and intensity differ, Mexican diplomats in Paris did show interest in cultural relations. In the end, diplomats, whether writers or engineers, were part of the Mexican elite of the post-revolutionary era, who wanted to contribute to the national cultural project directed by Vasconcelos. These diplomatic figures knew that the Mexican Revolution had still to be recognised or accepted abroad in a period of suspicion of revolutions especially as a consequence of the Soviet Revolution, which was seen as a real global threat by some politicians, businessmen and media owners,

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<sup>468</sup> Alberto J. Pani and Federico E. Mariscal asked Gorostiza to write a report on the construction of the Palace of Fine Arts in 1934 covering the history of the 30 years of construction: José Gorostiza, *El Palacio de Bellas Artes* (Mexico: Edición Cvltvra, 1934).

<sup>469</sup> Ana Garduño, “Patrimonialismo y poder: Alberto J. Pani”, p. 1808.

<sup>470</sup> “Pani centró su capacidad de gestión, en tanto activo agente cultural, en la adquisición, exhibición y difusión de pintura post renacentista europea, a la que definía como única fuente de belleza capaz de construir eternidad. Así, dejó patente su escaso interés por las corrientes artísticas que le eran contemporáneas” Ana Garduño, “Patrimonialismo y poder: Alberto J. Pani”, p. 1809.

particularly in the United States, and by Catholic propaganda both in Europe and the USA.

The interest in cultural links was also present with the actions of the diplomats that looked for improvement of German-Mexican relations through common interests in regard to fine arts, education, popular culture and information. The actions of Pascual Ortiz Rubio and Ramon P. de Negri showed this.<sup>471</sup> For example, in his presentation of diplomatic credentials, De Negri mentioned that Mexico recognised the philosophical and economic genius of Germany that had done so much for humanity and that the Mexican people had a sincere spiritual and material admiration for the country.<sup>472</sup>

Mexican diplomats had as their counterpart French and German Foreign Offices and diplomats who shared the goal of achieving good understanding and cultural exchange between countries. Therefore, they contributed to the accomplishment of academic and military exchange, the establishment of knowledge spaces such as libraries and took care of popular representations of the nation and its people in the theatre, cinema and Press which I shall explore in the following sections.

#### *4.3 The strengthening of intellectual links*

Throughout the 1920s, different contacts were established that led to an increase of intellectual relations between Mexico and the European Powers. Intellectual links in regards to diplomacy and the arts were mainly achieved by Reyes and Périer, while scientific exchange, related to military and technical programmes, and intellectual

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<sup>471</sup> The former from the state of Michoacán was an anti-reelectionist in the late Díaz period and studied topography at the *Escuela Nacional de Minería* in Mexico City. The latter came from the state of Sonora and had a diplomatic career at consulates and the embassy of Mexico in the United States.

<sup>472</sup> ADMAE, 22cpcom, Protocole, Mexique 33 Corps diplomatique, août 1920-décembre 1927: Pierre de Margerie to Aristide Briand, Berlin, 5 June 1926, f. 204.

lectures were possible by the cooperation of official and non-official cultural diplomats including Ortiz Rubio, Honnorat, and Hagen.

For decades, France had appealed to Mexicans for its literature and science,<sup>473</sup> but its scientific appeal was being challenged by German and British competition in areas such as biology and medicine. This was clear in 1924 when the French minister thought that Calles could decide between a French and a British doctor to deal with health problems, but it was a German doctor who treated him in Germany, where he recovered five weeks before assuming office. He had previously been treated in Los Angeles.

Besides, several figures of the Mexican artistic world studied in Europe during the 1900s and 1910s, but the United States became a centre for cultural attraction too. By the 1920s there was an increase of Mexican artistic interest in New York, which continued during the following decades and was accompanied by an interest of US artists in Mexico's culture.<sup>474</sup> For example, Diego Rivera lived in Paris, but also in New York, he also spent time in Spain, Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina and Italy while Rufino Tamayo and José Clemente Orozco resided during some years in the United States. Through their work and that of David Alfaro Siqueiros, Mexican art joined the international avant-garde.

The composer Manuel M. Ponce stayed for some years in France, where he studied at the *École Normale de Musique de Paris* and established the *Gaceta Musical* in Spanish. This journal included information on Latin American musicians and genres. From 1925 to 1933, while in Paris Ponce visited Italy, Germany and Cuba. Silvestre Revueltas lived in the US and Carlos Chávez visited Vienna, Berlin

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<sup>473</sup> ADMAE, 22cpcom, Affaires politiques, Mexique 25 Propagande, mars 1918-décembre 1923: François Dejean to Stéphen Pichon, Mexico City, 25 June 1918, f. 15.

<sup>474</sup> See Tenorio Trillo, "The Cosmopolitan Mexican Summer, 1920-1949" and Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations Between the United States and Mexico 1920-1935*.

and Paris in 1922-23 and then left for New York. For these nationalist musicians, there was a need to work out what Mexican music should consist of in the context of the international avant-garde. While Ponce understood Mexican music as more classic using indigenous themes; for Chávez, Mexican music was modern with indigenous themes; and for Revueltas it was more modern using Mexican living folklore.

France experienced those cultural and scientific challenges by the US, Germany and Great Britain not only in the Mexican milieu, but around the world. Such competition, along with the usefulness of propaganda in the Great War, influenced the French government's decision to reconfigure the *Bureau des écoles et des œuvres françaises à l'étranger*, established in August 1910, as the *Service des œuvres françaises à l'étranger* / The Service of French Work Abroad in 1920. The Service aimed to send French books, make propaganda, increase tourism to France and achieve an intellectual presence through universities, French alliances and lyceums; this implied support for the committees of both Catholic and Protestant associations as well.

Even if the efforts done in other regions of the world were more important than in Mexico, it allows us to understand the relevance of cultural relations in the multilateral framework. France needed to maintain its international relevance, but Germany continued to be a threat by challenging the full application of the Treaty of Versailles which complicated the French economic reconstruction, but also Germans abroad, *Auslandsdeutsche*, were applying soft power through cultural diplomatic activities which were appreciated by the Weimar government. Hence, it became a problem that Germany continued to be a source of attraction for Mexico's cultural project even after losing the Great War.

While the German government did not have a similar sector as the French Service in its Foreign Office, Rinke explained that it used *Auslandsdeutsche* to support the German cause and also to influence the international press. It also backed up the establishment of academic lectures and students' exchanges, the creation of libraries and associations. For example, in 1925 the *Deutsche Musikvereinigung* (German Music Association) was established in Mexico. Two years later, representative Eugen Will asked the German government to offer a subvention of 1000 marks to Professor Rocabrana who had been directing this institution freely. Moreover, Will encouraged financial assistance for the German school so that it could offer language courses in the evenings and he promoted the establishment of a professorship of German Literature in Mexico and a programme for a yearly exchange of professors.

The different attempts by Will to increase cultural relations were appreciated in Mexico and by 1927 he had been nominated as honorary member of the *Academia Nacional de Historia y Geografía* (National Academy for History and Geography), the *Sociedad Científica Antonio Alzate* (Antonio Alzate Scientific Society) and the *Ateneo de Ciencias y Artes de México* (Ateneo for Science and Art of Mexico). Other European diplomats did not achieve such memberships in the 1920s and according to Will this was a clear signal of the relevance Germany had for these associations focused on knowledge.<sup>475</sup>

Efforts by Mexican diplomats and intellectuals to improve cultural relations existed under the national project of Vasconcelos. As explained in the general introduction of this thesis, the cultural project of Vasconcelos had as a basis the promotion of education, libraries and fine arts throughout the country with the goal of

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<sup>475</sup> PAAA, Mexiko, Rechtswesen 6, Zivilrechtliche Beziehungen Mexikos zu Deutschland, July-Dezember 1926, R79649: Eugen Will, "Mittel für kulturelle Zwecke".

homogenising heterogeneous Mexico(s). It meant the printing of ‘universal’ literature, Western (European) classics, in schools in the capital and provinces.

Besides, the National University of Mexico, which Vasconcelos directed from June 1920 to October 1921 before taking charge of the Ministry of Education, also took into consideration the necessity of achieving academic exchange of ideas through yearly lectures from French professors. In August 1924, Dr George Dumas gave lectures at the National University of Mexico regarding mental and nervous disorders generated by the war. He, along with Henri Bergson obtained the Doctor Honoris Causa from the Mexican National University and the National Academy of Medicine made Dumas Honorary Member.<sup>476</sup> After the success of his lectures in Mexico, Dumas promoted a project for an annual subvention to create a Franco-Mexican Institute to attain intellectual and scientific collaboration between the Universities of Paris and Mexico.<sup>477</sup> Dumas’ conference was followed by the yearly presence of other French intellectuals. Another success was the visit of Germain Martin. Martin was asked, after offering successful lectures to audiences of 300 people, to give recommendations to the *Banco de México* regarding financial problems and the French colony invited him to visit factories in Mexico and Orizaba and receive feedback.

In the period addressed in this thesis, the most successful visit was that of Professor Paul Hazard, a very influential historian of the *College de France* who wrote the famous *La Crise de la conscience européenne (1860-1715)* in 1935. During his three-week stay in September 1928, Hazard gave nine conferences at the University of Mexico about French literature including romantics, revolutionary

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<sup>476</sup> “Fue brillante nota de cultura la recepción del Doctor Dumas”, *El Demócrata*, Mexico City, 7 August 1924 and “La Academia de Medicina Honra al Doctor Dumas”, *El Universal*, Mexico City, 12 August 1924, ADMAE, Mexique 35: ff. 128-129.

<sup>477</sup> Dumas also achieved the establishment of the Brazilian institutes of culture of Rio (1922) and Sao Paulo (1925).

writers, poets and Modern novels. His lectures were very successful with the attendance of more than 800 people, and the conferences were also transmitted by radio. The National University nominated him Honorary Professor; he was offered banquets and held reunions with academics and university authorities. Besides, he held meetings with authorities from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Public Education and Calles.

According to De Simonin, French chargé d'affaires in Mexico City, this was the most effective propaganda for French culture.<sup>478</sup> In the same days of Hazard's academic visit, there were other relevant lectures by Frenchmen in Mexico, one by Paul Reynaud, future Finance Minister (1938) and Prime Minister at the time of the fall of France (March-June 1940), on "Le Menage Choiseul". Another important visit in 1928 was that of Jean-Claude Nicolas Forestier, former general director of parks and promenades of the city of Paris, who talked about urbanism and the necessity of open spaces in cities and the gardens of Andalucía. Forestier was also in charge of the 'Parque María Luisa' in Seville for the Ibero-American Exhibition at which Mexico attended with a neo-Mayan and modernist pavilion, and the urbanisation of Montjuic for the International Exhibition of Barcelona, both in 1929.<sup>479</sup>

After the various successes in 1928, Alfonso Pruneda, rector of the National University, stated the interest in a continuation of such visits that were useful for the intellectual rapprochement between both countries. With this in mind, Pruneda said

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<sup>478</sup> ADMAE, Mexique 35: M. de Simonin, charge d' affaires of France in Mexico, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico City, 26 September 1928, ff. 181-182.

<sup>479</sup> Conrad Kent, "From Pleasure Gardens to Places Dures: Continuity and Change in Barcelona's Public Spaces", *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies*, 6 (2002), pp. 227-228. Alfonso Braojos Garrido and Amparo Graciani García, *El Pabellón de México en la Sevilla de 1929. Evocaciones históricas y artísticas* (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 1998).

that the Mexican government was interested in sending in 1929 a Mexican professor to give conferences on Mexico in one of the Parisian faculties.<sup>480</sup>

Moreover, during the 1920s, cinema became a source for education promoted by the Mexican ministries of War and Marine, Public Education and Agriculture and Development. Films were presented in different regions of the country to show peasants and workers better ways to improve their agricultural and industrial techniques.<sup>481</sup> Furthermore, scientific health films were presented at the National University and schools, and US and European films were used for the education of the military. Many films from US companies or public sectors were consumed during these years in Mexico, but also from German companies.<sup>482</sup> Besides, films were presented in day-long festivities that included other activities such as traditional dances, sports choreographies and lectures, but also in educational centres as well as squares in cities and towns. For example, from January to April 1923, 1557 movies were seen by 56,150 spectators.<sup>483</sup>

Also regarding technical approaches and following the work done in the 1910s, the Mexican government promoted projects around biology, medicine, zoology, forestry and botanical gardens. These allowed exchanges with the world and the inclusion of the country in the modernised world. Diplomats encouraged the exchange of plants and animals, for example for the ‘Mexican Gardens’ in Lyon, France or the exchange of species between the zoological park in Mexico City and

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<sup>480</sup> ADMAE, 22cpcom, Contentieux, Mexique 94 Pièces jointes: dossiers nominaux (M et O), 1926: Le Chargé d'affaires de France au Mexique to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico City, 17 October 1928, f. 5.

<sup>481</sup> De los Reyes, *Cine y sociedad*, p. 131.

<sup>482</sup> De los Reyes, *Cine y sociedad*, p. 140 and 148.

<sup>483</sup> De los Reyes, *Cine y sociedad*, p. 143.

that from Dresden, Germany. Mexican animals were also exchanged with France for the Museum of Natural History.<sup>484</sup>

Additionally, Mexican diplomats in France and Germany sent information regarding aspects as varied as chemicals, landscapes, the organisation of institutes and health centres to different ministries with the hope that it could be useful for the reconfiguration of Mexico and its place in the international scene. For example in 1924, the Mexican government sent José Manuel Puig Casauranc to Paris with the goal of visiting establishments of public assistance such as the maritime hospital of Berck, the Villemin sanatorium and the free clinic Leon-Bourgeois.<sup>485</sup> Two years later, Manuel Galindo was commissioned to visit hospitals and consultation cabinets for women with venereal syphilis sickness while Alfonso Ortiz went to study the organisation and regulation of prostitution in Paris as well as hospitals and health organisations concerned with this topic.<sup>486</sup> Likewise, in 1925 the Mexican government requested from Germany the laws regarding public and private hospitals and sanatoriums, chirurgical clinics, hospices, orphanages, institutes for the blind and the deaf, retirements homes and others.<sup>487</sup>

Other sources of exchange were those regarding popular art. Honnorat and Reyes looked for the exchange of collections of ceramics between Sévres and Mexico. The project was analysed by the Ministry of Public Education and in January and April 1927 the *Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Historia y Etnografía* sent 97

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<sup>484</sup> On 28 November 1926, Alfonso Reyes mentioned that he went to the Museum of Natural History in Paris to see the Mexican animals. Alfonso Reyes, *Diario 1911-1930* (Guanajuato: Universidad de Guanajuato. 1969), p. 171.

<sup>485</sup> José Manuel Puig Casauranc (1888-1939) was a doctor from the State of Campeche. After living in exile during Huerta's and Carranza's presidential periods, Puig Casauranc returned to Mexico in 1922 and he became an important figure during the post-revolutionary era since he was in charge of the presidential campaign of Calles and was Minister of Public Education (1924-28, 1930-31), Minister of Industry, Commerce and Labour during the end of 1928, Chief of the Department of the Federal District (1929-20) and Minister of Foreign Relations (1933-34).

<sup>486</sup>ADMAE, 22cpcom, Dossiers divers, Mexique 86 Mexicains en France, 1918-1939.

<sup>487</sup> PAAA, Mexiko, Sozialpolitik 1, Soziale Verhältnisse, Sozialpolitik im Allgemeinen, Februar 1925-März 1933, R79673: Mexican Legation in Berlin to the AA, Berlin, 2 February 1925.

specimens of regional ceramics, 78 specimens of Indian ceramics and 34 books concerning Mexican archaeology.<sup>488</sup>

Besides, a significant contact was created with the exhibition in 1928 on pre-Columbian art in the Louvre. François Carnot, President of the Central Union of Decorative Arts (*l'Union Centrale des Arts Decoratifs*), was assigned by the French Ministries of Public Instruction and Foreign Affairs to organise this exhibition and was sent in a mission to Mexico City to establish the necessary contacts. Mexico collaborated with objects from the *Museo Nacional de Arqueología de México* and “occupied the principal part, for which it can be considered as a true artistic manifestation of our country. When entering the exhibition one could see photography, castings, reproductions of manuscripts, etc. referent to Mexico.”<sup>489</sup> This exhibition was the result of years of scientific and artistic interest in France on pre-Columbian archaeology, history and art; this was also of interest in the US, especially during the 1930s, and an antecedent of the Mexican Art exhibition at the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris in 1952.<sup>490</sup>

All these exchanges of information and species were part of an attempt of making Mexico part of the Western / modernised world by benefitting the masses according to revolutionary promises with bilateral cultural relations. The relevance of forming part of international practices regarding the arts and education is also evident in the decision to join the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation after the encouragement of Reyes as I already explained in Chapter 1. This institute was established in Paris after the French government requested it and committed to cover

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<sup>488</sup> ADMAE, 22cpcom, Dossiers divers, Mexique 75 Expositions, 1921-1939: Alberto J. Pani to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Paris, 25 May 1927, f. 11.

<sup>489</sup> “México ocupó la parte principal, por lo que cabe considerarla como una verdadera manifestación artística de nuestro país. Desde que se entraba a la exposición se veían fotografías, vaciados, reproducciones de manuscritos, etc. referentes a México” AHSRE, 41-5-20 (I) Legación de México en Francia remite recortes de periódicos relacionados con México. The clippings are not available.

<sup>490</sup> “Mexican Art: Musée d' Art Moderne, Paris”, *The Spectator*, 20 June 1952, pp. 14-15.

its expenses, which denotes the importance the French government saw in being the epicentre for intellectual relations. Ultimately, being part of the institute opened opportunities for Mexico to take part in multilateral intellectual discussions.

I have presented some ways in which intellectual links were achieved in the 1920s, in the subsequent subsections I will focus with more depth in the contacts between diplomacy and the arts (writers, painters and musicians) and then about diplomacy and education that intended to promote academic exchange of civilians and military, and the establishment of libraries and bookstores for a better academic understanding.

#### 4.3.1 Diplomacy and the Fine Arts

As soon as Reyes arrived in Paris in 1925, Valéry Larbaud and Francis de Miomandre approached him for interviews and these were published in articles in the Press. He was welcomed in the Press by Miomandre in *L'Europe Nouvelle*, Cassou in *Le Journal Littéraire* and Larbaud in *Revue de l'Amérique Latine*.<sup>491</sup> The latter offered him a welcome party in the 'Carlton' which was attended by at least 180 guests. This was only the start of the active role Reyes played to strengthen Mexican relations with French and Hispanic members of the Parisian art world during the second half of the 1920s. The 1920s were a moment of extensive French-Hispanic networks in Paris. Several Hispanic writers lived in this cultural centre, for example Stephen Henighan has analysed how Paris influenced the work of Guatemalan Miguel Ángel Asturias during the 1920s and 1930s allowing him to universalise his own experience instead of accepting European universalism, including ideas from surrealism, the interest in the pre-Columbian past and discussions on cultural identity.<sup>492</sup> However, after 1928

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<sup>491</sup> See the entries for 15 February and 15 March 1925 in Reyes, *Diario 1911-1930*, pp. 93- 94.

<sup>492</sup> Stephen Henighan, *Assuming the Light. The Parisian Literary Apprenticeship of Miguel Ángel Asturias* (Oxford: University of Oxford, 1999), p. 1-6.

various Latin Americans went back to their home countries and the majority of journals such as the *Revue de l'Amérique Latine* were discontinued.<sup>493</sup>

During the 1920s, Reyes and many writers had Adrienne Monnier's bookstore *La Maison des Amis des Livres* as a centre for discussions and meetings. One other centre of reunion between French writers and Spanish language writers was *La divine boutique*.<sup>494</sup> Besides, Reyes offered literary social gatherings ('tertulia' in Spanish) at his house on Sundays. Reyes was in contact with Mathilde Pómes, poet and translator of Reyes's verses, Bergsen, Cassou, Henry de Montherlant, Jules Supervielle, Jules Romains, Jean Prevost, Marcelle Auclair, Gabriela Mistral, Paul Valéry, Palma Guillén and others.<sup>495</sup> They discussed their and others modernist writings and they also entertained themselves by reading their works or classics to each other.

Reyes also became friends with Latin American writers and artists such as writer and journalist Asturias from Guatemala, the caricaturist and illustrator Toño Salazar from El Salvador, who became a critical caricaturist of dictators such as Hitler, Franco, Mussolini and Perón, essayist and philosopher León Pacheco from Costa Rica, who analysed politics and identity from his own country, the essay writer Alberto Zérega from Venezuela, and with diplomats such as González Zaldumbide, Minister of Ecuador. Pacheco and Zérega eventually became diplomats as well. In addition, Reyes put an effort in promoting Mexican artistic figures such as Mexican painter Zárraga.

The contact with French and Latin American cultural figures enriched Reyes' cosmopolitan modernist writings, in contrast to a nationalism concentrated on Mexican customs and revolution, and allowed him to establish life-long friendships

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<sup>493</sup> Paulette Patout, "La cultura latinoamericana en París entre 1910 y 1936" in Amos Segala (coord.), *Miguel Ángel Asturias, París, 1924-1933. Periodismo y creación literaria* (Madrid: Colección Archivos, 1997), p. 753.

<sup>494</sup> Patout, "La cultura latinoamericana en París", p. 753.

<sup>495</sup> Patout, *Francia en Alfonso Reyes*, pp. 38- 52.

that would continue throughout his diplomatic and literary career.<sup>496</sup> It would imply that Mexican writers would publish their work along with other Latin Americans, but also that Hispanic writings were translated into French and sold in French bookstores, increasing the exchange between nations in intellectual terms. For example, Pómes translated and published Reyes's work in *Le Journal des Poetes* (1931), the journal founded in Belgium by painter and poet Pierre Louis Flouquet, and his work also appeared in an anthology made by UNESCO, under the direction of Jaime Torres Bodet, on Mexican literature published in French in 1952 and in English in 1958.<sup>497</sup>

This role as intellectual epicentre also allows us to understand that Reyes inaugurated the Exhibition of Decorative Arts in 1925 where the aim was to promote Art Deco.<sup>498</sup> According to the Victoria and Albert Museum, more than 16 million people visited it. "The exhibition was shaped by France's ambitions in the years immediately after World War I (1914-18). Its aim was to establish the pre-eminence of French taste and luxury goods. French displays dominated the exhibition and Paris itself was put on show as the most fashionable of cities."<sup>499</sup> The United States and Germany were not part of the exhibition; the former refused to participate since it had nothing to present and the latter received the invitation too late to organise. Great Britain, the USSR and other European countries did take part. One year before Great Britain had also hosted a design exhibition. Hence, participating in Art Deco shows became a form to show a country's role in the international artistic scene and Reyes made Mexico present, even though it lacked a proper stand. It is worth

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<sup>496</sup> In 1932, after receiving accusations for his journal *Monterrey* not being focused in Mexican problematics, Reyes wrote that the only way to be productively a nationalist was in being generously universal. "Nada puede sernos ajeno sino lo que ignoramos. La única manera de ser provechosamente nacional consiste en ser generosamente universal, pues nunca la parte se entendió sin el todo", Alfonso Reyes, *A vuelta de correo*, 30 May 1932 quoted in Stanton (ed.), *Correspondencia Alfonso Reyes Octavio Paz*, p. 118.

<sup>497</sup> Stanton (ed.), *Correspondencia Alfonso Reyes Octavio Paz*, p. 100.

<sup>498</sup> Patout, *Francia en Alfonso Reyes*, p. 17.

<sup>499</sup> Victoria and Albert Museum, "Art Deco: The 1925 Paris Exhibition", [<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/a/the-1925-paris-exhibition/> accessed 19 June 2016].

mentioning that the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* in Mexico City had a mixture of art nouveau and art deco and Mexico City's architecture was updated with art deco in the 1920s and 1930s especially in the residential sectors (*'colonias'* in Spanish) Roma and Condesa.<sup>500</sup>

While Reyes' role as a bridge between the art world and diplomacy was celebrated in Paris, in Mexico it led to some criticism. In January 1926, Reyes and Enrique González Martínez, Mexican Minister in Madrid, were told confidentially by subsecretary of Foreign Relations Estrada, that according to the Minister Sáenz, President Calles considered that both diplomats were dedicating too much time to literature instead of their diplomatic duties. This letter affected Reyes for several weeks; he countered that he spent a lot of time in administrative matters (accountability, reorganisation of the archive and others), but he had still achieved good relations with the French government and Parisian society,<sup>501</sup> for example by giving talks in the Sorbonne. Making a stand before the criticism, Reyes decided to stop his collaborations in Mexican newspapers and made clear that during 1926 he would only publish books with material written in previous periods: *Reloj de Sol* and *Pausa*.<sup>502</sup> This seemed to have a good effect since Sáenz decided that Reyes could continue being Mexican representative in France. However, by the end of the year, Reyes was reassigned to Argentina and he handed over the Legation to Pani on 16 March 1927.<sup>503</sup>

Before leaving, Reyes wrote a report insisting of the relevance of accomplishing several artistic exchanges. He insisted in inviting French composer

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<sup>500</sup>Ageeth Sluis, "Planning the Deco City. Urban Reform" in Ageeth Sluis, *Deco Body, Deco City: Female Spectacle and Modernity in Mexico City, 1900-1939* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), pp. 179-220.

<sup>501</sup>Serge I. Zaitzeff, "Alfonso Reyes en París a través de su correspondencia con Genaro Estrada", *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica*, 37:2 (1989), p. 679.

<sup>502</sup>Zaitzeff, "Alfonso Reyes en París", p. 681.

<sup>503</sup>Zaitzeff, "Alfonso Reyes en París", p. 687.

Darius Milhaud, a member of 'Les Six', a neoclassical composer who was innovating music with polytonalities and including jazz elements in his work, for example, in 'La création du monde' (1923). This invitation could have been important in the context of the national cultural project which allowed the promotion of the fine arts in Mexico. For example, Julián Carrillo, who studied in Leipzig, director of the *Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional* (1918-24) and of the *Conservatorio Nacional* (1920-21) promoted European and Mexican composers such as Beethoven and Ponce.<sup>504</sup> This musical milieu led to the establishment of Mexico's symphony orchestra in 1928. Nonetheless, in my archival research and literature review, I did not find information that the invitation to Milhaud was made or that such a visit happened.

Pani did not follow Reyes' legacy in regards to links with writers, painters or musicians. As already mentioned in a previous section of this chapter, Pani was not interested in the modernist discussions of his time. However, he was interested in the cultural ties between Mexico and France and this led him to employ Mexican modernist painter Zárraga for the painting of murals in the room for parties at the Mexican Legation in Paris. The murals covered the origin of Mexico, the Mexican-French friendship and the intentions of national development.<sup>505</sup> Pani used this occasion to write a pamphlet called *Los inmuebles del Gobierno Mexicano en París* (1928).

In Mexico City, intellectual contacts happened with the help of Estrada. For example, he hosted French writer Paul Morand in January 1927.<sup>506</sup> Morand arrived in Veracruz, passed through Puebla, Mexico City and Ciudad Juárez before leaving to

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<sup>504</sup> According to von Montgelas, Carrillo was an important promoter of German music in Mexico, for example he directed Beethoven's symphonies for his 150 anniversary.

<sup>505</sup> Quote from Pani in Miguel Ángel Echegaray, "La obra de ángel Zárraga en la Embajada de México en París. Alberto J. Pani: patrimonio y diplomacia cultural", *Revista Mexicana de Política Exterior*, 101 (May-August 2014), p. 248.

<sup>506</sup> To learn more about Morand's visit in Mexico City and the hosting of Estrada, see Paul Morand, "Viaje a México", *Historias*, 73 (2009), pp. 12-16. [<https://revistas.inah.gob.mx/index.php/historias/article/view/3059/2960> accessed 2 September 2016].

the United States. During his short-visit he was in touch with members of the literary group *Los Contemporáneos*. Morand was in contact with Salvador Novo and Xavier Villaurrutia.<sup>507</sup> When Morand went back to France, he wrote about Mexico in *Les Annales* and Villaurrutia translated and published these articles as a book in 1940 as *Viaje a Mexico*. In general, the country was described as an abundant territory, allowing a positive image for Mexico in the French-speaking world.<sup>508</sup>

Moreover, Estrada held a “true and reciprocal friendship” with Périet since they had intellectual interests in common. Périet considered Estrada “maître très écouté” /the master most listened to. Along with official meetings in the French Legation or at the Mexican Foreign Relations Ministry, monthly breakfasts occurred. Different intellectuals were invited to those reunions, for example philosopher Antonio Caso, former ambassador to Mexico in Peru and ‘Master of the university youth’, Dr Daniel M. Vélez, the director of the Faculty of High Studies (March-August 1924) who was seen as a pro-German but supported French-Mexican efforts such as the installation of the Mexican House in Cité Universitaire, and Dr Margain, professor at the Faculty of Medicine. These social gatherings were important “because it is in them that one finds the best friends of France.”<sup>509</sup>

The French government celebrated these intellectual links by offering certain medals. For example, in 1922 the *Croix de la Legion d’Honneur* had been given to Caso, but also to Miguel Ángel de Quevedo, civil engineer and president of the

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<sup>507</sup> Salvador Novo briefly described the stay of Morand in Mexico. According to him, Morand got interested in ancient writing and the folklore, finding Diego Rivera frescos as the most ambitious work in Occident. Salvador Novo, “El curioso impertinente”, *Ulises*, no. 1, May 1927, pp. 29-31 in Salvador Novo, *Viajes y ensayos II* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2012), pp. 29-31.

<sup>508</sup> Ángel Trejo Raygadas, “Viaje a Mexico, de Paul Morand”, *Escafandra 45*, 5 January 2015 in Revista Buzos [http://www.buzos.com.mx/images/pdf/buzos645/45\_ESCAFANDRA\_642.pdf accessed 16 June 2016].

<sup>509</sup> “car c’est parmi ceux-ci que l’on trouve les meilleurs amis de la France”, ADMAE, 22cpcom, Affaires politiques, Mexique 10 Correspondance générale politique, mai 1924-décembre 1925: Jean Périet to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mexico City, 4 June 1924, f. 36.

Mexican Forestry Society.<sup>510</sup> In 1924 Estrada received the *Officier de la Legion d'Honneur* and Sáenz the *Commandeur*. Périer had asked for the offer of these medals for the relevant role both actors had in the signature of the Convention for claims but also mentioned that Estrada had never stopped showing sympathies towards France even in difficult times, for example, along with Caso he had formed “Les amis de la France” to support French efforts in the Great War. Moreover, he had a special knowledge of French literature and had translated many French works into Spanish, for example those of Jules Renard. Years later, in 1927 the French medal was given to Mexican intellectuals and cultural actors such as Vélez, Caso and Pruneda.<sup>511</sup>

Just as Reyes, Périer faced criticisms due to his strong intellectual contacts. The criticism did not come from the French government, which clearly had an interest in its international intellectual appeal, but from some members of the French colony in Mexico. Members of the French commerce association (Paul Tardan, André Genin, Rodolphe Levy and Antoine Galant) wrote Périer a letter, with a copy to Edouard Herriot, French Minister of Foreign Relations. In this letter, they complained that in eight months he had not done anything important to improve the commercial presence of France in Mexico as there was no publicity, conferences, consultations or contact with the diverse commercial associations in Mexico. They compared this lack of action with the Spanish representative who had promoted a pharmacy, electronic machines, cars, toys and a newspaper for the Spanish colony. However, Herriot

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<sup>510</sup>Emily Wakild, “‘It is to preserve life, to work for the trees’: The Steward of Mexico’s Forests, Miguel Angel de Quevedo, 1862-1948”, *Forest History Today* (Spring/Fall 2006), pp. 4-14.

<sup>511</sup> See ADMAE, 22cpcom, Protocole, Mexique 36 Décorations mai 1927-mai 1933.

decided not to answer this letter and said to Périer that he was entirely satisfied with his role as minister in Mexico defending the interests of France.<sup>512</sup>

#### 4.3.2 Diplomacy and education

A way in which Europeans were able to exercise soft power towards Mexico was through education. There was a tradition of selected Mexicans going to study abroad to learn new techniques from Europeans, but also of using European examples in the national educational system. This was evident with the influence of positivism in the last third of the nineteenth century, but also in the fact that painter Zárraga studied in Paris with a scholarship from the Porfirian government.

The stabilisation of the country after the armed conflict also allowed Mexico's educational system and military education to look to Europe for contemporary approaches. This allowed more efforts with regard to diplomacy and education, by diplomats, politicians, academics, militaries and people concerned with promoting two areas that could improve the understanding of the *other*. On the one side, there was interest in the military studying new techniques in Europe for which Mexican students and commissions were sent to France. On the other, the establishment of libraries or bookstores that would allow one person in a country to learn from the other before, after or without visiting the *other's* country.

Furthermore, the promises of the Constitution of 1917 implied a challenge for European educational options in the Mexican territory, especially for the middle class and elites. Some of these schools were lay and others were Catholic. During the *Cristero* rebellion, foreign Catholic priests were expelled under Article 33. The laicisation of education also implied a threat for French and British Catholic schools'

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<sup>512</sup> ADMAE, Mexique 10: Paul Tardan, André Génin, Rodolphe Levy and Antoine Galant to Edouard Herriot, 2 August 1924, ff. 72-74.

cultural impact in Mexico. While the conflict would not threaten private German education, it was a menace for immigration projects that intended to bring German colonies to the country.<sup>513</sup> Hence, Mexican-European educational relations passed through a period of uneasiness. Therefore, in the Obregón-Calles era, we will have present the dilemma of stabilisation and revolution in Mexican-European Powers in educational terms as well.

#### 4.3.2.1 Libraries and bookstores

Books were necessary for the Mexican educational project promoted by Vasconcelos that intended to generalise knowledge on the classics throughout the Mexican territory, but also for diplomats as part of a country's cultural impact. This is clear in the case of French books in Mexican libraries; according to Rafael Alducín, director of *El Universal*, 8 out of 10 books from foreign authors were written in French. Moreover, French Minister Blondel mentioned that doctors, engineers and architects in Mexico preferred French books over British or German options. One source for French books was the library of the French Alliance in Mexico City, which had 150 visitors daily and 15,457 volumes by February 1922.<sup>514</sup>

Another source for books were French bookstores. Honnorat, who was in Mexico as part of a private visit from 16 December 1921 to the end of February 1922, promoted the creation of a new bookstore for technical learning. The Barcelonettes supported his project and *El Libro Francés* was established on the Avenue 5 de Mayo. However, Blondel considered this was not useful since there already existed three French bookstores and there was the Library of the French Alliance. This clearly allows us to see the differences in approaches by diplomats and other actors in

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<sup>513</sup> PAAA, Mexiko, Politik 16, Religions- und Kirchenwesen Mexikos 1, August 1921-Mai 1928, R79640: Eugen Will to the German Foreign Office, Mexico City, 17 May 1926, f. 4.

<sup>514</sup> ADMAE, Mexique 25: « A. s. du séjour de Mr Honnorat au Mexique », Blondel to Raymond Poincaré, Mexico City, 25 February 1922, ff. 117-120.

the question of increasing French intellectual and educational presence in Mexico. For the French diplomat it was better to strengthen what already existed instead of increasing and separating efforts. Furthermore, by September 1926, Ernest Lagarde considered the bookstores in Mexico City had no effect since people were now buying books directly from Parisian stores.

In contrast, diplomats did not mention British or German bookstores or libraries in Mexico City; this clearly allows us to see the traditional cultural influence of France in Mexico's academic and intellectual circles. There was no Mexican library in the capitals of the European Powers in the Obregón-Calles era, but the Mexican Library as part of the Ibero-American Institute in Berlin and the Mexican House in Paris would be a first step to achieving this from the 1930s onwards.

Aware of the general lack of presence of Mexican books regarding scientific findings in Germany, Ortiz Rubio paid to translate the "Treaties on Biology" written by Alfonso L. Herrera, one of the pioneers in institutionalising the discipline of biology in Mexico.<sup>515</sup> It was precisely Herrera, academic and bureaucratic, who promoted the exchange of species between Mexico City's and Dresden's zoological parks. Ortiz Rubio considered it was important to translate Herrera's work as it could show Mexico's progress in biology. The translations were offered to German scientists at universities in Berlin and Hamburg.<sup>516</sup> Herrera's work *Notions de Biologie et Plasmogénie* had been published in Berlin in 1906 and his research was known in France too.<sup>517</sup>

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<sup>515</sup> Herrera was a key figure in the establishment of the *Sociedad de Estudios Biológicos* (1922) and had experience as director of the Museum for Natural History (1914) and the *Dirección de Estudios Biológicos* (1915). He eventually was in charge of the botanical garden, the zoological park, the aquarium, the museum of natural history and the institute for general biology and medicine.

<sup>516</sup> AGN, Fondo Obregón Calles, 104-A-49: Pascual Ortiz Rubio to Plutarco Elías Calles, Berlin, 31 December 1924.

<sup>517</sup> An article on *Société d'études historiques et scientifiques de l'Oise* had discussed his works (February 1911) see Consuelo Cuevas Cardona, Ismael Mateos and Lucrecia Orensanz, "Alfonso L.

Most importantly, Calles supported the project of Hagen to establish a Mexican Library in Germany at the University of Magdeburg. Already in 1923, Hagen had planned to geographically study Mexico to write a book and to establish a geographical library of Mexico. However, there was already a published topographic atlas of the Republic so there was no need for Hagen's proposed project, but it was suggested that he could translate it. The project that would continue during the following years was the establishment of a Mexican library. According to Hagen, this library would allow an intellectual link between both countries by making Mexican academic publications accessible to Germans in order to increase knowledge of Mexico.<sup>518</sup> By then there was almost no available information regarding Mexico in Germany, except of archaeology and ethnology, and there was no German public library with the necessary contact and bibliographical knowledge. Other institutions covered information on Latin America, but the focus was on countries like Brazil and Argentina.

Calles promised in a meeting with Hagen that all official publications during his presidential term would be sent to a library in the Geographic Institute of the University of Magdeburg. The Mexican library was indeed established in 1925 and its director, Hagen, visited Mexico for several months in 1926-27, he travelled one-third of the territory to ask for materials and obtained 112 boxes with books, paintings, photographs and objects from the national museum as well as 26,540 objects including volumes, brochures, maps and newspapers.<sup>519</sup> Furthermore, Hagen gave a talk on 23 March 1926 at the National University of Mexico where he mentioned the

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Herrera: controversia y debates durante el inicio de la biología en México”, *Historia Mexicana*, 55:3 (January-March 2006), p. 983.

<sup>518</sup> APEC, expediente 61: Hermann H. HAGEN, (Dr.), legajo 1, fojas 1-9, inventario 2697.

<sup>519</sup> PAAA, Mexiko, Politik 26, Politische und kulturelle Propaganda in Mexico, Oktober 1921-Oktober 1935, R79646: Hermann Hagen to the AA, Berlin, 4 July 1927.

intellectual relationship between both countries. He started his paper emphasising this relationship was

united by traditional ties of a friendship that has never been disturbed; ties that persisted even throughout the terrible world war that destroyed many friendships. Germany, fighting to reach new development, under new forms of social life, understands the similar fight in Mexico and accompanies your fatherland in the difficult, but fruitful ascent, with intimate sympathy and living desires to see her at the stage we all desire.<sup>520</sup>

Furthermore, Hagen insisted on the big opportunities the Mexican Library offered as it was the first institution in Germany to focus on Mexico.

The library was transferred from Magdeburg to Berlin in 1927 to become part of the Ibero-American Library, which belonged to the state of Prussia. The Mexican Library opened to the public by the end of 1930.<sup>521</sup> This thesis is a clear example of the long-term usefulness of Hagen's efforts since I have found many materials for my understanding of the period there. For example, the *Revista de Hacienda* that allowed me to explore the symbolic efforts done by Mexican consuls to improve Mexican-European relations, analysed in the previous chapter. Besides, the Ibero-American libraries are part of institutes that promote the interaction of citizens of different nations, for example the Ibero-American Institute in Hamburg along Mexican-German societies residing in Hamburg offered a reception for Calles at the 'Hotel Atlantic' in August 1924.

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<sup>520</sup> "que unen lazos tradicionales de una amistad jamás turbada; lazos que persistieron aun a través de la terrible guerra mundial que tantas amistades rompió. Alemania, luchando por alcanzar nuevos florecimientos, bajo nuevas formas de su vida social, comprende la lucha similar de México y acompaña a vuestra patria en su difícil, pero fructífero ascenso, con íntima simpatía y vivos deseos de verla algún día a la altura que todos deseamos." Hermann B. Hagen, *Las relaciones intelectuales entre Alemania y México* (Mexico: Secretaría de Educación, 1926), p. 4.

<sup>521</sup> Hermann B. Hagen, "La biblioteca mexicana", *Ibero-Amerikanisches Archiv*, Berlin IV:1, April 1930, pp. 1-4. Also see Instituto Iberoamericano, "Un puente entre los mundos. El Instituto Ibero-Americano de Berlín", *Anuario Americanista Europeo*, 3 (2005), pp. 381-414.

#### 4.3.2.2 Scientific Exchange

During the 1920s, Mexican diplomats in France and Germany promoted the scientific exchange of civilians and the military in Mexico and Europe. The concern for Mexico's educational and military sectors was mainly in regards to practical skills that were of necessity for the modernisation of Mexico. The Mexican army was restructured and it needed to look for modern options for education and this allowed to take into consideration European models. In 1921, the Secretary of War obtained information from the organisation of the French Ministry and School of Studies of War, for example the modules on aeronautics, communications and fabrications of war. In further years, information about the organisation of the Ministry of Marine and École Navale was sent. However, the French military did not share confidential information of certain requests, for example on tactic courses. Moreover, Mexican engineers and militaries were sent to France to short-term stays to study radiotelegraphic stations in Bordeaux, Lyon and the Eiffel Tower in 1921, electronic constructions of Lyon and Dauphiné in 1925, the aeronautic laboratories of St. Cyr and St. Raphael in 1921 and visit military aviation centres in Cazaux, Istres, Versailles, Villacoublay, Dugny and Bourget in 1922.

Apart from requesting the mentioned information, the role of Mexican diplomats resided in achieving academic exchange by asking for permissions so that Mexican students could undertake short- or long-term stays in France or Germany. That was equally the role of German and French diplomats in Mexico. This occurred in a context in which Germany could not offer military training to foreigners as a result of the Treaty of Versailles and the German decision not to train foreigners in general, but France could. However, in aspects of technical knowledge, both countries represented accessible options and this led to a rivalry between French and German interests.

Some Frenchmen and Germans went to teach or study in Mexico as well. The numbers were very low, maybe less than ten people at any given time, but were still mentioned in the diplomatic correspondence. For example, teacher Eugène Gles was paid by the French government and teacher Janet by the French colony in Mexico to take classes at the University of Mexico for two months.<sup>522</sup> These teachers offered conferences and were useful for Périer to consider that France finally was recovering its intellectual influence in Mexico by 1925.<sup>523</sup>

German professors went to Mexico to share their knowledge as well, for example Rudolph Schreckhase and August Huelsmeyer taught in a school concentrated on technical knowledge at Jalapa, Veracruz: the *Escuela Vocacional Enrique Pestalozzi*.<sup>524</sup> Also, the Mexican Ministry of Industry enrolled 10 German specialists: two tanners, two rope makers, two glass-makers, two rubber workers and two practitioners in canned goods. They travelled in Mexico to recommend the most desirable places to install new industries and to teach the new procedures to the existing industries to increase productivity and offer products with higher quality.<sup>525</sup>

Some Mexican students went to Germany to deepen their knowledge. Just to set an example, in 1922 30 Mexican students were learning production techniques in the German chemical industries and they would later be employed by the Mexican government as instructors. The implications of this was that Germany represented a technological centre to learn from in order to achieve the technological development of the country. An idea that continues to be one of the appeals of the country worldwide.

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<sup>522</sup> AHSRE, 42-28-68, Franquicias concedidas al consulado en Salina Cruz: exemptions conceded to professors Gles and Janet in 1925.

<sup>523</sup>ADMAE, Mexique 25: Jean Périer to Aristide Briand, Mexico City, 14 October 1925, ff. 67-70.

<sup>524</sup> AGN, Fondo Obregón-Calles, 104-A-19, Alemanes profesores técnicos: S. Alvarado to President Álvaro Obregón, Mexico City, 21 June 1923.

<sup>525</sup> ADMAE, Mexique 8: French Consul in Veracruz to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Veracruz, 20 October 1922, f. 103.

Mexican diplomacy in Berlin was attentive of the studies by Mexicans students in Germany since they received the help of the government. For example, a file was created with the information from Antonio R. Ramírez. He studied mechanical engineering at the *Fundación Nacional de Artillería* and learned the language, took classes and completed internships in Germany for two years, 1923-25.<sup>526</sup> Student Ramírez was one of the few Mexicans that had the opportunity to study abroad with the hope that all the knowledge he acquired could be applied to improve Mexican industrial and military development. The training he took could be useful in a country with important mining sources, but which for decades faced technological and production problems. In this regard, in 1924 Eng. Ignacio López Bancalari, a professor of the National University of Engineers of Mexico, was sent to visit schools, institutes, factories and engineering works in Paris. He visited the *École Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées* and the *École Nationale Supérieure des Mines*.

While French ministers and consuls did regard with mistrust the influence of Germans in technical education, there was no problem with military education. Mexican military were only allowed to study in France, but not in Germany. Germany lost its role as an example for Mexico's military system which was being reconfigured. Nonetheless, Germany did not lose its appeal as it is clear with several applications made by the Mexican military to send students there throughout the

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<sup>526</sup> In the beginning, Antonio R. Ramírez studied German at the Ibero-American Institute at Hamburg and he took classes of arithmetic, algebra, beginnings of trigonometry, drawing of machines, projections and models with J. Siefken. Afterwards, he entered the Industrial School for Metals in Iserlohn (Westphalia) where he learnt about materials, technical accounting, technology, machines, electricity and other techniques. During the summer of 1925, he took modules on metallography and laboratory at the School of Mines in Clausthal (Harz). From October 1925 to March 1926 he did an internship at the Machine factory Schiess in Düsseldorf; from March to July 1925 at the Iron Factory Krieger in Düsseldorf-Oberkassel and from August to December 1925 an internship at the Metals Factory Schwietzke in Düsseldorf- Mörsenbroich. AGN, Fondo Obregón-Calles, 826-R-30, Estudiantes de México en Alemania: Report of Antonio Ramírez about his stay in Germany, 2 March 1926.

Obregón-Calles era, all of which were declined. However, in February 1926, Lagarde explained that the Minister of War and Marine, Joaquín Amaro, was pro-German.<sup>527</sup>

The Mexican government covered expenses for Mexican militaries to study in the Application School of Artillery of Fontainebleau, the School of Cavalry Application of Saumur and the School of Engineering in Versailles.<sup>528</sup> Moreover, General Miguel A. Peralta studied in Europe techniques that were in practice during the Great War and the military schools that could be applied by the Mexican Army. He visited various times the *Hotel des Invalides* and the French Army Museum; he also visited the tomb of Napoleon and spent some days in Verdun.<sup>529</sup> In contrast, Mexican military and students were denied attendance of courses in schools such as the Riding School in Hanover. According to von Montgelas, this attitude would not increase the already existing sympathies of Mexicans towards Germany, sympathies which had been clear with the Occupation of the Ruhr.<sup>530</sup>

Lastly, in 1925 Fernandina Poulat, normalist and piano teacher in Mexico, asked for authorisation to visit female industrial schools, primary and complementary schools. There was a clear division of gender interests and it was mostly men who were part of the academic exchange between Mexico, France and Germany.

#### 4.3.2.3 European alternatives in private education

From the end of the nineteenth century onwards, European colonies started to establish schools for their members in Mexico City; for example, the German School, nowadays called *Colegio Alemán Alexander von Humboldt*, was established by the German Colony in 1894. The impact was very little since only the children of

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<sup>528</sup> “Salen para Francia los militares mexicanos”, *El Universal*, Mexico City, 13 August 1925, AMARO, serie 0313, expediente 165: Prensa: Oficina de recortes, foja 165, inventario 476, legajo 4/12.

<sup>529</sup> ADMAE, Mexique 8: Report “Une mission mexicaine”, ff. 143-147.

<sup>530</sup> PAAA, Mexiko, Politik 16, Religions- und Kirchenwesen Mexikos 3, Januar 1929- Februar 1936, R79642: Montgelas to the AA, Mexico City, 23 April 1923.

influential politicians could afford to study with the children of the German colony. In the 1920s, the school had an average of 500 students, of two sexes, and more than half of them were Germans. In this decade the German School received educational certifications by the German and Mexican governments. In the long-term, it was these certifications and the opening of the school to Mexicans that allowed it to remain open even during World War II, while German schools in other countries were closed, for example in Brazil.

The French Colony had the already mentioned *Liceo Francés* and some private schools taught French since the nineteenth century. Besides, Catholic congregations established schools in Mexico from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, but especially those expelled from France at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>531</sup> For example, the Franco-Anglian college of the Frères de Marie “Los Maristas”, which had an average of 2,200 students including a good proportion of the French colony and children from the elites, was by the 1920s the most important institution for French interests.<sup>532</sup> Besides, the *Maristas* were present in Guanajuato, Nuevo León, Michoacán, Hidalgo, Oaxaca, Chiapas and Yucatán with around 3,000 students by September 1926. The French missionary congregations concentrated on the private education of the urban elites, charity to the poor, and preaching.<sup>533</sup>

The Mexican Revolution and the Constitution of 1917 became a concern for religious schools by promoting the standardisation of education in the hands of the

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<sup>531</sup> By the end of the Porfirian regime, the *lasallistas* had 13 schools in ten cities with 3240 students and the *maristas* had 23 schools. Pi Suñer, Riguzzi and Ruano, *Europa*, pp. 233-234.

<sup>532</sup> ADMAE, 22cpcom, Affaires Politiques, Mexique 18 Affaires religieuses, février-décembre 1926: “Note pour le secrétaire général, direction des affaires politiques et commerciales”, Paris, 27 February 1926, f. 15 and Gruliasco, Institut des Petits Frères de Marie, Paris, 3 March 1926, ff. 66-67.

<sup>533</sup> Camille Foulard, “Les congrégations enseignantes françaises au Mexique (1840-1940). Politiques religieuses, politiques de laïcisation et enjeux internationaux”, *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* [Online], Virtual classroom, Online since 17 March 2009, connection on 05 March 2015. URL: <http://nuevomundo.revues.org/55674> ; DOI : 10.4000/nuevomundo.55674

government, which needed to be secular according to Article 3. Since the Agua Prieta rebellion appeared less Jacobin and without the intention to affect foreign education and the Catholic status quo, the sum of 10,000 francs were assigned to Father Lejeune, Director of French-Anglo School of the *Maristas* in Mexico, as part of the Service of French Work Abroad in August 1921, to find new French teachers. Also in November 1924 when the *Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes* arrived in Mexico, they were offered a subvention of 5,000 francs.

Camille Foulard has explained that Calles's religious restructuration "affects the nucleus of the device developed by France to secure its cultural influence abroad, as many of those [anticlerical measurements] intended to end the Catholic education in all the republic."<sup>534</sup> Therefore, French diplomats in Mexico City intended to defend the religious communities that were part of the francophone interests in Mexico from 1926 onwards. On 14 June 1926, a reform of the Penal Code was established which dealt with "the exercise of worship, the properties of the Church and teaching, with the goal of closer supervision of pastoral, liturgical and educational activity."<sup>535</sup> Moreover, religious orders were prohibited and religious people who did not respect the law would spend one year in jail, and their superiors six years; religious property concerned with administration and education was nationalised and private schools were to follow national rules and texts; the chapels, sanctuaries, religious images and crucifixes were prohibited. The presence of foreign priests was also banned.<sup>536</sup> All

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<sup>534</sup> "Las medidas anticlericales [de Calles] afectan el núcleo del dispositivo desarrollado por Francia para asegurar su influencia cultural en el extranjero, ya que varias de ellas intentan acabar con la enseñanza católica en toda la república" Camille Foulard, "Las ambigüedades francesas ante el conflicto religioso mexicano: pragmatismo del discurso político y movilización de la opinión pública católica" in Meyer (comp.), *Las naciones frente al conflicto religioso en México*, p. 135.

<sup>535</sup> "al ejercicio del culto, los bienes de la Iglesia y la enseñanza, con el fin de enmarcar más de cerca la actividad pastoral, litúrgica y educativa." Foulard, "Las ambigüedades francesas ante el conflicto religioso mexicano", p. 136.

<sup>536</sup> Foulard, "Las ambigüedades francesas ante el conflicto religioso mexicano", pp. 136-138.

these anticlerical measurements were affecting French priests and properties with a value of more than 2,000.000 million pesos in Mexico.

Between 1926 and 1929, diplomat Ernest Lagarde tried to avoid the application of all these measurements to the French Catholic community and he was concerned with its defence. Nevertheless, he was not invited to the 1929 negotiations that solved the problem whereas U.S. Ambassador Morrow was. Besides, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered it could not ask the Mexican government to defend French interests as this would be against French principles regarding laicism, also in France there had been a conflict regarding religious education with a 1904 law to regulate this and in 1901 a law was established to regulate religious communities. Besides, French members of religious orders who taught in the country were not accepting Lagarde's advice of being conciliatory with the Mexican government and instead were under oath to follow the Holy See's indications, accepting the 1929 official peace. In the end, French priests were not allowed to practice during the religious conflict, but the schools remained open.

Hence, as Foulard concluded, there was a tension in French diplomacy. On the one side, the government had to defend its cultural presence in Mexico pragmatically, meaning only if French citizens looked for the interests of the nation and not the Holy See. On the other side, Lagarde was really interested in defending French religious orders who were being affected.<sup>537</sup> For the French government, supporting the congregations meant to be near conservatives that could also help with the development of Francophilia in a context where France had already lost its economic importance. Ultimately, Calles prioritised revolutionary claims to achieve a

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<sup>537</sup> Foulard, "Las ambigüedades francesas ante el conflicto religioso mexicano", p. 146.

revolutionary stabilisation which affected French educative interests, but this was not sufficiently relevant to break the bilateral relationship.

#### *4.4 The strengthening of cultural ties*

Cultural ties were strengthened by the encounter in different spaces which could be ephemeral, such as in theatrical scenes, or long-standing, such as architecture. During the 1920s, the Mexican government considered establishing new legations for Mexico which would symbolise the dignity of the country abroad. It was Reyes who insisted on establishing a bigger building for the Mexican Legation in Paris.<sup>538</sup> The purchase of a new building had been considered by Obregón's administration but was not done because of the economic difficulties the Mexican government was facing after putting down the *Delahuertista* rebellion. In 1927, the Legation was changed from an old house on Boulevard Haussmann to a bigger one in President Wilson Avenue that used to be the house of Duchess Luynes et de Chevreuse.<sup>539</sup>

Another form in which Mexico became physically present was with the establishment of a Mexican House in Cité Universitaire in Paris. Reyes and Honnorat promoted the building of a Mexican House so that this space could make public the "national spirit" through an exhibition and a library. The French colony in Mexico collected 6 million francs for this project. Nowadays the Mexican House still exists and many Mexican students have lived there during their studies in Parisian universities, this demonstrates the long-term effectiveness of such cultural diplomatic efforts.<sup>540</sup> It is worth noting that according to Lagarde, the answer of the German government to this House was the creation of three scholarships for young Mexicans that desired to study in Germany.

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<sup>538</sup> Zaitzeff, "Alfonso Reyes en Paris", p. 676.

<sup>539</sup> Echegaray, "La obra de ángel Zárraga en la Embajada de México en París", p. 247.

<sup>540</sup> Zaitzeff, "Alfonso Reyes en Paris", p. 676.

The question of physical representations was also relevant for Europeans and it became problematic in the case of the German Legation and colony in Mexico City.<sup>541</sup> This was a colony conscious of being the most respected among the Europeans because Germany had not invaded or taken territory away from Mexico as other European colonial powers and the US had done during the hundred years of its history as an independent state. This was affirmed by the German representative in Mexico who mentioned Mexican nationalism and xenophobia were mainly directed at the US and Spain.

The importance of feeling beloved as an immigrant group was evident when the German colony rejected criticism voiced in 1926 by the *Grüne Post* of Berlin towards Mexico. The German Citizens League in Mexico wrote to *El Universal* with a protest against the “unjustifiable calumnies from certain newspapers of Berlin, that maybe for unhealthy sensationalism, allow to denigrate and ridicule one friendly nation of Germany, with noble qualities they do not know neither can estimate, and against these calumnies we raise our voices with all our indignation.”<sup>542</sup> Evidently, foreign colonies were important sources for the support of a national programme such as post-Revolutionary Mexico.

The problem of representation with the colony for the German Legation was that various members had refused to change from the Imperial to the Weimar Republic flag in properties and businesses throughout the Mexican territory. German residents argued Mexicans were already familiar with the Imperial flag and this protected their properties from many attacks, while a change of flag would imply that

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<sup>541</sup> According to von Montgelas, the German colony in Mexico consisted of 8,000 people, 3,000 of whom lived in Mexico City, but Delia Salazar mentioned that in 1895 there were 2332 Germans in Mexico and 3775 in 1910. Salazar cited by Pi Suñer, Riguzzi and Ruano, *Europa*, p. 216. AHSRE, 11-11-35, Correspondencia intercambiada entre la Legación de Alemania en México y la SRE, 1919-1921: Álvaro Obregón to the Executive Committee of the German Colony, 15 October 1921.

<sup>542</sup> Dr. G. Pagenstecher, Presidente de la Liga de Ciudadanos Alemanes en México, in *El Universal*, Mexico City, 16 November 1927. PAAA Mexiko 47/1, 000265.

their land and businesses would easily be victims of robbery in times of political and military crisis. This decision making process was omitting that many of those Germans were conservatives who did not support the Weimar Republic, made clear with the backing of those Germans to the Nazi regime years later. In any case, for those German residents Mexico's people did not understand the change of politics in Germany and continuing with the Imperial flag was a physical representation for assuring stability before revolutionary threats to their properties and lives.<sup>543</sup>

Other cultural ties were momentary and achieved by a contact between governments, diplomats, businessmen and colonies to celebrate official dates or war efforts. Other forms of connection were done by public representations through newspapers, pamphlets, posters, theatre or films; non-official actors mainly realised these, but diplomats were aware of this and mentioned in which sense they could improve or diminish friendly positions in bilateral relations. Lastly, it was through the visit of Europeans to Mexico and vice versa that a dialogue between cultures could be achieved, it was of the interest of governments, consuls and diplomats that excursions were interpreted as positive demonstrations of cultural understandings. I will now look into all these momentary contacts in the following subsections.

#### 4.4.1 Official cultural celebrations

Events to commemorate the French revolution or the Mexican independence were useful as meeting points between diplomats, politicians and nationals abroad. These events could vary from breakfasts and gala dinners to the establishment of war memorials and statues. For example, in 1921 the German colony offered a statue of Ludwig von Beethoven, which was appreciated by President Obregón who saw it as a

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<sup>543</sup> More on the flag problem and the German colony in general can be found in Silke Nagel, *Ausländer in Mexiko: die "Kolonien" der deutschen und US-amerikanischen Einwander in der mexikanischen Hauptstadt 1890-1942* (Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert, 2005).

beautiful and meaningful detail and a “tangible expression of the cultural links that unify Mexico with Germany” as the celebrations in Mexico for the centenary of Beethoven had shown. The French consul in Nuremberg considered this statue was part of the efforts done to develop German interests in Spanish America.<sup>544</sup>

Along with the participation of von Montgelas in the centenary of the Mexican Independence, one ceremony of German-Mexican formal relations worth mentioning was the celebration of Mexico’s independence in September 1924 while Calles was in Berlin as the presidential candidate. The party was held at the ‘Hotel Eden’ and attended by the German Minister of Foreign Relations, Stresemann, the State Secretary Maltzan, the newly appointed German Minister in Mexico, Will, the ambassador of Spain and ministers of Uruguay, Belgium, Argentina, Brazil, German industrialists and labour leaders. Given that President Ebert was unable to attend, he sent a telegram congratulating Mexico and wishing Calles a good presidential period. Calles and Obregón wrote a thankful note. At 11 pm Calles held the Mexican flag and made the call of Independence, the *grito*, the Mexican national anthem was sung and ‘vivas’ were shouted. Calles left at 2 am.<sup>545</sup> This was a party for Mexicans in Germany and German economic, labour and political figures to celebrate together.

One year later, in Paris, Reyes held a party with more than 650 people to celebrate Mexico’s independence. In his diary, he mentioned that he was apprehensive about the meeting of the ‘ancient regime’ (Porfirian) and the ‘new regime’ (revolutionary) colonies, but also about the idea that students or artists could drink too much. However, almost all members of the Porfirian colony were outside Paris for holidays and there was no over-drinking of alcohol. There was live music, Ponce, who at the time was residing in Paris studying structural and instrumental

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<sup>544</sup> ADMAE, Mexique 7: The French Consul in Nuremberg to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nuremberg, 14 December 1921, f. 192.

<sup>545</sup> APEC, expediente 86: LEGACION DE ALEMANIA, legajo 1, fojas 6-10, inventario 3144.

harmonic modalities at the *École Normale de Musique de Paris*, also played and his wife, Clementina, sang *Las Mañanitas* and *Estrellita*.<sup>546</sup>

One year later, the celebrations for the Centenary were held as a breakfast with champagne in the Legation and not as a dinner, since members of the colony were outside the capital for holidays and the remaining students had no appropriate clothing (tailcoat or smoking jacket). He considered a dinner would then be for foreigners and not for Mexicans.<sup>547</sup> Again, these celebrations were seen as a relevant form to keep national colonies happy; they were important sources of support abroad. Another example can be found in the acceptance of diplomatic credentials of Alfonso Reyes on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1925. The French President recognised the important role of the active and laborious French colony in contributing towards a rapprochement between the two republics.<sup>548</sup>

In the case of the French Legation in Mexico, Périer offered several breakfasts to commemorate the French Revolution which were attended by Mexican authorities and members of the French colony. Once relations were restored, the British representative, Esmond Ovey, invited Mexican politicians to celebrate King George V's birthdays. In contrast, German diplomats did not have a special annual day to celebrate, or at least I did not find those invitations in the archives.

Other forms in which there was a cultural rapprochement between diplomats, authorities and colonies was the commemoration of war soldiers. This was possible in the case of the Mexican-French relationship in which collective memory of war efforts was considered. In January 1919, an album was published in Puebla to commemorate members of the French colony in Mexico who joined the French

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<sup>546</sup> Entry from 18 September 1925 in Reyes, *Diario 1911-1930*, p. 108.

<sup>547</sup> Entry from 13 September 1926 in Alfonso Reyes, *Diario 1911-1930*, pp. 148-149.

<sup>548</sup> ADMAE, Mexique 33: The French president to Reyes, 20 January 1925, f. 144.

army<sup>549</sup> and the French colony established a monument in the French Cemetery in Mexico City to recognise them on 11 November 1919.

Some years later, in Basses-Alpes, the region from the Barcelonettes who were such important members for the French colony in Mexico, there was a ceremony to put a plaque to commemorate those same soldiers. The ceremony was attended by the chargé d'affaires of Mexico in Paris, Honnorat (Senator of the Basses-Alpes) as representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Paul Reynaud, at the time deputy of the Basses-Alpes. Alducín, the owner of *El Universal* who was in France, was also invited but he could not attend. However, he sent a note mentioning his solidarity with the Barcelonette community that was a friend of Mexico.<sup>550</sup>

While the celebration of important national historical dates was the initiative of diplomats and had an ephemeral impact, it was a historical tradition and is something that continues in practice. In contrast, the establishment of statues or memorials was planned by foreign colonies. It had a long-term local impact since these physical constructions continue to exist. Both cultural rapprochements linked diplomats, cultural, political and artistic elites with nationals living abroad creating a sense of a community away from home.

#### 4.4.2 Cultural representations in the press, theatres and films

Representation of historical moments or present affairs appeared in newspapers, scenic arts and cinematography. For example, in 1924 the Mexican government sent to Germany six boxes with films presenting the ministries, commercial houses,

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<sup>549</sup> French diplomats called for the men of the colony to defend the motherland in the war. If the men of the colony did not contribute, the French Legation would not be able to protect their properties, business and commercial interests in the context of the Mexican Revolution. The French colony in Mexico also pressured young men to join; for example, many commercial houses encouraged them to join and paid the travel expenses to France. Pérez Siller, "Les <<Poilus Mexicains>>", San Bartolo Ametalco, Mexico, 2 November 2003 in <http://www.ehess.fr/cena/colloques/2006/emigrants/siller.pdf> accessed 06 March 2015, pp. 6, 12.

<sup>550</sup> *The New York Herald*, New York City, 19 August 1923. ADMAE, Mexique 8; f. 166.

schools and other organisations of Mexico as a way of Mexican propaganda.<sup>551</sup> Those representations allowed a civil society to understand, perceive or interpret an *other*. In words of Dr Karl Müller, member of the Nuremberg German-Mexican Chamber of Commerce, “numerous German films from different sorts carry today one piece of awareness to Mexico, equally as the other way around through the renowned Mexican films which drive the best visual instruction about Mexico to Germany”.<sup>552</sup>

Hence, through diverse media, official and non-official cultural actors presented Mexico in Europe and vice versa. While the popular encounters varied, I only covered those mentioned by Mexican and European diplomats, since these are the ones linked to foreign policies in regards to questions of representations and the need for cultural understandings, but also to propaganda and the question of public diplomacy.

One of the most relevant sources for representations was the use of propaganda. The Great War created a paradigmatic change in the sense that it strengthened the idea of distributing and making propaganda abroad. In this context, French diplomacy saw as a clear threat the establishment of Duems Agency in 1920 by Carl Düms, a member of the German colony that during the Great War had established Servicio Atlas (1918-20) with the goal of supporting the German cause in Mexico and later on in Latin America. He closed Servicio Atlas since Mexican newspapers were not publishing his news. The end of the Great War had implied an end to the publication of Germanophile news and he was not obtaining more subventions from the German government. With the new agency, Duems was one of

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<sup>551</sup> ADMAE, Mexique 86: ff. 81-99.

<sup>552</sup> “zahlreiche deutsche Films aller Art tragen heute ein Stück Aufklärungsarbeit nach Mexiko, ebenso wie umgekehrt durch die bekannten Mexikofilms bester Anschauungsunterricht über Mexiko in Deutschland getrieben wird.” PAAA, Mexiko, Politik 11 Nr. 1, Personalien: Staatsoberhäupter und deren Familien 1, Januar 1920-Dezember 1935, R79628:Dr. Karl Müller, “Moderne Methoden zur Förderung der deutsch-mexikanischen Beziehungen”, Pamphlet of the Deutsch-Mexikansichen Handelskammer, Nuremberg, 21 and 22 November 1924.

those *Auslandsdeutsche* that promoted support for post-Versailles Germany. The Duems Agency received a subsidy both from the German and the Mexican administrations and it fostered a good image of Mexico abroad and of Germany in Latin America. The Duems Agency was a basis for pro-German attitudes in Latin American Press until 1932 when it closed.

In contrast, in 1921 French news agency Havas suspended its service in Latin America for economic reasons and only opened it again in March 1924. French diplomacy saw this as a real threat, especially because Duems Agency was increasing its presence in Latin America. French diplomats accused Duems Agency of publishing lies about France. They also feared the support of the Mexican people for the German people during the French Occupation of the Ruhr; for example, newspapers such as *El Universal*, that used to be pro-Allies, started to become neutral and promoted the organisation of a campaign that aimed to get support for German children of the Ruhr.

According to German representative, Adolf von Montgelas, the efforts of Duems Agency were successful as *El Universal*, traditionally pro-French, had been willing to collect money for those German children. Moreover, *El Universal* decided to publish a special issue on France in July and later one on Germany in October 1923 celebrating its recent achievements, which was seen as a clear example of the German success in neutralising this newspaper. Besides, Mexican unions decided that as long as there were French troops in the Ruhr the *Marseillaise* would not be sung by them, and members of the working class of the state of Yucatán collected money to support workers from the Ruhr. According to von Montgelas “all sympathies are and

must be in the German perspective”.<sup>553</sup> Besides, German diplomacy considered the role of Duems an important focal point in the region since French propaganda was lying about Germany and portraying it in negative ways.<sup>554</sup>

Mexico also faced the benefits and problems of propaganda in Europe. The two moments when Mexico was more present in European newspapers was the visit of Calles to Europe and the *Cristero* rebellion. In the first case, as I explained in the previous chapter, Calles asked Duems Agency to cover all his events in the Mexican and German press and to assure a positive image of the country. Mexican newspapers used the Duems Agency coverage to portray his visit and the interviews he offered. Besides, several German newspapers mentioned all of his activities and portrayed the country as a promising land. Moreover, the company *Ufa* made a film about the festivities for Calles in Hamburg, a film that was due to be exhibited in Germany and also in Mexico.<sup>555</sup>

In the second case, Mexican diplomats in the European Powers’ capitals dealt with the pressure of German Catholic propaganda whether in newspapers, pamphlets or posters in order to stop the *Cristero* war. This propaganda accused the Mexican government of being Bolshevik and/or Jacobin, and even in the case of Great Britain

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<sup>553</sup> “Aller Sympathien seien und muessten auf Deutschlands Seite sein.” PAAA, Mexiko, Politik 12, Pressewesen, Allgemeines, März 1920-November 1927, R79635: Adolf von Montgelas to the AA, Mexico City, 20 June 1923.

<sup>554</sup> I have explored the rivalry between France and German news agencies in Mexico at the Essex History Research Day (12 May 2015), which allowed me to write the archival article “La propaganda alemana en México desde la perspectiva francesa, 1920-1924” submitted to the journal *Tzintzun. Revista de Estudios Históricos*. A new version of these ideas including a comparison with the use of propaganda in the Great War was discussed at the British International History Group 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference (8 September 2016).

<sup>555</sup> The film presents moments of the visit of Calles in Germany: his arrival to the port of Cuxhaven in which we see Calles walking; Calles in a train with his family; Calles in a boat talking with authorities; Calles walking in Potsdam visiting the Sanssouci palace; Calles presenting a crown to the fallen soldier and visiting the Garnisonkirche. The film can be watched at the Bundesarchiv-Abteilung Filmarchiv. I express gratitude to Dr David Romo who let me know of the existence of this film while we were both doing archival research in Berlin during the summer of 2013.

parallels were established with the Tudor tyranny.<sup>556</sup> Calles, as has been said in Chapter 1, tried to avoid any associations with Soviet Russia although relations with it existed and the government supported the cause of labour. However, the Mexican government had a liberal and not a Soviet approach to revolution.

According to Will, the presidential annual report of 1928 mentioned that there was criticism in international media on the executive position of the government towards the *Cristero* rebellion. Apart from criticism in the US, the situation was critical portrayed in newspapers from 1. Italy, 4. Germany, 6. Belgium, 9. Spain and 12. England.<sup>557</sup> As an example we have German Catholic newspapers that from 1926 to 1929 continuously reported on the religious conflict in Mexico, going as far as portraying Calles as a Jew, Nero, Bolshevik and Jacobin. This happened although the German government asked for neutral and objective reports of the events in Mexico.<sup>558</sup> The propaganda was so intense that by February 1928 Ramón P. de Negri, Mexican minister in Berlin, asked the German Foreign Office to censor it, something the German government refused to do in agreement with freedom of speech. The German government also resisted the pressures of German Catholic associations that wanted the Weimar Republic to protest against the Mexican government or even went so far to ask for the cancellation of diplomatic relations.<sup>559</sup>

Moreover, the Mexican religious conflict led to complaints by Reyes of seeing posters around Paris that accused his government of committing atrocities against Catholics. Also, according to the US Embassy in Paris, the conflict had relevance in

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<sup>556</sup> Fernando Cervantes, “Los católicos ingleses ante el conflicto religioso en México” in Meyer (comp.), *Las naciones frente al conflicto religioso en México*, p. 112.

<sup>557</sup> PAAA, Mexiko, Politik 16, Religions- und Kirchenwesen Mexikos 2, Mai -Dezember 1928, R79641: Telegram from Eugen Will to the AA, 3 September 1928.

<sup>558</sup> PAAA, R79640: Telegram from Schubert to German Embassy in Rome, General Consulate in New York and the Legation in Mexico, Berlin, 8 August 1926.

<sup>559</sup> I have analysed this problem in collaboration with David Murrieta Flores in the poster presentation “Gruel in Mexiko: German Diplomacy and the *Cristero* Counter-Revolution in Mexico” at the International Conference World-Counter-Revolutions 1917-1920 from a global perspective, Hanover-Herrenhausen, 9 June 2016.

the French press, for example in *La Matin* an article entitled “Propaganda of the Third International” appeared and one in *L’Avenir* on 3 August 1926 entitled “In Mexico, the real designs of President Calles, a utilitarian anti-clericalism? What are the United States going to do?” written by S. de Givet.<sup>560</sup> According to the latter article, Calles was a Bolshevik in character influenced by the Soviets:

the pretended plot, in which seven out of the nine accused persons were women, brings out clearly Moscow’s way of doing. The Soviets have always pretended the existence of plots against the regime as an excuse to multiply prerequisites and wholesale shooting. But it is only the steps that have this character, the social cause lying much deeper.<sup>561</sup>

The article maintained that the Mexican government also worked with the proletariat with the goal of: “appropriating the property of someone else for the personal benefit of those at the head of the Government.”<sup>562</sup> For the author of this article “In the acts of Calles and of his band, there is neither political nor philosophical conviction”, but they only aimed to take the property of nationals and foreigners. For S. de Givet. the only country that could intervene in this conflict was the United States as “European countries will take care not to, in order not to offend the susceptibilities of the United States which take offence at any gesture on the part of the “World countries” toward South America. Of course, it is useless to suppose that, as England is said to have intention of doing, to protest to Mexico would produce any result.”<sup>563</sup>

Foulard has also summarised how the French Press dealt with the *Cristiada*. For example, she analysed *Ouest éclair*, a newspaper founded in 1899 in Rennes by the abbot Trochu and the lawyer Emmanuel Desgrées de Lou, which covered the

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<sup>560</sup> CDEEEUM, serie 1926, expediente 110102: EMBAJADA DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS: CORRESPONDENCIA CON SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, fojas 1-6, inventario 46, legajo 1: Ambassador Sheldon Whitehouse to the Secretary of State, Paris, 6 August 1926, f. 1.

<sup>561</sup> CDEEEUM, serie 1926, expediente 110301: AGREGADO MILITAR DE ESTADOS UNIDOS: CORRESPONDENCIA DE EDGAR W. BURR, foja 4, inventario 63, legajo 1. August 1926, Dispatch no. 6553, Translation of an article which appeared in L’AVENIR of Paris, France, dated August 3, 1926”.

<sup>562</sup> CDEEEUM, serie 1926, expediente 110301: foja 4, inventario 63, legajo 1.

<sup>563</sup> CDEEEUM, serie 1926, expediente 110301: foja 4, inventario 63, legajo 1.

*Cristero* war though news from Reuters and Havas agencies. According to this newspaper, Calles' radical laws had led to the war. He was described as a mason, Jew, Bolshevik, that was defending the international banking system influenced by the U.S, and he was under the influence of the interest of U.S. Methodists.<sup>564</sup>

In Great Britain, Catholic newspapers such as *The Tablet* defended the position of the *cristeros* in Mexico and in contrast criticised the expulsion of priests and the accusation of Catholics for violent acts such as the assassination of Obregon in July 1928. Nonetheless, Catholic voices had few repercussions in Protestant circles, which predominated, a neutral Press such as *The Times*, and the position of the British government of neutrality towards a Mexican internal conflict.

Other sources of public representation were film and theatre. In these the question of censorship was taken into consideration when representations were unfavourable. We have the case of October 1925 when Ortiz Rubio asked Stresemann to prohibit a play called "*die letzten beiden Azteken* / The last couple of Aztecs" which had been played in some fairs in southern Germany. For the diplomat, this scenic representation showed a lack of respect for the Mexican people because it mocked their physical properties, for example it was said that the mass of a Mexican brain would at the most be of 200 grams.<sup>565</sup> A play like this extended the idea that Mexicans were inferior, something that according to Jorge C. Ursúa was a common idea about the nationals of Mexico who suffered injustice and bullying, being treated as cannibals and savages in Germany.<sup>566</sup> By March 1926, the governments of Prussia and Baden-Württemberg had asked the police to censor presentations of the play.

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<sup>564</sup> Foulard, "Las ambigüedades francesas ante el conflicto religioso mexicano", p. 145.

<sup>565</sup> PAAA, Mexiko, Politik 2, Politische Beziehungen Mexikos zu Deutschland, 3, Dexember 1925-Januar 1936, R79600: Pascual Ortiz Rubio to Stresemann, 12 October 1925, *Weser Zeitung*, 21 January 1926.

<sup>566</sup> AGN, Fondo Obregón-Calles, 104-A-50, Situación ciudadanos mexicanos: Jorge C. Ursúa to Plutarco Elías Calles, Berlin, 20 December 1924, p. 1.

There were occasions in which the question of representation was not a problem, but the economic instability. The “Teatro Alemán en la América del Sud, S.A.” / “German Theatre in South America”, toured in Argentina, Chile, Peru and Mexico in 1922-23. It remained two months in Mexico, November-December 1923, and intended to improve German-Mexican relations. According to the director Gustav Bluhm it was a German cultural mission, a pioneer of *Deutschtum* abroad, but the effort to present works of unrecognised writers was not a success according to von Montgelas. The German representative reported that while the German colony in Mexico committed to the work of the German Theatre, this was not of great importance to the Mexican public which in contrast had greater interest in an Italian theatre group that arrived in Mexico in the same dates. The only exception was when Obregón and his family went to the performance promoted by the *Deutschen Frauenvereins* for the children of Germany in need.<sup>567</sup>

In the instance of cultural ties between France and Mexico, there was the example of summer 1926 when two spectacles related to Mexico were performed and celebrated by Reyes. One was organised by Armen Ohanian, Armenian writer and dancer married to the Mexican Macedonio Garza, and another by Colombian Luis Enrique Osorio in the Theatre Michel, in which his stay in Mexico is portrayed as significant for his dramatic career and also his esteem for Vasconcelos was mentioned.

In the case of films, in April 1921 the presentation of “Modern Mexico” in Hamburg was accompanied by a conference from M. Erichsen who talked about life in Mexico and the fact that Mexico stayed friends with Germany even when it faced pressures by the Entente. According to the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* this film

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<sup>567</sup> PAAA, Mexiko, Kunst und Wissenschaft 1, Kunst und Wissenschaft im Allgemeinen in Mexiko, März 1923-Mai 1934, R79593: Von Montgelas to the AA, Mexico City, 26 January 1923.

presentation was a celebration of Mexican-German sympathies; the event was attended by the new Mexican consul in Hamburg who celebrated German culture. The attendees sang “Deutschland über alles”.<sup>568</sup> Clearly, a good representation of a country was celebrated and established moments of friendly bilateral relations.

Likewise, Reyes understood the importance of cinematographic propaganda. For example, he promoted a deal with the Gaumont House, to prevent the American film “Mademoiselle Minuit” showing scenes disrespectful towards Mexico’s people. About this, Reyes achieved recognition that the Mexican Legation might intervene when films were affecting Mexico. According to him,

Cinematographic companies have been very sensible to my menace of Mexican “boycott.” I really believe that with this right of previous censure, we have obtained a true triumph and a useful conquest. Besides, the *Secretaría* will be able to, in some cases, use this authorised antecedent to obtain the same in other countries.<sup>569</sup>

The idea of censorship was multilateral. For example, the German representative in Mexico asked Calles’s government to prohibit the exhibition of the movie *Lo que olvidó el Kaiser en sus memorias/What the Kaiser forgot in his memoirs* produced by the Mexican Florencio Soto, because it was considered to denigrate Germans in general and therefore the German Colony in Mexico.<sup>570</sup> This movie was indeed banned in Mexican territory.

These few cases show how diplomats were concerned about the representation of their people abroad through newspapers, scenic and visual arts. Clearly, diplomats took care to secure respectful treatment and assure equality in this relationship, but they were also aware of the usefulness of the new media for propaganda actions.

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<sup>568</sup> *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, Hamburg, 26 February 1921.

<sup>569</sup> “Las Compañías cinematográficas han sido muy sensibles a mi amenaza de “boycott” mexicano. Creo realmente que, con este derecho de censura previa, hemos obtenido un verdadero triunfo y una conquista útil. Además, la Secretaría podrá, en algunos casos, usar de este autorizado antecedente para obtener lo mismo en otros países.” AHSRE, 18-5-198, Asuntos pendientes de resolución de la legación en Francia, 1926: Alfonso Reyes to Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores, Paris, 10 October 1926.

<sup>570</sup> AGN, Fondo Obregón-Calles, 104-P-39, Películas denigrantes para Alemania.

Furthermore, this diplomatic perception was shared by the colonies, an illustration of this is Max Athenasy who wrote an article in *L'Echo français* called “Reciprocité!” in which he recognised that the French government took a good decision in censoring French movies that were lacking tact when portraying Mexicans in the same tone as Los Angeles productions that presented denigrating scenarios of its neighbour. However, it criticised the lack of censorship to an exhibition in a store in Bolivar no. 42 of photography, caricatures and prints that ridiculed the French occupation troops in the Ruhr. The owner of the store where the exhibition took place was Germán Alberto Lenz.<sup>571</sup>

#### 4.4.3 Visits of official and non-official figures

During the 1920s, European official and non-official individuals visited Mexico and vice versa. The most important visits were those of politicians. Even if these were formally not ‘official visits’, they ended up being public: French Senator Honnorat visited Mexico (1920-21) and President-Elect Plutarco Elías Calles visited Germany and France. The two-month private visit of Honnorat (December 1921- February 1922) has been already mentioned throughout this chapter. Clearly, Honnorat had impact in aspects such as war commemoration and the establishment of the bookstore *El Libro Francés*. While in Mexico, Honnorat visited factories, school, charities and shops. His presence was covered by *El Universal* which, for example, demanded that intellectual relations between Mexico and France became closer. While the French Alliance and the Union of Women of France were already dealing with this aspect, the newspaper said one of the most relevant intellectual ways to achieve this goal was

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<sup>571</sup> “Reciprocité!”, *L' Echo français de Mexico*, Mexico City, 22 March 1924, ADMAE, Mexique 25: f. 13.

missing: theatre.<sup>572</sup> This was the most relevant aspect of visits, they made relations with a foreign country present in national news.

The visit of Calles has been already portrayed regarding its impact in the political and economic areas in the previous chapters, in this one it is clear that he had a role in the creation of the Mexican Library in Magdeburg, now part of the Ibero-American Library in Berlin, and he took part in commemorating Mexico's independence. His visit also encouraged the excursion of German businesspeople and scientists to Mexico (1925 and 1926) which also led to the visit of Mexican businessmen and political leaders to Europe in 1926, also to the visit of a German school ship. Besides, the presence of Calles led to a friendship between Calles and Ebert and a peak of coverage on Mexico in European Press.

The relationship between Ebert and Calles is illustrated in the fact that Ebert's death in February 1925 led to sorrow for Calles and the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations. Ortiz Rubio attended the funeral and left a crown as a tribute to the friendship of President Calles and its government. Furthermore, a packet was sent to Ebert's widow in June 1925 with Mexican products done by indigenous people.<sup>573</sup>

However, the admiration was not unilateral. Ortiz Rubio sent Calles a section of the *Tribune* of New York that stated that "The room [of President Ebert] was just as he left it on Monday night. Above his desk is a painting of President Calles of Mexico. On another wall is a picture of Rathenau, former Finance Minister."<sup>574</sup> It was

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<sup>572</sup>"Le voyage de M. Honnorat à Mexico", *Bulletin Périodique de la Presse Sud-Américaine*, no. 79, 14 March 1922. ADMAE, Mexique 25; f. 124.

<sup>573</sup> Two tablecloths and twelve frayed napkins, four blankets from Saltillo, two large and two small, two shawls from Santa María, two suedes one with the Castle of Chapultepec and the other with the Cathedral and a large blanket with the portrait of President Ebert. APEC, expediente 51: ORTIZ RUBIO, Pascual (Ing.), legajo 1/4, foja: 25, inventario 4239: Plutarco Elías Calles to Pascual Ortiz Rubio, Mexico City, 11 June 1925.

<sup>574</sup> AGN, Fondo Obregón-Calles, 104-A-37, Ministro de México en Alemania: *Tribune* of New York, March (unable to find exact date) sent by Pascual Ortiz Rubio to Plutarco Elías Calles, Berlin, 3 March 1921, f. 13.

not only Calles who admired Ebert, as Buchenau mentioned, but the German head of state corresponded the admiration.

The most relevant aspect in which the effectiveness of the visit of Calles can be analysed is through the media. German newspapers talked about the important historical links between both nations, the latest social developments and economic opportunities in Mexico, especially for economic exchange, while Germany was seen as the example of a country that after a war and a revolution was achieving social justice and economic reconstruction. Nonetheless, the Press did not show interest in questions of academic exchange or knowledge.<sup>575</sup> As already mentioned, all activities Calles did during his first week in Germany were reported in the German Press as well as interviews Duems Agency held with him.

After Germany, Calles went to Paris for a week. In charge of the agenda of Calles in Berlin and Paris was Puig Casauranc. For him, a similar reception of Calles in Paris as the one he received in Germany was necessary since this “will translate in prestige for Mexico and strength for your government”.<sup>576</sup> Various newspapers in France and Mexico mentioned all the activities of Calles in Paris. The focus was on economic relations between countries, the mixed claims commission and the commitment to follow the Constitution and law. The interest of Calles in intellectual and cultural relations was mentioned too. For example, *Excelsior* published an interview in which Calles said intellectual relations were improved through the

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<sup>575</sup> Some German newspapers that mentioned Calles's stay in Hamburg and Berlin were: *Hamburger Nachrichten*, *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, *Vossische Zeitung*, *Deutsche Allg. Zeitung*, *Der Tag*, *Berliner Tageblatt*, *Die Zeit*, *B. Z. am Mittag*, *Welt-Rundschau*, *Deutsche Zeitung*, *Neuste Nachrichten*, *Hamburger Correspondent*, *Harungische Zeitung*, *Breslauer Zeitung*, *Hamburger Echo*, *Schlesische Zeitung*, *Thueringer Allg. Zeitung*, *Leipziger Tagesblatt*, *Muench. Neuste Nachricht*, *Lokal Anzeiger*, *Neue Preussische Kreuzzeitung*, *Deutsche Tageszeit*, *Der Bund*, *Koelnische Volkszeitung*, *Der Jungdeutsche* and *Fraenkischer Courier*. See Fondo 12, serie 010602, expediente 78: PRENSA, Recortes de, legajo 1, inventario 178, fojas 1-104/165. Descripción: álbum con recortes de prensa en alemán.

<sup>576</sup> “se traducirá en prestigio para México y en fuerza para su Gobierno.” APEC anexo, Fondo Elías Calles, serie 0306, expediente 23: PUIG CASAURANC, José Manuel (Dr. Y Dip.), legajo 1, foja 91, inventario 1377: Puig a Calles, Paris, 22 September 1924.

exchange of students and teachers and the diffusion of literature and scientific work.<sup>577</sup> For its part, *Petit Bleu* highlighted that the visit of Calles did not intend to gain money, but only to show sympathy to the French people.<sup>578</sup> This is exactly the reason for which the visit of Calles is so important, it was a way to show sympathy and commemorate a relationship that could be useful in economic terms. The visit showed that the dilemma between revolution and stabilisation had been solved in favour of the stability of the country.

Before leaving Paris, and Europe, Calles offered an interview in which he stated that during his visit he had collected “precious information that makes me hope for my country an economic waking that will restore the prosperity of our finances.” This, of course, was part of the post-Revolutionary goal to stabilise the economy and continue the modernisation project with an economic nationalism. Calles also explained that he “realised that the Latin republic that I will represent will count with the friendship of democracies across the Atlantic.”<sup>579</sup> Evidently, Calles went to Germany and France since these were democracies with which he wanted Mexico to be associated. Also, these democracies had already recognised Obregón. Calles did not want to be linked to the Soviet Union or other European countries that he did not regard with the same admiration or which had failed to respect the Mexican Revolution, meaning Great Britain.

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<sup>577</sup> “Le Président Élu du Mexique à Paris”, *Excelsior*, 5 October 1924. FONDO 12, serie 010603, expediente 78: PRENSA, Recortes de, legajo 1, inventario 203, foja 12.

<sup>578</sup> *Petit Bleu*, 7 October 1924. FONDO 12, serie 010603, expediente 78: PRENSA, Recortes de, legajo 1, inventario 203, foja 31.

<sup>579</sup> “J’étais venu en Europe pour me documenter avant de prendre la présidence de l’État mexicain. Je rentre avec de précieux renseignements qui me font espérer pour mon pays un réveil économique qui rétablira la prospérité de nos finances. J’étais venu aussi me rendre compte que la république latine que je vais représenter pourra compter sur l’amitié des démocraties outre-Atlantique. Je vois que mon espérance était fondée. Le souvenir de l’accueil qui m’a été fait en France restera gravé dans mon cœur.” “Le départ du Président du Mexique”, *Intransigeant*, 20 October 1924. FONDO 12, serie 010603, expediente 78: PRENSA, Recortes de, legajo 1, inventario 203, foja 71.

Along with being useful for making Mexico part of the European imagery through media, the visit of Calles was successful in the case of the Mexican-German relationship in the sense that it led to other cultural encounters. It was followed by two excursions of businessmen and scientists to Mexico, a similar visit of Mexicans was programmed for Germany, but it was extended to a stay in other European countries, for example, France. This was something promoted and celebrated by the French government that did consider a rapprochement between Mexico and Germany represented a menace for French interests. Those expeditions have been already analysed in Chapter 3. It is now the moment to look at other visits that were related: cadets and Prince Henry of Prussia.

In January 1925, the training ship “Berlin” visited Mexico. This was not the first European training ship that arrived in the country during the 1920s. For example, from 14 to 17 December 1923, French marines in the school-battleship “Jeanne d’Arc” arrived in Manzanillo as part of their activities. The French Colony in Guadalajara invited the students two days to the fair in the city. In order to do the trip from Manzanillo to Guadalajara the French colony and consul asked the governor of Jalisco for some trains that would transport the marines. These were extended.<sup>580</sup> At this moment, even when French recognition had just been received, there was no official celebration of the visit of cadets.

The “Berlin” training ship group, which was formed by commander Paul Wülfing von Ditten,<sup>581</sup> 59 cadets and 124 officers of the deck and personnel, visited Mexico City and Veracruz. In both places they were “tempestuously acclaimed” by government officials and the Mexican people, with a “stamp of spontaneous

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<sup>580</sup> AGN, Fondo Obregón-Calles, 223-F-5, Visita marinos franceses en 1923: Louis Gausson (French consul in Guadalajara) to Governor José Zuno, Guadalajara, Jalisco, 17 November 1923.

<sup>581</sup> Viceadmiral Paul Wülfing von Ditten (1880-1953) was commander of the Cruiser “Berlin” from 1 October 1923 to 18 July 1925.

cordiality”.<sup>582</sup> German cadets in Veracruz were received with a formal banquet offered by federal and local authorities. General Marcelino Murrieta, who was in charge of welcoming the German marines talked about the links and affinities that unified both peoples, on what Mexico owed to “grandiose” Germany in the domains of pedagogy and teaching methods. He went further and signalled that

The Mexican government did not participate in the European war, but the heart of Mexicans, of all habitants of this land, was with Germany, sympathetic with her, suffering the pains in the moments of sadness, celebrating with her the hours of victory. Mexicans, civilians and military, we take as an example the great virtues and the great discipline that the German people has demonstrated, Mexican soldiers and cadets incline themselves in front of the chiefs that fill their duty in the hour of trial.<sup>583</sup>

The answer of von Ditten was that he hoped these good feelings would lead to insoluble links between both countries.

In Mexico City, the cadets were received in the National Palace and a party was given in their honour at Chapultepec. Minister Will had a private audience with Calles to thank him for the cordiality. Moreover, in the newspaper *Excélsior* the company *Buen Tono* paid a whole page saluting the German colony in Mexico with images of the Brandenburger Tor, also a similar salutation was done in radiotelephonic communications on a Sunday. This was problematic since the institution was mainly owned by members of the French colony. As a matter of fact, Périer complained to the company which argued that the decision was not made by the directors of the company, but by the publicity agency.

Moreover, Périer wrote to Herriot stating that this visit of the “Berlin” cadets school was a clear example of the rapprochement between Germany and Mexico. He argued that it was an occasion for enthusiastic manifestations that proved how

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<sup>582</sup> “saludo afectuoso de mi Gobierno para el de esta Gran Nación que se ha distinguido siempre por su benevolencia y hospitalidad”, AGN, Fondo Obregón-Calles, 104-A-54, Alemanes marinos, baile restaurante Chapultepec: German Consul to the Inspector Gilberto Valenzuela, Veracruz, 11 January 1925.

<sup>583</sup> ADMAE, Mexique 10: Discourse by General Marcelino Murrieta, quoted in letter of Jean Périer to Raymond Poincaré, Mexico City, 6 February 1925, ff. 189-190.

Germany was still influential in Mexico and that Calles was willing to counterbalance the US with Germany. He explained that other recent visits such as the one by Senator Giurati, special ambassador of the king of Italy and the major-state of the ship “Italia” and a Japanese visit to Manzanillo were unnoticed. Furthermore, he argued that the Mexican-German contact was implicitly against the Allies.

Périer also mentioned his concerns to Estrada who explained that the visit of “Berlin” had no political signification and that was only a cordial reception after Calles had been welcomed in Germany. For this reason, the Mexican Foreign Relations Ministry did not participate in the organisation of the reception to the German cadets. Estrada explained that a French ship would also be received with enthusiasm equal to the one showed to “Berlin”.

Clearly, while the visit of German cadets to Mexico did not lead to a short-term impact in the Mexican-German relationship, it was an event part of a long-term friendly relationship that appeared to become stronger since German cadets were indeed better received than those from other nations during the Obregón-Calles era.

In contrast, the 18-days private visit of Prince Henry of Prussia to Mexico in the steamboat ‘Río Bravo’ had not so much resonance. On 22 November 1926, *La Prensa* (Buenos Aires, Argentina) published a note saying this visit was intended to increase the good relations between Mexico and Germany deeper and return the visit of Calles to Germany,<sup>584</sup> but this was not the case. In Mexico, the Prince travelled to Puebla, Cuernavaca, San Juan Teotihuacán and a mine near Pachuca, Hidalgo. He visited museums and some factories, but not French ones since this was asked to be refused by the French Legation in Mexico. He had private audiences with Calles and Amaro, but these were not relevant. Moreover, the Prince was welcomed by German

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<sup>584</sup> *La Prensa*, Buenos Aires, 22 November 1926, PAAA, R79600.

businessmen and alumni of German universities and there was also a reception by the *Casa Alemana de México*/German House in Mexico. There were also rumours that the Prince intended to expand German marine and to study the country to report to the Krupp Foundation which aimed to broaden its presence in the region.

Both visits show that Calles's visit to Germany did create a positive feeling between Mexico and Germany accompanied by an interest to increase the economic and cultural links. French diplomacy commented on the Mexican-German rapprochement as it was understood as a menace for the Allies and a clear sign of German imperialism, which could represent a threat to French soft power in Mexico.

There was also a surprise visit of two Frenchmen in June 1927, Lucien Romier ex-director of *Journée Industrielle* and *Le Figaro* and Gabriel Villard, an industrial from Saint-Etienne, who passed eight days in Mexico, they visited the Teotihuacan pyramids with Luis Montes de Oca, recently appointed as Secretary of Finance, and held a meeting with Calles. The visit was seen as a clear message of the friendship of France towards Mexico. This visit and that of Morand were according to Périer a clear example of the attractiveness of Mexico in France. This also incentivised him to continue looking for an establishment of a Transatlantic Co. to organise a tourist cruiser to Mexico.<sup>585</sup> Also, in September 1927 a Mexican delegation of military aeronautics went to France.<sup>586</sup>

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that according to a document found at the Diplomatic Archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Obregón had intentioned to visit France in September 1928 before assuming office for a second

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<sup>585</sup> ADMAE, Mexique 25: Jean Périer to Aristide Briand, Mexico City, 2 June 1927, f. 154.

<sup>586</sup> ADMAE, 27RC, Relations commerciales 1919-1940, B 62-79 Navigation maritime et fluviale, No. 78 : ff. 150-151.

term. The goal was to offer him similar receptions as that of Calles.<sup>587</sup> However, Obregón was assassinated.

#### *4.5 Conclusions*

Throughout this chapter, it is evident that Mexican, French and German diplomats practised cultural diplomacy in different degrees according to their personalities. They all saw relevance in having a good image abroad through newspapers, films and theatre and they promoted the understanding with other peoples through some individuals.

Reyes and Estrada were bridging figures between the arts and diplomacy, and along with Pani, Ortiz Rubio and Ramón P. de Negri considered it necessary for Mexico to be well represented abroad. They promoted an exchange of ideas through academic exchanges. Périer showed an interest in intellectual links with a close friendship with Estrada; this was evident in breakfasts with writers and philosophers. The German diplomats in Mexico, von Montgelas and Will, promoted the idea of a historic friendly relationship between Mexicans and Germans even during the Great War and through the Mexican Revolution, but they did not show so much promotion of cultural links unless they considered German dignity was at risk.

Non-diplomatic politicians whose work was related with broader questions of bilateral relations also had an impact as cultural diplomats. This was the case with the visits of Honnorat in Mexico and of Calles in Germany and France. They were not diplomats, but they were recognised official figures. In the case of Calles, even though this was a private visit, he was treated with a formal character as President-elect. It was evident that he had an international agenda and diplomats were part of

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<sup>587</sup> ADMAE, 22cpcom, Protocole, Mexique 31, Affaires diverses, 1918-1940 : Note received in the Direction Politique et Commerciale, 16 July 1928, f. 134.

the planning of his visit. These visits had immediate consequences: making the *other* appear in the Press and making the national press cover visits that represented a celebration of friendly bilateral relations in political, economic and cultural terms, especially if recognition had been offered. Short-term consequences of these links were the friendship and admiration between Ebert and Calles and the visits by German businesspeople and cadets to Mexico. Furthermore, the presence of Honnorat and Calles abroad was relevant with long-term impact in academic terms: achieving the exchange of ideas, values and traditions and promoting socio-cultural cooperation. Nonetheless, these efforts could also be counter-productive, for example with the creation of a new bookstore which according to Périer was dividing and not strengthening French intellectual presence in Mexico.

Non-diplomatic efforts related to cultural relations were the establishment of the Mexican Library by Hagen and the creation of the Duems Agency by Carl Düms. Both functioned as a bridge for Germany's image in Latin America and Mexico's in Germany. Moreover, it is worth reconsidering the impact of the efforts done by nationals abroad to take care of cultural relations, the statue of Beethoven in Mexico City symbolised a cultural tie and the defence of Mexico in German newspapers was a consequence of Germans feeling well taken care of in the country.

Beyond bilateral relations, it is worth stressing that cultural diplomatic and non-diplomatic efforts had consequences for the soft power of a nation in global terms. For this reason, Périer feared a Mexican-German relationship that could harm French interests and appeal. This fear was intense especially in the Occupation of the Ruhr, with the lack of a Havas Service while de Duems Agency increased its position in the region and called for support of the German people. Furthermore, Germany's soft power through agrarian projects, military and technical education was a risk for

the French one. However, as a result of the Treaty of Versailles, studies of military education of Mexicans in Germany were not possible and this allowed the increase of French relevance in the area. French soft power continued to be intellectual, but this was also being challenged by the US offer and Mexico's political process. The application of the Constitution of 1917 affected foreign Catholic private education in Mexico, diminishing the French cultural presence.

For France and Germany, cultural diplomacy was part of their soft power in regards to Mexico: this implied that there was a rivalry between them. For Mexico, both countries represented models to imitate to be a modern country in the international scene. Moreover, both European Powers represented a source of recognition. The Mexican post-Revolution wanted to be associated with social democracies, not with any other type of European nation whether imperial-monarchical or Bolshevik.

In contrast, Mexico did not exercise soft power in its relations with European powers, but it did in the case of Latin America. Great Britain did not show interest in applying soft power, and it eventually lost its hard power too. This answers the specific question to solve in this chapter which was whether the three European powers exercised cultural diplomacy towards Mexico; the answer is that only France and Germany did, since both countries had lost their hard power in the region, and could only hope to be strong as cultural examples to follow.

In the reconfiguration of international relations and national projects after the Great War and the Mexican Revolution, only France was willing to have a national foreign policy that as part of its activities explicitly cared for cultural relations, this was clear with the Service of French Work Abroad. In contrast, Germany used *Auslandsdeutsche* and diplomats to care for good relations in all questions and

Mexico had diplomats in charge with these efforts along with other activities. This is the reason for which Calles considered Reyes was taking care of intellectual issues instead of more short-term necessary steps in regards to administrative duties.

In conclusion, cultural diplomacy is an important aspect of international relations and it has political consequences in regards to the role a country can play in the international sphere, as a source for artistic, scientific, academic and literature inspirations, but also as a place attractive for investment and economic development. The exercise of cultural diplomacy is facilitated by stable diplomatic relations and encourages understanding between diverse national projects that face the dilemma of revolution and stabilisation. In the 1920s, diplomats and other actors exercised what nowadays we call cultural diplomacy. They did so without the use of this concept but having in mind an attempt to maintain or increase friendly relations and reinforce the position of their country in the world.

## **Final Reflections**

The focal point of this dissertation has been Mexican international relations with the three main European Powers in the 1920s. These relations, just as in the case of the United States, were dominated by the ongoing tension between implementing revolutionary goals, on the one hand, and stabilising the economy, society and political life, on the other hand. The methodological decision of having Mexico as point of departure enabled the exploration of the roles of diplomats in shaping international relations in the aftermath of revolutionary upheaval and the consequent alteration of internal political, economic and social objectives. This understandably also had a cultural dimension. These issues have significance beyond the particular case of Mexico since they apply in cases of stabilising the revolutionary order in relation to other Powers.

My principal focus is the changed relationship of the main European Powers during the Obregón-Calles era, 1920-28. Mexican governments, as we saw, were willing to prioritise stabilisation over revolution, for example in renegotiating the debt and dealing with mixed claims conventions, as in the case of France. Revolutionary nationalism, however, became uppermost when repeated tensions with Great Britain became unsustainable and accordingly delayed recognition, even leading to a rupture of relations in 1924-25.

The Mexican Revolution of 1910 onwards was the first revolution of the twentieth century. One might even view it as part of a revolutionary trend in that century, followed as it was by the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the fall of the dynastic monarchies in Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire in 1918/19. Accordingly, international power relations were changed considerably as a consequence of the Great War. The impact of the war also affected Great Britain,

France and Germany. All three countries were engaging in some form of reconstruction at the time that Mexico was working out the consequences of ten years of revolutionary upheaval.

Therefore, there was the need to explore what revolution implies in diplomatic terms and how it is connected with political, economic and cultural aspects of bilateral relations, but always part of a multilateral framework. To formally be part of the international society a government that arose from a revolution needed to be recognised (nowadays the practice has changed and a country is part of the global community if it is recognised as a state and governments are rarely recognised anymore). Forming part of the international community gave a state power, relating to others as equal and allowing it to be part of organisations such as the League of Nations. Internally, it stated that the revolutionary government was stable enough to be seen as in control of the territory and with the capacity to manage national boundaries, access to external armament and able to ask for external support if in need.

In order to portray the Mexican-European Powers relations from a diplomatic history perspective, I first looked into recognition, then economic diplomacy and finally cultural diplomacy. The question of recognition is connected to the economy. A government would be recognised by other governments which had diverse interests. Recognition became harder to get when economic actors felt under threat. This was clearly the case when the US government refused to recognise Obregón until its financial and industrial interests felt protected.

The issue of recognition had the capacity to retain or release international pressures and national economic interests. Recognition would also enable a better political, economic and cultural understanding between nations. The dedication of

Mexican and European diplomats as well as non-official actors permitted the development of more stable and stronger relations in the Obregón-Calles era. All such efforts were characterised by the dilemma mentioned above between revolutionary aims and general stabilisation.

As I have implied, the degree to which this dilemma was operative for the countries involved differed considerably. For Mexico, resolving this tension was of primordial importance since it had an impact on both national and international political and economic affairs. It also had a significant cultural dimension. With regard to internal political life, the revolutionary group which held power between 1920 and 1928, which was generally known as the Sonoran Group, struggled with the problem of how to remain in power and apply the principles contained in the 1917 Constitution; in this sense, De la Huerta, Obregón and Calles stood at a turning point in Mexican history. In order to recover foreign investment, stabilise the currency and renew industrial and agricultural production, the country needed to be governed with a steady hand so that foreign interests felt confident. Furthermore, political and economic stability were necessary if the state was to be in position to implement a cultural project which was nationalist and revolutionary, rejecting neo-colonialism and formal or informal imperialism whether European or from the United States. In contrast, the revolutionary governments reaffirmed Mexico's pre-Columbian past, in order to differentiate the country from outside influences and to assert a distinct identity. On this basis, intellectuals and artists receptive to international contemporary styles and modes of expression could blend outside influences with historic traditions.

The Mexican governments from 1920 to 1928, in front of the dilemma, prioritised stabilisation of relations. By doing so they delayed several revolutionary objectives, notably the strict application of Article 27 of the Constitution. While they

shared this common policy, we cannot talk about a uniform “Sonoran” foreign policy towards European Powers, since the foreign policy of De la Huerta, Obregón and Calles exhibited different attitudes towards Germany, France and Great Britain.

The German government did not give the dilemma much relevance. There were some similarities between the states in the attention paid to labour rights, and also in regards to the difficulties faced in the international arena -the League of Nations. Germany could not afford to and did not desire to have a bad relation with one of the few countries that remained neutral during the war and was even accused of being pro-German; also because the Mexican Revolution did not challenge German economic or cultural interests significantly. Hence, it was easier to offer recognition because its economic interests were not that important in Mexico and they did not feel under much risk.

The French government did find itself caught up in Mexico’s dilemma of holding to revolutionary principles or succumbing to internal pressures mainly because the question of the debt. The negotiation in 1922 resulted in a favourable French position towards recognition. However, the French government was not willing to go against US decisions since this would imply hostilities in the French-American relation; being under reconstruction after the Great War there was an urgency to maintain good relations. Furthermore, the difficulties of the Mexican government to service the debt after the *Delahuertista* rebellion put the trust French interests had in Mexico at risk. Nonetheless, the new renegotiation in 1925 rebuilt it. The tension between revolution and stabilisation was also a concern for French diplomacy in the case of the *Cristero* rebellion which put its educative presence under threat, but not enough for relations to be broken.

The British government did consider the dilemma of great importance since it had more economic concerns than the other European Powers, especially in regards to oil, mining and railways. Different British governments desired a return to the type of Porfirian regime as a precondition for stability and in consequence rejected the revolutionary objectives. British economic pressures were relevant until 1923, but after that, although these were pressuring for recognition the British government did not follow. I think it is evident that something else was in play in the Mexican-British relationship and that was national pride. However, the British government miscalculated the relevance of its economic interests or its political friendship for Mexican diplomacy, which henceforth contrasted with the importance of the US. By the end of the *Delahuertista* rebellion, the Mexican government had realised that Europe could not act as a counterbalance to the US. The recognition of the USA in 1923 greater contributed to the stabilisation needed in Mexico, although internal conflicts still continued to jeopardise it, Great Britain now had to accept the new Mexico, or suffer the consequences of isolation.

For Mexico, it was precisely economic pressures that made the dilemma between stabilisation and revolution harder. The Mexican government, with a past of strong diplomatic history that rejected foreign pressures, needed recognition to be politically stronger and able to modernise the country. Foreign interests should play a major role in the economic reconstruction. Therefore, the Mexican government was willing to concede in some aspects, for example committing to pay the debt, but not in the question of Article 27 which was a relevant revolutionary claim. The Bucareli Agreements conceded, but not legally and this, of course, was a thin line that facilitated US and French recognition, but also internal criticism as was evident with the *Delahuertista* rebellion. However, with the passing of the years between 1920 and

1924 it became evident that recognition was useful to maintain peace inside, and the *Delahuertista* rebellion clearly demonstrated that having stable relations with the US was a major factor in national strength. Stability was the basis for economic reconstruction.

Furthermore, recognition allowed stable economic relations and attempts to improve relations with projects such as the visit of Calles to Europe, the excursions by businessmen, the establishment of exhibitions with samples to increase commerce, etc. There were pragmatic and symbolic efforts to improve relations. I have not analysed the effects of those attempts, but focused on the efforts because they were part of strategic challenges faced during the Obregón-Calles era. Ultimately, economic diplomacy only played a small part in industrial, financial and commercial relations in contrast to what other ministries and non-official actors could achieve.

Additionally, once recognition was granted, cultural relations became more vivid with diplomats concerned with the promotion of scientific exchange, representations in the Press, theatre and films. Besides, stable diplomatic relations implied that a government did not take a stance against cultural challenges such as the *Cristero* rebellion. The governments of Germany, France and Great Britain remained neutral even if French and British diplomats were feeling some of their educative presence was being challenged. In the case of Germany, the *Cristero* war could make attempts to install German colonies in Mexico impossible. Also, good relations implied that European governments did not buy into the idea of Bolshevism in Mexico which was promoted by US media, ambassador Sheffield and the Catholic press in Europe.

The dilemma of revolution and stabilisation was the essence of Mexican-European Powers relations in the 1920s in the multilateral framework which had as

relevant actors the US and the USSR. This thesis shows how recognition of a revolutionary government can be obtained after an internal shift, ten years of revolution, and an international reconfiguration took place after the Great War with the definitive increase of US influence on the world stage and the scare of communism as consequence of the Russian Revolution. Also, how recognition is the basis to maintain traditional historical cultural, economic and political relations which implies dealing with the tension between achieving stability and applying a revolutionary project, although to diverse degrees.

Dealing with the dilemma, the aim of Mexican diplomacy was to portray and defend the country as a land of progress, social justice and opportunity. Mexico was a country reassuming its earlier process of modernisation. Just as in other parts of the world, discussions on projects of modernity were ongoing. However, Europeans were invited to respect this new modern Mexico and to contribute to its development. Economically, Europeans and Mexican-Europeans were expected to invest, establish businesses and consume raw materials. For this reason, the establishment of chambers of commerce and the visits by European businessmen were relevant. In order to achieve this goal, the Mexican government showed its commitment to respect European lives and properties by offering protection and signing the conventions of mixed claims. In the end the percentage paid was minimal, but it symbolised the recognition of those rightful claims.

Europeans were also considered important as a source of knowledge in regards to medicine, agriculture, arts, architecture, military and aviation techniques and engineering. Mexico would also share its knowledge through libraries and by taking part in the activities of the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation in Paris. It was also important for Mexico's museums to encourage cooperation to show

Mexican specimens in natural history museums and artefacts in art museums to increase the understanding of the country abroad and vice versa. Mexico was showing through all this collaboration that it was a revolutionary government in action thanks to its stabilisation, but also that it was borrowing knowledge from Europe and offering new ideas to the world. Collaboration in science and arts was even strengthened by being represented physically whether with the Mexican House in Cité Universitaire in Paris or restored buildings for the Legations. For Mexican diplomacy, the most challenging problem was to ensure Mexico was seen as a modernised country in the Press, theatre and films. This was quite difficult during the *Cristero* rebellion. Mexican diplomats needed to demonstrate that the government was right in defending secularisation according to the revolutionary Constitution of 1917 even if this implied the country would be under instability from 1926 to 1929.

During the Obregón-Calles era, Mexican diplomats were aware of the responsibility in ensuring Mexico took part of the international society while the revolution was still ongoing, although in the context of the state project. All of them had a friendly position towards the countries they were in. They showed interest in increasing economic links, but some showed more interest in artistic rapprochements and others in educative relationships.

The efforts by Mexican diplomats induced different responses from the Europeans. In the case of French diplomats, Ayguesparse was friendly towards the Mexican Revolution. Blondel had a harder position towards the situation in Mexico and did not bother to speak the language, which limited his possibilities. Périer was friendly, looked to establish good relations with intellectuals and remained neutral in regards to problems such as the threat of Bolshevism and the *Cristero* war. In contrast, Secretary Lagarde pressured the French government to officially criticise the

attitude of the government since French cultural interests were under threat. Besides, French diplomats in Mexico promoted a cultural link between nations since this was the strongest source of French soft power in the country. The continuous interest of Mexico's organic intellectuals was recognised by the French government offering them honours. Moreover, non-diplomatic actors did promote cultural and economic relations; for example, Honnorat encouraging a new library and being present in the commemoration of the French-Mexicans that fought for France during the Great War.

Regarding British diplomacy, one must conclude that there was a striking absence of it. It is obvious that there is a remarkable contrast between Cummins and Ovey. It is not the same to be represented by someone who is not actually a diplomat and who has no official position as a diplomat, and someone that has been trained in the diplomatic service and is willing to be understanding of the context. These differences clearly had an effect on Mexican-British relations which were only completely stable from 1925 onwards. The fact that the *Cristero* rebellion occurred and that tensions were present in regards to oil did not allow Ovey to start a vigorous activity to increase cultural and economic relations between countries. It is relevant to stress out that the different British governments did have a similar position of distrust towards the Mexican Revolution before 1925, and this did not even change with Labour in power.

German diplomats had a more consistent position towards Mexico. Von Montgelas and Will were both friendly, reconciliatory and always celebrated the historical relation that had never been put into question. They participated in each attempt to improve economic ties and were careful to avoid tensions as a consequence of rebellions in Mexico. Besides, Duems played a relevant role in the strengthening of diplomatic relations; it was a way to establish German soft power in Mexico and to

weaken the presence and agendas of other countries, especially France. Besides, the German colony in Mexico City was not only the most beloved, but also the most defensive of Mexico in the Press.

Something shared by Mexican and European foreign policies in the 1920s was the need to take into consideration the position of the United States government towards Mexico. European Powers did not offer a counterbalance towards the great neighbour anymore, but prioritised their relations with the US in detriment of the relationship with Mexico. This was a great challenge for Mexican diplomats, and some European diplomats and colonies in Mexico even criticised this (Ayguespasse), who understood the pressures felt by Europeans but also needed to protect national dignity. This explains the patience of the Mexican government in obtaining *de jure* recognition from Germany and France, but the eventual frustration and distancing from Great Britain.

By doing this research, I intended to undertake several clarifications and fill some glaring historiographical gaps. For example, the fact that German recognition did not occur in December 1920 or 1923 after the Bucareli Agreements, but in August 1921. The difference in dates allows us to understand that German diplomacy felt pressured not to be the first to recognise Obregón, but to wait for US, British and French recognition. However, with the realisation that not offering recognition could affect relations and that this would benefit, for instance, Spanish and Italian economic interests, Germany offered recognition. Clearly, the multilateral framework is necessary to understand the German decision.

Another clarification is regarding recognition of France to Obregón. *De facto* recognition occurred in March 1921 when the French government confirmed receipt of the start of Obregón's administration, but *de jure* only in September 1923 after the

Bucareli Agreements. France was willing to follow US diplomacy because French-American relations were more important than the link with Mexico, even if the country had already negotiated the debt which was the largest economic interest for France. Nevertheless, French diplomacy was not willing to differentiate between the letter of acceptance and full recognition in 1921 to avoid tensions in the relationship, allowing misinterpretation of it.

While the existing historiography does open up the question of the position of France in regards to the *Cristero* rebellion, French banking and finance interests, the role of Reyes in Paris, and the visit of Calles to Paris (see Meyer, Foulard, Oñate, Reyes, Patout, José Valenzuela and Ortiz), the issue of French recognition had not been problematised and the role of other diplomats and non-official actors to improve the relationship has not been studied. Throughout this dissertation, I examined these topics because they allow us to understand how French soft power operated in Mexico during the 1920s. This important period lacks historiographical discussion, in contrast to French impact in Mexico from the French intervention in the 1860s to the Porfirian regime.

While the visit of Calles to Germany, the role of the German colony in Mexico and the news-agency Duems as well as the general terms of the economic relation have been previously studied by Rinke, Nagel and Buchenau, this thesis contributes to the problematisation of the question of recognition and places attention on the efforts by official and non-official actors to increase economic and cultural relations. Also, no previous study had looked at the ways in which the *delahuertista* and *Cristero* rebellion led the German-Mexican relationship into a period of tension.

With regard to the Mexican-British relationship, this thesis widens its understanding by taking into consideration the comparison of Mexican-British-

American relations already studied by Meyer, Knight and Garner. The present study has provided a basis for a comparative analysis of the relationships between Mexico and the European Powers as well as the overriding importance of the USA.

However, there are plenty of topics I did not have the time to explore. For example, the ways in which language schools, newspapers, films, theatre performances and news agencies had an effect in Mexico beyond the European colonies. Who had access to these publications, schools and cultural events? Did these efforts have a consequence on public opinion in Mexico? Were these sources of Germaness or Frenchness significant? Did they exercise cultural influences? Mexico also used propaganda in Europe, how useful was it?

Furthermore, an aspect I decided not to explore in depth was the role played by European colonies in Mexico and Mexican colonies in Berlin, London and Paris. Moreover, I did not look into the projects to bring German immigrants to Mexico during the 1920; it would be important to analyse whether they reflected the exercise of German soft power. Also, it would be necessary to study the ways in which artists, musicians and writers benefitted of living abroad. How did the writing of Reyes, the music of Ponce and the paintings of Zárraga reflect the years spent in Paris? Looking at these topics would have been useful to have a better understanding of Mexican-European Powers relations, but for now I have focused primarily on the diplomatic approach and its cultural dimension.

Apart from looking at the economic and cultural effects of the diplomatic efforts, other lines of research I consider might be explored in further research are a prosopographic study of Mexican diplomats. All these diplomats were educated; all went to university, but studied in different states and specialised in diverse careers, but how did this background shape their diplomatic actions? It would also be

interesting to look at their class origins and the ways in which the Porfirian regime shaped their ideals, were they all anti-Porfirian modernisers? Besides, most of the Mexican diplomats and officials that dealt with Mexican-European Powers relations worked in other areas of the revolutionary state and had a broad understanding of Mexico's needs in the Obregón-Calles era. Can we talk about a generation of organic intellectuals?

Furthermore, I consider it is of urgency to start studying the role of women in diplomacy. Women, the wives of the diplomats, indirectly worked for the Legation by organising and attending events. What was their role? Was it informal? It will be quite a challenge to find the information, but for example in his diary, Reyes talked about his wife Manuelita; it would be necessary to look for them in other diaries and diplomatic documents.

Likewise, the case of Mexican-European Powers relations would benefit from learning about other comparisons. It would be beneficial to compare it with the ways in which other Latin American countries dealt with the reconfiguration of the international. We are missing a study that explains the different ways in which recognition of governments was dealt with during the reconfiguration of the international scene, the invigoration of international law and the birth of disciplines such as International Relations. What do countries understand as recognition? How do governments understand the correlation between having recognition and having diplomatic relations? International relations scholars and international lawyers could offer an answer to this.

Finally, it is worth taking the time to consider that while the US became the most important diplomatic and economic partner for Mexico in the 1920s, European Powers still represented an important referent, especially in cultural terms. We should

maybe reconsider how postrevolutionary Mexico's foreign policy was a response to the US and therefore diversification became necessary, making other parts of the world quite important. I only concentrated on relations with the European Powers, but we should look at relations with other European countries. Some historians have done so (Meyer and MacGregor for Spain, Soto Cortés for the Baltic and North Sea and López Contreras for Central European countries), but we lack more analysis on relations with Italy and Belgium, which clearly had some relevance since Palavicini was sent in a special mission there. The dilemma of revolution and stabilisation could serve as an analytical tool to explore those relations too.

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#### Abbreviations

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AHSRE	Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores
ADMAE	Archives Diplomatiques du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères - La Courneuve-Aubervilliers, Paris, France
AMARO	Fondo Joaquín Amaro (FAPECyFT)
APEC	Archivo Plutarco Elías Calles (FAPECyFT)
CDEEEUM	(FAPECyFT)
BIAI	Bibliothek des Ibero-Amerikanischen Instituts Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Germany
PAAA	Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, Berlin, Germany
FAPECyFT	Fideicomiso Archivos Plutarco Elías Calles y Fernando Torreblanca
NA	The National Archives
HW	Government Communications Headquarters (NA)
NLBC	Nettie Lee Benson Collection-Manuscripts and Rare Books, University of Texas at Austin

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