

MEXICAN OIL AND UNITED STATES POLICY

MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES IN THE OIL CONTROVERSY, 1917-1942. By LORENZO MEYER. Translated by MURIEL VASCONCELLOS. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977. Pp. 367. \$19.95.)

DIPLOMACY AND REVOLUTION: U.S.-MEXICAN RELATIONS UNDER WILSON AND CARRANZA. By MARK T. GILDERHUS. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1977. Pp. 159. \$4.25.)

It is hardly surprising that, as the Shah of Iran settles into exile, President Carter is taking Spanish lessons. A recent policy paper (Presidential Review Memorandum 41, December 1978) begins with the assertion that oil-rich Mexico is becoming "an economic power of strategic value to the United States" and stresses the importance of maintaining "a stable, humane, and cooperative Mexico."¹ Although some analysts calculate that Mexico's reputedly huge reserves of oil could lessen America's reliance upon the Middle East and OPEC, others, of course, caution that Mexico's resources will not necessarily provide a quick fix for America's energy dependence. The latter group quite rightly cites historical experience in order to dampen excessive zeal for telling Mexico when and how to use its oil. In the midst of this current debate, it is fortuitous to have two new book-length contributions to the historical literature.

Lorenzo Meyer's *Mexico and the United States in the Oil Controversy, 1917-1942* first appeared in Spanish ten years ago. It has now, however, been revised and ably translated into English by Muriel Vasconcellos. The book is a standard work on United States-Mexican relations, and it fully deserves the wider audience that an English translation will guarantee. Meyer's analysis of the complexities of oil diplomacy is especially important because it examines the Mexican side of the controversy much more thoroughly than most earlier studies. Meyer traces the dispute over Mexican oil from the beginnings of revolutionary disorders; through the wartime controversy between Carranza and Wilson, the oil companies' hopes for armed intervention in Mexico, the Bucareli agreements, the crisis engendered by Calles's oil law; and up to the expropriation of 1938 and the final settlement of compensation in 1942. Throughout these years, Mexico's administrations struggled to implement a policy of independent economic nationalism, a policy in which Mexico's internal needs, rather than international market forces, shaped the development of its oil.

For twenty-five years, Mexico's aspirations encountered opposition from American oil companies and from the United States government. Meyer writes that, most of the time, the oil companies had the "total and unconditional support of the State Department," and that "Mexico's government labored under the shadow of possible United States intervention, either direct or