

## The Search for Management Policy in the Mexican Revolution

In late May of 2016, I departed the Bay Area for two months of research in the archives of Mexico City. The previous semester I had composed a work of original research focusing on the management decisions of Spanish-Mexican businessman and landowner, Íñigo Noriega Laso. The resources of the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas, Austin had served me well in developing an initial analysis of business elites in revolutionary Mexico, but I needed to familiarize myself with the vast network of archival material available in Mexico itself in order to make significant strides in the process of discerning a viable dissertation topic.

The first couple of weeks were bumpy on the research front, with progress through the bureaucracy of the Archivo General de la Nación moving at a snail's pace. The archive, located in the northern, San Lazaro neighborhood, is situated in the former Lecumberri Prison, which famously housed Argentine historian and political dissident Adolfo Gilly as he wrote his *magnum opus: La revolución interrumpida*. After the commute on Mexico City's bustling and efficacious metro, I consulted with the archivists to ascertain what parts of the vast collection might be useful.

I quickly found that the national archives might not be the best environment for documents pertaining to private enterprise, especially during the Revolution. The archivists recommended I consult the ministry of patents to ascertain what technological and industrial activities were taking place as long as the ministry was still standing. Unfortunately, records regarding economic activity in the Archivo General were sparse. Although there is a rich source base in the archives of the [\*Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de las Revoluciones de México \(INEHRM\)\*](#), most of these papers concerned the military activities of the major figures of

the Revolution, including Emiliano Zapata, Genovevo de la O, Pancho Villa, and Francisco Madero.

Much to my fortune, I received excellent guidance from a number of amazing Mexican historians at the *Colegio de México*, including Professors Romana Gloria Falcón Vega, Aurora Gomez Galvarriato, and Erika Gabriela Pani Bano. With their advice, I found that, in future endeavors in this line of research, my best chance would likely be to choose one sector of the economic elite in the revolutionary era—be it struggling Porfirian businessmen or ascendant northern Mexican elites—and seek out the localities of their personal archives, which happen to be located throughout the Mexican states. My new mentors also informed me that there is a general dearth of archival material related to private enterprise in Central Mexico, as most of the archives located in Mexico City and the surrounding areas concern governmental affairs.

In the meantime, Professor Falcón directed me to the archives of one of the most important figures of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Mexico: Plutarco Elías Calles. President Calles's archives, located in the picturesque Condesa neighborhood, although they did not provide me with the kind of insight regarding the inner working of Mexican businesses available in the Íñigo Noriega Laso Papers, allowed me to discern a picture of the emergent, post-Revolutionary business environment. It is already well known that the victory of the Obregón/Calles faction of the Revolution represented the ascendancy of northern economic elites over their previous counterparts in the Porfiriato with strong connections to the international capital of Europe. What is less apparent in the existing research is the economic dynamism of the Revolutionary era itself.

Within the Calles archive, I found that the future President of Mexico and revolutionary general spent a significant amount of time fielding speculative business requests, even when the

outcome of the Revolution was far from secure. Entrepreneurs from both sides of the border were clamoring to gain the favor of the ascendant Sonoran. Among orders for the ongoing war against the Yaquí and various revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces, Calles was fielding investment requests in developmentalist ventures including irrigation plans in Jalisco and trans-border railroads between the United States and Mexico. Though the Revolution certainly represented a shift in the socio-political organization of the state, this evidence suggests that the country's new elites were not necessarily substantially different in their stance towards notions of economic modernity than their Porfirian predecessors.