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Friedrich E. Schuler. *Mexico Between Hitler and Roosevelt: Mexican Foreign Relations in the Age of Lazaro Cardenas*, 1934-1940. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998. x + 270 pp. \$24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8263-2160-2.

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When examining the international dynamics before and during World War II, historians have traditionally focused on the rise of a select few powers, notably the United States, Germany, Great Britain, and Russia. Most historians ignore what has become known as "Third World nations," as these countries are not seen as having an instrumental role in the time leading up to the Second World War or, for that matter, in the war itself. When examining the 1930s and 1940s, many historians view Mexico as one of these peripheral nations, afterthoughts when contemplating international relations.

Friedrich Schuler challenges this basic assumption in his recent publication, Mexico between Hitler and Roosevelt. In his research, Schuler attempts to illustrate the complexity of the interaction between Mexican domestic and international policies. The Great Powers did not understand the true nature of the Mexican political situation. In Schuler's opinion, Mexican diplomats were "better skilled in international negotiations, more realistic in the evaluation of historical contexts, and more creative in situations than their European and U.S. counterparts" (p. 1). As war approached, Schuler argues that Mexico used the perception of the Great Powers to its advantage. Lazaro Cardenas attempted to secure the best possible scenario for Mexico, both domestically and internationally, without having to commit Mexico to either side of the conflict for as long as possible.

Schuler endeavors to do four things in his research. First, he wants to provide the reader with a chronological examination of Mexico's foreign policy during Cardenas's reign. In particular, Schuler examines the international economic system of the 1930s. Second, Schuler examines how Mexico's foreign relations are described

as a struggle between the Mexican president and Mexican bureaucratic professionals over the meaning and nature of Mexico's links abroad (p. 2). Here, Schuler hopes to demonstrate how Mexican bureaucrats began to challenge the president in foreign policy. Third, Schuler wishes to explain the impact that the Mexican political elites had over the entire population. Fourth, Schuler promises to explore "the interrelationship between Mexican national economic development and changes in the international economy" (p. 2). With these four purposes in mind, Schuler attempts to place Mexico in the broader international picture of the 1930 and 1940s throughout the seven chapters that make up the body of his work.

Chapter Two focuses on the "rebirth" of the Mexican foreign policy bureaucracy between 1920 and 1940. By the time Cardenas achieved power in 1934, the foreign relations bureaucracy reasserted its autonomy, sometimes not even consulting the president. While the Mexican Foreign Ministry gained power during this period, Schuler explains, it was the Ministry the Treasury that obtained the most power over Mexico's foreign policy. It was economics that was drove Mexican policy abroad and this required the growth of a bureaucratic structure to handle the increasing technical and economic demands. The most important aspect of this chapter is that it demonstrates how the governmental structural in Mexico adapted to a changing world situation.

In keeping with his desire to provide a traditional overview of Mexican foreign policy, Schuler devotes Chapter Three to how Mexico interacted on the international level. The most important nations in Mexico's foreign policy during the period 1920-1936 were the United States, Germany, Great Britain, and Spain. Over-

all, Schuler believes that the United States dominated Mexico's international relations, with lesser roles played by European nations. The one nation Schuler feels might have rivaled the United States is Spain. Spain's influences on Mexico were long-standing and kept Mexico deeply involved in the events occurring on the Iberian Peninsula. In addition, Schuler touches on the foreign relations that Mexico shared with nations such as France, Japan, and the Soviet Union. It is interesting that Schuler relegates the rest of Latin America to the position of "Third World" nations without much of an impact on international relations by not even mentioning them in this chapter.

Schuler views 1937 as the "watershed" point in Mexico's development under Cardenas and develops this point in Chapter Four. Between 1934 and 1936, Mexico moved from a period of "experimentation" to a period of survival (p. 63). Pointing to the creation of the ejido system, Schuler argues that land redistribution was the impetus for the near economic collapse that Mexico faced at the end of the year. When internal measures did not correct the economic downward spiral, Cardenas looked for solutions involving other nations. In looking for a foreign market for its agricultural goods, Mexico could only find a market in Adolf Hitler's Germany. In an effort to obtain trade concessions with Germany, Mexico offered participation in various mining ventures. In the end, the government's corrective measures failed and Schuler argues that Cardenas was on the brink of losing his power. Mexico was near economic collapse and Cardenas needed to find some way to reassert his power.

In Chapter Five, Schuler argues that Mexico used the expropriation of oil in 1938 to attempt to remedy the crisis that had begun the previous year. The expropriation alone was not enough to stem the economic crisis that Mexico faced, so Minister of Hacienda Eduardo Suarez also devalued the peso. This particular economic maneuver did not bring about more anti-Cardenas sentiments because most Mexicans believed that the falling peso was a result of expropriation (p. 91). While Mexican capital stopped leaving the country, nations such as the United States and Britain were shocked at the move to nationalize Mexican oil wells. Basically, Schuler discusses how these decisions affected Mexican relations with the Great Powers. The result was that Mexico survived economically. The next few years actually pushed Mexico and the United States closer together regardless of Cardenas's expropriation.

After expropriation, Schuler brings two forces to the fore in Chapter Six. Here, Schuler intertwines Cardenas's

policy toward the Allies and the impact of foreign propaganda's on internal politics to develop a discourse on the Mexican place in the world. With the Mexican Supreme Court upholding appropriation of the oil fields, Cardenas was able to physically control the oil wells. While Great Britain was effectively removed from the picture, the United States strengthened its efforts for diplomacy with Mexico. Schuler suggests that Cardenas used the upcoming 1940 United States' election to force President Franklin Roosevelt to move closer to Mexico.

On the other hand, Schuler shows that Cardenas was not having an easy time at home. He was fighting off forces from the political right who wanted to support the fascist Francisco Franco in Spain. In addition, Cardenas had to deal with propaganda from both the Allied and Axis sides. However, Schuler asserts, while Cardenas made no hesitation in letting the Allies know that he supported them, he did so without jeopardizing his relations with the Axis Powers. Overall, Cardenas acted to ensure his political stability at home over all else.

Another aspect of Mexican development focused on its military during the latter years of the decade. As Europe and Asia became embroiled in war, Mexico found that its military needed a "new, permanent mission as part of the postrevolutionary state" (p. 153). In its drive to modernize its armed forces, Cardenas was able to play the United States and European weapons manufacturers off each other. While Mexico wanted to improve its defenses, its attention was directed towards protecting the Americas from imperialism. Schuler indicates that the world preparing for war curtailed Mexico's attempts to modernize and forced Mexico to cooperate with the United States.

Chapter Eight deals with the transition from Cardenas to Avila Camacho. Schuler focuses on how Cardenas and the United States use their respective influence and power to keep Leonidas Almazan from derailing Camacho's rise to president. With this chapter, Schuler reveals the final binding of Mexican-United States relations over Mexican-German relations.

In his "Conclusion," Schuler reasserts that Mexico was well prepared to handle foreign policy during the 1930s. He also asserts that Mexico was able to balance its domestic situation with the international circumstances. He further concludes that Mexico had two overriding relationships: 1) political and economic relations with the United States, and 2) the cultural and social ties with Spain. Schuler indicates that Mexico handled itself well during the period from 1934-1940 and deserves to be

thought of as more than a Third World nation on the international stage.

In brief, Schuler's work adds to the dialogue of both Mexican history and international relations during the pre-World War II years. In doing so, he follows a basic chronological development of Mexico under the leadership of Cardenas. Using a wide variety of both primary and secondary sources from Mexico, the United States, and Germany, Schuler is able to provide the reader with various views into the Mexican diplomatic world. This is

especially useful as he compares how Cardenas's Administration played both the United States and Germany to get the best deal for Mexico. He concludes that Mexican history during this period was a grand dialogue between the domestic push for capitalist economic development and the "reverberations of international war" (p. 207).

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Citation: David R. Buck. Review of Schuler, Friedrich E., *Mexico Between Hitler and Roosevelt: Mexican Foreign Relations in the Age of Lazaro Cardenas, 1934-1940.* H-LatAm, H-Net Reviews. June, 2000.

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