
Reviewed by Marc Alsina (Johns Hopkins University)

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Commissioned by Penelope K. Hardy (University of Wisconsin-La Crosse)

Peter B. Soland’s *Mexican Icarus: Aviation and the Modernization of Mexican Identity, 1928-1960* is a welcome addition to the slowly growing canon of scholarly works on the history of aviation in Latin America. Soland unpacks the cultural and political dimensions of the aviator as a figure of identity in twentieth-century Mexico—a country whose revolutionary ideology, large size, and proximity to the United States make it a particularly rich context for the history of aviation. Over fifty years, official and popular representations of the aviator evolved from a darling of the Porfirian elite, to the “Goodwill” pilot of revolutionary Mexico, before finding its final place as an icon of middle-class stability under an “institutionalized” revolution after 1945.

In his introduction, Soland emphasizes the omnipresence of technological determinism in state ideology before and after the Mexican Revolution in the 1910s. Aviation technology was harnessed by government officials to promote development strategies that first and foremost sought to industrialize the economy. Soland embeds his study in the historiography of culture, politics, and aviation, particularly the works by Scott Palmer (*Dictatorship of the Air: Aviation Culture and the Fate of Modern Russia* [2006]) and Willie Hiatt (*The Rarified Air of the Modern: Airplanes and Technological Modernity in the Andes* [2016]).

*Mexican Icarus'*s first chapter opens with the earliest efforts at heavier-than-air flight by members of the Liberal elite under the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz from 1884 to 1911. Soland then chronicles the overnight transformation of aviation from a hobby of adventurous elites to a weapon of war with the advent of the Mexican Revolution. The war’s various factions frequently harnessed airplanes during their campaigns. As the rebelling forces pushed out the Porfirian regime, the airplane was cemented as a tool of revolution in the national imagination.
Chapter 2 continues into the interwar period as state officials used the airplane to reinforce the now victorious revolutionary government. Soland emphasizes the violent nature of the national reconstruction period in the 1920s. Airplanes were marshalled to suppress unrest generated by the state's new policies. Officials conflated technological and moral superiority, seeing the deployment of airplanes as proof of their progressive righteousness regardless of the violence they unleashed.

The next three chapters are the heart of Soland's study as he delves into the period when pilots were at the apex of their public stature from 1928 through World War II. In chapter 3, Soland focuses on the “Goodwill” aviators—often military pilots—who attempted great flights in the name of international diplomacy. Celebrity pilots, such as Emilio Carranza and Roberto Fierro, were presented in official media as the embodiments of the government's revolutionary values. Officials characterized aviation feats as the continuation of a long history of national progress rooted in a mythologized indigenous and Hispanic past. Even when the nation's great aviators met tragic ends in accidents, officials were able to spin technological disaster into revolutionary martyrdom through elaborate funerals and ceremonies.

Chapter 4 sees a shift in state policies and propaganda with the rise of Lázaro Cárdenas's administration in 1934. Cárdenas sought to reduce the role of the military in national aviation and promote social equality by increasing the accessibility of flight training. Such efforts were bolstered by the growing desire on the part of common people to enter aviation as a career. But in the end these ambitions were subverted by the rudimentary state of the local aviation industry in the 1930s. In chapter 5, the aviation industry finally attained “technological momentum” as it joined the Allied war effort in World War II. In partnership with the United States, Mexico created a small squadron of fighter aircraft—Escuadrón 201—which fought to extricate the Japanese from the Philippines in 1945. State propaganda and the popular media presented them as the zenith of the “aviator as an archetype of modern, revolutionary citizenship” (p. 159).

Soland examines the postwar aviation industry in chapter 6. The period saw a fundamental shift in the state's politics as the revolution was “institutionalized.” Gone was the era of “revolutionary class solidarity” and in its place was a new “ethos of class mobility” that placed a premium on middle-class family life (p. 215). The cultural archetype of the pilot followed suit, especially as employment in the commercial aviation industry became a realistic possibility. Yet the promise of economic ascendency in the aviation industry was undermined by the low wages foreign companies offered to their Mexican employees.

The book finishes with a strong conclusion that offers insights into the development of aviation in Mexico after 1960. Soland effectively emphasizes a paradox central to the Mexican experience with aviation technology: flight was portrayed as a symbol of freedom and of the promises of the revolution yet so often was an instrument of repression or of foreign domination.

Mexican Icarus engages with a variety of themes from technology and politics to industrial dependency to aviation in film. Soland analyzes notions of race, gender, and class that were foundational to official and popular expressions of a modern Mexican identity. While undeniably instructive, such intersectional analyses sometimes lack in-depth discussion of notions of identity beyond the aviation community. A deeper foregrounding of the sociocultural milieu of Mexico's diverse population and their engagement with technology more broadly could have enriched Soland's arguments around the effects and qualities of aviation specifically.

Soland's excellent concluding argument about the tension in the official use of aviation as both a symbol of freedom and an instrument of repres-
sion points to a missed opportunity in *Mexican Icarus*'s periodization. As we see in chapter 1, the use of airplanes in the 1910s during the Mexican Revolution generated a “broader, national interest” in aviation (p. 21). Yet, as the title and introduction make clear, Soland argues that national aviation truly became a phenomenon only after 1928. While civil aviation undoubtedly saw little activity until the late 1920s, the public’s reactions to their very modern experiences with aerial warfare during the revolution merit more extensive consideration in Soland’s narrative.

*Mexican Icarus* is nevertheless a must-read for anyone interested in the global history of aviation and for scholars of twentieth-century Mexico. It ably navigates the complexities of Mexico’s political and social history while compellingly arguing for the importance of aviation to the articulation of a modern Mexican identity.

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