PREFACE

From the early years of the Mexican Revolution the United States government and many of its people have expressed alarm that our southern neighbor had gone or was going Bolshevik, or, in later terminology, Communist. During the 1920's these fears had some basis, however superficial, in the attraction of Marxism for certain revolutionary leaders and in the freedom permitted to radicals of all types to organize and propagandize throughout the country. What U.S. critics failed to understand properly was the pride that Mexico's leaders had in the revolution that they were creating, and their determination to exclude foreign influences and pressures. A Communist uprising in 1929 was ruthlessly put down, relations with the Soviet Union were broken in 1930, and the Communist movement suppressed and persecuted for about five years.

With the inauguration of President Lázaro Cárdenas in 1934 persecution ceased and in time the government sought the collaboration of the Communists. The movement attained its greatest successes in the 1930's. U.S. alarm reached new heights. Writers talked of Red Mexico, labeled Cárdenas a Communist, especially when he expropriated the oil industry in 1938, and expressed fears for the security of the United States. Many of the specific charges laid to the regime were accurate enough. The government's benevolent attitude led to an increase in Communist Party strength, permitted Communists to

penetrate government and labor organizations, and enabled Communists to entrench themselves in the teachers' union.

What was not then and frequently still is not taken into account is that Cárdenas attempted reconciliation with all groups. He restored peace between the government and the Catholic Church after years of bitter strife, recompensed the oil interests after the expropriation, and left some property to the expropriated hacienda owners whose lands were taken for distribution to the peasantry. Furthermore, Cárdenas never accepted the Communists in a government coalition, refused to let them incorporate into the government political party, and did not permit them to form a large bloc in the Congress. In other words, he carefully excluded them from positions of political power despite their other infiltrations. To demonstrate, we have only to remind ourselves how easily Communist power was broken in labor in the matter of a few months in the late 1940's, and how easily the official Party could shift to the right after 1940 with a minimum of political unrest. True enough, Communists have remained strong in one faction of the teachers' union, but they have long been a minority and dare not use their position for political agitation. The one group that tried it in the late 1950's was crushed.

Despite the weakening of the Communist movement in Mexico during the past fifteen years, a considerable number of newspaper and periodical writers in the United States have continually raised the problem of Communist influence in Mexico. The rise of an anti-Communist movement in the country, with its attendant press releases and publications, has seemingly led to the belief that Communism is on the ascendant. In fact the very existence and growing popularity of such a movement attests the opposite. At one time it was impossible to aspire to a political career in Mexico if one was anti-Communist, because such a position seemed contrary to Mexico's basic political orientation of complete tolerance of political beliefs. Today this is no longer true. Leading politicians are openly anti-Communist, and the government is actively hostile to Communism. Many Communist leaders are in prison, others are restrained by fear of government suppression, and those at liberty are constantly quarreling among themselves.

My interest in Mexican Communism began in the years 1955 to

1958 when I served as a political officer in the Department of State. I read the Communist press daily and soon immersed myself in Party documents. When I left Washington to begin teaching at The University of Texas my interest continued, and during the past several years I have collected materials for this book. The cutoff date for the body of the work is June 1962, but a Postscript updates it for major changes and developments through the summer of 1964. I am deeply indebted to Dr. Nettie Lee Benson, curator of the famous García Collection of The University of Texas Library. I also owe much to Dr. Rollie E. Poppino, of the University of California at Davis, and to Dr. David D. Burks, of the University of Indiana, both of whom were former colleagues in the Department of State. My thanks also go to Mr. David Garza, who assisted me in the final preparations. Finally I must acknowledge the contribution of my family, who granted me the hours of peace and quiet to write the manuscript and tolerated my many absences in quest of materials.

I alone am responsible for all statements of fact and interpretation contained herein.

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