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Globalizing Violence:
The Mexican Revolution and the First World War

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Resumen. - Sin lugar a duda, el siglo XX fue un siglo de violencia desde su inicio y América Latina también formó parte de esta experiencia. Eso se puede ilustrar si se presta atención a la Revolución Mexicana. La prolongada guerra civil, en la cual distintas facciones lucharon durante muchos años, tuvo incluso más víctimas per cápita que la Primera Guerra Mundial en todos los países beligerantes. De hecho, el caso mexicano enfatizó que no había posibilidad de no envolverse en la espiral global de violencia que durante los años de guerra alcanzó una dimensión hasta entonces desconocida y que fue más allá de la Europa devastada por la guerra o de estados naciones particulares.Para obtener un entendimiento más detallado de los modelos interpretativos de la Guerra Mundial desarrollados en América Latina y especialmente en México, una consideración de las circunstancias de crueldad en el subcontinente en la temprana década de 1910 parece importante. Eso no quiere decir establecer una conexión causal entre los desarrollos en México y la Guerra Mundial. Sin embargo, un análisis de la perspectiva de numerosos contemporáneos revela que ambos eventos se vincularon a un mundo en crisis. Desde el punto de vista contemporáneo, una ola de violencia cogió al globo entero y sustentó el fin de su propia seguridad. El objetivo del artículo es representar las percepciones mexicanas y las connotaciones de la Primera Guerra Mundial, así como considerar las circunstancias regionales específicas y las interacciones entre transformaciones globales y experiencias locales. Para México, en particular, la guerra pareció estar inserta en un periodo de agitación social revolucionaria y disturbios políticos que alcanzaron su punto álgido entre 1917 y 1919. Este proceso abrió nuevos espacios de entender el papel de la nación, así como su posición en un mundo que estaba cambiando profundamente.

Palabras clave: Primera Guerra Mundial; Revolución Mexicana; violencia; propaganda; Estados Unidos, movimientos sociales.

Abstract. - Without doubt, since its very beginning, the 20th century has been a century of violence. Latin America, too, partook in that experience. This can be illustrated clearly by paying attention to the Mexican Revolution. The protracted civil war in which the various factions fought during many years demanded even more victims per capita than the First World War in all the belligerent European countries. In fact, the Mexican case emphasized that there was no possibility to keep out of the global spiral of violence that during the war years reached a

hitherto unknown dimension and went beyond war-torn Europe or single nation states. In order to obtain a more detailed understanding of the interpretive models of the World War developed in Latin America and especially in Mexico, a consideration of the circumstances of cruelty in the subcontinent in the early decade of 1910 appears to be important. This does not mean to establish a causal connection between the developments in Mexico and the World War. However, an analysis of the viewpoint of numerous contemporaries reveals that both events were linked to a world in crisis. From the contemporaries' perspective, a wave of violence had caught the whole globe and underpinned the end of its self-certainty. This article aims to depict the Mexican perceptions and connotations of the First World War while considering the specific regional circumstances and the interactions between global transformations and local experiences. For Mexico, in particular, the war appeared to be inserted in a period of social revolutionary turmoil and political disturbance, which reached its peak between 1917 and 1919. This process opened up new spaces for understanding the role of the nation as well as for its position in a world which was profoundly changing.

Keywords: First World War; Mexican Revolution; Violence; Propaganda; United States; Social Movements.

Without doubt, since its very beginning, the 20th century has been a century of violence. Latin America, too, partook in that experience. This can be illustrated clearly by paying attention to the Mexican Revolution. The protracted civil war in which the various factions fought during many years demanded even more victims per capita than the First World War in all the belligerent European countries. In fact, the Mexican case emphasized that there was no possibility to keep out of the global spiral of violence that during the war years reached a hitherto unknown dimension and went beyond war-torn Europe or single nation states.

In order to obtain a more detailed understanding of the interpretive models of the World War developed in Latin America and especially in Mexico, a consideration of the circumstances of cruelty in the 1910s appears to be important. This does not mean to establish a causal connection between the developments in Mexico and the World War. However, an analysis of the viewpoint of numerous contemporaries reveals that both events were linked to a world in crisis. From the contemporaries' perspective, a wave of violence had caught the whole globe and underpinned the end of its self-certainty.

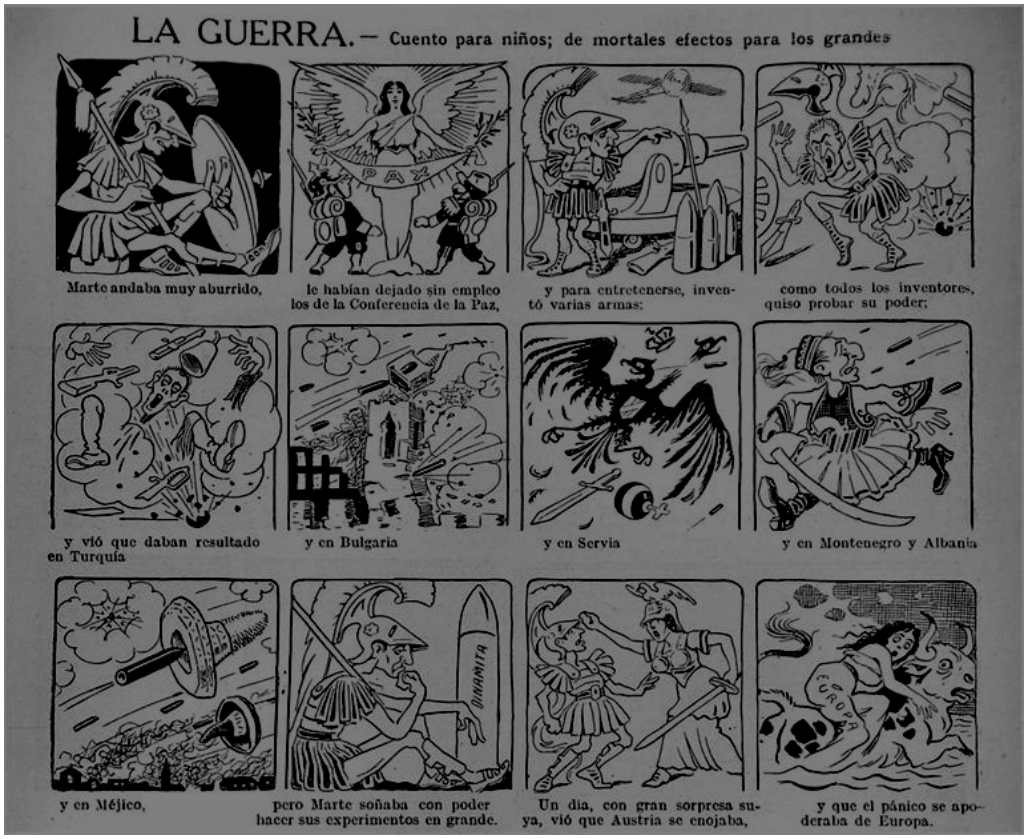
This article aims to depict the Mexican perceptions and connotations of the First World War while considering the specific regional circumstances and the interactions between global transformations and

local experiences. For Mexico, in particular, the war appeared to be inserted in a period of social revolutionary turmoil and political disturbance, which reached its peak between 1917 and 1919. This process opened up new spaces for understanding the role of the nation as well as for its position in a world, a position that was profoundly changing.[1]

Violent Forebodings: The Revolution in Mexico

The publication *Caras y Caretas* in Buenos Aires, which had a large circulation of around 90,000, was the most professional illustrated magazine of the time in Latin America. Some days after the outbreak of war in Europe, on August 8, 1914, it produced a pictorial narrative entitled "The War: Children's Fairy Tales with Fatal Consequences for the Grown Ups." Herein, the reader could observe how the God of War invented new weaponry due to the fact that he was bored with the Peace Conference at The Hague. After testing the weapons and succeeding in Turkey, the Balkans, and Mexico, Mars embarked on even superior challenges, provoking panic across Europe. The publication is noteworthy because of the fact that the illustrator draws what was an apparently obvious analogy between the outbreaks of violence in pre-war Europe and in Mexico.

[1] This article is mainly based on the monograph Stefan Rinke, Latin America and the First World War, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.



The God of War spreads violence around the whole world.
Source: Manuel Redondo, "La guerra": Caras y Caretas (Buenos Aires, 08.08.1914).

The cartoonist's thinking is partly clarified by looking at the historical advances in Europe and Latin America. Current research shows that the Great War in Europe, in fact, already began before August 1914 with the fighting in the Balkans and in Africa.[2] During the same period, the Mexican Revolution marked an eruption of violence in Latin America that fit into the broader global context of the time.[3] The disturbances provoked massive attention and turned into a continental media event

[2] Oliver Janz, 14 – Der große Krieg, Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2013, p. 12.

[3] For the role of violence in revolutionary contexts see especially the corresponding articles in: Stefan Rinke / Michael Wildt (eds.), Revolutions and Counter-Revolutions. 1917 and its Aftermath from a Global Perspective, Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2017.

due to the sensationalistic reporting by the US press, which related the revolution above all to violence and disorder.[4] The social revolutionary demands that went along with the developments in Mexico raised questions about whether the traditional social order as such was in danger. The worries were comprehensible, as the numerous factions fought an apparently interminable bloody civil war, which lasted for almost a decade.[5]

The scale of violence, unfamiliar to Latin Americans at that time, was clearly associated by the witnesses to the increase of imperialist competitions up through the 1910s. In fact, the United States, the European powers, and even Japan sought to influence the progression of the revolution. In accordance with the Tobar Doctrine of 1907, Wilson rejected to recognize the putschist Victoriano Huerta and instead supported the coalition led by First Chief Venustiano Carranza, while the German and Japanese governments, for instance, collaborated with the dictator Huerta.[6]

The clash then actually culminated in the occupation of the Mexican port of Veracruz by US troops in April 1914. A war seemed to be inevitable.[7] However, a conflagration could still be averted through negotiation and dialogue. In reaction to the many pompous notes on the situation in Mexico in the European press, Argentinean intellectual Leopoldo Lugones stated in July 1914 that the European powers had proceeded in the Balkans in a comparable manner to the United States in Mexico, that is to say, by exploiting the disorder to their own benefit.[8]

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[4] Pablo Yankelevich, La revolución mexicana en América Latina. intereses políticos e itinerarios intelectuales, Mexico: Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora, 2003, p. 13.

[5] It probably resulted in more than a million, mostly civilian, deaths. Estimates vary considerably, which is also related to the fact that the end of the revolution is defined differently in the research. I follow here Robert McCaa, "Missing Millions. The Demographic Costs of the Mexican Revolution", Mexican Studies, 19 (2003), pp. 367-400, here: p. 400. On the general significance of the revolution see: Jürgen Buchenau / Gilbert M. Joseph, The Once and Future Revolution. Social Upheaval and the Negotiation of Rule during Mexico's Long Twentieth Century, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013.

[6] Yankelevich, La diplomacia imaginaria. Argentina y la Revolución Mexicana, 1910-1916, Mexico: Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 1994, p. 78. On the European and Japanese interests, see Friedrich Katz, The Secret War in Mexico. Europe, the United States and the Mexican Revolution, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981, pp. 119-252 and Friedrich E. Schuler, Secret Wars and Secret Policies in the Americas, 1842-1929, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010, pp. 67-82.

[7] Katz, The Secret War, pp. 195-202.

[8] Leopoldo Lugones, "La viga en el ojo": La Nación (Buenos Aires, 08.10.1914), pp. 2-3.

Lugones' article was published after some delay on August 10 in the Buenos Aires daily *La Nación*. By that time, however, a war had erupted in Europe. Even in civil-war-torn Mexico, newspapers like *El Imparcial* had full-page spreads on the European situation already on August 1.[9] Without doubt, it was a conflict that, due the immersion of every major power in Europe, turned into an extraordinary challenge for Latin America as well. How were the governments to act toward the belligerent parties? What was the potential impact of the conflagration?

When the first newsflashes from the "Old World" reached the double continent, all American governments declared themselves neutral. By doing so, Latin America tried to stay away from the war and followed the US course.[10] On the one hand, countries with a high percentage of European immigrants wished to avoid ethnic troubles. On the other, Latin Americans had no concrete political commitments that could have led to an intervention. Moreover, they tried to maintain the vital economic ties with all warring parties in Europe as long as possible.[11]

However, Germany's "global strategy," through which Berlin sought to confront the British in their empire, was also supposed to carry the war to the "informal empire": Latin America.[12] Soon, various rumors of more or less utopian projects circulated.[13] In addition, Berlin also intended to gain influence in the so-called "backyard" of the Unites States. Here, the key setting was Mexico, where Germany had been conducting a secret war since 1910. Mexico was of extraordinary interest for various reasons: first, because of its vicinity to the United States; second, because of the strategic significance of the Mexican oil wells; and, third, due to the unclear political situation surrounding the revolutionary civil war. As historian Friedrich Katz has been able to demonstrate, the German

[9] "La situación europea se agrava": El Imparcial (Mexico, 08.01.1914), p. 1.

[10] For an overview of Latin America and the United States during the war see: Stefan Rinke / Karina Kriegesmann, "Experiencing Global Violence. Latin America and The United States Facing the Great War": Wilfried Raussert (ed.), The Routledge Companion to Inter-American Studies, New York: Taylor & Francis, 2017, pp. 402-414.

[11] Rinke, Im Sog der Katastrophe. Lateinamerika und der Erste Weltkrieg, Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2015, pp. 54-55.

[12] Hew Strachan, who works out the strategy of the Reich, does not look at the role of Latin America. Hew Strachan, The First World War, Vol. 1: To Arms, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 694.

[13] Schuler attaches great importance to these plans, but cannot prove they existed. Secret Wars, pp. 96-97.

national leadership made it a priority to stimulate the already-existing tensions between the US. and Mexico.[14]

The Germans organized their intelligence work in Mexico from their embassy in Washington. They initially followed the plan of bringing Huerta back from Spanish exile and then putting him into power through a coup to undermine US-Mexican relations. However, the strategy failed because Huerta was detained in transit by the US Secret Service.[15] Also related to the planned coup was the so-called Plan of San Diego from January 6, 1915. The anonymous document called on Latinos, African Americans, and Asians to rebel in the formerly Mexican areas in the southwestern United States in order to found an independent republic that would afterwards probably join Mexico. During this revolt – deliberately labeled a "race war" – all "white" Anglo Americans over 16 years of age were to be summarily executed. Nevertheless, the extent to which the German secret service gave support or, for that matter, was responsible for the idea remains unclear.[16] United States' representatives were also in the dark. Secretary of State Robert Lansing noted in a personal memorandum from October 1915 that it seemed as though Germany was supporting all the revolutionary factions with the ambition of stimulating the civil war and by this means weakening the United States.[17]

At the end of 1915, Germany tried to find a new partner in Mexico and found him in Carranza. The Mexican showed interest in a partial cooperation with the German Empire against Mexico's dominant neighbor to the north.[18] The connection between the German and Mexican antagonism to the United States became strong, on the one side, when Washington and Berlin stood on the edge of a war because of a the U-boat question in 1915-1916 and, on the other, when Mexico became a

[14] Katz, The Secret War.

[15] Ibid., pp. 364. Schuler, Secret Wars, pp. 112-113. Esperanza Durán, Guerra y revolución. Las grandes potencias y México, 1914-1918, Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1985, pp. 206-207.

[16] For the text of the Plan of San Diego, see: Steven Mintz (ed.), Mexican American Voices. A Documentary Reader, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, pp. 122-124. Benjamin H. Johnson, Revolution in Texas. How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003, pp. 71-107. Claudio Lomnitz, The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón, New York: Zone, 2014, pp. 450-451.

[17] Lansing, "Private Memorandum" (10.10.1915), LC, Lansing Papers, Reel 1.

[18] Katz, The Secret War, pp. 345-350. British intelligence had already concluded in 1916 that Carranza was acting in league with the Germans. Lorenzo Meyer, Su majestad británica contra la Revolución Mexicana, 1900-1950. El fin de un imperio informal, Mexico: Colegio de México, 1991, p. 243.

flash point in early 1916. On March 9, 1916, Carranza's opponent and revolutionary leader of the north, Francisco "Pancho" Villa, attacked the US border town of Columbus, New Mexico. The fight, which caused heavy causalities, gave rise to a punitive expedition under General John J. Pershing, who hunted Villa for almost a year until February 1917. Other opposing revolutionary factions widely shared the condemnation of the punitive expedition, and aggressive attacks against the policy of the United States in the Mexican media became prominent.[19] In general, Germany was considered a troublemaker.[20] Press reports from South America illustrate that other countries shared this impression.[21]

This opinion was not completely unfounded. Indeed, Carranza hoped for a closer collaboration with Berlin in 1916, as counterbalance to the United States because Great Britain and France had lost their interest in Mexico since the outburst of the war.[22] At the end of the year, Carranza and the German envoy met for talks and negotiations on the future cooperation.[23] Berlin was still hoping to keep the United States out of the war, however, this position would alternate a few months later.[24] While Carranza's fear of an intensification of the conflict with the United States increased, the coup plots against him only added to the general feeling of anxiety. Carranza's pro-German policy was thus somewhat plausible. Furthermore, due to the fact that it harmonized with the coup-ready, pro-German military, it had a stabilizing impact domestically.[25]

Moreover, the repercussions of the war were by no means restricted to the political sphere. From an economic perspective, the export boom experienced during the war years even had a positive influence on

[19] Gonzalo de la Parra, "Los cerdos que comercian con cerdos han ultrajado a mi patria": El Nacional (Mexico, 06.19.1916), p. 1. See also Katz, The Secret War, pp. 303-314.

[20] Yankelevich, La diplomacia, p. 142. Berta Ulloa, México y el mundo. Historia de sus relaciones exteriores, vol. 5, La lucha revolucionaria, Mexico: El Colegio de México, 2010, pp. 287-318. On the significance of the Mexican experience for Wilson's thinking on an intervention, see Thomas J. Knock, To End all Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 24-30.

[21] See, for example, the comments of the correspondent for the Paraguayan La Tribuna, Pedro Sayé, Crema de menta, Asunción: Zamphirópolos, 1916, pp. 129-134.

[22] Meyer, Su majestad, pp. 181-182. Durán, Guerra y revolución, pp. 171-188. Pierre Py, Francia y la Revolución Mexicana, 1910-1920. O la desaparición de una potencia mediana, Mexico: Centro de Estudios Mexicanos y Centroamericanos/ Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1991.

[23] Katz, The Secret War, pp. 364-366.

[24] Meyer, Su majestad, pp. 245-246.

[25] Katz, The Secret War, p. 513.

revolutionary Mexico from 1915 on, where the demand for crude oil, copper, silver, and sisal rose abruptly.[26]

The "Soft" War: Propaganda Activities between the Hemispheres

Besides the political turbulences, the war came quickly to Latin America in the form of propaganda. The subcontinent boasted a huge number of neutral states and the Allies hoped them to enter the war on their side, whereas Berlin wanted to keep Latin America neutral. In view of this delicate condition, the region became a main battlefield for worldwide propaganda initiatives.

In order to send messages over the Atlantic, the Germans were profoundly dependent upon the stations of the Telefunken Company in Sayville (Long Island) and Tuckerton (New Jersey). After the US government put these stations under the control of a censor in mid-1915, German interests took an extremely active stance in Mexico. Telefunken intended to expand the radio station that had been operated in Chapultepec already before the war. The Carranza government was deeply interested as it would lessen its dependence from the United States, whose news services had one-sidedly spread a negative impression of the revolution.[27] Nevertheless, the German plans for a global radio network could not be realized until early 1917, not least due to technical complications.[28]

In view of these challenges, Berlin made many efforts to organize the media propaganda transnationally. In addition to Buenos Aires in the south, Mexico in the north worked as a point of dissemination. Under Carranza, German activities could be carried out more or less without interruptions. In the form of the daily *El Demócrata*, edited by Rafael Martínez (alias *Rip Rip*) – which, from 1916 on, had taken a German-friendly stance and was then sponsored by the German delegation – German propaganda had an exceptionally effective mouthpiece.[29] It was able to reach an audience even beyond the national capital and provincial

[26] Sandra Kuntz Ficker, "El impacto de la Primera Guerra Mundial sobre el comercio exterior de México": Iberoamericana, 14 (2014), pp. 117-137, here: p. 126.

[27] Rinke, Im Sog der Katastrophe, pp. 75-78.

[28] Katz, The Secret War, pp. 417-419.

[29] Katz, The Secret War, p. 448. Yolanda de la Parra, "La Primera Guerra Mundial y la prensa mexicana": Álvaro Matute (ed.), Estudios de historia moderna y contemporánea de México, Mexico 1986, pp. 155-176, here: p. 159.

cities such as Mérida (*Boletín de la guerra*) or Monterrey (*El Heraldo Europeo*). From Mexico, the German services could also be spread to Central America.[30]

Newspapers from Latin America responded in different ways to the mass deceit. Due to the lack of alternatives, most continued to reproduce the incoming dispatches, although some were not eager to let propaganda lies pass by without commenting on it. For example, in reaction to criticism of supposed false and one-sided reportages on European events, *El Imparcial* stated in early August 1914 that it would not take sides and from that moment on would provide its pages to anyone who could offer verifiable news.[31] Furthermore, the Mexican rival paper *El Nacional*, for instance, labeled its cable and correspondent division about the war "Mentiras y Verdades" (Lies and Truths).[32]

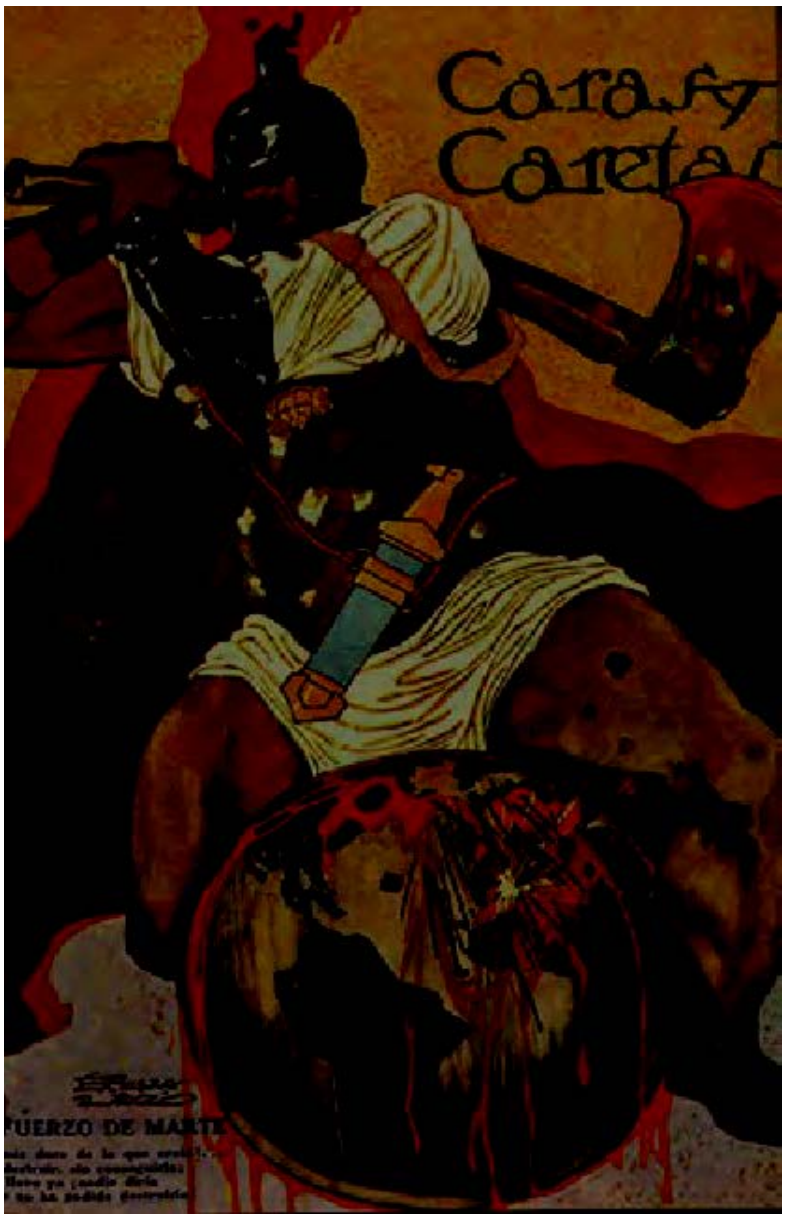
Brutality played a predominant role, not only in cartoons but also in press reports, as the media assumed that it could identify a clear pattern of global violence, first perceived in Latin America in 1910 with the Mexican Revolution and then developed into an "immense horror" with the war in Europe. The daily *El Demócrata* ironically described the arrogance of the "Old World" towards Latin America and analyzed his own region's "underdevelopment". When it came to brutality and militarism, the Europeans stood head and shoulders above the rest of the world, while the scope of the slaughter in their own civil war paled in comparison. "Thank God," stated the columnist, "we're not as developed here as the Europeans."[33]

[30] "Una palabra de introducción" and "Guatemala y la colonia alemana": El Eco Alemán (Guatemala, 09.01.1914), p. 1. Nicolás Rivero / J. Gil del Real, El conflicto europeo. Actualidades y diario de la guerra, Havanna: Pi y Margall, 1916, p. 1. See also Thomas Schoonover, Germany in Central America: Competitive Imperialism, 1821-1929, Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998, pp. 156-158.

[31] "Note from publisher": El Imparcial (Mexico, 09.08.1914), p. 1.

[32] "Verdades y mentiras": El Nacional (Mexico, 05.10.1916), p. 4.

[33] "La guerra de Europea y nuestra revolución": El Demócrata (Mexico, 09.25.1914), p. 2. See also Ezequiel A.Chavez, "L'opinion publique mexicaine et la guerre européenne", L'Amérique latine et la guerre européenne, Paris 1916, pp. 99-131, here: p. 111.



In 1917, cartoonists saw brutality at the center as the god of war continued to lash out at the whole world in vengeance.
Source: "Esfuerzo de Marte": Caras y Caretas (Buenos Aires, 08.11.1917)

Participants in this public debate concurred that the only possibility a nation could reach a basis for the expected or already present strength was to be true to itself. However, what this was supposed to mean in the immigrant countries of South America and other ethnically diverse societies continued to be unclear. Responses to this problem were provided in some of the acknowledged classics of the national literature on authenticity that gained importance during the war years. Comparable arguments were given by leading voices in different countries, such as Alfonso Reyes, who had published his work *Visión de Anáhuac* in 1917. Finally, the concern was with how singular interests could be subordinated to the ideal of the nation.[34]

In the Wake of War and Revolution

In 1917, the conflict in the Americas reached a new dimension.[35] All the more or less half-hearted intentions concerning mediation and peace initiatives were ruined once a diplomatic telegram from Germany was released in the US as well as in Latin America on March 1, 1917. *El Universal*, one of Mexico's rare openly pro-Ally newspapers under publisher Félix Palavicini, thus printed the full text of a cable of the German State Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Arthur Zimmermann, which would be known in world history as the Zimmermann telegram.[36] The content of this communication from the Foreign Office in Berlin in January – sent coded via the embassy in Washington to Mexico, but then decoded by the British – was shocking:

> "We intend to begin unrestricted submarine warfare on February 1. The attempt will nevertheless be made to keep America neutral. In the event that this should not succeed, we will propose to Mexico that we enter into an alliance on the following basis: Joint warfare. A common peace agreement. Abundant financial support and consent on our part (which does not constitute a guarantee) to Mexico recapturing earlier lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona (California will likely be

[34] Mariano H. Cornejo, La solidaridad americana y la guerra europea, Lima: Imprensa del Estado, 1917, p. 12. For the overall context: Nicola Miller, Reinventing Modernity in Latin America: Intellectuals Imagine the Future, 1900-1930, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

[35] See, e.g., Stefan Rinke, "'The Birth Year of Revolutions'. Latin American Debates About the Global Challenges of 1917-1919": Stefan Rinke / Michael Wildt (eds.), Revolutions and Counter-Revolutions. 1917 and Its Aftermath from a Global Perspective, Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2017, pp. 201-218.

[36] Parra, "La Primera Guerra Mundial": pp. 162-163. See also "Declara el Secretario de Estado": El Nacional (Mexico, 03.01.1917), p. 2.

> reserved for Japan). Arrangement of the particulars will be left to Your Excellency. Your Excellency will want to divulge the foregoing under strict secrecy to the president once the war has broken out with the United States and encourage him to invite Japan to immediately enter the war of its own accord and at the same time to mediate between us and Japan. Please inform the president that unrestricted use of our submarines now offers the prospect of forcing the peace with England in a matter of months."[37]

What caused an alarming shock to contemporaries made sense within the context of Germany's global strategy and its efforts to cooperate with Carranza. Zimmermann's telegram was sent in a moment when it was, moreover, already obvious that the US entry into the war was forthcoming due to the U-boat warfare.[38] In the event of Mexico's consent, the Germans would have let Mexico fight alone, since active support would have been impossible. On February 20, a dialogue took place between the German envoy and Carranza, who rejected the offer, even though there were some supporters within the Mexican government. Carranza intelligently avoided upsetting the Germans. In recognition of the need for money and weapons from abroad to stabilize his rule, he managed to keep the door open to possible negotiations in the future.[39]

These clandestine negotiations were, of course, unknown to the public. Hence, the publication of the Zimmermann telegram caused an explosion in the public. In Mexico itself, the press loyal to Carranza first dismissed the publication as a classic hoax of the tabloids. To them, the offer of an alliance seemed absurd.[40] In the United States, however, the press as well as government circles took the Zimmermann telegram seriously.[41] The consequences for the US-Latin American policy soon became apparent. On the one hand, numerous editorials discussed the potential repercussions of the move. *Excelsior* suggested that while the active contribution of US troops in the European war was doubtful, it was even more likely that the United States would try to extend its influence in the

[37] Quoted in Martin Nassua, "Gemeinsame Kriegführung, gemeinsamer Friedensschluß". Das Zimmermann-Telegramm vom 13. Januar 1917, Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1992, pp. 16-17

[38] Katz, The Secret War, p. 353.

[39] Ibid., pp. 353-383.

[40] "El gran escándalo amarillista": El Demócrata (Mexico, 03.03.1917), p 3.

[41] Sec. of State Robert Lansing, Memorandum (Washington, 03.04.1917), The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, vol. 41, pp. 321-327. For a detailed analysis of the reactions by US citizens, see Thomas Boghardt, The Zimmermann Telegram. Intelligence, Diplomacy, and America's Entry into World War I, Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2012.

south and particularly in neighboring Mexico.[42] On the other hand, the Mexican government's unyielding position towards the United States was esteemed and even considered by several newspapers as a "lesson worthy of imitation."[43]

Almost at the same moment when the US took the decision to break off relations with the German Reich, the Mexican Constitution of 1917 took effect on February 5. It announced a new kind of social legislation and, in particular, the nationalization of natural resources. This step can be interpreted as a direct assault on the interests of the great powers, which were dependent on the Mexican oil supplies above all during the war. Therefore, it was no surprise that declarations of solidarity with the United States from Mexico were uncommon. Quite the opposite, Mexico embraced a literal understanding of the notion of active neutrality, already submitting on February 12 a solid proposal for a new peace initiative to the neutral countries of the Americas and Europe. In the memorandum, Foreign Minister Cándido Aguilar explained the argument that the neutrals had contributed to protracting the war with their resources. They now should come together in order to bring the conflict to an end. The neutrals were to interrupt their trade with all belligerents until peace finally triumphed. Moreover, revolutionary hints could be found in the Mexican government's plan. Although the effort to embargo both sides constituted an entirely novel step in international law, Aguilar clarified that the global war itself was new, and that extreme measures were thus not only acceptable, but even mandatory in order to finally end the violence.[44]

Undoubtedly, Carranza's foreign policy can only be explained in view of the backdrop of the exceptionally tense relations with the United States since the Pershing expedition. Anti-US comments dominated in the Mexican press. Carranza's government paper *El Demócrata* added a great deal to this general direction.[45] On the contrary, the amount of those favoring a rapprochement with the United States remained comparatively small. The publisher Félix Palavicini, who established his

[42] "México y la guerra germano-americana": Excelsior (Mexico, 04.05.1917), p. 3. "La guerra contra los neutrales": Excelsior (Mexico, 04.13.1917), p. 3.

[43] "Lección digna de imitarse": Ecos Mundiales (Cúcuta, 09.14.1918). Supplement to US consul Sec. of State (Maracaibo, 09.22.1918), NA, RG 165, MID, 35-19. See also "Lógica y patriotismo": Transocean (Bogotá, 11.06.1917), p. 1.

[44] Mexican Foreign Minister C. Aguilar, circular (Querétaro, 02.12.1917), printed in Narciso Garay, Panamá y las guerras de los Estados Unidos, Panamá: Imprenta Nacional, 1930, pp. 13-15.

[45] Katz, The Secret War, p. 459. In 1919, the British government honored Palavicini for his pro-Ally stance. Meyer, Su majestad, p. 249.

own anti-Carranza newspaper, *El Universal*, in 1917, was unquestionably the best-known voice to openly campaign in Mexico on the side of the Allies.[46]

In general, due to their propaganda and secret-service activities, the Allies played an active role in Mexico.[47] Above all, the US boulevard press engaged in frequently publishing dramatic reports on German conspiracies there following the scandal caused by the Zimmerman telegram. In the United States, security matters against Mexican migrants were implemented due to concerns about spies.[48] The Mexican media condemned these actions as much as it attacked the United States' foreign trade restrictions. Editorials argued that Mexico had long provided critical war goods such as crude oil, without however getting its due respect.[49]

However, this did not sway the US. government, which in its place looked with anxiety at Mexican policy toward Central America with its anti-Guatemala thrust. The Mexican propagandists frequently noticed that the US influence on the Central American media had increased extremely since the United States had entered the war. Additionally, it was hardly thinkable to spread anti-US news any longer because of the high costs. In contrast, Carranza was now criticized in many places as a Germanophile.[50]

Paradoxically, it was the successful German propaganda in Mexico that made this assessment seem credible to numerous contemporaries. With the entrance of the United States into the war, Mexico became a central point of the German intelligence and propaganda efforts in Latin America's north more than ever before. Hence, alongside India and the Middle East, it was also a main part of Berlin's tactic to revolutionize and thus weaken its enemies' colonial empires.[51]

Carranza himself responded to the international pressure with a dynamic policy. On the one hand, he continued to work towards strengthening relations with Berlin; on the other, he avoided dramatic

[46] See, for instance, the example given by Miguel Rebolledo, México y Estados Unidos, Mexico: Viuda de C. Bouret, 1917, p. 163.

[47] Py, Francia y la Revolución Mexicana, p. 211.

[48] "Una barrera para los germanos": Excelsior (Mexico, 12.05.1917), p.1.

[49] "Memorandum": El Demócrata (Mexico, 03.06.1918), p. 3.

[50] "Il y'a fagot fagot et d'étranges neutralités": Le Courrier du Mexique (Mexico, 11.01.1917), p. 1. Yankelevich, La revolución, pp. 114-120.

[51] Lorenzo Meyer, México y el mundo. Historia de sus relaciones exteriores, vol. 6, La marca del nacionalismo, Mexico: El Colegio de México, 2010, p. 23.

confrontations with the Allies.[52] With his peace initiative, Carranza emphasized Mexico's ambition to leadership in the subcontinent under the auspices of his country's revolutionary nationalism. He cleverly took advantage of the anti-US. resentment that prevailed in the whole region. Moreover, he also represented his country as an alternative to the rule of the old global elites. Carranza's attitude proved to be quite effective for Mexico, for he kept his country out of the world war. Nevertheless, he failed to encourage other Latin American states to follow his ideas. The US. dominance was simply too overwhelming.[53]

Regarding economic matters, the Allies were successful in bringing into line Argentina and Chile, two major neutral countries that had always tried to keep their political independence. When it came to Mexico, however, they reached their limit. According to Katz, the particularly intense secret war of 1918 being carried out there for economic concessions was linked to the interest in Mexican raw materials. Carranza constantly negotiated with both sides in order to achieve the most latitude. Without doubt, his government's financial needs were great in view of the continuing internal crises, but the president was not willing to accept a US. offer of credit on the condition of breaking off relations with Berlin. However, Carranza's plans for getting a German loan were not fruitful, either.[54]

Global Revolutions and Social Movements

1917 was an important year for historical transformations on a global scale – not only due to the situation in Mexico and the US American entry into the war. The year can correctly be considered the turning point of the First World War and the basis for the influential structures of the short 20th century. The repercussions of the Russian Revolution were perceived in the Americas, too. To give an example, above all, the Mexican anarchist Ricardo Flores Magón was full of hope. From his perspective, the entry of the United States into the war meant a significant step towards world revolution, which he had been expecting for a long time. Furthermore, he suggested that the Czar's overthrow and

[52] Jürgen Buchenau, In the Shadow of the Giant. The Making of Mexico's Central America Policy 1876-1930, Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press 1996, p. 129. Isidro Fabela (ed.), La política interior y exterior de Carranza, Mexico: Ed. Jus, 1979, pp. 215-216.

[53] Rinke, Im Sog der Katastrophe, p. 194.

[54] Katz, The Secret War, pp. 403 and 408-410.

the famines observed in various regions were decisive emblems of the start of global anarchy. From his perspective, revolutionary Mexico was leading the way forward.[55]

The discussions picked up again especially after the Bolsheviks' October Revolution. The revolutionaries' disposition to end the war was an indication that the anarchists in Latin America welcomed with enthusiasm.[56] In February 1918, the revolutionary leader Emiliano Zapata, too, recognized the parallels between the Mexican and the Russian revolutions. Flores Magón refreshed this view later – in fact, he even directly connected the Russian Revolution under their new leaders Lenin and Trotsky with the promised world revolution.[57] When Latin Americans heard about the events in Russia, many of the workers, mainly in the cities, but also in the rural areas, adopted the positive view for themselves. Left intellectuals in the subcontinent drew again a connection between Mexico and Russia, and, in the following period, moved to Mexico. To the outside world, they all took part in turning Mexico into a kind of comrade state of Bolshevik Russia.[58]

This phenomenon, in which social struggles increased to a breaking point around the last months of the war, was recognizable in many regions of Latin America. In Mexico, strikes had frequently flared up since 1917 in the oil-producing zone around Tampico and were directed particularly against the British company El Águila. Sometimes suspicion fell on German intelligence representatives who were accused of cooperating with anarchists and Russian Bolsheviks to cripple the Allied war apparatus.[59] Intense labor struggles also took place in other South American countries. The motives were always similar, namely, the revolutionary stimulus originating from Mexico and Russia as well as the crisis of international capitalism due to the war.[60]

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[55] Ricardo Flores Magón, "Rumbo a la anarquía": Regeneración (Mexico, 02.12.1917), p. 2. Idem, "El mundo marcha": Regeneración (Mexico, 02.24.1917), p. 2. Idem, "La revolución mundial": Regeneración (Mexico, 03.24.1917), p. 1 See also Lommitz, The Return, p. 448.

[56] Patricio Geli, "Representations of the Great War in the South American Left. The Socialist Party of Argentina": Helmut Bley / Anorthe Kremers (ed.), The World During the First World War, Essen: Klartext, 2014, pp. 201-214, here: p. 203.

[57] Ricardo Flores Magón, "La revolución rusa": Regeneración (Mexico, 03.16.1918), p. 1.

[58] Daniela Spenser, Los primeros tropiezos de la Internacional Comunista en México, Mexico: CIESAS, 2009, pp. 67-77.

[59] Carl W. Ackerman, Mexico's Dilemma, New York: George H. Doran Company, 1918, pp. 68-69. Meyer, Su majestad, p. 199.

[60] Bill Albert, South America and the First World War, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 236-237. Hobart Ames Spalding, Organized Labour in Latin

From the viewpoint of the anarchists, the war offered quite a promising environment. While the well-connected Flores Magón brothers sought to exploit the eruption of war to intensify their propaganda activities,[61] the socialists did not welcome the war as the entrance to worldwide revolution. On the contrary, they lamented the uncountable victims among the workers. Nevertheless, they, too, observed the possibility for a mobilization of their followers better than ever before. Hence, the strikes, which only got stronger until the end of the war, also had political goals.[62] In the United States, these events were viewed with some fear. The US government hoped to contain the radical anarchist movements and block the growing transnationalization of the labor movement.[63]

Besides the revolutionary tendencies, nationalist movements gained new power in various spheres during the course of the war. The Carranza government was particularly determined to implement economic nationalism. The objective was to force foreign firms to pay higher taxes, to restrict their influence in politics, and to reach national sovereignty over natural resources. At least in theory, the constitution of 1917 contributed to the realization of these intentions. The echoes in Latin America revealed commensurate enthusiasm.[64]

Finally, culture in the broadest perspective was also affected by the nationalistic zeal. In Mexico, for example, the establishment of the so-called Generation of 1915 (or the "Seven Sages") underscores this. Like in other parts, Mexicans discovered their glorious history. Not only in Mexican muralism, but also in folklore it was apparently possible to discover authentic artistic and musical forms of expression from the past.[65]

America. Historical Case Studies of Workers in Dependent Societies, New York: New York University Press, 1977, pp. 1-51.

[61] Yankelevich, La revolución, p. 14. Enrique Flores Magón, "Burlemos la ley": Regeneración (Mexico, 08.08.1914), p. 3. Ricardo Flores Magón, "Leyendo el porvenir": Regeneración (Mexico, 08.12.1916), p. 1.

[62] "La grave situación": La Vanguardia (Mexico, 08.07.1914), p. 1. "En homenaje a Jaurès": La Vanguardia (Mexico, 08.08.1914), p. 1. Ernesto del Valle Iberlucea, La cuestión internacional y el Partido Socialista, Buenos Aires: M. García, 1917, p. 27.

[63] American Federation of Labor, Labor and the War. American Federation of Labor and the Labor Movement of Europe and Latin America, Washington: American Federation of Labor, 1918, p. 152. Gregg Andrews, Shoulder to Shoulder? The American Federation of Labor, the United States, and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1924, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, pp. 70-94.

[64] Katz, The Secret War, pp. 498-499.

[65] "Primeiro Congresso de Historia Nacional": Jornal do Commercio (Rio de Janeiro, 09.17.1914), p. 3. Olivier Compagnon, L'adieu à l'Europe. L'Amérique latine et la

Besides this concentration on the role of the nation, the media combined the request for an immediate end of the conflict with one for essential reforms to give all people equal rights. This was also the case in civil-war-plagued Mexico.[66] Since 1916, there had been a student movement that fought in view of the European war and the US imperialism for robust relations between Latin Americans and for the defense of neutrality.[67]

What is more, in Mexico, the revolution was quite crucial in influencing the indigenist movement.[68] As a member of the intellectual vanguard, Manuel Gamio called for rediscovering the indigenous tradition. According to him, it was essential to integrate the "raza de bronce" ("bronze race") and to generate a homogeneous nation.[69] In order to learn to appreciate one's own culture, Gamio emphatically appealed for abandoning the "fatal orientation towards foreign countries".[70]

These developments went along with an increasing importance of those who raised their voices and accused the United States of imperialism. In Mexico, the government worked on the establishment of an anti-imperialist and pro-Mexican network. The Latin American context was advantageous for these measures as it was influenced not least by the spirit of reform that came along with the students' movements. The best-known protagonist in this anti-imperial chorus was

Grande Guerre (Argentine et Brésil, 1914-1939), Paris: Fayard, 2013, pp. 302-304. Eduardo Devés Valdés, El pensamiento latinoamericano en el siglo XX. Entre la modernización y la identidad, Del Ariel de Rodó a la CEPAL, 1900-1950, Santiago de Chile: Centro de Investigaciones Diego Barros Arana, 2001, vol. 1, pp. 97-103.

[66] "Historia de la actual guerra en Europa": El Diario del Hogar (Mexico, 10.07.1914), p. 2.

[67] See Romain Robinet, "Students Facing the Great War in Revolutionary Mexico. The Intellectual Youth and the Quest for a New Order (1914-1921)". Olivier Compagnon / Maria Inés Tato (eds.), Toward a History of the First World War in Latin America, Madrid / Frankfurt: Iberoamericana/ Vervuert, forthcoming.

[68] Devés, El pensamiento latinoamericano, vol. 1, pp. 84-85. Manuel Andrés García, Indigenismo, izquierda, indio. Perú, 1900-1930, Sevilla: Universidad Internacional de Andalucía, 2010 pp. 89-90 and 101-106.

[69] Manuel Gamio, Forjando patria, Mexico: Ed. Porrúa, 1960 [1916], pp. 5-6 and 10. See also Devés, El pensamiento latinoamericano, vol. 1, pp. 111-112. Patricia Funes, Salvar la nación. Intelectuales, cultura y política en los años veinte latinoamericanos, Buenos Aires: Prometeo libros, 2006, pp. 102-106.

[70] Gamio, Forjando patria, p. 120.

Manuel Ugarte whose fame rested also on his stays in revolutionary Mexico.[71]

Ugarte expressed his perspective in speeches at the Teatro Ideal in Mexico in May 1917. He argued that the continent had not reached full economic and cultural autonomy with the independence movements of the early 19th century. In this regard, Latin America was in Ugarte's opinion still a colony. He cited diverse methods of imperialism and contended that the weak states could only find relief through joint actions in solidarity.[72] Many intellectuals in the region, such as Víctor Haya de la Torre from Peru, concurred with Ugarte and wrote with a similar thrust.[73] With the Revolution in Russia, the anti-imperialist spirit won additional energy. Even if the attacks did not have the same intensity in the whole region, there was, without doubt, an underlying fear of a world-dominating imperialism that was also expressed in numerous cartoons.

Above all, Mexico had reason to worry due to previous US interventions. During the Pershing expedition, newspapers excelled in making anti-American statements. For instance, *El Demócrata* warned that in reality there could be no equality with the United States.[74] The journalist Gonzalo de la Parra, for his part, stated in *El Nacional*: "The United States of the north, a people without a race, without anything autochthonous or distinctly its own, are a ridiculous imperialist country, for they always only suppress weak or small nations [...]."[75]

Besides US-orientated imperialism, colonialism per se was also discussed in Latin America since the peace conference at the latest. Latin American observers like Ugarte did not fail to notice that the belligerent states recruited enormous masses of soldiers and auxiliary forces from their colonies for the battle lines in Europe and, moreover, fought each

[71] Manuel Ugarte, La patria grande, Buenos Aires: Capital Intelectual, 2010 [1924], p. 101. Ugarte's attitude was even reported on in Ecuador, "Ugarte y la neutralidad": La Verdad (Guayaquil, 12.22.1917), p. 2.

[72] Manuel Ugarte, La América Latina ante la Guerra europea, Mexico 1917, pp. 23-27.

[73] Eduardo Hodge Dupré, "La defensa continental de América Latina en el pensamiento de Manuel Ugarte y Víctor R. Haya de la Torre (1900-1945)": Latinoamérica, 52: 1 (2011), pp. 139-164, here: pp. 141-145.

[74] "Panamericanismo de duplicidad y Panamericanismo de lealtad": El Demócrata (Mexico, 06.13.1916), p. 2.

[75] Gonzalo de la Parra, "Los cerdos que comercian con cerdos han ultrajado a mi patria": El Nacional (Mexico, 06.19.1916), p. 1. See also Mario Mata, "Tengamos serenidad ante el peligro": El Nacional (Mexico, 06.20.1916), p. 3.

other in the colonies themselves, which demanded countless civilian victims.[76]

In the end, the armistice in Europe put an end to war – at least for the short term. In many cities in Latin America, too, in the days leading up to November 11, 1918, the atmosphere was fraught with anticipation. The Mexican paper *Excelsior* even demanded "peace at any price" in response to the protracted negotiations between the conflicting parties.[77] Simultaneously, the enthusiasm was relatively muted in some regions where the advocates of neutrality defended their attitude despite the war's outcome.[78] On the contrary, the Germans had no cause for celebration. Their disillusionment, indeed shock, was enormous.[79] However, there was also alarm in Mexico about the news of the revolutionary disorder dominating in Germany.[80]

The adoption of the charter of the League of Nations accompanied the ratification of the peace treaty. Eleven signatories from Latin America were to become founding members. However, at that moment, revolutionary Mexico was excluded as a result of pressure from Britain and the United States. 18 of the 42 original members of the League of Nations came from Latin America. This solid numerical representation gave rise to the hope that the ideal of universal equality would actually be realized.[81]

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the First World War was a central watershed in history that interacted with the Mexican Revolution. After August 1914, the cycle of violence took on a new global dimension. By looking at the Latin American region, we can notice that, nevertheless, the spiral of global violence started earlier. The Mexican Revolution, which in the 1910s overlapped with the wars in Europe and other places, and the

[76] Manuel Ugarte, Mi campaña, Barcelona: Ed. Cervantes, 1922, p. 208. See also Ugarte, La patria grande, p. 113.

[77] "La paz a toda costa": Excelsior (Mexico, 11.09.1918), p. 3.

[78] Meyer, Su majestad, p. 249. Reinaldo Matiz, Amistad Colombo Germana, Bogotá: s.n., 1918, p. 8.

[79] Katz, The Secret War, p. 451. Stefan Rinke, "Der letzte freie Kontinent": Deutsche Lateinamerikapolitik im Zeichen transnationaler Beziehungen, 1918-1933, Stuttgart: Heinz, 1996, pp. 368-369.

[80] "El derrumbamiento de un gran imperio": Excelsior (Mexico, 11.12.1918), p. 3.

[81] Rinke, "Der letzte freie Kontinent", p. 177.

conflict with the United States proved to form part of this hitherto unknown level of brutality.

Even if the Latin American governments sought to stay neutral and put their expectations in the rapid end to the war, the conflict, however, soon took on exceptional dimensions: it neither passed by quickly nor were the Latin Americans able to stay apart. Much to the contrary, especially wartime media activities made the magnitude of the conflict felt throughout the region from the beginning.

Mexico's experiences were unique for several reasons. In terms of political considerations, the country can be considered the central point of the German war tactic in Latin America. Moreover, the already prevailing tensions intensified in the 1910s due to its geographical proximity to the United States. Above all, Mexico confronted an uncertain domestic situation in the form of the revolutionary civil war. This situation can be understood better by taking into consideration the perception of interactions between global transformations and local experiences and by paying attention to the worldwide flows of new ideas that accentuated, amongst others, the role of the nation and anti-imperial rhetoric.