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¡Américas unidas!
Nelson A. Rockefeller's Office
of Inter-American Affairs (1940-46)

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Chapter 5

Fighting for the Soul of the Mexican Press: Axis and Allied Activities during the Second World War*

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This chapter explores the efforts undertaken by the U.S. Department of State and the Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA) to exert control over the Mexican press during the Second World War. As in other parts of the region,¹ cooperation between the Department of State and the OIAA was marked at times by intense competition that hampered operations in the informational and other fields of activity. However, these two organizations finally arrived at a successful formula whereby the U.S. Embassy assumed tight control over all propaganda activities within Mexican territory.

As this contribution will make clear, however, the United States was not the only power to interfere with the Mexican press. Toward the beginning of World War II, Nazi Germany had established an extensive and highly efficient propaganda apparatus that had made considerable inroads into Mexico's mass media. Yet, by and large, such inroads into the press had been checked by the Mexican government and by Franco-British counterpropaganda organizations well before the OIAA appeared on the scene. This tactical success on the propaganda front, of course, did not prevent broad segments of Mexican public opinion and many editors from continuing to have anti-American and anti-Allied leanings. To print such opinions, however, became increasingly difficult as the combined thrust of the U.S. State Department and the OIAA, by means of economic threats and/or substantial rewards, was able to sway the Mexican press into compliance.

For the history of the Mexican press, the war years represent one of its darkest chapters. Its servility, unethical practices and shortsightedness provided a fertile soil for the political interests of the belligerent countries, especially for the British and Americans. The press abounded with foreign propaganda disguised as information, while foreign currency was flowing in and swelling its coffers.

Toward the end of the war, the OIAA's well-oiled communication machinery was no longer concerned about Axis activities, but about propaganda undertaken by the British and Soviet governments with a view to postwar interests. Such concerns help explain why the Americans continued to bribe the Mexican press, maintained an agency of "stooge" writers and financed other covert means even after the Nazi threat had waned.

The Mexican press during the early forties

In 1940, Mexico had a population of roughly twenty million, of which less than fifty percent could read and write. Mexico's print media were highly concentrated in regional terms. The capital's leading commercial newspapers were *El Universal*, *Excélsior*, *Novedades* and *La Prensa*. Two other morning papers, *El Nacional* and *El Popular*, were organs of the government party, the *Partido de la Revolución Mexicana* (PRM), and of the labor union's *Confederación de Trabajadores de México* (CTM), respectively. The publishers of *El Universal* and *Excélsior*, also had afternoon newspapers, *El Universal Gráfico* and *Últimas Noticias*. In the provinces there were approximately 130 newspapers, which were classified by the U.S. Embassy as "small" (83) and "intermediate-sized" (41).² Additionally, U.S. media surveys detected a flurry of "small publications, usually of a very short life, but sometimes very pretentious," which "live entirely on the money which they are able to extract from government officials, from business firms, and from private individuals. They live because of the vanity or selfish interests of certain individuals. Their circulation is extremely limited and usually non-paid. Their influence is invariably nil."³

For these reasons, and contrary to the practices of the German and Franco-British propagandists, the Americans decided in mid-1942 not to subsidize the press so as to influence their editorial policy (a promise they would not comply with in the following months). At that time they decided that the Mexican mass media were to "be dealt with a strong hand as they are not above using threats and indirect blackmail."⁴ The Americans would concentrate on the established papers in and outside the capital and for this reason they set up a local agency for free-of-charge distribution of features, photographs and editorials.⁵

With regard to magazines, by the early 1940s there were about one hundred in Mexico of which thirty – the ones published in the capital – were con-

sidered to be of some importance by the Allied media analysts and five were deemed really influential: *Hoy*, *Todo*, *Sucesos*, *Tiempo* and *Mañana*.⁶ The U.S. Embassy included two further magazines, both referred to as anti-American, anti-Allied and thus “dangerous”: *La Reacción* and *La Nación*. *La Reacción* had a relatively large circulation in the capital and throughout the country, but ceased publication on September 1, 1942; *La Nación* was the mouthpiece of the *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN), whose leaders were prominent Catholics. Due to the many religious and political factors involved, Guy Ray, the unofficial American Press Officer, considered *La Nación* as “the most difficult one that the Embassy has endeavored to handle.”⁷

Nazi activities in the Mexican press

After Adolf Hitler came to power in January 1933, Germany substantially increased its propaganda activities at home and abroad. In Mexico, the Third Reich’s propaganda machine received an important impulse in April 1935, when Berlin assigned Arthur Dietrich as Press Attaché to the German Legation. Dietrich soon established such a notorious career that his critics would come to dub him “the Mexican Führer.”⁸

The Nazi apparatus in Mexico was financed by forced contributions and by donations from German-owned firms, which held strong positions particularly in the hardware market and in the chemical and pharmaceutical industries.⁹ German companies were investing large sums in newspaper advertising and Arthur Dietrich convinced them to work together as a pool so as to use their combined market power to influence the media’s editorial stance toward the Third Reich.¹⁰ In mid-1935, the German legation supported the creation of the evening newspaper *La Noticia*, providing it a monthly subsidy of 500 pesos. When this paper failed, Dietrich took control in 1936 of the capital’s popular tabloid *La Prensa* and supported it with 1,500 pesos monthly and substantial commercial advertising.¹¹ During 1938 even the most prominent “independent” newspapers, *Excelsior* and *El Universal*, published full sections of disguised propaganda that were paid for by Nazi agents.¹² Many journals and magazines were also receiving information and photographs from German news agencies free of charge or for a symbolic fee.¹³ The Office of German Press bought off many Mexican journalists such as José Pagés Llargo, an influential writer with the newsmagazine *Hoy*. He was hired to work as a “foreign correspondent” based in Germany following the commencement of

hostilities. Pagés was granted a generous expense account while traveling and reporting from Germany and other European countries.¹⁴

In 1940, the German activists in Mexico founded new propaganda outlets such as the news weekly *Timón*, which started on February 22. Directed by José Vasconcelos, one of the most outstanding Mexican intellectuals of the day, *Timón* was heavily subsidized by the German embassy and financially supported by German advertisers. It aimed at the conservative and educated middle classes and became a blatantly propagandistic vehicle for the Third Reich. Above all, *Timón* sought to persuade Mexicans to remain neutral and to avoid commitments with the United States.¹⁵

Not surprisingly, Axis propagandists sought to make the most out of Germany's rapid military triumph in Poland and subsequent campaigns during the spring and summer of 1940. Thus, on May 31, 1940, the Spanish version of *Deutsche Zeitung von Mexiko* was replaced by *Diario Alemán*, which on June 3 changed its title again to *Diario de la Guerra*.¹⁶ According to an FBI report, its propaganda was "particularly vicious" because it falsely appeared to be written by Mexicans. The newsboys that sold it had instructions to hand it out for free to customers from the lower classes.¹⁷

Yet Germany's triumphs on the battlefield were not easily translated into victories on the propaganda front, as the official correspondence and personal diary of the German minister in Mexico reveal. Germany's propagandists in Mexico were experiencing serious financial woes. On May 7, 1940, the minister informed Berlin:

We are losing ground day by day for lack of funds. One newspaper after another slips through our fingers, falling to enemy pressure. It would be a fatal error to believe that we can successfully influence the press simply by means of printing supplies, personal contacts, cocktails... Here all of the newspapers and journalists expect material rewards for their collaboration, rewards which seem to be available in abundance from the other side.¹⁸

Such complaints allow us to develop a fairly objective understanding of the real balance of power with regard to propaganda in Mexico during these early and decisive wartime months. Indeed, German intrusions in Mexico's media were soon to be thwarted by other forces.¹⁹

Allied activities in the Mexican press

When the war broke out, the British Consul General in Mexico, Thomas Rees, formed a small war committee. Composed of the most influential British ex-

patriates, the new organization included a subcommittee in charge of publicity activities.²⁰ In mid-September, the Ministry of Information in London named Robert Marett as its representative in Mexico. Marett, who spoke perfect Spanish, had ten years of business experience in Latin America, seven of which he had spent in Mexico as an executive of *El Aguila Petroleum Company*. He had married into a prominent Mexican family and thereby acquired many useful contacts among the corporate, governmental and social elite. As a foreign correspondent for *The Times* from 1936 to 1938, he became very familiar with local issues, so much so that he authored a book on his experiences in Mexico.²¹ Marett immediately moved to reinforce the publicity infrastructure already in place, while also establishing the Inter-Allied Committee of Propaganda (IACP). Chaired by the Consul General of Great Britain, the IACP was composed of representatives from the British, French, Polish, Dutch, Belgian, Greek and Jewish communities in Mexico.²² The IACP created the Allied Information Office (AIO) as a means of stirring up sympathy for the Allied cause in Mexican public opinion. By mid-March 1940 the Office was co-chaired by Robert Marett and Jacques Soustelle, a prestigious French anthropologist and expert on Mexico's indigenous cultures. Young, energetic and well-prepared, these two agents would prove to be the main figures behind the Franco-British communication efforts in the first years of the war.²³ Following the fall of France, General Charles de Gaulle named Soustelle as the representative of the Free French Movement in Mexico. The anthropologist thereupon established a Press Bureau that worked very closely with the AIO. The British took responsibility for most of the operative burden of the IACP. Nevertheless, until mid-1942 the French community in Mexico covered half of the substantial expenses of the Allied Information Office and also financed the much lower propaganda outlays of the Free French Movement.²⁴

British propaganda agents took a poor view of the Mexican press as

lacking a high standard of independent or intelligent journalism. For its foreign news and comment it relies respectively upon the services of the 'Associated Press' and the 'United Press', which are provided by these agencies at cheap and, in some cases, uneconomic rates, and upon special articles, syndicated throughout Latin America, by American, and occasionally British, writers on political and military subjects.²⁵

Yet more importantly, the British decried the fact that even the leading newspapers and magazines in Mexico seldom evinced firm editorial policies and that commercial revenues directly conditioned the press's attitude towards the war. Hence, the editorial stance of a given paper seemed to reflect

the relative amount of Allied and German advertising and publicity that was forthcoming.²⁶

Indeed, through much of Mexico's modern history it was timeworn practice to bribe editors or reporters to portray propaganda as news (a genre locally known as *gacetillas*) or to subsidize newspapers so as to influence editorial policy.²⁷ During the inter-war period, the German Press Office had made a substantial investment of this nature in Mexico's press media. At the outset of the war, the British Consul General calculated that they would require at least 500 pounds a month to undertake an extensive and effective publicity effort to wield "control [over] well-established local papers with morning and afternoon editions."²⁸ Marett denounced the Mexican press as "excessively mercenary,"²⁹ but this opinion did not stop him from playing the bidding game to secure the placement of British propaganda throughout the Mexican media at what proved to be a very high premium.

By late 1940, out of the AIO's total monthly budget of 35,900 pesos, 15,500 pesos were disbursed for "subsidies" to periodicals and for covering the operational deficits of ANTA.³⁰ A purportedly Mexican news agency, ANTA had been set up to place news items, cartoons, photographs and editorials throughout the country. It was financed by the French news agency Havas and, after the fall of France, by the British Reuters. To put these figures into perspective: AIO's monthly budget provisions for activities seeking to influence radio broadcasts in Mexico were only 1,000 pesos. Clearly, the British strategy focused on printed mass communication.³¹ The U.S., in contrast, regarded radio as their medium of choice.³²

The Mexican government and the national press

In the first months of 1940, several newspapers in the U.S. launched a heavy-handed and paranoid campaign against the Mexican government and its supposed "lukewarmness" towards an alleged Nazi "Fifth Column." Some papers even claimed that neighboring Nazis were planning to invade the United States.³³

At the same time, and even as it still professed neutrality in the world conflict, the Mexican government played a most decisive role in stopping the dissemination of German propaganda. Lázaro Cárdenas, Mexico's leftist president, whose hatred of Fascism and Nazism was well known, showed growing uneasiness with the widespread propagandistic activities sponsored

by the German legation. Thus, on June 11, the Mexican government declared Arthur Dietrich *persona non grata* and expelled him from the country.³⁴ That same day, the Mexican Justice Department convened all the editors and managers of the capital's newspapers to inform them that the government's foreign policy was now sympathetic towards the U.S. and that their cooperation in fostering better bilateral relations would be greatly appreciated.³⁵ Thereafter, the Mexican government shut down *Timón* and began to censure the news emanating from fascist countries. Cárdenas communicated to U.S. officials his hopes that the press in their country would adopt a more friendly posture towards Mexico. The Department of State thereupon directed its staff to take advantage of any opportunity to praise Mexico without overdoing it. It was hoped that these messages would deflate the anti-Mexican campaign of certain North American newspapers and magazines.³⁶

These early anti-German diplomatic moves signaled a clear pro-Allied posture on the part of the Mexican government. Subsequent reports concluded that the expulsion of the Nazi mastermind, Arthur Dietrich, led to a steep decline in pro-German publications.³⁷ What is noteworthy for our purposes is that Germany's propaganda machine had already received a massive blow weeks before the OIAA was established and many months before the American Embassy became actively involved in war propaganda. The Mexican government thus deserves credit for significant advances against the Nazi agents during this time period. Cárdenas's successor, Manuel Ávila Camacho, clearly continued this course. On March 28, 1941, his government shut down one of Germany's few remaining organs of overt propaganda, *Diario de la Guerra*.³⁸

After Mexico entered the war in May 1942, a special propaganda agency was set up, the *Dirección General de Información*. The new agency reported to the Ministry of the Interior and followed a corporatist pattern. It relied heavily on influencing regional and local public opinion leaders. Toward this end, it used traditional ways of communication such as town meetings, posters, flyers, "corridos" (Mexican folk songs), talks and conferences given by teachers, politicians, intellectuals, etc. Within this communication system, the governmental ministries played a large role (especially the Ministry of Education) along with organs of the governing party, the PRM. Yet the State's propaganda budget was limited and the state-owned mass media rather feeble. The government therefore turned to the commercial mass media and obtained cooperation from private quarters.³⁹ Surprisingly, we have found no evidence

of coordination or cooperation between the Mexican propaganda offices and their Allied and American counterparts.

The U.S. State Department and the Mexican press

From the mid-thirties onward, the U.S. Embassy in Mexico kept a close watch on every step taken by fascist organizations. At the same time it scrutinized the Mexican media. It reported on the launching of new periodicals or the publication of articles of interest for the United States. Moreover, upon particular requests from the State Department, the Embassy carried out some more thorough investigations: for instance, it analyzed the extent to which U.S. news items were carried in the local press as well as the increase or decrease of such coverage over a period of time.⁴⁰ As the political situation in Europe worsened and Nazi-Fascist propaganda activities gathered strength in Mexico, the U.S. Embassy increasingly reported on this subject. Thus, in January 1939, it conducted a very detailed study of the capital's press, pointing out for each periodical the owners, circulation, readers' profiles, reputation and attitudes towards the governments of Mexico and the United States. In May of that same year it investigated rumors about the alleged financing by the German Legation of the leading newspaper *Excélsior* and its evening edition *Últimas Noticias*.⁴¹

Apart from consular dispatches from all over the country, the Embassy was receiving information from FBI agents, military attachés, Mexican official and unofficial informers and diplomats of the Allied countries. In a nutshell, the Embassy carried out its own investigations of the Mexican mass media and had at its disposal a suitable network for monitoring the state of public opinion in the country. The handling of the press was put into experienced hands. At the beginning of 1941, the U.S. Embassy appointed Guy W. Ray as its Second Secretary, a move that would turn out to be decisive in the following years.⁴²

The Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA) and the Mexican Press

The organizational history and general objectives of the OIAA have been explained elsewhere in this volume and need not concern us here.⁴³ For our purposes, it will suffice to remind our readers that analyzing and monitoring Latin America's print media was one of the OIAA's major tasks, as well

as coaxing the press towards a more pronounced pro-Allied stance. Hence, the Press Division was one of the largest and best-established subdivisions of the Rockefeller agency and Mexico was one of its most important operational fields south of the Rio Grande.

The OIAA was operating in realms that by tradition and international law were the responsibility of the State Department. Rockefeller's authority and jurisdiction, moreover, had been poorly defined. Such conditions inevitably led to tensions with powerful figures in the State Department and in the diplomatic corps. As will be explained below, these tensions climaxed in the early months of 1941 when the State Department pressured President Franklin D. Roosevelt to clarify responsibilities. In a letter to Rockefeller in April 1941, the President reaffirmed the State Department's overall responsibility for foreign policy and subjected the OIAA's activities to the Department's oversight and approval. From then on, the two parties enjoyed relatively harmonious relations, but underlying tensions continued to surface at times, particularly in Mexico.⁴⁴

First mass media studies and public opinion surveys in Latin America

From the very beginning of his nomination as Coordinator, Nelson Rockefeller wanted to undertake a detailed investigation about the state of Latin America's mass media and public opinion in order to better understand their attitudes towards the United States as well as the nature and scope of Axis propaganda. Toward this end, in the fall of 1940, he approached the noted polling expert George Gallup. Gallup brought into the project an associate of his, Hadley Cantril, who was to direct public opinion surveys in Latin America. The first and most elaborate survey was conducted in Brazil, because of the country's importance and strategic location. For Mexico and other countries Rockefeller turned to the American Association of Advertising Agencies (4As) for recruiting "observers" to monitor opinion in the press and radio of the major cities. These observers performed a variety of functions. For instance, they maintained a daily clipping service on local and editorial opinion; they surveyed the technical facilities of the main media outlets and tracked audience, circulation, ownership and attitudes towards the belligerents and the United States.⁴⁵ Rockefeller's man in Mexico City was Harald J. Corson, an advertising expert in his early forties.⁴⁶

By early 1941 the OIAA was prepared to use these men for its first major propaganda operation authorized by both Rockefeller and Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle. The “observers” placed full-page advertisements by a dummy firm, the Inter-American Travel Agency, depicting the United States as a prime destination for tourism. They ran the ads in the 350 major Latin American newspapers and especially in those with unfriendly attitudes towards the U.S. The objective was not only to present a positive image of the Yankees, but also to foster economic dependency. Once dependent on American advertising money, it was reasoned, the paper in question could later be brought to heel.⁴⁷ Many embassies condemned the scheme as public funds were being channeled to papers friendly to the Axis and expressed their displeasure at not being consulted. As Claude Curtis Erb has shown, no one in the State Department was more upset than Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles who had been in charge of Latin American relations since 1934. Welles had opposed the creation of the OIAA in the first place. This advertising campaign had taken him completely by surprise. Welles was irate at not having been informed of ground operations taking place on his watch, and which ended in a fiasco. Welles thereupon used this incident to convince Roosevelt to put all the OIAA’s activities under the authority of the State Department.⁴⁸

After this costly failure Rockefeller disbanded the 4As field organization. (The observers were kept, however, and continued their research activities.) Instead and this time in full cooperation with the State Department, the OIAA created “Coordination Committees,” semi-official bodies of prominent U.S. citizens residing in Latin America. The State Department and the OIAA worked in concert to recruit committee members, always subject to local embassy approval. On August 19, 1941, Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Coordinator Rockefeller signed a formal agreement establishing this new field organization. And so, a week later, John Dreier of the Department of State and John McClintock from the OIAA departed for a trip through Latin America to formally establish the Coordination Committees.⁴⁹ Mexico’s committee was set up on October 28 of that same year.⁵⁰ Headed by James R. Woodul, President of the American Smelting Company, the Committee had an executive board of eleven members, each one of whom was a senior manager at firms such as General Electric, Anderson Clayton, General Motors, Pan-American Airways, Colgate Palmolive and Sydney Ross, etc. Ms. Paxton Haddow directed the Mexican Press Section from late 1942 onward. The Committee could count on advice and aid from John Lloyd, Chief of the Associated Press Bureau in Mexico, Edward P. Morgan, his counterpart in the United Press and

Curtis Vinson, staff correspondent of the *Dallas Morning News*. As the U.S. Embassy reported to Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles: "In this way, the Committee's operating organization is assured of advice, guidance and direction from those men [the American journalists] in Mexico most familiar with the existing conditions in each specific field of its operations."⁵¹ On the Embassy's side, Guy W. Ray was chosen as the Committee's liaison officer.

New tensions between the State Department and the OIAA in Mexico

After serving as U.S. Ambassador to Cuba, on February 24, 1942, George S. Messersmith presented to President Manuel Ávila Camacho his credentials as the new Ambassador to Mexico.⁵² Messersmith's arrival marks a turning point in the relations between the U. S. Embassy and the OIAA in Mexico. If the two parties had been able to cobble together a fairly harmonious working relationship, the new Ambassador was to upset things.

Only a few months before Messersmith had urged American diplomats to resist the interference of Rockefeller's emissaries. In Havana he had been most unfavorably impressed by Rockefeller's press emissary: "[T]he poor fellow," he complained, was supposedly reporting on public opinion, but was "utterly incompetent to begin with, and so was pestering the embassy to do his research for him." Messersmith's biographer Jesse H. Stiller describes how

in Messersmith's jaundiced view, Rockefeller's projects fell into one of two categories: worthy ones, like artistic exchanges, being bungled in the execution, and unworthy ones, like his Hollywood movie stars on tour, that smacked of cultural imperialism, insulted Latin intelligence, and probably converted not a single soul to the Allied cause. On the bright side, Messersmith accurately foresaw "a hell of a time" awaiting Rockefeller when next he had to go before Congress to justify his prodigious expenditures. Until then, 'we must see to it that these projects are kept in line... The Coordinator's Office is here today and may be gone tomorrow.' The damage it did would fall to the State Department to repair.⁵³

Messersmith was a career diplomat with little patience for amateurs and he wholly disapproved of having naive and bungling intruders from the OIAA meddling in his cultural and political bailiwick. On one occasion when Rockefeller's chief of the Information Division, Wallace K. Harrison, came to brief the new Ambassador on the OIAA's local activities, Messersmith responded by throwing Harrison out of the country. As the months passed, however, the Ambassador eventually became somehow convinced of the usefulness of

the Coordinator's Office and allowed a rapprochement, but only after making sure that previous working arrangements between the Embassy and the OIAA were modified to his advantage. From then on, Guy W. Ray, his unofficial Press Officer, was to supervise all propaganda activities.⁵⁴ Ray thus became the most influential man within the realm of Mexican (and possibly Latin American) mass media.⁵⁵

In the meantime, the Mexican Coordination Committee had succumbed to a period of confusion as its Executive Secretary informed Rockefeller in late 1942: "It seems to us that the staff members concerned do not have a clear comprehension of the position of the Ambassador and this Committee in the administration of the program."⁵⁶ Such problems were finally settled a few months later by means of a reorganization. Among other things, it was decided that from now on the Coordination Committee in Mexico was in charge of distributing the press material emanating from the OIAA's Washington headquarters in order to improve the hitherto poor results in terms of the number of items published by the Mexican media.⁵⁷

Controlling the press by investigating editorial policies, analyzing contents and taking reprisals

Rockefeller and his agency made a substantial contribution to the U.S. government, and to the Department of State in particular, with its regional mass media and public opinion research. The OIAA maintained "observers" in every major city in Latin America and sponsored large-scale studies of the media. It analyzed communications media, their audiences and the firms that were to be "blacklisted" because of their cooperation with the Axis powers.⁵⁸ The U.S. government published these Black Lists on July 17, 1941. They included 1,800 cases, 180 of which were based in Mexico. The State Department kept a less-publicized list that identified important persons and firms who seemed most sympathetic to the Axis. "Blacklisted" entities included some radio stations as well as newspapers and magazines such as *La Prensa* and *Hoy* (Mexico City) or *El Norte* (Monterrey).⁵⁹

The Black Lists proved to be the most direct means to control Axis influence in the Latin American media. They were also a clear demonstration of how the OIAA could be of use to the Department of State. Notably, Harald J. Corson's secret content-analysis studies of Mexican mass media and his surveys on public opinion, attitudes and reactions to the war news were the most

pioneering work of scientific communications research hitherto conducted in Mexico. The British propagandists, who were acquainted with some of the results of Corson's investigations, praised his skillful work.⁶⁰

Controlling Mexican public opinion through the blocking of news sources

In their pursuit of the most up-to-date information on the progress of the war, Mexican newspapers relied heavily upon international news agencies. As was the case with most Latin American countries at that time, what knowledge of the war that there was in Mexico came primarily from news services that were "combatants" in the war of information and disinformation. In this highly charged environment, propaganda had become a weapon of war. Many authoritarian and democratic countries established special cabinet ministries to produce and disseminate information. As a result, people found it harder and harder to obtain trustworthy news.⁶¹

The Transocean News Service, for example, a subsidiary of the official Reich news service DNB, was an integral part of the Nazi propaganda machinery. Before the war, Transocean had been furnishing a daily news service to all of the newspapers in Mexico City as well as to several others. All of its contents originated in Germany and other foreign points and was transmitted throughout Mexico by radio.⁶² During the first months of the war a special news bulletin was prepared and supplied free of charge to many radio stations.⁶³

Transocean and other Axis-controlled news providers, however, were no match for the Allies. Through blacklisting and other methods of intimidation (explained below), the latter effectively reaffirmed their predominance in the news field. As a U.S. Embassy official reported for the week from May 26 to 31, 1941, Transocean news bulletins were being published only in Mexico City's papers and, in comparison with the space allocated to news coming from other agencies, accounted for only 1.9 percent of the grand total. The Associated Press led the list with 37.2 percent; ANTA (which transmitted news provided by British official services and Reuters) came in second with 26 percent; and the United Press came in third with 12.1 percent.⁶⁴ In short, by mid-1941 U.S. and British information services in Mexico were by far the dominant source of news about the war.

Controlling Mexican public opinion by blackmailing the press

Although Government censorship was rather effective in dismantling the center of Germany's communications apparatus in Mexico and Allied blacklisting operations greatly reduced the flow of news furnished by Axis-controlled providers, such measures could not stop by fiat the widespread pro-Nazi sentiments held by large numbers of Mexicans. These people showed little sympathy towards the British and American cause and they wanted Mexico to remain completely neutral. Many editors of periodicals kept publishing a substantial amount of news and commentary that militated against the interests of the Allies. Perhaps it was because of the editors' personal convictions or because they wanted to report the truth on the Nazi's impressive military victories or because they were loath to lose precious German subsidies.

Britain's representatives at first seemed rather unconcerned about the way the war was presented in the Mexican press. The war was still in the "phony" stage when in November 1939, Consul General Thomas Rees assured His Majesty's government that the principal newspapers in the capital were very impartial and seldom published any editorials bearing on the conflict. He denied rumors that *Excelsior* and *El Universal* were receiving funds from the German Legation. Rees assured his superiors that there was no German slant in the presentation of news in Mexico, save occasionally in *Últimas Noticias*.⁶⁵

During the spring of 1940, the situation changed dramatically. On April 10 Robert Marett wrote that Mexico's press did report information detrimental to the British. Interestingly enough, he blamed U.S. news agencies, particularly the Associated Press, which he considered "far from friendly" to their cause.⁶⁶ Marett referred specifically to the agency's headlines as presented in such a sensationalist way that they worked against British interests and he singled out *Últimas Noticias* as the worst offender. For that reason, the IACP applied an advertiser's boycott against this paper and the whole *Excelsior* group in August 1940.⁶⁷ The editor-in-chief of *Últimas Noticias*, Miguel Ordorica, was forced off the staff on the 14th of that month,⁶⁸ though he returned to his office a few months later.

By January 1941 the Office of Allied Information reported that almost all of the chief periodicals in Mexico were presenting the news in terms favorable to the Allied cause, giving for instance significant prominence to the British advances in North Africa. The only real "fly in the ointment" was once again the first edition of *Últimas Noticias*. According to the British Consul General, this paper had "always been hostile" to Great Britain, but in December 1940

and January 1941, the publication outdid itself in its unfair presentation of the news, especially regarding the “Lend-Lease Bill” debate in the United States. Because of its “unfavorable scare headlines” and its unabashed editorial policy, no one had any doubt that this newspaper was pro-German.⁶⁹

After several unsuccessful meetings with Rodrigo de Llano, President of the *Excelsior* group, and also with Ordorica, the Inter-Allied Propaganda Committee in Mexico City organized a new punitive campaign against the whole group. Supported by the U.S. Embassy, American firms joined the boycott and rumors spread that *Excelsior*'s publications were already included on the dreaded Black Lists of the U.S. government.⁷⁰ As a result, Rodrigo de Llano became very upset and alarmed. On April 7 he held an urgent meeting with his board of directors. De Llano blamed Ordorica for the editorial policy that had sparked the economic reprisals and ordered him to take another leave of absence. Immediately thereafter, he flew to New York to obtain the support of his friends from the Associated Press. De Llano obviously hoped that if not he himself, then his business partners would be able to convince the Department of State that his publishing group had never been sympathetic to the Nazis, but was decidedly pro-American and pro-British. De Llano's lobbying activities proved so effective that by early May the State Department came down decisively on the side of *Excelsior*. Sumner Welles blamed OIAA officers for this mistake, for having produced a rushed and careless analysis. Soon thereafter, the OIAA meekly offered to buy full-page advertisements in *Excelsior* promoting the previously-mentioned “Inter-American Travel Agency.”⁷¹

Around that time the British and the Americans applied another commercial boycott, this time against *Hoy*, the news weekly with the largest circulation in the country. *Hoy* had been accepting a large amount of paid publicity from both the Allied and Axis camps since the beginning of the war.⁷² The paper was therefore included in the State Department's “un-official Black List.”⁷³ Commercial reprisals forced *Hoy*'s general manager Allen Bernard to make his own pilgrimage to Washington, D.C. After freely admitting that pro-Nazi articles had appeared in the magazine in the past, Bernard repeatedly assured State Department officials that their future policy would be “entirely favorable to the United States and continental solidarity.” Despite all of Bernard's best efforts, he was not able to erase his publication's bad name in U.S. governmental circles.⁷⁴

Controlling the Mexican Press through newsprint supply

Newsprint became a powerful weapon in the Allies' arsenal for persuading Mexican editors to favor the Allied cause. Printing paper was a scarce commodity during the war years and Canadian companies were the principal suppliers. In May 1940 the British believed that this dependence should be wielded as "a weapon [...] with the utmost discretion." Rather than threatening the press directly with cutting off paper supplies, Allied agencies opted for a different strategy. They resorted to persuading Mexican authorities to request British assistance in solving the supply problem.⁷⁵

It seems that this strategy produced political dividends for both the Mexican government and the Allies. First of all, the Directors of the four leading papers in the capital agreed not to attack the new President Manuel Ávila Camacho in their publications. On February 12, 1941, they were then included on the Board of PIPSA (*Productora e Importadora de Papel S. A.*), a semiofficial agency charged with the rationing and distribution of imported newsprint.⁷⁶ They thereupon visited the Canadian Board of Trade so as to secure future supplies. The head of the South American Section of the British Foreign Division, Oliver Bonham-Carter, urged the Foreign Office to take advantage of this opportunity for publicity purposes⁷⁷ and the British Consul General in Mexico suggested that they "take action which [will] put an effective check to German propaganda in the local press and ensure that fairer publicity be given to Allied war news and anti-Nazi material."⁷⁸

The PIPSA delegation also went to Washington, D.C., in order to negotiate a loan for the construction of a paper mill in Mexico and to secure U.S. assistance in the procurement and delivery of paper. On the American side of the negotiations, Guy W. Ray added a clause in the contract by which any attempt by a newspaper to import newsprint to Mexico required previous authorization based on loyalty to the Allied and American cause. In addition, the U.S. Embassy sent the list of the blacklisted Mexican periodicals to the Canadian Government.⁷⁹

Once the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and the United States entered the war, the American propaganda machinery escalated its activities in Mexico. In late 1941 and early 1942 Guy W. Ray invited the editors of the most important of the recalcitrant papers to call on him in person or by means of representatives at the U.S. Embassy. He assured them that the U.S. government was not threatening to withhold newsprint, but rather wanted to explain in no uncertain terms what the American position on the issue was and he

asked the editors for their cooperation. After lengthy discussions, the OIAA reported, “these editors all agreed that the United States and Canada could not reasonably be expected to furnish newsprint to papers which persistently attacked the United States and the Allies.” The Embassy certainly did not expect “to have such papers do an about-face overnight, but rather to make a gradual transition, the tempo of which will be set by Mr. Ray.” The reason for this gradual approach was to give these publications time to compensate for the expected loss of Axis revenue.⁸⁰

Controlling the Mexican press through advertising

The Advertising Group of Mexico was a bogus independent organization invented by the Mexican-American Chamber of Commerce to make U.S. advertisement contracts conditional on the elimination of Axis-propaganda from the Mexican media. Because such a strategy required detailed information, the new organization made arrangements with the Embassy to meet Harald J. Corson. Corson explained to Hadley Cantril the scope and the terms of the research he was going to supply:

Such information would consist of my regular reports (those I’ve been sending to you) covering the respective periodicals, the running record I keep showing attitudes expressed in editorials and main headlines of each of the papers, the classification of each paper in accordance to the sentiments of the owners, and the policies of the paper, and finally the current record I keep of all American products advertised in each medium, with the total space occupied by each advertiser, as well as the percentage of the total ad content which corresponds to American products.⁸¹

During the meeting with Corson all the participants agreed that it would be far preferable to avoid threats and pressure —at least in the beginning— and instead use the policy of allocating advertisement contracts in accordance with the stance taken by each medium.⁸² Newspapers in the capital feared that the withdrawal of revenues from German corporations such as Casa Bayer, producers of the pain-relievers Aspirina and Cafiaspirina, would not be duly compensated by U.S. advertisements.⁸³ After numerous talks between Guy W. Ray and the owners and editors of all the capital’s papers, a solution emerged: not only would the main American corporations and retailers substantially increase the amounts spent on advertisements, but they would also pool their resources in the Advertising Group of Mexico to allow for sufficient funds to be channeled to the individual papers.⁸⁴ Finally, starting on

April 1, 1942, the Mexican owners of radio and newspaper companies agreed to refuse all Axis advertising as long as the American businesses filled the ensuing void by upping their own advertising by 50 percent. The surrendering forces included the magazine *Hoy*, once a defiant rebel that had denounced such hardball advertising tactics. *Hoy* had now become a humble supplicant, anxious to erase everyone's memory of its former self.⁸⁵ From then on, the Mexican mass media and the OIAA's Coordination Committee maintained a *modus vivendi* whereby the Mexicans accepted U.S. domination as long as the Americans provided due compensation.

Mexican mercenary writers working for foreign propagandists

In addition to the Mexican News Agency ANTA, the Allied Information Office established in 1940 *Servicio Mundial*, a feature news and opinion agency. Located in a separate office, this firm pretended to be a commercial enterprise but was financed and managed by the Franco-British propagandists who considered it to be "an integral part" of their propaganda organization.⁸⁶ *Servicio Mundial* was directed by Alexis Loustau, a Mexican of French extraction whose assignment was to supply the press in the countryside with articles and photographs favorable to the Allies (and a little later also to the Free French Movement). To disguise the propaganda, he hired well-known Mexican reporters to write on-demand or pre-packaged stories. When the author was French or British, a pseudonym would be used. Having started in January 1940 with 193 articles published, *Servicio Mundial* reached 40-odd provincial papers, 25 of which were described as regular customers. Its monthly average for that initial year was 441 articles. Activities peaked in June 1940 with 646 items published, so as to downplay Germany's triumph over France.⁸⁷

One of the chief functions of this agency was to plant propaganda disguised as news features and to "frame" war-related events in order to convince readers of an eventual Allied victory. The *Servicio Mundial* played a leading role in garnering the sympathies of the Mexicans at a time when Germany appeared invincible. This is just one striking example among the many successful manipulative techniques developed by the Allied propagandists.

In June 1941 Floyd Ransom, head of the Advertising Group of Mexico, suggested to the American Embassy to approach well-known Mexicans such as José Vasconcelos and Eduardo Villaseñor, the chairman of Mexico's Central Bank, and invite them to write pro-American articles for a fee of 200 or

250 US dollars. In order to appeal to their vanity, the Embassy should suggest translating their articles into English and have them published also in the United States, along with their pictures.⁸⁸ Interestingly, Vasconcelos accepted and on February 19, 1942, he published an article in a leading Mexican magazine urging the Mexicans to back the United States war against the Axis and to follow Mexican government policies wholeheartedly. The American propagandists hailed this article as a success⁸⁹ and started to hire more Mexican writers. They thereby followed the path taken by other foreign propaganda agencies since the beginning of the war and even long before, as was the case of the Germans. One of the most popular writers, especially among the provincial papers, was Benito Xavier Pérez Verdía, who also had a radio commentary program, which was financed by the OIAA's Coordination Committee.⁹⁰

From cooperation to competition: framing countries' war and post-war perceptions

By the end of December 1942 the Mexican mass media were wholeheartedly aligned with the Allied cause. Apart from the PAN's *La Nación* and two minor anti-American papers in the capital, which were left unscathed in order to simulate freedom of expression, the country's mass media had been brought to heel. Guy Ray reported that there was "not a single publication of outstanding importance in Mexico, outside of Mexico City, which could be classed as anti-American in its news and editorial policy." Ray attributed this improvement to the fact that Mexico's media entrepreneurs had realized that newsprint was controlled by the U.S. and Canada and that newspapers which continued to attack the Allies could not expect to receive newsprint from their suppliers in North America. In his report for the State Department he illustrated the degree to which the Mexican press had been subjected to U.S. oversight and control:

A policy on the part of the Embassy is keeping in close personal contact with the principal newspapers and magazines in Mexico City and also with the most prominent regional newspapers. *Such publications frequently check information with the Embassy and in most cases consult with the press officer of the Embassy when doubtful questions or matters of controversial nature arise.*⁹¹

Within the same document dated December 11, 1942, Guy Ray failed to credit extensive cooperation between the OIAA and the Allied Propaganda Office.⁹² This omission is rather puzzling since all of these parties had worked

very hard at what might seem a concerted effort to persuade the Mexican mass media to align themselves with the Allied cause.⁹³ Yet, at least in Mexico, the rapport between the Inter-Allied Committee, the Free French Movement and the Coordination Committee had never been very close and ended up being difficult and even acrimonious. The different propaganda teams soldiered ahead in a rather uncoordinated fashion, presenting not even a semblance of personal cordiality. Lack of coordination soon turned into competition and mutual suspicion. Thus, by 1942 Jacques Soustelle wrote to his superiors in London: “The United States considers Latin America to be its private sphere of influence. Instead of cooperating on propaganda and information with the Allies, the Americans are more inclined to seek a complete domination of the press, radio and all mass communication by their own means.”⁹⁴

Soustelle’s concerns were kindled, for example, by U.S. moves to mount an editorial news service in competition with the agency that served the Inter-Allied Committee. Not only did the new service headed by Harald J. Corson duplicate the Inter-Allied *Servicio Mundial*, it was also willing to pay much higher rates to the papers using their editorial opinion service. The French calculated that the Americans were paying six hundred pesos for an article to appear in twenty newspapers, while the Inter-Allied Committee and the Free French Committee were paying around forty pesos for the same distribution. Indignant about the situation, Jacques Soustelle lamented: “In addition to the slovenliness of this bidding contest, the general effect is to keep our propaganda out of the press. It is undeniable that the impoverished editors in the provinces will always prefer to use an American article for twenty or thirty pesos in lieu of publishing our material for nothing.” According to Soustelle, the Americans practiced the same tactics with mercenary writers.⁹⁵

The French were not the only ones to complain. In January 1944 the British informed London that the Americans in their pursuit of control over the press media and public opinion had intensified their efforts in the “bidding contest.” According to this report, and although the press was less flooded by U.S. activity than film and radio, the OIAA was becoming “increasingly active” in this realm by “paying for a good deal of space using American firms’ commercial advertising as a lever.” Since the Americans were also subsidizing many papers in the provinces, the British found the spaces open to them to be increasingly limited. The report depicted the British endeavors as being “overwhelmed” by the waves of U.S. press commentators. It also complained that the torrents of news that were pouring from American wire services suffered from a “spin” that was exaggerating the U.S. contribution to the Allied

war effort: "A.P. and U.P. dispatches reflected in the headlines give an unbalanced impression of U.S. participation in the war."⁹⁶

British observations are borne out by the OIAA's Coordination Committee reports. In 1944, the OIAA inaugurated a new press service benefiting the fifty-six major newspapers in the provinces and the leading periodicals in the capital that were to be provided with two stories per day and many glossy photographs. During March 1944, they set a striking record: 876 items appeared in Mexico City papers alone.⁹⁷ Some months later the Committee informed about the addition of a new journalist to their staff of writers hired on a permanent basis.⁹⁸

The British were not inclined to capitulate in the face of the deluge of U.S. propaganda. As the Americans took over the English page in *Novedades*, for which they paid one thousand pesos per month, the British withdrew their subsidy to this daily and reached an agreement with *Excelsior* and *El Universal* whereby each was to publish at least fifteen British articles a month. By the summer of 1944, both papers had taken "considerably more than this number." The British were also strongly promoting the services of Reuters, which established a bureau in Mexico City in February 1944. Soon, many important Mexican papers were using its services and expectations were running high in the British Ministry of Information, even as Reuters was deemed to be fighting an "uphill battle" against U.S. news providers.⁹⁹

Increasingly, the battle for hearts and minds was turning to postwar issues and the Allies were soon joined by another competitor: the Soviet Union. Around late 1943, the Soviet *Tass* jumped onto the postwar propaganda bandwagon and began to provide information to the dailies *El Nacional*, *El Popular* and *La Voz de México*. The Soviet Ambassador undertook a very intense public relations campaign amongst the upper echelons of Mexican politicians and intellectuals. Before long, the American and Soviet Ambassadors, George Messersmith and Constantine Oumansky, publicly entered into a harsh ideological quarrel that was widely covered by the national and foreign media. The Cold War thus started early in Mexico, but this is a topic that cannot be dealt with here. Nevertheless, we should remind the reader that throughout this period, the real tug of war regarding propaganda in Mexico was between the United Kingdom and the United States.¹⁰⁰

The bribing of the Mexican press by the Americans did not come to an end with the war. "For the magazines in Mexico City," said a report from the U.S. Embassy dated July 4, 1946, "we have regular publications by a Mexican writer in the following magazines: *Hoy*, *Sucesos*, *México al Día*, and *Nuevo*

Mundo. Mañana publishes one such article about every four to six issues. They always have one in advance.”¹⁰¹

The OIAA and the Mexican press – a balance

In a document titled “Future Information Program of the United States Government particularly as regards to Mexico” of March 23, 1945, Guy W. Ray suggested that propaganda would play a “much greater part in future years,” and he approved the idea of having an “external office” to help the U.S. Embassy in this area. He thought that “the headquarters organization should preferably be in the State Department.” However, in order to avoid the accusation of being involved in propaganda activities, he suggested that the “information office” should be established as a separate organ and headed by a manager under the guidance of the Embassy but with full authority with regard to distribution of material.¹⁰²

With slight differences in their policies, strategies and tactics, all of the major countries involved in the war used “external” offices to deal with the Mexican mass media. After the German Propaganda Bureau had trail-blazed the communications field by means of bribery and blackmail, the British propagandists with their Office of Allied Information, the French with their Free French Press Bureau and the Americans through the Mexican Coordination Committee, the Advertising Group of Mexico, and the Export Information Bureau of the American Association of Advertising Agencies followed the same path and gained unprecedented control of the Mexican press and hence of the agenda-setting processes. In spite of the initial clashes with Ambassador Messersmith, the OIAA came to play a decisive role in spreading American propaganda in Mexico. In a way, the OIAA promoted the modernization of the communications infrastructure: it brought new ideas and practices into the Mexican information field and conducted pioneering work in the fields of public opinion and mass communications research in Mexico. Yet such developments were accomplished by unethical means which carried a very high price for the advent of true democracy in the country. The OIAA contributed to, and reinforced, the collusion of interests between power elites and the media owners and operators. The U.S. information agents ended up using the very same devious and unethical methods that the Nazis and Franco-British propagandists had employed in Mexico in order to influence the communications sector’s entrepreneurs, editors, writers and finally the general public.

This reality completely contradicts the official history of the OIAA: "The Office prided itself in handling its information program in accordance with the best professional standards, and with no deliberate perversion of the truth."¹⁰³

If the OIAA, with the backing of Mexico's wartime governments and in cooperation with the State Department and other Allied agencies, was able to bring Mexico's mass media to heel, its effectiveness in influencing hearts and minds should not be taken for granted. Mexico's mass media reached at best fifteen percent of the population and was heavily concentrated in a few metropolitan areas. Of the twenty million Mexicans in 1940, seventy percent lived in the countryside and most of these were illiterates immersed in local indigenous cultures and rather indifferent to the problems of the outside world. The OIAA's public opinion and mass media research, moreover, advanced as it was for the time, does not provide a reliable assessment of the attitudes held by the different sectors of the Mexican people, literate or illiterate. As mentioned before, the Rockefeller agency conducted the first research of this kind in order to measure the impact of its efforts, but was unable to produce conclusive results as to the effects it had on hearts and minds.

Mexico, to be sure, came to join the Allied coalition in May 1942 when it declared war on the Axis, but this move seems to have been guided rather by a pragmatic assessment of wartime conditions and dangers than by a change of attitudes towards its powerful neighbors of the North. It may very well be that massive propaganda highlighting the danger of a foreign invasion by Axis forces, as employed by the Mexican government as well as the Allied agencies, helped to prepare the public for the alignment with the Allied cause, but even so the power of propaganda should not be exaggerated.

During the Cold War years, even as schooling and literacy rates improved markedly, the use of mass media for propaganda purposes continued to be fraught with difficulties, as the OIAA's successor, the United States Information Agency (USIA), was to find out in a report of 1960. Mexicans continued to be influenced by other sources, including public schooling, which tended to convey a strong sense of nationalism, resentment of foreign interferences, anti-capitalist notions as well as general distrust towards the Colossus of the North.¹⁰⁴

Notes

- * I wish to thank Theodore S. Wills for his invaluable assistance in this work.
1. See also Thomas Leonard's contribution to this volume.
 2. National Archives and Record Administration, College Park, Maryland, Record Group (hereafter, NARA, RG) Herbert Bursley to Secretary of State, December 14, 1942 (NARA, RG 59, 811.20212/60). Within the provincial group, eight belonged to the *Asociación de Editores de los Estados* (Association of Editors of the States) and were among the most influential provincial papers in the country: *El Informador* in Guadalajara; *El Porvenir* and *El Norte*, in Monterrey; *El Siglo*, in Torreón; *El Mundo*, in Tampico; *El Herald*, in San Luis Potosí; *El Dictamen*, in Veracruz, and *El Diario de Yucatán*, in Mérida.
 3. George Messersmith to Secretary of State, July 25, 1942 (NARA, RG, 812.917/56).
 4. Ibid.
 5. John C. Dreier to Guy W. Ray, February 6, 1942 (NARA, RG 59, 812.76/423). Harald J. Corson, of whom we will speak later, headed the agency.
 6. Robert H. K. Marett to Latin American Section. Report on Publicity Activities December and January, 1940 (National Archives of England, Public Record Office, London, Foreign Office/hereafter PRO, FO 371/26075). Among the magazines of relative importance were: *Ahora*, *América*, *Así*, *Enigma*, *Estampa*, *Jueves de Excelsior*, *Libertad*, *México al día*, *Orbe* and *Revista de Revistas*.
 7. From Guy W. Ray to Secretary of State, December 11, 1942 (NARA, RG 59 812.911/487).
 8. Born in 1900, Arthur Dietrich graduated in 1922 in Agricultural Studies and traveled to Mexico in 1924 to work as the administrator of a ranch. He was later arrested for swindling 80,000 pesos and was jailed. Upon his release, he moved to a quiet neighborhood in the capital, accompanied by his wife Felicia and their four sons. In November 1931 he joined the Nazi Party in Mexico City. By 1933, Dietrich had become Party Chief. See Jürgen Müller, "El NSDAP en México: historia y recepciones: 1931-1940," *Revista de Estudios Interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe* 6, no. 2 (1995): 90-91; and Archivo Genaro Estrada (from now on AGE) III/323(43)/21, from the German Legation to Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (from now on SRE), April 16, 1935.
 9. Among them the most prominent were: *Casa Bayer*, *Merck-México*, *Cia.*, *General de Anilinas*, *Beick Felix y Cia*, *Carlos Stein y Cia.*, *Casa Boker*, etc. See: Stephen R. Niblo, "Allied Policy towards Axis Interests in Mexico during World War II," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, 17, 2 (Summer 2001): 359.
 10. Friedrich E. Schuler, *Mexico Between Hitler and Roosevelt. Mexican Foreign Relations in the Age of Lázaro Cárdenas 1934-1940* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico, 1998), 148.
 11. See letter and attachments from Xavier Campos Ponce to Francisco J. Múgica, September 7, 1937, Fondo Francisco J. Múgica (Jiquilpan, Michoacán), Vol. 147, Doc. 88.

12. See, for instance, the special section published in *Excelsior* about “Foreign Communities in Mexico” on September 16, 1938, and the full-page article published by *El Universal* on October 14, 1938, 8.
13. Wallace K. Dillon to Department of State, July 21, 1939 (NARA, RG 59, 812.00-N/61).
14. Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City (hereafter, AGN), Branch “Presidents,” Lázaro Cárdenas (LC), 704.1/124-1, “El Nazismo en México, reporte de los Inspectores PS-10 y PS-24,” May 23, 1940.
15. Itzhak Bar-Lewaw M., *La Revista Timón y José Vasconcelos* (Mexico: Edimex, 1971), 13-15. An excerpt from an article published by José Vasconcelos in the May 1940 edition of *Timón* gives us an idea of his ideology: “The Mexican people could be largely Germanophile, and we believe that in truth they are, but only because they see in the breaking of the present international order their own liberation. We desire the ideas, the culture, the art and the trade with Germany. We also know there is no danger of a German invasion, but we know that it is another power that hovers, and will continue to hover over us. On the other hand, for our culture and for the integration of our economy, Germany represents a factor of first importance.” (NARA, RG 59, 812.00 B/584, “Copy of Betty Kirk’s Life Magazine article,” airmailed May 18, 1940).
16. The launching of this paper was reported by FBI agents to the State Department: see J. Edgar Hoover to Adolf A. Berle, Jr., July 8, 1940 (NARA, RG 59, 812.00-N/280).
17. *Ibid.*
18. Rüdít von Collenberg’s personal diary. Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores de México (hereafter “ASRE”), C-6-2-4 (2). [The translation is mine.]
19. Judging on the basis of German sources, Radkau, for example, disagrees with the claim that the Mexican press was firmly in the hands of German advertisers. “On the contrary,” she says, “the pressure that the French, the British and the North Americans were exercising on the newspapers, by threatening to pull out their advertising, never ceased to worry the Nazi Legation.” See: Verena Radkau, “Los Nacionalsocialistas en México,” in *Los empresarios alemanes, el Tercer Reich y la oposición de derecha a Cárdenas* (II), eds. Brigida von Mentz, Verena Radkau, Daniela Spenser and Ricardo Pérez Montfort (México: CIESAS, Ediciones de la Casa Chata, 1988), 168. [The translation is mine.]
20. Marett had moved to London to work for the Shell Petroleum Company some time between the end of 1938 and the summer of 1939 (“Mr. R. H. K. Marett. Details of experience, etc.” Document sent to Mexico City Consul General, September 8, 1939, PRO 930/111).
21. This work, entitled *An Eyewitness to Mexico*, was published by Oxford University Press in March 1938. Thirty years later Marett published his memoirs, of which he devotes a substantial part to his work as a propagandist in Mexico. See: Sir Robert Hugh Kirk Marett, *Through the Back Door: An Inside View of Britain’s Overseas Information Services* (Oxford and New York: Pergamon Press, 1968).
22. Letters dated October 7th and 14th, 1939 (PRO, FO 371/26087); “From Thomas Ifor Rees to Anthony Eden,” November 26, 1941 (PRO, FO 371/22780).

23. Denis Rolland, *Vichy et la France Libre au Mexique. Guerre, cultures et propagandes pendant la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1990), 73-74.
24. Mexico Budget 1942/43, June 16, 1942 (PRO, FO 930/112).
25. Report on the Organization of the Allied Publicity in Mexico, January 17, 1941 (PRO, FO 371/26075); and Annual Report for Mexico for 1942 (PRO, FO 371/33994). According to Lawson, "all the essential traits of Mexico's political system were reflected in the country's press. Early on during the authoritarian rule, the media were colonized and used as a vehicle of private gain and political legitimization (...) different factions of the political elite founded or purchased their own newspapers to advance personal and policy agendas, supporting them through an array of government subsidies." See Chapell H. Lawson, *Building the Fourth Estate: Democratization and the Rise of a Free Press in Mexico* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 25. For a good study of the relationship between the print media and the Mexican government see: Rafael Rodríguez Castañeda. *Prensa vendida. Los periodistas y los presidentes: 40 años de relaciones* (México: Grijalbo, 1993).
26. Report on the Organization of the Allied Publicity in Mexico, January 17, 1941 (PRO, FO 371/26075); and Annual Report for Mexico for 1942 (PRO, FO 371/33994).
27. "Though these *gacetillas* are difficult to recognize, they probably constituted some 60 percent of the total magazine pages in *Hoy* and *Mañana*. Moreover government advertising went much further than subsidizing self-praise for its functionaries; given the vast number of nationalized businesses (...) the government was easily the country's largest advertiser." See: John Mraz, "Today, Tomorrow and Always: The Golden Age of Illustrated Magazines in Mexico, 1937-1960," in *Fragments of a Golden Age: The Politics of Culture in Mexico Since 1940*, eds. Gilbert M Joseph, Anne Rubenstein and Eric Zolov (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), 123. See also: Joe Keenan, "La *Gacetilla*: How Advertising Masquerades the News," in *A Culture of Collusion: An Inside Look at the Mexican Press*, ed. William A. Orme Jr. (Boulder, CO: University of Miami, North South Center, 1997), 41-48.
28. Telegram from Consul General Mexico City, September 8, 1939 (PRO, FO 930/111).
29. Overseas Planning Committee. Plan of Propaganda to Mexico. First Revision of Channels, January 21, 1944 (PRO, FO 371/38314).
30. During the first period of the Second World War, the Inter-Allied Committee of Propaganda was paying the Mexico City dailies *El Nacional* and *El Popular* a monthly sum of 1,000 and 2,000 pesos respectively. They had also bought for 1,000 pesos per month the English page in *Novedades*. In Orizaba, the journal *Radio Mundial* was receiving 500 pesos per month. In Tampico, the Committee exercised complete control over *La Tribuna*. They were also paying "subsidies" to *El Regional*, in Culiacán, and to *Horizontes* and *Las Noticias*, both of Guadalajara. Mexico City's magazines *Ahora* and *Candil* also received financial help from French and British companies. A report for May 1941 indicated payments to *Novedades* for the placing of 43 articles and also to *El Universal*, for publishing 5 items. This information was culled from different reports located in PRO FO 371/26075.

31. Report on the Organization of Allied Publicity in Mexico; Consul General to C. R. Bock, January 17, 1941 (PRO, FO 371/26075).
32. As of February 28, 1943 the OIAA's expenditure for all of the Latin American republics amounted to a total of \$591,864 for radio projects, against \$167,852 for press media and \$114,754 for motion pictures: see Rockefeller Archive Center, Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller Personal Washington Files (hereafter RAC, RFA, RG4, NAR Papers), OIAA General 1940-1946, Box 4, Folder 34, Coordination Committee Activities. "Inception of Committees to Date of Latest Expenditure Report Received" (as of 2/28/43).
33. *The New York Times* was one of the most persistent vehicles to spread rumors about the Nazi threat emanating from Mexico, already beginning in 1938. See, for instance "Warns of Mexican Nazi," January 23, 1938, 25. "Fascist Influence Growing in Mexico; U.S. Trade Suffers," August 15, 1938, 1. In 1940, this reporting mounted to paranoia. See, for instance, "Red-Nazi Plotting in Mexico Charged," April 14, 1940, 31.
34. Telegrams from Pierre de L. Boal and from Mexican Embassy to Department of State, June 1, 1940 (NARA, RG 59, 711.12/1467 and 1473); see Josephus Daniels, *Diplomático en mangas de camisa*, Spanish translation by Salvador Duhart (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1949), 315.
35. "Mexico Reported Ousting Nazi Aide," *The New York Times*, June 13, 1940, and "Reich Press Chief Ousted by Mexico," *The New York Times*, June 14, 1940, 8.
36. Telegrams from Pierre de L. Boal and from Mexican Embassy to Department of State, June 1, 1940 (NARA, RG 59, 711.12/1467 and 1473).
37. Carmela E. Santoro, "United States and Mexican Relations during World War II" (PhD diss., Syracuse University, 1967), 153.
38. See the complaints for this drastic measure published in its final edition: *Diario de la Guerra*, Editorial, March 28, 1941.
39. The Mexican Archives' information about the activities of the "Dirección General de Información" (DGI) is still poorly organized. What is available does not contain highly-relevant documents. Nevertheless, some reports about propaganda expenditures and allocations can be found at: AGN, DGI, 103.2/4, "Informe de labores llevadas a cabo por el Departamento de Información General de la Dirección General de Información del 1o. de septiembre de 1942 al 31 de agosto de 1943," Box 244 and other documents in AGN, DGI, 103.5.
40. These reports are located in NARA, RG 59, series 812.911: for the study of Guadalajara, Jalisco, see NARA, RG 59, series 812.911/220; for Torreón, Coahuila: NARA, RG 59, series 812.911/221, etc.
41. See NARA, RG 59, 812.00/NAZI/9; 812.00/N/61, 812.911/255, y 812.911/261.
42. Undoubtedly the most relevant and outstanding of all characters on the propaganda stage in Mexico, Ray had arrived in the country in November 1933 to work as Vice-Consul in Guaymas, Sonora. In April 1942 Ray was appointed Consul and in July 1945 he was named First Secretary of the Embassy. He relinquished that charge in April 1946 when he was posted to another country. Ray came back to Mexico in the middle of 1950, but in September of that same year he suddenly passed away. (The cause of death is not mentioned in the sources we investigated). By that time, Ray had already achieved the

rank of Minister. He had the authority to take command of the Embassy in the absence of the Ambassador. See ASRE, IV/333 (73-72)/846, "Ray, Guy W." It is very likely that from 1942 to 1946 his real title was "Embassy Secretary in charge of informational affairs," a term that appears in a report dated July 4, 1946, when the U.S. Embassy in Mexico reorganized its cultural and propagandistic activities. It is quite possible that Guy W. Ray held this position. He may have then passed it on to David Thomasson in April 1946. See W. L. Schurz to Mr. Storn, July 4, 1946 (NARA, RG 59, Records of the International Information Activities, 1938-1953, Box 161, "Report on Mexico").

43. See Introduction by Gisela Cramer and Ursula Prutsch.
44. H. Stephen Helton (Compiler), *Records of the Office of Inter-American Affairs. Inventory of Record Group 229* (Washington, 1973, National Archives and Records Service) 1-7 (Introduction).
45. These "observers" apparently worked for the "Research Division of the Export Information Bureau" of the 4As and received special training in media content analysis from Leonard Doob, one of the leading communication experts in the United States. In fact, some months later, Harald J. Corson, who reported to Hadley Cantril, conducted public opinion surveys in Mexico City that were based on Gallup's methodology (adapted to local conditions). See NARA, RG 229, General Records, Commercial and Financial, Regional Reports and Surveys, Box 138 "Export Information Bureau" # 18, *passim* and *ibid*: Box 139 "Export Information Bureau" # 19, Manila Envelope.
46. NARA, RG 229, General Records, Commercial and Financial, Regional Reports and Surveys, Box 137, American Social Surveys Export Info 8, Names and addresses of observers. For a detailed analysis of Corson's public opinion polls in Mexico, see: José Luis Ortiz Garza, *Ideas en Tormenta: la opinión pública en México en la segunda guerra mundial* (México: Ruz Ediciones, 2007).
47. In an official memorandum of the OIAA's Commercial and Financial Division, this project was described as a bogus travel promotion. Its primary purpose was described as "to tell the story the way we want to tell it in those countries and to make it profitable for publishers." In another letter, dated March 13, 1941, Nelson Poynter noted that the advertising campaign would start out "as innocuous travel advertising," but his hopes were that in the very near future it would be converted into "hard-hitting political advertising": Donald W. Rowland, *History of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. Historical Reports on War Administration* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1947), 245-248.
48. Claude Curtis Erb, "Nelson Rockefeller and United States-Latin American Relations, 1940-1945" (PhD diss., Clark University, 1982), 96-97.
49. Committee members served without compensation, although they could hire full-time staff. All expenditures on personnel and on the administration of programs were provided through indirect grants in order to officially separate them from the U.S. Embassy or the OIAA; see Rowland, *History of the Office*, 245-248.
50. John Atkin to Nelson Rockefeller, July 25, 1945, attached document (RAC, RFA, RG4, NAR Papers, OIAA General, 1940-1946, Box 4, Folder 34, Coordination Committees, 1942-1945).

51. Herbert S. Bursley to Secretary of State, December 14, 1942 (NARA, RG 59, 811.20212/60).
52. A very favorable report about the new Ambassador was sent to London Reports on heads of Foreign Missions (1942). Charles Bateman to Anthony Eden, July 7, 1942 (PRO, FO 371/30565).
53. See Jesse H. Stiller, *George S. Messersmith, Diplomat of Democracy* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 180-181; and Kent Warner Smith, *The United States Cultural Crusade in Mexico, 1938-1945: A Case Study in Person-to-Person Peacemaking* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1972).
54. The clause added by the Ambassador, referring to radio projects, said: "Content of all programs is subject to the absolute control and supervision of Guy W. Ray, Second Secretary of the Embassy, with whom all scripts must be cleared (this is not a term of the contract, but it is distinctly understood and agreed to between the Committee and the Embassy). Any deviation from the approved script is ground for cancellation with a termination of liability for all amounts due or that fall due. Also the agreement may be cancelled by the Committee at any time with or without cause on thirty days' notice. The work is to be done for cost only." Dudley T. Easby, Jr. to Wallace K. Harrison, March 14, 1942 (NARA, RG 59, 812.911/364).
55. John Atkin to Nelson Rockefeller, July 25, 1944 (RAC, RFA, RG4, NAR Papers, OIAA General 1940-1946, Box 4, Folder 34, Coordination Committees, 1942-1945). Document sent as enclosure. From the total of 608 Committee members south of the Rio Grande, Mexico had 168, followed by Argentina (77); Brazil (64); Chile (61); and Colombia (31). Many nations had fewer than 10 members on their Committee. The Committee in Mexico City alone had 70 members and there were subcommittees in 20 other cities: Agua Prieta, Sonora; Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua; Chihuahua, Chihuahua; Durango, Durango; Guadalajara, Jalisco; Matamoros, Tamaulipas; Mazatlán, Sinaloa; Mérida, Yucatán; Mexicali, Baja California; Monterrey, Nuevo León; Nogales, Sonora; Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas; Oaxaca, Oaxaca; Pachuca, Hidalgo; Piedras Negras, Coahuila; Puebla, Puebla; San Luis Potosí, San Luis Potosí; Tampico, Tamaulipas; Torreón, Coahuila, and Villahermosa, Tabasco.
56. Herbert S. Bursley to Secretary of State, December 14, 1942, with Attachment CCM-844; W. C. Longan to Nelson Rockefeller, December 11, 1942, Attachment CCM-844 (NARA, RG 59, 811.20212/60).
57. Ms. Haddow remained at the helm of the Committee's Press Section, but she dealt with strictly operational and administrative issues, whereas Guy W. Ray was charged with the task of dealing with the owners and the directors of the leading Mexican newspapers, magazines and radio stations. Herbert S. Bursley to Secretary of State, December 14, 1942, with Attachment CCM-844; W. C. Longan to Nelson Rockefeller, December 11, 1942. Attachment CCM-844 (NARA, RG 59, 811.20212/60).
58. Fred Allan Fejes, "Imperialism, Media and the Good Neighbor: New Deal Foreign Policy and United States Shortwave Broadcasting to Latin America" (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1982), 157-158.

59. Edward H. Robbins to Laurence Duggan, September 22, 1941 (NARA, RG 59, 812.917/46).
60. Robert H. K. Marett to Latin American Section of the Ministry of Information, April 24, 1941 (PRO, FO 371/26075).
61. By mid-September, the prestigious journalist and scholar Salvador Novo advised radio listeners tuning into European war news that “they will have to use their brains or their hearts to figure out what is happening in the war, its causes and its trends.” Cfr. “Guerra de noticias,” *Hoy*, September 16, 1939. Reproduced in Salvador Novo, *La vida en México en el período presidencial de Lázaro Cárdenas* (México: Empresas Editoriales, 1964), 413-414. [The translation is mine.]
62. NARA, RG 59, 800.20212/392.
63. Robert H. K. Marett to C. R. Bock, June 4, 1940 (PRO, FO 371/24218).
64. We are not including syndicated columns such as the ones from *The New York Times*, or *Time* magazine. Also excluded are feature services. The main users of Transocean bulletins were, as expressed in lineal centimeters, column width: *La Prensa*, with 271; *El Universal*, with 140; *Últimas Noticias*, with 115; *Excelsior*, with 83 and *El Universal Gráfico*, with 44. Neither *Novedades* nor *El Nacional* had published anything from this agency. See Space occupied by News Dispatches in Mexican Newspapers (NARA, RG 59, 812.911/315).
65. Thomas Ifor Rees to Kenneth G. Grubb, November 6, 1939 (PRO, FO 930/111).
66. Robert H. K. Marett to K. G. Grubb, April 10, 1940 (PRO, FO 371/24218).
67. Besides the morning paper and its first evening edition, the group also published an afternoon newspaper bearing the same name and issued two weekly magazines: *Jueves de Excelsior* and *Revista de Revistas*.
68. Josephus Daniels to Secretary of State, April 10, 1941 (NARA, RG 59, 812.911/307).
69. Report on the Organization of Allied Publicity in Mexico; Consul General to C. R. Bock, January 17, 1941 (PRO, FO 371/26075).
70. Report of Naval Attaché to State Department, March 20, 1941 (ANW, RG 59, 811.20212/25).
71. Sumner Wells to Laurence Duggan (and enclosures), May 2, 1941 (NARA, RG 59, 812.911/311).
72. Report on the activities of the Allied propaganda office, April and May 1941 (PRO, FO 371/26075) and “Nuestro Amo es el Público,” *Hoy*, April 26, 1941, editorial page.
73. From Edward H. Robbins to Laurence Duggan, September 22, 1941 (NARA, RG 59, 812.917/46).
74. Memorandum of the State Department, September 19, 1941 (NARA, RG 59, 812.917/45). Two other magazines with pro-German tendencies as the war began were *Todo* and *Ahora*. Both changed their positions during the second half of 1940 because of the advertising revenues that they were receiving from Allied companies and information items furnished by the Americans: From Josephus Daniels to Secretary of State, June 24, 1940 (NARA, RG 59, 812.917/19).
75. Robert H. K. Marett, to K. C. Grubb, May 7, 1940 (PRO, FO 371/24218).

76. Guy W. Ray to Secretary of State, September 24, 1942 (NARA, RG 59 812.00/32052); Guy W. Ray to Department of State, April 20, 1950 (NARA, RG 52 912.60/4-2050); see also "Nueva Organización de la PIPSA," *Hoy*, February 22, 1941, 8.
77. Robert H. K. Marett to K. G. Grubb, May 7, 1940 (PRO, FO 371/24218).
78. Thomas Ifor Rees to K. G. Grubb, April 26, 1940 (Ibid.).
79. Dudley T. Easby Jr. to Wallace K. Harrison, March 14, 1942 (NARA, RG 59, 812.911/364).
80. Ibid.
81. Harald Corson to Hadley Cantril, Letter No. 80, August 5, 1941 (NARA, RG 229, Box 138).
82. Ibid.
83. Dudley T. Easby Jr. to Wallace K. Harrison, March 14, 1942 (NARA, RG 59, 812.911/364).
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid.
86. Report from Robert H. K. Marett to Ministry of Information, February 21, 1941 (PRO FO 371/26075).
87. Ibid.; see also "El Nazismo en México" (AGN, L. C., 704.1/124-1).
88. Herbert S. Bursley to Mr. Dreier, July 1, 1942, and Letter attached from Floyd Ransom to Walter Douglas, June 21, 1941 (NARA, RG 59, 812.911/7-141).
89. "Hubert Herring's Committee on Cultural Relations with Latin America, Inc.," Release No. 2, June 18, 1942. Titled "Primero es México" ["Mexico comes first"], the article appeared in Mexico City's magazine *Todo* (February 19, 1942, 5). The following is an extract translated by officers of the U. S. Embassy in Mexico: "Fortunately, we do not have to sacrifice our convictions or forsake any of our principles in collaborating sincerely with the United States. Mexico belongs to a family of nations living under Western customs and principles; we may belong to Latin civilization and they to Anglo-Saxon, but the origins of our civilizations are the same: Greece and Rome." (NARA, RG 229, Project Files, Publications, Box 1171; Folder: "Interchange of Articles for Magazines and Books between the United States and the other American Republics \$16,400-4,850, Herring).
90. Herbert Cerwin to Nelson Rockefeller, December 4, 1944 (NARA, RG 229, Box 443, Folder: "Cerwin, Herbert").
91. Guy W. Ray to Secretary of State, December 11, 1942 (NARA, RG 59, 812.911/487) [The italics are mine.]
92. Ibid.
93. Robert H. K. Marett to K. G. Grubb, May 7, 1940 (PRO, FO 371/24218).
94. Quoted in: Rolland, *Vichy et la France Libre au Mexique. Guerre*, 238.
95. While the French and British paid writers between twenty and thirty pesos for each editorial, the Americans offered them sixty. Ibid., 240.

96. Overseas Planning Committee. Plan of Propaganda to Mexico. First Revision of Channels, January 1, 1944 (PRO, FO 371/38314).
97. Covering Reports Received from April 25-May 1, 1944 (RAC, RFA, RG4, NAR Papers, OIAA, Coordination Committee Reports, Issue 114, 5).
98. Paxton Haddow to Nelson Rockefeller, December 11, 1944 (NARA, RG 229, Box 342, Folder: "Operating Procedure").
99. Overseas Planning Committee. Plan of Propaganda to Mexico. Second Revision of Channels, June 27, 1944 (PRO, FO 371/38314).
100. For further research into this subject, see: Juan Gustavo Galindo González, "Las relaciones entre México y la Unión Soviética durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial" (Bachelor's Thesis, El Colegio de México, 1983); David Thomasson to Secretary of State, December 7, 1943 (NARA, RG 59 812.74/532); Herbert Cerwin to Nelson Rockefeller, September 4, 1943 (NARA, RG 229, Box 345, Folder: "Reports"); Constantine Oumansky to Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores, May 25, 1944 (ASRE III 2479-7); C. H. Bateman to Anthony Eden, April 28, 1943 (PRO FO 371/34004).
101. Report on Mexico, W. L. Schurz to Mr. Storn, July 4, 1946 (NARA, RG 59, Records of the International Information Activities, 1938-1953, Box 161).
102. Arthur W. MacMahon, *Memorandum on the Postwar International Information Program of the United States. Prepared by Dr. Arthur W. MacMahon in cooperation with The Office of Public Affairs* (The Department of State: Washington, D.C., 1946), 126.
103. See Rowland, *History of the Office*, 42.
104. The USIA report pointed out: "The climate of public opinion in which the program is operating leaves much to be desired. In spite of a generally friendly public press and the posture of friendship Mexico finds vital to her national interests, a substantial percentage of the people in all walks of life dislike and distrust the United States, its government and its people." See: NARA, RG 306, "Inspection Reports and Related Records," Box 6, Folder: Mexico, Inspection Report USIS/Mexico, From James L. Meader to the Director of U.S. Information Agency, July 15, 1960.