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Articles

The opening of the Pan American Highway. Tourism and stereotypes between Mexico and United States

La inauguración de la Carretera Panamericana. Turismo y estereotipos entre México y Estados Unidos

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Abstract

The objective of the article is to explore the geopolitical context at the time of inaugurating the first direct road between the national capital and the border with the United States. In addition to considering the specific weight of this event within the media sphere, the text tries to contribute the historical study of cultural stereotypes and tourism promotion between both countries. Through access to documentary sources and official correspondence of the time, the findings concern the meanings that were built about the road and Mexico itself. We also discussed political and economic tensions between the National Northeast and Northwest regions. The historical context reconstruction describes the border region as a space for cultural exchanges where precise stereotypes about Mexico and the United States arose. The fact that the road inaugurated had the name "Pan American" had ideological and diplomatic implications that in this work are crumbled.

Keywords: highways, cultural stereotypes, tourism, border towns, revolutionary nationalism.

Resumen

El objetivo del artículo es explorar el contexto geopolítico al momento de inaugurarse la primera carretera directa entre la capital nacional y la frontera con Estados Unidos. Además de considerar el peso específico de dicho acontecimiento dentro de la esfera mediática, el texto intenta aportar al estudio histórico de los estereotipos culturales y la promoción turística entre ambos países. Mediante el acceso a fuentes documentales y correspondencia oficial de la época, los hallazgos conciernen a los significados que se construyeron acerca de la carretera y de México

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en sí. También discutimos las tensiones políticas y económicas entre las regiones del noreste y noroeste nacional. La reconstrucción del contexto histórico describe a la región fronteriza como un espacio de intercambios culturales de los que surgieron estereotipos precisos acerca de México y Estados Unidos. El hecho de que la carretera inaugurada llevase el nombre "Panamericana" tuvo implicaciones ideológicas y diplomáticas que en este trabajo se desmenuzan.

Palabras clave: carreteras, estereotipos culturales, turismo, poblados fronterizos, nacionalismo revolucionario.

Introduction

On July 1st, 1936, the diplomatic encounter between Mexico and the United States on the Laredo International Bridge, Texas and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, inaugurated the first portion of what would be later called the "Pan American Highway". The inaugural event officially started the circulation of cars from Rio Grande to the Mexican capital. The reception of the event, described as a "very well-known occasion" (García, 2015, p. 414), transcended to Washington and other American geographic locations, finalizing ten years of work and investments of 65 million pesos—equal to 17 million dollars at that time—(Merril, 2009, p. 70; National Revolutionary Party [Partido Nacional Revolucionario-PNR, for its acronym in Spanish], 1936). As illustrated in Figure 1, although the construction of highways continued for a good portion of the twentieth century, the opening of this path facilitated the integration between the northern border of Mexico and central Mexico.

Since the presidential period of Plutarco Elías Calles, a "policy of national reconstruction" was created. The main objective of which, along with the creation of the Bank of Mexico and the National Commission of Irrigation, was to rehabilitate and construct land routes. In 1925, Calles created the National Road Commission (CNC, for its acronym in Spanish) to build the first "petrolized" roads (Waters, 2006, pp. 221-222). The tax on gasoline proved useful to build the road infrastructure, given that with the gradual tax collection—of three, six and eight cents per liter—the budget of the CNC was funded (Uhthoff, 2010, pp. 15-20, Tables 1 and 4).

The role of serviceman Juan Andrew Almazán was fundamental for the conclusion of the stretch between the capital of the country and Nuevo Laredo. At first as the chief of Military Operations in Monterrey, and later as a majority shareholder of the Anahuac Construction Company, Almazán learned the trade of contractor from the one that Calles granted to the Byrne Brothers Company (BBC). This American company worked only for six months given that Luis Montes de Oca, comptroller of the Republic, suggested the annulation of the contract due to "the lack of discipline of the American contractors and their continuous increase in personnel", without any prior consultation of the federal government (Beltrán & Puga, 1926, p. 4). Almazán and other Mexican engineers worked for the BBC, and thus learned how to manage fleets (of laborers and trucks) and build roads (Mijares, 2015, p. 238).

Figure 1: Official inauguration of Mexican highways on the northern border

Source: Own elaboration based on Harrison (1950) and Kim (2015).

The hemispheric repercussion of the opening of the highway was caused by the Pan American policy which, translated into the private and public investment of the time, aimed to communicate North American and South American by land. In Mexico, the Pan American ideology was promoted since the presidency of Porfirio Díaz by Matías Romero and the so-called "Scientists" of the regime, José Yves Limantour and Joaquín Casasús (Marichal, 2002, p.25). The most significant Pan American agreement (1929) expressed the commitment of the "revolutionaries" to develop roads and highways. It is also worth mentioning that Pan Americanism was a diplomatic hemispheric doctrine that aimed—since the beginning of the twentieth century—to have a political and economic integration in the face of a broader international scenario.

In this context and with the purpose of integrating highways, the United States offered to economically cooperate with the Latin American countries to finance their own transport networks. With the exception of Mexico and El Salvador, several of Latin American countries accepted the offer, but the stand of the Mexican delegates was that the country did not need help to start and conclude its national highway network (Kelchner, 1938, p. 725).

The objective of this article is to observe how the Pan American highway—before and after building its 1 226 kilometers—made possible a series of political, economic and cultural exchanges between Mexico and the United States. The observing site will be the nascent tourist industry, especially the official acts in which the diplomatic tensions that occurred in the binational political power spheres manifested. With this, it is demonstrated how highways highlighted the cultural differences between the capital of the country and border towns such as Nogales, Ciudad Juárez and Nuevo Laredo, which are access points for tourists and other cultural agents.

It was during the Mexican revolution that publicists and reporters from the United States, Canada and Europe created a negative image of Mexico (Vázquez & Meyer, 2013, pp. 159-160). The symbolic operation that allowed tourist promoters to combat said representations that considered the country as being filthy and violent, was the efforts to give exposure to the ethnic and cultural wealth represented by the artistic and archeological heritage (Berger, 2006, p. 13). However, the American embassy also had an interest in improving the image of Mexico.[1] Dwight W. Morrow not only played an important role by persuading Calles to put an end to the religious conflict in the Bajío region, but in his search for political and financial stability, Morrow thought that artistic and cultural promotion along with other diplomatic and economic activities (such as the petrol industry) would improve binational relations (Merrill, 2009, p. 29).

The opening of the stretch between Mexico and Nuevo Laredo was an event in which the recurrence of rituals and stereotypes was made evident. The fact that this event happened a little late, given that vehicles had been circulating from Laredo to Monterrey since 1932 (García, 2015, p. 414), made it possible to test the representations that, in our temporary distance, appear to be empty and artificial in the sense that the implementation of a diplomatic protocol subsumed the binational tensions. The American sociologist Norman Hayes (1966) observed the contrasts that, two decades after the finalization of the highway, were never included in the protocol activities. After traveling from the northern border to the south, he noted: "Small town life happens as it did hundreds of years ago", highways brought along only superficial changes, according to the sociologist (Hayes, 1966, p. 18).

If the inauguration of the highway included stereotypical representations of being "Mexican", it is due to a particular context. The Pan American conference of 1933 in Montevideo was important, as the attendance of Cordel Hull, "Secretary of state of the brand-new administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt […] [began] what would be referred to as the 'good neighbor policy'" (Marichal, 2002, p. 25). Josephus Daniels, former ambassador of the United States, indicated the (apparent) similarities between the governments of Roosevelt (1933-1945) and Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940). The compatibility between the

[1] Although tourism was not included in his argument, Gamio (1982, p. 107) already addressed this idea: "We implore the Foreign Cultural God, to give us the grace of his redemptive zeal and to continue imposing his culture". The interest of Gamio in studying and rehabilitating the archeological site of Teotihuacán through the Fine Arts Department (*Departamento de Bellas Artes*) made tourism promotion possible.

Sexennial plan of the National Revolutionary Party (PNR for its acronym in Spanish) and the *New Deal* policy of the democrat facilitated the tasks of Pan Americanism (Daniels, 1949, p. 73).[2]

The "good neighbor" policy promoted by Roosevelt regarding Mexico and Latin America would improve continental safety conditions (Sosa, 1996, pp. 161-162). The "good neighbor" discourse helped calm the annexationist impulses of American diplomats and businessmen, provided that investments in the petrol industry were not violated. The significant change in Mexico's foreign policy towards the United States, and vice versa, suspended the "dollar diplomacy", which was representative of President Calvin Coolidge, who believed that "the Latin American leaders lacked the discipline to manage their own economies". It was due to this that tourism promotion was not put into effect (Merrill, 2009, p. 60), there were only "informal agreements". Although these did not stop, this article shows how Mexican nationalism was only tolerable to a point.[3]

Ambassador Josephus Daniels represented said change of attitude by arriving at Mexico City with two assignments. The first was to not relate himself too much with the "American Chamber of Commerce and the American Colony" (Daniels, 1949, p. 467), and the second was to warn the country of the "threats to come" if they continued with the religious conflict and selling petroleum to Nazi Germany (Daniels cited in Sosa, 1996, p. 159). Said national and international conditions favored the emergence of new political and tourist agents, whose actions and discourses purely reflected the stereotypical representation of being "Mexican".

Unlike cultural sociology—in which the stereotypes represent damaging forms of racial discrimination (Valenzuela, 1998, p. 90)—, for cultural history and anthropology, stereotypes are fundamental for the understanding of the discursive montage that originated the national States (Herzfeld, 2005). The extensive work of Ricardo Pérez Montfort (1994 and 2009) delved into the symbolic construction of a "Mexican identity". Analyzing this construction implies going beyond the essay representations of Santiago Ramírez, José Vasconcelos or Octavio Paz, as was done by José Manuel Valenzuela (2003, pp. 37-42). On the other hand, cultural history aims to demonstrate how intellectuals, Mexican politicians and foreigners re-interpreted the past and invented a new national identity.

Although the advertising media such as the press, magazines and leaflets of the time were the ideal medium to reinvent stereotypes (Pérez, 2009),[4] this article did not resort to said evidence, due to length issues, but we can refer the reader to an ample guide regarding said sources in Riguzzi and Ríos (2012, pp. 271-276). Conversely, to demonstrate the inherent efficiency of cultural symbols to represent national life, these pages present the stereotypes in people foreign to this cultural and intellectual field, focusing on the utilitarian and accessory use of said artistic and national expressions—according to our

[2] Criticism for this idea can be found in Riguzzi and Ríos (2012, pp. 258-260) and Vázquez and Meyer (2013, p. 170).

[3] The protestant missionary and historian Samuel Guy Inman is an example of the anti-intervention voices of the United States. Not only did he devote his time during the first decades of the twentieth century to debate with politicians and oil entrepreneurs, but ideologically he was a strong instigator of Pan Americanism. During Franklin D. Roosevelt's second term, Inman attended the conferences and strongly promoted the Pan American Highway (Hart, 2013, pp. 20-21). Other anti-intervention voices were those of William Borah and Robert La Follete (Vázquez & Meyer, 2013, p. 159), in addition to the protestant literacy teacher William C. Townsend (Riguzzi & Ríos, 2012, p. 275).

[4] And for the northern border see Félix (2011), Núñez (2012), and St. John (2009).

qualitative approach of the cited, printed and file sources—. This being a study of historic-cultural reception, the use of stereotypes by promoters of Mexico as a tourist destination is going to be described.[5]

Tourism promotion in the posrevolution

During the reconstruction period, the interests of the federal government and those of the private initiative coincided to coordinate the tourism market. In 1928, Luis Montes de Oca saw in this the opportunity to attract currencies and escape economic dependency, especially foreign. The news that there was not even one restroom from Nuevo Laredo to Monterrey alerted him to changing the opinions of the "readers and listeners" of the United States (Berger, 2006, p.14). Once he was part of Calles' cabinet, at the forefront of the Secretariat of Finance and, subsequently, in the Bank of Mexico, Montes de Oca took action.

The vindication of the "Mexican people" in the eyes of nationals and foreigners entailed promoting artistic and cultural events. Therefore, people like Calles and Álvaro Obregón, along with Montes de Oca and the banker Alberto Mascareñas (of whom we will speak later), consolidated "a series of representations and images that were gradually simplified and oriented in order to create a particular repertoire" of national classifications (Pérez, 2009, pp. 155-156). The posrevolutionary regime warned that this alone would not change the national image: it would need the effort of artists and intellectuals, but also that of the private sector to demonstrate the renovation and institutional reform of the country.

Since 1928, Montes de Oca and Mascareñas began a cultural content advertising campaign in the United States. Assisted by the businessman and diplomat from Monterrey, Antonio L. Rodríguez, they published the first tourist guides in which they announced road works. Moreover, they convinced president Emilio Portes Gil to create a National Tourism Commission, subsequently called the Department of Tourism, which would finance the production of *Mexico Nights*, a music and information program for radio stations in the United States (Berger, 2006, pp. 20-21). The contact that Montes de Oca, Mascareñas and Rodríguez had with José Rivera, one of the engineers of the CNC, was fundamental. Rivera was one of the closest collaborators of the BBC and had to deal with the unsanitary image of Mexico, administering "potable water [for] some of the towns of San Luis Potosí that were along the highway" (Anaya, 2009, p. 111).

The creation of the Mexican Automotive Association (AMA, for its acronym in Spanish) changed the way to promote the tourism industry. The conformation of the board of directors included distinguished people: on behalf of the CNC, José Rivera; from the Bank of Mexico, Luis Montes de Oca and subsequently, Alberto Mascareñas; and from the Chamber of Commerce of Monterrey, Antonio L. Rodríguez. Montes de Oca even invited representatives of the Pierce Oil Company, Huasteca Petroleum Company, California Standard Oil Company and, of course, the "El Águila" company (Berger, 2006, p. 50). The usefulness of including foreign oilmen in the board of directors benefited the provision of fuel in highways and other products for the construction of the same.

[5] Our theoretical and methodological option comprises unexplored sources, without neglecting the large historiographic production on the relations between Mexico and the United States during the posrevolution. Our interest lies in observing the use of cultural products—for this case, leaflets, postal cards, folklore books and general advertising—more so due to the context of their distribution rather than their intrinsic content. This work is more of a political account of the cultural meanings than just a cultural history.

Public investment destined for the construction of highways made possible several of the tourist projects. The election of the route between Mexico City and Nuevo Laredo did not only obey a technical criterion. The CNC traced the route through Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, San Luis Potosí and Hidalgo, in pursuit of connecting the capital and the border, making it an "axis and international path" with the rest of Latin America (Mijares, 2015, p. 237). The route decision was also determined by the strategic relevance of the industrial facilities in Monterrey, by the oil fields of the Huasteca Potosina and by the sugar cane mill of El Mante (Tamaulipas), of which Calles was an investor. A historian pointed out that these places were considered tourist attractions by the authorities, as they though that the modern industrial infrastructure would "attract" foreign visitors (Waters, 2006, p. 230).

The decision to communicate Mexico and the United States through the Laredo and Nuevo Laredo intersection[6] reveals something interesting regarding the posrevolutionary regime to promote a particular type of cultural and economic exchanges. In 1931, on the occasion of the Press Congress of the World in Mexico City, the Secretariat of Public Works (Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Obras Públicas [SCOP]) edited a bilingual tourist guide with the main works of the CNC. The reason for selecting Nuevo Laredo was that back then, it was—and still is—"the border customs office with the greatest commercial movement" (Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Obras Públicas [SCOP], 1931, p. 29). After making mention of it stretch by stretch, the guide indicated: "The National Road Commission has enabled the construction of the Mexico-Nuevo Laredo road, in view of the enormous benefits that it will bring to the country" linked to tourism (SCOP, 1931, p. 34).

In the meantime, Montes de Oca, Mascareñas, Rodríguez and Rivera, contacted William Harrison Furlong, a representative in San Antonio, Texas, of the *Inter-American Highway* project, as he was assigned in certain sectors of the United States with regard to the Pan American Highway (Berger, 2006, p. 22). The participation of Harrison Furlong was decisive, as his involvement in the AMA enabled him to be contracted by the federal government to promote tourism in the United States. Although he specialized in technical management, the connections of Harrison Furlong with the contracting companies were as useful to the AMA-CNC as those he cultivated with the advertising agencies, "the same happened among functionaries of the Department of Commerce of the United States as with theater companies" (Anaya, 2009, p. 119). In addition to producing and projecting short films about Mexico and Latin America, Harrison Furlong opened the representation offices of the AMA in California and Arizona. As will be observed below, it was also there that multiple projects that looked to compete with the Pan American Highway were created.

The operations of Montes de Oca, Rivera, Mascareñas and Harrison Furlong aimed to not contravene the incipient ideology of revolutionary nationalism. The political and military elite resented the "North American omnipresence" to the point of celebrating the day of Pan Americanism as a national event (Pérez, 1994, p. 380). The construction of the highway at forced march imposed concentrating on the most difficult sections. Almazán expressed the urgency of "crossing, even if it was done through a half width

[6] The selection of the route from Mexico City to Nuevo Laredo followed two important historical regional accomplishments in Northeast Mexico. Originally, and since colonial time, there was a route that led to one of the crossings of the Rio Bravo and to the town of Laredo consolidating with the railways promoted by general Bernardo Reyes in the middle of the nineteenth century, which connected Monterrey to Texas (Ceballos, 2006, p. 30).

road, the mountain range between Jacala and Tamazunchale [San Luis Potosí] as soon as possible, particularly to make the country aware that the highway […] was not just a tale" (Almazán, 1932, p. 12). Four years later it would be a reality.

Hereunder, as a *excursus*, we would like to clarify something regarding the geopolitical implications chosen by the federal government after selecting a couple of twin cities to open modern highways.

Unlike modern border cities such as Nogales, Sonora and Nogales, Arizona, the history of Laredo and Nuevo Laredo is not the average for "twin cities". The long cultural tradition between both towns dates back to the eighteenth century and speaks of several social agreements and disagreements. After the land-use planning of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), some of the people from Laredo and Nuevo Laredo crisscrossed worksites and residence between Texas and Tamaulipas. "The last two decades of the [nineteenth] century were decisive in the formation of the two Laredos, which grew thanks to modernizing projects", indicates Ceballos (2001, p. 243). In the eve of the opening, the negative stereotypes of revolutionary Mexico seeped into the perception of some tourists.

The tourist information cards conceived by Montes de Oca, in force since 1929 and inspired by the "migration procedure for tourists from Canada and the United States" were counterproductive, as some of the visitors received abuse by the police and customs (Berger, 2006, p. 15). On their own, the "cards" were subject to several suspicions and intrigues. When crossing to Mexico, American drivers would hand over the papers of their vehicles in customs, and would circulate in the country with the card as their only identification, which would confuse police and traffic authorities in cities and highways. Since then, Nuevo Laredo has been an entry point for vehicle smuggling, used or stolen, and even "Northern governors adopted their tax exemption, […] [which was] illegal, but the State, acknowledging the porosity of borders, postponed its implementation" (Anaya, 2013, p. 12).

To avoid mistreatment, corruption and inconveniences, Eduardo de León and the National Chamber of Commerce of Nuevo León promoted the "further simplification" of the procedures and requirements for border crossing (Merrill, 2009, p. 69) among migration authorities. In this context, it was suggested to the Chamber of Commerce of Laredo, Texas, to create a Foreign Club in Nuevo Laredo, that would have a dance floor, bar, gymnasium and beauty salon. "De León was convinced that though Nuevo Laredo did not have any electricity or potable water, the [private] initiative should not wait" (Berger, 2006, p. 30).

The possibility of finalizing business with binational impact encouraged entrepreneurs to picture a new and different Mexico. Members of the AMA such as Alberto Mascareñas grew up observing the benefits of border culture. The father of Mascareñas was the mayor of Nogales, Sonora, and in addition to the commercial turns and relations with Arizona, "the civic leaders of both towns would often meet and exchange opinions […] Many of them belonged to the same social clubs" (Tinker, 2001, p.271). The American tourism that would emerge with the Pan American Highway was the opportunity for Montes de Oca or Mascareñas to work with the aim of having a country closer to the northern border.

The report that William Harrison Furlong presented to Lázaro Cárdenas in June of 1936, on the eve of the inauguration of the highway, revealed the difficulties that Americans would face when traveling and staying in Mexico. The representative of the AMA traveled from San Antonio Texas to Mexico City with some tolerable difficulties. Technical problems began in the territory of San Luis Potosí. The construction of the

"half-width" stretch between Jacala and Tamazunchale reported by Almazán presented several "technical failures". However, there were "traversable surfaces" along the entire road, added Harrison (1936a, p. 14).

Tourists would only find supply and quality in their accommodation in two places: Monterrey and Mexico City. Among the recommendations that had to be provided to American tourists, in addition to carrying protection for mosquitos, was to travel with the necessary tools to boil water and prepare food. The cultural intervention carried out by Harrison Furlong warned his countrymen of the following:

> Entering a foreign country causes the traveler to be in touch with laws, regulations and national agreements. A similar environment will be quickly understood by the traveler as he gets to know the country and, at the same time, he will realize that negative commentaries must be avoided, as well as any BELLIGERENT CRITICISM (Harrison, 1936a, p. 15, original capital letters).

The phrase "belligerent criticism" alludes to possible disagreements between indiscreet tourists and xenophobic hosts who, since the Mexican revolution, do not appreciate the opinion of foreigners regarding politics. Since 1932, these recommendations, along with maps and guides of the Mexican Northeast, emerged from the "tourist information office" of the AMA (Berger, 2006, p. 31). Josephus Daniels himself wrote a list of comfortable and attractive places to vacation, remarking that it will be an enriching experience despite "certain bureaucratic anomalies" (Daniels cited in Merrill, 2009, p. 88). For the posrevolutionary regime, stereotypes (hereby understood as conventional representations inherent to the context of use) were double-edged swords; while they fought the negative of the national environment, they also emphasized, without regard for consequence, the institutional weakness of the nation. What is certain is that all stereotypical representation develops from a reciprocity of looks and interests: while the Mexican people were seen as dirty and violent by Americans, Mexicans responded to this stereotype through cinema and press by representing Americans as the "dumb tourist, the voracious and predatory businessman, and the provocative blonde" (Riguzzi & Ríos, 2012, p. 276).

The opening of the highway

Lázaro Cárdenas reaped the rewards of the road policy that Calles established since 1925, assigning Francisco J. Múgica as the head of the Secretariat of Communication and Public Works (SCOP, for its acronym in Spanish) to modernize Nuevo Laredo and receive the binational authorities (Anaya, 2009, p. 111). The opening of the highway, while a ritualized event, turned into an opportunity to signify the "changing diplomatic relation" between Mexico and the United States. Furthermore, the six-day program for the opening of the highway included nationalist events and expressions (Waters, 2006, pp. 232-233).

Regarding stereotypes, it should be noted that they surfaced from the cultural exchange between the federal government and Mexican society, as well as between foreign visitors and national hosts (Félix, 2011). The confrontation of the official and popular representations "combined with the economic interests of the businessmen of the new

mass media, [created] an image of the Mexican that prevailed", within and outside of Mexico (Pérez, 1994, p. 348): that of a modern country that preserved traditional cultural aspects without a problem. The preparations of the highway illustrated said social and official interaction; for example, when the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP, for its acronym in Spanish) fought the stereotype of a "dirty Mexico". Through rural and urban teachers, along with children and parents, public squares were cleaned, thus "civilizing" the appearance of the country (Fell, 1989, p. 107). The Department of Tourism issued several notices to the municipal presidents, "inviting them to preserve and construct 'paved roads'; attend to water, lighting and cleaning services; as well as to build gardens" (Anaya, 2009, p. 118). As has been done since the end of the nineteenth century, these indications to keep the "good neighbor" at home also instructed city halls to have full inventories regarding regional, patriotic and religious celebrations.

Since 1932, the legislation of the SCOP transformed the CNC into the National Road Board (DNC, for its acronym in Spanish) (Mijares, 2015, pp. 256-258). Few days after becoming president, Cárdenas decreed the issuance of additional 16 million pesos for the culmination of the road to Nuevo Laredo, allocating only four million pesos to the highway to Acapulco (Cárdenas, 1935b, p. 133). Since the first half of 1934, the SCOP assigned engineer Vicente Cortés Herrera to the forefront of the DNC, who would collaborate in the oil expropriation two years later. However, in June 1936, Cortés Herrera was involved in searching for a solution to the technical flaws of the highway, and was asked to suggest a program of activities to the Secretary of Foreign Relations (SRE, for its acronym in Spanish) and to other government instances (Cortés, 1936, p. 643).

Mexican diplomacy decided to divide the retinue into two delegations, one Mexican and one American. On July 1st, 1936, at nine in the morning, the SRE prepared a simple ceremony on the Laredo and Nuevo Laredo International Bridge. The Foreign Secretary, engineer Eduardo Hay, welcomed the delegates, who spent the following five days traveling Mexico by road, responding to the invitations of the governments of Nuevo León, Tamaulipas and Hidalgo, until reaching Mexico City (SCOP, 1936b, p. 315). They slept in Jacala, "a small town at the center of a fertile and scenic valley, visible from highlands from which the road descends to give it life and prosperity" (SCOP, 1931, p. 29). Roosevelt and Cárdenas confirmed their attendance to the event, but the presence of the vice-president of the United States, John Nance Garner, maximized security measures (Daniels, 1949, p. 563).

At one point in the road between San Luis Potosí and Hidalgo, the American Chamber of Commerce in Mexico installed a commemorative plaque to "neighborliness". Pérez Montfort (1994, p. 380) defined this type of gestures as too "idealistic", in the sense of artificially invoking Pan American unity, as there were more profound tensions—i.e., concerning the oil industry—. In the extraofficial correspondence with Washington, Daniels, then ambassador of the United States in Mexico, covered this reality when stating "that the highway would foster a mutual understanding between Mexico and the United States" (cited in Merrill, 2009, p. 72).

Almazán organized the welcome in Monterrey, receiving vice-president Garner with 21 cannon blasts. Vice-president Garner returned to Laredo, Texas, from Monterrey; "he came to Mexico and won over all the hearts, but not satisfied with that, —joked Daniels (1949, p. 565) as his luggage ended up in Garner's car—he stole the clothes of the American ambassador". This misunderstanding was distorted by the American press, which referred to a so-called theft of the vice-presidential luggage, and that of other delegates that traveled to Acapulco (Quintanilla, 1936, p. 107).

The artistic ingredient of the inauguration came from two of the national "stereotypes" used, with greater effectiveness, by the posrevolutionary regime: the *Charro* and the *China Poblana*. It was thought that this image would prevail in the attraction of American tourists, even Daniels and his wife took pictures donning the traditional attires. To unveil the commemorative plaque, the American Colony contracted the services of a "*Mariachi*" to enliven the event (Daniels, 1949, p. 567). For Pérez Montfort (1994), the stereotypical images of the *Charro* and the *China Poblana* exemplify an "invented tradition", in the sense that they had a regional origin of conservative extraction, becoming a general expression of "Mexican identity".

The meeting of authorities on the International Bridge would have been something that had already been done in the immediate past. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the festive calendar of Laredo and Nuevo Laredo included the celebration of the 4th of July and September 16th alike. Since 1902, the mayors of Laredo and Nuevo Laredo met on the bridge and, along with the marching bands of each town, sung their respective national anthems, as observed during the opening of the Pan American Highway.

> Nuevo Laredo celebrated, for the first time, its foundation in November 1934 […] The different periods of Mexican history were enacted on parade floats; to prevent bad memories, the war between Mexico and the United states was omitted (Ceballos, 2001, pp. 252-253).

The essential difference between the local and international celebrations was the massive repercussion of the latter: in the opening of the highway, the use of Cárdenas' favorite media outlet was included. From the National Palace, Cárdenas delivered a radio message welcoming the American delegates (PNR, 1936). After three days visiting governors, the retinue arrived at its destination in Mexico City on July 4th, 1936. An official record should be cited:

> At exactly the appointed time, on July 4th at 5 p.m., we arrived at the Villa de Guadalupe [Presently the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe], where we found the functionaries, a group of *charros* mounted on magnificent looking horses, and women dressed in beautiful regional dresses who were also mounting good horses. A chorus comprised of lovely ladies intonated songs of welcome, while another group of young people threw flowers at the visitors. Thousands of people had gathered […] On Sunday evening [July 5th, 1936] we attended a party and danced at the Chapultepec Castle, followed by dinner and fireworks at the lake of the same forest (Daniels, 1949, p. 566).

The organization of the "Mexican Night" on the occasion of the opening of the highway, tested the cultural and diplomatic efficiency of the national stereotypes, which in turn represented particular regional figures. According to the stereotypical analysis of this article, it will be necessary to explain how *Charros*, *Chinas Poblanas*, and *Mariachi* conjured concrete representations of Mexico in the events of the 4th and 5th of July 1936. According to one of the most illustrious and important theorists of cultural history, Peter Burke, stereotypes represent concrete forms of knowledge. On their own, stereotypes are a symbolic representation of reality, when emerging from the encounter of "different

cultures, even more so when said encounters are prolonged", especially, declares Burke (2007, p. 232), "in national and colonization processes". Within this context, the same posrevolutionary regime carried out a sort of "internal colonialism" by building highways and collecting the artistic and cultural expressions of each of the regions. The *China Poblana* from Puebla and the *Mariachi* from the Mexican Bajío region became expressions that were incorporated into the national stereotype repertoire.[7]

Since the 1920s, the ritualized reconstruction of the popular Mexican festivities has turned into one of the unavoidable references to attract foreign tourists and consumers: "With their *Charros* and *Chinas*, their *papel picado*, their parades, their *jaripeos* and the indispensable '*Jarabe Tapatío*' it was ultimately more in tune with the general intentions of tourism from the north", that is, the United States (Pérez, 2009, p. 166). Similar to the meetings on the Laredo-Nuevo Laredo International Bridge, this performance remitted to the recent past of the Mexican nation. The invention of the "Mexican Night" was one of the better articulated cultural products of Mexican nationalism.[8]

The correspondence of American citizens that congratulated president Cárdenas comprises a historical source on the reception of the event and, at the same time, on Pan Americanism, letting us also know about those who did not attend the inauguration. The representations poured into the letters described a process of massive communication that brought traditional media—cinema, radio and press—together, but also the mediation of public agents. The Pan American referent encouraged the emergence of concrete images regarding the relation between both countries. Beyond the "good neighbor" discourse, it will be important to stress how the citizens of the United States wished to impact the tourism industry.

In this regard, the international relations theory and diplomatic history present the concept of "soft power". In this case referring to the behavior of certain tourists that thought of Mexico as a "space open to the Yankee purchase power" or others, with more modest and interactive purposes, thinking that the country offered the opportunity "to get to know another culture" (Merrill, 2009, p. 31). For example, Shelby M. Tobey, a paper manufacturer from Saint Louis, Missouri, showed the event coverage. Additionally, Furlong's tourist promotion work arrived following the railway up to those latitudes (Berger, 2006, p. 82). Tobey went on a journey on a caravan of vehicles from Missouri to Mexico City. In his letter, he said that they enjoyed the magnificent engineering work and the hospitality of the people. "I believe that the journey I took in your country and mine will go a long way to build good faith and mutual benefit", he added, assuring that other travelers from Saint Louis also had the same opinion (Tobey, 1938, p. 1050).

From North Carolina, Nesbitt Sullivan attempted to send a letter to President Cárdenas through the city hall of Laredo, but when finding out through the press that none of the presidents would attend, he desisted. The purpose of the letter was to request the publication in national and Latin American press of a map of the "Southern Short

[7] In addition to being the most important political resource of the regime, the National Revolutionary Party was one of the colonization agents on the country regions. Needless to say, Jalisco and Puebla were entities in which the Calles regime, for example, fought to integrate the revolutionary policies.

[8] In 1921, Obregón celebrated the centenary of the consummation of the Independence with a "popular" celebration. He contracted the multidisciplinary artist Adolfo Best Maugard, who transformed the Chapultepec castle and forest into a "regional fair", and called it "Mexican Night" (López, 2006, pp. 24-25). Best Maugard supervised all the details of the event, the main act of which was the debut in Mexico of the "Mexican Fantasy" choreography, interpreted by Anna Pavlova, and previously acclaimed by the New York reviews (López, 2006, pp. 26-27).

Way". The announcement of the road work that would go from Virginia to Texas was of importance, as it represented the shortest straight road to New York (Sullivan, 1936, p. 1259). The manager of the Winfield Scott hotel from Elizabeth, New Jersey, congratulated the Mexican government as it had built the touchstone of "Pan Americanism on wheels",[9] "one of the greatest achievements in the world", and as many other Americans that tended towards "soft power", he projected the commercial success of the highway. He wrote to the president that 'the economic revenue that the American tourists would leave in Mexico would surpass the amount of dollars and other currencies received in Jamaica, Bermuda or the European continent' (Anonymous, 1936, p. 1353).

On a more personal note, William Harrison Furlong (1936b, p. 830) wrote to Cárdenas referring to the event "as one of the most important moments of my career", reminding him that the inauguration reflected several years of operations. As it will be indicated below, it was only on one occasion that president Cárdenas personally answered these messages. Without being significant evidence of the readers and radio listeners that were aware of the event, what is shown by these letters is the reception of the event, and as such they revealed little (or nothing) of the immediate intentions or other future plans to visit Mexico.[10]

The Pacific International Highway

Since the interim administration of Abelardo L. Rodríguez and until the presidency of Cárdenas, the correspondence between presidents and the Automobile Club of Southern California (ACSC) shows the permanent dialogue between the private and business initiative of the United States—more specifically, of southern California—and the federal government. Under the terms of "soft power", the correspondence between the ACSC and the presidency informs of those "informal agreements" that allowed the posrevolutionary elite to cultivate the relations that resulted in future and beneficial business deals. The history of foreign touring clubs in Mexico, as noted by Anaya Merchant (2009, p. 109), is linked to that of "hoteliers from Guadalajara [who] developed a campaign to renew the interest in the highway that would connect Jalisco with Sinaloa and Sonora". Hoteliers from Jalisco wished to expand their road network to the border, given that the federal government had postponed the work of the highway and the same had few branches to the north of the country—with the exception of the network set between Guadalajara and the Bajío region— (SCOP, 1931).

The contact between Rodríguez, Cárdenas and the ACSC—travel agency, insurance company and promoter of vehicle information—was of strategic importance. This touring club put the posrevolutionary regime in contact with, perhaps, the biggest vehicle market in the United States (Pace, 1990, p. 395). In 1927, Rodríguez was accompanied by members of the ACSC to supervise the construction of roads as governor of the Northern District of

[9] See this idea also in Freeman (2011).

[10] The New Yorker economist Hall (1936, p. 1356) assured the president that the value of the land would increase thanks to the highway, and this could in turn finance more work. Hall ignored the fact that for months Cárdenas had been planning a massive distribution of land. Conversely, Mrs. Denman (1936, p. 802), offered her mapping and elaborate tourist guide services. The manager of the Flamingo Groves hotel (Hollywood, Florida) sent Cárdenas a mimeographed newsletter titled 'Mexico in your Own Car', requesting a Mexican flag to place next to the other Latin American flags (Hamerstein, 1936, p. 662).

Baja California (Núñez, 2012, pp. 52-56). Being an interim president, Rodríguez received a letter from the ACSC in which the association undertook the Pan American ideal of building a road from Alaska to Argentina, and so he asked about the role of the Baja California peninsula in the process (McStay, 1934, p. 1). The response that he received was evasive:

> This government has continued to grant priority to the construction of highways that will link Mexico to the United States, and we hope to finish the Mexico-Laredo highway for next April [1935].
> Our purpose after that is to push forward with the project of the Guadalajara highway to the north, in order to conveniently connect the Western states with California and thus facilitate commercial and tourist transit (Rodríguez, 1934, p. 8).

Since the conference in Montevideo (1933), the Pan American Highway served as an excuse for Mexican delegates to comment on the state of the national road network. In the report presented by delegates of the SRE, it was reported that "*the section of Baja California-Mexico comprises a second Pan American Highway,* as an auxiliary to the first, it stretches through the states of Sonora, Sinaloa, Nayarit, Jalisco, Michoacán and Mexico" (SRE, 1933, emphasis added). Judging by the response of Rodríguez, one year later, the Baja California peninsula was excluded from these plans.[11] The new route, with an approximate distance of 2 400 kilometers, was barely in its rudimentary localization phase. Although American businessmen considered it a reality, the federal government was restrained and allowed national engineers to work at their own pace.

As soon as the national and international press publicized the fact that Cárdenas had won the 1934 elections, the vice president of the ACSC, Henry Workman Keller (1934a, p. 172), wrote to congratulate him "by reason of his well proved interests and efforts, for the construction of good roads". They contacted each other in 1931, when a caravan of Californian drivers traveled the Mexican Pacific coast towards Guatemala. According to what Keller wrote (1934a, p. 172), Cárdenas was the governor of Michoacán when he received the members of the automobile club in Morelia, a gesture that he repeated with other foreign businessmen during his six-year term (Merrill, 2009, p. 92). Once he was at the National Palace, Cárdenas answered Keller. With his characteristic moderation, the President mentioned that he was one "of the main interested parties in the construction of the Pacific [International] Highway", and therefore he would do his part to conclude it (Cárdenas, 1935a, p. 170). This implies that the interest of the regime continued to be the Pan American Highway.

It is appropriate to compare the message of Shelby M. Tobey, the paper manufacturer of Missouri and that of Keller, representative of the ACSC. The establishment of commercial relations between the Mexican government and the American businessmen imposed certain rules regarding the economic game. Being used to a lobby policy, Americans first established intermediations to find an audience in the political power. On the other hand, the posrevolutionary elite did not neglect these relations, as Cárdenas, still being the governor of Michoacán, sent a representative of his government to the official launch

[11] The Baja California peninsula did not became a part of the national road network until December 1973. The highway between Tijuana and San José del Cabo was inaugurated by president Luis Echeverría. The lag on the integration of the Baja California peninsula to national roads explains its absence in Figure 1.

of the project of the Pacific International Highway (CIP, for its acronym in Spanish), as recalled by Keller (1934a, p. 173).[12]

In order to reach national authorities, the ACSC hired a Mexican lawyer in Los Angeles, Emilio González. He acted as intermediary between the automobile club and José Inocente Lugo, renowned politician with a long career and whose curriculum included, in addition to being one of the writers of article 123 of the Constitution of 1917, having led the government of the Northern District of Baja California. In 1935, Lugo acted as governor of Guerrero. "Mr. Keller has been insisting on this subject for years with governors [such as Filiberto Gómez, governor of the State of Mexico], tourism agents and other functionaries […] without any results"; but trusting in the "youth and good intentions of General Cárdenas", Keller believed that the project would be "the economic salvation of Mexico. Despite the economic depression, Roosevelt invested in public works" (Lugo cited in González, 1934, p. 217).

Lugo and Keller were not foreign to the construction of highways. As a show of "soft power", the ACSC established its own routes on the Baja California peninsula, long before the federal and state governments introduced the highway program. Being proactive, the Californian entrepreneurs flawlessly localized and indicated the routes between Tijuana, Tecate, Ensenada and Mexicali, long before the federal government (Kim, 2015, pp. 325-326; Pace, 1990, p. 400). Therefore, at the request of Calles in 1922, Lugo began the first localization and maintenance operations of the stretch between Tijuana and Ensenada. In order to carry out such works, he contacted engineers from Los Angeles, California, and Phoenix, Arizona (Núñez, 2012, p. 42).

The ACSC financed an international campaign to communicate the utilities and benefits that the future CIP would bring. Keller (1934b, p. 219) had full confidence in that there was not and would not be "a [project] as commercially or politically important in the Western Hemisphere" as this highway. If for any reason this did not include Baja California, the investors from Los Angeles and Phoenix would propose another close point to the peninsula. Since 1932, it was suggested that the CIP depart from Nogales, an ideal starting point to commence transit to Mexico City. The Chambers of Commerce of both Nogales conceived their customs position, imagining it to have a similar importance to that of New York (SRE, 1932; Tinker, 2001, p. 279). Within the proposed argument, the archeological and artistic path of Mexico was recaptured to justify the success of the project, at a time during which the major muralists: Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros painted public buildings in the United States—at the initiative of Morrow— (see Merrill, 2009). As set out below, Nuevo Laredo was the reference used to project the road tourism of the CIP:

> The American tourist is tired of Europe and wishes to see something new. Where can they find a more interesting country than Mexico? A country that offers a blend of landscapes, culture, original art and the remains of a civilization which was higher, richer, and probably even more ancient that the Egyptian (Keller, 1934b, p. 219).

While the letters of common citizens appeared to be uninformed, tourism promoters from Los Angeles were aware of the cultural policy of the Mexican State. Merrill (2009, p.

[12] Confirm in Kim (2015, p. 321).

55) dated the archeological interest of Americans in Mexico in 1922, after discovering the tomb of Tutankhamun in Egypt. Although, since the middle of the nineteenth century, the Mexican Republic projected the Hispanic past and its pyramids, Luis Montes de Oca and Alberto Mascareñas retook said tradition to build an image of the country as "the Egypt of America" (Berger, 2006, p. 21). The stereotypical construction transcended the Pan American framework not only by turning the national culture "exotic" but also by giving it an orientalizing.

However, there was a long distance between the northern border and Teotihuacán, and not all roads were paved or had a covered surface. The Pan American highway would immediately favor the Atlantic coast of the continent, but the biggest automotive and road development was on the other side, on the West Coast. Keller summarized and presented the intentions of entrepreneurs and tourism promoters: "All of us would like to go to Mexico when the [CIP] has been built, *because tourists from Canada and the Pacific Coast of the United States do not wish to enter Mexico through Laredo*", in other words, given the distance, they would not enter the country through Texas/Tamaulipas (Keller, 1934b, p. 219, emphasis added). Thus, the stereotypical representation quickly and irretrievable resorted to the "black legend" of the border, inherent to the tourism derived from the implementation of Prohibitionism of the Volstead Act (Félix, 2011, p. 68; Merrill, 2009, p. 30; Núñez, 2012, p. 41).

Our interpretation is that Keller and his business group did not care about the fact that the "black legend" also applied to Tijuana and/or Nogales since the first years of the revolution, but with greater vigor during the Prohibitionism of the Volstead Act.[13] Even more troubling is that the correspondence between the ACSC and Cárdenas did not clear up the meanings surrounding the comfort experience that seems to determine the discourse of the promoters that refused to cross over to Mexico through Nuevo Laredo, given the big distance between one point and the other, which comprised a complex state road network between Arizona and New Mexico.

In a similar fashion to other Californian businessmen, Keller had several properties and numerous hectares in northern Mexico—especially in Baja California—. The comfort they sought was to be able to travel from Los Angeles to the doorsteps of their ranches in Mexican territory. Since the renaissance of the past and Hispanic heritage of Los Angeles and southern California in the 1920s,[14] Keller had "romantic ideas" regarding the northern border, seeing it as a space for the convergence of Mexico and the United States (St. John 2009, pp. 117-119).[15]

The priorities of the federal government were not in accordance with the regional development of the Mexican northeast, which followed its own dynamic and was more or less independent. Conversely, the "road" policy was incorporated to the economic dependence of the energy sector. Therefore, infrastructure works were overly-dependent on the internal market of the Mexican petroleum products—gasoline and asphalt—produced by foreign companies (Uhthoff, 2010, pp. 18-21). Other two areas were also important for the selection of the border space between Texas and Tamaulipas instead

[13] Regarding the creation of the black legend for all border points see Humberto Félix (2011, pp. 80-81).

[14] After the opening of the Panama Canal, the Panama-California Exposition was celebrated in San Diego in 1915. Since then, the Hispanic heritage of the region was publicized in Los Angeles Times and in artistic and cultural ceremonies. Daniels (1949, p. 563) himself acknowledged that the interest of the government of the United States in the Pan American Highway entailed being able to travel to Panama by car.

[15] Kim (2015) also offers data on this matter.

of the coast of the Mexican Pacific. In both cases, we were at an energetic disadvantage: while in the northeast, the closeness to the refineries would facilitate the supply of inputs, in the northwest, within the expansion of its agricultural border, that is not the case. Perhaps even more important is the traffic control of weapons through customs in Tamaulipas, which is essential for the stability of Calles' regime, as well as the creation of agricultural colonies to accommodate more than 200 thousand Mexican repatriates (Vázquez & Meyer, 2013, pp. 162-165), turning Nuevo Laredo into an open gate for civil and war capitals from the United States.

Furthermore, the decision to inaugurate the first modern highway between Mexico and the United States in one of the international crossings of the northeast, was due to a strong socioeconomic truss that included "bilateral commerce", as well as the "substantial expansion of industrial production" (Riguzzi & Ríos, 2012, pp. 266-269), linked to interests from groups in Monterrey and oil companies in the coast of the Gulf of Mexico.[16] We should not forget either that, after the derogation of the Volstead Act, in the context of trade openness and revitalization of tourism between Mexico and the United States, the "exceptions or reductions in taxes to imported gasoline" were also important, even more so in border towns in northeastern Mexico (Riguzzi & Ríos, 2012, p. 270).

Festival at the National Stadium

"The work of the Mexico-Nuevo Laredo road is a *symptom* of the growth phenomenon experienced by the entire country", a memory of the SCOP rightfully noted (1936a, p. 11, emphasis added). The term "symptom" is appropriate to describe the outlook of the country, beyond tourism promotion, in political and economic terms. As will be seen at the end of this section, the consolidation of political power by the Cárdenas' regime quickly interrupted the achievements of the incipient tourism.

In order to recapitulate all of the above, it would be convenient to conclude these pages with the description of the Mexico-Laredo highway inauguration's closing, which took place at the now former National Stadium, built and inaugurated in 1924 by José Vasconcelos and the SEP (Fell, 1989, p. 461). The stadium was witness to the changes in the regime, since the presidency of Plutarco Elías Calles and through that of many others. In 1936, little was left of the Vasconcelos regime, which fought against the "stereotypes that deform the image of [Mexico] abroad". Vasconcelos, a Oaxacan philosopher—who grew up in the northern border—thought that Pan Americanism governed Ibero-America (Fell, 1989, p. 14). To celebrate the opening of the highway, the stereotypical ritualized recreation was part of the strategy of revolutionary nationalism, which appropriated from popular culture, "detracting from its authenticity and showing a certain façade which was related to demagoguery". Thus, several ceremonies of the regime were done at "the National Stadium, in the pyramid of Teotihuacán, [or] in the neighborhood of Balbuena" (Pérez, 1994, pp. 346-347).

The SEP and the Fine Arts Department organized the events to say goodbye to the American delegates, especially to the wife of vice-president Garner. Although the delegates

[16] For a better explanation on the years following the inauguration, on the eve of the Second World War, see Michael Bess (2014).

did not return to Texas until July 7th, 1936, after attending "a lunch in Xochimilco", the main event was a "civic celebration" the day before at noon. The ceremony included several representations of children from the capital city and representative groups that danced the "Jarabe Tapatío" (SCOP, 1936b). The speech given by one of the deputies of the Congress of the Union developed into an eloquent piece of oratory that reproduced the intrinsic tensions of the use of stereotypes. Although it was full of parliamentary references, the welcome that the deputy Federico Medrano Valdivia gave, did not neglect other rhetorical resources, among them, the solemn use of historical referents. Medrano was pleased to meet the delegations in "the old ancestral home of Anahuac, the legendary nation of Cuauhtémoc and Hidalgo", receiving them "as brothers in the ideal of America" (Medrano, 1936, p. 1328). In other words, a neighborliness that was not yet questioned by the control of energy resources, such as oil.

The occasion merited the speaker to address "neighborliness" matters and Pan Americanism. For the legislator, the highways would strengthen the ties of binational solidarity, establishing a continuum between material self-defense communication routes to reinforce continental safety. Regarding the official speech of the SCOP, Medrano Valdivia (1936, pp. 1328-1329) added in his own speech: "Our wish of mutual understanding and knowledge takes shape in the new highway that was just inaugurated. It brings us closer in the matter, just as the ideal shall bring us closer in spirit". The rhetoric piece found its climax in a succession of essential rhetoric cores which, after being narrated one after another, differentiated the "us" (Mexicans) from the "you" (Americans).

The discursive function erased some of the cultural differences between Mexico and the United States, but there was an issue that irrevocably created (and very soon would keep on creating) a reasonable distance regarding the "good neighbor" policy. According to the summary we wrote from his speech, the speaker addressed all the points of the revolutionary ideology: in addition to mentioning the mythical figure of Madero as an "apostle of democracy", he established the apparent continuities between the programs of Emiliano Zapata and Venustiano Carranza. The speech did not leave out the use of the Constitution of 1917, in particular articles 27 and 123. Finally, he concluded that:

> This is how the government has been able to achieve, without neglecting the spiritual and strictly social work of the revolution, the construction of the Mexico-Laredo highway, which shall be significant in the development of the commercial and spiritual relations of our neighboring towns […] A new sun of fraternity shines in the sky of America, whose most powerful nation, through the voice of its illustrious President [Roosevelt], invites the countries of the continent to become part of the union that will perpetually consecrate the rule of law over the brutal and ruthless regime of force; this happens in America in contrast to the spectacle of ignominy presented by the old Europe to the disbelieving eyes of the world (Medrano, 1936, p. 1330).

The events of the following years showcased the mere protocol-driven nature of the opening of the Pan American Highway, as there were economic interests that gradually came into play. In the years before the Second World War, the political and economic processes, in dormant state, tended towards a new controversy between Mexico and the United States. The constant appeals to Pan Americanism and to the mutual understanding

that the highways would bring forth, were once again forgotten. Fifteen days after the meeting on the Nuevo-Laredo International Bridge, Josephus Daniels himself disclosed in his reports to Washington his concern regarding "the aggressions of Cárdenas towards the economy, to private property", represented by the oil companies installed in Mexico since the presidency of Porfirio Díaz (Daniels cited in Sosa, 1996, p. 160).[17] The truth is that Cárdenas made the decision to expropriate this industry, in addition to following the advice of Múgica, because "oil companies had stopped selling gasoline […] and other products on credit" (Gilly, 2001, p. 347). The territory of San Luis Potosí, through which the new roads stretched, turned into a symbolic and material breaking point between Mexico and the United States.

The presence of oil companies in San Luis Potosí and other regions of the *Huasteca Veracruzana* and *Tamaulipeca* regions was the cause of conflict between the regime and the old leaders of the revolution. After the separation of Saturnino Cedillo from the Cárdenas' government: "An insurrection against the federal government started brewing through the financing of oil companies. Oil companies, Nazis and nationalists saw in Cedillo the man that would be able to lead the counter-reforms", granting him money, weapons and logistical support to carry out a coup (Sosa, 1996, p. 21). When he died under circumstances that have yet to be clarified—regarding the intellectual perpetrator of the crime—, Cedillo went down in history as the last leader that tried to rebel against the posrevolutionary regime.

Two events that interrupted the prosperity of the highway's stretch to Jacala and Tamazanchule took place in San Luis Potosí. The first of these events was associated to the fall of Cedillo, with the disobedience of the measures that the Supreme Court dictated regarding the abuses of oil companies (Gilly, 2001; Vázquez & Meyer, 2013, p. 173), mainly of the British and Dutch that harassed the country. Conversely, the oil interests of the United States "were not able to eradicate the "good neighbor" policy that insisted on negotiating with Mexico, more than to fix things by force" (Pérez, 1994, p. 383). Due to the sum of diplomatic and circumstantial interests that determined it, Pan Americanism—seemingly a doctrine with a very elastic ideology—persisted during the oil conspiracy.

The second event, although not related to the oil industry, caused a decline in the flow of tourists to the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. In August 1938, a hurricane struck San Luis Potosí. The following month, hotel investment was in danger of being lost after the natural disaster. Therefore, bank authorities and the federal government designed a "hotel credit" that subsidized and granted tax exemptions to those who invested in the construction of hotels (Merrill, 2009, p. 91). William Harrison Furlong along with the Mexican Automobile Association, once again undertook—with Cárdenas' endorsement—a new advertising campaign. Tourism flow was reestablished the following year in the "upward development of the new industry" (Anaya, 2009, p. 123) of leisure and entertainment. In a country like Mexico, where ceaseless cycles of peace and violence attract and drive foreign visitors away, these data are not trivial.

[17] For more information on the companies see Uhthoff (2010).

Conclusions

In 1950, an international balance of the Pan American Highway indicated that it followed a somewhat unrealistic idea, due to the bad transit conditions between Mexico and Central America (Harrison, 1950, p. 182). The judgment of the Pan American Highway being "unrealistic"[18] serves to understand the optimism of the federal government when undertaking the construction and inauguration of new highways, such as the Nogales-Mérida (1957) highway, same name as the route previously promoted by the Automobile Club of Southern California. However, since 1940, the reasons to build neighboring and international routes transcended the idea of attracting tourists. The bundle of tourism promotion and popular stereotypes prove to be only an artifice, the ritual usefulness of which, in addition to presenting the modernization works of the immediate past, was surpassed by the buzz introduced by the press and diplomacy during the most radical time of the six-year presidency period of Cárdenas. Unlike other countries in Latin America, the "soft power" and the "dollar diplomacy" found a precise limit in the actions of a government that did not hold back in expenses when it was time to celebrate.

The stereotypes for the promotion of tourism were a useful resource of the posrevolutionary regime, but they were also characterized for existing thanks to the promotion given to them by politicians and businessmen from the United States. The stereotypical production of being "Mexican", with which the federal government offered some of the national attractions to drivers from the east coast of the United states, is an example of the trust the government built around itself in the middle of the 1920s (Vázquez & Meyer, 2013, p. 176). Although they simplified the reality of Mexico, the stereotypes represented the kinder side of revolutionary nationalism, that which was worthy to be broadcasted internationally and which diminished the possibility of an armed intervention during the oil conflict (Pérez, 1994). Judging the contributions of this article on binational relations requires emphasizing the symbolic operation that opened the doors to foreign tourists and drivers. Thus, we expect these pages are of use as a kind of archeology of the crossing by vehicle from the United States to Mexico and vice versa.

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[18] Unlike the inauguration of the stretch of the Pan American Highway discussed in this article, in May 1950 the "middle" stretch of the highway, from Ciudad Juárez to El Ocotal, Chiapas, merited another type of official ceremony: a highway that gathered the major drivers of the world. President Miguel Alemán attended the event and, according to sources of the time, he was thrilled by the innovative racing cars. (Freeman, 2011, pp. 4-5).

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