

Reviews

Mexican history comes alive

**Historias de Edmundo Flores
Autobiografía 1919-1950**
Martín Casillas Editores

**Antesalas del Poder
Historias de Edmundo Flores
Volumen II
Autobiografía 1950-1973**
Editorial Posada, 1986

**Antesalas del Poder 2
Historias de Edmundo Flores
Volumen III
Autobiografía 1973-1976**
Editorial Posada, 1990

Daniel Cosío Villegas, distinguished scholar and historian, observed in the prologue of his memoirs (1976) that Mexicans are not inclined to write autobiographies. Cosío Villegas is right. Few Mexicans publish their memoirs and when they do, they limit themselves to political and bureaucratic affairs. A notable exception is José Vasconcelos' remarkable four volume autobiography, *Ulises Criollo* (1936-1939). Vasconcelos was a gifted writer who participated passionately in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution.

Another notable, and contemporary, exception is Edmundo Flores, born in 1918, a self-made man with advanced academic degrees, several books to his name and several divorces. He has written an autobiography in three

volumes and threatens to write a fourth. Eight years ago, Flores published the first volume: *Historias de Edmundo Flores. Autobiografía, 1919-1950*. Three years later, a second volume followed, *Antesalas del Poder, 1950-1973*, and again, three years later, a third volume, *Antesalas del Poder 2, 1972-1976*, was published. Flores writes about his life, his peers and surroundings without pulling any punches. He documents childhood in a lower middle class home. His beautiful, young mother was single, something which at that time was far from fashionable.

Early in life he decides to explore and tries to understand the world he was born into. He reads voraciously, and he does well in school. Raised a Roman Catholic, he turned to Marxism and the Communist Party during the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas, and later, in his Wisconsin days, he dismissed ideology altogether.

An agronomist who earned his Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics at the University of Wisconsin in 1948, he had learned English like a native, but kept an accent. He taught agricultural economics and economic development at several American and Latin American universities. Flores was also deeply involved with land reform in Bolivia and elsewhere in Latin America. He leads a stormy emotional life: five marriages plus liaisons with many beautiful, bright women along the way.

In 1973 he was appointed Mexico's Permanent Representative

to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome by President Luis Echeverría. In 1975 he was named Mexico's Ambassador to Cuba, a very sensitive post in his country's foreign policy.

When José López Portillo launched his presidential campaign in 1976, Flores accompanied him throughout the country. After the election, President López Portillo appointed him Scientific Advisor to the President and Director General of the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT), a post with cabinet rank. In this fashion, he became the man in charge of the development of science and technology in Mexico -the most formidable limiting factor for his country's development. When López Portillo's term in office ended in 1982, he left CONACYT and went back to teaching.

Antesalas del Poder translates into "Corridors of Power". In his autobiography, Flores combines his fascination with ruthless, demanding and utterly absorbing politics, which he calls "the ultimate game," with a deeply ingrained drive to read everything and write his thoughts and perceptions.

Flores writes about his times and his generation with erudition, insight, irreverence and a sense of humor. All three autobiographical books are well worth reading for people interested in politics, development and women in contemporary Mexico.

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