

# Reviews

## Historical honesty

The British government generously provided the venue and the backing for the recent celebration of an extraordinarily enlightening exhibition on the disastrous venture of the 'Invincible Armada', as King Philip II called it. In its attempt to invade the British Isles, the Spanish Armada got caught in strong gales which wrecked hundreds of transport vessels and many men-of-war. Most of the shipwrecked were drowned, but the few survivors swam to the shores of England, Ireland and Scotland, where their descendants still live, though their surnames have now been anglicised, such as the Barrons (Barrones) of Aberdeen.

This exhibition on the bank of the Thames is a show of open honesty and conclusive proof of King Philip II's words, when he heard the Duke of Medina Sidonia's report on the

disaster: 'I sent you to fight the English, not the elements.'

For years, the consensus of opinion was that the defeat of the Spanish Armada had been the cause of the decline in Spanish power. We now know that it was a case neither of Spanish defeat nor English victory, but of a disaster taken advantage of mainly by the Dutch, whose timely intervention the English were relying on.

Both this exhibition and the recent publication of *El México Antiguo* - a collection of essays written by Dr. Miguel León Portilla and scholars from the United States and compiled by Hanns J. Pren and Ursula Duckerhoff (published by Plaza and Janés) - have helped to dispel the dark legend concerning the cultural history of Hispanoamerican countries.

**Antonio Armendáriz**

Professor in the National University of Mexico.

*Lorenzo Meyer*

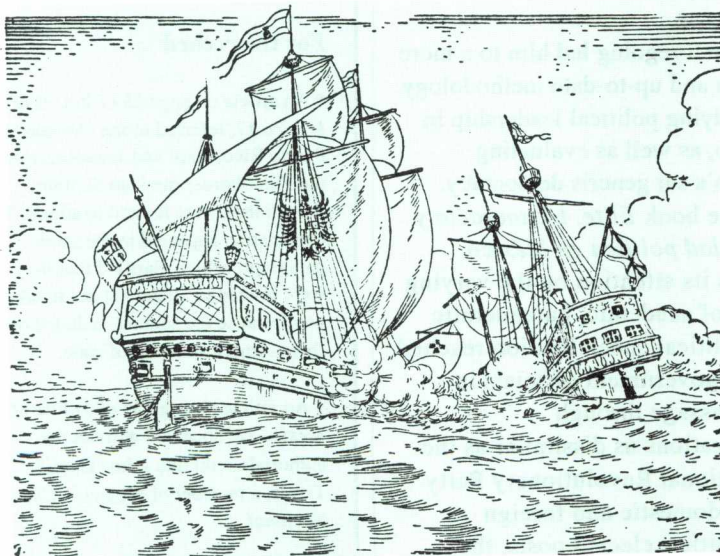
**Su Majestad Británica contra la Revolución Mexicana, 1900-1950, el fin de un imperio informal.**

El Colegio de México, 1991



Around 1910, the British Empire had its best and most lucrative relations with Mexico. Porfirio Díaz needed British capital to counterbalance excessive U. S. influence. England had a major share in Mexican railroad construction, banking and oil, and was very important in other areas. Her relations with the government and dominant groups went back to the years when New Spain emerged as a mining power.

A few months later the Díaz regime was overthrown, beginning a long period from the very beginning of which the Mexican government and British subjects residing in





Mexico made disparaging attacks on each other.

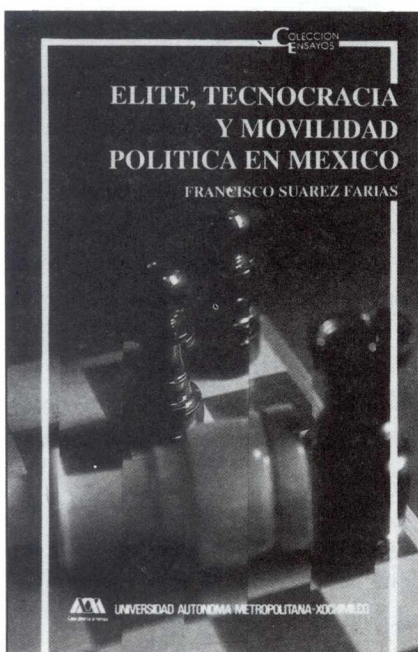
Peoples of different nationalities tend to think of each other in terms of clichés that usually tend to deform, and this is the story of a long misunderstanding.

With this compact and particularly well-documented text, in my opinion the most complete on Anglo-Mexican relations, Lorenzo Meyer has produced a work that fills large gaps in our respective historiographies. Sometimes it reads more like a crime novel, as in the matter of the Rosalie Evans' murder during the Carranza period, than a study of history. I highly recommend it to anyone interested in the Mexican revolutionary period.

**Alonso García Chávez**  
Seminar on pre-Hispanic Studies  
for Mexican Decolonization.

### Mexican political leaders

*Francisco Suárez Farías*  
**Elite, tecnocracia y movilidad política en México.** México, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 1991. 303 pp.



Although diverse American and Mexican political scientists have studied public power from varying points of view, including the recruitment of political leadership, little has been written about the process and its most conspicuous characteristics and technocratic tendencies between 1970 and 1991.

Francisco Suárez Farías, researcher at the Metropolitan University at Xochimilco and professor in the graduate school of the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences at the National University of Mexico (UNAM) makes an in-depth study of the most influential Mexican politicians and their mobility in strategic positions at local, state and federal levels.

At the beginning of his research, the author reviewed and built upon the pioneering efforts of Frank R. Branderburg, Wilfred Gruber, Martin and Carolyn Needleman and, more recently, Peter H. Smith and Roderic Ai Camp, among others. He also evaluated the accuracy of political theorists such as Peter Bacharach, Robert A. Dahl, Karl Mannheim, William Kornhouser, Joseph A. Schumpeter and Giovanni Sartori in explaining the Mexican political system.

The foregoing led him to a more modern and up-to-date methodology for studying political leadership in Mexico, as well as evaluating Mexico's sui generis democracy.

The book *Elite, tecnocracia y movilidad política en México* centers its attention on the varying levels of academic, bureaucratic and political specialization reached by top government officials in their passage through organizations as dissimilar as the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), domestic and foreign universities, elected posts, the

Supreme Court and the government, among others.

Based on a contrastive study of the public and educational profiles of old-time professional politicians and modernizing political technocrats, the book treats the high degree of specialization displayed by the members of Carlos Salinas de Gortari's cabinet and those of previous administrations.

Suárez Farías guides the reader through the labyrinth of political cliques, dynasties and families in power, as well as innumerable incidents and anecdotes relating to the exercise and development of their public careers. With a wealth of statistical data to support his findings and a unique methodological approach to the topic at hand, the book should be required reading for anyone interested in forming a precise and up-to-date opinion on contemporary leaders in Mexico. **M**

**Francisco Suárez Farías**

### For the record

\* An article on page 85 of *Voices of Mexico* 17, referred to the absence of Puerto Rico, Haiti and Jamaica, from the First Ibero-American Summit, though they were invited to attend. The explanation appeared in the same paragraph, which clarified that they were invited to attend but not to take part because the summit included only Ibero-American heads of state.

\* An article on page 35 of *Voices of Mexico* 18, appeared without the authorial credit due Jaime García Terrés, a member of Mexico's *Colegio Nacional*.