Guns, Grit, and Glory: How the US and Mexico Came Together to Defeat the Last Empire in the Americas

Michael Hogan

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Freedom, Fighters, France, Frailties, Ferdinand, and Fido! Once again, NCIS member and Mexican historian Dr. Michael Hogan informs and engages the reader as few historians can. He makes understandable the complex personalities, events, and issues involved in the little-known US participation in the Franco-Mexican War (1861-1867).

It was only fifteen years earlier that the United States and Mexico were at war (1846-1848). Then, in the early-1860s, after a few years of internal warfare (The Reform Wars), Mexico found itself in a new conflict with France, another colonial power. While the United States civil war garnered the focus of a thousand historians, the Franco-Mexican war received very little attention. The *ayuda escondida* (hidden help) provided by the United States to Mexico during its war with France accumulated even less analysis. Hence, the importance of this book.

Guns, Grit, and Glory begins its historical overview in 1861 when Presidents Lincoln and Juarez assume office; Lincoln for the first time, and Juarez as constitutional president (he had already served for some years as interim president). It ends in 1867 with the capture of Mexico City by Mexican forces and the death of Emperor Maximilian. The analyses and documents in the final fifty pages of the book are very beneficial, especially Chapter 16, "The High Price of Freedom: The Complex Legacy of Benito Juárez." There is a vigorous debate among Mexican historians concerning this subject. This reviewer wishes this chapter had gone on a bit longer.

Drawn from both the enlisted ranks and the highest echelons of senior officers, Hogan explains how retired Union soldiers aided the Mexican military effort. Significant excess armory and weapons were made available to the Mexican war effort. The porous Mexican-US border was made more so by deliberate

and conscious efforts at the highest level of the US government to provide covert military aid and supplies to the Mexican cause. For instance, in 1865, General Grant suggested to General Sheridan that he might "lose" 30,000 rifles by the Rio Grande River! Eventually, President Johnson agreed to provide munitions to the Mexican resistance army via private arms dealers (47).

Hogan summarizes, "In the end, more than 10,000 Americans became involved in harassing French and Austrian troops at the border, preventing the French from obtaining supplies at Texas ports…"(48). Summarizing the complexities of the struggle, Hogan writes, "nevertheless how that death blow came about was neither simple, nor entirely altruistic. It involved manipulations, profiteering, political chicanery, and betrayal. It also brought forth some of the finest qualities of leadership, self-initiative, and mutual cooperation from both American and Mexican officers and men"(49).

Minister of Mexico to the United States Matías Romero concluded that at one point in the conflict, US auxiliary forces composed one-third of the entire Mexican army (116). Of particular interest is the creation of a force of US Civil War veterans known as the American Legion of Honor. These veterans fought in many of the conflicts leading to the recapture of Mexico City in 1867. Hogan informs the readers of the involvement of the Legion, the US Colored Troops, the Texas Volunteers, and the California Volunteers. In addition to the military, Hogan candidly discusses the bankers, investors, and business people who sought to profit through engagement in the war.

What this reviewer most appreciates is the even-handedness of Hogan's perspectives and portrayals. He takes the reader beyond what we think we know and challenges us with new insights that better reflect the human experience so often obscured behind the curtain of bias and preconceived notions.

The author reacquaints the reader with the famous: Lincoln, Maximilian, Díaz, Juárez, Grant, and Sheridan. Hogan opens new horizons for the reader by introducing new and lesser-known figures such as Matías Romero, Prince Felix zu Salm-Salm, his faithful wife Princess Agnes, Lieutenant Thomas Carter, Colonel George Church, Sam Brannan, and of course, Fido. Many hitherto unknown photos help introduce the reader to these new players on the Mexican stage.

One thing which makes Dr. Hogan's writing uniquely interesting is his use of anecdotes to bring his characters to life. The reader feels as if she is in the room, listening to the conversations. Hogan writes in a way that facilitates visualization of the events. When coupled with academic rigor, this makes the story come alive, and helps explain why Dr. Hogan's books end up on bestseller lists.

Less than forty-five years later, Mexico's own civil war, its famous revolution, would consume all the ink in the Mexican historian's pen. Dr. Hogan's excellent book refills the inkwell with a necessary reminder that not always were US - Mexican relations tense and one-sided. This book is an essential contribution to a little-known chapter in the history of both countries. It is a lesson in how to overcome tense relationships when leaders support each other in a common purpose.

Phil Stover lives in Mata Ortiz, Chihuahua, where he specializes in the study of the religious history of Mexico. Phil has spoken extensively in both the United States and Mexico on religion as conflict. His book, Religion and Revolution in Mexico's North won a national non-fiction award from Writer's Digest and has been adopted as a university textbook. Phil enjoys serving as treasurer on the Board of Directors of the National Coalition of Independent Scholars. He is a Ph.D. candidate in Modern Mexican History at the University of Kent in Canterbury, England.