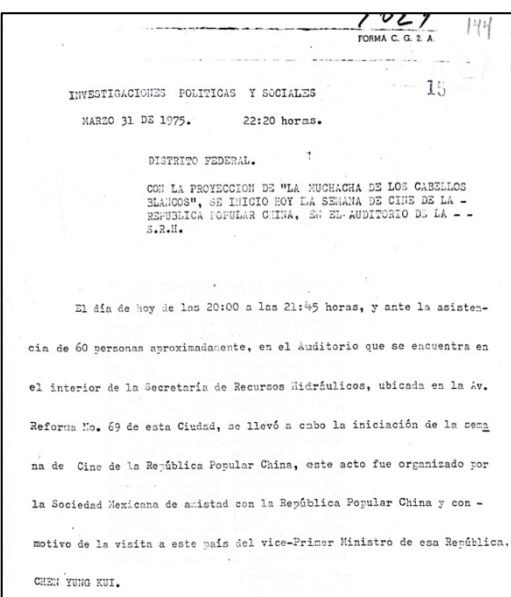


Title: Third World friendships in the Mexican Global 1970s: A Multi-archival Research Experience

By Yixin Tian

In March 1975, when Vice-Premier of the People's Republic of China, Chen Yonggui (Chen Yung-kuei), arrived in Mexico City, peasant leaders hailed him as a living reminder of their own nation's 'glorious revolutionary tradition'. Chen, celebrated as the architect of China's Socialist agriculture, brought with him not only the agrarian philosophies of the famous Dazhai (Tachai) model but also a favourable prospect for Third World friendships. To welcome his visit, the Mexican Society of Friendship with People's China organised a 'PRC Film Week' featuring screenings of Chinese revolutionary cinema.



In this new phase of China's international engagement, the export of guerrillas and emancipatory revolutions was replaced by more intangible cultural influences. Transnational grassroots networks like the Mexican friendship society played an increasingly pivotal role in bringing about a rapprochement with China. Through public lectures and cultural events, they popularised the ideas of 'Third World Marxism' and opposed US imperialism, channelling radical internationalisms inspired by Maoist China into domestic political struggles. Their activities, closely monitored by the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) state, have left behind the archival traces that today make such histories accessible to us.

This summer, thanks to the generous support of the Rothermere American Institute Research Grant, the Colin Matthew Fund, and the Malcolm Deas Fund, I spent six weeks in Mexico and the United States gathering primary sources for my PhD project. My research explores the diplomatic and political history of Mexico during the presidency of Luis Echeverría Álvarez (1970–1976). Specifically, I examine the administration's repressive handling of the 'left-wing problem' in contrast to its embrace of ideological



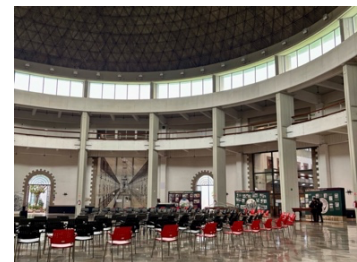
pluralism abroad, most visibly in its opening to the Socialist Third World. I argue that this revolutionary foreign policy often served to mask the regime's reactionary instincts and complicity with US anti-Communist undertakings.



In Mexico City, I primarily stayed in the *Archivo General de la Nación* (AGN). Situated in the former Lecumberri Palace prison, the AGN is an imposing site whose architecture reflects its carceral past while serving today as a national repository of documentary heritage. Its DFS-DGIPS (*Dirección Federal de Seguridad-Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales*) collection, comprising the records of Mexico's domestic intelligence and secret police agencies, has proven extremely helpful for foregrounding Mexican perspectives in the local Cold War history and for decentring the weight of US sources.



The sense for national reckoning was also felt in Mexico's cultural life. My visit coincided with Mexico City's Pride celebrations. On 25 June, the AGN hosted a public event showcasing archives on the state's surveillance of the LGBT movement at the end of the twentieth century.



My research was further enriched by other repositories, including the diplomatic historical collection at the *Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores* (SRE) in



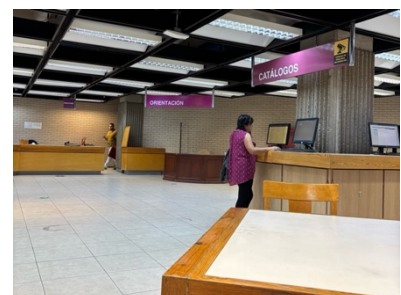
Tlatelolco, which was neatly organised into country units; and the *Hemeroteca Nacional*. There, I consulted bound volumes of leading Mexican newspapers, as well as digitised copies of *El Nacional* and



Excélsior on on-site computers. Further historical newspapers were also available in a microfilm viewing room.



My main destination in the US was the National Archives at College Park, where I dug into many boxes of US-Mexican files produced by the State Department between 1967 and 1973. These sources, which contained diplomatic communications, internal memoranda, and consular reports on Mexico's domestic and foreign affairs, offered a revealing US perspective on the PRI regime's balancing act between Third Worldism and pro-US anti-Communism.



I am deeply grateful to my benefactors whose generosity made this fieldwork possible. My time in the archives was especially enjoyable and transformative. I was encouraged to develop original arguments and analyses that would illuminate the layered conflicts in Mexico's Cold War and the many protagonists involved.

