Chapter Seven

Prelude and World War Two in Mexico
LIFE magazine became an overwhelming success with the first publication on 23 November 1936. It was born into the creation of the Second World War, and reached a peak circulation of eight million American and Canadian readers during the war years. Most importantly, it captured the war in vivid photos and well researched articles which preserved our tragic past.

The 7 December 1936, [third] issue contained seven full pages of a new world leader Adolf Hitler, who was described as the “revivalist” who will “awake all of Europe.” LIFE stated –

*Today, more than any other man alive, Hitler is the fulcrum on which peace or war for Europe teeters.*

This issue also contained three full pages on the Spanish Civil War in the section “The Camera Overseas.” Both would affect Mexico in the coming years.
This LIFE image captured a very important part of the new Nazi Germany and its plan for full world domination. The man in middle pointing is General Franz von Epp, Governor of Bavaria, and head of the Nazi Colonial League. He is teaching young Nazis how England, France, and Belgium stole the old German colonies after World War One. Many of these youngsters will be sent to Adolf Hitler’s special school for training colonial officers to rule a German colonial empire when he wins the war. LIFE magazine had first warned North America, but nobody was listening.
These plans of Hitler are explained in full detail in my history titled – “Nazi Propaganda and the Three Fuhrers.” Yes, you read that correctly, as both Canada and the United States of America had a Fuhrer, and both travelled to Germany and met with Adolph. The Canadian Fuhrer was French-Canadian Adrian Arcand, and the more powerful American [German born] was Fritz Julius Kuhn, who caused many problems in the U.S. until the Japanese attacked on 7 December 1941. By 1938, these two North American Nazi leaders had an estimated following of over one million Germans, living in mainly Ontario, and Quebec, Canada, plus the nearby State of New York. Part of this organization had been created, and funded, in Germany by General Franz von Epp, which was featured in the LIFE magazine issue of 7
December 1936. For some reason, this is still a huge hidden part of our past ‘dark side’ in both Canadian and American history, and you won’t find the History Channel or CNN willing to present a documentary called – “Finding Hitler in North America. It’s just too embarrassing for both governments even today, while large parts of this American Nazi past remain in Long Island, New York, to this very date. The power of Hitler’s Nazi Colonial League, formed in 1935, can also still be found in hidden parts of South America, which I’m sure would even surprise Adolf, if he knew what a lasting power he created.
Joseph E. McWilliams, handsome leader of the Christian Mobilizers, saluted 10,000 members of the German-American Bund at Camp Siegfried, Yaphank, Long Island, Aug. 27. McWilliams' aim is co-ordination of all Nationalist groups in the U.S. to "start a drive now that England and France are in trouble" and seize any of their possessions in the western hemisphere. His starting point would be Canada.
The Nazi swastika is proudly displayed in the United States [Long Island, New York] as well as South America from 1936-1940. [All captured in LIFE magazine issues]

While Central and South America were full of Nazi colonial trained agents and spies, Mexico took a different approach, which has been described as not being one of the Axis powers most favourite countries. The attitude of many Mexicans was divided, mainly due to the past historical grievances with the United States, and there were many. The large Mexican communist community and the Italian immigrants supported war on the side of the Axis powers, which could be expected. The German pro-Nazi element did their best to gain Mexican support with large propaganda books, posters, and newsletters which were all printed in Germany, and supported by the Nazi Colonial League.

In 1940, Mexico elected conservative Manuel Avila Camacho as President, and he decided his government would fully support the United States and also remain neutral in the world war. The past government of Mexico had opposed the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and supported the Republican government during the Spanish Civil War [1936-39], as reported in LIFE magazine December 1936. The Mexican government also allowed and welcomed the establishment of a Spanish Republic government in exile in Mexico City, which function into the postwar era.

Then, in the same year, an unknown Mexican artist stepped up and began creating his own anti-Axis cartoons in Mexico’s leading photo magazine called “HOY” [Today]. They were published in LIFE magazine and gave Americans some idea what part of Mexico was feeling in 1940. This brave Mexican cartoonist became the first publication to directly combat against all the Nazi
propaganda which was being published in Germany and shipped to Mexico by the Nazi Colonial League.

Bernal was not afraid to use the most important world leaders in his cover art, and attacked Uncle Sam in a number of paintings, which even included the most famous Mexican artist Frida Kahlo de Rivera on one special English cover. In 1929, Diego Rivera married Frida Kahlo, the same year he was expelled from the Mexican Communist Party in regards to his actions in Moscow a year before. This was possibly a hidden attack on the Mexican communist party using the world famous Diego Rivera, but that is just my interpretation of his art.
SPEAKING OF PICTURES . . .

... THESE CARTOONS DYNAMITED NAZIS IN MEXICO

One of Mexico's best defenders of democracy is a young tousle-headed artist named Antonio Arias Bernal, whose anti-Axis cartoons appear weekly on the cover of Mexico's leading picture magazine, Hoy ("Today"). Bernal declared his own war on the Axis three years ago when he joined Hoy's staff. At that time many Mexicans friendly to Germany denounced the 25-year-old cartoonist and Hoy's circulation slumped. But Bernal's splashy colors, his impish irreverence and his excellent drawing won more and more followers. His cartoons, reprinted widely, were internationally recognized as dynamite in combating Nazi propaganda in Mexico. Today he has his country's complete support.

Though Bernal has many American traits, he has never visited the U. S. He is the 14th child of a coffinmaker in Agua Caliente. His first drawings were on coffin boards, and he used to take his siestas in any coffin handy. With 40 other employees in his father's workshop, he organized a baseball team that won every local match and became known as "Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves." He also became the champion oarsman of his neighborhood. At 20 Bernal won one of the art contests sponsored by the Mexican Government and started out with 35 pesos ($7) to make a fortune in Mexico City. Terrified by the big city, he promptly drank up his 35 pesos to forget his fears. After peddling his drawings, he eventually landed his job at Hoy and has reigned there ever since. Painting swiftly and without error, Bernal completes a cartoon in the time it takes him to smoke ten cigarettes, enjoys the American bad habit of working with the radio going full blast.
This is my favourite cover painted in a special English edition on 30 November 1940. The joining of Frida Kahlo de Rivera and Uncle Sam to join Latin American countries to get involved in World War Two against the Axis powers.
This 1940 cover “Gone with the Wind” urged both Uncle Sam and Mexico, to get involved in the World War and stop being neutral against the Axis powers. I hope this art survives in Mexico today.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, Mexico, along with most Latin American countries, broke off all diplomatic relations with Germany, Japan, and Italy. Mexico became the first to pledge full support to the United States, and aid in protecting the border and the coast lines in Mexico. The Mexican Air Force was organized into two air regiments, and each consisted of three squadrons. The first Air Regiment [1* Regimiento Aero] was sent to protect Baja California, flying obsolete Vought 02U-2Ms [1930] with a few newer V-99M Corsairs purchased in 1937.
Old U. S. Vought "Corsairs" are used by Mexican air force to patrol Lower California.

Mexicans cross U. S. to Lower California

Mexico's most vulnerable spot in a Pacific War is the long peninsula of Lower California, hanging like an icicle down from Los Angeles and San Diego. More than 700 miles long, it has 1,800 miles of coastline, with hundreds of harbors and islands where Japanese ships and planes can hide out.

Just after war broke, Mexico moved to strengthen her defenses in Lower California. All her Army posts there were increased, and to get even more men there quickly, she was granted permission to send troops across American California. The pictures here show the troops in transit. Wherever they went they were greeted cordially by the Americans, were even given a dinner in their honor at La Caverna on the border.
MEXICANS CROSS THE INTERNATIONAL BORDER, PREPARE TO BOARD AMERICAN TRAIN
UNDER FLAGS OF U.S. AND MEXICO, OFFICERS OF TWO ARMIES TOAST EACH OTHER
Mid-December 1942, and LIFE magazine covered the event. Note the Mexican flag Eagle and snake face to the right during World War Two.
In the Afternoon of 23 January 1942, 21 independent states of Pan America meet and join the United States in an anti-Axis stand.
Mexico’s Foreign Minister Ezequiel Padilla munches a breakfast orange. Brilliant orator and vigorous leader of anti-Axis bloc, young Senor Padilla was an invaluable ally of the U.S. delegation.
One of the still unreported and forgotten parts of the Japanese submarine war is the fact they were operating and using hidden bases in the west coast of Canada and Mexican Baja coastline, before 7 December 1941. This was one of the main reasons the First Mexican Air Regiment, with three squadrons, were sent to Baja California, in January 1942. The 1\textsuperscript{st} Air Regiment were flying a large patrol area using obsolete aircraft such as the Vought 02U-2M, the Mexican built Azcarate Corsario and American Vought V-99M Corsairs. On 20 March 1942, Lt. Leopoldo Meza was flying his patrol thirty miles off the coast of Sinaloa, when he spotted a Japanese submarine on the surface. It is believed he was flying a Vought Mexican built [Azcarate] Corsair, but all of the Mexican aircraft were only equipped with one machine gun and carried no bombs. Although the pilot and his rear gunner attacked the Japanese submarine with their single machine gun, no damage was done. This was carried out before Mexico declared war on the Axis and the only known attack on a Japanese submarine, by a Mexican built aircraft. [this is a complete history to itself] In the next week, [25 March 42] the 1\textsuperscript{st} Regiment received the first modern American aircraft, six Vought Sikorsky OS2U-3 Kingfisher landplanes.
United States Navy Aviation Archives, free domain of Vought Sikorsky OS2U-3 landplanes at factory in 1941. The Mexican aircraft were painted with serial numbers [P for Patrulla] Patrol-69 to 74.

After the surprise attack at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, President Manuel Ávila Camacho ordered the seizure of nine Italian and three German merchant ships, which were docked at Mexican ports. The twelve ships now became part of the Mexican Merchant Navy and began to carry cargo in the Gulf of Mexico, beginning in February 1942. On 10 April 1942, the oil tanker “Tamaulipas” which was sailing under an American flag, was sunk by German U-552, killing three Mexican crew members. On 13 May, the confiscated Italian vessel “Portero del Llano” was attacked off the coast of
Miami, Florida, and sunk by U-564, killed fourteen Mexican crew members. Seven days later, a second confiscated vessel “Faja de Oro”, was sunk by U-106, killing ten more Mexicans. A protest letter was sent to Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany.

After no response to the sinking’s were received from Hitler, Mexico officially declared war on the Axis powers on 28 May 1942. Internet free domain poster image, reads – “The Cry of War.”
El Presidente de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos

El Capitán 1º de Aeronáutica, Piloto Aviador Luis Noriega Madrano, el grado de Mayor Piloto Aviador de la propia Armada con antigüedad de veinte de noviembre de mil novecientos cuarenta y uno.

Por estar comprendido dentro del instructivo para la Promoción de Jefes y Oficiales 1941 y haber satisfecho los requisitos que para el efecto se fijaron.

corresponde

consideraciones subalternos jefe que conformidad

Secretaría Público Presente

nueve abril novecientos cuarenta y doce

[Signature]
On 9 April 1942, Luis Noriega Medrano had been promoted to the rank of Major in the Mexican Air Force, and five weeks later he will prepare for world war.

On 30 May 1942, Major Luis Noriega was issued urgent orders, which placed him in charge of four other Mexican pilots who proceeded to Duncan Field, San Antonio, Texas, for a two week flying course, which first included the twin engine Beechcraft AT-7 advanced trainer. This was like coming home for Major Noriega, as Kelly Field and Duncan Field, Texas, were in the same location.

This free domain image was taken in 1935, showing top right Kelly Field, Texas, where Lt. Noriega had completed his U. S. Air Corps training in October 1934, then received his American Wings. At that date, Duncan Field,
was located just across the landing area [left] and was used as a major U. S. Air Corps Aircraft Repair Depot. In 1942, soon after the United States declared war on the Axis powers, a huge reorganization of the new U. S. Army Air Forces [the name changed on 20 June 1941] was required and Duncan Field became the training base for the Beechcraft AT-7 advanced navigational trainers. One pilot, one instructor, and three student navigators were the normal training crew, which flew out over the Gulf of Mexico for long over water flight training and navigation. In 1942, Duncan Field had four training squadrons – 492nd, 667th, 1029th, and 1030th, and Capt. Noriega received his water navigational training in one of these squadrons, lasting possibly five to seven days. Duncan Field, was in operation from 1 January 1942 until mid-February 1943, then the two were united and again called Kelly Field. The two airfields had originally been called Kelly Field #1 and #2 until 1925, then Field #1 was named to honor Lt. Col. Thomas Duncan killed in a flying accident at Kelly Field, #2.
This free domain image records a Beechcraft AT-7 Navigational Trainer on a flight with U. S. Army Air Force students in 1943, when the two airfields had been consolidated and were called Kelly Field, Texas. The United States government were eager to advertise the unity and training of Mexican Air Force pilots in the Army Air Forces schools, and at least three American promotional photos were taken of Capt. Noriega and his fellow pilots. These images were taken in early June 1942, when the training school was officially called Duncan Field, Texas.

Over 4,500 Beechcraft Model 18s saw military service during World War Two. They were built in 25 different versions for just the U. S. Army Air Forces alone, including 577 constructed for navigational training, with
astrodome and seating positions for three student trainees. These 577 aircraft were given the designation AT-7 Navigator, and a large number were stationed at Duncan Field, later Kelly Field in Texas. The training of navigators over the Gulf of Mexico also provided extra protection for sighting and reporting of German U-boats operating in the Gulf Coast. By the end of June 1942, U-boat sinking of merchant ships in the Atlantic, Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico had reached its peak at 383, including 34 in the Gulf of Mexico. This Gulf water navigational training was most important to these five senior Mexican pilots, who would soon be patrolling the same area further south from Brownsville, Texas.
The Mexican Officer in Charge, Major Luis Noriega stands in front of a Beechcraft AT-7 navigational trainer at Duncan Field, Texas, June 1942. All historians record six Mexican pilots were sent to Duncan Field, for a crash course to take delivery of six AT-6B Harvard trainers, and the first week of
actual training is totally omitted. Five experienced Mexican pilots first took navigational training in the Beechcraft AT-7 navigational trainer flying over the Gulf of Mexico, where they would later be flying U-boat patrols.

It is important to note that Mexico would soon receive seven Beechcraft 18 trainers supplied through American Lend-Lease, and Major Noriega would be the officer in charge of training at Mexico City in July 1943. This navigational training was all part of the new Mexican Air Force reorganization and receiving of modern American Lend-Lease aircraft.

This is the official U. S. Army Air Force photo taken at Duncan Field, [from the private collection of Luis Noriega] showing the five original Mexican pilots, but only two can be identified. Far right is the officer-in-charge, Major
Luis Noriega Medrano, the pilot to his left is possibly Major Enrique Velasco Rojas, the commander of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Air Regiment, then Teniente Lt. Alfonso Gandarilla Garacia, who flew over 300 U-boat patrols, the next could be Lt. Daniel Maldonado, the last is unknown.

The nameless pilots are possibly – Capt. Jose Mena Barona, Capt. Ignacio Ortiz Daiz de Leon, Capt. Carlos Astorga Franco and Capt. Roberta Legorreta Sicilia. These officer’s names appear in many publications as the pilots who flew the six AT-6B Harvard aircraft back to Mexico City on 13 June 1942. I feel all of the above five senior Mexican pilots had graduated from Randolph Field, Texas, and received their graduation Wings at Kelly field, where they have again returned in late May 1942.
Another U. S. Army Air Force image taken of Major Noriega at Duncan Field, Texas, early June 1942. These were possibly used by American publications during WWII.

Internet free domain

Seven Beechcraft AT-7 navigational trainers were later sent to Mexico by American Lead-Lease, and Major Noriega became part of this training and organization in July 1943.
From the 7 to 12 of June 1942, the pilots were involved in conversion training for the AT-6B Texan aircraft at Duncan Field, Texas, where Major Noriega was recorded driving an American Army Air Force Jeep. [Possibly the 13 June 1942, the date they flew to Mexico City]
North American aircraft had been involved in World War Two from the beginning in September 1939, training, and fighting with foreign pilots. The AT-6 became the primary advanced trainer in the R.A.F. and R.C.A.F. during WWII, known as the “Harvard.” After 7 December 1941, they became the
primary trainer in the U. S. Army and Navy, and joined the Mexican Air Force on 14 June 1942. The Texan, or Harvard, would now soon earn a new unexpected title “Mexican Dive Bomber.”

In Chapter Eight – The Mexican AT-6 Texan and Major Noriega go to war.