

as much success as Mexico in neutralizing the effects of the Russian Revolution. The reason was simple. Mexico had undergone its own revolution from 1910 to 1917 and was advancing on its own revolutionary road. The nationalist and socialist ideology of the Mexican Revolution triumphed in every confrontation with the homegrown Marxist-Leninism of the Mexican Communist Party -- Lenin and Trotsky could never compete with Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata. And the tension between the two revolutions shaped the Mexican political process for decades to come. # The Mexican muralist movement of the 1920s was as original and dynamic as Russian Modernism, with which Mexican artists carried on a creative dialogue. Mexico, in 1924, was the first country in the Western Hemisphere to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, a move frowned upon by the United States, whose government confused Mexican nationalism with Communism. Facing this apparent rapprochement between the two revolutions, President Calvin Coolidge seriously considered military action against " Soviet Mexico. " # That changed when the banker Dwight Morrow became ambassador to Mexico in 1927. He helped restructure the Mexican debt, became an adviser to Mexican political figures and had the brilliant instinct to become a friend and patron to leftist artists. The most famous among them were of course Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, and many young writers -- among them the combative poet Octavio Paz -- were Marxists who believed that the Soviet Union was " the land of the future. " # Declared illegal in 1929 and repressed, the Mexican Communist Party gained some influence during the term of President L? zaro C? rdenas (1934-40), but " domestication " once again had an effect. It was impossible to compete from the left with a government so clearly revolutionary