

# Overflow Crowd Hears First Spanish Lecture

An overflow audience was present Tuesday for the first in a series of six lectures in Spanish on the Porfirio Diaz regime, given by Prof. Daniel Cosío Villegas, outstanding Mexican historian.

In the first lecture, "Era of Peace," Cosío told of conditions preceding and during the regime of Porfirio Diaz in Mexico from 1877 to 1911. He said he believed constitutional reform under Diaz to be of unquestionable value.

Cosío said that when Diaz began his regime, war had passed and an era of tranquility began in Mexico—the most prolonged in Mexican history. As a result, institutions benefited, and his rule was an era of consolidation, with Diaz working for unity for all countries in Latin America. Diaz wanted complete freedom for all people, he said.

Cosío believes that during the regime of Diaz, Mexico became a modern society. He cited as an example that the first factory was established in Mexico during this time. Other improvements came in literature and philosophy as they began to take on

real meaning.

The remaining lectures in the series will be given as follows: "Era of Prosperity," April 16; "Era of Consolidation," April 18; "Era of Decency," April 23; and "Instruments of Control," (two lectures), April 25 and 29. All will be held at 4 p.m. in Business-Economics Building 105.

# Cosio Debunks Diaz Legend

By HELEN YENNE  
Texan Staff Writer

A legendary Mexican hero, Porfirio Diaz, was toppled from his pedestal Tuesday by visiting historian, Prof. Daniel Cosio Villegas, who delivered the second of six special lectures on the Diaz era, 1877-1911.

Picking up the pieces, Prof. Cosio fitted them together anew; and Porfirio, the so-called "hero of peace," emerged as an ambitious politician. Like every other genuine politician, Porfirio was driven, said Prof. Cosio, "to reach power, to use it, and conserve it."

In his first lecture, April 9, the Mexican historian had examined the legend cultivated around the caudillo whose endurance record in power has not been equaled by any other Latin American dictator.

## LEGEND LIED?

That legend transformed a military man — Porfirio Diaz was a division general at 32 — into a symbol of peace.

"This was a 180-degree turn," Prof. Cosio said, "but was it the truth?"

Itemizing the revolutionary activities that Porfirio Diaz engaged

in on his way up, the historian concluded:

"It is clear that he was not a lover of peace until he came to power, but he came to love peace very much indeed when others tried to topple him."

## HOW MUCH PEACE?

How much peace was there in Porfirio Diaz' 35-year reign? Prof. Cosio cited various attempted uprising against the dictator, then added: "There is peace and then there are peaces. And there was enough public peace — that is, in the streets and elsewhere — for Mexico to prosper economically.

"But the motor of the prosperity was capital investment above all, foreign capital."

Paradoxically, it was this economic prosperity that began to disturb social peace because it produced a new breed of laborer, class conscious, and nationalistic, who began to fight with his employer and to seek strength through union with his fellow workers.

## PEACE 'LIMITED'

As analyzed by Prof. Cosio, the peace prevailing under Porfirio Diaz was not bucolic, angelic, or absolute. It was a limited, reduced peace dependent upon one man.

It lasted until the beginning of  
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this century when it culminated in chaos, Prof. Cosio said.

The third of Prof. Cosio's lectures, all of which are in Spanish, will be given at 4 p.m. Thursday in Business-Economics Building 105.

His month-long visit to the University was made possible by a Rockefeller Foundation grant to the Institute of Latin American Studies.



# Cosio Audience Left in Suspense

## Historian Telling Of Diaz' Regime

By HELEN YENNE

Professor Daniel Cosío Villegas is a master of the historical suspense story.

As he finished Thursday the third of six lectures on the regime of Porfirio Díaz (1877-1910), the visiting Mexican historian left his audience wondering how he would complete his word portrait of Mexico's durable caudillo.

"Possibly no other aspect of the Porfirian legend," said Prof. Cosío, "has gained such general acceptance as that pertaining to the great material progress of Mexico during the Díaz regime."

He cited statistics which indeed seemed to prove that Mexico had, under Porfirio Díaz, prospered on an enormous scale. "But you have to interpret figures," he added with a wry smile.

In the historian's judgment, the much-hailed Porfirian prosperity had one great fault: it did not benefit significantly the indigenous masses of the country. It was a prosperity that went up the social pyramid instead of down.

"Porfirio Díaz had no economic strategy," Prof. Cosío maintained. "He was not an intellectual nor a philosopher. He was what you call 'a matter of fact' sort of man . . . and he had a very poor opinion of his fellow Mexican. He considered them inept. There might be good poets among them and a tolerable violinist or two, but Porfirio Díaz did not believe that Mexicans would be good builders."

As for the intellectuals — "los

# COSIO . . .

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good for the wealthy investors was good for Mexico, Cosio said, paraphrasing the famous statement credited to the American industrialist Charles Wilson ("What's good for General Motors is good for the country.")

But somehow such laissez faire reasoning did not work out as much to Mexico's advantage as had been hoped.

Prof. Cosio continues his series of lecture Tuesday, April 23, at 4 p.m. in Business-Economics Building 105.

# Cosio: Turmoil Hindered Diaz

By HELEN YENNE

As visiting Mexican historian Daniel Cosío Villegas gave his final lecture Thursday on the caudillo Porfirio Díaz, an audience of more than 100 persons, reluctant to stay "hasta la vista," gave him a standing ovation.

Prof. Cosío was one of six foreign professors singled out by the Rockefeller Foundation to participate in the celebration of its fiftieth anniversary. The professors were invited to spend a month in the United States at the universities of their choice.

The only Latin American among the six, Prof. Cosío chose to return to The University of Texas where he had been a visiting lecturer in 1952.

## CONTINUALLY AT WAR

In his final talk here, Prof. Cosío was concerned with the instruments of control used and perfected by the dictator during his 33-year reign, a record of tyranny unequalled in the world.

That Porfirio Díaz was able to easily bring about peace, order, and tranquility in Mexico was due, Prof. Cosío observed, to the fact that the country had lived from 1810 to 1866 in a state of practically continuous civil war. As if that was not turmoil enough, there were in addition four foreign wars.

"Thus the Mexican people were prepared to receive peace," said Prof. Cosío, "to adulate that peace, and to retain it at whatever price, even political liberty."

## THE ONLY POWER

With the stage thus set for peace, history lent a helping hand by removing from the wings hostile actors who might have rushed upon it—the militant caciques. When Porfirio Díaz came to power he was the only great military leader left in Mexico. He was in no danger from

other jealous, ambitious caciques.

Discussing the political power of the dictator, Prof. Cosío described it as formidable:

"The only political group in the country came to be that of Porfirio Díaz. His genius knew no limit. Sometimes he offered 'pan' (bread) and sometimes he used 'palos' (sticks). Gradually he offered more and more 'pan' and relied less on 'palos'."

## CAUDILLO UNJUDGED

Prof. Cosío passed no final judgment on the caudillo since such judgment would hinge upon whether one deemed political liberty or economic prosperity more important to a growing nation.

Whatever else may be said about the Porfirian era, the historian mused, it was the time in which Mexico acquired the facade of a modern nation.



# Cosio: Mexico United Despite Caudillo Rule

By HELEN YENNE

Historian Daniel Cosío Villegas returned to the contrapuntal themes of legend and reality for his lecture Tuesday on the Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz.

The visiting lecturer discussed the 33-year rule (1877-1910) of the caudillo as an "era of consolidation," with special emphasis upon the consolidation of Mexican nationality, political institutions, and prestige abroad.

"According to legend," Prof. Cosío said, "Mexican nationality was on the point of disappearing in the epoch before Díaz (1810-1877). There was continuous civil struggle before and after Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821.

The legend stresses the instability, the division of the pre-Díaz era, contrasting the several foreign wars which Mexico fought

during that time with the peace preserved under the caudillo.

## NO COMMON DENOMINATOR

"Well, yes and no," said Prof. Cosío, as he proceeded to demolish the legend. "The process of consolidation began long before the regime of Porfirio Díaz. It was long, painful, difficult. In Mexico there was no common denominator — neither of race nor of language."

The Spanish conquest imposed upon the widely diverse elements of an indigenous civilization a new language— Spanish—a new religion — Christian Catholicism—and a central government. Only with independence did Mexico face the choice of being a nation or disappearing as one.

Prof. Cosío thinks that Mexico went forward all along in spite of the brutal struggles. The legend, on the other hand, portrays Mexico as "losing weight" until Díaz came on the scene.

The legend is selective in its mention of institutions. Díaz is credited with consolidation of juridical institutions, but there is a profound silence surrounding political institutions.

## RESPECT FOR LEGAL FORMS

Under Díaz there was supposedly a respect for legal forms even if laws were not complied with, but Prof. Cosío has never been satisfied with such an explanation.

"How can you have respect for form without respect for meaning?"

It was this distortion between law and reality that opened the way to anarchy when the Díaz regime fell, he concluded.

## LARGE AUDIENCES

Prof. Cosío will give his final lecture on Porfirio Díaz Thursday at 4 p.m. in Business-Economics Building 105. His previous lectures, all in Spanish, have consistently drawn audiences that filled the 115-seat lecture hall.

His month-long visit to the University was made possible by a Rockefeller Foundation grant to the Institute of Latin American Studies, which has sponsored the lecture series.