

# The Robert J. Alexander Interview Collection

John D. French

Pioneering Latin Americanist Robert Jackson Alexander (1918–) was a central player in U.S.–Latin American labor, political, and scholarly affairs after World War II. For some five decades starting in 1946, Professor Alexander traveled extensively as an engaged witness to, and active participant in, many major political events in Latin America and the Caribbean. The unique documentation Alexander created and assembled (the largest and most important private archive of its sort) is deposited with the Special Collections and University Archives of Rutgers University.<sup>1</sup> The crown jewel of this remarkable collection are his contemporaneous notes on over ten thousand interviews he conducted with presidents, politicians, trade unionists, businessmen, government officials, military men, diplomats, and scholars. Although specialists knew of these interviews, few historians have realized the scope of this comprehensive multinational resource, which documents modern Latin America's tumultuous political and diplomatic history.

## Robert J. Alexander's Latin American Interests

Born in 1918 in Canton, Ohio, and raised in New Jersey, Robert J. Alexander was the son of a university professor. His life trajectory was rooted in the tumul-

1. The Robert J. Alexander holdings at the Special Collections and University Archives of Rutgers University include a voluminous and diverse collection of correspondence, news clippings, union newspapers, constitutions, leaflets, political pamphlets, union contracts, masters' theses, and books. The preliminary guide is available from <http://www.scc.rutgers.edu/cefb/projects/ead/eadmmain.htm>. The Alexander archival preservation project was supported by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission in 1998; see Fernanda Perrone, *Robert Jackson Alexander Papers, 1890 (1945)–1999. MC 974* (New Brunswick: Special Collections and University Archives, 2001). Additional support for work with the interviews from 1996–98 was received from the Consortium in Latin American Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Duke University, with special thanks to working group coordinator Dr. Jody Pavilack.

tuous years of the Great Depression (the “Red Decade,” as it came to be called), when he served as a leader of the Young People’s Socialist League at his high school.<sup>2</sup> Like many of his generation, Alexander’s strongly held social-democratic beliefs were shaped by a loss of faith in free enterprise, a rejection of laissez-faire, and a strong belief in the positive contribution of organized labor to the cause of New Deal-style social reform.

The origin of Alexander’s life-long involvement with Latin America stemmed from his exposure, as an undergraduate at Columbia University, to the charismatic teaching of Austrian-born Frank Tannenbaum (1893–1969). An important, if heterodox, Latin Americanist, Tannenbaum would be widely recognized for laying the foundations of scholarship on the Mexican Revolution, as well as for helping to create the field of comparative slavery and race relations in the Americas.<sup>3</sup> Under Tannenbaum’s influence, Alexander completed his masters’ thesis on labor in Latin America in 1941. He then discovered, as he says wryly, that he was now “‘an expert’ on Latin American labor for the simple reason that no one knew anything” about the subject. During the war, he spent a brief stint at the Labor Relations Division of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs run by Nelson Rockefeller, spending 1943–45 in England with the U.S. Army Air Force, where he sought out and interviewed Labor Party leaders and activists.<sup>4</sup>

His wartime experience also shaped his larger political outlook. Having left the prewar Socialist Party because of its pacifist position, Alexander became convinced that the transcendent issues involved in international politics (democracy versus totalitarianism) were inseparable from the domestic political conflicts within countries. World War II also strengthened his belief in the essential decency of the policies of the U.S. government, whatever its mistakes. His strong identification with the “American mission” in the world and his anti-communist social-democratic politics would lead Alexander to decisively align

2. For a fuller treatment, see the biographical sketch of Alexander available, along with the guide to his collection, at the Rutgers Special Collections Web site.

3. Frank Tannenbaum’s two landmark studies were *The Mexican Agrarian Revolution* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929) and *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (New York: Knopf, 1947). For more on his background, see Helen Delpar, “Frank Tannenbaum: The Making of a Mexicanist, 1914–1933,” *The Americas* 45, no. 2 (1988): 153–72; and Mark T. Berger, *Under Northern Eyes: Latin American Studies and U.S. Hegemony in the Americas, 1898–1990* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1995), 262.

4. Serafino Romualdi, *Presidents and Peons: Recollections of a Labor Ambassador in Latin America* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1967), 4, 36.

himself, as did so many liberals, with the U.S. side of the emerging cold war after 1946.

Alexander returned to Columbia University after the war to work with Tannenbaum on a doctoral thesis in economics entitled "Organized Labor in Chile." With a grant from the State Department, he conducted fieldwork in 1947–48, which included a national industrial relations survey that served as the basis of his still useful but unpublished 1950 dissertation. During these six months he also recorded extensive notes on 349 interviews, conducted during a period of intense political and trade-union ferment under the Communist-backed government of González Videla, who would turn on his leftist allies in 1947.<sup>5</sup>

During this initial trip to South America, Alexander also stopped in Brazil and Argentina, nations that were each experiencing remarkable periods of mass political mobilization.<sup>6</sup> In Argentina, in particular, Juan Perón's rise to the presidency in 1946 opened an entirely new historical epoch in Latin America, which scholars have come to call the Populist Era. A sui generis figure, Juan Perón and his regime were vigorously and publicly opposed as fascist by the U.S. government, as well as by social democratic and communist groups in Argentina and abroad. Given these concerns, Alexander would make the phenomenon the subject of his first book, *The Perón Era* (1951). This oft-reprinted volume would remain the only treatment in English for the next decade. Although hostile to Perón, Alexander's book displayed the virtues that grew out of his emerging research methodology based on extensive interviews of people of all political perspectives and from all walks of life. Reviewers would often comment on Alexander's unique ability to connect with individuals, establish a degree of trust, and then ask the questions that would generate the richest replies.<sup>7</sup>

Joining the faculty at Rutgers University in 1947, Alexander traveled to Latin America hundreds of times over the next 35 years (and continued to do

5. The value of the Chilean materials generated or gathered by Alexander in 1946–47 is amply demonstrated by Jody Pavilack in her study of the Communist-led coal miners of Lota, whose 1947 strike was the dramatic turning point in Latin America's cold-war history; "'Black Gold in the Red Zone': Repression and Contention in Chilean Coal Mining Communities from the Popular Front to the Advent of the Cold War" (Ph.D. diss., Duke Univ., 2003).

6. In *The Brazilian Workers' ABC: Class Conflicts and Alliances in Modern São Paulo* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1992), I made effective use of Alexander's postwar correspondence and interviews.

7. Lars Schoultz, "Review of 'Latin American Political Parties,'" *American Political Science Review* 69, no. 3 (1975): 1053.

so, but more sporadically, through the early 1990s). His travels included not only all the mainland Latin American countries but also almost all the countries and colonial dependencies in the Caribbean. Yet this breadth of exposure was not achieved at the expense of sustained and concentrated research. Throughout his career, he specialized in six major Latin American countries—Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Bolivia, Venezuela, and Peru—which together make up more than half of the region's total population and account for 13 of his 25 major monographs.

Alexander's sustained engagement with Latin America began at a unique moment in the history of the region and of the United States. The United States' emergence as a truly global economic, military, and political superpower in the mid-twentieth century had a mixed impact on the study of Latin America in the United States. As Mark Berger has shown, the "Good Neighbor" policy of the 1930s and the strategic demands of World War II enhanced government and academic interest in Latin America, but this "growth and disciplinary diversification" quickly dissipated after the end of the war. This relative decline in academic interest would continue until the wake-up call of the Cuban Revolution, which was followed by increased funding, heightened interest, and the institutionalization of Latin American studies in North American universities.<sup>8</sup>

The post-World War II neglect of the region had occurred at a moment when Latin America was experiencing social, economic, and political transformations. During these decades, the region's largest countries embarked on an unprecedented process of industrialization, with a rapid expansion of the urban working and middle classes. This was accompanied by the emergence of the popular sectors, particularly organized labor, as a factor in national political life and the flourishing of new political and ideological currents. With acute insight and surprising tact, Robert Alexander established a place for himself as a witness in a historical epoch that included the rise and fall of Perón, the Bolivian Revolution of 1952, the overthrowing of the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship in Venezuela in 1958, the rise to power of Fidel Castro in Cuba, and the turbulent years of Eduardo Frei's Christian Democratic government (1964–70) and the left-wing Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende in Chile.<sup>9</sup>

8. Berger, *Under Northern Eyes*, 70, 72.

9. Some of these national leaders were profiled in Alexander's *Prophets of the Revolution: Profiles of Latin American Leaders* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), while others received full biographical treatment: *Arturo Alessandri: A Biography* (Ann Arbor: Latin American Institute of Rutgers University and University Microfilms

Alexander's extensive travels within Latin America were undertaken under a number of auspices and for various purposes.<sup>10</sup> His 1962 book on organized labor grew out a 1956 grant from the Ford Foundation's Inter-University Study of Labor Problems in Economic Development. And his yearly trips to Bolivia in the 1950s, the subject of his third book (*The Bolivian National Revolution*), were funded in part by consultantships with the U.S. aid program to that country. Given his extensive knowledge and contacts, Alexander was also an active participant in the U.S. government policy debate about Latin America during the Kennedy administration. Although he did publish a book on the region with a U.S. congressman, Berger likely exaggerates when he calls Alexander "a major figure behind the Alliance for Progress."<sup>11</sup>

Yet many of Alexander's most important early trips were not strictly academic at all. As he freely revealed to his readers, in the 1950s he was a combative opponent of both communism and Peronism and their fellow travelers. Throughout his career, his scholarly activities were informed by a clear political agenda: to build support for mass-based reformist parties that would fight the communists "on their own grounds and among the groups from whom they especially drew support." Yet not all such noncommunist reformist political movements and leaders would win Alexander's favor, precisely because many tended to be highly nationalistic and resentful of U.S. predominance and influence. The groups that Alexander and U.S. policy makers favored were those that combined social reform commitments with a reliable policy of collaboration with the United States in the struggle against the Soviet Bloc and the communist threat within their own countries.<sup>12</sup>

As a prolabor U.S. anticommunist, Robert Alexander cultivated friendships with many of the key Latin American political personalities of the "Democratic Left," such as Haya de la Torre, José Figueres, Rómulo Betancourt, and

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International, 1977); *Juan Domingo Perón: A History* (Boulder: Westview, 1979); *Juscelino Kubitschek and the Development of Brazil* (Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1991); *Rómulo Betancourt and the Transformation of Venezuela* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1982).

10. A full chronological accounting for his travels would no doubt reveal interesting rhythms and patterns no doubt linked to the ebb and flow of political and social controversy in Inter-American Relations.

11. Charles Orlando Porter and Robert Jackson Alexander, *The Struggle for Democracy in Latin America* (New York: Macmillan, 1961); Berger, *Under Northern Eyes*, 78.

12. Leopold Kohr, "Review of 'The Bolivian National Revolution' by Robert J. Alexander," *Annals of the American Academy* 328 (1960): 180-81.

Víctor Paz Estenssoro. Thus, he was particularly well placed to gain special access, at the highest level, to the leadership of the major center-left political parties of Venezuela, Peru, and Bolivia (AD, APRA, and MNR). Originating in the student, labor, and popular insurgencies of the 1930s, these anti-status quo parties had briefly risen to power after World War II, but they were subsequently ousted and persecuted by rightist military regimes. When they did return to national prominence, their chastened leaders served as dependable allies of the United States in its struggle against the Cuban Revolution.

Thus Alexander was, in every sense, an intellectual *engagé* and a direct participant in the bitter political struggles that marked interhemispheric political and labor affairs. Going back to 1948, he had worked closely with the American Federation of Labor's regional representative, Serafino Romauldi, an anti-communist Italian immigrant. He also collaborated closely for many years with the notorious *eminence gris* of the cold war, the one-time communist Jay Lovestone, who headed the International Department of the AFL and later AFL-CIO.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, at least eight of his trips to Latin America between 1952 and 1959 were made with funds received through Lovestone, from both government and CIA sources. Whether in spite of, or precisely because of, his political militancy, Alexander actively crossed ideological divides to interview those active in organizations and movements he bitterly opposed, such as communists. Indeed, his reports to Lovestone about his travels contained detailed and frank assessments of the strategic and tactical issues facing their political camp in the different Latin American countries.

As a leading cold-war operative, Alexander gained the opprobrium of critics of the United States. To one Soviet scholar, this "reactionary American historian" was "an apologist for the aggressive policies of U.S. monopolists."<sup>14</sup> Another Soviet analyst particularly objected to his pioneering monographs on labor and communism: "Alexander is noted for his works which distort the history of the labor movement in Latin America. Sponsored by A.F.L. money, he

13. Romauldi, *Presidents and Peons*. Lovestone was always the subject of intense polemical commentary, given his role as a key cold-war strategist at the global level; Ted Morgan, *A Covert Life: Jay Lovestone: Communist, Anti-Communist, and Spymaster* (New York: Random House, 1999). Scholarly interest in Lovestone, as well as in his collaborators such as Alexander, are bound to increase with the recent opening of eight hundred cubic feet of archival materials bequeathed by Lovestone to the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace at Stanford University.

14. Edward B. Richards, "Marxism and Marxist Movements in Latin America in Recent Soviet Historical Writing," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 45, no. 4 (1965): 581.

carried on ‘research’ in various Latin American countries, establishing contacts with renegade and opportunistic elements ousted from communist parties. Notes on talks with these renegades serve as the main source of Alexander’s ‘works.’”<sup>15</sup>

Alexander’s political alignments were equally suspect in some conservative U.S. and Latin American circles in the 1950s, especially given the dubious and often “communist” origin of many of his favored political parties, with their past record of revolutionary-sounding rhetoric. In 1963, for example, ultra-conservative U.S. scholar J. Fred Rippy criticized him for his “slanted views of U.S. policy,” while describing Alexander as a man who was “well known by members of his profession as a champion of radical causes and of public contributions to them.”<sup>16</sup> After the 1958 ouster of Venezuela’s Pérez Jiménez, the military dictator’s U.S. supporters issued a Red-baiting report that condemned the new AD president, Rómulo Betancourt, as a crypto-communist. In classic McCarthyite fashion, they profiled the subversive background of his U.S. supporters, including Alexander and other members of the Inter-American Foundation for Democracy and Freedom, an “extreme leftwing group” they deemed full of “Communists, pro-Communists, fellow travelers, Socialists, and left wing liberals.”<sup>17</sup>

As Latin American studies flowered in the late 1960s, the new generation of scholars had little patience for the cold-war liberalism that had led Alexander to support the 1954 coup against democratically elected Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala or to oppose Fidel Castro as early as 1959 (after which point he was barred from travel to the island). Faced with the leftward shift in the political climate in both Latin America and the United States, Alexander’s anticommunist politics left him unswayed even by the bloody 1973 military coup that overthrew the democratically elected Salvador Allende. The Popular Unity

15. I. R. Lavretskii, “A Survey of the *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 1956–1958,” In *Latin American History: Essays on Its Study and Teaching, 1898–1965*, ed. Howard F. Cline (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1967), 156.

16. J. Fred. Rippy, review of *Today’s Latin America*, by Robert J. Alexander, *Hispanic American Historical Review* 43, no. 4 (1963): 556–58.

17. John H. Clements Associates, *Report on Venezuela* (New York: John H. Clements Associates, ca. 1958–59), 157–59. The social democratic IADF was headed by Alexander’s long-time friend Frances Grant, whose involvement in the region went back to the 1920s and included participation in various inter-American women’s organizations. Her archives, which have been catalogued, are also held at the Special Collections and University Archives of Rutgers University. For more information, see the Special Collection’s Web site cited in footnote 1.

(UP) coalition, as he reminded readers of his 1978 book *The Tragedy of Chile*, had used “democratic means to achieve a totalitarian society,” and he discounted the CIA’s complicity in Allende’s destabilization as documented by Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in its famous 1977 “Church Committee report”: “Whatever the ITT did or did not do, whatever the CIA did or did not do, whatever certain U.S. military personnel did or did not do, whatever economic policies the United States followed or did not follow with regard to Chile—all of these factors had only the most marginal impact in generating the economic and political crisis of the Allende regime in its final months. And they had nothing to do with the Chilean military leaders’ decision to oust the Unidad Popular Regime.”<sup>18</sup>

Not surprisingly, such tough-minded views won Alexander few friends among the new generation of Latin Americanists. His work was increasingly criticized for its openly partisan political commitments and absence of scholarly rigor, which had become the norm with the professionalization of Latin Americanist research and scholarship. In 1979, young Chileanist historian Peter Winn criticized Alexander’s 1965 monograph on labor for its “frequently tendentious interpretations [based] upon a slender body of research.” Other labor studies scholars criticized his embrace of the “anti-Communist line of both the United States government and the AFL-CIO,” with their simplistic stories of “good guys (i.e. ‘democrats’) and bad guys (i.e. ‘totalitarians’).” While rejecting Alexander’s “cold war anti-Communist perspective,” these young critics nonetheless recognized that his books were often “rich in information drawn from interviews and newspapers.”<sup>19</sup>

The 1980s would witness a greater appreciation for Alexander’s assessments of the sociopolitical affairs of the countries he visited. In 1986 Charles Bergquist praised him as the only one of his generation of scholars, whether North or Latin American, who “consistently stressed the importance of organized labor in the modern historical development of the region.”<sup>20</sup> And Alexander was one of “a few relatively isolated figures,” observed Thomas Skidmore,

18. Robert Jackson Alexander, *The Tragedy of Chile* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1978). For the Church Committee report, see Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Covert Action in Chile 1963–1973: Staff Report* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1975).

19. Kenneth Paul Erickson, Patrick Peppe, and Hobart Spalding, “Research on the Urban Working Class and Organized Labor in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile: What Is Left to Be Done?” *Latin American Research Review* 9, no. 2 (1974): 115, 118.

20. Charles Bergquist, *Labor in Latin America: Comparative Essays on Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, and Colombia* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1986), 2, 205.



who had cultivated the study of labor, “a curiously neglected field” prior to the 1970s.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, “without his immense work there simply would not exist any account of the development of the various Latin American labor movements.”<sup>22</sup>

Even the scale of his scholarly production and the extent of his political activism was not made clear until the publication, in 1991, of an 84-page bibliography of his work.<sup>23</sup> Discounting translations and reprintings, Alexander has written almost 30 major books, edited two collections of Latin American documents by Rómulo Betancourt and Haya de la Torre, and served as the major editor for two reference works on political parties and politicians in Latin America. In addition, he had published, by the early 1990s, almost 50 book chapters, 8 pamphlets, 400 newspaper and magazine articles (largely of a non-scholarly sort), 200 book reviews, and 75 encyclopedia and yearbook entries.<sup>24</sup>

### The Nature of the Alexander Interviews As Primary Sources

Throughout his career, reviewers have often criticized Alexander’s books for being excessively descriptive, uncritical, and disconnected from the relevant scholarly literature. Yet these same reviewers consistently praise the range and breadth of his open-ended interviewing, while commenting on the “depth of understanding” achieved through his use of such “first hand sources.”<sup>25</sup> Yet these scholarly tributes to Alexander’s field interviews were derived solely from

21. Thomas E. Skidmore, “Workers and Soldiers: Urban Labor Movements and Elite Responses in Twentieth-Century Latin America,” in *Elites, Masses, and Modernization in Latin America, 1850–1930*, ed. Virginia Bernhard (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1979), 81, 147.

22. Henry A. Landsberger, “The Labor Elite: Is It Revolutionary?” in *Elites in Latin America*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset and Aldo Solari (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), 297.

23. John D. French, *Robert Alexander: The Complete Bibliography of a Pioneering Latin Americanist*, Latin American Labor Studies Bibliography no. 3 (Miami: Center for Labor Research and Studies, Florida International Univ., 1991).

24. The 85-year-old Alexander continues to publish in his areas of interest, most recently *Maoism in the Developed World* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2001); *International Maoism in the Developing World* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1999); and *A History of Organized Labor in Brazil* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003).

25. Alberto Ciria, “The Individual in History: Five Latin American Biographies,” *Latin American Research Review*, 20, no. 3 (1985): 247–67; Robert E. Scott, review of *Communism in Latin America*, *Annals of the American Academy* 315 (1958): 171; Bryce Wood, “Review of *Communism in Latin America*,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 38 (1958): 131–34.

the evidence presented in his written work. Although known for providing other scholars with access to his materials, most were unaware of their impressive scope and the disciplined and systematic way in which he documented the interviews and interactions that so informed his publications.<sup>26</sup> And most would be astonished to learn that Alexander had accumulated typed notes for an estimated ten to twelve thousand encounters across five decades. Indeed, it is precisely as a master documentarian that Alexander will have made his most lasting scholarly contribution to the study of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Although not given to methodological disquisitions, Alexander maintained a consistent interview methodology over time. "I have never used a tape recorder or similar device for interviewing," he wrote in 1987, because he believed that it might "interfere with the willingness of people to converse freely." Seeking to maintain an atmosphere "as informal and as near to simple conversation as possible," Alexander also refrained from taking notes during the interviews; only afterwards would he take "preliminary notes in a kind of *sui generis* shorthand, consisting of all sorts of abbreviations which only I (or my wife) could probably understand. Then, as soon as I have been able to get to my typewriter, I have expanded these notes, in a kind of stream-of-consciousness process" into an English-language summary, in third person, of what has been said by the individual.<sup>27</sup>

Varying in length from one paragraph to five or six single-spaced pages, Alexander's interview notes offer a unique breadth of information and perspective on all aspects of Latin American society and politics. During his numerous visits throughout Latin America, as well as in meetings, interactions, and travel outside the region, Alexander took contemporaneous notes on his conversations with individuals from all walks of life, whether with a disgruntled taxi-cab driver, a prominent industrialist, a female attorney, a trade unionist, a government bureaucrat, a visiting U.S. scholar, a national congressman, or a current, past, or future president.<sup>28</sup> It is precisely from these thousands of personal interactions that Alexander derived his feel for Latin American labor and politics.

26. Alexander has generously shared his materials with other scholars over the years: Christopher Mitchell, *The Legacy of Populism in Bolivia: From the MNR to Military Rule* (New York: Praeger, 1977); and Jon V. Kofas, *The Struggle for Legitimacy: Latin American Labor and the United States, 1930–1960* (Tempe: Center for Latin American Studies, Arizona State Univ., 1992).

27. Robert J. Alexander, "Reflections on the Use of Interviews As Primary Sources," *The Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries* (June 1987): 42.

28. A tiny portion of these interviews are already available in Robert J. Alexander, *The ABC Presidents: Conversations and Correspondence with the Presidents of*

Now available in a 15-reel microfilm edition from IDC, Alexander's unique interview collection captures the opinions and ideas of an immense diversity of voices from the top to the bottom of every country and territory in the Americas, with especially large numbers for Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Peru, and Venezuela.<sup>29</sup> The diversity among actors interviewed by Alexander spans generation, gender, class, race, religion, and social position. Those interviewed include the rich and well born, hundreds of professionals, including lawyers, judges, and economists, as well as a wide sampling of U.S. embassy officials, disgruntled U.S. expatriates, and U.S. academics and businessmen. Yet Alexander was also particularly concerned to document the views of the mass of the population, such as workers and peasants, while making room for an occasional shoe shine boy. Women constitute a respectable minority of the total interview pool.

Given his nongovernment status, Alexander's interviews are often far richer and more revealing than formal interview summaries written by foreign diplomatic and consular officials during these same years. Moreover, he often reinterviewed the same individual in subsequent visits, and these follow-up encounters documented the shifting positions they occupied within evolving national histories (a diachronic dimension that allows us to better evaluate their earlier claims and statements). Having ranged widely during any given visit, Alexander's notes also allow us to explore synchronic divergences within a given moment in time. Thus we can trace differences of outlook, opinion, and knowledge within political parties, labor organizations, religions, communities, and even families.

The IDC collection does not contain just field interviews, since Alexander also recorded notes on discussions with and talks given by outside observers

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*Argentina, Brazil, and Chile* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1992); *The Bolivarian Presidents: Conversations and Correspondence with Presidents of Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1994); *Presidents of Central America, Mexico, Cuba, and Hispaniola: Conversations and Correspondence* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1995); *Presidents, Prime Ministers, and Governors of the English-speaking Caribbean and Puerto Rico: Conversations and Correspondence* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997).

29. Individual interview-level guides are available at present only for Chile and Cuba: Jody Pavilack, *Modern Chile: Indexes of the Robert J. Alexander Interview Collection, 1946–90* (Durham and Chapel Hill: Duke-UNC Program in Latin American Studies Working Paper no. 25, 1999); and Jody Pavilack and David Sartorius, *Modern Cuba: Indexes of the Robert J. Alexander Interview Collection* (Durham; Chapel Hill: Duke-UNC Program in Latin American Studies Working Paper no. 26, 1999). To order, go to <http://www.duke.edu/web/las/papers.html>.

and Latin Americans abroad, whether under exile in another Latin American country or speaking before the Council on Foreign Relations in New York (of which he was a long-time member). Thus, each country's interview files also contains a substantial body of notes on the observations of foreigners (primarily, but not exclusively, North Americans), which reveals how different Latin American countries came to be appreciated and understood by a wide variety of foreign observers.

Typed in English, the interview notes are organized by country and group and may include politicians, businessmen, bankers, agriculturalists, employers, trade unionists, government officials, police and military personnel, students, intellectuals, publishers, teachers, religious figures, and foreign observers. Each begins with a full identification of the interviewee, including comments about their appearance or manner, in addition to the place and date of the interaction. The observations of those interviewed can be remarkably frank, often surprisingly revealing, and at times humorous, as they explain their society to this knowledgeable and inquisitive foreigner. In some cases, the notes include almost ethnographic accounts of what he witnessed while visiting a trade union headquarters or attending a political meeting.<sup>30</sup>

To those who have worked in his archive, the most surprising aspect is the amazing detail they afford the researcher about matters both large and small. In addition, Alexander's paraphrases preserve the nuance of individual verbal expression to such an extent that the reader may laugh at the jokes or smile at the witticisms Alexander recounts. Most importantly, it is evident that he maintained a high degree of faithfulness in paraphrasing even those with whom he disagreed. All in all, Alexander's priceless interview collection, and the extensive archive of which it is a part, will be a required stop for all those interested in the development of modern Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>31</sup>

30. Alexander's interviews are extensively used in John D. French, *Drawing in Laws: Labor Law and Brazilian Political Culture* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2004).

31. The Alexander microfilm collection from IDC does not include his active correspondence with hundreds of individuals in Latin America. A small part of his extensive correspondence with Rómulo Betancourt was published in Robert J. Alexander, *Venezuela's Voice for Democracy: Conversations and Correspondence with Rómulo Betancourt* (New York: Praeger, 1990).