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Charles H. Harris III and Louis R. Sadler, *The Great Call-Up: The Guard, the Border, and the Mexican Revolution*. Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 2015. Pp. xiii, 559. ISBN 978-0-8061-4645-4.

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Some stories are hidden in plain sight. The National Guard mobilization of 1916 has long been an afterthought of American military history—usually treated as a sideshow in studies of the Punitive Expedition or a failed experiment in the lead-up to World War I. With *The Great Call-Up*, Charles Harris III and Louis Sadler have finally given this subject its due.

The authors, both emeritus professors at New Mexico State University, have over the past four decades studied the complex effects of the Mexican Revolution of the 1910s on the borderlands and American-Mexican relations more generally. In a series of books and articles, they have looked at the spillover of Mexican revolutionary activities into the United States, as well as spies and revolutionaries on both sides, and the responses of police, the Texas Rangers, and the military to discord along the border.

Their work is a valuable corrective to oversimplified or American-centered histories and reveals just how various actors in Mexico pushed their own agendas by manipulating border troubles. For example, the Mexican government of Venustiano Carranza used the threat of widespread violence along the border in Texas in an effort to compel the Americans to withdraw the Punitive Expedition. Harris and Sadler note that most of the political maneuvering and much of the violence of 1916 took place far from John Pershing's 10,000–12,000-man force in north central Mexico. As they looked into those other stories and relevant archival records, they realized—unlike most military historians—that the Punitive Expedition was a sideshow. The mobilization of 1916 was the main event: some 150,000 men participated altogether, and its significance matches its scale. *The Great Call-Up* is the first comprehensive history of the mobilization. Its authors make the case that the mobilization was more successful than many—especially vocal regular army critics of the National Guard—have portrayed it.

The book comprises two parts. The first, “Border Problem,” covers preliminaries to the mobilization and briefly summarizes the authors’ previous work on the border troubles. The second, longer part, “Border Service,” proceeds not chronologically, but geographically according to assembly points along the border. Since units from various states gathered at these locations, each chapter also describes state mobilizations.

Harris and Sadler begin with San Antonio, where Fort Sam Houston served as the headquarters for the Southern Department, which was in direct command of almost all the mobilized forces. Gen. Frederick Funston, who commanded the department, is the star of the authors’ account. The squat Kansan was a national hero after his exploits in the Philippines War and the San Francisco earthquake. He was now charged with defending the long border, negotiating with his Mexican counterparts, working with the War Department back in Washington, and directing the training and disposition of regular and guard units of varying quality as they assembled in his department. He did all this with remarkable diplomacy and aplomb, especially considering the reputation as a brawler he had acquired in his younger years.¹

The authors turn next to Corpus Christi and Brownsville on the east coast of Texas, and then work their way west in successive chapters along the border to Laredo, Eagle Pass, Big Bend, and El Paso, as well as Columbus in New Mexico, Douglas and Nogales in Arizona, and the California border. For each location, they summarize the mobilization and assembly of units in their home states, their transport to the border areas, their organization and training in camps, their relationship with and effect on local communities, their growing disillusionment over not fighting, and finally their return home. While the stories get a bit

1. Oddly, Harris and Sadler do not cite Thomas Crouch’s important writings on Funston in their bibliography.

repetitive, the authors have a knack for amusing or illustrative anecdotes, and they highlight prominent individuals like William J. (“Wild Bill”) Donovan and Allen Dulles, who took a part in the mobilization. Throughout, they argue persuasively that some guard units were pretty good and squared away and others were a mess, but all improved and would later use their experience to great benefit in preparing for World War I.

As vast as the 100,000–150,000-man mobilization was, it represented a small proportion of soldiers who participated in the war. The organization and preparation of units mattered more, as *The Great Call-Up* demonstrates in detail. As state units assembled and moved to the border, they took on various shapes and forms—mostly companies, troops, battalions, and regiments. Some went as brigades and two, New York and Pennsylvania, as complete divisions. When they reached the border, they joined brigades, divisions, or even quasi-corps. Almost all the troops participated in exercises or maneuvers, trained, marched, and were transported by new trucks in these large units. The authors’ retelling of 1916 mobilization proves definitively that the US Army had extensive experience beyond that of the 10,000-man Punitive Expedition with units above the regiment level before the First World War.

Harris and Sadler also explain that historians have misjudged the significance of the General Mobilization because of its timing and politics. The War Department had long been experimenting with large unit structures, but not until the National Defense Act of 1916 did the nation settle on the creation of permanent divisions. But the act came right in the middle of the border crisis, before the Army could fully implement the reform. Instead of creating the permanent divisions on the fly, Funston and the War Department decided to build provisional divisions and brigades out of the existing regular army districts and brigades along the border, made up of the mobilizing National Guard units and commanded and staffed by regular army officers. At the height of the mobilization in the late summer, and counting the New York and Pennsylvania divisions and the Punitive Expedition, there were no less than nine provisional divisions on the border, ranging in size from 10,000 to 22,000 men.

The timing of the mobilization made these divisions provisional; the politics of the era made the “provisional” seem nonexistent. The leaders of the regular army did not believe they had anything like the resources to provide for America’s defense, especially given the potential for US entry into the European war. The regulars wanted more money for better equipment and training, and they wanted a larger standing force with something like universal military training to build a robust reserve. If Congress and the nation knew the extent of the organization and training of the army on the southern border, they would assume that it had enough money and resources. So Funston kept the organization quiet and disparaged the guard forces, emphasizing their weaknesses in their initial call-ups and training.

The regulars, Funston included, disparaged the National Guard as a system, but worked well with the state forces in their units. Predictably, the mobilizing forces struggled at first, but they did improve under the direction of the regulars and their officers gained experience that would serve them well in World War I.

The practice of history, especially academic history, is often a matter of interpretation—the telling of stories from different perspectives to reach new conclusions. But history can also tell stories never told before, or well told. Charles Harris and Louis Sadler are to be commended for having found and told such a story and for filling a large gap in the history of America’s military.