Oil has been an important factor in world history and politics since the early 20th century. The Soviet Union was the first country to nationalize private oil companies (1918), Bolivia second in 1937 and Mexico third in 1938. The oil controversy in US-Mexican relations in the first half of the 20th century generated a great deal of interest in the Soviet Union and continues to attract attention in Russia. The experience that the US and Mexico shared during and after expropriation of American oil companies in Mexico were unique because they were neighboring states, with many ties. Russian archives provided me with one angle on the action-reaction dynamic and access to resources in the US provides another. My goal is to synthesize these resources to generate new insights into the nationalization process and discuss their relevance to oil and politics today.

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