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Numbers 8 & 9
ISSN 0186-9418

\$ 4.00 U.S. 4,000 pesos
\$ 3,900 Precio Pacto





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MÉXICO, D.F. 655-88-23 655-86-88 655-81-99 655-82-94

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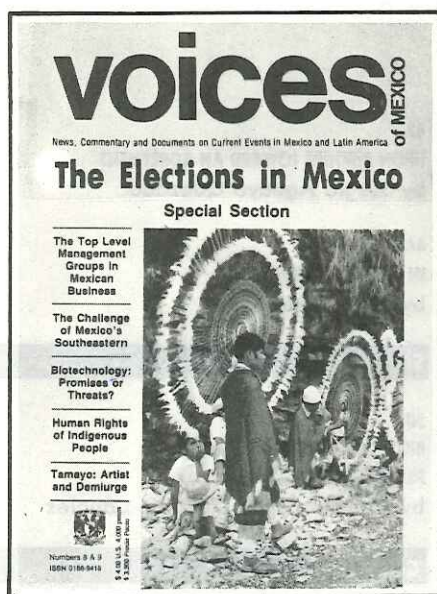
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THIS ISSUE



Voices of Mexico dedicates this double issue to a comprehensive panorama of Mexico's national reality. We analyze Mexico by looking at three current themes of great importance: the electoral process—clearly the most significant event in Mexico, the centers of power within Mexico's economic system, and the dichotomy between poverty and riches in one of Mexico's richest areas—its southeast.

In *Features*, we remove the veil which often covers the activities and the influence of Mexico's leading business groups. The economic analysis is complemented in *Point of View* with an interview with one of the most important leaders in the nationalized banking system.

We then take a journey through Mexico's southeast in the *Special Report*, where we uncover not only its economic and social contrasts, but also its splendor and magic which makes it one of Mexico's most attractive areas.

In our *Special Section*, we bring together six specialists who represent a wide range of opinion, to analyze the electoral process and the effects that the elections are having in Mexico's political and social changes.

In *Culture*, the plight of the human rights of indigenous people is examined and changes are proposed to help resolve the problems of frequent human rights abuse. Finally, we encounter the pictorial work of Oaxacan artist Rufino Tamayo, full of expressions of Mexico's national roots.

Mariclaire Acosta

THE MEXICAN TRANSITION

Héctor Aguilar Camín

For Luis González

Towards the end of last February, the Second Symposium of Contemporary Mexican History was held in Querétaro, organized by the Department of Historical Studies, the Autonomous National University's (UNAM) Institute of Social Research, and the Metropolitan Autonomous University's (UAM) social science departments. The text published here was read as an inaugural paper to the wide-ranging works included in the symposium. It is a rapid summary of different themes of a book to be published this year.

There is a paradox and a certain professional absurdity in undertaking the task of writing the history of the immediate past, a past which we can almost remember as part of our lives. By definition, the historian's material is the past, what has happened. But we are now putting our modest weapons of retrospective prophets to serve the cause not of what has happened, but of what is happening at the present. There will be historians of the past generation and of our own who will be unable to understand our efforts.

Even at the end of the 1960s, in the College of Mexico, what was considered to be historic material did not go beyond the collapse of Porfirio Díaz' regime. No one was prohibited from investigating post-1910 revolutionary history, but those who dared to do so were kindly persuaded to look for a sociology or political science professor to act as a thesis advisor. With a few worthy exceptions, institutional historians dedicated themselves strictly to the past—

which at that time was, above all, colonial history—and not to the present, which was considered to be what came after Don Porfirio's tears on the *Ypiranga*.

Barely 20 years have passed since those transparent days at the College of Mexico, and the frontier between past and present, between what is properly historic and properly contemporary, has been blurred or relaxed enormously in the minds of most historians. The armed conflict of the Mexican Revolution appears to many historians today as something as remote as the colonial past seemed to some of us at the end of the 1960s. We want more and better history of recent times. I attribute this compulsion to the fact that as a society we are living an epochal change that is converting realities that only a few years ago were our most irrefutable present into things of the past. Shaken to its roots by the magnitude of the change, our present becomes the past with ever greater speed.

Albert Camus once said that a defect of contemporary wisdom is the supposition that the present is the most interesting of times. At the risk of falling into the similar error, I believe that without a doubt the Mexicans of the second half of this century have been given the privilege of experiencing one of the more profound historical transitions of their country, equivalent in its long-term effects to the Bourbon reforms of the 18th century.

This has been recorded with unsurpassed smoothness by Luis González:

Shaken to its roots by the magnitude of the change, our present becomes the past with ever greater speed

Director of *Nexos* magazine

This article first appeared in *Nexos*, No. 125, April 1988.



A market in downtown Mexico City: reminiscent of pre-Columbian trade
(Photo by Marco Antonio Cruz)

Every present gives the impression of being a break with the past, but the present in which we live today is perhaps not so typical because it manifests some extraordinary cracks. There are many easily observable symptoms of the cultural crisis. Judging by what is barely visible, the present revolution is no less devastating than the changes of the 16th or 18th centuries. During the century of the Conquest, the values of our indigenous and Spanish ancestors came into crisis, giving way to the culture of our mestizo fathers. During the Enlightenment, baroque culture entered its death throes as modernity took shape. From about the middle of this century, the galloping decrepitude of the beliefs and customs of modernity is palpable and the hint of something still without a name arises. We inhabit the ruins of one culture and the site of another in construction.¹

Historical Transition

Luis González' litany announces the end of our ancient and venerable rural-based society with its agricultural and peasant heart. It was a pre-industrial, Catholic, corporative, slow-growing and dispersed society raised in stagnant regions under provincial peculiarities preserved by the territorial disarticulation of uses, customs and markets.

It was the society of barely yesterday, before the clinic and public health came in the scene. It was prudent and austere, monogamous and macho. Politically pyramidal in structure, that society placed a great emphasis in authorities and strong elites. Meanwhile, the unlettered masses, at the same time enduring and turbulent, were raised on the stoic foundations of an ancestral culture of poverty.

The nature of the historical transition in which we find ourselves is precisely the theme underlying these comments. What direction is it taking? What are its characteristics? Who are its actors? I believe that the direction of this transition is constituted by eight basic tendencies, four of which are structural—"civilizational" or "long term" as Braudel would have it—and four which are superstructural in character, that is to say, middle-term changes in the system of political domination.

The four structural transitions are:

- 1 the evolution from a rural to an urban country;
- 2 the shift from an acute centralizing process to the constitution of a decentralized periphery;
- 3 the consolidation of a new phase of integration into the economic, technological and financial realities of the global market; and,
- 4 the change to a new concentration of inequality.

The four superstructural mutations are:

- 1 a descent in the relative weight of the state and an increase in the relative weight of society—the end of the era of state expansion;
- 2 an erosion in the corporative pact and the corresponding emergence of logic and actors of liberal, citizen sensibilities;
- 3 the transition from an absolutist presidential regime to a constitutional presidential regime; and,
- 4 the transition from a regime of one dominant party to one of a majority party.

Below are the essential traits of each of these tendencies with a short, final note about the social product that summarizes the process: the constitution of a new national majority.

From the country to the city

In 1960, for the first time in the country's history, the urban population was greater than the rural—the difference was 487,000. At that time 35 million Mexicans inhabited the nation. Fifty-one of every 100 lived in an incipient system of cities including Mexico City, with a little more than 5 million inhabitants, Guadalajara, with 850,000 and Monterrey, with 700,000. Twenty years later, in 1980, the 35 million had doubled: they were now 67 million, but the urban population had grown one and a half times—from 18 to 44 million—and now not 51 but 66 of every 100 people lived in cities. In 1980, Mexico City had 15 million inhabitants, Guadalajara had 2,200,000 and Monterrey had almost 2,000,000.

These figures summarize the most decisive civilizational change experienced by Mexico since the Conquest of the 16th century. In the course of the giddy decades of demographic growth of the second half of the 20th cen-



"In the last forty years, the most important cities have lost their size." (Photo by Arturo Fuentes)

ture, Mexico began not to be what it had always been: a rural country, tied to the earth and with an ancient way of organizing life and dealing with nature.

In 1960, for the first time Mexico's urban population was greater than its rural population

There is no room for doubt regarding the tendency's vigor and irreversibility. If population growth remains at its projected rate, by the year 2000, Mexico will be a country of 103 million inhabitants, and seven of every ten Mexicans, or 70 percent will live in cities of more than 15,000. The latter conclusion should be underlined, because the rise of urban Mexico cannot be explained solely by the monstrous urban sprawl of the valley of Mexico, Guadalajara or Monterrey. We must take into account the qualitative transformation of what we continue to call "provincial" Mexico. This mythological place is no longer that of forceful and immutable essences, but of accelerating change. It is traversed by demographic abundance and the proliferation of universities, banks, shopping centers, radio stations, television stations, videoclubs, videostyles and parabolic antennas.

In the last forty years, the most important cities in the country have lost their provincial size. In 1940, there were only five cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants, but in

1960 there were 17, in 1970 there were 31, and in 1980 there were 64 cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants. There are 22 million people living in those principal cities, and they have stopped being economically simplified or immobile. At the beginning of the 1980s, the indicators of their economic diversity and labor stratification were substantially higher than in previous decades.²

The growth and diversification of the intermediate cities indicate a profound change in regional living conditions and above all, in centralizing tendencies.

From the center to the periphery

According to Enrique Hernández Laos, between 1900 and 1970, national wealth tended to be concentrated regionally. During the 1970s however, the tendency changed direction, although only in a marginal way. The area of concentration *par excellence*, the valley of Mexico, had lost in the 1970s a considerable portion of the national wealth that it had formerly won (7.4 percent less than the total). On the other hand, regions that had been traditionally slow and subordinate, such as the south and southeast, gained points without precedent in the new distribution (4 percent more than the total), the same held true for the central western, central northern and central regions (excluding Mexico City) which also gained a substantial percentage (7.8 percent more than the total).³

An equivalent change took place in the figures for production per capita. At the beginning of the 20th century, an inhabitant of the valley of Mexico produced 2.3

The growth and diversification of the intermediate cities indicate a profound change in regional living conditions and above all, in centralizing tendencies

times more than an inhabitant of the south or southeast. By 1940, the difference was 5 times and in 1970, 4.7 times. But by the end of the 1970s, this proportion had dropped substantially to only 1.8 times more production per capita.

The economic recession of the 1980s has produced different regional impacts that have probably favored and deepened the consolidation of our new "periphery." While these last years have seen poverty and a contraction in the budget of Mexico City, there has been progress in other areas of the country, such as the southeast, the Bajío and the north.

The symptoms of regional emergence are visible to any observer who has been in even superficial contact with the old Mexican provinces. Among other things, in the 1980s, we have witnessed the unusual phenomenon of strong state treasuries against a contracted and deficit-ridden federal treasury. We have seen the imposition of an acute decentralizing awareness—translated into government plans and programs—on the national consciousness. We have witnessed the most intense, regional, electoral agitation since the 1920s. This group of symptoms is referred to by journalist León García Soler as the "cry of regional independence." An unyielding return of the old regional spirit characteristic of the country's history that has found its felicitous intellectual formulation in the matriotic manifestos of Luis González.

From the country to the world

In a similar way, this new internal regionalism in Mexico corresponds to a new phase of regionalism in the world. In recent years, Mexico has been at the mercy of the whims of the world market, its political pressures and its technological challenges.

In our preoccupation with our own problems, we tend to give little attention to the decisive importance of foreign affairs on our sorrow and fatigue. But the reality is that, notwithstanding our own responsibilities in the affair, we will soon reach the end of two decades in which the adverse movements of the international economy and political system have bludgeoned our development perspectives worse than our own internal errors.

Think, for example, of the abrupt suspension of economic growth which asphyxiates us today. Of course, Mexico had its own particular way of falling into the brambles, but the disastrous result was so identically shared by other Latin Americans who were alien to our errors that it is possible to attribute our specific debacle to the laws of a wider process, not subject to our control nor at times, within our understanding.

At the end of 1983, Chilean economist Jaime Estévez, in a discussion in the magazine *Nexos*, spoke convincingly of this process:

The abrupt end of consumerism and the traumatic awakening to the reality of the crisis experienced by

the public in the first months of 1982, is not a phenomenon specific to Mexico. On the contrary, 1982 was a year of crisis everywhere in Latin America, the worst since the 1930s... (After a high growth rate during the 1970s, in 1981 the rate of growth of the regional domestic product was worryingly low, only 1.5 percent, the lowest since 1940. (In 1982), the tendency towards stagnation turned into a recession and for the first time in forty-three years the regional product diminished. Eleven of nineteen countries suffered drops in their gross domestic products and the others registered gains so small that they could not keep pace with population growth.⁴

The technological question is no less important in its international impact on Mexico. At the beginning of the 1970s the world experienced a technological revolution comparable only with the invention of the steam engine and the birth of the Industrial Revolution. Among other things, this revolution makes obsolete that part of the industrial structure implanted in the postwar era and responsible in a large way for the industrialization that gave rise to the so-called "Mexican Miracle." A conse-

The symptoms of regional emergence are visible to any observer who has been in even superficial contact with the old Mexican provinces

quence of this breakthrough is, among other things, a new international division of labor and world trade whose most visible signs are the assembly plant belts in peripheral countries and industrial reconversion towards "soft" high technology in the center nations.

Given the conditions of the brutal contraction of international credit in the 1980s the only road to financial self-sufficiency which might guarantee the development of countries like Mexico seems to be to export—that is, to tie ourselves to the global flow of production and merchandise. To persist with our industrial base from the last era in a protected economy oriented solely towards the overexploitation of the internal market is to condemn ourselves to productive obsolescence and the sole export of oil, a material that may be exhausted soon after the year 2000.

To open ourselves up to the outside world implies a new period of commercial, financial and technological dependence on the United States but also possible inclusion in the regional developments of the future—such as the Pacific Basin—and the modern diversification of our dependence through treaties of industrial updating and foreign investment with Japan, Europe and, along the way, with Latin America.

Inequality

Starting in the 1980s, the challenges of the outside world and the bankruptcy of the internal model have in-

initiated a new period of top-down modernization in Mexico. As with all top-down modernizations, a Mexican specialty since the Conquest, the one at the end of the 20th century will have—and it already does—a high social cost before realizing its possible benefits. A core factor of this modernization program was that of relative prices, that is, the equilibration of products and services with their real prices, making them competitive internationally. No other relative price has been adjusted as much as wages and salaries, whose fall varies according to the base year adopted to measure it, but whose fall could be estimated, without exaggerating, in the order of a 40 percent drop in real terms from 1983 to the present date.

Inflation-Speculation

The "adjustment," the term used to abbreviate this dramatic decline in living standards has taken place in particularly unfavorable conditions for the fixed income sectors, and the population in general. It occurred in the middle of an acute inflationary process and at the onset of general bankruptcy of public finance. Its recomposition includes the unprecedented restriction of subsidies and state social programs. The effect of these converging adversities is, of necessity, an extreme sharpening of social and economic inequalities.

On the one hand, inflation and speculation have en-

riched the "haves" and impoverished the "have-nots." On the other hand, federal budget cuts has impeded the social program's distribution of part of the national income to the less protected sectors. At the end of this century we are faced with an environment of general impoverishment and, at the same time, of lacerating accentuation of privileges and inequalities. Calculations by the Barros Sierra Foundation give an idea of the intensity of the process by comparing the income of the top and bottom of Mexican society. If actual tendencies continue, and there is no indication that they will change much in the course of the new modernization, by the year 2000, the top 10 percent of the Mexican population with the greatest income will be 40 times wealthier than the poorest 10 percent. The difference will have more than doubled in the last fifty years. In 1950, the top 10 percent was 18 times wealthier than the poorest 10 percent, in 1970, 27 times wealthier, and in 1986, 36 times wealthier.⁵

To open ourselves up to the outside world implies a new period of commercial, financial and technological dependence on the United States

The social consequences of this process can barely be exaggerated. We are headed perhaps towards an unprecedented period of dual society, segregated internally, with modern sectors besieged by misery, backwardness and crime. Some figures give a better idea. In 1982 there were close to 44,000 robberies reported in Mexico City's Federal District. In 1984 there were more than 73,000. The projected growth in criminality for minors is 50 percent from now to the end of the century for crimes against property such as theft, and 236 percent for non-felony crimes such as drunkenness, vagrancy and, public disorder.⁶

II

We shall refer now to the four superstructural or political tendencies of the transition:

The state's limits

I share with Lorenzo Meyer the impression that the 1980s may be thought of as the beginning of a new period in post-Revolutionary history. Its novel, main point, as Meyer himself says, is that "the interventionist state is contracting, is diminishing its presence in society and is leaving other forces to fill the space that remains behind. The contraction in and of itself is of no great magnitude... The important thing is that the period of expansion, initiated even before the Revolution and continued from then on, appears to have arrived at its culmination and begun a retreat."⁷

The date which, according to Meyer, initiates the new era of state's retreat is precisely that of its last historic expansion: September 1, 1982, the day former President José López Portillo nationalized the banks. It was the greatest act of state autonomy since the nationalization of



"In 1960, for the first time, the population classified as urban was greater than the rural." (Photo by Marco Antonio Cruz)

We are headed towards an unprecedented period of dual society

the oil industry but also the limit of the legitimacy of the expropriatory powers of the state and, in particular, the president.

Mexico's bankruptcy—a link in the global chain of declining welfare states in the post-Keynesian era—took the form of a crisis in the foreign debt, recession, the impossibility of state subsidies, unproductivity, a protectionist crisis and an opening of the economy to foreign competition. As with the rest of the world, the instruments of bankruptcy administration consisted of reorganizing public finances, cutting the deficit and state investment, reductions in wages and salaries, privatization and deregulation of the economy. In short, the return to the free market.

At the beginning of the 1980s Mexicans received the news that state had reached its limit and that, distinct from previous transitions, the following modernization would not occur through expansion but rather through the contraction or thinning down of the state. It appeared to be more a proposal of society than of government, but it was perhaps only a government proposal based on the evidence inspired by the economy and the society.

We must admit that the state has organized and modernized Mexican society. Its most closely guarded contradiction is precisely this: it promotes a modernization that will go beyond its own self. A mature society, with an independent post-state spirit, has emerged from the saga of state-sponsored modernization. From all sides of the family, challenges and discontent rail against the too ubiquitous state paternalism. In particular, criticism mounts from within the state: the corporative pact that rooted it socially in the 1930s and whose erosion is already in evidence is clearly in disagreement.

A Faustian Pact

One by one the different sectors of the corporative pact of the 1930s—workers, peasants, the middle class, private enterprise—manifest change and resistance to state domination.

To begin with, let us take business and industry. The nationalizing of the banks broke or finished breaking the symbiosis between the leaders of private enterprise and the government. One extreme political consequence of the break is the novel phenomenon we see today of business and industrial leaders seeking office as candidates of the opposition. The economic result can be seen in the very low indicators of private investment in recent years and the abundance of capital flight. The attempt to put the alliance back together through political concessions and economic aid led, at the end of last year, to a new cycle of loss of confidence, speculative impunity and the anticipation of another apocalyptic end of the presidential term.

Wary of the agreement and the rules of the game that once guided their contentious cooperation with the state, private enterprise today looks for political independence and ideological assurances, speaks with clarity, boasts its own oppositionist initiatives, conditions its support and acts in strict compliance with its own interests.

Labor Discomfort

The conditions of the official workers' world are no less difficult. The decline in real earnings has separated the official, corporative union leadership from the rank and file. The modernization program's offensive against the corporative interests of the labor unions, its rejection of subsidies of the sweetheart contracts of another time—like the public works contracts that PEMEX used to give to its union, the rejection of labor leaders' political style and, finally, a presidential succession that guarantees the modernization program's continuity, all explain the discomfort and at times, disgust which the labor bureaucracy feels towards the government. It also explains labor's complaint that the government has abandoned the Mexican Revolution and labor's claim to be the last flagbearer and jealous guardian of the Revolution's legacy.

The emptying of the peasant organizations is also significant. Everything has grown politically and economically in the Mexican countryside except for what we continue to understand, with legendary and demagogic pride, as the peasant. Each and every one of the actors that we could call "external" to the old historic countryside has won space, power and wealth during the sad history of the decline of the traditional, rural society—the modern farmer as well as multinational agribusinesses, the government agencies as well as the cattle associations. The attempt in the 1970s to revitalize peasant organization and production led to a new process of bureaucratization and tutelage. In dispute are the *ejido* and its historic viability and the advantages of the idea of guardianship and the usefulness of bureaucratic extensionism in the countryside. Today's struggles often center around the modern factors of production: credits, prices and market conduits.

The middle class' exasperated desertion from the instruments and resources of traditional domination is another scene, perhaps the decisive one, of corporative erosion. Nowhere else is the demand for participation and democracy so well rooted as in these children *par excellence* of modernization. And no other sector of society speaks such an efficient language of inconformity and protest as do these contingents born from peace and economic development. Their demands, as Soledad Loaeza points out, have turned the state into a "hostage."⁸

A 1987 poll showed these sectors to be decidedly pessimistic about the future. After almost 20 years of democratic reforms, only 14 of every 100 members of the middle class polled believed that the country had changed. Although a substantial majority thought that the PRI would remain in power in Mexico, the great majority, close to 80 percent, attributed this predominance to negative factors such as a lack of democracy, electoral fraud, imposition of candidates, government complicity, lack of awareness and fear of change.⁹

Within the middle class' irritation we can find the causes for the critical climate of public opinion, the lack of credibility and the demands for change that hang over the two canonical pieces of the system and the last two tendencies on our itinerary: the president and his party.

From an absolutist president to a constitutional president

Mexico's presidential figure—an institutional adaptation of the colonial Viceroy and the 19th century caudillo—is

beseiged by the shadows of discredit and inefficiency. Including the current administration, Mexico will complete four consecutive presidential administrations that have terminated far from where they had promised to arrive. The inefficiency of their projects and instruments is apparent. Together they, form a now irremediable part of the public consciousness.

The presidential figure has consequently lost part of the magic and veneration that it used to inspire. It has also lost the capability to lead where it will the bureaucracy which has become harder to handle the larger and more centralized it has become. Finally, the presidency has lost the confidence of the citizenry in the succession process, the quintessence of presidential power. The president's faculty of electing his successor is material for much dispute and has permitted José Carreño Carlón to invent a happy analogy. Just as Obregon's death permitted and obliged the country to change from a caudillo regime to an institutional regime, so the congestions and crises of the system will permit and oblige, in this present political generation, the change from absolutist presidentialism to one that is simply constitutional.¹⁰

From a dominant party to a majority party

The transition that the state party is suffering is no less drastic. Its electoral loss of 21 percent in the voting over the last twenty years would have been enough in any other country to have made it lose the government.¹¹ It has been enough in Mexico to snatch away its hegemony in the key settings of modernity—urban Mexico—and in the regions of greater relative development—the north in particular.

In these settings, the Institutional Revolutionary Party has stopped being the hegemonic party and now competes, sometimes with difficulty, to become simply the majority party.

Clear historic signals have begun to show that the party is too small a house to process the long series of clientele, convictions and interests that form its fabric. At the beginning of 1986 I had, unknowingly, a prophetic idea. I wrote, "The habitual six year exclusions of political personnel is now showing some of the same effects as a demographic explosion. The revolutionary family of today has almost as many people outside as inside the house; and for those on the outside there appears to be no other future than to reaffirm their exclusion. The participatory temptations of this part of the family should not be underestimated and, in critical political moments, could be the detonator of a party split."¹²

The fissure is already there and it is called Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. Since my first prophecy has been fulfilled, I shall try again. Since now it will be conscious and voluntary, it will surely fail, but here it is: from the break-up that the PRI is experiencing today, in less time than we imagine, a true system of parties will arise in Mexico, capable of offering the electorate real options and capable of disputing and beating the PRI in open, legitimate elections. The novelty that will permit this central change is the consolidation of a party with a social democratic orientation, but fed by profound national traditions.

III

In conclusion, I will say a few words about the transitional fact that perhaps summarizes and expresses all the rest:



"The galloping decrepitude of the beliefs and customs of modernity is palpable."
(Photo by Marco Antonio Cruz)

social change brought on by development.

What we call today the "Mexican Miracle" was an efficient mix of traditional political domination—paternal, authoritarian, clientele-based and centralized—placed at the service of a particularly successful economic project which was modernizing, industrial, urban, and capitalist. At the time of its initiation in the 1940s, the familiarity of the mix made Cosío Villegas sacrilegiously remember Porfirio Díaz and launch himself on an exhaustive thirty year exploration of the model denied him. Four decades after that moment, the air of family may also be perceived in another way. As during the era of Porfirio Díaz, the modernization begun in the 1940s has transformed Mexico to the point of giving birth to a new society, that, like the Porfirian society, is too narrow or confining for the methods and instruments that created it.

As Carlos Fuentes wrote recently:

The revolution urbanized and industrialized Mexico, sending millions of children to school. The result is a new civil society, lettered, energetic, made up of professionals, bureaucrats, technocrats, businessmen, industrialists, intellectuals and women. The new civil society asks the system for the same thing that the system taught society: social justice with democratic freedoms, progress and reform.

"Silent subversions" is what historian Francois Xavier Guerra called the accumulated changes of the Porfirian era that became manifest in their magnitude in the Revolution of 1910. The social children of 20th century Mexican modernization are also, as were their Porfirian

ancestors, a "new people," a new sensibility, a new social majority. It is no longer the old Indian majority of the colonial world nor the explosive rural majority that brought the Mexican Revolution to life. Nor are we dealing with the spiritual majority of a Catholic people nor the popular majorities that were the basis for the corporative pact of the 1930s.

We are talking about the majorities of urban Mexico, its middle class, its bourgeois liberals, the mass society jammed into our cities, mobilized by desperation and poverty, trapped by the severity of the present but already without roots or nostalgia for the old Mexico, molded instead by the future. They are at the same time illusory and real, offered up by the mass media which sprinkles it with the same breath of expectations and consumerism.

To conclude, I return to Luis González: The reasonable thing is to listen without getting upset to the indicators of the immediate future, because you can already hear the footsteps of a new appreciation of the body, of intolerance to physical pain, of contempt for bourgeois phariseism, of the return to nature, of ignoring history and Mexico's peculiarities, of rejection of texts without images, of the sterility of science without art or humanism, of a new humanism and new religious attitudes. Pushing its way into this country is a new way of feeling and a new way of thinking. We are seeing the creation of a New Man.

Thus said, we arrive at the end of the paradox that is implied in the pretense of writing the history of the immediate past. Given the profound transition alive in its breast, the history of the immediate past that we propose, if it will truly be one, will also be the history of our immediate future. □

¹ Luis González: "Las tradiciones se despiden", in *Nexos* No. 100, April 1986. Also in *México mañana* Océano, México, 1986; p. 10.

² See María Eugenia Negrete Salas: "Diversificación económica y sistemas urbano regionales en México: un estudio exploratorio", in *El desarrollo urbano en México. Problemas y perspectivas*. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México, 1984. (Programa Universitario Justo Sierra); pp. 65-81.

³ See Enrique Hernández Laos: "La desigualdad en México, 1900-1980", in Carlos Tello and Rolando Cordera (coords.), *La desigualdad en México. Siglo XXI*, México, 1984; pp. 155-192.

⁴ "La crisis de México", in *Nexos* No. 67, July 1983.

⁵ Ana Irene Solórzano, Irene Martínez, Antonio Alonso: "Foro México 2010. Escenario base común". Mimeo, México, Barros Sierra Foundation, September de 1985; chart 13.

⁶ Nora Lustig: "Balance de sombras. El precio social del ajuste mexicano", in *Nexos* No. 106, October 1986. The projection of the growth of delinquency in *La Jornada*, July 20 1987, p. 12.

⁷ Lorenzo Meyer: "Los tiempos de nuestra historia", in *Estudios*, No. 7, summer 1986. México, Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, 1986.

⁸ Soledad Loeza: "Las clases medias mexicanas y la coyuntura económica actual", in Pablo González Casanova y Héctor Aguilar Camín (coords.): *México ante la crisis*, II. El impacto social y cultural-Las alternativas. Siglo XXI Editores, México, 1985; pp. 221-237.

⁹ Encuesta sobre actitudes de clases medias, Instituto Mexicano de Opinión Pública, March 1987. Mimeograph.

¹⁰ José Carreño Carlón: "La sucesión presidencial", in *Nexos* No. 116, July 1987.

¹¹ See Juan Molinar: "El México electoral", in *Nexos* No. 85, January 1985.

¹² Héctor Aguilar Camín: "El canto del futuro", in *Nexos* No. 100, April 1986. Also in *México mañana*, op. cit., p. 61.

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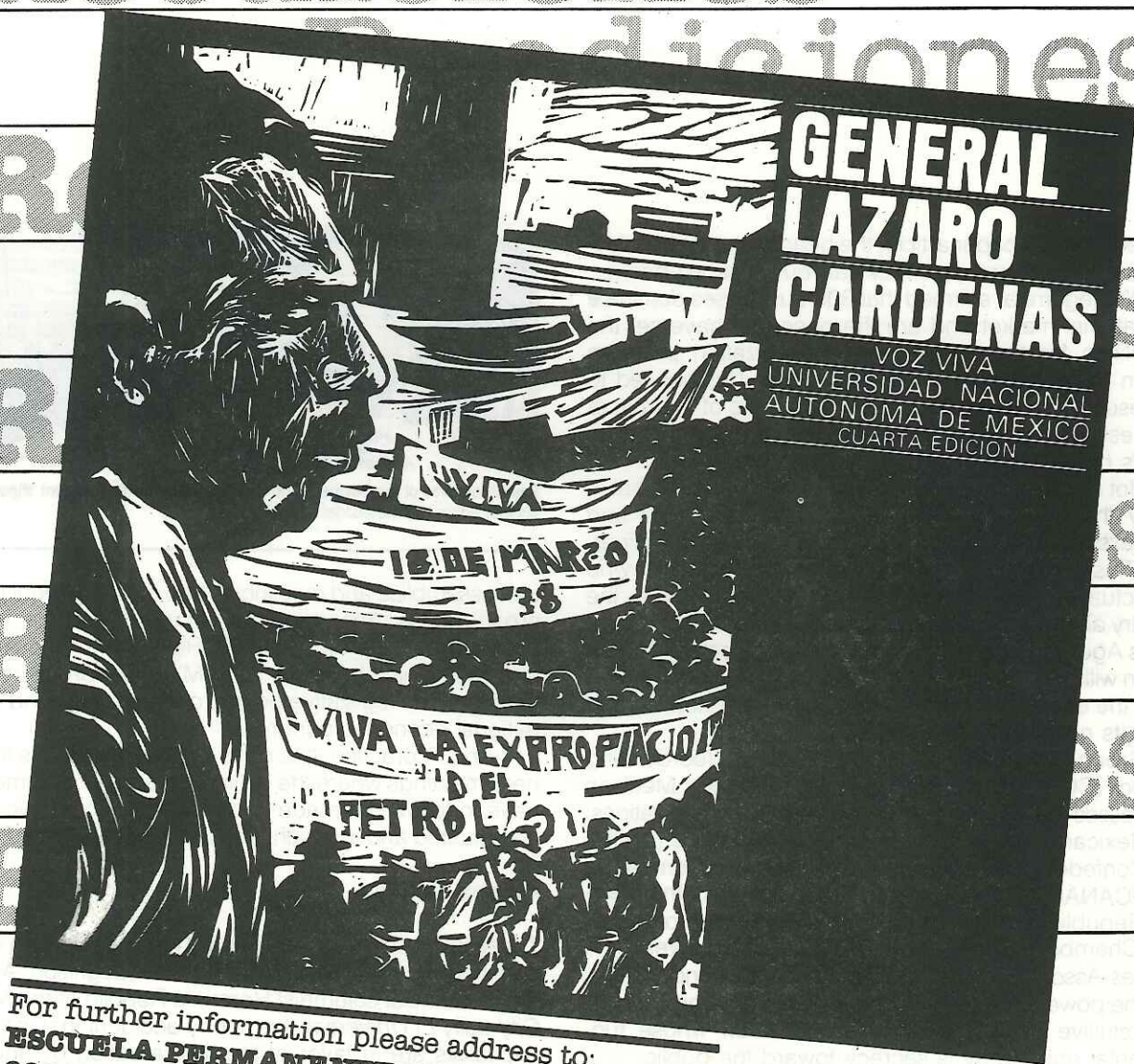
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COORDINACION DE DIFUSION CULTURAL UNAM/1988

THE TOP LEVEL MANAGEMENT GROUP IN MEXICAN BUSINESS

Luis Alberto Rodríguez J.

In a recent newspaper article, the head of the highest level management group in Mexican business, ex-banker, Agustín Legorreta, affirmed that 300 businesses dominate the national market and are the ones that have set the guidelines for the government's stabilization program known as the Economic Solidarity Pact. This has led to the resurgence of the hotly contested topic of the role of business organizations in representing the rights and interests of almost two million businesses.

Not long ago, a former business leader stated that in reality the top level management of industrialists and businessmen are bastions of power in the business oligarchy. This functions in spite of the fact that the men who are actually among the 100 most wealthy people in the country are not in positions of control. An exception to this rule is Agustín Legorreta himself, heir to an establishment begun with the National Bank of Mexico (Banamex), founded at the end of the past century and today state-owned since its nationalization in 1982.

Grouped together under the Business Coordinating Council (CCE), the top management of today's Mexican businesses are represented by seven basic organizations: the Mexican Association of Insurance Institutions (AMIS), the Confederation of National Chambers of Commerce (CONCANACO), Confederation of Employers of the Mexican Republic (COPARMEX), the Confederation of Industrial Chambers (CONCAMIN), the Mexican Investment Houses Association, the National Farmers Council (CNA), and the powerful Mexican Council of Businessmen, a type of exclusive "club" for rich businessmen whose fundamental philosophy is secrecy toward the public.

According to Isaac Guzmán Valdivia in his book, *The Employers Movement (El movimiento patronal)*, all of these are powerful pressure groups, which despite their main differences, make coherent decisions. It is not by chance that the most important announcements concerning economic policy made by the public officials take place be-



Representatives of the Business Coordinating Council with President Miguel de la Madrid. (Photo from Novedades archive)

fore assemblies and meetings of the most powerful private organizations. According to Fernando Carmona, analyst from the Institute of Economic Research of the Autonomous National University (UNAM), these groups, "more than than the legislative power, often act as a kind of true national economic congress."

And in practice, this does indeed occur. It is in business meetings where the outlines that the government will have to follow are made known, where economic policy is evaluated and in which, frequently, errors are admitted.

Hidden Politics

These influential business groups thus constitute a way of participating in politics without formal recognition. According to financial columnist Herminio Rebollo of the Mexico City daily *El Universal*, it is not by accident that the major capitalists are in favor of the radicalization of industrial, trade and employer organizations to exert more pressure against the government even though they have what may be described as "latchkey rights" or privileges.

The interest in controlling the top management organizations is based on concrete facts. For example, in the case of the commercial sector, only 44 businesses, which represent less than 0.08 percent of the 610,059 establishments distributed in urban areas, are at the peak of the commercial structure. Furthermore, only 10 percent of the commercial businesses capture 70 percent of total sales,

Reporter for *La Jornada*. Specializing in economic topics



Jorge Ocejo, President of COPARMEX.
(Photo from uno más uno archive)



Agustín F. Legorreta, President of the Business Coordinating Council.
(Photo from Novedades archive)

while 54.6 percent of the businesses are responsible for 11.7 percent according to statistics collected by the Ministry of Programming and Budget.

But beyond this, according to Mexican journalist Alicia Ortiz Rivera, the 300 businessmen who control the economic development of Mexico as well as the top management groups physically represent only 0.03 percent of the total business enterprises in the country. This small percentage accounts for 35 percent of the Gross National Product.

Influential business groups constitute a way of participating in politics without formal recognition

In Ms. Ortiz Rivera's article, Legorreta is quoted as stating, "a small, very comfortable group of 300 persons are the ones who make economically important decisions in Mexico... and the president (Miguel de la Madrid) negotiated with them in structuring the Economic Solidarity Pact."

"We gave the government a plan that would remedy its financial difficulties... and the government has carried it out, even in advance. They understood that when July arrived [elections were held in July for president, senators and deputies], they ran the risk of losing power. Maintaining it is the only thing that interests them... so they agreed to carry out the conditions imposed by the 300 persons who make up the top management group."

President Miguel de la Madrid's response to Legorreta's comments came in a public ceremony: "Business activity cannot be reserved for minority groups, rather it is a right of all Mexicans." De la Madrid added that the notion of a small minority in power "undermines democratic aspirations" and reduces liberty to pure formalism before "the privilege of only a few."

According to UNAM analyst, Fernando Carmona, fewer than a thousand families monopolize the bulk of private wealth in Mexico. Among them, only 100 would be placed in a kind of "class A," and of these, only 35 families would be situated at a very high level.

These people are not at the head of business organizations at present, although in other times they intervened, exerted widespread influence and participated directly. One example is the Garza Sada family of Monterrey whose economic empire has diminished as a result of confronting serious economic problems, derived from a high debt with foreign banks incurred during the past administration.

The Business Organization

Until Eduardo García Suárez became president of the CONCANACO which unites more than 1,350,000 businessmen in all of Mexico, the acceptance of the political nature of business organizations was a "tabooed" subject. This is because Mexico's private sector has always been considered to favor the National Action Party (PAN), although in practice some businessmen, industrialists and their leaders are members of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). García Suárez, a militant anti-communist in his youth who today is said to be pluralistic and mature, affirmed recently that the business organizations are essentially political, although he added that they did not constitute a partisan policy.



CONCANACO meeting. (Photo from uno más uno archive)

The 300 businessmen who control the economic development of Mexico—0.03 percent of the total businesses in the country—account for 35 percent of the country's Gross National Product

CONCANACO is the largest business organization with affiliation mandatory by law. Since García Suárez entered office, it has maintained the course followed over the past 30 years, although with greater radicalism, of relying upon "organizations that battle" the government. CONCANACO is committed to free enterprise and a business strategy identified closely with Christian social thought.

On the other philosophical extreme is COPARMEX, a voluntary organization of some 50,000 businesses. COPARMEX was created in response to the formation of the central union of workers known as called the Labor Congress. Traditionally, COPARMEX has maintained a hard line in political activity. Among its prominent members are José María Basagoiti, current president of the Mexican chapter of the International Chamber of Commerce, and Manuel Clouthier, former presidential candidate for the PAN and prominent agroindustrialist.

COPARMEX has the reputation of doing the "dirty work" when the top management of businesses are confronted with serious difficulties with the government. That is to say, it is responsible for making accusations that other business organizations would not dare to make formally.

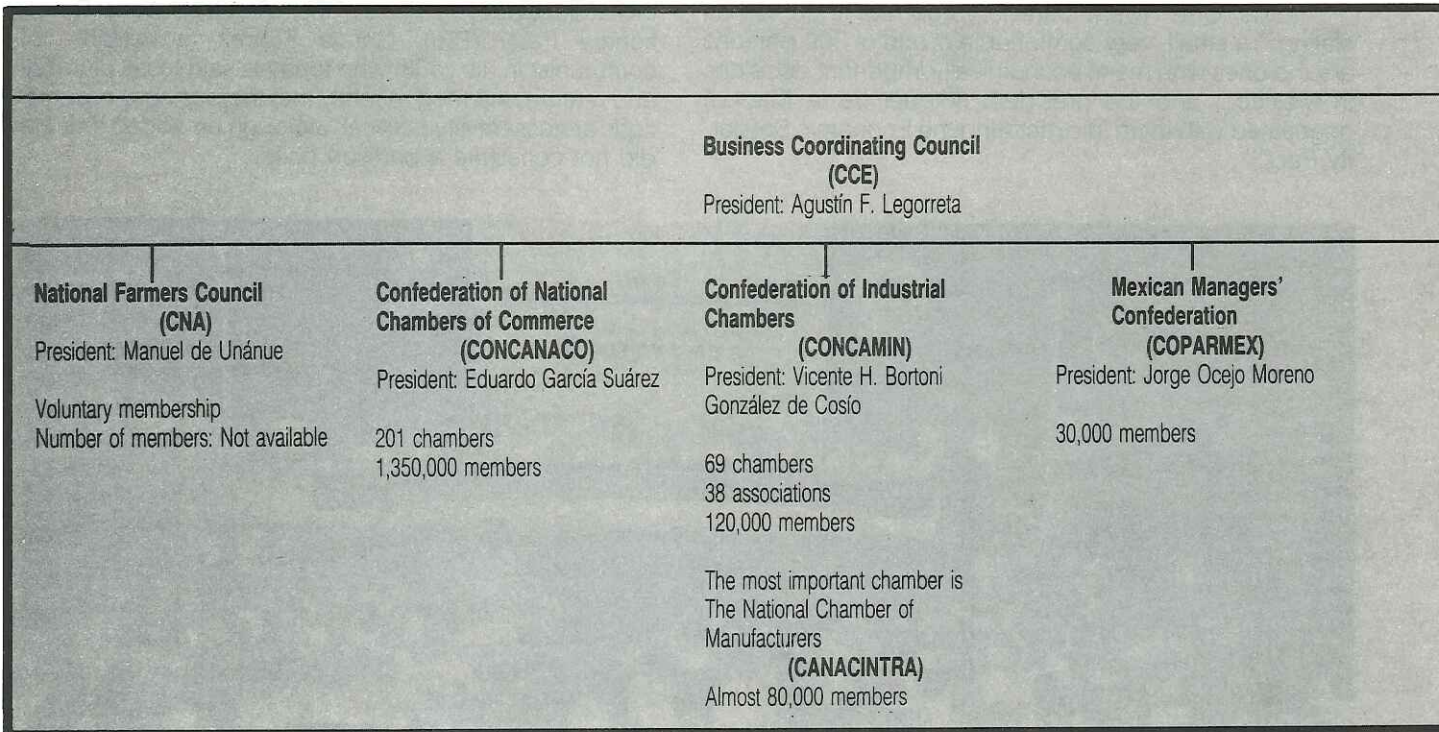
COPARMEX's tradition of taking the hard line was visible recently when then COPARMEX president Bernardo Ardavín Migoni faced serious criticisms from his consti-

tents for officially signing the Economic Solidarity Pact with the government. COPARMEX does not easily accept any accord with the government. Agustín Legorreta, the leader of the Business Coordinating Council, had to publicly defend Ardavín Migoni: "At times he has deserved the reproaches of those who have considered him to be too uncompromising and vehement against what he considers to be erroneous policies, and at other times he has been censured...for being convinced by the arguments that are not to the liking of those who systematically attack everything."

Today COPARMEX is headed by Jorge Ocejo, a highly pragmatic, soft drink industrialist. He too is a "hard liner," although so far he has not demonstrated it in his new office. Ocejo along with García Suárez from CONCANACO come from the so-called "Puebla Group," an informal group of business leaders from the state of Pue-



COPARMEX meeting. (Photo from Novedades archive)



Source: Luis Alberto Rodríguez based on official information

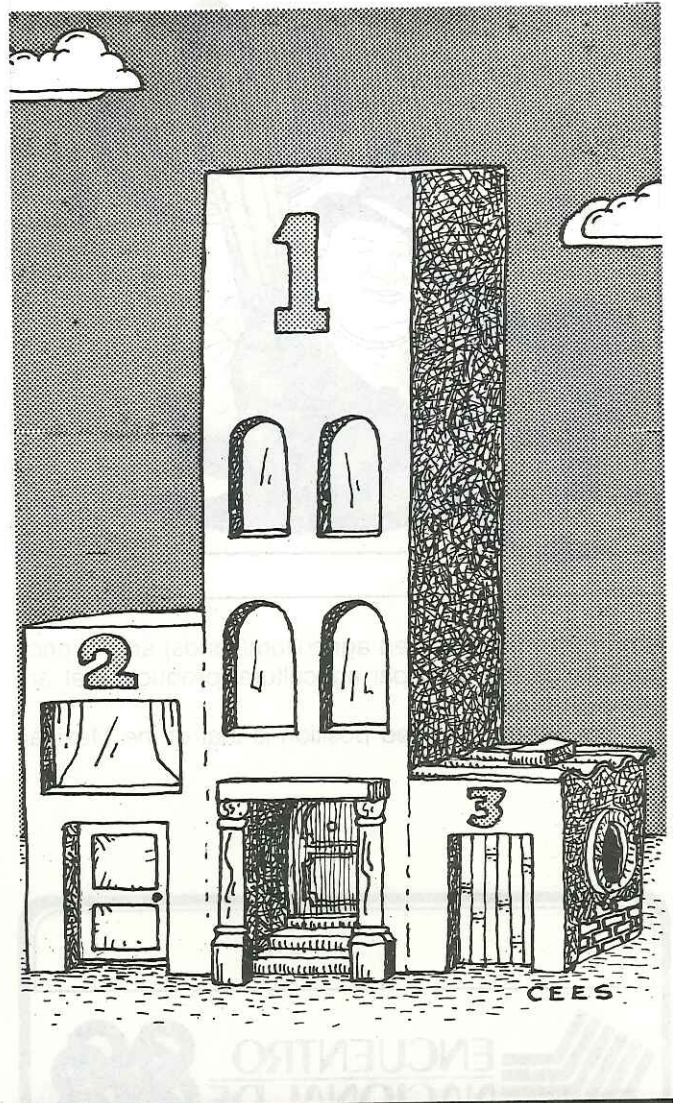
la. During the 1970s they had in one way or another participated in the fight against communists, socialists and Masons at the University of Puebla.

CONCAMIN, another organization with mandatory affiliation, represents more than 100,000 businesses. It maintains a traditional line of negotiation with the government because nearly 40 percent of its members depend on sales to governmental agencies. Its current president, Vicente Bortoni González de Cosío, is a member of the construction industry and closely tied to public works projects.

Until recently, the political nature of business organizations was a tabooed subject

This relationship explains CONCAMIN's moderate discourse. CONCAMIN abandons its moderate position only when industrial interests are seriously threatened as is now the case with Mexico's trade opening which has brought about the dismantling of tariff protection measures for businesses. Recently, CONCAMIN has been more critical of the government's handling of the economic recession.

With respect to the Mexican Association of Stock Exchange Brokers and the Mexican Insurance Institutions Association their performance has been tentative. Since the 1982 nationalization of the banking system, they are well aware of the fact that they too could be seriously affected by government actions. The National Farmers Council, the organization that voluntarily unites private farmers, has also been able to accomplish little, although it supports the doctrine of free enterprise, the elimination of the *ejido* (sys-



Mexican Insurance Institutions Association (AMIS)

President: Clemente Cabello Pinchetti

Voluntary membership
Number of members: Not available

Mexican Association of Stock Exchange Brokers (AMCB)

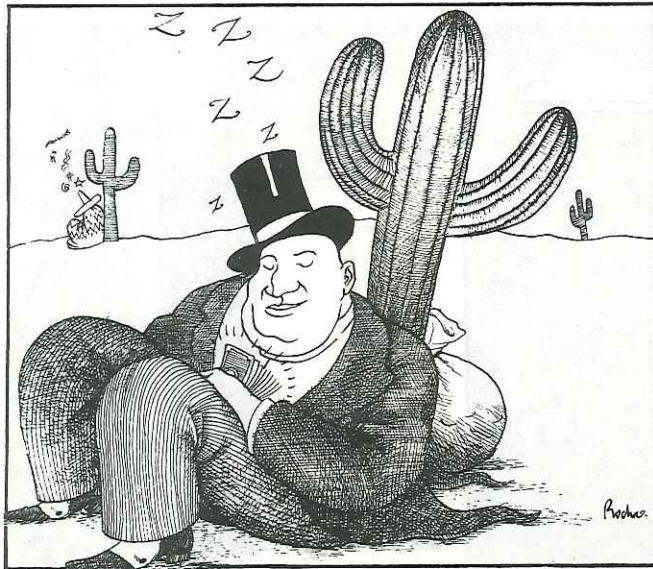
President: Alfredo Harp Helú

Number of members: Not available

Mexican Businessmen's Council (CMHN)

President: Ivan Sánchez Navarro

Enormous collective influence
40 to 50 Leading business leaders



tem of comunally-owned agricultural lands) and of price controls on the principal agricultural products that are grown in Mexico.

But the most closed position is that of the Mexican

Some Mexican businessmen have openly opted for partisan political action

Businessmen's Council which is made up of 40 businessmen from the principal commercial, industrial and services businesses in the country. The last two presidents of the Business Coordinating Council: Claudio Xavier González Laporte, president of the board of directors of Kimberly Clark of Mexico, and Agustín Legorreta are both members of the Mexican Council of Businessmen.

Thus, in a two-sided game, Mexican businessmen have seen how some colleagues, convinced of the futility of acting from the highest level of private enterprise, have opted for partisan political action. This is the case of Manuel Clouthier, PAN's presidential candidate in 1988.

And behind the scenes, openly distant from Clouthier, the big investors maintain close ties with governmental power.

As magnate Cloy G. Vallinas said years ago. "Oh, the state needs our cooperation for development, and it knows it, and we could not do anything without their support and we know it... no government of the Revolution can enter into any conflict with modern businessmen..." □



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INTERVIEW WITH DR. JOSE JUAN DE OLLOQUI

Mexico is passing through a period of economic changes as a result of its battle to control inflation.

With a nationalized bank and an economy subject to the ups and downs of the world market, the government has launched an economic policy of streamlining the parastate industries. These and other topics are discussed by José Juan de Olloqui, director of Banca Serfin in an interview with *Voices of Mexico*.

There must be a balanced relationship between rural and industrial development for economic and social reasons

What advantages have come from the nationalization of the banks?

The nationalization of the banks had immediate and medium-term advantages for the management of the nation's economic policy. Among the immediate advantages, the government was able to control foreign currency exchange rates more effectively and apply other measures necessary in confronting the foreign debt crisis with a disciplined and efficient banking system.

Among the medium term advantages it is worth mentioning the restructuring of the Mexican banking system which has provided us with a more rational scheme than before the nationalization. Also, state ownership of the bank has meant that the federal government has the backing of credit institutions in order to finance the public deficit.

Existing relations between the state banking system and the so-called parallel banking system have been described as complementary. What is your opinion on this?

The activities of the commercial banks and the so-called parallel banks are certainly complementary, but they are also interrelated. There are several areas where the field of action of the national credit societies and other agents of financial intermediation overlap. Thus, the healthy development of Mexico's financial system is indispensable and so is the existence of equality among all competitors.

Director of the Serfin Bank in Mexico, ex-President of the Mexican Bank Association
1984-1985

The nationalization of the bank meant that the state had access to new financial resources. What has been the link between the state banks and the development of the national productive system?

In spite of the appearance of new financial agents, the multiple bank is still the financial mediator *par excellence* and thus helps to meet demands for loans—a function that is indispensable for both public and private investment and for economic growth. Besides, there are various funds and trusteeships administered by the national credit societies as well as resources handled by the banking system which, according to the dispositions of the financial authorities, are assigned to the development of federal government priority areas.

One of the most notorious problems of our country lies in the inequality between the rural and urban areas, between agricultural development and the enormous urban industrial growth. How has the bank used its influence to change this unequal relationship?

The backwardness of agricultural development in our country is due to the growing emphasis given by the federal government, especially since World War II, to industrial development policies. Of course industrialization was and still is indispensable for the diversification of our economy, to increase the aggregate value of our production and provide employment opportunities. As John Kenneth Galbraith says, a country that wants to be developed only on the base of its agriculture will not be developed even in its agricultural sector.

However, there must be a balanced relationship between rural and industrial development for economic and social reasons. The rapid growth of our agricultural production in the 1940s and 1950s assured the supply of food and industrial goods of agricultural origin, supported the development of our manufacturing activities and contributed significantly to price stability.

We have to point out, however, that the equilibrium between agricultural development and industrial development is a question of economic policy which goes beyond the powers of the credit institutions. In practice, the national credit societies have operated more as instruments of economic policy, especially in response to indications from financial authorities which impose the assignation of a certain proportion of resources, at preferential rates, which should be destined to the countryside.

Since 1982 Mexico has experienced one of the most critical stages of its economic history: reduction of its internal market, the closing down many small- and medium-sized businesses and sources of employment and the rise of inflation. In some way the state banking system bank is the financial heart of our country: how has it been affected by this crisis and what have been the principal measures to avoid that this financial heart gets weakened?

Throughout this present period of government, banking activities have been greatly affected by the economic crisis. As I have already mentioned, the government has relied significantly on the multiple banks to finance its spending, limiting both the resources earned and the financial margin with which the banks used to operate.

In particular, with the Economic Solidarity Pact, the bank has had to confront a substantial reduction in interest rates as a result of efforts to reduce inflation. It is worth pointing out that in other countries in which similar stabilization programs have been applied, the financial institutions have suffered considerably.

In Mexico, however, the national credit societies have managed to adapt to the adverse conditions imposed by the economic situation and continue operating in conditions similar to those which existed before the Pact. How has this been possible? Besides the rationalization of the institutional structure and the achievement of greater levels of efficiency, the Mexican banks have managed to deal with current adversity through the development of new services and by increasing non-traditional banking activities without neglecting traditional banking activities.

Mexico's private enterprise has systematically favored reducing the state's role in the nation's economic control and planning. Does this also mean that private enterprise seeks to reduce intervention by the state bank? What has been the nationalized bank's position with regard to this matter?

I have always maintained that the bank nationalization is irreversible. This has also been indicated by Carlos Salinas de Gortari, who in all probability will be the next

Mexican banks have managed to deal with the current adversity through the development of new services



Juan José de Ollóqui, Director of Banca Serfin. (Photo from Novedades archive)

President of Mexico. For this reason I have been obliged to check some speculations about demands made by some members of the private sector who have openly tried to lobby for the re-privatization of the bank or for the creation of a parallel private bank.

On the other hand, however, in carrying out the current government's economic policies, the nationalized bank has played an important role in the process of selling non-strategic state companies to the private sector.

The Economic Solidarity Pact, has been put into effect in order to fight inflation. How have the nationalized banks' financial policies adapted themselves to the Pact?

Repeating the reply that I gave earlier, I would like to point out that the banks have made considerable efforts to support the objectives proposed in the Economic Solidarity Pact through the reduction of interest rates and their financial operating margin.

What role have the nationalized banks played in relation to the payment of foreign debt interest and capital?

In the case of Serfin Bank, priority has been given to developing foreign trade and earning foreign currency. Proof of this is that, although we are the third most important bank in Mexico in terms of the volume of resources handled, we are often first in matters of international activities.

This has been achieved through participation in programs of debt reconversion, promotion of foreign investment in priority sectors, and above all, through the promotion of exporting activities among the bank's clients. This constitutes the main way of earning foreign currency so that our country can adequately service the foreign debt.

Over the last few years the Mexican government has implemented policies to improve its state industry. Numerous state companies have been sold, closed down, fused and transferred. Others are going through the same process. Is the Mexican government interested in maintaining the nationalized banks in its hands? Is it thinking of increasing private sector participation in the banks? Where are Mexican banks going?

As I said before, I am convinced that the nationalization of the bank is an irreversible process. This has been declared by the PRI presidential candidate, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, who has added that private sector participation in bank capital will not be increased. I believe that the Mexican state banking system will have to keep operating within a framework of competition which will allow it to operate efficiently and adequately attend the necessities of the national economy. But it will also have to enter in international financial markets, where the activities of the service sector in general, and of financial services in particular, are becoming more and more important and where our nation should also have a significant presence. □



Banca Serfin office in downtown Mexico City.
(Photo by José Fuentes)



During the current administration, banking has been affected by the economic crisis.

The nationalization of the banks is irreversible

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THE CHALLENGE OF SOUTHEASTERN MEXICO

Edgar Celada

In seems almost paradoxical that one region of Mexico, its southeast, should contain so many contrasting features.

In the states of Chiapas, Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatán and Quintana Roo lie a crucial part of Mexico's natural wealth. Its rich soil provides the entire country with many products and meets export demand, while in its underground the bulk of Mexico's oil reserves can be found.

Mexico's southeast also possesses the secrets of ancient civilizations carved in pre-Columbian buildings and walls which fill abandoned cities throughout the rich jungles of the region. Edgar Celada confirms this and much more in a journey through this magnificent area.

A geographic, historical and socioeconomic review of the five states which make up southeastern Mexico will allow us to understand why one of the main challenges for Mexico's next government lies in this region

In the unforgettable experience of traveling by road from Mexico City to this area, the traveler can appreciate the clean geographical cut made by the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. The traveler will surely be impressed by the strong winds which cross this extraordinary 130 mile-wide corridor. To the west, snake-like roads wind over the mountains of Oaxaca to Mexico City and Puebla. To the northwest, lie the low lands of Veracruz. In a straight line to the north, the Gulf of Mexico; in the opposite

Despite the "Mexicanization" of the southeast, the region continues to be "another Mexico"

direction, the Pacific Ocean. But another world begins on the east, that which was the home of one of the most important Mesoamerican societies, the Mayas. To cross this wide space, there are only two possible roads. The Gulf Coast road will take us through the impressive tropical plains of Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatan and Quintana Roo. Its natural course continues beyond national boundaries to Beliza and the

Guatemalan province of Peten.

The other road passes along the narrower stretch formed by the Pacific Coast lowlands. The continuity of this path led Nahuatl-speaking peoples to places as far away as today's Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala.

The Sierra Madre mountain range rises up between both stretches of lowlands. These mountains form the historic heart of most of the five states in the region. With its nearly 3 million inhabitants and 28,730 square miles, Chiapas is in many ways the synthesis of southeastern Mexico. While some geographers claim that Central America begins in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, for the historian and the anthropologist, Central America begins in Chiapas. In any case, it is not difficult to believe that the development of the Mexican nation state has marked another route against the grain of the

region's geographic and historic legacy.

Despite the undoubted "Mexicanization" of the southeast, the region in many senses constitutes "another Mexico." Fifty-four years ago the phenomenon was much more notorious when Vicente Lombardo Toledano, the founder of the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) wrote: "In the hunting grounds and many of the ranches in Yucatan and Campeche, as in Guatemala, alcohol, instead of enraging our Indians, fills their eyes with tears and tightens their throats until they can't talk. From the drunkard there appears not a brave macho or an offended man seeking revenge, only the bitter source of tears from a being who complains for himself and for all his race, without knowing it, in a sad, silent and tragic manner that causes emotion even in the rocks."

Economic Base of the Nation

The winds of modernization that began blowing forty years ago in the country and which converted it into an industrial-agricultural economy, arrived with less strength in Mexico's southeast. A type of center-periphery relationship was established with the area, making it an important supplier of strategic primary products, but a minimal receiver of the advantages of modernity.

From the maguey fiber of Yucatan to the coffee of Chiapas, including the enormous oil reserves and water supplies transformed into energy, southeastern Mexico is today the base on which the Mexican economy rests.

—Southeastern Mexico supplies nearly 90 percent of the nation's total oil and natural gas production. Ninety percent of the known oil reserves are located in this region—65 billion barrels—. More than 40 percent of the value of the nation's exports in 1987 consisted of sales of oil and oil byproducts.

—More than 50 percent of the nation's coffee crop is produced in the region. Coffee grain exports in 1987 constituted the main agricultural export, worth 600 million dollars. The region's water

The winds of modernization arrived with less strength in Mexico's southeast

supplies represent two-thirds of the national total.

From the state of Chiapas alone fifty rivers lead to the Gulf of Mexico, while another 72 flow towards the Pacific Coast. This explains why the nation's main hydroelectric plants are located in this zone. Electricity generated in the area supplies more than 50 percent of that used to move the national economy.

Seventy percent of soils suitable for agricultural production are located in southeastern Mexico. The richness and variety of flora and fauna is also the most important in the nations. More than 8,000 plant species have been registered in Chiapas representing 32 percent of the national botanical total. Chiapas has 614 bird species, representing nearly 58 percent of all birds identified in Mexico.

Richest and Poorest

In contrast with its enormous natural wealth, in exploitation or still in potential, southeastern Mexico is the region in Mexico where the image of underdevelopment is most visible.

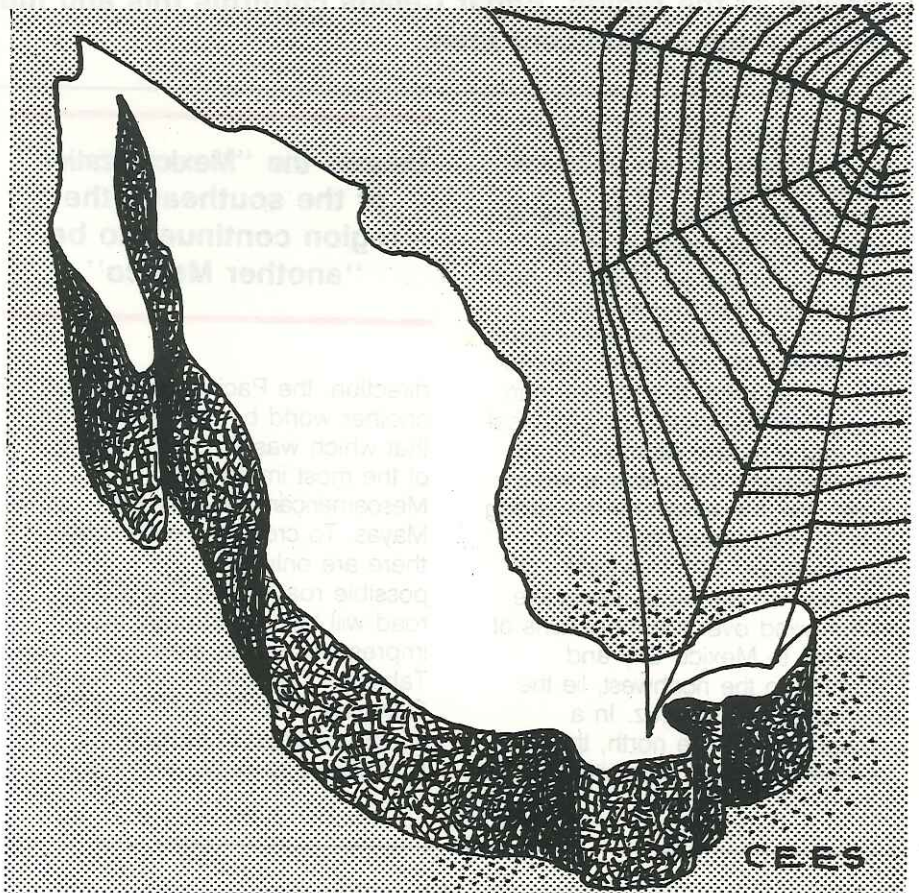
Social indicators such as health, housing, services and education are lower here than the national average.

More than 60 percent of children aged between 1 and 2 years show some grade of malnutrition. In the highlands of Chiapas, malnutrition is estimated at 75 percent.

Only half of the region's homes have drinking water, only 32 percent have drainage services and just a little more than 60 percent of homes have electricity.

Of every 100 children who enter primary school, only 42 manage to finish their primary school studies.

Since the 1950s—and in the Yucatan this dates from earlier decades—accelerated deforestation has been observed. The forests of Tabasco were reduced from over 2 million acres



AGRARIAN CONFLICT IN CHIAPAS REMINDS US OF CENTRAL AMERICA

Southeastern Mexico is a mosaic made up by a confluence of various peoples and cultures from Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Africa. Waves of migrants arrived in different stages and formed colonies which, although not very numerous, were sufficient to displace the original inhabitants of the area who were descendants of the Mayas.

The tropical and subtropical forest, unhygienic living conditions and isolation from the rest of the country, meant that during many years the region did not attract massive migrations. Thus, the zone has retained a low population density of 62.2 inhabitants per square mile. In Quintana Roo, population density only reaches 19.2 inhabitants per square mile, and in Campeche, 30.3 inhabitants per square mile.

Paradoxically, it is in the southeast, particularly in Chiapas, where the Mexican agrarian conflict has one of its principal focal points. The violence of this conflict inevitably reminds us of Central America where land-related problems constitute one of the basic components of the social-political conflict.

Chiapas is not only the southern state with the largest population, it also the state with

has the region's best agricultural land and water resources. However it is also a state where pre-revolutionary social and economic structures remained immune to changes begun by the Mexican Revolution of 1910. "Although this might seem to be a paradox," writes researcher Alicia Paniagua, "the Revolution was won by counter-revolutionaries who established themselves in power with all

the support of the center 'revolutionary' government."

The survival of the latifundium—whereby large tracts of land remain in the hands of a few—in clear or disguised forms and the displacement of indigenous peasant and their expulsion to mountainous territory characterize the history of agrarian relationships in the region. These relations entered a period of crisis in the 1970s, when the federal

government began to turn its attention to hydraulic and oil resources in the state of Chiapas.

Roads, dams and hydroelectric plants were built. Various federal institutions with their corresponding bureaucratic apparatus began to make their presence felt in the region. Modernization was installed on top of the old socioeconomic structures.

The inevitable result: a large chain of agrarian conflicts which continue to the present. Government bodies in charge of land reform have some 547 files which represent applications for land made by 15,000 peasants. An estimated 300,000 hectares are necessary to satisfy this demand.

However, according to Jesús Mario del Valle Fernández of the Agrarian Reform Ministry, "the repartition of land is reaching its limits, and policies should now aim to consolidate what has been handed over."

Meanwhile the agrarian conflict is the source of numerous violent incidents. The National Coordinator of Indigenous Peoples (CNPI) reports that in just three years, between 1983 and 1986, nearly 100 peasants were killed in Chiapas. Most of these murders were related to conflicts over possession of land.



The state of Chiapas is a synthesis of Mexico's southeast.

to just over a half million acres between 1940 and 1970. The forests of Chiapas, Campeche and Quintana Roo are likewise threatened by the timber industry. Erosion caused by deforestation affects nearly 2 million acres in Chiapas. The biospheric reserve of Montes Azules in Chiapas has 818,000 acres and is the only significant portion of evergreen forest which remains today in Mexico.

The road system in the region is underdeveloped. Road density in the region is only 145 meters per square kilometer, the average for a good road network is 500 meters per square kilometer. This means that the region's internal markets are not extensive, and at the same time partially explains the low degree of development in the manufacturing industry.

The lack of manufacturing in the region is most characteristic—only 19.2 percent of the work force in the region's five states was employed in manufacturing industries in 1986.

Thus we can observe some of the effects of a regional economic model described by researcher Rafael Abascal Macias, of the Center for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE): "During many decades economic growth was based on agricultural trade aimed at foreign markets, but this did not manage to transcend the primary stage, thus constituting regional economies which did not generate sustained economic expansion."

Strategic Zone

Located in one of the extremes of the convulsed Central American world, southeastern Mexico has seen its strategic importance grow not only due to its natural wealth and economic potential, but also due to the events in the Caribbean and Central American.

Events on that side of the border have reconfirmed an old national saying that security on Mexico's northern border with the United States cannot exist without similar security on the southern border.

When the expansion of U.S. interests on the small Balkanized republics of the Central American



Guatemalan refugees in Chiapas.



Henequen growers in the Yucatán peninsula.

isthmus was no more than two decades old, southeastern Mexico did not escape the attention of investors and strategists. During the years of revolutionary commotion—which in this region ended with local deals between oligarchic landowners and representatives of the central government—the significance of the region was made clear.

Southeastern Mexico supplies nearly 90 percent of the nation's oil and natural gas production

In a little-known passage from the history of those years, Guatemalan dictator Manuel Estrada Cabrera revealed the existence of secessionist plans to Ricardo Carrascosa, a Chiapas supporter of Venustiano Carranza: "With the territories of Chiapas, Soconusco, Lacantun and part of Peten we are going to form a new republic in the south of Mexico. I even have the name: it will be called the Southeast Republic. You, the victorious chief will be first president with resources that I will provide, and the state will be declared separate from the federation. The United States will immediately recognize the new

SECTS AND PROTESTANTS

A hot tropical night. The Caribbean breeze does not mitigate the heat generated in the modest church where nearly one hundred people meet regularly to listen to "the Lord's word." Song, prayers, tears and even scenes of hysteria are reproduced by the hundreds throughout southeastern Mexico. They express a new phenomenon: the proliferation of sects and Protestant denominations.

Protestant churches favored by the Reform laws of 1859, began to arrive in this region at the end of last century, and their presence began to be felt again during the 1940s. But their expansion over the last ten years has no precedent. In Tabasco, for example, nearly 25 percent of the population, some 300,000 persons, are affiliated with the various non-Catholic churches and sects.

In Tabasco's 1,399 towns with less than 2,500 inhabitants, which contain 61 percent of the state's population—there is invariably at least one Protestant church, although it is not unusual to see three, and in some places there are seven distinct religious groups.

A study carried out in the state of Yucatan in 1982 revealed the existence of 307 sects in 106 municipalities. It was in Yucatan where a Protestant church was first established in southeastern Mexico in 1877.

Not even Chiapas, the center of the region's Catholicism, has been able to escape the avalanche of sects and Protestant groups. It is estimated that between 11 and 30 percent of the population of the state belongs to a sect or Protestant denomination. In towns such as Ocosingo, Corozal, Palestina, Las Margaritas, Santo Domingo and Reforma, Protestants now form a majority.

Mexico's Constitution guarantees freedom of religious expression. The diversity of religious beliefs does not bother some sectors as much as the rapid expansion over the last few years of the sects and Protestant groups and their effects on the region's social and political life.

Many observers claim that behind most of the sects are foreign interests trying to prevent social conflicts through the diffusion of a very conservative and militantly anti-communist ideology. Generally the sects aim to preserve the existing *status quo*. More than one investigator has called attention to links between Protestants and ruling officials of the

Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in small communities.

On the other hand, some sects promote political abstinence, while others oblige their member to renounce recognition of national symbols.

Some cases of interference by the sects in community health programs carried out by regional authorities have been reported. In Chetumal, Quintana Roo, groups of indigenous Mayans, influenced by the sects, refused to give blood for the National Epidemiological Campaign.

In the highlands of Chiapas the proliferation of sects and Protestant denominations together with numerous agrarian conflicts have given rise to various armed confrontations.

Nearly 10,000 Protestant Chamula Indians have been expelled from their communities by their Catholics of the same indigenous group, according the Bishop of San Cristóbal de las Casas, the Rev. Samuel Ruiz.



Peasant farmers meeting.



The southeast produces more than 50 percent of Mexico's coffee.

state and your government."

If this version related by Rafael Arévalo Martínez is true, there exists little doubt that Estrada Cabrera was not speaking just for himself. These were the years of the domination of the Yucatan's maguey plantations by U.S. companies, of the spread of United Fruit Company's banana empire into Tabasco's tropical lands, and, above all, the years when the project of an interoceanic waterway in Tehuantepec—parallel to the recently-built Panama Canal—had not been completely discounted.

The Future Challenge

Today, when Central America's conflicts are affecting geopolitical relations maintained during more than half a century, Mexico's southeast is seen once more to be the nation's weak point. Not because anachronistic separatist projects are likely to prosper, but because regional security and stability make the region of key national importance.

The challenge presented by southeastern Mexico involves the need to overcome historical backwardness and put the region on the road to modernization advocated by the current and



Population growth exceeds the southeast's economic growth.

future leaders of the nation. Given events on the southern side of the border, the region needs to develop capacity to assimilate demographic and socioeconomic pressures that come from those countries.

On this last issue, analysts estimate that even if the war were to end tomorrow in Central America, Central American economies would take between 15 and 20 years to recuperate to 1978 levels. Meanwhile, they point out, the population increase in those nations is much higher than economic growth, thus producing the migratory flows observed over the last ten years. Mexico's southeast is an important receiver of these migratory movements.

With low population density—62 inhabitants per square mile in comparison with the national average of 109 inhabitants per square mile—southeastern Mexico should prepare itself for the Central American overflow, which has already begun.

Currently, the population of Guatemala and El Salvador triples that of the five states which make up southeastern Mexico—14 million people in Guatemala and El Salvador compared with only 4.7 million in southeastern Mexico. Calculations for the first decade of the 21st century put this population ratio of Central America to Mexico's southeast at four to one.

Mexico's southeast is seen once more to be the nation's weak point

Both factors—regional underdevelopment and pressure from Central America—have led Mexican authorities to make short- and medium-term plans for the incorporation of the region into the nation's modernization as a principal means of preserving national security in this area.

Consequently, industrial, tourist, educational and cultural development are crucial means to prevent the flames of the Central American conflict from extending to southeastern Mexico. □

THE ELECTION'S LESSON

Enrique González Pedrero

The elections held in Mexico on July 6 mean more than the beginning of a new presidential administration where the economic and political structures are merely passed on from one regime to the next. The recent elections have been marked by a political struggle, not only between opposing political parties, but also between factions within the long ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).

The social circumstances which Mexico faces, most visible in the economic crisis of a magnitude rarely seen in recent years, determined that the voting on July 6 would not produce the traditional results.

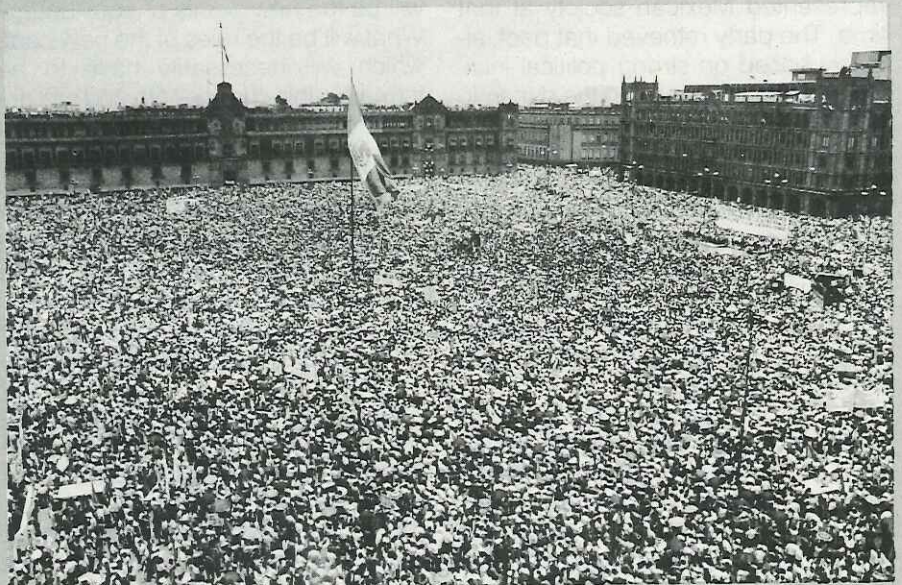
In this Special Section, we have sought to provide our readers with a wide range of opinions concerning the recent elections and what they will mean for Mexico's future.

"Does not the word knowledge come from to know, and is not madness the excess of a desire or of a power?"
Balzac

Everyone knows that national politics has changed since July 6; the election was a *lesson*. But didn't the same happen in May and October of 1968 and in September of 1985? Didn't we believe that all had changed only to find that the transformation would then seem dissolved, diffused, in the dizzy, daily succession of repeated inertias? Many hastened to venture that Cronos, the great devourer, had also swallowed the desire for change. Today it is clear that this was not the case. The desire for change is alive and it is time that has dangerously shrunk on us. The shagreen skin of Balzac's story, available time, has dried out and the deep desire of Mexicans for change demands fulfillment. "Present and past time/are perhaps present in the future..." The time of Mexico awaits answers. Whose answers? Yours and mine. From each and every one of us. From citizens, from society, from the parties, from the government. The answers of everyone, because we are all Mexico.

The Political and Social Pact

This is not the first time that Mexico finds itself at a crossroad. The coun-



Close of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas' campaign in Mexico City's Zócalo.

try's history has been a continuous heroic feat in the search of justice and liberty. To construct what we have now, with its defects and its virtues, has been the arduous task of generations. It should not be forgotten that at the birth of independent life, Mexico fought for survival itself. To arrive at the creation of a national state cost Mexico almost half a century and more than half its territory. After the wars of the Reform and of the restoration of the republic, the plan of the liberals clashed with a reality of enormous so-

cial inequalities and political restlessness that finally had to be suppressed with the might of arms. The period of re-electionist peace achieved by Porfirio Díaz led to the Mexican Revolution. The country returned to face violence as an extreme recourse to achieve the change demanded by the majority of the people.

The 1910 movement was the continuation of a long revolutionary process. The people triumphed with arms; but along with the triumph arose the need to find new points of equilibrium between factions. Although the national plan was shaped in the Constitution as a synthesis of the aspirations shared by the vast majority, its

The desire for change is alive and it is time that has dangerously shrunk on us

political orchestration would take more time. Ideas had to pass into practice, to be confronted with reality, to become government action.

Plutarco Elías Calles and Lázaro Cárdenas imagined and organized what has been called the Mexican political system. At the death of Alvaro Obregón, the task fell to Calles of uniting revolutionary forces in the great political pact, which gave birth to the National Revolutionary Party (PNR). Later, it was up to Cárdenas to strengthen the party and to give it permanence. He transformed the Party of the Mexican Revolution (PRM) into an organization of sectors that clearly represented Mexican society at that time. The party retrieved that pact, already based on strong political institutions, and adjusted it to the dynamic of a country in the process of transformation. The political system created in 1929 has lasted more than half a century; this is no small feat. But throughout this time, the system has not been the same. Its duration has been linked to its capacity for adaptation and change and to the constant renovation of the pact that gave birth to the modern Mexican state.

For this reason, we should methodologically ask ourselves the following question: what would Calles and Cárdenas have done today now that the people's call for change has recovered force? What would they do in a much more complex country that, although still rural to a great extent, has been rapidly transformed into an urban culture that has the world's largest megalopolis as its center? Would they cease to take into account the events since 1929? The answer is no. If anything has characterized the great men of our history, it is their intelligence in guiding the transition between the past and the future. They understood the state, at that moment, as a bridge between times: as condensed time.

It is necessary to pause and reflect seriously on Mexico's possible future, to first review in our imagination the paths that must be traversed to perfect our political system without breaking with the best of the past. It is clear that since July 6, a transition toward full Mexican democracy has begun. What



Election day at the polls.

will be the new points of equilibrium? What will be the rules of the new pact, which will necessarily have to be formed in this change? No one can anticipate where the extraordinary dynamism catalyzed in recent days will arrive, but we all perceive that there is a need to consolidate new structures. It is necessary to extend and expand vision, conscious that we are in the presence of an exceptional opportunity to invigorate the country's political life and thereby to strengthen the nation's future.

Perhaps we are attending the announcement of an era comparable with that of the great moments that forged our country—the Independence, the Reform and the Revolution. There is an essential coincidence: the true protagonists are the people of Mexico. But there is a qualitative difference: the denial of violence, the rejection of any form of intransigence. It is not, then, a period of breaking with the past, but rather one of evolution. The desire is not to discard everything and to start anew, but rather to transform

It is necessary to pause and reflect seriously on the paths that must be traversed to perfect our political system without breaking with the best of the past

the old. To reform it in order to rescue what had been left behind in the demand of our people for a greater democracy. I think that this has to do with modernizing the social and political pact that has united us since the first quarter of this century, to take a decisive step on the basis of what has been constructed over the last eight decades.

The New Political Reality

The people are indicating the courses that politics are to take, not only with their vote, but also with their attitude. They are demanding dialogue and tolerance; Mexicans do not want intransigent measures. They have manifested their desire for change within the framework of the law and respect for the will to live in a more just country. Perhaps what the July 6 elections have revealed is that the center of the political arrangement has varied. If what was born precisely from an indispensable political and social pact, joining partisan action with the task of government was maintained within the party for almost 60 years, that center now has been displaced toward a more updated conception of the state.

Under this conception, the party has literally turned around to become part, and no longer the political synthesis of the whole. Its democratic proposal, which tended to confine itself to its internal life, finally hardened into the social whole. The party itself stimulated that evolution, but the crisis and internal deviations accelerated

the process. The displacement of the nucleus of the political and social arrangement does not mean, however, a break in the agreement on what is fundamental to all Mexicans. On the contrary, at a distance and with political vision, the Mexican state can consolidate the strength that it needs to undertake the great changes that the country's modernization demands.

Naturally, it is necessary to unravel the causes of change and to accept the new political reality of the nation without fears. Only in this way will it be possible to formulate new rules of the game and transcend Mexico's immediate difficulties in order to think

about its future with the peace of mind that the circumstances require. What is at stake is much more than the immediate competition for political positions.

It is clear that since July 6, three political tendencies were delineated and that in the short term, the three will confront the need to adapt to the new era inaugurated by the elections. This adaptation is not limited to electoral questions nor to a circumstantial evaluation of the government. The change demanded by the Mexican people will not affect only a part of the system. I want to say that it will not be enough to adapt the procedures of the majori-

ty party. There are multiple tasks to undertake in the opposition and in all aspects of the country's political life.

It is evident that the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) cannot remain behind in this process of adaptation. It is up to the PRI to undertake a long, self-critical examination that leads, with intelligence and courage, to a profound renovation. But the task has to be the product of a thorough, participatory revision of its structures and practices. The PRI is no longer the only front joining all political tendencies. Today, part of these options have become radicalized and have strengthened other political parties. It is necessary for the PRI to rigorously specify, in this hour of definitions, the new role that it will play as the party defending the theory and praxis of the Revolution. The PRI will have to become accustomed to living together with powerful minorities that have gained popular support. It has to transform itself, but without breaking with its long historical trajectory, which is equivalent to confirming its leadership with the ideas and proposals of the Mexican Revolution. This attitude will not only help to strengthen the party's internal vitality, but also the stability of the country. It would also be a spur for minority parties to transcend purely electoral circumstance and to consolidate their own political and ideological positions.

The PRI will have to become accustomed to living with powerful minorities that have gained popular support

The PRI will have to run the risk of abandoning many of its traditions and forms, to concretize its own platform as a political party, even above the particular interests of the sectors that constitute it. It will be necessary to work with them. The reason is clear. As I said before the elections, we change or things will get worse. Why? Because with real options to the left and to the right, voters who do not see their expectations for change satisfied will be able to vote in the next elections for the extremes and this would mean a split in the party that has promoted the advance of Mexico's modern history.



Citizen participation. (Photo by Renato Ibarra)

We should not forget that many voters cast their ballots against the PRI's postponement of its promises, rather than in favor of the options presented by minority parties. We have, then, three years to show our determination to fulfill our goals and renovate the party. In this lapse, the system will have to arrive at definitions that have hardly been sketched out as of yet.

But if it is true that the transformation has to be started by the PRI, everyone will have to make adjustments and be brought up to date. Everyone will have to update themselves to be at the level of the Mexican people—the PRI, as well as the leftist coalition that will have to evolve into a party and transcend the heterogeneous union caused by the urgency of its electoral participation. In that grouping, there are many different currents that will have to make an effort similar to that of the strategic and ideological grouping that awaits the PRI. And the National Action Party (PAN), for its part, will soon have to confront the dilemma of the tendencies that characterize it. The so-called “neoPANism,” represented by its presidential candidate, is not the same as the historical PAN linked to the ideas of Gómez Morín, nor is either current completely homogeneous with the ideas of a large part of the urban youth and of the the middle class.

The fact that many voters cast their ballots more against the PRI should not be lost from sight

Moreover, the opposition will stop being the opposition in broad terms, to convert itself into a co-responsible part of the future government's progress. That is the other face of the transition from a system of practically one sole party to a new system of a majority party with minorities of indisputable political weight. As a whole, the opposition has to genuinely change to consolidate itself in view of the new responsibility that the people have given it. It is no longer enough to intransigently resist all governmental measures. It will have to contribute to the creation of the new system of parties with fresh criteria, in which it will necessarily be co-

The opposition will stop being the opposition in broad terms, to convert itself into a “co-responsible” part of the future government's progress

responsible. The opposition can no longer be a mere reaction. Its electorate hopes that the parties that constitute it will be converted into the head of the sector of ideas and interests that they represent.

The dissidence will now have to spring from the coexistence of different, often contradictory, points of view. Each part, beginning in September, will be co-responsible to the whole. Initiatives can only prosper with the key of genuine popular support in the entire country. Without exception, the political parties are called upon to break inertias. They have to adapt themselves and to put themselves at the level of a people who voted, above all, for democracy. It is necessary to advance quickly toward the establishment of the points of consensus on what will have to be renovated in the economic and social pact between Mexicans.

The change, because it is to be evolutionary, does not require action by ruptures; it has to be gradual. The transformation of the common struggle against depolitization into imprudent overpolitization must be avoided. The opposition will have to gradually change from what it opposes to what it proposes. It will have to prove that it can not only organize protest marches, but rather that it can participate in the legislative task that is the government's task. Can it jump to—without suddenly attacking—power in an evolutionary way? This is something that remains to be seen in the immediate future.

On the other hand, the country's new reality should not be limited to competition between parties. In any event, they are a reflection of the anxieties and aspirations of society as a whole. The tripartite representation that sprouted with the elections will necessarily have to be carried to the review in practice of all political questions. The transformation that has been put into motion will also encompass the media, which will have to genuinely inform the

public about the life of a complex, heterogeneous society. Education, social life, economic policy, and foreign commercial relations will have to be altered to the rhythm of the new times. The problem is not then merely a matter of political parties, nor much less a problem exclusive to the PRI. It is everyone's problem. It is Mexico's problem.

Basically, it has to do with the transformation of a political culture that has lasted perhaps too long and that is the product of everyone if we are to be honest. Now we must transform this culture on all fronts. We all will have a role to play in the transitional phase. Inertias will have to give way to allow free passage to intelligent initiatives so that the state, as a whole, emerges strengthened from this challenge.

Some Reasons for Change

The democratic transition demanded by the Mexican people will largely consist in adjusting the political methods to society's concrete needs and expectations. But the currents that have lead us to our present disequilibrium have still not been carefully reviewed. We ought not jump to hasty conclusions nor attribute all reasons for change to the specific lapse of time during the electoral campaigns. What is certain in that the distance between political practice and reality has been in gestation for some time now. The elections, from that perspective, constituted a call for attention. It is time to reflect—and to act—on the real causes of the electoral phenomenon as the first measures to adapt to the new reality are put into practice.

Popular Reaction

Of course, it is easy to appreciate the prolonged influence of the economic crisis on the national spirit. The citizens' vote is, among other things, a type of popular reaction to concrete circumstances of daily life. The deterioration of income that the majority of people has have suffered in the years of the crisis has undoubtedly influenced electoral preferences. Many blamed only members of the government and the PRI for the economic problems. The electoral response was, above all in this large city, voting against the ruling party. But to say that the crisis is the *only* reason for the changes that the country is seeing is an inadequate explanation. There are deeper causes that cannot be ignored. If we rely exclusively on economic explanations,

reality would soon pass us again, perhaps with greater vehemence.

Three years ago I said, and I repeat it now: the majority party, which is key to the political systems, has to update itself in accordance with the dynamic that the country is beginning to live. What did and does that dynamic consist of? It seems to me that there are at least four points that should be remembered now, because they have as much or more importance than they did in 1985.

1. I affirmed then that the Mexican Revolution was in reality a sum of revolutions. Of course, it was the last democratic-bourgeois revolution of the past century and the first social and popular one of the 20th century. But it was also a movement that bound together the different currents that arose within the regions of Mexico. In the north, democracy and liberalism were postulated as national plan; in the central and southern zones, the recovery of the property of the land in favor of the peasants was sought; and in the southeast, an advanced social state, promoter and rector of development, was proposed with an idea far ahead of its time. It seemed that such differences, manifest from the beginning, had been absorbed by a predominant, national criterion. We all know that unity within diversity was an indispensable requirement to permit the country to overcome its differences and to finally put into movement the allied plan that gave birth to the Mexican Revolution.

Centralism, at its time, was certainly a necessary tendency. But the concentration of power did not revoke regional life. It was not long ago that, led by President Miguel de la Madrid, we perceived the need to quickly reverse that centralist inertia that with time came to convert itself into a true point of strangulation for national development. The democratic demand is totally contrary to centralism. But the recognition of this regional diversity did not advance with the desired swiftness within the PRI nor in the political system as a whole. It is not an exaggeration to say now that the persistence of old methods rooted in the center undermined many of the foundations skillfully assembled by other political options.

If the electoral map is examined, it may be clearly noted that tendencies vary notably between different regions and even within each region. The center is not the same as the southeast



March for respect for voting.

nor is it the same as the north. In fact, it never has been so. Nonetheless stubborn centralism has formed generalizations, especially based on the electoral results from the nation's capital. In the country, the PRI has continued to be the option preferred by the majority of the electorate. In 27 states it retained a majority position not only in rural areas but also in almost all urban zones. Nevertheless, the PRI lost in the Federal District and its metropolitan zone which has contributed to magnify its defeats, since the capital is a great resounding box.

It is common that life in Mexico City, the seat of federal and national media powers, is confused with that of the entire country. But it is certain that there is no room for general explanations arising from partial visions. In spite of its evident demonstrations of strength, the opposition must not fall into that same error. If it wants to consolidate its power, it has to transcend its regional condition, participating truly and everyday in all states, something that has still not taken place.

2. This reflection goes hand in hand with the specific problem of Mexico City, the other face of centralism. On the one hand, the importance of regional activity has been ignored, on the other hand, excessive concentration has come to suffocate the world's largest metropolitan zone. In the capital, reality appears heavily distorted while relations with the rest of Mexico have been diluted by the magnitude of the capital's own problems. Being the capital, the Federal District and its metropolitan zone ironically live re-

moved from the rest of the country. The diagnosis of the difficulties confronted by the megalopolis have become clearer in recent years and it can help us to understand some of what is happening.

We know that its future is closely linked to the success of decentralization. Its future prosperity depends to a good measure on the autonomous development of other regions. But, in spite of the enormous efforts that are made daily to keep the great city functioning, dwellers of the capital feel and resent the fact that we have offered them a distressing panorama as their destiny.

Compounding the economic problems experienced all over the country, Mexico City dwellers face problems of safety, pollution, transportation and overcrowding. The inhabitants of the capital also faced the traumatic consequences of the 1985 earthquake and have suffered, or they feel this way, a type of "political marginalization."

As an immediate response to these accumulated problems, many have thought that the capital's congestion could be relieved by inviting capital residents to abandon their homes. But isn't that asking people to leave their original roots or those that they have already created? Decentralization, although well planned by the government, has been poorly translated on more than a few occasions as an aggression against those who live in Mexico City and make up the close to one quarter of the national population. The gist of decentralizations lies not only in the exit

of those who inhabit the capital, but in the strengthening medium-sized cities. In the Mexico City metropolitan area, there is still a lack of organizational imagination necessary to respond to the everyday problems of overcrowding. It is necessary to create more opportunities for life outside of the metropolitan zone, but it is also necessary to rescue the cohabitation in many urban communities throughout Mexico City.

3. The third point that has been influential in the modification of national political life is the confusion between the roles of the government and of the majority party. On several occasions I have indicated that the majority party's evolution from the PRN to the PRM and, later to the PRI, demonstrated the system's capacity to adapt to changes that the same system was promoting. In 1985, I emphasized the advantages of taking a new step forward by separating the tasks of the party from those of the government. We should seek a party in the government, but not a party of the government. Confronting the crisis, it was evident that society would demand renewed proposals and that it would be better if those proposals arose from the constant mobilization of the party in power. Undoubtedly the extensive and intensive political campaign undertaken by the triumphant candidate of today, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, constituted the outlet for that mobilization. But I fear that a good part of the electorate also hoped for a renewal at all levels of the party, with a clearer separation of governmental agencies.

The future is closely linked to the success of decentralization: its future prosperity depends to a good measure on the autonomous development of other regions

The demand of the party's membership was to strengthen the methods and structures from below and from within the party itself. Their goal was to prepare the party in advance in different sectors and in state, district, municipal and sectional committees for the elections. They wanted to strengthen internal democracy and to invigorate true militancy. Many advances have been

THE HARVEST HOUR

Bernardo Bátiz V.

Such a gigantic step toward democracy must be consolidated. Of course, what has been achieved up till now is not the final goal nor an indication that the struggle should be stopped. Nor is it a matter of making firewood from a fallen tree. However, between continuing to exert pressure with the same force and abandoning the struggle, there are other intermediary options that may eventually prove to be best.

The government is caught in a one-way street. It lacks credibility and any clear hopes of recovering it. Leaders of the official party and those of the system are more disconcerted than ever, but they maintain resources that in fact may be used brutally and without thought if pressure arrives at

limits that they consider intolerable.

Now is probably the moment of achieving what was not attained in 1986 with respect to new electoral legislation. Today, with the opposition's strength, it is possible to force the government to modify the code in effect and to adapt it to Mexico's new political reality. The code is bad, con-

Now is probably the moment of achieving what was not attained before with respect to new electoral laws



Victory sign in the Zócalo. (Photo by Angeles Torrejón)

Deputy for the National Action Party (PAN)

This article first appeared in *La Jornada*, July 20, 1988.

In times of economic crisis, democracy should have priority

tradictory, confused, labyrinthine, non-systematic, imprecise and open to abuses. The moment has arrived for the opposition to force the government to reformulate such an important law.

The main reforms are few in number. They may be formulated by good lawyers who can be found among party members or among members of the bar association which is beginning to show signs of new life.

A basic change is an electoral authority who has independence from the government in political matters, is autonomous in terms of administration and is made up of party representatives who are prepared to place their vocations for justice and for truth before party convictions. It would be terrible for Mexico if a new electoral organization absolved from the government, continued the vices of partiality and sectarianism. The risk is real and it must be cut short.

Another change should be made in the voting lists and in the voting identification cards. Moderns electronics will provide feasible and reliable solution. It should have the funding necessary by an independent electoral organization. It should have the funding necessary for its proper functioning. In times of economic crisis, democracy should have priority.

Also it will be necessary to modify the composition of electoral voting precincts. In all cases, residents and party representatives from each party should be in charge of the great responsibility of collecting and counting the votes. There should be a vote totaling document that is simple to fill out and easy to understand. There should be no more than 300 to 350 voters in each precinct and secrecy of the ballot must be fully guaranteed. These steps are indispensable to consolidate the advances that have been gained up till now, to harvest what has been planted with so much effort and patience. If the government, as it has offered, is prepared to hold a dialogue, then these are some of the points for the agenda.

made in that sense, but much has been left behind by the weight of inertia. Profound changes are always met with equally profound resistance. And in this case, in spite of the efforts of national leadership and a good part of the members at the grassroots level, the dynamic was slower than it should have been. The confusion between party and government has not been resolved. And before public opinion, the PRI bears the weight of almost all its failures and very few of its successes. The time for the complete transformation of this less than virtuous relation was brief and after the July 6 elections the time for change has been reduced even more.

4. The desperation of some and the confrontations between different viewpoints in difficult times for the country make the risk of an internal split foreseeable. Three years ago I said and I quote to the letter: "Just as Mexico is many Mexicos and the Revolution, many revolutions, the PRI is many parties. Thus democracy is carried out within the PRI and then spreads to the entire country. And so the PRI will have its own internal opposition. In Mexico, the formal opposition still does not win the majority. Or, said in another way, in Mexico until now the real opposition has always won. Thus Reyes Heróles said that the opposition's victories are more self defeats of the PRI. He indicated that from here arises also a serious danger: a division. In order to avoid them, we always keep in mind that the schisms of Almazán and Henríquez were at the point of provoking a rupture. They were oppositions that sprouted within the party. A heterogeneous force, when it is not careful, becomes a weakness." Today, unfortunately, the consequences of that split are evident: the leadership of the second electoral force of the country has arose from the ranks of the PRI. And the risk of further divisions persists. The departure of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and of those who followed him did not eliminate the possibility of other separations. I immediately add that neither did it annul the party's capacity for cohesion.

The analysis of the factors which have called for change are not exhausted in the four points that I have commented on. It is necessary to reiterate, on the contrary, the need for further reflections to fully analyze those transformations which await Mexico. But it is appropriate to note, nevertheless, the most evident traits of

what could be the beginning of a new political era in the country.

The Perspective from Close-up

Realistically defining the methods and instruments of renewed pluralism will have to be a collective task. I do not claim to know them beforehand. They will have to be derived, as I have already said, from dialogue and intelligent reconciliation. Nevertheless, it is clear that what is beginning to appear in the Mexican future is a new democratic trilogy. The first signs of its shape are already visible: the formation of three strong political options that, surely, will be reorganized in light of election results.

It will be a collective task to realistically define the method and the necessary instruments of renewed pluralism

As a member of the PRI I must be concerned primarily with my party. It is necessary to work on its organization, returning to its origins. If the PNR was born from the union of what was dispersed, the PRI now confronts the challenge of uniting 32 state parties into one great national party with a solid regional and local support. Recognizing the country's diversity, the party will be able to undertake the principal changes that are needed to regain its strength. It is necessary to rebuild the PRI from its foundations, from the sectors, in a simple and yet at the same time difficult move: the democratic selection of leaders and candidates. Consultation with the bases, a method already successfully employed in certain local elections, has to return to be an everyday task at all levels. With this sole decision, it will be possible to maintain the entire party structure in constant activity, to revitalize the internal consensus and above all, to recuperate the indisputable leadership in each state and in the country as a whole.

It has been said that this method is opposed to the apparent rigidity of the sectors, that is to say, of the "corporate" part of the PRI. I think that the opposite is the case: party sectors are



Election day in the countryside. (Photo by Lucio Blanco)

also confronting the dilemma of transforming or weakening themselves and the logical path that lies ahead is a reorganization of intermediary forces, based on the double support of internal democracy and of the negotiatory capacity of its leadership. We cannot ignore the importance of the relative independence that characterizes the sectors. Each one represents a segment of the national reality. To ask them only for discipline is to lead them to their own defeat. They exist in order to defend their constituents' interests and this should be seized with greater combativeness. Internal democracy should not be incompatible with class leadership. Of course vices such as imposition which have damaged our great organizations have to be rejected. But the party's different sectors—fundamental columns of our party—must strengthen themselves in order to survive.

Democracy in the entire structure of the party and greater autonomy for the sectors will require a new relation between party and government. The party must once again be a vanguard of social organization. Its responsibility is to surge ahead, but also to be attentive to the public mood: to indicate the paths which should be followed and to denounce errors and deviations. Thus it has to be advanced, it must grasp public demands and make sure the government fulfills its promises to meet such demands. If desired, the party has to convert itself into a type of popular "comptroller general." The party should also con-

vert itself into the brightest forum in the political arena as an honest service to the public.

The second shape in Mexico's political future that is becoming visible is the Mexican people's reaffirmation of the obsolescence of criteria that assume that all that emanates from the center is national.

Now it is clearer than ever before that the particular problems of each region of the country require a definition of different political tendencies. I do not want to say that the elections have divided the country. Rather, the July 6 elections ratified Mexico's diversity in all its dimensions. If prior to the elections there were clear traces of the need to urgently eradicate what remains of centralism—which is no small feat—after the elections it is obvious that the states must participate more liberally in the future political development of the nation. I do not refer so much to state governments as to the social and political organizations of each entity.

The Role of Municipality

Decentralization is linked to democracy and it has to be profoundly carried out as was clearly expressed in the electoral mandate. It is almost unnecessary to underscore the importance of recuperating municipal life. In the future democracy, municipalities will play a key role: each municipality should have the power to tip the scales in major decisions, perhaps as never before in the history of Mexico. The

reason is very simple: the most direct form of popular representation resides in the municipalities.

The third aspect of the democratic trilogy that may be assessed is perhaps the most complex and most debated. I refer to the new relations between federal powers. I believe that the era of preeminent presidentialism will have to step aside for a new system characterized by a stronger legislative branch and a more independent judicial branch as indicated by Carlos Salinas de Gortari in his discourse in Puebla. In particular, the Chamber of Deputies will have to convert itself into the vanguard of the party system. What begins in September will be a legislature of historic dimensions. In good measure whether democracy advances with fluidity or is stagnated in infinite discussions will depend on the new Chamber of Deputies. The new Chamber of Deputies will be divided into practically equal parts between PRI and opposition deputies. The Senate will include four representatives of the Cardenist coalition—two of them representing Mexico City with all that this entails. With regard to the composition of the new Chamber of Deputies, the first observation that stands out is the virtual equivalence of forces. However, this is a matter of a precarious equilibrium by virtue of the fact that the majority will only be possible by a few votes. The new structure will require, then, the search for a tactical alliance to carry out governmental programs, to legitimate legislative resolutions and to perfect judicial action.

We are looking at a situation in which many parties are still in the process of being born, a process which will take time. Mexico's pluralistic representation in Congress which reflects Mexico's political reality, will begin to resemble the intense parliamentary life of other countries. Many of the decisions of the executive branch will have to pass through the sieve of the Congress. For example, what will occur when the proposals of a minister of state are met with objections by a number of deputies? The response reveals the transitional regimen that must govern Mexico in the coming years and, of course, the role that the majority party will have to play as a type of sieve prior to the inter-party debate.

The party system can only mature, however, in light of the responsible action of the political actors. The process

of transforming the three parties will rely, to a large extent, on negotiations between parties and on the social might that they represent. Pluripartisanism must overcome the electoral competition to institutionalize itself in Congress, in executive decisions, and in judicial measures.

It is up to the political parties to follow the example of maturity set by the people. We must establish new rules of the game. We must renew the political and social pact between Mexicans. I see some qualities in that process that should be taken into account: tolerance, respect, prudence and intelligence. It is necessary to make a profound effort to find points of equilibrium and to establish a basic consensus to begin the dialogue required by national unity. All of this will show us how to delve deeper into democracy or better yet: to lay the foundations for a new democratic culture.

Final Considerations: To Transcend the Immediate

Mexico should not get bogged down in "maximalist" tactics of all or nothing which are contrary to democratic life. Sticking to the law, we will have to overcome the critical moment of electoral evaluation and look ahead. It does little good to subject yourself to the law and then immediately deny it in declarations and rallies. The law must be respected on the principle of political ethics and in all parts. If the norms that have made this phase essential for the history of Mexico possible are nevertheless unsatisfactory,

there will be time and room to perfect them. The law must be changed by the law. The course of the country was not detained on July 6. The cruder the mutual accusations become, the more the patrimony of popular trust—indispensable for the nation's political health—will be exhausted. The people want something else. They did not vote to see their will destroyed. They voted, I insist, in favor of democracy, in favor of the rule of law.

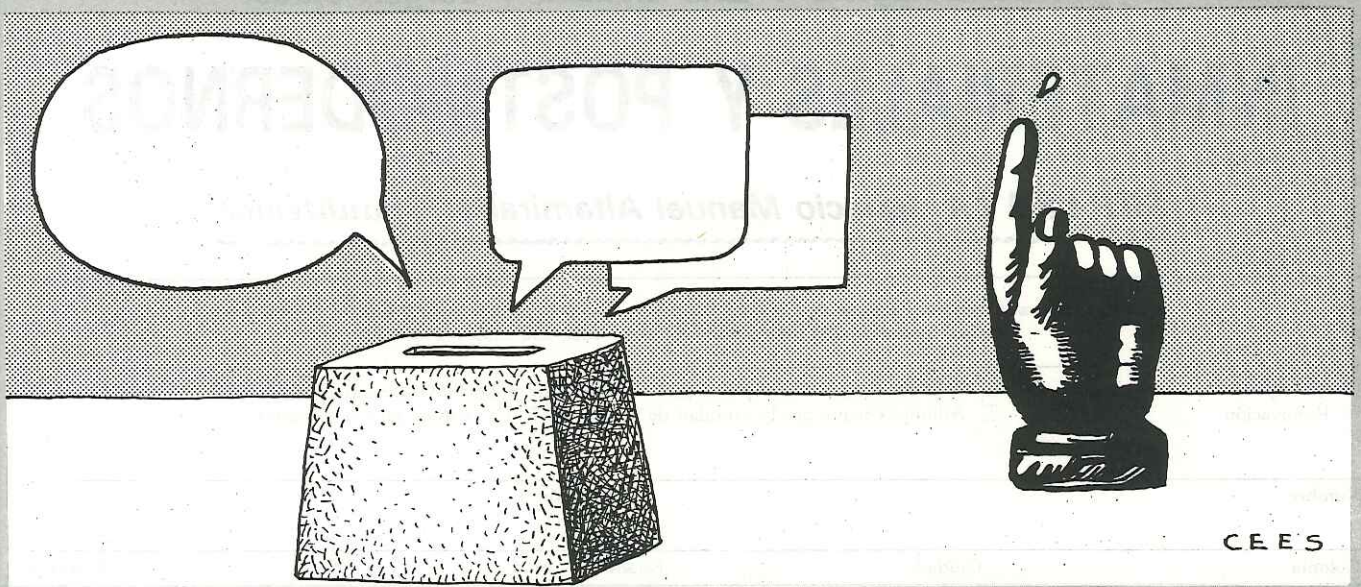
I do not speak of overlooking electoral irregularities where they occurred, but rather to avoid generalizations that confuse the issue and that take away from the transformations that are already being announced. It is an error, perhaps the products of inertia, to believe that the strategy of discrediting the elections will affect only the PRI.

At the moment, the basis for the full emergence of democracy lies in the recuperation of the system's credibility. No party should betray the people's confidence, because the country's weakness benefits no one. It is necessary to undertake the democratic modernization of Mexico, searching for consensuses beyond electoral speculations. Legality has to cease to be only a political banner and convert itself into the guide for action: a legality that means respect for electoral laws and the petitions derived from those laws.

We must transcend the immediate difficulties of the electoral process, illuminating its dark sides with information and blending in the arguments regarding the respect of the will of the people. The slowness of the handing

in of election results has been criticized. Based on that reasonable criticism, arguments have been put forth that seek to invalidate the totality of the elections. The press of some countries widely disseminated those arguments and it has helped contribute to the confusion that hampers the birth of the country's new political era. We must return to the law in order to give clarity to the process: votes were counted, ballot after ballot in each voting booth, and in each one, the corresponding reports were written up and signed by the representatives of the different political parties. The reports and ballots were sent to the District Committee for ratification or rectification. It is perhaps an excessively slow procedure, but it is the one established by the law. Delays cannot be attributed to the will of a single party, since all participated in the scrutiny and later ratified it in each electoral district.

In dealing with more than 54,000 voting booths, it is natural that irregularities might occur. Voting is carried out by fallible human beings, in good or bad faith and of any ideological bent. We are not in the presence of the infantile reductionism of the good guys against the bad guys, but rather of a complex process that, in spite of everything, has legal outlets to settle controversies that may arise. I know only too well that many will remain unsatisfied in any case, but I also know that the parties knew the rules of the Federal Electoral Code and it is precisely now when they have the patriotic obligation to respect them. Consequently, the partial failures of the electoral procedure that undoubtedly



exist, do not totally disqualify the entire process. Even where sufficient evidence supporting inconformities exists, we will be talking about only parts of the process which in no way should be carried to hasty generalizations nor to preconceived judgments. Who should come out ahead in this process are the Mexican people.

The attitude of some representatives of the foreign press, on the other hand, is not surprising. I avoid, naturally, falling into generalizations, of which I disapprove. There are objective serious correspondents who fulfill their job of collecting information with professionalism, but how many times have other special correspondents predicted the beginning of an armed revolt in Mexico? How many times have they come in search of alarming news? How many times have they come out with incomplete versions of stories? It is not unusual, then, that the possibility of announcing a great electoral fraud attracted them. Separate mention, however, should be made of

the Spanish press. Its growing interest in the situation in Mexico speaks well for the identity that joins us with Spain. But the anxiousness with which they view our democracy merits special attention. Perhaps they do not know the difficulties that people must face to peacefully move from one political system with deep roots to another, more dynamic, more open, more pluralistic one. I do not claim to compare the Spain of Franco with Mexico in transition: we all know that our post-Revolutionary system has always renounced the dictatorial temptation, but the transition toward a strengthened democracy is, for any people, a challenge that takes time. Our friends in Spain and in the world can considerably help us if they understand July 6 with objectivity and they recognize the efforts that we as Mexicans are making to transform our political system without altering social stability.

The coming days will be a challenge to Mexico's capacity for adaptation in confronting entirely new

situations. We all have to learn quickly and collaborate in the full emergence of a new political culture. The challenge is of enormous proportions, because although it has begun due to partisan questions, it cannot be reduced solely to this level. It encompasses much more than this. Society as a whole must adapt itself to the new ways of carrying out and understanding politics. We must break with old methods which over time have turned into custom. Democracy, a statement which must be repeated as many times as necessary, is way of life that begins in the elections but must later reach all levels of social life. The media, universities, businesses, unions, civil associations, rural organizations, and the life of the entire country will be reasons for changes in this step toward democratic renovation. Modernization necessitates a change in mentalities. As Mexicans, we must adapt ourselves to the new historical position that we ourselves have put into motion. □

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449

junio, 1988

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TRANSPARENT DEMOCRACY

The Masses and their Leaders

Pablo González Casanova

Although I believe that the way to new sociopolitical negotiations is both possible and necessary, I can foresee several obstacles to the realization of such negotiations. There is first of all, the obstacle of "legitimacy" in the electoral process. Second, there is the obstacle of the "hotheads" and the resentful, or those who would look for the breakdown of constitutional order. Third, there is the obstacle of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) members who are used to always winning and determined to "carry away victory when they lose." Fourth, there is the obstacle of Legorreta's 300 business leaders. Fifth, there is the structural obstacle of a tributary, multinationalized, dependent capitalism. Sixth, there is the obstacle of an impoverished people and a "nobody" working class that was formerly attended to by the government—at least in the better organized, corporative part—both restless and irritated and with an emerging awareness of its mass strength which it can feel, see and would like to use. Seventh, there is the obstacle of a neoliberal president that doesn't agree with Carlos Salinas de Gortari's speech at Chalco nor with the political and economic changes that the population demands, and the obstacle of a Salinas who leaves his political discourse in the realm of electoral rhetoric by not understanding that, in order for it to become reality, a transparent democracy is indispensable. Finally, there is the obstacle of those who perceive any negotiation as

An immense proportion of public opinion, both national and international, does not believe that the constitutional right of suffrage has been respected

a trick, as a sellout, without understanding that negotiations exist that are not necessarily betrayals and that are necessary in order to meet the demands of the people.

I am going to analyze these obstacles, beginning with a consideration of the first one. With all of them, I will make observations which I feel are true.

The lack of legitimacy of the Mexican elections of 1988 is a universally accepted fact, not just in Mexico, but also in the world at large. The lack of legitimacy is a political fact. Today, the Mexican government is faced to an unprecedented degree with the problem of "winning without convincing," that is to say, it is faced with the problem of force. The problem is not the result of a suspension of the Constitution, as in South America. At the present, the problem has arisen because of a lack of legitimacy within the constitutional framework that the government claims it respects.

The problem lies in the fact that an immense proportion of public opinion,

both national and international, does not believe that the constitutional right of suffrage has been respected. The idea of "macrofraud" is very widely held, and because international and transnational opinion is valued in national politics, it is no small matter that the entire world says that the government was disposed to commit fraud against the will of the people.

It is even more important that all of the opposition parties for the first time in modern electoral history affirm that the elections were not legitimate. While some—such as the National Democratic Front (FDN)—claim to have won, others, in particular the National Action Party (PAN) maintain that the turbulence is of such magnitude that it is impossible to say whether they have won or lost and that no one can possibly claim to know what the results were with any honesty or seriousness.

There are several proposals designed to recover legitimacy. First of all, there are proposals that come from the government itself. Some within the government ponder a traditional transaction with negotiations and agreements with the leaders of the opposition in order to calm the spirits of those involved. Others within the government, imagine a new type of political negotiation with the left that could affect economic and social policies by conceding positions to leftist candidates. Of course, there are also hard-liners inside the government who are adamantly opposed to any negotiations with or concessions to the opposition. Fidel Velasquez absurdly demands no negotiation with the op-

position, while proposing to play opposition politics from inside the government in the old, limited way.

An Act of Faith

What no one in the government doubts, and which is dispensed as dogma, is that Salinas de Gortari won the elections. In front of this dogma or act of faith, the PAN candidate declares, "He who would like to think of himself as an even slightly ethical or moral man cannot claim to have won." Clouthier discredits Salinas de Gortari and he discredits Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. He discredits the elections "chaos." He has warned, "If they rob this election, I can assure you that they won't finish the term." He even attributes greater economic deterioration to the "lack of credibility" resulting from the elections of July 6. In these circumstances he makes an extreme demand, the elections should be annulled and new elections should be called. Clouthier's proposal appears to be the furthest from a viable, political negotiation. From the very first, he calls for the annulment of the elections.

Cárdenas' position is different. Cárdenas' proposal lends itself much more to a social and political negotiation of the new type, if legitimacy is seen as a key problem to the nation's future. Cárdenas does not say he won; he doesn't state it as an absolute truth. "We believe," he affirmed on July 28 en route to Tula, Hidalgo, "that we won, but, if they can show us that the result is otherwise, then we can find no reason not to accept that fact."

Cárdenas asks that the government not demand that its word be taken on faith. But he does not stop there. He demands that the government continue to divulge the electoral information that it has stopped doing. More concretely, he demonstrates that the Federal Electoral Commission, which had originally made public the figures from the polls, suddenly stopped doing so. Cárdenas asks that Mexico be permitted to see the results of the official polling affidavits, all of them.

The problem and the solution lie in the following:

Cárdenas' argues that for Salinas to have obtained 50.36 percent of the final total, he would have needed to have obtained 67 percent of the vote in the totals of the polling places of which there is no public information, that is to say, almost double what he

WHEN THE ELITES DIVIDE

Lorenzo Meyer

Each time that there has been a significant change in the Mexican political regime, it has been preceded by a rupture in the elite

A little more than a year ago we were all witness to a spectacle that developed in an entirely predictable way. At the 12th assembly of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) a handful of dissidents proposed the internal democratization of the ruling party that has the longest tradition in the western world. Without great ceremony, the heterodox members were put in their place. First they were ridiculed, then ostracized, finally to wind up abandoning the Great Party to be condemned to live in error, that is to say, outside the party's budget. In normal times this would have been the end of the story, a mere footnote in the Great Party's long history. But it turns out that 1987 was not a normal time in Mexican politics: it was the fifth year of the Great Mexican Depression.



PAN supporters at a PRI meeting.
(Photo from uno más uno archive)

Today that small group of reformers, headed by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, has incredibly turned the tables. Now, in pursuit of the July 6 elections with several aces in hand, the Cardenist movement has demonstrated to Mexico—and incidentally to the

Academics Director of the Colegio de México
This article first appeared in *Excelsior*, July 27, 1988.

rest of the world—that the ones who were in error were not those who ended up leaving the state party, but rather those who remained inside. Wielding a hollow authority, now without content, the PRI denied the possibility of channeling the political discontent brought on by the economic crisis into a more or less free play for the party's nomination of its presidential candidate.

**Today, for the first time,
the possibility exists that
the rupture will not lead to
violence**

Now then, how is it that this minority that called itself the Democratic Current and that failed in its attempt to win a niche within the PRI, today has enormous popular support that allows it to very successfully confront the invincible Mexican presidency of yore to the point of prohibiting in from being able to govern? Part of the answer can be found by examining past experiences when the governing elite weakened by the exercise of power, lost its cohesion and divided.

Casting a glance at our political history, one fact stands out: each time that there has been a significant change in the Mexican political regime it has been preceded by a rupture in the elite. That is to say, a conflict within the dominant group has ended in the branching off of another group. That does not mean that the division has been the only cause for change. These historical changes have been the result of very complex processes, the origins of which predate the fragmentation of the governing group. Nevertheless the rupture within the elite has been a powerful catalyst putting other players into action, namely the subordinate, mass groups who, after all, are crucial in the process of change.

Historical Memory

A fundamental rupture in the core of the dominant group served as a precedent to the great political movements of Mexico's Independence, the

Reform and the Mexican Revolution, to mention just three of the most important examples from our history. In each of the three cases, the causes of the clash between a minority of the small privileged group—the standard bearers of change—and the bulk of their equals—the defenders of the *statu quo*—arose from a fundamental disagreement over how to confront a major crisis within the dominant system. These crises were the Spanish invasion and the capture of its monarch by the French, the United States defeat of Mexico and the disastrous leadership of Santa Anna, and finally, the presidential succession during the dictatorship of General Porfirio Díaz. Along with a disagreement over *how* to confront the challenges of each one of these three crises another equally critical point of disconformity arose, namely *who* should do the confronting. That is to say, a personal struggle arose within the elite over who had the right to exercise supreme power in the moments of change.

In each one of the three crises that have marked the end of one historical era and the beginning of another in Mexico, the group that put the extant arrangement into doubt in the name of another, new, more legitimate one, was a marginalized minority within the elite group in power. To successfully challenge their powerful enemies, the dissidents always had to call on the non-powerful classes for their support, that is to say, the middle classes or the common people or both. In reality, in these three cases the banners raised by the discontented ones were general principles that were aimed at rescuing the dignity and interests of the Mexicana people as a whole, interests and dignity forgotten by those who had exercised power.

From this perspective, what is happening today is not in its essence anything entirely new. The dispute between the ones in power has given origin in various occasions to an explosion that has broken the iron circle that has always surrounded power in Mexico. Due to that rupture, new forces, new actors burst in, actors who challenged the ruling system until it was transformed.

But if there is nothing entirely new under the sun, neither is history repeated in exactly the same way. Today, for

example, the rupture has not come from only one point: it comes from the left as well as from the right. In effect, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Manuel J. Clouthier and part of the group that surrounds both of them were in their times central parts of the system of domination that is today put into doubt. Both leaders despite their antagonistic positions agreed on one point: on an invitation to the masses of citizens, still passive up to a little while ago, to cease being mere objects in the political arena and to convert themselves into conscious political actors. This invitation in the face of the deterioration of the quality of life turns out to be very attractive and even necessary.

However, the most important difference between the rupture in the elite of the past and of the present is not its double character, but rather the fact that today, for the first time, the possibility exists that the rupture will not lead to violence. If all of those involved in the process conduct themselves with a minimum of good sense—and the citizens who have responded to the call of the new leaders have behaved in an optimal way at the balloting boxes as well as in the streets—perhaps it will be possible to pass with difficulty, but without falling hopelessly into chaos, from an authoritarian system to a pluralistic one.

**Today it is not utopian to
suppose that it is possible
to peacefully overcome the
authoritarianism and
corporatism of the
present**

The historical memory—the recollection of the immeasurable suffering and tremendous losses provoked by the civil struggles of the past—should serve to curb the passions of those who have launched the assault on the citadel of authority as well as to limit the inflexibility of the defenders of the citadel. Today it is not utopian to suppose that it is possible to peacefully overcome the authoritarianism and corporatism of the present and to arrive at a situation in

which a true pluralism reigns, permitting, with the passage of time, the existence of true political parties and competitive, reasonably clean elections, in which basic agreements are made in broad daylight between the legitimate representatives of social groups and not as today, in the solitude of the palace between the president and the upper corporate echelons.

Peaceful Transition

Undoubtedly it is the principal responsibility of the government and its supporters to regulate the transition from one system to another. In effect, the government must accept that what has happened now is not a mere electoral setback, but rather the beginning of a process that must arrive at a change in the fundamental rules of the political game. Today, the president, his collaborators and his supporters must think about what, until yesterday, was impossible: that it is necessary to be prepared for the peaceful transfer of power in some not very distant future to someone who obtains it by way of voting that can no longer be stained as today's ballots, by the shadow of fraud. Any attempt to step backward, to resist change by the path of violence, would be suicide and an unforgivable historical error.

As far as the opposition is concerned and Cárdenas supporters in particular, they must not demobilize themselves nor disappoint their followers by relinquishing their demands for clean elections and, above all, for more just rules in the political game. Nevertheless, the opposition must not arrive at limiting situations. In any event, it is essential that the new leadership search for ways of channeling the action of the people as actors via a new party—today, the action of the Cardenist masses seems to have gone beyond that of the existing parties. Otherwise the risk is run of not efficiently channeling that genuine creation of power that the appearance of a massive leftist electorate signifies. Only with the formation of a party of leftist masses of the PRI can the present-day rupture of the elite lead to a peaceful, long-term struggle that puts a definitive end to the drawn out, authoritarian history of Mexico. □

Cárdenas asks that the government not demand that its word be taken on faith

won in the polling places of which we have figures. Of course, at the same time, Clouthier would have had to have obtained in the unreported polling places 12 percent instead of 22 percent and Cárdenas 20 percent instead of 39 percent, that is to say, almost half of what they obtained in the public, official polling affidavits, according to the vote totals.

Cárdenas' argument is very precise and conclusive. He asks that all the parties be allowed to examine the affidavits that have not been made public yet and that are still being retained. This is a perfectly serious petition. And if the government wishes to recover its legitimacy, it needs to make this information available and ask that it be analyzed in a clear fashion. This petition is not a provocation. It is a demand that may be attended to if the political will exists, if the government is willing to preserve constitutional order. If this will does not exist, then they will not deliver the affidavits.

It is true that asking the government to exhibit some documents that it has been more than reluctant to do is based on a simple conjecture—that they contain evidence of electoral manipulation. But if this hypothesis is incorrect, if in fact these documents of 25,000 polling places provide more support for the government and the official candidate, then there is no reason to hide them. The documents would legitimate the ruling party's triumph.

Without a doubt, there are still other sources which have called the election's legitimacy into question, for example, the irregularities in the voters' lists, the denial of election identification cards to those who were entitled to them, the ballots that were cast by election officials, the ballots that were stolen, the polling documents that "disappeared", the precincts from which opposition representatives were expelled and the "voting brigades" that went from one polling place to another to vote. Absenteeism was the highest in Mexican electoral history in both absolute and relative numbers. Given the absenteeism, only 25.32 percent of registered voters ac-

tually voted for Salinas. This is a political fact that may be added to the apparently statistical facts, like the magic 50.36 percent which Salinas supposedly obtained.

But there is still one more source of incredulity and of illegitimacy. It is found in the distrust of the present electoral process in which the PRI holds the vast majority of the positions on the different commissions such as in the Federal Electoral Commission and the Electoral Disputes Court. The political parties and the public have shown themselves to be very sceptical of a court in which the judge and the accused are from the government. Only one step remains, the establishment of the Electoral College made up of the Chamber of Deputies. Its responsibility will be enormous.

There is no doubt about it. In order to legitimize not only this government but also the next one it is absolutely necessary to deliver and analyze the polling affidavits from *all* the polling places and to make a decision based on these figures and other evidence that suggests a need for corrections in particular cases of electoral fraud. Added to the decision to deliver and not hide the remaining 24,642 documents from the same number of polls, is the obligation to emit an objective judgment on the real results of the national, state and district totals. And added to this is another decision that can only be conceived as scandalously provocative and irresponsible to those who postulate consciously or unconsciously a policy of repression. This is no exaggeration: or voting is respected as a governmental practice or we are headed towards a policy of repression in which the army would be called out against the population without knowing why or wanting to. Sooner or later, and sooner than later, this will be the alternative.

Preserving the Constitution

On the supposition that Salinas' triumph is not supported by proof, the Electoral College's responsibility will be enormous with its 260 PRI deputies and 240 from the opposition. In particular, it will be an enormous responsibility for the PRI deputies who seriously believe it necessary to preserve the nation's constitution and with it a democracy that satisfies the demands of the people for the truth. Several PRI deputies will be faced with a civic and moral dilemma which they

will surely resolve with a politically realistic and moral decision to vote for the truth.

On the other hand, the basis of the opposition must be the law, and if the law cannot prove "macrofraud," then it is necessary to support with all firmness the electoral result, whatever it may be, without claiming irregularities that cannot be proven. But for this to occur, the first step must be taken by the government, and the final decision—a constitutional one—lies with the Congress. The political decision to not hide the voting results from 24,642 polling places lies with the president who continues to be Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado. He is the one—perhaps the last president of an institutional presidentialist regime—who must make the necessary decisions to provide his successor government with a legitimacy. If he fails to do so, he will leave the country in a position of extreme weakness and instability. The last act of a president who has done everything in his power to end the former political system and initiate a system of political parties should consist of facilitating in every way possible a process by which the truth about who won can be known. It is true that the president to a certain degree reflects national and transnational forces and that he chooses within this context. But he does *choose*.

The obstacles to a policy of consensus begin with the obstacles which do not permit public accounting of the electoral process. If the electoral process can be cleared up and the necessary decisions are made about *effective* suffrage, a new political process can be initiated, though not without some difficulty, especially in a country like ours on the capitalist periphery. Here, Legorreta's 300 business leaders and other national, political and foreign businessmen are use to the idea that doing business in Mexico consists of looting Montezuma's treasure, dominate the people through force and exploit them with myths and inflation without a thought about hunger, disease, crime and the lack of schools and housing. All so that they can keep their well-earned income and send the indispensable "quinto" to the king or the "half" to the International Monetary Fund. Many of them are pressuring publicly for the continuation and the accentuation of the speculative, monetarist policies that have permitted them to prosper so well in the past years. And they are

prepared to throw the blame of the "possible fall of Salinas" on the "corruption of the PRI-government." Their idea, of course, is to accept a South American-style policy of repressive looting in which they already know how to give greater strength to the rightist currents in the army. They imagine that a forceful government will have to rule for a brief period with a civilian head of state, then with a military head for a longer period.

In order to legitimize this government it is absolutely necessary to deliver and analyze all polling affidavits

Among the indoctrinated, neoliberal, "political" businessmen, there are those who are well acquainted with the politics of destabilization. They are both psychologically and ideologically prepared to back up any destabilizing measure that would frustrate a popular, democratic triumph, including the use of ultraleftist provocateurs who call for a takeover of the National Palace—a similar call could be heard among such provocateurs when Cárdenas held a rally in the Zócalo in July. The extreme right wing is ready

for anything and could play the role of provocateur to a frustrated people whose standards of living have fallen dramatically in this six year period.

A national, social and democratic policy will only come about if the people who drew up Salinas de Gortari's famous Chalco speech do what the candidate offered there. They will have to respect the will of the people as expressed in the ballot boxes without engaging in tricks or deals and they will have to work, with the FDN, in or outside the government to draw up appropriate policies for food, clothing, schools, health care, and housing for the great majority of Mexicans. This is of the utmost importance and can only come from an official sphere capable of recognizing that it is living in a new nation in which the opposition can enter government through the electoral process.

It is true that only an organized populace can make democracy triumph. But the response of the government is also essential.

For the time being, just as in Brazil, the people shouted "Direct elections now!", now in Mexico we must shout "The election affidavits now!" We are talking about a minimum demand whose benefits for the whole country could well be optimum. To comply with this demand would be to comply with the Federal Electoral Code and with the rule of law. □

EL ESPÍRITU DE LA CULTURA LATINOAMERICANA

CUADERNOS AMERICANOS 9
NUEVA ÉPOCA

Fundador: Jesús Silva Herzog
Director: Leopoldo Zea

UNA REVISTA EDITADA BIMESTRALMENTE EN SU NUEVA ÉPOCA POR LA UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTÓNOMA DE MÉXICO. CONJUGANDO LAS MÚLTIPLES Y DIVERSAS IDEOLOGÍAS LATINOAMERICANAS

Número 9 Mayo-Junio 1988

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Sergio Aguayo Quezada

UPON RUPTURE TOWARD AN AGREEMENT

Opposition parties demand the share of power they believe they have received from society

We live in tense and confused times in which any variant of confrontation or negotiation is possible. There are more questions than answers in spite of the fact that we are playing with the future.

Tension is logical because indifference is impossible. At times the desire arises to act impulsively and prove that one is right. Faced with the enormous costs in eliminating those who do not think in the same way, then comes the temptation to reach some type of agreement.

The dichotomy is very generalized. The government, its party and its ideologists are not accustomed to diversity. Made for power and impunity, they respond with an inflexible "we won" attitude to any challenge. They relax and call for a legality and a prudence that they do not cease to abuse. Perhaps they only play with time to wear out the opposition and to wait until their energies are calmed; they have never lacked ingenuity.

In spite of this, the caution and restraint of the actions of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the

government are noteworthy. This, they claim, is due to the strength of the opposition, which is divided over what to do and whom to blame, and due to the widespread feeling of discontent with the PRI which is waiting for more propitious times.

Opposition parties demand the share of power they believe they have received from society. They insist on legality, but they leave their options open. The precedent and the irregularities of this election have made their claims credible. At the same time, they practice the art of staying in tune with the vigorous social mobilization.

The opposition is supported by its traditional grassroots membership and by a citizenry irritated by government corruption, the economic crisis and the surrender of portions of the national sovereignty to foreign countries. The offensive cynicism of the PRI's old guard and the arrogant haughtiness of its young technocrats have also added to the damage.

A situation like this can lead to violence. Nevertheless, there is a question that no one can answer, although many have attempted it. Is society prepared for a confrontation or does it prefer to negotiate? What poll, by what means can we uncover what society wishes?

One thing we know for certain: there are three major political blocs. They are asymmetrical in their power

and internal cohesion, but none of them has the ability, at least in the short term, to eliminate the others.

The relative equilibrium of power would seem to make negotiations appropriate. However, what are they going to discuss? who was elected President? what Congress did the people elect? Are they going to discuss the laws which permitted an election that left everyone dissatisfied?

Questions without answers multiply. Will Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas be vindicated and demonstrate his triumph legally with existing information? What will happen when all peaceful avenues are exhausted and December 1 arrives? Would Cárdenas' coalition and the population in general resist a call for direct confrontation? What would and will happen to the National Action Party (PAN)? How will the PRI react? Will it succeed in recovering and taking the offensive? Will it renounce its devious practices? Will it indefinitely continue to respect a prolonged dissidence that is growing? Will the PRI be able to govern?

A Country Ready for Change

These are not purely speculative questions, because unless something unexpected develops the government has the power to anoint Carlos Salinas de Gortari as president, even if they have to do it in a half-empty Congress and in a building converted into a bunker.

Independent of the decisions that are gradually being adopted, social mobilization reveals a country ready

Is society prepared for a confrontation or does it prefer to negotiate?

for change and perhaps ready to accept negotiations that break the backbone of authoritarianism, that adapt the legal mold to the new political practice and that arrive at a rupture in the system.

In other countries an agreed upon rupture has been implemented. This formula consists of a revolution, that is, a revolution within the framework of legality and within limits accepted and legitimized by the society. This scheme eliminates high-level, secret negotiations.

An agreed upon rupture in Mexico seems possible for several reasons. Widespread social mobilization exists, there is a relative equality of powers and perhaps most important, the proposals made by the three major blocs advocate reforms to the existing order, not its destruction. The point of greatest consensus concerns politics, not the economy. Democracy is demanded more than a radical change in the ownership of the means of production.

An agreed upon rupture, an implicitly difficult concept, confronts a further obstacle in Mexico: the dispute over who will be the next president. If that obstacle can be overcome, the time seems to be right to discuss how to provide for more independent and transparent elections; how to strengthen the legislative and judicial power, the municipalities and the states; how to increase social participation in activities that affect the entire nation, such as democracy in the capital and in the private television concession, Televisa.

This is a difficult moment. The fate of the nation resides in what the three major political blocs and their allies do or let be done. Opposition parties have to balance a respect for the expectations they have created and a fidelity to their promises, with a good dose of realism that allows them to be a viable and united option.

Salinas de Gortari does not only have problems with the coalition of interests that support him, but also with at least half of population who may accept him as the legal president but not as the legitimate president. Perhaps he won, but we will never know, and the

ghost of fraud will always haunt him. His silence, that of an accomplice, does not reduce doubts about the elections in light of the underhanded methods that his supporters used to elect him. Will Salinas de Gortari and his team be able to reform the PRI? Will that be enough? Will he be able to understand that to reach a respectable place in our political history, he will have to help to destroy the system that made him?

Perhaps we shall have an agreed upon rupture and a transition to democracy. Perhaps not. In this least opportune moment, the polling fever has ended. We are left with no indication of the preference of millions of

An agreed upon rupture in Mexico seems possible for several reasons

The fate of the nation resides in what the three major political blocs and their allies do or let be done

Mexicans who followed these elections with passion and hope. Declarations, marches and opinions allow me to be certain that I am not alone in this desire for change and in this obsessive question: negotiation or confrontation?

How clearly I perceive the dishonest ambiguity of posing the problem and evading the resolution. In January of this year after much deliberation and soul-searching, I decided to vote for Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas for president. Having to put the "X" on the emblem of a party that I did not respect deeply bothered me. At that moment, there was no alternative. At this moment, and for all kinds of reasons, I give a symbolic and individual vote for an agreed upon rupture.

**Apareció el número 8-9
abril-mayo ■ \$2 500**

**LATINOAMERICA
HORACERO**

Año 1 ■ edición especial ■ número 8-9 ■ abril-mayo de 1988 ■ publicación mensual ■ Ciudad de México ■ \$2,500

**HOY ES PANAMA,
MAÑANA...**



Carlos Monsiváis

IN DEFENSE

OF HOPE

Concerning the reactions of the apostles of the PRI religion

They had played the role many times, but never before such a packed house (despite the invisibilizing efforts of national television). At precisely the moment when they should have portrayed the part of "republican dignity offended by the interruptions of the president's final State of the Nation address," the members of the political system (there were exceptions, please forgive me) took refuge in the "crushing power" of Naughty Words and played the part with all the maturity of a boxer. (Why did the PRI members say that they were so afraid of awakening the "dark side" of Mexico, if they're the ones who have always been Henchman Jeckyll to Minister Hyde, Lawyer Hyde to Businessman Jeckyll?) The legislative chamber became a thick, roaring, acritical mass that, with the serial emission of insults and condemnations like a cheering section in a sports stadium admired the denigratory allusions to their opponents' mothers with all the fervor of adolescents and compensated for the lack of critical analysis with ire.

Days before, while denying the political nature of the murders of the four adolescents, PRI Senator Ernesto Luque Feregrino verbalized so marvellously this state of mind: "I think we've had enough of prudence and enough of sensibility." On September 1 the psychic vulnerability was quite genuine—the agitator who spoke without permission in front of the president offended the PRI legislators in their very reason for being, in their very soul, in their deep-seated need to maintain power.

In the peaceful transition to democracy, presidentialism is the principal danger. Presidentialism is not only the concentration in one person of decision-making that rightly belongs to a government, a party and a society, it is also its direct and necessary complement: the atmosphere of false and true religiosity where criticism and the demand

for dialogue are such heresies that they may be benevolently considered to be "breakdowns in constitutional order." On September 1, in the Chamber of Deputies, no one showed a lack of respect for Mexico's president, nor was he insulted, nor—as the Chamber of Deputies president Miguel Montes pointed out—was the presidential persona desanctified. The rules were barely broken. The only thing that happened was that the nation was made aware of the systematic cornering that the opposition had been suffering at the hands of the PRI's mechanical majority in the Electoral College. While the opposition demonstrated numerous cases of fraud, the PRI legislators amused themselves at impromptu cocktails and voted against arguments and proof.

This is the true context of the interruptions and not that described in the complaints of the presidential court. Not very convincing, for example, are the tantrums of Agustín Legorreta, president of the Business Coordinating Council, when he says, "the opposition showed a total lack of political maturity and a lack of respect for the office of President and the institutions." As if he were so respectful when he assures us that 300 individuals direct governmental conduct. Nor is the argument of Governor José Francisco Ruiz Massieu very persuasive. Who, or so I have been told, is called the apostle of the vote because of his electoral scrupulousness in Guerrero. According to Ruiz Massieu, among other things, in a presidentialist regime one doesn't interrupt or ask questions of the chief executive; parliamentary customs and traditions do not grant a congressman the right to formulate questions (for the PRI, unwritten law is the law of God); and finally any demand for explanations or any questions of the President could lead to a "mini-coup d'état or a mini-auto-coup d'état." The governor, after bludgeoning himself with maxi-auto-coups of elementary logic, gives the rationale to those who have no wish to turn "the inclination to negotiate into cowardliness,"—that is to say, to those who judge surrender to be an act of courtesy, be it solely verbal, towards the other's vote.

The most minimal democratization of the presidential office is not permitted—something rather different from a

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This article first appeared in *La Jornada*



Poor people at the polls. (Photo by Lucio Blanco)

lack of respect—because the PRI believes it to be literally sacred. If it were not so, the delegates of presidential power here on earth would turn out to be mere mortals. Ergo, the exasperation and the cheerleading fervor in the Congress. With a shudder, politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen, who would later deny any loss of cool, presenting good manners, flung themselves into the breach in the order to protect the mythic fount of their privileges, not so much because it was in any actual danger, but rather because their outrage was the only possible reaction to the situation.

The next day, the leader of the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM), Fidel Velázquez, played two parts before the PRI candidate, Carlos Salinas de Gortari—the believer-offended-by-blasphemy, and something even more crucial, the militant-indignant-because-of-the-wimpiness-of-the-party-leadership. He accused the PRI and the government of having step by step ceded power to the opposition, all that is lacking now is to negotiate the presidency. The CTM declared its independence and announced it will attack the enemy in accordance with its own interests. The PRI meanwhile, is acting on the fringes of its party bases, while a pseudo-ideologue is trying to switch the party's sectorial bases for individuals—(I'm told that this is not a flattering reference to the party's president Jorge de La Vega).

The tribal chants—traitor—the amorous missives to power, the revival of Díaz Ordaz' special brand of anticommunism, the threats that longed to imitate Darth Vader's

fulminating destructiveness, all are mutually coherent in this testicular ideology. It is the Versailles discourse of fetichist machismo. The whole affair can be synthesized in one phrase: "We will not cede power." Every PRI militant has said it in one way or another, and the president most incisively: "The system will not be changed, we have enough strength..." And how is this judged by those who condemn the intransigence of the Cardenas forces because they demands that the elections be cleaned up? To say, "we will not cede power" is to disqualify beforehand the results of any possible electoral process. It is to make power non-transferable. It is to make power private property. And in the PRI, the "dark side" of Mexico and the Mexico that has read Milan Kundera and Marguerite Yourcenar (mixed in with Irving Wallace and Cartland) share an axiom: the transition to democracy, in order to be carried out at all, should be scheduled a couple of centuries from the present regime. Beyond the warm confidence in their parliamentary majority—psychological life insurance for the PRI candidates, is the demand: power shall not be shared. Manuel Camacho Solis, PRI's secretary general, spoke of a principle: "Under the present conditions, there is no distinction between the majority party and the opposition parties." I do not know if the exasperation at this political modesty is what led Camacho to the gang plank of the "pseudo-ideologues." I do know that a great majority of PRI members find the idea of legal equality unthinkable. Note for example the series of doors leading nowhere, the void and the locks with no keys that constitute the present

electoral legislation. They find the idea of political equality as simply inconceivable.

Labor chieftain Fidel Velázquez once affirmed, "We got in with bullets, and only with bullets will they drive us out." This is no mere boasting. Here is a disqualification of the electoral process, and a certainty: the motives of the opposition will always be obscure because they are not illuminated by the possession of what is fundamental. A few days ago, a journalist from Excelsior was scandalized by the illicitness of aspiring to govern. "Does anyone still doubt that the struggle of the Cardenas forces is for power?" And all this time we had thought that Cardenas' supporters were participating in the elections in order to see news about themselves suppressed on television. To struggle for power. Why that is a sacrilege even more atrocious than interrupting the president's state of the Nation address every second.

What has never been conceded, *ab eternum*, is not so much power as something rather trivial, something within reach of the president's publicly ridiculed stereotypes, the "cubicle academics and the cafe pessimists." This is why the PRI members never felt called upon to try to hide their fraud, nor even to feel ashamed of it in private. Because according to this particular political culture, the population's civic "underageness" made fraud a paternal obligation. To fix the elections is to remove the temptation of power from eternally inexperienced hands.

Concerning the intolerance that dares not utter its name

How is intolerance affirmed and ever more widely spread in the recomposition of the different strengths and weaknesses that today constitute what we recognize as political life? The business, political, union, journalistic right wing proclaims itself as the prime beneficiary of what happened on September 1. We, they say with expansive monotony, by venerating the institutions, end up becoming the inevitable alternative for the country. We are "the real forces of power," the only ones capable of holding back the copper-colored masses, the Zapatismo *sans* rifles but with transistor radios and vengeful looks. For this reason we refuse any conciliation or dialogue. It was a grave error to have ever conceded anything. We gave the opposition 240 congressional seats and four senator seats, and now they seem to think that they are our equals. For these people, the solution lies in the use of force.

Next to right wingers, in a division so real yet so fictitious of the governing apparatus, the public friends of tolerance may be seen. As magnificent as this is and though this attitude may never be repeated or be as widespread as we might wish, tolerance is founded on the recognition of the rights of others. Ergo, the calls to tolerance have been up to now pleas for clemency for those who are supposed to resignedly return to political marginality. Tolerance is not invoked when faced with the dissident point of view, but rather in front of the adversary who has already confessed his defeat. We are dealing here, in fact, with an "anticipated amnesty."

From a tactical point of view, once the battle for credibility is lost, the PRI hopes to recuperate by demonstrating to be the lesser of two evils "Allright, you say I'm fraudulent. I won't admit it even though I do practice it, but would you prefer the horders, the unwashed, the un-

lettered Cardenists?" In essence, the duel continues over the July 6 vote, and a publicity-wise struggle seeks to amend to the vote for Cardenas and for the PAN. One gets the impression that the PRI still trusts that the votes have yet to fall into the pregnable urns and that, as this instant becomes eternal, the citizens may still be persuaded of their error: "Don't do it! Avoid chaos!" In order to prevent the elections and postpone July 6 forever, everything is turned to. Judicial decisions are not permitted. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas' proposal of examining 1000 selected polling places is left unattended. Complaints accompanied by hundreds of items of proof are ignored. The electoral packets are left unopened out of principle. The national certainty of electoral fraud is treated with sarcasm.

This is where the most intolerance resides. The other—the verbal posturings, the threats of union "houscleaning," the CTM tough talk—are the *grand-guignol* version of the fundamental negative. If it is inconceivable for a 100,000 reasons that a country whose boundaries are the United States and the PRI permit power to be shared in even the most minimal way, the wisest thing to do is to adapt yourself to the "legal results." If not, you will fall into intransigence before intolerance, a perfectly noxious attitude, as everyone on television says.

The message leaves no room for doubt. He who will not accept the essential intolerance of the system is intolerant. His conduct merits, in the most philanthropic of possibilities, the declarative lash. And in function of this siege of "intolerance," the attempts grow at character assassination and the moral and political lynching of Cardenism, especially of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Porfirio Muñoz Ledo. In this hate campaign even meta-PAN sectors have acted, their visionary antimarxism nourished from the Middle Ages. They would like to revive the atmosphere of 1959 or 1968 when it was enough to throw out somber accusations—"agitator, treasonous"—in order to stir up fear and loathing. But, though it might have produced excellent results for former Mexican presidents López Mateos and Díaz Ordaz, this kind of climate of homicidal intolerance just does not work any more.

There is in Mexico, far more extended than is readily admitted, a public opinion representing judgements and actions of a civil society that is not only adverse to moral lynching, but destined to laugh at whoever uses the masks of the blue demon of Atlantis to dramatize the dangers to the fatherland. The anti-student rage and the crimes of manipulated, popular anger, as happened in San Miguel Canoa, are impossible to repeat today. Urban society and a large part of rural society are better informed today and more integrated into national society. The spectacle of socialism a la Agustín Legorreta or Fidel Velázquez (the successor of Fidel Velázquez who in turn inherited his power from Fidel Velázquez, who in turn...) does not and cannot convince them. In September 1988, the struggle is evidently for a democratic cause, an indispensable milestone along the road to social justice—the elimination of electoral fraud, which is to say, respect for the people's will.

Of course, there are valid criticisms to be made of the Cardenist forces, though far from any defamation. As with any heterogeneous movement and one of such rapid growth, Cardenism has some obvious limitations. Among these limitations are:

— Very distinct levels of ideological articulation and

political culture, corresponding in their most regressive manifestations to authoritarian practices that do not take into account the constant education and the different points of view of the participants;

— Areas ruled by a sectarian discourse that reveals incomprehension of present-day reality and by affirmations that are not followed by proof or political reasoning;

— Minimal areas where traditional picaresqueness is in charge, the most recent exponent being Salvador Miranda Blanco, the king-for-a-few-hours, plurinominal deputy for the PARM who, when he felt that his services were required, transferred to the PRI his prestige and his incorruptible ideals;

— Attitudes in which dogmatism imposes itself on any democratic consideration. (I recall Ortiz Mendoza of the PPS in the electoral college ridiculing the clergy, when the PAN argued in my opinion, fraud in an irrefutable way in Durango first electoral district.)

— Slogans and oratorical posturing that express militant attitudes, emotionally comprehensible but alien to the Cardenist line, based on the defense of constitutional legality facing the sum total of illegal acts of the regime.

— Aftertastes of leftist authoritarianism with its "caudillo" enthusiasm.

But these criticisms, as important as they are to discuss in the national arena, do not affect what is fundamental to Cardenism, nor are they taken into account in the practice of intolerance which proposes the reconstruction of prejudices, rancor, the utilization of any method at all to prove that what is done to the adversary is all right, given that, according to the dominant group, they are frankly inhuman. When dealing with the PAN, the classical nullification is of an ideological order—"they're reactionaries, so they don't enjoy the right to have their votes respected"—dealing with the Cardenism of the 1980s, intolerance proceeds by extreme disqualification with "dehumanization of the enemy." Later, if still needed, and now justified by the people who matter—the governing class, the business and political circles of the United States, the Church—repression will not provoke greater political costs.

For this reason, in the anti-Cardenist attacks, reasons do not count as much as calumny, insults, never proven charges of "actions outside the law," grotesque imputations of an alleged "zeal for violence," the pop-psychologizing—charges of "messianism" from the experts who every six years salute the new messiahs or of "insanity" from those who cling dementedly to their little power fiefs and, last but not least, the demands for a firm hand and a hard line. In their frenzy, the anti-Cardenists forget that these "detestable" beings were accompanied by millions of votes—recognized or still to be so—corresponding to millions of people who, in one way or another, thought their decision through and continue to do so. And intolerance continues to affect the electoral process, which these moral and political lynching parties wished had never, ever happened.

The principle of Hope

In February 1988, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas visited the Lagunera area of northern Mexico, and his campaign took

a qualitative leap. A commiserative interpretation began to be divulged: the most backward sector recognized itself in the shadows of the past. The nostalgic campesinos, during the hours of retrospective yearning, believed that they were in the presence of Tata Lazaro. It is useless to argue about the different age of those in attendance and the fervent response whenever present-day reality was referred to. If they are campesinos, then they are backward. Their clock stopped with the Agrarian Reform of 1936.

Also explicable, using techno-modern logic, is Cardenas' triumphal campaign in Michoacán. That would be the end if his campaign did not function there. And those who certified the disastrousness of his government and his unpopularity in the state—"The one who really moves things there is Martínez Villicaña, as modern as a tractor and as popular as speculation"—save face by ridiculing the chauvinism of the Michoacán residents who cannot distinguish between Juan Colorado and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. And what about the large meetings and marches of the National Democratic Front (FDN) across the country? They are products of "messianic exaltation," a confusion of historic moments, fear of modernity, and the effect of the religious spirit (lay Guadalupanism!) deposited in a clearly otherworldly cause (democracy). The faith which before was only reserved for virgins and saints. In relation to this last accusation, and with no desire to annul the arguments of those scornful of the ecstatic faces in the Cardenist meetings, I would like to counterpose Max Horkheimer's defi-



Carlos Salinas de Gortari, presidential candidate for the Institutional Revolutionary Party. (Photo by Marco Antonio Cruz)

Urban society and a large part of rural society are better informed today and more integrated into national society

nition: "What is religion in the best sense of the word? The sustained impulse against all reality, still unsuffocated, that things will change, that the enchantment will be broken and justice will be done."

The meeting, at the Autonomous National University's (UNAM) campus left no room for doubt about the multiple qualities of "neo-cardenism" or just plain Cardenism. Tens of thousands of students, professors, workers and researchers listened with redoubled watchfulness. The admiration—a phenomenon often repeated in Mexico City—come from Cardenas' historical heritage, his energetic but reflective departure from the PRI, his capacity to encourage the answers so long forgotten in the rural areas, and his most contemporary characteristic—a viable offer of political participation, circumscribed or not to voting, but related to the individual and collective reconquest of citizen sensibility.

Stated in the foregoing words, the main proposal of Cardenas and the FDN would appear to be merely declamatory. It is not at all so, and if it has turned out to be enormously convincing and vital, then it is because even before July 6 it was seen as a real alternative. Nothing succeeds quite so well as success, and the meeting, the exhausting tours, the sensation of a shared cause with neighbors, friends and family all began to solidify the Cardenism of the 1980s, something that is reinforced in demonstration after demonstration, in march after march. And after overcoming the crucial tests of campaign fatigue, to continue on once the electoral frenzy is over, the FDN proved that, despite its constitutive deficiencies, it is a movement destined to remain, especially if at the same time it can give birth to an indispensable political party and not lose the libertarian characteristics of a social movement.

Ever since the beginning of the year it has been self-evident: the vitality of the Cardenas Front—"the hope", as so well described by Adolfo Gilly—owes little to the three parties that it started with. Another Rainbow Coalition is in the making, the heterogeneous combination of ages, social classes, regions, attitudes, cultural backgrounds, degrees of tolerance and of sectarianism, intellectual and anti-intellectual visions. In four or five months, the most visible processes have begun to surface—actions, mobilizations, ideological rejections, vital certainties, that took decades of subterranean germination. Much of the maturing of the different societies in Mexico, identified not uniquely but principally with the modernization of mentalities, is manifested by the enthusiasm with the Cardenist alternative, which, in the terms of Mexican reality, joyfully and critically forms the political boundaries of the center left.

The crowning figure, the notorious bond with a great tradition, the point of reference for the movement is Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. But in spite of his decisive place in the FDN, I find it difficult to characterize it, last name and

all, as a "caudillo" movement. Cardenas has not risked the lives of his followers. He has not desisted from his serene tone nor the explicative and didactic mode of the beginning of the campaign. (He has modified it, freeing it from a large part of the rhetoric of the Mexican Revolution and keeping it within the political analysis of each moment.) He does not stray from the emphasis on legality. And the silent attention that surrounds his words, his anti-charismatic charisma, does not lead to the constitution of a caudillo. For this, we can count on the efforts of presidentialism and the factory of unmovable caudillos in all shapes and sizes: the CTM.

Cardenas is, I believe, the most qualified leader in the opening of the new political space, under the very adverse conditions of this transition to democracy. In this respect I need to enumerate some of the disadvantages of Cardenas' leadership:

- A small team as compared to the gigantic structure of the PRI and its government functionaries, remunerated accordingly so that their political activity will be most sincere.
- A lack of financial resources as compared to the budget abuse of the PRI.
- A high concentration of decision-making.
- Areas of party fallibility (for example, the four deputies who finding the road to Damascus, were converted to the PRI on their knees, only after finding that, horror of horrors, the FDN ignores the norms of good conduct in the court!).
- Enormous difficulties in the integration of the actions of such diverse groups.
- Schematic development of a national program.
- Informational blackouts that include a large part of the press and the television networks.
- "Atmospheric tension" cultivated with the western torturous theology by the PRI, something which combines funereal threats—"I can't guarantee the life of anyone from the FDN who tries to intervene in the unions of the CTM", Mr. Fidel Velázquez"—with pontifical dictums—"The opposition is immoral and perverse," Jorge de la Vega Domínguez).
- Precarious or non-existent organizational forms in numerous places around the country.

In spite of all of this and given the great distance covered in such a brief time span, I consider the social and political movement of the FDN to be the most important one that has arisen in the last fifty years. That is still far from eulogizing it within the historical framework so dominated by the authoritarianism that imposes and dissipates depoliticization. It is, in essence, and so should remain, non-violent. It is today the fruit of the first democratic practice of millions of people and demands a complement: the intensification of internal democracy. It is a generalized, critical attitude implying the fundamental revision of the dominant political culture which existed as of July 5. And it is also, one of the most vital forerunners of the new nation that we are still far from inhabiting, but which in some way perceive in fragments, in episodes, through extraordinary experiences.

To defend the democratic hope is today to hold back the promises of violence and provocation and to promote in the best way we know how, the exercise of rationality.

□

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Mexico City THE NEWS Vol. XXXIX No. 43
Page 10

Monday, August 15, 1988

Mexican Sectors Extend Pact Through November

The News Staff

The federal government, private, labor and campesino sectors agreed Sunday to extend the Economic Solidarity Pact (PSE) through November and announced a 30 percent reduction in income tax for those earning up to four times the Federal District minimum wage.

A 3 percent reduction was also announced for prices in effect between July 7 and Aug. 7.

Value Added Tax (IVA) will also be removed from processed foodstuffs and medicines, and a revision of guarantee prices for agricultural products within the next two weeks was also announced.

President Miguel de la Madrid said at the signing of the PSE extension — held in the Carranza room of the Los Mexico Presidential Residence — that Mexicans can agree on the most important thing about living together, adding: "We can find better ways for our economic system and our society."

He told members of his economic cabinet and representatives of the private labor and campesino sectors that the pact has been successful in achieving its original purpose — that of slowing inflation.

He said the country has suffered from uncontrolled hyperinflation in the past.

(See PACT page 12)

Soviet Withdrawal From Afghanistan Ahead of Schedule

By ANDREW KATELL
Associated Press

MOSCOW — The Soviet Union pulled half its troops out of Afghanistan by Sunday, one day before the deadline, and rebels seized the provincial capital after a week of fighting.

Iran To Help Free British Hostages

By HANS NEUERBOURG
Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — A government-run newspaper said in an editorial Sunday that Iran will work to free British hostages held in Lebanon, particularly an Anglican church envoy Terry Waite.

In another development, British diplomat David Reddaway said Iranian Foreign Ministry officials told him he would be able to meet a Briton held in Lebanon on spying charges.

Burmese Oppo Demands Court For Ousted Pr

By DENIS D. GRAY
Associated Press

BANGKOK, Thailand — Thai government groups in Burma nationwide protests today against the ousted president because that political prisoners t Kyodo news agency said Burmese capital of Bhamo also demand families of those killed in government riots last week.

Diplomats contacted by the Thai government said they saw leaflets in Bhamo that urged people to join the protests.

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BIOTECHNOLOGY IN MEXICO: PROMISES OR THREATS?

Agustín López-Munguía
Canales

Historical

When the Aztecs were growing the algae *spirulina* for food in the lake of Texcoco or fermenting *aguamiel*, the sweet juice of agave to obtain *pulque*, they would have never imagined the role that fermentation processes would have in the 20th century society. Like almost all civilizations, Mexico has traditional fermented products derived from natural raw materials. These include not only the worldwide known tequila but also some interesting products like *pozol*, a corn based non-alcoholic beverage in which the protein content is increased due to the nitrogen fixation bacteria involved in its fermentation.

It was from *pulque*, that a German microbiologist, Paul Lindner, isolated in 1924 the bacteria known as *Zymomonas mobilis*, studied nowadays all over the world because of its high alcohol productivity. However, from the industrial point of view, Mexican biotechnology lost its first battle, when beer produced from barley replaced *pulque*, now considered a second class beverage, and Mexican biotechnology made no significant technological improvements for more than four centuries.

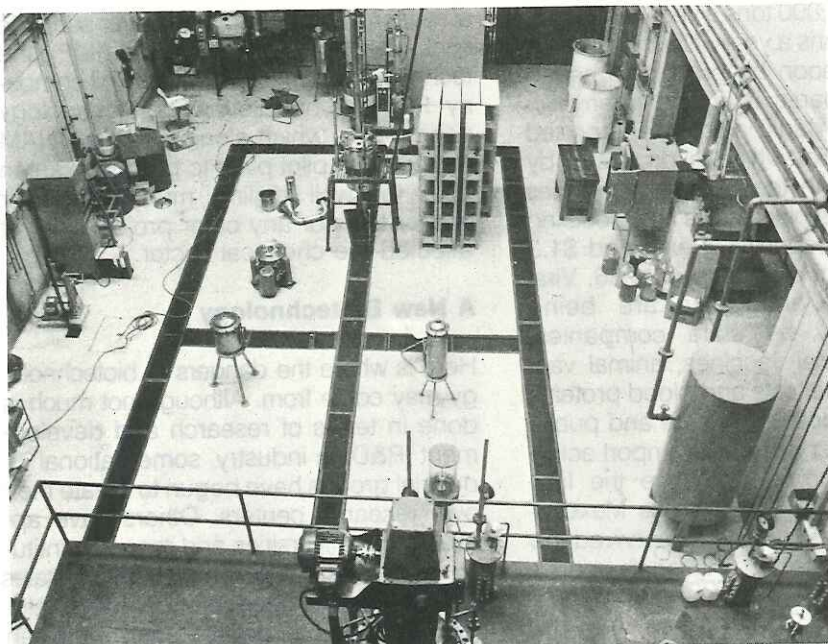
In this article, biotechnology will be reviewed from an historical point of view. In 1857, when Louis Pasteur demonstrated the microbiological nature of the alcoholic process, the fermentation processes could no longer be called "traditional." And in 1944, biotechnology became an industry when industrial amounts of antibi-

otics were produced due to the huge demand during World War II. By the end of the 1960s, what has been called "actual biotechnology," through fermentation and enzymatic processes was responsible for providing the world with food products, such as cheese, yogurt, bakers yeast, wine and beer, food additives such as glutamate, enzymes, essential aminoacids, vitamins, pharmaceutical products, such as antibiotics, vaccines and hormones, and chemical products, such as ethanol, organic acids and biopolymers.

Biotechnology in 1988 is where electronics was at the end of the 1960s or microcomputers were at the beginning of the 1970s

"New biotechnology" was born this decade with a major technological advance, the so called "DNA technology." It gave new perspectives to biotechnology, not only in industry but also in other strategic fields such as agriculture and health. It has been said that biotechnology is nowadays in the inflection point of the classic technological lifecycle curve, just between the adaptation and the growth phases. The first product of this technology, human insulin, appeared in 1982. It was actually a substitution

Researcher in the Nutrition Section of the Chemistry Department, UNAM



Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering Laboratory at the Autonomous National University.
(Photo from La Gaceta archive)

product because insulin from animal pancreas was available. However in 1987, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the first new product, tPA (tissue plasminogen activator) from Genentech, a thrombolytic agent. Plants are now being designed and patented with pest- and drought-resistance properties and virus free properties. Micropropagation techniques are employed for germoplasm preservation and plant production. Tissue culture techniques have proven useful for industrial production of several vegetal products such as the shikonine colorant. Biotechnology in 1988 is where electronics and microcomputers were at the beginning of the 1970s. How will this biotechnological boom affect developing countries like Mexico? Is this really, as it has been stated, a departing train in which any country can still get on, or is it like the petrochemical industry in which we arrived late? In this article some aspects of the situation of biotechnology in Mexico are analyzed. I try to present a picture of how the country is facing the hopes and threats that biotechnology represents.

The Mexican Biotechnological Industry

Probably the main bioindustries in Mexico could be included in what has been called "traditional biotechnology." Good quality beer is produced and exported from four main breweries—Modelo, Cuauhtémoc, Moctezuma and Yucateca. More than 70 companies produce wine and brandies. Beer takes 68 percent of the alcoholic

Mexican companies are involved in the manufacture of inoculants for leguminous plants

beverages market, followed by wine and brandies with 19 percent, tequila with 9 percent, and rum 4 with percent. More than 400 companies are involved in dairy products. The average annual growth rate of this sector, however, dropped from 6.1 percent in the 1970-1980 period to 2 percent in the 1980-1984 period. Other traditional processes include the production of nearly four tons a month of the algae *spirulina* in the salty waters of the Texcoco lake. It is produced by a parastate company and primarily exported to the United States and Japan. There are approximately 5 private producers of baker's yeast. A French company started operations in this field just a few years ago. Edible mushrooms production had been monopolized for many years by a private company, but in years other producers have appeared in the market. In one of these cases, the technology was developed by a group from the Autonomous National University (UNAM) with the financial support from the National Council for Science and Technology (CONACYT).

Actual Biotechnology

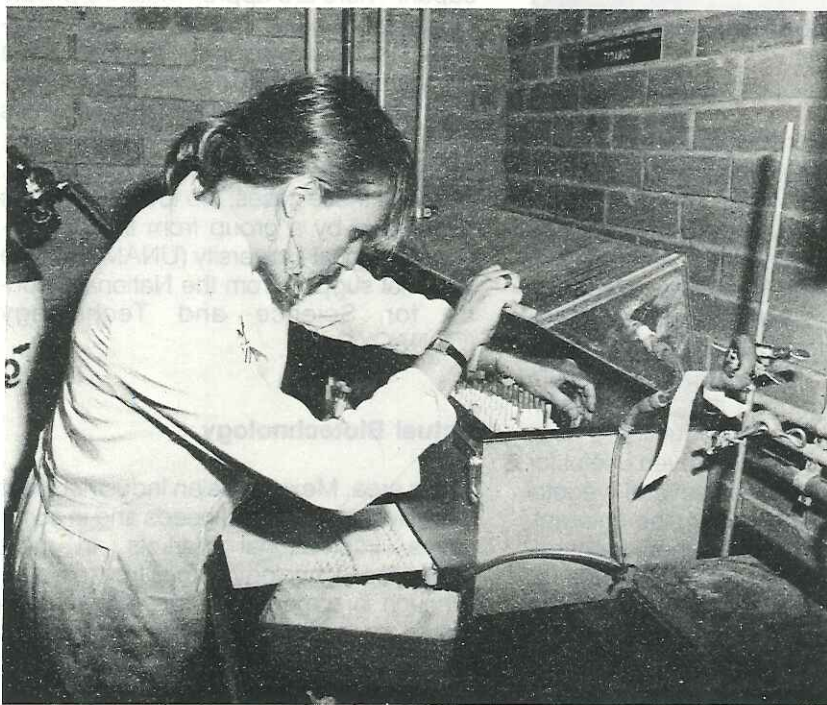
In this area, Mexico has an industrial plant that covers the internal needs and in some cases, international markets. In most cases, the technology comes from abroad, although in some cases, transnational companies such as Pfizer, Miles Laboratories, Bayer and Ciba are directly involved.

Microbial enzymes used in biological detergents, starch modification and milk clotting, are produced mainly by a single plant, with Miles Laboratories technology and participation. Mexico imported enzymes worth a total of \$3.13 million dollars in 1987, \$0.74 million more than in 1986.

Mexican companies are involved, in most cases with Mexican technology, in the manufacture of inoculants for leguminous plants. This 600 ton-a-year market is mainly absorbed by soybean growers. No efficient competitive inoculant has yet to be developed for beans, the basic legume staple in the Mexican diet.

In the pharmaceutical sector, there are nine companies that produce antibiotics and a state company that produces aminoacids by fermentation—6,000 tons a

year of lysine, 3,000 tons a year of glutamic acid and 120 tons a year of leucine. A new company will soon be producing aspartame from aspartic acid and phenylalanine. All the organic acids are imported except citric acid, which is produced by fermentation with technology from Miles Laboratories in a plant that is now doubling its production capacity. It exported \$1.3 million dollars of citric acid in 1986. Viral vaccines and antibodies are being produced only by state companies, whereas bacterial vaccines, animal vaccines, diagnostic tests and blood proteins are produced both by private and public enterprises. Most companies import active raw products only to produce the final products in Mexico. There is one Mexican-owned laboratory which has survived the big pharmaceutical transnationals operating in Mexico.



Experiments at below zero. (Photo from La Gaceta archive)

The chemical industry has not been concerned with biotechnology up to now. Because petroleum is abundant, the biological alternatives for solvents—ethanol, methane, glycerol—are not economically feasible. There has been interest in using methanol as substrate for single cell protein production but for sever-

The main force of Mexican biotechnology nowadays lies in its human resources

al reasons, this project has never seen the light. The Mexican Oil Institute (IMP), the technical branch of the national oil company PEMEX, has its own biotechnology department, which along with the UNAM has set up a pilot plant to produce xanthan gum for well drilling muds. However neither this nor any other project has yet affected the chemical sector.

A New Biotechnology

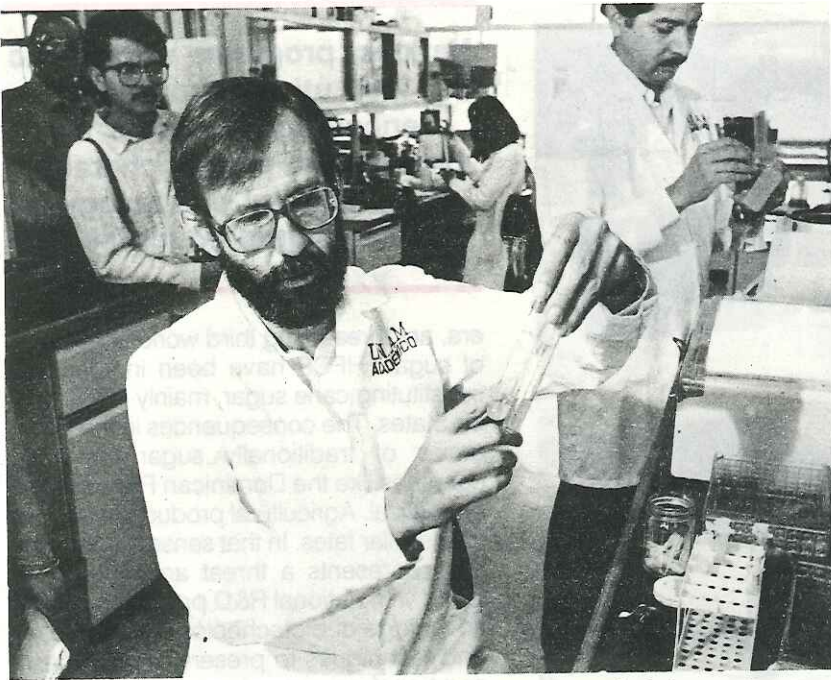
Here is where the dangers of biotechnology may come from. Although not much is done in terms of research and development (R&D) in industry, some national industrial groups have begun to create their own research centers. Others have approached universities and research institutions. Compare this with the United States where after one decade of DNA technology, the original collaboration between universities and industrialists has evolved into an emerging industry with more than 300 companies. It is difficult to find an important industrial company in the industrialized countries without at least a joint venture program in biotechnology.

Dupont, Monsanto, Eastman Kodak, Corning Glass, Ciba Geigy, Bayer, Shell, Pfizer, Upjohn, Nestle, Unilever, Elf, Sanofi, Royal Dutch, and many others, have biotechnology programs. Products have begun to emerge in all areas—new sugars such as alitame and thaumatin; new enzymes such as microbial renin and lysozyme; biopesticides; improved plants and seeds; biochips; more than 100 diagnostic tests based on monoclonal antibodies; DNA probes; new vaccines—Mexico is now importing the hepatitis B surface antigen; hormones—human insulin is now available in Mexico; microbial gums; and new food additives such as colorants and cyclodextrins. There is even biotechnology involved in defense programs.

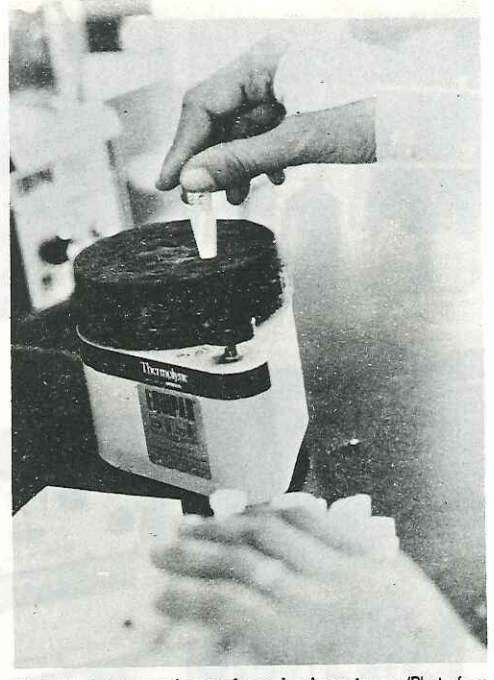
In this universe of new biotechnology very few companies in Mexico have started micropropagation techniques. And then, only in those agricultural products with sufficient added value: such as is the case of flowers.

Human Resources

Probably the main force of the Mexican biotechnology nowadays lies in its human resources. Excellent scientific groups have been formed during the last 15 years and are now distributed in different centers and universities around the country. They are working in more than 400 projects. Efforts are being made to link them with industrial groups. In a recent document elaborated by G. Arroyo and M. Waiss-



Francisco Bolívar Zapata, Director of the Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering Laboratory at the Autonomous National University. (Photo from La Gaceta archive)



Biotechnology, a science of growing importance. (Photo from La Gaceta archive)

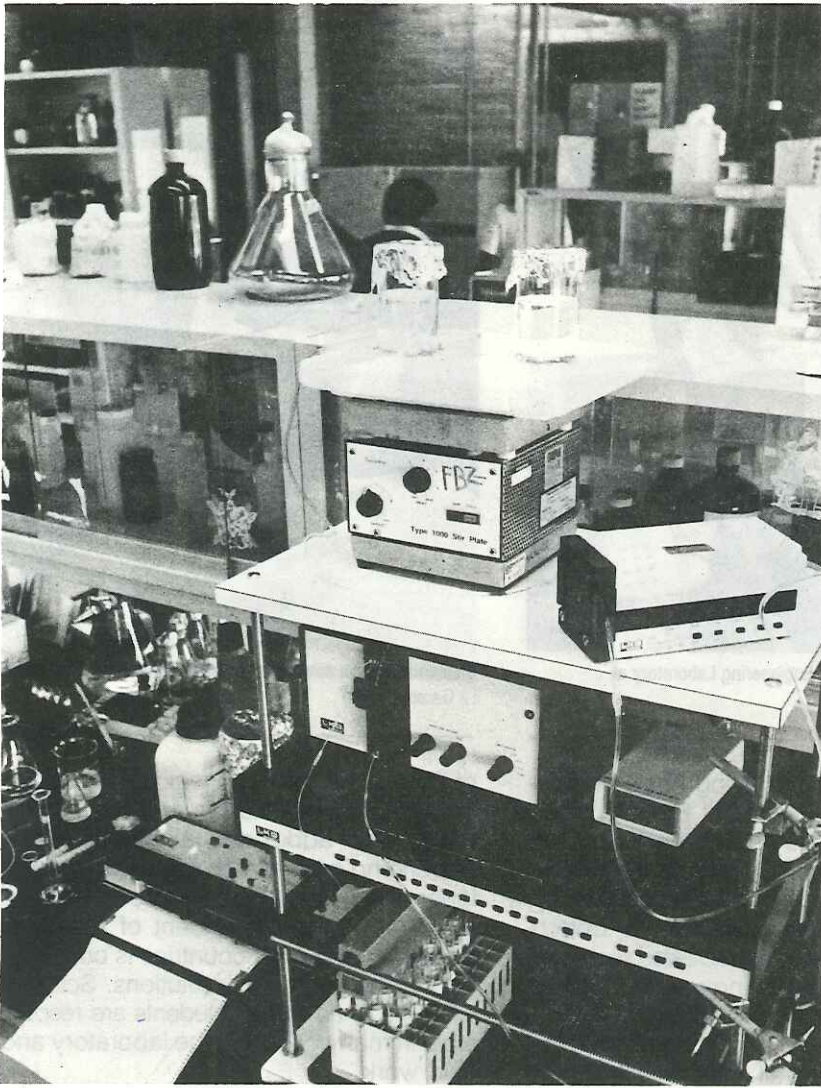
bluth, 36 institutions doing basic and applied research in Vegetal Biotechnology and 24 in Industrial Biotechnology are reported. In an earlier catalog, 116 institutions reported activities in Biotechnology. Institutions exclusively dedicated to biotechnology research have been created such is the case of the Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology Research Center, the Nitrogen Fixation Institute and the Biomedical Research Institute, all at the UNAM. There are other strong groups in the Autonomous Metropolitan University (UAM), the University of Chapingo, the National Polytechnical Institute's (IPN) National School of Biological Sciences and the Mexican Institute of Appropriate Technology.

Biotechnology represents a threat and should be confronted with national R & D programs

Although one large company, such as Novo Industries in Denmark certainly has more scientists than we have in all our biotechnology centers, and although the budget spent in the development of a new single product by the new biotechnology companies is larger than the total annual budget for biotechnology in Mexico, productivity is very high in Mexico because of the low cost of labor. The Mexican government created the National System

of Researchers in 1984 which has successfully retained scientists in research institutions, with additional tax-free stipends depending on research quality. Research labor, which in many cases constitutes as much as 70 to 80 percent of a project budget in industrial countries is considerably reduced in our institutions. Scientist with Ph.D.s as well as students are responsible in many cases for the laboratory and field work.

Some examples of the type of projects carried out in these institutions are the micropropagation techniques employed not only for flowers and decoration plants, but also in export products like coffee, strawberries, pineapples and in autochthonous industrialized plants such as agave and sisal hemp. The CINVESTAV in Irapuato is probably the strongest in Latin America as far a vegetal biotechnology is concerned. A single cell protein project, produced from molasses is being set up in Mexico City by CINVESTAV. Solid fermentations have been used to propose alternatives for cassava industrialization and other metabolites production. On the other hand, lactic acid fermentation is being studied as a tool for grains and vegetables preservation in the UAM. Enzymatic processes for the extraction of vegetable oils are being in UNAM's chemistry department along with several pilot projects for biological water treatment, with a biodisc system. The same institution is also studying some traditional Mexican fermentation products such as *pozol* and *tesgüino*. Mushrooms production has been taken to



Genetic engineering lab equipment. (Photo from La Gaceta archive)

industrial level. Milk substitutes and fermentation of agricultural wastes are being used as alternatives for cattle feed in the UNAM's Biomedical Research Institute. Proteolytic enzymes from Mexican fruits and vegetables have been extracted, identified and studied at the IPN. These projects are mentioned to give an idea of the situation but by no means is this list intended to be a complete review of institutions and project.

Hopes or threats?

There is an increasing impact of biotechnology in the production of food and agricultural products, as more food and more higher quality food will be available and controlled by major transnational companies.

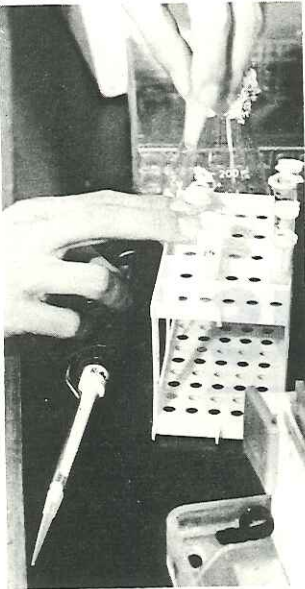
A second battle is being lost. High fructose corn syrups (HFCS), produced by an enzymatic process from corn starch in a technology developed before the DNA

National programs with public institutions should be encouraged in order to balance the private character of agricultural technology in developed countries

era, are threatening third world production of sugar. HFCS have been increasingly substituting cane sugar, mainly in the United States. The consequences in the economies of traditionally sugar exporting countries like the Dominican Republic are dramatic. Agricultural products in general face similar fates. In that sense, biotechnology represents a threat and should be faced with national R&D programs, taking advantage of biotechnological processes and techniques to preserve germoplasm and transform natural raw materials. New alternatives for the transformation of our natural products must be developed in many cases with the help of biotechnology.

First of all, priorities should be defined. There have been several reports dealing with the diagnosis of the situation of biotechnology in Mexico. However, we still lack a national plan. There is no "Mexican Project." Coordination is difficult even in the institutions themselves. Research is being done in almost all areas of biotechnology without basic guidelines. The Brazilians have their alcohol program. Japan is trying to convince developed countries to enter into the Human Frontiers Program. In the United States, coordinated action is taken place around the human genome. The Cubans have their interferon project. We have seen cassava production programs born and die, for reasons which do not include the lack of scientific and technical support and interest. Amaranthus, a protein rich grain known by the Aztecs, was rediscovered abroad.

National programs between public institutions and national groups or international organizations interested in joint programs for underdeveloped countries should be encouraged in order to balance the private character that agricultural technological advances is taking in developed countries. The "Latinamerican Biotechnology Network" or the UNIDO's Regional Biotechnology Program are examples of this type of actions. There has been special financial support from CONACYT in order to consolidate national postgraduate programs resulting in the strengthening of the seven institutions that offer masters and doctorate degrees in biotechnology.



Biotechnology experiments.
(Photo from La Gaceta archive)

Investment should support basic as well as applied research. In the haste for industrial development, one tends to forget that today's basic research is tomorrow's applied research. As has been stated by a distinguished Mexican researcher, Dr. Ruy Pérez Tamayo: "There are only two types of research, good research and bad research." Financial institutions and industrial groups from the public and private sectors should look for both investment opportunities of immediate application and long-term investment in basic research.

There is an increasing interest from transnational companies in investing in research in Mexican institutions. During these times of economical crisis this provides a source of economical revenues and scientific prestige. However there is the grave danger of deviating research toward models far away from our basic needs and economic reality.

Finally, a word about industrial patents property. In the United States, DNA technology opened in 1980 the way for industrial protection of genetically modified microorganisms which five years later was extended to all types of genetically modified plants.

Since last year, new multicellular organisms can also be patented: animals will soon be patented! There is nowadays a real patent war in the United State involving universities and private companies. In Mexico, the deadline is 1997. After this date all type of biotechnological and genetic processes could be patented: strong pressure is being made so that Mexico accepts patents on plants and animals.

Will biotechnology be used for development and self-sufficient food supply or for more economic dependence? □

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HUMAN RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Rodolfo Stavenhagen

In 1988 two anniversaries that are of special importance for Mexico's indigenous population are being commemorated. On the one hand, Mexico is celebrating the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the National Indigenous Institute (INI), a federal organization aimed at providing attention to the country's indigenous population. On the other hand, the 40th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ratified in 1948 by the United Nations General Assembly, is being celebrated all over the world. The coincidence of these two events requires a serious reassessment of the situation of human rights of indigenous peoples, not only in Mexico, but also in the rest of native America, poorly called "Latin" America.

In addition, in a few years the Hispanic world will celebrate the fifth centennial of what some people call the "Discovery of America," which others refer to as the "Meeting of Two Worlds." Indigenous populations, in contrast, lament this event as the sesquicentennial of their submission and the birth of their resistance.

Five hundred years since the European invasion, native peoples of the continent continue to be victims of the worst violations of human rights, from discrimination to geno-

Native peoples of the American continent continue to be victims of the worst violations of human rights

cide. They continue to be denied the right to which all people are entitled according to United Nations General Assembly resolutions: the right to self determination. They continue to be deprived in general of the most precious possession of all peoples, namely their identity.

The human rights of indigenous populations, which for many years were ignored and scorned, today have become a source of international concern. This is due largely to the organizational efforts of native peoples themselves, who have alerted the public to their situation though their struggle and perseverance.

The violation of native human rights began at the very moment the Spaniards arrived, a transgression that has not ceased since that time. Some would say that it is audacious to speak of "human rights" in the 16th century since this concept did not form part of the legal and political discourse of the time. It is said that the Spaniards

were motivated by superior morals in their dealings with the "natives," by a just, divine, religious mission that must be understood in its own terms and not judged in light of contemporary legal, political and moral ideas. Of course there is some truth to this position, but in general terms it is not acceptable. No matter how "just" the conquerors, large estate owners and evangelists believed themselves to be, in reality they were doing what they would not have tolerated if the same had been done to them.

The European "bearer of civilization" operated with a double standard. What was "good" and necessary for the Indian did not follow for the Spaniard. The idea of the civilizing, universalizing mission of Christianity and of the West was from that time on—and it has continued to be so until the Cold War and the "development projects" for today's Third World countries—a simple mask to cover the expansionistic zeal of the world capitalist system. An ideology that masked or concealed—undoubtedly rooted in the fanaticisms of the period, it was nevertheless an infringement upon the same values which constituted the foundation of Western civilization.

On the other hand, among the Spaniards there were those who questioned and disagreed with the conquerors' ideology, which violated natives' rights. It is for this reason that it is indeed valid to judge the conquest and evangelization of

The negation of the Other, the Indian, was characteristic of the colonizers

America without denying other merits that it might have had, to state directly that the conquerors perpetrated grave violations of the human rights of autochthonous peoples of the continent and that these deep-rooted wrongs still have not been righted.

Colonization and Human Rights

It is not enough to remember that all conquests have their conquerors and all colonial systems have their colonizers. In fact, the situation of the Indians of America only became defined during the course of three centuries of colonial rule when legal and institutional mechanisms that standardized relations between native and non-native peoples were established. The position of indigenous peoples within the framework of global society was shaped throughout this process of colonial rule.

The point of departure of the system of relations between natives and Europeans was the moment of the first contact. The essence of the matter resided in the way that Europeans viewed and knew the indigenous peoples, that is to say, the form in which they were cognitively integrated into their semiotic and ideological universe. In other words, how Europeans shaped their relation with the Other.

The relation with the Other was the basis for the new system of domination that the Spaniards established in America. The negation of the Other, that is to say of the Indian, of his culture and of his humanity, was characteristic of the colonizers. This denial of the Other constituted the basis for Spanish control, oppression and exploitation of the natives. The denial of the Other is the first and most fundamental violation of human rights. Later, other colonizers would do the same, although with even more brutality, in Africa and Asia.

The demographic catastrophe produced as a result of conquest and colonization has been widely documented. To be added to this list



Chamula woman. (Photo by Angeles Torrejón)

are ecological imbalances, destruction of the territorial base of indigenous communities and the system of exploitation of native labor. Although throughout the colonial period, protective and tutelary legislation for the natives was developed, by the end of the colonial era in the Americas, the sovereign autochthonous peoples of yore had been reduced to an undifferentiated mass of exploited and exploitable Indians, forming the lowest castes and social classes of colonial society. The only rights they possessed were those granted to them by the Crown.

In spite of the legal equality of all citizens established by republican constitutions, the human rights situation of indigenous peoples probably worsened during the period of Independence. With the expansion of agricultural and cattle raising farms and the development of capitalist relations of production, native populations were the object of massive dispossession, sometimes of massacre and mass extermination. In addition, the exploitation of native labor on the part of large estate owners, farm owners and other landowners worsened.



Chamula women. (Photo by Angeles Torrejón)

New Society, Old Structure

The situation of Indians under new republican societies was largely defined by their position in the economic structure. Their situation was also affected by the conception of the ruling elites and native intellectuals, which was in turn shaped by national and state ideology. During the first half of the 19th century, Latin American societies were still not organized into discrete governments of states. They formed a series of vaguely interrelated regional units based on partially self-

sufficient semi-feudal agrarian economies. In that context, many of the existing conflicts between different factions of the ruling class expressed the tensions generated by the need for a strong, centralized state—preferred by the urban middle classes and the emerging bourgeoisie—in opposition to regional, often separatist interests that were fundamentally agrarian. A profound, much more persistent division existed between the small dominant groups, owners of lands and mines, and the subordinate, indigenous rural population. The divi-

sion of classes was also a cultural one.

The concept of a centralized state and a national culture was controlled by the upper classes, the white descendants of European colonists. At the same time, the modern model of the nation that went hand in hand with the development of a capitalist economy was that of the liberal democracies of the West. In this scheme, indigenous populations, although constituting the majorities in many countries during the 19th century, were considered obstacles for national integration, and thus, a threat for the legitimate place that government elites believed they occupied among the civilized nations of the world. The principal intellectual leaders of the century openly looked down upon native cultures and considered them inferior to the dominant culture of the period. The dominant ideology, based on liberalism and positivism, held that the indigenous element did not have any place in the new national cultures that were being formulated.

This ideology continues to predominate in the 20th century. In modern Latin America, the concept of national culture has been maintained in the idea that Indian cultures do not exist, or if they are acknowledged to exist, have nothing or very little to do with national culture. The greatness of native cultures, if by chance recognized, pertains only to the historical past. If such cultures still exist, they are no more than vestiges of past splendors and their natural tendency is to disappear, reason for which the best thing that a progressive, modernistic government can do is to hasten their demise. In this way, not only are national unity and culture benefitted, but also the Indian peoples themselves are seen as beneficiaries of modernization and progress.

In political and cultural terms,

In spite of legal equality, the human rights situation of the Indians worsened during the Independence period



An elderly Chamula woman. (Photo by Angeles Torrejón)

the idea of a nation in contemporary Latin America is based on the denial of indigenous cultures. This has led in turn to the formulation of a continental indigenous policy, created at the First Inter-American Indigenous Congress of 1940, whose

objective was the "assimilation," "incorporation" or "integration" of indigenous populations into the molds of the dominant nation state.

Violations of native human rights have been of two types. On the one hand, there is ample

documentation of violations of native civil and political rights including those human rights defined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Pact of Civil and Political Rights, the Inter-American



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Marzo-Abril 1988

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Convention of Human Rights or the San José Pact, and in the national constitutions of American countries. The rights violated include the right to life, the right to freedom, the right to political participation, the freedom of expression, and the freedom of movement. Violations of these rights, which the Indians share with all other human beings, have been reported before national and international bodies such as the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, the United Nations Commission of Human Rights and the Russell Tribunal. In addition, because native populations form the weakest element of national society due to their position in the political and economic structure, they have also been and continue to be the most vulnerable sector with regard to human rights violations.

The second aspect refers to the violation of collective rights of native peoples, that is to say, violations of their economic, social and cultural rights as ethnic groups. These violations, as has been seen, are incorporated into the legal and ideological structure of Latin American countries, which, in general, deny the very existence of Indians as cultural entities distinct from the dominant group. The human right to ethnic identity, to culture, to language, to religion, and so forth, are also established in different international instruments, such as the conventions against racial discrimination, Article 27 of the International Pact of Civil and Political Rights and other resolutions of specialized organizations of the United Nations.

Finally, by subjecting indigenous groups to the imperatives of federal governments, as defined by the dominant classes in Latin America, a basic principal of international law is violated—the right to self determination of peoples. The right of self determination appears as the

In the 19th century, indigenous populations, although constituting a majority of the population in many countries, were considered obstacles for national integration

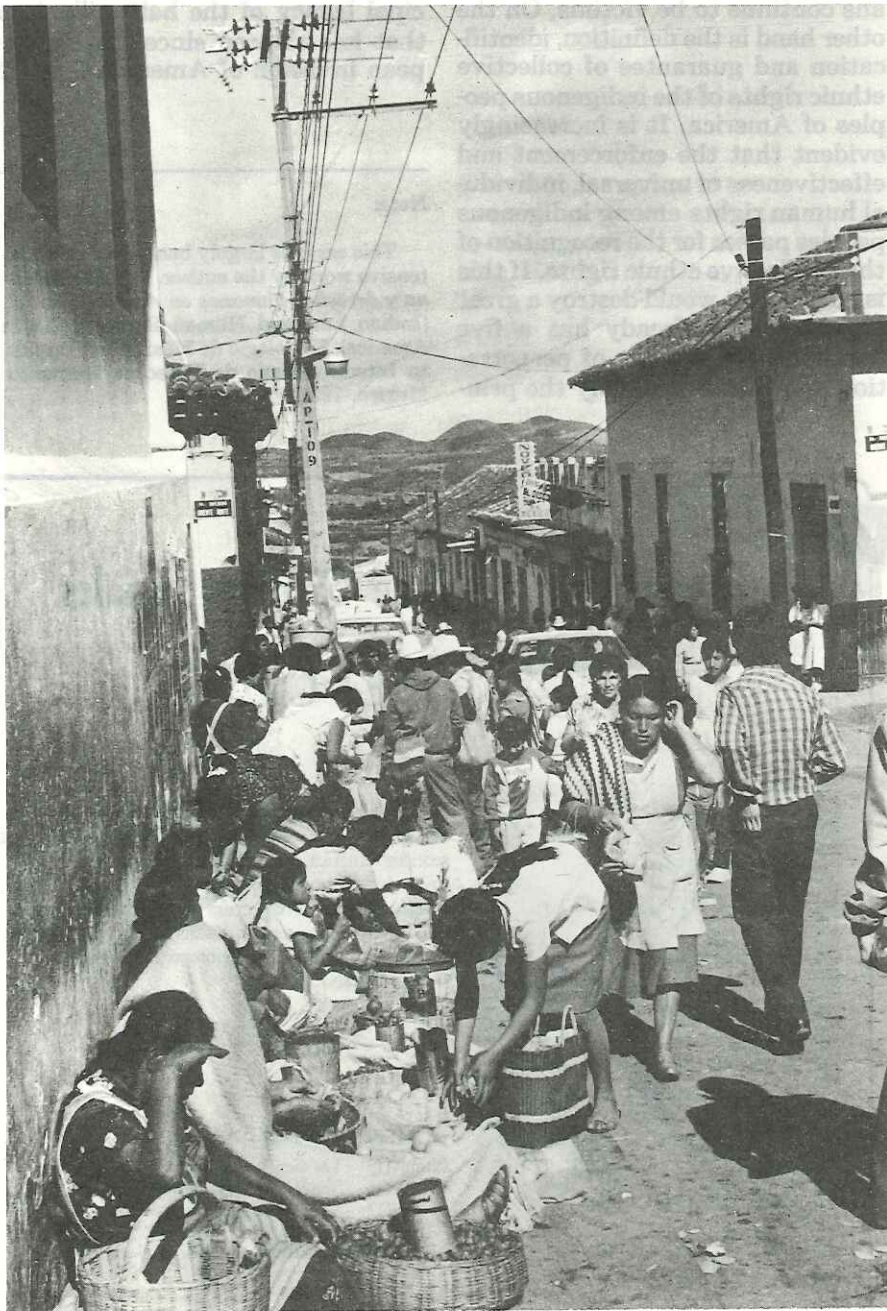
first article in the two international pacts of human rights of the United Nations, that of Civil and Political rights and that of Economic, Social and Cultural rights. There are those who deny that native peoples have the right to self determination. The United Nations has been categorical in establishing that this right does not apply to ethnic minorities nor to ethnic groups within independent nations that respect human rights in general. The right to self determination of peoples is only applied, according to the United Nations' judgment, to

territories under colonial occupation.

Nevertheless, indigenous people of the continent have not accepted this interpretation. For several decades, native populations have politically organized themselves to defend their rights and have set forth the right to self determination as one of their fundamental goals. Today the struggle for this right, and its denial on the part of governments and dominant groups, constitutes one of the principal debates on human rights with respect to America's native populations.



Chamula woman and child. (Photo by Angeles Torrejón)



Right to a better life. (Photo by Angeles Torrejón)

The Role of Laws

As a result of the political awakening of indigenous peoples, national legislation has been modified in some countries. For example, in recent years, the constitutions of Panama, Guatemala and Nicaragua have recognized certain rights of their indigenous communities. Argentina has passed an indigenous law. Peru and Ecuador recognize native languages. In Brazil, the constitutional treatment that will have to be given to the Indians has been discussed. In Mexico, there are no legal statutes for indigenous popu-

lations. Although this absence is justified in the name of formal legal equality of all Mexicans, in reality it can be said that it has made the collective and individual human rights of indigenous ethnic groups vulnerable.

**Although changes are slow,
Latin American
governments are responding
to the demands of native
peoples**

Although changes are slow, little by little, as the fifth centennial approaches, Latin American governments are responding to the demands of native peoples. They are beginning to recognize, although reluctantly, certain collective rights that we could call ethnic or indigenous rights, which complement private human rights already possessed—at least on paper—by all persons, including Indians.

The international community has also made progress in matters of native rights although the road that lies ahead is still a long and difficult one. In the United Nations, a work group on indigenous populations has been formed and has met since 1982 in order to elaborate a declaration of indigenous rights that would be submitted to the General Assembly. Numerous native organizations have expressed their view-points in this group. Convention 107 on Indigenous and Tribal Populations, which has been passed since 1957, is being revised and updated, since many native groups considered it assimilating and paternalistic.

In the American hemisphere, things move more slowly. As already mentioned, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has been concerned with violation of human rights of Indian groups in Paraguay, Guatemala, Colombia and Nicaragua, but it has not taken a public stance on what we might call native rights as such. The Inter-American Indigenous Institute, an intergovernmental organization attached to the Organization of American States (O.A.S.) has in recent years gathered statements from native organizations and it has reoriented its initial positions to take into account new collective demands with regard to indigenous rights. But the organization as well as its periodic indigenous congresses are not resolution-making organs of the O.A.S. Their resolutions have no legal force. On the other hand, the possibility of an additional protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights is being discussed in the O.A.S. It would cover economic, social and cultural rights that are presently not included in this inter-American document. It would be desirable from all points of view if this protocol in-

cluded at least some reference to the collective rights of indigenous population of the continent. This is a task proposed by native organizations in the 1980s.

In conclusion, indigenous people still have a long road ahead in matters of human rights now in force. There are two principal areas that require attention. On the one hand is the fight for the effectiveness of universal human rights guaranteed to all human beings and the systematic violation of which the Indi-


ans continue to be victims. On the other hand is the definition, identification and guarantee of collective ethnic rights of the indigenous peoples of America. It is increasingly evident that the enforcement and effectiveness of universal, individual human rights among indigenous peoples passes for the recognition of their collective ethnic rights. If this is achieved, it would destroy a great injustice that already has a five hundred year history of perpetration and that is probably the prin-

cipal legacy of the half millenium that has elapsed since the European invasion of America. □

Note:

This essay is largely based on a more extensive work by the author. *Derecho indígena y derechos humanos en América Latina*, (Indian Law and Human Rights in Latin America), El Colegio de México and Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos, Mexico, 1988.

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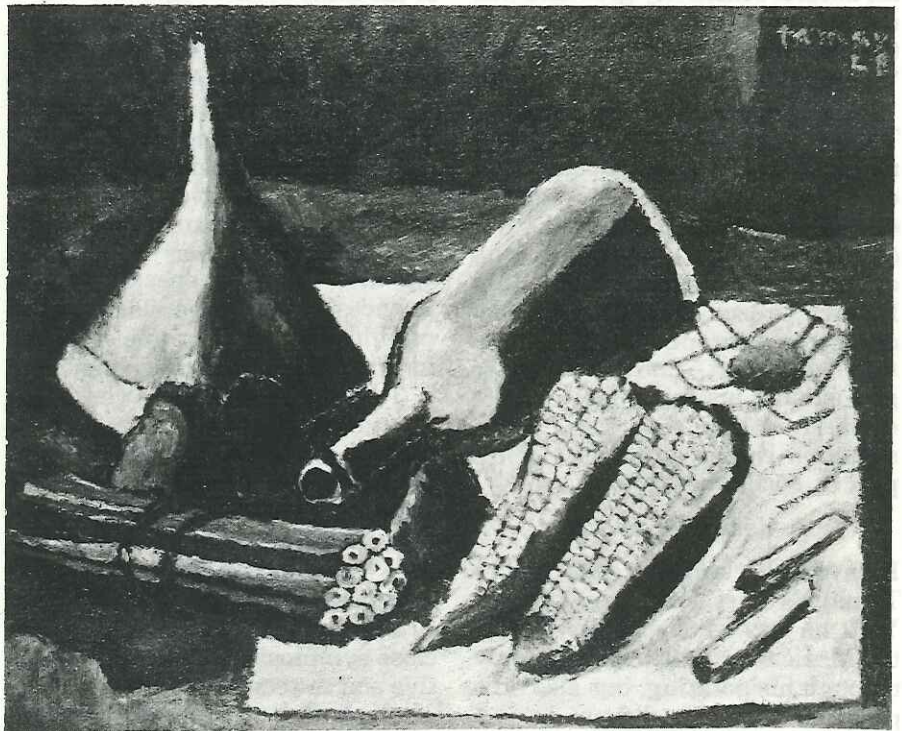
Teresa del Conde

TAMAYO

Artist and Demiurge

Tamayo's creations produce not only tactile sensations for the viewer, but also sensations of the taste and smell

As all truly creative artists, Tamayo's aesthetic actions are expressed by way of a mental and sentient codification captured by the manipulation of material substances. The first thing that one should note is the individual and irreplaceable character that each of his works of art possesses. This character does not prevent that very same work from alluding to another and even constituting one of the links that form a determined chain. Later I will elaborate on this theme, but for the moment it is worth remembering that Tamayo directly "touches" all that he makes. He shows his respect and love for the material of which the product will be made. The physical part of a painting, its constituent material elements, are of great interest to Tamayo. This gives rise to the fact that his works never appear to form a series, although links naturally exist between different works. The pictorial sensuality possessed by his works are also derived from this. His creations produce not only tactile sensations for the view-



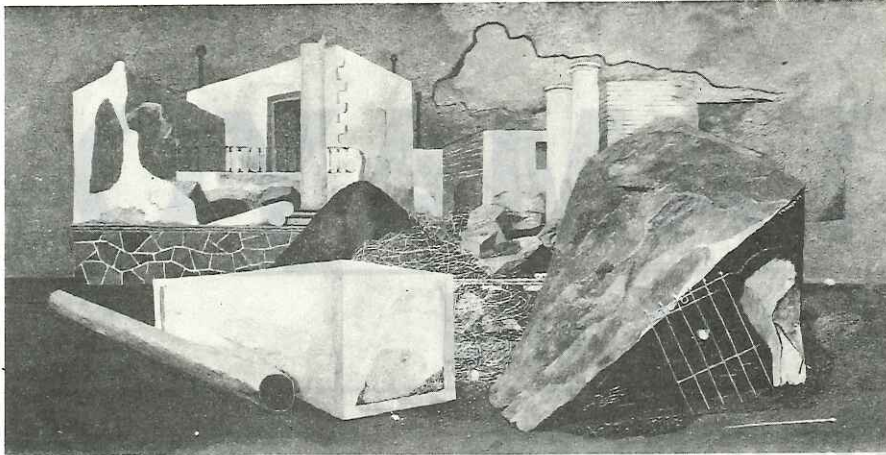
er, but also sensations of taste and smell.

A Complex Creative Talent

It is very risky to speak of the complex network of contingencies upon which Tamayo's creative talent is based and of the way that his talent

is expressed. Only extremely general comments can be made. Among them is the highly varied milieu in which he has developed his "vocabulary." He first lived in Oaxaca and then in Mexico City where he was in close contact with pre-Hispanic art, no longer simply as a fascinated, sensitive spectator, but rather as the head of the Ethnography Department at the National Museum of Archaeology. His museum position induced him to

Director of the Rufino Tamayo Museum, Mexico City Editor in the Department of Literature, UNAM



reproduce, by means of line, a vast quantity of objects from different ancient cultures. At the same time, his natural sensitivity grew and was refined by his contact with the artistic movement initially led by José Vasconcelos.

It is commonplace to consider Tamayo remote from the beginnings of the Mexican School. If anyone contributed to the creation of this concept—although not directly—it was Tamayo, who declined an invitation to join Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros because the concept of “art with a message” went—and continues to go—against his principles, in spite of the fact that all artistic representation entails an implicit or explicit social message.

A Venerator of Art

It is worth clarifying that before Tamayo's first long stay in New York he was wholly involved with the Mexican artistic milieu not only through his painting, but also on a personal basis. He did not have a close rapport with Diego, but he did deal with him, as well as with Orozco, and to a lesser extent, with Siqueiros. Tamayo was a great friend of Carlos Chávez, as well as of the writers who made up the group of *Los Contemporáneos* (The Contemporaries), above all with Carlos Pellicer.

In addition, since the beginning of his career, Tamayo has been intensely involved with the visual poetics of the twentieth century. Apart from his interest in painting, he also appreciated music—in 1934 he married the pianist Olga Flores—

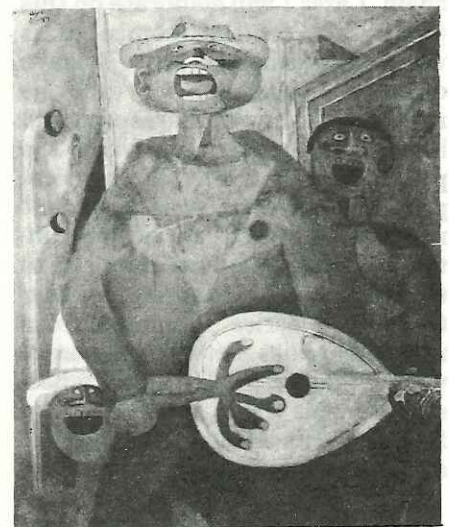
architecture, popular arts and literature. Naturally in matters of painting he has been linked with several of the most notable figures of twentieth century art. Tamayo could not ignore Picasso, Leger, Braque, Juan Gris, Miró and also Americans, such as Gorky and De Kooning. Just as Roberto Matta, he perceived the importance of the non-orthodox vein of surrealism, but in contrast he did not feel attracted to Action Painting, although it was one of his detours. I am not speaking of influences, I am referring to the predilections and appetites for forms and ways of modeling.

Tamayo is part of the very wide mosaic of post-Cubism, initiated through the *Ecole de Paris*. It is undeniable that his national and regional roots are expressed, by way of aesthetic values that pertain to Western painting, as much European as Latin American in origin. I think it can be safely said that the close symbiosis between the primitive and the contemporary—not exclusively, but very much a part of Tamayo—has always qualified his modes of expression. One fancies that instead of rejecting the primitive, archaic and even obsolete aspects of the forms that he has encountered in his career, Tamayo has integrated a multitude of visual elements through logical processes creating something like a magical synthesis in which archaic sources remain preserved by means of new and unexpected configurations, or by means of reprints that are organized to form chains in which each link is different from the other.

Many Artistic Techniques

Despite the large exhibit of Tamayo's work recently on display to celebrate seventy years of his creative labor, little has been said about his graphic work exhibit in the small galleries on the third floor of Mexico City's Palace of Fine Arts. This is the reason for the following brief consideration of this theme. Rufino Tamayo's prints form an artistic contribution with autonomous value which may be viewed separately from his contributions to easel and mural paintings. That is, his incursions into the field of engraving form a sequence, parallel to his career as painter. Engraving's multiple reproduction possibilities have made the wider transmission of the rich Tamayesque universe possible. But this is not the only important factor. Xilography, lithography, etching and above all mixiography, are techniques that tend to present certain types of solutions to the artist. And Tamayo responds to the limitations imposed by certain techniques without losing an iota from his casting plate. By extracting the maximum resources from each technique, he puts into play his ability

Since the beginning of his career, Tamayo has been intensely involved with 20th century visual poetics



RUFINO TAMAYO: 70 YEARS OF CREATION

On December 9, 1987, the exhibition of easel paintings by Oaxacan artist Rufino Tamayo opened at the museum that bears his name. The exhibition formed part of the events entitled "Rufino Tamayo: 70 Years of Creation" scheduled to celebrate the seven decades of this prolific painter's artistic achievements. Both the Rufino Tamayo Museum and the Palace of Fine Arts were filled with Tamayo's portable murals, paintings, sculptures, drawings and prints. The organizers of the Tamayo retrospective also scheduled a concert and dance performances, mounted exhibitions outside of Mexico City, and published several books on Tamayo's life and work.

This extensive project was organized by museographer and art critic Raquel Tibol, Director of the Tamayo Museum, Cristina Gálvez, and a team selected specifically for this purpose. Raquel Tibol tells us about the process involved in organizing this important event, as well as its importance in the cultural life of Mexico.

The budget to fund these activities came from the National Institute of Fine Arts (INBA) and from numerous other contributions. Among the contributors, Raquel Tibol mentioned the following: the three cities where Tamayo's works were on exhibit, Ciudad Juárez, Culiacan and Oaxaca; the investment house Inverlat which paid for transporting the artist's mural from Smith College and other pieces from the United States; anonymous private donors providing a total of some \$75,000; the Autonomous National University (UNAM), which published

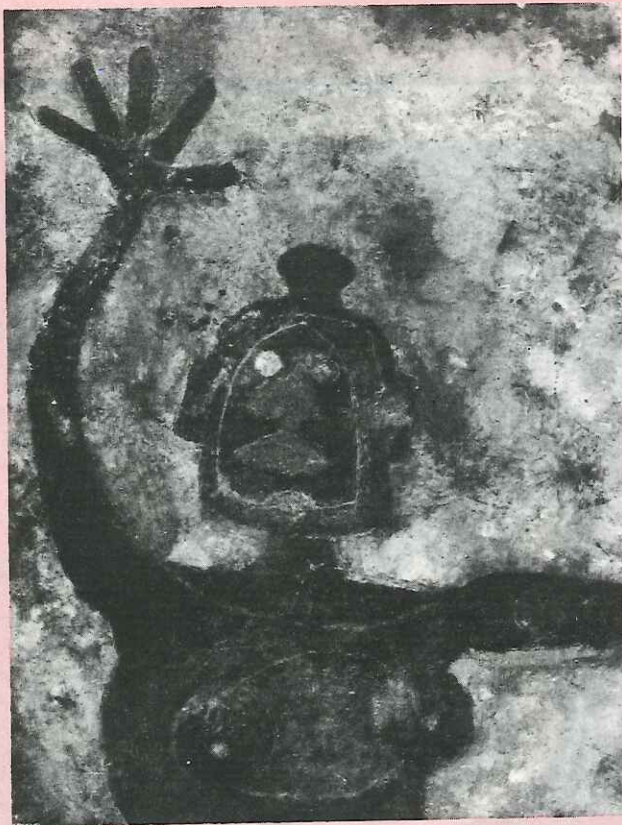
an anthology of texts; the National Council of Resources for Youth which funded the publication of a critical anthology; the Rufino Tamayo Museum which published a chronological resume (compiled by Judith Alanís and Sofía Urrutia); the University of Puerto Rico which paid for the transport costs involved in sending its mural to Mexico; and Christian Dior and Air France which brought the two Tamayo canvases belonging to the George Pompidou Center in Paris. "Outside contributions to the INBA," says Raquel Tibol, "were on the order of four hundred million pesos. I don't know if the INBA's contribution has been calculated."

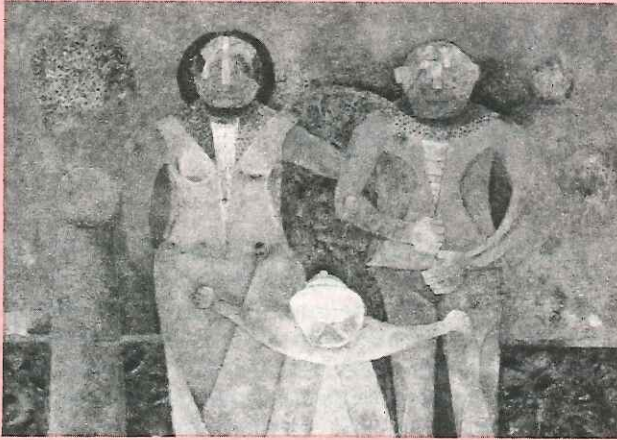
Raquel Tibol, who among her many activities writes for the art section of the Mexico City weekly magazine *Proceso*, explains that the criteria for exhibiting Tamayo's work was not solely a matter of "selection." Rather, attempts were made to get as many works as could be assembled since, "...you have to see as much as possible; excellent works, good ones, ordinary ones and frustrated ones."

She believes that the importance of this celebration has many facets. In the first place, young people have the opportunity to appreciate a previously unfamiliar artwork old enough to be the young viewer's "grandparent"—the oldest painting, *Capilla de Oaxaca* ("Oaxacan Chapel"), dates to 1920. On Tamayo's reaction to the celebration, Raquel Tibol says, "He has really taken it all with a great deal of satisfaction. We've proven this because he had many reservations of all kinds. Tamayo is very mistrustful of his exhibitions. He has a highly developed sense of self-respect, and in view of this we've come out as well as could be expected." Furthermore, Tamayo was highly satisfied with results throughout the country. For example, in his hometown "...they held a procession with lanterns, orchestras, children and fireworks, and a *mayordomía* (a religious ceremony held in conjunction with a change in government). They held an extraordinary celebration in Oaxaca." In this way, the celebration, "for this 88-year old man has meant a shot of happiness... and a rejuvenation," adds Tibol.

Tibol also felt a great sense of satisfaction. She says, "Whenever you get involved in this type of work, you learn a great deal: you have to work with a maximum of precision and with a minimum of errors." In addition, she has been able to "completely immerse" herself in Tamayo's work, although not for the first time. To her credit, she has carried out other important projects related to the painter's work. In 1984 she was the curator of the Museum of Modern Art's exhibition "Color in Prints." She also organized the Tamayo Hall in the Print Biennial in Puerto Rico. Along with Jorge Bibriesca, she organized a retrospective of prints, tapestries and paintings for the Guadalajara Regional Museum. She considers these experiences a good background: "When I began to work on a large scale, I had already formed a good relationship with Rufino [Tamayo] and with Olga, his wife, and I had his direct participation and, with his agreement, we worked in a very friendly way."

In addition, Tibol's other satisfactions included designing the exhibitions for the Tamayo Museum and the Palace of Fine Arts and commissioning a concert by composer Blas Galindo. She says of this, "It was my idea to request a performance with a Tamayesque aesthetic." At the same time, she considered Guillermina Bravo's work performed by the National Ballet and entitled *Constellation and Dance*, a fusion of Tamayo's conceptions and those of modern dance, as "a magnificent and a major aesthetic step." In turn, she mentioned Jaime Blanc's choreography in *Mujer con personaje* ("Woman with Character") and *Paisaje de figuras* ("Landscape of Figures") and Rosanna Filomarino's work *Personajes* ("Figures"), divided into Tamayo's themes: Chapter I, At dawn the dogs howl, Chapter II, Looking at infinity, Chapter III,





The shout, Chapter IV, Women, and Chapter V, The toast. "At all times," Tibol continues, "a character appears who spins the chapters: *La mujer en blanco* ("The Woman in White"), which unfortunately we didn't get for the exhibitions." An additional satisfaction was "that of publishing new texts by Carlos Monsiváis, Teresa del Conde, Jorge Alberto Manrique, Ramón Fabela (a Chicano art historian) and myself." Another important factor was that "in the middle of the (economic) crisis, *all*—restoration, publications and exhibitions—has been done with a small team in eight months." "The work was very difficult to carry out, but it was done with much dignity."

With respect to Tamayo's influence and his impact in the United States,

Raquel Tibol mentions, "...he has been a person who works at the same level as other artists of generations close to his own, but I don't find visible influences." This may perhaps be attributed to the fact that Tamayo, "possesses a very personal voice that is difficult to imitate follow." "On the other hand," she tells us, "Tamayo believes that the United States helped him to grow in all senses. It opened his eyes in 1926 when he visited museums where he could see artworks from the Renaissance to the European vanguard." Later, when he settled in Paris, *Doña* Raquel adds, "Tamayo acquired a greater color sense and his prestige became more international."

In the process of locating Tamayo's works, Raquel Tibol traveled to Europe, where she contacted different museums. "They asked for terms that were very extreme and costly for Mexico. This gave us the idea that Tamayo's work is considered as important in the museum in London as in Oslo." At the same time, she verified the existence of a considerable body of work in the United States. She said, "You could fill two museums with the Tamayos that exist in the United States. They have works from different periods, from the earliest to the latest."

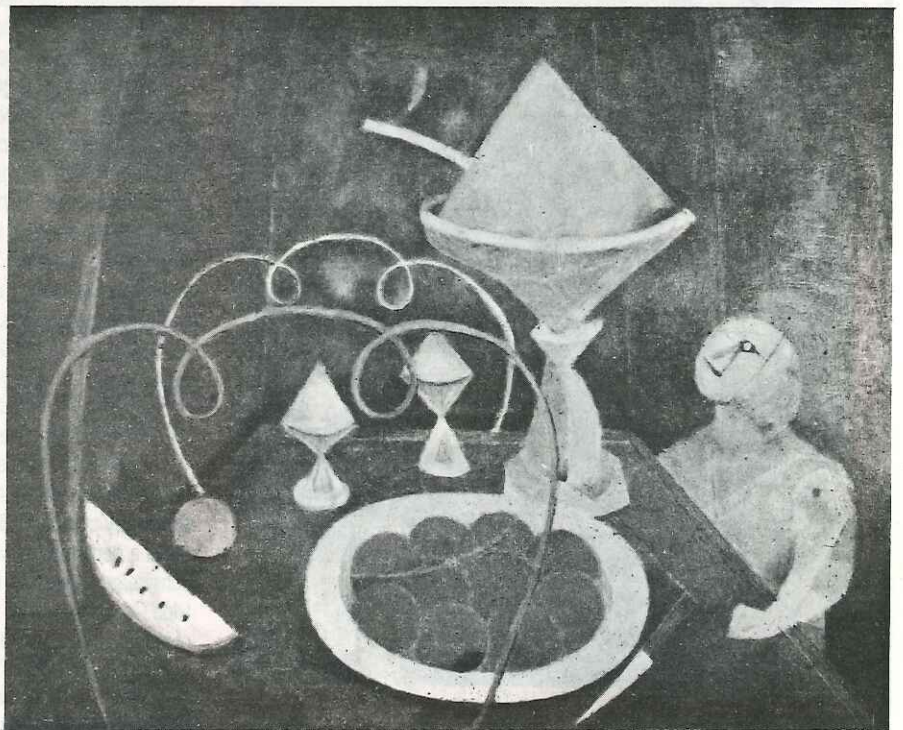
And what opinion does this woman, who has undertaken this cultural project of such renown, have about Tamayo? Her answer leaves no doubts, "Tamayo is a creator of a visual language very distant from narrative aspects and very focused on symbolic factors. His painting is severe, not obvious, hermetic, this last trait recovered by Tamayo from pre-Hispanic art." While the art produced under Christianity "is clear, narrative and with established symbols, Tamayo creates symbols more difficult to read; we stand before the inventor of a visual language."

"In addition," she continues with a tone of profound respect for Tamayo, and his work, "his allegories are important for eras not linked to immediate: anguish, fear which are common feelings of our era. Tamayo lived through the Mexican Revolution, two Worlds Wars... (through) all of this century of so many tragedies and discoveries." And she ends with a remark that summarizes everything: "Emotive and allegorically, Tamayo has left his mark on the 20th century. His work is unmistakably an art of the 20th century."

Instead of rejecting the primitive, archaic and obsolete, Tamayo has integrated them in a magical synthesis

to synthesize, his appropriately pictorial aptitude and that extraordinary sensitivity of his to construct a plane with light, color and textures without violating his two-dimensionality and without letting the line, as overwhelming as the outline of rock painters and that of pre-Hispanic artisans in its strict contemporaneity, lose its smooth foundation and elegance.

Of course Tamayo, has been no stranger to the aspects of craftsmanship required by the graphic arts. From the preliminary sketch to the incision with the curved engraving tool to the different states of the inking process, he is aware of



and coaxes out the physical properties of the materials and instruments, while preventing the product from somehow escaping from his control. From here each one of his creations within the field of prints reflects not only his personal system of configuration, but also the steps through which the present model has passed through in his mind, quick to take form with his hand, until converting itself into the final matrix that will give rise to works numbered and organized into series.

According to Tamayo's own words, he "accepts challenges in the workshop," never trying to stereotype production. If he is asked to work on a burned plate, the figure that is born there "is extinguished." It is red in color and the tone is modulated by way of a *sfumato* reminiscent of smoke. The acceptance of what we understand as "burned" is poetically united with a formal structure that preserves the condition of the material that served as initial recep-

tle. In a similar way, when working on a lead plate which retains oxide and slag, he produces the gray man, whose muted tonalities appear as if illuminated by a silvery moonlight that transmits the idea of something astral and cosmic, or if one prefers, the soul that exists within the lead, visible only for those who, such as Tamayo, are alchemists and demiurges.

Without a doubt, mixography has been a field of continuous experimentation and innovation for Tamayo since 1974. Mixiography, as the term indicates, is mixed because it permits the combination of various processes and also because it allows the inclusion of planography, and engraving in negative, relief and texture on the same plate.

Mixiography has been a field of continuous experimentation and innovation for Tamayo since 1974

In addition, it results in the achievement of pictorial effects. Among Tamayo's mixiographics. *Dos personajes atacados por perros* ("Two Figures Attacked by Dogs") may be considered a major work in the concert of contemporary world graphics. The dimensions of the mixiographic almost approach mural size and the structure, iconography and extremely subtle treatment of color, admirably sum up certain persistent signs full of significance in this artist's visual language.

The tactile aspect of Tamayo's graphic work as much as the morphological one, carry the viewer to new levels to explore a poetic universe that summarizes the career of this great twentieth century creator. At the same time the viewer of Tamayo's work is transported to distant formations in time and in space that through Tamayo's creative impulse and wisdom are integrated with the compact reality of that simple and at the same time noble material, paper. □

THE WORLD OF TAMAYO IN THE PALACE OF FINE ARTS

Raquel Tibol gave a guided tour of the galleries in Mexico City's Palace of Fine Arts. With enthusiastic eloquence she explained the importance of several of Rufino Tamayo's works exhibited for the celebration of the artist's 70 years of creative activity. The tour, given to a group of nearly 60 viewers, was a refreshing experience that allowed us to appreciate the beauty and delicacy of Tamayo's smallest sketches, the infinite coloring of his lithographs and mixographs, and the magnificence of his murals. Raquel Tibol conveyed in the span of two hours a sketch of Tamayo's dimensions—a panorama in which we could dwell and enjoy.

Posters and Photographs

We first enter the documentation gallery where posters of Tamayo's one-man shows in Europe, Asia,

Australia and the American continent were on display. "The European posters are particularly beautiful, as are the Japanese posters and some of the American ones too," says Raquel Tibol at the beginning of the tour. Later she points out a painting by the late painter Jaime Saldivar who imitated the technique used in *retablos* (small popular paintings on metal) to present a "valuable biographical synthesis of Tamayo."

Another important part of the exhibition are photographs. Tamayo has been sought as a model by well-known photographers, such as Cornel Capa. "Many photographs that have never before left the Tamayo house are on exhibit for the first time." So we see Tamayo at six years of age and later, photographs of him beside Siqueiros, Orozco and Luis Arenal. We see him next to his wife Olga. We see him in a delegation of the anti-Fascist Congress that he attended in 1936.

Tamayo received many medals and diplomas from different countries including the Doctor Honoris Causa when he received Mexico's



National Art Prize. "Tamayo," comments our guide as she points out his awards, "feels very flattered with the honors he has been given. He receives them with pleasure and they have been given with pleasure."

Then come the books that have been written on Tamayo over the decades. Our guide, affectionally known as *Doña Raquel*, tells us that there are some books that she had and that Tamayo did not own, that are also exhibited. With pleasure she continued the inventory of achievements. "This is the oldest monograph written in another language. It was done by Robert Goldwater in 1947. It is a study unsurpassed for the scientific seriousness of the author's focus on Tamayo's work."

Our guide concludes our tour of the documentation gallery, noting that "one may acquire a serious understanding of Tamayo. In this gallery one may make contact with many decades of Tamayo... with prominent people, with humble people."

Drawings

Many of the drawings exhibited in the next gallery are being displayed for the first time. There are sketches done for paintings that Tamayo completed and for works that were never executed.

Upon entering, we see the principal drawing, executed in pastel, chalk and pencil. It is a portrait of Olga Tamayo that Tibol classifies as "magnificent." Here *Doña Raquel* interrupts her explanation with yet another anecdote: "The majority of these drawings came from files that had been in the Tamayo house and that were removed from the roof, where we began to dig them out and dust them off." Some drawings stored in one of the files were at the point of being tossed into the wastebasket if they had not been rescued by *Doña Raquel* in time. *Doña Raquel* shows us lovely sketches for the ballet *Antígona*, "in which Tamayo fused Greek elements with modern ones, such as these breasts of the woman in red; and the rays that form asymmetry in many of the sketches."

The explanation continues as we are informed that, "what is astonishing in most of the drawings is the gentleness of the hand, of the line." A visit to this gallery confirms that the search held on the Tamayo roof bore good fruit. "It was possible to happily organize this gallery because it gives a very tangible vision of Tamayo."

Murals

Another of the rescue projects carried out for this event was that of recovering a mural that adorned the walls of the Lafragua Sanborn's, a Mexican coffee shop. The mural deals with a modernist still life that was preserved, thanks to the dust that accumulated on its surface, for 30 years. Now that the layer of grime has been removed from the mural, it shines in all of its splendor on the first floor of the Palace of Fine Arts exhibition, next to the murals, brought from Smith College and the University of Puerto Rico. Tibol enumerates the richness of *Naturaleza muerta* (1954) ("Still Life"), which appeals to her as a representation of "active life" because of its great beauty and the "juicy quality of colors." "In this work," continues *Doña Raquel*, "Tamayo's watermelons appear as hallucinations of greens, soon appearing as grays, then blues that turn into grays or greens framed by a red pulp of a thousand possible reds."

Another important Tamayo mural, was commissioned by Smith College in the United States. *La naturaleza y el artista: la obra de arte y el espectador* (1943) ("Nature and the Artist: The Artwork and the Spectator"). In this work, Tamayo devotes himself to the pleasure of navigating in his vocation as painter, and of entering into allegorical, symbolic elements. "This mural," asserts *Raquel Tibol*, "due to the manner of the artistic solution, represents a radical change in the painter's work. From this moment on, he brings to a close his relationship with realistic painting." This mural is replete with different symbols, including a painter honoring the artist, a woman with double breasts—as the ancient



deity—rendering homage to nature, and a rainbow in honor of color. It is one of *Doña Raquel's* favorite canvases because of "the great synthesis that it achieves and its chromatic splendor."

Tamayo's Lithographs

In the print section, lithographs executed by the painter in different workshops in the United States, France, Italy and Mexico predominate. Some of the works such as the lithograph *Medio pescado* ("Half Fish") demonstrate "a su-

perb quality and delicacy of color complexity." In the mixograph entitled *Protesta* ("Protest") honoring the Palestinian people, Tamayo uses "very odd, very deep colors" where texture, colors and "the bizarre" are combined.

Here *Raquel Tibol* finishes the guided tour with more observations "to whet the appetite." In Mexico City's Palace of Fine Arts you could find the drawings, the photographs, the paintings, the medals, the books and the murals to close the chapter of seventy years of work and to open the chapter of a world and a life.

THE PICTORIAL MAGIC OF GUY ROUSSILLE

Guy Roussille was born in the south of France where he began to paint at an early age. Later, he moved to Paris where he developed as a painter. He is a member of various European painting movements, including the Cobra group which he founded.

Fascinated by the light, color, panorama and climate of Tepoztlán, Morelos, Roussille set up a studio there. The magic of Tepoztlán—a place of artists, poets and witches—inspired Roussille to create a volcanic work which took years to complete. This year he moved his studio to Valle de Bravo in the state of Mexico, where he is currently working on new projects.

Guy Roussille's world lies in a magical and bright medium. Galactic constellations, phosphorescences, meteoric storms and energy sources are in circulation among an extraordinary vibrant and euphoric space. Air and fire, such are the constitutive elements of Roussille's cosmos. From these dancing molecules, he embroiders his universe into a system of complementary oppositions which is not far from the cosmogony and bipolarity of the great primitive civilizations. Sky and earth, Yin and Yang, vulva and phallus embroider their differences and their connections into a huge planetary ballet.

Roussille translates this very primary unity and drama with a singular symbolic vocabulary. The masculine and the feminine are expressed through divided and geometric mysterious objects where black and white amorously fit together. Geometry of perfect pyramids floating like ghosts in great



auras of light. And structures again of these kind of wasps' nests, of curved, striated shells pretending to hide a golden architecture.

Rousselle's fire's effervescence, his waves, his electric charges, the turbulence of a billion photons cannot hide the universe's deep order. Pure labyrinths imbricate their galleries like an underground arrangement, the secret intelligence of matter. Some centers refract light harrows in every possible direction. A fascinating figure resumes the very intelligence of the whole, of cosmos and of life.

You find it again like the demi-urge seal in each painting. You are in front of a growing double evoking all together a bivalvular shell and a female sex.

Fantasy is dreaming between the fruit, the mollusc and the root. A red and black flesh is swelling out, both labiate and pneumatic.

Polished and distended, this is the perfect hem of enjoyment. This crowd of precise signs may remind us of hieroglyphics, numbers of the occult scences or the mysteries of alchemy.

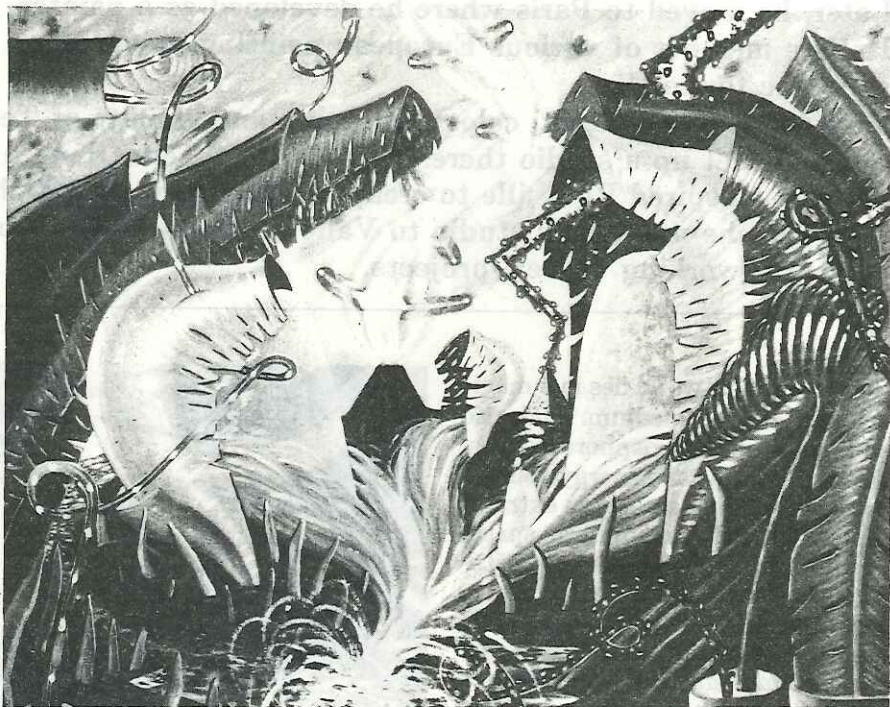
Roussille restores the algebra of desire as well as the alphabet of the gods.

Is he not trying, inside his painting's crucible, to obtain this cosmogonic egg, this primitive hermaphrodite who would reconcile the masculine and feminine principles into one sole body?

Sulphur and Mercury may be right in the center of this colored magic which directly dazzles in each picture. There is, in this sign tapestry, a connection with the analogic system of a Paracelse or of a Jeronimus Bosch free from hell and purely paradisiac.

The Renaissance and its armories, its mirror games, its lyrical inventories, its system of analogies and occult marks are given back to us. Roussille's art is directed by the great intuition according to which microcosm and macrocosm answer one another. Sometimes, big flows are bathing the outlines, the matter is dimmed, opened by the transparencies making it float in a dreamy uncertainty. And it is as if the world spiral was emerging from these supernatural rivers.

Pistils, drops, gametes and germs are springing up from the earth and proliferating in the form



of bunches. Rockets like long phosphorescences and giant glow-worms are interlacing enchanted rainbows.

Because Roussille is always bringing us back to the light and world iridescence, his colors are extraordinary and almost mythical. They proceed from a mixture of science and sorcery. They are born from a kind of Epiphany. Roussille,

it's like matter's Pentecost!

Our look is caught all together in four different directions which overlap the two female and male axes of the world.

The light diffused through space like its main substrate is flowing towards magical and focal places. Just as if a great radiation, coming from the confines of the cosmos,

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BOOKS

Alejandro Toledo

NEWS OF THE EMPIRE: ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A QUEEN

In 1959 a magazine in Veracruz *La palabra y el hombre* ("Word and Man") published "El estudiante y la reina" ("The Student and the Queen") by Fernando del Paso. The short story tells of the encounters of a medical student with a mad woman who claims to be a queen but in reality is an old prostitute. This curious story establishes an intimate relationship between two of this Mexican writer's three novels, *Palinuro de México* (1977) ("Palinuros of Mexico") and *Noticias del Imperio* (1987) ("News of the Empire"). The protagonist of the first novel is a medical student who died in Santo Domingo Plaza in 1968 as a result of government repression of the student movement. The second tells of the French intervention in Mexico and of the residence of Maximilian of Hapsburg and Maria Carlota of Belgium in the Mexican Second Empire. The crux of the novel is a long monologue by Carlota, who by this time is insane and awaiting death in Bouchout Castle.

"The Student and the Queen" published in 1959 spans a bridge between two novels that had not yet been written. Its epigraph is worth noting: "Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition." Perhaps it is from James Joyce's

Dubliners. This information helps us trace some of the coordinates between which Fernando del Paso will move—a medical student, a mad queen a waiting to die, and the other axis grounded in the works of James Joyce.

Nevertheless, Fernando del Paso's first novel *José Trigo*, was not published until 1966. Its subject matter is a far cry from that of "The Student and the Queen." In *José Trigo*, Del Paso adopted the 1958-1959 railroad workers' movement as central theme. This movement affected the nation as a whole and it began a decade of dissidence and repression that culminated in the massacre at the Plaza of Three Cultures at Tlatelolco. As if a premonition, the geographical setting of *José Trigo* is Nonoalco Tlatelolco where railway workers had their camps. Some view this novel as a dark omen of the student massacre that occurred during the presidency of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz. The account of Tlatelolco told in *José Trigo* casts a gray, deathly halo over the region bathed by the tragedy.

Specific places and specific historical events—the railway workers' movement, the student movement, the French intervention—seem to be other gauges of Fernando del Paso's narrative exercise. An author of only three books, he has tended to form a trilogy of Mexico independently of the fact that he takes as his basis the most significant events of the 19th and 20th centuries in Mexico. Del Paso avoids direct reference to the 1910 Revolution, undoubtedly because it would be difficult to find new creative possibilities for the topic.

While Mexican narrative shows an interest in history, that does not fully define Fernando del Paso's novels. He belongs to a generation of writers born between 1925 and 1935 who share a critical view of Mexican history. The leading writer of that generation is Carlos Fuentes. It is, however, difficult to compare, the two authors. Fuentes has tried to forge in his writing a "Mexican comedy" in the style of Balzac,



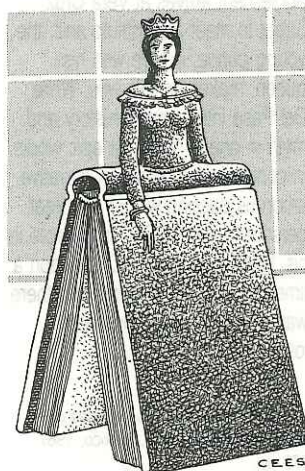
Fernando del Paso (Photo by José Fuentes)

while Del Paso seeks to achieve a supreme synthesis in only three books published a decade or more apart.

Marcel Schwob notes, "The science of history plunges us into uncertainty about individuals." Perhaps for this reason, literature that deals with history pays attention to those specific histories, which in their small complexity add up to form the past. A better definition of Fernando del Paso's novels is that they may be seen as a "bundle of narratives." It is not so much Great History as the more specific accounts of Luciano, the railway worker leader, of Palinuro, the fossilized student in the Medical School, or Maximilian of Hapsburg, a weak man educated to govern the masses. These intrusions into the individual, these visits to the interior universe offer new

perspectives when historical events are involved. In *News of the Empire*, for example, Carlota speaks at length:

Today the messenger came to bring me news of the Empire. He came laden with memories and dreams, in a caravel with sails swollen by a single puff of luminous wind filled with parrots. He brought me a handful of sand from the Isle of Sacrifices, some deerskin gloves and an enormous barrel made of precious woods brimming over with frothy and burning hot chocolate, where I am going to bathe every day of my life until my Bourbon princess skin, my 80-year old skin of a mad woman, my white Alençon and Brussels lace skin, my snowy skin like magnolias from the Miramar Gardens, until my skin, Maximilian, my skin split by centuries and tempests and the crumbling of dynasties, my white angel skin of Memling and of Beguinaige's sweetheart falls to pieces and a new dark and perfumed skin, dark as the cocoa of Soconusco and perfumed as the vanilla of Papantla covers me entirely, Maximilian, from my dark forehead down to the tips of my Mexican Indian, brown-skinned virgin, Empress of America, bare, perfumed feet.



Contributor to *uno más uno* weekly supplement "Sábado", and *Casa del tiempo* and *La Orquesta* magazines



The novels of Del Paso
(Photo by Arturo Fuentes)

Structuring *News of the Empire*, Carlota's monologue is composed of long sentences and extensive paragraphs that come to comprise several pages. It is a lyrical exercise that focuses its attention on the flow of images. By calling it a "lyrical exercise" one attempts to emphasize its pre-eminence for song and the fact that the continuous creation of metaphors provides historical information. It has been compared with Molly Bloom's monologue that closes James Joyce's *Ulysses*, but it is easy to distinguish between the two. While Joyce's work follows the stream of consciousness, Del Paso's has a verbal resonance: it is music of the word and not of thought. As in *Palinuro de México* everything contributes to the creation of the artistic image, and the infinite connections that give form to the monologue create a sense of resplendent catharsis.

News of the Empire is also a polyphonic novel. The amorous discourse of the insane empress precedes or serves as a prologue to the historical chapters, each divided into three sections narrated in the historian's voice.

Carlota embodies time that has stood still. She awaits death 60 years after her adventure in Mexico, when most of the protagonists have already died. This final awareness immerses the account which goes from 1861 to 1872, and then jumps to 1927 during Carlota's agony.

The dialogue of times and voices forms a counterpoint that

activates the novel. The intensities of the monologue find their match in the accounts of battles or events of war in which Del Paso achieves an uncommon mastery describing the torture inflicted by Colonel Du Pin on the prisoner Juan Carbajal on board a barge.

Del Paso recalls two accounts by Martín Luis Guzmán: "La fiesta de las balas" ("The festival of bullets") in *El águila y la serpiente* ("The Eagle and the Serpent") and "El lazo de Canuto Arenas" ("The Rope of Canuto Arenas"), published in the newspaper version of *La sombra del caudillo* ("The Shadow of the Commander"). The three works refer with great explanatory coldness to an act of torture and punishment in the midst of war.

The fame of Colonel Du Pin spread all over the world. Egon Caesar Conte Corti, principal historian of the Empire, speaks of him as "a desperate person who had lost his rank in his homeland as a consequence of different irregularities and had recovered it far from his country by offering himself voluntarily in acts of war. His mission consisted of mercilessly advancing against bands fighting the intervention that had overrun the country, but he also often dedicated himself to all kinds of robberies and assassinations, and he did this in such a radical way that he achieved the worst notoriety because of his terrible cruelty and his numerous senseless killings."

A writer's early texts sketch, although only roughly, the paths which he will follow. Fernando del Paso's first story published in 1959 for a university magazine dealt with two possible readings: the adolescent arrives at Vera Cruz Street to meet a prostitute and, the young prince, in love with his queen, makes her his wife. While Del Paso interweaves history and myth in one of the most epic works in contemporary Mexican narrative, amorous passion will be his great, personal twist. As Del Paso wrote in his 1959 short story, "Once upon a time there was a student. And there was a queen. And they were lovers."

Del Paso, Fernando. *Noticias del Imperio*. Editorial Diana, México, 1987. 670 pp.

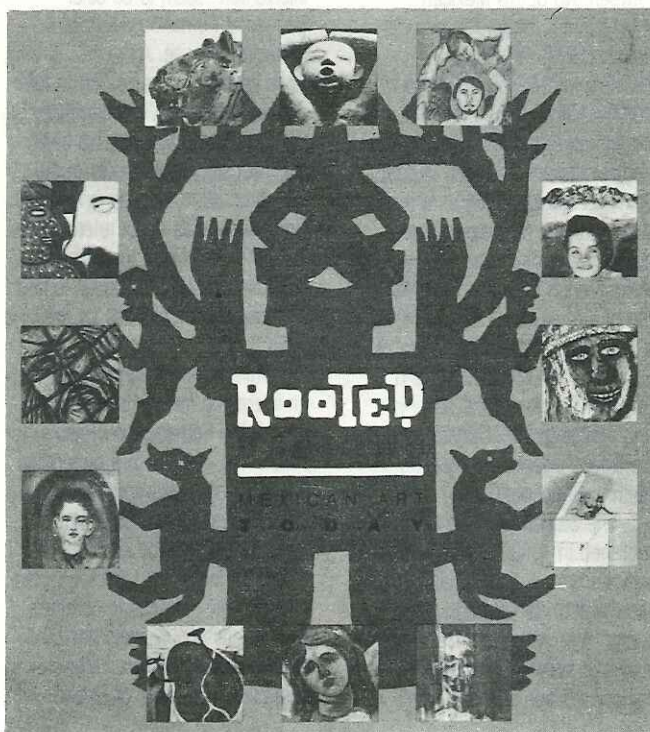
ROOTED VISIONS

In the past nine years Mexico has witnessed the appearance of a number of artists who have succeeded in bringing the traditional realist roots to the forefront with great contemporary zeal. Many elements have undoubtedly played a part in this current need to examine the traditions that, with their manifold meanings, have inspired and renewed the art of Mexico during this decade.

A volatile economy coupled with tremendous social changes, in addition to the physical hardship of earthquakes, seem to have propelled a compelling disposition to exhort those values that can best project a selfhood, one that is rooted in a "mexicanness" (la mexicanidad). On the other hand, there are those who view this art as a new and contemporary rendition of earlier Mexican art, such as the 1930's Mural Renaissance, or the humanist realism of the *Contemporáneos* who during that

time taught in the open-air schools that were created to promote art appreciation and creativity to the less privileged popular classes.

Although it would be comfortable to presume that this new art forms part of an order and chronology of Mexican art, particularly since similarities abound, there is still something quite different at hand in this work. The striking difference of this new work with earlier Mexican realism is the absence of an ethical point of view. Without the ethical program of their predecessors whose socially-oriented comradeship with the masses made the indigenous heroes of monumental mural art, and subject of romanticism, these artists take their spiritual ideas from the layers of cultural forms, like pre-Hispanic, or the indigenous version of Christianity, as well as the wit and irony of the objects surrounding the popular fairs. And, they generally adopt a more humble and not specifically political attitude. In fact, as several Latin American critics have observed, the use of native traditions within what could appear to be close to today's mainstream styles, can also be seen to have a subversive quality.





Cortés and the Malinche. Alejandro Arango

When it comes to introducing the work of other cultures, most North American critics tend to recur to a frame of establishing differences and similarities, the other and the self, local and world view conceptions or appropriation and originality, and so forth, in order to come up with an acceptable Western working method of appreciation. Quite to the contrary, one would wish for a collapsing of these divisions and that by seeing and looking at this art, the viewer is forced to take the perspective of the other, the native of that other culture, so that what is at first perceived and felt to be strange can, by the same token, take the viewer away from what is thought she knows about herself. Still, in order to accomplish this, it is necessary for a viewer to have at least a minimum of clues to guide him or her in the process to acquire such an appreciation.

Mexico has for a long time been a focal attraction for artists and intellectuals, to live and immerse themselves in the plural and rich cultural traditions, so distinct from their own backgrounds. Richard McKinzie

wrote in *The New Deal for Artists*, "people talked most about the Mexican 'invasion' of American art... Among a certain artistic set, admiration of Mexican art took on something of the flavor of a religious cult." While it is hard to speculate about the results of these previous exchanges, it is fair to assess that Mexican art is not totally unknown to the New York audience for it to be strictly viewed in terms of the other and the outsider.

At the same time, the type of exhibitions that have been organized show a Mexican art that is bound to a progressive history which takes the viewer from the pre-Hispanic universe to the art of the Vice-Regal Spanish period, into the 19th century—with its incipient nationalism—ending with the art of the muralist. Then, apart from the visibility of Frida Kahlo and Rufino Tamayo, hardly anything has been shown that addresses a contemporary vision of the rootedness and how the actual coexistence with popular tradition has operated in today's art.

In contrast to the United States, when the traditional, the indigenist, and the roots reappear in a Mexican art discourse, it seems

to meet with the question of national as opposed to international art; in short, a debate on colonialism. While this is a significant enough question to raise, it should be put within the context of the intrinsic and vital connections that Mexican artist—regardless of their class origin—establish with their surrounding realities and the legacy of their shared tradition.

During the sixties this question of tradition was largely centered on the confrontation between those who preferred international abstract models and those who preferred the figurative modes. By the seventies many international exhibitions, as well as juried competitions and exchange programs had put abstraction, specially geometric abstraction, into a Mexican and Latin American perspective. It even came to be seen as a genuine native form of art.

Then, after a period of exploration and experimentation in which artists banded together in groups, and after the debacle of the economy and banking systems, as contact with international art became difficult, and the country turned into itself, the artists took the challenge of this relatively isolationist period to seek out popular and traditional roots that would come to represent the strength of a new sense of "mexicanness." This was not part of a consciously determined program, but emerged spontaneously and simultaneously in the individual work of a number of artist. Nahum B. Senil's statement of what occurred to him is pertinent:



Opera singers. Adolfo Riestra

"I first showed abstract work in a government gallery, as a result of the La Esmeralda art school. Soon I realized that there was no way to be myself unless I did art that related to my situation, which is composed of many realities." Another artist in this exhibition, German Venegas, from the mountain region of the State of Puebla, also spent time at the La Esmeralda school but soon began to incorporate into his art the wood carving of his ancestors that he had learned as a child. Actively involved with the Holy Week tradition of Mexico City's Ixtapalapa area, where Christ's *Via Crucis* is enacted in its entirety, he employs this subject matter not as a reflection and representation but as a visual communication of a direct and personal spiritual experience. Contrasting gods and demons, heroes that are victims as well, lions and toads, saints and serpents, his painting and sculpture show some of the most powerful contemporary correspondences with the underworld, terrestrial and celestial realms of the continuous battling duality in Mexican art. Evoking awe and dread, inspiring terror, has been a part of Mexican art, from the Aztecs to today, and Venegas brings this in an unusually personal and contemporary fashion for us to consider, whether we see it from within Mexico or from New York.

Adolfo Riestra, an artist who paints and creates monumental clay figures, could easily be locked into being an extension of just Meso-American, pre-Hispanic art. However, upon closer examination, these imposing figures are an approach to the creation of a contemporary pantheon of demigods and temple guards, a unique blending of images for devotional veneration that have permeated throughout many cultures, from Babylonia to India or Africa, yesterday and today. Rocío Maldonado, by some critics associated with Frida Kahlo's sensibility, works large scale, extending her painting onto the frame. With allusions to the *ex-voto* tradition, the iconography points at a female condition of both fantasy and fear. The recurring image of the Virgin of Guadalupe as patron saint is here set in a scenario of newborn babies, bleeding hearts,

spined roses, and the anatomy of females, angels and saints, that only occasionally and almost incidentally refer to the male. By contrast, Adolfo Patiño's Virgin of Guadalupe is placed in the context of the heroic, those heroes who in general art historical terms are personally important to the artist, as well as those individuals that he has decided, by means of artmaking, to turn into heroes. His obsessive anthologizing and remodeling of some of Mexico's national icons into a meaningful alternative, seems to share the same spirit of excessiveness with which the official Mexican media insist in confronting and reminding the public with what is "Mexican."

On another level, Dulce María Núñez also presents the transformative element of national symbols. The *Ixtaccihuatl* volcano (Nahuatl for the Dormant Woman) becomes, next to her self portrait, an acute statement about Mexico, *la patria*, in a state of possible awakening, perhaps exploding, to reveal its true identity, strength and character. The *Ixtaccihuatl* has been a theme for many Mexican artist, including Rufino Tamayo's famous *Sleeping Musicians*, but

Núñez' vision, coming from a woman artist, is at once poignant and direct by alluding to ancient fearful attributes of the female.

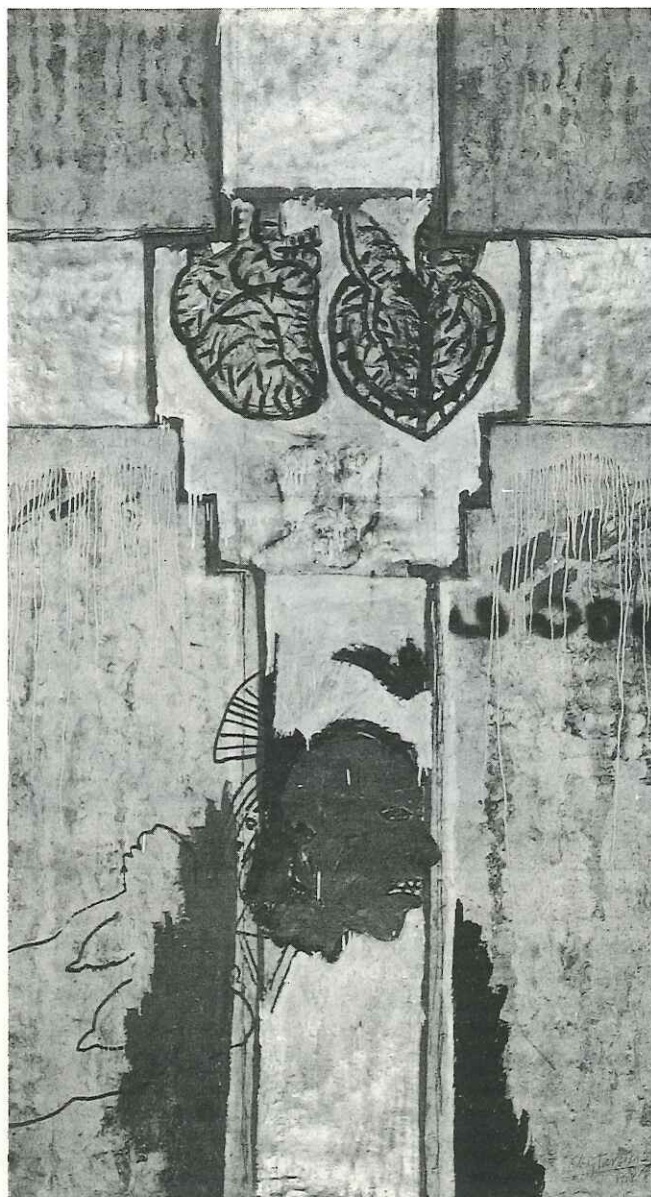
Eloy Tarsicio traces "mexicanness" by way of mythological-religious connections, such as the cactus, eagle and snake of the Mexican flag, and its colors as a contemporary metaphor for destruction and resurrection. Currently he is working on a series of large bark-paper codexes that are another approach to the Aztec's view of death, the expression of chaos and evil absolutely necessary for the continuity of life.

The frightening, voracious and macabre imagery that speaks for the ceremonial and ritualistic content of much of Mexican art, seems at the same time a difficult aspect for a western trained art viewer, who would probably prefer these violent explosions to be tamed into something that can be appreciated from a distance or on strict formal terms.

As an extension of selfhood and "mexicanness," it should only be natural that some artists such as Julio Galán, Miguel Ventura and Nahum B. Zenil engage in a true visual self-analysis. Their work



Unto. Adolfo Riestra



From Tenochtitlan to our time. Eloy Tarsicio.

generally shows rapture and pain that accompanies this type of process of examination. Here the individual self is placed in contrast with larger issues of a collective Mexican idea of self. One of the most pertinent images in this respect, "I Lied to You" by Julio Galán, reveals an almost uncanny introspection as to the nature of appearances and hidden identities. The "what you see is not what you get," with eyes mirroring the soul, renders one of the most memorable visualizations of duality. One could continue to elaborate on other images included in this exhibition, suffice it to state that all the artists included have contributed on many levels, each with individually

outstanding elements, to give an approximation of the plural expressions of rootedness in today's Mexican art.

To conclude, it is significant to point out that this work should be viewed also within the larger scope of Mexican art, the one that extends beyond the Rio Grande to the north, where Hispanic-Americans and North Americans alike, share and feel akin with the rich and varied traditions that in a time of change continue to nurture the art on both sides of the border. □

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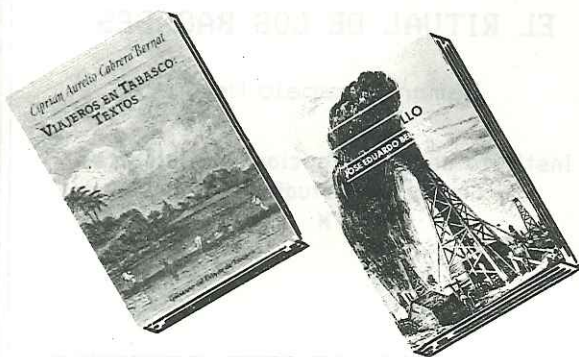
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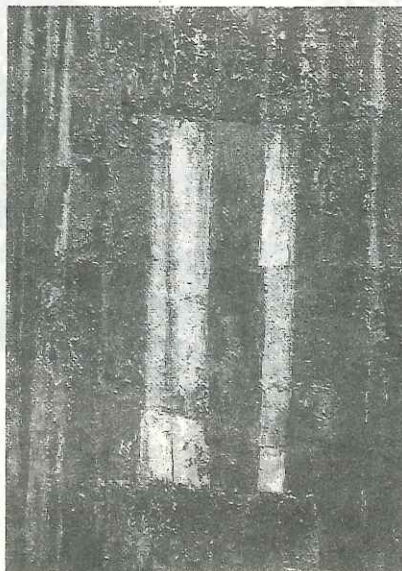
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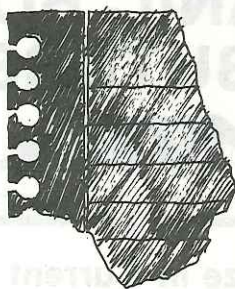
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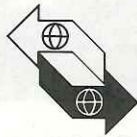
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