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The World Food Crisis

*Articles by Camelia Tigau
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The Bush Legacy For Multilateral Trade

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Rampant Criminal Violence in Mexico

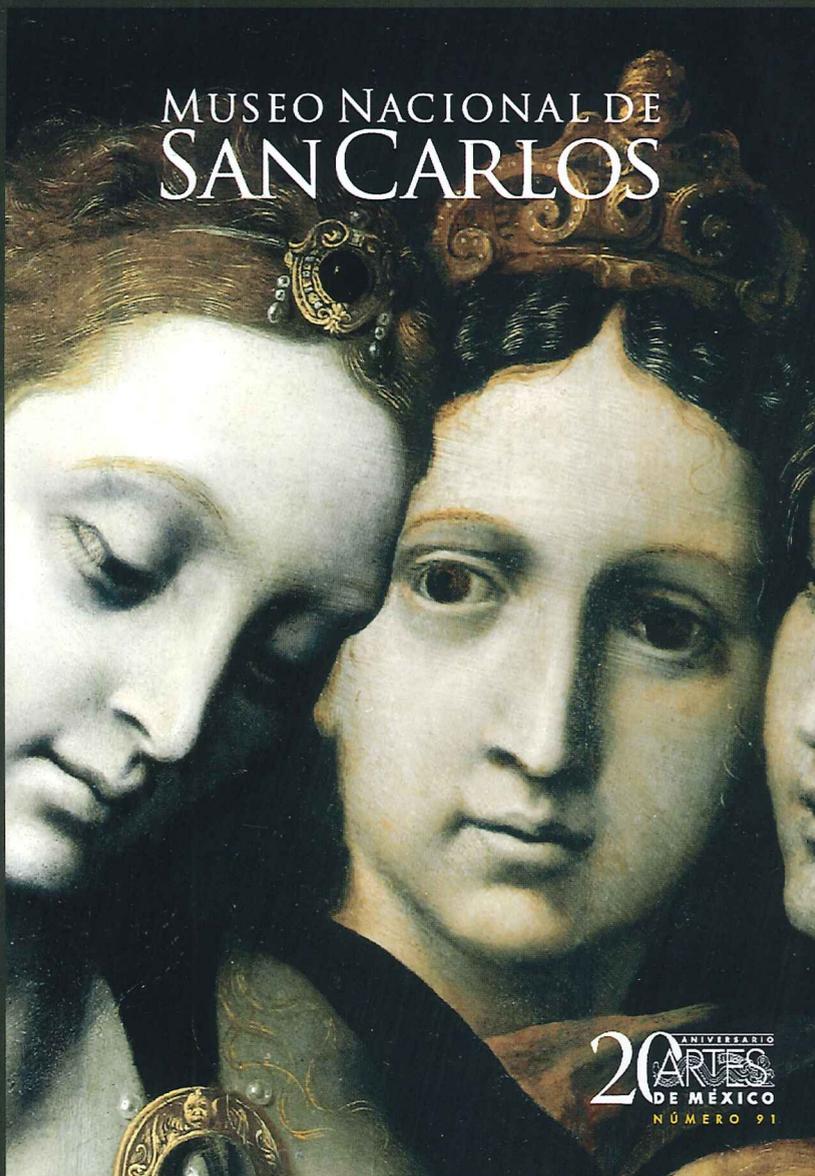
Carlos Antonio Flores

The Mayan Riviera, Ancient Mayan Cities And the Mayas of Today



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40 AÑOS DE HISTORIA

El Museo Nacional de San Carlos, en un momento de su historia, se encuentra en un momento de su historia...



LA COLECCIÓN DE ESCULTURA



UNO DE LOS MUSEOS MÁS IMPORTANTES DE MÉXICO ES REVELADO EN ESTAS PÁGINAS A TRAVÉS DE UN RECORRIDO POR SU COLECCIÓN. SU ORIGEN, LA HISTORIA DE SU ANDAR POR DIFERENTES INMUEBLES Y LA LLEGADA DE PROPUESTAS ARTÍSTICAS INNOVADORAS A SUS SALAS.

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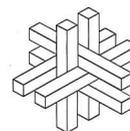
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Elsie Montiel

Cover

Nicolás Moreno, *Dead Ahuehuate*, Architecture V Series, 95 cm x 123 cm, 1969 (oil on canvas and wood).

Back Cover

Azulik resort in the Tulum area.
Photo by Elsie Montiel

Contents

Editorial

- 4 Our Voice

Politics

- 7 Oil and Nation Building
Manuel Barquín
- 13 Felipe Calderón's
Proposed Energy Reform
O. Sarahí Ángeles Cornejo
- 19 1968
40 Years Later
Carlos Sevilla
- 24 Mexico '68/Beijing '08
A Tribute to the Student Movement
Roberto Escudero

Society

- 28 Criminal Violence in Mexico.
The Risk of Institutional Irrelevance
Carlos Antonio Flores Pérez

Art and Culture

- 33 Nicolás Moreno
Six Decades Interpreting Mexico's Landscape
Alicia Moreno
- 41 Nicolás Moreno by Nicolás Moreno
A Life Dedicated to Landscape
- 43 Felipe Carrillo Puerto
Capital of the Contemporary
Mayan World
- 51 Hum Batz
Recovering Pre-Hispanic Mayan Music

United States Affairs

- 57 Is Obama Black?
José Luis Valdés-Ugalde

63 A Genuine American Dilemma
Bernadette G. Vega Sánchez

67 Mexico and the U.S. Elections
María Cristina Rosas

World Affairs

72 Food Crisis: Is It Really About Food?
Camelia Nicoleta Tigau

76 Understanding the World Food Crisis
And Its Effects in Mexico
Ciro Murayama

The Splendor of Mexico

81 The Walled City of Tulum
Adriana Velázquez Morlet

87 Cobá
A City amidst Lagoons
Adriana Velázquez Morlet

92 *Aluxes*
Sprites of the Land and the *Cenotes*
Elsie Montiel

94 Mayan Riviera
A Natural Paradise

Museums

99 The Caste War
Museum
Elsie Montiel

North American Issues

107 The Balance Sheet of the
Bush Administration's
Multilateral Trade Negotiations
Elizabeth Gutiérrez Romero

In Memoriam

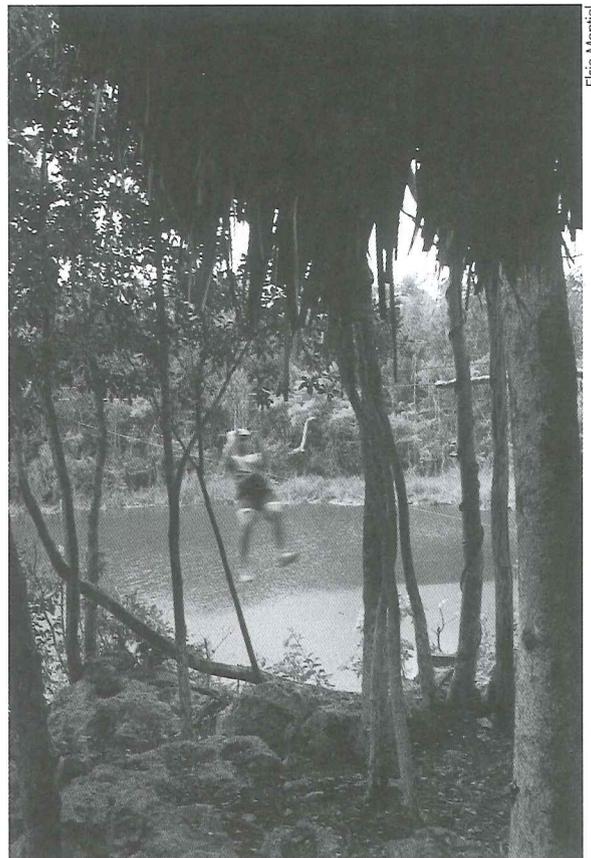
111 Gilberto Rincón Gallardo:
The *Decent* Bolshevik
Jesús Rodríguez Zepeda

115 A Non-Discrimination Policy:
Gilberto Rincón Gallardo's Contribution
José Luis Gutiérrez Espíndola

Reviews

118 La migración y los latinos en Estados Unidos.
Visiones y conexiones
Elaine Levine, editor
Érika Cecilia Montoya Zavala

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Elsie Montiel

OUR VOICE

A great change is taking place on the U.S. political scene, and another fundamental one is approaching in what has been by far the longest and most fascinating electoral process in that country's modern political history. Only a few days before the elections, polls show that it is practically certain that Barack Obama will occupy the White House next January 20. All the polls, from the general ones to those taken by specific socio-economic, race-based, religious and generational groups, put Senator Obama leading John McCain by an average of 10 points. It is just a matter of time before the hypotheses of Obama's victory are confirmed. If Obama wins, we will be witnessing the most dramatic, transcendental moment of modern U.S. political history: the most symbolic place of power in the United States —Lyndon B. Johnson referred to it as the house that is not only white outside, but inside— will be occupied by a black politician, constituting a radical turn in the history of the U.S. presidency. Obama will have inspired the majority of his country's electorate with Martin Luther King's maxim that he likes repeating so much: "the fierce urgency of now," that is meeting up with history today, just around the corner.

Several factors are present in this great political moment. On the one hand, U.S. economic and political decadence has become unbearable, and, given the standard of living of the people and the leading class, this is not something any politician with aspirations can play around with. Having been the superpower for decades and a singular democracy has been a way of life to which everyone has become accustomed. And, it is to be expected that the idea is that things continue that way. As the Bush administration begins fading from the political scene ahead of time, it is in itself evidence of the urgent need for someone to occupy the presidency who proposes the recovery of lost well being and power. This can be via applying a new, broader social policy, by going back to "soft, smart power," or by recovering a multilateral approach in foreign policy. Obama has appeared in the political-electoral firmament as the competent option, as the politician who understands the need for this change generation-wise, and as a "transformational figure" of change, as General Colin Powell called him when he threw him his support.

The paradox: by presenting himself as the "war hero" and the "hard" candidate, McCain was left without a platform. As a result, he had no proposal in the face of two things: the possibility of winning in Iraq politically and militarily and the solution to the most important economic crisis since the Great Depression, both inherited from Bush, his ominous shadow. So, his political persona deteriorated because of three strategic mistakes: first, his inability to articulate a fitting proposal for these crises; second, by opting for dirty campaigning against Obama, which has backfired on him —Powell himself criticized him harshly for it when he supported Obama; and third, the grave mistake in judgment of choosing inexperienced, ignorant Sarah Palin as his running mate, who has scared off undecided voters and independents, decisive in an election like this one.

With things as they are, only two eventualities could stop Obama's victory: if Al Qaeda became the big elector and perpetrated a destabilizing or terrorist action that would help McCain win. It is more than obvious that, for Bin Laden, the election of the black senator would put an end to the business of war he started in 2001; that is why he prefers McCain and the continued exercise of "hard power." The second would be that a significant number of white voters, caught up in the Bradley-Wilder syndrome in the solitude of the polling booth, decided to vote based on race for McCain. Everything seems to indicate, however, that neither of these two scenarios is in the interest of either a rather worse-for-wear Bush or an angry U.S. society.

The United States is not the only partner of Mexico's that has gone through controversial elections. Canada's balloting has been completely overshadowed by its neighbor's race: 37 days of whirlwind campaigns cannot compare with the U.S. electoral paraphernalia. In fact, some media have even suggested that the Obama-McCain face-off was followed even more closely by Canadians than the race between Conservatives and Liberals (which Prime Minister Stephen Harper won, although with a minority in Parliament). This victory was due in large part to the fact that Harper was able to unite two parties on the conservative side of the political spectrum, and now it is the Liberals, who have governed for most of Canadian history, who are divided and have a weak opposition leader, Stéphane Dion, about to resign.

Certainly, for the Conservative Party, it is a dark victory. Although it secured 17 more seats than it had had in the outgoing Parliament, for a total of 144, it did not achieve a majority. And it will undoubtedly need that majority in the coming years, when Harper will have to face an economic crisis from a limited, much-questioned position.

The outcome of the Canadian elections cannot be read without taking into account the U.S. process and situation: Canada's anticipated elections responded to Harper's concern that a possible Democratic victory south of his border would spark an inclination on the part of his own population to elect a government compatible with the U.S. one. This was particularly the case given the prime minister's tendency to implement right-wing social policies and talk about conservative values in a liberal Canada, plus the close alliance between Stephen Harper and George W. Bush, unpopular the world over, an alliance his opponents have bitterly criticized.

* * *

Three articles with different aims and focuses in our "United States Affairs" section deal with the U.S. elections. The first, written by myself, looks at the ways in which race has influenced the campaigns and how the frontrunner has been conceptualized, depending on the actors and special interests, as more or less black, or more or less white. The topic is important because it demonstrates the existence of a racially polarized U.S. society. Analyst Bernadette Vega shows us the dilemma facing the U.S. electorate: the two visions of the country that the contending parties represent. Today, they are more at odds than ever about political strategy and economic ideology, above all because of the two issues that have been particularly telling in this election: the economic crisis and the Iraq war. Lastly, to provide the context, María Cristina Rosas reminds us of some of the characteristics of the U.S. electoral system, and contributes her comments about some of the implications that different electoral outcomes could have, not only in the presidential race, but in the make-up of the new House and Senate, both in general and for Mexico in particular.

Undoubtedly, the unfortunate —not to say disastrous— Bush administration, about to come to an end, has been a factor not only in determining the electoral outcome, but also the course of many other aspects of the development and destiny of today's globalized world, almost always and in most spheres, for the worse. In our "North American Issues" section, economist Elizabeth Gutiérrez Romero contributes her reflections about the balance sheet of the Bush administration's performance in multilateral trade. Her point of view is that the field is strewn with failures, both in matters of free trade and of the regulation of the agricultural sector and negotiations about services.

A series of events over the last few months will undoubtedly have a definitive effect on Mexico's medium- and long-term future. Our "Politics" section includes two articles about the energy reform, an issue that has divided Mexican society. Jurist Manuel Barquín Álvarez helps us contextualize the debate historically, presenting a brief but substantial chronicle of the zigzags of oil ownership and exploitation since before it was nationalized until today, sketching the arguments for and against private participation in the industry. For her part, Olivia Sarahí Cornejo explains why she thinks that the intention from the very first proposal to reform Pemex has been to privatize it; she builds her argument on a detailed examination of the official diagnostic analysis of the oil industry that was the basis for the reform. These two visions will help our readers understand the political and economic complexity of the issue of energy in Mexico.

The last few months have also been a time for commemorating the fortieth anniversary of Mexico's 1968 student movement. Two participants in those events contribute to this issue with original articles, whose main value is that they have managed to keep away from the traditional ready-made accolades. Former political prisoner Carlos Sevilla ventures a chronicle of that year using the formal structure of a play, with its acts, actors and plot, and, of course, its denouement: the significant influence the movement had and continues to have on Mexico's democratic development. Former student leader Roberto Escudero looks at the issue from the perspective of the similarities that those complicated times in Mexico have to the protest movements against the Olympics in China this year. In both cases, the proximity of the respective sports events influenced the strategies chosen by the actors in conflict and the decisions —more or less extreme— made from positions of power.

These few months have also been times of concern and anxiety for Mexican society because of the uncontrollable spike in criminal violence expressed in an unprecedented increase in kidnappings and drug-

trafficking-related executions. For this reason, we include in our “Society” section an article by public security specialist Carlos Flores, who sketches a panorama of a desolate future unless real, sincere efforts are made to attack the problem at its root: impunity and corruption.

The last few months have not only been difficult for Mexico. Different events and trends have affected the well-being of peoples the world over. The U.S. financial and the world food crises are perhaps the two most important. We have included contributions about the latter in the “World Affairs” section. Researcher Camelia Tigau finds that the food crisis, one of the main causes of which she considers is the dizzying rise in the production of biofuels, has had both losers, who suffer the famines, and winners, among which are aid agencies like US AID, which has capitalized it politically in its favor. Economist Ciro Murayama also writes about this topic in a more theoretical article to explain the causes of the crisis in the relationship among production, demand and supply of foodstuffs in a globalized world with increasingly demanding emerging economies, showing how in the case of Mexico the problem sharpens because of its proverbial historical lag in agricultural production.

The country recently lost one of its most eminent left-wing politicians, respected by political actors of all tendencies. Gilberto Rincón Gallardo was not only a politician, but also one of Mexico’s most widely recognized social activists of the last 50 years, as his most recent cause shows: his untiring struggle against discrimination and for equal opportunities for all marginalized groups in society. His former collaborator in the National Council to Eliminate Discrimination, José Luis Gutiérrez Espíndola, writes about this facet of his life and his contributions to the issue of discrimination. Jesús Rodríguez Zepeda, Rincón’s advisor and close friend for years, writes about his trajectory as a left militant and undoubtedly influential figure in Mexico’s process of democratization.

* * *

This issue’s “Art and Culture” section begins with an article about one of Mexico’s most prolific landscape artists: Nicolás Moreno, a painter for 64 years. His work is a pictorial legacy of the evolution of the country’s landscape in all its different facets. The next two articles deal with the contemporary situation of Mayas in Quintana Roo, particularly in the region near the Mayan Riviera, one of the country’s exclusive tourist areas that has grown the most in recent years. The first describes the efforts of the Mayans living in the municipality of Felipe Carrillo Puerto to keep the authentic aspects of their culture alive when faced with the onslaught of the commercialization of the Mayan heritage for tourism. The section concludes with a look at a school established to preserve traditional Mayan music and musical instrument making.

“The Splendor of Mexico” visits the Mayan Riviera. First, we take a trip through two of the most outstanding archaeological sites in the area: Tulum and Cobá. Both are written by the director of the Quintana Roo Office of the National Institute of Anthropology and History. Then, we offer a brief description of Mayan communities involved in sustainable tourism, which allows visitors, for example, to come into contact with the *aluxes*, fantastic beings who have inhabited Mayan jungles since the time of their pre-Hispanic ancestors. We conclude the section with a photographic panorama to give an idea, even if only succinctly, of its infrastructure and immeasurable natural beauty.

The “Museums” section visits the Caste War Museum, located in the town of Tihosuco, where visitors can learn about the history of one of the bloodiest wars of resistance the Mayas ever fought, a history interpreted by the Mayas themselves.

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde

Oil and Nation Building

Manuel Barquín*



Janet Kimber OAC/Reuters

Jared Diamond brilliantly put forward the complex circumstances that explain the supremacy of Europeans in the Americas in his celebrated book *Guns, Germs and Steel*. A publishing success, as reflected in the *New Yorker* review, the book's subtitle, *The Fates of Human Societies*, presages his lesser known work, *Collapse, or How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. However, the cases of historical failures reviewed in this second work lack the spectacular display of grandeur and misery surrounding the conquest of the "New

World." This prompts the question of why he did not include the case of Mexico and oil as one of his chapters.

The first of his books might inspire the analysis of the expropriation of oil by the post-revolutionary generation led by the legendary Lázaro Cárdenas and other lesser known figures. The painful twilight of Mexico's oil industry and the ominous doubts about the viability of its "nation building," as put forth since the end of the Revolution, could well have been an object of analysis in the second book mentioned above.

Valley of Mexico civilization dominated the vast territory that is today pompously called the Mexican United States, compared in naïve nineteenth-century thinking to a "horn of

* Researcher at the UNAM Institute for Legal Studies.

Mexico's first experience with oil came at a time when there was a new political class, the product of the independence movement and its naive liberal ideology.

plenty,” of which all that is left is a yearning for a past that, if not better, was at least more poetic. So, it is surprising the region is so populated despite its adverse climatic conditions. Mexico is situated between parallels 20 and 30, the same location as the great Sahara and Gobi Deserts and the one on the Arabian Peninsula; this makes it a site that seems not very promising for hosting a vast, viable society. However, from the times of the splendor of Teotihuacan and Tenochtitlan, New Spain and contemporary Mexico, its very existence seems to defy logic.

The capital of New Spain occupied a vacuum left by the Aztec empire's lake capital and became the jewel in the monarchy's crown on the head of Spain's overseas empire. Soon, the dreams of the mythical cities of Cibola and Quivira, with their endless lodes of gold, began to fade. In their place, silver deposits would ascend to legendary dimensions and make it possible to finance not only New Spain's viceroyalty, but the military adventures and exploration of the Austrian and Bourbon dynasties. The unending stream of vessels loaded with the gleaming metal would finance everything from the Caribbean navy to the plateresque and baroque architecture of the Iberian Peninsula.

The War of Independence and the chaos that followed the end of Spanish domination did not favor the expansion of silver production and export. The celebrated silver coins bearing the seal of Mexico's mint would continue to circulate throughout the world, but the colonial period boom would not last very long. During the decades of anarchy, the new nation's credit would suffer such blows that it would lead to military threats and interventions by the European powers. The flow of silver along what was called “the Silver Road” winding through the mining towns of Taxco, San Luis Potosí, Pachuca and others, was no longer sufficient to finance the ambitious national project.

The introduction of the railroad in the nineteenth century made it possible to overcome regional isolation and to create a national market, something the Balkanized geography had impeded. Together with steam ships, this made

it possible to export agricultural products with commercial value on the international market. However, this was not enough to finance the launch of a traditional, unproductive society, fraught with inequality and the extreme poverty and ignorance of the mass of peons bound in servitude, with an agricultural sector incapable of supporting a massive population, until the post-Revolutionary governments introduced irrigation well into the twentieth century.

In the midst of all these extraordinary events emerges the key factor to modern Mexico: “black gold.” The new nation's first contact with oil took place in the framework of a centuries-old mining tradition, but with, on the one hand, a new native political class, the product of the independence movement and of its naively liberal ideology, and on the other hand, a new generation of adventurers and explorers who, instead of brandishing sword and musket, now held pick, shovel and theodolite for surveying. The nineteenth-century liberals abandoned the theory of state ownership of the sub-soil and adopted the U.S. vision of complete ownership by the owner of the surface area. They even awarded excessively generous concessions, to the point of giving foreign investors tax-exempt status. They thus recreated the story of native indigenous exchanging gold for glass beads from the Europeans, believing them to be benevolent, protective demigods who had come to graciously redeem them in their ignorance and primitivism free of charge.

The first incursion of foreign entrepreneurs was in refining oil and gas, which were still being imported, at Walter Pierce's processing plant in the port of Tampico in 1887. Exploitation of the sub-soil would have to wait until the discovery of the large oil deposits in northern Veracruz and eastern San Luis Potosí. Edward Doheny and his partners set up a small oil company in 1901 called Ébano. Finally, they founded the Huasteca Petroleum Company in 1907 with US\$15 million in seed capital. It became one of the most successful oil companies, whose most famous well produced 33,000 barrels a day in 1915. The other large oil company was the English-Dutch-owned El Águila, founded in 1908, whose shareholder equity rose to US\$50 million by 1915. After 1910, the year the Mexican Revolution broke out, more companies were founded. By 1920, when the bloodiest part of the armed struggle had come to an end, there were around 200 nationally- and foreign-owned oil companies in Mexico.

During the civil war period of the Revolution, the main companies, owned by foreign investors, paid their own permanent army under the command of a supposedly revolu-

tionary general named Peláez, who provided them with faithful, effective protection. U.S. Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson considered himself the protector of U.S. investors' interests, particularly those of the oil companies. The influence of the oil interests was noticeable and on-going: some authors think that one contributing factor in the fall of naïve President Francisco I. Madero was a Mex\$0.20 tax he levied on each ton of oil. Years after leaving his post, the former ambassador confessed to a reporter that he had expressed his acquiescence to deposing the unfortunate martyr, alleging that he never knew that the rebels commanded by Madero's own Ministry of War and the Navy intended to assassinate him.

The need to protect oil interests led the U.S. government to extremes that provoked the enmity of the revolutionary leaders. President Woodrow Wilson was in favor of the Revolution, but not of the state's declaration of eminent domain over the sub-soil and oil deposits. That may be why he supported the financial viability of the revolutionary fraction contrary to the so-called "constitutionalists," who were responsible for the 1917 Constitution and its Article 27. U.S. diplomacy successfully neutralized the government plan of applying Article 27 to the letter.

The regimen of concessions via contracts replaced the regime of full ownership, but quite a few oil companies were able to survive under the 1917 Constitution. During the first years it was in force, there was a climate of low-level confrontation between the companies and the administrations of Carranza, Obregón, Calles and those under the latter's tutelage. The *modus vivendi* that had been reached only changed with the 1929 financial crisis and the discovery of new oil deposits in other developing countries (Venezuela and the Middle East) that had comparative advantages *vis-à-vis* property ownership which were friendlier than Mexico's.

In Mexico and other Latin American countries, the domestic tensions produced by the global economic slowdown favored the development of different kinds of populism, of a more or less authoritarian nature, that put a priority on state intervention in the economy. In Argentina, General Juan Domingo Perón, and in Brazil, Getulio Vargas inaugurated right-wing populist governments, while in Mexico, General Lázaro Cárdenas launched a left-wing version, with massive land redistribution that eliminated huge and medium-sized pieces of rural private property in favor of collective farms and small private holdings, and the expropriation of oil.

It cannot be argued that the expropriation took the oil companies by surprise. Some had even already begun to

The nineteenth-century liberals abandoned the theory of state ownership of the sub-soil and adopted the U.S. vision of complete ownership by the owner of the surface area.

transfer their operations to Venezuela. According to Lázaro Cárdenas's advisor, Jesús Silva Herzog, the private companies' oil tankers had already been moored in safety on the other side of the northern border. The installations and infrastructure had not been kept up, and years of scant investment left them ramshackled and obsolescent.

The reaction of the most important companies should have been to strengthen their negotiating position to avoid the retroactive application of the law and the Constitution, as well as to optimize conditions for compensation, because the expropriation enjoyed almost general acceptance. It was so popular that large public collections were taken up to pay the compensation, including donations of personal possessions in the midst of a wave of patriotic fervor and nationalism.¹

The response of those affected was formidable. Not only did they block the sale of oil on the international market, but they even tried to boycott the sale of silver, Mexico's other export, for which it enjoyed one of the first places in the world. Despite the fact that President Cárdenas was always conciliatory, two factors led to the failure of negotiations: first, the companies' vengeful attitude, and secondly, the outbreak of World War II, which tempered the position of the U.S. government and its allies, who finally put an end to the boycott and renewed its purchases from Pemex.

The first civilian president after the Revolution, Miguel Alemán, called "the gentleman president," was Catholic, conservative and rather unenergetic. He was responsible for the turn toward economic modernity and the acceleration of capitalist development. During his administration, exploration and pumping concessions were once again awarded to foreign companies; these concessions could almost be called excessive because of the favorable conditions they gave contractors.

The Adolfo López Mateos administration also stands out in matters referring to oil because of the reform to constitutional Article 27, adding a sixth paragraph that seemed to restrict private participation even more. This paragraph seems to ban the awarding of concessions and contracts for the

exploitation of hydrocarbons. However, it also delegates establishing the limits of this exclusion to the regulatory legislation.

The Regulatory Law and practice itself tempered the constitutional ban. The law expressly allowed for the possibility of signing contracts for services with private parties as long as they were not those considered risky or for participation in production itself. In practice, not only did contracts for the exploitation of hydrocarbons continue to be signed with private parties, but they even increased, as can be seen in the criticisms the famous former director of Pemex, Antonio J. Bermúdez, made at the time. The most conclusive result of the constitutional reform was the cancellation of the service contracts signed under the Miguel Alemán administration. We can safely say that one of the possible motives for this reform was putting an end to these contracts.

It is not clear why risk contracts were banned in 1960, taking into account that the risks are on the part of the contractor and not the state-owned company. What is more, in Brazil's specialized literature, analysts consider that the introduction of risk contracts, together with the adoption of the structure of a private company for the public oil company Petrobras, were in large part responsible for the modernization and boom of the most successful state-owned oil company in Latin America and the developing world in general.

The last Mexican constitutional reform was in 1987 under President Miguel de la Madrid. It reinforced the ban on private participation in all branches of the industry, except in so-called secondary petrochemical sector. It did not, however, establish a precise scientific distinction between basic and secondary petrochemicals.

During the term of Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Pemex's internal structure was changed, decentralizing it into three subsidiaries. However, its fundamental problem continues to be its being a para-state entity, since its organization is neither that of an efficient company nor that of a government ministry. It is a kind of hybrid. The control it is subjected to by centralized federal bodies is not only excessive and paralyzing, but even inefficient. Innumerable bureaucrats in the monitoring sections of the Ministries of the Public Function, Finance and Public Credit, Energy and even of the Economy and National Defense and the Navy have a say in the decision-making bodies of this publicly-owned company. Or at least, they dream of having that say, even if only as a status symbol, because in reality, they simply do not have enough trained personnel to do it, in contrast to Pemex's qualified staff.

The need to protect oil interests led the U.S. to extremes that provoked the enmity of the revolutionary leaders. President Wilson was in favor of the Revolution, but not of the state's declaration of eminent domain over the sub-soil and oil deposits.

In addition to the excessive number of checks, two other fundamental problems plague Pemex operations: 1) the state's practically confiscatory taxes, which exceed 60 percent of its earnings and prevent it from having sufficient funds for investing in exploration or expansion; and 2) the regimen of contracting suppliers' services, which is cumbersome and obsolete. Federal legislation about public works is inexplicably primitive, on the one hand, and excessive, on the other. Federal public investment in oil is about 47 percent of programmed investment in infrastructure. However, the law only allows for two types of contracts: those denominated in unit prices and those that allow for unit-price increases under certain macro-economic conditions over time, with the idea that, as a general rule, these contracts are signed once a year.

For decades, contracts for public works signed in the most developed countries of Latin America have included more functional contracts for energy-sector infrastructure, for example, using contracts for costs or incentives. But, until today, the federal government has not promoted a fundamental reform of regulations in this area. In addition, in the field of exploration for and exploitation of oil and gas, the most common kinds of contracts in Latin America are shared risk contracts, or shared production contracts, which are not allowed in Mexico.

The long-term future of the oil industry seems to lie in deep-water drilling, since the crude oil deposits on land or in shallow water do not seem very abundant. However, when people propose the need to partner up with other state-owned oil companies like Petrobras or Norway's Statoil, the response is to minimize the technical problem and say that Mexico can solve it on its own, like it did after the expropriation of the oil companies. This ignores the fact that private enterprise continued to participate extensively and intensively under the Lázaro Cárdenas administration and even continued to do so, to a lesser extent, after the statist reforms of López Mateos and Miguel de la Madrid. In addition, they were not starting from scratch: after the expro-

The expropriation did not take the oil companies by surprise. The private companies' oil tankers had already been moored in safety on the other side of the northern border.

priation, all the facilities of almost 200 companies and their pipelines continued to exist, as did hundreds of Mexican employees who had been trained to operate them.

In several spheres, including that of energy, the nationalist discourse that served to legitimize the last century's inefficient statism continues to be accepted as true, without questioning its content and value for the needs of a globalized Mexico in the twenty-first century. Unfortunately, the Biblical metaphor of Sarah turning into a pillar of salt as punishment for looking back seems to apply to the fake or real blindness of the prophets of out-of-this-world traditionalism.

Maintaining the appearances of realities that are now out of date—or never even were a reality at all outside the demagogic rhetoric of a self-satisfied, vacuous political discourse that can only be continued by cynical, ingenuous or ignorant manipulators who want to delay the reforms and reformulations that were urgent yesterday and today, if not undertaken, threaten to mortgage the immediate future and that of generations to come—will have no other result than to give us another thing to recriminate ourselves for in the future. In addition, we could be giving Jared Diamond the another topic for his book *Collapse, or How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. ■■■

NOTES

¹ They intended to take preventive action to discourage other attempts to affect their interests in other countries that were considering following Mexico's example, such as the case of Iran under the Mosadeg government.

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Felipe Calderón's Proposed Energy Reform

O. Sarahí Ángeles Cornejo*



Ricardo Castelán/Cuartoscuro

The Senate debate on the reform.

INTRODUCTION

Mexico is debating the energy reform bill President Felipe Calderón sent to the Senate. It is fundamentally a reform of the state-owned oil giant, *Petróleos Mexicanos* (Pemex), and the oil industry. Its aim is to open up investments to the private sector in all activities, specifically to broaden out exploration and drilling in already localized basins and on the new frontiers, above all in the deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico, where the government proposes to multiply exploration,

drilling, etc. ten-fold.¹ To this end, the government proposes Pemex's administrative and business reorganization to strengthen its corporate governance in the manner of multinational corporations.

This article's aim is to present an overview of the Energy Reform Bill, its main proposals and the most important reactions to it, and to propose some alternatives for energy policy.

CALDERÓN'S ENERGY REFORM

Several months before presenting the bill, the Calderón administration, in the style of his predecessor, Vicente Fox,

*Researcher at the UNAM Institute for Economic Research.

Every one of Calderón's affirmations was refuted by specialists, academics, opposition political leaders and most importantly by retired Pemex experts, who used official figures from Pemex itself and the Ministries of Energy and Finance to demonstrate that the country did have large oil reserves that would last 30 years.

launched a media campaign to present a series of arguments to convince the public of the need for private investment and strategic alliances with multinational corporations in the oil sector. The administration argued:

1. Mexico's oil reserves will only last nine years;
2. Pemex does not have the money to do the exploration necessary to find the deposits that would compensate for the drop in reserves and of crude pumped;
3. Pemex does not have the technology to explore and drill in the deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico, and therefore it needs to partner up with international companies that have that technology; and
4. The government is not going to privatize Pemex.

Soon, every one of these affirmations was refuted by specialists, academics, opposition political leaders and mainly by retired Pemex experts, former executives, who used official figures from Pemex itself and the Ministries of Energy and Finance (SHCP) to demonstrate that the country did have bigger oil reserves that would last 30 years. In addition to the government-recognized proven reserves (11.0476 billion barrels), there are 11.0339 billion barrels in probable reserves and another 9.8253 billion in possible reserves. All tolled, Mexico has certified 33.093 billion barrels of 3P reserves.²

Later, the government itself reported that in addition, the country has prospective Gulf of Mexico deep-water resources calculated at around 29.5 billion barrels, and, the bill introduced April 8 to amend the regulatory legislation for Article 27 of the Constitution states that the country has 100 billion barrels.³

In addition, Pemex generates sufficient earnings to invest in the industry's activities that are currently in the red. It is the company that generates the most income from sales in the country. For example, in 2007, it earned US\$104.5 billion.⁴ For Pemex to invest in repairing the deterioration caused by the different administrations over the last 25 years, it would be enough for the government, through the Finance Ministry, to reduce its taxes and fees.

Technology can be purchased or rented. This is something that the world's main multinational oil corporations do. Therefore it is unnecessary for Pemex to form partnerships with foreign companies.

It is also false that it is urgent—or even a good idea—for Mexico to search for oil in deep waters, which is very costly and uncertain. While drilling a well on land and in shallow waters (less than 500 meters deep) costs US\$25 million, in deep waters, the price rises to US\$150 million and the government is projecting the drilling of 2,000 wells.⁵ The cost of this experiment will be US\$300 billion.

What is advisable is to invest in developing the probable and possible reserves and increasing exploration of shallow waters, and at the same time, for Pemex to advance in deep water exploration and drilling just as it has been doing. To date, one well, the Lakach-1, has been drilled, a 988-meter deep shaft that turned out to hold non-associated gas.⁶

Regarding the government's statement that it will not privatize Pemex, the theory about privatization should be kept in mind. The 1993 book *Accounting, Valuation and Privatization*, published by the UNCTAD as a guide for nations, defines privatization as going beyond the transference of public property to the private sector: it includes the more general concept of introducing or strengthening already existing market forces. Worldwide, privatization has been carried out in three main ways:

1. State-owned companies contracting out activities to private companies;
2. Deregulating monopolies or quasi-monopolies; and
3. Selling public goods or assets.⁷

Clearly, the Calderón administration is promoting the privatization of Pemex in the first way, that is, by its state-owned companies contracting out activities to private companies.

DIAGNOSIS OF THE SITUATION OF PEMEX

A few days after introducing its reform bill, on March 30, the administration, through Energy Minister Georgina Kessel and

Pemex Director Federico Reyes Heróles, presented a document called “Diagnóstico: situación de Pemex” (Diagnosis of the Situation of Pemex). This analysis focuses on detecting Pemex’s activities’ deficiencies in order to open Pemex up to private investment for business purposes, or increase an already existing participation. This would be legalized through the legislation presented in the reform bill.

THE REFORM BILLS AND PROPOSALS

The energy reform consists of five bills:

1. A bill outlining a new charter for Petróleos Mexicanos;
2. The Reform Bill to Change the Federal Administration;
3. A bill to reform the Law on the Energy Regulatory Commission;
4. A bill to reform the Regulatory Law for Article 27 of the Constitution;
5. A bill to create the Oil Commission.

Pemex’s new charter would establish as the company’s objective a substantial increase in its production of oil and derived and refined gas, as well as its participation in exploring for new reserves. To do this, it proposes:

- A change in management by strengthening corporate governance, in the style of multinational corporations, with a board of directors and auditing and remunerations commissions. On its web page, Pemex states that this change will allow it to make timely decisions based on entrepreneurial criteria.
- To give the Board of Directors full authority to reorganize and restructure the company, management, etc., whereby it will transform Mexico’s oil industry. In addition, four professional members, appointed by Mexico’s president, would join the board, with access to all the information they need about Pemex to be able to carry out their duties. What is even more important is that any decision made

by the board would require the vote of at least two of these professional members.

- To reiterate that Pemex needs to increase its operating capacity, free up productive capacity, modernize, etc. To do this, it needs greater flexibility in order to explore new production frontiers. That is, to move into deep water.
- To give Petróleos Mexicanos greater management autonomy for managing its budget and acquire debt.
- To authorize the Board of Directors to issue citizens bonds. These securities would not offer either property or corporate rights over Petróleos Mexicanos, nor would they affect the domain or exploration of oil. They will be linked to Pemex’s performance and the payment of its debt. Although the proposal states that these bonds can only be purchased by Mexicans, it also stipulates that the pension-management funds (Afores) will also be able to purchase them, which will benefit foreign banks that own the Afores.⁸

The government proposal makes Pemex responsible for the debt that the federal government should shoulder since it is a state-owned company.

Some important aspects of the Reform Bill to Change the Federal Administration are that private individuals will be encouraged to participate in the sector’s activities and energy-related concessions, permits and authorizations will be revoked.

THE DECREE REFORMING THE LAW ON THE ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

This decree changes paragraphs of articles in the law to regulate the activities being privatized:

- First-hand sales of products derived from refining, gas and basic petrochemicals.
- Transportation and distribution of gas and the products obtained from refining oil and basic petrochemicals, through pipelines, as well as the storage of these products (Article 2, paragraph VI).

It is also false that it is urgent –or even a good idea– for Mexico to search for oil in deep waters, which is very costly and uncertain. What is advisable is to invest in developing the probable and possible reserves and increasing exploration of shallow waters.

- The transportation and distribution of bio-fuels, through pipelines, as well as their storage (Article 2, paragraph VII).
- The Energy Regulatory Commission is ordered to regulate the participation of the social and private sector in the transportation, storage and distribution of oil products and basic petrochemicals, as well as to continue presenting proposals for legislation. It should be assumed that this regulation will harmonize with the regulations the United States establishes through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), and that these regulations will be shared by the member countries of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP), signed by former President Fox in March 2005 and taken on board by Calderón.⁹
- The energy reform does not privatize the industry, although it supports private investment in all activities according to the government's proposal itself.
- It will substantially increase Pemex's production levels of oil, gas and derivatives, and allow it to participate in exploring for new reserves. To this end, the reform proposes to make Pemex's management more autonomous, to increase its operational capacity through broadening out the participation of the private sector in all oil industry activities and by reorganizing Pemex along business lines, giving the Board of Directors the authority to create or liquidate subsidiary companies.
- That exploiting oil consists only of exploration, drilling and pumping.

Among the changes proposed to the Regulatory Law for Article 27 of the Constitution in the Oil Sector are those in the bill's Article 6: "Petróleos Mexicanos and its subsidiaries will have the power to sign contracts with individuals or legal entities for works and services." The bill's Article 4 stipulates that the social and private sectors, will be allowed, after obtaining permission, to carry out activities of transportation, storage and distribution of gas, the products derived from oil refining and from basic petrochemicals.

Article 1 of the bill on the Oil Commission creates that body as a decentralized entity of the Ministry of Energy for operations involving exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons in their different spheres.

THE MOST IMPORTANT POSITIONS

Ever since the forum about the first point of debate on the agenda, the constitutional analysis of the bills,¹⁰ two positions clearly emerged: that of experts who supported the government proposal, and those who critiqued it. The administration and its allies argued:

- That the energy reform is not unconstitutional and if a few points were inconsistent, they should be perfected.

Critical experts argue that Calderón's energy reform proposal is unconstitutional. Outstanding constitutionalists participating in the debate, among them former Supreme Court Judge Juventino Castro y Castro, stated that Calderón's energy reform is unconstitutional because it proposes that Pemex and its subsidiaries give contracts to the private sector, something expressly prohibited in the Constitution.

Article 27, Paragraph 6 of the Constitution stipulates, "In the case of oil and solid, liquid or gas hydrocarbons or radioactive minerals, no concessions or contracts will be given, nor will those which already exist be honored, and the nation will carry out all exploitation of these products in the terms stipulated in the respective regulatory legislation."¹¹

Constitutionalist attorneys like Raúl Carrancá y Rivas argued that the Constitution's ban is unambiguous, leaving no room to legislators for interpretation, contrary to the government position defended by its allied jurists who, basing themselves on the theory of interpretation, say the proposal is not unconstitutional. Several of the reform bills are unconstitutional because they establish the possibility of signing contracts, or even direct assignation or contracts with incentives.¹² Multinational corporations like Shell have expressed interest in obtaining one of these to explore deep waters.

While technology does exist for exploring and drilling, there is no technology available in the world for pumping oil from 3,000 meters below the seabed. In addition, Mexico has 29.5 billion barrels of certified reserves on land and in shallow water, where the cost of exploring and drilling is lower.

Several of the reform bills are unconstitutional because they establish the possibility of signing contracts, or even direct assignation or contracts with incentives. Multinational corporations like Shell have expressed interest in obtaining one of these to explore deep waters.

The formulation of several of the bills is also unconstitutional, according to Jaime Cárdenas, for example, in the attributions they confer on the Board of Directors, such as those involving the budget and contracting of debt, which Article 74 of the Constitution establishes as the sole prerogative of the Chamber of Deputies.

THE GOVERNMENT PROPOSAL VS. THE REAL SITUATION OF OIL

Calderón's proposal for reforming Pemex and the oil industry would privatize it and favor multinational corporations. In addition, it is counter to the constitutional principle giving the state exclusive rights to exploit oil.

Article 4 of Calderón's proposal to reform Article 27 of the Constitution states that the social and private sectors will be able to get permission to carry out transportation, storage and distribution activities of gas, the products derived from oil refining and of basic petrochemicals.¹³

The five bills propose the participation of the private sector in oil industry activities. With this, the administration is proposing the privatization of transportation, storage and distribution not only of gas but also of gasoline, diesel fuel, turbo fuel, fuel oil, as well as other products derived from oil refining and petrochemical production.

Calderón's proposal will privatize aspects of refining because his bill to reform the Regulatory Law for Article 27 of the Constitution stipulates that *Petróleos Mexicanos* and its subsidiaries will be authorized to contract out oil refining activities. The persons who carry out these activities or services will be allowed to build, operate and own pipelines, installations and equipment.

As has already been explained, deepwater exploration is neither urgent nor appropriate for Mexico given the high costs of exploring and drilling. While technology does exist for exploring and drilling, there is no technology available in the world for pumping oil from 3,000 meters below the seabed. In addition, Mexico has 29.5 billion barrels of certified reserves on land and in shallow water (under 500 me-

ters), where the cost of exploring and drilling is lower. Pemex can also pump that oil without the need to resort to alliances or partnerships with multinational corporations, which operate according to the criteria of the greatest profit and would take an important part of oil earnings with the contracts they would sign with Pemex, something that would increase even more if they were contracts with incentives.

Oil exploitation involves all oil industry activities: exploration, drilling, extraction or production, refining, petrochemical production, transportation, distribution and commercialization.

The governors from oil states have been very vocal in their support for Calderón's energy reform, but they ask to be allowed to participate in the exploration and exploitation of mature deposits that were abandoned by Pemex when it found richer, less costly fields.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

During the debate organized by the Senate, the head of Mexico City's government, Marcelo Ebrard, proposed consulting the public about the energy reform, particularly the reform of Pemex, "which [the public] has a right to under the Constitution." This proposal was accepted by some state governments headed by members of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), but rejected by the federal government and its allies.¹⁴

CONCLUSIONS: POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE ENERGY POLICIES

I think the following proposals should be taken into account as measures that can lead to a new energy policy for Mexico:

1. Comply with the Constitution, which stipulates that the nation shall control oil and all hydrocarbons, a responsibility that is inalienable and over which there is no statute of limitations.

2. The elimination of the confiscatory tax and payment regime.
3. A reform of Pemex to eliminate corruption in the upper echelons of the union and company officials and support for political campaigns, as well as to correct productive deficiencies.
4. An oil policy aimed at the country's economic development, including the redistribution of oil revenues, using what is needed to foster energy use based on alternative renewable energy sources.
5. A policy to integrate Pemex, the oil industry productive chain and the energy sector as a whole.
6. The elimination of international reference prices for domestic operations. The oil that Pemex Exploración y Producción (exploration and production) sells to the other three state-owned companies (Pemex Refinación, Pemex Gas y Petroquímica Básica and Pemex Petroquímica) should be sold at the value of the cost of production (US\$4 to US\$6.50 per barrel), not at international prices that range from US\$80 to over US\$100. ■■■

- 6 According to Pemex, this field is producing from deposits located at depths starting at the sea floor, between 3,000 and 3,200 meters down, with production tests of 25,000,000 and 30,000,000 cubic feet a day in a vertical well. *Diagnóstico: situación de Pemex*, pp. 66-67, on line at <http://www.pemex.com/files/content/situacionpemex.pdf>.
- 7 United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *Accounting, Valuation and Privatization* (New York: UNCTAD, 1993), on line at <http://unctc.unctad.org/asp/allDocsYear.aspx>. [Editor's Note.]
- 8 The proposed new charter is available on line at http://www.sociedad enmovimiento.org.mx/debatepemex/docs/Iniciativa_de_la_Nueva_Ley_Organica_de_PEMEX.pdf. [Editor's Note.]
- 9 See <http://209.85.215.104/search?q=cache:IhFAXx8Gu34J:grupo.reforma.com/infograficas/nacional/LCRE.pdf+Decreto+por+el+que+se+reforma+diversos+art%C3%ADculos+de+la+ley+de+la+Comisi%C3%B3n+Reguladora+de+Energ%C3%ADa&hl=es&ct=clnk&cd=15&gl=mx>. [Editor's Note.]
- 10 Other points are how Mexican oil income should be spent; exploration, exploitation and restitution of the oil reserve; transborder deposits; self-sufficiency in oil refining; and policies for strengthening the petrochemical industry. Other issues are relations with foreign companies and the jurisdiction of international courts; Pemex's tax regime; and its organization and management.
- 11 See the current *Constitución política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*, on line at <http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/1.pdf>. [Editor's Note.]
- 12 Article 5 of the proposed new charter of Pemex states that "Petróleos Mexicanos and its subsidiaries, in accordance with their respective objectives, will be authorized to sign all manner of acts, agreements and contracts as well as to contract debt with private individuals or institutions, maintaining exclusive control of the Mexican State over hydrocarbons, subject to the applicable legal stipulations." Articles 44, 45 and 46 of this bill allow for awarding contracts without bidding, by direct assignment, in the cases of spills and other risks; Article 46 even proposes contracts with incentives: "Pemex will have the authority to agree on incentives that would tend to maximize effectiveness or the success of a work or service, which will be paid solely in cash." See http://www.sociedad enmovimiento.org.mx/debatepemex/docs/Iniciativa_de_la_Nueva_Ley_Organica_de_PEMEX.pdf.
- 13 Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, *Iniciativa de reforma energética* (Mexico City: 2008), available on line at http://www.pan.org.mx/?P=reforma_energetica. [Editor's Note.]
- 14 It was proposed by the Broad Progressive Front, made up of three parties of the moderate left (the PRD itself, the Labor Party [PT] and Convergence) as well as private citizens from a broad spectrum of society. The results of this consultation, held July 27, 2008, can be found at <http://www.consultaenergetica.df.gob.mx/>. [Editor's Note.]

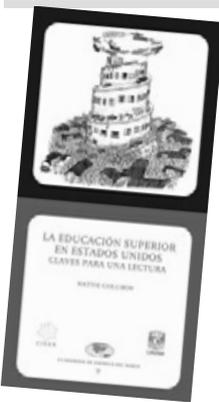
NOTES

- 1 Minister of Energy Georgina Kessel announced this in a television news interview with Carlos Loret de Mola, anchorman of Televisa's *Primero Noticias* early-morning news program, on February 14, 2008.
- 2 Pemex, *Anuario Estadístico 2006* (Mexico City: Pemex, 2006), on line at http://www.pemex.com/files/content/AnuarioEst_06_Portada.pdf. [Editor's Note.]
- 3 See http://sil.gobernacion.gob.mx/Archivos/Documentos/2008/04/asun_2423743_20080425_1209149652.pdf. [Editor's Note.]
- 4 Pemex, *Anuario Estadístico 2007* (Mexico City: 2007), available at <http://www.pemex.com/files/content/Anuario20071.pdf>. [Editor's Note.]
- 5 Energy Minister Georgina Kessel in her February 14, 2008 television interview.



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1968 40 Years Later

Carlos Sevilla*

To understand the significance of the 1968 Mexican student movement, we have to start by mentioning some of the outstanding characteristics of the society which gave rise to it.

The most significant trait of 1968 Mexico was the noticeable spirit of change in the air and the economic and social advances of the previous three decades, a process which—with slight exaggeration—was referred to as the “Mexican miracle.” The fact that Mexico was chosen as the site for that year’s Olympic Games was a recognition of those achievements. From 1930 to 1970, the country’s population increased 146 percent, going from 19.6 million to 48.2 million. Even more surprising was the rise in the gross domestic product (GDP), which increased ninefold, going from 319.03 billion to 2.74 trillion pesos, calculated in 2004 pesos.

These figures make it possible to conclude that Mexican society had taken a great leap forward toward modernization: the population not only grew and rapidly increased its living standards, but also improved its educational levels and contact with the world. It stopped being eminently agrarian to become a more urban society. And this situates the nature of the problem implicit in the student movement: the



Students and teachers arrested in 1968.

clash between a modern society in development and a pre-modern political system, built between 1920 and 1940 by the political class made up of the so-called “revolutionary family.” It also allows us to observe the historic drama of that political class, whose leadership was a determining factor in satisfying the social demands posed by the Revolution and achieving industrial development. It was precisely those policies’ success that gave rise to a new society in which that political class stopped being functional and faced the need to reinvent itself. This would have meant leaving behind authoritarianism, tribal culture, corruption and illegality. Despite the fact that the transition from reform policies to development policies, carried out after 1940, implied a change similar to the one demanded in 1968, the government’s decision was to maintain authoritarianism at all costs. The results are

*Ex political prisoner and member of the National Strike Council in 1968. Professor at the School of Political and Social Sciences, UNAM.

Mexican society had taken a great leap forward toward modernization. It became more urban. And this situates the problem implicit in the student movement: the clash between a modern society in development and a pre-modern political system.

clear to the eye: no one talks any longer about a Mexican miracle, except to refer to something that might stop the process of decomposition of a state incapable of fulfilling its main function: guaranteeing public security and order.

The aim of this essay is to analyze the development of the student movement and its outcome, as well as to evaluate its impact on the country's evolution. To do that, I will use an analogy from the theater.

CAST

Students

Played mostly by junior high school, high school and university students enrolled in the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and the National Polytechnic Institute (IPN), who were part of the new middle classes that turned these schools, previously the domain of the children of the oligarchy, into mass institutions.

Government

Played by President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970), who concentrated all power, exercising authoritarian presidentialism reinforced by the development of the conglomerate of companies and institutions through which the state guided the economy.

Party Activists

Political party activists, mainly on the left, among whom the most important were those inspired by the Soviet model, with their two currents: communists and former communists. Then there were the members of small sects of Maoists, Trotskyists and Fidelistas, plus, lastly, some members of the National Action Party (PAN), the Institutional Revolutionary

Party (PRI) and even some members of the so-called para-state parties, like the Popular Socialist Party (PPS).

Society

All the classes and groupings whose support was sought by the different political currents and interest groups. Most of society accepted governmental authority, but in recent years, the way in which it governed had been increasingly questioned.

ACT ONE: REPRESSION OF STUDENTS AS A DETONATOR

The student conflict was sparked by police repression of two groups of high school students engaged in a series of street fights in the Ciudadela Plaza on July 23, 1968. This kind of repression was nothing new to the life of the city. The different thing about this occasion was how harsh and sweeping it was. This caused indignation among the students involved, who decided to protest and seek the support of their fellows. After deliberating for two days, they decided to march to the National Palace to present their protest directly before the president and ask him to punish those who had violated their rights and broken the law.

The march was scheduled for the afternoon of July 26, a day on which the sympathizers of the Cuban Revolution celebrated the anniversary of the assault on the Moncada Barracks, also with a march. Although the two contingents left from different points, they met up at the Alameda,¹ making it possible for some party activists to join the protest. But nobody made it to the Zócalo square because the groups that went down the streets from the Alameda toward the Zócalo were brutally dispersed in many clashes, which degenerated into disturbances that would spread throughout the city's entire Historic Center. These would last until two days later when the government used a bazooka to destroy the door of the historic building housing Public High School No. 1. That was how the authorities finally subdued what they considered to be the general headquarters of the students in struggle.

At no time did the president consider the possibility of granting the students' demands because he himself had given the order to ratchet up measures for maintaining order: for that reason, he left those measures in the hands of those who aspired to succeed him in office.

Luis Echeverría, then minister of the interior, limited himself to authorizing the march, calculating that, if a conflict broke out, it would discredit Alfonso Corona del Rosal, the city's mayor, demonstrating his supposed lack of control. Corona, who was very bold, had the trash cans lining the streets on the march route filled with stones, and sent in city cleaning crew workers as provocateurs, ordering them to break store windows, loot and start fights. At the same time, he had a group of Communist Party (PCM) members arrested and then presented them as those responsible for the disturbances and participants in a trumped-up conspiracy against Mexico. Civil society, represented by businessmen's organizations, the Catholic Church, the media, unions and other professional associations, used different means to show their support for the government and express their rejection of the agitators and "fake students." Only intellectuals and artists supported the students. The most backward circles of the administration thought that by chastising the young people and jailing the Communists, the youth "uproar," as Díaz Ordaz called it, had been quelled and its complete disappearance was a matter of days or, at most, one or two weeks.

ACT TWO: THE RESURGENCE OF THE RESISTANCE

The government had not yet finished proclaiming the break-up of the youth protest when indications appeared of its resurgence with bigger actions.

Parallel to the official and semi-official voices that praised to the heavens the new "saviors of the homeland," other voices began to be heard: those of the dissidents, among which the loudest was that of the then-president of the UNAM, Javier Barros Sierra, who publicly denounced the bazooka attack on the high school that left an unknown number of victims and the destruction of its centuries-old door. At the rally he called on the University City campus, Barros Sierra alerted listeners against the dangers of prevailing policy and called on students to defend the university and its values. In addition, he raised the flag to half mast in mourning and later headed up the first student demonstration. The march wound through the southern part of Mexico City, applauded by local residents and under the watchful eye of government secret agents, supported by mobile strike forces discretely stationed a few blocks away.

The dissidents' voices began to be heard, among which the loudest was that of UNAM president, Javier Barros Sierra. At the rally he called on the University City campus, he exhorted students to defend the university and its values.

For their part, and contrary to official expectations, the student victims of government violence did not abandon their demands. They went to their fellow students to inform them of what had happened and ask for their support. The answer was quick in coming: after being informed, they called assemblies in which they agreed to halt classes, form struggle committees, protest the repression and take to the streets to denounce the violation of the law. A distinctive feature of these students making their debut on the political scene was their determination to defend citizens' rights, which, though protected in the Constitution, had really never been respected by Mexican authorities, something known as the "simulated democracy" that dated back to the era of President Porfirio Díaz. Meanwhile, in their naiveté, the students were willing to risk everything to make those rights a reality. That naïve determination would give the movement an unprecedented capacity for struggle: instead of surrendering to the authorities or running away in face of the threat of repression, they decided to resist injustice.

Although it has become fashionable today to present the activists of the time as experienced fighters for democracy, the truth is that all the leftist activists were trying to make the revolution or at least prepare the conditions for its victory. That is why they were so enthusiastic about the forms of organization that emerged spontaneously in the schools: struggle committees, strike councils, flying political brigades, political guerrilla tactics, coordinating councils, etc., that these young people associated with the soviets of revolutionary Russia and that they tried to head up. In the National Strike Council (CNH), the Young Communists and former Young Communists began to compete for hegemony. The activists from other currents joined the struggle committees and often took responsibility for writing and making the propaganda materials, participating intensely in the flying political brigades. However, the party activists were never able to lead the movement, which at all times maintained its spontaneity and creativity; and this clashed with the party organizations and activists' bureaucratic and even

Contrary to official expectations, the student victims of government violence did not abandon their demands. They went to their fellow students to inform them of what had happened and ask for their support.

contradictory culture and practices. That is why Octavio Paz called the rebel students “unconscious democrats,” arguing that the students demanded making public issues public. By contrast, the party activists, guided by their bureaucratic culture, wanted to subject the movement to capricious proposals they imposed through secret manipulation and “packing the meetings.”

ACT THREE: THE IGNOMINIOUS CONCLUSION

In August, the movement spread throughout the country, and in the capital there were several increasingly large demonstrations. Enthusiastic popular support was growing. The student flying political brigades had penetrated all spheres of society, and many took actions, in addition to informing, that tightened their links to society, like cultural activities in public plazas, in parks, in workplaces, churches and schools, where the young people arrived accompanied by singers who sang about the movement and the prevailing political situation. They added dancers, poetry recitation, actors and painters, creating an atmosphere of renovation, fiesta-like, that spread throughout the city.

The movement did not fade away as the government had predicted; rather, it was the administration that began to become isolated. Some thought the authorities had already lost the battle and would end up at least recognizing some of the student demands by firing those responsible for the repression or freeing the political prisoners. This would have been a good starting point for beginning a process of political liberation. However, this kind of reasoning was completely alien to Díaz Ordaz’s authoritarian thinking and that of his inner circle, which manifested itself in the demagogic campaign the president ordered based on a supposed outrage against the national flag during the August 28 demonstration. Later, the authorities dispersed the vigil in the main Zócalo square that had been called to await the president’s

annual report to the nation. Lastly, during the address itself, the president clearly threatened to use the full force of the state to reestablish order and reaffirmed his political creed, which allowed for no concessions. Díaz Ordaz stated that the administration would not succumb to pressure because doing so was not governing, but “opening the door to anarchy, since, once the government cedes to one group, everyone will demand the same treatment and all authority disappears.” Events and the president’s statements did not augur well, and it seemed clear that the movement needed to prepare to deal with the threats. Everything was moving forward with the tempo of a tragedy in which each character was walking blindfolded toward his/her destiny.

Some of the most perceptive observers and activists clearly foresaw what was coming. Writer José Revueltas, a member of the School of Philosophy and Letters struggle committee described the movement’s situation in this way: “They have put the barrel of their revolver to the back of our heads,” and suggested retreating to limit the damage of the imminent offensive. It was agreed then to propose to the assemblies putting an end to the strike and designing a strategy to reorganize the movement and prepare for a long-term struggle. However, the proposal was rejected and the assemblies reiterated their determination to carry the resistance to its ultimate consequences. When the activists heading up the CNH, who had previously agreed to the retreat, saw that the assemblies rejected the proposal, they decided to echo the rank and file and, without a second thought, forgot their role as leaders. Vain as they were, they concentrated on developing their own personality cults. This disarmed the movement, leaving it without warning of the coming storm.

The government, for its part, revealed its criminal ineptitude even in the design and execution of the repression. Based on the strange hypothesis that the movement was made up of a majority of good, but stupid students, manipulated by a group of “perverse agitators,” the authorities came to the conclusion that they could put a stop to it simply by arresting and jailing the latter. That was the basis for their spectacular occupation of University City, where it arrested more than 2,000, but only a dozen or so leaders among them.

The student protest was not silenced. It grew and became more militant, which put the government in the position of either having to review its entire conception about the movement or making the leap to the savage decision to drown it in blood. It chose the second path, consistent with Díaz Ordaz’s political creed, according to which the prin-

ciple of authority simply had to be exercised regardless of the cost.

The Tlatelolco massacre was coldly plotted by Díaz Ordaz, Luis Echeverría and other criminals, without the knowledge of the army and the majority of the cabinet. Many medium- and high-level government officials personally regretted and even rejected the crime, but, curiously, nobody did so aloud. The moral decomposition of the political class had gone so far that officials seemed to be chorusing to Díaz Ordaz the well-known phrase, “with you ever, unto infamy.” But their archaic conception of what constituted authority was not only evidence of moral degradation but also of political backwardness.

FIRST EPILOGUE: THE BEGINNING OF UNINTERRUPTED CRISES

The bloodbath broke the movement’s back, but it did not resolve the historic contradiction between modern society and the anachronistic political system the students were denouncing. The government’s bet on extreme authoritarianism soon began to produce regressive results. The first was deciding the presidential succession in favor of Luis Echeverría Álvarez (1970-1976), an obscure, sinister figure who emerged from the dark bureaucratic depths of the state, and who, once in power, made every effort to lead Mexico to lower and lower stages of morality and development. Echeverría has the doubtful honor of having begun the recurring six-year-term, cumulative economic, political and social crises.

The bloodbath, however, did not prevent a handful of students and party activists from deciding to continue to fight for their rights and for respect for the law. Brave, self-sacrificing young people who knew that they could not beat the forces at the government’s service on their own.

When the new administration took office, the regime’s ideologue, Jesús Reyes Heróles, developed the idea, which later became dominant, of carrying out a political reform that would make room in the system for dissidents via the elections, to put an end to the violence. This came about in the following decade and was an important achievement of the long march to democracy: real parties were organized; real electoral competition was developed; and political liberties were broadened out.

This did not mean that a real highway to democracy opened up; new actors, interests and factors took center stage

The moral decomposition
of the political class had gone
so far that officials seemed to be chorusing to
President Díaz Ordaz the well-known phrase,
“with you ever, unto infamy.”

on the new, more complex national political scene, elements that the currents that emerged from ’68 have taken a long time to decipher. Until very recently, it was not public knowledge that there was a devious plan behind Reyes Heróles’s reform. Only recently it was revealed by Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, who said that Reyes Heróles had “sold” the idea of the reform to José López Portillo (1976-1982) and company with the argument that it was not necessary to liquidate or jail the dissidents because that would turn them into martyrs. It would be better to put them in a golden cage that they would enjoy and that would end by discrediting them: the addiction to the public teat, with the enormous privileges and incomes of high-level bureaucrats.

Although this procedure was only developed on a large scale during the administration of Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000), with the scandalous increase of the budget for financing political parties, it had already begun to be experimented with at the time of the mid-term elections for Congress in 1979. Many of the deputies elected on the former PCM ticket, who suddenly had hitherto undreamed-of incomes, were happy to accept their leaders’ proposal to hand over a large part of their wages to their organization. But curiously enough, at the end of the legislative session, many deputies had left the ranks of the party. That is, they had taken the bait. Another illustrative example was the first reaction to the increase: both the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and the National Action Party (PAN) considered it obscene. The PAN announced that it would return a large part of the surplus resources; the PRD said it had invested them in school implements and other items to distribute among the poor. However, the following year, both parties demanded a bigger increase.

Greed and corruption had been let loose. ■■■

NOTES

¹ This park is in downtown Mexico City, next to the Fine Arts Palace. [Editor’s Note.]

Mexico '68/Beijing '08

A Tribute to the Student Movement

Roberto Escudero*



ISSUE/AHUNAM/Colectión Manuel Gutiérrez Paredes

Mexico, 1968: the year of the repression.

At first glance, there seems to be no similarity between the 1968 Mexico Olympic Games and the 2008 China games. However, a closer look reveals a certain resemblance: both games *seemed* to be in danger of not taking place. I underline the word “seemed” with relief. If the 1968 Olympic Games had not taken place, several of the 1968 student leaders might not be alive to tell the tale, though apparently President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz never gave up his

intention of doing away with them completely. “I would shoot them, Constitution in hand,” was the way a well-known intellectual, a permanent sympathizer of the student movement, and one of Mexico’s best pens conveyed it to me —and perhaps to others.

But I say that Díaz Ordaz never gave up his intentions because he ordered an even worse atrocity, if that is how the massacre of October 2 can be described.

Not-very-well-thought-out decisions led sex symbols Sharon Stone and Richard Gere to call for the boycott of the Chinese Olympics; and the French Foreign Affairs Minister seconded them after the unjustifiable repression of the

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Tibetan monks —although to be objective about it, the Chinese government had broadcast videos of bludgeon-wielding, obviously furious monks destroying establishments owned by Chinese residents in Tibet. But if the Olympic Games had not been held in China, can anyone imagine what the fate of Chinese dissidents, already acting in the most difficult of circumstances, would have been? China's enormous territory would have been even more closed off than ever, and it is not hard to suppose that the internal dissidents would have paid the piper.

In Mexico, the 1968 student movement began in late July, so from our perspective, the Olympics were so far off that they weren't even part of our calculations.

The only one who did talk about one "tendency" in the student movement aiming to "perhaps prevent" the holding of the Olympic Games was Gustavo Díaz Ordaz himself in his fourth annual report to the nation, where he dedicated several paragraphs to the games. It is worth reprinting one of them here:

During the recent conflicts in Mexico City, various main tendencies could be discerned amidst the confusion: the one made up of those who wanted to pressure the government to grant certain petitions; that of those who tried to take advantage of the moment for ideological and political ends; and that of those who aimed to spread disorder, confusion and hatred to prevent dealing with and solving the problems, in order to damage Mexico's reputation, taking advantage of the broad publicity surrounding these athletic events and perhaps even preventing the Olympic Games from being held.

Here, I think it pertinent to make a brief digression: one of the three tendencies that Díaz Ordaz points to in his brief "sociological" analysis, only the last one, the one that supposedly wanted to prevent the Olympic Games from being held, by going from "perhaps" to actions, could be alleged to be committing a crime. The activities of the other two are not mentioned in any criminal code.

But we did deal with the issue of the sporting event; we couldn't not deal with it, given that, as time went on, the Olympic Games became more and more visible on the horizon.

Perhaps an anecdote would be more illustrative. In all sincerity, I don't remember if Díaz Ordaz's fourth report to the nation had already been published or not, but the fact is that in a meeting of the National Strike Council, three or four of us delegates were given the task of writing a doc-

Nobody, not the National Strike Council nor anybody outside it, requested a boycott of the Mexican Olympic Games as happened in China.

Now it is easier to understand why we should be happy that the games took place in such a paradoxical country.

ument. It wasn't about the Olympics, but the issue was so present in so many discussions and documents that we included a short paragraph that said, more or less, "If the Olympics are not held, it will be the fault of the government, not of the students."

When Raúl Álvarez, who everyone recognizes as the strategist of the student movement, heard those words, his reaction was unequivocal. He said that those few words carried with them a grave risk: that we were admitting the possibility that the Olympics might not take place. So, he said that not only should we not mention that possibility in our documents or public statements, but that we should say nothing at all about the Olympics. And that was what we did from there on in.

I would like to point out that, at least in the nation's capital, the last movement that had been repressed was the 1965 doctors movement. So, until the first acts of violence in 1968, nothing had disturbed the peace and tranquility of the Díaz Ordaz administration for three years. That is why the president said in his report to the nation, "When we competed for and won the right to hold the Olympic Games here, there had been no demonstrations, and there were none in the following years. It was only a few months ago that we discovered that the aim existed of disturbing the games."

Seemingly, even under severely authoritarian regimes like the Díaz Ordaz administration, certain periods are required without the noise of repression —hard power, according to Joseph S. Nye's classification, about which I will return later— and dead calm is needed to wield soft power, showing the smiling, self-legitimizing face of the government, organizing Olympic Games, for example, here and in China.

The fact is that nobody, as far as I know, not the National Strike Council nor anybody outside it, requested a boycott of the Olympic Games as happened in China. For that reason, I think that now it is easier to understand why we should be happy that the games took place in such a paradoxical country. An example of just how paradoxical it is is



Tanks occupying the center of the city in August 1968.

ISSUE/HUNAM/Colectión Manuel Gutiérrez Parades

The two Olympic Games
 have something in common: repressive regimes.
 In the case of Mexico, with no provocation
 whatsoever from the students, the government
 opted for the worst path anyway:
 it committed a collective crime.

arrest until his very recent death. An unknown number of students also died around the square, where they were heading, and eight movement leaders were sentenced to death, a sentence that was carried out before the stunned eyes of the world.²

Fortunately, neither Tiananmen nor the Three Cultures Plaza have been forgotten. They remain tragic symbols of what unfettered power is capable of when it decides to sacrifice its citizens, even under-aged citizens. In the case of Mexico, 40 years after the 1968 student movement, I see renewed interest in the events of those days, which continue to be remembered, as the slogan “October 2 will never be forgotten” demonstrates. Fortunately, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz’s talents as an oracle expressed in his report to the nation failed him: “In a few weeks or months, the events will take on their true dimension with the perspective given them by time, and they will not be remembered as heroic episodes, but as an absurd struggle with dark origins and unspeakable aims.”

In the case of China, let’s look at something as apparently alien to totalitarian violence as architecture. It also helps remind us of what we should remember. The quote is quite long, but not a word is wasted:

Formal experimentation and technological feats in architecture have appeared with complete freedom: Beijing’s Olympic stadium by Herzon & De Meuron; Beijing’s airport, by Norman Foster; the Water Cube by PTW; the National Theater, by Paul Andreu; the World Financial Center of Shanghai, by KPF, etc. All these are works that could not exist in another country with a different system of production. They reflect the grandeur of their time. However, in the whole whirlwind, a certain blindness can be perceived, something of the Chinese mirage. Ian Buruma is very precise: “It is hard to imagine in the 1970s a famous European architect designing a television station for the Pinochet regime without losing all credibility. Why, then, is it alright to do it today in China? It’s true. Is this how cynical we have become? Does anyone remember Tiananmen? Does anyone care? The new East looks

the fact that about a year ago, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China allowed itself to thank the Chinese business community for its contribution to growth and development, at the same time that slave labor and other extreme forms of super-exploitation still exist in that country.

China carried off the Olympic Games brilliantly once the issue of the boycott was forgotten, but at the same time, it could not avoid demonstrations of discontent, which, of course, people had a right to express, although it was able to prevent them from being disseminated. Joseph Nye explains where the failure of the rulers lay, and it is no small thing: the Chinese government has not achieved all its Olympic aims. It did not fulfill its promise of allowing peaceful demonstrations and free Internet access, with the consequent reduction of its soft power successes.¹

According to Nye, the Russians wielded such abusive hard power in Georgia that even the Chinese refused to support them, when they had been their allies on many other occasions. Meanwhile, the valiant Chinese opposition continued fighting in less unbearable conditions than if the boycott had been carried out to open up more room for freedom and democracy.

We must never forget that in 1989, when the student movement gained strength in China and the world’s attention focused on Tiananmen Square, the only Chinese leader who argued for dialogue with the students was Zhao Ziajang, who was removed from office and was kept under house

like the Old West: everyone has come to try their luck in a lawless land; they have to know how to maneuver amidst speculation and corruption, to take advantage of opportunities, to bet everything and be very aware that the house always wins.”³

To recapitulate, the two Olympic Games have something in common: regimes that are already repressive should not be provoked because the consequences can be terrible. We have to admit, however, that in the case of Mexico, the government, with no provocation whatsoever from the students, opted for the worst path anyway: just 12 days before the Olympics were inaugurated, it committed a collective crime in the Three Cultures Plaza at Tlatelolco, leaving men, women, senior citizens and children dead. Perhaps it did it so the games could be held in peace, something it achieved despite the enormous international discredit it faced down.

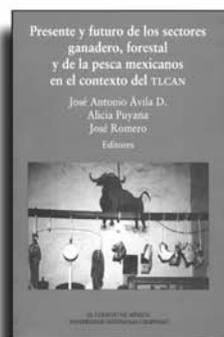
No one knows what will happen to the opposition in China, but fortunately, in the globalized world, not every-

thing turns out unfavorably for the people: there is increasing awareness of the need to respect human rights and favor liberalism and democracy. So, China may not be able to continue invoking its exceptional status and special way of understanding these matters. Regardless of anything else, the Olympics it held brought it into the spotlight in the eyes of the world, and we all know that there are horrors there that must be stopped as soon as possible. ■■■

NOTES

- ¹ Joseph Nye, “Los cañones y el oro de agosto,” *El País*, September 10, 2008, pp. 23-24, at http://www.elpais.com/articulo/opinion/cañones/oro/agosto/elpepiopi/20080910elpepiopi_4/Tes.
- ² “The Tiananmen Papers,” introduced by Andrew J. Nathan, *Foreign Affairs* (January-February 2002), pp. 1-48.
- ³ Juan Carlos Cano, “La velocidad de la arquitectura china,” *Letras Libres* no. 116, August 2008, pp. 90-92.

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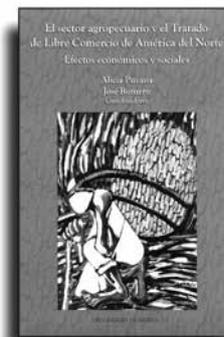
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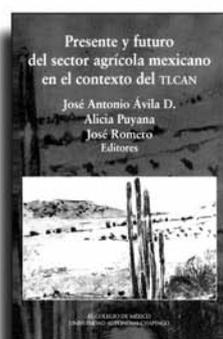
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Criminal Violence in Mexico

The Risk of Institutional Irrelevance

Carlos Antonio Flores Pérez*



Javier Palacios/Cuartoscuro

Everyone wore white to the protest march against public insecurity. The main slogan the crowd shouted at the authorities was, "If you can't do the job, resign!"

By mid-2008 the social atmosphere in Mexico was showing clear signs of preoccupation and uneasiness. The cause: endemic violence and insecurity reigning in various regions of the country, despite the triumphalist discourse reiterated by authorities. The violence had not been contained, even though government officials continued to insist the “war on drug trafficking” (term they used) was going well.

The violence initially associated with drug trafficking has extended to other types of individuals without any criminal connections. The reason: the virtual guarantee of impunity with which criminals are able to operate in the country, fre-

quently in collusion with government functionaries from the most diverse hierarchies, within institutions that are formally responsible for providing security and a sense of certainty to citizens.

The daily sanctioning of impunity—manifested in atrocious crimes that go unpunished—is the greatest incentive for the “creativity” of criminal organizations. It is important to emphasize that these organizations are composed not only of those who directly carry the weapons to commit illegal actions, but also by those in authority who protect them. This includes individuals not only in police forces but also in political structures—together with those in charge of laundering the immense profits from these criminal acts. And precisely these last two dimensions of organized crime remain practi-

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cally off limits in Mexico, making it possible for the operational aspect of crime to regenerate itself.

The social unrest caused by public insecurity was expressed in an enormous citizens' protest march on August 30 of this year. It is important to point out, however, that this was a catharsis of sorts and actually a politically harmless march, since due to reasons traceable to various political tendencies, a significant number of the organizers did not want the pressure exerted on authorities to extend beyond certain harmless limits.

The trigger for this protest demonstration was the Mexico City kidnapping and murder of Fernando Martí, the young son of a prominent businessman, Alejandro Martí, who owns a chain of sporting goods stores and health and fitness centers in Mexico.

This sad event not only revealed the errors of institutions responsible for federal and local security, but also the high-level corruption prevailing within them. In this particular case, an assistant inspector from the Federal Preventive Police (PPP) coordinated the roadblock where the criminals, some of whom had police badges, kidnapped the youth. Also involved in these criminal acts were officers from the Mexico City judicial police.

Federal and local authorities have made obvious, unsuccessful attempts to distance themselves from responsibility and place the blame elsewhere. At times they have seemed to be trying to turn the negotiator consulted by the victim's family into a scapegoat. However, the indignation expressed by society started to include even social sectors that previously appeared somewhat immune to the national drama of violence associated with organized crime. These are sectors that may have previously accepted the erroneous perspective of government authorities who insisted the violence was perpetrated and suffered by individuals linked to criminal activities.

The notion that "they're out to kill each other, so the violence should not be a reason for concern" for society seemed to be the message in statements by various authorities from a number of government spheres and in numerous contexts and public forums. This shows the limited perspective from which the state is addressing this problem.

Collaterally—and of course involuntarily—the massive protest revealed that it took the unfortunate death of a young man from the most privileged layer of society for the latter to show its organizing muscle and to visibly exert pressure. The over 5,000 executions in less than two years of the current administration had not been enough, nor were the victims, also innocent, who were born into less powerful social

The indignation spread even to social sectors that previously appeared immune to the national drama of organized-crime-related violence.

groups. One such victim was a little girl hit by a bullet from an AK-47 during a shoot-out in Mexico City, while in her own bed.

The inevitable inference from similar events is that some social groups have a severely limited sense of solidarity, as reflected in the country's current situation of grave socioeconomic inequality and revealed in exclusionary, not inclusive political positions. This can be observed by anyone curious enough to read the comments expressed in different public forums, and reported in the Mexican media, especially on internet.

Nonetheless, this does not contribute to generating long-term prevention-oriented policies and strategies. Such an approach must be based on a perspective extending beyond a limited police focus, and rather must aim at preventing large numbers of young people who feel they have no future from joining criminal ranks as a way to demand what they feel they have a right to and to get material benefits.

However, what must be given high-priority attention—given the consequences if ignored—is the lack of alternative strategies formulated by Mexican authorities to successfully confront organized crime and the violence it has generated in recent years. In light of recent events, this violence is far from diminishing; rather, it is worsening at unprecedented rates since at least the second half of the twentieth century.

In an attempt to placate social discontent—especially coming from the elite sectors, which for the first time during the current presidential term showed signs of irritation in response to violence and insecurity—government authorities from various federal and local institutions, together with some social organizations, signed what has been called a National Agreement for Security, Justice and Legality, on August 21, 2008.¹

Especially noteworthy among the agreement's 75 points is the absence of any new measures other than those already anticipated in government strategies. We need only point out, for example, that proposals from federal, state and municipal

governments such as “purging and strengthening security and justice institutions” cannot help but seem just a bit rhetorical, since they have been mentioned in official discourse for several decades now. Furthermore, such “purging and strengthening” have not been measured on the basis of objective indicators, and the goals formally proposed have never been achieved.

A similar situation is that of the goals of promoting “the culture of legality, reporting crimes and social participation,” which the social organizations signing the pact agreed to fulfill. What happened in the case of Fernando Martí’s kidnapping leaves no doubt as to the fundamental reasons that Mexican citizens are reluctant to report crimes. Solving such crimes, at any rate, does not appear to depend on the willingness of citizens to follow the procedures defined by the law —especially when the public servants who should be overseeing compliance with those laws frequently act in collusion with criminals.

It hardly seems necessary to emphasize that the problem in Mexico is not a matter of limited economic resources allocated for fighting crime. In 2007 public spending programmed for “order, security and justice” was 60.46 billion pesos. In 2008 this amount was increased to 69.58 billion pesos. This last amount represented an 86.8 percent increase *vis-à-vis* 2003, when the amount designated was 37.25 billion pesos.² Even so, President Felipe Calderón requested a 39 percent nominal increase over the current year, in the Federal Spending Bill for 2009 presented to Congress.³ In the last six years, the federal executive has used only approximately 50 percent of the amounts budgeted. Nevertheless, the results do not correspond by far to the amounts spent in this area.

In addition, the commitment on the part of federal and state legislatures to promote better laws for fighting crime is hardly anything new. While in the midst of social discontent, some are calling for life imprisonment and even the death sentence for kidnapers, the problem will certainly not be

solved by stricter punishment —if there is no increased certainty that those breaking laws will be punished. Thus, we come back again to the problems of impunity and corruption, as the basic factors influencing the reproduction of criminal activities.

A successful strategy for reducing insecurity and diminishing the violence generated by organized crime undoubtedly requires an efficient legal framework; solid, professional security institutions; and social prevention measures aimed at modifying the root causes leading large groups of individuals to be willing to participate in illegal acts. Nevertheless, nothing mentioned here will achieve significant results without a serious, simultaneous attack on the critical points permitting criminals to operate with impunity and to continue to make themselves rich, specifically political and police protection and money laundering.

If there is international consensus on these critical points in fighting crime, and the reason for emphasizing these points is clear, why do authorities at different levels of government in Mexico insist on maintaining a strategy that is nominally comprehensive, but limited *de facto*?

The historic evolution of the problem of organized crime in Mexico throughout the twentieth century, and especially drug trafficking, demonstrates that criminal groups evolved with backing from political power and from security institutions. In addition, the changes in presidential administrations since the beginning of the current decade have altered the traditional correlation between conventional criminals and those who provided them with protection from the state apparatus. Consequently, organized crime currently enjoys greater independence and capacity for dealing with challenges to its activities.⁴ This is not merely a perception, but a fact documented during the 1994-2000 presidential term that led to criminal charges being brought against public officials and high-level political figures. It is important to emphasize that since that time, no other trial of similar proportions has been held in Mexico.

All of this leads us to propose two alternative hypotheses about authorities’ limited response to the problems of insecurity and criminal violence in the country. First of all, the level of mutual understanding between criminals and institutions at the various levels of government makes it politically unviable to seriously clean up security forces and establish precedents that will discourage future problems. Secondly, the institutional structural of the Mexican state is so deteriorated that it is incapable of turning around the

What must be given high priority attention is the lack of alternatives formulated by Mexican authorities to successfully confront organized crime and the violence it has generated in recent years.

situation, and its intentions and agreements are insignificant *de facto* and completely unable to exert any influence on the real actors—whether legal or not—and on changing their behavior.

Neither of these two hypotheses necessarily exclude the other, but clearly the risk involved in the second is considerably greater, since it virtually implies, for all practical purposes, the imminent collapse of the Mexican state.

The purpose of this brief analysis is not to diagnose the current status of the Mexican state, however the latter is clearly at a decisive moment in terms of its continuity. The response from organized crime to the agreement signed by authorities was the appearance of various warnings, denouncing real or supposed links between high-level federal and state government officials and a specific crime organization. Also, the first massive executions were carried out: 12 persons decapitated in the state of Yucatán and 24 executed in the state of Mexico. Of even more concern is the fact that, in an act of terrorism unprecedented in our history, two grenades were thrown at unarmed civilians in Morelia, Michoacán on the night of the national independence celebration, resulting in seven dead and more than 130 injured.

In addition to these grave events, it is also important to mention the risk involved in criminal organizations operating in paramilitary structures with high-powered weapons,

plus protest demonstrations by self-defense groups. All of this is being promoted in certain states by those with enough economic resources to carry out such actions, and in an atmosphere of discontent in relation to the capacities of formal institutions, with the tendency for some to want to take justice into their own hands.

In these critical conditions, if the Mexican state fails to show clear, convincing signs that it intends to fight the roots of organized crime in all the aspects mentioned here, it will unavoidably run the risk of institutional irrelevance. ■■■

NOTES

¹ This agreement can be consulted at http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/vi_532069.html.

² Data taken from “2° Informe de Gobierno, Anexo Estadístico, Estadísticas Nacionales,” in the line item identified as “Estado de derecho y seguridad,” p. 61, http://www.informe.gob.mx/anexo_estadistico/PDF/ESTADISTICAS_NACIONALES/ESTADO_DE_DERECHO_Y_SEGURIDAD/2_1.pdf.

³ “FCH solicita incremento de 39% al presupuesto de seguridad y justicia 2009,” *La Crónica de Hoy*, September 9, 2008.

⁴ Due to limited space here, the author recommends that interested readers consult a prior work: Carlos Antonio Flores Pérez, “El Estado en crisis: crimen organizado y política. Desafíos para la consolidación democrática,” (Ph. D. dissertation, UNAM, 2005), Chapter 3.



Revista 66

Enero-abril de 2008

IDENTIDADES Y FRONTERAS

Francisco de la Peña M. El psicoanálisis, la hermenéutica del sujeto y el giro hacia la ética en la obra tardía de Michel Foucault

Anna María Fernández Poncela Las mujeres y su relación con la política institucional

Elsa S. Guevara Ruiseñor La masculinidad desde una perspectiva sociológica. Una dimensión del orden de género

Miguel Moctezuma L. El migrante colectivo transnacional: senda que avanza y reflexión que se estanca

Liliana López Levi Tijuana: imaginarios globales, fortificaciones locales

Vol. 39, núm. 154, julio-septiembre, 2008

Índice

EDITORIAL

ARTÍCULOS

India en los albores de la transición energética
ENRIQUE PALAZUELOS

El papel de las instituciones en el cambio económico de México

MARCELA SUÁREZ ESTRADA

Salarios y calificación laboral en México

LUIS HUESCA REYNOSO
REYNA ELIZABETH RODRÍGUEZ PÉREZ

Disparidades regionales en el sector manufacturero mexicano

ALEJANDRA BERENICE TREJO NIETO

La política ambiental en América Latina y el Caribe

MARIANA CONTE GRAND
VANESA D'ELIA

Economía y agroerosión en el sur de España

JUAN AGUSTÍN FRANCO MARTÍNEZ

Sector asegurador y economía mexicana

JOSÉ FRANCISCO REYES DURÁN

Modelación y sociedad

MANUEL E. CORTÉS CORTÉS
ANÍBAL E. BORROTO NORDELO

COMENTARIOS Y DEBATES

La crisis del sistema en el mundo capitalista: la coyuntura ontemporánea y los desafíos de América Latina

Carlos Eduardo Martins

TESTIMONIOS

El lado oscuro de la ganadería

ROSARIO PÉREZ ESPEJO

REVISTA DE REVISTAS

RESEÑAS

Repensando el desarrollo regional: contribuciones globales para una estrategia latinoamericana, de Víctor Ramiro Fernández, Ash Amin y José Ignacio Vigil (comps.)
BLANCA REBECA RAMÍREZ

Las desigualdades económicas inter e intra regionales en el estado de Oaxaca, de Pedro Maldonado Cruz, Julio César Torres Valdés y Andrés E. Miguel Velasco
ISAAC LEOBARDO SÁNCHEZ JUÁREZ

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Nicolás Moreno

Six Decades Interpreting Mexico's Landscape

Alicia Moreno*



Dead Ahuehete, Architecture V Series, 95 cm x 123 cm, 1969 (oil on canvas and wood).



Eccide II, 47 cm x 160 cm, 2007 (oil on canvas and wood).



The Lightning Bolt, 95 cm x 123 cm, 1969 (burin and dry point).

Nicolás Moreno has never stopped capturing the shadows and volumes of nature, the silhouettes of its mountains, the depths of its gorges, the shrouded secrets of its vegetation, as well as the paths showing the way forward to new, noteworthy possibilities in its extraordinary landscapes. That is why he is known as one of our country's best established artists.

FELIPE SOLÍS
Catalogue of the exhibit "Nicolás Moreno
and His View of Mexico's Landscape"

Nicolás Moreno Orduña is one of Mexico's most diligent and prolific landscape artists. His body of work has been admired and praised by art critics, poets and writers like Justino Fernández Márquez, Guillermo Rivas, Andrés Henes-trosa, Salvador Elizondo, Juan José Arreola and Elisa García Barragán, and the sheer volume of work can be summed up in poet Carlos Pellicer's comment after leaving his workshop: "My eyes hurt from walking so much."

* Curator of the work of Nicolás Moreno.
Photos property of Nicolás Moreno.



Light in the Jungle, 76 cm x 60 cm, 2004 (oil on canvas and wood).

Moreno was born December 28, 1923, in Mexico City's modest Santa Julia neighborhood. He was the first of 16 children born into a poor family. His paternal grandfather, Don Sixto Moreno, a rough but affectionate man, was the first to encourage Nicolás's love of nature from a very young age. An untiring, ingenious conversationalist, his grandfather filled the little boy's head with detailed narrations of episodes that took place in the vast reaches he covered daily as a muleteer. A keen observer, he took advantage of the slow going set by the rhythmic beat of the mules' hooves to store up images: territories and climes, depressions and hills, erosion and humidity, valleys and volcanoes. Nothing escaped his attention. Then he would fascinate his grandson with detailed accounts of his observations; and, once alone, young Nicolás would recount them, embellished with fantasies of his own. For years, these images stayed in his mind, until he brought them to life through his painting.

When Nicolás was 10, his family moved to Celaya, Guanajuato. The rural scenery surrounding the city nourished his passion for nature even more. Enveloped by family affection, he also learned the importance of being productive: in his home, people did not work to live; they lived to work. His life in Celaya is today a safe harbor of transparent emotions.

His return to the capital city was sad: he neither despised nor felt attached to his humble neighborhood. He wanted

to get back to the countryside, to the scenery. His family's modest income meant they could only pay for his basic education. Their difficult economic straits forced him to go out to work, but at the same time he was eager to learn to draw, perhaps to capture nature on paper. He wanted to learn to use the pencil as a magic wand that would open a door to other as yet undefined worlds.

A few years after finishing primary school, Nicolás enrolled in a night course in sketching at the University Cultural Center, catering to workers. He soon became skilled in his chosen field and won a cash prize that he used to enroll in the old San Carlos Academy, today the National School of Visual Arts. Tuition was only one peso, which meant that his prize money was enough for him to study the entire major of master of visual arts. Learning to sketch was exactly what he wanted and he began his studies at the academy in 1941 without consulting his family. At the age of 17, armed only

with his predilection for sketching, he joined artist Benjamín Coria's workshop, telling the teacher of his aim of drawing rural scenes, only to be disappointed to find that landscapes were not part of the curricula.

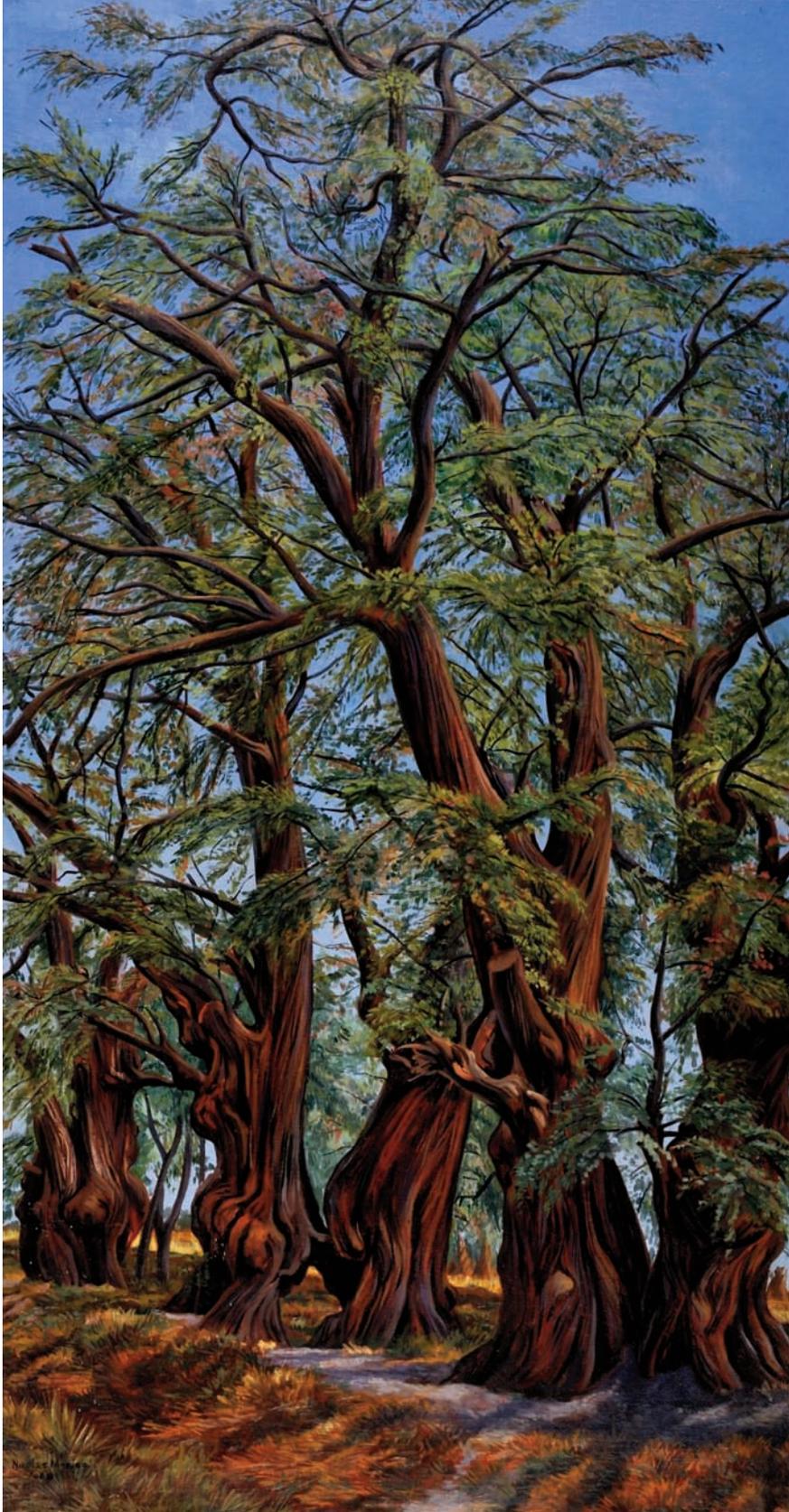
In his five years at San Carlos, he came into contact with established and fledgling artists and made the most of their teachings and innovations. He attributes his teacher and friend José Chávez Morado with giving him his start with technique. He also became friends with Alfredo Zalce, who especially interested him in engraving and introduced him to the diversity of approaches to pictorial art.

Nicolás Moreno has never stopped learning and analyzing. In 1946, he became an art teacher at the Mexe National Rural School in the state of Hidalgo. This would be the beginning of a long teaching career. In 1947, he was given a position to teach introduction to art, commissioned to the Normal School for Young Ladies, and he also gave sketch-

Nicolás enrolled in a night course in sketching. He soon became skilled in his chosen field and won a cash prize that he used to enroll in the old San Carlos Academy. Tuition was only one peso, which meant that his prize money was enough for him to study the entire major of master of visual arts.



Singed Tepozanes, 70 cm x 120 cm, 1990 (oil on canvas).



Ahuehuetes, 120 cm x 60 cm, 1969 (oil on canvas and wood).

ing classes in different junior high schools. A year later, he plunged into an adventure involving the National Autonomous University of Mexico's Cultural Dissemination Department, the National School of Visual Arts (ENAP) and a group of enthusiastic colleagues and friends: the organization of the ENAP's Traveling Exhibits. Between 1950 and 1953, he was awarded a National Fine Arts Institute (INBA) grant to paint, with a professor's salary.

In 1953, the ENAP hired him as a full-time professor of landscape art and sketching. This was an achievement since the ENAP was Mexico's most important art school at the time. That year, he also received the Annual Grand Prize of the *Salón de la Plástica Mexicana* (Mexican Visual Arts Salon).

It was a time for reaping the rewards of all his efforts. Nicolás Moreno would receive many other awards for his work. Over the three decades between 1954 and 1983, he would participate in several exhibitions abroad, invited by the INBA: in Poland, Germany, England, France, Italy, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Japan, China, the United States and Peru. Thanks to these achievements, his work is among the Mexican paintings represented in Europe, since several of his pieces were acquired by different governments there.

He has also had individual exhibits in Mexico City and the rest of the country, and has received innumerable prizes and honors from governments and art institutes. In his travels through Mexico, he never forgets to visit painting schools and participate in activities and shows organized by different cultural organizations.

In his long life as a painter, Moreno has met many of the great representatives of Mexican visual arts. Some were his teachers, like José Chávez Morado; others, his colleagues, like Luis Nishizawa; and others, his friends and mentors. Among the latter is Gerardo Murillo, better known as Dr. Atl, who respected and admired his work, to the point of recommending him as his replacement on several occasions. In 1961, for example, Dr. Atl sent a letter to the director of the El Ángel Gallery, recommending to her that Nicolás Moreno take his place, saying, "The vacuum I am leaving in your gallery can be superbly filled by showing the work of Nicolás Moreno, an artist who has achieved what very few painters do, creating images of the grandeur of the landscape on canvas." Without a doubt, Dr. Atl's recognition sprang not only from their mutual friendship, but from the admira-

Gerardo Murillo, better known as Dr. Atl, respected and admired Moreno's work, to the point of recommending him as his replacement on several occasions.



The Giant, 100 cm x 49 cm, 1990 (mixed technique).



Damp Roots, 61 cm x 122 cm, 1990 (oil on canvas).

Moreno has worked continuously for 67 years and his successes and honors are a natural part of a career rooted in talent, resolution, simplicity and his unchanging love for landscape. His most recent exhibits show that his palette has never stopped portraying the changing colors and chiaroscuros of our national landscape.



The Eternal Drought, 75 cm x 156 cm, 2005 (oil on canvas and wood).



The Little Cliff, 102 cm x 122 cm, 1995 (oil on canvas and wood).

tion for his work as an established artist. In 1964, in another letter, Dr. Atl gave Moreno an important commission:

My dear Nicolás Moreno, I am very happy to tell you that the director of the [National] Museum of Anthropology now under construction in the Chapultepec Forest has asked me to paint a 20-meter-by-3.5-meter panel depicting the prehistoric Valley of Teotihuacan. But, as I do not have the time to paint it, I implore you to replace me and take on the commitment to do this large-scale landscape. To be crystal clear: I want you to paint this landscape so that your appearance on the scene is magnificent.

In the end, the museum officials asked Moreno for two more murals: one that recreated the Landscape of Juchitepec with the classic house from that region, and another

depicting a view of the Mezquital Valley, one of the region's most arid areas that Moreno knew quite well. These two panels decorate the museum's Otopames Room today. By the end of the 1960s, Nicolás Moreno was an indispensable figure on the national painting scene.

It is now 2008. Moreno has worked continuously for 67 years and his successes and honors are a natural part of a career rooted in talent, resolution, simplicity and his unchanging love for landscape. His most recent exhibits, "Drama and Poetry in Mexican Landscape: Pictorial and Graphic Works", at the Contemporary Mexico Cultural Center in 2006, and "Nicolás Moreno and His View of Mexican Landscape", in the National Museum of Anthropology in 2007, show that his palette has never stopped portraying the changing colors and chiaroscuros of our national landscape. **NMM**

Nicolás Moreno *by Nicolás Moreno*

A Life Dedicated to Landscape



I've always been a wanderer: by this time, I've already traveled over a third of the world, but mostly in my country, which I love dearly, and which I have dedicated myself, almost obsessively, to portraying in my paintings. I always wanted to paint nature in the countryside, and the only variation that my work could offer was to think that ideas and concepts could also be expressed through landscape painting. Also, I don't believe just in pretty scenery. Some of my paintings depict erosion, the destruction of the earth —not ecology: that's a very recent invention.

THE ARTIST AND HIS MILIEU

There is no such thing as failed artist. If you're part of an artistic milieu. I joined my milieu in the San Carlos Academy, and, as I learned to draw, a whole world began to open up for me that I hadn't known before and that I've always found exciting.

[In the 1950s] there was no market for painting. All there was was a privileged few. A couple of galleries had just opened. Many artists worked in advertising; others colored black-and-white photographs; and others went abroad to try to learn more. It was a tiny world. That was when the *Salón de la Plástica Mexicana* (Mexican Visual Arts Salon) was born to help painters.

I worked on starting up the School of Design and Crafts at the Ciudadela. There were a lot of us there working to create a kind of Mexican Bauhaus, with elements of folk art and the art of old Mexico.

Luis Nishizawa, Celia Calderón and I were contemporaries in the Mexican Visual Arts Salon. We were among the first to join the ranks of the more established painters. There was one period in which all the important painters belonged to the Salon. Diego [Rivera], [Rufino] Tamayo. Everybody wanted to be there.

HIS RELATIONSHIP TO DR. ATL

I met him by chance, because when they built the University City, a group of young people from San Carlos tried to get an art school established in the university for us. They refused because they said we didn't have a high enough academic level. I asked whether Diego [Rivera] had lots of schooling when he started. In those days, you only needed elementary school to get a degree in art. Dr. Atl really wanted to help us. But they paid no attention to him either. We became friends then. He recommended me for a commission doing some murals in the National Museum of Anthropology.

THE UNAM MURALS

I did a mural for the MUCA [the University Science and Art Museum] at the University City. But it's "sequestered", hidden away. It was exhibited there for a time; it's of the Valley of Mexico, about 20 meters long and 4 meters high. The

idea was to put it in the new museum, the one that's about to be inaugurated, but with all this business of globalization, they think it's out of date.

THE LOST CANVASES

Two of my paintings that were in the Museum of Modern Art were taken out; one is in a room in the President's Offices, but I don't know which. The smaller one just disappeared.

THE TRAVELING EXHIBITS

I paint in cycles. For example, I spent two years in the Tarahumara Mountains and painted 150 canvases. But I hardly have any of them; they were sold. Later, in the Tehuantepec Isthmus, and then in Coahuila. I arrived in those places with projects, because I always had the idea of disseminating. I was the first one to have the idea of doing "traveling exhibits", which they now call "itinerant."

MAKING A LIVING OF PAINTING

I've never liked the wretched business of galleries, even though I was in one for a while. My work is more in private collections. I haven't been near powerful people. I was never interested. I didn't need to be. I've always made a living from my painting. Now it's a little difficult. There's no middle class left. In the past, a university professor, say, could afford to buy a medium-priced painting. Not anymore.

TECHNIQUES AND FORMATS

I've always painted in oils. I've never been comfortable with tempera; I used it for a while. I don't like watercolors; they don't work for me. I work in oils and encaustic painting (a combination of wax, copal resin and pigments). This is, let's say, the opposite of oil painting, which is more refined.

I don't just have large formats. When I'm at my most pretentious is when I do larger canvases; when the topic demands it.

The basic thing you need to be a good landscape painting teacher is to teach the students to see, to pick motifs, plus technique, of course. **MM**

Felipe Carrillo Puerto

Capital of the Contemporary Mayan World



▲ The Mayan Region is not an ethnographical museum –it is a people on the move.

► Peoples on the move are a hindrance to neo-liberal plans. This war will not be lost here in this land, because this land will be reborn.

Mural at the entrance of the Cultural Center.

Elsie Montiel

Elsie Montiel



Elsie Montiel

The Sanctuary of the Talking Cross, still a ceremonial center, holds one of the sacred crosses.



Remains of a train hark back to Carrillo Puerto's time of economic splendor in the early twentieth century.

The cultural legacy of the pre-Hispanic Mayas is so clear and has had such a dynamic momentum in the entire Yucatán Peninsula that the continual allusion to “the Mayas” and the almost abusively common use of the term “Mayan” to describe almost any cultural or tourist activity here seems justified.

Tourist resorts and cities using the name “Mayan” or trying to co-opt its culture have grown all along the Caribbean coast of the state of Quintana Roo. This means that the confrontation between what is Mayan for tourists and what is authentically Mayan is a day-to-day occurrence. Visitors do not usually notice it because very few actually venture far enough afield to encounter what we could call the real contemporary Mayan world. That world has its capital in the city and municipality of Felipe Carrillo Puerto.

In this city, Mayan culture not only refers to immortalizing the feats of their pre-Hispanic ancestors, but to knowing about later history. That history includes the Mayas' participation and development as a social group throughout the colonial period, after independence and in the last two centuries, pinpointing its significance and tracing a route for their future. In Felipe Carrillo Puerto and the communities that survive around it, being Maya implies recognizing yourself as such in order to keep your language and customs alive and defending your rights as indigenous people. The very birth of the city is related to the quest for autonomy and the resistance to oppression and the annihilation of Mayan identity.



Elsie Montiel

BRIEF HISTORY

When the colonial system was imposed on the Yucatán Peninsula —Quintana Roo was not made a separate territory until 1902— the indigenous people suffered both economic exploitation and the imposition of new religious beliefs. In that period there were at least seven Mayan uprisings. Domination and oppression did not disappear when the country won its independence from Spain, but simply changed form. Resistance movements fighting for liberation did not disappear either.

Felipe Carrillo Puerto was founded during the first part of what became known as the Caste War, which broke out in 1847 in Tepich, with the movement fighting for autonomy and better living conditions.¹ It was 1850; the indigenous had risen up three years before and become so strong that they controlled a large part of the peninsula. Different events turned those conditions around and the indigenous forces, tired and demoralized, were on the brink of defeat. It was then that something happened that gave them back their confidence and cohesion: a talking cross appeared.

The “miracle” was the work of General José María Barrera, who carved some crosses in a tree and proclaimed that they transmitted divine messages that talked about

Elsie Montiel



The Spring of Blows, a fountain where Mayan rebels were publicly whipped. ▶



Elsie Montiel

reuniting and continuing the struggle. A ventriloquist served as Barrera's "interpreter of the cross." So, Barrera led the rebel military operations. Around the site where the talking cross appeared, the town of Noh Ca Chan Santa Cruz Balam Nah, today Felipe Carrillo Puerto, was founded. The rebels not only resumed armed actions, but also became devotees of the cross. The local people called themselves *cruzoob*, or "the followers of the cross."

Soon, a theocratic-military structure was established under the leadership of a Chief of the Cross or *tatich*, who was the superior of the Chief Spy (Tata Nohoch Zul). These two, in turn, gave orders to the military command and the oracle of the divine word or Interpreter of the Cross, and under them were the soldiers and priests, followed by the common people (*macehualoob*). Whites, prisoners and non-*cruzoob* Mayas were slaves. Chan Santa Cruz developed an economy that allowed it to resist; it bought weapons from English residents of Belize, a form of support they would lose later on. Armed actions took the form of guerrilla warfare, which would last until 1901 when government troops took the city. This was the official end to the Caste War, and the talking cross would be silent forever after. One reminder of the violence against the rebels in that period is the so-called Spring of Blows, a fountain that exists today

next to the church. Bound rebel indigenous warriors were forced to kneel and be publicly whipped at the foot of this fountain.

The cult of the cross did not disappear altogether. The Sanctuary of the Talking Cross is still a ceremonial center. Although today it is common knowledge that the cross never really spoke, its role in uniting and organizing the Mayan people is considered important.²

The geography of the peninsula changed. In 1902, the territory of Quintana Roo was founded, and in 1904, Santa Cruz (whose name had been changed to Santa Cruz de Bravo) became the capital. Natural resources, particularly exotic wood and *palo de tinte*, began to be exploited and exported via the port of Vigía Chico, connected to Santa Cruz by railway. From that splendid time, Felipe Carrillo Puerto preserves a tiny fragment: in a park near the center of the city is part of a railcar.

In 1915, the capital moved to Payo Obispo, and Santa Cruz was practically deserted. Later, it would be repopulated by Mayas. At that time, the main economic activity was the production of rubber for export. Francisco May, considered the last *cacique* or Mayan ruler, held the monopoly on rubber production. He was repudiated by many because it was said he amassed a great fortune from agreements with the fed-



▲ The Regional Music Museum has a copy of the national anthem in Mayan.

Photos this page by Mauricio Degolladao



According to Mayan myth, the sorceress Xtabay bewitched ► and killed drunkards on the roads. Felipe Carrillo Puerto Cultural Center.



Publications and CDs in Mayan on sale at the Regional Music Museum.



Exhibit about the development of music in the Mayan region.
Regional Music Museum.

eral government granting him the monopoly in exchange for maintaining political and economic control of the Mayan population. In 1932, Santa Cruz de Bravo was renamed Felipe Carrillo Puerto after the Yucatán leader and governor known for his interest in the welfare of the Mayan population. Today, this city is the seat of the municipality of the same name and is considered the center of the Mayan region. In 1974, Quintana Roo became a state.

A CULTURE IN MOVEMENT

The Mayas of today continue to resist the cultural onslaught that aims to turn their customs and traditions into consumer products. The main form of resistance is preserving the language in day-to-day use and in public schools and municipal government offices. Civic organizations like the Academy of the Mayan Language include visual artists, writers and musicians interested in preserving their traditions and language. With other organizations, they do surveys on the use of the language, publish books in Mayan and organize activities to recover and study natural resources. Children are the main target of these efforts, particularly in municipal seats or towns where their location means they are more influenced by Spanish.



Photos: this page by Mauricio Degolladao

Children are the main target of the efforts to preserve traditions and language.

Radio XEN KAH on AM broadcasts all its programming and music in Mayan. The tiny Regional Music Museum and Library is another example of the efforts to ensure that their identity is not lost. It delves into regional history using paintings, photographs, clothing, musical instruments, radios and even LPs. Here you can find a copy of the national anthem in Maya, as it is sung in local schools; a copy of the Quintana Roo state song; and a Mayan calendar given as a gift by their Guatemalan brothers and sisters. Children from the city and surrounding communities come here to do research. For more than five years now, Expo-Maya has been held, bringing together artisans, musicians and visual artists from the region with the aim of recovering the expressions of current Mayan culture and exhibiting them without any commercial influence.

All these efforts are sanctioned by the Law on Cultural Rights and Indigenous Organization of the State of Quintana Roo, which came into effect in July 1998. The law covers the use and preservation of customs, traditions, language, authorities, religion and clothing, but its implementation has not been easy and always faces difficulties.

In any case, clearly the descendants of the ancient Mayas have not lost their ability to resist invasion and to defend their rights, though their weapons have changed. **MM**



Hand-painted Mayan calendar.

NOTES

- ¹ See the article about the Museum of the Caste War in this issue of *Voices of Mexico*.
- ² The crosses carved in the tree became three wooden crosses. One is in the Sanctuary of Carrillo Puerto, a second is in another sanctuary in a nearby town, and the third is said to be lost.

Hum Batz

Recovering Pre-Hispanic Mayan Music



Elsie Montiel

[1] Conch shell; [2] *tunkul*; [3] *huehuetl*; [4] reed flutes; [5] tortoise shell; [6] clay ocarinas.

The Center for the Recovery, Research and Dissemination of Pre-Hispanic Mayan Music is headquartered in Felipe Carrillo Puerto. Its aim: to foster the appreciation and knowledge of Mayan art through the study of its musical instruments and the techniques for making them. Outstanding among them are the *tunkul*, one of the oldest known

Mayan instruments, and also the *zacatán* or *huehuetl* drum, the conch shell, the tortoise shell, reed flutes and clay ocarinas, or mouth organs.

Recovering these instruments includes handing on the secrets of making them and running a music and children's dance school. It was at this school that the group Hum Batz was formed;

since then, it has traveled to more than 40 cities nationwide to disseminate its research results. The important thing about these efforts is that the children at the school not only learn to make an instrument and play it, but they are also taught to recognize that they are Mayas, to be proud of their origins and to remember the philosophy, the history and the language of their ancestors. This project, directed by Ricardo Delgado, began more than eight years ago and has reached beyond the Carrillo Puerto community.¹ Today, five groups in five different surrounding communities are encouraged to preserve their own culture through music and dance workshops.

According to ancient wisdom, learning the art of making an instrument like a *tunkul* implies something more than just choosing the raw materials—making sure it has no defects, and that it is a single piece—and following technical instructions step by step. It can be made with different kinds of wood, soft or hard (ebony, *granadillo*, *palo rojo*, cedar, mahogany, pine), but since each kind of wood has its own “personality”, that personality will become part of the make-up of every *tunkul*. This is why each one will have a different sound, a different personality. Performers must realize that the *tunkul* does not give out the sound the musician wants: the wood always speaks for itself.



Mauricio Degollado

The exhibition department.

Once the wood is picked out, it’s time to think about the design; then the exact measurements have to be decided on as well as precisely where it will be bored out and where what Ricardo Delgado calls a keyboard (the slot on the top that determines the instrument’s pitch) will go. When the artisan starts to hollow out the piece, he or she has to make sure that the walls are all the same width, and that the tuning holes or “keys” and the *cabezales*, or round, head-shape ends, are all the same size. Corn or linseed oil should also be rubbed in so the wood does not crack and the desired sound can be made. The sticks used to beat the *tunkul* are tipped with rubber.

Besides these principles, the sound requires something else: when the artisan is working the wood, he or she must seek balance: the instrument must not vibrate. Today, a pitch pipe is used to know whether a *tunkul* is tuned appropriately, but in ancient times, it was placed on top of a gourd filled with water and if the water moved when the *tunkul* was beaten, it was a sign that it would make noise, not music. But if the water made little waves, it was a sign that it had the right sound; this was the way the ancient Mayas applied physics. If the *tunkul* is not ready, the artisan has to continue to carefully hollow it out, since a single blow can ruin it because it is “a precision instrument.”



Elsie Montiel

When a *tunkul* does not want to sing it just doesn’t.



Mauricio Degollado

Children at the school not only learn to make an instrument and play it, they are also taught to be proud of their origins and to remember the history and the language of their ancestors.

There are many stories about this *tunkul* with its *aluxe* face, and it has won prizes, but the most important thing is that it is the school-children's favorite, so much so that they've threatened Don Ricardo that if he sells it, "they'll sacrifice him to the gods."

The mood of the artisan as he or she works also influences the sound. You should work with joy if you want it to sing well. But, this does not mean that the *tunkul* does everything on its own; the student also has to learn how to get the sound he/she wants from it. Hum Batz's performances include eight *tunkules* singing at the same time.

The children attending this singular school learn all these principles. Their lessons even include learning how to recognize which kind of tree the wood their instruments are made of comes from; what mahogany is like, what cedar is like. But, as Delgado says, "Their grandparents have already taught them that. They have this knowledge of the Mayas in their blood. A Maya who doesn't know about trees or wood isn't a Maya. In a way of speaking, that's part of his or her cultural genetics."

They are also encouraged to learn more about Mayan philosophy by reading texts like the *Po-pol Vuh* and the *Chilam Balam*, and to study Mayan stelas. They are given information about the instruments' origins and the historical references to them in codices, stelas and murals. So, they know, for example, that the *tunkul* is of Mayan-Olmec origin and that it has been used for thousands of years. One of the famous murals still preserved in the Mayan city of Bonampak depicts a great fiesta where the instru-

Ricardo Delgado, head of the project.

Once the piece is finished, there is one last vital thing: when a *tunkul* does not want to sing, it just doesn't. Don Ricardo Delgado has seen innumerable instances: in the center he directs, there are *tunkules* of different sizes, designs and kinds of wood. One of them seems to detest being close to the sea or salt, so when it goes with a musical group to Cancún or Playa del Carmen, its sound is different, dull. But when it is in Carrillo Puerto or drier places, it sings beautifully. Don Ricardo assures us that when they went to Zacatecas, another *tunkul* "sang like never before." The wood in some *tunkules* gives them "a very thin, shrill" voice, and others made of soft wood that transmit that quality in their sound, softness. The group has a very special *tunkul* with the face of a small *aluxe*.² Don Ricardo took more than a month to finish it because it didn't want to sing, until one day he thought it was ready and he finished.



Mauricio Degollado

like the tortoise shells and conch shells, which are very difficult to play. It is known that the ancient Mayas used conches as forms of communication, something still frequent in jungle communities today.

Delgado says that very few people can identify the sound of the *chirimiya* even though it is commonly used for background music in documentaries and period films. Much less do they know what it looks like. The *chirimiya* “is nothing more than a kind of drinking straw that our ancestors made with material they got from the rubber tree.” Today, this tree is disappearing. In Carrillo Puerto, there are only 14 left, and for that reason, the instruments are now made with simple straws, even though the sound is different.

Mayan music does not base its sounds on the diatonic do-re-mi scale. It is duatonic, with only two notes. In performances, a single blow may be repeated up to 20 times, but does not,

ment is seen being played by musicians who are livening up the celebration. The mural also shows the *zacatán* (a large drum), the *chirimiya* and small mouth organs known as ocarinas.

The *zacatán* or *huehuetl*, the natural accompaniment to the *tunkul*, is a hollowed-out trunk made into a drum, perforated from side to side and wrapped with deerskin. Its versatility made it indispensable in pre-Hispanic music. The Aztecs used the *huehuetl* only for mass dancing. Its strong, virile sound complements the *tunkul* qualities very nicely and accompanies it perfectly. Other complementary sounds are made by using clay pots with deerskin tops; when they are struck, the sound reverberates through the clay and is another form of accompaniment.

The wind instruments, in addition to the *chirimiyas*, the reed flutes and the clay ocarinas, include what are called “the natural ones,”

Delgado says that Mayan music has its own rhythm and harmony and that “when Gregorian chants were only just beginning, the Mayas were already holding fabulous bashes with *tunkules*.”



Mauricio Degollado

Each *tunkul* has a different personality. Performers must realize that the *tunkul* does not give out the sound the musician wants: the wood always speaks for itself.

however, stop having musical value. Delgado says that Mayan music has its own rhythm and harmony and that “when Gregorian chants were only just beginning, the Mayas were already holding fabulous bashes with *tunkules*.”

Ricardo Delgado arrived in Quintana Roo more than 15 years ago in search of science and art not taught in universities. His first contact with indigenous cultures was with the Hui-chols; from there, he went to Tulum to learn from a Mayan teacher, Pablo Balam. He has both had Mayan teachers and done his own research, but his aim from the very beginning was to disseminate and perpetuate the authentic musical values of the region. Several classes have already graduated from his school, and they come back to teach the new students. The idea is to create a dynamic whereby the older students teach the younger ones, so that the recovery, research and dissemination work is never interrupted.

The current members of the musical group Hum Batz are between 9 and 14 years old; they are all regular students at Felipe Carrillo Puerto municipal schools. The group has performed Mayan dance and music in practically all Quintana Roo’s cities, as well as other states, like Veracruz, Chiapas, Tabasco, Zcatecas, Aguascalientes, Campeche and Yucatán. They receive funds from the municipal and state governments, but they have also recorded a CD, they sell instruments, and they give courses and do private performances to finance their activities.

The center’s facilities are no more than a little four-by-five-meter cabin in the Mayan village recently built in Felipe Carrillo Puerto



Elicé Montiel

The *tunkul* with the *aluxe* face, the children’s favorite.

to hold the Expo-Maya. Nevertheless, everything fits in it, say the children who go there: it has its workshop, its exhibition department, its research department and even its systems department. More than anything, though, it is big enough to show the world a little part of the immense wealth of Mayan music. ■■

NOTES

¹ The information used in this articles and the quotes all come from a *Voices of Mexico* interview with Ricardo Delgado in the city of Felipe Carrillo Puerto, June 4, 2008.

² *Aluxes* are the Mayan equivalent of a mischievous sprite; they live in the jungle and people should be wary of them and not be tricked by them. They also often watch over corn fields and frighten away thieves who try to steal ears of corn.



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Héctor Cuadra Montiel

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Rodrigo Parrini, Xóchitl Castañeda, Carlos Magis, Juan Ruiz y George Lemp

Dimensiones simbólicas de la inmigración indocumentada. Rituales de paso de "norteños" y "norteñas" nahuas del sur de México hacia Estados Unidos
Martha García

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION / CONTRIBUCIÓN ESPECIAL

Los primeros tratados internacionales estadounidenses
Ignacio Díaz de la Serna

REFLECTIONS / REFLEXIONES

ENTREVISTA / INTERVIEW

Approaching Power and Understanding Leadership through The Lens of Joseph Nye
by José Luis Valdés-Ugalde

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Karl Popper, ¿padre del neoliberalismo?
Eduardo Harada O.

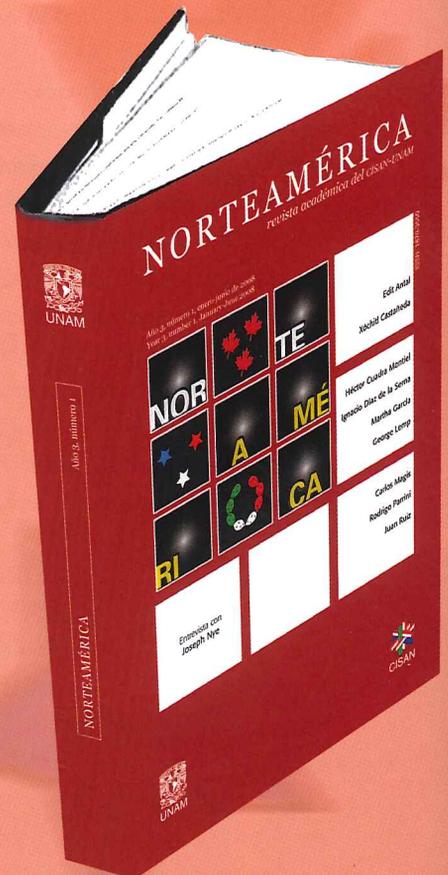
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Ana Luisa González Arévalo

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Camelia Nicoleta Tigau

CHRONOLOGY / CRONOLOGÍA

Cronología de América del Norte (agosto-diciembre de 2007)
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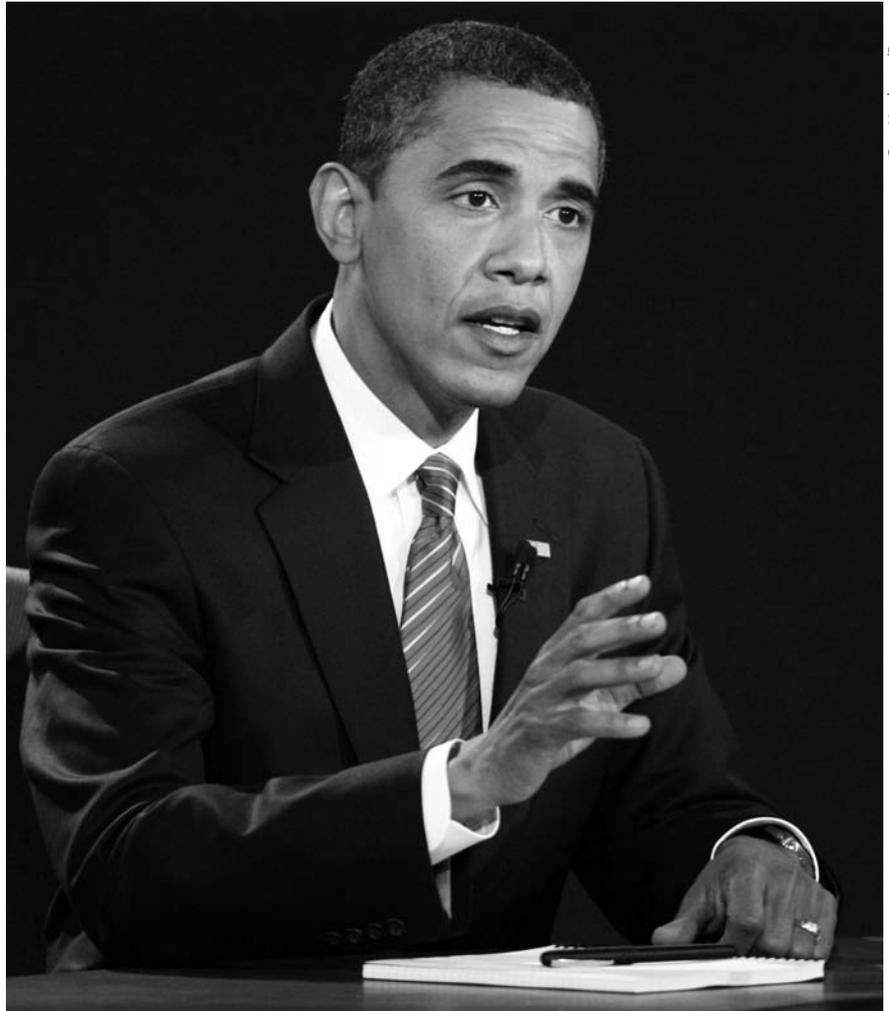
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Is Obama Black?

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde*



Gary Hershorn/Reuters

INTRODUCTION

Race and ethnicity have never stopped occupying center stage in all the U.S. presidential hopefuls' most intimate discourses or that of other actors involved in the campaigns, especially since the Reverend Jeremiah Wright (Obama's pastor for the last 20 years at the Trinity United Church in

Southside Chicago) forced on the Democratic candidate his agenda of domestic debate about the nature of his own candidacy;¹ since Obama insisted on defining himself as a post-racial candidate; since Hillary Clinton played the race card as a (knee-jerk) response to the supposedly sexist insinuations made during the campaign by her black opponent and above all in the U.S. TV media establishment. This is particularly the case since, after the Democratic Party contest for the nomination ended with Obama's victory, the final confrontation began with McCain and his party, which never stopped hovering around ethnic issues.²

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Obama confirms himself as a black man facing a contender
who is really white and becomes even whiter because he is opposing a representative
of the very intolerable, ungraspable “otherness”, singular to the U.S.

Certainly, what Obama proposed explicitly as a post-racial campaign has implied nevertheless an emphasis on the matter of the color of the “other” much more than in the cases of Martin Luther King and Jesse Jackson, just to mention the two best known black leaders in U.S. history. From the gender sphere (Clinton), we journeyed to the ethnic sphere (Obama) of the volcanic politics of the United States today. We must ask ourselves if all this has heralded the dawn of a new moment in the political system, a modernization, the beginning of a post-racial era in U.S. politics, the end of the multi-culturalist debate, or, if on the contrary, what we are seeing is a repetition of U.S. racist policies, that today have a clear but complex target in Obama.

I

For the purpose of constructing the symbolic real and virtual discourse, is Obama a black, Afro-American or a person of color? I think that, despite all the semiological, semantic, ontological, sociological, cultural, political and other kinds of drawbacks this issue has, Obama has to be considered “black”. He is black despite being of mixed blood (he was born in Honolulu, the son of Ann Dunham, a Kansas-born anthropologist, who besides being white, was an atheist, and a black Kenyan Muslim Harvard-trained economist).³ This is because it is among *blacks*—and particularly one with a real chance of becoming the first head of state in the developed world who comes from a traditionally marginalized ethnic minority—where his identity is most and best defined; much better than in any other place in the United States’ socio-ethnic territory.⁴

His inclusive discourse, then, has uniquely awakened the interest of broad, diverse sectors of the population, above all among disillusioned young people. This is not only because he has convinced them of his non-Negritude, but mainly because he is a charismatic leader and brilliant orator—just how effective he is in turning his proposals into reality is as

yet unclear—who has captured the imagination of a broad audience, mainly young and reactive, anxiously looking for ways out of the neo-conservative morass.

In this sense, he is a “black” leader who can talk to white people because of his ability to deal with the big problems all U.S. citizens face, not just blacks and other minorities. He is “black” because his history situates him far from the universe of the politically correct, so-called “Afro-American”. His is not a past of slavery, nor is he one of the Afro-Americans who define their identity after a long tradition of fighting for civil rights.

He is also an “other” that is extremely strange *vis-à-vis* the usual standards historically practiced in the United States for negating the “other”. Barack Hussein Obama has an exotic name inherited from his father and grandfather, and an equally exotic background. For all these reasons, Obama is beginning to be turned into just another “un-American” by the recalcitrant establishment. In his passionate attempts to stop being black, Obama confirms himself as a black man facing a contender who is really white and becomes even *whiter* because he is opposing a representative of the very intolerable, ungraspable “otherness”, singular to the U.S. Obama, a Negro with universalist pretensions—“a cosmopolitan!” as Rudolph Giuliani has called him—was a real rival who seriously has aspired to state power as no other “anomalous” actor has in the past. Under these circumstances, the ethnic card is recharged: Obama is *blacker* because he is more dangerous for McCain and for the most conspicuous and traditional U.S. racism (quite well represented historically by the Republican Party) in that he seemed to seriously threaten to take power. It is a matter of presenting the anti-war senator, the impeccable orator, the social leader as “a black candidate,” but without paying the price or assuming the responsibility this implies. Instead Obama has been turned by the GOP into a terrorist—an “un-American” threat? It is worth quoting some of Sarah Palin’s thoughts on this taken from one of her electoral rallies:

“So, I was reading *The New York Times* and I was really interested to read about Barack’s friends from Chicago. I was reading my copy of the *New York Times* the other day,” she said. “Booooo!” replied the crowd.

“I knew you guys would react that way, okay,” she continued. “So, I was reading the *New York Times* and I was really interested to read about Barack’s friends from Chicago.”

It was time to revive the allegation, made over the weekend, that Obama “pals around” with terrorists, in this case Bill Ayers, late of the Weather Underground. Many independent observers say Palin’s allegations are a stretch; Obama served on a Chicago charitable board with Ayers, now an education professor, and has condemned his past activities.

“Now it turns out, one of his earliest supporters is a man named Bill Ayers,” Palin said. “Boooo!” said the crowd.

“And, according to *The New York Times*, he was a domestic terrorist and part of a group that, quote, ‘launched a campaign of bombings that would target the Pentagon and our U.S. Capitol,’” she continued. “Boooo!” the crowd repeated.

small-town America (as opposed to, say, Chicago and its community organizers) from Westbrook Pegler, the mid-century Hearst columnist famous for his anti-Semitism, racism and violent rhetorical excess. After an assassin tried to kill F.D.R. at a Florida rally and murdered Chicago’s mayor instead in 1933, Pegler wrote that it was “regrettable that Giuseppe Zangara shot the wrong man.” In the ‘60s, Pegler had a wish for Bobby Kennedy: “Some white patriot of the Southern tier will spatter his spoonful of brains in public premises before the snow falls.” This is the writer who found his way into a speech by a potential vice president at a national political convention. It’s astonishing there’s been no demand for a public accounting from the McCain campaign. Imagine if Obama had quoted a Black Panther or Louis Farrakhan —or William Ayers— in Denver.⁶

Thus, being the “black” opponent is the sole responsibility or fault of Obama and the Democratic Party, not of the very WASP, implicit hostility in the McCain campaign

Being the “black” opponent is the sole responsibility or fault of Obama and the Democratic Party, and is also the result, naturally, of his stubbornness and audacity in daring, from his unacceptable “otherness,” to represent the interest of “all” Americans as the head of the executive.

“Kill him!” proposed one man in the audience.

Palin went on to say that “Obama held one of the first meetings of his political career in Bill Ayers’s living room, and they’ve worked together on various projects in Chicago.” Here, Palin began to connect the dots. “These are the same guys who think that patriotism is paying higher taxes —remember that’s what Joe Biden had said. And,” —she paused and sighed— “I am just so fearful that this is not a man who sees America the way you and I see America, as the greatest force for good in the world. I’m afraid this is someone who sees America as ‘imperfect enough’ to work with a former domestic terrorist who had targeted his own country.” “Boooo!” said the audience.⁵

Frank Rich has complained about this demonstration of vernacular racism:

No less disconcerting was a still-unexplained passage of Palin’s convention speech: her use of an unattributed quote praising

or of the racist prejudice that some have tried to put between Obama and the electorate. It is also the result, naturally, of his stubbornness and audacity in daring, from his unacceptable “otherness,” to represent the interest of “all” Americans as the head of the executive. “I don’t look like all those presidents on the dollar bills,” he answered his rival when McCain accused him of playing the race card in his favor; his stubbornness and audacity in daring to represent those who are against the war, those who aspire to comprehensive, better quality health and educational systems; his stubbornness and audacity in daring to be ahead of McCain, as he was ahead of Clinton, in almost all the opinion polls, especially after testing his suitability for the job in the presidential debates, proving that McCain’s argument about Obama’s lack of experience and preparedness is irrelevant, not to mention untrue.

That is, it is a fight for power and an ideological debate in which Obama opponents subtly have resorted to using blows that have discriminatory effects, making him respon-

sible for it, for this discrimination involuntarily created by the force and personality of the Democratic candidate, by accusing him of being irresponsible, rash or inexperienced for proposing, for example, pulling the U.S. out of Iraq in 16 months—McCain has accused him of preferring to lose the war that “we are winning” than to lose the election.

How does an un-American anomaly of the dimensions of a Barack Obama dare talk seriously about *real politik*? It is he—and not us—who represents the past (which is doubly anomalous), backwardness and the denial of progress—the audacity of rejecting a war when “it’s being won”! His opponents seem to be saying that for this very reason, he is even more black: because he is irresponsible and unpatriotic. He made the mistake of fighting for power and whatever bad things might befall him are the result of his being anomalous—he is not an equal. He has faced all the obstacles in order to become an uncomfortable contender.

In this campaign, McCain and Palin have played the patriotism card dangerously. It is a direct association between, on the one hand, the lack of patriotism, using as the main argument his desire to end the war, and, on the other, the supposed zero right to patriotism, affirming that Obama’s lack

Afro-Americans, and not to mention the Latin American peoples: like minors, incapable of thinking or acting for themselves. This is why the United States has been accused of exercising a kind of semi-apartheid, palatable because it is subsumed in the prevalence of a melting pot. Obviously, this kind of *very white* intolerance cannot even be compared to the black supremacism typical of the struggles of the 1960s, more or less represented by Jeremiah Wright and his incendiary rhetoric.

What we have here is the possibility of a post-Bush sharpening of the neo-conservative discourse, including its worse vices, like the old racist practices that are—sometimes more and sometimes less intensely—authentically white supremacist.

II

The enormous weakness of the (white) U.S. elite becomes obvious cyclically when it finds itself surrounded by “dangers” and submerges itself in a well-known discriminatory tradition. In the not-so-distant past (the nineteenth and twen-

The traditional U.S. white discourse treats Obama in exactly the way the white Calvinist tradition always did the native population and then Afro-Americans, not to mention the Latin American peoples: like minors, incapable of thinking or acting for themselves.

of experience does not lie in his political record, but rather in his non-existent right, according to the white supremacist view, of being a first-class citizen.

How can a second-class citizen usurp a place reserved for centuries for the white race? White conservative Sarah Palin’s nomination and the unsustainable aforementioned association between Obama, the “non-patriot,” and the Vietnam War-era radical William Ayers, “the terrorist,” seem to be reiterating this belief. Therefore, he is even blacker because he has dared to seriously aspire to power, and we will make sure we emphasize that every time he tries or dares to stop being black.

Obama is treated by the traditional U.S. white discourse in exactly the way the white Calvinist tradition requires and as it always did with the native population, then with the

tieth centuries), this happened mainly when faced with external threats: the enemies of the U.S. order. Like when the loyalists confronted the reprobates and won the day; the virtuous against the perverse; or the privileged against the unfortunate; the Protestants against the Papists; and, in the United States, the Anglo-Americans against the Spanish; the democrats against the Fascists; and, finally, the democrats against the Communists. But, relatively speaking, not since the infamous massacre of old men, women and children in Chief Black Kettle’s Sand Creek camp, November 29, 1864, led by Colonel John Chivington; the Washita River massacre of peaceful southern Cheyenne on November 27, 1868; and, of course, not since Wounded Knee on December 29, 1890; or, more recently, My Lai, Vietnam, in March 1968,⁷ had we seen the discourse of “common sense,” which

Obama is a “black” leader who can talk to white people because of his ability to deal with the big problems all U.S. citizens face, not just blacks and other minorities. He is “black” because his history situates him far from the universe of the politically correct, so-called “Afro-American.”

becomes discriminatory, be applied with so much emphasis in electoral campaigns as it is in the case of Obama.

This obsessive vision of U.S. “common sense” has distinguished itself as a link with a fundamental value of its culture: racism. In this regard, Michael Hunt points to three basic principles that motivate U.S. domestic and foreign policy: 1) race hierarchy; 2) the idea of American Destiny; and 3) U.S. aversion to revolution.⁸ These vigorously social Darwinian traits would significantly influence the U.S. struggle for “the waste places of the earth,” inside and outside its borders.⁹

In the United States, the notion of “race” as a concept and a point of departure on the road to virtuosity started up a hierarchical attitude and an entire conception of reality. It was also always linked closely to exceptionalism. This extraordinary concept of Americans themselves as “the exceptional society,” “the society of destiny,” “the new Israel,” “the new Jerusalem” or “the nation to be,” as John Winthrop called it when he was with the pilgrims on the Massachusetts coast in 1630, or “the city on the hill”:¹⁰ these were all the components of the highest importance in creating a new civic religion in the United States, whose objective ultimately would be to achieve national greatness for that country. In this context, national greatness meant the beginning and the end of a new time in the nation’s history, in which “under the protection of the heavens,” it was called upon to be the instrument for the moral and political regeneration of the world.¹¹

All of this, linked to the notion of “common sense,” led to an atmosphere of intolerance that, seemingly, has had an impact on the political climate in which our character, Barack Obama, finds himself. About all of this, Augelli and Murphy have the following to say:

Colonial religion can be understood as the source of three sets of ideas that are common sense to most Americans. One idea has to do with identity, with who Americans are, with the view that many Americans have of their own exceptionalism and destiny, the idea of Americans as a chosen people. The second has to do with how to deal with dissent, how to deal with peo-

ple whose views differ from your own. For many Americans the only way to deal with people whose ideas differ from your own is to isolate yourself from them (or them from you), convert them, or destroy them... Finally, we look at the limited American idea of charity which is bound up with assumptions about the exceptionalism of the American people.¹²

But above all, it is U.S. intolerance which recurs historically. Again Augelli and Murphy explain it like this:

Americans, especially those who identify themselves as more religious, are not particularly tolerant of behaviour that deviates from relatively narrow norms, even though the same people are likely to profess an adherence to an abstract principle of “liberty for all”. As a result, many Americans accept a relatively authoritarian concept of “community”, one that entails indoctrination and little real dissent. For many Americans it is the only concept of “community” they understand. Yet, many Americans remain frightened by those who limit a dissenter’s alternatives to reconversion or repression, and they fight against every manifestation of this impulse in American political life... “Calvinism’s original force comes from this ability to impose a legitimate, authoritarian order on a confused world.”¹³

Is this part of the United States’ twentieth-century past still alive? Is Obama a dissident, a pagan of U.S. politics? Or, will he be capable of becoming the first actor in a post-racial era? In winning the presidency, it will very possibly be a step toward achieving a deep transformation of the polity. If he had lost by a wide margin, if the prejudices of the political establishment represented by McCain defeat him and he is the victim of a witch-hunt, it might mean the biggest step backward for the country since the 1960s. All of this would polarize U.S. society even more, perhaps more than if he won.

An Obama loss as the result of having been presented by his opponent and his spokespersons as an expendable anomaly —“that one” in McCain’s words; it would mean that white racism and social backwardness in the United

States will have, as never before, put the noose around the neck of democracy in their country and will take the enormous risk of not making timely use of the impulse for renovation that has been visible there for the last two years. What will happen is that race will become a matter for shame and interminable recriminations. The opportunity for demonstrating whether Obama's political discourse and his campaign promises were baseless or not will also be lost. In short, what would be lost is the opportunity of seeing whether a president in the United States, who is also black, can inaugurate a new post-racial era, a more democratic and just society, a new society and whether he can, once and for all, bring civilization to the European-American savage living under the white skin of the all-powerful elite, represented by an aged politician and an ineffective, war-mongering party in decline that will leave Americans, after suffering under the most shameful presidency of U.S. history, a legacy of social, political and economic decline the likes of which have not been witnessed since the Nixon era. At the end of the day, it is a matter of seeing whether it is possible to apply the maxim of the famous Afro-American writer, James Baldwin, who said that the white man cannot free himself from racism by himself, so the very salvation of this idea of democracy lies in the hands of the most dispossessed.¹⁴ Today, the entire power structure of the state in the United States is waiting for a definition on this issue.

An Obama victory will be also an opportunity for the U.S. to show to what extent its society, especially the side that decided not to support Obama, is able to renovate and face the challenges of its future, namely: the reconfiguration of its political system in that it has lost relative credibility and strength; the loss of legitimacy as a world leader within the international order and the struggle between unilateralism and multilateralism, and the dramatic questioning of the international political economy paradigm; not to mention the need to rebuild the fractured social consensus and overcome the moral discontent which apparently will become George W. Bush's most ominous legacy. ■■■

NOTES

¹ On September 16, 2001, Reverend Wright preached a sermon to his congregation, saying that the United States had brought on al Qaeda's attacks because of its own terrorism and foreign policy. "We have supported state terrorism against the Palestinians and black South Africans, and now we are indignant because the stuff we have done overseas is

now brought right back to our own front yards. America's chickens are coming home to roost." That same day, he said, "We bombed Hiroshima, we bombed Nagasaki, and we nuked far more than the thousands in New York and the Pentagon, and we never batted an eye (God damn America)". However, he delivered his most controversial sermon in 2003, a severe affront to U.S. patriotism, in which he denounced U.S. treatment of its African-American population, saying, "The government gives them the drugs, builds bigger prisons, passes a three-strike law and then wants us to sing 'God Bless America'. No, no, no, God damn America. That's in the Bible for killing innocent people. God damn America for treating our citizens as less than human. God damn America for as long as she acts like she is God and she is Supreme." "Obama's Pastor: God Damn America, U.S. to Blame for 9/11," *ABC News*, March 13, 2008.

² In October, the McCain-Palin campaign has made incendiary statements about Obama that are apparently part of a strategy to show Obama as a dangerous anomaly — "terrorist?", "socialist?", "Arab?", "Muslim?", "black?" These are, by the way, the same dirty, Rove-like practices that made McCain drop out of the race in 2000.

³ Barack Obama, Sr. was born in Nyangoma Kogela, in rural West Kenya. In the book *The Risks of Knowledge*, he is described as a Harvard-trained economist. The authors detail a paper he wrote for the *East Africa Journal* in which he attacked the economic proposals of pro-Western "third way" leader Tom Mboya and sided with the communist-allied leader Oginga Odinga. PrestoPundit located a copy of the paper titled "Problems Facing Our Socialism," published in July 1965, in which the author's name is given as Barak H. Obama. See maggiesnotebook.blogspot.com/2008/04/barack-obamas-father-why-it-matters.html.

⁴ However, it is worth noting that Obama has refused to use the self-victimized narrative black leaders have resorted to in the past in order to become politicians. The difference between them and Obama is that he decided to become a politician before considering himself "black".

⁵ "In Fla., Palin Goes for the Rough Stuff as Audience Boos Obama," *The Washington Post*, October 6, 2008, WashingtonPost.com

⁶ Frank Rich, "The Terrorist Barack Hussein Obama," *The New York Times*, October 12, 2008.

⁷ See U.S. Senate, "Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders," Senate Reports, vols. 3-8 (Report no. 94-465), 94th Congress, 1st Session (November 20, 1975) (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office). This is a documented Senate hearing that demonstrates the involvement of leaders like Central Intelligence Agency Director Alan Dulles, CIA official Richard Bissel, and Presidents Eisenhower and Nixon in complicated conspiratorial attempts to destroy both governments and leaders with which the U.S. government was dissatisfied.

⁸ Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and US Foreign Policy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), Chapters 2 and 4.

⁹ Henry Cabot Lodge, quoted by Michael H. Hunt, op. cit., p. 37.

¹⁰ The idea Winthrop expressed is that "Men shall say of succeeding plantations: the lord make it like that of New England: for wee must Consider that wee shall be as a City upon a Hill, the eies of all people are uppon us." Quoted in L. Baritz, *City on a Hill: A History of Ideas and Myths in America* (London: John Wiley & Sons, 1964), p. 3.

¹¹ See Chapters 1, 2, 11 and 12 of A.P. Whitaker, *The US and the Independence of Latin America, 1800/1830* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1941).

¹² E. Augelli and C. Murphy, *America's Quest for Supremacy and the Third World: A Gramscian Analysis* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1988), p. 37.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41, footnote 15.

¹⁴ Ronald Walters, "Race in America: Multiculturalism, Afrocentrism, and the New Democratic Framework," *Black Collegian* (April 1996), p. 5.

A Genuine American Dilemma

Bernadette G. Vega Sánchez*



Charles Dharapak/Reuters

The current presidential race in the United States is perceived worldwide as the most attractive electoral process ever, due to the transcendental nature of the issues at stake. Are we facing a possible turning point in the U.S. style of domestic and foreign policies? Or is it just a peculiar electoral context with uncommon personalities? In crisis, the United States can brook no delay in the evaluation of the state of political affairs. The opposition between the presidential candidates entails an honest predicament, but the apparent conflict between them and the core American assumptions about power and politics may overemphasize the tight spot the population is in on November 4. Whether

the character, the platform or the kind of change the winner will bring to the office, the dilemmas are a lot more present and the uncertainty even more influential than in previous elections.

Far from attempting a detailed examination of the political platforms, this is an exercise in presenting a comprehensive view of the dilemmas the average voter will have to deal with when exercising his or her vote.

NOT BLACK, NOT YOUNG: EXCEPTIONAL

Obama is the first African-American officially nominated candidate of the Democratic Party, and there are legitimate

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The electorate may feel identified with the kind of hope and change that Obama offers, but the questions that arise are how feasible and enduring that promise of change can become.

doubts about his being black enough, American enough, Democrat enough and, what is more, presidential enough. This hesitation does not lie in the Rove-style campaign that McCain has adopted, but in genuine concerns about Obama's capacity to fulfill national and international expectations. The electorate may feel identified with the kind of hope and change that Obama offers, but the questions that immediately arise are how feasible and enduring that promise of change can become. The problem of identification is no minor matter. It should be remembered that the U.S. electorate is driven by the identification a candidate and his/her whole campaign paraphernalia can create with his/her target constituency; and the relationship between the average voter and Obama has been erratically weak and breakable. It is interesting to note that before the financial crisis shook up presidential politics, the more the race advanced, the more Obama's presidential potential became diffuse and questionable.

The Democratic Momentum. There are several reasons why this presidential race belonged to the Democrats from the very beginning. First, Democrats found the most fertile soil for recapturing adherents and re-conquering Washington after the Bush disaster. The generalized displeasure with Bush's performance made a heavy burden for anyone the Republicans nominated.

Democrats almost had their way back to the White House assured, but their challenge was tougher: the party had to prove their suitability for the job, which in the current state of affairs implies surviving a crisis that may endanger the world economic system, and continuing to lead an unconventional war against terrorism and anti-Americanism. On the contrary, the only way for the GOP was up.

Secondly—and this has been mentioned repeatedly—for the first time a woman and an African-American had a real chance of being president of the United States. The race for the Democratic nomination between Hillary Clinton and

the unexpected Barack Obama was perhaps excessive even for the party that seemed to already have one foot in the Oval Office. It turned into something that slowed them down. The injuries from a fight between giants are deeper and harder to heal than the injuries when fighting a diminished opponent. In 2004, John Kerry was virtually nominated in February, after confirming his advantage over all opponents. Kerry's injuries were barely scratches. Four years later, Obama was simultaneously bleeding from the wounds inflicted by Clinton and fighting for the presidency.

An Unconventional Candidate. A lot has been said about Obama's blackness and the meaning it has for the African-American community. However, as transcendental and reminiscent of Martin Luther King's dream as it may be, the personal-history-led campaign accounts for a feature beyond race: Obama's most played card is his own exceptionality. It can be taken as an attempt to personalize the exceptionality expressed in the United States' mission and extraordinary character, creating an automatic association between the inherent purpose of the American nation and the black political messiah. Alternatively, the rareness of the Democratic candidate has been commonly related to a stranger, non-patriotic style, because of the remoteness of his politics from the Washington *modus operandi*. What makes Obama exceptional, then? His personal history and political thoughts, his background, rhetoric, poise and elegance and his non-racial appeal. His own way of doing politics is exceptional, including his being an astonishing fundraiser and political climber. Obama, being the figure of freshness, naïveté, idealism, change and boldness, is, as a matter of fact, a truly devote of nuance. This can be an advantage for making cautious and more objective decisions, but in any electoral race in the U.S., nuance is not a convenient quality. The opposite of nuance, Obama's flip-flopping is also commonly attributed to his lack of experience and political maturity. For instance, his free trade position turned into a self-destructive weapon, especially after the gaffe of his economic advisor, Austan Goolsbee, who assured a Canadian audience that Obama "did not really intend to renegotiate NAFTA, as he has often claimed on the campaign trail."

A Promise of a Different Foreign Policy. This is why Obama's presidential performance is subject to reservations. On the one hand, there is a new discourse and ideology on foreign policy as a response to the global pledge for multilateralism,

that praises diplomacy and dialogue at the highest level, in which the most controversial issues are the condemnation of the unnecessary war in Iraq, the need to fix the Afghan chaos and finally, the courageous proposal of sitting down with “evil” leaders to start up a dialogue without preconditions. The latter deserves close attention; it comes from a candidate whose main purpose is to restore the American place in the international order, but in a friendlier and a more cooperative way. Basically, it entails the end of the United State’s disastrous unilateralism, no minor thing. The scope of this promised future can be obscured by a sometimes clumsy foreign affairs amateur who declares —not to mince words— that the U.S. will act in Pakistan on high value terrorist targets. Can Obama materialize this transformation promise, or is it only a campaign-led fad?

A TRADITIONAL CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICAN, BUT DIFFERENT

John McCain, the Republican dissident, enjoyed a considerable advantage after winning the nomination to face a divided Democratic Party, which enabled him to build solid foundations for his campaign relying on experience, patriotism and personal qualifications. However, McCain’s problems center on his ideology, his explosive character, his own party, the link with the Bush administration and the contradiction between being the embodiment of Washington politics and his particular change mantra.

Republican Dissident. A maverick, a moderate, a different kind of Republican, McCain has been able to fight against Obama’s exceptionality using his own uniqueness, the most outstanding feature of which is his independence from his party. He has a record of following his own principles regardless of party values. This becomes appealing for independents and centrist Republicans for contributing to create a “McCain majority,” by giving a chance to “common-sense conservatism.”

Nevertheless, the moderate label is not self-sustaining; McCain has relied heavily on his voting record, which in fact does not show moderate behavior on military decisions, abortion rights or gun control. Yes, there are some moderate positions like the immigration reform initiative, but most are a consequence of unpleasant personal experiences like being prisoner of war in Vietnam, leading to an anti-torture amend-

In the last days of Bush’s presidency, the executive was reduced to its minimum expression, and the proof was the inability to promote White House initiatives.

ment, and the “questionable conduct” he was criticized for when linked to Charles Keating in the savings and loan scandals in 1991, which somehow justifies his support for financial reform. McCain is building on his own rebelliousness and not relying on his party because, first, the party is not unified behind its candidate, and second, party reliability just cannot hold.

The Republican Despair. The lack of legitimacy the Bush administration is closing with has infected the party in several ways: any Republican would be linked to President George W. Bush, and, on the other hand, the GOP faces the strongest suspicion about the ideological guidance and appropriate judgment any Republican president has ever had. In the last days of Bush’s presidency, the executive was reduced to its minimum expression, and the proof was the inability to promote White House initiatives. Some of the worst events for the American nation happened under this administration. Bush is not to blame for all of them, but certainly some of his policies —or lack of them— extended the tragedy’s consequences: 1) the 9/11 terrorist attacks set the tone for the rest of the term, ranging from the war against terrorism to a crusade for imposing democracy unilaterally and disrespectfully of international principles, which nourished anti-Americanism around the globe and paradoxically increased the risk of being attacked; 2) Hurricane Katrina exposed the incompetence, lack of preparedness and racial politics still prevalent in the U.S. system; and, to make matters worse, 3) the financial crisis exploded, implicating the Bush administration for its excessive deregulation.

McCain has struggled to put sufficient distance between him and Bush in order to attract voters looking for a change. Nonetheless, his stand on Iraq, Gustav reminding everyone of Katrina on the very first day of the convention, and the population blaming Republicans and neoliberal policies for the current economic crisis all makes the endeavor of being perceived as a man who can actually be relied on titanic.

This may be one of the few elections in which the figure of the vice-presidential candidate is relevant for attracting votes. McCain choosing Palin was perhaps the riskiest move.

Once called the number one Republican rival of Bush and a fierce critic of his and Rumsfeld's handling of Iraq, McCain remains tied to the Republicans' most impressive disappointment.

The Same Old Foreign Policies? On the whole, McCain's thinking belongs to the twentieth century, to the previous standing of the U.S. as an uncontested superpower; and this philosophy of condescending unilateralism no longer matches the current world context. The League of Democracies is not indicative of a multilateral approach in foreign affairs; on the contrary, an elitist group of nations acting superior levying sanctions on non-democratic countries does not guarantee peace, disarmament and democratization. It sacrifices diplomacy and dialogue and jeopardizes the existing international arrangements for peace and security. In Iraq, McCain is right about the need to adopt a problem-solving attitude, although the triumphalism evidenced by the idea that victory is just around the corner goes beyond naïveté.

THE VICE-PRESIDENT COUNTS

This may be one of the few elections in which the figure of the vice-presidential candidate is relevant for attracting votes. McCain choosing Palin was perhaps the riskiest move; even so, Palin was clearly a response to Obama's pick. Biden covers his candidacy's resume loopholes: we are talking about a partner who is the current chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. That may not match Obama's discourse for change, but Biden has contributed to building a more reliable ticket for addressing the second most important issue for Americans, right after the economic crisis: a safe withdrawal from Iraq. Biden is also an asset in Washington, for those who considered Obama too much an outsider; and he is adding his long career for those who were worried about Obama being too young and inexperienced.

The unexpected Palin was an attempt to take advantage of Clinton's absence for getting the female vote. She added an air of freshness and youth to the campaign; her links with the religious right helped repair McCain's hostile relationship with hardcore conservatives; and the average U.S. family can easily identify with her: a working mother of five who faces problems similar to every American family; for example, supporting her pregnant teenage daughter and raising a kid with Down syndrome.

Unlike Biden, she was a newcomer, and the ticket's bounce in the polls shows the power they have. She attracted the audience and media by her mastery of public relations; and she earned enough confidence by relying on her executive record. That overconfidence exposed her weak points to the extent that the bounce only lasted three weeks after the Republican Convention. So far, her suitability for assuming the responsibilities of the second most important job in the world has become dubious.

IDENTIFICATION OVER QUALIFICATIONS?

The election will be decided by a wide variety of factors including racial prejudices, party reliability, political influence and Bush's legacy. However, the U.S. population will have to choose between two different paradigms of doing politics, domestically and internationally, between two identities representing different sides of the American dream, and between two proposals for change. People may vote thinking about the economy, and Obama has significant advantage in this area; his party is not being blamed for the financial disaster and he has adopted a presidential attitude in his first presidential challenge. But, additionally, voters will be swayed by how much they identify with the values and character of a particular ticket.

McCain and Palin are relying on this identification, on sharing the same values with the electorate; Obama and Biden are calling for restituting the American dream because they represent its materialization. Whether a candidate is qualified or not to be the U.S. president is a tough question that cannot be solved by focusing merely on the candidate's resume or personal traits. The U.S. situation requires better judgment, bipartisan skills, popular support and public trust in the first executive. "When it comes to politics, there is a mad love of mediocrity in this country." Hopefully, Sam Harris will prove wrong... ■■■

Mexico and The U.S. Elections

María Cristina Rosas*



The U.S. presidential elections have two protagonists: the Democrat Barack Obama and the Republican John McCain. In Mexico, the collective unconscious pays a great deal of attention to our northern neighbor's presidential hopefuls. As the reader will remember, a few months ago a survey revealed that Mexicans preferred Hillary Clinton to Obama. In the United States, the Hispanic community also threw its support to the former First Lady. This is no minor matter: once Obama achieved enough delegate votes to ensure the presidential nomination at the Democratic Convention

August 25 to 28 at the Denver, Colorado Pepsi Center, the Hispanic communities inside the United States and abroad began expressing concern about his scanty knowledge of Latin America. He is criticized for never having traveled to the region, and people fear that, just like under the George W. Bush administration, if Obama sits in the Oval Office, Latin America will continue to be peripheral to U.S. international concerns. In contrast with John McCain, whose first international trip as the virtual Republican candidate was to Colombia and then Mexico, Obama opted for a tour of Middle Eastern and European countries, traditionally considered a priority in U.S. foreign policy.

In this regard, it is worth asking just how much Mexico should concern itself with who will occupy the U.S. presi-

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See other works by the author at <http://www.paginasprodigy.com/mcrosas/libros.htm>. [Editor's Note.]

Barack Obama and John McCain aside, there is a national project in the U.S. and a bi-partisan consensus about how to achieve it. Both candidates would foster national power so their country can pursue its interests most effectively throughout the world.

dency for the 2009-2012 term. The media do not help to come to an appropriate judgment given that they focus more on the candidates' personalities and appearance than on their political ethics. When Barack Obama arrived in France last July, the media compared his popularity with that of Paris Hilton. It would seem, then, that if someone manages to look good, or pretty or even sexy—like Paris Hilton looks to many people—then he or she has a good possibility of making it to the White House.

U.S. historian Gil Troy, who currently works at Montreal's McGill University, writes in his most recent book, *Leading from the Center: Why Moderates Make the Best Presidents*, that regardless of the political affiliation of the person in the Oval Office, he or she always tends to "move to the center" of the political spectrum because otherwise he/she would antagonize and divide the electorate, when what is required is to govern for everyone.¹ Clearly, after electoral processes as polemical as that of 2000, the electorate is increasingly divided; so, the figure that emerges victorious in 2008 will have to conciliate to be able to govern.

A glance at Obama and McCain's numbers shows that next November 4 balloting will be close. There is little room for speculation about the support that each of the two virtual candidates naturally have. In 35 of the 50 states the balloting is already practically defined, meaning that who will be the next president of the United States will be decided in the other 15.

In the United States, the president is not elected by popular vote, but by the Electoral College. This body is a kind of link or intermediary between the voter and the candidate. Thus, most people of voting age cast their ballots for electors, who then choose their preferred candidate. The Electoral College is currently made up of 538 electors. Each state has a right to the same number of electors as its representatives and senators in the U.S. Congress. The District of Columbia, seat of the federal government, is assigned the same number of electors as the smallest states in the Union.

Each of the members of the Electoral College votes twice: once for president and a second time for vice president. To win the election, a candidate must get at least 270 Electoral College votes. If none of the candidates gets this number, the decision falls to the House of Representatives. In the case of the vice president, if no one gets the required amount of votes, the decision falls to the Senate.

Today, Barack Obama has already practically assured 210 votes; that is, he only needs 60 votes more to be elected president. John McCain, on the other hand, has 165 votes and needs 105 more to occupy the White House next January.

As already suggested above, everything will practically be decided in 15 states: Florida (with 27 votes in the Electoral College); Pennsylvania (21); Ohio (20); Michigan (17); North Carolina (15); Virginia (13); Missouri (11); Colorado (9); Iowa (7); New Mexico (5); Nevada (5); New Hampshire (4); Montana (3); North Dakota (3); and South Dakota (3). Trends indicate that if the elections were held today, Florida, North Carolina, Missouri, Montana and North and South Dakota would give their 62 votes to John McCain, giving him a total of 227, but even so he would be 43 votes short of the required 270.

What do Barack Obama's numbers look like? Presumably, six states would throw their support to him: Pennsylvania, Michigan, Colorado, Iowa, New Mexico and New Hampshire. Their 63 votes would put him beyond the magic number with 273 votes total, and he would become the next president. Naturally, all these numbers are based on current trends. Suffice it to mention that in Ohio, Virginia and Nevada (with their combined 38 votes), voters are undecided. It remains to be seen what effect Ralph Nader's announcement that he would run for the fifth consecutive time since 1992 as an independent will have on Obama and McCain's situation. While it is clear that Nader has no possibility of winning the election, he can take fundamental support away from the "two big candidates"; and it was clear in the 2000 elections that in a close election, the loss of those votes can be fatal for either (it is said that Nader's candidacy cost Al Gore the 2000 election).

Another no less important issue is the backing Obama and McCain can expect from their party supporters. And it is in this area that Obama is at the disadvantage *vis-à-vis* his opponent: the Democratic Party was worn out in the primaries by Hillary Clinton's powerful campaign, which fragmented it. Now, it is necessary to work for party unity. McCain, by contrast, has 86 percent support from Republican Party followers.

It is important to analyze who votes in the United States: the campaigns are directed at them. One of the enemies to overcome is abstentionism, which is growing in low-income sectors. Not everyone of voting age votes; those who go to the polls are the ones with reasons and motives to exercise that right and who, evidently, are in more advantaged social strata. Therefore, marketing techniques channel efforts toward this group.

A rather caricaturesque analysis of the way the presidential elections unfolded four years ago, when George W. Bush was reelected, reveals the profile of who goes out to vote and who they cast their ballots for. The well-known characters of the successful television series *The Simpsons* offer an explanation for Bush's 2004 victory: Homer's neighbor, Ned Flanders, known for his devotion to the church and his extreme conservatism, even in the simplest spheres of daily life, is most certainly a Republican sympathizer, typical of the voters who gave George W. Bush his 2004 victory over Democrat John Kerry. Reviewing the profile of voters who cast their ballots for Bush, surveys found that 80 percent underlined the importance of "moral values" in their decision. On the average, these voters earned more than US\$100,000 a year and said they went to church at least once a week (like Ned). The website www.politicswatch.com holds Ned Flanders and people like him responsible for Bush's remaining in the White House for a second term. It goes even further, saying that if Homer's neighbor weren't "yellow," he would be the perfect Republican candidate for the Senate or the presidency!

Twenty-five percent of U.S. voters tell pollsters that they think 72-year-old John McCain is too old to adequately carry out the president's job. Another 45 percent think that 47-year-old Barack Obama is too young and lacking in experience to guide the nation's destiny —there is actually a 25-year difference in their ages, no small matter.

In any case, what is most important for Mexico in the process unfolding north of our border? Barack Obama and John McCain aside, there is a national project in the United States and a bi-partisan consensus about how to achieve it. Regardless of who becomes president, regardless of differences in age, experience and political profile, both Obama and McCain would work to foster U.S. national power so their country can pursue its interests most effectively throughout the world. It is true that Mexico and the United States will continue to be neighbors after the November 4 balloting, and there is a complex enough bilateral agenda to

We should not expect great changes from the White House *vis-à-vis* Mexico, and we should carefully analyze what Congress looks like after the elections given that that is where the fate of the fundamental issues on the bilateral agenda will be decided.

avoid Mexicans being marginalized from Washington's agenda of international priorities. This having been said, however, we should not expect great changes from the White House *vis-à-vis* Mexico, and we should carefully analyze what Congress looks like after the elections given that that is where the fundamental issues on the bilateral agenda will be decided. This means that if a migratory accord is agreed upon, it is the next 111th Congress that will ratify it. If the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) file were reopened to negotiate things like agricultural trade or others, Congress would have the last word. Funding for the Merida Initiative needs congressional approval. While it is true that the U.S. president has the prerogative of making decisions without Congress, the political cost is very high. This was clear in 1995 when President William Clinton decided on a US\$51 billion financial bailout package for Mexico, thus sealing forever the fate of the initiative for creating the famous Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) because U.S. legislators would not accept new trade agreements with Latin American countries incapable of maintaining minimal financial stability.

The 110th Congress, in session from January 3, 2007 to January 9, 2009, has given the go-ahead to legislation like the Energy Security and Independence Act (2007), the Food and Energy Security Act, or 2007 Farm Bill (2007) and the Protect America Act of 2007. Meanwhile, it has stalled on passing the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007, the Executive Branch Reform Act (2007), the Iraq War De-escalation Act of 2007 and the Global Warming Pollution Reduction Act of 2007, among others.

The Democratic Party has a majority in the House of Representatives. In the Senate, both parties have the same number of seats (49), and there are two independent senators (although they both work with the Democrats, which is why analysts say the Democrats *de facto* control the upper house. Next November 4, there will be elections for senator in 33 out of 50 states; for all the seats in the House of Representatives and for the governorship in 11 states, plus referendums and local elections in many different states.

Of the Senate's 100 seats, 35 will be up for the vote next November, 23 today occupied by Republicans and 12 by Democrats. From the start, the Democrats have the advantage of only having to defend 12, a little more than half of what is at stake for the Republicans. As if that were not enough, five Republican senators have announced their retirement, forcing the party to look for new candidates to satisfy voter expectations. Meanwhile, none of the Democratic senators is retiring. The number of states where the Democrats are predicted to win, given that their opponents lack the minimal possibilities for overcoming voter preferences is much higher (nine, total) than the states where the Republicans will win (only four). So, the Republicans are in serious trouble, given that it looks like the Senate will again be controlled by the Democrats, who could substantially increase their number of seats.

In the lower house, the Democrats have 233 seats, versus the Republicans' 202. The House of Representatives is made up of 435 congresspersons, based on the 2000 census. Analysts think that it will be very difficult for the Republicans to upset the Democrats' current majority. One of the issues that hurt the Republicans the most in the 2006 elections was the Iraq War, which continues to be a hot item, to the extent that political analysts as conservative as Robert Novak have warned that U.S. participation there could cause trouble in Republican ranks next November 4.

For this reason, it is worthwhile reviewing which agendas tend to favor the Democrats. While it is generally thought that the Democratic Party favors liberal initiatives, in recent decades it has taken positions more to the center, as Gil Troy has said: they support a progressive social agenda, where the government plays an important role, particularly in the fight against poverty and social injustice, even when it means increasing taxes. In the past, their main support came from unions and working people, but now they also have the backing of social liberals and highly-educated middle classes with salaries over the national average.

In international politics, the Democrats generally oppose unilateralism. However, it should be pointed out that after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, House and Senate Democrats voted almost unanimously to authorize the use of force against Afghanistan. There was a noticeable division of their votes on Iraq.

As is well known, the Republican Party favors low taxes, balanced budgets, greater economic freedom and small government. It opposes universal medical coverage and strict

Mexico will have to raise awareness among Republicans and Democrats both before and after the elections. It is no secret that the Calderón administration has very solid ties with the Republicans and not with the Democrats.

environmental standards. Its traditional base of support is the business community and those with mid-level to high incomes, a large part of the armed forces and the white population, above all, white married couples with children. People with high educational levels favor the Republicans and the Democrats in practically equal proportions.

In terms of international relations, the Republicans generally favor unilateralism on issues involving national security, based on the idea that the United States can and must act in the concert of nations in its own interest, without the support or the "permission" of others. They like free trade agreements, although they are divided on migration, given the clash between those who want a "friendlier" platform and those who favor a more nationalist stance. It is noteworthy that John McCain's support for last year's migratory reform proposal almost cost him his candidacy in the 2008 presidential race.

With all this in mind, a U.S. Congress dominated by the Democrats poses important challenges for the Mexican government given that emphasis on social and domestic issues like gun control, universal medical coverage, internal security and discrimination (something that will be very important if Obama is elected) will demand material and human resources that eventually would put the international agenda, above all *vis-à-vis* a region like Latin America, on the back burner. Barack Obama's first international trip as the virtual Democratic candidate was to regions that are a priority for the United States, but that, above all, made him "look good," judging by his reception in Germany and France. It should not be forgotten that this trip was part of a political campaign, which does not guarantee that, once in the White House, Obama would be a pro-active internationalist. In addition, it also does not mean that John McCain considers Latin America the priority region for U.S. foreign policy. His visit to Mexico and Colombia should be interpreted in context: anticipating a possible Obama visit to the region and, above all, trying to send "friendly" messages to the U.S. Latino population and —why not?— also to the

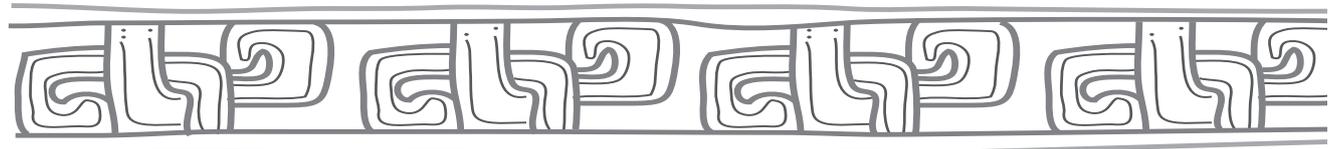
one million Americans residing in Mexico with a right to vote. On his trip to Mexico, for example, McCain met with businessmen and, despite being a Baptist —by the way, it is well known that he attends the North Phoenix Baptist Church in Arizona only sporadically— he paid his respects to Our Lady of Guadalupe at the Basílica, an activity fraught with electoral significance since McCain is extremely discrete about his religious beliefs.

In this sense, Mexico will have to develop a strategy for raising awareness among Republicans and Democrats both before and after the elections. It is no secret that the Felipe Calderón administration has very solid ties with the Republicans (in addition to their clear ideological empa-

thy) and not with the Democrats (one factor among others that favored McCain's visit and has postponed Obama's). Therefore, contacts with the Democrats will have to improve on all levels. A good starting point might be making them aware of the fact that, given globalization and the United States' interdependence with the rest of the world, and very concretely, with Mexico, its prosperity and domestic security depend on the prosperity and security of others, particularly Mexico. ■■■

NOTES

¹ Gil Troy, *Leading from the Center: Why Moderates Make the Best Presidents* (New York: Basic Books, 2008).



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Food Crisis Is It Really About Food?

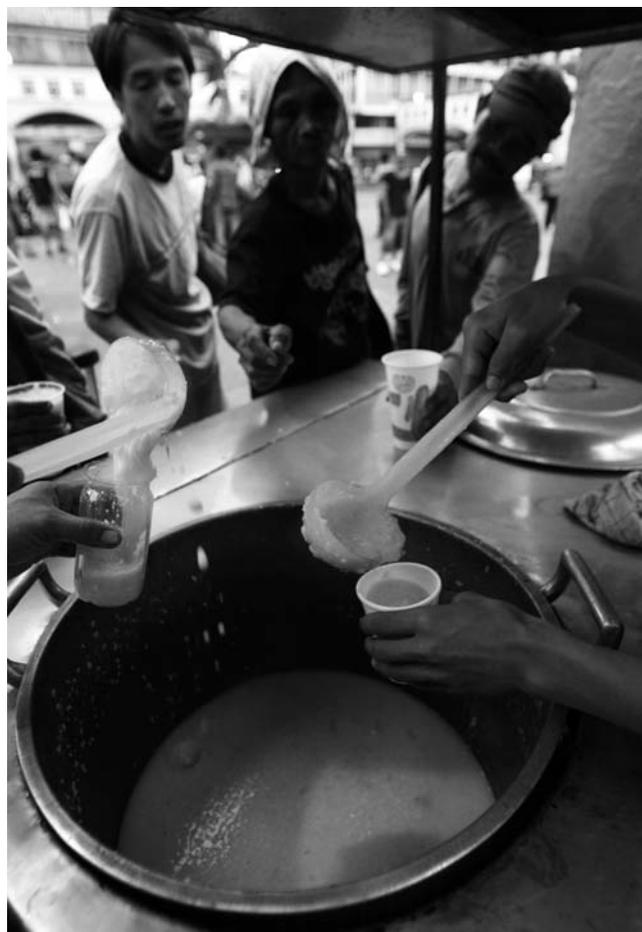
Camelia Nicoleta Tigau*

When people are hungry but do not have enough money to buy food, they start reducing the number of meals; they limit portion sizes at meal-times, eating less preferred but less expensive foods; they prioritize certain members of the household (mostly children) and they borrow food. These are the five most likely forms of behavior in the case of food shortage, according to a study by Daniel Maxwell, et al.¹ Alternative ways out, such as stealing food, starving or death are also likely and even probable in certain parts of our big world.

As a matter of fact, 37 countries are in severe need of food according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). While periodic food crises are nothing new to the world, the current one is something special: causes may vary according to who explains the problem, but food scarcity is almost never mentioned. Large amounts of edible groceries fill the garbage dumps of big cities daily, while no leftovers go to swollen-bellied children in Africa.

Some of the causes of this global fear of famine extensively broadcasted by the media are bad distribution of resources; high transportation costs; bad agricultural management in poor countries vs. subsidized agriculture in developed ones; speculators in grain prices; the increased demand for bio-fuels in Europe and the U.S.; and the boost of meat consumption in over-populated countries like India and China, to mention just a few of the most widely broadcast ones. Nevertheless, a brief overview of scientific opinion on the problem offers different reasons for the current food crisis, such as excessive cereal imports, destruction of farm lands, and high instability in domestic food consumption.

What the media and scientists agree on is that food problems and their corresponding solutions always end up on a



Cheryl Ravelo/Reuters

local level. Most recently, the food movements have transcended frontiers and moved from the poor South to the rich North. Some consequences of this sudden urgency of keeping our tanks full on an empty stomach have been widely announced: insane price hikes for lager at the Munich Beer Festival; pasta protests in Southern Italy; butter famines in Japan; panic buying of cooking oil before the religious feasts in Malaysia, just to mention a few.²

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A quick look at the Worldometrics homepage offers an even more dramatic view of the situation: one can actually observe the change in deaths caused by hunger, with numbers increasing each minute. One can compare the number of overweight people, which is 1.3 times bigger than the undernourished. Figures in dollars spent on dieting in the U.S. are also available, along with the tons of food produced during the year.³

THE FOOD SCARCITY STRATEGEM

With no aim of feeding the food scarcity panic, this article takes a quick look at some causes and interested actors in the food crisis business. The end result is a review of solutions, rather than a critical piece on food policies.

The food scarcity fear may be a tragedy to some, but also a win-game for others. Apart from the profits made on the market, several communication media have been used to strengthen the idea that huge amounts of grain should be produced to make biofuel and to feed people.

A quick look at conspiracy theories, understood as the intervention of one or more groups acting in secret in order to promote fear, distrust and irrational behavior, may offer a different view on food production. The food crisis may be considered a conspiracy to achieve the acceptance of genetically modified (GM) grain and promote biofuels. Behind the true story of famine in poor countries may hide the big interests of biofuel and GM production.

Information broadcasted internationally to create the global panic of famine also recalls the terrorism scare. It reminds us of a classic work about propaganda methods, published by Durandin in 1982. The author showed that when people lose the criteria to judge the truth, they are unable to defend themselves.⁴ That is the case with the global fear of hunger and rising food prices, largely induced in order to achieve acceptance of GM grains and favor subsidized economies.

POLITICAL SYMPTOMS OF HUNGER

“If you go to the market in Senegal you can buy European produce for a third of local prices. So the Senegalese peasant farmer no longer has any chance of earning a living,” said Jean Ziegler, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to

The food crisis may be considered a conspiracy to achieve the acceptance of genetically modified (GM) grain and promote biofuels. Behind the true story of famine in poor countries may hide the big interests of biofuel and GM production.

Food. He points to a new type of colonialism also singled out by the president of Zimbabwe at the food crisis summit in May 2008. It is about how products from subsidized agricultures have made their way into the underdeveloped markets, which import most of their basics at prices lower than local production costs. Logically enough, peasants from poor countries find it harder to sell products and tend to abandon agriculture.

Transportation costs are another inconvenient aspect of food imports. Food circulates in a strange way, an interesting issue in international commerce. Even produce that could be domestically cultivated tends to come from abroad. For instance, around 350,000 hectares of agricultural land, above all in Latin America, are dedicated to the cultivation of soybeans to feed European livestock, while one quarter of the local population starves.⁵ Additionally, the road from field to table is becoming ever longer. In the last 30 years the transport link of the chain as a whole has risen by 125 percent. More transportation requires more fuel and that is how the vicious circle between biofuels and grain production goes round and round.

BIOFUELS AND ECOLOGICAL BLUNDERING

The farmers’ decision in the U.S. and elsewhere to start growing crops designed for fuel tanks—a decision helped enormously by hefty subsidies—has crazily skewed dozens of markets around the world, as Lewis shows. The double meaning of the European biofuel-favorable policy has also been revealed.

The EU has already planned for biofuels to constitute up to 10 percent of transport fuels by 2020 and is now trying to push biofuels in order to resolve global warming, an idea that has already proved inefficient ecologically and politically, with social unrest caused by the sudden rise in food prices. A study by Doppelt shows biofuels to be the

The argument is that there is no way to feed the entire planet's population on organic and traditional farming. Genetic engineering would allow farmers to grow more crops on the same acreage, using fewer insecticides.

greatest failure of human thinking in history. Bio-ethanol must also be grown, collected, dried, fermented and burned.⁶ These steps require resources, infrastructure and transportation that often produce as much pollution as ethanol saves, shows Doppelt. As side effects, bio-ethanol has already caused the destruction of farm lands and impacts on small farmers communities in East Africa and Brazil, which may be even greater than the energy balance and pollution problems. Even the shift to non-food-based biofuels, such as algae, food waste and other celluloid-based biofuels run the risk of unintended ecological, economic and social consequences, concludes the author.

GMOS, OR THE MERCANTILE SOLUTION

Genetic engineering has invaded the food market either directly through imports and cultivation, or indirectly in the form of animal feed. Biotech companies try to sell the idea that the granaries are empty and the world will not extricate itself from the food crisis without genetic engineering. The argument is that there is no way to feed the entire planet's population on organic and traditional farming. Genetic engineering would allow farmers to grow more crops on the same acreage, using less insecticides, fungicides or weed killers.

The world leader in genetically modified seeds is Monsanto, a company founded in 1901 but which started producing GM plant cells in 1982. Since 2002, Monsanto declared itself an agricultural company whose primary goal is helping farmers around the world in their mission to feed, clothe and fuel a growing planet.

So far, the company has produced GM seeds for soybeans, corn, canola and cotton. Many more products have been developed or are in the pipeline, including seeds for sugar beets and alfalfa. It is also seeking to extend its reach into milk production by marketing an artificial growth hormone for cows that increases their output. Farmers who buy Monsanto's patented Roundup ready seeds are required to sign

an agreement promising not to save the seed produced after each harvest for re-planting, or to sell the seed to other farmers.⁷ This means that farmers must buy new seed every year.

Whoever provides the world's seeds controls the world's food supply, note Barlett and Steele. Profits have also been considerable. Monsanto reported in April 2008 that its net income for the three months up to the end of February 2008 was more than double that of the same period in 2007, from US\$543 million to US\$1.12 billion. Its profits increased from US\$1.44 billion to US\$2.22 billion. The operating profit of its grain merchandising and handling operations jumped 16-fold, from US\$21 million to US\$341 million.⁸ Similarly, the Mosaic Company, one of the world's largest fertilizer companies, saw its income rise more than 12-fold, from US\$42.2 million to US\$520.8 million, on the back of a fertilizer shortage, between December 2007 and February 2008. The prices of some kinds of fertilizers have more than tripled over the past year as demand has outstripped supply. As a result, plans to increase harvests in developing countries have been hit hard.

SOME WAYS OUT

These are the facts. Now the question is: is there a solution for the food crisis? Is there any chance of permanent food security in poor countries?⁹ Can we speak of sustainable thinking related to agriculture?

In 1981, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) created the Compensatory Financing Facility (CFF) to assist cereal imports. "The cereal import excess should be temporary and be the result of circumstances beyond the control of the country, such as a decline in domestic production caused by a crop failure, or a sharp rise in cereal import prices."¹⁰ Consequently, a food facility was proposed to separate cereal import compensation from export earnings. The IMF cereal facility was designed to provide balance-of-payments assistance to developing countries for excessive cereal imports arising out of poor harvests or high world prices.¹¹ However, even at its best, it does not seem to work; 20 years after the CFF was implemented, we find ourselves in a new food crisis, probably more dangerous than the previous ones.

At the last food crisis summit in May 2008, Ban Ki-moon said nearly one billion people were short of food and called on the countries gathered there to act with a sense of purpose and mission. U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Ed Schafer

promoted the benefits of biofuels and how genetically modified crops could reduce world hunger. President Luiz Inácio *Lula* da Silva of Brazil explained how Brazilian biofuels, made from sugar cane, had many advantages compared to the U.S. use of corn. The U.S., Brazil and some European countries defended their pro-biofuel policies, while developing countries such as Venezuela have criticized them sharply. France promised one billion euros, Spain 500 million and the Islamic Development Bank, US\$1.5 billion for food aid and agricultural development over the next five years.

Even though short-term solutions such as food aid are welcome, they offer no guarantees of food abundance in the future. The key lies, as always, in a return to the time when agriculture used to be the basis of national economies. To put it simply, we must take a step back to the time when farming used to be a respectable job, not a section in history museums. **NM**

NOTES

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³ www.worldometrics.com.

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⁷ Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele, "Monsanto's Harvest of Fear," *Vanity Fair* (May 2008), www.vanityfair.com.

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⁹ Food security is interpreted as the short-term (year-to-year) variability of average per capita cereal consumption for a country as a whole. Dimitris Diakosavvas, "On the Causes of Food Insecurity in Less Developed Countries: An Empirical Evaluation," *World Development*, vol. 17, no. 2 (1989), pp. 223-225.

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Understanding the World Food Crisis And Its Effects in Mexico

Ciro Murayama*



Cheryl Ravelo/Reuters

International economic attention is focused on rising food prices and the anticipated consequences for large segments of the world's population. It appears the era of cheap food has come to an end. The objective of this article is to explain the causes of this new context of global food scarcity.

CURRENT PANORAMA

Over the last year, international food prices increased by 50 percent,¹ intensifying a situation in which 800 million people around the world suffer food insecurity.²

These price increases are due to factors involving both supply and demand. We can see in Graph 1 that while the aggregate food supply may have grown—the displacement of the curve from S_0 to S_1 —it did not increase as much as the

demand—the displacement from D_0 to D_1 . This is reflected in a rise in market prices, although the volumes traded have also increased.

PROBLEMS ON THE SUPPLY SIDE

The last century's so-called "green revolution" seems to have reached its peak, and it is estimated that the rhythm of expansion in the food supply will be more modest in the future. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) warns of a decreased rate of expansion in agricultural production, expected to drop an average of 1.5 percent annually in the coming decades.³

One of the factors in this reduced dynamism in agriculture is water scarcity, with the world's average amount of water available per capita decreasing from 700 to 600 cubic meters over the last 25 years.⁴ On the average 70 percent of the world's water is used in agriculture.

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In addition the intensification of droughts and flooding, as consequences of climatic change, reduces the elasticity of the global food supply. These phenomena will tend to concentrate in countries with populations characterized by greater food vulnerability.⁵

The increase in prices of oil and its derivatives has negative effects on the costs of agricultural production, since hydrocarbons are used as raw material in making fertilizers.

While unrelated to the crisis in agriculture, the world's food supply will also decline in the area of fish products, since two-thirds of the world's fishing grounds are overexploited.⁶

In Graph 1, the supply curve S_1 is less elastic—more vertical—than S_0 , reflecting decreased growth in productivity, as well as a rise in prices for inputs needed in food production.

PROBLEMS ON THE DEMAND SIDE

Among the various explanations for increased food prices, there is consensus about the role of emerging Asian economies in relation to demand. Economic growth in these nations—which are going through rapid urbanization and managing to bring millions out of extreme poverty every year—⁷ is having an impact on their populations' diet (see Table 1). Specifically, people in these countries are consuming more cereals and meat as their incomes rise.⁸ These are countries characterized by very low levels of initial development and low income populations. Consequently, the dynamism in their economies in recent decades is translating particularly into an increased demand for basic goods, some of which have greater nutritional value (meat, milk). However, the consumption pattern anticipated in Engel's Law has not yet emerged clearly.⁹

According to FAO estimates, at the international level, the average daily food intake per person in 1960 was 2,280 calories, and has now increased to 2,800 calories.

Another element contributing to increased prices for agricultural products is the increased demand for their use in biofuel production. And it is important to add the impact from subsidies for their use in ethanol production.

In Graph 1, the displacement to outside of the demand curve is due, first of all, to an increase in the income levels of countries with populations with a high tendency toward marginal consumption of food. In addition, since some agricultural products are substitute goods for non-renewable raw materials in energy production, the increase in oil prices exerts

Among the various explanations for increased food prices, there is consensus on the role of emerging Asian economies' higher demand. People in these countries are consuming more cereals and meat as their incomes rise.

pressure toward an increase in demand in the food market. In other words, there are endogenous elements—both direct, as in the increase in human consumption of cereals, and indirect, as in the increase in meat consumption, which generates more demand for livestock forage—and there are exogenous elements—particularly growth in the demand for agricultural products to replace fossil fuel sources of energy. And all these elements push prices in the same direction.

PORTFOLIO PROBLEMS AND UNILATERAL DECISIONS

With the average reduction in financial returns in international markets, buying agricultural commodities in futures markets has become a profitable option, and this has caused food prices to rise. In addition, the concentration of the market supply of cereals—five corporations control more than 80 percent of the sector's profits—¹⁰ favors speculation.

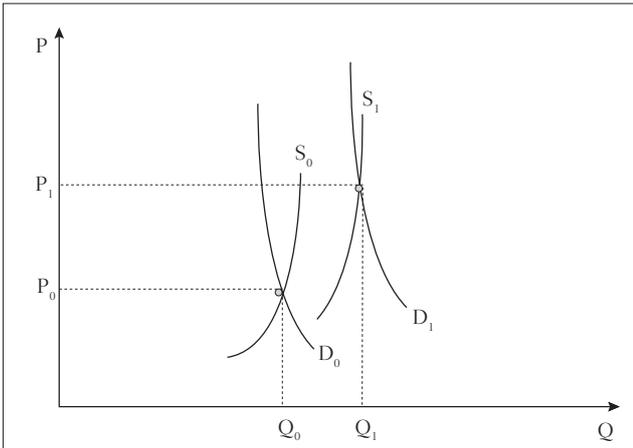
Other factors to consider include the initial reactions of a number of countries which, in order to assure their supply—by restricting exports, for example—may contribute to an increase in international prices. Unilateral actions in

TABLE 1. CHANGES IN COMPOSITION OF FOOD CONSUMPTION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (PERCENTAGE)

Product	Percentage by periods	
	1961-1963	2001-2003
Milk	2	3
Meat	3	7
Pulses	3	5
Sugar	4	6
Roots and tubers	9	6
Vegetables	6	2
Cereals	60	52
Other	13	19

Source: Developed by the author, based on FAO document *The State of Food and Agriculture* (Rome, FAO 2007).

GRAPH 1. CHANGE IN EQUILIBRIUM PRICES AND VOLUMES IN THE WORLD FOOD MARKET



Source: All graphs were developed by the author.

which each participant does what it deems best for its own interests in response to what others do (or may do),¹¹ may generate non-cooperative Nash equilibria, and this is what appears to be happening in agriculture internationally.

FOOD TRADE AND CONSEQUENCES OF HIGH PRICES

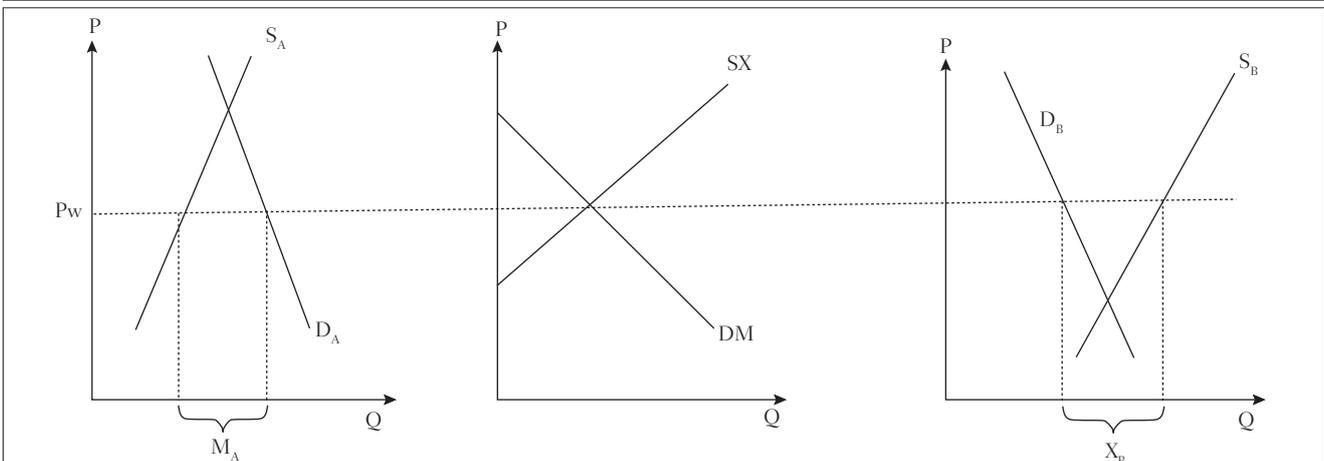
The qualitative changes produced in food trade during the last four decades explain the seriousness of the current crisis, as well as the vulnerability of certain economies. For example, in 1960, the agricultural surplus in developing countries

The qualitative changes produced in food trade during the last four decades explain the seriousness of the current crisis, as well as the vulnerability of certain economies. The effects from the current situation in the world food market will be distributed unevenly among countries, and also within countries.

was US\$7 billion; 20 years later this positive current account balance for agriculture had disappeared; and during the last two decades, developing countries have become net food importers. Excluding Brazil, the agricultural deficit in developing countries reached a level of US\$20 billion in 2000, and US\$27 billion four years later, according to the FAO. Currently, imports in these countries are, on the average, twice as high as exports.

The effects from the current situation in the world food market will be distributed unevenly among countries, and also within countries. On the one hand, nations that are net importers will be more gravely affected, while exporting countries will find their income and trade balance improved (see Graph 2, particularly export supply and import demand functions). And in all countries drastic increases in food prices will affect the families and sectors of the population that dedicate the greatest proportion of their income to buying food. A direct consequence from rising food prices may be less spending, and consequently, less consumption in

GRAPH 2. EXPORT SUPPLY AND IMPORT DEMAND



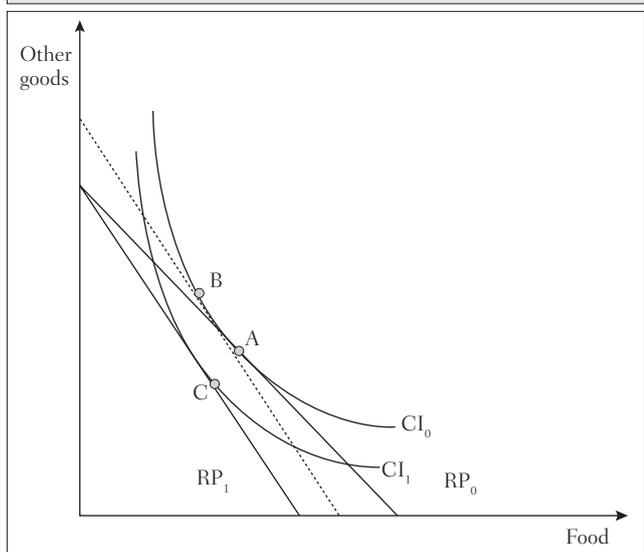
Country A (for example, Morocco) is not very efficient in food production, or in reaching internal equilibrium, with elevated prices, and therefore excess local demand (versus supply) is covered through the international market. Country B (for example, Argentina) empties its domestic market at lower prices, allowing Pw to have surpluses for exporting.

The dynamics of national supply and demand have led to increased imports of agricultural products, putting Mexico in a situation in which the sector's trade deficit has been rising for nearly two decades. Clearly we are one of the countries that will be negatively affected by rising international prices.

the areas of health and education for the most disadvantaged families, since in the case of food, there is low elasticity in the demand price. This indicates that a negative income effect—produced by the increase in the price for a good to which a significant portion of personal resources are dedicated, reflected in an “inward” rotation of an individual's budget restriction—will result in a low substitution effect for other goods (see Graph 3).

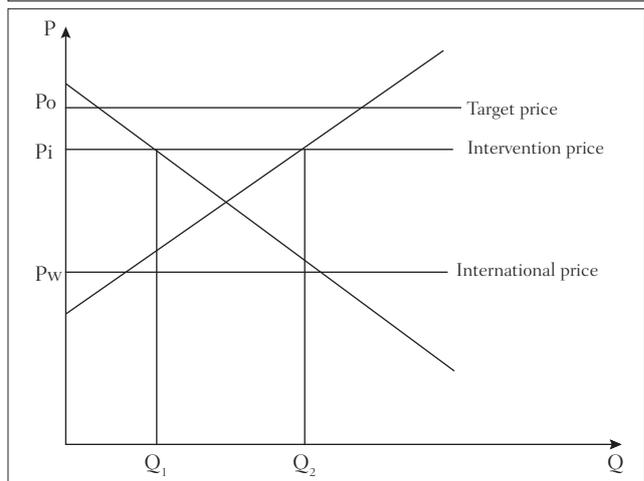
The economic asymmetry among nations is especially clear in agricultural trade. The agricultural chapter remained on the sidelines of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) agenda for decades, since it was not until the Uruguay Round in 1986—38 years after the GATT's first conference in Geneva—that it was incorporated into deliberations. Currently, it is estimated that for less developed coun-

GRAPH 3. INCOME EFFECT AND SUBSTITUTION EFFECT FROM AN INCREASE IN FOOD PRICES



The movement from A to B represents the substitution effect, according to which less food will be consumed as a result of the increased prices of food, in comparison to other goods. C is the point of final consumption, considering the income effect (loss of well-being) and a rigid price elasticity of food demand.

GRAPH 4. EFFECTS OF THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY (CAP)



Without subsidies for production, the EU would be a net food importer. With the cap, producers receive a premium price that may go from P_i to P_w or from P_o to P_w . An “exaction” is also added to imports, elevating their prices to P_o . Thus, in addition to subsidies, there is also protection for local producers.

tries, the costs of agricultural subsidies in the developed world will reach US\$24 billion annually, considering only its static effects—trade being diverted.¹² Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) tariffs for developing nations are up to four times higher than those established for imports originating from OECD member countries.

The European Union, with its Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), has gone from being a net importer to a net exporter of food and agricultural products. This radical change has been the result of massive aid, and not a change in comparative advantages generated by the market.¹³ Graph 4 illustrates an intervention price works, constituting a type of perfectly elastic demand for European agricultural producers. This price is much higher than the international price, and makes it possible for the European Union to have surpluses.

MEXICO

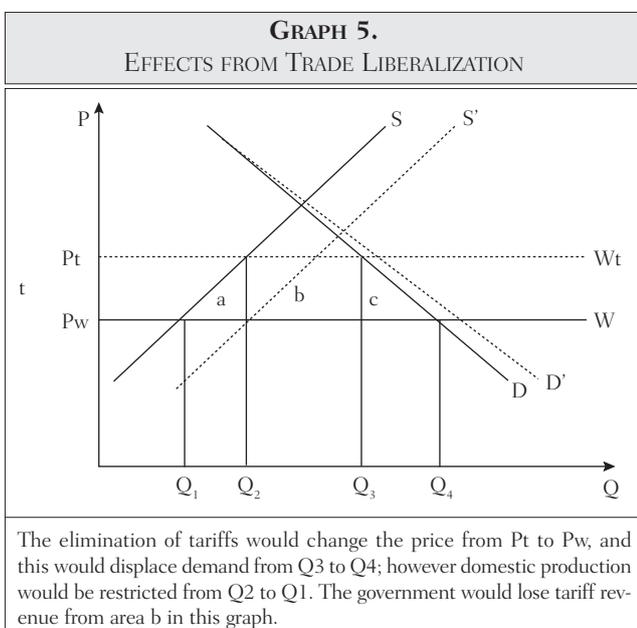
Over the last decade or so, the growth rate for Mexico's agricultural sector was below the average for the overall national economy (from 1996 to 2002, for example, this sector grew at an average annual rate of 1.3 percent in real terms, compared to an average of 3.7 percent for the entire economy).¹⁴ The dynamics of national supply and demand have led to increased imports of agricultural products, placing us in a situation in

which the sector's trade deficit has been rising for nearly two decades. With this panorama, it is clear that Mexico is one of the countries that, in net terms, will be negatively affected by rising international prices, while there may be certain groups of producers who will see an improvement in their situation.

In response to the emergency created by rising prices, Mexico's federal government defined three main areas of action: 1) eliminating taxes on food imports; 2) promoting food production and agricultural productivity; and 3) protecting the incomes of the poorest families.¹⁵

This strategy has received a number of criticisms. Some of them consider free trade to be the optimal solution, as long as certain conditions are met, one of which would be a perfectly elastic international supply (see Graph 5, in which areas *a* and *b* would be the losses due to inefficiency in production and trade deviation caused by the introduction of tariffs, and *c* would be a transference from consumers to the government through tariffs). However this situation is far from that prevailing in the world food market. Another criticism is that tariff liberation will facilitate expensive food imports that will affect the producers who could be incorporated into production if they did not have to deal with the external competition favored by liberalization measures.¹⁶ In Graph 5, Mexican producers could produce Q_2 , but would produce Q_1 after the implementation of trade liberalization policy.

The policy of transferring resources to low-income families would displace demand to D' in Graph 5, thereby counteracting the effect on consumption from rising prices.



Government policies for increasing production are limited, since it is likely that only 15 percent of producers receive loans for machinery and equipment—specifically, market-oriented producers—leaving a significant portion of the backward conditions in the agricultural sector unresolved. This suggests that more ambitious public policies are needed to modify the structural conditions in Mexican agriculture (in order to displace the supply from S to S' in Graph 5).

The food sector should be given priority in development policies implemented in Mexico, especially in an international context in which a supply of cheap food cannot be expected. ■■■

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- ⁷ A UNDP report published in 2005 estimates that between 1990 and 2002, a total of 130 million Chinese were lifted out of extreme poverty, and the figure for the last quarter of a century is 220 million. Some calculations are even higher, estimating the number of Chinese lifted out of poverty since 1978 to be 400 million. See J.E. Navarrete, *China: la tercera inflexión, del crecimiento acelerado al desarrollo sustentable* (Mexico: UNAM, 2007).
- ⁸ Table 1 illustrates that some food products, such as roots and tubers (potatoes and yucca, for example), as well as pulses (lentils, beans) are "inferior goods" since their consumption decreases as income increases.
- ⁹ This is one of the strongest empirical regularities, and states that the proportion of a family's total expenditures on food decreases when its income increases. See A. Roncaglia, *La riqueza de las ideas. Una historia del pensamiento económico* (Zaragoza: Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza, 2006), p. 404.
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- ¹³ T. Hitiris and J. Vallés, *Economía de la Unión Europea* (Madrid: Prentice Hall, 1999), p. 196.
- ¹⁴ R. Escalante, L. M. Galindo and U. Campos, "El agro mexicano y el TLCAN: ¿agro sin campesinos?" R. Cordera, comp., *La globalización de México: opciones y contradicciones* (Mexico: UNAM, 2006).
- ¹⁵ Presidencia de la República, "Para vivir mejor" (press release) (Mexico City: May 25, 2008).
- ¹⁶ R. Cordera, "La circulación de los déficit," *Nexos* no. 366, July 2008.

THE SPLENDOR OF MEXICO

The Walled *City of Tulum*

Adriana Velázquez Morlet*



Héctor Montaño/NAH

The Castle is crowned by a temple with three entrances and serpentine columns, with a descending deity and two giant zoomorphic masks on the corners.

Imposing, by the Caribbean Sea, Tulum sits atop the highest point of the coast of Quintana Roo state, a strategic spot for sighting enemies and worshipping the morning sun. This beautiful city was one of the first glimpsed by sixteenth-century European sailors; its chronicles call it Zamá, the Mayan word for “morning,” understandable due to the geographical location of its buildings from which the sunrise is a wonderful spectacle.

TULUM IN HISTORY

The name “Tulum,” then, which translates as “palisade,” referring to the wall surrounding the site, is recent. It seems to have been used to refer to the city when it was found abandoned and in ruins.

The history of its discovery is a long one. In 1518, during Juan de Grijalva’s second expedition, his chronicler saw a city “as big as Seville,” which may well have been Tulum, at that time densely populated. The campaign to colonize the

Yucatán Peninsula was devastating: by 1579, the splendor of Tulum was a thing of the past and it was already in ruins.

When the Spanish were firmly established, the practically deserted area of Tulum came under the jurisdiction of Valladolid, where most of the indigenous people of the area went. Tulum, called Tzamá in the documents of the time, became a small *encomienda* that only paid a pittance in tribute because of its small population.¹ In later years, the entire population was relocated and only a military outpost remained. There is practically no information available for the years between 1650 and 1842. The east coast was so far from Spanish centers of power that they opted to abandon it around 1680. We only know that some trips were made from Mérida and Campeche to get exotic woods, tortoise meat and eggs, tortoise shell for making combs and grey amber (a bilious secretion of the sperm whale found in the sea or on the coastal sands, used as a fixer for perfume and to make



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Elsie Montiel



INAH

Detail of the god Itzamná on the corner of the Temple of Frescoes (left). The interior of the Temple of Frescoes with its beautiful murals (right).

jewelry). For this reason, in the eighteenth century, the coast of what is today Quintana Roo was known as “the Amber Coast.”

In those times, the region was very dangerous, and stories abound about the savagery of the local inhabitants, though they were few. One such story is that of the survivors of the shipwrecked *Our Lady of Miracles* (or *El Matancero*) in 1741, which ran aground north of Tulum: they told how they barely escaped massacre at the hands of the local indigenous people. This area soon sparked the interest of English seamen who, between 1776 and 1777, began incursions seeking grey amber and exotic woods for trafficking.

No more references exist to Tulum until 1842, when John Stephens and Frederick Catherwood were guided to the area by the son of a pirate. Impressed by the site’s conservation and despite the mosquitoes “that made their stay miserable,” they managed to write a description of the ancient city and make it known to the Western world. A little later, the bloody indigenous rebellion known as the Caste War broke out, putting Tulum at the center of the whirlwind. By 1871, Tulum was a sanctuary for the followers of the “talking cross,” led by the priestess María Uicab, the “patron saint” of the “Santo Cah Tulum.”

After the war ended, different scholars of the embryonic field of archaeology arrived, among them Sylvanus G. Morley and Samuel K. Lothrop, the compiler of the most complete reference work about the region’s architecture. Several Mexican researchers also came, like Miguel Ángel Fernández, who in 1937 did a very complete architectural survey of Tulum.

In 1954, William Sanders did the first archaeological excavation of the site, and in 1969, the highway was built between Carrillo Puerto and Tulum, thus fostering its prominence as a tourist attraction. In the 1970s, the National Institute of Anthropology and History began to intervene more directly from the federal sphere, and with that, according to some, the Mayas abandoned Tulum for good.

A VISIT TO THE SITE

After 40 years of work, a visit to Tulum is an exceptional experience. Today, visitors enter the site from the north, using



INAH

An old woman carries a small effigy of Chaac, god of rain. Temple of Frescoes.



The Temple of Frescoes boasts one of the best examples of post-classical mural painting.



Small cove reserved for sea turtles to nest in.

two of its original access points. The great wall that protects the city has four roofed entryways with Mayan vaults and two watchtowers. The wall is irregularly shaped, following the terrain; originally, it was two meters thick, and stairways were later added making it possible to walk along the top.

The design of the structures in the area is very harmonious. Their north-south axis makes it possible to identify a true pre-Hispanic street. Inside the outer wall is a second wall that guards the most important civic and ceremonial buildings.

Visitors walk through a network of pathways that allow for circulation and protects the structures. At the start you can see the Northwest House, an elegant dwelling with a three-column portico. Among the buildings leading out from here are the House of Columns and the House of Halach Uinic, the most important palaces of the entire site, which, in their time, were equipped with sidewalks cov-

ered with matting, skins and perhaps cotton cushions and fine feathers.

A little to the south is the Temple of Frescoes, a two-storied affair with murals of exceptional quality depicting a series of underworld deities, making it one of the most important extant examples of Mayan mural painting. The building is adorned with large masks related to Itzamná, the most important Mayan god, identified as a hook-nosed old man associated with life and creation.

Walking toward the cliff, you come upon the Interior Space, where the main ceremonial buildings are found. The Castle is the most important of these, crowned by a temple with three entrances and serpentine columns, complemented with a descending deity and two giant zoomorphic masks on the corners.

Across from the Castle is a platform for dances, and on the sides, other buildings complementing the whole. Outstanding among them is the Temple of the Initial Series, where Tulum's oldest inscription was found, dating from A.D.564, before the site was built.



The pre-Hispanic boulevard. In the background, the House of Halach Uinic.



The Temple of the God of the Wind looks out over the Caribbean Sea.

This beautiful city was one of the first glimpsed by sixteenth-century European sailors; its chronicles call it Zamá, the Mayan word for “morning.”



Elsie Montiel

Façade of the House of Halach Vinic with the columns that used to hold up a flat roof.

Here is the Temple of the Descending God, a small basement on which a building adorned with the image of this deity, the main icon found in the city, was built. Tulum may have been dedicated to Venus, the morning star, one of the names given to Kukulcán, the quetzal-serpent symbol of the unity of heaven and earth. The descending god who guards the entrance of most of the city's buildings seems to be a representation of the deity associated with the planet.

Continuing, you come upon a small cove, today reserved for sea tortoises to nest in; it seems to have been the place where Mayan trading vessels moored to conduct their coastal commerce around the peninsula.

Then, you come to the Temple of the God of the Wind, thus named for its round basement, related to Kukulcán as god of the winds. Nearby are six small constructions that were used to store sculptures or incense burners for aromatic resins like copal.

The tour through Tulum concludes at the northeast entry in the wall, where you can see the construction system based on piles of roughly hewn, unmortared stones. You can also see the space the Mayas built for a sentinel and, going through the wall, a spectacular view of the Caribbean Sea.

TULUM THROUGH TIME

Tulum's buildings belong to the middle and late post-classical periods (A.D. 1200-1550), although some older constructions from the end of the classical period (A.D. 800-900/1000) also have been preserved. These buildings' architecture includes elements of the Puuc style, although with their own special characteristics, since on the east coast, builders did not use round moldings or mosaics, but smooth surfaces adorned with beautiful murals that have now been lost.



Northern access to the walled section of Tulum.

From A.D. 1200 on, Tulum's population grew rapidly; at that time, its architects perfected a style that would become very popular. Most of the buildings in the area were built after A.D. 1400 in a way that would become known as the "East Coast style," characterized by miniature temples, small chapels or rooms for worship inside larger ones, buildings with deliberately bulging walls and palaces with colonnades and flat roofs.

The building decoration included niches above the lintels that held stucco statues of a descending god. In Tulum's paintings, figures are in profile, while objects face front; the symbolism is related to rebirth and the passage of the beings from the underworld to an intermediate world, where Venus and the Sun play very important roles. Arthur Miller has suggested that the sanctuaries were used for rituals in which pilgrims from different places linked to the long-distance trade that was the city's main source of wealth participated. If that is so, the sacred and the profane would have been inseparably linked to Tulum's layout, since commercial

Most of the buildings in the area were built after A.D. 1400 in a way that would become known as the "East Coast style."



Access to the Interior Area, surrounded by a second wall.

activity would have been the economic basis for this city to become a great ceremonial and political center.

TULUM TODAY

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, despite being protected by two presidential decrees that reserve a little over 690 hectares, Tulum's enormous riches are in danger because of the disorderly growth of tourism on the Mayan Riviera. This has attracted voracious construction companies that put their economic interests before the need to preserve the cultural and natural heritage that it still possesses. Important action has already been taken to put the brakes on and order urban development in the area, and there is a real possibility of designing appropriate policies for its preservation. The grandeur and values of Tulum demand action and its defense by all. **NMM**

NOTES

¹ The *encomienda* was a trusteeship labor system instituted by the Spanish Crown in its American and Philippine colonies whereby up to 300 indigenous people were put under the "care and spiritual guidance" of the Spanish *encomendero*, who could command their labor in exchange for his military protection and Catholic teachings. [Translator's Note.]



Cobá

A City amidst Lagoons

Adriana Velázquez Morlet*

Surrounded by four lagoons that gave it its name, Cobá is nestled majestically amidst the vast jungle that has sheltered it for centuries. It is the most important archaeological site in the northwestern Yucatán Peninsula, comparable only with Chichén Itzá, its archenemy. It covers more than 70 square kilometers and was connected to its sub-

ject satellite cities by a network of 45 white roads (*sacbeob*, in Mayan), including the longest known road in Mayan territories, joining Cobá to the site of Yaxuná.

Cobá is one of the few Mayan cities that preserves its original name, made up of the words *kob* (“murky”) and *há* (“water”), that joined to make the word *Kob’a’*, meaning “place of murky water”, alluding to its surrounding lakes. The eleventh-century Mayas called it Kinchil Kobá, and it is believed that while the name of the city was Kob’a’a, it was actually the capital of a great kingdom named Ek’kab (“black land”), which at its peak would have ruled over a great part of what is today northern Quintana Roo.

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COBÁ IN ARCHAEOLOGY

The earliest references to Cobá can be found in the chronicles of Stephens and Catherwood's journey to the Yucatán Peninsula. When they visited the town of Chemax north-east of Cobá, the travelers gained access to the notes of a priest who mentioned the site. However, they could not visit it and merely mentioned the information in their book. Years later, during the terrible Caste War that made the region impenetrable, a few explorers ventured to go there. The first, Juan Peón Contreras, made a brief visit in 1882; in 1891, the German Teobert Maler penned the first archaeological description and took the first photograph of the Nohoch Mul, the site's highest building. In 1926, the English military physician Thomas Gann, who visited numerous Mayan sites, came and walked part of the *sacbé* road to Yaxuná. There he met Sylvanus Morley and the Carnegie Institution team working in Chichén Itzá, and managed to interest them in studying the site. As a result, in 1932, Eric Thompson, Harry Pollock and Jean Charlot published a wide-ranging work on Cobá, including a very complete map of its structures.



Vaulted passageway in Structure 4 of Cobá Group.

In 1972, the National Institute of Anthropology and History began systematically exploring the site under the direction of Carlos Navarrete, who came across a hamlet of Yucatecan Mayan peasants who were still holding ceremonies at the foot of the stelas and praying to the spirits of the hills. The arrival of the first visitors transformed the life of this small community, whose inhabitants gradually abandoned agriculture and bee-keeping and became tourist service providers. Later, Alejandro Martínez and particularly María José Con exhaustively explored and restored some of the main buildings. However, the size and volume of Cobá is such that it would take many years of work to understand the city's history and development.

DOWN THROUGH TIME

Cobá is one of Quintana Roo's sites with the longest pre-Hispanic occupation, dating from the late pre-classical period (200 B.C. to A.D. 100), when the low platforms that were later covered by buildings began to be constructed. Its strategic location at the center of the Yucatán Peninsula was decisive for its population growth and by A.D.100, the first



The Church, the Cobá Group's largest temple.

Cobá, nestled majestically amidst the vast jungle that has sheltered it for centuries, is the most important archaeological site in the northwestern Yucatán Peninsula, comparable only with Chichén Itzá, its archenemy.

great construction projects were underway. After that, Cobá developed into one of the most powerful cities in the northern part of the peninsula.

Between A.D. 200 and A.D. 600, Cobá came to dominate vast reaches of territory. Its strength could be seen in its control over large expanses of agricultural land and the region's commercial routes, including ports like Xelhá. It seems probable that Cobá established high-level alliances with other great kingdoms like Tikal, Dzibanché and Calakmul. Its links may have reached all the way to far-off Teotihuacan, judging by certain architectural elements linking it with the Mexican highlands.

Starting in A.D. 600, the rise of the Puuc cities and the emergence of Chichén Itzá in the regional socio-political scene sparked changes in Cobá's relationship with other cities, leading it to reorganize its domains.¹ This was a moment of splendor for the city: until today, 34 stelas have been found that were raised between A.D. 613 and A.D. 780, narrating key moments in the lives of the members of the governing class. Although very eroded, they have a recurring style: they show the richly attired ruler in profile, looking to his right and holding a ceremonial rod, while two subjugated captives serve as his pedestal. The times of glory were



One of the Ball Game captives, half naked with his hands tied.

It is one of Quintana Roo's sites with the longest pre-Hispanic occupation, dating from the late pre-classical period, when the low platforms that were later covered by buildings began to be constructed.

not eternal, however: around A.D. 900 or A.D. 1000, the city began a long conflict with Chichén Itzá, which would result in the loss of some of its most important enclaves and, in the end, final defeat.

The city lost a great part of its political power, but maintained its symbolic importance, recovering certain status when Chichén Itzá fell between A.D. 1200 and A.D. 1500. This is when different buildings were erected in the East Coast style, and when they relocated their old stelas in places specifically established for worshipping their ancestors. However, by that time, the region's economic and political dynamic center had moved to the coast, leaving Cobá as a less important city. Its best times were past; by the time the European conquistadors arrived, Cobá was already practically uninhabited.

A VISIT TO THE SITE

The visit begins on the west side in the parking lot managed by the local Mayan inhabitants. That is where the



The Group D Ball Game Court, decorated with representations of captives.

main buildings of the Cobá Group are: 53 structures that, according to María José Con, are the city's oldest. It is dominated by a basement known as The Church, given that until very recently, it was the community's place of worship. The building dates from the early classical period (A.D. 200-600), showing evidence of architectural details typical of the Petén style, characteristic of that period. The complex includes several palaces that evidence the wealth the city acquired. A little to the west is the Ball Game Court with representations of captives on its walls, and, to the south, a basement whose stairway is adorned with representations of human skulls and several references to the *kan* "yellow" glyph, the color of the southern reaches and of beautiful things.

Visitors can rent bicycles from the local community to continue down a wide path to Group D, made up of structures from different eras, outstanding among which is the Paintings Unit. It is called that because its main building, a basement from the late classical period (approximately A.D. 600-900) topped with a temple, contains fragments of post-

classical murals, with glyphs and other elements associated with agriculture and rain.

Nearby is another Ball Game Court, decorated with panels depicting bound, kneeling captives and a beautiful stone slab with writing from the late classical period, part of which has been deciphered: it deals with historical events related to the ruling Ko-b'a-a dynasty, including kings like the Steaming Tapir and the Steaming Jaguar, who bore the title of *kalo'mte'*, given to the great lords of the Mayan kingdoms.

Visitors walking along this route cross a raised, elongated place, the *sacbé* 1, the longest road in the entire Mayan region. It communicates the city with Yaxuná in Yucatán, a settlement that may have been a Cobá enclave in the enemy territory of Chichén Itzá. All along this road, small settlements have been found that most probably were peasant houses dependent on the city.

Further along there is an odd building called Xaibé, which in Mayan means "crossroads", because four of Cobá's *sacbé*s meet there. It dates from the early classical period



Stela 20, dated A.D. November 30, 730.



The Xaibé building where four *sacbé*s meet.



Nohoch Mul, one of the tallest buildings in the Mayan area, is 42 meters high.



The post-classical temple atop the Nohoch Mul.

Between A.D. 200 and A.D. 600, Cobá came to dominate vast reaches of territory. Its strength could be seen in its control over large expanses of agricultural land and the region's commercial routes, including ports like Xelhá. It seems probable that Cobá established high-level alliances.

(A.D. 200-600) and has an oval base and no temple on top; it may have been built to commemorate something, although its real function is not known for certain.

Walking further, the visitor comes to the Nohoch Mul (The Great Mound), with a huge 42-meter-high basement dominating a plaza and other minor buildings. The largest part of this basement was built in the early classical period. By the late classical period, rooms had been added on both sides of the stairway, and in post-classical times, a temple similar to the ones in Tulum was built on top, which preserves fragments of descending gods and a mural. From here there is a wonderful view of the jungle and the lagoons.

This is where Structure 10 is, a residential platform that holds Stela 20 at the center of the stairway, intentionally broken to create a niche, later a common practice in the buildings of Cobá. The monument registers the date November 30, 780, the latest date of the entire site, which may correspond to the beginning of the decline in building activity and the partial abandonment of the city. A little further back on the path is the intersection that leads by a broad pre-Hispanic *sacbé* to the Macanxoc Unit, a group of buildings used for ceremonial purposes, where stelas and altars related to this great kingdom's dynastic history were placed.



Descending god in a niche of the temple on top of Nohoch Mul, with remnants of multicolored paint.

Returning by the main path you can enjoy the lush vegetation and get glimpses of birds and small animals. With a little luck, you might see a deer, a *tlacuache* or a wild boar, species that might not survive very long, since the inhabitants of Cobá, blinded by the illusion of progress and fanciful expectations of prosperity, have turned to the sale of land demanded by increasingly predatory tourism. Hopefully, the old Mayan gods will once more speak to their children so they can again live in harmony with nature. Their grandchildren will thank them for it. **MM**

NOTES

¹ The Puuc region is located in the west of what is today the state of Yucatán. The word "*puuc*" means "hill" in Mayan, after a small mountain range that stretches from the town of Maxcanú to the border of what is today Campeche state. More than 100 Mayan cities are located in this area with a common architectural style, among the most important of which are Uxmal, Cava, Sayil, Labná and Oxkintok.



Aluxes

Sprites of the Land and the *Cenotes*

Elsie Montiel*

For the Mayas living in jungle communities, *aluxes* are a daily, unquestionable reality. They definitely do not think it wise to ignore them. Of course, if you're only a visitor to these lands, you would have the right to doubt their existence, but it would be best not to take any risks and accept protection against their trickery when offered. Pac Chen ("leaning well" in Maya), a Mayan village offering sustainable tourism, includes this in its services. Don Crisanto, the village *Ah men* ("doer" or wise man), is in charge of it.

Don Crisanto explains: "The *aluxes* are tiny, short little sprites, about 40 centimeters high, with hairy bodies. They appear on the roads, but not everyone can see them. Sometimes we think, 'I don't believe it,' or 'they're tricking me,' and we do things that bother them. So then, you'll be walking along, and they'll surprise you. 'What's that kid doing standing there?' And when you look back, it's not there anymore. It's a spirit; it's the wind. But the image stays in your eye, so you remember."¹

* Editor of *Voices of Mexico*.

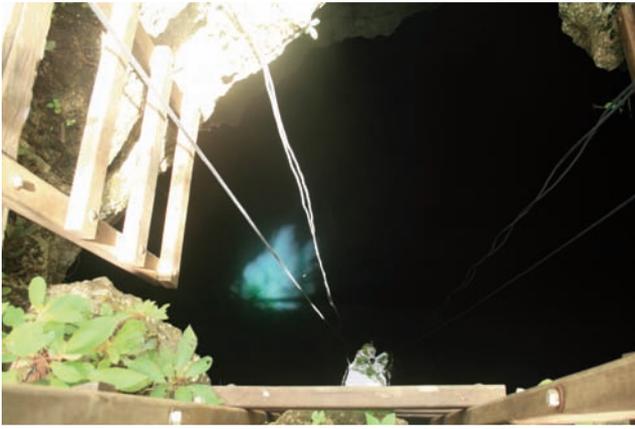
Photos by Elsie Montiel.



The *aluxes* wander the roads. The Mayas ask them to bring rain and to protect the harvest from all danger. There can be more than one. They also protect the crop from thieves, frightening them out of committing their crimes. "They keep watch because there's always somebody who thinks, 'In that little plot, there are a lot of watermelons,' and they think it would be easy to steal them, but they [the *aluxes*] take soil and throw it on them, or they throw a little stone [at the thieves] or they whistle, and since the thieves don't see anybody, they get scared and decide not to take anything." When the harvest comes, those who invoke their protection will have to make an offering of thanks; if they don't, of course, the *aluxes* will take their revenge.

Aluxes don't only walk on the ground; they're also in the *cenotes*. For the ancient Maya, these were sacred places representing the underworld, or Xibalba, the home of the gods of death. So, their ceremonies included a ritual at the *cenote* entrance.

In the villages that are part of the eco-tourism circuit, these rituals are not carried out, but outsiders are protected anyway.² Don Crisanto says: "Before entering, I have to protect our visitors because, since they are innocents, they



don't know and we have to ask the *aluxes* not to do anything to them, to protect them." Like almost all current indigenous rituals, they mix Catholic mysticism with pre-Hispanic beliefs. "We use copal for protection; I wave the copal in front of them and make a sign of the cross on each one. When they breathe in the smoke, it stays inside them, so they don't go in with fear; they have the courage to do it. Sometimes, when they go in and look up, they see little figures: that's them [the *aluxes*], but since they've already swallowed the copal smoke, they're protected."

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Visits to Mayan villages are part of the sustainable tourism projects operated by a private company involving the inhabitants themselves. The indigenous people are hired to build the installations (docks for the kayaks, the zip-wire and rappelling facilities, palm-covered open-aided restaurants, saunas); they are given the materials and trained to operate them for a wage. Visitors come in small groups and spend about three hours on site and are given a meal prepared by the village women.

For Pac Chen resident Sebastián, the business is good for his community since it helps out, particularly when the harvest is bad. It also prevents local residents from going in

search of jobs in the state's high-tourism areas. The village has fewer than 130 inhabitants: 27 families. Agriculture is subsistence farming; they plant corn, beans and squash and raise chickens; they purchase only a few industrialized products like salt and washing soap. They consume no soft drinks. Health care is based on herbal cures since they are very familiar with medicinal plants, used even to cure snake and other animal bites and stings. They only have a primary school; anyone who wants to continue his or her education has to go to nearby towns. Most young people are bilingual Mayan-Spanish speakers. Spanish is for talking to visitors. But the older residents and many of the women are monolingual. The village is located on a tourist corridor that includes the Cobá archaeological site and the spider monkey reserve at Punta Laguna. However, in hurricane season, it can be isolated for more than a month at a time.

Eco-tourism has been in place for eight years now, and although it does not seem to affect community life or deplete their natural resources, the rate of development of tourism in the area is such that it is reasonable to fear that low-impact activities will succumb to the sale of land for big tourist resorts, with the resulting effects on the social and economic organization of Mayan communities. ■■■



NOTES

¹ The quotes and information used in this article are all from personal interviews done in Pac Chen, June 6, 2008.

² In the opinion of the guide Aranzazu Chávez, "these ceremonies are not very authentic because they're designed for tourists. The traditional ceremonies were only held on certain dates. But that doesn't mean the whole thing is fake. Many parts of it are genuine, like the language (Yucatecan Mayan), the table they use called *kaanche* and the use of copal resin. The complete ceremony consists of a welcome and asking for protection for activities, and particularly for the *cenote*. The *Ah men* are free to pray as they wish; there is no predetermined prayer. But, above all, they are the reflection of the current situation of the Mayas in general and these communities in particular, immersed in sustainable tourism projects. I think it's commendable that they include these ceremonies in the tours because it gives tourists an idea of Mayan traditions."

Mayan Riviera

A Natural Paradise ndb



What has come to be called the Mayan Riviera, a more than 120-kilometer length of coastline bathed in the waters of the Caribbean Sea, stretches from Puerto Morelos to Punta Allen in the state of Quintana Roo. Over the last 10 years it has become one of the world's fastest-growing tourist destinations.



It offers practically unlimited lodging, entertainment and natural attractions, luxurious hotel complexes hidden away in the jungle, rustic hotels, golf courses and exclusive spas; white-sand beaches; all kinds of water sports, including deep-sea diving in the waters of the Great Mayan Coral Reef and underground rivers; archaeological sites like Cobá and Tulum; and ecological reserves like Sian Ka'an, a World Heritage Treasure. And these are just some of the possibilities.



The Aktún Chen Caves, 16 km from the Tulum ruins.



Unless otherwise specified, photos by Mauricio Degollado

This part of the Sian ka'an Biosphere Reserve is open to the public.

The Yucatán Peninsula has no surface rivers because water filters down through its limestone subsoil to form underground streams, dry and water-filled caverns and innumerable rivers that come to the surface only to create deep pools of water or *cenotes*. Just along the Mayan Riviera, there are approximately 600 *cenotes*, sacred to the Meso-American Mayas, and innumerable caverns and caves that have become part of the region's tourist attractions.

Quintana Roo boasts what may be one of the world's longest underground rivers: the Sac Actún system, formed by what was originally thought to be two separate rivers (Sac Actún [White Cave] and Nohoch Na Chich [The Great Home of Birds]), stretches 154 kilometers at a depth of 72 meters. Three years of underground exploration revealed that the two rivers were actually connected.



These river systems need to be mapped to protect them, given that they supply most of the region's drinking water, and that the rapid development of tourism infrastructure in the Tulum area is a serious threat to the underground ecosystem. Local authorities have already begun to consider this protection in the planning process for public works that are also vital to the economy of Cancún and the Mayan Riviera region.



"Fifth Avenue."



Playa del Carmen Capital of the Mayan Riviera

Until less than 15 years ago, Playa del Carmen, the Mayan Riviera's unofficial capital, was part of a natural paradise with low-impact tourism. Rustic hotels in the center of town, beautiful, deserted beaches and a small-town Mexico-style atmosphere made it the perfect spot for tourists —mainly Europeans— who wanted to discover and enjoy nature.

The expansion of big hotel complexes toward what came to be called the Mayan Riviera reached Playa del Carmen, turning it into one of the country's fastest growing cities. In 1994-1995, when the big all-inclusive package hotels began moving in, the Mayan Riviera had approximately 2,000 hotel rooms. Today, it boasts more than 35,000, and construction shows no sign of slowing.



Magic Blue boutique hotel in Playa del Carmen.

Nevertheless, Playa del Carmen has not lost all its small-town charm and informal, family-oriented atmosphere.

Calle 5, known as "Fifth Avenue" is the street where tourists and locals mingle, sprinkled with all kinds of restaurants for every pocketbook, exclusive shops next to exhibits of local crafts and a friendlier nightlife than Cancún. The city's accommodations range from exclusive boutique hotels to family B&Bs.



Elsie Montiel

Azulik resort in the Tulum area.



The Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve.

In contrast with what happened in Cancún, the Mayan Riviera offers a concept of tourism where the visual harmony of nature is the key: resorts cannot build anything higher than three stories, so density per square kilometer is lower and lower and the buildings blend into the jungle and against the background of the sea.



Nevertheless, the construction boom and the use of innumerable natural resources from the area for tourism cannot help but continuously threaten the preservation of these natural areas—officially protected or not—the region's flora and fauna, the underground rivers with their caverns and *cenotes*, the fragile coral reefs and even the vestiges of old civilizations in archaeological sites.

The Caste War Museum

Elsie Montiel*



Mauricio Degollado

*Tu waka tuukultik, tu láakal wíiniko'ob K'a'béet u ya'ako'ob ba'ax ku tuukultiko'obe, máanen te joonaja'
u t'i'ai ka chá'ant tu láakal ba'ax k'a'abetchaji t'i' le ba'axo'obe u chá'an way te lu'umo'oba*

Fragment of the Mayan inscription at the entrance to the Caste War Museum¹

If anything is characteristic of Mayas today, it is the awareness of being part of a powerful, dynamic ethnic group and the conviction that their history as a people is not limited to the study of their great pre-Hispanic past. The Maya of today strive to know and study all stages of their own evolution as a social group, a history loaded with resistance and change that has allowed them to preserve their identity until now.

This is the *raison d'être* for the Museo de la Guerra de Castas (Caste War Museum), located in the town of Tihosuco, one of the sites where this armed struggle played out. Inaugurated in 1993 in a restored eighteenth-century building, here contemporary Mayas offer their version of the violent social struggle against oppression and injustice led by their ancestors in the mid-nineteenth century.

The small museum has four rooms. The first summarizes colonial history and that of the resistance movements of the Mayan people during the entire colonial period, as well

* Editor of *Voices of Mexico*.



Mauricio Degollado

We learn that the resistance of the Mayan people started from the moment the Spaniards began their occupation of the area and their attempts at evangelization.

as the pirate invasions that laid waste to the city and its environs. As a preamble, the museum pays homage to the achievements of the pre-Hispanic Mayan civilizations, with one showcase exhibiting axe-heads and instruments from the period.

In this room, we learn that the resistance of the Mayan people started from the moment the Spaniards began their occupation of the area and their attempts at evangelization, around 1511. The first missionaries were Franciscans; the best known of them, Friar Diego de Landa, would go down in history as the person responsible for the burning and destruction of innumerable registers of Mayan history as part of his strategy to “facilitate” the conversion of the indigenous people to the new faith. The Mayas ceded but did not forget. Two mainstays keep them united: their language and their religious beliefs. The first rebellion broke out in 1546. Between then and 1761 there were more than 11 movements. The cruel punishments imposed on anyone who fostered and took part in the rebellions were not enough to definitively suppress the spark of resistance (many Mayan priests and leaders of the rebellions were publicly hung, decapitated or burned alive as a warning and to spread fear). The time that passed between one resistance movement and the next depended on how long it took them to regroup and face the Spanish again.



Mauricio Degollado

In this room, a very eloquent painting by Marcelo Jiménez illustrates these clashes, portraying a Christian cross opposite the Mayan god of war. A model reproduces different moments of the resistance, the burning of the annals and the punishment of 12,000 indigenous. Among the most important movements is the one in Valladolid, outstanding for its destruction and burning of the ceremonial center in order to build the Spanish town.

The last rebellion of that period, and perhaps the best known, was the one headed by Jacinto Can 'Ek (“Can” means “serpent”; “Ek” means “king”) in 1761. A Maya from Campeche, educated in the Catholic faith by the Franciscans, knowledgeable not only in the Christian liturgy but also in the prophecies of his people, after delving deeply into its past, he decided to help his Maya brothers. Expelled from the monastery, he took the title of Jacinto Uc de los Santos Can Ek Chin Chan Moctezuma and began a rebellion with the support of local strongmen and towns, demanding the Spanish recognize him as king of the Mayas. The clash in Cesteil, one of the towns where the fighting was the most ferocious, ended with the elimination of almost all the townspeople. Jacinto himself escaped, but soon after was captured and taken to Mérida, where he was brutally punished: he was beaten to death and his body cut up and burned.

This closed one chapter and marked the beginning of another, the subject of Room 2: “Yucatán in the Nineteenth Century,” depicting the lives of the Mayas in the early period of Mexican independence. The wheel symbolizes the beginning of the stage of large-scale agricultural production —specifically sisal fiber— with the resulting need for

transport and cheap —practically slave— labor. Photographs document the new symbol of exploitation of the Mayan people: the haciendas. The rich hacienda owners were well aware of the ancestral Mayan resistance, so they adopted the strategy of giving some local strongmen the title of *hidalgo*, or noble. In exchange for certain privileges, they assumed the central task of maintaining political control over the *macehuales* (common Mayas) who worked the haciendas. Many were forced to remain there until their deaths because they became hugely indebted and were not only unable to pay, but they also left these debts to their children. The *hidalgos* also had to trap any peons who dared to escape and bring them back to the hacienda.

The third room, entitled “Causes of the Caste War,” displays objects that belonged to the rich hacienda owners, which contrast sharply with the simple Mayan utensils. Coins and paper money reveal the immense wealth generated on the peninsula during this time, so much so that the own-

ers printed their own money. It was during this period that the owners toyed with the idea of becoming independent from Mexico, and they actually declared independence three times. Poverty and the barbaric conditions of exploitation once again united the Mayas: suffice it to say that from the age of 14 until the age of 60, they were forced to pay tribute in kind. Failure to do so meant they risked execution or losing their land; they even had to pay to baptize their children. The hacienda owners also used them to fight their battles: when the peninsula government with its seat in Campeche decided to increase taxes, they armed the Mayas and made them fight in their name, with the promise of canceling their debts. Their renegeing on this promise and the continuing abuse culminated in the bloody armed movement known as the Caste War. Three figures (Jacinto Pat, the local leader of Tihosuco; Cecilio Chi, the leader of Tepich; and Manuel Antonio Ay, the leader of Chichimilá) planned the rebellion. Their objective: freeing the Mayas from the domination of the creoles and the mestizos, giving them self-sufficiency and autonomy. The plot was discovered and Manuel Antonio Ay was shot. Chi and Pat continued with their plans and on July 30, 1847, the rebellion broke out in Tepich. In a short time, more than 40,000 Mayans throughout the peninsula had risen up in arms. Hatred fueled the hostilities and both sides fought mercilessly. The Mayas aimed for the total extermination of



Elsie Montiel

Hatred fueled the hostilities and both sides fought mercilessly. The Mayas aimed for the total extermination of the white population. Tihosuco itself was almost destroyed.



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The continuing abuse culminated in the bloody armed movement to free the Mayas from the domination of creoles and mestizos, giving them self-sufficiency and autonomy.

the white population. Tihosuco itself was almost destroyed: signs of the battle can still be seen on the church. By 1848, the indigenous forces had managed to dominate part of the peninsula and the local government found the situation uncontrollable and even asked for support from the U.S. army. Mexico's central government also went to its aid.

Jacinto Pat was convinced that they should establish a dialogue, but Cecilio Chi rejected any pact. The arrival of the rainy season interrupted the hostilities when only the cities of Mérida and Campeche were still unvanquished, and the rebels decided to return to their homes to till their fields. The army's counteroffensive was not long in the making, and it began to take back positions from the Mayas. Cecilio Chi and Pat were both assassinated, one for personal reasons and the other by a dissident Mayan faction. The museum offers visitors maps of the rebel routes, portraits of movement leaders and examples of arms and munitions to illustrate the events. Around 1850, the conflict became a low-intensity war with the rebels seeking refuge



Elsie Montiel

in the jungle. In that year, they founded Chan Santa Cruz (today known as Felipe Carrillo Puerto), a town that became headquarters for the movement because that is where the so-called "Talking Cross" appeared, that would keep the Maya fighting.² It is said that when the cross ordered them to take a particular town, the Mayas would always be victorious, thus restoring their confidence. This cross ended up leading the armed movement, and is still the object of religious worship to this day. The struggle lasted into the early twentieth century despite the hardships and shortages the Mayas suffered, without powder or weapons and punished by epidemics and the constant lack of food.

Some historians put the end of the Caste War at 1901 when the central government of Porfirio Díaz launched the last offensive and signed a series of treaties, among them, the one that divided the peninsula and created the territory of Quintana Roo. But the museum maintains that after that

date there were still bastions in the jungle under Mayan domination and a well-defined guerrilla war was waged under the religious-military structure dictated by the Talking Cross. A chart hangs in Room 4 illustrating the internal hierarchy, as well as photographs taken in 1935 of the movement's last leaders: Concepción and Evaristo Tulum. It also exhibits weapons and bullets used by both sides in the war —here, we also learn that the Mayas used English weapons brought into the country through Belize.

Lastly, there is a room dedicated to the donors: when the museum opened its doors, many local inhabitants decided to contribute pieces they had at home. Among these pieces are the skull of Bernardino Kin, a Mayan leader who achieved certain prominence and died from a machete blow to the head in 1875 during an encounter with the army. There are also clay replicas of *aluxes*, sprites common to Mayan mythology throughout the ages.

The visit ends in the small botanical garden boasting medicinal plants commonly used by local inhabitants. The garden was established with the help and work of 15 elders from the community wise in the use of the plants. More than 5,000 children have visited the garden, where they are

told of the importance of the plants, they learn to identify them with drawings they color and can compare to the live plant itself, and after that, woman elders or traditional healers teach them how to make a shampoo or salve. This space is also used as a meeting place for the elders.

Here, you can purchase shampoo, soap, syrups and salves. But, above all, you become convinced that you are in the presence of a people determined to interpret its history and perpetuate its knowledge and traditions on its own terms, to sow confidence in a future with dignity among its descendants. **NM**

NOTES

¹ “If you think everyone has the freedom to say what they think, pass through this door to see everything that was used and what happened in this place.”

² The indigenous forces were tired and demoralized, but the appearance of a miraculous cross that spoke and told them what to do restored their confidence in their struggle. This “miraculous” cross was born when José María Barrera, a mestizo from Peto, carved three crosses in a large tree, which brought forth their first message on October 15, 1850. But he used a ventriloquist, Manuel Nahuat, as the “interpreter of the cross” to reveal its messages. The so-called Talking Cross became the true ruler of society and even exercised military command. The town founded at the site of these three crosses was called Chan Santa Cruz (“Little Sacred Cross”), and its inhabitants called themselves *cruzoob* (“followers of the cross”).

E D U C A T I O N
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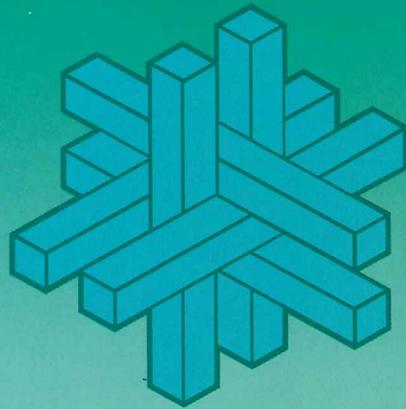
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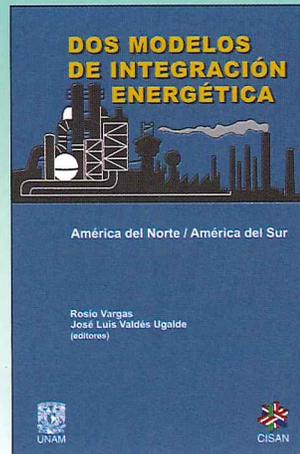
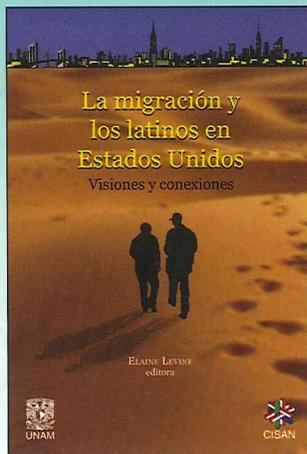
La migración y los latinos en Estados Unidos. Visiones y conexiones

Elaine Levine, editor

This book answers questions on a topic we know very little about: what happens to migrants once they cross the border? What are their lives like?

What is their work like? What problems do they face? What are their options and plans for the future? A many-sided vision that examines the vicissitudes of their journey and the conditions of their stay there as well as of their possible return.

Outstanding academics from both Mexico and the United States with extensive experience in fieldwork and information from original sources make it an undeniable contribution.



Dos modelos de integración energética. América del Norte / América del Sur

Rosío Vargas and José Luis Valdés-Ugalde, editors

This book analyzes the two main forms of energy integration in North and South America, and tries to answer questions like what that integration looks like in practice, whether we can expect solutions to national energy problems without putting national sovereignty at risk and whether integration is compatible with the energy security of all concerned.

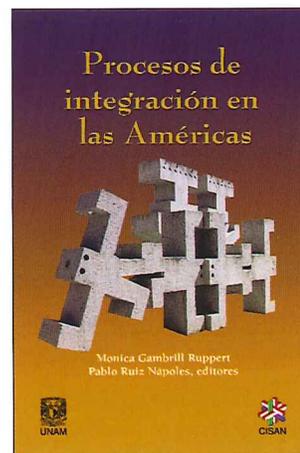
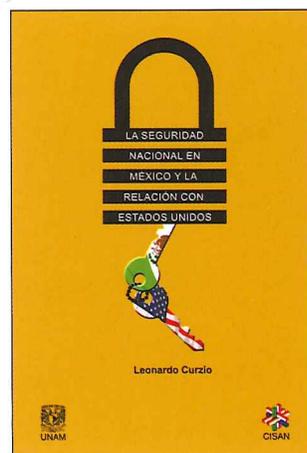
La seguridad nacional en México y la relación con Estados Unidos

Leonardo Curzio

The classic national security paradigm must be reinterpreted in the light of the changes both in Mexico and the world.

Over the last 20 years, Mexico has gone from being an inward-looking economy to one of the world's most open, though very dependent on the United States; it has stepped up emigration so that, today, unprecedented millions of Mexicans live and work in the U.S.; and in terms of security, it has become part of the equation of security in North America.

For all these reasons, we have to review all our suppositions and doctrine in this area.



Procesos de integración en las Américas

Monica Gambrell and Pablo Ruiz Nápoles, editors

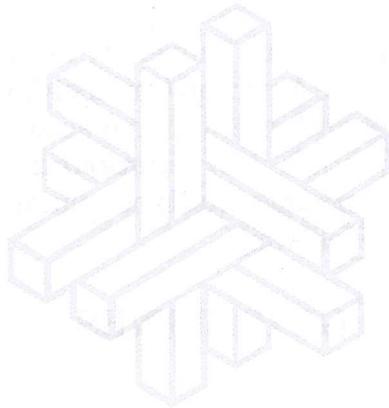
This book studies the intensification of integration processes in the Americas. Based on a huge amount of empirical data, the articles seek to show the impact of integration in regionalization processes. They deal with topics like the theory of the new regionalism as a tool to study recent integration processes; the specificities of Tamaulipas-Texas transborder cooperation; the inconsistencies in official data gathering that make it difficult to ascertain the real magnitude of trade among the NAFTA countries; and Venezuela's contribution to Andean integration.

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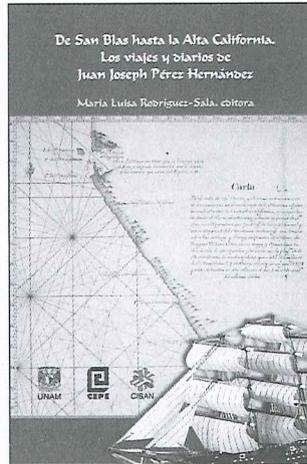
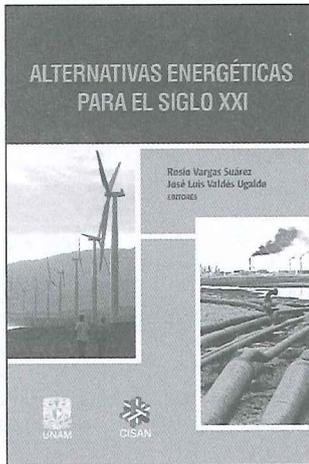
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p u b l i c a t i o n s

Alternativas energéticas para el siglo XXI

Rosío Vargas and José Luis Valdés-Ugalde, editors

This book deals with a vital issue for the world today: the search for energy alternatives to compensate for the imminent scarcity of traditional sources, particularly oil and gas. Based on specialized studies warning that current rates of oil consumption exhaust known reserves in about 40 years, the authors offer a panorama of the international oil situation, emphasizing the growing importance of natural gas and other renewable energy sources, as well as the obstacles and perspectives these new options face.



De San Blas hasta la Alta California: los viajes y diarios de Juan Joseph Pérez Hernández

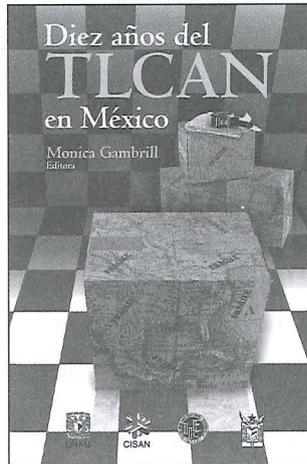
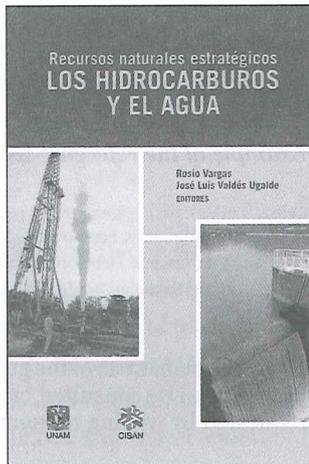
María Luisa Rodríguez-Sala, editor

This book deals with the vicissitudes and feats of Juan Joseph Pérez Hernández, a Spanish Royal Navy seaman in charge of the maritime exploration of the northern part of the New World in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The author explains that the ultimate reason for these travels was to be found in the policy and aspirations of two European empires, the Spanish and the Russian. The Spaniards wanted to consolidate and expand their territories in these northern latitudes in the face of the threat of the penetration through trade and settlement by the nascent Russian empire.

Recursos naturales estratégicos. Los hidrocarburos y el agua

Rosío Vargas and José Luis Valdés-Ugalde, editors

This book deals with an issue vital to the survival of the so-called global village: the imminent scarcity of strategic natural resources, basically oil and water, and the risks this poses for the world's well-being and peace. Experts from different disciplines and of different nationalities look at the problem from different perspectives. The prospects are not very promising.



Diez años del TLCAN en México

Monica Gambrell, editor

Ten years after NAFTA came into effect, specialists in different disciplines met to evaluate the effects of its implementation in Mexico. Among other topics, the book looks at macro-economic factors, national industry and the maquiladora plants, foreign investment, labor mobility, agriculture and animal husbandry, cargo transport, the environment and conflict resolution. Particularly interesting is its focus on the agreement's implications with regard to greater integration with the United States.

Forthcoming

Speaking desde las heridas. Testimonios transfronterizos/transborder testimonies through cyberspace
Critical Issues in the New U.S. Mexico Relations: Stumbling Blocs and Constructive Paths
Historia comparada de las Américas



CALL FOR PAPERS

The National Autonomous University of Mexico's Center for Research on North America (CISAN) and the American University's Center for North American Studies (CNAS) invite the national and international academic community to send contributions for its biannual journal, *Norteamérica*, dedicated to the study and reflection about the political, economic, social and cultural situation of North America. Contributions must conform to the following

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GUIDELINES

- The journal's theme is interdisciplinary in the areas of social sciences and the humanities about the North American Region (Mexico, the United States and Canada) and its links to the rest of the world.
- All papers must be previously unpublished.
- *Norteamérica* is a peer-refereed journal, and all articles will be submitted to a board of specialists for review.

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Norteamérica has three sections: Essays (Ensayos), Current Analysis (Análisis de Actualidad) and Reflections (Reflexiones). Contributions will be received in Spanish, English or French and published in their original language, and for each section, the articles must have the following characteristics:

ESSAYS AND CURRENT ANALYSIS

- Only articles based on scholarly research will be considered. These two sections will not publish articles on current events or opinion pieces.
- The articles must include relevant, up-to-date source citations.
- Articles must be accompanied by 4 to 6 key words and a 100- to 150-word summary or abstract.
Length: 20 to 40 pages.

REFLECTIONS

INTERVIEWS

- The interview will be with an outstanding figure from the academic, political, social and/or cultural world.
- Each interview will include between 5 and 10 analytical and comparative questions.
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CRITICAL NOTES

- Academic reflections about a polemical, current issue.
Length: 10 to 15 pages.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

- Essays that review, compare and analyze in depth from 2 to 5 recently published books on the same theme.
Length: 10 to 15 pages.

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- They will deal with the most important events in North America and the rest of the world and their reciprocal impact.
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- Source citation will be done using the author-date citations and references list style, also known as Harvard system. Example: (Diamond, 1995: 49-59).
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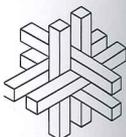
Diamond, Larry, Seymour Menton and Juan J. Linz, comp.
1995 *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy*, Boulder, Colo., Reinner.

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The Balance Sheet of the Bush Administration's Multilateral Trade Negotiations

Elizabeth Gutiérrez Romero*



Koichi Kamashida/Reuters

Bush with the rest of G8 leaders.

The failure of World Trade Organization (WTO) multilateral negotiations in the Doha Round has once again demonstrated the increasing difficulties faced by those attempting to advance in new facets of trade between countries with unequal levels of development.

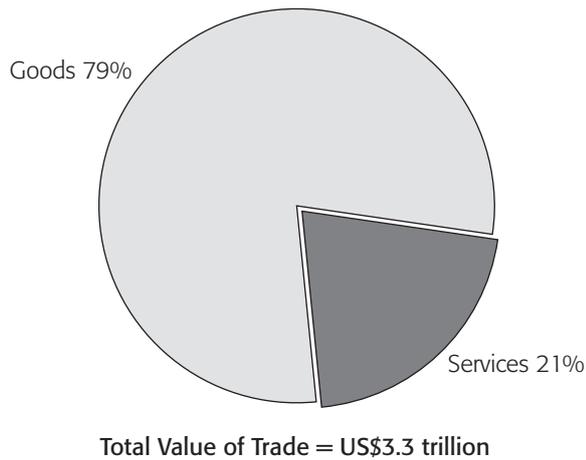
The outcome of the multilateral negotiations—held in July of this year—also reflects the growing economic and negotiating power of emerging nations, particularly the group made up of Brazil, Russia, India and China, known as BRIC.

Together, these countries defend the sensitive areas for their national goods and producers in the challenging international context marked by the world food crisis and turbulence in international financial markets.

On this most recent occasion, negotiations in Geneva collapsed when the main countries involved were unable to bridge their differences in regard to the so-called Special Safeguard Mechanism, which would allow countries to raise tariffs to protect themselves from massive imports of one or more agricultural products. India and China in particular sought protection for their crops (cotton, sugar and rice) while the

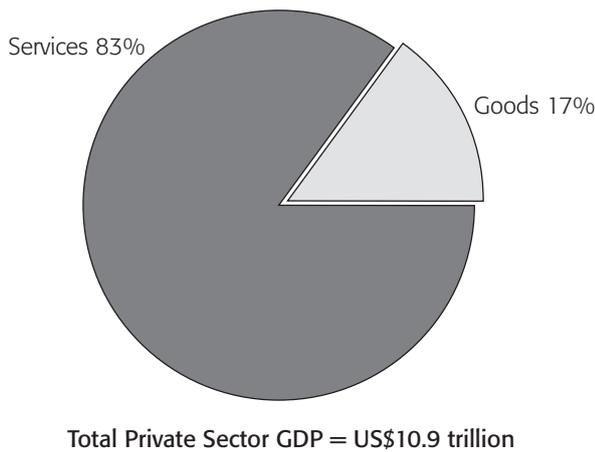
* Researcher at CISAN.

Graph 1. Value of U.S. Cross-Border Trade by Sector (2005)



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, *Survey of Current Business* 86, no. 10, 75.

Graph 2. U.S. Private Sector Gross Domestic Product by Sector (2005)



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, "Gross Domestic Product by Industry," *Industry Economic Accounts Database* (October 2006).

United States and Europe refused to make concessions to limit their many agricultural subsidies.

Also addressed at the latest ministerial WTO conference were other aspects related to trade liberalization of goods and services. Negotiations on these issues, including the possibility for opening up certain sectors in the areas of services, telecommunications, transportation, and banking and consultation services, have been repeatedly postponed.

A determining factor in the U.S. economic boom during the 1990s was the collapse and disappearance of the Soviet Union, which reinforced the positions held by Western economies regarding the validity and virtues of the market economy.

The failed negotiations reveal the differences between developed and developing countries with regard to how and how much to open up markets in areas in which trade in goods and services is still limited.

For the United States, but especially for the Bush administration, the recent failure in Geneva will be the last unsuccessful outcome of the trade policy implemented over the last eight years. During this time trade policy was given only secondary priority on the foreign policy agenda, with geopolitical interests dominating.

The Bush administration's top political priorities, including security, must be considered when evaluating its trade policy. It is also necessary to consider some prevailing circumstances in the international context that Bush confronted practically from the moment his first presidential term began. And also important are circumstances from the previous years when William Clinton was president for two terms characterized by economic and trade expansion.

A determining factor in the U.S. economic boom during the 1990s was the collapse and disappearance of the Soviet Union in 1991. This not only radically modified the U.S. geopolitical perspective—with an end to the communist threat—but also reinforced the positions held by Western economies regarding the validity and virtues of the market economy, in comparison to the inefficiency of the economic alternative proposed by real socialism. This explains the long period of economic growth in the United States during the 1990s, but it also explains the emphasis in the geoeconomic vision of the world on geopolitical considerations that prevailed for several decades during the Cold War.

The United States promoted free trade, particularly through multilateral negotiations within the institutional framework created in the context of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). However, beginning in the 1980s, during the Reagan administration, the United States introduced a series of trade initiatives, both unilateral and bilateral in nature, aimed at achieving its economic objectives, specif-

The failed Geneva negotiations reveal the differences between developed and developing countries with regard to how and how much to open up markets in areas in which trade in goods and services is still limited.

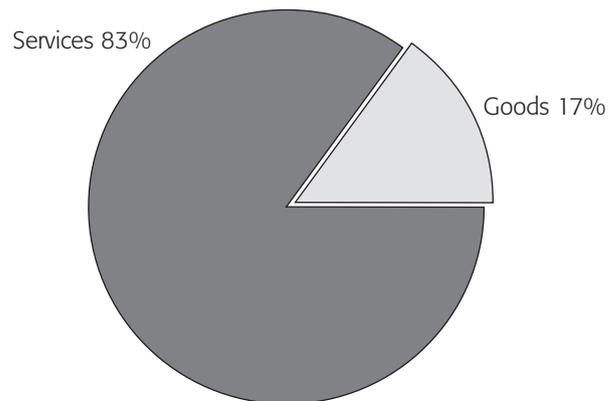
ically to protect its market and gain access to foreign markets. In accordance with a “multiple-track” strategy, a number of trade agreements were signed during the 1990s, the Uruguay Round was concluded (reducing trade barriers) and NAFTA was signed, linking Mexico’s and Canada’s economies even more closely to their powerful neighbor.

The international climate during the 1990s was favorable for promoting trade negotiations at all levels, and for U.S. representatives it was fundamentally important to accelerate trade liberalization in sectors that were lagging behind. At the multilateral level, the agenda for the Uruguay Round of GATT negotiations (which began in 1986 and ended in 1994) already included aspects of trade in the service and high-tech sectors and protection of intellectual property rights —issues not yet addressed jointly.

Also defined within this institutional framework was what would become the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) in the recently created WTO. The forms of trade in services were defined in this agreement, including trans-border movement of information. Trilateral negotiations —within the framework of NAFTA— included regional integration of services, with special emphasis on liberalizing the financial and telecommunications markets. Consequently, whether negotiations were at the multilateral, bilateral or regional level, the United States addressed the issue of trade in services, since this sector was consolidating in its economy.

The WTO held its 1999 summit in Seattle, Washington. The Clinton administration ignored the requests from several developing nations to review anti-dumping mechanisms, poor countries’ access to markets in developed economies, and the elimination of agricultural subsidies. Instead of addressing these requests, the United States promoted an agenda based on its own interests, including trade in financial services, information technologies and aeronautics. These divergences led to the summit’s failure, presaging the difficulties that would confront the Bush administration at the multilateral negotiations that began only months after the

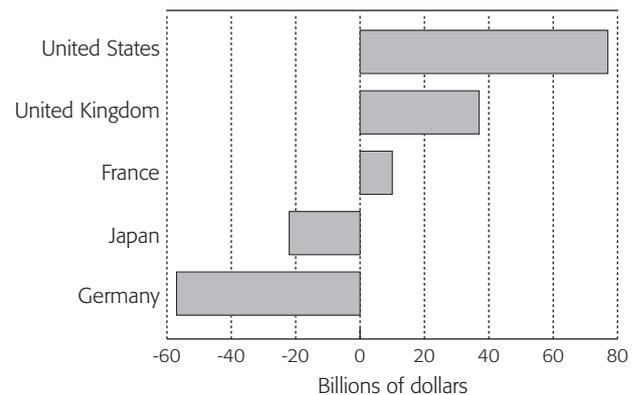
Graph 3. U.S. Private Sector Employment by Sector (2005)



Total Full-Time Equivalent Employees =
106.9 million workers

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, “Full-Time Equivalent Employees by Industry” (February 2007).

Graph 4. Services Trade Balances of Leading Exporting Countries (2005)



Source: World Trade Organization, “Leading Exporters and Importers in World Trade in Commercial Services, 2005,” *International Trade Statistics 2006*.

September 2001 terrorist attacks. However, these violent events would mark the beginning of a stage in which security and geopolitical issues would once again dominate other matters on the U.S. foreign policy agenda.

With the proposal of beginning the Doha Round in November 2001, the United States attempted to regain leadership in the multilateral arena —although it did not abandon negotiations for bilateral trade agreements, for which Bush was given “fast-track authority.”¹

The international context would suggest that trade policy will not likely be a priority for the next president. Still, the trade policy option established in the U.S. in the future will have a profound impact on the world.

Between 2001 and 2004, the Bush administration maintained intense activity in the area of bilateral and regional free trade agreements. Only some of these negotiations were successful, however, and the general opinion was that they were limited in scope, and diverted attention and resources needed to reach multilateral agreements. Nevertheless, in the multilateral negotiations, the issue of agricultural subsidies—especially for cotton—became an insurmountable obstacle. The differences among more than 20 developing countries—led by Brazil, China and some African nations—and the European Union, the United States and Japan, specifically with regard to agricultural trade distortions, led to a breakdown in negotiations at the WTO meeting held in Cancún in September 2003. Later, the task of returning to the Doha agenda fell to Robert Zoellick, then-U.S. trade representative, who held meetings on the three continents to iron out differences resulting from the Cancún negotiations.²

Despite the complications encountered in renewing multilateral negotiations (four attempts in five years), international trade in services and agricultural goods was vitally important for the United States. Specifically, its advantageous position in these areas could help to reduce its trade deficit in the area of manufactured goods. The United States is a great exporter of services, with an outstanding surplus in professional and technical, financial and other knowledge-related services. In 2006, this type of trade resulted in a surplus of more than US\$80 billion, while the deficit in goods trade was as high as US\$840 billion. This disproportionate relationship explains why the United States has sought, since the 1980s, to include these sectors on the trade agenda at the multilateral level (Graph 4).

We need only remember that the United States was the first nation to go through a structural change to a service-based economy. Around 1950 more than half of its work force was involved in tertiary activities; however by 2007, the services sector accounted for 85 percent of employment in the private sector and 83 percent of the country's gross domestic

product (GDP) (Graphs 2 and 3). Therefore, the possibility of expanding markets for services is vitally important for the United States, since world trade in services is much lower than international trade in goods (Graph 1).

CONCLUSIONS

With the failure of multilateral negotiations in Geneva, we witnessed the end of a series of unsuccessful actions in international negotiations initiated by the Bush administration in the areas of services and agricultural goods. One might expect an expansion of bilateral trade agreements in the future; however the fragmentation of markets would limit U.S. trade potential in the goods and services areas in which it is highly competitive.

The Bush administration's results in economic and trade matters were not satisfactory, and the international community is awaiting the outcome of the November 2008 elections, after which new policies are expected. Nonetheless, the international context would suggest that trade policy will not likely be a priority for the next president. Still, the trade policy option established in the United States in the future will have a profound impact on the world. We may see the initiation of a stage of greater protectionism, or emphasis may be placed on rebuilding a deteriorated global trade system to consider possibilities for development for all countries. ■■

NOTES

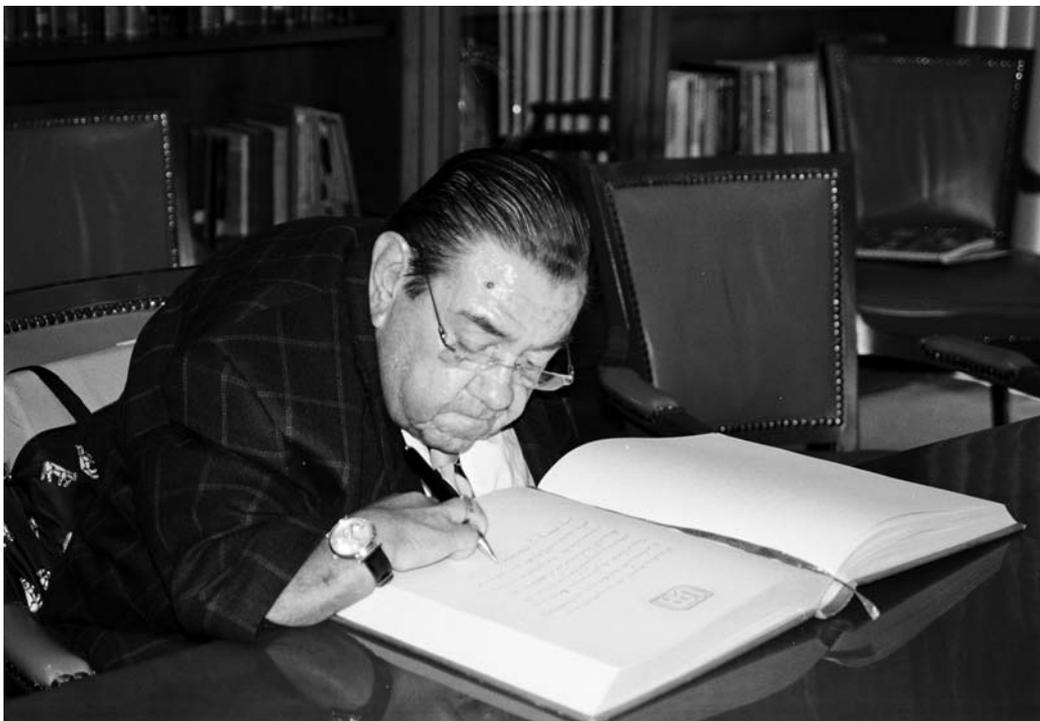
¹ Through this mechanism, the U.S. Congress approves or rejects a trade agreement without making changes. It is important to mention that the executive branch had not enjoyed this authority since 1994. See Sara J. Fitzgerald, *Needed: A New Vision for U.S. Trade Policy*, The Heritage Foundation, April 30, 2002, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/TradeandForeignAid/BG1543.cfm>.

² In January 2004, Zoellick sent a letter to representatives of 146 countries in which he proposed to move forward with multilateral negotiations on the issues of agricultural subsidies and access to markets, and in the area of goods, he proposed a flexible formula for decreasing tariffs on manufactured goods. Lastly, he offered technical assistance and services for developing countries.

Gilberto Rincón Gallardo

The *Decent* Bolshevik

Jesús Rodríguez Zepeda*



Antonio Saavedra / Courtesy of CONIPRED

[1939-2008]

On August 31, 2008, Gilberto Rincón Gallardo y Meltis died at the age of 69. He was one of the pillars of Mexico's transition to democracy, and one of the most lucid minds in the Mexican left in recent decades.

Rincón Gallardo had a Bolshevik's stubborn nature, a liberal's doubts about power and an aristocrat's manners. His commitment to social democracy during the last decade of his life reflected an uncommon path in left politics —where the temptation is always to play the victim or rely on

demagogy. Although he was a genuine victim of a ferociously authoritarian regime, he never presented himself as a victim whose experience granted him moral superiority over others, and he never attempted to justify his political errors by using the pretext of heroism —which he certainly could have claimed.

When he spoke publicly of his experience as a political prisoner, his aim was to unmask those who had recently joined the opposition, but had previously been —even minimally— complacent in the face of authoritarianism. Many of us still remember his participation in the first debate among presidential candidates in the 2000 elections (the other candidates did not allow him to

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participate in any other debate, for fear he would gain support). At that debate, he said clearly, “I’ve been fighting against the PRI’s authoritarianism for 40 years. I’ve always been in the opposition. In the ‘freedom-less’ Mexico of four decades ago, I was detained 32 times for my commitment to democratic change. The last time I was imprisoned was for three and a half years. It was 1968, and I suffered this injustice together with thousands of students who were demanding democratic freedoms. I never benefited from the government, from the regime that is fortunately coming to an end today. Which of those here tonight experienced first hand the repression from the authoritarian regime that many of us were confronting at that time? Although some would like to think so, democratic change is not achieved through careers in the bureaucracy.”

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Some say Rincón Gallardo was in jail more times than any other Mexican political prisoner. When he was imprisoned, it was due to his political opposition to the regime of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). The longest imprisonment was indeed three and a half years due to his political activity in 1968, when the PRI government decided to use all means—except the rule of law—to fight the opposition. Rincón Gallardo was never legally condemned or exonerated, and up to the day he died, his legal status was still “released on his own recognizance,” although the amnesty granted in the 1970s ended the legal persecution against him. More than once he recalled with bitter humor that a judge had sent him to jail with the accusation that he had set streetcars on fire by “skillfully throwing Molotov bombs.” The physical disability affecting his upper

limbs prevented him from even grasping a round glass—but even more importantly, he had consistently opposed violence as a political tactic.

Perhaps it was the physical disability he had lived with since his birth that helped him develop such perseverance. During his long political life, however, he never used his disability as a pretext. And he even said that only once in a while, when he looked in the mirror, was he reminded of the disability affecting him.

He was a *rara avis* in the Mexican left, moving against the tide of those tending to subordinate themselves to one *caudillo* (political leader) or another, as recently witnessed in Mexico. His efforts were aimed at building a project within the left that would survive beyond individuals and building a policy of dialogue and reaching agreements—to bring us closer to the democratic socialism that was flourishing in countries like Chile and Spain.

His commitment to dialogue and negotiation was not accidental or opportunist. When he learned that a group of comrades in the Communist Party had decided to take up arms to fight against the government in that fateful decade, the 1970s, he sought out his old comrade, the legendary guerrilla leader Lucio Cabañas, to convince him to put down his arms. His belief was that the democratic left could not engage in a policy of death for its comrades or its adversaries. He could not convince Cabañas, and he suffered even more believing that a generation of nonconformist youth—eventually annihilated by a repressive, murderous state—had given their lives for a mistaken idea. The defeat of the armed struggle in Mexico proved he was right. But even so, during his last years, he was forced to tolerate the demagoguery of many “upstarts” in the left, who had established themselves and enriched themselves within the ranks of the PRI and never risked their lives when the regimen was systematically repressive, speaking pompously of a revolution that existed only in their rhetoric.

At the time of his death, Rincón Gallardo was already outside the life of political parties. This was strange for someone who, since his early youth,

had made membership in a political party an aspect of his everyday life. After a brief early encounter with the National Action Party (PAN) during the Luis H. Álvarez campaign, he joined the Mexican Communist Party (PCM) in 1963. By 1972, he was a member of the Communist Party's Central Committee, and in 1977, when the party took advantage of a minimal political opening in the PRI's authoritarian regime, he became one of its first legislators in the Chamber of Deputies. One of the things the Communists defended there against a consistently overwhelming majority was the first bill proposing to legalize voluntary termination of pregnancy. This same group of legislators distanced themselves from the Soviet Union after its aggression against Czechoslovakia, and became dissatisfied with the authoritarian shift taken by Castro's regime in Cuba. From that time on, Rincón Gallardo never abandoned the conviction that a leftist policy could only be compatible with democracy if fought in the electoral and parliamentary sphere. Consequently, his political work was aimed at unifying left forces, building a party capable of reforming the authoritarian regime, and at the same time, reforming itself from a democratic perspective.

Therefore, in 1981 he sought the dissolution of the Communist Party in order to establish, together with other left forces, the Unified Socialist Party of Mexico (PSUM), in which he served as secretary of external affairs. Following the same emphasis on making the Mexican left larger and more competitive—but especially more democratic—he supported the dissolution of the new party, in order to create, in 1986, the Mexican Socialist Party (PMS), of which he became general secretary. After the infamous 1988 presidential elections, when the left suffered a historic electoral fraud, he fought for resolving the political crisis by building a new party, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), founded in 1989.

Rincón Gallardo was one of the outstanding players in the Mexican left, throughout all its ups and downs. He was also a victim of its prevailing dogmatism and *caudillismo* (or tendency to be dominated by a strong leader). Thus, in 1995, he re-

signed from the party, with great dignity and without a scandal. His exit was a sign that the democratic, educated, reasonable left—already flourishing in Spain and Chile—had no space in a party that, among other factors, had not even been inspired to abandon the language of revolution, and since then, had imitated the discourse of the PRI's revolutionary nationalism.

And so, abandoning the revolution was one of his obsessions. Rincón Gallardo believed the Mexican left's democratic identity could only be affirmed by genuinely reconciling the myth of revolution, in any of its forms, whether the socialist revolution or even the Mexican revolution. As he told me in an interview several years ago, "I'm not a revolutionary. I'm a reformist. Revolutionaries seek the elimination of others, and I don't seek to eliminate anyone. That's why an open, trans-

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parent act of renouncing revolution is the most difficult part, the most complicated and perhaps the most traumatic aspect in the left's reform process...What concerns me and what I don't accept is precisely the reference to the use of violence and not accepting the idea of social transformation...In Mexico no one asks us to take a stand in relation to the revolution, but this definition is absolutely necessary in the process of changing the left's identity."¹

Rincón Gallardo attempted twice more, with differing results, to create a democratic party of the left. In 1999 he founded and was president of the Social Democracy party, and then ran as the party's presidential candidate in the 2000 elections. Many citizens, unfamiliar with the history of the Mexican left, heard of him for the first time during that race. And many considered him the best



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candidate, but since the most urgent political necessity at that time was to defeat the PRI, the social democratic project in Mexico had to be postponed. In 2001, he made another commitment to building Social Democracy, creating the “Party of the Rose,” but an unwise decision by electoral authorities cancelled the party’s registration.

During his last years, although he stayed away from the life of political parties, Rincón Gallardo solidified his role as a genuine statesman. Between 2001 and 2008, he led the efforts of many social groups to establish both legislation and a public

institution in Mexico designed to fight all forms of discrimination. In 2001 the right to non-discrimination was introduced into the Mexican Constitution. Then, in 2003, as a result of a bill that he played a leading role in developing, the Federal Law for Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination was approved. This law established the National Council for the Prevention of Discrimination (Conapred), a governmental body that he headed from 2003 to 2008, the year he died. At that time, he was Mexico’s candidate for presiding over the United Nations Committee charged with overseeing the implementation of the UN Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Rincón Gallardo had fought during his last years to make this international norm a reality. He used his negotiating skills to forge an agreement among many nations on an international standard of justice. His political life cannot, of course, be reduced to his achievements during these final years, but it is clear that his prominence as a statesman brought him in closer touch with Mexican citizens.

Rincón Gallardo never ceased to be a *decent* Bolshevik, words I have borrowed from our mutual friend, Luis Salazar. In fact, with a classical Bolshevik spirit, he invested all his energy in professional politics, however as a *decent* man, he knew how to respond to the call for justice, tolerance and decency. He was a paradoxical Bolshevik, since he had renounced revolution—but in the end he was indeed Bolshevik, as he worked from within a minority to achieve goals that others believed were unreachable.

With his death, Rincón Gallardo has left some of us feeling a bit like orphans, those of us who believe that social justice, individual freedoms and generous, intelligent politics should be the hallmarks of the left. May he rest in peace. **VM**

NOTES

¹ Gilberto Rincón Gallardo, “Razones de una izquierda democrática,” *A contracorriente*, Jesús Rodríguez Zepeda, ed. and interviewer (Mexico: Centro de Estudios para la Reforma del Estado, 1999).

A Non-Discrimination Policy: Gilberto Rincón Gallardo's Contribution

José Luis Gutiérrez Espíndola*



Antonio Saavedra/Courtesy of CONAPRED

Gilberto Rincón Gallardo believed deeply in politics as a privileged space and tool for building agreements—to increase the viability of projects in the interests of society, and to guarantee peaceful coexistence rich in diversity. His life's work could perhaps be summarized in a single phrase, if we borrow the title from one of Bernard Crick's books: *In Defense of Politics*. If there was anything that characterized Rincón Gallardo, it was precisely his per-

sistent defense of politics in response to those who, from very different battlegrounds, opted for violence.

I don't know if Gilberto was familiar with Crick's work. My point here is that he might well have heartily supported the main theses of this British political scientist. He, too, was convinced that politics was the best way to respond to the problem of guaranteeing social order and a peaceful government, without reducing diversity to homogenous unity. Diversity and freedom of expression are the conditions that give politics its potential, and together with governability, are its most noteworthy outcomes.

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In a context marked by intolerance, sectarianism and the general discredit of politics, these ideas not only set Gilberto apart from others, but, unfortunately, made him the target of suspicions and accusations of betrayal and being a sell-out. But attitudes like these caused him no misgivings. In fact they probably reinforced his conviction regarding the civilizing value of politics—which for him was a vocation he engaged in passionately. Only this can explain his consistent activism, channeled essentially through his participation in various left movements and political parties, from the Mexican Communist Party (PCM) to the Social Democracy Party, and his last, failed attempt, in 2003, to breathe life into Social Democracy.

Within Mexico's left, generally mistrustful of the utility of politics and the intrinsic value of democracy, Gilberto sought to bring the principles of equality and freedom together in a credible equation. This was especially evident in the discourse he used during his campaign for the presidency in 2000, as a Social Democracy candidate. During that campaign, he placed the issues of diversity and non-discrimination on the political agenda, together with the demands of vulnerable groups that previously enjoyed little public visibility. In the midst of an electoral race dominated by insults and the absence of substantial proposals, Gilberto's initiative was refreshing and promising.

While the Social Democracy party did not endure, the effort was not in vain. Gilberto made sure the issues he had proposed in the campaign were not watered down. After the elections, he dedicated his efforts to inviting academics, social activists and legislators from different parties to promote the fight against discrimination. As a result, the Study Commission against Discrimination was created—a pluralist, civic body that began operations in March 2001 and was chaired by Gilbert Rincón Gallardo.

Its objectives were to develop a bill on non-discrimination and to design a state body that would oversee its compliance and promote the fight against all forms of discrimination. This was not a superficial demand or a bright idea from a group of intellectuals and professional politicians. As documented in a rigorous assessment of discrimination in Mexico (the first of its type), and in the commission's analysis of a number of international instruments in this area, it was urgently necessary to develop a law and a state institution focused on anti-discrimination in a society with the characteristics of Mexican society—specifically, with some of its profound inequalities resulting from discrimination and social exclusion.

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When the commission's work was already underway, discussion began in Congress on incorporating the rights of indigenous peoples and communities in the Constitution. This process opened up the opportunity to also include an anti-discrimination clause—not linked to any specific group, but instead, of a comprehensive nature. Members of the commission lobbied in favor of this clause. The crowning point came that same year when reforms were enacted, including modifications and additions to Articles 1, 2, 4, 18 and 115. A new paragraph in Article 1 clearly expressed the prohibition of all forms of discrimination against human dignity or aimed at eliminating or diminishing the rights and freedoms of individuals.

These reforms also provided constitutional support for the bill the commission was preparing. In November 2001 the commission formally presented the results of its work to the country's president, who promised to promote the legislation. He did so, although after a considerable delay and not before a number of key aspects were cut. At any rate, in November 2002, the president sent Congress the initiative for the Federal Law for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination, which was discussed and approved unanimously in April 2003.

On June 11 of that year the law was enacted, thereby creating the National Council for the Prevention of Discrimination (Conapred). In recognition of all the work Rincón Gallardo had accomplished and his long history of defending people's fundamental rights, the president appointed him as its first director.

This appointment opened up a new chapter in Gilberto's life. Before that time, he was dedicating his efforts to building a new political party, Social Democracy, together with a large group of party members, and with the intention of obtaining its legal registration in the mid-term elections of 2003 (between the 2000 and 2006 presidential elections).

The new party was not authorized by the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), on the grounds that it failed to meet all the legal requirements. It did lead the way, however, to the

His life was about politics, and from that arena, he focused on creating institutions. Perhaps the best example of his work during the last stage of his life was the enormous effort he invested in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

possibility that, after the anti-discrimination law was enacted, Rincón Gallardo would be the one appointed to head Conapred, and that is what happened. Gilberto, who had worked within political parties and had been forged within those parties, now faced the challenge of bringing a government institution to life and functioning as a public servant from within the State—which he had always viewed as being open to modifications. He accepted the appointment because he was convinced that even in the context of a conservative government—and perhaps precisely for this reason—it was important to position the issue of non-discrimination on the political agenda and to solidify the institution created for protecting this fundamental right. I had the privilege of being invited to participate on the founding team, and thus had the opportunity to witness, from rather close up, his performance in directing the council. I always had the impression that his enthusiasm for this political-institutional project was similar in magnitude to his wariness of the routines of federal public administration, with its never-ending bureaucratic procedures—which he understood only minimally and found terribly boring.

His life was always about politics, and from that arena, he focused on creating institutions. Perhaps the best example of his work during the last stage of his life was the enormous effort he invested in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Mexico, and Rincón Gallardo in particular, as head of Mexico's official delegation to the Durban, South Africa conference against racial discrimination and other related forms of intolerance, made the proposal to the community of nations to write this convention.

Gilberto would often comment that the proposal was not very well received, and not because the delegates in attendance thought it unnecessary, but because they did not believe Mexico had the moral authority to introduce the initiative, since it was not known as a country that had made significant advances in this area. Gilberto would skillfully respond by arguing that precisely for this reason it was impor-

tant for the Mexican proposal to be accepted, that the Convention would serve as a decisive impetus in our country for full recognition of the rights of persons with disabilities.

In the end, the proposal was accepted, beginning a process that would span seven years. Gilberto was one of its most active promoters. As Conapred president, he attended a number of meetings in New York and Geneva and drew upon all his political experience to persuade the delegations from countries opposed to recognizing certain rights of persons with disabilities. And—how absurd!—it was almost as challenging to reach consensus in Mexico's own delegation, since some of the members were also wary of accepting certain aspects of the project.

Because of all these efforts, and undoubtedly due to personal reasons as well—he knew what it was like to have a disability, and it was very clear to him that limitations did not actually originate in the disability, but in the social environment stigmatizing the disability—Gilberto celebrated the convention's approval at the UN General Assembly in late 2007, as well as Mexico's adherence to the convention (he represented our government at the official signing act) and later when it entered into effect.

Officially nominated by the Mexican government to serve on the Convention's Follow-up Committee, Gilberto was about to present his proposal for the work program, when death caught him by surprise. Fulfilling this aspect of the process would have been a happy ending to years of effort, and he would have received the national and international recognition he deserved, but his life was cut short.

I've referred to the role that Gilberto played in the process of the convention's approval, as an example of his commitment to a cause that unquestionably touched the deepest fibers of his being. One of the many valuable things he left to us was his conviction that the institutional struggle against discrimination must be comprehensive—to end *all forms of discrimination*, without exception. Some of the battles he had to wage as Conapred president, requiring both restraint and firmness, involved defending the principle of politics, and more specifically, defending some of the items on the Council's agenda (against discrimination due to HIV, due to sexual preference, or sex-gender identity), countering those seeking to suppress such rights. In the council's institutional consolidation process, the comprehensiveness of the anti-discrimination policy has perhaps been one of the key issues. On this topic and on many others, Gilberto's legacy is still very alive. **NMM**

Reviews

La migración y los latinos en Estados Unidos.

Visiones y conexiones

(Migration and Latinos in the United States:
Perspectives and Connections)

Elaine Levine, editor

CISAN-UNAM

Mexico City, 2008, 445 pp.

Latinos have become the largest minority group in the United States, representing 15 percent of the country's total population, and of this group 60 percent are Mexicans. The process of migration to the United States has diverse causes and consequences in both communities of origin and destination. Topics such as the social construction of the Latino identity and specific contexts of economic, political, social and cultural life for Latinos in the United States, as well as different processes of migration are constantly generating new perspectives and studies to better understand this phenomenon.

A new book with this interest in mind is *La migración y los latinos en Estados Unidos, visiones y conexiones* (Migration and Latinos in the United States: Perspectives and Connections), edited by Elaine Levine. The nineteen chapters organized into five sections offer theoretical analysis, new knowledge, perspectives, examples and empirical cases from some of the processes occurring from the moment migrants start their journey to arrival at their destination, and their role in the social transformations developing in the places where they interact. The chapters address Latin American migration in a multi- and interdisciplinary manner, using diverse methodologies and

theories, and aimed at clarifying the links and interactions between places of origin and destination.

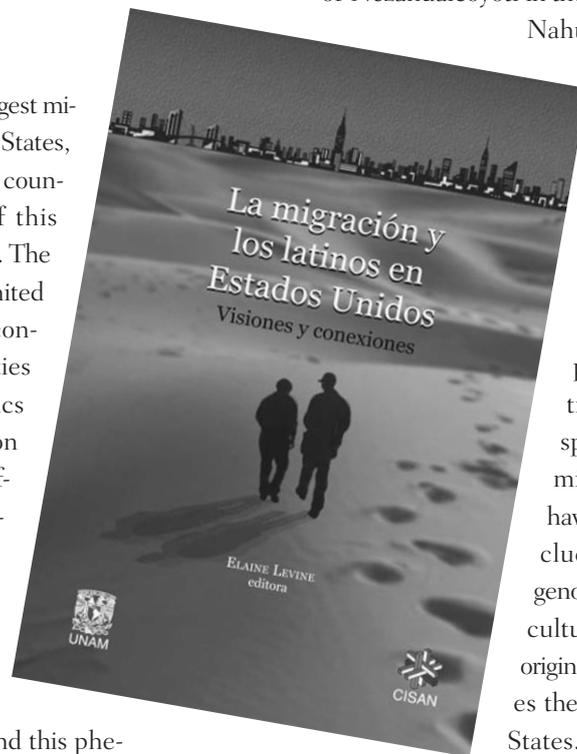
In the book's first section, the authors analyze some of the migration processes and circuits in Mexico: cases of Oaxacan migrants; the migration route of inhabitants of Nezhualcóyotl in the state of Mexico to New York; the

Nahuas who migrate to Los Angeles

and Houston; and the migration of Veracruz inhabitants.

These chapters reveal how identity is formed in the specific historic and social contexts in the places where migrants originate, but also in the places where they arrive. The authors also explore the conception of the migration circuit as the connecting of spaces linked together not only by migrants, but also by people who have never migrated. The section includes discussion on the way indigenous migration contributes to socio-cultural reconfigurations in places of origin and destination, and how it enriches the profiles of Latinos in the United States.

The second part describes perceptions of migration and migrants in Mexico. Two studies, one by Cecilia Ímaz and the other by Jorge Mercado, reveal the ways in which perceptions of migration changed in Mexico beginning in the 1970s, and how during the Vicente Fox administration, migrants were no longer described as deserters or traitors to their homeland, but as national heroes. Remittances were the main reason for this new perception, however this change in the migrant's image does not resolve the economic and social conditions generated by migration, and actually conceals its social and economic costs. In addition, Mercado analyzes the perceptions of migrants in their communities of ori-



gin, as well as the possible relationship between migration and violence, explored through opinions expressed by inhabitants of Apatzingán, Michoacán, and Fresnillo, Zacatecas. Mercado writes that while violence has multiple causes, the population remaining in these communities reports that it is actually a cause of migration. The author concludes that while international migration in the communities studied has had a strong impact on family and community structure, the effects have been especially negative in the cultural sphere.

The third section of the book is a kaleidoscope that attempts to untangle the complex interrelationships between the U.S. labor market and society. It includes five studies addressing issues like the insertion of Latinos into the U.S. work force, and revealing that Mexicans born outside the United States have the lowest educational levels and the biggest disadvantages on the job, while receiving the lowest wages. We learn that this tendency is more likely when migrants do not have English skills, are not citizens, and in many cases, do not have work permits.

One very interesting thing is that, according to these studies, these labor disadvantages have been motivated to some degree by migrants' low self-esteem, encouraged by the climate of discrimination against a considerable sector of Latinos. The authors propose reflecting upon the lack of the educational, housing and health services for this population needed to overcome disadvantages. And they suggest that if this situation is not resolved, it could affect the development of U.S. society.

Another perspective included in this section is that migrants contribute something more than labor to U.S. society. They enrich the communities where they live with their music, cuisine, businesses, skills and traditions, and they bring hope to communities that have been abandoned by people of U.S. origin. Examples can be found in Iowa and other states in the Midwest, in places where the majority of the population is elderly and young people are needed to keep schools, businesses and rural communities running.

The fourth section presents intense, revealing analysis on the educational experiences of migrants' sons and daughters. The authors view the level of schooling of young Latinos as indicators of their job and wage potential, and the results are not very encouraging.

The possibilities for children of poor migrant workers to surpass their parents' socioeconomic level are minimal. Young Mexicans face many barriers to remaining in school, and the authors highlight four factors that contribute the most to poor school performance: their age when arriving and entering school; their family situations; individual experiences in school; and whether or not they have immigration documents.

The fifth section invites the reader to reflect upon the construction of the Latino identity, migration policies and political participation by migrants. This series of studies is especially interesting, since it also discusses the origins and development of the Chicano movement. An innovative methodology known as "cybertestimony" is used to provide some examples of experiences and types of reasoning that figure into the multiple identities of Latinos in the United States. And it is pointed out that the only important element in relation to this minority's identity is U.S. society's perception, that they, like all Latinos, are not part of it and therefore do not belong there. This section also proposes that migrants contribute to redefining the meaning of being a "citizen"—with an understanding that goes beyond legal questions and the Latino identity—as an individual with the right to belong, based on his or her experience in that country.

Elaine Levine's work clearly inspires reflection on the impact of Latinos on the society, economy, culture and politics in migrants' communities of origin and destination. The book she has edited is based on an exhaustive study of the literature on this topic, lending a documentary quality that will be of great interest for anyone wishing to benefit from a comprehensive, dynamic viewpoint. The conclusions at the end of each chapter point to the need for the U.S. government to pay more attention to migration, and the urgent need for greater cooperation with governments of the countries of origin. ■■■

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