

A City for Everyone

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas*

Mexico City's Federal District is half the metropolitan area. The Federal District (D.F.) is both the capital of the republic and the official seat of the federal government. Mexico City is one of the most populated cities in the world, encompassing not only the D.F., but also parts of the states of Mexico and Hidalgo. In addition, it is one of the most polluted cities in the world. Built over one of the country's most active seismic areas, the city has an extremely high concentration of industry and businesses, vehicles, and cultural and health institutions. It permanently attracts people, activities and all kinds of investment. It has not been able to organize and provide public services efficiently and equitably, nor satisfy economic, social and cultural needs. It houses the largest concentration of military in the country. It is the seat of the highest ecclesiastic authorities and is a religious center and the financial hub of the country. At the same time, the city is a jumbled complex of relations where social inequalities are the sharpest and conflicts of every kind are most acute—poverty and marginalization, family disintegration, homeless children, informal economy, etc. It is a place where the crime rate and organized crime are daily on the increase.

Mexico City was the main center of the Aztec dominions in pre-Hispanic times; later it was the colonial capital, and after Independence, the nation's capital. Since

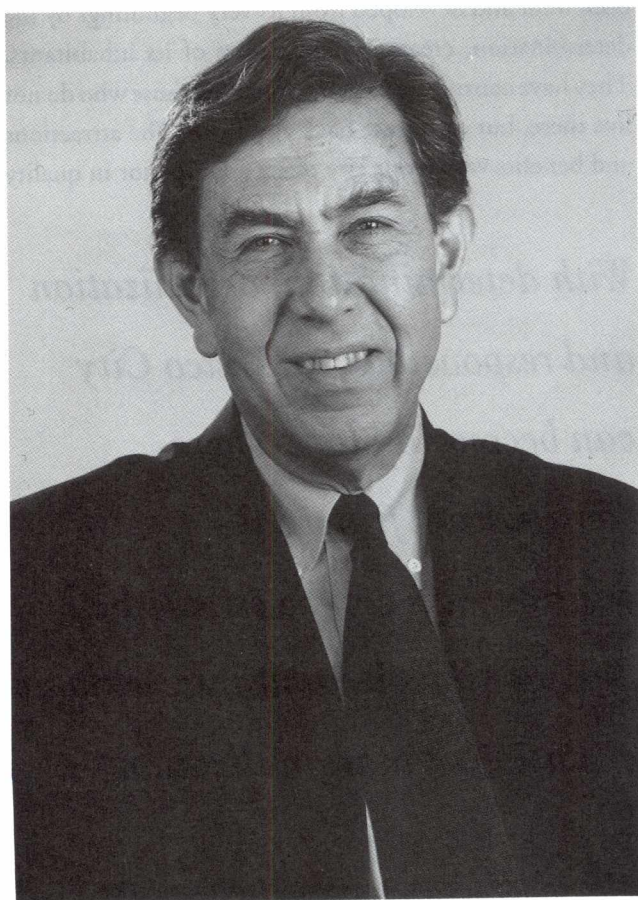


Photo: PRD Press Office

* Candidate for mayor of Mexico City's Federal District for the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD).



Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas at Mexico's City Sports Center.

before becoming a federal district, it was the center of political decision making. But it is the only part of the country with a special form of government, which means that its inhabitants, and particularly its citizens,¹ have been deprived of their full constitutional rights.

Mexico City, with its rich and myriad heritage, has been built and developed from its very beginnings by the determination, creativity and efforts of its inhabitants. They have contributed a great deal, even those who do not live there, but commute back and forth. The attractions and benefits which our city offers are superior in quality

*With determination, organization
and responsibility, Mexico City
can become a place where
constructive, fraternal
relationships can be established
among all its inhabitants, without
exclusion or marginalization.*

¹ Mexicans become citizens upon coming of age. [Editor's Note.]

and quantity to those of any other urban center in the country. Its economic activity and all the initiatives that emerge from it are part of its people's determination to make the nation's capital a productive, generous, hospitable and inhabitable city for everyone.

On September 19, 1985, our city suffered one of the worst, most destructive earthquakes ever recorded in our country. Thousands died and others disappeared; many buildings were destroyed or damaged throughout the city. From this misfortune came, first, a great feeling of human fraternity which lessened the severity of the tragedy. Then, starting from that solidarity and an exemplary collective effort in the face of a government paralyzed by shock and guilt, growing awareness and collective determination would finally make it possible for the people to organize on their own and express their demands, both their immediate demands and those pent up over a long period of time, and make a new start, both materially and spiritually.

* * *

The urban policy of neoliberalism, proposed, defended and orchestrated by the PRI and the PAN and on the basis of which the capital has been developing in recent years, has resulted in a rising cost of living and things getting more and more difficult daily. Only those who can meet those rising costs are supposed to live here and endure. As for the rest of the people, neither their future nor their existence seem to matter.

The year 1997 is opening up new opportunities, different from any that have come before. The citizens of Mexico City will be able to change their quality of life by electing a new head of government and the members of the new Legislative Assembly, mandating them all to orient and guide the capital's future development.

The July 6 election is an opportunity for the democratic forces of the D.F. to oppose the policy that means that only those who can pay its rising costs should be able to live in the city. It is an opportunity to establish a policy to develop a democratic, decent way of life through active and growing public participation, an opportunity to create a city for everyone, with a different form of government.



Photo: Gustavo Graf / Imagenlatina

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and his daughter Camila campaigning for the nomination at a union rally.

The city we want is a far cry from the city we have. Can we possibly imagine a city and Valley of Mexico with clear skies, without crime, without tension or corruption? Most of us want to change our city for the better. But some want to change it for their own personal profit, even if that means degrading the quality of life for everyone and making our city into a place less and less inhabitable for the majority.

The city's problems are not insoluble. What has been lacking is the determination and political rectitude needed to face them. The population and its legitimate demands have taken back seat to corruption, insensitivity, the patronage system, complicity and favoritism.

With determination, organization and responsibility, Mexico City can become a place where constructive, fraternal relationships can be established among all its inhabitants, without exclusion or marginalization, where the wealth of resources generated by its development are benefits shared by all. It must be understood that city management, the solution of its problems and the fostering of

its potentialities cannot be the task of a single person, a single official or even of a single organization. It must be the task of the entire population of the metropolis.

The Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) has presented the inhabitants of the Federal District with a proposal to positively and democratically transform the current situation of our capital. The proposal is developed with the following guidelines:

- *Decentralization*: from the redistribution of the population and economic activities in more appropriate places, to the change in jurisdiction and resource management that allow for applying policies and executing programs for the D.F. as well as the whole metropolitan area.
- *Democratization* of all spheres of political and economic activity, culture, planning and daily life, as a result of a new way of governing, with the people and for the people.
- The qualitative *transformation of government functioning*, putting an end to discretionary power, corporatism, the use of public office for personal gain and



The kick-off of the Cárdenas campaign at Mexico City's central Zócalo square.

corruption in the capital's public administration, replacing the old way with honest, effective, republican government understood by the people.

- The *construction of a state with social responsibility* which assumes its constitutional functions to end all types of marginalization and establishes a pact with the different social actors, majority and minorities alike, with the aim of sustained improvement of the population's living conditions.
- *Implementation of an alternative form of urban economic growth* with sustained and sustainable equitable distribution of income and social justice, which would have as its objective the well-being of the whole population and would preserve (or restore and increase) the natural resources and the environment for capital residents of today and the future.
- *Shared responsibility between government and society*, based on mutual trust and respect for each other's respective areas of decision making, an openness to dialogue, agreeing on joint action, public participation and the living up to agreements, at the same time that the constitutional, social and political rights of the entire population are protected.
- *Governability based on democratic practices*, an end to the violation of the people's rights through abuses and omission, the guaranteed safety of the individual, unrestricted transparency and honesty in government, far-sighted planning, an equitable distribution of the costs and benefits of economic and social development and getting at the root of problems to solve them. ❧