

VOICES *of Mexico*

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**Felipe Calderón's
Foreign Policy**
Leonardo Curzio

**The Lessons of
The Mexican Elections**
Pedro Salazar Ugarte

**Accountability and Higher
Education in Mexico**
Alonso Gómez-Robledo V.

**The New Social Security
Law for Public Servants**
Gustavo Leal

**Insights into the Future
Of Mexican Oil**
Articles by David Shields and
Víctor Rodríguez

**Undocumented Migration
And Human Rights**
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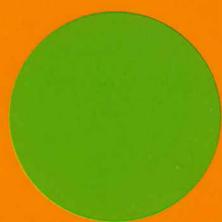


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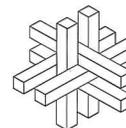
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Cover

Miguel Cabrera, *From a Mestizo and an Indian Is Born A Coyote*, 1763, Mexico (oil on canvas).
Elisabeth Waldo-Dentzel Collection, Northidge Studios.

Back Cover

Attributed to Diego de Atienza, *Monstrance*, 1649, Lima (poured, chiseled and engraved gold-plated silver with enamel). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Friedsam Collection, property of Michael Friedsam.

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Mauricio Degollado

OUR VOICE

“We are finished with this for the time being,” said Senator Harry Reid, Democrat from Nevada and majority leader, as he turned the Senate to work on energy legislation. That was his reaction to the Senate vote (50-45), which was insufficient to end the debate on the immigration reform and put it to the vote. Those in favor of ending the debate and voting on the bill needed 60 votes. In other words, the reform will not be approved in the short term.

Thus, temporarily at least, the Senate and its leader concluded a debate that has been harsh and ferocious from the beginning. The latest summary of the proposed reform, in its last stages backed by the White House, had a rocky beginning and was clearly promoted at a bad time, when the U.S. political class considers this a *toxic* issue, which, as such, cannot be dealt with as freely as they would like. Even so, though it seems very contradictory, presidential pressure led the issue into a tense congressional debate that resulted in the polemical senatorial vote. In the same sense, we have commented here and elsewhere, the political moment in the United States does not admit *anomalous* issues in the political debate. Much less when the overwhelming weight of the enormous foreign policy failure of the war against terror and particularly the tragic adventure in Iraq are added to the priorities of the presidential primaries, all of which has a huge impact on the debate about this and other sensitive issues in Washington and throughout the country.

Although U.S. immigration legislation urgently needs reforming, neither the government nor society were duly prepared to deal with them fully. This can be explained on two levels: first, U.S. society is divided about its present and its future. This polarity existed even before 9/11, but was deepened by the terrorist attacks. In addition to its loss of innocence, it was subjected to unprecedented pressure about its response to the world and its enemies. Even if only partially, U.S. society has been forced to support a foreign policy in Iraq that from its very beginnings could be seen as weak and false. Knowing how weak its society is in times of crisis, the White House promoted nationalist euphoria that initially received a favorable response, to the point that it got President George W. Bush reelected (even if an important number of voters did do an about-face). Thus, government blackmail was very effective. In the second place, the Bush administration, like no other in modern U.S. history, is facing a credibility and popularity crisis both domestically and internationally. The reason has already been explained: the U.S. administration went to the extreme in its antiterrorist obsession; but it is perhaps the outrageous exercise of *hard power* that has relieved Washington of the moral power that it once had among its European, Latin American and other allies around the globe. Anti-Americanism has grown as never before throughout the world and, alongside that, Washington’s moral authority has decreased as it has been unable to make its exercise of power credible. To this extent the U.S. state suffers internally the consequences of this growing deterioration. Because it has not understood the limits of its power, the establishment has been incapable of making some fundamental aspects of its sustainability visible (with the regret and self-imposed silence of a good number of political and social actors, those who have usually belonged to the rational center). This crisis, which transcends the Iraq policy, as can be seen daily in the scandals the Bush administration has been implicated in, has played out most contradictorily on the domestic stage. Today, it was immigration reform that suffered the blow; tomorrow, that enormous wear and tear on the U.S. political establishment will cause other reverses. It will perhaps be then —and it is devoutly to be wished— that Americans will stop a moment and have to think again about Santayana’s magnificent maxim: “Those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it.”

* * *

Of course, immigration reform affects Mexico directly. This is why Mexico’s new administration’s actions to push for the most favorable possible decision in the United States are very important. It may need to reformulate the country’s international alliances and its foreign policy strategies. In our “International Affairs” section, we include an article by analyst Leonardo Curzio who goes into great detail about what are emerging as the main outlines of President Felipe Calderón’s foreign policy, among which the author recognizes a more pragmatic vision and the explicit intention of deepening relations with Latin America. Recently, most Latin American nations have undertaken different attempts at integration and democratic

consolidation. Nevertheless, significant conflicts subsist both among and within these countries. Very often these conflicts are violent and have prevented the consolidation of peace in the hemisphere, as Luis Díaz Müller shows in his contribution to our “Politics” section. This issue of *Voices of Mexico* also includes researcher Ariadna Estévez’s reflection about the link between undocumented migration and human rights.

Domestically, we can say that one of the main political themes of the new administration’s first six months is political actors’ new willingness to finally bring about the much-needed reform of the state. In his article, political analyst Pedro Salazar establishes some of the orientations that will necessarily have to be taken into account in that reform, among them, the urgently needed debate about the relevance today of the presidentialist system. Two other topics that have been in the public eye are transparency and accountability on the one hand, and the respect for human rights, on the other. We dedicate our “Society” section to these issues, starting with an article by Alonso Gómez-Robledo V., a member of the council of the Institute for Access to Public Information, who examines transparency in Mexican institutions of higher education. The second contribution to this section is from academic Rubén García Clarck, who looks at the recent performance of the National Human Rights Commission, centering on the analysis of its recommendations and their scant impact on the behavior of public institutions under investigation.

Undoubtedly in the first half of 2007, the reform of Mexico’s social security system for public employees (through the so-called ISSSTE Law) has become one of the issues that has most polarized society. Specialist Gustavo Leal describes from a critical, comparative perspective what he considers to be this law’s unfortunate consequences for state employees, comparing them to the reforms other countries have implemented in their social security systems. We have also included in our “Economy” section two contributions about the very sensitive issue of declining oil production in Mexico. David Shields, a well-known energy consultant, offers us a general panorama of the crisis of Pemex’s oil and gas production, and Víctor Rodríguez looks at what seem to be very rich oil fields discovered along the border with the United States and in the Gulf of Mexico, that make an agreement about the exploitation of the shared deposits urgent.

* * *

This issue’s “Art and Culture” section is dedicated to the magnum exhibition “Revelations. The Arts in Latin America, 1492-1820”, which brought together a huge number of works that are part of the opulent legacy of the Spanish viceroyalties and Portuguese-dominated Brazil. This text is followed by an article about the artistic career of América Gabrielle, who in addition to being a sculptress and painter, is an untiring art promoter. Next comes an article about the La Quebrada cliff divers, whose stunning feats are part of the golden age of Acapulco. Lastly, we touch on film and three Mexican directors whose work has brought them international renown; in this issue, we present an article about the first of them, Alfonso Cuarón.

Our “The Splendor of Mexico” section is dedicated to a region of Michoacán where tradition and craft-making are more alive than ever. One article deals with efforts to promote respect and preserve traditional wear in indigenous communities in the Uruapan region; another touches on the abundant, versatile folk crafts made in more than 200 communities. The section finishes with an article about the Paricutín volcano, born suddenly in the mid-1940s, a part of local history. In “Museums” we look at Uruapan’s La Huatapera, a place that pays homage to Michoacán’s four indigenous peoples.

We dedicate our “Literature” and “In Memoriam” sections to one of Mexico’s most renowned writers of twentieth-century Mexican *costumbrista* literature, depicting local customs and manners. Recently deceased Rafael Ramírez Heredia undoubtedly deserves this small homage, for his legacy as a novelist and short-story writer, but also because of his indefatigable work as the teacher of many generations of Mexican writers in his famous literary workshops. Precisely one of his most outstanding disciples, Gilda Salinas, writes about his work and career.

* * *

I will end by informing our readers that because of increasing printing and editing costs, we are obliged to reduce the number of issues we produce a year: starting with this issue, we will be publishing every four months. *Voices of Mexico* is a very important project for disseminating Mexican culture among English-speaking peoples and nations. For that reason, we will continue our best efforts in its preparation. For the time being, we have preferred to reduce the number of issues, but maintain and improve the magazine’s quality by focusing on new and more original sections and material.

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde

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The Lessons of the Elections

Pedro Salazar Ugarte*



Germán Romero/Cuartsuro

The Federal Electoral Institute General Council sessioning during the 2006 elections.

On July 2, 2006, the electoral authorities' worst nightmare came true: in a country fraught with poverty and inequality, the right-wing governing National Action Party won by a narrow margin of 0.56 percent of the vote, defeating a left coalition headed up by a charismatic candidate who had launched his campaign with an important advantage despite federal government attempts to stop him. This made it natural for the frustrated losers to seek refuge and consolation in irrational but fecund conspiracy theories.

It is true that, with time, the fraud hypothesis was not backed up by empirical evidence, but it is also true that the tone of the presidential campaigns, the meddling of businessmen and the president in the campaign (the former illegal and the latter illegitimate in Mexico), the well-founded hopes for a left victory and the photo finish at the polls awakened in many Mexicans their historical mistrust of electoral officials and institutions. This is why polling reported that about 30 percent of Mexican citizens think that there was electoral fraud.

In the following pages, I will propose some keys for interpreting what happened and suggest certain measures

to avoid a repeat performance. Of course, I am aware that uncertainty about outcomes is normal in any democratic system and that, for that very reason, close elections will always be on the horizon.

A PROBLEM CALLED PRESIDENTIALISM

Presidentialism has been very bad for Latin America. The problem is not new, but its effects have made themselves felt again during the transitions toward a democratic constitutional model: the personalization of politics paves the way toward a return to populism, not the consolidation of democracy. At least in this, it is a good idea to turn toward Euro-

* Researcher at the UNAM Institute for Legal Research.

pe and forget the United States. After all, as Robert Dahl has taught, in matters of democracy and constitutionalism, the U.S. model is the old one and the new one is the post-war model that has flourished on the other side of the Atlantic. There, although personalities are important—just remember Silvio Berlusconi—the legislative branch is the axis around which politics turns. Here, even though there is a congress, the pivot of power has a first and last name: Hugo Chávez, Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva, Néstor Kirchner, Michèle Bachelet, Evo Morales, Felipe Calderón, etc. It is not by chance that candidates without a party—erroneously called independent—have emerged so often in these lands, nor that legislatures enjoy such low prestige.

The institutional design of presidentialism is the backdrop that explains a sizeable part of people’s dramatic reaction to the 2006 electoral results. The two frontrunners, Felipe Calderón and Andrés Manuel López Obrador, personified the aspirations, fears and frustrations of millions of Mexicans. For that reason, although neither got more than 35 percent of the vote, when the race got close, emotions boiled over. The almost 15 million voters who cast their ballots for each of them experienced the electoral outcome as an absolute victory/defeat. Those are the perverse results of the “winner-takes-all” arrangement: the loser, at least in the presidential race, is left with nothing. In a parliamentary system, by contrast, the defeated candidate is the leader of the opposition and—most importantly—operates from the legislature. For that reason, even though the left made its best showing in history by almost doubling its Senate seats and winning 150 additional deputyships compared to only six years

before, López Obrador’s followers experienced the federal election as a failure. In fact, the resounding defeat of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the formerly hegemonic, authoritarian party that in only three years lost 27 Senate seats and 105 seats in the lower chamber, went practically unnoticed. The competition between the frontrunners obscured the merits of the democratic Olympics.

Strengthening the legislative branch, putting it at the center of national politics as a space for discussion, deliberation and decision-making is the most ambitious challenge suggested by the 2006 elections. Making politics par-

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liamentary through institutional reforms that would weaken the president and strengthen the legislature throughout Latin America is the only way to strengthen parties as opposed to caudillos, institutions as opposed to personalities. Real democratic governability lies on this road and not on the road that imposes a single will over collegiate pluralism, as Alberto Fujimori used to like or Hugo Chávez is attracted to. The reformer’s compass must lead us toward practices like reelection for the legislature or even a true parliamentary system and not, as some propose, toward strengthening the executive branch by instituting a second round of voting in

presidential elections, government by decree or weakening legislative pluralism by reducing the number of deputies and/or senators. In Mexico, for example, the transition to democracy included the creation of what were called “plurinominal” deputies, or so-called party-deputies (deputies elected by proportional representation), which allowed the opposition parties to gain representation in legislatures. Eliminating this would simply be a step backward toward the abyss. Supporting the democratic system means creating more democracy, not less. To reinforce the rule of law, it is necessary to advance toward a “government of laws” and not toward postmodern reformulations of “a government of men.”

PARADOXES OF THIS UNFORTUNATE REALM OF INEQUALITY

A real electoral reform, at least in Mexico, must include a radical change in the relationship between politics and the mass media, above all at election time. Current legislation allows for a perverse formula that can be summarized as follows: national political parties receive huge amounts of public monies which, every three years when there are mid-term and or presidential elections, end up in the pockets of the big radio and television networks, that is, the pockets of two people.¹

Sad paradoxes of this unfortunate realm of inequality: at election time, government resources benefit the rich and alienate the poor. We should immediately point out that the problem is not in the decision to emphasize public monies over private monies for the parties. In fact, as electoral events of the last 10 years show, this system has favored

equality in the competition and hindered the transfer of “dirty” money into politics. The problem resides in the amounts and destination of the funds. And the best way to justify reducing these amounts is by restricting the parties’ options for spending them; concretely, in banning political ads in the broadcast media. I understand that this might seem an unjustified limitation on fundamental freedoms, but what is at stake are the institutions that make those freedoms possible, and therefore, apparently paradoxically, that limitation—which would also be directed at the holders of media licenses—is a precondition for democracy itself becoming viable.

The problem of the “media-ization” of political competition is not just a matter of money. As the 2006 Mexican presidential campaign eloquently demonstrated, electoral publicity in the mass media tends to simplify the message, trivialize public issues, and, in the extreme case, demonize all adversaries. Some might think that this is inevitable and even positive: politics, they will say, is confrontation, and in politics, like in love and war, everything goes. Nevertheless, there are those of us who accept only the first part of that reasoning: politics is confrontation, that is true, but for it to be democratic, it has to take place within certain perimeters and echo principles like tolerance, respect for pluralism, legality, etc. That is the logic of current Mexican legislation, which stipulates that parties must “abstain from any expression that implies a diatribe, slander, libel, affront, defamation or that denigrates the citizenry, public institutions or other political parties and their candidates, particularly during electoral campaigns and in political publicity materials used dur-

ing said campaigns,” as stated in Article 38 of the Federal Code of Electoral Institutions and Procedures (Cofipe). Otherwise, the fight for power continues to be *political*, but stops being *democratic* and threatens to go beyond institutional bounds. The 2006 experience offers a factual basis for this warning.

During the presidential campaign, advised by publicists and marketing specialists, most of Mexico’s political parties ignored this norm. Thus, during the campaigns, rancor, multiplied by the media, divided the supporters of the front-runners into the good guys and the bad guys, the honest and corrupt, the democrats and the fascists. These extremely

The institutional design of presidentialism is the backdrop that explains part of people’s dramatic reaction to the 2006 electoral results. The two front-runners personified the aspirations and fears of millions of Mexicans.

offensive pairs of adjectives were simultaneously and indistinctly hurled back and forth from one side to the other. And, as we discovered, saddened and surprised, after the election, many Mexicans remained trapped in the friend/enemy logic reminiscent of Karl Schmitt. This adversarial climate undoubtedly increased the pressure and the intensity of the accusations flung at the electoral authorities. Given the intensity of the barrage, the arbiter seemed like a babe amidst a band of scoundrels.

This is why purchasing airtime for political ads should be banned definitively, like in some European countries. This does not imply that politics and

democratic discussion would be banned on radio and television, but it would put an end to paid ads in the media. Nevertheless, the media should be obligated to allow the dissemination of ideas and to broadcast programs by the different political forces in equal conditions, as well as to use government time slots to air proposals from parties and their candidates. This would, on the one hand, radically reduce campaign costs (and therefore, the amounts received by parties could be significantly cut back), and, on the other hand, in principle it would generate the incentives necessary to prioritize explaining ideas instead of insults, proposals instead of whims. And, along the way, to kill three birds with one stone, campaign length should also be shortened; today a presidential candidate’s campaign lasts 166 days (23 and a half weeks); senators’ campaigns, 91 days (13 weeks); and deputies’ campaigns, 70 days (10 weeks).

THE INFILTRATORS

In 2006, actors other than political parties and their candidates took a hand in electoral competition as never before, riding roughshod over the rules; and, obviously, when they could, they did it through the mass media. One example was President Vicente Fox, who illegitimately used public resources and drew his sword to strike left candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador. Another example was, despite being explicitly banned by law, some businessmen, members of the Businessmen’s Coordinating Council (CCE) and certain interest groups expressing their preference for the winning candidate.

In some countries, this is considered normal and even desirable. In Mex-

ico, given the design of our legislation which, among other things bans reelection, and the hostility that finally marked the campaign, they fed the interpretation of those who saw the electoral outcome as the culmination of a plot against the candidate of the Coalition for the Good of All, López Obrador. To top it all off, in an act of profound, cynical irresponsibility, when the Electoral Tribunal, the legal body responsible for judging the election, denounced the offenses and excesses of both Fox and the CCE, they both ignored the judges and acted as though their actions had been legitimate. More fuel on the fire.

In the future, we have two choices: either legislation includes effective punishment for those who violate this kind of ban, or the restriction should be lifted and everyone should be allowed to intervene in the campaigns. The coming reform must be clear on this point. It is true that the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) General Council could have tried more energetically to stop the “negative campaigns” and to prevent the continued broadcast of the spots paid for by the businessmen and the president’s office against López Obrador. But it is also true that they did not have the legal tools (legislation stipulating effective, timely sanctions that could actually be enforced) needed to put a definitive stop to them; and this was taken advantage of by those who are now demanding respect for the arbiter of the race. The president, parties and businessmen, knowing that the electoral authorities could not punish them effectively, lent a deaf ear to IFE accords, communiqués and calls to obey the law, and in doing so, were jointly responsible for the deterioration of its credibility.

These illegitimate and/or illegal interventions that have had such an important impact on the post-electoral ambiance in Mexico are an additional argument for definitively banning the sale of political ads by the media. In fact, in an apparent paradox, a legal restriction of this kind could be accompanied by a liberalization of citizens’ participation and the participation of their organizations in electoral campaigns. After all, in any self-respecting democracy, the door for expressing preferences and supporting political options must be open for all; what is not legitimate is using that opportunity to denigrate your adversary or taking advan-

Illegitimate and/or illegal interventions that had such an important impact on the post-electoral ambiance in Mexico are an additional argument for definitively banning the sale of political ads by the media.

tage of privileged positions (political, economic or ideological power) to have an impact on the race. For this reason, and because of their cost and the interests involved, political ads in the media must be banned equally for everyone. What must be done is to design legislation that would allow the citizenry to openly express its political preferences but that, in addition to ensuring a quality debate, would also make certain that it is not only the voices of the politically and/or economically powerful that could be heard by banning their broadcast or publication in the mass media. This would be the best *signum prognosticum* for the future.

CONCLUSIONS

The IFE General Council made politically important, isolated errors that were its fault during the presidential election. Concretely, electoral counselors have been accused of

- a) not announcing voting trends on election night;
- b) being rather unconvincing when they explained the reasons for that omission; and
- c) clumsily and confusedly explaining the reasons that they had not included the votes from some tally sheets that were said to contain certain inconsistencies in a Program of Preliminary Electoral Results (PREP), which makes it possible to consult the election results on the Internet polling place by polling place, even if these results were not legally binding.

Although these decisions had been previously agreed upon by all the political parties, they were not reported to the public in a timely, precise manner. The mistake, in light of the election outcome, became enormously important, and, as Jeremy Bentham warned, a belated explanation does not always repair the damage of a first mistaken impression. When a project is not transparent, the public may harbor serious, sinister misgivings. This is the case, above all, when one of the contenders—in this case the Coalition for the Good of All—decides to take advantage of the authorities’ waffling to feed the spiral of mistrust. The negligent inexperience of some and the disloyalty to democracy of others put the electoral institutions in check.

But the electoral institution had a flaw from the beginning that cannot be attributed to the officials who were members of its decision-making body: the appointment of the president and electoral counselors in 2003 was the result of a disagreement, not a political compromise. Many of us predicted the evils that this flaw portended, above all if the final outcome turned out like the one we witnessed in the presidential elections, like a bad joke of fate. The lack of a political agreement to back up the arbiters' appointment contaminated the public's evaluation of their performance, very often unjustly, and undermined their political authority. The solution to this original sin is not—at least not neces-

sarily— replacing the members of the electoral body, but rather all the existing political forces, or at least the three most important ones, categorically showing confidence in the arbiter. And this has to be achieved before 2009. Respect for the arbiter's decisions is a political, not a legal, requirement for future elections. In this same sense, it would be a good idea to find, once and for all, a way to gradually renovate the administrative and judicial electoral authorities' decision-making bodies. As we have seen, it is worth it.

The only promising route forward for reforming the electoral institutions is compromise, agreement among the parties. As Hans Kelsen knew, compromise means postponing what sep-

arates partners in favor of what unites them. Every agreement, every pact, is a compromise, because compromise means mutual tolerance. That political pact must result from a deliberation and a broad, responsible negotiation because the idea is to agree on the “rules of the game” to be used to compete for political power. This is a competition that, as Karl Popper said, can only be peaceful when it manages to be democratic. **MM**

NOTES

- ¹ The author is referring to Emilio Azcárraga Jean, the owner of Televisa, and Ricardo Salinas Pliego, from Televisión Azteca, two of Mexico's most powerful businessmen. [Editor's Note.]



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Peace and Development In Latin America

Luis T. Díaz Müller*



Alfredo Guerrero/Cuartoscuro

President Calderón with Latin American presidents and governors during the Puebla-Panama Plan Summit.

INTRODUCTION

Peace is not just the absence of war. In the case of Latin America, the study of peace must be linked to matters of development and democracy. This attempt at globally interpreting the variables peace, development and democracy is part of the framework of a neo-structural analysis of Latin America.

*Researcher at the UNAM Institute for Legal Research (luist@servidor.unam.mx).

Underdevelopment marks the direction of the continent. Old and new theories attempt to explain its causes and possible alternatives. The current stage of globalization, begun between 1989 and 1990, offers new elements—probably negative ones—for structuring peace with social justice that could be called “*pax democrática*.”¹

The relationship of bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes to development, peace models and the democratic challenge deserves a lot of thought; plus, they prompt the question of whether a

regional peace without democracy and development is possible.

What is clear is that at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Latin American regimes have moved from authoritarianism to formal democracy without promoting development, thus creating weak democracies. We can say, therefore, that a lasting peace will not be produced solely by the advent of a stage favorable to development, but by an authentic democracy that makes it possible to negotiate “among equals” to overcome the conflicts that may arise in the

future. As we shall see, development and democracy are necessary but insufficient prerequisites for regional peace.

LATIN AMERICA:
PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

The weakness of nation-states for dealing with important crises reflects the inability of political regimes to overcome the poverty line and, of course, underdevelopment. One example is Argentina's 2001 crisis under President Fernando de la Rúa.

There is an unavoidable link between peace and development. A *pax democratica* implies the existence, exercise and preservation of social rights, the right to housing, health care, education and work, for which comprehensive development plays a preponderant role.²

The weakness of institutions and lack of democratic traditions are part of the lack of democratic development in the region.³ Without falling into "determinism," it is logical to think that, as trends, the lack of development and democracy brings with it an absence of regional peace reflected, for example, in coup d'états.

Poverty, a characteristic of underdevelopment, becomes the main cause of the lack of comprehensive democratic development. In *El problema de la guerra y las vías de la paz* (The Problem of War and the Road to Peace), Norberto Bobbio writes that war is a blocked road that creates enormous confidence in the balance of terror: the impossibility of war.⁴

But, are there economic growth rates that are more favorable for keeping the peace? I do not think so. There is no such thing as a political-economic deter-

minism that manifests a peace policy fostered by macro-economic indicators. What does happen is that military governments are more likely to take a military way out, just like the case of Argentina with the Falklands War.⁵

Authoritarianism, for its part, has been linked with the "national" question, with nationalism, and this has resulted in a series of armed conflicts of different dimensions:⁶ this is the case of Argentina, the civil war in Colombia, the political violence in Peru and certain conflicts in Mexico.

Violence organized from the state, like a modern Leviathan, has controlled civil society, if not made it completely disappear. Permanent economic crisis has created instability, emigration and violence.⁷ Once again, the bureaucratic authoritarian state imposed in Argentina by Héctor Cámpora in the 1970s is an ominous example of this state terrorism.

LATIN AMERICA: GLOBALIZATION,
PEACE AND NEOLIBERALISM

It is commonplace to say that Latin America arrived late and unequally to the beginning of globalization. What is worthwhile asking is to what extent globalization and neoliberalism affect the peace of our societies. However, there is no causal relationship between the two aspects of the problem.

A lasting peace will not be produced
solely by the advent of a stage favorable to development,
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it possible to negotiate "among equals."

A first idea is that the existence of the neoliberal wave, as Touraine writes, increases and deepens the contradictions of the globalized nation-state.⁸ In that sense we can say that neoliberalism has failed in its promise of development, since the majority of the population does not benefit from its supposed political and economic miracles.

In the second place, the globalization process accentuated ethnic and nationalist conflicts. For example, the Iran war "monopolized" the existence of global violence. However, many ethnic and "internal wars" continue to exist on a national level, such as the long civil war in Colombia, a far cry from the now defunct Cold War. A third effect of globalization, because it exacerbates conflicts and asymmetries between the center and the periphery, is that it has increased the risk of conflicts between powers, states and ethnic groups, as well as sub-regional wars like the Iraq War.

Lastly, neoliberalism should be linked to worsening conditions for peace and Latin American regional development. Privatizations, the supremacy of the market, *ad hoc* structural adjustments and the dismantling of the welfare state are all associated with globalization policies and offer a different, hegemonic vision of national problems and the global society. In this sense, they cause a move from classic wars to "globalized," "trans-state" wars, whether they be civil or ethnic wars.

DEMOCRACY AND PEACE
IN THE REGION: THE PEACE
AGREEMENTS

Peace agreements have become fashionable: for example, ETA's negotiations in Spain. But, what would a stable peace look like?⁹ A positive peace is the guarantee of a stable peace in which there is a state monopoly of power, the rule of law, social justice, democratic participation, a culture of constructive conflict and self-control of countries due to their interdependence.

The national question plays an important role in globalization conflicts. Certainly, in many cases, these conflicts take on a markedly ethnic slant, and they have become a characteristic of the globalization process: Ireland (as a national movement), Kosovo, Bosnia Herzegovina and Latin American indigenous movements are examples.

POVERTY: DEVELOPMENT,
GROWTH AND PEACE

It is tempting and fascinating to think about the relationship between growth, development and peace. Methodologically, it can only be thought of as a trend, rather than an inextricable, mechanical, causal relationship.

The proposal of neoliberal models, if we consider that they began to be imposed in the region in the late 1980s, was not closely related to representative democracy. The era of bureaucratic-authoritarian states is quite consistent with neoliberal formulas.¹⁰ When democratization processes began, paradoxically this reinforced globalization with incomplete, weak transitions to representative democracy. In a word: without establishing social rights, since

At the beginning of
the twenty-first century, Latin American
regimes have moved from authoritarianism to formal
democracy without promoting development,
thus creating weak democracies.

poverty and inequality not only continued, but actually increased.¹¹ As we know, poverty and domestic social polarization have awakened sharp contradictions in Latin American societies,¹² incurring high social costs, exclusion, tension and frequently a clash of intolerant ideologies.¹³

The *pax democratica* is a difficult equation to conceive. According to Latin-Barómetro, while in 2002, 57 percent of the population thought that democracy was the best form of government, only 33 percent was satisfied with its functioning. "It is not very believable that the disrepute in which democracy is held in our region corresponds to a preference for dictatorships. Latin American citizens are very familiar with the horrors of dictatorships, whether directly or indirectly, and they long for effective democracies that fulfill the principles that inspire this form of government."¹⁴

The crisis of the 1980s deepened poverty and inequality. From that we learned that macro-economic imbalances and fiscal irresponsibility are not a good recipe for achieving sustainable growth and that their effects can be devastating.¹⁵ The average growth rate was 3.2 percent a year, a far cry from the 6 percent needed to reduce technological and social backwardness, as the ECLAC had pointed out in 2000.

Since 1990, Latin America's rhythm of growth has only averaged 2.6 per-

cent, half of the figure attained during state-led industrialization in the 1950s and 1960s (5.5 percent). Even the best performance of the "new-style development," between 1990 and 1997, only produced a 3.7 percent annual growth rate, very much below what Latin America experienced until the debt crisis.¹⁶

This made a paradoxical advance possible: Latin America became the region that most clearly combined the advance in representative democracy with market liberalization. All this poses a question: Is it possible to achieve *pax democratica* under a neoliberal regime?

NEOLIBERALISM:
PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

Neoliberalism places the market at the center of public affairs. Ocampo estimates that a new equilibrium is needed between the market and public interest "that will make it possible to deal with the powerful centrifugal forces of globalized markets."¹⁷ A correct analysis of the relationship between neoliberalism and *pax democratica* means asking ourselves about the possible scenarios. Ulrich Beck proposes cosmopolitanism, which involves the experience of the crisis of world society, interdependence, the principle of recognizing the differences in world society, that of cosmopolitan empathy and the

This article situates itself
in the theoretical tradition of the analysis of
the *pax democrática* as a central concept for studying
the relationships between peace, globalization
and development.

change of perspective, that of the impossibility of living in a world society without borders, and that of the mix and interpenetration of cultures.¹⁸

In a cosmopolitan framework, the relationship between neoliberalism and *pax democrática* might be timely. The democratic idea would be the one that allows for civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights to be in force. In that sense, the neostructuralist perspective put forward new alternatives when it called for a “total” market to be in force, reformulated a selective strategy of imports and exports, and proposed direct action by the state in the fight against poverty. But, does it have any relation with the universalization of neoliberal democracy? Naturally, since the idea is to adapt the economic model to the political model: market democracy. The problem lies in the fact that neoliberal or market democracy has not managed to decrease poverty and underdevelopment levels; it has not been capable of resolving the social debt and unemployment.

The challenge is to build an egalitarian democracy, which first of all means a correspondence between democracy and citizenship. Beyond political rights, it implies recognizing the current validity of the values of equality, solidarity and non-discrimination. In the second place, it means admitting that democracy is diversity. That is to say, it is necessary to recognize

that there are many alternatives, the freedom to choose among the different kinds of existing welfare states.

CONCLUSIONS

It is impossible to sustain *pax democrática* without a real democracy; and representative democracy is the best environment—necessary though insufficient—for keeping the peace.

The “end of history” is not the disappearance of the state. We can say that the current dispute is about whether there is a larger or smaller state, a larger or smaller market.

Peace is a comprehensive concept, just like development. This article situates itself in the theoretical tradition of the analysis of the *pax democrática* as a central concept for studying the relationships between peace, globalization and development, as well as their connection to the neoliberal system.¹⁹ ■■■

NOTES

¹ Mark Pecera and Carolina C. Beer, “Dictatorial Peace?” *American Political Science Review* 96, no. 1, March 2002, p. 15 on.

² Luis T. Díaz Müller, “América Latina: derechos sociales y desarrollo,” paper presented at the International Human Rights Congress

organized by the UNAM Institute for Legal Research in Mexico City in 2006.

³ Claudio Fuentes and David Álvarez, “¿América Latina en la encrucijada?” *Nueva Sociedad* no. 198, July-August 2005, p. 74 on.

⁴ Norberto Bobbio, *El problema de la guerra y las vías de la paz* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 1982).

⁵ Luis T. Díaz Müller, *América Latina. Relaciones internacionales y derechos humanos* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1991).

⁶ Peter Waldmann and Fernando Reinares, comps., *Sociedades en guerra civil* (Barcelona: Paidós, 1999).

⁷ Mary Kaldor, *Las nuevas guerras. Violencia organizada en la era global* (Barcelona: Tusquets, 2001).

⁸ Alain Touraine, “El fin de la ola neoliberal,” paper included in the report on the series of lectures entitled “Inequality and Globalization,” at the School of Social Sciences of the University of Buenos Aires (Buenos Aires: Editorial Manantial, 2001).

⁹ Heinrich Krumwiede, “Posibilidades de pacificación de las guerras civiles: preguntas e hipótesis,” Waldmann and Reinares, op. cit., p. 109 on.

¹⁰ Luis T. Díaz Müller, “América Latina derechos sociales y desarrollo,” op. cit.

¹¹ Touraine, op. cit.

¹² Bernardo Kliksberg, “Un tema ético central: el impacto de la pobreza sobre la familia en América Latina,” Bernardo Kliksberg, comp., *La agenda ética pendiente de América Latina* (Buenos Aires: FCE/BID, 2005), p. 69.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ José Antonio Ocampo, “Economía y democracia,” Bernardo Kliksberg, op. cit., p. 95.

¹⁵ Rebeca Grynspan, “La desigualdad de las oportunidades de América Latina: una revisión crítica de los resultados de las últimas dos décadas,” Bernardo Kliksberg, op. cit., p. 138.

¹⁶ José A. Ocampo, op. cit., p. 96.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁸ Ulrico Beck, *La mirada cosmopolita o la guerra es la paz* (Barcelona: Paidós, 2005).

¹⁹ David Kinsella, “No Rest for the Democratic Peace,” *American Political Science Review* 99, no. 3, August 2005, p. 453 on.

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Accountability and Higher Education in Mexico

Alonso Gómez-Robledo V.*



AH-UNAM/CESU/ICM

A panoramic view of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, the main public higher education institution in the country.

To Pedro Baranda, in memoriam

The guiding idea of accountability is to be able to control political power, not by any means to eliminate it. In this very sense, as Andreas Schedler says, accountability will inevitably presuppose the exercise of power. He also maintains that

* Councillor of the Federal Institute for Access to Public Information (IFAI) and member of the UNAM's Board of Governors.

the concepts of accountability and responsibility seem very similar, though they are by no means identical.

Accountability implies responsibility to someone and, reciprocally, being responsible to someone implies being accountable.

Thus, public officials will be responsible to their immediate superiors and are therefore obliged to be accountable. Those in power are responsible to those

affected by their decisions and are therefore obligated, first of all, to be accountable to the citizenry.¹

In the sphere of Mexican universities and centers of higher education, accountability is a practice whose discussion has enriched academic debates for several years now, although it is only of recent advent. It began with the implementation of monitoring and auditing mechanisms and the entry into effect

The law establishes specific
deadlines for responding to requests, a process
that includes a review mechanism when
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the applicant's expectations.

of the Federal Law on Transparency and Access to Public Information (LFTAI), that stipulates that public universities and state centers of higher education must comply with its guidelines.²

THE LAW ON TRANSPARENCY

This law is an effective mechanism for accountability, not only because it guarantees citizens' access to public information, but also because it obliges public servants to document their activities. One of the most significant advances is Article 7 that deals with "obligations in matters of transparency," which includes 17 kinds of information that mandated entities, including public universities, must make available to the public without any express request having to be made. Among other kinds of information, these include the entity's structure, the prerogatives of each administrative unit, a directory of its public servants, the monthly pay for each post, budget information, audit results, subsidies given and the normative framework.

Another contribution that should be underlined is that the law establishes specific deadlines for responding to requests, a process that includes a review mechanism when the information supplied does not fulfill the applicant's expectations because it is incomplete,

is not what was requested or because it has been reserved as classified or confidential.

THE UNAM AGREEMENT FOR TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Other entities that come under the jurisdiction of the Law of Transparency, among them constitutionally autonomous bodies like the UNAM, must emit their own regulations for access to information. In this case, the Agreement for Transparency and Access to Information was published March 17, 2003 in the *Gaceta Universitaria* (University Gazette) and two questions arose: Who is the university accountable to and what information does it have to disclose?³

In answer, the UNAM is accountable to the university community and the public at large. The obligations of transparency specified in the university document's sixth agreement, which enrich the stipulations of the federal law's Article 7, adapting them to the UNAM's specific situation, deserve special mention. Equally important are the definition of reserved information applied to specific university documents and confidential information, covering only the personal data of students, professors, workers and officials that university

authorities or central administration have at their disposal.

It is also important to mention that in the case of entities of the federal administration mandated by this legislation, Article 18, Section II of the Federal Transparency Law defines confidential information as the personal data at the disposal of institutions and entities. Therefore, it would be desirable that all personal data in the possession of the UNAM be included and not only the data pertaining to UNAM employees and students.

The *2005 Annual Report of the UNAM Liaison Unit* gives some interesting figures on the results of implementing both the law and the agreement. In that year, the UNAM received 675 requests for access to information, of which 81 were internal and 594 were external.⁴ In most cases, complete information was given; only five requests were classified as reserved information and 56 were classified as confidential.⁵ This is a good start for the university, taking into account that in the case of bodies specified as autonomous by the Constitution, the institutional design of access to information is an eminently internal responsibility

ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN FEDERAL CENTERS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

It is also important to study academics' role as promoters of access to information, as external evaluators of the law's impact and as its users. Here, we should once again refer to statistics and concentrate on what has happened to federal institutions that the law mandates to provide information.

Since the System of Information Applications (SISI) began functioning

in June 2003, public institutions and offices have received 170,000 applications, a little over 151,000 of which were made electronically. The information supplied by applicants has made it possible to classify them by sector. In 2005, most applications were from academia (33.9 percent), followed by the business community (17.7 percent), government (13.0 percent) and the media (8.6 percent). We should point out that the lowest number of requests actually came from the media because very often people think they are the most frequent applicants.

There are still no precise studies about the kinds of information most frequently requested by each of these groups. However, we can say that the topic most frequently requested between 2003 and 2004 was “information generated by the institutions,” including information about administrative procedures, statistics, the results of official surveys and the entire process of bidding for public contracts.

In 2005, interest in statistics grew and requests for information about administrative procedures dropped. There was also a big increase in the complexity of the requests, suggesting a higher degree of specialization on the part of applicants, and undoubtedly an indicator of the participation of members of the academic community.

The issues of greatest interest for the academic community are subsidies, trusts and services involving crimes dealt with by specialized district attorneys’ offices.

Lastly, one of the programs most asked about has been the federal Opportunities Program, about which applicants have wanted to know details about monies distributed by state, municipality and family.⁶

The Law on Transparency is an effective mechanism for accountability, not only because it guarantees citizens’ access to public information, but also because it obliges public servants to document their activities.

THE IFAI’S PRACTICE

Among the institutions of higher education that come under the aegis of the Federal Law on Transparency and the Access to Public Information are the National Polytechnic Institute (IPN), the National Pedagogical University (UPN), the Center for Technical Industrial Teaching (CETIS), the Center for Scientific Research and Higher Education of Ensenada, B.C., the Center for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE), the National College of Professional Technical Education (Conalep), El Colegio de México (Colmex), and the National Institute of Criminal Sciences (Inacipe). Some cases involving these institutions, dealt with by the IFAI plenary are presented in the box, which will undoubtedly give the reader a clearer idea of what has been explained here.

CONCLUSION

As the IFAI resolutions clearly show, every day more and more citizens are interested in having information about grades, entrance exam scores, scholarships awarded, actions taken to comply with new norms, faculty training, documents backing up the validity of promotions or the appointment of a professor or researcher, among many others.

Information requests about these questions have led to the exercise of the right to information. But, above all, they have clearly established the obligation of institutions of higher education to make known their internal mechanisms and procedures, which until recently were seen as matters that could be dealt with in a highly subjective, discretionary manner. ■■■

NOTES

¹ Andreas Schedler, *¿Qué es la rendición de cuentas?* Cuadernos de Transparencia no. 3 (Mexico City: IFAI, 2004), pp. 24-25, <http://www.ifai.org.mx/publicaciones/cuadernillo3.pdf>. A previous version of this text was published in English as “Conceptualizing Accountability,” Andreas Schedler et al., eds., *The Self-Restraining State: Power and Accountability in New Democracies* (Boulder, Colorado and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), pp. 13-28.

² See <http://www.ifai.org.mx/transparencia/LFTAIPG.pdf>. [Editor’s Note.]

³ See the accord at <http://www.dgcs.unam.mx/gacetaweb/historico.html>. [Editor’s Note.]

⁴ The UNAM distinguishes between the number of applications and the number of requests. Some applications include more than one question, which is why 601 applications were made, including 675 requests. See *Informe de labores de la UNAM 2005*, p. 15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁶ The Opportunities Program was the main government social assistance program under the Fox administration. The new president, Felipe Calderón, has continued it. [Editor’s Note.]

EDUCATIONAL CASES DEALT WITH BY THE IFAI PLENARY

1. In a petition to the National Polytechnic Institute (IPN) (0639/06), the applicant asked, "What were the conditions, criteria or reasons that a professor could be transferred without his/her consent in the School of Physics and Mathematics. Justify response." (sic)

In its answer, the IPN told the applicant that it would make the information available to him in the offices of its Liaison Unit. Unhappy with that answer, the applicant requested an IFAI review, reiterating his original request for information since he said he had not asked under what circumstances a professor could be transferred. After looking at the norms involved, the IFAI plenary agreed to revoke the IPN's answer since the institute had not turned over the document explaining the "conditions, criteria or reasons" for which a teacher could find himself in this legal situation.

2. In another petition to the National Polytechnic Institute (0652/06), the applicant requested the following information:

- a) The amount of money raised directly by the School of Physics and Mathematics of the National Polytechnic Institute in 2005;
- b) An explanation of the origin of those monies;
- c) The way they were invested in 2005;
- d) Proof of that investment.

In his review request, the applicant reiterated his petition for original information and expressed his dissatisfaction with the response, saying that the information the IPN had provided referred only to funds raised during December 2005, while the request had been for the amount for the entire year of 2005.

After a detailed analysis of the IPN's answer, the IFAI plenary came to the conclusion that, given that the "financial statement" offered by the IPN states that total expenditures from the funds raised during 2005 came to Mex\$240,760.61, and the "financial statement about the application of income raised" stated that Mex\$46,709.14 had been spent, the latter document justified the expenditure of the funds raised during December 2005, but did not include the amounts and items for expenditures for the entire year.

For that reason, the IFAI plenary proceeded to change the IPN response, making the documents concerning income generated from January 1 to December 31, 2005 available to the applicant.

3. In a petition to the National Institute of Criminological Sciences (Inacipe) (2175/06), with regard to the procedures an applicant followed to enter the master's program in the administration of justice for the years 2006-2008, the petitioner asked for the evaluations and exam results for the following topics: legal knowledge, physical evaluation, toxicological evaluation, polygraph and socio-economic situation.

The Inacipe informed the petitioner that the information requested had been classified as confidential, adding that, in accordance with the notification of exam dates, requirements and conditions, test scores were not subject to appeal. The petitioner requested an IFAI review, questioning the classification of the test scores as confidential. Now, as often happens, once the review request was made, the Inacipe changed its original response and handed over the information requested. This nullified the review request (based on Articles 55, 56 and 58, Subsections 5, 1 and 4, respectively, of the Federal Law on Transparency and Access to Public Information).

4. In a petition to the National College of Professional, Technical Education (Conalep) (2001/06), the applicant requested the following:

- a) The administrative payroll records for the pay period from May 15 to 31, 2006, for the Azcapotzalco campus.
- b) The resume of "CLR"
- c) The document appointing "CLR" to the post.
- d) A description of the post "CLR" holds.

In its response, the Azcapotzalco Conalep:

- a) Sent the petitioner a list of personnel working at the Azcapotzalco campus and told him that he could consult the portal on transparency about staff's duties, pay scales and economic benefits;
- b) Told the petitioner that the administrative payroll records of the Azcapotzalco campus contained confidential information protected by Article 18, Subsection II of the Federal Law on Transparency;
- c) Told the petitioner that "CLR" was not an employee at that campus.

After a review and analysis of the information turned over to the petitioner and published on the Conalep website, it was clear that the response did not satisfy the terms of what the petitioner had requested. Even though the Conalep had provided a list of public servants working at the Azcapotzalco campus and published the pay scales for each category of the staff on its website, it is not possible to link the wage of each of the public servants working at the Azcapotzalco campus to his/her job category. And, therefore, the information about pay was not forthcoming.

For this reason, the IFAI plenary modified the Conalep's response, ordering it to turn over the information about the posts that the public servants assigned to that campus hold so that the petitioner could be completely informed about the pay they receive.

5. In petition 415/06 filed with the National Pedagogical University (UPN), the applicant asked to be informed about:

- a) the legal basis, covenant or agreement that specified who the person responsible was for managing the budget of National Pedagogical University 231, located in Chetumal, Quintana Roo; and
- b) all the chapters of the budget assigned to that institutions for the year 2006.

The UPN responded that the information requested did not come under its jurisdiction and that therefore, it urged the petitioner to go to the Liaison Unit of the Quintana Roo state government. The petitioner rejected the answer, arguing basically that the UPN was responsible for knowing what went on at the UPNs throughout the country.

Once the file had been completed and the resolution substantiated, the IFAI plenary concluded that the transfer of all educational services had been formalized in every aspect in November 1992 and that therefore, the government of Quintana Roo had assumed full control of the operations of the campuses located within its borders, according to the Coordination Covenant signed May 21, 1992.

6. Lastly, request 0869/06 filed with the Center for Mathematics Research asked for a "copy of the contract for local and long-distance telephone services."

The center responded that it did not have said contract in its files, but did state that the services were provided by the company Teléfonos de México, S.A. de C.V.

In accordance with the chapter on pleas or arguments, the company changed its original response and turned over a document containing information relevant to the contract in question. However, the IFAI plenary found that this did not satisfy the original information request given that, among other things, the Master Contract for Telecommunications Services, signed by the UPN and Teléfonos de México, S.A. de C.V. on November 12, 1999, was the document that really defined the local telephone service according to its Conditions of Service.

Human Rights in A Context of Democratic Deficit

Rubén R. García Clarck*



Paola Hidalgo/Cuartosuro

President Felipe Calderón greets National Human Rights Commission President José Luis Soberanes.

An examination of human rights in Mexico sparks concern rather than encouragement. Reports by the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH), Amnesty International and the International Civil Commission for the Observation of Human Rights all cite grave human rights violations during the Fox administration that have never been satisfactorily addressed. The administration of Felipe Calderón, for its part, has begun a fight against insecurity and organized crime that in some ways seems at odds with safeguarding human rights. All this is happening in an international context of open retreat in

the field and weakening actions to promote democracy worldwide based on the argument that the war against terrorism requires the restriction of fundamental individual freedoms and therefore, the democratic achievements of the world's peoples. These restrictions have an impact not only on countries that are consolidating their democracies, but also those that have mature democratic regimens. Other factors that undermine human rights and democracy are the neoliberal policies that globally reduce the sovereignty of national states and strengthen private interests to the detriment of public interests.

The neoliberal model has contributed to increased economic inequality and social exclusion wherever it is adopted, undermining the essential link that should

exist between development, human rights and democracy, as stated in the Declaration on the Right to Development, passed by the UN General Assembly on December 4, 1986; the Declaration of Warsaw, "Towards a Community of Democracies," signed by more than 100 countries on June 27, 2000; and, of course, the Inter-American Democratic Charter, approved by the Organization of American States on September 11, 2001.

In our hemisphere, the commitments to development, human rights and democracy have not been met. This can be seen in the increase in the number of *failed states*, which, according to Noam Chomsky, are characterized by their inability or lack of determination to protect their citizens from violence, and by their tendency to situate themselves

* Professor and researcher in the Mexico City Autonomous University (UACM) Human Rights Program.

outside the law, whether it be national or international, and, although they have democratic institutions, suffer from a serious “democratic deficit,” which empties them of real substance. Chomsky thinks that the United States is beginning to take on some aspects of the failed states given its increasing distance from values like legality, equality, liberty and significant democracy.¹

In Latin America, researchers supported by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) report on a persistent “democratic deficit” in the region, demonstrated by the fact that many Latin American countries do not have the basic requirements for effective rule of law. According to the authors of the report *La política sí importa: Democracia y desarrollo en América Latina* (Politics Does Matter: Democracy and Development in Latin America), the result is an unreliable, unequal justice system incapable of ensuring legal security and therefore of guaranteeing the exercise of rights and obligations, or that does not effectively exercise its punitive function to stop the increase in different forms of criminal activities and threats to public security. At the same time, the state’s limited redistributive capabilities are expressed in a restriction of both basic social services and of its ability to train citizens to be efficient and productive members of society, which is indispensable for the expansion of citizenship.²

In Mexico, the deficiencies of the rule of law are worsened by a crisis of public mistrust in institutions and political actors. According to the CNDH, the alternation in office begun in 2000, that is, the year the National Action Party (PAN) took office, brought expect-

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tations that democracy and the respect for human rights would increase. However, these expectations were betrayed by, for example, President Fox’s attempt to abort Andrés Manuel López Obrador’s presidential candidacy using an unfounded charge to impeach him as mayor of Mexico City and the first executive’s open campaigning in favor of his own candidate, PAN contender Felipe Calderón. We should remember here that the Electoral Tribunal of the Federal Judiciary concluded that Fox’s intervention in the electoral process might have put the entire presidential election at risk. To Fox’s campaigning, we should add the Federal Electoral Institute’s unfortunate handling of the preliminary election results and its refusal to open up the presidential election ballot boxes for a recount, which has very probably resulted in decreased public confidence in this electoral body and democracy itself.³

For the period 2000-2006, in general, human rights expectations were not met. In its report on that period, the CNDH states that the authorities did verbally abide by their human rights commitments, but that few concrete measures were actually taken to make them a reality. Also, the national ombudsman’s report points to signs of active defense of human rights in the international sphere that contrasts with the dismissive and negligent attitudes domestically. It also underlines the systematic refusal

by some government bodies to comply with CNDH resolutions, and that numerous complaints were made about arbitrary arrests, inhumane treatment, the continued use of torture in investigations and frequent failures of the administration of justice.⁴

According to this report, “Given the nationally important investigations, like the one into the cases of persons who disappeared during the so-called ‘dirty war,’ or the heightened public insecurity nationwide, the feminicides of Ciudad Juárez or the May 2004 violence in Guadalajara, the CNDH decided to write a general report or recommendation. We should point out that these general resolutions, which fall within the bounds of the CNDH law, were verbally accepted, but the violations were not punished. In other cases, the responsible authorities ignored the recommendation.”⁵

Some of the CNDH’s points are confirmed in Amnesty International’s 2006 Annual Report. A few ideas that appear in the latter should be underscored, such as the initiation of a National Human Rights Program which seems to have had little effect. The proposed amendments to the Constitution and reforms to the criminal justice system never came about. The commission continued to receive reports of arbitrary arrests, bad treatment and torture. The number of young women murdered in Ciudad Juárez rose once more and the response to violence against women continued to be inadequate. The justice system was again an important source of human rights violations since it protected neither victims’ rights nor those of the accused. Its limitations had a disproportionate effect on the most underprivileged, poorest members of society. Several journalists died violently or were threat-

STATE OF CNDH RECOMMENDATIONS (2005 AND 2006)		
STATE OF THE RECOMMENDATION	2005	2006
Accepted, with proof of partial compliance	26	33
Accepted, with proof of full compliance	2	5
Accepted, with no proof of compliance	8	2
Not accepted	6	11
Unanswered	13	6
Accepted, still within the time limit to present proof of compliance		3
TOTAL	55	60
Source: National Human Rights Commission, 2005 and 2006 (www.cndh.org.mx).		

ened. Attempts to hold past violators of human rights responsible for their actions also failed.⁶

The CNDH balance sheet concludes that compliance and observation of human rights during the 2000-2006 presidential term were insufficient, with advances in some areas like freedom of expression. An important achievement in this field was the approval of the Federal Law on Transparency and Access to Public Information, as well as the creation of the Federal Institute for Access to Public Information (IFAI). The Ministry of the Interior has stated that with the creation of these instruments, “Mexico has eliminated the conditions favoring government secrecy. A culture of transparency and accountability has begun to be created through institutions and processes that guarantee public access to information about the functioning of government bodies.”⁷ Other undeniable advances in the field of recognizing and protecting the rights of both individuals and those of ethnic communities are the constitutional reform on indigenous

rights and the passage of the Federal Law to Prevent and Eliminate Discrimination and the creation of the National Council to Prevent Discrimination (Conapred).

One indicator of the respect for human rights is authorities’ willingness to comply with CNDH recommendations to correct or prevent their violation. Unfortunately, between 2005 and 2006, the number of recommendations ignored by the authorities increased from 10 to 20 percent, as shown in the table above.

The year 2006 was particularly critical with regard to human rights. Suffice it to mention the unfortunate episodes in San Salvador Atenco, Lázaro Cárdenas (in Michoacán) and Oaxaca. In all three cases, the CNDH found that confrontations between local and federal security forces and local inhabitants and demonstrators had resulted in grave human rights violations. The common denominator was the violation of the right to life (with 24 people killed), but there were also violations to physical well-being and the freedom

to demonstrate, affecting hundreds of people who were injured or arbitrarily detained. In the cases of Atenco and Oaxaca, instances of torture and violations of sexual freedom of both men and women were reported, in addition to diverse attacks on the freedom to legality and legal security. In Atenco, foreigners were expelled from the country in frank violation of the General Population Law.

Given these human rights violations, the CNDH wrote reports and, in the case of the violence in Atenco and Lázaro Cárdenas, made recommendations to protect the rights of detainees, restore the rights of foreign nationals and begin investigations about government officials’ actions to determine who was responsible for what. The governments of the State of Mexico and Michoacán, as well as the National Migration Institute, partially complied with the recommendations, while the federal Ministry of Public Security roundly refused to accept them, arguing that the members of the Federal Preventive Police had acted legally and within the legal framework of coordination and legitimate self-defense and with full respect for the human rights of demonstrators and persons arrested during the commission of a crime.

CNDH recommendations are still pending in the case of Oaxaca. However, it should be mentioned that the International Civil Commission for the Observation of Human Rights (CCIODH) presented its report *Conclusiones y recomendaciones preliminares sobre el conflicto social de Oaxaca* (Preliminary Conclusions and Recommendations about the Oaxaca Social Conflict) in Mexico City January 20, 2007.⁸ The CCIODH agrees with the CNDH about the human rights violations in

2006 was particularly critical with regard to human rights. Suffice it to mention the unfortunate episodes in San Salvador Atenco, Lázaro Cárdenas (in Michoacán) and Oaxaca where the CNDH found grave human rights violations.

Oaxaca, and contributes an interpretation that situates them within a state legal, police and military strategy to repress independent social movements.⁹ From that standpoint, the CCIODH recommends dealing with the original causes of the conflict, rooted in the structural problems of poverty and strongmen-controlled local leadership, as well as reestablishing the rule of law, freeing detainees, recovering society's trust, restoring order through dialogue, not force, and determining the responsibilities of each of the authorities involved.

Starting with his inaugural address, President Felipe Calderón's stance with regard to human rights clearly stated that his priority was going to be strengthening the state's capability to fight crime and ensure public security. However, the emphasis is on the government's effective ability to repress rather than on crime prevention in society or on safeguarding human rights.

In accordance with his punitive vision of the rule of law, Calderón sent Congress bills that increased sentences (life imprisonment for kidnappers), strengthened district attorneys' police forces, giving them technical and functional autonomy, the ability to investigate and tap phones at their discretion, do searches and make arrests without warrants in the case of organized crime or when criminals are apprehended *in flagranti delicto*. To support this empowered police force, Calderón proposes

harmonizing the country's criminal codes and creating a National System of Public Security, a Single System of Criminal Information and a National System of Police Development, which would have the task of recruiting and training police officers who, in addition to the district attorneys' police agents, could be freely removed from their posts without the right to be reinstated.

The salvageable aspects of Calderón's proposal include the introduction of guarantees for complainants, the modernization of the administration of justice by establishing oral trials and the technical and functional autonomy of the federal Attorney General's Office, which should answer only to the satisfaction of society's interest and the common good, thus averting partisan administration of justice by the president as happened when Fox attempted to impeach López Obrador.

The matter for the most concern in Calderón's position is that, shielding himself behind a supposed attack on organized crime, he justifies the implementation of special measures like fast track extraditions and discretionary powers for the police. In addition, it makes it seem like the executions of drug traffickers do not merit investigation by federal authorities, much less bringing their murderers to trial. This would mean that the state would not be fulfilling its obligation to investigate and prosecute *ex officio* all kinds of crimes.

Without renouncing the state's effectiveness in its fight against crime and the administration of justice, democracy must be strengthened nationally and globally by deepening the reform of the state in Mexico and ensuring unrestricted respect for international law by *all* UN member states. This is

indispensable for promoting a socially inclusive model of economic development that makes it possible to effectively protect fundamental rights, that is, the human, civil and political rights protected by the constitutions of democratic states, and to promote the second- or third-generation rights that are always left until last. ■■■

NOTES

¹ Noam Chomsky, *Failed States: The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006).

² J. Mark Payne, Daniel Zovatto and Mercedes Mateo, comps., *La política sí importa: Democracia y desarrollo en América Latina* (Washington, D.C.: BID/Instituto Internacional para la Democracia y la Asistencia Electoral/Planeta, 2006), p. 10.

³ Former IFE President José Woldenberg stated that Mexico's July 2006 elections brought with them a rebirth of disbelief and doubts about the vote count (*La Jornada*, September 26, 2006). The most recent Latinobarómetro poll reveals that Mexicans trust democracy less and "under certain circumstances" would support an authoritarian government (*El Universal*, December 8, 2006).

⁴ Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos, *Balance del 2000 al 2006 en materia de derechos humanos en México*, www.cndh.org.mx/lacndh/informes/espec/balance00-06.pdf.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶ See Amnesty International's "Report 2006, Americas: Mexico," <http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/mex-summary-eng#top>, and "Mexico. Laws without justice: Human rights violations and impunity in the public security and criminal justice," <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAMR410022007?open&of=ENG-391> (accessed April 20, 2007). [Editor's Note.]

⁷ Ministry of the Interior, *Los nuevos retos de la gobernabilidad democrática*, Government of Change Collection (Mexico City: Segob/FCE, 2005), p. 50.

⁸ See http://cciodh.pangea.org/quinta/070120_inf_conclusiones_recomendaciones_eng.html. [Editor's Note.]

⁹ Comisión Civil Internacional de Observación por los Derechos Humanos, "Las violaciones de derechos en Oaxaca," *Memoria*, no. 217 (March 2007), pp. 12-16.



NORTEAMÉRICA
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1995 *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy*, Boulder, Colo., Reinner.

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The New ISSSTE Law An Attack on the Future Of Public Employees

Gustavo Leal F.*



Nelly Salas/Cuartoscuro

Public employees demonstrate against the ISSSTE Law.

Because there is no true progress without liberty and legality, and without clear support for the reforms made by the public, convinced that the sacrifices it demands are necessary if we want to get out of our doldrums and take off. The lack of this conviction and the population's passive resistance to timid or clumsy attempts at modernization explain the failure of the so-called "neoliberal governments."

MARIO VARGAS LLOSA¹

Throughout the world, most efficient governments base the reform of their pension systems² on consensus and the best information available so that,

* Professor and researcher at the Health Care Department of the Autonomous Metropolitan University, Xochimilco campus.

with economic growth, a project for the country and their model of health and social security, they can negatively impact as little as possible the rights of active workers and, above all, young people. In Mexico, however, the political class has waylaid public affairs,³ "measured," "designed," "communicat-

ed" and decided them taking into consideration no one's interests but its own.⁴

The Calderón government, its Finance Ministry technocrats and the decadent elite of Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the country's third-largest party, forged an open alliance with

THE UNIVERSE OF THE ISSSTE “REFORM”

- Number of people affiliated: 10,765,000
- Temporary and permanent employees affiliated: 2,420,000
- Affiliated family members: 7,256,000
- Pensioners: 275,000
- Retirees: 310,000
- Relatives of pensioners and retirees: 504,000

the strongman-headed union leaderships of the National Educational Workers Union (SNTE) and the Federation of Public Employees Unions (FSTSE). Together, they ended up imposing a financial reform (as opposed to a comprehensive reform to the system that would take into account the security of workers’ pensions) of the Public Employees Social Security Institute (ISSSTE) that they presented as the only way out. This reform is technically and politically unviable and therefore stillborn.

The biggest anomaly is that they opted to bypass society in making this “reform,” which affects more than 10 million Mexicans, among them 2.4 million public employees covered by the ISSSTE.⁵ This flies in the face of the trends, experiments and evidence being explored worldwide.

THE UNITED STATES: PRIVATE COMPANIES AND PENSIONS

It seems that the times of super-pensions have ended and the succulent private pensions with which the big U.S. corporations used to delight their employees are a thing of the past. Traditional corporate plans created after World War II have been frozen out, while 401(k) funds are enthusiastically promoted, allowing companies to make

more flexible contributions and transfer all risks to the employee. In 2005, 42 percent of U.S. wage earners had one of these funds and only 21 percent was covered by a traditional company plan. The number of senior adults forced to go back to work to avoid falling beneath the poverty line is gradually expected to grow. This can already be seen in the employee lists of some of Wall Street’s giants: IBM, Hewlett-Packard, General Motors (the largest single private employer in the United States) or Verizon telephones.

The U.S. pension system is based on three complementary pillars: on one extreme are payments from the public Social Security system, which average about \$U.S.12 billion a year; on the other extreme are the private pension plans used by the highest-income groups as a supplement in their old age, and in the middle are, on the one hand, the coverage from companies to their former employees calculated according to wages and the years worked, and, on the other hand, the aforementioned 401(k) pension savings plans.

The 401(k) savings plan was designed a quarter of a century ago as a pension supplement to which companies could contribute, not as a substitute. It was preferred by small companies, but today, the trend is to bury the old plans, with some analysts maintaining that com-

panies had no other option. First to sign up were the airlines (United), the steel, metal-working and textile industries; they were then followed by companies with healthy spreadsheets like IBM, HP and Verizon who justified themselves arguing that their decision was due to the urgent need to cut costs that more modern companies cannot sustain if they are to compete.

The most recent figures from the Watson Wyatt consulting firm reveal that 627 of the *Fortune* 1000 corporations had traditional pension schemes. Of these, an estimated 115 have canceled or frozen the benefits for new employees. Labor experts explain that this move over to 401(k) funds is justified because corporate contributions are not as linked to the employee’s longevity, and they also warn about the threat that these changes represent for the middle class. During the stock market euphoria, the disadvantages linked to the risks of these funds were seen as an advantage for the employee since going into the stock market could make his/her future payments rise, or he/she could make smaller contributions. But after the technological bubble burst, the image changed radically.

EUROPE: MACRO-DESIGNS BY CONSENSUS

Given the disquieting prospect of private pensions, some efficient European governments are already designing and experimenting with different macro-plans.

While in Germany, the Christian Democratic/Social Democratic coalition is evaluating the possibility of increasing the retirement age from 65 to 67, though accompanying the measure with

the 50+ Initiative, which would keep over-50s active,⁶ the United Kingdom is delaying its reform to continue to seek formulas that would lessen the impact on the population. The most recent proposal includes establishing a national savings system into which 5 percent of every employee's wage would be paid for his/her pension (1 percent would come from tax cuts, companies would contribute 3 percent, and the worker him/herself the remaining 1 percent directly). They are also studying a gradual increase in state pensions pegged to a gradual increase in retirement age.

France has put a stop to the debate about retirement age after the 2003 reform, made through a broad consensus, which eliminated the differences between pensions in the private and public sector. Now, an individual can only be forced to retire after the age of 65. There are exceptions: when an employee began working between the ages of 14 and 16, since in that case, he/she would finish out 40 years of employment before reaching 60. Starting in 2013, every year worked under the required 40 or 41 years will reduce the pension by 5 percent, and it will increase 3 percent until the age of 65.

And in Italy, although in 2004 the retirement age was raised to 60 for males, the reform, slated to go into effect in 2008, maintained women in the old system and anyone who has worked for 40 years will be able to retire, regardless of age. In addition, the reform includes an economic incentive for anyone working beyond retirement age. In 2008, those eligible for retirement who continue to work will receive a bonus in their paychecks: one-third of the sum contributed by the company to the social security system. The commonality of these reforms is the strategic defense

THE "RECOGNITION" BONUS

- Any employee who decides to sign up for the individual account system will have the right to a federally-provided pension bonus in recognition of his/her pension rights.
- This bonus will be available to both employees who have fulfilled the prerequisites (1.3 million) and those who have not yet done so (1 million).
- The bonus will consist of a deposit in the employee's individual account of the money needed to obtain a lifetime pension that he/she had the right to at the time of the "reform."
- If the employee has been affiliated 30 years, the bonus will be equal to 100 percent of the lifetime pension. If the employee has been affiliated 15 years and is 55 or older, it will be equal to 50 percent.
- When the employee decides to retire, his/her pension will be equal to the bonus plus his/her contributions.

of those who might be affected by their efficient governments.

ARGENTINA RETURNS TO PUBLIC PENSIONS

Similarly, the Kirchner government is pushing through a law that will bury the obligatory privatization of the pension system designed by Menem in 1993. This means there will be a mixed system in which public coverage will play an increasing role. That is, 14 years later, Argentinean workers will be able to opt between continuing in the private system with individual accounts or returning to the old, public system, a possibility the previous legislation denied them.

THE MEXICAN ANOMALY: THE ISSSTE CASE

Felipe Calderón and his administration's team are maintaining the same eco-

nomic policy that has been in place for the last 20 years, which does not create growth or sufficient formal-sector jobs, but rather promotes widespread poverty, sharpening inequality and creating fertile ground for drug trafficking and migration. How, then, did they deal with the "reform" to the social security system for public employees embodied in the ISSSTE, which is the second largest national institute, surpassed only by the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS)?

Calderón did not dare evaluate the failure of the 1995 law that then-President Ernesto Zedillo imposed on the IMSS privatizing pensions for private-sector workers,⁷ despite the fact that a Federal Commission on Economic Competition study proved that 12 years after that regressive reform, the commissions paid to retirement fund (Afore) management companies completely ate up the net annual earnings of worker's individual accounts for the years 1997-2006.⁸ He also disregarded proposals made by different actors for new

reforms after the IMSS revamping.⁹ What he did take into account were five “single response” documents—the kind that pose the question as “either we do this one thing or society will collapse”—¹⁰ and used the PRI elite to present the “reform” bill.¹¹ Without any prior publicity, without sufficient debate, using closed parliamentary procedures,¹² he did, however, encounter clear opposition in the legislature from the numerous affected groups. Despite that, Calderón dared use a simple majority to impose a grievous “comprehensive” financial “reform” presented as an urgent need to “save” the institution, a reform which, jointly with certain businessmen’s groups and debt qualifiers, he immediately described as a “great victory.”¹³

Without any consultation with employees affiliated to the ISSSTE, the “reform” was approved imposing a system of individual accounts managed for the first 36 months by something called the PensionISSSTE, complete with attending commissions.¹⁴ Workers’ re-

tirement paycheck deductions were increased; pension size was decreased; retirement requirements were increased; and neither the public employees’ wages’ decreasing purchasing power nor the freezing of the number of employees affiliated to the ISSSTE were taken into account.¹⁵

The reform was also not preceded by a comprehensive audit of all the services the ISSSTE manages (particularly the Pension Fund, the Housing Fund [Fovissste] and the Stores and Pharmacies), nor were better services guaranteed. Quite to the contrary. Despite the situation of the compromised medical fund,¹⁶ the “reform” includes the increased participation of private service providers, increasing sub-contracting out services, fostering “competition” among the already under-funded public hospitals and reducing the catalogue of benefits and services.

With the new law, providing funeral services, which during the Fox administration dropped almost 24 percent,¹⁷

will be contingent on “the Social and Cultural Services Fund’s financial possibilities.” The previous law included no such condition. This benefit will probably disappear in the medium term, given that the new law allows private companies to provide the service to affiliated employees, charging the cost to the ISSSTE.

To top it all off, without really dealing with the basic challenge facing the Mexican pension system, the “reform” is also extraordinarily expensive: according to the Mexican Institute of Financial Executives (IMEF), it will cost more than two trillion pesos and will continue to be “insufficient.”¹⁸

Threatening national work stoppages and strikes, people took to the streets. The office of Joel Ayala, president of the FSTSE, was taken over and workers affiliated to the ISSSTE appealed to try to protect themselves from the new law and to get it struck from the books by having the Supreme Court declare it unconstitutional.

THE PROPOSED ISSSTE REFORM

- Retirement age will gradually increase from 48 to 58 years for women and from 50 to 60 years for men, until 2028, increasing one year every two years.
- The minimum pension will increase from minimum wage to twice minimum wage.
- The government will increase its contribution from 19.75 percent to 25.14 percent.
- The government will contribute a social payment of 3.5 percent of the wage base to improve health services.
- The state will contribute 5.5 percent of the employees’ wages to the pension fund.
- 300,000 employees who were formerly being paid by honoraria or were considered temporary workers will be affiliated to the ISSSTE.
- 8 billion pesos will be contributed to medical services.
- 2 billion pesos will be earmarked for the fund for personal loans.
- 7,000 mortgages will be offered to pensioners.
- It is hoped that the deficits of five specialization hospitals, 10 general hospitals and several clinics will be dealt with.

LOSSES AND GAINS

Affiliated employees will have to

- Change to a pension system based on individual savings, obligatory for all new employees.
- Accept a new retirement age that will gradually increase from now to 2028 from 51 years of age to 60.
- Increase their retirement contributions from 3.5 percent to 6.125 percent over the next six years.

The government promises to

- Increase its contribution to financing its employees' social security by 9 billion pesos a year.
- Contribute 3.5 percent of all employees' base wages to improve ISSSTE social security.
- Make an additional pension payment of almost 2 billion pesos a year plus 8 billion pesos for infrastructure.

What the government "gets":

- The "reform" will allow it to reduce the debt derived from public employees' pensions from almost 54 percent of GDP to 24 percent, a reduction of almost 3 billion pesos.
- The "savings" for public finances will not be felt for another 10 or 15 years. In the short term, it will have to spend an additional 25 billion pesos a year.

THE RESULTS FOR THE POLITICAL CLASS

Without a doubt, this public issue demanded government attention, but not the kind it got. The Mexican anomaly clearly confirms the correctness of the proposals being experimented with by efficient governments elsewhere and points the way that the next administration team should follow. In retrospect, it also sheds light on the quality

of the "democratic" credentials of the current political class with its penchant for taking over the course of public affairs in an authoritarian manner.

In order to gain the legitimacy and strength it needs to really make reforms, any majority must win more from a proposed reform than it loses. The Calderón "reform" of the ISSSTE does not comply with this maxim: not only does it not resolve the pension challenge, but it also sparks more con-

frontations than agreements and more polarization than convergence.

The first step of any reform is to present a government proposal giving more and better information, and then allow enough time for democratic deliberation.

Calderón did none of this. The product of a "deal" among the elite, his "reform," like the reform of the IMSS before it, will also be a failure that will blow up from below. **MM**

NOTES

¹ Mario Vargas Llosa, "Las exequias de un tirano," <<http://www.almedron.com/tribuna/?p=13301>> (accessed April 12, 2007).

² See Benjamín González Roaro, *La seguridad social en el mundo* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 2003).

³ In this case, by "political class," I mean the executive, legislative and judicial branches; the system of parties; the communications media (with honorable exceptions); the business elites; union leaderships; national and international consulting firms; and academic "experts."

⁴ See *Reforma integral del ISSSTE 2005*, <http://www.issste.gob.mx/reforma/sup_ref.html>.

⁵ See Gustavo Leal F., *El ISSSTE bajo el foxismo* (Mexico City: UAM, 2007); *Logros y avances en la gestión institucional 2001-2003* (Mexico City: ISSSTE, 2003); *El ISSSTE en la historia, 1959-2004* (Mexico City: ISSSTE, 2004); *La seguridad social de los trabajadores del Estado: avances y desafíos* (Mexico City: ISSSTE-FCE, 2005).

⁶ This initiative also includes aid and subsidy payments to those over 50 and aims to improve their work situation. [Editor's Note.]

⁷ See Gustavo Leal F., op. cit.

⁸ Statement by Eduardo Pérez Mota, president of the commission, published in *El Financiero*, November 23, 2006.

⁹ See the colloquium report *Perspectives for Social Security in Mexico and Latin America* (Mexico City: SNTISSSTE, 2003); *Sistemas de pensiones. Desafíos y oportunidades* (Mexico City: Comisión de Seguridad Social/LIX Legislatura de la Cámara de Diputados del Congreso de la Unión, 2004); *Sistemas estatales de pensiones* (Mexico City: Comisión de Seguridad Social/LIX Legislatura de la Cámara de Diputados del Congreso de la Unión, 2006); and "El SNTISSSTE convoca a construir una 'nueva fórmula social en México,'" *La Jornada*, October 3, 2006.

¹⁰ World Bank, *Mexico, A Comprehensive Development Agenda for the New Era*, Chapter 10,

pp. 223-237 (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2001); World Bank, *Mexico-Technical Assistance for Public Sector Reform, ISSSTE* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, April 2002); Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público, *Una propuesta de reforma al ISSSTE* (Mexico City: DGSV/SHCP, July 17, 2003); "Iniciativas de ciudadanos senadores del senador Joel Ayala Almeida, del Grupo Parlamentario del Partido Revolucionario Institucional, la que contiene proyecto de Ley del Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales de los Trabajadores del Estado," *Gaceta Parlamentaria* no. 145, Primer Período Ordinario del Senado de la República, December 15, 2005; "Iniciativa de diputados que expide la Ley del Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales de los Trabajadores del Estado y Abroga la Ley del ISSSTE, suscrita por diputados de diversos grupos parlamentarios," *Gaceta Parlamentaria* no. 2214, Cámara de Diputados, March 15, 2007.

¹¹ This new positioning of the PRI had already been rehearsed in 2004 when then-PRI Deputy Manlio Fabio Beltrones presented a bill changing the pension and retirement system for IMSS employees. In self-defense, the workers' union, the SNTSS, appealed to the Supreme Court. Almost two years later, the court rejected the appeal saying that the union did not

have any legal standing. This new position of the PRI was repeated with the controversial Televisa Law and now with the ISSSTE "reform" bill.

¹² When the specific articles of the "reform" were passed, the senatorial debate "rejected all amendments, changes to a total of 17 articles and eight transitory articles, proposed by the PRD and Convergence caucuses." *Reforma*, March 29, 2007.

¹³ Although the "benefits" will not become apparent until 2012, Héctor Rangel Domene of BBVA-Bancomer considered the "reform" "positive," while Mario Rodarte, of the Private Sector Economic Studies Center (CEESP) dubbed it "a positive measure" and the Businessmen's Coordinating Council described it as "a landmark that may be the turn toward modernity that the country needs."

¹⁴ The PensionISSSTE will be a decentralized body of the ISSSTE itself with executive capabilities. It will manage public employees' individual accounts and invest them. It will be supervised by the National Commission of the Retirement Savings System (Consar), directed by an executive commission made up of the director of the ISSSTE; an executive representative appointed by the ISSSTE's Board of Directors at the director's proposal; three representatives appointed by the Finance Mi-

nistry; one each appointed by the Ministries of Labor and of the Public Function and the Bank of Mexico; and seven appointed by workers' organizations.

¹⁵ According to a Finance Ministry document, "Compensación económica para la separación de servidores públicos de la administración pública federal, 2001-2006" (Severance Pay for Federal Public Servants, 2001-2006), published in October 2006, during the Fox administration, 95,347 state employees were let go, most of whom were given severance pay according to the "voluntary retirement" program. The program's total cost came to 30.7517 billion pesos, while savings came to 9.196 billion pesos.

¹⁶ See *Situación del Fondo Médico* (Mexico City: ISSSTE, August 2005), mimeographed copy.

¹⁷ According to the study *La seguridad social de los trabajadores del Estado: avances y desafíos* (see endnote 5), the 10-year freeze in rates meant that up to 81 percent of funeral costs were being subsidized. However, when under the direction of Benjamín González Roaro the institution updated prices in 2004, funeral home earnings rose 128.5 percent (from 6 billion pesos to more than 13 billion pesos), even though the adjustment made for a 19 percent drop in the number of funeral services.

¹⁸ *El Financiero*, March 28, 2007.

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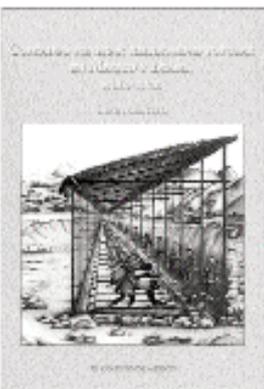


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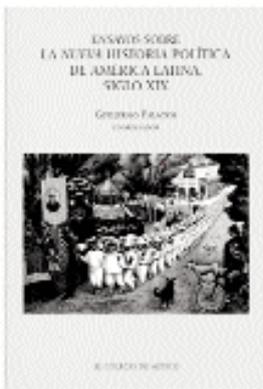
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The Difficult Prospects For Exploration and Production in Pemex

David Shields*



Alfredo Guerrero/Cuartoscuro

President Calderón on the sixty-ninth anniversary of the expropriation of Mexico's oil.

It was President José López Portillo who called on Mexicans in 1980 to “manage abundance.” His administration left Mexico with 72 billion barrels of “proven” oil and gas reserves, but also with a financial crisis and foreign debt that would be paid for with two decades of oil exports.

Since 1984, when our oil reserves were reported at 72.5 billion barrels, the highest level in history, the figure has dropped year by year. After the numbers were questioned and the Secu-

rities and Exchange Commission (SEC) criteria adopted, in 1996, Petróleos Mexicanos (Pemex) began to talk about “total” reserves, or the sum of the “three Ps” (proven plus probable plus possible). In 1999, officials were still talking about the country’s “enormous reserves,” a total of 60 billion 3P reserves, including 24.7 billion barrels of proven reserves.

In the following years, there were new decreases and re-classifications, so that on January 1, 2006, Pemex reported 33.1 billion barrels of 3P reserves, of which 11.8 billion were proven, 11.6 billion were “probable” and 9.6 billion “possible.”

In addition, the Vicente Fox administration added a new category: “prospective resources,” calculated at about 54 billion barrels. This refers to the estimated amount of still undiscovered but inferred hydrocarbon deposits that are potentially recoverable. The estimation of their size is based on geological and geophysical information about the area under study and on analogies with areas where hydrocarbons have been produced. However, they are not considered reserves because no exploratory wells have been drilled to prove their existence.

In March 2007, under the administration of Felipe Calderón, the coun-

* Journalist and private energy consultant in Mexico and current editor of the magazine *Energía a debate* (shields@energiaadebate.com.mx).

TABLE 1
PROVEN CRUDE OIL RESERVES
(BILLIONS OF BARRELS)

1996	62.0 ¹
1997	60.9 ¹
1998	60.1 ¹
1999	24.7 ²
2000	24.6
2001	25.7
2002	18.7 ²
2003	17.2
2004	16.0
2005	14.8
2006	13.7
2007	12.8

¹ "Total" reserves.

² New criteria for calculating the amounts were used.

Source: Pemex. Figures for January 1 each year.

try's oil discourse changed, putting an end to the pretension of abundance. The president expressed his concern about the fact that the ratio of proven reserves to the production of crude gives us a production limit of only 9.3 years. He warned that for decades we have pumped more oil than we have found and that it is necessary to reverse this trend to prevent the country from becoming a net importer of oil and its derivatives.

This somber tone is partially attributable to the recent fall in oil production which all indicators say will continue due to a decrease in the Cantarell field. Neither Calderón nor Pemex General Director Jesús Reyes Heróles any longer talk about total or 3P reserves, although they still play a part in the complex evaluation and calculation methodology applied internally at Pemex Exploration and Production (PEP).

In the annual publication *Las reservas de hidrocarburos de México (evaluación al 1 de enero de 2007)* (Mexico's Oil and Gas Reserves [Evaluation as

of January 1, 2007]), which reports on exploration efforts and the incorporation of oil reserves in the previous year, PEP states that the country's proven crude oil reserves had reached 12.849 billion barrels by that date, 6 percent less than the previous year and enough to cover a little over nine years' production at the current rate of extraction. Nevertheless, this amount is only enough to put Mexico in fifteenth place in the ranking published by *Oil & Gas Journal*. Total proven oil and gas reserves come to 15.514 billion barrels.

PEP's reports on reserves and their respective methodologies are not easy to understand and analyze for the uninitiated. Nevertheless, there are many indications that the replacement rate for proven reserves is not improving. According to the January 1, 2007 annual report, in 2006, 966 million barrels of 3P (proven plus probable plus possible) crude oil were incorporated into the reserves as a result of new discoveries, but only 66 million barrels of these were proven reserves.

Pemex's reports on reserves and their respective methodologies are not easy to understand and analyze. Nevertheless, there are many indications that the replacement rate for proven reserves is not improving.

If we analyze the results cited in the annual reports over the last five years, and only look at proven oil reserves, we can see that from 2002 to 2006, Pemex produced 6.030 billion barrels of crude, but incorporated only 360 million barrels of proven reserves in new discoveries. So, the replacement rate attributable to new discoveries barely reached six percent of what was extracted.

However, PEP assures the public that this figure of "new reserves incorporated due to discoveries" is not an appropriate indicator since every year probable and possible reserves which had been identified in previous years are reclassified as proven, after review, delimitation and development activities. The reports do not specify what kind of field and office work was done to make this reclassification possible, but it is linked to the drilling of delimitation and development wells.

Even with reclassification, the real replacement rate of proven reserves was 41 percent in 2006, a figure that surpassed 2005's 26.4 percent rate, but that is still considerably lower than the official directive (and international norm) of 100 percent. Put in simpler terms, four out of every 10 barrels extracted from the earth are replaced every year.

This "gap between 41 percent and 100 percent reflects insufficient investment in exploration, which in 2006

The goal of a 100-percent replacement rate will not be achieved under this administration, and, therefore, net reserves will continue to drop for the rest of the president's term.

came to 12.703 billion pesos, 17 percent less than in 2005 and 42 percent less than in 2004 in real terms," according to Jesús Reyes Heróles.¹ In general, investment earmarked for exploration in this decade has come to about U.S.\$1 billion a year annually, while about U.S.\$8 billion a year goes into gas and oil production.

Vinicio Suro Pérez, PEP's assistant director of Planning and Evaluation, has stated that between 2007 and 2012, an estimated average annual investment of at least U.S.\$2 billion will be earmarked for exploration (that is, almost twice that of recent years), making a 77-percent replacement rate for proven reserves possible by 2012. This is practically the same as saying that the goal of a 100-percent replacement rate will not be achieved under this administration, and that therefore, net reserves will continue to drop for the rest of the president's term.

So, the oil reserve replacement rate has become a critical factor, undoubtedly the most critical factor that Pemex faces, because without oil fields to explore, the state-owned company would not be able to subsist as a producer and exporter of oil and gas. With proven oil and gas reserves due to last less than 10 years and a low replacement rate, Pemex's very survival could be at risk in the long run.

TABLE 2
EXPECTED DECLINE OF CANTARELL
(IN NUMBER OF BARRELS PER DAY)

2004	2,136,000 ¹
2005	2,035,000 ¹
2006	1,788,000 ¹
2007	1,526,000
2008	1,373,000
2009	1,200,000
2010	1,000,000
2011	820,000
2012	713,000
2013	600,000
2014	531,000
2015	450,000
2016	430,000
2017	339,000

¹Real figures.

Source: Pemex.

PROSPECTS FOR PRODUCTION

PEP is facing a drop not only in oil reserves, but also in production. This is particularly worrying considering the aforementioned large investments earmarked for it. Crude production, affected by a decline of the Cantarell field, dropped two percent in 2006, when 3.265 million barrels a day (b/d) were produced. The decline has continued and in the first months of 2007, production was close to 3.1 million b/d; everything indicates that it will be difficult to keep it above 3 million b/d in the short term.

In the case of Cantarell, PEP predicts that its production, which recently was at about 1.5 million b/d will drop to 1 million b/d by 2010 and 600,000 b/d by 2013. Based on the recovery factor in this field (about 34 percent), it is even very feasible that the drop in production could be quicker, compensated only partially by other deposits, like the new Ku-Maloob-Zaap heavy crude complex. Since other deposits

have also registered decreases —Ku-Maloob-Zaap will be among them starting in 2010— it is not crazy to think that national production of crude, today at 3 million b/d, could drop to 2 million b/d within a few years. This would have a negative impact on the amount of crude available for export and Pemex's capacity to generate income.

A MATTER OF INVESTMENT?

It is particularly worrying that PEP has not had any important successes in exploring over the last decade. No giant oilfields have been discovered in the last two decades; at the same time, exploration and production costs will be larger and larger, above all if we go into deep waters. More investment is required to obtain the same production levels or the same number of discoveries.

Both Calderón and the PEP have publicly stated that underinvestment in exploration is a problem. But it is by no means certain that the Congress

will authorize additional funding to solve it. An additional difficulty is that the assignation of resources is irregular, varying from year to year. What is more, it is difficult to justify the assignation of public resources, our taxes, to risky activities that do not guarantee a return on our money.

It is also difficult to evaluate to what degree the poor results in exploration can be attributed to technological insufficiencies, bureaucratic methods of hiring drilling equipment or the lack of management capabilities and techniques. PEP is a vertical, tightly closed body, whose internal criteria and ways of operating are little known outside it. No one knows if it uses the best industrial practices and makes the best decisions, although it is a fact that regulation of oil jobs in Mexico, which dates from 1973, is obsolete, and for this reason there is no kind of external evaluation of PEP's industrial practices

in exploration and production. In addition, more powerful technologies are needed to determine where to drill.

Another plausible theory is that no more big oil deposits will be discovered. However, this theory runs in the face of the supposition that large amounts of resources remain to be discovered, above all in the Gulf of Mexico. It should be taken into account that Mexico has been and continues to be a country with large oil deposits. Ever since President Lázaro Cárdenas's expropriation of the country's oil March 18, 1938, the exploitation of giant deposits (first Poza Rica, in Veracruz; then the Bermúdez Complex in Samaria and Jujo-Tecominoacán in Tabasco; Abkatún-Pol-Chuc, Cantarell and now Ku-Maloob-Zaap in the Campeche Sound) has been what has sustained national oil production. Thanks to the exploitation of giant deposits, Mexico has become one of the world's main oil producers and export-

ers. Nevertheless, rapid exploitation has been ruinous at a time when the reserves are not being replaced. The Abkatún-Pol-Chuc complex practically lasted only one six-year presidential term, that of Carlos Salinas de Gortari. The Ku-Maloob-Zaap field is just reaching high production levels, but will begin its decline before the end of this administration.

This gives us an idea of the difficulty Pemex will face in its efforts to maintain national crude oil production in the coming years. It is an enormous challenge that must be resolved in order to ensure the future sustainability of the national oil industry. **NMM**

NOTES

¹ Jesús Reyes Heróles, speech on the 69th anniversary of the expropriation of Mexican oil in Veracruz on March 18, 2007, http://elmundodelpetroleo.com/articulos.php?id_sec=8&id_art=80 (accessed April 19, 2007). [Editor's Note.]



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Shared Oil Deposits: The Urgency Of an International Treaty

Víctor Rodríguez Padilla*



Pemex/Cuartoscuro

Oil platforms in the Gulf of Mexico.

One of the energy agenda's central issues is the existence of geological formations favoring the accumulation of gas and oil deposits that spill onto both sides of the border in ultra-deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico, and the threat that the United States might unilaterally begin drilling to the detriment of Mexico's interests.

The two countries share more than 1,100 kilometers of marine border, ex-

tending to the east from the Tamaulipas coast to the maritime border with Cuba. Along the way, the sea floor drops deeper and deeper. At the end of the first 300-kilometer stretch, in deep waters, is the Perdido Foldbelt. Further along is the western polygon or "doughnut hole," which in June 2000 gave rise to an international treaty between Mexico and the United States that we will touch on later (see map 1). Next to that is the oil-less abyssal plain, stretching up to the eastern polygon that borders

on the three countries and is not yet the object of negotiations.

The Perdido Foldbelt extends over both sides of the border. The U.S. part is on the extreme southern end of the Alaminos Canyon, an area designated by the U.S. government for granting oil concessions. The area has created great expectations despite depths of from 2,286 to 3,048 meters. According to UNAM Professor Fabio Barbosa, 13 exploratory wells were drilled between 1996 and 2006.¹ Some have been suc-

* Guest researcher at the CISAN.

All that formally exists today
is a very general treaty for the western region, while
the rest of the border remains to be covered, specifically
the area of the Perdido Foldbelt.

cessful, but none is currently pumping oil since until recently there was no technology to pump oil and natural gas in ultra-deep water.²

Today, the technological limit is 2,731 meters under the sea. The record was set in December 2006 by Transocean, a drilling company hired by Anadarko Oil, which is developing the Independence Hub project. For exploratory wells, the world record is the 3,051-meter Toledo well, on 2003, in the Per-

dido area, very close to the border with Mexico.

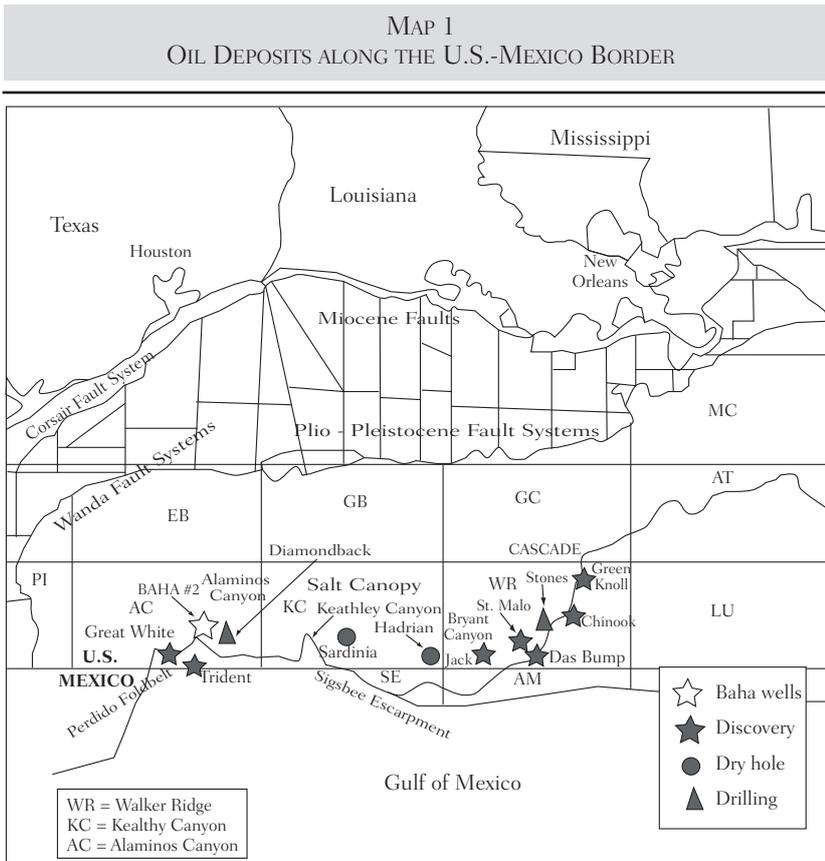
Outstanding among the successful wells drilled in Alaminos Canyon are Great White (Shell, 2002) and Trident (Shell, 2003) in 2,438- and 2,953-meter-deep water. Both wells began being productive starting at the level of the Lower Tertiary Wilcox sands.

The Wilcox sands reach east to Keathley Canyon and Walker Ridge on the Sigsbee Escarpment and the Amery

Terrace, precisely in the part of the “doughnut hole” that came under U.S. jurisdiction. In these two areas, three and twelve wells have been drilled, respectively, some successfully.³ In September 2006, industry press shook the world with the announcement of a gigantic reservoir of oil discovered by Chevron in the Walker Ridge area when it drilled its Jack-2 well 2,300 meters under the sea. This discovery, which could yield 800,000 barrels a day starting in 2011, has unleashed a wave of speculation about the volume of the deposits there and the possibility of stopping the decline in U.S. oil production.

But let us return to the Perdido area. Based on seismic information, it is estimated that some of its formations, due to their line-up and form, extend to the Mexican side. This is the case of Trident, a structure considered the first shared deposit, although no well has been drilled on the Mexican side confirming the hypothesis. Hammerhead, Aruba, Toledo and Toronto are structures on the U.S. side that seem to extend south of the political border, but it is unknown whether they contain hydrocarbons since, with the exception of a dry well in Toledo, no drilling has been done.

It has recently been said that the Great White block (2,438 meters) is also a shared deposit, in fact the largest one according to press reports quoting the U.S. Department of Energy. What is most important is the December 2006 announcement of the imminent erection of a production platform by Shell, BP and Chevron, to begin pumping this deposit in 2010, as well as that of the Tobago (2,926 meters) and Silvertip (2,804 meters) fields. According to Shell, these will be the pumping stations for the deepest undersea wells ever drilled.



Source: <http://www.energiayecologia.com/articulo.php?nid=53698&sid=14>.

On the Mexican side, since the mid-1990s, Pemex has been doing exploratory studies in the Perdido area, studies that have made it possible to pinpoint some locations at a depth of 2,500 to 3,350 meters, but no well has yet been drilled. Some of these sites cannot be drilled with current technologies, but others could be. For the time being, two areas have been defined (Máximo, bordering on the U.S., and Magno, further south) that Pemex hopes to open up to international bidding when Congress passes reform legislation in the matter.

A LIMITED TREATY

U.S. interest in extending its domination to all areas with oil potential in the Gulf of Mexico and the will to close the door to third parties that might claim rights over the western polygon—until then considered international waters—led the United States to open up negotiations with Mexico to divvy up the area in question. The result was the Mexico-United States Treaty on the Delimitation of the Continental Shelf in the Western Gulf of Mexico beyond 200 Nautical Miles, signed June 9, 2000, which went into effect January 17, 2001.⁴ Its official aim was to recognize and establish commitments about the area with regard to oil or natural gas reservoirs that could cover both sides of the new border. The area in question is located at from 2,500 meters to over 3,500 meters under the surface of the ocean.

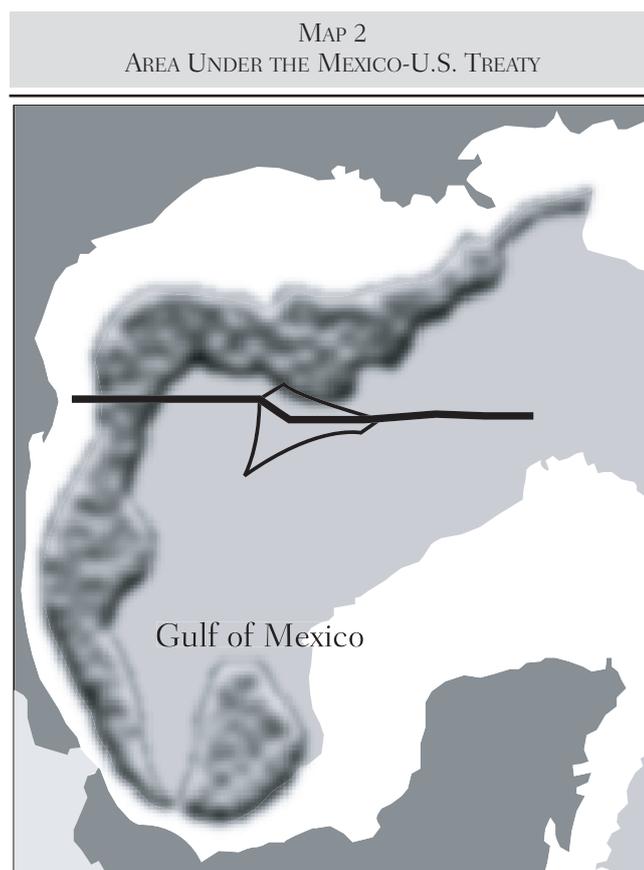
Most of the western region is abyssal plain devoid of geological structures. That is what Mexico ended up with. The rest, as has already been mentioned, is the Sigsbee Escarpment and the Amery Terrace, areas with oil po-

The federal government
and the Senate urgently need to begin to negotiate a treaty
with the United States for the optimum exploitation
of shared resources.

tential that ended up on the U.S. side (see map 2).

The two countries agreed that for a period of 10 years after the treaty entered into effect, they would not authorize or allow drilling or oil or natural gas extraction on the continental shelf within 1.4 nautical miles (2.6 kilometers) of the border established in the treaty; that is, they set a moratorium for a strip a little over five kilometers wide along

the border. They also decided that the parties would share any geological and geophysical information they had in order to determine the possible existence and location of transborder reservoirs, and that they would notify their counterparts if they discovered new ones. They also agreed that both parties would meet periodically in order to identify, locate and determine the characteristics of these deposits. Fi-



Source: INEGI, <http://mapserver.inegi.gob.mx/geografia/espanol/datosgeogra/poligono/menuintro.cfm?c=162>



Marco Polo Guzmán/Cuartoscuro

A Pemex oil tanker.

nally, they resolved to try to come to an agreement about efficient, equitable exploitation of the resources, without specifying the mechanisms for solving differences.

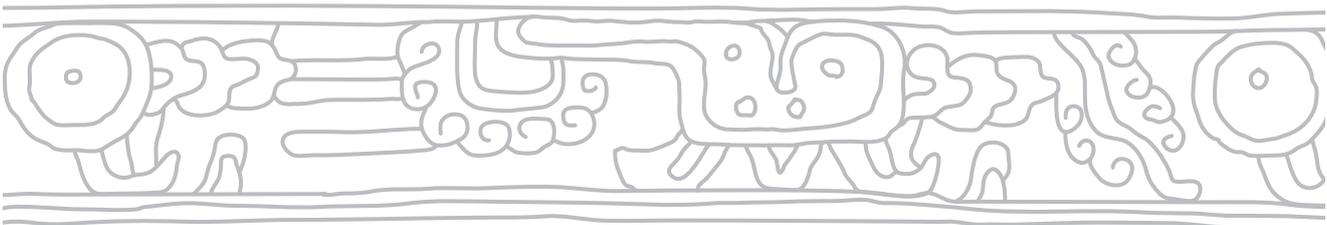
In summary, formally, all that exists is a very general treaty for the western region, while the rest of the border remains to be covered, specifically the area of the Perdido Foldbelt. The last big jump in technology shortened Mexico's breathing time. Four years ago it was only possible to drill and pump oil at a depth of 2,200 meters; today it is possible 2,700 meters under the sea. In only a few years, it will be possible at 3,000 meters. It will take longer to design and put into operation specific

drilling and pumping projects; however, it is clear that time is running out for our country.

The federal government and the Senate urgently need to begin to negotiate a treaty with the United States for the optimum exploitation of shared resources. It is, above all, a matter of diplomacy that will not be solved by changing industrial structures, property rights or the Constitution. It is devoutly to be wished that the rules of unification used in the North Sea for optimum exploitation of shared deposits be applied. In any case, the authorization of development and extraction plans must be the decision of the appropriate authorities of both countries. **MM**

NOTES

- ¹ They are Baha 1 and 2 (Shell); Trident 1 and 2 (Unocal); Great White 1 and 2 (Shell); Toledo (Chevron); Tobago (Shell); Silver TIP (Shell); Tiger (Shell); Diamond Back and Gotcha 1 and 2 (Chevron).
- ² See Fabio Barbosas's article, "La próxima batalla por el petróleo del golfo de México," <http://www.energiayecologia.com/articulo.php?id=53698&sid=14>. [Editor's Note.]
- ³ The Sardinia, Hadrian and Kaskida wells have been drilled in Keatleen Canyon. Chinook 1 and 2, Cascade, Dana Point, St. Malo 1 and 2, Jack 1 and 2, Stones, Das Bump and Tucker have been drilled in Walker Ridge. In November 2006, Petrobras got permission to exploit the Cascade and Chinook fields 2,499 meters under water. *Offshore*, vol. 66, issue 12, December 1, 2006, <http://www.offshore-mag.com/pastissues/index.cfm?pubyear=2006>.
- ⁴ For details of the treaty, see <http://mapserver.inegi.gob.mx/geografia/espanol/datos-geogra/poligono/decreto02.cfm>. [Editor's Note.]



Revelations

The Arts in Latin America 1492-1820

Ery Cámara*



Anonymous, Child Christ with imperial Inca crown, dressed as a Catholic priest, eighteenth century, Peru (oil on canvas). Private collection.

Motivated among other things by interesting research and a series of increasingly well-documented exhibits about extant Latin American art from the colonial period, Joseph Rishel, curator of the Philadelphia Art Museum's European pre-twentieth-century art collection, decided to contribute to the knowledge and appreciation of the complexity of the artistic legacy of Spanish viceregal America and Brazil, dominated by Portugal. He gathered together a select committee of researchers, curators and specialists and coordinated their efforts to structure the bases, references and collections that inform the exhibit *Revelations: the Arts in Latin America, 1492-1820*.

Committed to giving this artistic legacy the place it deserves in the Western tradition given the transformations it effected in it, with the support of a Getty Foundation grant, his team met as often as necessary to delimit its field of research and the strategy for the undertaking. They also traveled to several countries, visiting museums, private archives and collections and public and religious institutions to request the loan of pieces whose quality made them exceptional testimony of the period. In addition, these efforts unearthed some works that were severely damaged and other pieces that would be documented and exhibited for the first time. The experience also demonstrated the need to establish practical mechanisms to simplify the paperwork involved in loans from collections, at the same time serving to contribute to their protection and dissemination. The restoration of some cultural goods included in the collection is a way of contributing to the preservation of this irreplaceable legacy. We should underline the generosity of sponsors, museums and collectors whose loans have been vital for organizing this exhibition.

Three museums committed to promoting inter-institutional collaboration to open up new horizons to greater knowledge of our cultural diversity joined hands to organize this complex project: the Philadelphia Art Museum, the Old College of San Ildefonso and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Paintings, sculp-



Anonymous, *Saint Elesbón*, second half of the eighteenth century, Recife (multicolored wood). 5ª Superintendencia Regional of IPHAN, Pernambuco, Brazil.

tures, textiles, worked gold, furniture and ceramics, among other items, reveal the characteristics of the most diverse, complex societies, as well as the similarities and differences in religious expressions, languages, traditions and artistic expressions shared by the peoples of Latin America.

This exhibition is the first in Mexico to cover so many countries in colonial Latin America over a period of almost three centuries. Although not all the countries responded with the same generosity, the diversity of the artistic genres included in the collection, the selection of artists, works and themes, offer a wonderful opportunity to be amazed at the many revelations they spark. The artistic production created by and for colonial society in the different regions of Latin America is displayed museographically in a way that, without aspiring to completely exhaust the theme, allows both amateurs and scholars to admire an un-

* Curator and exhibitions coordinator at the Old College of San Ildefonso.

Photos courtesy of the Old College of San Ildefonso, taken by César Flores.

precedented array of works: important oeuvres brought together for the first time, loaned by 59 art museums, 37 Catholic archdioceses, religious orders and churches and at least 20 private collectors. The exhibition includes more than 243 works from Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Guatemala, Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. In truth, this is an exceptional opportunity to examine close up originals that very often cannot even be seen in their countries of origin. And that does not take into account the fact that visiting all the loaning institutions would cost a fortune.

The exhibition, very successfully inaugurated last September at the Philadelphia Art Museum, was an excellent introduction to the diversity of artistic and cultural expressions forged by Latin American society.

For Latin American viewers, the exhibit was strengthened using descriptions and chronologies that prompt-

ed other observations or reviews revealing the ties between the Americas and the rest of the world. The Old College of San Ildefonso benefited from the advisory services of Dr. Clara Bargellini of the UNAM Institute for Aesthetic Research, who was part of the scientific committee collaborating with Joseph Rishel from the project's onset. Dr. Bargellini fine-tuned the documentation, selection and distribution of the collections sent from Philadelphia and 40 more pieces loaned to San Ildefonso to enrich the discourse. Simultaneously, all the museum's departments designed strategies and activities to optimize the organiza-

The exhibition brings together works loaned by 59 art museums, 37 Catholic archdioceses, religious orders and churches and at least 20 private collectors.



Juan Patricio Morlete Ruiz, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, mid-eighteenth century, Mexico (oil on canvas). Private collection.



Diego Quispe Curo, *Christ on a Column*, 1667, Potosí (multicolored cedar).
Provincia Misionera San Antonio in Bolivia, Recoleta Convent Museum, Sucre, Bolivia.

The revelations go from the singularity of an object, its iconography, style and technique, to the circumstances that governed social, political and economic interaction.

tion, promotion and security in the different services offered to visitors, in addition to taking charge of the conservation and protection of the collections.

In contrast with the Philadelphia Art Museum, a building in the neoclassical style, the Old College of San Ildefonso, a wonderful example of New Spain architecture, was added to the collection it held as an ideal showplace for the thematic interpretation of the museographical script.

The collection was distributed chronologically, by theme and to balance the combination of artistic genres. The aim was to weave a discourse that would allow for multiple approximations to the analysis or appreciation of the collection. The incorporation of new works that, for different reasons, could not be displayed in Philadelphia, together with the design of the furniture, graphics and lighting, gave the exhibit in San Ildefonso an expressive intensity that makes it even more eloquent. Pieces of the college's permanent collection, like the large-scale oils from the sacristy and the set of chairs from the San Agustín Convent kept in the El Generalito Room, were naturally incorporated into the display.

The exhibition was structured around five themes distributed in 12 rooms, each in a different color that, combined with the light, brought out the formal qualities of every piece: "The Meeting

of Materials and Processes," "Debated, Reinterpreted and Transformed Places," "Artistic Traditions of the Americas," "Devotions for Life and Death" and "Societies of Diverse and Multicolored Individuals." In a progression, the visitor discovered, compared, recognized and detected similarities and contrasts between works of different origins. The revelations go from the singularity of an object, its iconography, the style and technique, the creator and his/her context, to the exchanges and circumstances that governed social, political and economic interaction. Among the different arts and trades included in the collection are outstanding artists from all the regions, many still unknown to most of our populations, whose work and influence transcended local borders. These include Bernardo Bitti, from Cuzco, Peru; Melchor Pérez Holguín from Potosí, Bolivia; Gregorio Vásquez de Arce

y Ceballos, from Bogotá; Luis Juárez, Alonso López de Herrera, Juan Correa and Cristóbal de Villalpando, from Mexico; Antonio Francisco Lisboa (Aleijadinho), from Brazil; Bernardo de Legarda and Manuel Chili Caspicara, from Quito; and José Campeche, from San Juan de Puerto Rico, among others. There are also outstanding works by anonymous artists, whose craftsmanship can be seen in the impressive originality and the quality of furniture, ceramics, feather art, textiles, gold working and sculpture.

The museum's main objectives in mounting this exhibit were to achieve a museography that gives the visitor a pleasurable aesthetic experience; by documenting these collections, to emphasize the transcendence of European expansion that connects the Americas with the other continents, as well as the social, economic and political transformations that the mestizo culture fed by migrations spurred; and the exchanges during the centuries of consolidation of viceregal societies and their impact in the world. In a globalized world in which migration is increasing despite measures to stop it, it is a good idea to foster this kind of review to tear down prejudices and make balanced judgments both about the past and the present, favoring exchanges that further progress and peaceful coexistence among the cultures of the world. An exhibition like this one lends itself to debate about many issues and situations linked to Latin American cultural unity.

The show is supplemented by essays by 55 outstanding specialists, as well as broad documentation and illustrations that shed new light on the collection. All of this has been gathered in a splendid catalogue/book that

will most certainly become a reference work. More than concentrating on the formal qualities, the style and the iconography of some of the master works on display in all the rooms and analyzed even more in the catalogue, soon to be published in Spanish by the Fondo de Cultura Económica, I would like to emphasize the underlying unity of the different themes that make up the exposition.

The first room is an introduction, situating the visitor in the context of a period of encounters and migrations, illustrated by a map of the viceroyalties and their links to the rest of the world. In addition, a few works are displayed as examples of artistic genres that exist-



Miguel Cabrera, *From a Mestizo and an Indian Is Born a Coyote*, 1763, Mexico (oil on canvas). Elisabeth Waldo-Dentzel Collection, Northridge Studios.

ed prior to the conquest and which the Europeans admired for their originality and quality. The same techniques were later used and massively adapted to the Christian iconography: feather art, sculpture in corn stalk paste, wood or stone, and painting were all pillars of and media in which reminiscences of Mesoamerican and Andean cultures can be glimpsed. They shine through in the furniture decorated with inlays, the ceramics, the work with mother-of-pearl incrustations and screens, with both Asian and Western influences. Clearly new techniques have been introduced to make them, revealing the innovative skill of the artists and craftsmen in the Americas in interpreting only recently assimilated codes. To this should be added the cultural influences from African slaves and groups of Asians who joined these societies. This many underlying meanings make each work an unending source of knowledge.

In an atmosphere dramatized by the red-painted walls, evoking the intensity of these encounters, singular works illustrate a network

of exchanges of materials, techniques, trade routes traveled by men and women, traditions, beliefs, dreams and aspirations. The printing press and navigation favored a previously unimaginable spread of Western culture and the Christian religion. All the works evidence the skill and meticulousness with which they were fashioned. Recognizing ourselves in this approach to the creative diversity of the new world awakens a re-creation of the viewer through his/her imagination and a re-creation of how each work was made.

The next theme deals with the appropriation of space, referring to the places reinterpreted and transformed following the guidelines established by the Spanish crown for the colonization of the new lands and the exploitation of their riches. The spiritual conquest, the missionary endeavors, the urbanization of the new settlements with different hierarchical structures forged customs that made up a mestizo society that, defending its own values, began to reconstruct its historic memory after a century of living together.

The room that holds these works is painted in the blue of the scenery, highlighting different aspects of its topography in a sort of chronicle that reviews the event, the miracle, the memory and territorial demarcations. A detailed chronicle can be discerned from the paintings, screens, maps and furniture; the artists' eyes do not miss the smallest detail. The exploitation of the wealth of the new settlements was decisive for the distribution of lands to the Spaniards, local strongmen-caciques and indigenous communities.

The artistic traditions of the Americas reflect the enormous number of images and objects that viceregal societies demanded to adorn their churches, palaces and residences. The services of teachers and craftsmen were required to decorate their



Anonymous, Desk, end of the eighteenth or beginning of the nineteenth centuries, Quito (wood with hardwood inlays; base added in restoration). Franz Mayer Museum, Mexico City.

homes and to make gifts and donations. The markets and fairs supplied by the Nao ships, galleons and caravels fostered intense intercontinental trade. In these rooms, the work and influence of religious orders and brotherhoods as the main patrons of art shines through. Master craftsmen from Spain, Italy, Flanders and Portugal organized guilds, respecting to the letter the ordinances established for their foundation, facilitating the transmission of trade secrets to several generations and encouraging the intervention of indigenous, mulattos, Asians and Creoles in artistic production. Religion, classical literature and the stylistic trends of the moment were sources of inspiration for the creators, attentive to the most convincing proposals of their time. From the gray walls hang paintings projecting their own luminosity and, in the middle of the rooms are sculptures, pieces of furniture and extraordinary examples of silver work in which the viewer can discern different sensibilities, materials, techniques and uses. The talent of the masters of the baroque period in the Americas reveals qualities whose popularity transcended the hemisphere.

Societies manifest their spirituality in their devotional ceremonies for life and death; they add to the Christian iconography new figures and attributes linked to the appearances, miracles and the syncretism derived from the adaptation of ancient beliefs and concessions to the Christian catechism. The interpretation of Biblical passages, of the life of Christ, of the Virgin and the Saints, or the ornamentation of churches, of worship, the vestments, the instruments and the liturgy itself are all aspects that reflect particular regionalisms and forms of worship. The same can be seen in the use of techniques like lacquers or paste varnish that the American indigenous used. The presence of communities of African origin can be perceived in Brazil and Guatemala, with saints like Saint Elesbán and Saint Ifigenia, as well as Saint Martín de Porres in Peru. Our Lady of Guadalupe and the indigenous Juan Diego are linked to Mexico's pre-Hispanic past, and Saint Rosa de Lima, the first Native American to be canonized, was born in Peru. We can also point to the Virgins of Cocharcas and of Copacabana, or Guatemala's Virgin of Colocha or Ecuador's Virgin of Quito. Talented goldsmiths and cabinet-makers, carvers, painters and sculptors contributed



Attributed to Diego de Atienza, *Monstrance*, 1649, Lima (poured, chiseled and engraved gold-plated silver with enamel). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Friedsam Collection, property of Michael Friedsam.

The artistic traditions of the Americas reflect the enormous number of objects that viceregal societies demanded to adorn their churches, palaces and residences.

with works of impeccable manufacture to the success of society's religious conversion. Under the solemn nave of the chapel of the Old College of San Ildefonso, magnificent carvings and paintings brilliantly reflect the splendor of the baroque and its versions of religious faith. In this space, monumental works dialogue, illustrating through their variations, beliefs and aspirations the complexity of the religious manifestations expressed through artistic creation. As though they had been conceived for the place, the dais



Partial view of the room "Art Traditions of the Americas," the exhibit's third theme.

and crucifix of Olinda shine before the La Dolorosa altarpiece from the Jesuit Santa Lucía hacienda.

The last section of the visit illustrates some of the changes that came about with the arrival of the Bourbons to the throne and the impact of the ideas of the Enlightenment, which imposed a greater secularity on customs and thinking. Creole society portrayed its composition and defined its hierarchies, and its elites manifested their refinement and taste for domestic furnishings. The caste painting genre emerged in New Spain, illustrating a multi-ethnic society. These are valuable pictorial testimonies projecting tastes and customs, fashions and food, in the end, mixtures that captivated the curiosity of the European and Latin American enlightened alike. The passion for commemorating dates important for families to remember and celebrate, the dedication to spiritual education and the intellectual training of family members motivated an increase in portraits of civic officials, crowned nuns, the deceased, babies and families.

In all the viceroyalties, a mestizo society, conscious of its own values, began to decrease its production of religious art and direct its gaze toward the rococo and neoclassical styles promoted by the canons of the academy. Our visit to the exhibition ends in this blue room, where the portrait of the liberator Simón Bolívar announces the beginnings of the independence movements that would mark the close and transcendence of this immensely rich period.

Revelations: The Arts in Latin America, 1492-1820 included activities like creative workshops, concerts, lectures and a seminar incorporating some of the authors published in the catalogue. Like a banquet of unprecedented stimuli, this exhibition began the celebration of the first 15 years of the museum which, since 1992, has made enormous efforts to find projects whose excellence and quality transcend and contribute to strengthening the cultural development of our societies. **MM**

The Three Magicians Of Mexican Cinema (Part 1)

Miguel Cane*



From left to right: Alfonso Cuarón, Alejandro González Iñárritu and Guillermo del Toro.

The names Alfonso Cuarón, Guillermo del Toro and Alejandro González Iñárritu are already part of film history, even if that was the last thing expected at the beginning of their careers. Escapes from desolation, these three Mexican filmmakers, born in the 1960s, decided to experiment with innovative styles and themes. Their first films, though well received in Mexico, became their passports for international movie-making. In a series of three articles, I will sketch their profiles and talk about what in their movies kick-started their careers, with the idea of exploring the secret of their global success a little. In this issue, I will center on Alfonso Cuarón, born in Mexico City in 1961, and one of his biggest hits.

* Film journalist at the magazine *Milenio Semanal* and the newspaper *Milenio*.

SÓLO CON TU PAREJA
(ONLY WITH YOUR PARTNER):
LOVE + HYSTERIA = A CULT CLASSIC

Even though it might not seem like it, 16 years have gone by since this movie premiered, changing many suppositions about what it means to write, make and watch films in this country. Condemned to the limbo of forgotten films for more than a decade, *Sólo con tu pareja* (Only with Your Partner) (1991), which in the meantime has become a cult classic, has been revived by the advent of DVD, which now brings it to new generations of viewers.

This movie, with strong strains of black comedy, marked Alfonso Cuarón's debut as a director of feature-length films, although by that time he already had an extensive career under his belt as a director of television. It was also his brother Carlos's debut as a scriptwriter. Ten years later they would repeat the partnership in *Y tu mamá también* (And Your Mother, Too) (2001), taking a look at a culture that had been bypassed in the Mexican cinema of the time: the upwardly mobile middle class, Mexico's yuppies, portrayed on celluloid with healthy doses of humor, slapstick, sarcasm and tenderness.

The plot of *Sólo con tu pareja* centers on the adventures and misadventures of Tomás Tomás (Daniel Giménez Cacho), a brilliant ad executive who at the start of the story is trying to come up with an obviously sex-laden slogan ("Gómez homemade jalapeño chili peppers let you blow as you eat..."). Tomás is a compulsive womanizer as well as a confirmed hypochondriac, who lives amidst the decadent nineteenth-century splendor of a building in the Roma Neighborhood, and like Mike, the hero of e.e. cummings's poem, he likes all kinds of girls: blonds, brunettes, thin ones, fat ones...all kinds except green ones. His friends and neighbors, patient practically to the point of sainthood, are Dr. Mateo Mateos (the late Luis de Icaza) and his wife, Teresa de Teresa (Astrid Hadad), who act as a kind of Greek chorus for our antihero's romantic and hormonal mishaps. Things get complicated when two women come into his life almost at the same time: seductive Silvia Silva (the irresistible Dobrina Luibomirova) and the celestial Clarisa Negrete (a radiant Claudia Ramírez in a role that fits her like a glove since at the time she was the director's girlfriend and muse). The two of them will turn things



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This movie,
with strong strains of black comedy,
marked Alfonso Cuarón's debut as a director
of feature-length films.

around for this neurotic Don Juan when the very real specter of AIDS appears on the scene.

If *Sólo con tu pareja* had been shot in the 1960s, obviously AIDS would not have been an issue and possibly another sexual problem would have been used, maybe a funnier one (venereal disease? unstoppable parasites?). The main character would have been played by Mauricio Garcés, with some curvaceous beauty like Amadée Chabot or Jacqueline Voltaire in the role of the ardent nurse, while Irma Lozano —nobody could play virgins like she could— would have created the role of the flight attendant who lived next door.

Fortunately, the sensibilities of the 1990s and the many references the Cuarón brothers use —clearly these are two young men who watched Robert Altman films and devotedly read José Agustín, Carlos Fuentes as well as J.D. Salinger— make the material transcend its light tone and speak to an entire generation in its own language. They use very emblematic images that go from the wrestler El Santo to Ultramán and create their own iconic takes, like the sequence in which Clarisa, a serene beauty, stands in front of a mirror practicing the movements all flight attendants have to use to show where the airplane's emergency exists as a besotted Tomás spies on her from the balcony with something like adoration as captured by the lens of Emmanuel "El Chivo" Lubezki. This scene will be preserved for posterity, having become a small classic.

With its freshness, rhythm and audacity, *Sólo con tu pareja* was a watershed for bored audiences, tired of Mexican commercial cinema being flooded with cheap, vulgar comedies, and who finally returned to the theaters ready to pay the price of admission to see a movie Made-in-Mexico. While this film was a resounding success locally, it did not transcend our borders; but that did not stop Cuarón, who finally took the risk of making the great leap without a net and, armed only with encouragement from director Sydney Pollack (who confessed to being a fan of the film), he went to Los Angeles. There, he directed an episode of the TV series *Fallen Angels* and later, he had the chance to shoot his second feature, *The Little Princess* (1995). Once again in partnership with Lubezki, here he could



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Cuarón has made a name for himself as a very special director and has been fortunate in his choice of themes and projects.

explore his concerns as the eye behind the camera to tell a tender, classic tale based on the 1905 novel of the same name by English writer Frances Hodgson-Burnett (1849-1924).

Alfonso Cuarón has made a name for himself as a very special director and has been fortunate in his choice of themes and projects. He was both very successful at the box office with *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (2004), the third piece of the saga and a splendid result for a commissioned piece, and sparked enormous affection in some circles with his version of *Great Expectations* (1998), mainly because of the exception performances he elicited from Anne Bancroft and Gwyneth Paltrow, his choice of soundtrack and the extraordinary art direction. His most recent work, the sublime, disquieting dystopia *Children of Men* (2006), with first-rate performances by Clive Owen, Julianne Moore and Michael Caine, places him further away from Hollywood's commercial complacencies, which his predecessor, Luis Mandoki could not avoid, and closer to what is termed "author's cinema." Currently living in London, Cuarón is much more than the promise of his first film. However, this work exists to remind us, now thanks to the Criterion Collection, that his very special narrative voice was heard for the first time in the convulsive megalopolis that is Mexico City, where he left a continuing, indelible mark. **MM**



Monarchs Binomial, 50 x 70 cm, 1995 (mixed color engraving).



The artist and her teacher, muralist Ramón Alva de la Canal.

América Gabrielle An Artist of Two Millennia

Gabriela García Correa*
Demian Fernández García**

América Gabrielle is a true product of women breaking new ground in society, going from being spectators to being protagonists in Mexico's productive, creative society.

* Mexican writer and poet.

** General director of the Diomara Center for Comprehensive Human Development.

As a little girl, América Gabrielle lived in the San Ángel neighborhood and often walked with her brothers toward what is today the Insurgentes Theater. At that time, Diego Rivera was painting the theater's famous Venetian mosaic mural. From atop his scaffolding, Diego used to throw little América diminutive colored pieces of tile that she would then arrange in a harmonious whole on



Marine 1, 70 x 90 cm, 1990 (oil on canvas).

The artist merges with her surroundings, embraces with her soul whatever she touches and expresses this in her work with a simplicity that goes beyond the visible.

the sidewalk to make her own mosaic. Later, when Diego would come down, the two would talk a little and go buy an ice cream cone. That was her first incursion into the world of art, just the start of her journey along that road.

She did her extensive training in several places: the San Carlos Academy in Mexico; the National School of Fine Arts in Paris; the Pietro Vannucci Institute in Italy. She has had the opportunity of working in teams and getting advice from great masters like Ramón Alva de la Canal, a founder and member of the 1930s movement known as Mexican Muralism, from whom she learned fresco technique. With him, América painted the mural *Our Order* in the Benito Juárez Space of the Valley of Mexico Great Lodge. With Alfredo Zalce, a member of the second generation of Mexico's muralists and a founder of the League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists (LEAR), she partici-

pated in several exhibits at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Morelia in 1984, and, in 1992, in the National Lottery Building Gallery, where they showed sculptures in copper, glass and "litho-gradients," a technique América invented.

Together with Francisco Moreno Capdevila, an engraver and teacher at the San Carlos Academy, she tried out engraving techniques. With Alberto Beltrán, sketch artist and engraver, she illustrated magazines, newspapers and books published by the Chamber of Deputies Institute for Legislative Research, among them the magazine *Quorum*. In 1979, with Dr. J.J. Fonseca, the director of the Urban Visual Arts Workshop, she sculpted *Solarium*, a monumental, stainless-steel piece mounted in the city of San Luis Potosí.

From the time she was a student, her work received recognition and awards that earned her scholarships to several countries in Europe. Once

she became a professional, she won first place in France's 1982 International Sculpture Contest. The winning piece was a copper sculpture now on display in the Parisian Higher School of Fine Arts.

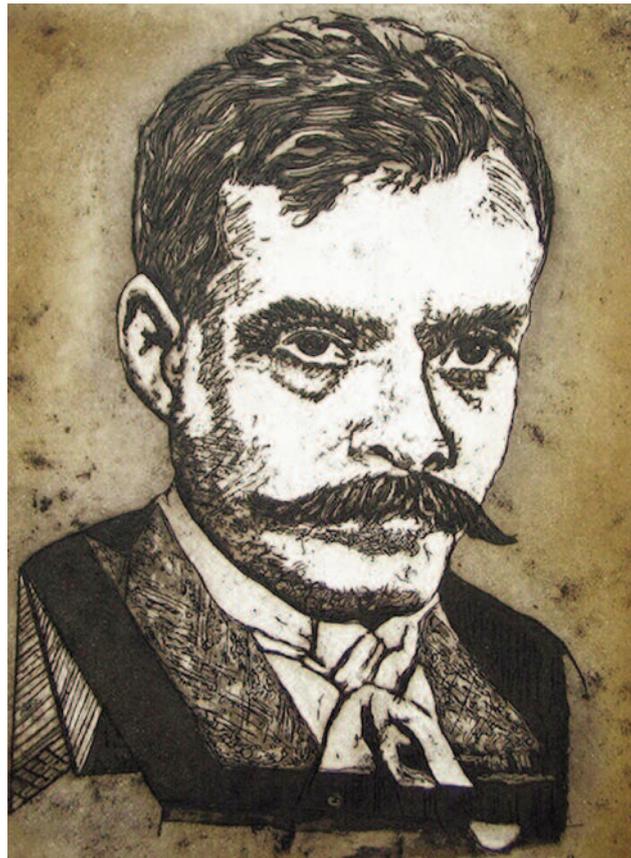
América Gabrielle works masterfully in sculpture and has experimented with different techniques, mediums (glass, copper, bronze and stainless steel) and dimensions. Some of her best known pieces are *Aerogenia*, a sculpture in glass displayed in the building of the Mexican Pilots Union, commissioned to commemorate the organization's twenty-fifth anniversary; *Rhythms*, a work in bronze that can be admired in the Morelia's Contemporary Art Museum; *Freedom*, displayed at Toronto's Henry Moor Museum; and *The Family*, a work in bronze shown in Tokyo's Hakome Museum.

In 1982, together with Ramón Alva de la Canal and Alfredo Zalce, she founded "Para el Arte Spacios" [For Art Spacios], a cultural movement inspired in José Vasconcelos's idea that it is possible

to redeem ignorance through education. Vasconcelos thought taking art to the people was the main mission and way forward for the state to build a nation.

The main premise of "For Art Spacios" is to humanize public and private spaces with art and to ensure that art be the formative factor in developing children and young people's ability to perceive in order to nurture their conceptual and expressive capabilities. For that reason, the movement's aim is that becoming an artist should lead to a way of life based on a system of positive values.

Committed to this mission, in her capacity as advisor to the Institute for Legislative Research and Secretariat of Parliamentary Affairs in Mexico's Chamber of Deputies, América Gabrielle has proposed a bill making art a required subject, not just an elective, in Mexico's formal educational system. At the institute, she is developing a research project about the most representative artists in each



Zapata, 32.8 x 24.5 cm, 1999 (engraving), based on a portrait hanging in the official residence of Mexico's president.

state of Mexico, and, based on this, is developing programs to formalize a painting gallery in the San Lázaro Chamber of Deputies complex.

América is the zenith that brings together artists in a cultural space, the point of movement whose main driving force is visual artistic endeavors. She is working with determination on a project to create a Mexican museum for the blind that would greatly benefit society.

As an untiring promoter of culture, and as director of the state of Michoacán's artistic and cultural heritage, she has participated in organizing gatherings convened by poet Homero Aridjis like the First International Poetry Congress held in Morelia in 1980, to which poets from all over the world came, including the 1999 Nobel laureate for literature Günter Grass. América always says that Grass suggested writers of all statures should write religiously a minimum of five pages a day to stimulate their creativity and master the language. She says that visual artists should do something similar.

In addition to her work as a disseminator of art, América Gabrielle is recognized in artistic circles as a portraitist because of her untiring experimentation and novel contributions to this genre. Out-

standing for its style and technical originality among her portraits is the one of General Emiliano Zapata, the leader of the revolutionary forces of the South, which hangs in Mexico's official presidential residence, Los Pinos. The gaze of that Zapata has the purity and sincerity of a child, and his face reveals the kindness and determination of the Mexican people. Naturally, the painting's qualities reflect the way the artist has experienced the life and personality of this Mexican hero, whom indigenous peoples venerate as one of their greatest forefathers.

Two passions rule América's creativity: family and art. Both are intertwined in an extraordinary way with a halo of the geometric warp expressed in her painting and sculpture. The artist merges with her surroundings, embraces with her soul whatever she touches and expresses this in her work with a simplicity that goes beyond the visible, revealing unsuspected natures.

It is obvious that Mexico's great artistic tradition nourishes América's inspiration and practice. She also has her roots in one of the purest lands of Mexico: Michoacán, a place of profound contrasts and legendary resistance, since this is



Encounter, 50 x 70 cm, 1992 (watercolor).



Inner Landscape, 70 x 90 cm, 2003 (watercolor on canvas).

For America, flowers are symbols of how to make the invisible visible by fixing in a physical medium, as the primary aim of art, the instant in which color explodes.

somewhere Aztec domination never penetrated and was, along with San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, a refuge where the indigenous peoples enjoyed the protection of Tata Vasco, a historic influence that has inspired and definitely influenced several of her works.

Because of what today's art market is like, particularly its well-known inclination to eliminate any vestige of socially committed art, América has decided to contribute to fostering belonging and raising the flag of nationalism with a contemporary bent. She thinks this is the time to partner up with every kind of producer of art and honorable people concerned about the process of artistic production in our country and its contribution to universal culture.

Artist Ramón Alva de la Canal, an initiator of the muralist movement, says that she “has real talent and a positive gift for expressing volume through color, one of her essential qualities. Her

very original style, her unprecedented techniques in engraving, sketching and painting make people think of her as an artist who will transcend, and has raised Mexico's name high through her work.” Alfonso Moreno, an excellent Mexican guitarist, has also said that América's ideology is clear in her artistic expression.

Another fundamental aspect of América, in addition to her being a creator of art, is her activity as a protector of art, which prompted the National Autonomous University of Mexico to honor her in 1992.

Today, with her creative abilities at her vital center, América Gabrielle achieves novel, original forms in contemporary styles, in which her main theme is flora and fauna. For her, flowers are symbols of how to make the invisible visible by fixing in a physical medium, as the primary aim of art, that instant in which color explodes, so characteristic of her work. **MM**



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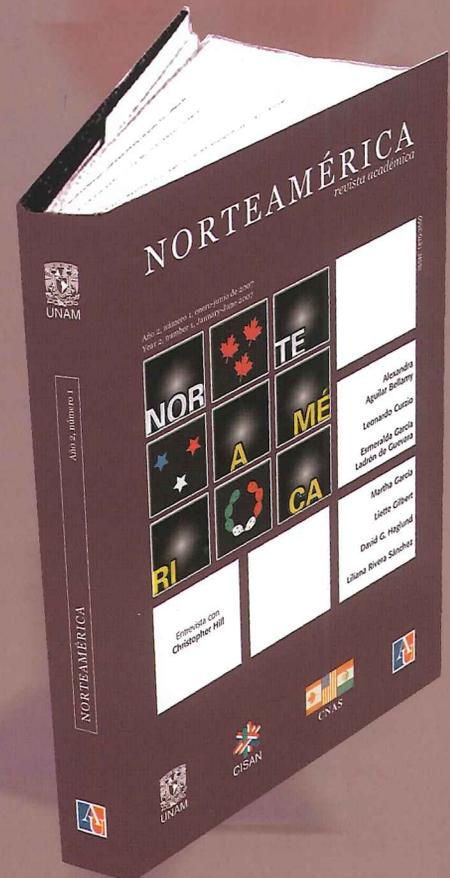
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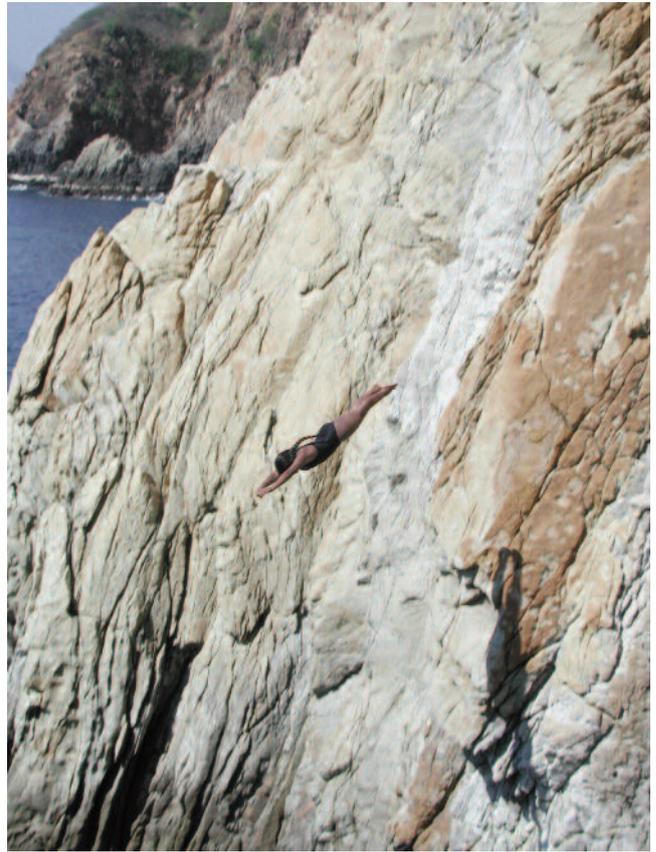
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Cliff divers perform a special dive for Acapulco's orphaned children on Children's Day.



Iris Álvarez is currently the only girl to dive in La Quebrada.

La Quebrada Divers

Barbara Kastelein*

As anyone who has listened to the introduction broadcast four times every night from the venerable Hotel Mirador will know, the world-famous Acapulco cliff divers are “the proud representatives of the original native Acapulqueños who...lived in the area surrounding La Quebrada and as part of their living had to fish, swim and go under water to rescue their fishing hooks when trapped at the rocky bottom of the canal.”¹

The voice continues, “It was at the beginning of the 1930s when in a brotherly act the youngsters started competing among each other to see

who could risk to dive [sic] from the highest altitude at La Quebrada cliffs.”

Few know that the announcement, broadcast in Spanish, English, French and German, is based on a text written, as he recalls, a little over 11 years ago, by veteran cliff diver Ignacio Sánchez. This text also notes that the cliff is about 110 feet high and that the divers plunge from this height into 13-foot-deep water dotted with sharp rocks.

As a researcher, it occurred to me that there was no one else whom international readers want to hear more from on Acapulco's twentieth-century history than the world-famous, daring and intriguing “clavadistas de La Quebrada,” as they are called at home. However, I soon found that it was unusual to consult the cliff divers' opinions and that their

* Author and specialist in cultural studies.

Unless otherwise specified photos by Barbara Kastelein.

voices were largely absent from modern accounts of Acapulco's tourism lore.

I learned from Ignacio, known affectionately as Don Nacho (now aged 58), that he began diving in La Quebrada when he was only 12, in 1961, and this is not unusual —many divers start young. He told me the Cliff Divers' Association was first organized in 1942, then called "The Quebrada Divers' and Lifesavers' Club." Common injuries are fractured wrists, perforated ear drums, displaced retinas and spinal injury.

In the past, the divers have traveled around the world in exhibitions and competitions. Many who are now in their fifties and sixties have worked in Japan, diving from an artificial fiber glass tree.

Back at home in Acapulco the divers have a profit-share system, cover rent of the area in La Quebrada where the show takes place, pay taxes and electricity and provide night watch services.

In those days, just over two years ago, divers could earn somewhere between 3,000 and 8,000 pesos (a little under U.S.\$300 to U.S.\$800) every two weeks. As he was renting out his three fishing boats near Acapulco's Las Hamacas Hotel, one early March morning, veteran cliff diver Isafas Carvajal, known as "Chai", told me that it is much the same today.

The dangers and physical stress of a cliff diving career mean it does not last long, at best similar to that of a boxer or a soccer player. But in the

The cliff is about 110 feet high and the divers plunge from this height into 13-foot-deep water dotted with sharp rocks.





Divers and children in the La Quebrada Channel.

The dangers and physical stress of a cliff-diving career mean it does not last long, at best similar to that of a boxer or a soccer player.

absence of comparable pay the divers have to have back-up income just to make ends meet. In Chai's case it was fishing, which he still does at night while helping with ticket sales and administration in La Quebrada on certain days of the week.

Many veteran divers, such as twice international champion Juan Obregón, drive a taxi. Articulate, well-informed and exceedingly witty, Juan (known as "Don Peque") will engage in all kinds of banter with his fares, including in-depth conversations about the past glamour of Acapulco. But he will not tell them he was one of La Quebrada's most important cliff divers.

I learned also about "Tarzán" (Johnny Weismuller), Frank Sinatra and other celebrities associated at some point in their lives with La Que-

brada and La Perla nightclub, the undisputed magnet of Acapulco located inside the Mirador Hotel which overlooks the diving show. But it was Antonio Velázquez, "El Profe" —all the cliff divers have a nickname— whom I spoke with next, who liked to remember the bad-old good-old-days and the stars, Marlon Brando, Brigitte Bardot, Bob Hope and James Caan.

"We were hated in Acapulco!" he remembers with gusto. "We were seen as trouble. It was envy, because we got all the foreign girls." His cliff diving career has taken Antonio all over the world: Holland, Portugal, Spain, Rome, the former Yugoslavia, Canada and the United States.

Lastly, back in 2004, I met the laconic Don Mónico, who looked at me for a second like a toad



Courtesy of Apolinar Chávez

Veteran cliff diver Don Apolinar Chávez with President Eisenhower.

at a fly not worth waking up to eat, before he closed his eyes to utter, “We are just part of Acapulco’s yesterday.”

Only a few months before, on July 17, the most famous cliff diver of all, Raúl “Chupetas” García had died, after suffering an embolism at the age of 76. With his demise came the end of an era, for the divers and for Acapulco, of which Raúl was one of the top promoters, along with former President Miguel Alemán, and the Swiss entrepreneur Teddy Stauffer.

However, while in other countries “Chupetas” would have spurred gripping obituaries in the national press, in Mexico his memory was in danger of falling back into oral history and rumor. His widow Myrna Dalia Reyes Galeana was saddened that former President Fox did not even mention his death, even though Raúl had supported Fox and gone to Mexico City to attend his presidential inauguration. Myrna says Raúl was one of the most interviewed men in the history of Acapulco.

It has not been easy for the divers to find a united voice on what “Chupetas” meant to their tradition and community. Everyone agrees the orphan boy who arrived by boat from Zihuatanejo had charisma, but with it came a very strong per-

sonality, overbearing even. It was he who, as Diver Association president for a long period, took the show on the road to national fairs and international exhibitions, made adverts for Timex and Johnny Walker, and was on friendly footing with international showbiz figures the likes of Sinatra.



Courtesy of Rubén Aréchiga Robles

Actress Mia Farrow and Raúl “Chupetas” García.



Today's cliff divers before their annual dive in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

His complex status, in a world of rapid tourism development, served both to “open the world to us,” as Antonio says, but also to obscure the individual achievements of other cliff divers of greater technical or artistic talent. As the “great leader,” he provided a unified face of the Acapulco cliff diver; intrepid, picaresque, outspoken, contrary, willful and unpredictable.

This model, patriarchal and yet independent, helped maintain a brotherhood of cliff divers whose discipline, rules and systems of rewards and punishments have kept the phenomenon going through tremendous social and economic change in one of the continent's great tourism resorts. Inevitably, it also spurred rivalries and dissatisfaction, as well as probably led to an under-evaluation of many aspects of the cliff diver community, such as the divers' social participation, family dynamics, technical skill and individual courage.

What few could imagine at the end of 2004 was that this “forgotten” world was on the verge of renewal. The steps and surrounding areas of La Quebrada were remodeled in March 2006; the cliff divers hosted the long-overdue international high diving competition once again in La

Quebrada last November; Iris Álvarez, a 12-year-old cliff diver girl, was included in the 2007 *Guinness Book of Records*; numbers of active and trainee cliff divers began to increase, and rigorous training sessions became a daily feature.

These are among the achievements so far of Jorge Mónico Ramírez, the current president of the Cliff Diver Association. Ironically Jorge is the son of Mónico who expressed himself so pessimistically only two and a half years ago.

Jorge, who remembers taking his first dive onto the bed from the top of his closet when a boy, is only 35 years old, but studious and earnest. He used to organize diving championships at home with “luchadores” (little wrestler figures, popular toys among Mexican boys), and would attach matchsticks to their hands, to be their torches.

His serious manner suggests he sees this not so much as play, but as preparation for the responsibility he now bears. Jorge has an ambitious agenda for the divers that includes hopes of taking the spectacle to Africa (the only continent where they have not yet performed), that we complete the first-ever book on the divers' history, and a *son-et-lumière* (sound and light) enhancement of the show.

We talk about Raúl's last dive, an astonishing feat undertaken at the age of 70 and by some accounts performed to draw attention to Acapulco after the devastation wreaked by Hurricane Paulina at the end of 1997. "His friends told him not to dive, but he had already promoted the event in the press," Jorge remembers. "He wanted to do it. He wanted to die with his boots on."

The thunder claps as if signaling Raúl's agreement as we finish our supper in the traditional Hotel Boca Chica. "But it brought repercussions," Jorge says wistfully, "The last time we talked together his speech...well it wasn't fluent anymore. And that made me feel sad."

And now other divers are beginning to tell their stories: Don Apolinar, who met President Eisenhower for whom the whole of La Quebrada was closed off to the public; Don Daniel "El Plomo," who used to dive in a specially-made Spiderman suit for Acapulco's orphans on Children's Day; Temoc, who was unlucky in love and lives in his car in the little La Quebrada square; Rogelio, the "Soul

Brother" who met with little success as a cliff diver but is a highly talented sand sculptor; or "Chamoy," the only Mayan diver, who came to Acapulco from Yucatán as a boxer, found cliff diving to his liking, and now works part time as a tour guide.

"I like the fraternity of the divers," says Jorge simply. "On December 11 when we all dive, even those who are retired, in honor of the Virgin of Guadalupe, we might think of another, 'You really piss me off. But I don't want anything to happen to you.' Up there on La Quebrada we are all warriors. We offer our lives there." ■■■

NOTES

¹ Dr. Barbara Kastelein has been documenting oral histories from La Quebrada, Acapulco, since November 2004. Her upcoming publication, *Héroes del Pacífico* (Heroes of the Pacific), is due for release in 2008.

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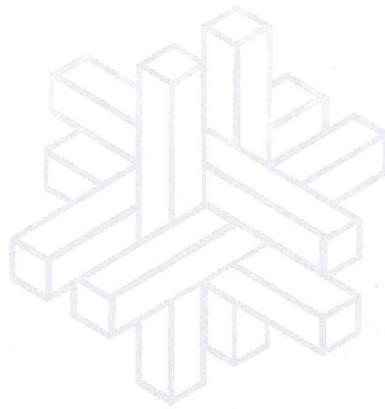
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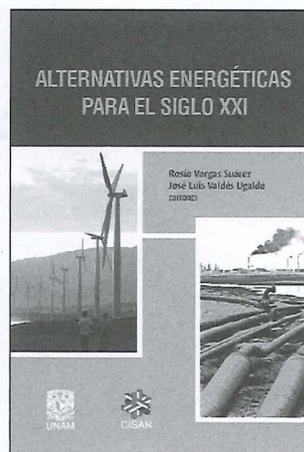
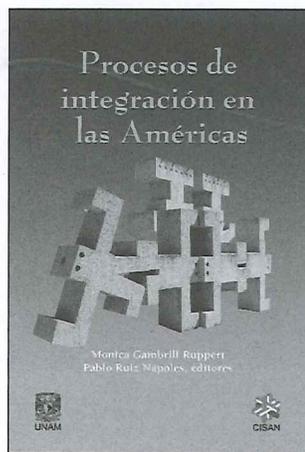
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Procesos de integración en las Américas

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.



Alternativas energéticas para el siglo XXI

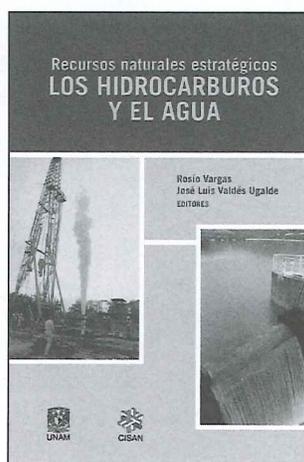
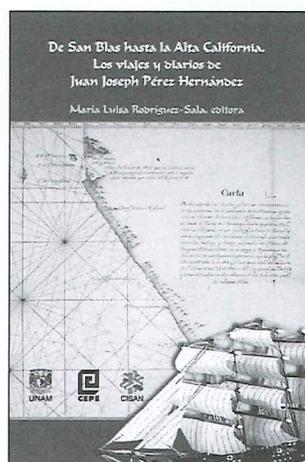
Rosío Vargas and José Luis Valdés-Ugalde, editors

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 will 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.

For further information contact

Centro de Investigaciones sobre América del Norte, CISAN

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Torre II de Humanidades, piso 9, Ciudad Universitaria, 04510

México, D.F. Phones: 5336-3558, 5336-3601, 5336-3469 and 5623-0015; fax: 5623-0014; e-mail: vocesmx@servidor.unam.mx

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Felipe Calderón's Foreign Policy

Leonardo Curzio*



Nelly Salas/Cuartoscuro

Minister of Foreign Relations Patricia Espinoza with President Calderón.

The Felipe Calderón administration has delicately begun to unfold its foreign policy, without too many sudden moves. The president has gradually tried to reduce the intensity of four big issues that brought down heavy criticism on his predecessor: Venezuela, Cuba, relations with the United States and foreign policy in general. Let us consider each of these in turn.

*Researcher at the CISAN.

VENEZUELA AND CUBA

A great deal of the background noise behind the launch of the Calderón administration stemmed from the public differences that the Fox administration had with Venezuela and which led to the withdrawal of ambassadors from Caracas and Mexico City. The situation has still not been normalized because Hugo Chávez's radicalization has impeded its going any further. On the one hand,

Chávez was the only one who, though ambiguously, played with the possibility of backing the hypothesis that the 2006 elections had been fraudulent, a hypothesis put forward in Mexico by the Coalition for the Welfare of All headed by Andrés Manuel López Obrador, and therefore with the idea of not recognizing the legitimacy of Felipe Calderón's government. On the other hand, the new wave of nationalizations in Venezuela has come very close to affecting Mexican interests.

**Calderón has dealt with relations
with Cuba cautiously: he has opted for pragmatic
courtesy, putting the relationship on its way to getting
back on course without incident.**

At the beginning of his term, President Calderón publicly differentiated himself with certain aspects of the Chávez Bolivarian regime's economic policy. The most critical moment came during the January 24-28, 2007 Davos World Economic Forum meeting when Calderón participated in the January 26 panel "Latin America Broadens Its Horizons" with the president of Brazil and the OAS general secretary. On that panel, Calderón said that Mexico was a country that he thought had surpassed the false state/market dilemma and that he did not consider nationalizations the solution to regional problems. Criticisms from the opposition rained on the Mexican president for clearly expressing this position. Broad sectors of the public thought that putting things this way was an incentive for worsening bilateral relations and reducing Mexico's weight in Latin America, and that, in the last analysis, gained little since the markets had already differentiated what Mexico does from what Venezuela does perfectly well.

In this way, once the difference was marked, Calderón recapitulated and weighed three objectives of his foreign policy strategy that seemed notably weakened after the position he took at Davos. The first was to lower the intensity of the confrontation with Venezuela; the second, to weave a sufficiently generic Latin Americanist discourse that would not cause unnecessary rivalries or pro-

tagonism. After all, if you aspire to exercise leadership, there are certain things that you cannot say in public, and Mexico could not continue to lose its ability to dialogue with its Latin American brethren. The third was the reactivation of the opposition of Mexican revolutionaries. Mexico's Congress rarely discusses foreign policy, but the Institutional Revolutionary Party uses the sensitive issues of Cuba, Venezuela and the United States to pontificate about how foreign policy was managed when they were in office. For Calderón, there were already sufficient potential points of conflict with the opposition without adding Venezuela to the mix.

In the same month of February, in London, Calderón decided to retouch his position and, in more conciliatory coded language, he coined what some have called "the spirit of Dorchester" (the name of the hotel where he made the speech). Succinctly, this implied promoting two ideas: the first was that for Mexico, harmony with Latin America was a priority, despite Hugo Chávez's unfriendly tone; and the second was that there were different economic policy options and Mexico defended its right to follow the one it had chosen, but that this should not be an insurmountable obstacle for deepening integration in the region.

With the Venezuelan front a little quieter, the relationship with Cuba has tended to be handled less stridently.

After a series of diplomatic incidents ranging from the bus entering the Mexican embassy in Havana, the grave accusations and resulting expulsion of alleged Cuban agents the Mexican government accused of engaging in activities incompatible with their migratory status, to the well known phrase, "You eat and you leave,"¹ clearly the Fox administration was in no position to try to change the trend. Calderón has dealt with relations with Cuba cautiously: he preferred to leave to one side democracy and human rights on the island as a priority and has opted for pragmatic courtesy, putting the relationship on its way to getting back on course without incident.

THE NATION'S MOOD

By opting to reduce the level of confrontation with these two countries, Felipe Calderón has correctly interpreted the feelings of an important sector of the Mexican public, and, of course, of the political class and diplomatic corps, who think it a positive that Mexico's discourse propose tightening ties to Latin America and leave behind the frictions inherited from the Fox administration.

In this way, he has managed to exclude foreign policy from the field of daily confrontations between the opposition and the government. Without Chávez making daily declarations about Mexico, foreign policy once again returns to the extremely low profile that political parties have assigned it on their agendas. The appointment of ambassadors has generated some debate, but until now, Foreign Affairs Minister Patricia Espinosa's reports to Congress have been quite uneventful. The risk is that in order to avoid domestic confrontations, foreign policy could lose vigor and be-

come less and less important in the country's political life.

THE U.S. FACTOR

It is true that the United States was scrupulously careful to not meddle in Mexico's 2006 elections. Although we could suppose that for ideological reasons, Calderón's victory must have sat better with them, they did not give in to the temptation of trying to sway the balance, a very wise decision.

As we know, relations between our two countries are enormously complex and often flow regardless of the frictions or misunderstandings that may exist between us.

What was difficult to hide was that in the last part of the Fox administration, relations were mutually unsatisfactory. For the Mexican government, it was clear that no significant gains had been made on the issue it had decided to put a priority on from the beginning of its term: migration. What is more, not only had there been no advance, but at the end of the term, it had to put up with the material and symbolic impact of the famous fence between the two countries. A worse scenario for a president whose sympathies lay to a great extent with that country could not be imagined.

The United States had a harder and harder time dissimulating its dissatisfaction with the lack of real progress in controlling violence along the border. Ambassador Antonio Garza's public statements were increasingly clear and put the Mexican government in the sad position of repeating the old refrain of co-responsibility. These were moments of tension and nervousness that contributed little to re-launching other aspects of bilateral relations.

Without Chávez making daily declarations
about Mexico, foreign policy once again returns
to the extremely low profile that political parties
have assigned it on their agendas.

THE FIRST STEPS

Once in office, Felipe Calderón has begun to make some decisions that we can only hope he will sustain in the years to come. The first was to take on board the so-called "spirit of Dorchester" and foster pragmatic cordiality with Latin America as a general concept. The second consists of looking at the Latin American dimension as an optimal operating scale in the continent since with Colombia and the countries of Central America, we have broad agreement on issues like infrastructure, competitiveness and relations with the United States. The April 2007 Campeche summit and the incorporation of Colombia into Puebla-Panama Plan activities are proof of the importance he will place on the region.

In his closing speech at the January 9, 2007 18th Meeting of Ambassadors and Consuls, Felipe Calderón outlined his conception of what he hopes will be Mexico's profile during his administration. The main idea—forgive the paradox—is both simple and complex: that Mexico be "a winner country." He adds, assuming that he is expressing the desires of all Mexicans, that "we want Mexico to not only compete, but to win; we want a Mexico that doesn't try to change the world, but changes itself; a strong, self-assured, winning Mexico."

Three problematic central items can be identified in the presidential message.

The first is the agenda for competitiveness, which presupposes a complete revision of the country's economic structure and its human and technical capabilities. The second, linked to the idea of winning, makes defining national objectives and goals a precondition. Victory or success are always relative and can only be measured in terms of pre-established goals. The third is Mexico's role in the world. We can be observers or the agents for change. In the former case, it would suffice to move as inertia takes us as we did to a great extent during a large part of the twentieth century; this position is broadly supported by traditional forces. If we opt for a more active role, Mexico would have to have a detailed agenda for the regional, hemispheric, Ibero-American and global spheres, which still has not been set.

With regard to bilateral relations with the United States, the first stage has been marked by decentralizing migration discussions. This start for an issue that is unlikely to offer tangible short-term results opens up the way for some decisions to begin to be made without so much political pressure, but Calderón has yet to make a detailed statement about the country's central foreign policy agenda issues. What has been sketched out until now is absolutely generic; for the time being, that may be useful, but as the presidential term progresses, it will be necessary to make de-

With the topic of foreign policy
in a less agitated phase, without a doubt,
the Calderón government will have to make more important
decisions in the medium term.

cisions about the other issues on the bilateral agenda.

In the fight against drug trafficking, policy has been more direct. A spectacular number of extradition orders for high-level drug kingpins in February 2007 was complemented by an express request that there be more control of arms trafficking into our country. In his speech welcoming Bush to Mérida, President Calderón particularly emphasized U.S. drug consumption. Our U.S. ambassador, Arturo Sarukhán, was more direct when *The Washington Post* asked him what he thought the United States was contributing to the fight against drugs: his answer was “zilch.” It is unusual for a Mexican ambassador to use this colloquial language to speak so frankly about such a sensitive issue.²

Bush’s March 2007 visit to Mérida made it clear that while bilateral relations continued to be solid with regard to the main issues, there is nothing like euphoria or high expectations. Mexico is taking very specific steps without expecting anything in exchange because, it should be pointed out, the last president got nothing from the man who publicly presented himself as his “friend.”

Perhaps the tone of the relationship is to guarantee mutual compliance with obligations without any kind of enthusiasm and with the necessary rigidity of two actors who know that at least until there is a new resident in the White House, what already exists should be

managed without creating any additional problems.

THE DILEMMAS

With the topic of foreign policy in a less agitated phase, without a doubt, the Calderón government will have to make more important decisions in the medium term and can opt for one of the poles of an old dilemma that has divided us for the last two decades. On the one hand are the traditionalists who think it is necessary and a good idea to go back to a very courteous, low-impact foreign policy without making any statements about aspirations that might cause frictions with other countries. On the other hand are those who believe that because of the country’s economic, demographic and cultural weight, it should participate more actively in the international concert. Of course, there is no consensus about what the optimum degree of participation would be, but what seems to be clear is that given the international context, it is increasingly difficult to isolate ourselves from the globalized world. It would also be more costly to try to not play a growing role in the international system, particularly given that ours is an important country in several geo-political groups: Latin America, North America and the Pacific Basin.

Although it is not very popular among our political class, it is imperative that

we open up a major debate about the role Mexico can and wants to play in the world, since, even if only with minimum objectives, we have to know what we want. Saying that we will try to get along well with everyone is a good start, but at some point we are going to have to begin talking about goals, and that is when the frictions and conflicting interests will come into play. The job of leading foreign policy will look more like that of a gardener who has to take care of his plants and their surroundings than that of a public relations executive who lives with a smile plastered on his face, proclaiming himself to be the ideal neighbor who lives and lets live. Our size makes us a country that can upset the neighborhood, since we also have aspirations and interests beyond our own borders.

As we have seen, by reducing the importance of the issue of migration, the tumor planted by former Foreign Relations Minister Jorge Castañeda—in the form of an *enchilada*—has been excised. The influence of the “whole *enchilada*” was so great that many observers took it more into account when evaluating the last administration than even Mexico’s participation in the UN Security Council during the Iraq crisis and its systematic defense of multilateralism.³ Now, without the “whole *enchilada*” in the collective imaginary, there will be more space to evaluate more calmly other fields of relations. The main thing now is to define what objectives we have in North America: deepening the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP); keeping things as they are?

The initial position with regard to Latin America is appropriate for reducing the noise made at the beginning of the new administration. Proclaiming

closeness to Latin America is always very useful, particularly domestically. The traditional parties and a broad segment of the public are comforted by these positions. What is not so clear is if, besides “peace and love” with Latin America, any other projects exist. But once they have been defined, I suppose that we will have to decide which forums we can use to put them forward in the best way (the Ibero-American Summit, the Rio Group or the Organization of American States).

With regard to many issues, like relations with the Caribbean, we can float along with the ambiguity that was so useful in the past, but there is one matter we cannot elude: Cuba. I suppose that at this point the discussions about what Mexico would have to do if it wanted to influence the Cuban process

are very advanced. Not only Caracas, Washington and Madrid have direct interests and proximity to the island; for different reasons, Mexico cannot put its head in the sand in this case, and it had better begin specifying what our interests are *vis-à-vis* the new situation on the island.

In short, the priority focuses will be, of course, the United States, Cuba and Latin America, without forgetting the commitment we made to multilateralism that continues to be one of our foreign policy’s main assets and consensuses. External pressure is increasingly clear in the sense that there is a basic contradiction in proclaiming ourselves the champion of multilateralism and not taking on the responsibilities to guarantee peace and security for the planet that that role implies. **MM**

NOTES

¹ Presidents Fidel Castro and George W. Bush were both slated to attend the 2002 Monterrey Development Summit. In a phone conversation, President Fox told the Cuban president that, of course, he could attend the summit, but on the day Bush arrived he would have to leave right after lunch. The Cuban leader’s security team taped the conversation, considered a serious insult on the part of Mexico, and released it to the media. [Editor’s Note.]

² About Arturo Sarukhán’s statements and the U.S. government response, see articles by Karen De Young, “Mexican Envoy Highly Critical of U.S. Role in Anti-Drug Effort,” March 23, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/22/AR2007032201853.html> and Marcela Sanchez, “Kid-Glove Diplomacy. Mexico Takes New Tack on Immigration after Lofty Promises Founder,” March 30, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/29/2007032901677.html> [Editor’s Note.]

³ This refers to Mexico’s position in immigration negotiations that former Foreign Relations Minister Jorge Castañeda dubbed “the whole enchilada,” or going for broke. [Editor’s Note.]



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Undocumented Migration And Human Rights: Possible Futures

Ariadna Estévez*



Migrants waiting for the right moment near one of the border's international bridges.

In Mexico, the human rights defense discourse has historically been a means for denouncing repression and the abuse of power. In the specific case of migration, human rights allow us to point to the mistreatment of those who exercise their right to leave their country of origin in search of a better life or simply to join their families. This is important, but an analysis of human rights and international migration should not be limited to denunciations. Monitoring human rights can also be the parameter for building possible futures in this complex global phenomenon. In this article, I will lay out some reflections that may make it possible to trace those fu-

tures, not from a legal perspective, but rather from a socio-political, international perspective. On this basis, we will be able to develop the proposal of a possible future that at the Center for Research on North America (CISAN) we call universal citizenship.

FIRST REFLECTION

The dynamics of globalization that reproduce socio-economic inequality and establish transnational socio-cultural dynamics are also prompting unprecedented movement of individuals.

Recent international migrations and their interconnections are the product of the dynamics of globalization since

they take place outside the exchanges between systems traditionally considered classic like those between Mexico and the United States, Italy and Argentina and the United Kingdom and Australia. Today, accelerated migratory flows are directed equally at Europe, South America, the Asian Pacific and North America from different points of origin. With globalization of migration also come phenomena which had not occurred since 1945 or even during the golden years of the welfare state (the 1950s and 1960s) like the growing feminization of migration and the transnationalization of decision-making with regard to migratory policy.¹

The globalization dynamics that push individuals and entire families to emi-

*Researcher at the CISAN.

grate can be of different kinds (economic or demographic, for example), but there are two human rights-related ones: the political-economic and the socio-cultural. First of all, it has been shown that free trade leads to increased migration because of the big differences in wages and income, for example, among NAFTA trade partners. When slower economies are exposed to the pressure of competition, the agricultural sector tends to collapse, leading to an exodus from rural towns to urban centers or from poor countries to rich ones, so that massive migration may continue even if economic conditions do not change.²

While free trade systematically threatens poor countries' productive chains, the division of labor in economic globalization demands both skilled and unskilled foreign labor. In fact, for Castles, globalization includes differentiated migration regimes in which elites and highly skilled individuals are pushed into greater mobility while unskilled workers and the persecuted are excluded. This hierarchy of the right to migrate may be seen as a kind of "transnational racism" in which certain individuals can go where they like while others are controlled by discourses that range from discrimination for religious reasons (like the one that segregates people by linking them to Islamic fundamentalism), to open criminalization, like the one that links certain groups with terrorism. Still others are pushed into illegal migration.³

More generally, international migration is the product of the unequal North-South exchange pointed out by Bauman and Castles.⁴ Economic globalization, which Castles understands as "a differentiated process of inclusion and exclusion of particular regions and social groups in World market rela-

FUNDAMENTAL LEGAL INSTRUMENTS FOR THE DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- International Convention for the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families

tions," has led to great insecurity and human inequality that affects the countries of the South to the extent that local economic elites are created, and those of the North given that their workers feel that their survival is threatened.⁵

In addition to the economic inequality created by the dynamics of global production and trade, the policies linked to this kind of an economy, which systematically favor the rich countries, force many people to abandon their places of origin. One of these dynamics is the construction of supposed development projects that are really nothing more than infrastructure at the service of the economic elites and Western tourism, like airports, dams, highways, luxury apartment complexes, theme parks, golf courses, spas, hotels, etc. According to the World Bank, these activities expel more than 10 million people a year from their homes. In addition, others leave their communities because of pollution, natural disasters caused by the deterioration of the environment and industrial disasters.⁶ Another factor that forces many people to leave their countries is trafficking in human beings for exploitation. Hundreds of

women and children in the former Soviet republics and the former Yugoslavia are sold or enslaved for the prostitution industry and other forms of sexual exploitation in war zones or important cities in the rich countries. In addition, the North's economic interests (oil, diamonds, weapons sales, the control of drug trafficking) play a key role in prolonging internal wars that force people to leave their countries.

As Castles says, in this complex relationship between North and South, "the distinction between forced migration and economic migration is becoming blurred as a result" since "many migrants and asylum seekers have multiple reasons for mobility and it is impossible to completely separate economic and human rights motivations which is a challenge to the neat categories that bureaucracies seek to impose"⁷ In fact, forced migration is an integral part of North-South unequal relations, as described above. However, this kind of migration is delineated with very limited criteria in the 1951 Convention on Refugees, which defines refugees as individuals forced to leave their countries of origin due to political persecution.⁸

FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS

- The right to life
- The right to not be tortured
- The right to not be subjected to forced labor or slavery
- The right to medical care
- The right to decent housing
- The right to a family life
- The right to a minimal subsistence
- The right to fair working conditions
- The right to join a union
- The right to social security linked to one's employment
- The right of children to have a name and identity
- The right to education
- The right to freedom from arbitrary arrest
- The right to access to justice
- The right to not be collectively expelled

In the second place, as I mentioned above, people emigrate not only for economic, but also socio-cultural reasons. Castles points out that economic and political globalization, with its local, national and regional consequences, has brought with it rapid social transformations that have become fundamental factors in the growth and diversification of migration. One of these changes is the construction of social networks and transnational communities established even after the economic factor changes, that in turn sustain themselves based on other processes linked to globalization, such as technology and culture.⁹ People also emigrate because their entire families may be in another country or because it is a tradition in a given community to do so at some time in one's life. As a result, social dynamics change both in the country of origin and in the destination country. People also emigrate just because they want to: the promotion in the media of an unbridled consumer culture and publicity about the economic prosperity of the peoples of the

West, as well as the availability of information about migratory routes and job opportunities are big incentives to migrate to the countries of the North.¹⁰

Whether because of economic, social or cultural changes, migration is on the rise and with it the infrastructure that facilitates it. As Castles points out, there is an entire web of social relations that make up "globalization from below," in which networks of immigrant communities and ethnic minorities facilitate their countrymen and women migrating and swiftly becoming part of these communities' dynamics. In fact, some expressions of these networks are institutional and justify the emergence of a "migration industry," which includes *polleros* (people smugglers) and transnational job pools, as well as travel agents, bank transfers and real estate trades.¹¹ The migration industry is possible due to the great demand for labor and strong immigration controls in the North.¹²

As we saw, international migration has structural as well as individual and social causes. The importance of pin-

pointing them is not to see how it can be stopped: it really is irreversible since socio-cultural dynamics would continue even if the economic ones were eliminated. What is really important about pinpointing the causes of migration is seeing who fosters and how they foster the inequality that causes it in order to control its intensity, analyzing what makes one's home country stop being an option. Human rights may be a tool for understanding this.

SECOND REFLECTION

The socio-economic inequality caused by the dynamics of globalization imposes obligations on states with regard to human rights in both sending and destination countries.

From a human rights perspective, the dynamics that push people to leave their home countries do not come about by chance; they are the result of political and economic decisions that violate human rights so systematically that thousands of people are forced to emigrate, like what happens with Mexican peasants who cannot subsist working the land here and must become day laborers in the United States where they have no rights and are far away from their support networks. To make up for this, destination countries (including the United States, but also Mexico, both accessories to these policies) must change their policies to comply with the international human rights legislation they have committed to, even if they have not ratified the specific treaties because there is a moral obligation even if there is not a strictly legal one.

The Declaration on Social Progress and Development, the Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger

and Malnutrition, the Declaration on the Right to Development and the Millennium Declaration establish not only international cooperation but also states' shared responsibility to guarantee the development of countries, particularly poor countries.¹³ This international responsibility includes, but is not limited to, economic assistance; it implies establishing a world economic order that guarantees human rights, peace and the preservation of the environment, but that also eliminates poverty and the risk of war. Among these responsibilities are explicitly mentioned the establishment of a fair international trade regime and state control over each country's economic and social policies without outside interference. These are the obligations of the international community for guaranteeing development, but human rights legislation also imposes obligations directly on individuals. The consequences of globalization for humanity and the still weighty role of the state in fostering them impose an ethical obligation on states to guarantee people who emigrate for economic and political reasons a minimum of rights, regardless of their nationality. This includes Mexico, which accuses the United States of violating Mexicans' human rights while our country does the same, since its immigration policy toward Central Americans coming across the southern border is just as repressive and exploitative—or even more so—than that of the United States.

The Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migration (PICUM) recently published a list of the documents imposing these obligations on states and the specific rights derived therein, which all individuals should enjoy regardless of their migratory sta-

tus.¹⁴ The PICUM reminds readers that international human rights legislation sets rules, whether by custom or treaty, based on which individuals can claim certain legitimate rights in states' ethical commitment to human dignity and the international community. Although dozens of treaties exist, there are a group of fundamental instruments and those that states must comply with based on these commitments (see box, p. 73). Rights follow from these instruments, rights that everyone must enjoy regardless of their migratory status (see box, p. 74).

While international human rights legislation recognizes that the state may reserve the exercise of certain rights for its citizens (fundamentally social, cultural and political rights), it is also the case, as was mentioned in the second reflection, that the exploitation by rich nations of the poor ones creates certain moral responsibilities for them. In this sense, to the extent that the rich nations maintain a *status quo* in which the inequality between them and the poor nations is not only created but accentuated, their obligation to recognize migrants' rights takes on a moral character since in many cases people would not have to leave their places of origin if agricultural production there had not disappeared thanks to subsidies that rich countries give their local farmers, or if Coca-Cola had not monopolized the water supply or arms sales

had not sparked a civil war. If states accept that the dynamics of globalization transform local production and trade and consumption rules, they must also accept that international migration is another important consequence and that therefore, they are obligated to see cultural diversity as a final, positive result. The creation of transnational communities and the resulting cultural diversity demand the recognition of rights that allow migrants to live according to their multiple cultural specificities, but also to negotiate and lobby for their group interests, particularly when they confront exploitation, generalized xenophobia and systematic discrimination in areas like employment and access to justice, education and health care. To deal with the socio-cultural dynamics of international migration, cultural rights must be recognized, and perhaps even the catalogue of minority rights suggested by Rainer Bauböck, expert in citizenship and migration (see box this page).¹⁵

THIRD REFLECTION

Human rights are guarantees vis-à-vis the power structure and therefore states cannot be expected to guarantee them without a struggle.

A fundamental part of the quest to uphold these rights is social organiza-

CATALOGUE OF MINORITY RIGHTS SUGGESTED BY RAINER BAUBÖCK

- The right to freedom of conscience, economic initiative, religion, association and assembly for political, religious, cultural and labor activities
- The right to individual and collective protection against discrimination
- The right to non-electoral political representation, such as consultative committees

tion and political lobbying, both by immigrants' organizations and by individuals, both in receiving countries like the United States and Canada, and in sending countries like Mexico, where the government is jointly responsible for these policies that, on the one hand, force people to leave, and on the other, strengthen the national economic elites that are part of the structural problem.

As Castles observes, migrants are not isolated individuals reacting to market stimuli and bureaucratic rules, but social beings trying to attain something better for themselves, their families and their communities, actively forging the migratory process. Migratory movements, once begun, become self-perpetuating social processes.¹⁶

ONE POSSIBLE FUTURE: UNIVERSAL CITIZENSHIP

Based on these reflections, at CISAN we propose people begin to think and promote a kind of citizenship that answers to this complex human rights problem. As researchers Aleinikoff and Klusmeyer say, citizenship is not merely a form of belonging, but also an important agency through which fundamental principles of what is fair and just in a polis are institutionalized and guaranteed.¹⁷

Universal citizenship is parallel to national citizenship, as in the case of Europe. That is, it does not make the migrant part of a nation, but it does give him/her the minimum guarantees to be able to live with dignity, express the cultural identities that he/she needs and advocate his/her own rights. To this effect, there would be a minimum list of rights whose aim would be to maintain the dignity states have promised to protect. This would not constitute

a great burden for the welfare state given that it involves a minimum that would only be broadened out if immigrants took on national citizenship. The adjective "universal" does not allude to its scope, but to its link to universal human rights, those declared and systematized by the UN, the product of socio-political struggles and which, in the language of public international law, are known as the "universal system" of human rights.

In our view, universal human rights are understood differently from commonly established human rights (those we have by virtue of simple being human beings), which make up a passive subject who waits for them to be recognized and for them to be given to him/her. The idea of universal citizenship implies conceiving of the subject as a participant in the construction of his/her rights; he/she does not wait for them to be given, but rather demands them, and, by doing so, constructs them in accordance with his/her needs and not those of whoever gives them.

We understand human rights as political, legal constructions that can be used by people who suffer from exclusion and violence to give meaning to their experience. When the excluded use human rights for these purposes, they become a discourse that gives meaning to human suffering and provides those who demand them with the tools they need to oppose the causes of that suffering (mainly socio-economic inequalities and discrimination) and the forms of coercion used to maintain the *status quo* (like violence and repression).

This concept of human rights linked to the construction of a new kind of citizenship would bring with it the edification of a possible future in the hands

of a citizenry forged "from below," from the struggle to claim their rights in the face of injustice, but also in the face of the social and cultural transformations of our time. ■■■

NOTES

¹ S. Castles and M.J. Miller, *La era de la migración. Movimientos internacionales de población en el mundo moderno* (Mexico City: UAZ/INM/Segob/Porrúa, 2004).

² J.F. Hollifield, "The Politics of International Migration. How Can We Bring the State Back In?" C. Brettell and J.F. Hollifield, eds., *Migration Theory: Talking across Disciplines* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

³ S. Castles, "Twenty-First-Century Migration as a Challenge to Sociology," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* no. 33, 2007, p. 360.

⁴ *Ibid.* and Z. Bauman and P. Hermida Lazcano, *Vidas desperdiciadas: la modernidad y sus parias* (Barcelona: Paidós, 2005).

⁵ Castles, *op. cit.*

⁶ S. Castles, "Towards a Sociology of Forced Migration and Social Transformation," *Sociology* no. 37, 2003, pp. 13-34.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ S. Castles and A. Davidson, *Citizenship and Migration: Globalization and the Politics of Belonging* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); S. Castles, *Ethnicity and Globalization: From Migrant Worker to Transnational Citizen* (London: Sage, 2000); S. Castles, "Towards a Sociology"; and S. Castles, "Twenty-First-Century Migration," pp. 351-371.

¹⁰ Castles, "Twenty-First-Century Migration."
¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Castles, "Towards a Sociology."
¹³ United Nations, ed., *Human Rights. A Compilation of International Instruments* (New York: UN, 2002).

¹⁴ Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants, *Undocumented Migrants Have Rights. An Overview of the International Human Rights Framework* (Brussels: PICUM, 2007).

¹⁵ R. Bauböck, "Cultural Minority Rights for Immigrants," *International Migration Review* no. 30, 1996, pp. 203-250.

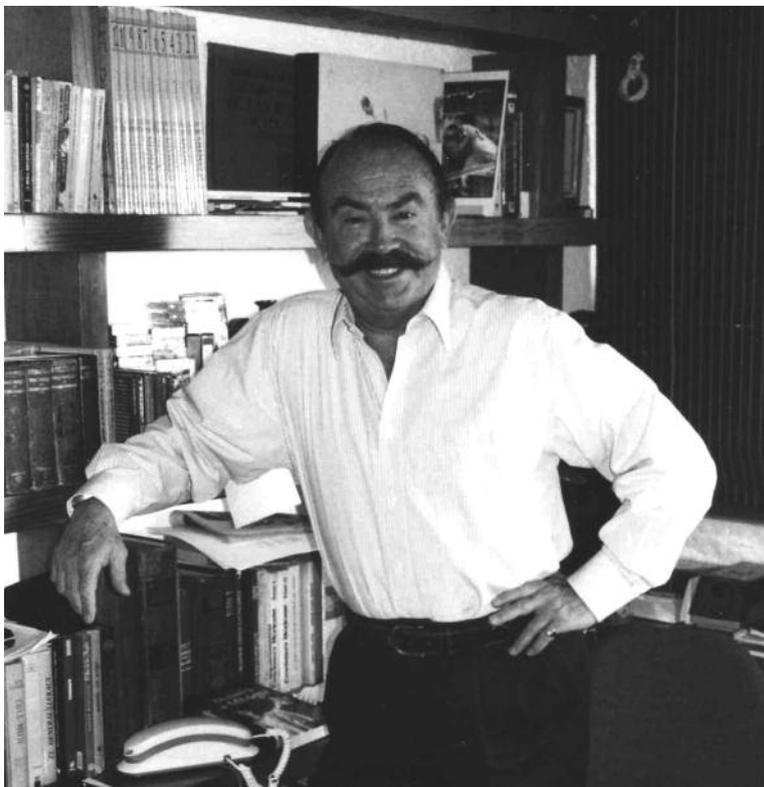
¹⁶ S. Castles, "Factores que hacen y deshacen las políticas migratorias," *Repensando las migraciones. Nuevas perspectivas teóricas y empíricas* (Mexico City: INM/UAZ/Porrúa, 2006), p. 42.

¹⁷ T.A. Aleinikoff and D.B. Klusmeyer, *Citizenship Policies for an Age of Migration* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace/Migration Policy Institute/Brookings Institution Press, 2002), p. 1.

Rafael Ramírez Heredia

Exceptionally Seductive

Gilda Salinas*



God never pays the bill.

RRH

Rafael Ramírez Heredia (1942-2006) drew portraits of sociological phenomena, convinced that literature was a constant search. "Literature is the magic of words: architecture and music," he said, despite the brutal take he always had when portraying the society of his time, which is ours as well. Ramírez Heredia, the author of over

50 books and innumerable articles published in newspapers and magazines in Mexico and abroad over a period of 40 years as a journalist, wrote with his guts and re-wrote with his head. He was an implacable critic of his own work, inquisitive, obsessive and perfectionistic. He was a 24-hour-a-day writer because even if he was not in front of his computer, the novel, story or article he was doing was going through his head, where he was tying up loose ends, gestating until he

* Mexican novelist and cultural writer.

could stumble over to the desk with it to put it down in black and white.

“Writers are like Mexican peasants: condemned to die working,” he would say more than once with his unfailing black humor. And he preached with his example: despite cancer, one month before his death he was in Mexico City’s Zócalo to launch *La esquina de los ojos rojos* (The Corner of Red Eyes), and three weeks before he died, just like every Tuesday since the 1980s, he went to give his workshop at the Jesús Reyes Heróles Cultural Center in Coyoacán, willing to teach his students the resolutions, accents, hooks that make up the literary bag of tricks. There was no room for writers without talent in the workshops he gave all over Mexico and in Spain, Chile, Colombia, Honduras and Cuba. “You can learn the bag of tricks, but you can’t learn talent.” He was an early riser, like people from the coast (he was born in Tampico). But he also had a good dose of Yucatán genes. So, by 6:30 in the morning, he was already “crucified on his ass in front of the keyboard.” Five, ten, twelve hours, whatever the piece required because writing was the only thing, the most important thing in his life. “When I’m writing, I feel absolutely protected, in a very special womb.” And, like most passionate creators, he began to experience parallel realities: the real one and the literary one; the day-to-day one and the reality of the work in progress.

Rafael Ramírez Heredia was a loyal friend, a generous mentor, a charmer, a renowned lover of bullfights and songs by José Alfredo Jiménez (especially about the bullring, of course, as evidenced by the 122 times he was in the ring himself, facing many young bulls and a mature one or two, being gored a couple of times, his work as a bullfight reporter

and his book *Tauromagias*). But Rafael was also, and above all, an exceptional, prolific writer capable of seducing the reader, creating a partnership between author and reader, of taking the realism of literary truth all the way to pluck the deepest chords of angst or pleasure, of placing his finger on the sore point, like he does in his novels *La jaula de Dios* (God’s Cage) and *La Mara*, or on some erogenous zone of the human geography, like in *Con M de Marilyn* (With M for Marilyn), and of finishing the work in the same way that he recreates a bullfight, all the way until the sword is driven in to the hilt: seeking innovation in doing, in telling, in the saying of it, digging and researching to get the most out of the ideas, interchanging adjectives for

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or pleasure.

images, replacing commonplaces with metaphors, traveling to see *in situ*, smelling, testifying and understanding other realities that surround us, or pulling out memories from adolescence to sprinkle his stories with the flavors of puberty, of the tropics, of loneliness, or nostalgia.

Winner of the Juan Rulfo Prize of Paris, given by France Radio (1984), of the Rafael Bernal Prize for Best Police Novel (1993), of the Dashiell Hammett Prize of Spain (2005), among other important awards, he was the literary father of researcher Ifigenio Clausel —“If” to his buddies— (*Trampa de metal* [Metal Trap], *Muerte en la carretera* [Death on the Highway] and *Al calor de Campeche* [In the Heat of Campeche]), and of Rayo Macoy, a boxer for whom the fortune in his fists laid him the trap called success to which he succumbed. The characters of Ramírez Heredia —“Rafa” to his friends— are sustained, modeled on a personal language that reveals them through the plot, with flashes of humor and pain until they become beloved. “A writer must have a

good time, even if he suffers every time he writes, he must enjoy himself,” and his giving of himself and commitment as a creator explain the joy that superficial literature, like soap operas, always gave him. He would say, “In light-weight literature, everything moves ahead calmly; we don’t smell the sweat, the conflicts, the characters’ desperation. It has no substance...and it is what it seems, as an old bullfighting adage goes.”

Ramírez Heredia’s departure leaves a huge hole in national narrative fiction, in the tutelage of new writers, in the lectures, back covers and book launches, in the incisive promotion of reading (“There is no doubt that there are very few books and lots of television sets.”), in the publication and dissemination of the work of friends and students, and it also leaves a gap that can never be filled at the La Guadalupana cantina. On one workshop afternoon, he said, “A piece of writing has two movements, advancing and the one that takes us to the end. When a newborn is slapped on the butt, it begins its life. But it also begins the road to its death. In a novel, the end and the

**Heredia’s characters
are sustained, modeled
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and pain until they
become beloved.**

advance meet at a rendezvous of actions.” It is true that Rafa leaves us with his absence, but he also leaves us his written word, the memory of his happiness and black humor, the evocation of his low-brow, imaginative, playful or incisive conversation and his pragmatism; the nostalgia for the afternoon workshops and the shared meals, the image of a writer of great sensitivity and camouflaged sentimentalism, the astute, perspicacious look;

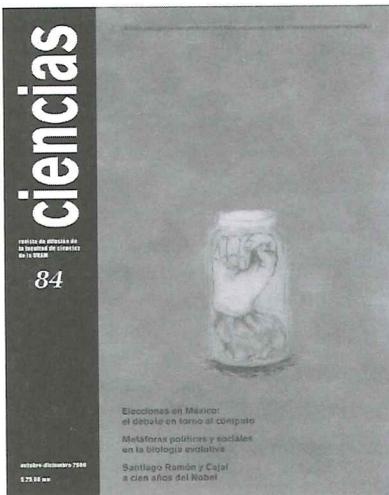
the image of his index finger and thumb caressing his Zapata-style, handlebar mustache with a half smile in the background; the sarcastic opinion and the tenderness. He leaves us the anecdotes of his living life to its fullest and his surprising memory. We are left with a beloved memory, although some of us

feel that he left us too soon.

Authors are like bullfighters, he said, at the center of the ring all alone. I would hazard the opinion that even though death also sends us alone into the ring, in the case of Rafael Ramírez Heredia, like with his writing, his death takes place in two movements: even though he leaves, for many he remains. ■■■



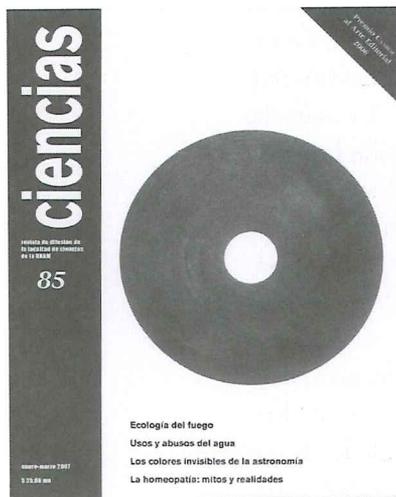
Héctor Ponce de León



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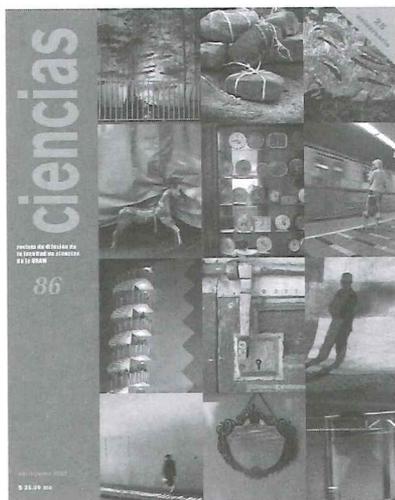
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Fax: 56 16 03 26
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THE SPLENDOR OF MEXICO

Traditional Dress in Michoacán In the Face of Modernity

Mauricio Degollado Brito*

Since it began 26 years ago, Uruapan's annual Traditional Clothing Pageant has offered us the opportunity to observe the inevitable merger of the traditional with the modern in everyday and fancy-dress wear in this part of Mexico. It also is a chance to note the vitality with which indigenous clothing has adapted to the onslaught of modernity, holding its own and staying alive.

**Voices of Mexico* photographer and staff writer.
Photos by Elsie Montiel.

TODAY'S EXPRESSION OF INDIGENOUS,
POPULAR CULTURE

Uruapan has been a strategic regional center for trade since before the conquest. Barter, one of the main forms of trade practiced by pre-Hispanic indigenous peoples, was common here given the population density and the variety of products to be found. Its continued use in modern times has become a way to foster and preserve the region's cultural heritage since every year one of Latin America's largest craft markets

is held here. This meet of craftspeople not only includes a myriad of products, but also a sampling of versatile gastronomic customs, specificities of language and differences in clothing among Michoacán's indigenous communities. Traditional dress, in particular, has been a special attraction since the pageant of traditional outfits became part of the craft market held during Easter Week and the following week.

Encountering the peasants and indigenous people from around Uruapan who come to the market,

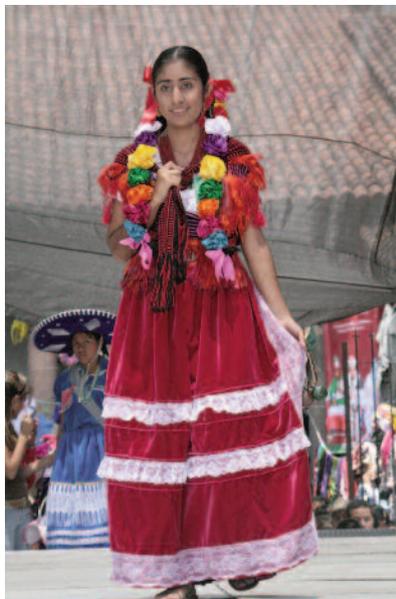
the occasional visitor will note the daring combination of colors in women's clothing, the exquisite embroidery on blouses, sashes and aprons, and perhaps the different pieces of clothing that make up the outfits as a whole. What he will never be able to even imagine is the multiplicity of small differences that distinguish, for example, the daytime outfit of a Santa Clara del Cobre woman from that of another from Pátzcuaro, or San Juan Nuevo, or Tzintzuntzan or even Uruapan. It may be the fabric used for the



Costume for the "Los Kurpites" dance.



Adult ceremonial dress.



Ceremonial dress.

A meeting of colors that we never would have imagined could go well together is the first impression we get of all these outfits seen together.



Offering.



Daily wear.

skirt; whether the apron is embroidered or trimmed with lace; if the blouse is made of shiny material or embroidered cotton; if the shawl is one color or another; the way they wear their hair; the accessories they hang around their necks; plus an infinite combination of all of the above. Things may seem simpler in the case of men, since cotton broadcloth continues to be the most common among those who wear traditional clothing. But we would have to review their overcoats, their kerchiefs, their hats, the colors and the kind of embroidery on their undershirts, pants and sashes. And, as it turns out, there are subtle variations, not only according to the communities they come from, but according to whether they are adults, children or teenagers. And this is only taking into account everyday dress. The matter becomes a serious topic for anthropological research when we add outfits for fiestas and ceremonies, many of whose histories we can trace back to the social and religious syncretism that took place during the colonial period, but which, in their modern versions, incorporate modifications that prove that no culture is immune to globalization.

APPRECIATING TRADITIONAL INDIGENOUS DRESS

The arrival of the Spanish violently transformed indigenous customs and traditions in every possible way. Their dress was no exception: the recent arrivals, imbued with the Puritanism characteristic of Catholic societies, found the scanty clothing worn by both indigenous men and women offensive and hastened to fight it. Nevertheless, the wrap-around skirt held up by a sash, as well as the *huipil* or the *quechquemil*, are some of the pieces of clothing that managed to survive the cultural clash and endure until our day. Men began to cover their bodies in the Spanish manner, giving rise to cotton shirts and trousers with a belt tied at the waist. People's being trained as tailors contributed to adding elements to the outfits as well as varying the materials, including woven woolen cloth, still widely used today.

With variations, some pieces of clothing remained to differentiate the mestizo and Creole population, particularly among women. Women's daily wear



Outfit for the "La Maringúa" dance.

in indigenous communities today is made up of five basic pieces of clothing: an underskirt, a skirt, an apron, a blouse (*guanengo*) and a shawl, and it is the combination of materials, colors and ornaments in the entire outfit that distinguish a woman from one community from one from another.

Although women, particularly adult women, have continued to use certain traditional items of clothing, it is interesting to observe that young women add modern details to their outfits and personal grooming: fashionably cut, high-heeled shoes, cosmetics and sometimes, dyed hair. Men now generally wear industrially manufactured pants and shirts, and only the traditional woven palm hats and sometimes sandals and overcoats survive.

In 1982, when the first contest of traditional dress was held, the intention was to foster pride among participants in their clothing in order to preserve it. The response was unexpected: more than 200 people signed up in the five categories, 1) daily wear; 2) ceremonies; 3) weddings; 4) traditional fiestas; and 5) dances. Later on, the ceremonial and fiesta categories were combined into one.



Head ornaments and masks are a monument to syncretism, combining cardboard, little mirrors, lengths of tinsel and everything that might catch the eye.



The contest, held on Palm Sunday, begins with registration, which can take one or two full days. Organizers make a detailed list of contestants by age group (children, teenagers and adults) and categories, as well as the outfits themselves, so the judges can do their work. On Sunday just after noon, contestants parade before the public in a place called the *Huatápera*, which usually draws a big crowd and creates a lot of excitement. The prizes are given out in the afternoon.

A plethora of colors, unusual combinations of purples with greens, yellows or pinks, happily joined to every imaginable tone of blue, red and orange, splashed here and there with black, that is, a meeting of colors that we never would have imagined could go well together, is the first impression we

get of all these outfits seen together. Later, there is time to note the diversity of textures and forms, the different fabrics following one after the other to breathe life into the underskirts, the skirts, the apron and the shawl; fabrics that, again, we would never imagine together in our cosmopolitan cities. Finally, amidst the whirlwind assaulting the senses, appear the accessories: sashes, shining bead necklaces, hats woven of palm leaves, masks, bunches of fresh fruit, colored ribbons, mirrors and even lengths of tinsel (yes, the kind used to decorate Christmas trees) happily join together with kerchiefs and transparent colored fabrics.

Over the years, interest in the contest has varied. Some communities repeat their entries year after year, while others stay away a few years or even



The apron is one of the main ways to identify the wearer's community of origin.



indefinitely if their contestants do not win. Some participants have won on several occasions because of the care they take with their clothing and this has sparked protests. In their enthusiasm for introducing new elements in their dress, others add things that have no basis in tradition but that make the outfits, particularly for fiestas and ceremonies, more attention-grabbing. And complete inventions, or individuals who have loaned a winning outfit to someone else to wear, or participants who re-register an outfit from several years before are not unknown since the number of outfits registered every year make it impossible to keep a precise record.

The use of modern materials helps in making an outfit faster than it would take if it were made in the old way. For example, sometimes instead of being

sewn on, sequins are glued on with silicon; necklaces are bought wholesale; head ornaments are a monument to syncretism, combining cardboard, little mirrors, lengths of tinsel and everything that might catch the eye. As you can imagine, all these elements put pressure on the judges who have to struggle to define the terms authenticity and tradition.

On the other hand, the continuing presence of details like the exquisite embroidery on blouses, aprons, shawls, sashes, undershirts, offerings, walking sticks, carved masks representing white men (held up by dark-colored hands) to perform dances like The Moors or the Maringuía remind us that this region has many traditions that must be recovered and preserved before they succumb to the ravages of time. **MM**



Mauricio Degollado

The Craft Market

A Glimpse of the Essence of Michoacán

Elsie Montiel*



Elsie Montiel

Michoacán is one of those places where the conquest was at its fiercest but also brought forth some of the best results. The Michoacán indigenous groups decidedly opposed the invasion of Spanish soldiers, who massacred them indiscriminately. Later, during the first years of pacification, they were decimated by the demands of the *encomienda* system.¹ Evangelization, despite its moral burden and the frontal attack on indigenous beliefs and traditions, was actually a breather for the population when it was led by figures like Don Vasco de Quiroga, who argued for their rights and sought a way to adapt them to the new rules. The evangelizers took into account local customs to disseminate not only the word of God, but also part of the knowledge accumulated down the centuries in Spain, namely some of the skills and trades. These, combined with indigenous dexterity and creativity,

* Editor of *Voices of Mexico*.

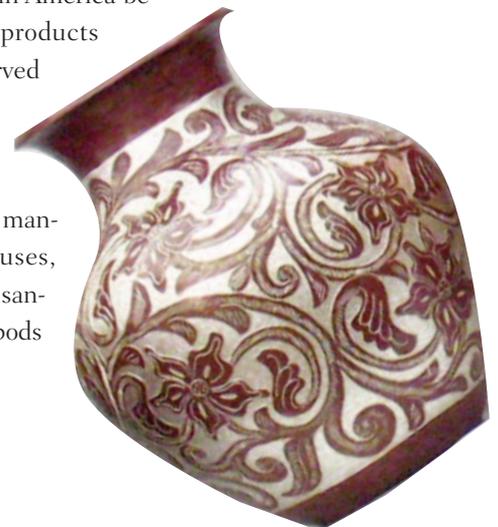


Mauricio Degollado

turned the area into one of the regions richest in the production of all types of objects made of the finest, most varied materials used to trade. Even today, many of these objects are coveted as ornaments because of their beauty and exquisite manufacture.

A POPULAR FIESTA AT EASTER

The Uruapan craft market, or *tianguis*, is held in March and April every year at Easter time. This market has been dubbed the largest in Mexico and Latin America because of the number of towns that participate and the variety of products and materials to be found there: textiles, ceramics, clay, lacquer, carved wood, copper objects, musical instruments, items made of palm leaves, animal skins and leather. This year, for example, more than 1,200 artisans came from all over the state to sell their products in the city's main plaza. Here, you can purchase all manner of items both for daily use (jugs, sets of dishes, blouses, wooden cooking spoons, boxes, baskets, lamps, guitars, sandals, blankets) and as ornaments (flat, green *guaje* pods and hand-painted trays decorated with *maque*, a pre-Hispanic and colonial tech-



nique typical of Uruapan, which had practically disappeared but has recently been revived; all kinds of clay, copper and carved wood). For two weeks, the plaza brings together a sampling of almost all the products that can be purchased in Michoacán.

The *tianguis* is inaugurated by a parade of representatives from all the region's towns from the National Park on the edge of the city to the plaza by way of Carranza Street. The townspeople wait excitedly for the parade every year, with its additional attraction: many of the craftspeople carry with them small bags or baskets of samples of their wares that they give away to spectators on the way. For the children, these are little treasures to be piled up on the sidewalk and then boasted about to their friends. Foreigners are delighted when brown, generous hands hold out miniature pieces of copper, wooden spoons, clay containers, items made of palm leaves, finger traps and other objects that are the pride of entire communities specialized in making them.

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In the parade many of the craftspeople carry with them samples of their wares that they give away to spectators on the way.



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The contingents are accompanied by marching bands, whose cadences are catching, making the parading women sway to the music. Their outfits at first seem to be variations on a single theme, but gradually, you start to see the differences in the skirts, sashes, ribbons and colors that indicate their origin in one community or town or another. For example, the women from San Juan Nuevo are distinguished by their beautiful shiny, transparent blouses that look like lace, but are not. Without a doubt another color fest are the innumerable ribbons woven in with their braids that go almost all the way down their backs. The women are radiant in their finery, with their elegant, graceful hairdos.

Here is the true essence of Michoacán, its towns and its people, who preserve traditions, trades, customs, with the unusual mix of simple dress that highlight the beauty of the robust, brown bodies. The murmurs of their mother tongue, that they keep alive, like P'urhépecha, the most common language spoken at the *tianguis*, are heard in the streets and parks, soft and at the same time indistinguishable, with sounds we are not used to hearing, impossible to define, as though the diction of the words were lost, slipping over the lips without beginning or end.

The parade features those who underline the trade typical of their towns, like the craftspeople from Santa Clara, who have worked copper for centuries. They march with a flatbed truck featuring a little portable workshop showing off their dexterity.

During the two weeks the *tianguis* lasts, other activities attract the public, like the State Craft Contest, the Traditional Dress Pageant and the Popular Food Show.



Mauricio Degollado



Photos this page by Mauricio Degollado

A UNIQUE SPACE FOR FOLK ART

When talking about crafts, we should distinguish between what is produced in great numbers for utilitarian purposes and the kind made by the most dedicated artisans, using all their knowledge and trade techniques to produce unique pieces. The latter are the ones that travel round the world and are promoted as the seal of identity of a people or region. In the case of Michoacán, the beautifully made folk art of all kinds can mainly be seen during the craft contests usually organized by state and municipal government cultural, economic development or tourism institutions. For the last 47 years,

a statewide contest has been held in Uruapan, bringing together the best pieces of craftsmanship from more than 50 communities. These contests aim to be an incentive to maintain the quality of folk art made with traditional techniques. But, creating a piece like this requires time and resources. So, like with all these kinds of activities, artisans do not have the economic freedom to work full time on a trade that does not offer them a way to make a living. For that reason, together with the prizes, the contest serves to promote the sale of the competing pieces to private buyers, gallery owners and folk art dealers from specialized shops in Mexico and other parts of the world.

More than 1,000 pieces of all kinds of folk art are entered in the competition: a) pottery: polychrome, high temperature, highly burnished, glazed, negative, sanded, leadless; b) *maque*; c) lacquer; d) plant fibers: *paniku*, palm leaves, reeds, cane and *chuspata*; e) miniatures; f) toys; g) paper cut-outs; h) feather art; i) cane paste; j) copper; k) gold and silver jewelry; l) wooden carving;





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m) wooden furniture; n) masks; o) musical instruments; and p) textiles: colored with natural dyes, or embroidered cotton, made of worked cotton; of finely woven *patakua*, of wool woven on waist looms or on back-strap looms; and cotton and woolen sashes.

Uruapan's state competition has become nationally and internationally famous; it boasts magnificent pieces at reasonable prices because they are sold directly by the makers. Regardless of the benefits of exhibiting at this fair, it is surprising just how many people come from throughout Mexico and abroad to the opening of the display of the winning pieces not to admire them, but to fight to buy them before anyone else can. So, a folk-art lover who arrives at the exhibit two hours after it opens probably will not see that year's winning pieces. This brings to mind the suggestion that the pieces be exhibited for a day, even if they have already been purchased, so the public can see the artisans' mastery of their trade. That would eliminate the impression that, instead of attending a competition that aims to preserve the quality of folk art, we are really visiting a huge bazaar where pieces are bought at a good price to be sold later, whether in pesos or foreign currency, for a great deal more. ■■■

NOTES

¹ The *encomienda* was a trusteeship labor system imposed by the Spanish crown from 1493 to 1791 in New Spain whereby overlords were granted the guardianship of indigenous people's souls with the responsibility of converting them to Catholicism in return for the right to tax them and command their labor. [Editor's Note.]



Elsie Montiel



Mauricio Degollado



San Juan Parangaricutiro. Photo sold at Angahuan souvenir stands.

The Birth of a Volcano

Elsie Montiel*

In a little valley in the state of Michoacán, surrounded by the petrified remains of extinct volcanoes that time has covered with vegetation, Don Dionisio Pulido Mateo was preparing his land for planting, not knowing that that day the world around him would change forever. It was just after four in the afternoon on February 20, 1943 when, 100 meters from where he had the plow, a column of smoke came out of the earth and rose high into the air. He tried to get close enough

to see what was happening, but an enormous roar stopped him cold. The column of smoke began to thicken and go higher and higher and the earth trembled. Amidst the confusion, Dionisio did not realize that he was watching something that few human beings have had the privilege of seeing so close up, or been lucky enough to live through to be able to tell about it: the birth of a volcano.

The process began more or less like this:

On the Quitzocho plain, a great crack opened up in the earth and a dense column of black smoke

*Editor of *Voices of Mexico*.

came out of it. This must have happened at about six in the afternoon. Two hours later, the volcano was already 10 meters high and the crater had already begun to form. By midnight, the newborn had grown to a height of 50 meters and was 200 meters wide. The column continued blowing upward and lava appeared. In the next few days, anyone who saw what was happening was surprised. The volcano grew uncontrollably and a few days later, it was more than 150 meters high, with several lava flows and a plume of black smoke.¹

Despite the apparent surprise, the earth had actually been giving out warning signs for weeks beforehand: in the mornings and at dusk, a strange mist was seen in the area; on occasions, the ground under your feet seemed to vibrate and make strange sounds; earth tremors were frequent; barnyard fowl and animals were restless. Local inhabitants didn't know why, but some even predicted the end of the world.

By the end of the first year, the Paricutín (named after the first town that it gobbled up) reached 275 meters in height and was still emitting materials. Later it stopped for a while and, over a nine-year period of intermittent activity, grew to its current height of 430 meters, the equivalent of a 150-story building. During its first year, seven little towns disappeared under the layers of ash, sand and lava from the explosions; wells dried up and plants and trees disappeared for several kilometers around it. More than 8,000 people had to leave their homes to get away from Paricutín.

THE DESTRUCTION OF AN ENTIRE WORLD

In the Purhépecha language, “paricutín” means “to cross” or “on the other side.” Before the eruption, the town of Paricutín was separated from the town of San Juan Parangaricutiro by a ravine. The for-

During the volcano's first year, seven little towns disappeared under the layers of ash, sand and lava from the explosions, wells dried up and plants and trees disappeared for several kilometers around it.



Unless otherwise specified, photos by Elsie Montiel



Visitors find it difficult to explain why, after completely covering the nave, the lava stopped before reaching the altar, respecting the structure from the floor to the roof.

mer was named as it was because to get to it, you had to cross the ravine. That was the first hamlet to fall victim to the volcano.

The volcano went through several phases in its activity: at first it shot out volcanic ash, bombs and vapors in big explosions. Then came the lava. By April 1943, there was nothing left of the community of Paricutín, located about 500 meters from the cone. All traces of its existence had been buried beneath sand, ash and lava. Its inhabitants were indigenous peasants; almost nobody spoke Spanish; and in their fear, they only managed to understand the gravity of the situation and the need to abandon their lands and the world as they had known it until then, and to start over from nothing.

San Juan Parangaricutiro did not disappear immediately. Its inhabitants lived with the volcano

for more than a year. The uneven terrain, the form and direction of the eruptions and the winds fed local inhabitants' hope for a time that the danger would pass. Although some did leave, the majority withstood the constant tremors, the explosions, the atmosphere thickened by gases and the ash and sand that the volcano rained down on them.

The lava's advance toward the town was very slow. First, the volcano spread lava elsewhere, but then it opened up another mouth, a smaller volcano known as Zapicho, which hurled most of its lava in the direction of the town. Many thought that it would be stopped by a hill, but it just went around it and began to enter the town through the cemetery. Not even the supernatural power of the ancestors laid to rest there could stop it. Then it slid slowly through the streets of the town, burn-

ing the houses and covering them with rocks. Finally, the decision was made to abandon the town, in early May 1944.

Days later, a new lava flow penetrated all the way to the church. But the church would withstand the volcano's destructive force: part of it, the altar, the towers and a section of the entryway arch would resist its onslaught, poking out of the petrified lava. Today, visitors find it difficult to explain why, after completely covering the nave, the lava stopped before reaching the altar, respecting the structure from the floor to the roof.

The population was not afraid, though perhaps uneasy. Although there was no loss of human life, some live witness accounts give us an idea of what it meant for a peasant to lose the main or only source of food and subsistence:

I was barely a child of 11. I thought it was fun to go look at the volcano in the afternoons. It was like a castle because the land was on fire. But for my parents, and even more for my grandparents, it was a disaster because they lost the land they worked... their personal effects...

Everybody wanted desperately to not abandon their homes and lands. One lady who had a sturdy wooden house and a few animals dug in and didn't want to leave. When her neighbors came to tell her she had to leave she shouted at them furiously "I'll die here! What am I going to do somewhere else, without anyplace to live or anything to eat?" They had to take her out by force...the lava had already invaded her corral and had begun to burn the house itself. As she was leaving, she turned around to look and said, drying her tears, "It's God's will."²

Nevertheless, what for some was a misfortune, for others was reason for amazement and interest because they wanted to study or just admire the phenomenon. Despite the confusion, the fear and the damage caused, the Parícutín provided a spectacle worth watching for many months.

AN EXERCISE IN GEOMETRIC PERFECTION

The town nearest the volcano area is Angahuan. The townspeople still have strong Purhépecha roots;





Mauricio Degollado

the adults speak little Spanish and many local inhabitants earn their living renting out horses or as guides for visitors who want to go look at the church or hike up to the crater. One of those guides, Don Enrique Bravo Gómez, explains that, almost from the beginning, many came from outside attracted by the spectacle. “They came at night to watch the eruption, from about nine to midnight... because during the day you couldn’t see anything and it was very hot. So that’s when we started to work as guides. For example, my grandfather started acting as a guide then; people continued to come until the eruption ended.”³

As innumerable chronicles tell us, the Parícutín made for one of the most imposing, majestic spectacles of the history of volcanology in Mexico.

From the day it was born, the volcano, like an enormous fireworks show, hurled burning rocks to high altitudes. They fell down in torrents to crash against the sides or into the nearby lava flows, and as they broke up, they produced a light and color show... The lava that came out...of the base of the cone flowed from 17 to 56 meters a day...and at night, it slid like a serpent, golden and red, huge, running away from the volcano. Through the enormous crater, burning rocks, from cherry red all the way to white

from the heat, were launched into space. The steam clouds rose above the volcano and gleamed fantastically, and the gases made enormous rumbling sounds inside the crater. The lava on the surface of the flows cooled, taking on a coal black color and creating fantastic figures, but as the eruption continued, the edge cracked and fell off, making a sound like breaking porcelain...Sometimes, the rocks exuded green, yellow and red salts...at one point the volcano created a stampede with the emission of bombs, sand, solid and gaseous materials, forming imposing, beautiful plumes. Some of the bombs were enormous and made enormous holes when they fell to earth.⁴

One of the most faithful spectators was Dr. Atl, a member of the generation of Mexican muralists that Diego Rivera, David A. Siqueiros and José Clemente Orozco also belonged to, and an eminent volcanologist. Dr. Atl built a cabin-lookout near the volcano and his innumerable nights of observation resulted in many paintings, as well as a legacy of scientific observations and aesthetic reflections. Among the latter, the one referring to the cone of the volcano is worth reproducing here: “During this whole month of May [1943] the central column has been modeling the cone

surprisingly slowly until it has reached geometric perfection. The cone is very regular on all sides. In some crags on its north or south side there is a small landslide or variation, but the column immediately moves to correct the defect. On all sides, the Paricutín looks like a clay vessel made by an able potter and the grooves marking this little mountain in formation seem machine-made.”⁵

From the tourist center of Angahuan, with its cabins and other services, the visitor reaches the old church by horseback in a half an hour ride. It takes longer to reach the volcano: two or three hours. The trip to the crater is made on the western slope, where the lava flows were scarcer; going up is the challenge since the pathway is made of sand and ash. Volcanic activity has not ceased altogether. From above, you can still see small columns of steam that remind us that under the earth are burning lava beds. The Paricutín went through more than 12 phases by the time it ceased major activity in 1952. Today it only breathes and sleeps. But, for the com-

munities of Caltzontzin, San Juan Nuevo, Angahuan and Zacán, among others, its birth is still a key moment in their history. Many black-and-white photographs hanging on the local huts offering water and snacks to the visitors who come down from the church show that what they say here is true: the Paricutín was born under the gaze of strong, resilient men who only abandoned her slopes when the fruit of her belly threatened to devour them. **MM**

NOTES

¹ Television documentary by Jorge Prior, *Chronicle of Paricutín*, broadcast on Mexico City’s Channel 11, April 12, 2007.

² Ibid.

³ Personal interview with the Angahuan guide, April 23, 2007.

⁴ Esperanza Yarza de la Torre, “Los volcanes del sistema volcánico transversal,” *Investigaciones Geográficas*, bulletin 50, UNAM, April 2003, p. 228.

⁵ Ibid.

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La Huatapera Museum of the Four Indigenous Peoples

Kuricaveri Gaspar Ortega*

The word “huatapera” comes from the P’urhépecha expressions “uandajperakua,” from the high plateau region, or “uantajperakua,” from the region of the lakes and canyons, meaning “meeting place” or “place where

one can arrive or meet.” These spaces, founded by the Franciscan friars on their first missions in different parts of Mexico, were created in the sixteenth century during the contact between the West and the Mesoamerican civilizations, and are a cultural symbiosis between Spaniards and indigenous. At that time, they were used by both groups as places of reference, by the Spaniards in their evangelizing activities and by the indigenous for the preservation of their community

* Director of the La Huatapera Museum of the Four Indigenous Peoples.

Photos by Mauricio Degollado.

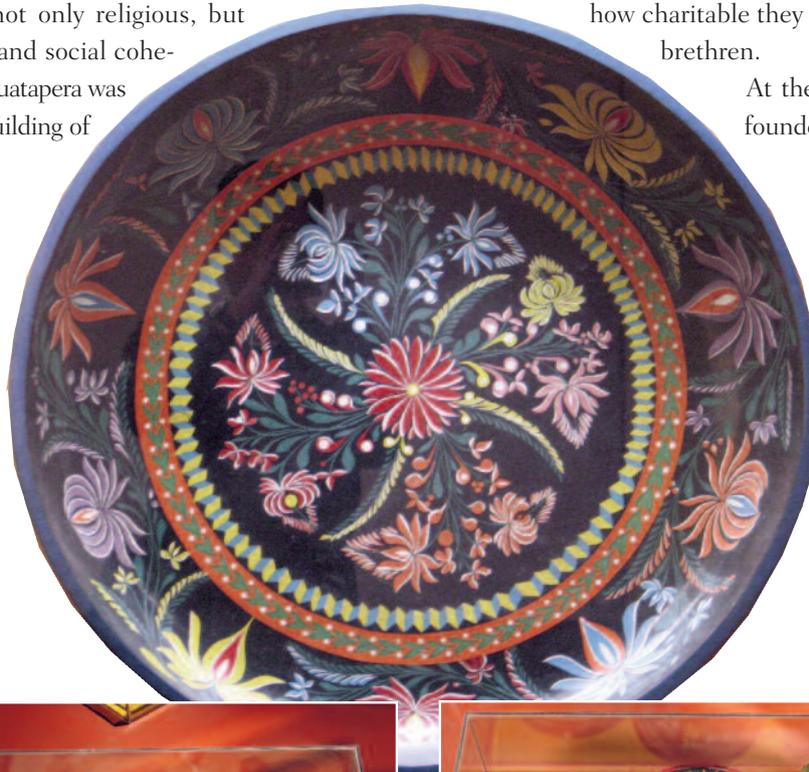
identity. Today, they still have important uses and meanings both for the community of Uruapan and for the indigenous communities living in the P'urhépecha Highlands, who consider the site an important part of their relationship with the city of Uruapan and their cultural identity.

Uruapan's La Huatapera is one of Michoacán and Latin America's oldest historic sites because of its origin as a Spanish settlement dedicated to attending to the indigenous. The construction has very close to a vernacular, popular architectural style, erected with simple materials found in the region (essentially adobe, wood and stone). Founded by Friar Juan de San Miguel in 1533, its aim was to offer the Indians a place that would serve as a shelter and hospital, as well as a meeting place and inn. It became a central element in not only religious, but also civic and social cohesion. La Huatapera was the first building of

its kind in the region and Uruapan's first colonial structure.

The complex was made up of the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, two naves, to the north and the west, each with rooms, the Holy Sepulcher Chapel at one end (also known as the Little Hospital Chapel), and an atrium in which a stone cross is still preserved. La Huatapera was organized in three departments: one for the sick and pilgrims, another for the *semaneros* (indigenous authorities in charge of the building) and another for the indigenous local government. In general, these places are the reflection of the indigenous religion, social policy and humanity, since it was there that they showed how devoted they were to their faith, the most sociable aspects of their republic in the assemblies they held and how charitable they were to their brethren.

At the death of its founder, the build-



Details of *maque* work and its materials in the permanent exhibit room.

ing was left to the city's nine neighborhoods, with each taking a turn in caring for it. One of the most important things that happened in La Huatapera's history is that, since it was the most important hospital in the region, Don Vasco de Quiroga, Michoacán's first bishop, spent his last days there until his death in 1565. It was then that, because of the creation of the *maque* artisans' cooperative, La Huatapera became the main exhibition hall for this beautiful work.¹

Although the entire region was assigned to *encomenderos* in 1524,² in 1540 the system was changed to an indigenous republic, confirming the indigenous population's autonomy *vis-à-vis* the Spanish government. Nevertheless, throughout the entire viceregal period, the population of Uruapan rebelled and revolted frequently.

The building was abandoned at different times and in the nineteenth century, the Holy Sepulcher Chapel mural was covered over with a new decoration. In the mid-twentieth century, a fire damaged its wooden ceiling, and in 1954, the building was turned over to the National Indi-

genist Institute that proposed using it as a trade school and regional museum. In 1999, new adaptations began to prepare it for its use as a museum and as the Regional Information and Documentation Center.

LA HUATAPERA TODAY

Currently, the building is home to the Museum of the Four Indigenous Peoples.³ It also houses the Regional Information and Documentation Center (CRID), whose aim is to concentrate and disseminate materials regarding the 62 indigenous peoples of Mexico's cultural mosaic, with particular emphasis on the peoples of this state. There is also a library which hosts different cultural activities.

The place is used for artistic exhibits of the peoples of Michoacán, and is an important venue for the celebration of traditional fiestas. That is why La Huatapera is important in Uruapan's cultural context as a meeting place, a place for re-



In its four rooms for temporary exhibits, La Huatapera offers exhibitions about the life, customs and world view of Mexico's indigenous peoples.

search, for the preservation and dissemination of our regional heritage. That is also why its murals must be preserved as one of its most characteristic and valuable expressions.

The museum has a permanent exhibit of Michoacán *maque* work. This room summarizes the cultural value of a historic line of artistic production of the P'urhépecha people, as well as the aesthetic and technological differences among the state's different *maque*-producing areas: Uruapan, Quiroga and Pátzcuaro, each with its own particular characteristics, both in terms of the items produced and in terms of the techniques, designs and finishes used.

In its four rooms for temporary exhibits, La Huatapera offers Michoacán society and visitors exhibitions about the life, customs and world view of Mexico's indigenous peoples.

Another of La Huatapera's most important spaces is the Holy Sepulcher Chapel, which boasts the mural *Angel Musicians*. In recent years, people have begun to understand the value of this work again thanks to the discovery of different

characteristics that until then had been hidden because of the lack of maintenance, the little formal use of the chapel and, the fact that many people did not even know it existed.

The work, dating approximately from the sixteenth century, is an unfinished mural done both as a fresco and in tempera on the three walls of the presbytery (the central and two lateral walls). The work's current name is taken from the elements it contains: eight full-sized angels in the foreground carrying musical instruments situated symmetrically in niches like architectural arches.

According to the scant amount of documentary information that has come down to us, the work seems to have remained unfinished because of an indigenous revolt during evangelization which spurred the abrupt departure of the missionaries and therefore of the mural's painters, probably Spaniards, judging from their technique. A while later, when the conquistadors returned, the building was once again occupied and its interior remodeled using much less interesting decorations. With the passage of the centuries,



A permanent exhibit of Michoacán *maque* work summarizes the cultural value of a historic line of artistic production of the P'urhépecha people.





this cycle repeated itself two or three times, until, by the end of the 1950s, the chapel's ceiling was lost in a fire, leaving it victim to the inclemency of the rain that began to wash away what was on the walls, finally revealing the existence of the original images that can be seen today.

THE GILDARDO GONZÁLEZ
RAMOS REGIONAL INFORMATION
AND DOCUMENTATION CENTER

The center has a place for students, researchers and the public at large to comfortably consult books, magazines, videos, recordings, maps, etc. It also has up-to-date information magnetically stored so that users can print any information they need.

The new La Huatapera Museum thus contributes to the state's educational and cultural development, as well as promoting respect and tolerance for Mexico's cultural diversity. **MM**

NOTES

¹ *Maque* is a pre-Hispanic craft technique using earth and natural colored paints. See "The Craft Market. A Glimpse of the Essence of Michoacán," in this issue.

² The *encomienda* was a trusteeship labor system imposed by the Spanish crown from 1493 to 1791 in New Spain whereby overlords were granted the guardianship of indigenous people's souls with the responsibility of converting them to Catholicism in return for the right to tax them and command their labor. [Editor's Note.]

³ Four indigenous peoples inhabit the state of Michoacán: to the east, bordering on the states of Mexico and Querétaro, live the Mazahuas and Otomis; on the coast are the Nahuatl people; and in the mountains, the highlands, Zacapu's swampy, lake region and in the east live the P'urhépechas.

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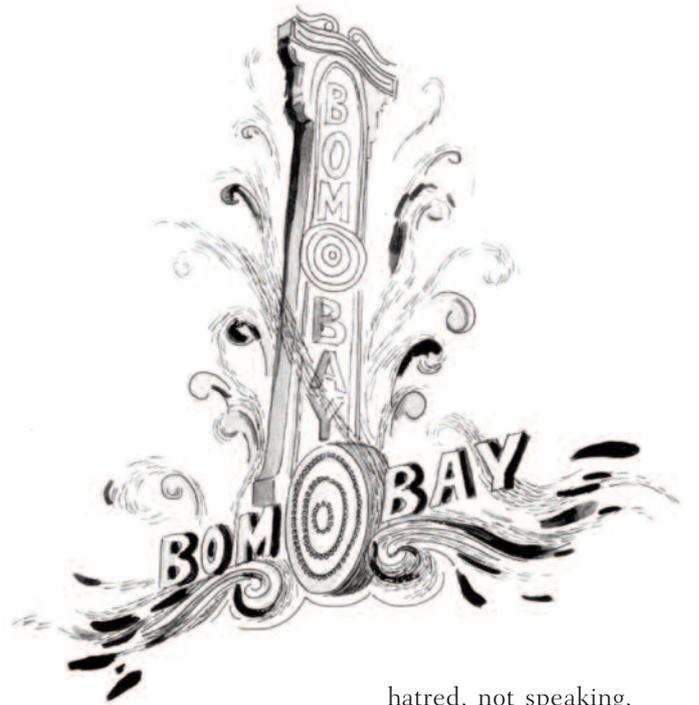
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Museo de los Cuatro Pueblos Indios
Vasco de Quiroga esq. Plaza Morelos
Centro Histórico
Uruapan, Michoacán
Phone: (452) 524-3434
Free admission

God's Cage¹

by Rafael Ramírez Heredia

You said: that's it and you turned around and went against the traffic, driving north, toward the Bombay. You didn't bother with any of the boobs trying to flag you down, you just keep your eye on the Swatch because you're more than 15 minutes late and you remember your words: Ventura Mandujano doesn't come late even to the hour of his death, much less to see the Cocolisa, who's got you by the throat, with your whole maw bleeding, like that puffed-up peacock José Alfredo would say; you're going through the traffic, which is heavy this time of day, heavy because it's not nine at night yet and you said you'd meet Motor and Baude at the Garibaldi Plaza fountain, you'd down a few any old place; what of it, it's just to make time so you can go to the Bombi later and there's the queen, the biggest of them all, and fuck everybody's mother, that's all you said, you remember that you were talking about it? And your green VW minivan didn't want to take on any more passengers, fuck it's hard to get passengers, with that little cord you use to open and close the doors, well I'll tell ya, sometimes you get some hot pieces of ass like the time the Viaduct flooded and you had to circle around to come out by the Morelos housing project, beyond the velodrome, and you realized: the bitch had fallen asleep in the back and you, well, nobody looks a gift horse in the mouth. You took off toward San Lázaro and in the little street where you got out, you lock up the minivan and all of a sudden it seemed like the bitch was gonna scream because when she cracked an eye it was because you were all ready, with your Johnson in your hand and you were yelling, aw, don't get your panties in a twist, and the bitch just shut her eyes because she didn't even want to see your face. Afterwards, remember? you let her out at Joaquín Pardavé because you're not such a bad guy, those songs by Don Susanito Peñafiel y Somellera really get to you, especially that one that goes "Spray of roses, pretty little sprig, cut at dawn..." and if the bitch hadn't been looking at you with all that



hatred, not speaking, not even opening her mouth, you, my dear Ventura, would have told the bitch to kiss you, that she should put something on, that it was all the same given the situation you were in, and why should she be fucking fussy, the bitch was kind of out of it, like she wanted you to come quick to forget it all, and for sure the fucking bitch never even noticed you took care to let her out on Pardavé Street and as you left, you even whistled that song "Little Purple Window" that really makes you cry when you've got a couple of drinks in you, especially when it talks about those young boys who don't want to go to war, that's really how it is, who the fuck wants to go to war? That business about the war is why you don't want to go to the United States because otherwise you'd be the happiest man on earth if they let you go but didn't send you into the battles that they have every fucking day all over the fucking world.

That's why I understand you, my dear Venturi, going to see the Cocolisa, dancing with her even if you have to pay for it, no way you're going to save money when you know that she's on the clock, it's the way she earns her bread, it would be like your pals using you to drive them around from one place to another without paying the fare, not cool, right? what's yours is yours, business is sacred, you can't be an asshole and let yourself get fucked just because a fly



crossed the room, no, my dear Venturín, you've really got to work your ass off for your own good, I can just see you giving money to all the friggin' fire eaters in Mexico City, or letting the goddam windshield cleaners get money outta you on every corner, fuck, you've gotta work for them, seems like, doesn't it? And then come all the ones who sell Kleenex and gum, no, you're from the streets, my dear Ventura, you're not in it just to get by, you need enough dough to go to the Bombay, to alternate with King Caesar, you know that Mr. Caesar is the king of Bombis, and if you want to be, well not the king, but just the prince, at least you have to start by strutting in, my man, and leaving like a lord, because they see you comin' in all like a wuz, draggin' your butt, eyes on the floor, and they'll fuck you, and the first one to tell you to fuck off is Cocolisa because she likes her men macho and not pussies, don'tcha know?

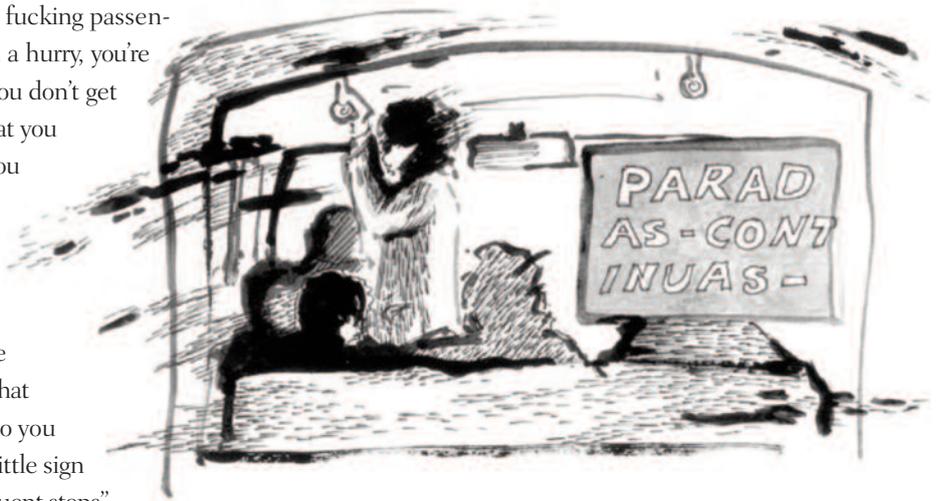
You told them that later, so this is no time to see if you're gonna get there or not because Central Avenue was more jammed up than shit, you were weaving your minivan in and out everywhere because you were imagining Motor and Baude peeing themselves laughing with the mariachis, getting them to sing the ones you like even though sometimes you don't like that they don't know the ones by Pardavé who was super righteous, not like that bitch from the Morelos neighborhood who went to sleep like a little bird, and then you even thought it would have been a good idea to get her address, maybe you could have set her up like your regular bitch, even though you know that never works out, because you've told me yourself that regular old ladies just suck you in, always asking you for housekeeping money, they want to know where you're going, who the fuck you went out with, or why you come in so late, you're not one of those, my dear Venturis,

you're one of those guys who likes to spend his own money, you don't want them asking you where the dough is and taking your jack off you.

Going around the whole town, well, on your route, with the minivan always full up, with those guys who get on and off, with the bitches that you can tell want some, and you, my dear Ventura, looking in the rear view mirror, with those hand signals you make so that the hot ones sit next to you, the eyes you make at them, and sometimes you even take them out, like that little blond one who lived in Lucas Alamán, who got on at Jamaica, right away you saw that she was good for it because she was pushing her leg up against you, and every time you changed gears you could feel her luscious thighs and you ended up at the Ideal Hotel that has a garage because blondie told you not to let her out of the car at one of those hotels where you have to go by the reception desk because she didn't do it just with anybody, right? and you know what you got outta that because it was her and not the other one, it was the fucking blondie, they had to shoot you up with who knows how many units of penicillin. Now you're all bent outta shape that it might be AIDS, that's not just for fags anymore, my dear Ventura, but even real he-men, fucking-A, man, because if it's just the clap, well you can cure that, that's not dangerous anymore, now its Vietnamese and a little HIV action, AIDS, you gotta be smart, but, well, that's it, you and me, we're all into that, you're not gonna throw roses before the swine except by working and that's life, you work your ass off from eight to eight, you leadfoot it around like crazy, then those assholes come up with you gotta respect the traffic laws, don't go over the white lines, treat your passengers right, like you had time to waste on bullshit, like you, my dear Ventura, didn't have



enough of your own problems that the fucking passengers never see or hear about, they're in a hurry, you're in a hurry, too, for your own reasons, if you don't get your kicks like with that blond chick that you ended up giving a few bucks to because you didn't want the poor thing to go home on foot or to have to take her home, or that other chick from the Peñón public baths who got up in your face and you had to give her a few pops up side the head, or the other ones, but that's what you like, what your body asks you for so you can keep on in the minivan, with your little sign in the back that says "Pay attention: frequent stops", you think they don't get it that it's your willie standing at attention when you see the breasts of the kids in uniform, the little girls that get on with their short little skirts, with their little legs and everything, right, Mandujanito? nobody calls you Mandujano as though your last name were the same as your first name, you don't have a name, Ventura sounds like a last name, you're a guy who doesn't have a first name, just last names and that's why, do you think that's why you don't like anybody calling you by your second last name, Huerta? besides, you don't like La Huerta because once in a club in Acapulco they beat you to a pulp, you don't like getting beaten to a pulp, well, nobody does, but you're a guy who doesn't get into fights and your rages, my dear Ventura, you let



them out in other ways, with quick starts, by not stopping when a passenger says just up ahead, and you're like a wild animal, and you pass by the stop on purpose, and you don't pay any attention if the passenger complains or sends you to hell, but that's the least of it, just imagine if you got into it with every asshole who gets in the minivan, fuck, you'd have to fight on every corner, and there're thousands, millions of corners in the city, just on your route there are a billion tough guys who want to take out their anger against everybody who's driving, everybody who can go from one place to another without being packed in like sardines in the subway and even if the minivan isn't yours, well, it's like it was, because old man Ibarra has a fuckload of taxis, minivans, he doesn't know when you take it out and you go do your shit to give your body its pleasure, to blow off some steam and you go dance with Cocolisa like today that you're in Garibaldi, you're looking for Motor, for Baude, and you're gonna go down a few drinks with them, sing with the mariachis and then go see Cocolisa so you can squeeze her ass, pinch her a little, she likes you to pinch her bottom and you give her a few slaps, just lightly, or sometimes hard, when you're alone, she arches her back like a bow with what you do to her, with what you whisper in her ear: little whore, that you're sticking your bone into her, that her pussy smells, then the little slaps so Cocolisa gets a little red, yells, scratches your back. **MM**



NOTES

¹ This is an excerpt from Rafael Ramírez Heredia's novel, *La jaula de Dios* (Mexico City: Joaquín Mortiz, 1989), pp. 27-31.

Drawings by Héctor Ponce de León.

Reviews

**El Tratado McLane-Ocampo.
La comunicación interoceánica
y el libre comercio**

Patricia Galeana

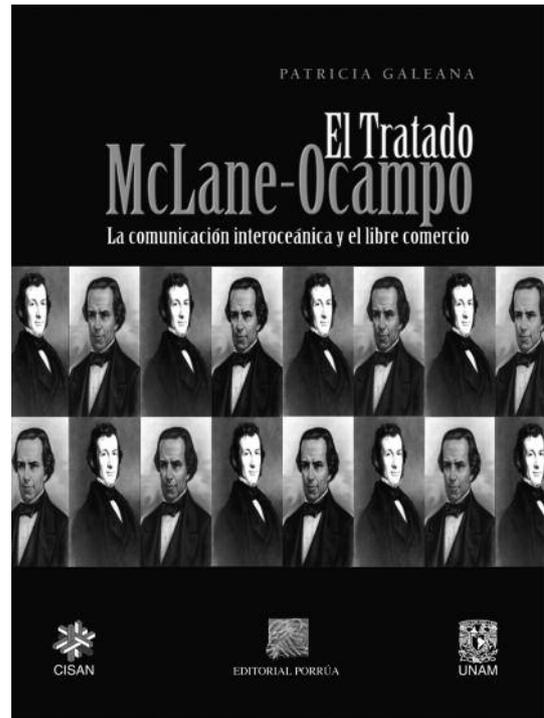
Porrúa/CISAN-UNAM

Mexico City, 2006, 515 pp.

This is a well-documented, rigorously analytical study about an issue fundamental to understanding nineteenth-century Mexico, despite its always being enormously polemical. The author's serene, measured evaluation of the historiography involved is an important plus for this book.

I have not been able to overcome the graphic, painful impact of the historic events this book recounts. No one can read this story without being moved. The Mexican nation's fragility during the nineteenth century jumps out at the reader as with few other books. The recurring civil war from 1828 on had left thinkers doubting the country's ability to govern itself. September Independence Day commemorative speeches had become the occasion to admonish the citizenry and call upon them to do their civic duty. The defeat in the war with the United States with which this book actually begins had created the fear that the nation's weakness had no means to stop new invaders and thwart their intentions. Liberals and conservatives built their alternative national projects to come to the nation's rescue, which led inevitably to a decided confrontation.

In the 1858-1860 civil war, one side conceived of the idea of calling on Europe and the monarchy to put the country back on its feet, turn its back on the United States and recover what might be left of social cohesion and hierarchy. In this vision, the viceregal period represented the founding moment of modern Mexico, with its monarchist traditions, its profound Catholicism, the Spanish language and the existing laws and customs with their recognized resistance to the test of time. The other side, the Liberals, was inspired by the ideas of political economy in vogue in Europe and in general in the Atlantic world (I am referring to the nascent political science and study of economics). For one side, the best defense against the United States and any other invader was to hold tight to tradition and customs and make sure nothing



alien could penetrate. In contrast, for the other side, Mexico was not only its pre-Hispanic or colonial past; the present represented a quest for a self-expression that would simultaneously reflect and give form to the disparate elements that made it up. What better means of advancing in that self-expression than a dialogue with the most advanced economic and political concepts of their time?

The war with the United States and the signing of an onerous treaty, rejected initially by Melchor Ocampo, as the author tells us, should have led the population to reject both the United States and its republicanism. And among a considerable part of the intellectuals of the time and other important social sectors, this is exactly what happened. From a conservative point of view, Mexico had its traditions and one had to rely on them, but for another part of the intellectuals and other important social sectors, the smell of gunpowder had not even faded when they began to recover their own profound republican convictions. They created a strange mixture—very often incomprehensible—of the pain of defeat with the demand for a deepening of Mexican republicanism

and the fulfillment of the promises to renovate the nation that had, in their eyes, been born with Miguel Hidalgo's movement. The choice was essentially simple: being weak-spirited or rising to the occasion of the transformations possible in accordance with the world's most advanced political and economic ideas. In this, the United States was not the true enemy. In the Liberal mirror on the national soul, the enemy was within. Americans attacked Mexico because our nation had shown itself incapable of being an influential actor in the international arena because it still had not carried out the fundamental reforms that were already being discussed and implemented elsewhere. However, absurd pretensions of social hierarchy continued to be maintained; barriers were placed around immigrants, their efforts and investments; in an immense country with a population of eight million, intolerance persisted and external, ostentatious religious practices continued instead of promoting modern religious instruction and a privatization of faith; and in addition, hoarding of both land and capital by religious institutions was permitted, preventing the creation of a virtuous, ascending economic cycle of economic growth and social mobility.

Two Mexicos faced off: one proud of its way of being in accordance with its origins that had given it three centuries of rock-solid existence, and the other anxious to constitute itself as a republic similar to the United States because it did not see in the country that plenitude of being the Conservatives yearned after. The Liberals observed that other countries were leaving Mexico behind because it did not want to change. Capriciously enamored of its vainglorious past, it lacked the courage to seize the present, explore new values and take advantage of its prospects in order to truly establish itself with a view to the future.

As Patricia Galeana argues throughout her book, it turned out that neither of these two Mexicos had sufficient strength to beat the other. One, resisting the disorder produced by the exercise of popular sovereignty and lamenting the sad fate of Agustín de Iturbide's First Empire, decided to resort to a foreign dynasty and power to give it strength. In practice, this would turn into the French intervention and eventually Maximilian of Habsburg's Second Empire. The other Mexico, the country dreamed of by the confirmed republicans, saw the coming monarchy and denounced it incessantly as early as the 1850s. The Liberals were violently perturbed by the praise Lucas Alamán had been expressing for Iturbide since 1848 and his condemnation in his work *Historia de Méjico* (History of Mexico) of the disorder that he argues

originated with Miguel Hidalgo. From the time of the Ayutla Plan and the Constituent Assembly of 1856, young Francisco Zarco and José María Mata demanded that the 1857 Constitution be taken as proof that Mexicans were capable of rivaling the standard bearers of progress in any country on the Atlantic. Even when it did not turn out to be everything they wanted, they defended it as a valiant step forward despite the denunciations of its conservative detractors. Later, completely bankrupt amidst the repeated defeats in the face of their conservative opponents' fearlessness in the civil war, who could they look to for support?

In her book, Patricia Galeana reveals that all the efforts to attract European diplomatic recognition and capital for the constitutional government failed. Even though they could not shake off their suspicions of U.S. motivations or withstand the negotiations for territory, the right-of-way and different reparations payments, they preferred to deal with the difficult negotiations between two republican countries than to give in an inch to the conservative proposals, an eventual monarchy and links to political formulae anchored in the past. They even maintained the possibility of forging a deep, lasting friendship with the United States, winning its respect and that of the world by transforming the country, and perhaps at some better time getting back something of what had been given up, thus fully recovering territoriality and sovereignty.

The author anticipates some critics' harsh questioning of the decisions and resolutions of the constitutional government, particularly Melchor Ocampo, Miguel Lerdo de Tejada and José María Mata, among others. She narrates the events to explain Mexico's choices in the context of the Atlantic, within the bounds of the dispute over controlling inter-oceanic access, in accordance with the two great national projects in conflict. She points out the divisions within the Liberal government, its representatives and allies. She underlines many of the resolutions and breaks of the conservative government and its standard bearers. She unravels the origin of false or distorted affirmations about the historical facts, at the same time that she presents documents to detail and subtly explain what happened. She highlights the tensest moment in which internal strife sent the negotiation of the very existence of the nation, with its two great competing projects, to the international sphere. And she particularly undertakes to decipher what the Liberals were willing and unwilling to concede to show us how they cultivated the art of diplomacy with an opponent that was at the same time their last hope and their most profound model.

In eight chapters, two biographical boxes, six maps and six appendices that include, among other things, previously unpublished documentation, and with the very useful support of analytical indices, this book takes us significantly forward in our understanding of the uncertainty of that equally weighted national conflict in the context of a competitive international sphere with its many breaches. It gives us a glimpse of the U.S. representatives' mixed motivations, the contradictions of U.S. partisan-fed policy and the not only diplomatic, but personal relations among the representatives of both nations. This book will not bore the reader: one begins to want to know what else can be clarified, what other smokescreen can be dissipated. It is not a book to be read in one sitting, but once begun, it will be difficult to put down.

Reading it obliges us to have a multi-dimensional understanding, since it leads us to simultaneously take into account

not only the complex events taking place in the country, but also the continental dimension of the isthmus crossings, the competition and complicities among the Atlantic powers, and the unavoidable, unstoppable advance of Mexico's northern neighbor. By reading it, we will ponder both conflicting national political projects and the men of flesh and blood who tried to deal with problems apparently too vast for simple solutions. We will end up by weighing particularly the Mexican who put his name to the famous McLane-Ocampo Treaty, and even measuring him in comparison to his Liberal colleagues, his conservative opponents and his U.S. counterpart. **MM**

Brian Connaughton
Historian



Los acordes esféricos

(The Spherical Chords)

Ignacio Díaz de la Serna

Ediciones ERA/Conaculta

Mexico City, 2005, 129 pp.

The first lines of a novel are always extremely important. How many of those beginnings will we remember forever? “In a village in La Mancha (I don’t want to bother you with its name)...”; “Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul...”; “Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice.”

Los acordes esféricos (The Spherical Chords), a novel by Ignacio Díaz de la Serna, also begins with a fortunate phrase: “I surmise that Ireneo began writing the *Diary* a little before setting up in Madrid.” Ireneo. I immediately think not of a novel, but of a story by Borges, “Funes el memorioso” (Funes, the Memorious), which introduces us to the unforgettable Ireneo Funes, in whom a blow to the head caused a kind of inverted amnesia that made him remember everything he had experienced in absolutely minute detail.

How risky to start a novel with the word “surmise”! What commitment for the writer! And I ask myself whether the novel will manage to live up to its first phrase, “I surmise”. If



it stirs all these reactions in me, it is a good beginning; it makes me want to know more about Ireneo, his *Diary*, his Madrid, the eighteenth-century atmospheres that our author

reconstructs so well, and about the “I” who is doing the surmising and has spent two years and seven months of his life studying that *Diary*. This is how I got into reading the novel that I read in a single, delightful sitting.

We could deal with it from very different angles because it is enormously rich. However, I would like to point out the part of it that is an homage to Jorge Luis Borges, who in turn pays tribute to the *Thousand and One Nights*, to the thousand and one stories that enthrall the king, who, for both Borges and for Díaz de la Serna, is the reader. Which reader? The reader of *Los acordes esféricos*, who cannot help but be trapped by the novel’s suspense.

Let us be clear: the text is about the research-reconstruction by a twenty-first-century man of a diary written by a man named Ireneo, born in New Spain and who decided to travel to Spain to visit the land of his parents. In this Borgian dialogue the reader is enticed into, Díaz de la Serna imagines, I believe, what a diary by someone like Ireneo Funes would be like. Borges calls him memorious, someone who remembers everything but notes down in his diary only what he wants to for the pleasure of the game he establishes with the reader, for the pure pleasure of the telling. Thus, practically at the beginning of the novel, the narrator-researcher announces what he has found in the diaries and that, to a certain extent, marks the development of the novel.

Thus, for example, the reader follows the description of a monument, which is abruptly cut off, and a digression unexpectedly emerges about the nature of demons; he renews the chapter about Cunqueiro that he had dropped 40 folios back, continues single spaced with the theme of the protests against the king, from there jumps to the Gaspar episode, and dedicates the end of the day to pondering the recipe for some little rum-soaked pastries.

Where did the monument end up?

It’s 100 folios ahead, among the couplets by old Nereus and Madrid’s butcher shops.¹

Los acordes esféricos causes pleasure through what is narrated in the diary, but above all because it takes us masterfully into the game of narrating. Playfulness is just as important for Díaz de la Serna as for Borges, and this is clear throughout the novel. Erudition is another essential shared trait, and it confuses serious readers, who perceive that the greatest pleasures of narrating and reading lie in being playful. That is, erudition is part of the game, not something external to it.

The title, *Los acordes esféricos*, which seemed so enigmatic to me, is justified in the development of the novel, and is a kind of homage to Borges’ “El Aleph.”² In Díaz’s novel, dreaming—particularly dreaming in the eighteenth century, a time alien to the cinematographer—is an experience that happens all at once and not as a succession of images. In the dream, you receive everything at once, simultaneously, like what happens to Carlos Argentino in “The Aleph.” Definitely, what for Díaz is a spherical chord, for Borges is an aleph.

“Already aboard the galleon that brought me to these lands, my dreams began to happen in spherical chords.” By describing it in these terms, Ireneo tries to put into words a strange experience that perturbs him and whose meaning he cannot manage to unravel. What does it consist of? When he dreams, action *does not develop*. Events are simultaneous, they all appear at once. Nothing, nobody, maintains order because the ingredients of each dream are compacted into a single instant. The activity of dreaming does not unfold in sequential time; it does not include a “before”, a “during” and an “after.” On the contrary, it is an explosion, a blaze. It does not last. That Ireneo calls this experience a “spherical chord” simply shows his taste for music. I do not think it is a Pythagorean allusion.³

The narrative game is complicated as we make our way into Díaz de la Serna’s game. For that reason, in the game of mirrors that is life, the narrator is fascinated by a diary like the one he has in his hands and that somehow narrates what is happening to the narrator, who in turn is invented by the writer who invents the diary and the character of Ireneo; an Ireneo whose last name is Díaz, as we discover at the end of the novel. If we reduce him to his initials, I.D., we find that both the author and the character share them, and we deduce that the “I.” of Ireneo is the “I” of the memory personified in the memorious Ireneo Funes, he who travels through memory to encounter an entire tradition, that of Moorish, Jewish and Christian Spain; who travels to the Americas with its conquistadors, with their baroque nature, their religiosity, and which, like carrots, in contrast with leafy trees, “grows inward, slim.” If this is the case, the “I” is shared with that of Ignacio, making Ireneo and Ignacio Díaz identical. Ireneo is the memory of a tradition that Ignacio has in his blood and in his last name, because Díaz was also El Cid. Thus, life and literature are confused in a torrent that, like a dream, makes itself present and vanishes in an instant. For this reason, the end of the novel says:

Thus, in this evil smelling bog where we float together, adrift, the dead and the forgotten dead, lies forever the Creole Ireneo Díaz, without a cross, without a headstone, without a name.⁴

The enigma of why someone spends two years and seven months of his life deciphering Ireneo's diaries is resolved at the end. As we just pointed out, Ireneo is interesting because he is Ignacio himself. The demons who beleaguer Ireneo in his diary are the same ones that somehow torment the narrator-researcher-writer today.

"I feel that I'm falling apart in mummy flesh." Starting from a place, a mask is buried. A little after it arrives, another mask replaces the first one.

The repertory of that mummy flesh is infinite. As it changes location, masks fall apart and are shaped, they disappear and are drawn. Ireneo is no hypocrite; he is an apprentice acrobat, living between his incessant death and resurrection. The present is no more than the biography *that was and will be* where the cadavers turn.⁵

But Díaz de la Serna does not let us go so easily. Another turn of the screw traps us and is the one that happens when Ireneo wants to return to New Spain. At the moment that he says good-bye to Juan, his Spanish friend, Juan gives him a book, *The Gospel of the Nomads* by Ireneo the Good. Like Borges, Ignacio invents a rare book and in a footnote, the narrator tells us:

Thanks to my friend Philippe's instinct for finding curious books that have been unfortunately forgotten by men, I came upon a copy of the *Evangelio de los nómadas* [The Gospel of the Nomads]. Today, only two copies of the only translation into Spanish printed in 1743 survive. One is in the parish archives of Freixedas, a city in Portugal's Beira Alta region. The second is in the Salamanca University Library, in the rare book section, under the catalogue number PJT049/2592/C03.

When I found it, the well preserved copy was between a little treatise on horsemanship published in Oviedo at the end of the seventeenth century and *Sylvas espirituales para el entretenimiento del alma christiana* [Spiritual Verses for the Entertainment of the Christian Soul], written by His Excellency Don Miguel Santos de San Pedro, who had been the bishop of Soria and Plenipotentiary Counselor of Ferdinand V in the Supreme Council of the Indies. According to the title page, the work by Ireneo the Good was translated from the Latin by

Father Friar Lorenzo Aldave Gomar, the prior of the Saint Katherine the Martyr Monastery in the city of Ávila. It was printed by Martín Santiago Ribas at his own expense, at number 4 Hilanderas Street, next door to the Portería de la Concepción Gerónima in Salamanca. It was approved by Reverend Father Vicente Navarro of the Society of Jesus, a Reader in Theology and Judge of the Holy Inquisition, and Father Friar Miguel Ruiz de Berlanga, also a Jesuit.

Finding that copy made it possible for me to follow exactly the allusions that Ireneo makes in the *Diary* to the book by Ireneo the Good.⁶

The narrative game that Díaz de la Serna proposes is delicious and, like all fantastic tales, it creates doubt. It sows a disquiet that makes us ask ourselves if the book we are reading is *The Spherical Chords* or *The Gospel of the Nomads*. If it is, the book I am reviewing here is not this one, but a different one, and is the same one, dating both from 1743 and 2005. Is the temporal, narrative game linked to the demons that appear in the novel? I will leave that question to its next readers, hoping that they discover the mysteries of *The Chords of the Nomads* or *The Spherical Gospel*, and that they delight in Díaz de la Serna's erudition, in the intratextual, historical and other games proposed in this, his first novel. **MM**

NOTES

¹ Ignacio Díaz de la Serna, *Los acordes esféricos* (Mexico City: ERA/Conaculta, 2005), p. 10.

² "Under the step, toward the right, I saw a small iridescent sphere of almost unbearable brightness. At first I thought it was spinning; then I realized that the movement was an illusion produced by the dizzying spectacles inside it. The Aleph was probably two or three centimeters in diameter, but universal space was contained within it, with no diminution in size. Each thing (the glass surface of a mirror, let us say) was infinite things, because I could clearly see it from every point in the cosmos." "The Aleph," at <http://web.archive.org/web/2006041201300/wolcano.host.sk/web/txt/borges/aleph.html> translated by Norman Thomas Di Giovanni in collaboration with the author.

³ Díaz de la Serna, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

⁴ Ibid., p. 129.

⁵ Ibid., p. 65.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 100-101.

Raquel Serur
Professor of Modern Letters,
UNAM School of Philosophy
and Letters

