

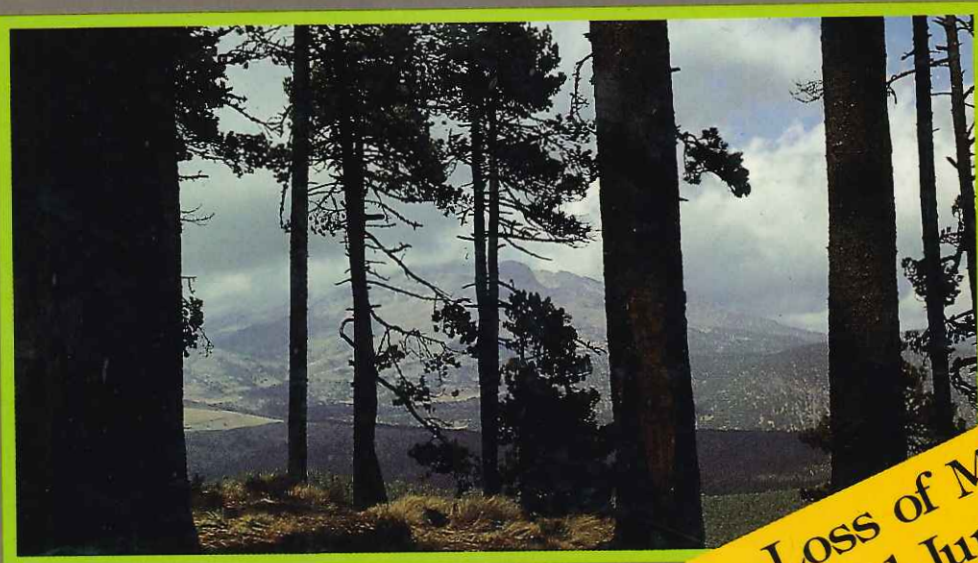
voices **of MEXICO**

News, Commentary and Documents on Current Events in Mexico and Latin America

New era

**CHURCH-STATE
RELATIONS IN MEXICO**

THE POPE'S VISIT,
the Church and the Constitution



**Dramatic Loss of Mexican
Forests and Jungles**

**THE RIGHT TO DIGNIFIED HOUSING:
A CONTINENTAL CONCERN**

**Spiritualists Use
their Faith to Heal**

**RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN
NOT-SO-CATHOLIC MEXICO**



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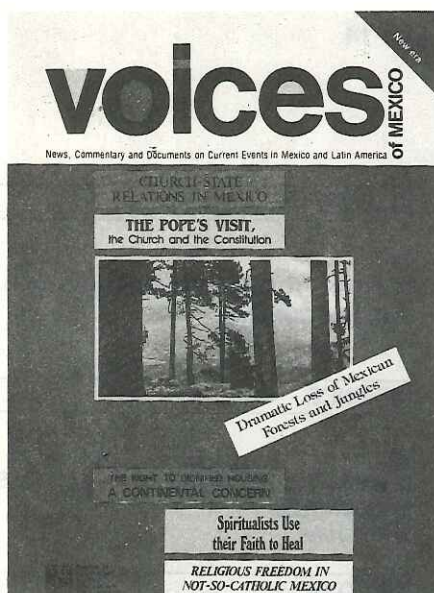
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THIS ISSUE



Cover: Photo by Alejandra Novoa
Design by Angélica Hernández

As in many aspects of our lives, the "official" image of Mexico is one thing, and the reality is very different. Official statistics on Mexico report that the majority of Mexicans describe themselves as Catholics. There is no doubt about this. But it is also true that people can say one thing and do another. If as a nation we are multi-ethnic and multi-cultural, there's no reason why we won't also be multi-religious.

In a country which guarantees freedom of worship, lay education and separation of Church and State - following several civil wars and interventions by foreign powers - the thorny issue of re-establishing formal diplomatic relations between the State and the Catholic church, along with modifications to various articles in the constitution which limit the participation of religious institutions in public life, incites diverse and sometimes passionate reactions among the various sectors of Mexican public opinion.

The recent visit made by Pope John Paul II, and the political waves this caused, have had the effect of provoking a great national debate. After the show, the tumultuous crowds, the fervour, we Mexicans are asking ourselves many questions: Who is to gain if diplomatic relations are re-established with the Vatican? The government? The Catholic hierarchy? Political parties? The Mexican people?

These and many other doubts are discussed in this issue of *Voices*, which is dedicated to exploring the different facets of Mexican religious behaviour. Our aim when we planned this issue was to give space to the debate which is just beginning on the State and Church in Mexico. We also wanted to show the great variety of religious cults observed in the country - some officially, some under cover - and to sketch some tentative answers to the questions raised.

From the variety of views and opinions given by our collaborators, one point emerges clearly: up to the present, and apart from the massive religious manifestations seen during the Papal visit, the great majority of the population has not participated in the discussion on Church-State relations.

Mariclaire Acosta

RELIGIOUS FAITHS IN MEXICO

After the Spanish Conquest in the 16th century, the Catholic religion became an essential part of our culture. The influence of the representatives of the Catholic Church on the population, the parts they played in the principal historic events that have shaped the country, their economic power and even their political power, the number of believers, all of these have given this religion predominance over others. Nevertheless, these characteristics are not sufficient to warrant calling Mexico a Catholic country today. The country's regional, cultural and geographic diversity have permitted the development of an array of religions including Spiritualism and Protestant beliefs, many of the second being of North American origin. If we add to this situation the fact that the Catholic religion itself contains both official, dominant tendencies as well as important minority tendencies such as liberation theology, we can discern a multi-religious mosaic which cannot be ignored as a vital characteristic of modern Mexico. In this context of minority and majority religious groups which search for acceptance among the Mexican people, the rapprochement of the Catholic Church and the Mexican State occurs, favored by the naming of a presidential representative to the Vatican and the recent papal visit. *Voices* presents an historical review of Church - State relations and examines the growing importance of minority religions.

Luis Ramos

CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS IN MEXICO

In Latin countries, religion is not an esthetic experience which exclusively concerns the individual's inner self, therefore the religious question tends to have a prominent place in their respective histories. Mexico is no exception and although it has a coherent and homogeneous legislative history, the space reserved for the individual and collective religious experience has not always been valued in the same way, so that as a rule the country has preferred to approach the solution of this problem with caution, parting from the principle of the separation of Church and State. During the nineteenth and part of the twentieth century the fundamental idea has been the struggle against the manipulation of religion by the oligarchy.

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1810: An Independent Nation

When the colony of New Spain became the independent State of Mexico, in 1821, it lost the statute which ruled its relations with the Vatican, because the only relations which were recognized by the Holy See were those which had been established with the Spanish crown. The Iturbide Empire sought an extension by the Vatican of the Royal Trust which permitted the Spanish sovereign to choose candidates for ecclesiastic posts. However, this trust was not conceded to the new nation, whose independence was not immediately recognized.

The Vatican maintained its relations with the Spanish crown intact, in that it did not recognize the colonies which had declared their independence. Therefore, the question of the Royal Trust was left unanswered and it was impossible to name ecclesiastic authorities.



The new relationship: Pope John Paul II and President Carlos Salinas de Gortari. Photo by Luis Humberto González.

The Question of the Royal Trust

The history of the efforts of independent Mexico to establish relations with the Vatican began with a petition made by the Iturbide regime to obtain a trust similar to that of the Spanish crown. This was not attained because of the fall of the Iturbide Empire and execution of the emperor.

After overcoming the obstacle of an unfortunate letter which Pope Leo XII sent in 1824 to the Latin American colonies urging them to be obedient to the very Catholic King Fernando IV, which caused great consternation in Mexico, relations between Guadalupe Victoria and the Vatican were very good ones.

Efforts were made to obtain diplomatic relations that would make explicit mention of the separation of Church and State. The negotiations were not easy but in the end they produced the acceptance by the Vatican of Francisco Pablo Vásquez, canon of the Cathedral of Puebla, as the representative of the Mexican Republic. Pope Pius VIII refused to name bishops to the Republic and it was his successor, Gregory XVI who in 1831 named the first six bishops of independent Mexico.

Rome was not in a position to recognize the independence of Mexico, given the close relations which tied

In 1854 the government of Juan N. Alvarez decreed laws which took away the political rights of the clergy and ended all the ecclesiastic exemptions

it to the interests of Spain. This prevented the arrival of the diplomatic minister sent by the government of Victoria as an official envoy as well as hindering agreements with the Vatican.

Relations were tense and unstable, at times due to the Vatican and at times due to the Mexican government which was inclined to establish a national church similar to that of Galicia or France. This was something Rome did not want to hear about.

From independence onwards, the ideas of the revolution of 1789 became ever more popular in Mexico. The Church, whose wealth and hegemony had been criticized by some independent clergy, came under the scrutiny of the liberal and republican regime. This was a church which tolerated worse things of the Europeans than of the Americans, who were always considered to be "under age".

Towards Mexican Liberalism

The regime of General Antonio López de Santa Anna put an end to a series of provisional, short-lived governments. The liberal ideals of the expropriation of Church property, the freedom of religion for other faiths, and the secularization of education were the primary goals of a republic which endeavored to be enlightened and modern. The Santa Anna government was not a conservative one, and favored a strong clergy, in a comfortable economic situation, understood to be the mortar which held the bricks of the nation together. But the liberal ideas of José María Luis Mora and Melchor Ocampo had obtained wide acceptance by then, and attacks on the clergy by intellectuals and the educated classes multiplied.

In 1833 the vice-president Valentin Gómez Farías created legislation which secularized education, made the clergy an appendix of the government, and suppressed the male and female religious orders. In reality, these laws were short-lived and not only did Gómez Farías fall from power but the very post of vice-president was abolished by Santa Anna. In the era of Antonio López de Santa Anna, around 1855, a reform which had been announced at the end of the past century was enforced. The Jesuits returned and Saint Gregory's College was reopened; many properties which the laws of 1833 had expropriated were returned to their former religious owners.

But liberal ideas were already part of the values of many citizens and the Church began to feel the effects of a wave of secularization which would irreversibly strip it of the

properties necessary to continue ecclesiastic work in the customary manner.

It must be noted that since 1851 the ecclesiastic laws had shown a liberal tendency towards which the most important politicians wished to see the country lean. The relations between Church and State became ever more similar to those of France and Austria, in spite of the resistance of the Church, expressed repeatedly. Meanwhile, the conservatives were preparing the imposition of a monarchy.

The 1857 Constitution established that the state was above the church and the church existed within the state and therefore the latter was responsible for controlling the former

The Constitution of 1857

In 1854 with the creation of the Ayutla Plan the panorama changed completely for the Church. The conservatives had lost the battle and Juan N. Alvarez took power, decreed laws which took away the political rights of the clergy and ended all the ecclesiastic exemptions. The Church suffered its first exclusion from national life, or to say it another way, it faced a new situation in a liberal republic where it did not have privileges. This situation created problems for which the Church did not have a solution; a Church in an enlightened nation had not yet been imagined.

Juan N. Alvarez, Melchor Ocampo, Benito Juárez and Guillermo Prieto put together their intelligence and motivation to give the country the liberal institutions which the progress of the nation required in 1855; the formation of this group was fortuitous and short-lived, although it was decisive in the long run.

However, these liberal institutions included the suppression of all ecclesiastic exemptions, which affected many interests; the clergy of Puebla and in particular those from Acapoaxtla took up arms and the city of Puebla followed their example.

They faced the arms of both the conservatives and the liberals. Ignacio Comonfort placed the church property of the rebels under government control and forced them to pay the costs of the repression. The bishop of Puebla, D. Pelagio Antonio de Labastida y Dávalos criticized these events mildly, but a sermon of his did not appeal to the authorities in the capital of the republic and he was exiled.

On February 5th, 1857, the Constitution was proclaimed, a fundamental piece of legislation which took many sessions to create and which was fought over both within and outside the Congress. The fundamental idea was that the State was above the Church and the Church

existed within the State and therefore the latter was responsible for controlling the former. All Mexican citizens were invited to swear loyalty to the Constitution, including the bishops, who refused to do so because they thought that the Church, being a divine institution, should not be subject to laws which would hurt its interests. The bishops of Mexico City, Michoacán, Linares, Guadalajara and San Luis Potosí wrote a letter denouncing persecution of the Church.

It was on this occasion that Benito Juárez accused the Church of fostering civil war and of disobeying the civil authority.

The conflict worsened with the nationalization of Church property and with the destruction of churches, church buildings and colonial monuments. Pope Pius IX denounced the persecution of the Church in Mexico. With the rise of President Zuloaga to power and the creation of the Tacubaya Plan, the President sent a missive to the Pope asking for the establishment of a new situation which would disregard the past history of persecution and bitterness. It was a petition for formal relations with the Vatican.

But Juárez, who governed from Veracruz, passed a law in opposition to these efforts, specifying the withdrawal of the Mexican representative to the Vatican. We have already mentioned that there were no formal, mutual diplomatic relations with the Holy See, but unofficial relations, without the use of the title of ambassador, had been maintained almost without interruption.

The victorious entrance of Benito Juárez into Mexico in 1861 resulted in the expulsion of the bishops who had supported the reactionary cause

The Reform Legislation

In July of 1859, in order to cement the independence of the State in relation to the Church, the unofficial representative was withdrawn with the argument that there were actually very few diplomatic and commercial relations which tied the Mexican Republic to the Pope as sovereign of the papal states. In reality the Mexican representation, due to the differences with the liberal government, was almost completely inactive, which motivated the Minister of Foreign Relations, Melchor Ocampo, to send the order to London for the suspension of representation and the return of the archives to the Mexican Republic. Although there were no formal, mutual diplomatic relations involving ambassadors, for Juárez it was a question of principles and a manner of emphasizing the change which the Church underwent in relation to the liberal republic, that is, the new space it was assigned.

The armed conflict between liberals and conservatives made the establishment of relations with the Vatican even more difficult. The victorious entrance of Benito Juárez into Mexico on January 11, 1861 resulted in the expulsion of the bishops who had supported the reactionary cause and of the Apostolic Delegate Luigi Clementi. The departure of the bishops was extremely embarrassing because the most frenzied onlookers threw stones at them and they had to take refuge in the French consulate, in the houses of foreign businessmen and eventually in the fort of San Juan de Ulua.

Almost an Empire

With the people tired of war and violence of all kinds, the French invasion of Mexico, with a political situation favorable for the conservatives, led to the imposition of an archduke, dressed as an emperor. Most of the bishops favored this radical change in government because they expected the reestablishment of the previous situation. However, Maximilian was Catholic but not conservative, and those who supported him were disappointed because no one in the Mexican "court" wanted to turn the clock back, or at least not if it involved returning property seized from the clergy. The very bishops who had participated in the negotiations that brought the archduke to Mexico were left bewildered by the results. The Archbishop of Mexico, D. Pelagio Antonio de Labastida y Dávalos, who was a member of the Regency established by the French army before the Emperor arrived, had to

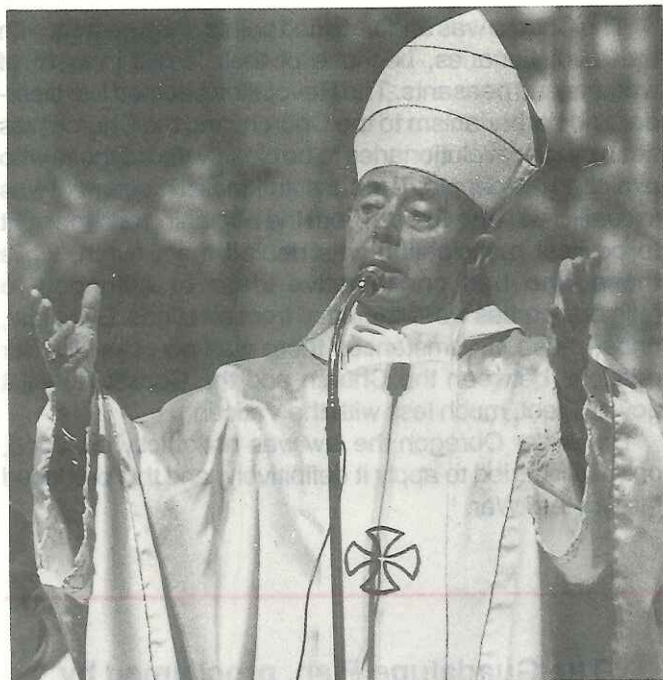
resign when he realized that the Church was not going to recuperate its previous properties and power. Maximilian, nevertheless, wanted relations with the Vatican like those which had existed under the Bourbon Kings.

Pius IX, in a show of benevolence towards the new regime which proposed a reform of the Mexican Church, granted an Apostolic Nuncio, Monsignor Francisco Meglia, in response to the arrival of Mexican ministers who had been sent to the Holy See. For the first time the relations between the Church and Mexico were formalized; unfortunately this occurred under a foreign prince and a regime that was only maintained by the threat of force imposed by the armed invaders. The emperor intended to impose a liberal resolution upon the nuncio consisting of nine points. Since the nuncio refused to accept the imperial proposal, his political and diplomatic validity was revoked and he was forced to leave the country suddenly and without formalities. The nuncio resigned and left Mexico with all the personnel from the nunciature in the end of April of 1865. Relations were not discontinued because Maximilian sent a commission to try to mend the damage, but they were never reestablished with formal ambassadors from that time onwards.

Maximilian's fall and execution in 1867, and the return of Benito Juárez to the presidency, created a very difficult situation for the Church, that is to say for the Ecclesiastic Hierarchy, and most bishops had to go into exile once again. The people were left without pastors once more.



Mexican intellectuals listened to the leader of universal Catholicism. Photo by Rossy Alemán/Imagenlatina



Archbishop of Mexico City, Ernesto Corripio Ahumada demands greater political space. Photo from *Novedades* archives.

Under the Restored Republic

On August 3, 1959 Juárez suspended diplomatic relations with the Vatican, from the port of Veracruz. The restored republican regime did everything possible to reduce the influence of the Church, and relations with the Holy See were almost nonexistent.

The government of Sebastian Lerdo de Tejada enforced the laws energetically; he went so far as to make the Reform laws part of the constitution. This, as well as legislation which was added later, meant that besides being bereft of its properties, the Church lost the right to collect alms outside of church buildings. The monastic orders were disbanded and those who created communities outside of the monasteries were sought out and dispersed. The repeated protests of the bishops were ineffective; it was soon evident that the liberal State proposed a policy without concessions. The result of this extreme policy was a homogeneous, coherent and clear legislation, but it was not clear what rights religion did have. This defect would continue to exist in the following years.

The restored republican regime did everything possible to reduce the influence of the church, and relations with the Holy See were almost non-existent

From 1865 to 1896 there was no Mexican representative in the Vatican; during this time the Mexican government tolerated the presence of Monsignor Averardi, who tried many times to initiate diplomatic relations with the Vatican, but the government rejected all efforts in this direction. Things had changed since the fall of Sebastian Lerdo de Tejada and the efforts to establish relations failed repeatedly.

The Tuxtepec revolution brought Porfirio Díaz to power (he would continue as dictator for 35 years) and initiated a period in which Church and State agreed to disagree. The government would not enforce the laws and the Church would not demand that they be changed. During this period, from 1876 to 1910, the Church recuperated. Porfirio Díaz actually had a conciliatory policy under which the dioceses could grow in number. Carmelita Romero Rubio, the dictator's wife, favored the Church in many ways and thus it recuperated part of its property as well as being able to build seminaries. Many councils and synods were formed which enriched the life of the Church. The Latin American Plenary Council, held in 1899 in Rome, stimulated the life of the Church and initiated an active social promotion campaign through the Catholic Congresses, which mobilized workers and peasants. The Church acquired political power and its capacity for mobilizing the masses made it evermore conspicuous and important in the nation's life. The encyclical letter entitled "Rerum Novarum" from Leo XIII, sent in 1891, encouraged social work, which intensified towards the end of the century. At this time, since the bishops were restricted by law in many aspects, activities by laymen were intensely promoted through social work and the publication of newspapers which had a large influence on public opinion such as "Catholic Society" and "The Voice of Mexico", and which opposed the famous anti-clerical newspapers "The Century" and the "Republican Monitor".

In 1902 Leo XIII tried to propose a Mexican Cardinal but the government decided that the situation was not ripe for relations to be formalized with the Vatican. However, the Apostolic Delegation was reestablished in 1904, and this type of relations lasted until 1911.

The Revolution

The Mexican Revolution (1911-1917) intensified the difficulties of the Church, since both the constitutionalist forces from the south and Francisco Villa from the north occupied Catholic buildings for use as barracks and Government buildings. Emiliano Zapata was the only one to respect Church property and helped the Church in many ways. It was a tortuous period when the Mexican people suffered continuously and repression was concentrated among Catholics, both laymen and priests.

Francisco I. Madero's Revolution was victorious because it took advantage of the general rejection of the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, but Madero was not a radical and this would cost him his life. Madero left the dictator's cabinet almost intact, and a military man from the previous regime named Victoriano Huerta took advantage of this

The relations between Huerta and the church have always been interpreted as an example of a reactionary attitude which legitimized violence

situation with a coup d'état that included the assassination of Madero and his vice president Pino Suárez, with the obvious support of the United States' ambassador to Mexico, Henry Lane Wilson.

The Church and Huerta

While some members of the clergy supported Huerta, others such as Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, criticized him for usurping power. Huerta knew that the relations with the Church could be manipulated as they had been in the times of Porfirio Díaz, and he supported it, but he repressed the National Catholic Party when it began to have opinions and attitudes that were too independent. Huerta avoided direct conflict with the Church, and the Church gave him a loan when the troops threatened to take their salaries in looting.

The relations between Huerta and the Church have always been interpreted as an example of a reactionary attitude which legitimized violence, but in reality from 1913 on, conflicts between Catholics and followers of Huerta became more and more serious, until the government exiled those Catholic journalists who dared to criticize the regime in the official publication of the Catholic Party. But the fact that some members of the Catholic hierarchy had supported the Huerta dictatorship (which lasted only 17 months) could not be erased from the memory of the Jacobins. With Huerta's fall from power, the Catholic Party was dissolved and its members were threatened and harassed, and some had to leave the country. A new party, the National Republican Party, which lasted an even shorter time, grouped together those Catholics who dreamed of a Christian State. This party participated in the election which made Obregon president.

The Guadalupe Plan, proclaimed by Venustiano Carranza and supported by the large Constitutional Army, began a period of intense persecution of the Church, in that it stated that the Church had been responsible for Madero's death and Huerta's victory.

For four years before and twelve years after the proclamation of the Constitution of 1917, the Church was attacked on economic and ideological matters. This constitution legitimized the violent attitude of the Constitutional Army towards the Church. Carranza's campaign to import U.S. capital and industry included the promise of tolerance of different faiths and the suppression of the Catholic Church. With these promises Venustiano Carranza arrived at the capital with ammunition, fuel and food for his troops provided by the U.S.

The Church was unable to find points of agreement with the revolutionaries, because of their ideals in favor of workers and peasants. The Revolution seemed like disorder and barbarianism to the Church, and the Church was seen by the revolutionaries to be closely tied to those who exploited the people. The constitutionalist movement was in conflict with the Church from the beginning and the right to political participation was denied the Church, while those who had conservative ideas or belonged to religious parties were excluded from elections. Evidently, under these circumstances there was no possibility for relations between the Church and the Constitutionalist government, much less with the Vatican.

But under Obregon the law was not strictly enforced, only Calles tried to apply it definitively, and this produced the Cristero War.

The Guadalupe Plan, proclaimed by Venustiano Carranza, began a period of intense persecution of the church

Agreement without Consensus

When an agreement was reached, the bishops agreed to accept the laws of the Constitution without conditions, in exchange for which the government would return the confiscated property and grant amnesty to those implicated in the armed uprisings. The Church had to comply with its part of the bargain but the government only satisfied the first part of the agreement partially and instead of granting an amnesty it began a witch hunt and summarily executed all the Cristero leaders who were unable to escape.

These provisional "agreements" set the stage for relations between the Catholic Church and the governments of the revolutionary generals and their successors until the end of the twentieth century. Given the individualist understanding of religion that the liberals and the masons took it upon themselves to emphasize, a government official was shielded by law and government in any attacks he might make on the ecclesiastic institutions. Most politicians who supported anticlerical legislation sent their children to Catholic schools that by law should not have existed. The Catholic Church was also persecuted under President Lázaro Cárdenas who, obviously intending to make Mexico socialist, expropriated the oil wells from foreign ownership and nationalized the production of crude oil. For Catholics it was a time of persecution because some members of the Cárdenas government, such as Tomás Garrido Canabal, in the state of Tabasco, enforced laws limiting the clergy, until they almost completely disappeared. The third article of the Constitution

Most politicians who supported anticlerical legislation sent their children to Catholic schools that by law should never have existed

which prohibited religious education in the schools was enforced without concessions. Government inspectors made unannounced visits to the Catholic schools and fined those which broke the law.

Towards a Pacific Co-existence

From 1940 on there was a slow warming process in the relations between Church and State. President Manuel Avila Camacho declared publicly that he was a believer, and President Miguel Alemán Valdés maintained a semi-public personal friendship during his administration (1946-1952) with the Archbishop of Mexico, Luis María Martínez, who had participated in the agreement of 1929. Relations with the Church slowly improved, without actual changes in legislation.

The anti-communist campaign resulting from the McCarthyism of the fifties resurfaced in the sixties in fanatical uprisings which aimed to crush those arguments that were less than reactionary. Since the Vatican II and its theology did not comply with these requirements, extreme fanatics became enemies of the Pope and of those bishops who had participated in the conciliate. The

Archbishop of Mexico, Miguel Darío Miranda, perceiving the dangerous nature of these groups, called them to order.

Legislation Follows Practice

The relations between Church and State underwent profound changes when President Luis Echeverría Alvarez visited Pope Paul VI in 1974 in a private meeting that lasted 50 minutes and about which there is no official information. Paul VI wanted to visit Mexico for the Second Meeting of the Latin American Episcopate (CELAM), but death surprised him, and his successor as well, and it was John Paul II who visited Mexico in 1979.

From that moment, the apostolic delegate, Jeronimo Prigione has made public his desire to establish diplomatic relations between Church and State. Since the papal visit was used by the party in power to strengthen its position, some editorialists expressed the fear that the visit of Pope John Paul II in May of 1990 would aim to establish relations which the Mexican Republic had never maintained before. But the farewell discourse of the Foreign Relations Secretary, Fernando Solana, made clear that these matters would be dealt with in Mexico through the appropriate channels and within the Mexican judicial tradition.

The number of Catholics has decreased in the last decade (1980-1990), but the Catholic Church is still the majority religious group and the Mexican government must accept dialogue with it in the search for the place which religion will occupy in the social and political life of the country. ■

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CAROL WOJTYLA'S SECOND VISIT

Breaking Security to Touch the Pope





Photos by Luis Humberto González.

Carlos Mondragón

THE POPE'S VISIT, the Church and the Constitution



Some Mexican clergy want to come out of the confessionals into the political arena. Photo from unomásuno archives.

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Church-State relations in Mexico have had a long and complicated history, full of ups and downs with tensions and violence. The history of the Mexican nation is virtually crossed with this conflict, especially after the Constitution of 1857 and the reforms made by President Benito Juárez in 1859.

The separation of Church and State as well as freedom of worship, two of the great achievements of liberal Mexicans, have been points of permanent conflict with the Catholic Church. At the same time they also have been two of the most important factors in the making of modern Mexico. These achievements were consolidated by the Constitution of 1917, the legal basis that still sets the norms today for relations of the Churches with the Mexican State.

Some of the articles in force that are being questioned at present are the following:

Article 3, that establishes secular education, "removed from any religious doctrine and based on the result of scientific progress". It also maintains the prohibition that "religious organizations", "religious ministers" or "societies connected with any religious belief", may be involved in the educational process on "a primary, secondary school or teachers' education level as well as education of workers and peasants".

Article 24, that guarantees the freedom of worship.

Article 27, that states the following: "The temples for public worship are property of the Nation". Thus, Churches may not own property nor accumulate wealth.

Articles 55, 58 and 82, which prohibit ministers of any religious belief from holding the office of representative, senator or president.

Article 130, which among other points, states the following: 1) "The Congress cannot dictate laws establishing or prohibiting any religion"; 2) "Marriage is a civil contract"; 3) "Churches" have no legal standing; 4) There is a limitation on the number of religious ministers; 5) Religious

ministers must have Mexican nationality; 6) Ministers are prohibited from stating any criticism against the government in public or private meetings or religious ceremonies; 7) Ministers "will have no right to an active or passive vote, nor have the right to associate for political ends"; 8) The State controls churches and their wealth; 9) "Periodical publications of a religious character" are prohibited, as well as meetings of a political nature in churches.

The fulfillment of these legal resolutions has been in function of a complex and paradoxical social dynamics. Relations between the Churches, principally the one with the majority of believers, and the different post-revolutionary governments seem to have been ruled for the most part by political convenience. The State, trying to conserve its "autonomy" by enshrouding the liberal ideals of the past expressed in the Constitution; and the Catholic Church, trying to increase its range of intervention and political influence. We should put the Pope's visit within this context to understand its relevance.

The Controversial Visit

Months before the arrival of John Paul II, in Mexico the theme of Church-State relations again appeared in public opinion. The press talked about "modernizing" these relations, beginning with the recognition of the legal status of the Catholic Church. This idea was expressed by Bishop Luis Reynoso of Cuernavaca when he stated that "modernization in Church-State relations would help to alleviate many social tensions". This "modernization" is understood in the sense that some of the articles of the Constitution mentioned above should be modified: "Thus the final goal of the struggle to revise certain articles of the Constitution, is that of recognizing the legal character of the Church" (*La Jornada*, November 27, 1989).

Another argument that is being used time and again is that the political Constitution as its stands is an offense to human rights. Just one example: in referring to the renewal of diplomatic relations between the Vatican and the Soviet Union and to the Gorbachov-John Paul II dialogue, Genaro Alamilla (President of the Bishops' Social Communication Commission) asked the following: "When will Mexico have the complete capacity to recognize human rights?" (*La Jornada*, December 6, 1989).

"Legal recognition of the Church", "human rights", "religious freedom", "modification of some constitutional articles", were the most important themes discussed during the months previous to the Pope's visit. The avalanche of opinions in favor of or against the modification of the Constitution only heightened with the news that President Carlos Salinas de Gortari had named a "personal representative" to the Pope in the Vatican, accredited in Rome on April 24, 1990. The opposition interpreted this as the *de facto* re-establishment of diplomatic relations with the Vatican State.

The debate that this provoked went so far as the House of Representative and appears to have produced a political effect. There was a certain "reversal" in the tone of the

press statements of public authorities and the Catholic hierarchy. This may only have been a tactic to avoid darkening the political atmosphere any more than it already was in the time shortly before the arrival of the Pope in Mexico on Sunday, May 6. The news that the President would personally welcome Pope John II was justified by the fact that he was not a Chief of State but a "distinguished visitor".

The Pope's visit once again showed the great power of influence and attraction that he has over a large part of the Mexican population. The tumultuary demonstrations to welcome the Pope and to listen to the Papal sermons were interpreted by some clergy as "proof" of the wish of the grass-roots majority to normalize relations with the Church. Both State and privately owned television channels covered the visit twenty-four hours a day in a most amazing way.

John Paul II's speeches to different sectors of the population produced the most varied reactions in public opinion. There had been much speculation about the objective of the visit: contrary to church spokespersons who said that the trip was exclusively pastoral, the most radical sectors argued that the objective was a political one and that the goal was to help legitimize the present government.



The Mexico City Cathedral, built on top of the Aztec Grand Temple.
Photo from Novedades archives.

Some of the Pope's messages produced a controversy. In Veracruz and Aguascalientes, the Pope stated that "a new perspective of contacts between the Church and the political community of this country is being formed in our days". (*unomásuno*, May 9, 1990). He also said that the Gospel should be the norm in politics, culture and education. He condemned "false leaders" who serve "strange ideologies". At the same time the Pope criticized religious minorities protected in Mexico by the Constitution. Lastly, he made a call to change secular education, "opening it to the message of Christ". The most radical case of opposition to this was that of members of the Mexico City Assembly from the opposition parties - the Popular Socialist Party (PPS), the Workers' Revolutionary Party (PRT) and the Party of the Cardenist Front for National Reconstruction (PFCRN). These people wanted to apply Article 33 of the Constitution (which imposes sanctions on foreigners) to the Pope for interfering in "affairs that only concern Mexicans" (*unomásuno*, May 9, 1990).

The present situation appears to be a "frozen" and confusing one. Spokespersons from the Government

have made statements that there will be no changes in the Constitution. On the other hand, members of the opposition have asked that negotiations be taken out from behind the screens and that the public be given information. In this state of uncertainty the farewell speech of the Minister of Foreign Relations, Fernando Solana Morales (in representation of President Salinas) to Pope John Paul II was surprising. He categorically stated that "we will continue to make the fundamental decisions of our country within the framework of freedom based on our historical experience, on our national principles and on our future projects... Please take with you the conviction that this Mexican freedom will prevail and that Mexico's joy and spirit will be two of the strengths that will continue to encourage our performance in trying to be more fair and just" (*El Nacional*, May 14, 1990).

What does this mean? Is it only a tactical retreat of the government? It appears that the visit left both rivals (Church and State) exhausted, since there seems to be a period of "repose" at the moment. However, this calm, as that of the eye of the hurricane, may be misleading. ■



SUSCRIBASE A

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Raúl Macín

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN NOT-SO-CATHOLIC MEXICO

In the Christian churches, whatever denomination they be, there is a clear mission when the church is a minority. This is part of the apostolic tradition: no one can forget that the entire ministry of Jesus was carried out as a religious minority. His rejection of Phariseeism and of anything that converted human beings into slaves of dehumanizing legalism, made the people aware that He and his disciples were part of a heretical minority that was rebellious and broke laws.

The fact that Jesus insisted that the Sabbath was created for the good of humankind and not humankind for the good of the Sabbath, showed that He was a teacher whose lessons were dangerous for the majority of the people who were, of course, Jewish. He and his disciples were also Jewish, but they were different because they thought and acted in a very different way from the doctors and priests of the established law.

Thus, for Jesus, minorities had the possibility of realizing an important mission. For example, He showed this through the parable of the grain of salt. Though the grain is very small and has no beauty or worth, it can produce a unique flavor if dissolved in the appropriate medium. The only condition necessary is that minorities must be capable of sacrificing themselves in order to serve. The grain of salt must lose its form to be dissolved and give flavor. This characteristic (which many say is a tactic of minorities) was used by the persecuted Christians during the first centuries in order to survive and continue the struggle.

Minorities in Mexico

In Mexico, from the beginning of the Conquest and the Catholic missions, people worried about what was called "the heretical and disease-spreading Lutheranism".

General Director of the Coordinating Center for Ecumenical Projects.

People were worried that this would come to Mexico and that the teachings would take root in the country. Don Pedro Gringoire, Protestant journalist who wrote the column, "The Pulse of the Times" in the newspaper *El Excelsior* for over fifty years, stated that the first Protestant who came to Mexico was Andrés Moral, or Morel or Morab. He was later called Juan Alemán. Moral was born in Brumm, Moravia, and worked in cutting and polishing precious stones. In 1536 he was arrested by the Inquisition, then under Bishop Juan de Zumárraga, accused of being a Lutheran and he was exiled in 1538 to Toledo, Spain. There he was reconciled with the Catholic church and the *sanbenito* (cap and garment stigmatizing a person accused by the Inquisition) was taken from him. The Catholic writer, José Gutiérrez Casillas wrote: "In 1539, there was an anti-Lutheran campaign begun in all the bishoprics that obeyed the strict orders of the Council of the Indies. In Yucatan, one Englishman and ten Frenchmen were tried for being Lutherans, heretics and sacrilegious persons. A Spaniard was also tried because he wanted mercy for the Frenchmen. There were also people sentenced in Oaxaca and Guadalajara". Thus, there is no doubt that anti-Protestantism has been present in Mexico since the beginning of the Conquest. In some way it seems natural that the majority persecute and antagonize a minority that in some way is a bother to this majority. Therefore, any legal or constitutional step that corresponds to proclaiming the rights and responsibilities of religious minorities is not only important but serves as an example. In the month of March, 1990, intolerance arose again as the fruit of a generalized campaign against

The group led by Jesus Christ was once a minority itself



16th Century engraving. The Inquisition forced heretics to wear the *sambenito*

From the beginning of Catholicism in Mexico, people worried about what was called the "heretical and disease-spreading Lutheranism"

religious sects. The authorities of the Catholic church define sects as all churches and religious organizations that are not Catholic. Sociologically this may be correct, but it does not help in understanding the problem and it returns to attitudes of the sixteenth century.

The Catholic Definition of Sects

The Catholic Church tends to put all non-Catholic believers into the same category of Protestantism. In the same group they lump together the Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans and Baptists, who are in fact Protestants; with Jehova's Witnesses, Mormons and Adventists who are not Protestants; with Penticostalists who practise a sanctified Protestantism, as they say themselves; and with all those groups that have come out of or have been created in the United States and have invaded Latin America with an alienating and disintegratory preaching since 1969. This is something that is not only incorrect, but dishonest. It seems to indicate - please note that I say "seems" to indicate - that the intentions of the

Catholic hierarchy are those of going back, historically speaking, to the Constitution of Apatzingán (in the process of actualizing the relations between the church and State). Article One of the 1814 Constitution states that the Catholic religion is the religion of the State and the only one for Mexicans. In other words, Article 24 of the present Constitution, which guarantees the freedom of cults, is contradicted. In this way, events such as that which occurred in the Ajusco area some weeks ago are legalized: more than 100 non-Catholic believers were on the verge of being lynched by a crowd of people who had previously been stirred up by the priest of this area of Magdalena Contreras in Mexico City.

The situation is serious, not only because the rights of a minority are being violated (those that are guaranteed in the above mentioned Article 24 of our Constitution from over 100 years ago) but also because of what this means in relationship with the Catholic church. There is the possibility and risk that the Catholic church recovers its political influence and with this the privileges that it never wanted to lose. And the seriousness of the situation increases due to the fact that Pope John Paul II, during his second visit to Mexico, spoke about freedom of religious cults and advocated that such freedom be controlled by the Catholic authorities in Mexico. This closes the doors to freedom for religious minorities. In light of this, it is a deplorable fact that Catholic militants of the ecumenical movement said nothing. This shows that the reappearance of religious intolerance has also reached them. A short while ago, the Pope's representative in Mexico, Monsenor Jeronimo Prigione, stated that Protestantism or

sects are enemies of our sovereignty. In part, he is correct; but as always, half truths are usually also half lies. Personally, I have time and again denounced the using of religion to defend and protect the interests of United States' imperialism. In this area, not only religious sects have been used but even the Roman Catholic church.

This was denounced by Ivan Illich in the magazine of U.S. Jesuits, *America*, in an article entitled, "The Clouds of Charity". It has been seen in Panama, Nicaragua and Argentina and also in our own country. Thus, the enemy is not this or that church or religious organization, but imperialism and those who are accomplices with it.

Spanish evangelism endorsed the Conquest, with its killings, lootings and slavery

Religious Persecution in Mexico

In our history, as Fidel Chauvet states, the Catholic church used the political method of evangelization to carry out her missionary work during the conquest of Mexico. This method had a triple goal: evangelize, civilize and colonize the non-Christians. These were the Indians who were the inhabitants of the conquered regions, who had their own culture including their own religion. The method of evangelization served the interests of the imperial power, Christian of course, that in this case was Spain. And, it endorsed or christianized the conquest with all that this signified, including the killings, the lootings and slavery. The method consisted of three parts: exposition of the gospel to the masses, elemental Christian instruction and baptisms. Thanks to this, the religious majorities were transformed into minorities with no rights in relation to the religion of the conquerors.

Civil as well as religious authorities persecuted minorities that already existed or were in fact created by them or, as is the case of the Jews, came with the European migration. In the case of Protestantism the curious fact is that a religious minority started to be persecuted even before it was formed. Even the possibility that some type of Protestant work be established, worried the authorities and they did everything possible to avoid the establishment of Protestantism. One example of this is the work of Don Alonso de Montúfar, who was a bishop who acted against Robert Tomson, Englishman and Agustin Boacio, Italian. Since these two persons were Europeans who had just come to New Spain, they had to be repressed because they might be Protestants (1560). Another case was that of the religious nun, Sor Elena de la Cruz (1568) who had read the books of Fray Luis de Granada and believed that one could be saved if one obeyed the ten commandments. She was taken by the

Inquisition because she was suspected of being a believer of Judaism and a Lutheran lie-spreader. In the Inquisition she repented and her punishment was not so severe. There are many cases like these, documented in the acts of the Inquisition in Mexico, from those of Fray Juan de Zumárraga in 1535 to the acts of Abad y Queipo in 1811.

Religious Rights

In synthesis, a religious minority has the right to practice its religion (guaranteed by the Constitution) when it does not harm others nor violate the law. Article 24 of the Mexican Constitution and Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantee the freedom of conscience and religious practice. These do not uphold the use of religion for non-religious activities and even less to evade the law. This has been done many times by minorities when they have services in places that are not proper for such activities, such as stadiums, bullrings and arenas. This was also recently done by the Catholic church with its outdoor masses for the people during the visit of the Pope. Thus, there is no doubt that all defense of rights must involve all persons assuming their correct responsibilities. ■



16th Century persecution of heretics.

Millions Join Religious Sects

Enrique Vargas

To paraphrase the Gospel, it could be requested that the Mexican who throws the first stone be one who has not been visited at least once by some evangelist preacher from one of the 200 sects present in Mexico.

Practically all Mexican families have been faced by one of these insistent, inquisitive, and occasionally threatening or aggressive persons who will not accept defeat. They are masters of debate and are adept at perceiving the slightest vacillation in the speaker. They know in depth the most successful marketing techniques, yet they only sell ideas and a spot in heaven.

Very few Mexicans could answer the question as to how many religious trends there are in the country today, data that even the government does not have. Regarding this, some researchers indicate that in Mexico there are more than 200 religious non-Catholic sects; the success of their proselytizing campaigns are verified with the following data: nearly 10 million Mexicans are members of some sect. This represents an increase of 200 percent with regard to the data in the National Population Census of 1980. Their rate of growth is around 10 percent annually, one of the highest in the world. They have founded more than 10,000 temples throughout the country.

Some of the more well-known sects are Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons), the Pentecostal Gospel Movement, the Moon Sect, the churches of the Word, the Sabbaticalist, the Congregation of God, the Light of the World, and so forth.

The northern and southern border states of Mexico are the most affected by this invasion of new religions. Some calculations consider that 45 percent of the population of Campeche, in the southeastern part of the country, are no longer Catholics, while in Chiapas and Tabasco, similar 40 percent have changed religion over the last

few years. Researcher Gilberto Jiménez indicates that the most probable figure is around 20 percent.

To get an idea of the speed with which some of these religious groups have grown, it is necessary to indicate that in 1961 the Mormons had twelve thousand faithful, and now have more than 500,000 followers.

Another group with a great number of active members is the Jehovah's Witnesses, with 290,000 followers, a figure which places Mexico in second place in the world, after the United States, in followers of this religion.

A revealing point about the origin and objectives of the hundreds of sects is that 80 percent of them maintain relation with the National Council of Churches in the United States, an organization that has investments throughout the world.

Objectives

An example of the way these sects work is told by Arturo Solís in an investigation conducted in Reynosa, Tamaulipas, a city on the border with the United States (where recently a new sect called the Bahai Faith runs a local radio program conducted by foreigners and whose objective is the conversion of followers from the popular sectors).

Solís interviewed a number of persons from the city, who agreed that this and other religious groups alter the life style patterns and social organization of the places where they exist. They have influenced the population to such an extent that the Center for Technical Studies No. 44 of this city has threatened to expel school students who will not salute the flag and who refuse to sing the national anthem in the weekly ceremony.

Similar incidents are repeated daily in many places, without anyone apparently trying to mediate the conflicts.

The Migratory Studies and Information Center (CIEM) of Reynosa indicates that the sects promote the ideas of the Manifest Destiny originating in the Monroe Doctrine, which is North American-style puritanical Calvinism, as well as evident U.S. expansionist interests.

Journalist.

The denunciations against these religious groups are innumerable due to the increasing influence they exert in local communities. Besides, due to their behavior they are considered "foreigner-like", and they promote an active opposition to family planning campaigns based on artificial means; some sects prohibit blood transfusions or organ transplants and preach their own form of community relations which are often actions that frequently isolate them from the society. On the other hand, they call upon their followers to avoid political participation, which translates into electoral abstentionism, ignorance, and distance from local and national social problems.

For many years, groups defending human rights and the protection of indigenous peoples have made grave accusations against the Summer Institute of Linguistics (ILV), known in the United States as the Wycliffe Bible Translators.

The ILV was established in Mexico in 1934 by invitation of the Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas, as part of a government plan to educate people in the most remote regions of the country.

Among the strongest accusations against the ILV are the following: that instead of providing basic primary education, they teach indigenous peoples English as the national language, induce them to venerate the Stars and Stripes instead of the Mexican flag, and teach them that their president is that of the United States. They are also accused of causing internal divisions and violence in the proselytized communities.

This has propitiated the birth of myths that incite religious persecution and promote intolerance against these groups. Frequently the frictions end in physical aggression or with the jailing of the members of these religious movements.

Pursuing Spiritual Support

Some researchers attribute the growth of the sects to the new followers' need to strengthen their religiousness, to the search for support in the despair caused by incertitude in the future and the economic crisis in general, and the pursuit of spiritual support not found in traditional religious trends.

In a recent work presented in a forum on *Population, Demography and Religion, A Little Explored Relationship*, by Rodolfo Casillas and Alberto Hernández, it is noted that by the year 2,000 there will be states in Mexico where Catholics will be a minority, while emphasizing that this religion has the greatest following and political influence. The authors dare to assure us that the recent Population Census will confirm this tendency.

The risks faced by Catholicism in a region that has always believed in its exclusive influence, were causes of Pope John Paul II's visit during May. He frequently exhorted the Catholics to assume "all the responsibilities in the transmission of the Gospel's message and in the testimony of an alive and well-functioning faith".

On the eve of Catholicism's third millennium of existence and 500 years since the conquest of America, Karol Wojtila made a call to conduct an intense campaign to evangelize Latin America.

But the Catholics face problems such as some of their own traditions, little participation by their followers, increasing loss of prestige through ties to the powerful, and their frequent scorn for the poor.

In the face of this reality, the Catholic Church seeks to innovate its methods. "Evangelization 2000" is a charismatic evangelization movement based in Guadalajara, Jalisco. With a budget surpassing 10 million dollars, they began TV-evangelization, a method of indoctrination used originally by new religions in the United States. Also they produce radio programs transmitted by a broadcasting group of Jalisco. They also assume the task of training Mexican evangelists to preach the gospel using the same methods proven by new religious currents.

In a report published in No. 692 of *Proceso* magazine, the director of Evangelization 2000, Jesús J. Prado Flores, indicates some similarities between the charismatic



The monumental organ of the Cathedral. Photo from Novedades archives.

Rome in Mexico

Juan Luis Campos

For a week, Mexico was the kingdom of the Pope. Christ's messenger made a tireless pilgrimage throughout the country to reestablish the faith. Believers endured penances: travel to distant places, uncomfortable observation points, prolonged waits martyred by the sun and dust, the constant selling of portraits, images, medallions and above all the strict division of the rich and poor, officials - ecclesiastic and civil - and the common people, even during blessings. John Paul II reiterated his slogan: "Mexico, forever faithful".

On the afternoon of May 6th, the Sovereign Pontiff of the Universal Church travelled from the airport to the Basilica of Guadalupe to make official the Mexican

devotion to the Indian Juan Diego by beatifying him. "Juandiegismo" is the earthly part of "Guadalupanismo", the country's *mestizo* Catholic religion. During the same ceremony, he granted the country's ecclesiastic hierarchy the beatification of their own candidates: the Child Martyrs of Tlaxcala, sacrificed by adults in the 16th century for having adopted the religion of the Spanish conquerors. The Basilica, nevertheless, was far from the zeal shown for the Virgin of Guadalupe on December 12: the fervor of the religious service was limited by strict vigilance by the police.

The encounter between Carlos Salinas de Gortari and Karol Wojtila was not only a meeting between two heads of State, but

also of two reformers dedicated to the modernization of their gospels. The pastoral work of the representative of Christ is eminently political. Likewise, the policies undertaken by the president of the republic seek to be missionary, to redeem the Mexicans who live in extreme poverty. Chalco Valley symbolizes the encounter between both institutions.

In Chalco, east of Mexico City, in 1988 the then presidential candidate Salinas de Gortari did not have the sympathy of the population. In order to obtain it, at the very beginning of his administration he gave Chalco's inhabitants electric light and other services. Salinas himself spent the night there to verify that his orders had been



Painting of a 16th century baptism.

obeyed. The two million people who have moved to Chalco from all different parts of the country seeking to be a little less poor, also received the blessing of the sovereign of the Vatican.

Nevertheless, that morning of the 7th of May, the marginalized inhabitants of Chalco were marginalized once again. They attended Mass behind a fence which protected the more famous believers: Columbus' Knights, members of the Christian Family Movement, the boys' choir from the Catholic schools, nuns of different orders, distinguished families and the governor of the state of Mexico. John Paul II said: "I feel compassion for the multitude, because they are abused and humiliated like sheep without a pastor."

Wojtila's message linked the various Mexican cities he visited. Later that same day, in the port of Veracruz, which he called the "port of evangelization", he declared that the discovery, the conquest and the evangelization of America were brilliant, although not exempt from shadows. The next day he travelled to San Juan de los Lagos - that bastion of Catholics who, to the shout of "Long Live Christ the King!", fought the government of Plutarco Elías Calles in the Cristera War at the end of the 1920's - where he addressed the young people, after greeting the "land of martyrs", directing them to preach "the construction of a new heaven and a new earth" that would put an end to the injustices of the modern world. Previously, in the city of Aguascalientes, he had said that the "question of education, which is everyone's responsibility, is of growing concern for public opinion and awakens a renewed interest in the diverse areas of political responsibility". He insisted to the Catholic teachers: "Open the world of teaching to Christ!" The Church perseveres in its efforts to reeducate the Mexican people.

In the midst of the euphoria elicited by the Pope - fomented by the never ending messages in the mass media - President Salinas sent a proposal of Constitutional reform to the Chamber of Deputies that would put up for sale the banks that had been nationalized eight years ago.

On Wednesday May 9th entrepreneurs met with the Bishop of Rome in the city of Durango, where he stated that "the excessive monopolization of goods by a few

deprives the majority, and a type of wealth is formed that produces poverty". He also said that "an efficient, competitive and just firm is the best instrument that man has created to eradicate the extreme poverty of the people". It was a capital week for businessmen.

The next day, in the city of Chihuahua, he recapitulated on his "family doctrine", a "community of life and love". Later, in Monterrey, he told workers - he who was a worker in his youth - that the "Gospel is also the Gospel of work"; "Christianity cannot forget that the noble struggle for justice should in no way be confused with the program which 'sees in the class struggle the only way to eliminate injustices'. And he asked for heavenly grace for all Mexican workers.

Southern Mexico was his next stop. On May 11 he was in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, where he addressed the Indians and Central American refugees, commiserating with the harshness of their existence and the aggressions their culture suffers. The bishop of San Cristobal de las Casas had to write a letter to defend himself from the attacks of the region's political bosses, pointing out that a political clergy does not exist, as they had accused, but a Church which serves the poor. John Paul II then travelled to Villahermosa, Tabasco, a state in which atheism was the official religion during the twenties (now Protestant groups have great influence), where he spoke to his lost sheep saying: "Return without fear. Return to the breast of the church, your mother, who awaits you with open arms".

The city of Zacatecas received him on Saturday the 12th, where he gave his message to peasants, miners and immigrants: "A Christian must see work through faithful eyes... you must understand that your regular work, in the field, in the mine, wherever you labor, leads you to the fullness of your existence when know how to make it a offering pleasing to God."

Wojtila ended his mission of evangelism in Mexico City, by blessing the new building of the Mexican Episcopate Conference, encharging the bishops to continue the task he had begun. Late at night he met with a select group of intellectuals, many of whom clapped and shouted at the tops of their voices.

The office of the Pope makes Wojtila a very influential man: as Christ's vicar his word is spiritual, as an institutional man he gives orders. His supranational state makes his word a commandment for the simple believer as well as for the political institution where his speech is made. Wojtila could therefore dialogue with the Mexican State which still does not recognize the Vatican as it does other nation states.

For its part, the Mexican presidential institution is very flexible. President Salinas cannot separate himself from the anticlericalism which characterizes the State, but he can, personally, establish links with the representative of a State which today plays a very important role, especially in Eastern Europe. Likewise, he will make good use of the inertia of the Mexican Catholic majority for his political ends. In any case, the encounter between these two statesmen is only the first step towards putting into practice their respective gospels.

Missale romanum ordinatum.



Missale Romanum
nuper adoptatum comodū

quozūcūq; sacerdotū summa diligentia bñfñ
ctū: atq; ita ex nouo ordine bñfñ et appo
sitū introitib; gradualib; offertoriis cō
munib; oīs missē sint in suis locis
integre. In quonā adluncq; sunt
muleq; missē uopg. et alia plurima
supaddita, q; in missalib; bac
cen^o ipse bñfñ bñfñ.
an^o 1561

Catholic renewal and the North American sects: including an emphasis on the Pentecost and in the charisma of the Holy Spirit, the use of unknown tongues, and the religious miracle cures such as the laying on of hands. The fervor and methodology are similar to gospel dissemination.

"To preach in public and to give testimony of faith, the practice of some sects, is something that the Catholic Church should emulate. What we lack is a practical methodology on how to do things, how to preach the gospel", Prado says.

Another project very linked to Evangelization 2000 but based in the United States is Light 2000, which has established direct contact with the Summer Institute of Linguistics so that they may be taught the best means to conduct proselytizing campaigns in Latin America. They use the same methods that they have criticized and have used as an argument to expel others from Mexico.

The Government's Position

In view of this complex phenomenon of the advance of new religions and the stagnation or regression of the traditional ones, the Mexican government has only acted as a spectator.

The declarations of Jorge Moreno Collado, government director of the Government Ministry in the newspaper *unomásuno* on March 26 of this year were the following: "Paradoxically, we cannot make them appear evil even though some of them infringe on certain norms of convenience - such as Jehovah's Witnesses; the sects or religious movements can also aid in a more dynamic education of the people, to make them less conformist...It is preferable to have an excess of freedom in beliefs than any authoritarian determination. The conflicts can be resolved by the sensible application of the law...It is important to gain ground against ignorance, but by no means does the government assume a persecution posture, because that would be a return to barbarism, a situation we are far from accepting."

Everything makes us suppose that Mexico will continue to be a most fertile country for the development of new religious trends that continue to gain ground at the cost of the traditional religions.

Certainly not even the pressure recently applied by the Catholic Church to modify the Constitution on its behalf, with the intent to recover the terms of power, will impede its regression. It is probable that by the 2000th birthday of the Catholic Church, the prediction that it will be a minority will be fulfilled, at least in Mexico. ■

☪
☪

*Josefina Zoraida
Vázquez y Lorenzo
Meyer*

**MÉXICO FRENTE
A ESTADOS UNIDOS**
(Un ensayo histórico,
1776-1988)

Este ensayo pretende "ex-
plorar", desde la perspec-
tiva actual, el espacio his-
tórico en el que ha surgido
y se ha desa-rrrollado la
compleja y difícil trama de
la relación entre México y
los Estados Unidos.


●

Michael P. Costeloe
**LA RESPUESTA A LA
INDEPENDENCIA**
(La España imperial y las
revoluciones hispanoame-
ricanas, 1810-1840)

☪

Michael P. Costeloe
*La respuesta a
la Independencia*
La España imperial y las revoluciones
hispanoamericanas, 1810-1840

☪



Las revoluciones en la
América española y la rea-
cción del español penin-
sular común ante el desmo-
ronamiento del Imperio.

☪
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THE JEWISH-CHRISTIAN SEARCH FOR UNDERSTANDING

Sergio Nudelstejer

To try to penetrate the theme of this paper is not an easy task since it requires a good deal of space. Thus, we will try and point out the most important aspects of the topic, especially in light of the present interest in this subject.

On June 21, 1985, the Vatican published its third official modern document concerning the Jews and Judaism. Although it contained various positive points, the tone disillusioned the Jewish circles that had been participating in the Catholic-Jewish dialogue. Even with more than two decades of dialogue, Judaism, the Jews and Israel are defined not in terms of a Jewish concept but only according to Christian categories.

The first document was the famous declaration made public at the close of the Second Vatican Council in 1965. The event constituted an historic shift in viewpoint inspired by John XXIII and his awareness of the contribution of Christian teachings in the creation of an atmosphere that made the Holocaust possible. That document not only revoked the traditional teachings that considered Jews of all different periods guilty of the crime of deicide, but also started a completely new attitude towards the Jews. It strongly condemned antisemitism and opened the way to understanding between the two religions.

Ten years later the Vatican established *Guides* to put the declaration into effect which were also another step forward. Christians were asked to acquire a better understanding of the religious traditions of their "Jewish brothers and sisters". The *Guides* asked that dialogue replace the historical monologue, thus implying respect for the faith and religious convictions of each. They also established recommendations for a liturgical revision that would eliminate the offensive references, emphasize the Old Testament and underline the common elements of the two religions. These *Guides* also made similar proposals on teaching and education and favored joint action in social affairs.

Antisemitism is being fought against strongly by the (Catholic) hierarchy

The *Guides* generated their own momentum and there was considerable progress made in Judeo-Christian relations.

The document to which we are referring, entitled *Notes about the Correct Way of Presenting the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechism in the Roman Catholic Church*, was in the making for over two years and was long awaited.

During the last twenty-five years the Vatican has taken various positive steps in the framework of Judeo-Catholic relations. One of these was the abandonment of missionary activity by the Church. The virtual disappearance overnight of Catholic missions that for centuries had tried to convert Jews by persuasion or force, was a very notable event. Another step has been the strong position adopted against manifestations of antisemitism.

Inevitably, traditional attitudes are so deeply rooted that they may not be totally erased in a couple of years. All manifestation of antisemitism, however, is being strongly fought against by the hierarchy, which through its monolithic and authoritarian structure has very effectively made known its displeasure. The clear and unmistakable condemnation of all forms of antisemitism and discrimination comes at an opportune moment such as the present, when there is a rebirth of antisemitism in different places and in very different forms from the traditional types that, based on selections of a political nature, try to find justification of antisemitism in general.

Another positive step has been the development of inter-religious activities at a grass-roots level with Jewish and Catholic laity and clergy of different countries working together to attain a mutual understanding.

Writer and journalist. Researcher on Jewish-Christian Relations. President of the Latin American Committee for Human Rights.

On its highest level, the Judeo-Christian dialogue has developed perceptions that permit mutual respect by recognizing the validity of the other faith

Analysis of the 1985 Document

The new document produced the main disillusionment in the field of theology, although there are gains with respect to certain themes: it underlines the Jewish roots of Christianity and the Jewishness of Jesus and it speaks against the traditional Christian derogatory view of the Pharisees. It gives a lot of attention to the Old Testament and sees it as something good... when it is read by the light of Christian interpretation. It underlines the fact that the Jews continue to be the chosen people, and not a punished people. At the same time it renders tribute to the spiritual fertility in the rabbinical period in the Middle Ages and in modern times, thus negating the traditional Christian vision of Jews and Judaism as fossils.

The document however, adopts its most conservative and reactionary position in regard to the most basic problem. And it is here that the Jews lose their basic identity. This attitude comes from the old Christian teaching that the pact of God with the Jewish people was replaced by His pact with those who accepted Jesus. Cristian theologians have referred to the "displacement" of Jews and the "discontinuance of the divine agreement". The logical implication in accepting this belief is that the Jews were rejected and relegated to an inferior status.

On its highest level, the Judeo-Christian dialogue has developed perceptions that permit mutual respect by recognizing the validity of the other faith without compromising one's own beliefs. The pioneers of the parallel evolution were the Jewish intellectuals Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber. Since the Second World War, this way of thinking has been adopted by certain liberal Christian thinkers. This leaves the possibility open for an eventual convergence of the two religious traditions to be attained through some mysterious way in the moment that God chooses.

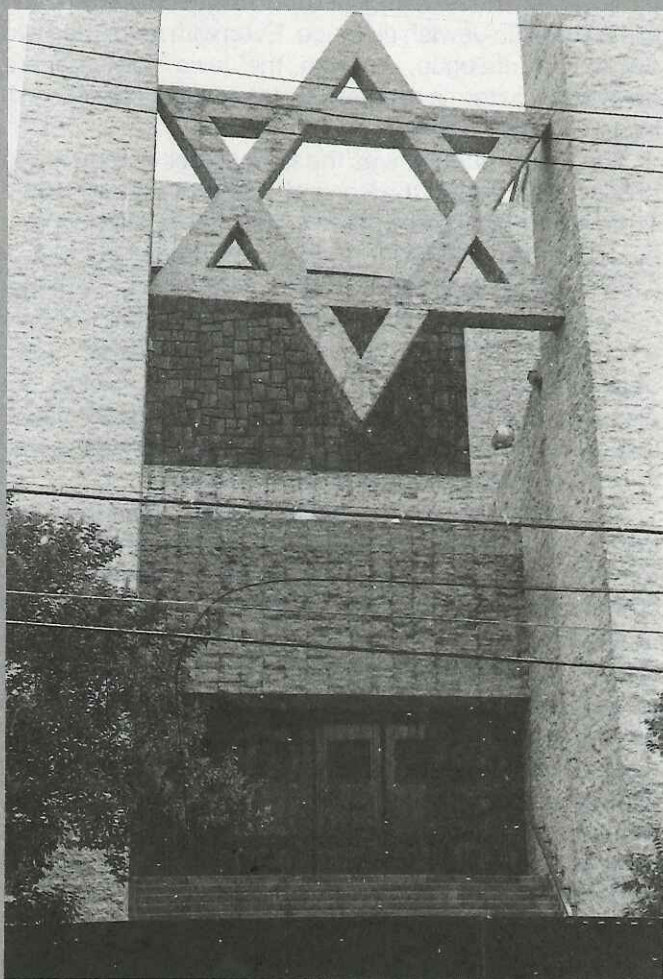
It was thought that Pope John Paul II had had a glimpse of such a way of thinking in 1982 when he spoke to Catholic experts of Judaism and said: "We may go on different paths which finally come together and with the help of the Lord, who never stopped loving His people; we may reach a true fellowship in the reconciliation, in the respect and the complete fulfillment of God's plan in history."

The 1985 document, however, repudiates all type of thinking in this direction. "Jesus declared (it states) that there will be one flock and one shepherd. Thus, the Church and Judaism cannot be seen as two parallel ways of salvation. The Church must be the witness of Christ as

the Redeemer of all and at the same time maintain a strict respect for religious freedom" (implying that the recognition of the legitimacy of Judaism only lies in the principle of religious freedom). With the admirable goal of uprooting antisemitism, it was suggested that Catholics be taught about the only ties that unite the Church with the Jews "who were chosen by God to prepare the way of Christ". If this is the only basis of their connection and if Jews are excluded from salvation unless they accept Christ, then they continue with an inferior status and again we are back to zero.

Relations with Israel

The references to the State of Israel are also disappointing, though this is to be expected. In the previous documents the existence of the State of Israel is completely ignored. The negative of the Holy See to formally recognize or establish diplomatic relations with Israel has been a very important obstacle in the dialogue with the Vatican. On its part, the Vatican has shown what it considers to be a *de facto* recognition expressed, for example, in the visits of Israeli ministers to the Pope. The Vatican holds that the problem is not theological but political, and that official recognition has not been given due to such factors as the



The Star of David in a synagogue in Mexico City. Photo by Gerardo Hellion.

The Vatican has shown what it considers to be a *de facto* recognition, in the visits of Israeli ministers to the Pope

absence of recognized borders, the situation of Palestine refugees as well as that of the West Bank and Jerusalem. We have to recognize, of course, the political pressures on the Vatican, pressures that also come from churches in Arab countries. The theological aspect that the Vatican says it is not influenced by (but some suspect that it is), is the traditional opinion that the Jews were excluded from their land because they rejected Jesus and they cannot return to it until they accept Christ.

The new document refers to the Jews of the Diaspora saying that "they preserve the remembrance of the lands of their ancestors in the center of their hope". Christians are invited to understand this religious attachment that has its roots in biblical tradition, but they are not asked to realize any religious interpretation about this relation. The existence of the State of Israel and its political options, including the concept that Jerusalem should be its capital, should be seen not from a perspective that is religious in itself, but in reference to the principle of international law.

Though this declaration has the positive aspect of formally recognizing the Jewish attachment for the Holy Land, it does not consider that this has any religious

validity for Christians (this area is nebulous and one might ask how this will be interpreted by Catholic educators who look for clear guidelines). In 1975, a short while after the publication of the *Guides*, the priest, Pierre de Contenson, secretary of the Vatican Committee of Liaison with the Jews, and one of the most outspoken advocates of understanding between Jews and Catholics stated: "The Jews cannot wait for us to adopt their theology concerning their divine right to return to the Promised Land".

Here the basic theological question of the repeal of the old agreement is implicit. According to Contenson's thinking, which continues in the document, the promise that God made to the Jews of giving them the Promised Land has no religious significance for Christians. All was cancelled by the new agreement. No reference is made to the right of Israel to exist. From a practical point of view and given the fact that the State of Israel should be seen with reference to international law, one might ask the following: Why doesn't the Vatican give *de jure* recognition to a nation that received international legitimation by a resolution of the United Nations and that has been recognized by more than one hundred countries?

Pope John Paul II asked that a joint testimony of Jews and Christians be presented to the world as a "sacred duty" in the name of the One God



A future Rabbi, on his way to the Synagogue. Photo by Gerardo Hellion.

FEATURES

Catholic Viewpoint on the Persecution of Jews

The reference in the passage that concerns the Holocaust is also unfortunate: "Catechism (systematic instruction) should help towards understanding the significance that the extermination perpetrated during 1939-1945 has for the Jews, as well as its consequences." It would have been much better if the document had talked in the language of its first signer, Cardinal Willebrands, President of the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, who stated in London in March, 1985: "The Jewish sensibility should be respected and understood... and I will mention two cases: the recent history of Jewish sufferings during the Nazi persecution and their preoccupation for the Land of Israel. This preoccupation is political and secular, but for many it is also religious. By not commenting about that dimension we are exercising Christian charity toward a brother with whom we are searching for reconciliation over very real offenses. Carrying the remembrance of millions of deaths is a terrible weight; having a place under the sun to live in peace and security, with due respect for the rights of others, is a form of hope."

The existence of the State of Israel should be considered in reference to the principles of international law

For his part, Pope John Paul II, who experienced Nazi persecution and was the recent victim of blind terrorism, has done more than any other Christian in making explicit what was implicit in the declaration of the council. In his historical declaration directed to Jewish leaders in Germany on November 17, 1980, the Pope referred to the Jews as "the people of the ancient agreement that God never withdrew" and as "the present day people of the agreement established with Moses". He asked that a joint testimony of Jews and Christians be presented to the world as a "sacred duty" in the name of the One God. He then added: "If Christians consider themselves brothers and sisters, and believe that they should teach one another, then so much more so should this be present when one finds him or herself with the Jewish people." The Pope finished with a prayer of Shalom (peace) for Israel, "the land that the Jews view with special reverence".

It was the hope that had been awakened by words such as these that was frustrated by the recent Vatican document. Even though there are attempts to find acceptable ways to stimulate understanding, the document may have made dialogue more difficult. Certainly Jews and Catholics can continue to look for common ground in such fields as social action, the struggle for religious freedom and by fighting against all forms of prejudice and persecution. The document as it is written, however, con-



Modern Jewish Architecture. Photo by Gerardo Hellion.

stitutes a contribution to conservatism that strengthens the basic theological barriers. Although the Jews recognize that the declaration was directed to guide internal Catholic action and although they never thought that their friends in dialogue would renounce to their basic beliefs, they did have the hope that the new tendencies would signify that these friends in dialogue would be dissuaded from their traditional supposed superiority and triumphal thinking. The new document places this supposition in doubt.

But although the dialogue has been successful in some areas it is still in its infancy and is very fragile. Twenty-five years of dialogue cannot entirely erase two millenniums of distrust and "Christian teachings of contempt" towards the Jews.

The present situation of recuperation of human dignity finds Judaism open to this ideal since we live in particularly dramatic times where new things are maturing and we have manifestations of serious material and spiritual crises. Undeniably this is a time in which men and women, whatever their faith be, feel the need to come together and speak of their common destiny. ■

Legal Status of Church and Clergy in Mexico

Juan Luis Campos

When President Benito Juárez entered Mexico City on July 15, 1867, after defeating Emperor Maximilian of Hapsburg in a tenacious five-year war, he declared that the triumph of the Republic was the second consummation of national independence. During almost half a century two broad groups--the liberals and the conservatives--dedicated themselves to determining the country's plans to be a nation. Throughout this struggle they subscribed, with arms, plans, decrees and constitutions that attest to the enormous difficulties encountered in forging the identity of the nation.

That triumph entailed the definitive implantation of the 1857 Constitution and of the Laws of Reform that the liberals passed to modernize the country and to incorporate it once and for all into the world. In the decree of July 12, 1859, Juárez considered the Church an enemy of the nation, which failed to respect civil authority and utilized its wealth to support the conservatives. Thus, he decreed that Church property become part of the patrimony of the nation. In addition, a separation between Church and State was established. The triumph over the party of the Archduke of Austria endowed Mexicans with the Republican nationality, alien to the government of any other State.

With freedom of cults, religious sentiments could develop in democracy. Guadalupeanism--the Mexican *mestizo* religion--which had already played a role in the Independence movement, resurged at the beginning of this century with the troops that defined the social character of the Mexican Revolution. At the same time, the Catholic hierarchy, always blessing the acts of the powerful, encountered the ill-will of revolutionaries who were called to make up jurisprudence from the ideals the nation had conquered in the battlefields.

The Constitutionalists stood out for their anti-clericalism. This stance arose from their modern conception of the State and also because the Church formed the National Catholic Party during the regimen of Francisco I. Madero, who had the support of twenty legislators of this party in the 26th Legislature. The Constitutionalists unleashed a harsh anti-Madero campaign that ended in the coup d'état of Victoriano Huerta in 1913 and the murder of Madero. The revolutionaries imposed rigorous sanctions in their territory on priests, especially if they were foreigners, and they supplied themselves with riches ex-

tracted from convents, churches and devout individuals.

The debates of the Constituent Congress of Querétaro were heated when the question of religion arose. Jacobin and Moderate legislators coincided that the Church was the enemy of sovereignty and of Mexico's progress. They considered it to be a foreign body, loyal to the Vatican, that exercised its power through education and confession. The concern of these legislators was then to exclude the clergy from education, since from their point of view it was a matter of teaching the truth and not superstition; in addition, in this way they would not politically influence the tender minds of infants. Confession had to be suppressed because it was the vehicle by which all types of transactions were made with inheritances, and besides it was used for avaricious ends. In sum, they feared that if they did not defeat the clergy, they were endangering the revolution and ultimately the nation.

Among legislators, noteworthy was the position of Félix Palavicini, who argued that weakening the Catholic Church would open the way for U.S. Protestant missionaries, after which the U.S. empire would not find it difficult to subjugate Mexico. Other legislators feared Jacobinism as much as the clergy, and they proposed the free competition of ideas. Whatever the case, anticlerical opinions, especially those of legislator Francisco J. Múgica, reigned in discussions on various articles. An important historical, judicial study *La lucha entre el poder civil y el clero* (The Struggle between Civil Power and the Clergy) (1934), was written by Emilio Portes Gil, who had been interim president of Mexico five years earlier following the assassination of president elect Alvaro Obregón, who was shot by a Catholic wielding a pistol. Portes Gil, Attorney General of the Republic at the time of Obregón's death, wrote:

It was necessary to reduce them to simple ministers of the cult and not into autonomous managers of it and without responsibility for the interests that they handle, given that temples, just as the buildings that serve for the administration of cult, were declared property of the nation itself. That was nothing more than a consequence of the fact that religious associations were declared to be without legal status and without the capacity to own real estate...



But perhaps the most serious matter was that priests were kept formally at the fringes of politics. They were also disqualified from voting. Article 129 of the Constitution, which finally became 130, established: "That the Law does not recognize any religious group as a personality with legal status. That the ministers of cult may never criticize the fundamental laws of the country, of authorities in particular, or of the government in general, in public or private reunions constituting meetings, nor in acts of worship or religious propagation; they will not have an active vote, nor the right to affiliate themselves with political ends."

Exiled in the U.S., the Mexican episcopate opposed this Constitution. Nevertheless, it was not until 1926, when such dispositions became effective, that the War of Believers in Christ ("Guerra Cristera") (1926-1929) broke out. The Catholic hierarchy united with the farmers of central Mexico, to the cry of "Long Live Christ the King!", and the country was again bathed in bloodshed. In these same years, the governor of Tabasco, one of the southeastern states, Tomás Garrido Canabal, established an atheist regime in which temples were desecrated and rationalist schools were organized. The struggle between the Church and civil authority has been a constant one; nevertheless, for long periods they have flattered each other and have practised political alliances. Constitutional norms have probably not erased the influences that they aspired to eliminate from the clergy, but they circumscribed the Church to the dictates of the State.



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DISEÑO: GILBERTO VAZQUEZ

Sara Alatorre

Salinas' Modernization Extends to the Church



The second visit of Pope John Paul II to Mexico brought to light an old discussion on a theme which traditionally has caused polemics in Mexican politics: the relations between State and Church, formally non-existent since President Benito Juárez broke the diplomatic relationship in 1859.

Carol Wojtila encountered an economically polarized Mexico which is facing rocky social roads - as he expressed himself in many speeches - and a nation which continues to be largely Catholic. But he also found a government determined to apply a modernization policy without which perhaps the operating changes in the State's relations with the Church could not be explained.

The Pope's visit cannot be analyzed more than in terms of the gains for himself, as representative of the Vatican, and for the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the Mexican government. There is an important absence in this trilogy: the majority of the Mexican nation, in whose name, paradoxically, all these meetings and agreements are made. In these terms, the question of the State and Church is addressed by Miguel Concha, university professor in the Department of Political Science of the UNAM, and by Miguel Basáñez, director of the Center for Public Opinion Studies, interviewed for *Voices* by Sara Alatorre.

INTERVIEW WITH MIGUEL CONCHA

What is your opinion about what is occurring between the State and the Church?

It is not the first time during the second half of this century, with different goals and even with contradictions, that this rapprochement is sought between some government sectors and the upper part of the hierarchy of the ecclesiastic community, civil society and even some political organisms. The candidates for president of the Institutional Revolutionary Party in 1970, 1976, and 1982, had the initiative to seek out, through their agents, the bishops of the dioceses where their campaigns were taking place in order to dialogue with them. On June 9, 1970, a sector of the Cuernavaca church gave to the ex-President Luis Echeverría Álvarez, the so-called Anenecuilco Paper, signed by the bishop Sergio Méndez Arceo, his Presbyterial Board and the secular apostolic organizations of the diocese. In this paper, the theme of State and Church relations was directly treated with a theological and renovated pastoral tone and a ponderous and objective historical judgement, and it was deemed convenient to openly and maturely elucidate



these issues in order to benefit the nation. To me, it does not seem either just or correct that in these recent times that paper is not duly considered. The document characterizes the legal situation of the Church as an "exceptional regime", and, without denying the common responsibility of Church action, judges the public relations between both institutions as "abusive-tolerant".

Is this rapprochement sponsored also by Christians who participate in popular movements?

Some groups of Christians tied to popular movements or leftist parties have thought it convenient to debate this problem openly and above all analyze it objectively from different perspectives, clearly distinguishing what would be a legal survey of the civil rights of religious ministers and the very status of religious institutions, of the recognition of the Vatican as the Holy See and therefore with jurisdiction within the Catholic Church in Mexico on the one hand, and on the other, the issue of State relations and the maintenance of diplomatic relations with the Vatican. In practice, the political and ecclesiastical implications of establishing these relations are generally feared in the country.

Does this imply that the principle of separation of State and Church is placed in doubt?

None of the political forces that until now have participated in the debate have placed in doubt the principle of the separation of the State and the Church and the lay character of the former, which should be absolutely observed not only in theory but above all, in practice, in order to avoid known opportunistic acts, should they be the Church over the State or vice versa. It is important to remember that since 1979, year of the first visit by Pope John Paul II to Mexico, a shift in the treatment of this theme has been observed, which many explain as due to the different political and ecclesiastical contexts of this decade, which in itself necessarily imposes a greater care in analysis.

Have Mexican bishops been influenced by the Vatican in order to sponsor the rapprochement with the State?

Previously it was the Mexican bishops who seemed to take the initiative in this affair, without counting on at least the veiled support of the Apostolic Delegation, which represents the authority of the Pope in the heart of the Catholic church in Mexico. Today it is well-known that Monseigneur Jeronimo Prigione, apostolic delegate since 1979, strongly sponsors legal changes in this respect.

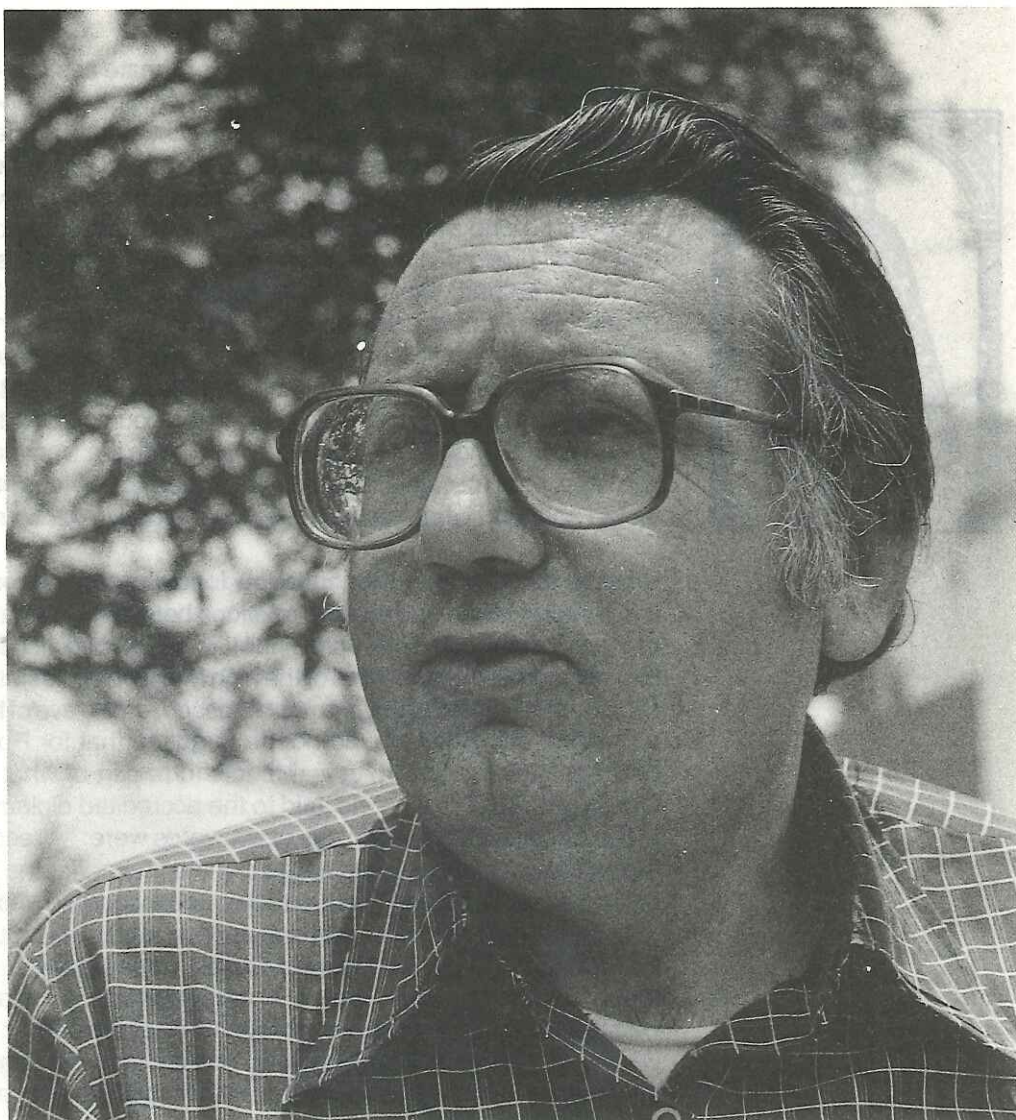
Is this rapprochement related to the economic and political situation presently facing the country?

As I have said, since 1979, and particularly since 1982, the ecclesiastic, international and national political contexts are very different. Cardinal Ernesto Corripio expressed during the XXX assembly of the Mexican Episcopal Conference in November 1982, that "the situation in the country looks greatly conflictive, challenging and problematic". Today we can see the change in the developmental model implemented by the Salinas government and the great social cost which this has meant for the majority sectors of the country in terms of unemployment, underemployment, scarcity, loss of the workers' buying power, the reduction and loss of quality in social services, etcetera.

But is this really a worry of the Mexican bishops?

It does not require great astuteness to discover a search for negotiation and mutual support between State and Church that, nevertheless, leaves the great majority of the Mexican nation out of their considerations. In his first statement after becoming President of the Mexican Episcopal Conference, the archbishop of Xalapa, Monseigneur Sergio Obeso Rivera referred to this: "The Church will use all its moral power to change the situation in Mexico", and concretely, "to seek to reform the Constitution if it is necessary in order to obtain the legal status of the Church", and specifically that in the Church-State relations "there has been mutual aggression and poor treatment, even though it is not possible to say that the representatives on both sides have been totally closed-minded".





Miguel Concha. Photo by Alejandra Novoa.

Nevertheless, even though it is publicly supposed with relative frequency that the Apostolic Delegate and important bishops discreetly meet with federal authorities of equal importance of the previous administration, particularly in important moments such as the state elections, the government does not openly and officially react to the demands of the hierarchy.

For this reason many analysts have strongly called attention to the official presence of the Apostolic Delegate, of the president of the Mexican Episcopal Conference and other high dignitaries of the Catholic church in Mexico, at the inauguration of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari on December 1, 1988. This was questioned by important citizens' groups, and above all the new President's explicit mention of the Church in the context of "modernization" and "agreement between it and the actual administration".

Then, what is the profit derived by both institutions in this rapprochement?

Besides considering questions of principle, which perhaps should be treated objectively in a different way and in another climate, for some it is necessary to take into account the possible motivations of both sides, that in the case of the government could be to answer, for example, the demands for a recognized space formulated by the hierarchy. On the other hand, Church intervention in electoral processes at the regional level, that in many instances coincided with the positions of some sector of the opposition, implied greater difficulties for the government in negotiating the situation. Also, the fact that the traditional corporate apparatus of the system was losing relevance and efficiency, led



the governing power group to try and legitimate itself by calling together and activating social subjects who until now were not participants in the corporate pact, as would be the case of the high ecclesiastical hierarchy and of some business sectors, that would look favorably on such participation. We can observe here an attempt to improve the image of the government through actions that would have ample popular support and to count on one more ally in the struggle for social control, in spite of the Jacobinism that is still present in some official sectors and some leftist organizations.

In counterpart, the Church hierarchy, conscious of the weakness of the present government, would seek on one hand to respond to the actual Vatican pressure to recover larger spaces of social influence and capacity to dialogue with governments; and on the other hand, to respond with greater advantage to the secularization processes evident particularly in the large cities of the country, and that it continues to consider the greatest challenge of its pastoral action. With it a "reconciliation with history" would be possible, as an ecclesiastical scholar of these questions has considered, and the Church would abandon what has been deemed "a dark legal corner".

What is the status of this question following the second visit of the Pope?

It is a secret for no one that the relations between Church and State in Mexico were one of the principal worries of John Paul II in his second visit to our country, even though he himself, numerous speakers of the high Mexican ecclesiastical hierarchy and even some representatives of the government stressed, on the eve of his visit, that this was eminently a pastoral act. But it should not be forgotten that for Pope John Paul II, the relations between states and with governments form part of what he calls his pastoral mission. One proof of this is what he said to the accredited diplomatic body in Mexico on May 8 in the Apostolic Delegation; his exact words were: "A recent example of the holy See to this vocation of service and request of the church for the spiritual and social well-being of the people has been given with this noble country, Mexico".

"I have received with great satisfaction the significant and important gesture of the President of the United Mexican States, to designate a personal and permanent correspondent to the Holy See, to which praiseworthy initiative the Holy See has replied with the designation of its own personal correspondent. It is the request for the supreme values of peace, solidarity among nations and the dignity of human beings, which induces the Holy See to be present also in the field of international relations where they constantly take form."

Thus it would be disorienting to consider the relations between the Pope and the governments of the world as a purely politically affair that has no relation with the pastoral mission. The concept held by Pope John Paul II is exactly the opposite of this. Another proof of this can be found in the speech he gave to the bishops of Mexico on May 12 in which, while speaking of the value crisis today affecting institutions such as the family or other determinant sectors of the population such as youth, he said that Mexico offers motives of well-founded hope for a fruitful and cordial understanding with the civil authorities, with a view to the straight development of social life and the continuance of the common good for all Mexicans. For this reason the Pope was seen to be profoundly pleased at the presence of President Salinas at the airport to welcome him, at the more than one hour long interview they had in the official residence of Los Pinos, and on different occasions during his visit he spoke with particular satisfaction of this new situation. What then has remained in Mexico following the Papal visit, has been the naming of the special presidential representative to Pope John Paul II, Agustín Téllez Cruces, and the official designation of the apostolic delegate as the Pope's personal representative to President Salinas. If this is to progress further, we shall see it as the situation develops.

And what about the Mexican people in all of this?

Well, that is the big question: the role that the majority of Mexicans are to play in all these negotiations, in all these agreements, in all these meetings, dialogues, discussions, and above all when these are proposed in the context of modernization and democratization of the society. For this reason, I myself began to favor several months ago an open, participative, plural, non-opportunistic proposal neither in favor of the church toward the State or vice versa, through some instance that could be a multidisciplinary and plural



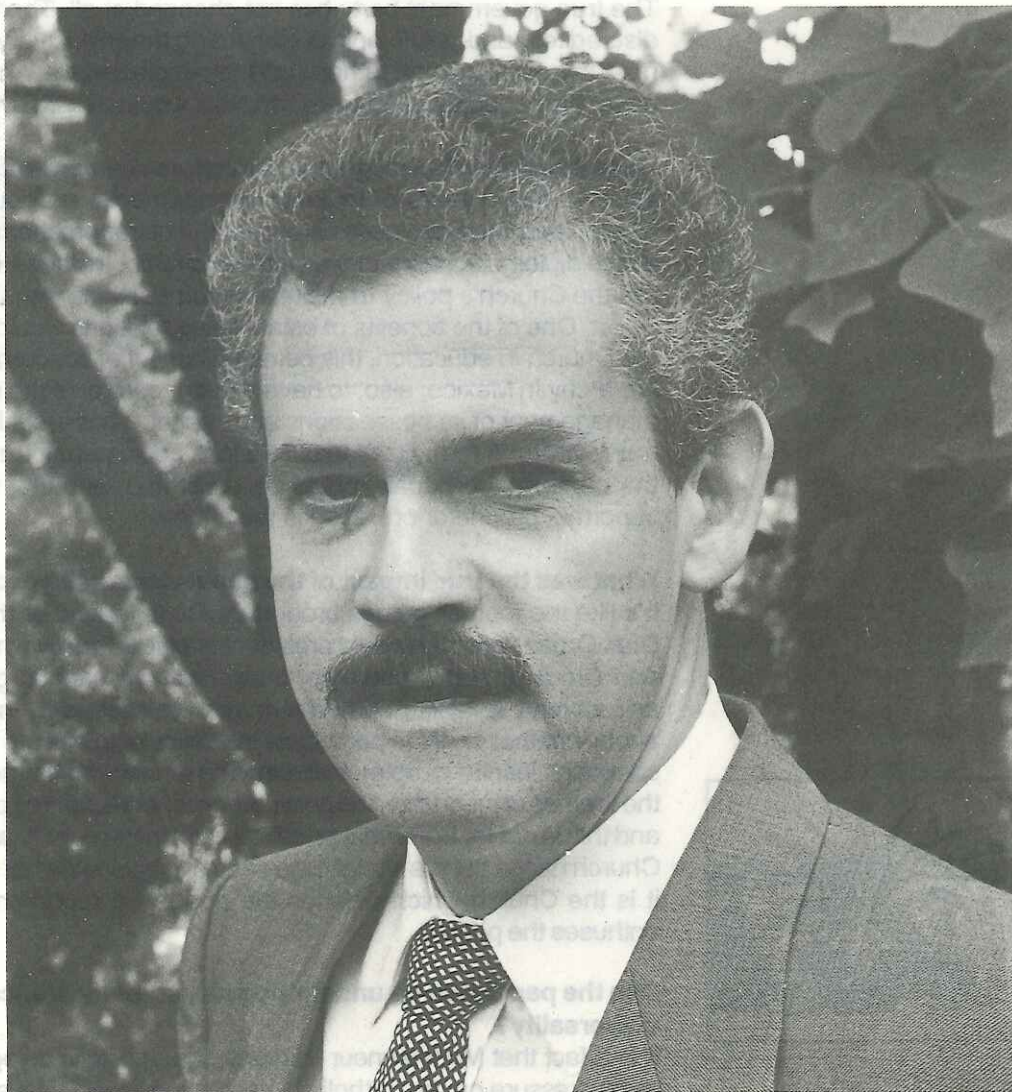
commission recognized by both institutions, that in an open way and following the sentiment of the different sectors of the population, would propose in a new climate the solution to this problem, analyzing its historical, philosophical, sociological, political, ethical and legal aspects.

That neither the government nor the high ecclesiastical hierarchy should assume that they automatically represent the people of Mexico, who have not yet been duly considered and consulted in regard to this.

INTERVIEW WITH MIGUEL BASAÑEZ

What would the Mexican government gain with a rapprochement between the Church and the State?

For the government, the rapprochement with the Church forms part of a more general framework. The government is modifying the system of things that used to exist: in particular in the economy, in its relations with the United States, and its power relations with other parties. These changes also modify the bases of support of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Already the governing party's three main support organizations, the unions (CTM), peasants (CNC) and the group called "popular" (CNOP), do not work, and so the government has to seek to reconstitute its alliances. In this search for new allies, the middle class and the Church are very important. The PRI has gradually



Miguel Basáñez. Photo by Gerardo Hellion.



been losing its ability to attract members, and it is polarizing the poorest strata towards the left and the middle sectors to the right.

In this context, a project is forming and tending to the evolution of the PRI towards the formation of new middle-of-the road parties, that represent what it has been during all its history, in other words, a coalition of forces that have been able to articulate comfortably within the party, something which gets harder and harder. So, I believe that the country is ripe to give birth to two very similar parties, one slightly leaning toward the promotion of the economy and the other to social necessities. In this scheme, if the PRI gives birth to these two parties, the one which will attract the middle classes needs the support of the Church. Thus, if the ruling group, which really has the hegemony within the PRI, achieves a peaceful transition, it will be a great success because it will enable some members of the PRI, under another name, to attract even a large part of the National Action Party (PAN), of the strong businessmen, of the middle classes and the Church; and, another part of the PRI, along with the Authentic Mexican Revolutionary Party (PARM), the Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) and the unions, will form the other party, in an overall scheme of social democracy, or social democracy of parties, whose differences of hue will be almost imperceptible. Thus, the visit of the Pope and the rapprochement with the Church become extremely fundamental to the formation of this new party which will attract the middle classes, which are very important for the present administration.

But if the public opinion polls indicate that the people trust the Church more than they trust the government...?

The true government party has not changed at all. The PRI becomes more and more discredited, and public opinion regarding the PRI is very negative, even though this is not a correct image but rather what the people believe. And to change this image it would have to be changed effectively, and this would be achieved with the party system.

What does the Church gain in the rapprochement with the State?

After so many years of informal arrangements, no doubt the relationships between Church and State are quite established. The rapprochement is the proposition of a new active diplomatic policy of the Catholic church. In itself it is a proposition, in as much as it is the Church's policy to maintain good relations with the states. Mexico is added to its list. One of the benefits of establishing relations would constitute the participation of the Church in education, this being an aspect of concern for much of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in Mexico; also, to have a better control of the market and an opening for the management of its possessions and capital, whose legal status has been uncertain for many years. A formalization of relations could permit that its patrimonial rights, now in the name of individuals, could be confirmed, and that the clergy could again be an important proprietor of wealth in the country.

What was the true impact of the papal visit on the people?

It's like the football games brought by De la Madrid or the Olympic games brought by Díaz Ordaz when they held presidential office. Finally what is behind all of this is bread and circus; it has a perverse impact that we cannot ignore. The other thing is that undoubtedly it injects enthusiasm into the sectors of the population that had doubts about whether or not to participate in politics or to affiliate to a political party. The Pope's speeches inspire people - including the priests - to be more critical of politicians, since the themes of inequality, the political errors, were pointed out by the Pope in his speeches and this is not far from what priests preach in the cult. That such a reputable actor as the Church hangs out the social flags seems to be somewhat spectacularly box office, since it is the Church which defends the poor, who represent 65% of the population; this enthuses the people.

Can the papal visit be understood as part of the Vatican strategy to recover universality?

It is a fact that Monseigneur Prigione, the apostolic delegate of the Vatican, exercises great pressure on the Catholic hierarchy in Mexico. Nevertheless, the Mexican bishops tread carefully around the theme of re-establishing the relations between our country



and the Vatican. But the consequence of this has been that the negotiations have been conducted almost exclusively between Prigione and the President, and now, with the personal representative of the President, Agustín Téllez Cruces. But the Mexican hierarchy seems to feel more enthusiasm for constitutional reforms than for establishing diplomatic relations.

Is it possible to speak of "high political" negotiation between the government and ecclesiastical authorities, beyond the sentiments of all of Mexican society? What the tests of world opinion are saying is that there is an advance toward postmaterialism, a return to the so-called profound values of the human being, to spiritualism, values considered to be beyond the material, and this lends new foundations to religion in general. Also, it becomes clearer that the Church is an agent which forms a very important part of the diffusion of values. This new papal visit is not different from the role that the Catholic church has played since the Conquest. The papal speech was one of a conqueror before the set table. Now the evangelical word has been dispensed with and the cross of a local virgin has been added. ■

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THE RIGHT TO DIGNIFIED HOUSING: A CONTINENTAL CONCERN

Jorge Luis Sierra Guzmán

The search for solutions to problems such as democracy, the foreign debt, commercial relations or peace, demands global proposals, international forums and multilateral agreements. But this international effort has involved only governments, very rarely have organizations from civil society been included. These groups make demands on their respective governments for participation in national decisions. For a decade now, poor squatters and tenants have sought to join forces in the Continental Front of Communal Organizations. Therefore, the international scene includes this new spokesman, which cannot be ignored if the governments of the American Continent seek authentic solutions to problems as severe as the foreign debt, lack of housing and the imposition of political and economic decisions by strong countries on weak ones. This report is an exploration of the points of view and the internal dynamics of this continental front.

At first, it seemed to be a meeting of the Wretched of the Earth. Poor people who live on the edges of the great cities, who live in areas which lack water, drainage, electricity, people who have suffered evictions by police forces, arbitrary detentions and persecutions, only because some day they had the courage to protest and demand their rights to a dignified shelter. But a closer look showed that these people were proud, cheerful, self-assured.

On April 15, 1990, hundreds of representatives of settlers' organizations from all over Mexico, as well as a similar number of inhabitants of poor colonies in the state of Guanajuato, waited for the arrival of international delegates to the Second Continental Encounter of Communal Organiza-

tions. They were gathered in a huge shed in the city of Dolores Hidalgo, where the priest Miguel Hidalgo began the 1810 War of Independence, and the delegates and other people were impatient for the delay.

Some took the opportunity to eat some beans and tortillas with chile sauce which were provided; others unfolded their huge banners, painted by hand, and hung them on the walls of the big shed. The children watched and played with the pennants and emblems of the Encounter. Youths dressed in red and white uniforms acted as aides to the popular urban movement and attended all those who arrived, offering them food, storing their luggage and making them feel at home.

The longer the wait, curiosity grew among the Mexicans about the foreign delegates due to arrive. What would the representatives from Chile

be like, after living 17 years under Pinochet's dictatorship? Who would come in the name of the North American homeless, those marginalized numbers who proliferate in the streets with their homes contained in super-market trolleys? What about the Cubans, what would they have to say about the U.S. attempts to transmit Radio Martí? And the Salvadorans, whose homes are frequently bombed by military planes?

At last, someone announced on the microphone that the international delegates had arrived. Everyone turned towards the entrance to the shed and the 56 representatives from all over the continent were received with applauses, shouts, songs. And finally, those delegates also had the same pride, the same self-assurance of the wretched of the earth who are organized in the popular urban movement.

Journalist.

A Slow Process

Over the last two decades, the organized movement of settlers, tenants, homeless, poor inhabitants of the big cities, have slowly occupied the social and political spaces which workers' organizations have lost as a result of governmental repression and also due to the limitations of their union structures.

The governments of Latin America, as well as that of the United States, are now confronting the pressure exercised by strong colonists' organizations, which are distanced from structural official controls, with greater independence and less vulnerability than the traditional organizations of workers and peasants. These urban organizations which demand basic fundamental rights such as dignified housing, water, health and education services, etc, are organized internationally in the Continental Front of Communal Organizations (FCOC).

The idea of unifying the urban movement on a continental level was first discussed in 1981, when the Bolivian National Confederation of Neighborhood Committees and the Peruvian General Confederation of Settlers, proposed a Latin American meeting of similar organizations. The following year, the idea was considered in an exchange of opinions with the Mexican National Co-ordinator of the Popular Urban Movement.

Due to their particular situation in the margined urban zones, Mexican women have managed to overcome their domestic isolation and have moved into public arenas in the demand for urban health services, provision of milk and other basic food supplies, expropriation of vacant lots for the construction of housing for the homeless, and at the same time they demand an end to the speculation with urban land and respect from government authorities. In contrast with the workers' movement, where organizations made up of and led by women are rare, Mexico's popular urban movement is characterized by the dominance of women in its membership.

Thus it was the women of the National Co-ordinator of Popular Urban Movement (CONAMUP) who continued working on the idea of a Latin American event for urban settlers, and

who took it to Nicaragua in 1983. Together, Mexican and Nicaraguan women contagiated the Sandinista government with their enthusiasm and this offered support so that Nicaragua be the meeting place. That same year, Mexican and Peruvian delegates held a preparatory meeting in Managua and formed an organizing committee.

If these facts indicate something, it is that the formation of a continental front of urban settlers has been, from the beginning, a slow process, always carried out through consultation with grass-roots members and national representatives, and usually through a system of agreements and accords, rather than through a simple victory of majorities over minorities. This demonstrates the presence of a strong democratic life in the popular urban movement, and its close adherence to the grass-roots members of each organization. For this reason, each Mexican settler who welcomed the foreign delegates, knew that she or he was a member of a truly continental sized front.

The Continental Front

The preparatory meeting was held in Managua in 1984, and was attended by representatives of the Peruvian General Confederation of Settlers, the Bolivian National Confederation of Neighborhood Committees, the San-

dinista Defense Committees, the Federation of Settlers' Associations from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and the Mexican National Co-ordinator of the Popular Urban Movement. They convoked the First Latin American Encounter of Settlers which was held in February 1987 in Nicaragua, with delegations from Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic and Uruguay.

These representatives concluded that "the large urban masses of the majority of the Latin American and Caribbean nations suffer unjust and poor quality living conditions, because of oppression and exploitation, and the chaotic and anarchic urban growth propitiated by capitalist urbanization. This situation means that we are more than tens of millions of people who live without a safe and stable shelter, lacking education and medical attention, margined from the most elementary public services, and the great majority live without any information or democratic participation in the lives of our communities".

The Latin American delegations, accompanied by observers from U. S. tenants and homeless organizations, agree to "create the Continental Front of Communal Organizations, which would have an anti-imperialist and democratic nature, and would represent the interests of colonists who live in the cities of our continent".



Slum dwellers, squatters, tenants and homeless people have formed the Continental Front of Communal Organizations. Photo by Katia Jiménez/Imagen Errante



Housing Yes, Evictions No. Members of Mexico's Popular Urban Movement marching in the rain.
Photo by Heriberto Rodríguez.

Organized Hospitality

Hundred of colonists from organized settlers and squatters groups from Guanajuato helped carry out the Second Continental Encounter. They shared the same general excitement of the official delegates. During the inauguration ceremony, there was no face, no hands or voices that did not express enthusiasm and cheerfulness. The drivers of a local taxi union shouted that together they would never be defeated, the women of various parts of the country declared their presence in the struggle, while the children, just as excited as the adults, shouted FCOC! FCOC!

The atmosphere became calmer during the transportation to León, Guanajuato, where the Encounter's first plenary sessions and workshops were to be held. Outside the big shed in Dolores Hidalgo, a fleet of some 300 vehicles of the Taxi Drivers Union "Emiliano Zapata" waited to drive the delegates and others to León. The taxi drivers related that their union, a member of the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), (the organization which was host to the first part of the Encounter), had been victim of various aggressions: "Members of the MIR have been very badly beaten.

We had all the necessary permissions for our taxis, but the owners of other taxi associations, close to the government, protested against us. So they took away our permission to work and we replied with a demonstration. The police attacked us, and several members of our group were arrested, but later the government could not stand our pressuring and freed all those who had been jailed. But now we have to work without the authorization papers and we have to put up with abuses from the police".

For those attending the Encounter, the taxi service was entirely free. The drivers worked their normal shifts, in the morning or the afternoon, and then worked a double shift to attend to any transport need of the delegates.

Women from the township of Morelos, formed after a squatters' invasion organized by the MIR, prepared a thousand breakfasts, lunches and suppers, and gave hospitality in their homes to the delegates. Later, when the second part of the Encounter was held in Durango, the members of the Popular Defense Committee once again organized all the necessary services of food, transport and lodging, as well as the spaces for plenary meetings and smaller workshops, medical services, dances etcetera.

Principles and Experiences

The Second Continental Encounter of Communal Organizations confirmed the basic principles agreed upon in Managua. However, the simple re-affirmation was not easy. On various occasions, the delegates suspended the exchange of experiences and discussed the problem of principles as a priority issue. Sometimes it seemed that a hostile discussion dominated the workshops. Some proposed that the FCOC proclaim itself a socialist front. The Cuban delegates, although they ardently defended socialism, maintained themselves outside the debate and only intervened to demand solidarity. The Argentine delegation was against the use of the expressions socialist and anti-imperialist because - they argued - the abusive use of these terms frightened many people. "It is more important that we be socialist and anti-imperialist in action and not just in words", was the point of view of the

Argentines. A woman delegate from the Dominican Republic said that divisions and sectarianism in left-wing socialist parties in her country had weakened the popular urban movement. She gave her opinion that the organization of tenants and settlers had grown in the Dominican Republic in spite of the left, and has declared itself independent of any party and of the government. She also opposed the use of the word socialist in the Declaration of Principles of the FCOC. "If we want to make a general front", a Mexican delegate said, "we must attract all the movements of colonists, even if they don't declare themselves socialist, just democratic".

The Problem of Unity

Guillermo Filoso, President of the National Judicial Department and executive member of the Metropolitan Coordinating Committee of the Chilean Colonists, is no more than thirty years old. He is part of a grassroots movement that is mostly made up of young people. "For me," he says, "the principal obstacle for unity is that no one wants to accept the participation of political sectors of the center or Social Democrats that are influential with the people. I think that this can cause the loss of important tactical allies at a moment when the most serious problems of the housing question, those of the neighborhood, must be solved. If here in the FCOC we are not capable of forming a proposal of integration, a coherent plan of action with all the countries of Latin America, building a single representation of settlers and tenants, we will not be able to obtain continental integration. We will not be able to persuade the Latin American governments that they must develop policies that solve the main problem of Latin America.

"The Metropolitan Coordinating Committee of Colonists", states the young Chilean leader, "was born in 1983 when the movement was rebuilding itself after a number of years of strong repression, in the midst of the rise of the workers' movement in Chile. Our Coordinating Committee tried to provide a space of national expression for youth, promote greater national participation and also promote participation in the fall of the dictator Pinochet. We have cultural, recreation and neighborhood defense boards. We have used



Delegates to the Second Continental Encounter of Communal Organizations.

different forms of fighting: taking over land to build homes, taking over embassies, demonstrations of 20,000 to 300,000 persons, stopping traffic or putting up barricades in the southern part of Santiago to protect the neighborhoods. At present, our forms of struggle include organized marches, carnivals, interviews with the Housing Ministry. We can now take advantage of mass communication in a much more efficacious way. We believe that the neighborhood movement should have a high level of technical development and that it should be representative and democratic.

"I am taking home a clearer and more precise understanding of what the problems of Latin America are and of the need for a constant exchange of information with the rest of the continent. I am also taking with me the idea of the need to continue with more global proposals for solutions that not only incorporate the rest of the country but all of Latin America."

The Foreign Debt

The Continental Front of Communal Organizations holds that the payment of the foreign debt leads to the self destruction of society, that the foreign debt is unpayable. Roberto Rivera, representative of the Associations for Integral Development of Costa Rica states the following: "We have not begun to pay even the interest. And now there is interest on the interest.

We will never be able to pay the debt. So, the only possible proposal is that of no payment."

Guillermo Filoso from Chile says the following: "We say that the foreign debt should not be paid with the sacrifice of the people of Latin America. It should not be paid by the people but by those who contracted the debt. I think it is important to establish agreements and pacts in Latin America that permit it to confront the problem of the debt as a continent and force a new international economic order on the United States and European empires. Such an order would be founded on the solidarity among peoples and on the equality of

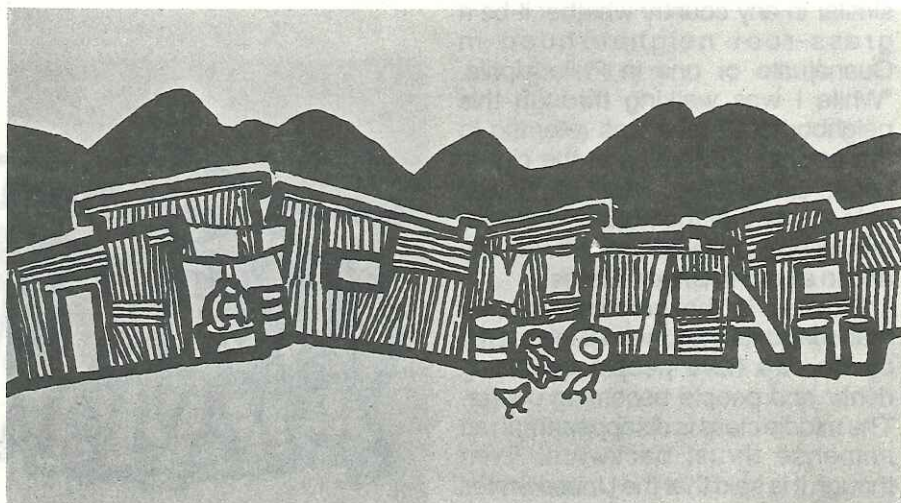
conditions in the buying and selling of products between north and south.

The Lack of Housing

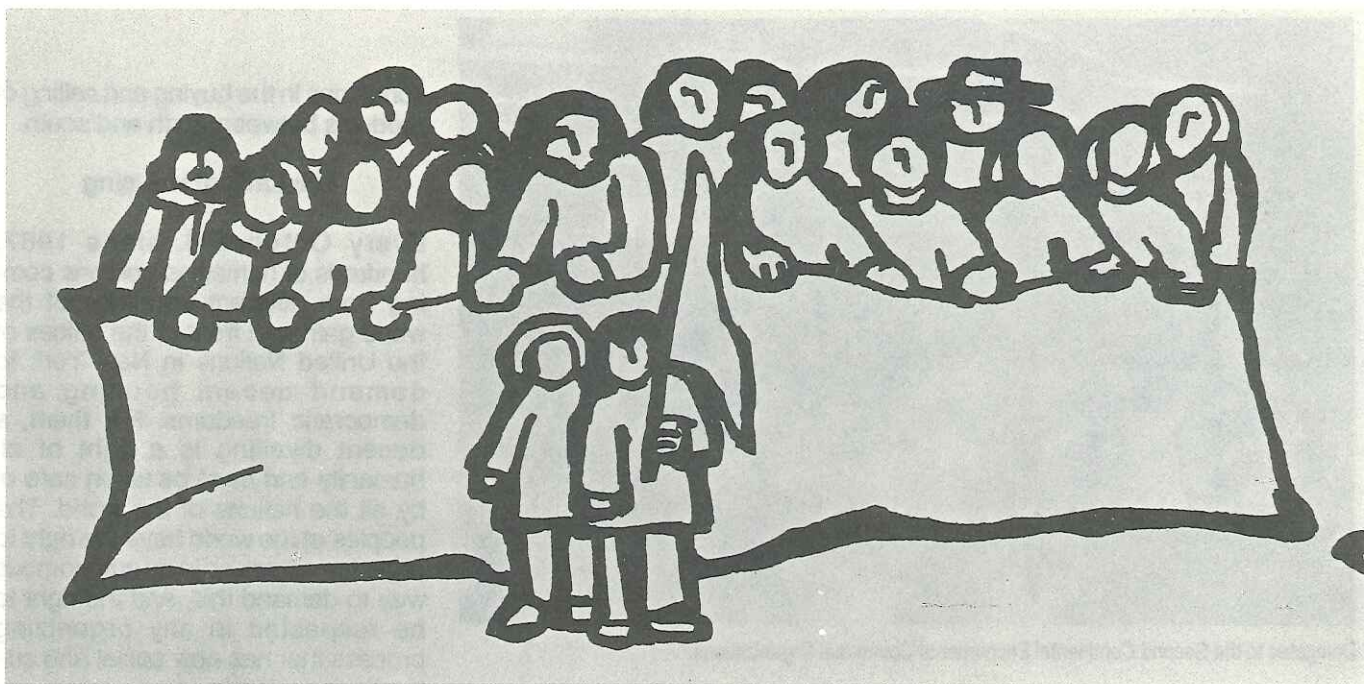
Every October 6, since 1987, hundreds of homeless persons coming from different countries of the world gather in front of the offices of the United Nations in New York to demand decent housing and democratic freedoms. For them, a decent dwelling is a right of all humanity and must be taken care of by all the nations of the world. The peoples of the world have the right to organize ourselves in an autonomous way to demand this, and the right to be respected in any organizing process that has new social and cultural expressions.

In the demonstrations of the homeless, the United States government has been asked to use funds from its military budget to provide housing and permanent social services. This group has also asked that billions of dollars spent by the Third World on the payment of the foreign debt be used for social programs and housing programs that would benefit millions of poor in the world.

Very high military budgets and cut-back budget policies used by Latin American governments all hurt the persons who lack access to social services and housing. Perhaps this is the reason for the enormous growth in number and strength of urban grass-root organizations. Such organizations exist within the heart of



Artwork by Rini Templeton. Reproduction by Rosa María Torres.



Artwork by Rini Templeton. Reproduction by Rosa María Torres.

development, inside the most powerful economies of the world, amidst luxury and urban richness.

Priscilla Curett, delegate of tenant organizations in Philadelphia in the United States, talks about the experience of the urban grass-roots movement in her country: "It's said that the United States is an exemplary model of democracy, but we have no active participation in making the important decisions of the country. As long as the government does not recognize the participation of the grass-roots people, then it cannot speak about democracy."

Delegates such as Priscilla Curett talked about conditions of life, of housing and of needs which are similar in any country whether it be a grass-root neighborhood in Guanajuato or one in Philadelphia. "While I was walking through this neighborhood" (she was referring to the section of Morelos in the city of León, Guanajuato, Mexico), "I was able to see that the houses and conditions are similar to those in my city and in all of the United States.

"Poverty is the greatest problem that confronts the United States. Day by day we have people becoming richer and people becoming poorer. The middle class is disappearing in an immense thrust backward. Even though it is said that the United States is a developed country we can see that more than 20% of the population

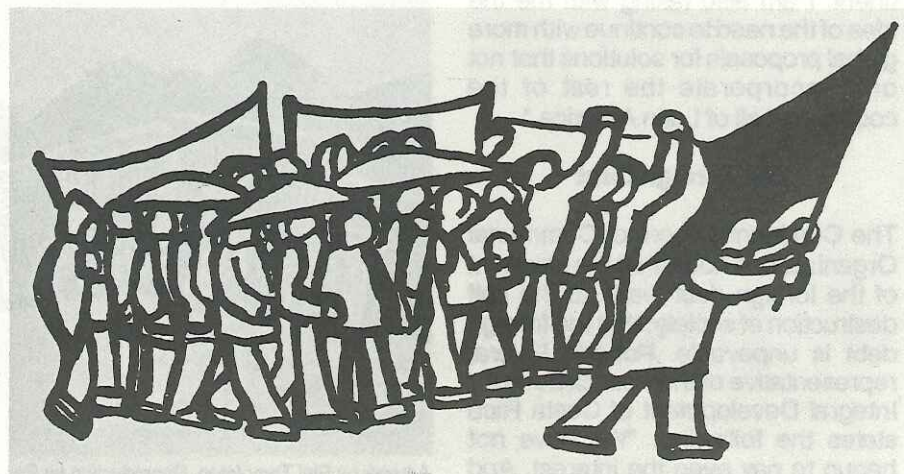
is unemployed and that the infant mortality rate is as high as in any country of Latin America. With respect to the lack of housing it has been projected that at the end of this decade there will be more than 17 million people in the United States without a home."

Future Tasks

The Third Continental Encounter of Communal Organizations will be held in the Dominican Republic in 1992. By that time the Front will have demonstrated again in New York and will have organized solidarity campaigns with Latin America, especially with Panama, Nicaragua, El Salvador,

Grenada and Puerto Rico. It will also have launched battles for the defense of ecology, sovereignty and democracy, and established relations with worker and peasant movements of the continent. It will have recognized that the participation of women is a *sine qua non* condition of the urban grass-roots movement.

At that time, it will be the Dominicans who wait for the arrival of the international delegates with the same passion and happiness that the Mexicans had on the arrival of the representatives this year. In the end, for the members of the FCOC, the lack of a home and the struggle for it is a condition that erases any border - it is a situation the size of a continent. ■



From Images of Women by Rini Templeton. Reproduction by Rosa María Torres.

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Dramatic Loss of Mexican Forests and Jungles

Jackie Buswell

The thoughtless destruction of forests now threatens the very stability of the planet, its water supply and the eventual survival of humankind. *Voices* reporter Jackie Buswell presents an article on the alarming rates of deforestation in Mexico, along with information on the poor quality and insufficiency of parks in Mexico City. In addition, we present a text written by the well known Colombian writer Gabriel García Márquez on the nuclear arms race, a theme of deep concern for humanity. Even though the super-powers have recently announced their intentions to make 50 percent reductions in their nuclear arsenals, the question still remains: What is the reason for the existence of the other 50 percent? And it is no secret that other nations, such as China, Brazil, India and Irak, have significant weapons industries, and work to develop nuclear capacities. This text by García Márquez, although written four years ago, is still a valid and poetic condemnation of man's impulse to destroy himself and his environment.

Trees are an ancient symbol of life, of the universe, of the eternal cycle of regeneration, they give us flowers, fruits, shade, clothing, shelter, color dyes, medicines, poisons, elixirs; their roots absorb the rain and pass the moisture down to valuable underground water reserves.

In ancient Greece, the olive tree was considered sacred, and anyone who damaged this tree was censured, while anyone who cut one down could be punished with the death penalty.

Robert Graves, in his book *The White Goddess* - where he renders tribute to the female deity and explains early connections between poetry, trees and the alphabet - complains in his introduction about man's lack of harmony with the family of living creatures among which he was born: "He has turned the house upside down by capricious experiments in philosophy, science and industry, and brought ruin on himself and his family. Nowadays' is a civilization in which prime emblems of poetry are dishonoured. In

which serpent, lion and eagle belong to the circus tent ... racehorse and greyhound to the betting ring, and the sacred grove to the sawmill."

More than forty years after that text was written, it is evident that all those trees in the sawmills signify overwhelming devastation for the planet's forests. It is well known, although perhaps not yet assimilated by the human conscience, that the green-house effect (warming of the planet due to excessive burning of fuels, to the loss of cool wet forests and to the destruction of the ozone layer) threatens an unpleasant future for humans on a hotter and dryer planet, along with the melting of the Arctic and Antarctic ice caps and the flooding of many major cities located on today's sea-level.

Mexico is one of the world's richest nations in native flora and fauna - along with Brazil, Indonesia and Colombia - with a great number and variety of species. There are more than 30 mountains in Mexico with an altitude above 2,000

meters, and this means that there is a large number of varied micro-environments, favorable for the development of diverse vegetation. For example, María de Jesús Ordóñez, of the National University's Ecology Center, says Mexico has forty species of pine tree and forty species of oak, and many kinds of corn. Yet she says that research on all of Mexico's existing species has not yet been exhausted - although many of these unknown species are now threatened with extinction.

Ms. Ordóñez -biologist, teacher and researcher of the UNAM- says it is difficult to calculate deforestation rates, as information on Mexico's forest resources is not complete nor up to date. In addition, the felling of timber is carried out illegally in many areas. She told *Voices* that there are various estimates of deforestation: at the rate of 400,000 or 500,000 hectares annually, while others calculate that from one million to 1.5 million hectares are converted annually to agriculture and grazing use.

Other researchers from the UNAM's Ecology Center, Julia Carabias and Victor Toledo, in a paper prepared for the now extinct United Socialist Party (PSUM) in 1982, reported that Mexico had lost 12 million hectares of pine and oak forest, and 26 million hectares of tropical rain forest "over the last few years".

Mexican territory is made up of 200 million hectares, of which 30 million are

suitable for agriculture, although only 22 million are currently dedicated to this activity.

Ms. Ordóñez says that if present deforestation rates continue, by the year 2000, Mexico will remain with only 25% of its original forests.

Other estimates are more pessimistic: for example a program called "The Jungle is Disappearing", prepared by TV UNAM in 1987, stated that only 5 to 15% of Mexico's vegetation remains unaltered by humans.

Tropical Rain Forests

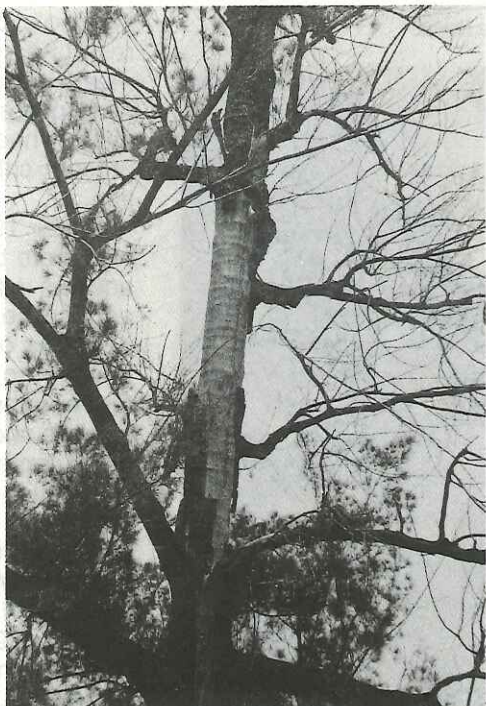
The south-eastern states of Veracruz, Chiapas and Tabasco are the most affected by ferocious deforestation over recent years, due to the excessive extraction of precious woods, and to the conversion of tropical rain forest lands to cattle grazing lands. Ms. Ordóñez says that "Chiapas has lost 53% of its jungle to cattle grazing and agriculture over the last ten years, and Tabasco has also lost 50% of its jungle for the same reason".

The biologist accused lumberers of "ecological vandalism": "They damage two-thirds of the rain-forest in order to extract one-third of the best trees: mahogany, ceiba, cedar; and they leave standing only the second-rate trees. This means that the forest will have great difficulty in re-establishing its ecological balance and natural beauty".

Sadly enough, an area with greater richness in resources is subject to greater exploitation and devastation: "Chiapas has 8,000 species of plants", says Ms. Ordóñez, adding that in one study, biologists found 300 species of trees in just one hectare of tropical rain-forest.

Tabasco and Veracruz today are suffering ecological havoc in those areas where the oil industry is flourishing: contamination of air, land and water, with subsequent loss of fishing waters and agricultural production.

Mexico's timber industry, however, is traditionally located in the northern states of Michoacán, Durango and Chihuahua. A study by Cuauhtémoc González Pacheco of the UNAM's Economic Research Institute in 1985 reported that some 13 million cubic meters of wood were cut down that year. The state of Michoacán has 31% of the nation's 1,233 sawmills, and there are numerous factories throughout Mexico -even in the metropolitan area- where the processing of paper, glues and resins is carried out. Ecologists had a victory two years ago when they achieved the closure of a paper and cellulose factory near the archeological zone Cuicuilco in



23% of trees in Mexico City's parks are diseased.
Photo by Alejandra Novoa.



An attempt to give new life to a dead tree. Photo by Alejandra Novoa.



Smog is a common enemy for birds, trees and humans alike. Photo by Alejandra Novoa.

southern Mexico City, near the National University -this area has now been converted into an "Ecological Park", used by ecologists for discussion and diffusion of issues they consider important.

Finally, says the biologist Ordóñez, the pity of all this deforestation is that it has not even brought Mexico self sufficiency in food, or in paper, as Mexico imports some paper and increasing quantities of food, including its staple diet item, corn. Traditional agricultural techniques in Mexico typically consisted of production of corn, beans, pumpkin, squash and chile in the one plot, and this system proved efficient for enriching the soil, and provided a balanced diet at the same time. Today, Mexican fields are more often dedicated to single crop production, such as cultivation of flowers, strawberries and vegetables for export to U.S. markets. For example, in the area around northern Cuernavaca in the state of Morelos, those plots of corn, beans and pumpkin still seen ten or even five years ago, are not so common now: many areas have been converted into urban and semi-urban zones, and the cultivated areas are generally dedicated to the cultivation of a single crop: tomatoes. And single crop farming, according to agronomists, generally impoverishes the soil, and makes the producer dependent on the commercial success of that product in any given year.

Deforestation

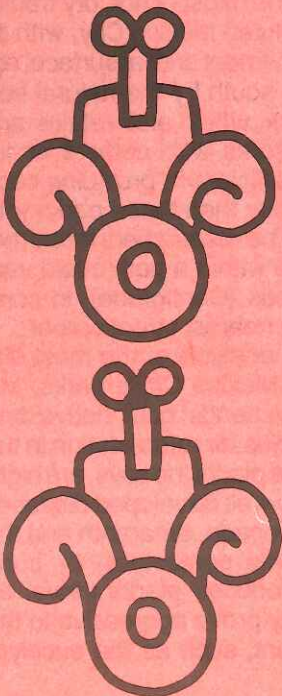
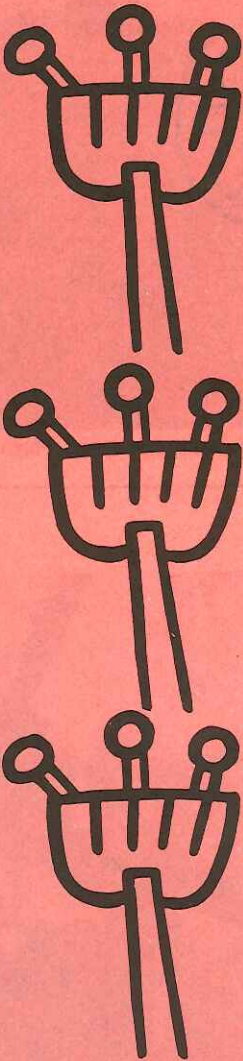
Mexico's deforestation, according to researchers Carabias and Toledo, has meant that nearly 80% of the national territory presents problems of erosion (157 million hectares), while 16% of these present critical advances of desertification.

In their 1982 paper for the PSUM, they also state that of the 60 most important aquifers in Mexico, 30 are over-exploited and some are beginning to present problems of contamination. If Mexico is to have an assured water supply in the future, reforestation is an urgent priority, as trees and forests play an essential part in the captation of water.

An even more pessimistic view on Mexico's ecological balance was presented in a paper prepared by the Association of Ecologists of Coyoacan for Earth Day 1990: "By 1989 Mexico had lost more than 95% of its tropical rain-forests, more than half of its deciduous forests and woodlands, and more than two-thirds of its mixed pine-oak forests. Every year between 500,000 and 750,000 hectares of tropical eco-systems are destroyed...

RECOMMENDED FOR PLANTING IN MEXICO CITY PARKS

palm tree	Washingtonia robusta	evergreen
Jacaranda	Jacaranda acutifolia	deciduous
bamboo	Bambusa arundinaria	evergreen
ahuehuete	Taxodium mucronata	evergreen
palm tree	Phoenix canariensis	evergreen
celtis	Celtis occidentalis	deciduous
peach tree	Prunus persica	deciduous
cedar	Cupressus lindleyi	evergreen
privet	Ligustrum lucidum	evergreen
yucca	Yucca elephantides	evergreen
eucalyptus	Eucalyptus sp.	evergreen
pine tree	Pinus teocote	evergreen
pepper tree	Schinus molle	evergreen
liquidambar	Liquidambar styraciflua	deciduous



OTHER PLANTS

cotoneaster	Cotoneaster pannosa	deciduous
bougainvillea	Bougainvillea spectabilis	evergreen
truena venus	Cuphea hyssopifolia	evergreen
veronica	Veronica traversii	evergreen
box arrallan	Buxus sempervirens	evergreen
fern	Nephrolepis exaltata	evergreen
and others.		

SOURCE: Victor Barradas, Ecology Center, UNAM.



"We want green areas". Photo by Alejandra Novoa.



A tree ... or a post... it's all the same to this merchant. Photo by Alejandra Novoa.

"It is estimated that in our country some 160 bird species, 130 mammals and numberless other vertebrates will disappear during the 1990's."

Mexico City

Meanwhile, in the nation's capital: inhabitants have an average of only 3.1 square meters of green area per person, in contrast with the 10 square meters per person recommended by the World Health Organization, according to biologist Victor Barradas.

Besides, these green areas are poorly distributed among the 16 delegations, or political sub-divisions of the city: two forests, Chapultepec and Tlalpan, provide 10.76 and 12.11 square meters of green area per resident in those areas, while the zone of Azcapotzalco, which hosts an oil refinery and many other industries, has only 0.97 square meters per resident. On the other hand, Azcapotzalco has many trees, 75% of which are planted in the streets, and only 6.5% are in public parks.

These figures were provided by researcher Victor Barradas, of the UNAM's Ecology Center, co-author, with Rocío J. Seres, of a study on Mexico City's green spaces. They concluded that the city's parks are insufficient and of poor quality, with many of their plants diseased.

In a survey of trees in several parks in the southern part of the city, they observed that 30% had been "damaged by humans" or vandalized, 23% were diseased, 44% were healthy, and 3% were dead.

Ecologists here describe parks as "cool, wet islands" in the midst of hot, dry traffic-intense and polluted Mexico City, with its heat-reflecting cement and tar surface, aggravated in the south by the natural surface of lava rock, which also retains and reflects heat. Parks with cement or tar paths are less efficient in providing coolness and humidity than those parks with earthen paths. The researchers found that the temperature within a park could vary by 3 to 5 degrees (Centigrade), in comparison with the nearest street corner.

Following his analysis of the most diseased trees in Mexico City's parks, Mr. Barradas recommends both native and introduced species for reforestation in the city. Some native plants, he says, are highly susceptible to well developed diseases - such as the avocado, amaranth and the *colorín* (*Erythrina coralloides*) or coral tree. Some introduced plants thrive, although they may prove aggressive to the local environment, such as the eucalyptus.

Gradual Replacement of Trees

The green leaves of a plant consume carbon dioxide and produce oxygen, filter air and water, and absorb dust, while the trunks, branches and leaves of trees can absorb heavy metals such as lead. The capacity of plants to do this varies according to the species, its age and the health of the tree; deciduous trees can only filter and absorb dust during the summer, but their advantage lies precisely in that each spring they have fresh new leaves ready to absorb the summer's dust and carbon dioxide.

But it is in winter when Mexico City experiences its most dramatic pollution problems; evergreen trees are therefore

necessary to filter pollutants in this season, but they will obviously suffer deterioration. Mr. Barradas has found that the maximum photosynthesis of a silver fir is reached at its 30 years, after this, its production of oxygen diminishes, as well as its utility in aiding Mexico City residents to breathe better air. Barradas recommends - a little sadly and ironically, because this recommendation implies a utilitarian viewpoint of the former "sacred groves" of ancient trees - "it appears that the most sensible thing to do is to replace old trees little by little and systematically, and thus the city could become a source of timber and at the same time provide us with the maximum amount of oxygen possible".

Mexico City authorities carried out a reforestation program in June, providing one million trees which were planted and are to be cared for by citizens. The program was entitled "A tree for every family". ■

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Damocles' Cataclysm

Gabriel García Márquez

A minute after the last explosion, more than half of all human beings will have died, the dust and smoke of the burning continents will vanquish the light of the sun, and absolute darkness will reign in the world. A winter of orange rains and freezing hurricanes will invert the time of the oceans and turn the courses of the rivers upside down, the fish will have died of thirst in the burning waters and the birds will not find the sky. Perpetual snow will cover the Sahara Desert, the vast Amazon will disappear from the face of the planet, destroyed by hail, and the age of Rock and heart transplants will return to its glacial infancy. Those few human beings who survive the first terror, and those who had the privilege of a safe refuge at 3 o'clock in the afternoon of that unlucky Monday of the grand catastrophe, will have saved their lives only to die later from the horror of their memories. Creation will have ended. In the final chaos of the dampness and the eternal nights, the cockroaches will be the only remains of what was life.

Mister Presidents, Mister Prime Ministers, ladies and gentlemen, friends: this is not a poor plagiarism of John's delirium in the exile of Patmos, but the anticipated vision of a cosmic disaster which could happen this very instant: the explosion - on purpose or by accident - of only a minimal part of the nuclear arsenal which sleeps with one eye open in the military storerooms of the super-powers.

That's the way things are. Today, August 6, 1986, there are more than 50,000 nuclear warheads deployed. In domestic terms, this means that every human being, including every child, is sitting on a barrel of several kilos of dynamite -- the explosion of which could eliminate twice over every sign of life on Earth. The potential annihilation posed by this colossal threat, which hangs over our heads like a cataclysm of Damocles, suggests the theoretical possibility of putting out of action four more planets of those which revolve around the Sun, and of destabilizing the equilibrium of the solar system. No science, no art, no industry has doubled itself so many times as the nuclear industry has done since it began forty years ago, nor has any other creation of the human genius ever held so much power over the world's destiny.

The only consolation in these terrific simplifications, if it's worth anything, is to prove that the preservation of human life on Earth is still cheaper than the nuclear plague. Just with their simple existence, the silos of death in the richer nations with their tremendous captive apocalypse, are squandering the possibilities of a better life for all.

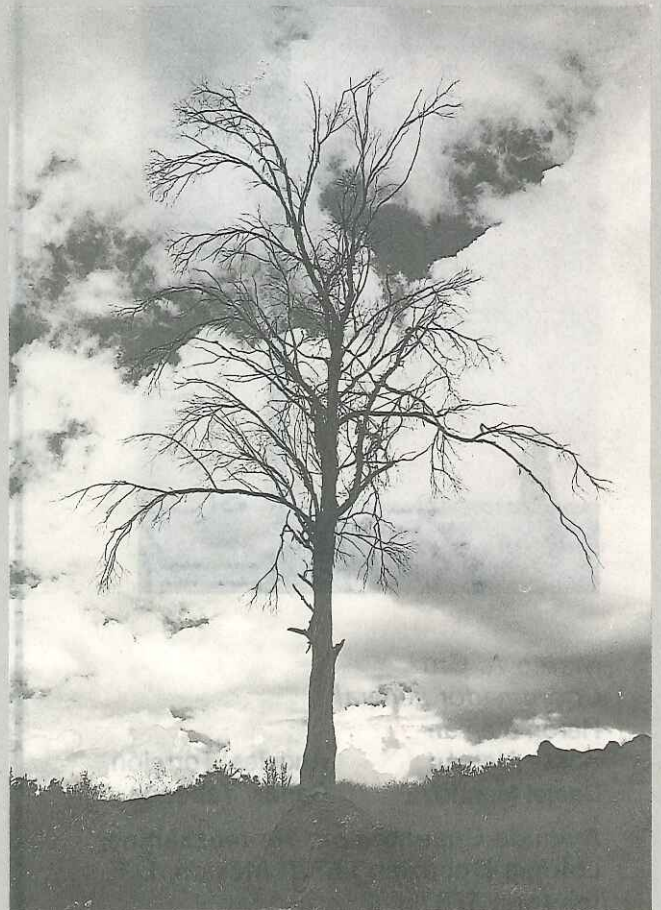
In infant welfare, for example, this is a truth of primary arithmetic. Back in 1981, the UNICEF proposed a plan to resolve the essential problems of the poorest 500 million children in the world. It included basic sanitary aid, elemental education, improvement of hygienic conditions, supply of drinking water and food. All this seemed an impossible dream with a cost of 100 billion dollars. However, this is the cost of only 100 strategic bombers B-1B, and of less than 7,000 Cruise missiles, in the production of which the U.S. government is to spend 21.2 billion dollars.

In health, for example, with the cost of 10 Nimitz nuclear aircraft carriers, of the 15 that the U.S. plans to build before the year 2000,

a prevention program could be carried out in the space of those same 14 years, protecting more than a billion people against malaria, and avoiding the deaths, just in Africa, of more than 14 million children.

In food, for example, according to the FAO, in 1985 there were 575 million hungry people in the world. Their indispensable average calory intake would have cost less than 149 MX missiles of the 223 deployed in Western Europe. Twenty-seven of them could have bought the agricultural equipment necessary so that poor countries could achieve self sufficiency in their food supplies within four years. Besides, this program would not cost even the ninth part of the Soviet Union's 1982 military budget.

In education, for example, with just two Trident atomic submarines, of the 25 that the current U.S. government plans to build, or with a similar number of Typhon submarines that the U.S.S.R. is constructing, the fantasy of world wide literacy could be attempted. Meanwhile, the construction of schools and the training of teachers needed in the third world to attend additional education



What will come first, ecological disaster or nuclear catastrophe?

Photo by Manuel Novoa.

demands, could be paid for with the cost of 245 Trident missiles, and there would still remain another 419 missiles for the same increase in education over the next 15 years.

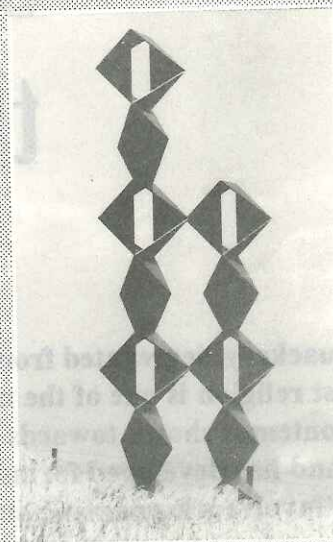
Finally, we venture to say that the cancellation of the third world's foreign debt, and its economic recuperation over ten years, would cost a little more than one sixth of the world's military spending during the same period. But with all this monstrous economic squandering, the waste of human resources is even more disturbing and painful: the war industry holds captive the biggest group of knowledgeable persons ever united in any enterprise in the history of humankind. Their liberation is indispensable so that they help us to create, in the fields of education and justice, the only way of salvation from barbarity: a culture of peace.

In spite of these dramatic certainties, the arms race gives no respite. At this very moment, a new nuclear warhead is being built. Tomorrow when we wake up, there will be nine more in the storehouses of death in the hemisphere of the rich. The cost of just one of them would be enough to perfume the Niagara Falls with sandalwood, even if it were just for one Sunday in autumn. A great novelist of our times once asked himself if the Earth is not the Hell of the other planets. Perhaps it is much less than that - a hamlet without memory, fallen from the hand of its gods in the last suburb of the great universal motherland. But there is an increasing suspicion that this is the only place in the solar system where the prodigious adventure of life has taken place, and this leads us mercilessly to a disheartening conclusion: the arms race goes in opposite direction to intelligence. And it goes not only against human intelligence, but also against that of Nature - whose finality even escapes the clear-sightedness of the poets. Since the appearance of visible life on Earth, 380 million years had to go by for a butterfly to learn the joys of flight, and another 180 million years for the creation of a rose with no other commitment than being beautiful, and four geological eras for human beings, in contrast with their pithecanthropus ancestors, to be able to sing better than the birds and to die of love. It is no credit to human talent, in the Golden Age of Science, that it has conceived the way in which such a costly and colossal multi-millenary process can be sent back to the Nothing where it originated by the simple art of pressing a button.

We are here to try and prevent that happening, adding our voices to the innumerable calls for a world without weapons and for peace with justice. But even if this occurs, and more so if it does, our meeting here will not be completely useless. Within millions of millions of millenniums after the explosion, a triumphant salamander which will have travelled once again the entire scale of the species, will perhaps be crowned as the most beautiful woman of the new creation. It depends on us, men and women of science, of the arts and literature, of intelligence and peace, it depends on all of us that those who are invited to that chimerical coronation don't go to the party with the same fears we have today. With all modesty, but also with all determination of spirit, I propose here and now that we make a promise to conceive and fabricate an ark of memory, able to survive the atomic flood. A bottle of astral wrecks thrown into the oceans of time, so that the new humanity knows from us what the cockroaches won't tell - that here, life existed, that suffering prevailed and injustice dominated, but also that we knew love and we were able to imagine happiness. And so that they know and make known for all time who were those responsible for our disaster, and how deaf they were to our demands for peace so that this life might be the best of all possible lives, and with what barbarous inventions and for what mean and stingy interests they eliminated life from the universe. ■

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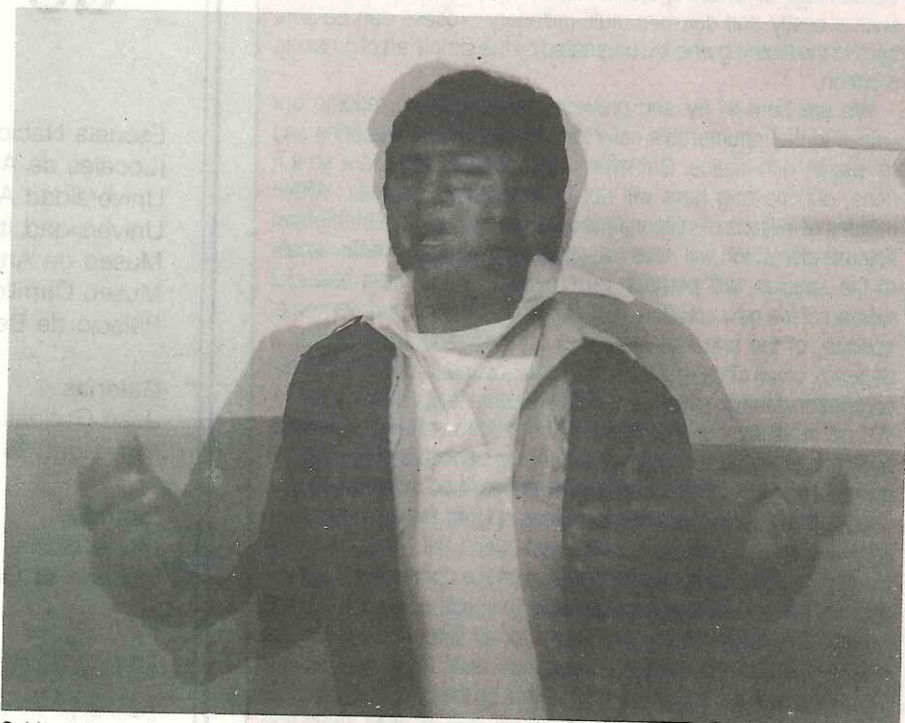
Silvia Ortiz

Spiritualists Use their Faith to Heal

Accused of quackery, segregated from other religions, labeled the product of ignorance, in Mexico the spiritualist religion is one of the most deeply rooted beliefs of people from all social levels. Despite the contempt shown towards it, this religious practice has its own philosophy of the world and of man, and has developed forms of spiritual healing which deal with the moral evolution of its believers and involve a humanistic attitude towards life which searches for a balance between material and spiritual forms of existence. Seen from a different angle, the spiritualist religion finds its source in folkways and folk knowledge, and maintains its validity when compared to the other beliefs which make up the religious and cultural plurality of Mexico. In this number Silvia Ortiz, author of *Spiritual healing in Mexico* offers an advance on her investigation of Spiritualism, which she has worked on for almost fifteen years. Sergio López Ramos, psychologist and university professor, has written a description of the Spiritualist temples in Mexico which was approved by long-time adepts of this religion before publication.

The process of cultural confrontation which began in Mexico in the 16th century, initiated the penetration and domination of the western culture over local cultural groups. Today's multi-cultural society demonstrates various levels of penetration, assimilation, incorporation and resistance by dominated cultural groups, in spite of repressive mechanisms used by the dominant group in the past and up to the present.

In the area of health and medicine, the current co-existence of different medical systems offers various alternatives for healing which have generated in the melting pot of cultural diversity. Modern health services refer to the prevention of and attention to illness in the framework established by western culture in the scientific development of medical science, in contrast and in opposition to traditional medicine which



Spiritualist in body and soul. Photo by Mariana Yampolsky.

Researcher, National Institute of Anthropology and History.



A spiritual healing. Photo by Mariana Yampolsky.

persists in various parts of the society. This medicine includes various empirical, traditional medical practices, which have been maintained continuously and permanently in these cultural groups.

Western medicine established its dominance with the support of the State, constructed its official character with the endorsement of constitutional laws, and imposed its dominance in the creation of a sole medical model. That is, as an exclusive therapeutic system, which logically excluded other existing healing practices, with the aim of ensuring its social, economic, political and ideological dominion and reproduction.

The dominating medical ideology is based on scientific validity, with increasing technological development and advancing specialization. The great advance of medical science and its technological resources in capitalist development has an important role in the consumer market with its monopolization by an elite, and the possibilities of access to this medicine - either private or institutional - is reduced for the poorer social classes.

For these marginalized classes, the real possibility of health attention in this

The belief that the change of millennium will bring great change and the establishment of the reign of God on Earth, promises believers a new age of justice, prosperity and happiness

kind of medicine is limited to access to the lowest levels of its scientific capacity, either in mediocre private medicine or in the state health institutions, where medical efficiency is limited due to the fact that demand is greater than real capacity.

The problems suffered in Mexico in the field of medical care are well known, and present a severe contrast between rural and urban areas. Medical science, linked as it is with social, economic and political interests of ideological reproduction, prefers to attend those cultural groups and social classes with a certain inclination in favor of the project of cultural homogenization.

The supremacy of this medicine has not managed to satisfy the demand for

medical services of the entire population, nor has it eliminated the forms and processes of traditional medicine. These systems of traditional health care co-exist with medical science in the global social structure, for some as a residue of the past and in opposition to their integrationist purposes, and for others as a principle of cultural ideological autonomy.

Spiritual Health Care

Religious healing is one system among many traditional medical practices, and its healing techniques are mainly based on symbolic efficacy and the use of empirical cognitive abilities rather than customary therapies and medicines. Here we will examine one kind of religious healing, that practised in the Trinitary Mariano Spiritualist Temples.

The origins of this group are urban, but it has currently spread to all states of Mexico, in rural and urban communities, with several million proselytes. There are also spiritualist temples in communities of Mexican workers in the United States.

The Spiritualist Movement was founded as a church in Mexico City in 1866, as a dissident group from the Catholic Church, with the name of the Mexican Patriarchal Church of Elias. This church was divided into seven churches or seals, following the model of St. John's Apocalypse.

The founder, Roque Rojas Esparza, became the charismatic leader of the new doctrine, and is recognized as the Mexican Messiah, the promised Elias or Messiah of the third epoch, with the mission of saving the humble and dispossessed of the Mexican nation, considered the new Jerusalem. The third epoch of humanity is characterized by the development of human spirituality before the impending Apocalypse, which, like a grand hecatomb, will show the way to a definitive change and recognition for the followers of the divine laws.

The belief that the change of millennium will bring great change and the establishment of the reign of God on earth, after a total transformation, promises believers liberation from oppression and the beginning of a new age of justice, prosperity and happiness. Its messianic, millenary and apocalyptic doctrine is laid out in the sacred Book of Revelations of God to Roque Rojas - known as the Last Testament.

The Church was well established by the time of Roque's death in 1879, with a group of male and female priests and a number of faithful who were considered members of the 12 lost tribes of Israel. The death of the charismatic leader was followed by divisions among the priests with personal antagonisms and intrigues revolving around the struggle for leadership of the new Church, and subsequently numerous branches developed, each with their own interpretation of the ideology of Mexican Eliasism.

An individual can become possessed by a malign spirit when his or her own spirit leaves its physical "wrapping" due to unforeseen circumstances

Health Through Purification

The growth of the group "Sixth Seal", originally led by the woman priest Damiana Oviedo, was named Trinitary Mariano Spiritualism from 1922 onwards, and is the group which today has the largest number of followers. The Sixth Seal used Roque Rojas' doctrines as their base, and then formed their own dynamics and religious practices. The main objectives of the spiritualist cult include teaching of doctrine, healing and spiritual advice. The objectives are linked to the ideas of regeneration and individual purification through the observance of a moral code contained in the 22 laws given by God to Roque Rojas as the only means of attaining collective salvation.

Healing ceremonies held in spiritualist temples constitute one of the main characteristics of the religious expression through which the Church carries out the exaltation of its faith and its efforts to find converts.

The fundamental metaphysical idea behind these healing practices is that of an individual's duality: a physical being and a harmonious being: man consists of an essential and primordial being which is the spirit capable of learning and of evolution in his development, and of a physical or material part which contains him temporarily - the body,

flesh or "wrapping". The sacred conception of healing, of illness and its treatment, lies in the idea that the body can be transformed by the will, with the help of supernatural and divine influences.

Spiritualist healing has a more complex idea of illness than that described by the dominant modern medical science, inter-relating its ideas on health and illness with a wide number of cultural concepts held in traditional medicine. The religious cosmovision conforms a special notion in the definitions of health and illness. Disease is a social category assigned to individuals who show certain culturally recognized symptoms, while health is that which gives people harmony with the divinity, with nature and with society.

The infraction of the divine, natural and social laws causes disequilibrium, indisposition and disease, with this last being considered a state of deviation. Thus, obedience to the rules of the established doctrinal code is the way of recuperating equilibrium, harmony and health.

The main emphasis of the healing is not restricted to illnesses of the physical body with its organic dysfunctions, rather, its action is directed towards the treatment of the spirit as a vital entity within the religious cosmovision. One spirit can influence another for good or evil. There are various categories of this influence, ranging from the proximity of a spirit to the arbitrary possession by a foreign spirit. This situation can be positive or negative according to the importance given to the spiritual world: if it refers to a spirit of light, a protector or benefic influence, it is positive, and it is negative if it is a being of darkness with evil intentions. These presences can be detected in the dichotomy of the antagonic energies *hot* and *cold* - a principle which is applied in order to recognize the opposing qualities of supernatural beings. One feels cold all over the body, especially in the limbs, and a kind of anxiety when a negative

Religious healing is one system among the many traditional medical practices, and its healing techniques are mainly based on symbolic efficacy

spirit is out and about; heat and calmness when a spirit of light is near. The influence of the first causes physical pain, problems and symptoms of illness, that of the spirit of light lends well-being, health and success in social relations.

In prehispanic Mesoamerica, there also existed an idea of spirit or soul as an entity considered independent of the material body or as a kind of energy which exists in all things. This vital energy was divided by the ancient Mexicans into the categories of *hot* and *cold*.

An individual can become possessed by a malign spirit when his or her own spirit leaves its physical "wrapping" due to unforeseen circumstances, and another takes over the body in situations such as dreams, fright or a strong emotion. In this way there is a connection between the traditional idea of "loss of the soul" and the spiritualist conceptions.

In the same way as traditional ideas on the ethiology of disease have been incorporated and given new functions in this religious healing, spiritualists have also taken ideas from other medical systems (allopathy, homeopathy etc.) and have incorporated them into their functional healing system - for example, surgical operations or the injection of solutions which, reproduced on a spiritual level, seem to non-believers to be just an imitation of the respective actions, but to the believers, these "operations" "injections" have the efficiency of modern science without its risks.

Against "Negative Spirits"

According to the spiritualists, many mental and physical illnesses are due to a greater sensibility to vibrations of spiritual energy which the individual cannot handle, and thus he or she needs intermediaries who, with supernatural help, can channel these forces or extract

The fundamental metaphysical idea behind these healing practices is that of an individual's duality: a physical being and a spiritual being

them from the bodies where the spirits have lodged and caused organic dysfunctions and disease. This action is not only limited to the extraction of evil spirits from the bodies of the victims, but the evil spirit should also receive illumination and wisdom, and be transformed into a positive force in the interminable struggle between good and evil. When the attempt to cause evil is more powerful, the intention and obligation of the healer to change good for evil has to be that much stronger. Certain symptoms of mental illness, such as hallucinations, hearing of voices, loss of consciousness, can be seen as a normal state of health instead of as pathologies or as symptoms of an unbalanced mind, and they can even be interpreted as an

Many mental and physical illnesses are said to be due to a greater sensibility to vibrations of spiritual energy which the individual cannot handle

indication of innate capacities for the development of divine powers.

The power to prevent acts by negative spirits is acquired with spiritual evolution through religious practice and with the appointment of protector spirits granted by the divinity, as well as

through ritual proceedings to purify the physical body and balance its vital energy which is its spiritual entity. This is where the "cleansings" (*limpias*), the "throwing out" (*desalojo* or *despojo*), and the "fluidic massages" acquire their relevant and specific functions. The *limpia* cleans the patient's physical body, while the other practices purify the spirit, even to the point of providing protection against various illnesses and social problems.

In the spiritualist temples of Mexico City, the *limpia* (with a bunch of aromatic herbs and flowers such as rue, rosemary, basil, pepper tree leaves and white or red flowers) has been observed to be the most frequently used healing technique, applied in the cleansing of both people and buildings (homes, workplaces and shops). Other specific kinds of "cleansings" are done with holy water, aromatic lotions, candles (where the number and color of candles to be used varies), the passing of an egg over the body (usually to make a diagnosis), as well as with chiles, lemons, cotton wool balls, garlic, fire. The spiritualist healer develops his or her work with a divine vision and a quality of metaphysical transcendence due to direct communication with guardian spirits or with God through the healing process or through trance or extasis. Besides, the healer is an ideological agent who sanctions social relations in the patients' community by manipulating notions of divine rewards and punishments. With his/her sacred character as an intermediary with divinity or with benefic spirits, the healer can re-establish health and social equilibrium through the handling of magical/religious symbols, producing in the patient states of emotional catharsis, obtaining stimuli of relief in relation to the anxiety or the psycho-somatic symptoms of loss of harmony.

Temples Give Ideological Support

In the densely populated margined areas of the city, the shamans or traditional witch doctors are being rapidly displaced by the spiritualist healers, whose activities are in the open and easily accessible with the protection of a Christian doctrine which has given the group cohesion and strength without any social stigma.

The emotional support that the patient receives in the treatment of his/her problem in a sacred atmosphere and with the participation of agents who



Altar in a spiritualist temple in Mexico City. Photo by Rosa María Torres.

CULTURE

come from the same culture, are factors which increase confidence in the healing process, along with the prompt diagnosis without the complication of technological apparatus. Medical hospitalization is a feared event among these social groups, where people try to attend their diseases within the family, which represents the main area of social relations.

The attitudes and advice of western medical practitioners, part of a clearly defined different and opposing cultural system, enter into conflict with the social norms and cultural values of these patients, who prefer to find health treatment within their known ideological parameters.

There are various reasons which motivate patients to look for the spiritualist healer: such as those who feel a real aversion for modern medicine or who have been declared beyond recovery in that system, and

The power to prevent acts by negative spirits is acquired with spiritual evolution through religious practice and with the appointment of protector spirits granted by the divinity

those who seek health care in both modern scientific methods and in the hands of the spiritualist healers, discriminating between those ills which can be treated in one system or the other. The preference for the spiritualist type of healing is more of cultural than economic origin, although the lower cost of the consultation and medicine is not an insignificant factor.

In the range of alternative methods of health care, spiritualist healing is located in the opposing camp to modern medical science, which is considered "materialist", profane and false, while the spiritualist healing system is seen to be sacred and "true", and therefore worth a great deal more in the religious cosmovision of its participants.

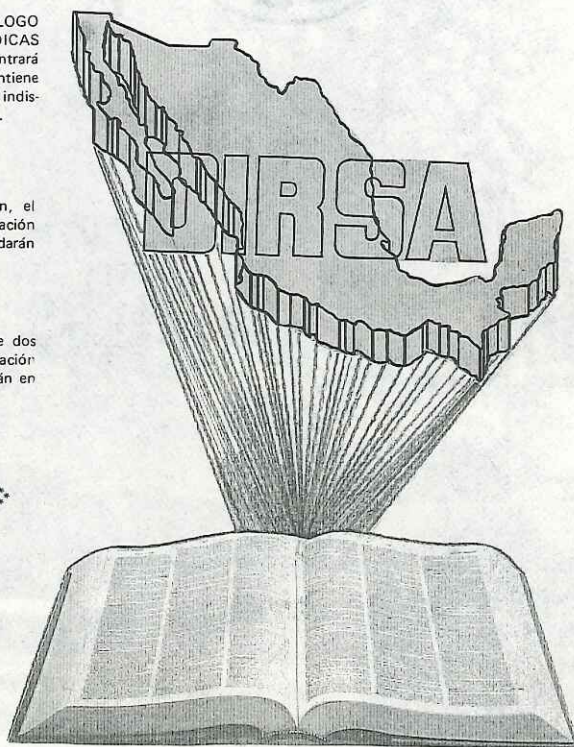
It is important to underline that the sector where these healing processes are used, is constantly growing, and consists of people who, for economic, social and cultural reasons, do not have access to medical science. The concept of a real social medicine has to consider the study of these elements so as to take its action to those parts of the population which have been margined from its benefits, but this will only occur when modern medicine no longer represents a mechanism of ideological and economic domination at the service of the dominating class. ■

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Además se ha añadido una nueva sección, el índice alfabético por estados y la información del último número editado, los cuales ayudarán a el Investigador en gran Medida.

NOTICIA: Esta edición, además le incluye dos actualizaciones cuatrimestrales con la información de recientes publicaciones, las cuales llegarán en los meses de Junio y Noviembre de 1990.



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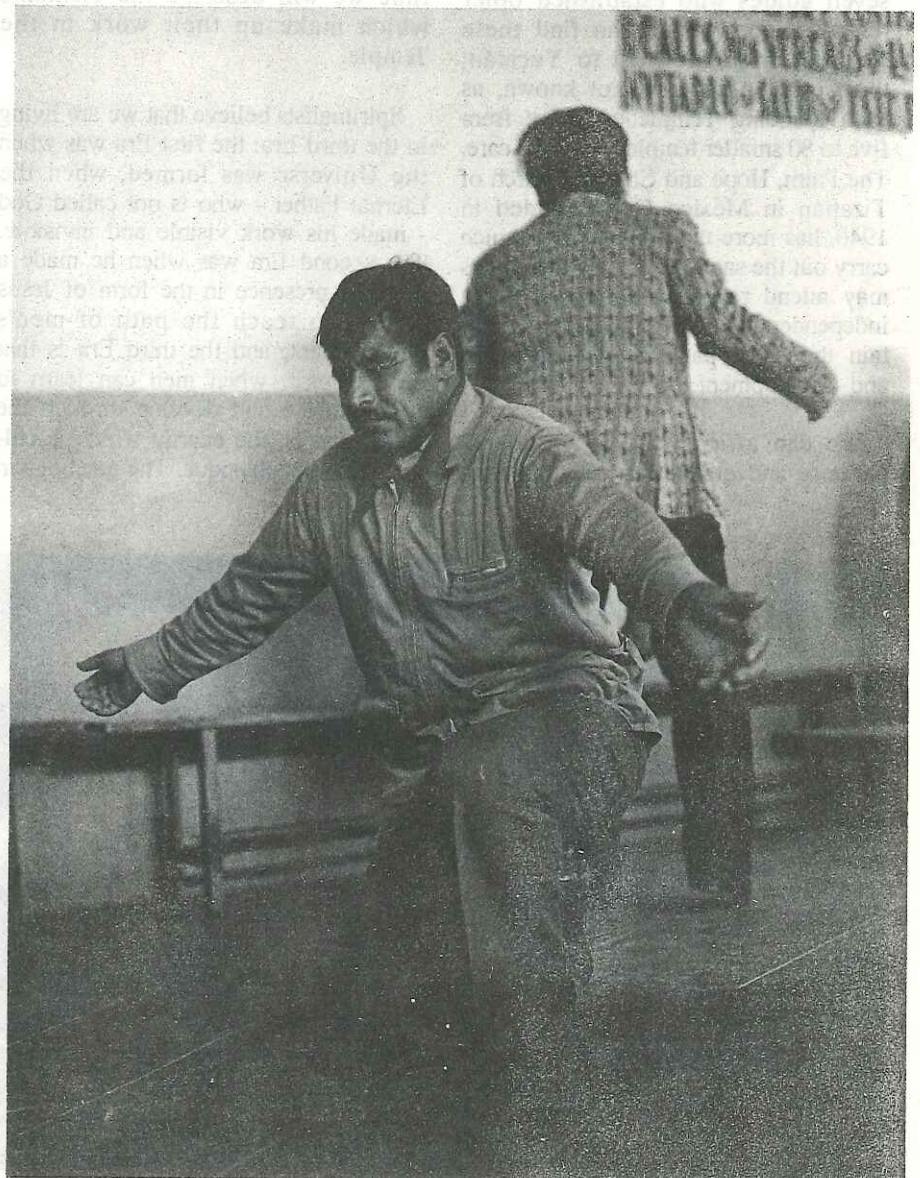
Growing Spiritualist Movement in Mexico

Sergio López Ramos

All spiritualists have their nearby temple, where they know they were baptized, and some have an idea of their origins beyond that beginning, and acknowledge Roque Rojas as the initiator of the project to form a temple for spiritual development. Spiritualism has grown as an alternative in confronting a crisis in forms of personal development in the official church, as a possibility of dialogue with the Supreme Spirit or Eternal Father. Some spiritualists consider that Roque Rojas received a message in the form of a manifestation which indicated the course of his service in the construction of the Work: the work being that of the Eternal Father. Others consider that the literature of the epoch influenced him: newspapers and magazines which published translations of French and English articles relating experiences in temples and private centers, often confusing spiritists with spiritualists.

In fact, spiritist practices existed in Mexico before the emergence of spiritualists. The distinction between them is that spiritists only communicate through manifestations and messages, physical or verbal, and they believe they receive the energy which is manifested. There is literature on the theme, in favor and against arguments that spiritists are charlatans or genuine spiritual agents.

Professor of Social Psychology, Professional Studies School. UNAM.



In a trance. Photo by Mariana Yampolsky.

Spiritualists have a process of preparation and initiation so as to communicate with the spirit of a dead person, who appears in a live person who is subsequently named a medium, an "open mind" or "chosen vessel". Spiritualists are dedicated to a systematic project, seeking material and spiritual development in daily life, while spiritists use devices such as turn tables and curtains to carry out tricks.

Roque Rojas' ideas were taken up and developed by Damiana Oviedo, says Salvador Jaén, spiritualist of the Tears of Abraham Temple in Anahuac, Mexico City, while Jesús Ibarra, of the La Fe Temple in Mazatlán, Sinaloa, says the spiritualist church began in the Midday Temple, in the central suburb of Guerrero in Mexico City, and spread from there to the provinces through seven guides who established other temples. Today, one can find these Temples from Mexicali to Yucatán; their exact number is not known, as each founding Temple can have from five to 80 smaller temples under its care. The Faith, Hope and Charity Church of Tizapán in Mexico City, founded in 1940, has more than 70 temples, which carry out the same work, and the guides may attend regularly or may become independent, but they generally maintain the same patterns of preparation and development.

We can affirm, due to visual experience and oral testimonies, that the

number of Temples has been multiplying gradually, and that they exist with equal frequency in rich and poor zones, and the attending public also includes people from rich and poor classes. There are two trends of mystic organization observed by the faithful in these Temples: those who adore images of saints, and those who believe that communications should be conceptualized, but both work on the principle of spiritual communication.

The Path of Spiritual Development

What do they do in the Temples? What principles do they follow? What are the necessary conditions or requirements? What are the different kinds of development? To answer these questions we will describe the steps of a person who is initiated or baptized, and at the same time we will describe the elements which make up their work in the Temple.

Spiritualists believe that we are living in the third Era: the first Era was when the Universe was formed, when the Eternal Father - who is not called God - made his work visible and invisible. The second Era was when he made a material presence in the form of Jesus Christ, to teach the path of men's development, and the third Era is that of the spirit, when men can learn to communicate and develop through the spirit, that is, the energy which is cultivated in his physique. The meetings in

the Temples, at the feet of the Eternal Father, are held in the belief in reincarnation, and this is confirmed when the spirit of the Father tells in what Age they have met previously and what the spirit who appears, has done.

The great majority of people who attend the spiritualist churches do so because of some pain or physical or mental illness. If the person continues going to the church, he or she can enter a preparatory process to get to know the Work - this is how the Temple is named - and what is done inside and outside the Temple. This preparation can consist of changes in the personal life style: for example, assume an attitude of greater solidarity, stop being rude and blasphemous, carry out acts to support the Temple, attend the Temple regularly, and in some cases, observe a period of sexual abstinence and fasts, which are imposed as tests to differentiate spiritual development and material temptations.

When the preparation is completed, the person can be presented at the feet of the Eternal Father by the church guide, or the Eternal Father calls the person for spiritual baptism: the marking of the spirit with the seven seals. At this point the person will be told how many reincarnations he has, his spirit name and from what tribe he comes; it is common to find references to Red Indian and Cherokee tribes, and to the twelve apostles; on other occasions the name will be related with Tibet - all this depends on each Temple's level of development. The initiate will also be told what is his/her spiritualist mission - this is the same as saying that there are various kinds of participation and development.

Some Initiates become Mediums

The baptized person has many possibilities according to his/her spiritual development up to that moment, and might be told that he/she has capacities to be a medium, chosen vessel or "open mind". This means they will have the happy experience of receiving a spirit, in other words, of lending their body so that another being, someone who has died, can make him or herself present and communicate. If the initiate is to be a medium, he or she will be given a spiritual protector who will look after the body until it is called by the Father (that is, until its death). This protector



Improvised spiritualist temple in a Mexican neighborhood. Photo by Rosa María Torres.

has a name, and will be called by this name to come to the medium to begin the development, which consists of massaging the body, so as to be able to work with those beings who have died without knowing anything about the Word of the Eternal Father. This work is known as giving light to dark spirits.

There are special days stipulated for each Temple practice: for the giving of light to dark spirits, the chosen days are Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, with the times being arranged according to the material commitments of the members of the group. The giving of light consists of making the dead person pass through the medium seven times,

and the dead person will no longer believe that he/she is still alive and will then form part of the Temple's spiritualist chains: this signifies greater strength and protection. This kind of service is also given to those people who want to communicate with a dead friend or relative.

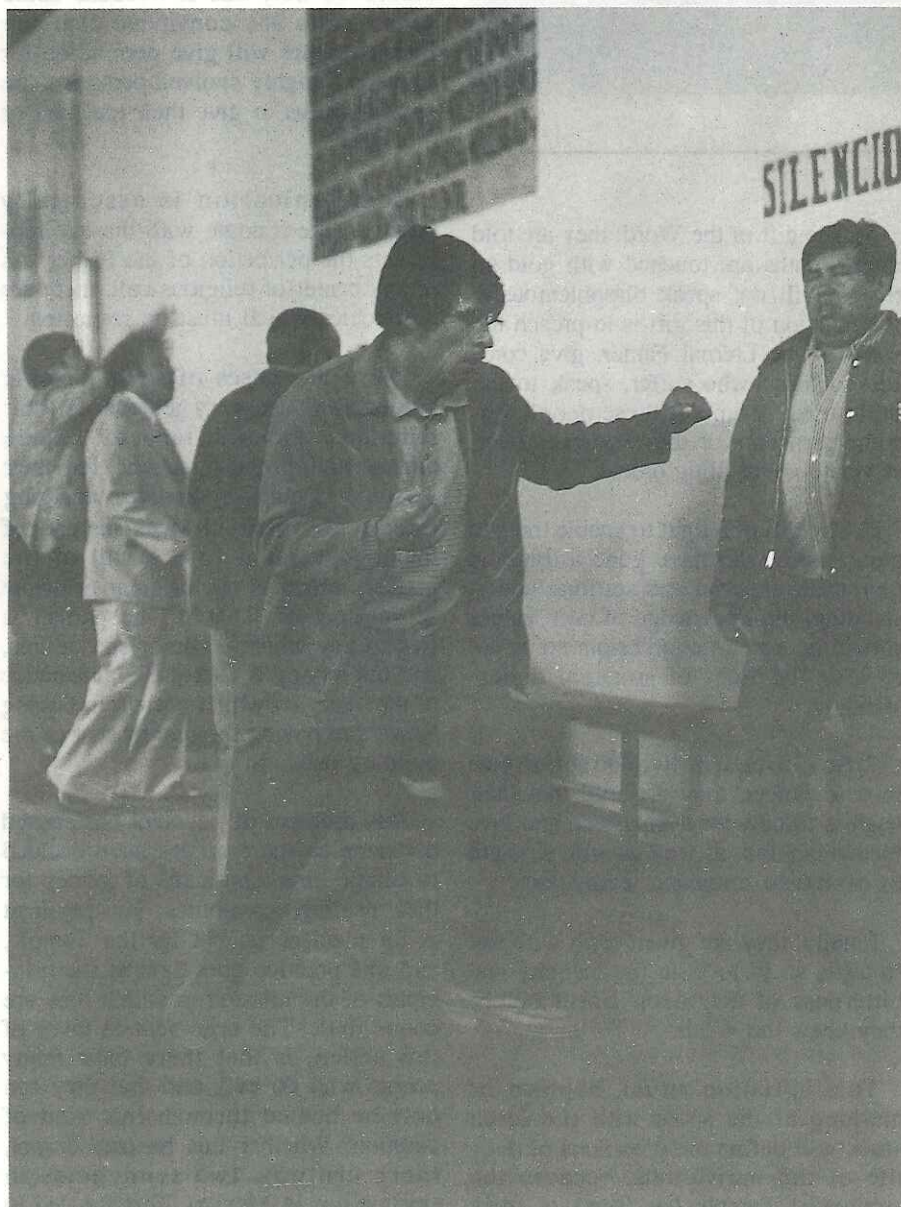
After a certain period of practice, according to the Work, the Eternal Father will be asked to give a spiritual doctor the capacity to cure physically and spiritually. This doctor can be an indigenous person, an allopathist or homeopathist, and he/she will attend the public on Tuesdays and Fridays exclusively. It is common to see queues of patients waiting for attention; in some

Temples patients wait from 5 a.m. to receive cards for their appointments; other Temples attend only in the afternoon, others work all day - which means that that Temple has a considerable number of mediums so they don't get tired.

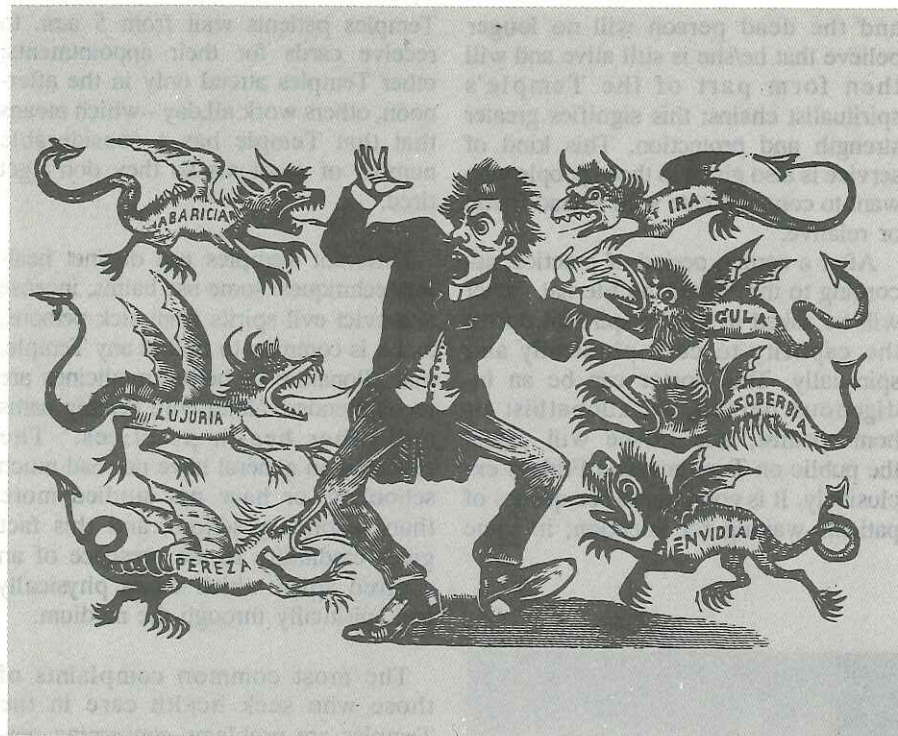
Different Temples use distinct healing techniques: some use balms, incense and evict evil spirits from sick persons, and it is common to find in any Temple, that allopathic or herbal medicines are recommended, along with healing baths and other health practices. The mediums in general have not had much schooling, or have not studied more than secondary school, and this fact gives credibility to the presence of an evolved spirit which cures physically and spiritually through the medium.

The most common complaints of those who seek health care in the Temples are problems concerning personal and passionate affairs; people seek orientation or clarity about their material lives. Most of the people only attend healing ceremonies, and ignore the spiritualist work of the temple, although some people do join the church, and attend regularly, including Sundays, which is teaching day, when the Eternal Father is present and gives his message, sometimes in metaphors and parables, other times directly and plainly: this depends on the kind of development achieved by the Temple and the medium who receives Him. The teaching is about spiritual life and its articulation with the material world, as well as a kind of preparation necessary for the times which are due to arrive. Sometimes there may be an announcement of an important natural or social event which will take place. Sunday is also the day for baptisms, along with the days 1, 7, 13 and 21 of each month.

The number of people who attend the spiritualist Temples is enormous as each founding Temple has an average of 10 smaller temples with an assistance of 10-100 people. Those who seek health care in the Temples may or may not have the right to State health institutions such as the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS) or the State Workers' Social Security and Services Institute (ISSSTE); what they are looking for is a service where they are treated differently with an opportunity to dialogue about their ills, and usually they find this in the spiritualist Temples.



Spiritualist session. Photo by Mariana Yampolsky.



Engraving by José Guadalupe Posada.

The Baptism

During the baptismal ceremony, the spirit is given a mark or identity when he receives the seven seals, and the person is told what is his/her mission in the Temple. The order may vary, but the baptism consists of the following seven points:

1) The person will be informed if he/she is to be a medium, in which case the work we mentioned above will be carried out.

2) The quality of clairvoyance, used to perceive the manifestations or receive the messages - which is something not anyone can do - and make these known as part of the mission.

3) The quality of hearing, so as to hear the words of those brothers and sisters who wish to communicate, or of highly developed spirits; again, so as to communicate this, and thus contribute to the development and courage of others.

4) The gift of healing with the hands: the hands are given a pure and perfect healing balm, to cure those who are ill and dying; some spiritualist healers visit hospitals to rub this balm on sick persons, and they also use it on plants and animals.

5) The gift of the Word: they are told their mouths are touched with gold so that it will not speak blasphemously; the function of this gift is to preach the word of the Eternal Father, give comfort to those who suffer, speak to the multitudes. Some of these people become preachers or they dedicate themselves to counselling others.

6) The gift of a light to enable them to guide those who have gone astray and give them material and spiritual understanding; the knowledge of both values should be kept in equilibrium so as not to lose the light of spiritual understanding.

7) So as to be sensitive and able to give love to others, they are told that their heart is filled with compassion and love for humankind, as well as with strength to overcome mundane temptations.

Finally, they are given earth with salt to taste, so as to taste the inequity and bitterness of action on Earth before they knew the Work.

This initiation ritual, baptism or marking of the spirit with the seven seals, will define the directions of daily life of the individuals, because the spiritualist Temple has forms of work which combine with the cultural

religious practices of Christianity, and which involve prayers, invocations, hymns and specific tasks according to the commission assigned, which might be a John the Baptist, Moses, Preacher, Golden Pen (secretary), Guardian, Samaritan, etc. The functions are associated with those of the disciples who were with Jesus Christ.

In relations to this, the Temples have only one altar with 12 or 7 steps, culminating in a triangle with an eye in the center. This represents the 12 apostles and the 7 levels of spiritual development required to achieve illumination or to reach fusion with the Eternal Father. The altars are adorned with candles and white flowers, some altars have a cross and images of saints while others do not; this is because some spiritualists are convinced that the Eternal Father will give permission for saints and highly evolved persons to be present, so as to give their teaching or message.

Communication is essentially spiritual, the triangle with the eye represents the perfection of the Father. As in any center of religious cult, there are hierarchies which must be respected.

There are cases of some Temple guides who are very jealous of their functions, and who tend to exclude others, and propose actions for their personal benefit, sometimes charging directly for their services instead of leaving payment to the will of the patient, which is the original principle of spiritualists. That is, the patient is free to pay whatever he or she desires, and the money is used for maintenance of the Temple - which goes from buying flowers to paying the rent or cost of the building used.

This problem of payment has caused divisions as some guides have decided to charge important sums of money for their healing ceremonies. The payment is for themselves, not for the Temple, and this practice goes against the principles of the mission to which they are committed. The argument in favor of this action, is that there exist many people who do evil, and that they can only be healed through this kind of curation. Whether this be true or not, there are now two tendencies in spiritualism in Mexico. This has led to confusions among patients, and has not



Talk given by an experienced member of the spiritualist religion. Photo by Mariana Yampolsky.

avored the spiritual development envisaged in the original principles.

Development of the Spirit

This leads us to reflect on the spirit, the energy handled by the spiritualists. While for many men of science its existence is undeniable, it is also true that there are many paths for its development - such as Zen meditation, parapsychology, healers and witch doctors, with the corresponding construction of distinct life styles.

Perhaps one aspect which crosses these practices is that of morality and the categories of good and bad, with the implied struggle against evil. In some Temples these approximations have been overcome, and spiritual development is assumed to be an integral part of life, with opportunities to achieve other levels of spiritual growth, without

having to result victorious, but making changes of attitude in daily life and living in a more constructive manner. Some spiritualists know that this is their only opportunity to reach a level of development on the scale of the spiritual world. Many believe, the discipline in spiritualism has allowed live or dead persons extraordinary success in healing, solving family problems and in providing peace in the security of being on the right path.

On the other hand, there are tragic stories about the end of their lives and their spirits after being defeated by earthly passions or temptations which nullify the individual's development and lead him/her to have to begin again in another incarnation.

Doubtlessly, spiritualism is an option in these times of crisis of spiritual values, in learning how to live a daily

existence where there are not many choices in confronting the future, where physical and mental health are so inter-related that modern medicine often fails to provide real solutions and where public institutions have lost the mystique of humanitarian service, and patients are faced with the need to search for alternatives beyond the medical formality. As the spiritualists themselves say, we are in the third Era, of dialogue and spiritual development, and if the spirit is sick the body will experience the consequences. Thus, their aim is to cure the spirit.

Spiritualist Temples are therefore a sanctuary for those who are to find the future promised by the Eternal Father, a future they will build themselves with the guidance of his light.

The third Era and the emergence of new forms of life and of new interpersonal relations, seem to be Utopian today, but the proposal of the spiritualists is not to be disdained entirely, if and when it is observed with consciousness and dedication to the practices, because the spiritualists maintain that it is possible to build alternatives, taking into account the principle of the Father's work, and create a just life in harmony with the evolution of each spirit.

Another element observed in the Temples, as in any human group, is the existence of passions and feelings of envy and destructive competitiveness, which provoke divisions and demonstrate the fact that these people are not well prepared, still experiencing conflicts between spiritual and material values. Spiritualists do not demand of each other a life of sacrifice and suffering, what they do demand is identification with spiritual growth which be materialized in daily life; this materialization should consist of attaining levels of emotional expression and relations in life which encourage other individuals.

Finally I wish to point out that these notes come from direct experience with spiritualists, and that each person lives life's difficulty according to their level of evolution; thus, individuality is an important aspect in the understanding of these experiences. ■

BOOKS

SO THE
WORLD
MAY KNOW

The photographer, as artist, seeks not only to capture the world: to depict it, but also to freeze an instant of life to make it last and above all to give it meaning. The photographer arranges the world in each frame. His job consists of constantly overseeing, of being a full-time observer, trained to select the decisive moment when life organizes itself, ready to capture the instant when the world becomes intelligible. The photographer takes years to prepare himself, he errs and tries again, he searches. Suddenly one day, he finds himself in the exact place and time, but if he is not lucky, this is worthless. The slightest variation of light, unexpected movement or poor placement can destroy the aesthetic, but if he knows how to use these to his advantage, he can even refine it. The photographer is an ally of fate. The thousandth of a second that passes between the harmonious image perceived by the eye and the shot set off by the shutter determines a vision of the world.

Photograph on the cover: Yankee Patrol at La Chorrera. One of the thirty seven thousand active members of the proud U.S. army that invaded Panama at dawn on December 20, 1989, walks down the middle of the street. He looks slightly down toward the left. Behind him, unfocused figures of other soldiers in camouflage uniform follow him. In the background, blurry silhouettes can be made

out of almost spectral civilians who watch them. The soldier's expression seems to hover between distrust and irritation. His hands firmly grasp the machine gun ready to fire. Against whom? He moves downhearted. He walks slowly as if measuring his steps. His gaze extends beyond the picture, searching for something, someone who threatens him. Is he afraid? Ashamed? It is impossible to decipher him with certainty. In any case, as the Mexican photographer Héctor García said at the presentation of *Que el Mundo lo Sepa* (May the World Know It), his attitude denotes "a state of mind that is not the supposed morality of an army conscious of the justice of its actions and its cause".

Behind a photograph, a real event is in effect captured, a happening that suggests a reading within its context. This reading is in no way unanimous, the same for each reader. All readings put a whole system of references into play: the viewer's political convictions, his information, his experience. There is no innocent, ingenuous, natural reading. Nevertheless, the real fact of war invalidates any analysis, it has an impact at first sight and it provokes reactions that touch even the most divergent group of readers in the same way. The photographer who captures the instant of agony, indiscriminate destruction, or violent death on his film, gives his images a predominant meaning: horror. An almost universally shared reading that appeals more to sentiment than treason. Already in the 1960s the enormous coverage given to the Vietnam war in newspapers and on television mobilized public opinion against it. To prevent similar effects, the U.S. government prevented media access during the first hours of the invasion of Panama: neither television cameras nor photographers, not even their own journalists were allowed to enter.

Photograph on page 36: El Chorrillo General Defense Quarters. A desolate, Dantesque space void of human presence. In the foreground a pile of rubble appears: scorched sheets of metal, twisted iron rods, walls collapsed as a result of the explosion of some of the 417 bombs dropped by the F-117 Stealth bombers during the first fourteen hours of the invasion. In

the background towards the right a fifteen story building remains standing with gaping holes from artillery strikes and the charred remains of fire in the paneless windows. Here a strange craft was put into use that penetrated walls with its fiery tongue, melting furniture, consuming machines and converting human bodies into ashes but without damaging constructions. The magnitude of the event is overwhelming. From any conceivable angle, the photograph would show almost the same, a vision of apocalypse. Reality overflows into all shots. The maximum achievement of the most modern bellicose technology of the world anticipates hell.

After three days of ground transport and of dodging road blocks of U.S. soldiers on highways, the Mexican photographer Luis Humberto González, who has worked for international magazines such as *Life*, *Newsweek* and *Le Nouvel Observateur*, and his companion, reporter Carlos Fernández Vega, arrived in Panama City. Although they were not in time to witness the "lightning" invasion, they managed to cover for the Mexican newspaper *La Jornada*, the military actions against resistance battalions, the smoldering ruins of the General Defense Quarters at

El Chorrillo, the prepotent attitude of U.S. troops and the disorder and devastation in this small Central American country after December 20. As a result of this journalistic effort, a book was published, entitled *Que el Mundo lo Sepa*, which offers a different version of the same tragedy. Its images are an invaluable testimony to what happened in Panama, while at the same time it is an evident refutation of the point of view of the invasion given by the major international news agencies. In its images, U.S. soldiers are not seen sharing candy and smiles, but rather bullets against resistance battalions; welcome ceremonies for the "marines" are not seen but rather solitary graffiti that say: "Yankee go home" or "Gringo go home"; nor are support meetings for Guillermo Endara shown, but rather the concentrations of those left homeless in Balboa college.

Photograph on page 53: Endara "Ratified" as President by the Electoral Tribunal. Guillermo Endara stands, looking upward as if searching the heavens for the words that he utters. His right hand rests softly on the presidential sash. The historical image of the ultimate politician is summarized in the gesture that eternalizes him. Endara's expression is solemn

May The World Know It
Que El Mundo Lo Sepa

Luis Humberto González

and eloquent, that of the politician who has achieved his ultimate dream. However, his pose has something artificial, something so well known. It is a pose that seems overacted, that has been practised so many times in front of the mirror that it turns out to be a caricature of itself. Endara is ratified as "Sovereign President" by an electoral tribunal under strict observation. He finally assumes the office after being sworn in on a U.S. military base and thanks to the support of a foreign army.

The timeliness and the sharp eye with which Luis Humberto González captured a part of recent Latin America history has converted *Que el Mundo lo Sepa* not only into a book of 72 pages, 59 photographs and a bilingual (English and Spanish) chronology, but also into a living memory of the horrors of war and into a graphic allegation of the injustice of the U.S. cause.

Que el Mundo lo Sepa
May the World Know it
Luis Humberto González
Publisher: José Martí
Havana, Cuba 1990.

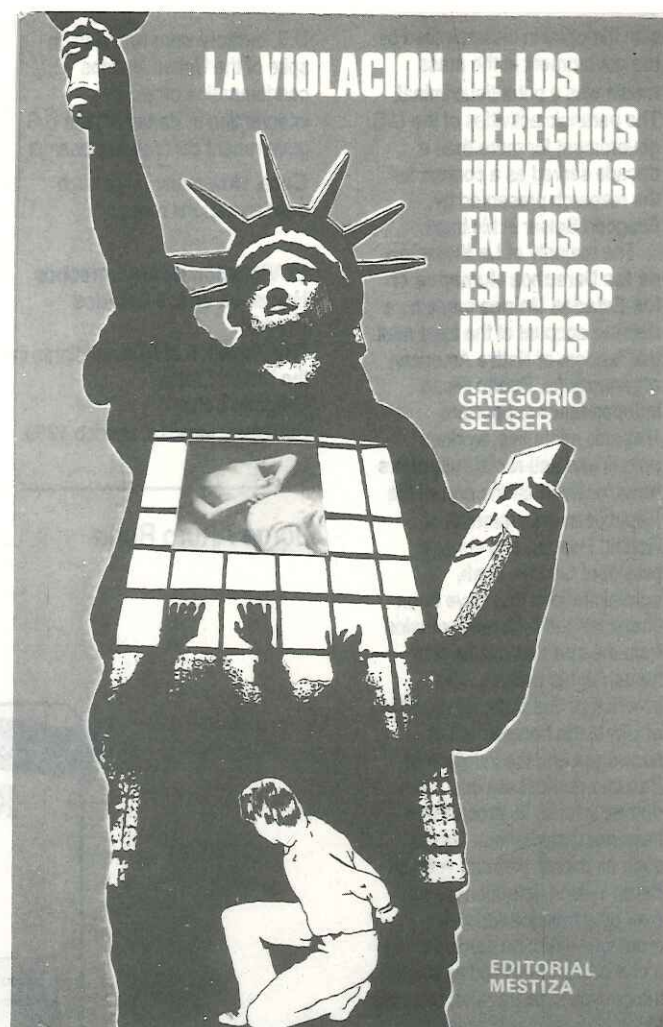
Jorge Arturo Borja

THE SPECK IN ANOTHER'S EYE

Since the 1948 promulgation of the Universal Human Rights Declaration, the U.S. government has become not only one of its most enthusiastic promoters, but

also the Big Brother that assumes responsibility for systematically pointing out those states which do not duly comply with the dispositions in this document. In the last decade, greater emphasis has been given to this policy of denunciation. Nevertheless, the support of dictatorial regimes in Chile, Argentina, Guatemala and El Salvador, hostilities towards Cuba and Nicaragua, in addition to the recent invasion of Panama, have all damaged the "champion of liberty" image that the U.S. government has been promoting for more than thirteen years. This controversial topic is the subject of the most recent book written by Gregorio Selser, journalist and researcher for the Center of Latin American Studies (CELA) of the Political and Social Sciences Faculty of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). *La Violación de los Derechos Humanos en los Estados Unidos* (The Violation of Human Rights in the United States) analyzes the performance of several U.S. administrations (both Democratic and Republican) that alternated their declarations on the rigorous defense of human rights with the daily, premeditated violation of these same rights. Based on an exhaustive collection of data, it reveals "the dark side" of the U.S. political discourse and demonstrates that the U.S.

ignores infractions of "friendly democracies" and on the other hand, points with an accusatory finger to similar illicit acts whenever they are committed by Eastern European countries or by leftist regimes in Latin America. In his research, Gregorio Selser gives specific examples of profound contradictions in U.S. domestic and foreign policy, beginning with the blatant U.S. disregard for the decision of the International Court of the Hague that obliged the U.S. to indemnify Nicaragua for economic damage caused by mining its ports, imposing trade sanctions and financing counter-revolutionary groups. Later he comments on the awkward situation of hundreds of activists from groups opposing the government when they had the "insolence" to demand their rights. Above all, Selser destroys the myth of freedom of thought and of association in a country where political prisoners and prisoners of conscience do exist, who have been detained through legal tricks for crimes still unproven and



evidently even including false crimes, and who have been judged and condemned by prejudiced, partial courts. Reading this book makes the reader infer a more serious conclusion: in the U.S. all men are equal before the law, although sometimes some are more equal than others.

The renewed concern for human rights in Washington was due in part to the increasing unpopularity of the Vietnam war, the Watergate scandal and the discovery of plans to assassinate leaders opposing state policy, damaging the image of Moral Guide that the U.S. had maintained since World War II. The only possible way to remedy this situation was the activation of a campaign in favor of humanitarian principles that did not evolve solely in the field of discourse, but also in the realm of concrete events. The interruption of military aid to Uruguay and Argentina, as well as measures of economic pressure against Chile, countries accused of genocide, renewed hopes among those who

thought of the Carter administration as the beginning of a new political era of true respect for individual rights. Refutations were not long in the waiting. Ultra-conservative groups considered the campaign detrimental to the high priority interests of national security, while leftist groups blamed the campaign for ignoring violations of rights that occurred in its own territory. President James Carter had to admit that "America also had human rights problems". It was the first official declaration that confirmed what the whole world knew: the espionage services of the FBI and the CIA abused their authority. Reports were made known on unjustified detentions, wire-taps and authorities dedicated to intimidating organizations and individuals whose only crime was to be in dissent with the state's politics. Those suspected of "subversion" included pacifist organizations, religious groups and workers' unions.

Any person who did not agree

with the opinion disseminated by the government in the mass media was a potential criminal. The paranoid activities of the U.S. government for more than a decade served as a context for the research presented by Gregorio Selser in his book.

The majority of *La Violación de los Derechos Humanos en los Estados Unidos* contains a detailed account of the treatment that leaders of Native American organizations, Puerto Rican independence supporters, Hispanic minorities, workers' unions and anti-racial supporters have received on the part of the Republican governments of Ronald Reagan and current president George Bush, administrations that have been characterized by a retrogression from the international level of human rights policies. The invasion of Grenada, the bombing of Libya, the harassment of Nicaragua and the invasion of Panama demonstrate this. On a domestic level, its procedures have not varied either. Cases such as that of Vietnam veteran Bryan Wilson, intentionally run over by a train loaded with munitions when he participated in a civil protest that tried to block the convoy's passage, or the case of the Native American leader Leonard Peltier, unjustly accused of murder and condemned to life imprisonment, illustrate unequivocally the type of relation that the government reserves for those who actively oppose the state's cause, even when peaceful protest and civil disobedience are rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

Selser's book calls attention to an aspect often ignored by apologists of the U.S. system who criticize "totalitarian" regimes at length for exercising methods of control and social repression, perhaps less effective, evidently, than those applied by their own government. Despite the efforts of institutions such as Freedom Now! that try to unmask this policy of simulation, the judicial power continues to fabricate crimes of political prisoners. In spite of the rise of the black movement, the egalitarian dream of Martin Luther King vanishes before the racist nightmare of the system. In spite of the supposedly good relations between Mexico and the U.S., in one year more than 380 violations of the human rights of Mexicans in

U.S. territory were reported. In spite of the United Nations' condemnation of "military intervention in Panama", the U.S. government continues to assault Cuba. How many more such condemnations remain?

La Violación de los Derechos Humanos en los Estados Unidos
(The Violation of Human Rights in the United States)
Gregorio Selser
Publisher: Mestiza, Mexico 1989.

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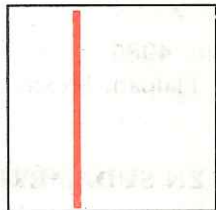
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