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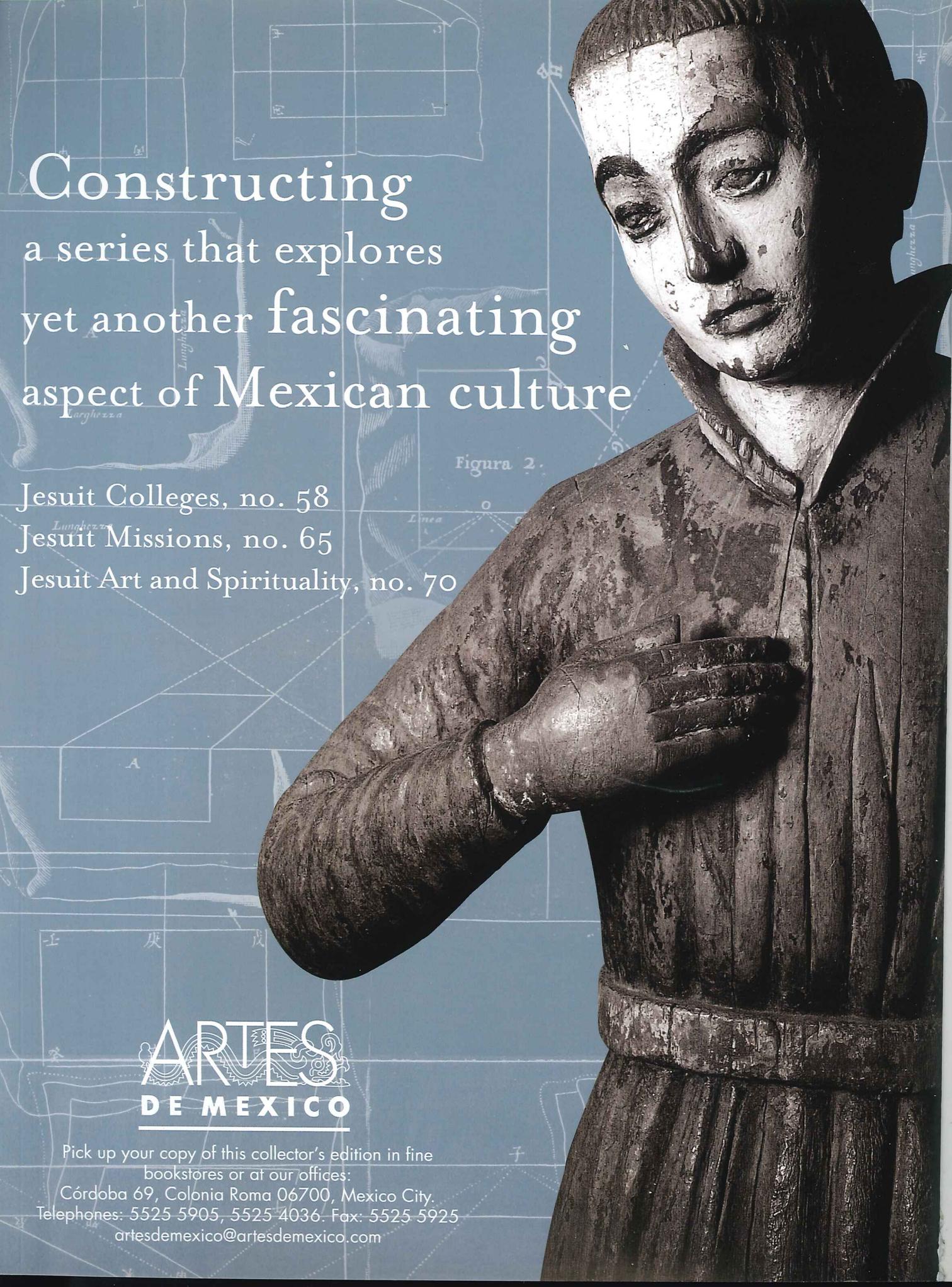
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Pre-Hispanic Legacy, The  
Swamps Culture, Regional  
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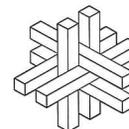
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Férido Castillo, *Black Tree*, detail, 70 x 50 cm, 1999 (watercolor).

**Back Cover**

Eleazar Valencia Valencia, *Xan*, no date (acrylic on canvas).

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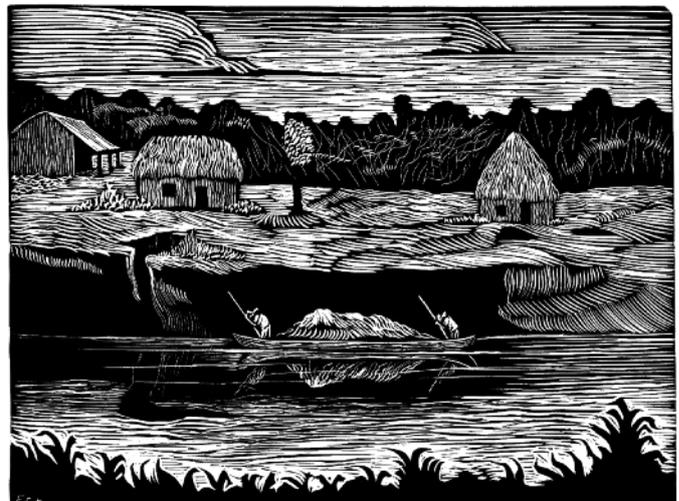
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Férico Castillo, *Towards the City*, 29.5 x 39 cm, n.d. (linoleum print).

# OUR VOICE

It is still early to definitively predict who will win the United States November elections. It should be said, however, that in the last six weeks, from around mid-August, electoral trends clearly and steadily favor President George W. Bush. Senator Kerry's campaign lost momentum when he declared August 9, when the final report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (commonly known as the 9/11 Commission) came out, that he, too, would have given the order to attack Iraq. If we consider his attacks in the early stages of his campaign and his current criticisms of the war, this contradiction is paradoxical, and it is even more surprising that Kerry has hurt himself in this way without his advisors taking any preventive action, bringing into question his campaign platform.

On the other hand, we should also recognize that the unjust attacks on Kerry by the Swift Boats Veterans for Truth were a decisive factor in his drop in the ratings. The last important event that contributed to weakening the Democratic senator was the attack against him by Bush himself, Rudolph Giuliani, Richard Cheney and other speakers at the Republican Convention, as well as the Republican strategy of turning the Iraq war and the war against terror into their main campaign weapon. All this has left John Forbes Kerry very badly placed. In such a polarized political environment, with a messianic, warlike discourse firmly entrenched in the White House, and after deciding to turn himself, like Bush, into a war candidate—even if a pacifist one—by placing the accent on his virtues as a Vietnam-decorated war hero, Senator Kerry has suffered from the impact of negative publicity about this central aspect of his candidacy, which has substantially affected Democratic rank-and-file morale. The damage was done. And after managing to maintain an average four-point advantage for a few months, which, though fragile, was important, Kerry seems to have been left behind by Bush, perhaps irreparably.

It is important to mention that one of the reasons the Democratic candidate is behind is that his strategy centered on an anti-Bush message, which seems to have been insufficient for improving his electoral possibilities. We should also recognize that the Republican strategy centering its discourse on the war and terrorism affected the Democratic Party agenda, forcing it to also concentrate on the same issues, although at a disadvantage. Kerry's many efforts to bring up questions like education, the economy or health care in the electoral debate have been unfruitful. Also, Kerry seems to have made a big political error: including an enormous number of issues on his electoral agenda at the same time that he lacks a central message that seems authentic to potential voters.

As if this were not enough, the senator from Massachusetts is encountering serious difficulties in positioning himself in states that will play a key role in the Electoral College, like Pennsylvania (21 electoral votes), Ohio (20 votes), Florida (27 votes), Wisconsin (10 votes), Colorado, Maine and Nebraska (9, 4 and 5 votes respectively, distributed proportionately in contrast to the other 47 states and D.C.). Kerry also seems to be facing serious problems among women and young people. According to *The New York Times*, the Democrats are desperately currying the favor of women voters, which recent polls say has dropped off (48 percent for Bush and 43 percent for Kerry). In the framework of defense and national security policies, which have paid off for the president, all women (married women tend to be Republicans and single women tend to be Democrats) are particularly susceptible to the issue of terrorism. Thus, recent polls show that 48 percent of this important segment of the electorate trusts Bush more than Kerry to protect them (only 29 percent). On top of all this, middle-class mothers, traditionally undecided, also seem to be supporting the Republicans. Obviously, if Bush has always enjoyed a majority of men's votes, it is fundamental that Kerry recoup women's votes. If we look at the 2000 elections, when most men voted for Bush and women for Gore (54 percent to 43 percent), it is easy to see that if this trend is not reversed, if the Democratic Party does not recover its hardcore electorate and if President Bush consolidates his current ratings at the polls, the result will be a real disaster for the Democrats.

According to an ABC-*Washington Post* poll taken after the Republican Convention, young voters between the ages of 18 and 24 increased their support for Bush by 14 percent (going from 32 percent to 49 percent), decreasing their preference for Kerry in the same proportion (dropping from 63 percent to 49 percent). However, what may be an advantage for Kerry is that this segment of the electorate continues to be part of the “undecided” voters.

Evidence shows that the war has dominated the electoral and political atmosphere in the United States and has changed traditional trends among U.S. voters. The October debates will be decisive in determining whether President Bush consolidates his lead or Senator Kerry manages to recover his lost advantage, or if election results as close as the 2000 balloting cause a constitutional crisis that forces Americans to seriously discuss the radical modification of an electoral system that today seems completely out of date.

\* \* \*

In this issue, we have included four contributions on the upcoming elections by Mexican specialists on Mexico-U.S. relations and U.S. domestic politics. Our aim is to offer a Mexican perspective of an event that will have important repercussions in many arenas, among them some that affect Mexico very directly. Leonardo Curzio reflects on the national security proposals in both of the main parties’ platforms and about the impact that they might have on Mexico. César Pérez Espinosa centers his analysis on the increasing trend among U.S. voters to opt for conservative candidates and policies, leading to a strengthening of the Republicans in both houses. Alejandro Becerra dissects Kerry’s political career, pinpointing the few times he has mentioned Mexico, showing that even though the bilateral agenda and its problems are not precisely one of his top priorities, he is sensitive to matters like aid for Third World development, the fight against world poverty and immigration policies that can lead to the legalization of undocumented residents in the United States. Finally, Antonio de la Cuesta and Jesús Velasco Grajales take a long hard look at Bush’s policies and Kerry’s campaign speeches about relations with Mexico to show that the victory of one or the other does not indicate a clear advantage for our country.

Our “North American Affairs” section continues to focus on the issue of relations between Mexico and the United States with two articles that draw a balance sheet of the first ten years of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Luis Quintana Romero looks at the institutions created to implement NAFTA, examining their effectiveness, transparency and their performance as supranational bodies and mechanisms. In the first part of a two-part article, Javier Aguilar García explores the effects of NAFTA in the maquiladora sector and the striking growth of informal employment; in our next issue, he will examine the impact of unemployment on migration to the United States.

In our “Economy” section, Pablo Ruiz Nápoles introduces us to one of the most important traits of the United States’ political and economic culture: consumerism. He does it from a theoretical perspective based on political economy to explain a phenomenon that has internationalized to the point that it is difficult to distinguish regional specificities. In this same section, we present the first of a series of articles for *Voices of Mexico* by natural resources specialist Miguel García Reyes about what may be the twenty-first century economy’s fundamental issue: the dispute over water. In this first article, García Reyes offers a general overview of the world’s water crisis and introduces what is undoubtedly the most important conflict over water for our country: the dispute with the United States over the waters of the Rio Grande.

Mexico’s national political life is starting to rev up for the 2006 presidential elections. Much of what the different parties are doing is already carried out with an eye to that overall objective. In this issue’s “Politics” section, we continue with the analysis of the internal life of each of the country’s three main political parties and their efforts to reorganize and restructure for the next elections. This time, we present an article by analyst Guadalupe Pacheco about the Institutional Revolutionary Party and its transformation from a mass hegemonic corporatist party with vertical decision-making processes and discipline, into one that has had to adapt to the new circumstances of political competition. Undoubtedly, one of the issues that will be determinant in the 2006 elections is public security, which urgently requires solutions and which growing sectors of the population see as closely

linked to corruption. Luis González Placencia not only lays bare media myths about the size of the problem but also defends the idea that society's totally understandable concern about it, which creates a feeling of helplessness and vulnerability, should not be an excuse for "hard line" policies, like the reinstatement of the death penalty.

Mexican society has organized around many different issues, including insecurity and free trade. Our "Society" section in this issue opens with an article by researcher Ariadna Estévez, who introduces us to the theoretical and ideological reasons that led to the emergence of civic and social movements against NAFTA. In what may well be categorized as a boom of civil society organizations in Mexico, the NGOs centered on free trade joined together first around democratic demands and later, when Mexico's democracy began to mature, around human rights issues. On the same matter, writer and analyst Pedro Félix Gutiérrez presents a panorama of the institutionalization of civil society organizations in Mexico through the creation of rules and laws by the state, which recognizes their importance.

\* \* \*

In this issue, we have dedicated the "Art and Culture," "The Splendor of Mexico," "Museums" and "Literature" sections to the state of Tabasco. The large Usumacinta and Grijalva Rivers crisscross the state, creating a landscape in which water has been the main protagonist and green its main color. This warm, humid land has propitiated a singular wealth of flora and fauna and was chosen by important pre-Hispanic peoples for building their imposing cities. In colonial, independent and modern Tabasco, for a long time the rivers were the only means of communication and at the same time, the main reason for its isolation. There is no risk in saying that much of what today's Tabascans are is determined by a culture of water. Examples of this are to be found in our "Art and Culture" section: we begin with the engravings of Férido Castillo. Journalist Roberto Ponce tells us about this unique artist for whom Tabasco could not be understood without its scenes of water and vegetation. Equally, Norma Domínguez explains how the indigenous youth of Tamulté de las Sabanas run their own painting school, which has been operating for ten years. Lastly, Leandro Soto describes another example of the talent of Tamulté's youth, the indigenous contemporary dance group, Nikamba, which has established with its art a dialogue that embraces its own traditions.

"The Splendor of Mexico" opens with two ancient cultures: the great mother Olmec culture and the Mayan culture, whose grandeur is representative of the development achieved by our pre-Hispanic ancestors. Lorenzo Ochoa writes of the La Venta Museum-Park and the Comalcalco archaeological site, which serve as a framework for the description of the endeavors of these cultures in Tabasco. Rodolfo Uribe reflects on the rhythm and the heart of the swamp that have determined the lives of both ancient and modern inhabitants of Tabasco in their efforts to "live outside the water." Lastly, Jorge Priego brings us back into the modern world to talk about Tabasco's regional cuisine, a fusion of indigenous and Spanish cooking, plus the popular wisdom of mothers and grandmothers, with its wealth of ingredients and recipes, little known outside the state.

Tabasco is famous for its literature, with the name of poet Carlos Pellicer Cámara first and foremost. Pellicer's love for his homeland and its culture took him into archaeology and anthropology, and it is to him that we owe the projects of the La Venta Museum-Park and the valuable collection of pieces from Mexico's main pre-Hispanic cultures that are the pride of the Carlos Pellicer Cámara Regional Anthropology Museum in the city of Villahermosa, described in our "Museums" section.

Tabasco's new literature has in Teodosio García Ruiz one of its most irreverent and outstanding representatives. An essay by Miguel A. Ruiz Magdonel about this poet and a selection of fragments of his poems are irrefutable proof.

This issue's "In Memoriam" section pays homage to the life and achievements of Gastón García Cantú, outstanding intellectual, university and government official, whose work will live after him.

*José Luis Valdés-Ugalde*

# Out of Office

## The PRI's Restructuring And Perspectives 2006

Guadalupe Pacheco Méndez\*



PRI President Roberto Madrazo next to legislative caucus head Emilio Chuayffet and State of Mexico Governor Arturo Montiel with other PRI leaders.

Juan Flores/Cuartoscuro



Controversial Teacher's Union leader Elba Esther Gordillo.

Nelly Salas/Cuartoscuro

### INTRODUCTION

#### THE GRADUAL DISARTICULATION OF POWER GROUPS: 1988-2000

The defeat of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in 2000 closed a historic cycle in Mexico's political life. Throughout its existence, the "party of the Revolution" took on several organizational identities: that of a coalition

of revolutionary regional forces during the years of the Revolutionary National Party, or PNR (1929-1938); that of a corporatist front of mass social organizations during the years of the Party of the Mexican Revolution, or PRM (1938-1946) and as the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI (1946-2000), subject, together with its three sectors (workers, peasants and community members), to the authority of the country's president. The common denominator of these stages was its subordination to an external authority, whether

the founding leader or the nation's president. And this was the fundamental distinctive trait that determined its internal power relations.

From 1988 on, external political conditions exerted increasingly strong pressures on the PRI internally, particularly the series of electoral reforms that would culminate in 1996 with the autonomy of electoral authorities vis-à-vis the executive branch of government, stripping the party of its privileges one by one, particularly those originating in the government, which had allowed

\*Researcher at the Sociology Department of the Autonomous Metropolitan University, Xochimilco campus.

**TABLE 1**  
**PRI LEADERSHIP ELECTION RESULTS BY GOVERNOR'S AFFILIATION**  
**(FEBRUARY 2002)**

GOVERNOR'S AFFILIATION	MADRAZO GORDILLO	PAEDES GUERRERO	CANCELLED VOTES	TOTAL VOTES	DIFFERENCE MADRAZO/PAREDES (NUMBER OF VOTES)	DIFFERENCE MADRAZO/PAREDES (%)
PRI-Madrazo	424,069	80,967	20,518	525,554	343,102	65.3
PRI-Paredes	596,611	949,824	82,746	1,629,181	-353,213	-21.7
<b>Total PRI</b>	1,020,680	1,030,791	103,264	2,154,735	-10,111	-0.5
PAN	384,401	266,766	33,671	684,838	117,635	17.2
PRD	112,982	168,660	12,903	294,545	-55,678	-18.9
<b>Total PAN and PRD</b>	497,383	435,426	46,574	979,383	61,957	6.3
<b>Overall Total</b>	1,518,063	1,466,217	149,838	3,134,118	51,846	1.7

**Source:** Table designed by the author with data from the PRI Internet portal, <http://www.pri.org.mx/principal/PRI.htm>

it to maintain electoral hegemony. This combined with a change in the internal distribution of “power quotas,” strengthening the ability of those directly linked with the new public sector technocracy to vie for candidacies for public office. That created tensions with the old “nationalist” elites linked to corporatist sectoral organizations. In turn, this would unleash an internal dynamic fraught with outbreaks of autonomy by party militants who no longer wanted to subordinate themselves to the authority of the nation’s president at the same time that links between those activists and PRI governors were strengthened.

These power struggles were also crisscrossed by an ideological fight: on one side were those who, under the flag of revolutionary nationalism, resist-

ed burying the Keynesian model of the state, and on the other extreme were those who waved the neo-liberal banner and agreed with the government technocracy’s restructuring of the economy and the public sector.

After the severe 1988 political-electoral crisis, new focuses of tension emerged in PRI internal life. During the administration of Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994), two bids were made to reform the party from above with Salinas attempting to eliminate the PRI’s sectoral structure by different means: the fourteenth national assembly’s “territorialization” (1990) and the implementation of the “Pronasol” program in the sixteenth assembly (1993).<sup>1</sup> The assassination of PRI presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio Murrieta

during the 1994 campaign and the tug-of-war that resulted in the designation of Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León to replace him also accentuated the internal tensions.

Later, new developments sharpened internal tension and discontentment. The shock created by Zedillo’s announcement that he would establish a “healthy distance” vis-à-vis the PRI, together with the bad electoral results of 1995 and 1997 caused by discontentment with the economic crisis that broke out at the beginning of the administration were all factors that sharpened internal tension and dissatisfaction. This led to the beginning of a phase of attempted rebellion of certain PRI groups against the president, which translated into the imposition

of serious limitations on his discretionary ability to designate the next presidential nominee during the seventeenth national assembly held in 1996; these were called President Zedillo's "padlocks", or limits.

As the 2000 presidential elections approached, internal clashes between PRI members identified with the party traditions and the "technocrats", the open opposition of then-governor of Tabasco Roberto Madrazo Pintado to overturning the reforms of the seventeenth assembly, and the mushrooming of groups inside the PRI with a local power base were all circumstances that led Zedillo to handle the succession in the most favorable way possible for himself. He decided to promote the direct election of the presidential nominee in which he would guarantee all the support of the party apparatus for his candidate, Francisco Labastida, and instituted a system for counting the votes by districts won, making the victory of opposition members with strong regional support difficult. The central confrontation was between Labastida and Madrazo. The primaries were held November 7, 1999, and, as expected, Labastida won the PRI's presidential nomination.

#### ELECTORAL DEFEAT AND THE INTERNAL POWER STRUGGLE: 2000-2002

The victory of Vicente Fox Quesada and the National Action Party (PAN) is a milestone in the country's political history. For the first time since 1929, a candidate from outside the "Party of the Revolution" had won. Until then, the PRI had not developed any real internal structure —not just a formal

Power struggles were crisscrossed  
by an ideological fight between nationalists and  
the neo-liberal technocrats.

one—for making major decisions and regulating internal conflict. The country's president had always taken care of that. This meant that when its candidate lost the election, the organization was left without its traditional political head.

From July 2000 until the election of the new national leadership in February 2002, the PRI came apart at the seams. After the first moments of bafflement, without the leadership of the nation's president, the elites heading up the party's different groups began to struggle furiously to fill the vacuum of power. To survive politically, party members faced the task of creating a new method for electing a national leadership and setting up rules for functioning and decision making outside the framework of the government.

In February 2001, the PRI elites and their main notables came to several agreements for electing the new national leadership. This meeting, known as the "El Caballito conclave" was the beginning of an internal truce. These informal agreements were ratified by the National Political Council. The most important was to hold the eighteenth national assembly in November 2001 to write new by-laws. The central question, naturally, would be the mechanism for electing the new party president and the general secretary of the National Executive Committee (CEN), until then appointed by Mexico's president. At this stage of the process, the actions of PRI governors were crucial. During the sessions of

the eighteenth assembly, the decisive debates took place in the working group on the by-laws, with a central confrontation between Madrazo and Labastida followers over control of the party. In general, despite the acrimony of the debate, the Madrazo followers managed to impose their proposals, particularly about how the new national leadership was to be elected.

Regardless of the kind of party the PRI might have evolved into and the degree of internal institutionalization it might achieve, simply having negotiated basic agreements and made decisions without internal splits and without the intervention of a PRI president, has undeniably meant that the party went through a major organizational change.

#### THE FIRST INTERNAL ELECTION OF NATIONAL LEADERS: 2002

Once the rules of the game were established, the next step was to put them into practice. In late 2001, two possible slates emerged from the two party factions to contend for heading up the party: Roberto Madrazo, backed up by Elba Esther Gordillo, and Beatriz Paredes Rangel and her running mate Javier Guerrero. They would compete for votes in February 2002. Both sides had gathered groups with different interests and varied regional forces.

The primaries took place February 24, and the results were made public on February 27. The process was not

without its clashes and frictions between the contenders; as was to be expected, both sides used the same mechanisms that the party had traditionally used to mobilize voters, sparking mutual accusations of rounding up voters and other illicit practices. At the end of the day, the winning ticket was headed up by Madrazo and Gordillo (see table 1).

Despite strong discontentment in the ranks of the defeated side, Beatriz Paredes decided against breaking with the party and accepted defeat but without hiding her disagreement. Paredes said, "I accept the commission's decision, but I do not share the way the election was carried out." The next day, she resumed her seat in the Chamber of Deputies and, before 70 deputies who had supported her, expressed the need to avoid internal clashes among legislators and of keeping the PRI caucus united so as not to lose influence.

Madrazo supporters took on the task of building bridges with the Paredes supporters in negotiating the composition of the PRI's new National Executive Committee. The new team was made up mainly of Madrazo and

To survive politically, party members  
created rules for functioning outside the framework  
of the government.

Paredes supporters. In this way, the new national leadership took office, but it had to negotiate its executive committee with its adversaries. Up to that point, the PRI's road was not an easy one, and at times it veered dangerously close to the abyss of organizational break. With things like this, the PRI approached 2003, a year which had several crucial developments in store.

In short, the internal power vacuum caused by the country's new president not being a member of the PRI and the subsequent faction fight seemed to herald the collapse or fragmentation of the party if not its complete disappearance from the political map. However, contrary to all forecasts, its elites managed to come to a basic agreement in the November 2001 eighteenth assembly to decide on the party's new by-laws. The most surprising thing was that the PRI did not split during this process.

#### THE TESTS OF 2003 AND ELBA'S COUP<sup>2</sup>

After the defeat of PRI presidential candidate Labastida, the party had to make its own political decisions for the first time. Since then, it has gone through difficult situations and serious internal conflicts, the results of which in the medium and long terms are uncertain. In 2003, several issues stand out: the repercussions of "Pemexgate";<sup>3</sup> the debate about the privatization of the electrical industry; the designation of candidates for public office, particularly for Congress; the decision about who was going to head up the PRI's congressional caucus; and the position of the PRI caucus about the PAN administration's fiscal proposals. These problems, although they each had their own dynamic, ended up by tainting each other. This was due to a great extent to the way that Elba Esther Gordillo tried to arrange power relations in her favor.

For the first months of 2003, the PRI's attention was fixed on the matter of the illegal funneling of state-owned oil giant Pemex funds through the union to Francisco Labastida's presidential campaign. In March, the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) fined the party about one billion pesos, a heavy blow to PRI finances, particularly amidst preparations for the next federal electoral campaign. This soured relations between the two sides of the national leadership since, at the end of the day, "Pemexgate" was a problem that had

**TABLE 2**  
**NATIONAL VOTE BY PARTIES AND NUMBER**  
**OF DISTRICT WINS (1997-2003)**

	VOTE (%)			DISTRICTS WON		
	1997	2000	2003	1997	2000	2003
PAN	26.6	39.1	31.8	65	141	82
PRI	39.1	37.8	38.0	165	131	163
PRD	25.7	19.1	18.2	70	28	55
Others	8.6	4.0	11.9	—	—	—

Source: <http://www.ife.org.mx/>

The polemical Elba Esther Gordillo  
used the National Educational Workers Union to support  
gubernatorial candidates opposing the PRI.

been created by Labastida's campaign committee, though the whole party was made to pay the cost.

The debate about privatization of the electrical industry began to have repercussions among the PRI currents even before the 2003 mid-term elections, but was momentarily taken out of the limelight because of the proximity of the elections and the change-over that meant in the Chamber of Deputies. Even so, it was clear that inside the PRI the discussion about how to combine the strategy vis-à-vis the new PAN administration overlapped with the redefinition of the state's new institutional profile and that, what was worse, there was no internal agreement about this matter.

Although there was no longer a member of the PRI occupying the presidency to approve (or "put a check mark next to the name of") the selection of candidates for senator and federal deputies for the July 2003 elections, in March, the new PRI leadership managed to negotiate its lists of candidates, suffering serious internal frictions like in any other party, but without organizational break-ups.

Once again, the PRI governors were a powerful factor in the negotiation of the candidacies, but not the only factor: the leaders of the large corporatist organizations had held onto their share of power, among them, Elba Esther Gordillo, the de facto leader of the National Educational Workers Union (SNTE), the country's largest union.

For example, one of the many conflicts brought about by the new general secretary of the CEN, Gordillo, came about when she was nominated as a deputy by proportional representation without promising to resign from her post in the party structure as stipulated in article 166 of the by-laws recently approved in the eighteenth assembly. Not only that, but from the beginning of the year, she announced that she would head up the PRI caucus in the newly elected Chamber of Deputies.

In the elections for federal deputies elected by district majority, the PRI ran as a coalition with the Green Party of Mexico in 97 districts, and made quite a good showing, coming out with a plurality of 38 percent of the vote, and winning outright 163 districts. This gave the PRI back its plural-

ity in the Chamber of Deputies that it had lost three years before (see table 2).

After the elections, Gordillo managed to impose herself as head of the PRI caucus. As was to be expected, tension in the Chamber of Deputies increased because Gordillo continued to occupy her post as general secretary of the party, openly contravening party by-laws. By October, a group of 70 deputies—a number which later grew even more—called for deposing Gordillo and electing a new head of the caucus because of her frank collaborationism with the PAN administration and her arrogance and temerity in occupying positions of power inside the party. This time the former governor of the State of Mexico, Emilio Chuayfett Chemor, came into the limelight as the new man of the hour. The clash between the two sides in the PRI congressional caucus then spread to PRI governors.

The conflict deepened even more in October for two reasons. One was when Gordillo named only her own

**TABLE 3**  
**LOCKED AND DISPUTED DISTRICTS**  
**CLASSIFIED BY WINNING PARTY (1997, 2000 AND 2003)**

	TYPE OF DISTRICT	NUMBER	%
Locked districts 1997-2003	PAN	40	13.3
	PRI	99	33.0
	PRD	18	6.0
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>157</b>	<b>52.3</b>
Disputed 1997-2003	PAN - PRI	81	27.0
	PAN - PRD	45	15.0
	PRI - PRD	17	5.7
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>143</b>	<b>47.7</b>
<b>Source:</b> Calculations by the author using IFE data from <a href="http://www.ife.org.mx/">http://www.ife.org.mx/</a>			

The PRI has known how to deal  
with the new political-electoral challenges, but its  
internal equilibrium is still fragile.

followers to head up the key Chamber of Deputies committees allotted to the PRI, shunting aside deputies trusted by party president Roberto Madrazo. The other was when she pressured to force the whole PRI caucus to vote in favor of the Fox administration's fiscal proposal to put a VAT tax on medicine and food, an issue discussed in October and November 2003. These were the straws that broke the camel's back. Until that time, Madrazo had been ambivalent about the general secretary's maneuvers during the conflict. But, since Gordillo had already made too many assaults on his supporters and pressure had begun to mount, Madrazo had to concede and begin the process of removing her as head of the caucus.

On December 2, awash in a sea of intense pressure, the extraordinary session of the PRI Standing Political Commission<sup>4</sup> and the National Political Council met to make a call to relieve Gordillo of her post. This was despite the fact that only hours before, the Gordillo bloc had pressured and even threatened deputies aligned in favor of the switch, and that the Gordillo deputies' absented themselves in an attempt to make a quorum impossible. The next day, the PRI caucus met and elected Chuayfett as the new coordinator by 118 votes. Once she was defeated, her support among the governors also waned, since they opted to respect the deputies' decision. That closed, for the time being at least, the chapter of Elba's coup.<sup>5</sup>

During 2004, Gordillo has continued to be the source of polemics since she created a new leadership post inside the SNTE, which she then proceeded to occupy. Later, during the local elections in Aguascalientes and Oaxaca and probably also in Veracruz, she used the union to support gubernatorial candidates opposing the PRI, which led to calls for her expulsion from the party (although this proposal was never implemented).

#### PERSPECTIVES FOR 2006

Thus, 2003 brought the PRI the most important political choices it has had to face as an organization independent of the government and led by an internally limited, but elected national leadership. The party has been transforming itself up to a certain point into a different political organization from what it was before 2000, but it has still not shed many of the old hallmarks of party identity that its long organizational past left indelibly engraved on its internal habits.

Although until now the PRI has been able to deal more or less positively with the challenges of the new political-electoral situation and has managed to avoid the internal power struggles causing splits, it is undeniable that its internal equilibrium is still fragile and precarious. And not only that: many of its actors operate motivated only by vested interests, which makes for a panorama of rather unstable internal alliances.

Leaving behind the anachronistic division between those who disciplined themselves to the nation's president, when the PRI still managed to impose its candidate, and those who rebelled against the government technocracy that used the party as a mere instrument, and going beyond the conflicts arising out of the simple struggle for power, we can also recognize a political-ideological axis that runs through the PRI with different intermediate shades of grey. It goes from those who, under the banner of the old revolutionary nationalism, defend the need to continue to reserve for the state Keynesian economic and social functions, all the way to those who favor a neo-liberal restructuring of the state and the economy.

This makes it difficult to predict the result of the PRI candidate selection process for 2006, particularly the presidential nomination. This will be the PRI's real trial by fire: nominating a presidential candidate without splitting the party and carrying out a coordinated electoral campaign. The precedent set by Gordillo, who frankly and openly violated the by-laws and established external alliances without the party's approval, and the lack of a political response by the national leadership may be an incentive for everyone to ignore the by-laws when the time comes to choose a presidential candidate and launch themselves into a battle without quarter that could seriously fracture the party. Of course, it is also very possible that political pragmatism, something the PRI elites excel at, may also lead them to keep the party together for all of 2006.

The external challenges arising from the election results are still to be met, whether they win or lose the presidency, whether they win a majority in

the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate or not. In both cases, there will be pressures inside the party. From the point of view of the elections themselves, the PRI has two things in its favor: having maintained a constant 38 or 39 percent of the vote in the last three federal elections (1997, 2000 and 2003) and having won one-third of all the seats in elections of federal deputies by district (see table 3). Actually, a great deal seems to depend on how the non-PRI vote is distributed between the PAN and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) in a series of strategic districts. In any case, most probably, their efforts will center on taking the districts where the PAN has a chance of winning, where the result of the federal elections will also

be played out to a great extent. From that point of view, the PRI's hand is not bad, but everything will depend on its knowing how to play its cards. And for that it has to maintain organizational unity, something which is more uncertain. **MM**

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The author refers here, first, to the attempt to transform the party from a corporatist organization based on sectors into one in which the leaderships were picked on a territorial basis. The implementation of the Pronasol program refers to the attempt to subordinate the party to the interests of and support for the National Solidarity Program (Pronasol), the administration's social relief program that covered all aspects (education, health care, housing, food) and was used in a corporatist way to strengthen the government party among the country's poorest population. [Editor's Note.]

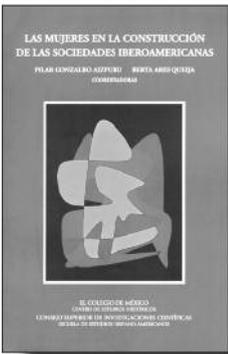
<sup>2</sup> "Elba's coup", or the *elbazo*, refers to PRI General Secretary and Federal Deputy Elba Esther Gordillo's actions: together with a group of followers, she decided to support the Fox administration's fiscal proposals without reaching an internal agreement with the PRI's main political players.

<sup>3</sup> The term "Pemexgate" refers to the scandal about Mexico's state-owned oil giant funneling funds to the PRI presidential campaign through the union. [Editor's Note.]

<sup>4</sup> This structure, made up of National Political Council members, was created by the eighteenth national assembly, and is an intermediate body between the NCP and the PRI's national president.

<sup>5</sup> In PRI insider language, the term "*albazo*" is used to mean that a political group attempts to surprise another group with an unexpected maneuver ahead of scheduled formal events. The term "elbazo", loosely translated as "Elba's coup", is derived from Gordillo's first name, Elba, and refers to her maneuvers during fall of 2003.

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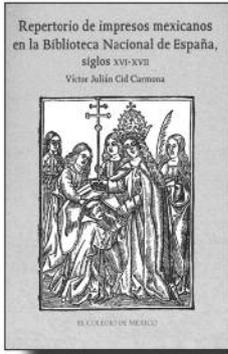
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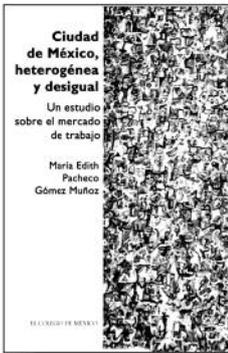
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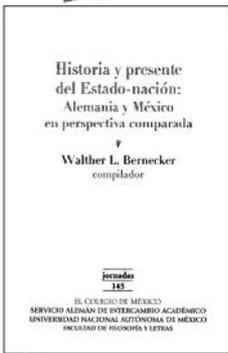


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# Insecurity in Mexico

Luis González Placencia\*



"Missing"

## INTRODUCTION

Since mid-1994, public security has become one of the recurring issues on the country's political agenda. However, amidst the myriad speeches touching on the issue, full of contradictions and confusion, grievances and complaints, two apparent certainties do stand out: people think it is both on the rise and out of control.

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\* Member of the Institute for Security and Democracy.

In addition to the effects of crime on its direct victims, indignation and the inability to find answers has led to a social ethos of toughening up the criminal justice system and a stronger false dichotomy between safeguarding security and protecting civil rights. Therefore, we need to think carefully, going beyond anger, and at the same time avoiding naive positions about the limits and scope of an effective crime policy, capable of situating the problem in the framework of full respect for constitutional guarantees.

Although there are ample reasons to give credence to the importance of the issue in current public discussion (among them, that the existence of a single victim should suffice to render the question of crime important), a look at the facts allows us to hypothesize that there is a significant disproportion between the real magnitude of the problem and the way in which it has been socially constructed and regulated in terms of values. In the space available to me here, I cannot go through all the arguments relevant to this discussion,

some of which I have already developed in other writings.<sup>1</sup> However, it seems relevant to present some of them to prove that insecurity, in terms of statistics and other objective indicators, has not only not increased, but has even tended to decline. Without a doubt, I cannot interpret this tendency as the result of state policy, or attribute it at this time to any other macro-ten-

dency, and for that reason, I will leave that part of the analysis for a later essay. I believe, however, that this analysis can stimulate the debate about a central question: the fact that the figures are frequently used to create an apparent consensus around the idea that crime is on the increase and out of control, with the risk of crime policy being based on that premise.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE  
RESEARCH ON CRIME

Without discussing the limits of empirical information in terms of comparability, trustworthiness and validity, research results in recent years are the most objective indicator of the size of the problem. To present the most complete image possible of insecurity, it seems to me that it is a good idea to simultaneously offer official data, the results of surveys on victimization and the data obtained in these studies about unrecorded crime and the perception of insecurity.

According to Zepeda Lecuona, the average 4,412 daily criminal complaints received nationwide put the country over the international average of 4,047. Mexico's homicide rate (14.8 per 100,000 inhabitants) puts it among the world's top ten countries and among the top four in Latin America. The states with the highest crime rates are Baja California, Mexico City and Quintana Roo.<sup>2</sup>

A Mexican Republic Businessmen's Confederation (Coparmex) study says that most offenders are arrested and charged with crimes like robbery and assault, and the states with the greatest concentration of alleged offenders per 100,000 inhabitants are Sonora, Baja California, Baja California Sur, Colima and Tamaulipas.<sup>3</sup> It is of note that between 1980 and 2000 nationwide, the number of alleged criminals grew three times more than the population.<sup>4</sup> The same organization documented 345 cases of kidnapping in 2002, 160 committed in Mexico City.<sup>5</sup> If we include cases that go unreported, but are known to the organization, the figures jump to 642 nationwide and 230 in the capital (see table 1).

**TABLE 1**  
**INSECURITY NATIONWIDE 2000-2002**

INDICATOR	MAGNITUDE
Crime rate (2000)	4,412 a day on average
Homicide rate (2000)	14.8 homicides a year per 100,000 inhabitants
Kidnappings (2002)	345 reported in the year; 642 committed in the year
Victimization level (2002)	3.7 million people in 2002
Percentage reported (2002)	17%
Number of crimes not reported (2002)	3,071,000
Perception of insecurity	44% feel somewhat or very insecure

According to statistics and other objective indicators, insecurity has not only not increased, but has tended to decline.

**TABLE 2**  
**INSECURITY IN MEXICO CITY'S FEDERAL DISTRICT**  
**JUNE-AUGUST 2004**

INDICATOR	MAGNITUDE
Crimes reported (daily average, major crimes)	257 (July)
Homicides (daily average)	2 (July)
Victimization level	16% (June/August)
Percentage reported	16% (June/August)
Number of crimes not reported	1,018,860 (June/August)
Perception of insecurity	32% (June/August)

To complete the picture, we have to include the results of victimization surveys, which give us a more realistic idea of the magnitude of the problem. The last survey by the Citizens Institute for the Study of Insecurity (ICESI) showed that 3.7 million people were the victim of some crime in the first half of 2002, but that only 17 percent of them made a formal complaint.<sup>6</sup> Based on these figures, we can say that the 3,071,000 crimes went unrecorded in that period.

Finally, an important component of insecurity is the public's perception. From the ICESI survey, we can also conclude that at least 44 percent of those polled said they felt somewhat or very unsafe in their area.

To compare, we can look at what is going on in Mexico City, with the nation's second highest crime rate according to Lecuona's figures, and the highest number of kidnappings according to Coparmex.

In July 2004, the capital's District Attorney's Office figures show that an average 257 of what it considered major crimes crossed its desk every day. Among them, we have two homicides, 86 stolen cars, 36 robberies of businesses, 19 robberies of homes and 55 muggings, as well as at least three rapes.<sup>7</sup>

Data from the quarterly victimization surveys by the *Reforma* daily newspaper shows that in August 2004, victimization in Mexico City was 16 percent, which means that at least three out of every 20 persons were the target of a crime.<sup>8</sup> The survey also reports that 74 percent of victims did not report the crime. Thus, taking into account the population of Mexico City's Federal District (8,605,239, according to the last census), we can say that in

**TABLE 3**  
**VARIATION NATIONWIDE AND IN MEXICO CITY**  
**2001-2002**

INDICATOR	VARIATION 2001-2002	
	NATIONWIDE	MEXICO CITY*
Level of victimization	-12%	+16%
Percentage reported	-32%	+ 8%
Percentage of unreported crimes	+ 3%	+16%
Perception of insecurity	-6.3%	+ 6%

\* Variation of averages of indicator according to *Reforma* newspaper surveys for those years.

A distorted image of insecurity  
makes the public sure that maximizing sentences  
is the way to fight crime.

that quarter, at least 1,376,838 people were victimized, and, of these, 1,018,860 did not report the crime.

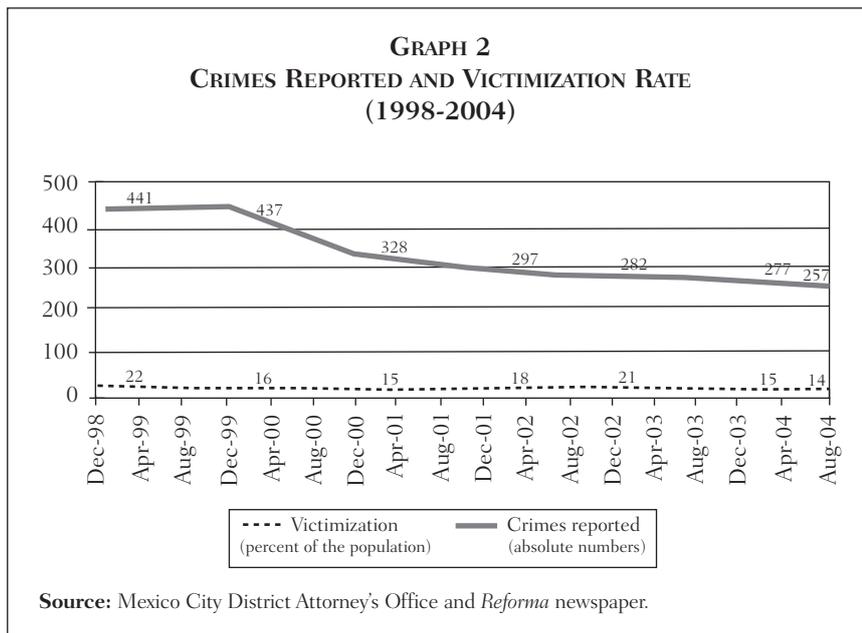
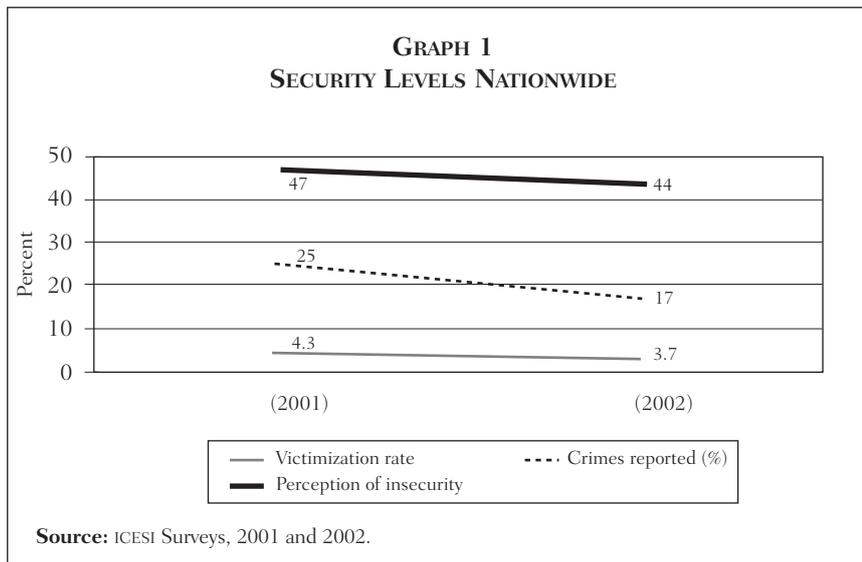
The last *Reforma* survey indicates that 32 percent of those polled thought that insecurity had gotten worse since 2003 (see table 2).

These figures give us a clear idea of the current magnitude of the problem, but they say very little about its gravity, which is a difficult indicator to measure except by using comparative methods. For practical purposes, a reference point for the severity of the phenomenon can be one or two measurements that can be compared with the size of the same variable in the past. On a national level, the results of the recent ICESI survey can be compared with those of the first ICESI poll a year before.<sup>9</sup> Both the Mexico City District Attorney's Office and *Reforma* have kept a record on the city for several years, so that data can also be compared.

Thus, the ICESI studies state that in 2001, 4.2 million people nationwide

were victims of a crime, while in 2002, the figure dropped to 3.7 million. In 2001, 25 percent of victims reported the crime, while in 2002, only 17 percent did, indicating that what increased in that period was not the level of victimization, but the number of crimes that went unrecorded, going from 2,972,230 to 3,071,000. There was also a drop in the perception of insecurity, since the number of people who felt somewhat or very unsafe in their areas dropped from 47 percent in 2001 to 44 percent in 2002 (see graph 1).

In Mexico City's Federal District, according to *Reforma*, between 1998 and 2004 the annual average victimization rate dropped from 24 percent to 14 percent.<sup>10</sup> That is, according to official figures, over the same period, the number of crimes reported dropped from 441 a day in 1998 to 277 in 2003, a decrease of 37 percent (see graph 2). With regard to the public's perception of insecurity, *Reforma* has been able



to document minimal variations between December 2000 and August 2004, showing that an average of 25 percent of those polled think the city is more unsafe. Thus, we can suppose that at least three out of every four people think that it is safer or more or less the same.

Putting aside objections about data-gathering methods, we can still make a new comparison of the size of the variation between national figures and

those of the capital for 2001-2001 (see table 3).

The data from this table allows us to conclude that, at least in Mexico City, the indicators have increased. However, even though the general trend from 1998 to 2004 was a decline, some increases were registered. Unfortunately, we still do not have the national data for 2003 and 2004, which would enable us to evaluate the variation in insecurity throughout the country and

compare it with what seems to be a notable reduction in insecurity in Mexico City. In any case, generally speaking according to the data presented here, insecurity seems to be on the decline and to a certain extent under control.

CONCLUSIONS

I have tried to show in general terms that the interpretation of insecurity figures depends to a great degree on our reading of them. A focus on a cross-section could offer an alarming scenario, but in and of itself it is not enough to calculate the gravity of the problem. A longitudinal reading, on the other hand, offers parameters for comparison that show how the phenomenon changes with time, but depending on the time period chosen, it may hide or show the peaks and valleys that may be decisive for understanding it. To use a well-known metaphor, the idea is to choose between looking at a photograph (the sequence we like the best) or the whole film. From the point of view of someone evaluating this data, the idea is also to take responsibility for what that choice implies, particularly if the judgment made based on it will determine the kinds of measures that should be taken to restrict the phenomenon.

The hypothesis born of this provocation is that, as has already been stated, to put together the value judgments in the discourse about insecurity, reasons are used that only instrumentally refer to the state of insecurity to strengthen their arguments. The problem arises when the possibility of generalizing public or private debates emerges from these arguments, on a level of communications, society, the

economy and politics. When these debates present a distorted image of insecurity, they make the public sure that the only way to fight against increased, uncontrolled crime is by maximizing prison sentences, even if this implies limiting rights.

Considering all of this, my conclusion is that public policies on matters of security and criminal justice cannot be based on the data offered by a changing criminal situation for the simple reason that this would imply making these policies into contingent responses. The criteria for validating that public policy, as we know, are in the Constitution, which establishes the limits and scope that both crime preven-

tion and the administration of justice must not exceed. **MM**

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Luis González Placencia, "La concepción sistémica de la seguridad en México (o la secreta adscripción del discurso preventivo a la razón de estado)," *Nueva Sociedad* 167, May-June 2000, pp. 87-98; and "El modelo de la seguridad, contra el sistema de justicia penal," *Diálogo y debate de la cultura política* 12, April-June 2000, pp. 53-75.

<sup>2</sup> Guillermo Zepeda Lecuona, "Entre la delincuencia y la impunidad: el desempeño de las instituciones de procuración de justicia penal frente a los desafíos de la seguridad ciudadana," *Debate* 4 at [http://www.debate.iteso.mx/numero\\_4/index.htm](http://www.debate.iteso.mx/numero_4/index.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Centro de Estudios del Sector Privado, A.C., "La inseguridad pública en México," *Entorno* (September 2002), available at <http://www.coparmex.org.mx/contenidos/publicaciones/Entorno/2002/sep02.htm>

[coparmex.org.mx/contenidos/publicaciones/Entorno/2002/sep02.htm](http://www.coparmex.org.mx/contenidos/publicaciones/Entorno/2002/sep02.htm)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> <http://icesi.org.mx/icesi-org-mx/images/contenidos/secuestros2002.gif>

<sup>6</sup> ICESI, Segunda encuesta nacional sobre inseguridad en las entidades federativas, 2002, at <http://icesi.org.mx>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.pgjdf.gob.mx/estadisticas/index.asp>

<sup>8</sup> P. Méndez, "Salen con miedo al hampa," *Reforma* (Mexico City), 16 August 2004.

<sup>9</sup> ICESI, Primera encuesta nacional sobre inseguridad en las entidades federativas, 2001 at <http://icesi.org.mx>

<sup>10</sup> J. Carrasco and J. Abreu, "Inseguridad: más miedo que delitos," *Reforma* (Mexico City), 12 December 2000, and P. Méndez, "Temer ir a cajeros," *Reforma* (Mexico City), 13 November 2003.



*Laura Valencia Escamilla*

- La pluralidad política y su impacto en la disciplina parlamentaria

*Miguel Moctezuma L.*

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# Civil Society Against Free Trade in Mexico

## Part 1

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Gilberto Molina/Cuartoscuro

In 1988, in the introduction to the classic book *Primer Informe sobre la Democracia* (First Report on Democracy), a publication that also happened to include Mexico's first-ever NGO human rights report, Pablo González Casanova stated that the increasing deterioration of the population's living standards was caused by the neo-

liberal discourse shaping economics. This, he said, would only change if a government controlled by the people replaced the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), a rather difficult objective in his opinion due to the lack of democratic conditions in the country at the time.

González Casanova's statement was not simply the expression of a personal opinion; it also neatly summarized

the underlying argument of what was to become the major strategic goal of civil society in the 1990s: democratic elections. Throughout the 1990s, democratic elections were constructed as the means to challenge the status quo supporting the economic discourse that was reshaping the country's social arrangements. Furthermore, democracy was the discourse facilitating unity among the social movements and non-government-

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tal organizations (NGOs) affected by economic re-structuring. Expressed in terms devised by Édouard Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, democracy was the first discourse acting as the nodal point extending the chain of equivalence for hegemonic articulation against the hegemonic forces imposing neoliberal policies. Nevertheless, since 2000 this situation has been changing. Human rights are replacing democracy as the chain of equivalence against free trade.

Before going any further, it is necessary to explain in detail Laclau and Mouffe's idea of hegemonic articulation.<sup>1</sup> In their discourse theoretical framework the idea of "hegemonic articulation" comes from the Gramscian concept of hegemony. For Gramsci, hegemony means political as well as moral-intellectual leadership aimed at forming a collective will with a national-popular character (a new collective identity), with the objective of controlling politics, the economy and civil society, at the level of democratic politics. But Gramsci gave social classes an ontologically privileged role in the struggle for hegemony because of their structural position at the level of the relations of production.

In Laclau and Mouffe, however, all identities have the same ontological status and none of them possess a fundamental character. The moment of hegemony is thus a moment of re-articulation of all the differences within the totality called discourse—which they define as a relational totality, a system of differences that includes both linguistic and non-linguistic elements; a discursive structure that has no fixed center and thus has no closure. Hegemonic articulations are the contingent expansion of a discourse for the purpose of fixing meaning among

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different identities vis-à-vis an antagonistic force, through the use of nodal points.

The nodal points around which hegemony is achieved must comply with conditions: they must be empty signifiers and work as chains of equivalence between the identities informing the system. On the one hand, an empty signifier is, strictly speaking, a signifier without a signified. The presence of empty signifiers is the very condition of hegemony. Emptying a specific signifier of its particular, differential signified is what makes possible the emergence of empty signifiers as the signifiers of a lack, of an absent totality. This relation by which a particular content becomes the signifier of the absent communitarian fullness is what Laclau calls hegemonic relationship. A nodal point becomes an empty signifier for hegemonic purposes depending on the context.

On the other hand, chain of equivalence is an empty signifier that subverts meaning so that differences cancel one another out insofar as they are used to express something identical underlying them all. It is not something positive that all of them share which establishes their unity, but something negative: their opposition to a common enemy. The community created by this equivalential expansion will be the pure idea of a communitarian fullness which is absent—as a result of the presence of the repressive power.

My argument is, then, that democracy certainly managed to function as

a nodal point achieving a chain of equivalence for the different struggles opposing economic globalization. However, as electoral democracy has been progressively achieved from 1997, when Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas won the mayoral elections in Mexico City, to 2000, when Vicente Fox became the first opposition president since the ruling PRI was set up in 1929, democracy has ceased to play that role. It no longer represents a unified socio-political opposition to an antagonistic agent.

Through analysis of the construction of free trade as an object of human rights discourse and observing how human rights has come to be used increasingly in the struggle against free trade in Mexico over a 10-year period (1991-2001),<sup>2</sup> I contend that human rights is now replacing democratic discourse—at least the discourse of electoral democracy advanced until 2000—because it became obsolete after the first democratic elections were held in the country. Over the last 20 years human rights discourse in Mexico has changed to include issues related to free trade, thereby extending the chain of equivalence to encompass many of the NGO networks and social movements involved in the struggle for fair trade. It is therefore becoming increasingly hegemonic.

I will develop this twofold argument in a two-part series. The first part explains how democracy raised as a chain of equivalence (1991-1997). I will then discuss why and how electoral democracy and human rights dis-

The 1988 electoral fraud made it clear that achieving electoral democracy and effecting all the desirable changes to the economy was going to be a long and difficult struggle that required a collective effort.

courses entered the Mexican political arena, and how a very young and limited Mexican human rights discourse was first constructed as a simple object of democratic discourse through the development of political rights. In the second part, to be published in the next issue of *Voices of Mexico*, I will talk about how human rights have changed through time, broadening sufficiently to include free trade as an object and thus a desirable empty signifier suitable for current struggles against free trade.

#### DEMOCRACY AND THE SUBORDINATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DISCOURSE

In the 1980s the Mexican economy drastically changed with the imposition of neoliberal discourse through structural adjustment programs. This led to the demise of Keynesian discourse and thus of the Mexican welfare state. There were two major socio-economic consequences of these changes. One, the deterioration of living standards due to the control of wages (low wages as a comparative advantage) and the reduction of social expenditure (health, education, subsidies for basic foods, housing). Two, the collapse of corporatist relationships between the state, unions and farmers' groups. The result of the simultaneous deterioration of socio-economic conditions and corporatist relationships was that people organized indepen-

dently in order to oppose the imposition of neoliberal policies. The response of the government was repression of social leaders, journalists, independent union leaders and students.

At the same time, although economic liberalization was imposed without similar reforms in the political arena, the ruling party could not prevent the introduction of new discourses, particularly democracy and human rights, which the left was willing to adopt due to the rise of democratic social movements in Eastern Europe and the eventual collapse of authoritarian socialist regimes—the Third Democratic Wave. The Mexican government, which wanted to join multilateral trade organizations and eventually sign a free trade agreement with the U.S. and Canada, had to tolerate and adopt the new discourses—which were also encouraged by neoliberalism itself—setting up institutions and enforcing legal changes. As the government had to cope with those discourses in order to acquire legitimacy in the eyes of the world, they became political opportunities for social struggle.

The writings of organic intellectuals of the time and pioneer human rights NGOs, like Sergio Aguayo Quezada and Miguel Concha Malo,<sup>3</sup> clearly refer to the strategic use of electoral democracy discourse for the wider struggle against neoliberalism in the manner explained at the beginning of this essay: electoral democracy was discursively constructed as the means to get a truly people-ruled government willing to reverse

neoliberal policies and to achieve social justice.

For their part, human rights were constructed as mere objects within the discourse of democracy. They were seen as a means to tackle the lack of liberty prevailing in the country and the state's selective violence toward the subjects of democracy: independent farmers and union leaders, students and journalists. At this point human rights failed to achieve hegemony for two reasons. The first has to do with the fact that human rights was a very new discourse in Mexico—it entered the country in the early 1980s via two important human rights defenders from El Salvador who launched a solidarity campaign with Central America in Mexico City which was later joined by local intellectuals and activists who would subsequently set up the first human rights NGOs in 1984. Since it was new and was imported from a region at war, human rights discourse included only the issues related to state violence: execution, forced disappearance, arbitrary detention, torture and other violations of the physical integrity of people who could otherwise express themselves freely.

Second, the 1988 electoral fraud made it clear that the PRI would not leave office without a struggle.<sup>4</sup> This event indicated that achieving electoral democracy and effecting all the desirable changes to the economy was going to be a long and difficult struggle that required a collective effort, including that of human rights defenders whose task was to defend those in the front line, those who were detained, tortured, held incommunicado, etc.

In 1991, an issue emerged that confirmed democracy as a chain of equivalence in the wider struggle against

neoliberal economics. Almost a year after the Mexican government started negotiations for the creation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (April 1991), a network bringing together social and civil organizations, as well as unions and farmers' groups, was set up: the Mexican Free Trade Action Network (RMALC). Its general objective was immediately inscribed in the larger chain of equivalence of democratic discourse. The RMALC claimed that it was not set up "in opposition to the idea of negotiating a trade agreement with the U.S. and Canada, but in the search for a development project alternative to neoliberalism, and within the struggle for the transition to democracy."<sup>5</sup>

According to its early documents, the RMALC was inscribed in the democratic chain of equivalence not only in terms of demanding clean elections for an eventual change in the economic model for a type of policy based on economic sovereignty and self-determination. Organizations and groups also pursued the democratic objective of active participation in decision making related to the signature of NAFTA, which they wanted to include compensatory policies aimed at tackling the possible consequences of the progressive elimination of tariffs between countries possessing enormous economic asymmetries.<sup>6</sup> Carlos Heredia stated, "The relationship between the struggle for democratization and the debate about free trade is direct and very important: what used to be a space reserved for political parties and organizations has been transformed into a space where proposals generated by society are also discussed".<sup>7</sup>

As for human rights discourse, once it was consolidated in 1990 with the

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creation of the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH), it started to expand and thus clearly became a discourse in its own right. However, its expansion was conducted subordinate to the democratic chain of equivalence. This was due to the fact that, after originally including issues related to political repression, i.e. violations of the right to physical integrity and security, to life, to justice and to freedom of expression, association and opinion, through murder, torture, illegal and incommunicado detention, execution, etc., the discourse was extended so as to include impunity and non-political abuses, but also political rights such as the rights to be elected to office and to vote in democratic elections.

On the one hand, the historical analysis of violations and the increasing development of expertise (mainly in the field of law) added structural issues to the agenda: impunity and police abuse, as well as violations perpetrated by the military in the fight against drug trafficking. On the other hand, two events helped the expanding discourse to include political rights. First, in 1990 and 1991 the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights of the Organization of American States (OAS), issued a resolution in relation to local electoral processes in Chihuahua, Durango and Nuevo León states in the second half of the 1980s. Advanced by the rightist National Action Party (PAN), the complaints led to the commission's decision that the federal government had violated articles 2, 23 and 25 of

the American Convention of Human Rights as it had failed to respect Mexicans' right to participate in authentic democratic elections, and also failed to provide the legislative framework for people who wanted to lodge a complaint if they believed that their political rights had been violated. The resolution had an enormous impact since it not only widened the discourse by transforming the typical PRI behavior during elections into a violation of a universal entitlement, but also added mechanisms for argumentation to the larger democratic cause.<sup>8</sup>

Second, during midterm elections in 1991, human rights NGOs that had been actively and consciously seeking to extend the human rights agenda to include the wider struggle for democracy, like the Mexican Academy of Human Rights and the over 40 NGOs that belonged to the Civil Organizations Network "All Rights for All" (RTDT), carried out electoral observations in Mexico City and states where local elections were going to take place, including San Luis Potosí, Guanajuato, Jalisco and Coahuila. Once again the PRI defrauded citizens, and a strong citizen movement explicitly defending political rights sprang up all over the country. Their leader was senior democracy activist Salvador Nava, the gubernatorial candidate for a coalition of all the opposition parties, both local and national. With the 1991 electoral fraud providing human rights violations data —manipulation and buying of votes, media partiality, and dishonest

With the 1991 electoral fraud providing human rights violations data the political rights recognized by the Inter-American Commission became the object of human rights discourse in Mexico.

handling of the voter list—the political rights recognized by the Inter-American Commission became the object of human rights discourse in Mexico. In addition, denouncing politically related abuses of civil rights such as murder and detention were also extended to political party leaders.

Due to the fact it was expanding so as to include some of the main objectives of the democratic cause, human rights could be included in the free trade agenda forwarded by the RMALC in 1991. Despite the fact that just a handful of national human rights NGOs joined the network in its early stages,<sup>9</sup> human rights issues were included in their very early documents and events, although as part of their “democratic demands” rather than in terms of an interpretation framework for the potentially negative impact of the terms of NAFTA upon Mexicans—mainly economic-social-cultural rights (ESCR) related issues.

During the International Forum “Public Opinion and Negotiation of the Free Trade Agreement: Citizen Alternatives”, held in Zacatecas, Mexico, October 25-27, 1991, a human rights agenda for the anti-free trade struggle, adopted by human rights groups and lasting almost 10 years (with very slight variations attributed to political conjuncture),<sup>10</sup> was drawn up including two types of demands. First, issues related to the institutional expansion of human rights discourse, especially signature by the parties involved of all United Nations human rights instru-

ments. Second, the so-called traditional abuses, which were linked to the political repression of social and political leaders, police abuse in civil contexts, and military abuse in anti-drug trafficking operations. No free trade-related abuses of ESCR were included.

The link between democracy and free trade was reinforced in 1994 with the Zapatista uprising, an event that defended indigenous identity in opposition to NAFTA—something the Zapatistas said negated their very existence because it excluded them—and demonstrated support for democracy in a wider sense than that advanced thus far, which concentrated on electoral democracy. Although the Zapatistas did emphasize presidential elections, which were due to take place that year, they also drew attention to the conditions of extreme poverty in which indigenous people lived and who as a collectivity lacked basic services such as water, decent housing, education and health. Consequently, the Zapatistas forced organizations to finally discuss something that had been part of their rhetoric for a long time: the fulfilment of economic, social and cultural rights and collective rights, especially of indigenous peoples, as a precondition for democracy. They forced organizations to consider widening both democracy and human rights discourses.

Nevertheless, democracy would not last long as a chain of equivalence after this because the first democratic elections were held in the country (the Party of the Democratic Revolution [PRD]

won local elections in Mexico City in 1997 without PRI attempts of electoral fraud). As clean elections were increasingly a fulfilled objective, democracy as a chain of equivalence was no longer making sense. This was reaffirmed in 2000, when PAN candidate Vicente Fox became the first president from a party other than the PRI, the party which had held power since its inception in 1929. **NM**

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Édouard Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* (London: Verso, 1990) and Édouard Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> This research has been conducted with the extensive use of original documents and personal interviews with major human rights figures in Mexico.

<sup>3</sup> See Sergio Aguayo Quezada, “The inevitability of Democracy in Mexico,” Riordan Roett, ed., *Political and Economic Liberalization in Mexico: at a critical juncture?* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1993), pp. 117-126, and Miguel Concha Malo, ed., *Los derechos políticos como derechos humanos* (Mexico City: La Jornada Ediciones/CIH-UNAM, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> From 1982 economists educated at Yale, Chicago and Harvard began to occupy top positions in the federal government and implemented structural adjustment programs for the liberalization of the country’s economy. The consequence was that the PRI split into at least two groups: those using neoliberal discourse, and those defending the social achievements of the 1910 Mexican Revolution (social rights recognized in the federal Constitution) and economic and political sovereignty in relation to U.S. pressure for economic liberalization. As the 1988 presidential elections approached, a group of prominent PRI members left the party, including Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the son of Lázaro Cárdenas, the Mexican president who promoted socialist policies in the 1930s and nationalized the oil industry, then in the hands of foreigners. Cárdenas became the presidential candidate of several left opposition parties and was supported by trade unions and farmers’ organizations—

including some of the corporatized groups that became aware of their loss of power in the new socio-economic arrangements imposed by neoliberalism— as well as social and civil organizations. People who once rejected electoral politics decided to vote, probably because of the discrediting of socialist regimes and the worldwide mood for democracy. Voting was massive in 1988 and it is widely believed that Cárdenas won the election, but the PRI, which completely controlled the electoral system, manipulated the information and the data thus awarding victory to its own candidate, Harvard-educated Carlos Salinas de Gortari. As people demonstrated against the electoral fraud, Salinas replied with the assassination, arbitrary detention, incarceration and disappearance of Cárdenas sympathizers. Former socialist leaders and PRI detractors set up the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) in 1989, members of which were persecuted and killed throughout the first half of the 1990s.

<sup>5</sup> A. Arroyo Picard and M.B. Monroy, *Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio. 5 años de lucha* (1991-1996) (Mexico City: RMALC, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio, *Memoria de Zacatecas. 25, 26 y 27 de octubre de 1991. La opinión pública y las negociaciones del Tratado de Libre Comercio: Alternativas ciudadanas* (Mexico City: RMALC, 1991) and Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio, *Promesas a cumplir. La agenda inconclusa para los derechos humanos y la justicia económica en las Américas. Declaración y recomendaciones de los organismos comprometidos con la sociedad civil para la Cumbre de las Américas* (Miami: RMALC, 1994), p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Carlos Heredia, "Las ONGs y el Tratado de Libre Comercio," Manuscript presented at the "III Encuentro Nacional de Convergencia de Organismos Civiles por la Democracia," Tlaxcala, Mexico, 27-28 May 1991, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Concha Malo, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> In the list of organizations and groups that founded RMALC in April 1991 there are no human rights organizations. There is the National Front of Democratic Lawyers, but none of the mainstream human rights NGOs are included.

Two of them did appear as active participants during the meetings of the International Forum "Public Opinion and Negotiation of the Free Trade Agreement: Citizen Alternatives," held in Zacatecas, Mexico, 25-27 October, 1991.

<sup>10</sup> The conjunctural extension was mostly related to political repression of new groups. For instance, in 1993 the rights of migrant workers would be included in the so-called social agenda, mainly directed at getting governments to include labor and environmental issues. Nevertheless, as governments refused to include migration issues, and the U.S. stepped up its border controls to prevent Mexicans from crossing, migration became a human rights issue related to police abuse on the border. Another example is the 1994 Zapatista uprising. As the Mexican government was preparing for the trade agreements with the Western Hemisphere and the European Union, human rights NGOs included in their demands the demilitarization of the region of conflict and the cancellation of arrest warrants for Zapatista leaders. A notable exception was of course the demand for the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights.



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# Citizens' Participation In the Mexican State

Pedro Félix Gutiérrez Turrubiarres\*



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## THE APORIA OF THE MEXICAN STATE AND SOCIAL DEMANDS

The long history of civil society, its organizations and the government being at loggerheads is not accidental; it is related to the structure and operation of the Mexican political system in the last century, and, more recently, with the way crises and the transition to another political regime have been managed. Villanueva's ideas can help us to understand this better: "In the hegemonic and monopolistic structure of political mediation inherent in the post-revolutionary political system, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) put itself at the center of relations between society and the government, taking over all society's tasks of representation and political participation. For this reason, civic organizations that by nature were different from, hostile to or reticent about these styles, principles or forms of political legitimization inherent in this system of 'legitimacy by negotiation' were excluded instead of democratically justifying themselves and making society move forward."<sup>1</sup>

It is also useful to review what Alberto Aziz Naciff proposes: "Certain ideological arrangements become a culture and create institutions because they put

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most recent examples of citizens' participation was the June 27 march in which thousands of people, outraged by the insecurity in Mexico City and the rest of the country, joined together to cry out collectively, aware of living in times of crisis, refusing to be dominated by confusion, demanding the right to exist and participate,

and showing their willingness to move forward to appropriate the public space and express legitimate demands about common concerns. This positions civil society in a different way because it is taking on demands and the tasks of a weakened state that had promised that Mexico was going to go through a substantial change and make dazzling progress. All of those promises have been mere speculation, because since 1982, when Mexico really opened its doors to the world economy, free trade, privatization and financial crises, intolerable poverty has been created.

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the revolutionary project into practice. Some of these symbols are free public education, the *ejido* collective farm, the agrarian reform, 'protection of workers', the corporatist structure of vertical control and, later on, the spreading coverage of health and housing policies. This was the basis on which the legitimacy of revolutionary governments was built, which for decades were 'popular', 'industrious', 'revolutionary'. They brought together a country and safeguarded its great transformations: from rural to urban, from illiterate to literate and from local strongmen to institutions....For decades, it was the state party and the presidency that kept the country together through pacts and rules —both written and unwritten— that were the basis for an authoritarian state and a closed economy."<sup>2</sup>

The parameters for looking at the government from the standpoint of society were stability and growth. Authoritarianism and society's lack of autonomy were "compensated" by a redistribution of wealth and peace in the public sphere. Votes in a ritual, non-competitive electoral system were shored up by corporatized sectors: the Workers Confederation of Mexico (CTM), the National Peasant Confederation (CNC), the Regional Worker Peasant Confederation (CROC), the different businessmen's associations, among others. In this country there was no democracy, no citizenry, no partisan competition, no freedom of expression, no open economy. There were no autonomous social actors and those that did exceptionally emerge were repressed: the railroad workers, doctors, oil workers and student movements.

What did exist was great class integration of popular coalitions, of economic and political elites, and a state with

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a revolutionary discourse and broad-coverage social policies, laws that were obeyed but not enforced, and a vision of time that very clearly established a revolutionary past, an institutional present and a future of progress and justice. In this country there was a view of the world, a PRI revolutionary hegemony that has come to an end.

In its place now we have fragmented visions, recurring crises, a citizenry-as-work-in-progress, ferocious competition for power, alternation in office (federal, state and municipal), an open, globalized economy, a highly polarized society, plus inhabitants living in extreme poverty with few alternatives for integrating themselves into development and globalization. Accompanying this model, we see guerrilla movements, crisis in the administration of justice and public violence and insecurity with political, social and family origins. So, revolution has been left behind and the country of democracy has not yet finished establishing itself.

In this context, we should ask ourselves what society's participation has been like and how society views the government, since the problems it faces about social demands are more and more complex and insufficiently attended to.

#### SOCIAL COORDINATION AND AUTONOMOUS LEADERSHIPS

The social coordination promoted by autonomous leaderships in Mexico has

its history, transcendence and specificities if we agree with Norberto Bobbio that civil society is the sphere of relations among individuals, groups and organizations that develop outside governmental relations of power.<sup>3</sup>

Villalobos says, "In civil society we encounter two large blocks: a for-profit sector identified with companies producing goods and services and the non-profit sector, which also organizes to offer goods and services to the community."<sup>4</sup>

Valdez and Hernández maintain that the history of philanthropy in Mexico has three differentiated periods: the first stretches from the colonial period to the time when public welfare institutions were established; the second is nineteenth-century philanthropy, mainly under the presidency of Porfirio Díaz; the third is philanthropy in modern Mexico. The last period is divided into four stages: relief (1950-1960); development (1960-1970); liberation (1970-1980); and criticism (1980-1990).<sup>5</sup>

The experiences of the Monte de Piedad Pawn Shop (founded in 1876) and the Mexico City Council for Private Relief (founded in 1889) were left by the wayside. In the 1960s, the United States created the Alliance for Progress to counter the Cuban Revolution's possible "expansionism." The Mexican Social Secretariat, founded in 1923, is the charitable arm of the Catholic Church; in the 1960s, it published the encyclical "The Progress of Peoples."<sup>6</sup> At the same time, a large

number of civic organizations were created: the National Center for Social Communication, S.A. [Cencos]; the San Luis Potosí Women's Institute [IMES]; the Rural Development Training Center [Cecader]; the Mexican Community Development Institute [Imedec], etc.) and the bishops organized the Mutual Union of Episcopal Aid (UMAE).<sup>7</sup>

In the 1970s, two strains became visible among non-profit organizations: those that aid others and those that work to change the political, economic and social structures generated by poverty and injustice. This was how the Mexican Foundation for Rural Development and the first foundations created by banks like Banamex and Bancomer to promote culture were born.

Social activists, for their part, created Cencos, Popular Development Promotion, Peasant Action and the Center for Ecumenical Studies. The individual experience of Mexican intellectuals was brought to bear in the creation of Humani International and in the defense of urban spaces for art.<sup>8</sup>

The memory of 1968 and the 1985 earthquakes became milestones in the country's modern history. Given the government's inability to respond to the magnitude of the earthquakes' effects, thousands and thousands of people went out into the streets to solve the problem, very effectively and rapidly creating mechanisms to feed and house the victims and rescue people from the rubble.

Those were years of the emergence of new social actors and organizations, among them environmental and feminist groups, the self-organization of the popular and professionals' movements, the creation of networks, collectives and negotiating bodies.

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The 1988 elections marked the beginning of a new era in Mexico: the official party lost but denied the opposition its victory. In 1989, citizens of the Democratic Republic of Germany tore down the Berlin Wall; the Sandinistas lost the elections; and Mexico's "modernizing" project followed the path of neo-liberalism. The North American Free Trade Agreement coming into effect in 1994 brought with it the illusion of entering into the First World, and that same day, the Zapatista rebellion broke out. It was clear that we were not the First World, and that there are an infinite number of social gaps waiting to be filled and that the number of poor is increasing.

After the NGOs initial surprise at the emergence of 100,000 citizens' committees financed by the Ministry of Social Development (Sedesol), a consensus was reached to "influence in the design of public policies, promote them and monitor their implementation. The NGOs argue for the need to act as a counterweight to the authorities and as a social auditor of government action."<sup>9</sup>

For their part, international bodies, donor governments and cooperation agencies took other kinds of action, and the NGOs had to take on their proposals. Institutional life, then, was being strengthened. National networks were created, like for example Convergence (1990) and the National Council of Non-Governmental Organizations,<sup>10</sup> the Forum of Mutual Aid (1992), the Civic Alliance (1994), the Mexican Human

Rights Network (1991), the Front for the Right to Food, the Civic Space for Peace (1992) and the Mexican Collective to Support Children. In addition, there were service clubs, the different businessmen's, religious, peasant, academic and cultural organizations.

In 1995, it was agreed that it was necessary to create a commission of citizen's participation in the Chamber of Deputies to discuss matters pertaining to the country's NGOs and their legal operating framework. A year-long consultation was carried out to write a bill. Six bodies are involved in the regulatory framework: the Senate, the Chamber of Deputies, the Ministry of the Interior, the President's Office, and the Finance and Foreign Relations Ministries.

Enrique Brito says that civil society emerged slowly but inexorably from the depths of social reality, participating increasingly and consolidating a national project more and more. He talks about a 30-year period from 1968 to 1998 with a logical sequence of social events: the 1968 movement, the October 2, 1968 massacre, the 1977 political reforms, the popular mobilizations and grassroots organizations in the 1985 earthquake, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas's break with the Institutional Revolutionary Party in 1987, the 1988 democratic movement and the 1994 armed uprising.

Concluding that civil society's relationship with the government has not been either smooth or replete with mutual trust, its presence can no longer

Civil society emerged slowly but inexorably from the depths of social reality, participating increasingly and consolidating a national project more and more.

be overlooked. Civil society has moved closer to the legislative branch, because the latter has shown interest in finding out about the concerns, points of view and above all the many issues that these organizations work on: political reform, human rights, peace, street children, women, environmental problems, vulnerable groups, productive projects and poverty.<sup>11</sup>

#### INVENTORY OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

The experiences of the Mexican Center for Philanthropy (Cemefi) (1995), the Mutual Support Forum (1996), the Ministry of the Interior (1994) and the National Social Development Institute (1998), among others, have been left behind by the reality of society. It is estimated that more than 8,000 non-governmental organizations exist in Mexico, including those registered as civic associations and public assistance institutions and those with no official standing. They work in different areas: health, social development, education, human rights, science and technology, art, productive projects, vulnerable groups, electoral monitoring and culture. However, traditional work more closely linked to relief and assistance continues to exist.

In 1968, A. Flower summarized the advantages of NGO work vis-à-vis that of governmental efforts: since they are centered on people, they have more skills for reaching the poor; they get

beneficiaries to participate; they find the correct ratio between development processes and achievements; they pick the right way of helping; they are flexible; they are skilled in experimenting; they are innovative, and they learn more quickly from their experiences.<sup>12</sup>

The new Law for Fostering Social Development Activities, which regulates civic organizations' activities, points out the importance of creating a legal framework to strengthen NGOs. It recognizes citizens' capability of organizing themselves autonomously for active, voluntary, solidarity-based collaboration in attending to the needy. The law stipulates that Mexico has a vigorous, growing number of civic associations committed to social welfare whose actions must be fostered by the state, and also affirms the need for a new relationship between the state and society based on legality and co-responsibility.

Citizens' participation is an effective tool in the implementation of public policy, and their actions have contributed experience and philanthropic capability toward achieving sustainable development that stimulates society's qualitative and quantitative growth. Recognizing this, we are now going to discuss, analyze and confirm that commitment, leaving behind the individualization of social processes and contributing to a new form of ordering society, building citizenship and superseding spiritual immaturity. This is because the Mexican state must be built side by side with its citizens, without

vacuums, without false prophets, now that social processes are no longer decided by dictum or force. **MM**

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Luis F. Aguilar Villanueva, "Las organizaciones civiles y el gobierno mexicano," *Sociedad civil, análisis y debates*, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Alberto Aziz Naciff, "Miradas de fin de siglo," *Sociedad civil, análisis y debates*, 1997, pp. 61-62.

<sup>3</sup> Norberto Bobbio, as quoted by Jorge Grzybowski Villalobos, *Las organizaciones de la sociedad civil en México, visión general* (Mexico City: Cemefi, A.C., 1977), n/p.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, n/p.

<sup>5</sup> Cuauhtémoc Valdez Olmedo and Concepción Hernández Rodríguez, *Estado actual y perspectivas de la investigación sobre la filantropía en México* (Mexico City: Cemefi/Fundación Mexicana para la Salud, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> "In 1967, in the encyclical about 'The Progress of Peoples,' Pope Paul VI said that development was the new name for peace and, prophetically, denounced capitalism as an 'evil system' and as the 'international imperialism of money.'" <http://www.sjsocial.org/relat/60.htm> [Editor's Note.]

<sup>7</sup> The Mexican Bishops' Conference (CEM) became interested in planning the work of its different bodies. A precursor in pastoral planning nationwide was the Mutual Union of Episcopal Aid (UMAE), which in the end grouped most of Mexico's dioceses and was later taken on board by the Episcopal Joint Pastoral Commission, charged with designing a National Pastoral Plan. [Editor's Note.]

<sup>8</sup> Humani International is an institution created by Dr. José Jesús Fonseca Villa in 1970.

<sup>9</sup> Rubén Aguilar Valenzuela, "Las ONG de desarrollo y democracia interna: una aproximación," Jorge Alonso and Juan Manuel Ramírez, comps., *La democracia de los de abajo en México* (Mexico City: La Jornada Ediciones/Consejo Electoral del Estado de Jalisco/Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias-UNAM, 1997).

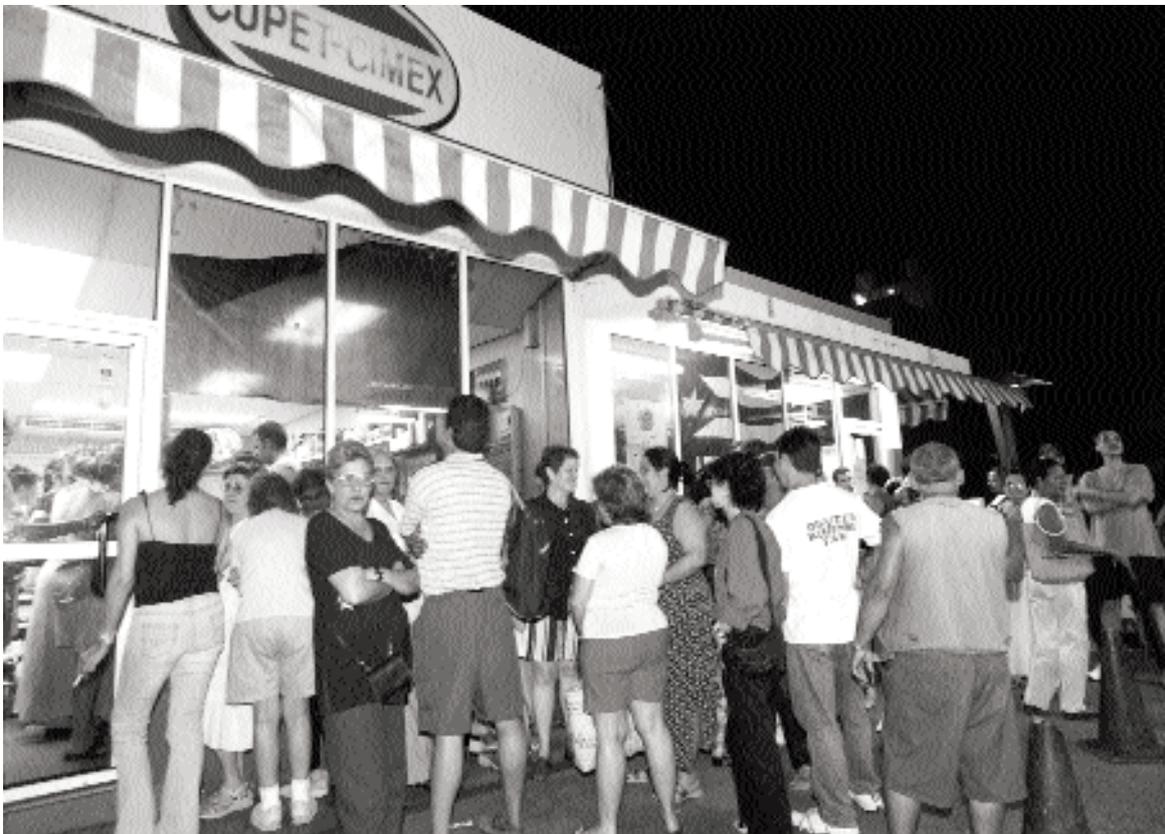
<sup>10</sup> A network that exists in 27 states and has more than 2,000 grassroots affiliates with different kinds of activities.

<sup>11</sup> Enrique Brito Velázquez, *Sociedad civil en México, análisis y debates*, 1997.

<sup>12</sup> A. Flower, "Non-governmental organizations in Africa: Achieving comparative advantage in relief and micro-development," discussion paper no. 249 (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Development Studies, 1968).

# Consumption, Economic Theory And the American Way of Life

Pablo Ruiz Nápoles\*



Claudia Daut/Reuters

## CONSUMPTION AND UTILITY AS A MEASURE OF VALUE

For contemporary economic theory, in general, consumption, the satisfaction of human needs, is the final aim of economic activity. As a result, all stages of

the economic process (production, circulation and distribution of goods and services) are attendant on it. Even the value placed on economic goods and the activities needed to produce them occurs from the perspective of consumption—understood in the broad sense—as we will try to show.

With the emergence and development of industrial capitalist society,

a corresponding economic theory was built based on the study of the functioning of the competitive market, as the fundamental institution for the assignment of resources needed for producing goods and services and their distribution through the mechanism of prices determined by the free play of supply and demand in specific markets of goods and productive factors.

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In the nineteenth century, the first developments of this theory emphasized the determination of the real cost of goods due to abstinence (by the capitalist or rentier) and labor (of factory or agricultural workers). In the words of Eric Roll, the renowned historian of economic thought, putting an equals sign between abstinence and labor weakened the theory; for that reason, there was a move toward a totally subjective establishment of value of goods using the concept of “utility,” which was a real revolution in economic thought. True to Roll, this revolution was also a long time in the making, with the value determined by utility—not unrelated to Marx’s theory of use value—and was mainly attributable to the so-called Austrian school: the Englishman Jevons, the Austrian Menger and the Swiss Walras.

This was the decisive step that differentiated modern from classical theory: the complete abandonment of the labor theory of value, replaced by the theory of marginal utility. This theory establishes that each person, as a consumer, assigns the value of each good according to the utility of that good upon consumption. As the consumer has more and more of this good, his/her level of satisfaction increases and, as a result, the utility decreases so that the marginal utility diminishes. This is how the theory of individual demand is built, in which quantity decreases vis-à-vis price, a fundamental element of modern economics. The sum of individual demands constitutes market demand, which also declines.

This presupposes similar behavior on the part of all consumers. This has been called the consumer’s rational behavior and is the basis of all demand theory.

This recent theory immediately claimed universal validity in two senses: 1) as an economic criterium to be followed by all the agents that participated in the process of exchange (production would also be seen as an exchange); 2) as applicable to any historic period and almost any region or country. The maximization of utility thus becomes the mechanism—conscious or unconscious—of *homo economicus*, an idea initially sketched out by Adam Smith, although from the perspective of production, instead of from that of consumption

We could say that, in essence, the theory of welfare economics developed

The decisive step that differentiated modern from classical theory was the replacement of the labor theory of value with the theory of marginal utility.

initially by Vilfredo Pareto is based on these concepts of utility and rationality. This means that the equilibrium between production and consumption is socially and individually achievable and represents the optimum.

The last thing we should consider is that, in these theories, the notion of utility is applied not only to goods that the individual obtains through exchange for his/her own resources, but also to leisure, so the individual freely chooses between working or resting, assigning a certain utility to leisure.

#### THE CONSUMPTION OF DIFFERENTIATED GOODS

As capitalism evolved, consumers’ needs diversified and became more complex. It is not that in previous stages there was no production of luxury goods;

there was, and it was even very sophisticated. Suffice it to consider the consumption of European monarchs and nobles in almost any period and country. But the production of these kinds of goods was never massive and therefore, their value was even more subjective and, in essence, not subject to the common rules of the market. Under capitalism, the production that matters is the mass production of identical goods. It was not until manufacturing diversified the production of goods that satisfy the same needs attributing to these goods special properties (mostly intangible properties like a brand or a design) created by publicity that so-

ciety was really transformed into a society ruled by consumption.

Based on the process of the diversification of the product and a more aggressive entrepreneurial search for markets, production began to create its demand, not in the sense of classic economics, but in the sense of creating heretofore non-existent needs through the introduction of new, differentiated, more technically sophisticated products (even if that sophistication was in some cases only in packaging). At the same time, a special disposable culture began to develop (called the “Kleenex economy”). As everyone knows, Kleenexes are used and thrown away, and the only objective way they differ from other similar products is through the brand name. In the case of Kleenex, its market penetration is so strong that it relegates all competitors to second place, giving its name—duly registered as a

trademark, of course—to the generic product. Actually, this was the prototype of the modern product, even though it is only a disposable tissue.

#### CONSUME TO GROW

Up to here, I have dealt with what we economists call micro-economics. There are, however, other reasons why the role of consumption is very important in contemporary capitalist society, and they are related to macro-economics. About macro-economics, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, French economist Jean Baptiste

There is waste of energy in some countries  
and unequal distribution among individuals and countries  
that cannot be corrected because energy reserves would  
be exhausted before leveling off consumption.

Say held that it was impossible to have an over-production crisis since every “supply creates its own demand.” This is known as Say’s Law, which was thoroughly refuted in the 1930s by John Maynard Keynes, whose theories showed not only the possibility of unemployment with balanced global supply and demand, but also particularly that the driving factor behind economic growth was aggregate demand, that is consumption and investment. But, given that investment’s only incentive is sales, the decisive role in the last analysis falls to consumer demand. Mass consumption, which in Malthus’s early-nineteenth-century theory was the villain threatening society as the product of exponential demographic growth contrasted with the arithmetic growth of food production, in Keynes’s theory became the saving factor of the capitalist system, given its recurring, profound

crises and the resulting unemployment. The key for getting out of the crisis was not saving but spending. And that was the sign of the times in macro-economics, from the 1930s to the early 1970s, especially in the United States.

#### U.S. CAPITALISM AND THE “AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE”

According to the Marxist concept of modes of production in history, the basic structure of society is the economy and all the political, religious and ideological institutions that correspond to that structure make up the supers-

structure, though not always harmoniously. Thus, for example—and even though it sounds a little mechanical—the democratic political system, Protestantism and liberal ideology correspond to the prototypical developed capitalist mode of production. In my opinion, this model can be found in its most finished form in the United States, almost since its birth as an independent country in 1776.

This prototype of society and culture, described very precisely, critically and rather pessimistically by the U.S. economist Thorstein Veblen in the early twentieth century, has been exported in many ways to the whole world as the model of modernity. The model’s spread sped up after the end of World War II thanks to U.S. economic, political and military hegemony in the West, and climaxed with the U.S. Cold War victory over the European

socialist bloc and the Soviet Union. I think that the technological development of U.S. and European industries played an important role in this victory, oriented as it was to the mass production of high-tech goods very much in demand and not produced by any Eastern European economy with the same quality or price.

The stage that begins after the triumph of economic liberalism in the world, a few years before the fall of the Berlin Wall, that some have called postmodernity, is characterized by the generalized adoption of some basic aspects of the American Way of Life, mainly consumerism as a cultural matter, that is, not only the economic factor of demand, but rather, from the perspective wherein whoever consumes a certain specific product does so in such a way as to adopt a way of being.

#### THE CONSUMPTION OF ENERGY

The American-Way-of-Life consumption pattern has evolved with time and has lost no adherents despite creating very diverse problems in the world, mainly linked to the environment and health. I will refer to only one of these problems, linked to energy, the production and consumption of fuels and electricity.

It has been estimated that the average energy consumption of an individual with a rich country life style is 7.5 times the kilowatts needed by an individual in a poor country. This figure must, of course, be carefully considered because not all the inhabitants of rich countries consume the same amount of energy—neither do they in poor countries—but indisputably, there is waste of energy in some countries

and unequal distribution among individuals and countries. The serious problem is that this inequality cannot be corrected at the current rate of expenditure because energy reserves would be exhausted before leveling off consumption. This means that rational consumption requires decreasing the energy use by the rich and increasing that of the poor to an intermediate level. In other words, the excessive expense of energy per capita of the American Way of Life cannot continue or spread to other social groups that do not enjoy it today; but even if there was no desire to correct that inequality, the current rhythm of energy expenditure implied in the American Way of Life will soon-

er or later lead to the depletion of the world's energy reserves.

I cannot refrain from mentioning that the world's current fuel consumption is already causing the proven increase in the average temperature, which makes for important modifications in global climate, with negative repercussions for all economies.

To finish up, something that can be said of the American Way of Life is that, whether judged good or bad, it cannot endure even in the United States itself, today the main producer of CO<sub>2</sub>, the main cause of atmospheric warming. Non-wasteful, more environment-friendly models of fuel consumption exist. Their adaptation to daily life

requires mainly a change in mentality and ethics on the part of the population (including producers, merchants, publicists and consumers) and the governments of all countries. **NM**

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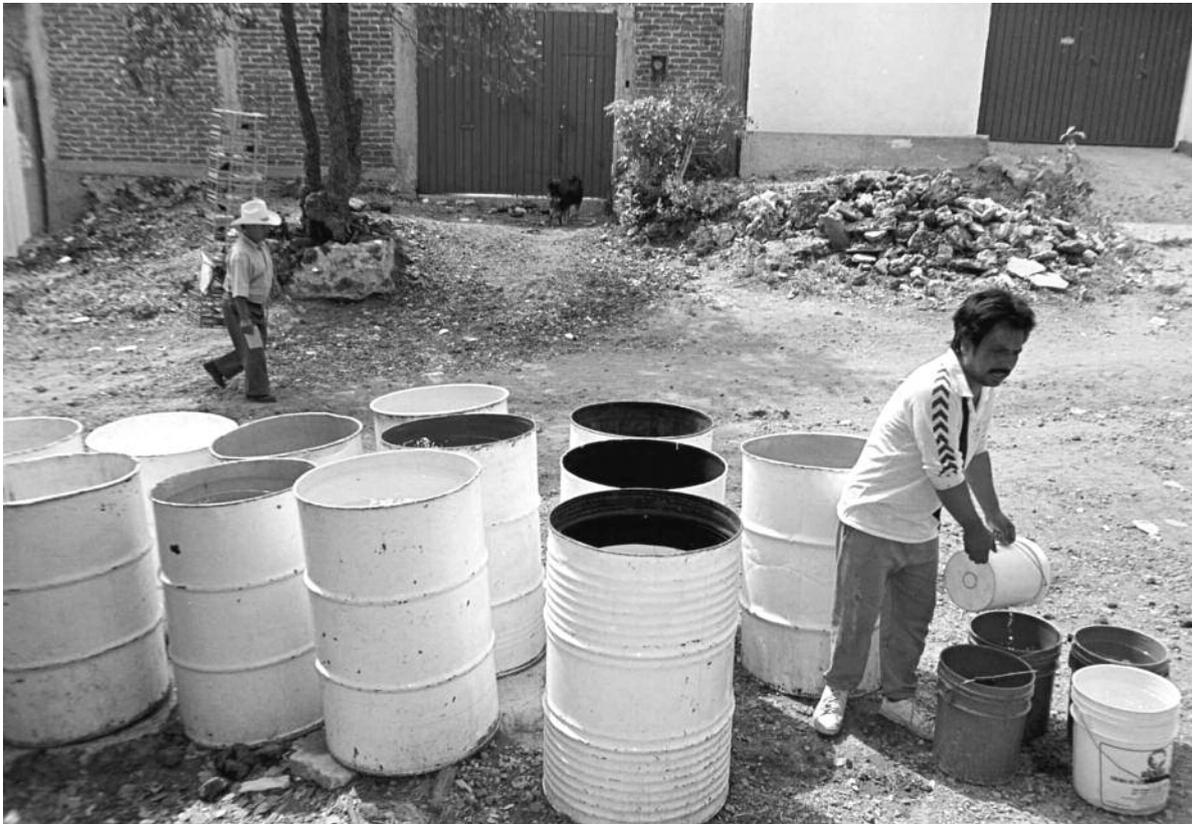
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# Conflicts over Water

## Part 1: The Rio Grande

Miguel García Reyes\*



German Romero/Cuartoscuro

### INTRODUCTION

The world's water supply threatens to be the springboard for a crisis of major economic and social proportions. And this is despite the fact that 75 percent of the planet's surface is covered by

water, a renewable natural resource.<sup>1</sup> This will have a negative impact on all nations' sustainable development and security. The problems are more dramatic in some developing countries, with overpopulation, scarce water resources and very little technology for treating the so-called "blue gold."

In recent years, this crisis has been one of the causes of international con-

flicts over countries' sharing water, particularly in the cases of scarcity in the world's 260 mega-basins. However, none of the more than 1,500 disputes has led to armed conflict.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, most have been resolved by diplomacy. In almost all cases, bilateral and multinational treaties and accords have been prepared and implemented to negotiate the different parties' interests.

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**TABLE I**  
**POPULATION AND HYDRIC STRESS (1997 AND 2025)** (in millions)

	NO STRESS		LOW STRESS		MEDIUM STRESS		HIGH STRESS	
	1997	2025	1997	2025	1997	2025	1997	2025
U.S. and Canada	27	30	280	310	–	–	–	–
Western Europe	18	18	180	180	300	310	15	14
Pacific	–	–	25	26	120	122	–	–
Ex-USSR	14	15	200	220	50	52	18	20
Eastern Europe	–	–	50	65	16	18	17	20
Africa	100	200	395	810	200	400	27	160
Latin America	–	15	360	480	140	200	–	–
Middle East	–	–	27	45	138	300	29	40
China	–	–	120	700	1.20	1.680	–	–
Southeast Asia	–	–	480	500	1.08	1.685	–	–

Source: <http://www.cidob.org>

In that context, one of the conflicts is between Mexico and the United States over the Río Bravo/Rio Grande. The dispute, until now handled diplomatically, became more heated in the early 1990s, when our country stopped meeting its commitment to turn over 431,721,000 cubic meters of water to the United States every year, its part of the Rio Grande water as established in the 1944 Treaty Relating to the Utilization of Waters of the Colorado and Tijuana Rivers and of the Rio Grande.<sup>3</sup>

Mexican authorities justify their actions by pointing to the droughts along the northern border, as occurred in 1992 and 1997. This led the U.S. and Texas governments to demand that our country review the status of water in the Rio Grande basin, which they hold is not as serious as alleged. They base their contention on aerial studies carried out in the United States according to which northern Mexico has sufficient

water resources to continue to meet its commitment. The Mexican government, for its part, continues to point to the local obstacles to covering the debt.

The tension in bilateral relations arising from this problem was behind both nations' agreeing in 2001 to put the issue on their joint agenda.

#### THE STATUS OF WATER IN THE WORLD TODAY

Water is, quite literally, the fountain of life. As we know, 70 percent of the human body is water. When it loses 10 percent of its water, it can die. In contrast with other natural processes in which basic fluids can be replaced, human beings cannot substitute the water they need to survive.

Several countries have begun to suffer from water scarcity. It should be noted that most of them are in the

South. This ensures that the water crisis will extend throughout the world.

Among the causes of the crisis are the irregular distribution of water over the planet, high pollution levels, the lack of technology for desalinization, increased consumption, waste, deficient management and irrational deforestation that impedes the renewal of underground water tables.

Of all these factors, the most important is irregular distribution, which, as I already said, leads to scarcity. As we know, of the planet's total water supply (almost 1.4 billion cubic kilometers), only 2.8 percent is fresh water. Of that, only 0.40 percent is accessible to people in lakes, rivers and underground reservoirs. The rest, or 97.2 percent of the world's supply, is ocean salt water, which covers three-quarters of the planet's surface (see graph). It should be pointed out that this distribution is beneficial for the northern countries,

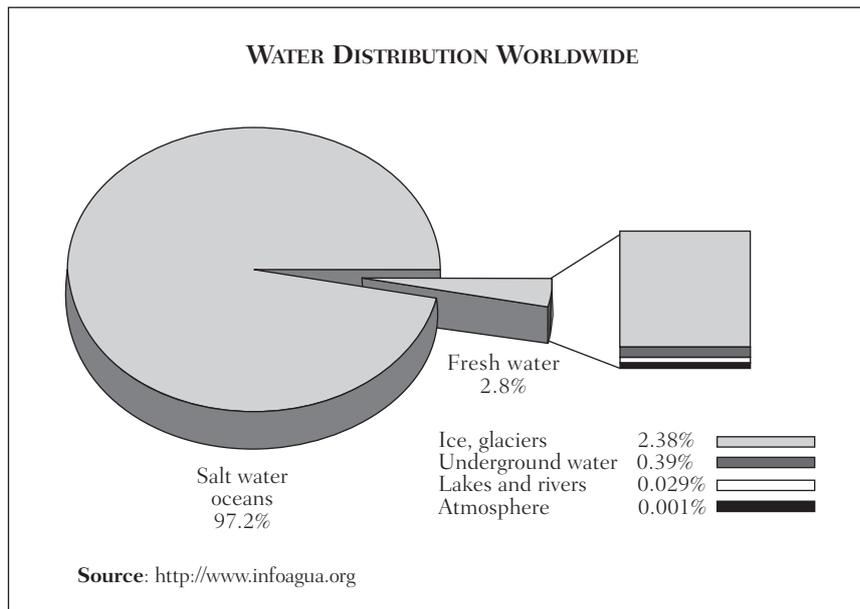
but not for those on either side of the equator, in the South. The northern countries have an excess of fresh water, whereas in the South, scarcity is becoming very serious.

Another result of this crisis is that the inhabitants of some countries, particularly developing nations mainly in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, consume barely 10 liters of water a day per person, far below the UN established minimum of 50 liters. In contrast, in the rich regions, such as Europe and the United States, consumption per capita is 150 liters a day. From this we could think that in these countries there are no conflicts over shared water. However, sometimes it is not scarcity but contamination that is the cause of conflict.<sup>4</sup>

The United Nations established a three-tiered classification to measure water scarcity: on the first level, when annual water supply drops to less than 1,700 cubic meters per person, the country or region experiences what is called hydric stress. This stress can be of two magnitudes: when supply is between 1,000 and 1,700 cubic meters, the area experiences a periodic or limited scarcity; when it is under 1,000 cubic meters, there is total scarcity.

#### HYDRIC STRESS

By 2030, an estimated 2.8 billion people will suffer from hydric stress: that is, they will lack the water to satisfy their most basic needs. This will cause them serious health problems and difficulties for the general development of society. In the worst of cases, it will also threaten their very survival. Most of these people will live in 48 countries in Africa and the Middle East.



Water has been used  
as a political instrument, a terrorist weapon  
or a military objective.

Table 1 shows the stress that some regions of the world faced in 1997, and the one that could exist in 2025 if measures to mitigate the effects of the crisis are not taken.<sup>5</sup>

Comparing the information on these tables, we observe that the countries most affected are and will continue to be those of Africa, Latin America and, to a lesser extent, Asia. It should be pointed out that a certain, though lower, amount, of hydric stress is also predicted for the United States, Canada and Europe.

In all cases, the number of people suffering from a lack of fresh water will increase. The Middle East countries deserve special attention, particularly Saudi Arabia, where a barrel of fresh water already costs more than a barrel of oil.

Table 2 shows that by 2025, the number of countries suffering from

hydric stress will also increase. The most serious case is Africa, which has no resources for finding water, treating contaminated water or much less purchasing it from other regions. This table reveals that the fresh water supply in the Middle East will remain unchanged despite its ready supply of fossil fuels and petro-dollars.

Another point that should be mentioned is that most of the nations on the table are currently going through local or international conflicts involving two, three or more countries. The most obvious cases are in the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Eurasia and the former Soviet countries of central Asia. All these regions suffer from sometimes brutal fresh water scarcity or contamination. This causes conflicts among countries, which in some cases threaten to turn into armed clashes.

The most grievous cases of contamination are those of the Rhine River in Central Europe and the Dnieper in the Ukraine, where industry has practically destroyed the water supply.

#### HYDRIC STRESS AS A FACTOR FOR CONFLICT

Our forebears preferred to settle on the edges of rivers and lakes, allowing them to stop being nomadic and become sedentary. This is how the first civilizations emerged and developed, in time turning into empires. The proliferation of empires brought disputes over territory and natural resources, among them, water. In the battles between these peoples, one of the most frequently used tactics to defeat the enemy was to sabotage or destroy

the water supply both for human consumption and agriculture.

Today, one of the main causes of conflicts is the hydric stress plaguing countries to a greater or lesser degree. As a result, it is increasingly common that participants in conflicts use water as a military tool, a factor for controlling society, a political instrument, a terrorist weapon or a military objective.

In the opinion of specialist Peter Gleick, because of its importance, water is beginning to be used in international relations as an excuse for starting wars just as terrible or worse than those sparked by the control of fossil fuels.<sup>6</sup> We must not forget that since the invention of the internal combustion engine brought about the second Industrial Revolution in 1870, oil has been considered a strategic resource,

which, if necessary, had to be controlled through cruel warfare.

It should be pointed out that, until now, common sense has prevailed in most decisions about the 1,600 conflicts in human history due to improper use of shared water in the world's basins. The Middle East is one specific case, where Palestinians and Israelis, despite their bloody confrontation, have decided to respect the water supply that in some cases they must share.

#### CONFLICTS OVER WATER

The first conflicts over water occurred in Africa and the Middle East, lands where the first civilizations flowered. The Nile, Volta and Niger rivers in Africa and the Tigris, Euphrates and Jordan rivers in the Middle East have



Pedro Mera/Cuartoscuro

always been disputed by the peoples who settled on their banks. Today, these regions experience the world's greatest hydric stress and therefore a greater threat to the sustainable development and security of local states. However, due to the capitalist, and even the socialist, development model that most contemporary societies have followed, Central Asia, Central America, South America and even Central Europe have been added to the list.<sup>7</sup>

Table 3 lists the regions where clashes over shared water or scarcity and contamination exist.

SHARING THE RIO GRANDE'S WATER

Mexico and the United States share a 3,000-kilometer border, which in some places, runs along the Colorado, Grande and Tijuana rivers. This means that both nations share these rivers' water.

In order to fairly distribute the water, Mexico and the United States signed the 1944 Waters Treaty.<sup>8</sup> The document establishes that the United States must pay Mexico 1.85 billion cubic meters of water from the Colorado River every year. Mexico, in turn, must turn over to the United States one-third of the water that flows to the main body of the Rio Grande, which will not be less overall than an average 431,721,000 cubic meters in cycles of five consecutive years. Considering the periodic climate change along the border, the treaty also allows for both countries to postpone the payment of the water in the case of extraordinary drought. If this happens, the debt can be paid in the following cycle.

Mexico punctually receives its quota from the Colorado River. However, the water is very contaminated by phos-

REGION	1997	SCENARIO 2025
U.S. and Canada	————	————
Western Europe	Belgium	Belgium
Asian-Pacific	————	————
Ex-USSR	Azerbaijan	Azerbaijan Turkmenistan Uzbekistan
Africa	Egypt Lybia	Algeria Egypt Lybia Morocco South Africa Tunisia
Latin America	Peru	Peru
Middle East	Middle Afghanistan Bahrain Iran Iraq Israel Jordan Kuwait Qatar United Arab Emirates Yemen	Afghanistan Bahrain Iran Iraq Israel Jordan Kuwait Qatar United Arab Emirates Yemen
Southeast Asia	Korea Pakistan China	Korea Pakistan China Singapore
<p><b>Source:</b> "Frente a la escasez de agua," <a href="http://www.infoforhealth.org/pr/prs/sm14edsum.html">http://www.infoforhealth.org/pr/prs/sm14edsum.html</a></p>		

phates and other pesticides U.S. farmers use and then throw in the river. Although Mexican authorities have lodged several complaints about this, very little has been achieved in terms of a solution.

In the 1990s a diplomatic tussle between Mexico and the United States began because Mexico began to make

irregular Rio Grande water deliveries to its northern neighbor. This was the case, for example in both the 1992-1997 and 1997-2000 cycles. Mexico justified the irregular deliveries pointing to the extreme drought in the border area. The United States did not accept this and warned our country's authorities that they should meet their

**TABLE 3  
CONFLICTS OVER WATER**

REGION	RIVERS DISPUTED	COUNTRIES INVOLVED
Africa	Nile	Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania
	The Great Lakes	Congo, Tanzania, Kenya and Rwanda
Middle East	Jordan	Israel, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan
	Tigris and Euphrates	Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran
Central Asia	Amudarya	Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan
	Syrdarya	Uzbekistan, Kyrgyztan and Kazakhstan
	Caspian Sea Basin	Russia, Kazakhstan, Iran, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan
	Aral Sea	Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan
East Asia	Indo	China, Afghanistan, India (Kashmir) and Pakistan
	Ganges	India, China, Bangladesh
	Yellow River	China
Western Hemisphere	Ogallala Underground Table	Southeast and Central Western U.S.
	Guarani Underground Table	Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil
	Rio Grande	Mexico and the U.S.
<p><b>Source:</b> Miguel García Reyes, "Los conflictos por el agua: el caso de la frontera México-Estados Unidos" (paper read at the international seminar "Los recursos naturales estratégicos: los hidrocarburos y el agua," organized by CISAN-UNAM, 28 May 2004, Mexico City).</p>		

commitment because farmers, above all in Texas, were ready to take the matter before U.S. courts. Mexico's situation worsened during the 2000 Texas elections, when the technical water problem became extremely politicized.

That same year, Washington emphatically demanded that the Mexican government pay the outstanding water

debt, which at that time came to 1.616 billion cubic meters. According to the Texas government, losses due to non-payment included 30,000 jobs and almost a billion dollars.<sup>9</sup>

Given this difficult situation, the U.S. and Mexican governments, headed up by George W. Bush and Vicente Fox, decided to include the issue

of water along their common border on their bilateral agenda. This means that in every bi-national meeting, whether of presidents or legislators, the topics will include the use of the shared Rio Grande water. This shows that through dialogue, the two countries can find solutions to their common problems. ■■

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Some specialists think water should be considered a finite resource like fossil fuels. This is questionable since, despite the current deterioration in the climate, the hydrological cycle continues to operate regularly. What is occurring is a depletion of fresh water supplies, particularly underground ones, that we use irrationally. It is only logical that if these bodies of water are not replenished, scarcity will increase, but this does not mean that water is disappearing.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Gleick, "Water Conflict Chronology, Version 2000," 10 June 2003, at <http://www.worldwater.org/conflict/Intro.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Texas Center for Policy Studies, *The Dispute over Shared Waters of the Rio Grande/Río Bravo*, July 2002 at <http://www.texascenter.org/borderwater>

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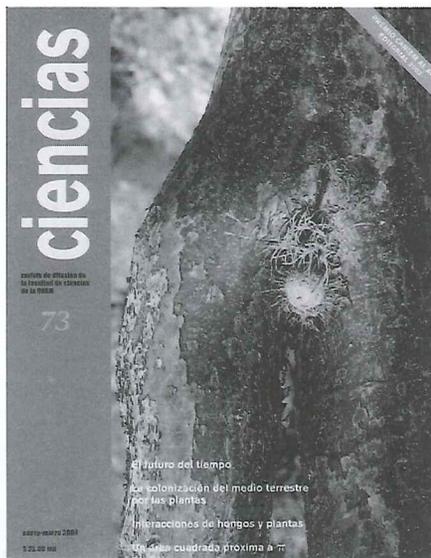
<sup>5</sup> Carlos A. Fernández-Jáuregui, "El agua como fuente de conflictos en el mundo. Repaso de los focos de conflictos en el mundo," *Reporte de la Oficina Regional de Ciencia y Tecnología de la UNESCO* (Paris: UNESCO, 1999), p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Gleick, op. cit.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander López, "Conflictividad en cuencas transfronterizas" at <http://www.una.ac.cr/ambi/ambien-tico/108/lopez.htm>

<sup>8</sup> *Tratado sobre la Distribución de Aguas Internacionales entre los Estados Unidos Mexicanos y los Estados Unidos de América* (Mexico City: Gobierno de México, 1944), p. 22.

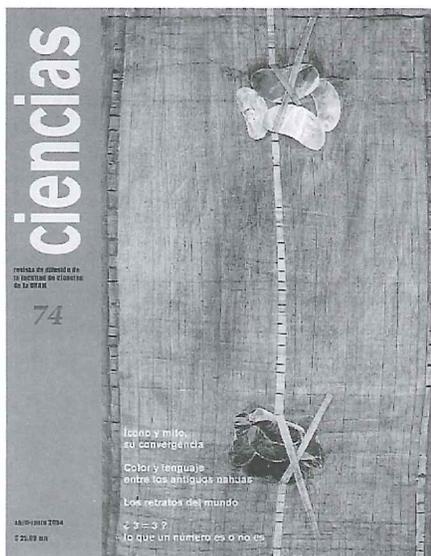
<sup>9</sup> Patrick Crimmins, "Texas Outlines Legal Position on U.S.-Mexico Water Treaty," Texas Commission on Environmental Quality at [http://163.234.20.106/AC/comm\\_exec/communication/media](http://163.234.20.106/AC/comm_exec/communication/media)



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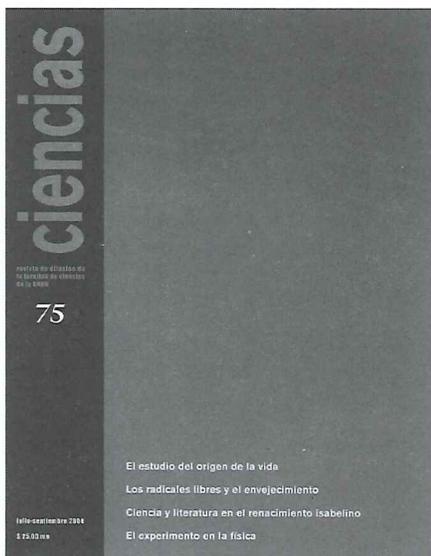
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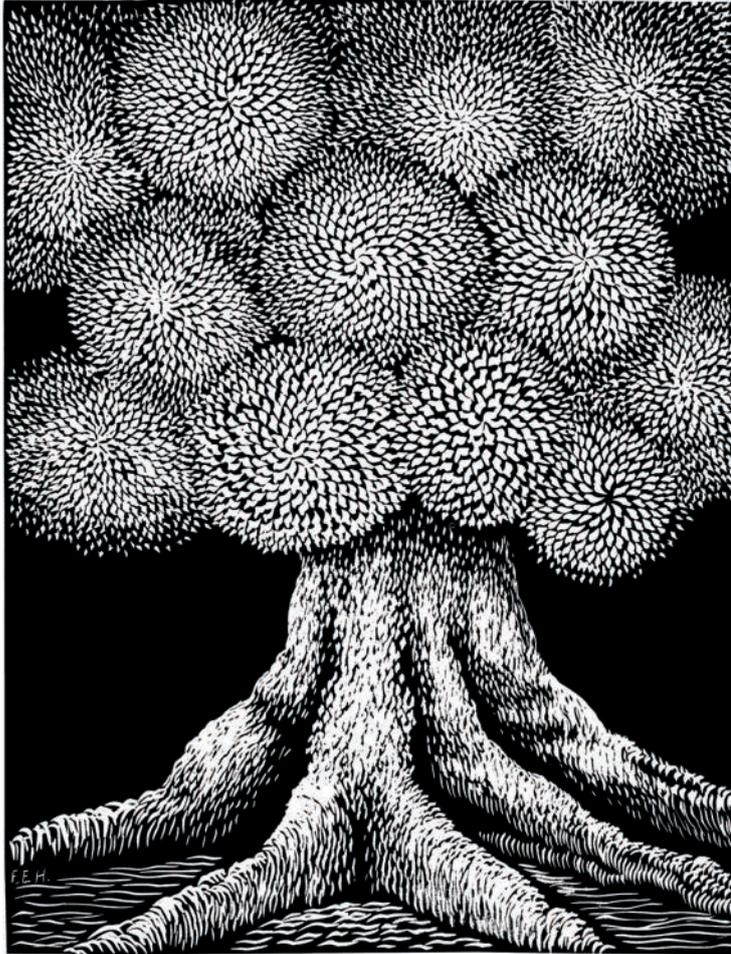
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# *Férido Castillo* Landscape Engraver

Roberto Ponce\*



*Champa*, 70 x 50 cm, 1999 (mixed technique).



*The Silk-Cotton Tree*, 30 x 39 cm, n.d. (linoleum print).

His engravings are vibrant prints of the Tabasco jungle. Multi-hued nature carved in black and white by his hands. A jungle that, unfortunately, is doomed to disappear. Tabasco-born engraver Férido Castillo charged, “The landscape of my homeland has always disquieted me, and today more than ever, when the exuberant jungle that I saw as a boy is disappearing.”<sup>1</sup> Convinced that “the most important thing is to do your art” instead of being

“a social critic who resolves nothing,” his work “presented the Tabasco jungle even though it is disappearing.”

Born in 1942 in Cacaos, in the Tabasco municipality of Jalapa, to a peasant family, Castillo did many different kinds of jobs and finally came to consider himself an engraver-in-training. Indifferent to those who considered him old-fashioned, he was proud of living modestly in Villahermosa. “I wouldn’t change my house. I have never been able to leave Tabasco and I’m not sorry. To be an artist you don’t have to go to a sophisticated school. I have affection for this place and the enthusiasm I need to dedicate my life to art here.”

In his last engravings, he emphasized urban growth “devouring” the natural areas and their inhabitants. “When I arrived in Villahermosa, downtown was another world. On Madero Street a car would barely go by every five minutes.” Construction worker, carpenter, newspaper vendor, baker’s helper, dishwasher, market stall salesman, Férido said, “The artist sensitizes the masses. Social themes interest me, but I think that the most important thing is to do your work, not so much get involved in social issues.”

From the start, he wanted to be a painter. “In 1963 I was caught up in Valeriano Maldonado’s and Jorge Corona’s Cuña Group workshop. In the short time they were here, they did murals and gave a workshop. I wanted to paint like Cézanne or Van Gogh, but they pushed me to develop my own style. So, I got rid of books; I have none at all now. I want everything that comes out of me to be natural, with no influence from anyone....I did my first engraving, a little landscape under Michoacán-born teacher Efraín Vargas. I took it to him and when he saw it, he

Engravings and paintings taken from *Férido Castillo: Surco a la luz* (Villahermosa: Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco, 2003). Reproduced by permission of the Juárez Autonomous University of Tabasco.

\* Journalist, translator, singer-songwriter, music critic and entertainment editor in *Proceso* magazine’s cultural section. rponce@proceso.com.mx

asked me to give him the first print. That made me very happy. It was a very important moment for me.”

Then came exhibitions, good reviews, prizes. In 1979, he made a decision: “I was good at engraving and, since this technique was practically unknown in Tabasco, I said to myself that I was going to continue learning and teach it.”

When asked whether he had ever felt the need to include the colors of the tropics in his work, he answered, “I haven’t needed the luminosity of color. I have tried to add it to my engravings, but I didn’t like the results. Those are works I will never show.”

Very close to Villahermosa’s Pino Suárez Market, Férido Castillo’s house was always open to purchasers of the soft drinks and popsicles that he sold with his wife, Carmen Pantoja. The big living room that gave onto the street was a place of movement that doubled as a studio as his children and innumerable visitors trooped through. There, he explained to me, “My father’s name was Lucio Castillo; he was a peasant. Consuelo Hernández, my mother, was a housewife. We lived in Cacaos, a very old town, in one of those clay houses covered in *jahuacté*, with a hallway and an earth floor.”

His art burst forth from a childhood enchantment, since as a boy he experienced the legend of the Vernete River: people swore that the siren who dominated it kidnapped a man one night with the help of a lizard. The women prayed for him, and when he returned, he told them of the amazing sights he had witnessed under the water. Castillo told me, “When the lizards make sounds at midnight, people say that it is the man from Vernete who has returned. When I was a boy, I heard that story and, one morning about seven, I

went there to draw. There was a very thick mist. I heard that loud noise and right there and then I decided I would reproduce the flora and swamps of Tabasco. The thousands of forms of nature in which I found the strength to express myself: the rattan, the parasitical plants, the very pretty red tree called *palo mulato*, that is like a great god of the jungle.”

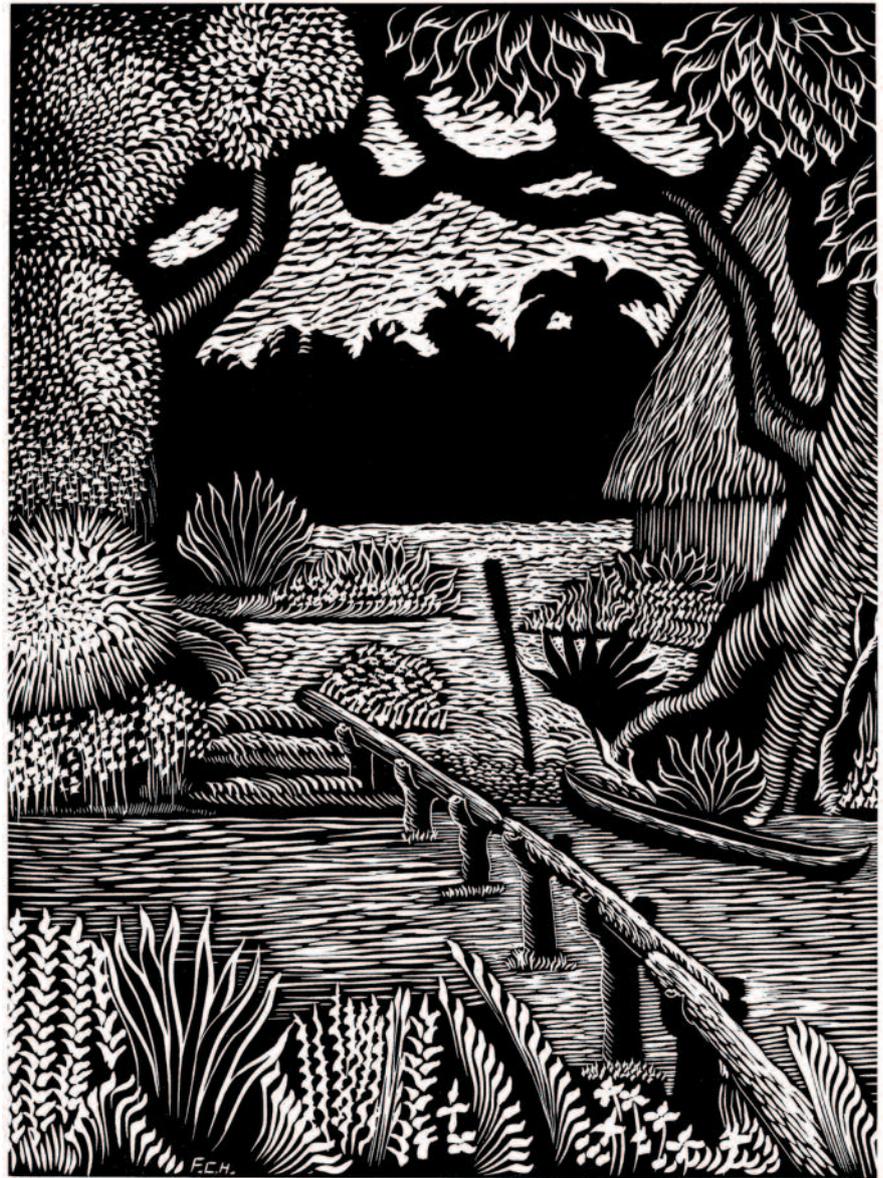
“Sometimes,” he said, “the rays of the sun filtering through the vegetation land on the *palo mulato* and illuminate the bend in the branches, and the bark looks like an incandescent green-blue ball of fire in the middle of the jungle. There were still plenty of fish; birds



*The Road*, 28 x 35.5 cm, n.d. (linoleum print).

called 'seven preys' came to eat their little sardines; white and black herons....I have a lively image of my childhood and I remember that the trees were so big that their branches intertwined and crossed from one side of the river to the other. You don't see that anymore because much of the vegetation has been destroyed and you can only see pastures. There are no longer as many exotic birds and you can no longer hear the song of the *tutupana*, the *chachalaca*, the iguana or the *garrobo* lizard. Gone, too, are the sounds of the tiger or the serpents that left a lasting impression on me as a child."

When he began to paint he was not environmentally aware. "This business of thinking about the fact that without the jungle there simply would be no life was not something conscious. I was seeking form and the contrast that you find from time to time between light and shadow. Because in engraving I seek high contrast, and where I achieve it the most is in immediate nature, the jungle that I have lived in since childhood." Just before he died, in January 2002, he said, "In the jungle, I find the thousands of forms that I can interpret in my engraving and also the necessary strength that I seek to present my work. The jungle does nothing but help me; it is a tremendous source of inspiration. Before people started talking about ecology, it was already my favorite theme."



*Railing 1*, 29 x 38.5 cm, n.d. (linoleum print).



*Fronde III*, 29 x 38.5 cm, n.d. (linoleum print).

Until the end of his life in January 2002, Fériido survived on the 7,000 pesos that he earned teaching at the Juárez Autonomous University of Tabasco and his wife's earnings from the little neighborhood store. Since his engravings were not backed by state promotional funds or auctioned in galleries, "Fero" printed t-shirts with Tabasco motifs from his work. They did not interest state cultural or tourism officials either, and so he could only place them in shops around the Villahermosa market. Some tourist may well have bought them, finding traces of Dürer, Doré or the French impressionists in his tigers, Olmec heads or exotic plants.

A man with hands worn by work in the countryside and a robust *guayabera* shirt, Fériido Castillo was generous with his gouge and to his friends. He died of a stroke at 59 in Reynosa, Tamaulipas. During his lifetime, no cultural authority organized a retrospective of his work or proposed a catalogue of the 500 works he created in black and white, with visions of a sober vastness of vegetation, that were exhibited in New York, San Luis Potosí, Chiapas, Yucatán, Veracruz and Mexico City. **MM**

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> All quotes are taken from two articles by the author published in *Proceso* weekly magazine, issues 593 (14 March 1988), p. 27, and 1316 (20 January 2002), p. 58.

# The Treasure of *Tamulté*

Norma Domínguez de Dios\*  
Citlallin de Dios Calles\*\*

**L**odged between the swamps formed by the González and Jo-lochero Rivers north of Villahermosa, Tabasco, we find the Yokot'an

indigenous town of Tamulté de las Sábanas. Here, a group of indigenous painters live who have created an original artistic movement called the Treasure of Tamulté. The group was founded in 1989 by several families, coordinated by Don Emilio Hernández and Timoteo Salvador, who convinced the local indigenous center's artistic initiation teacher, Leandro Soto, to help them

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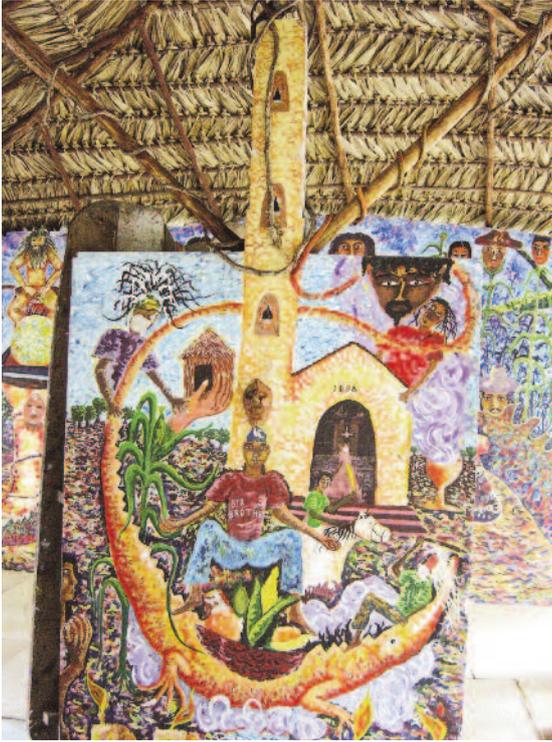
\* Editor of the cultural section of *Tabasco Hoy*, a daily newspaper published in Villahermosa, Tabasco.

\*\* Staff writer of the cultural section of *Tabasco Hoy*.

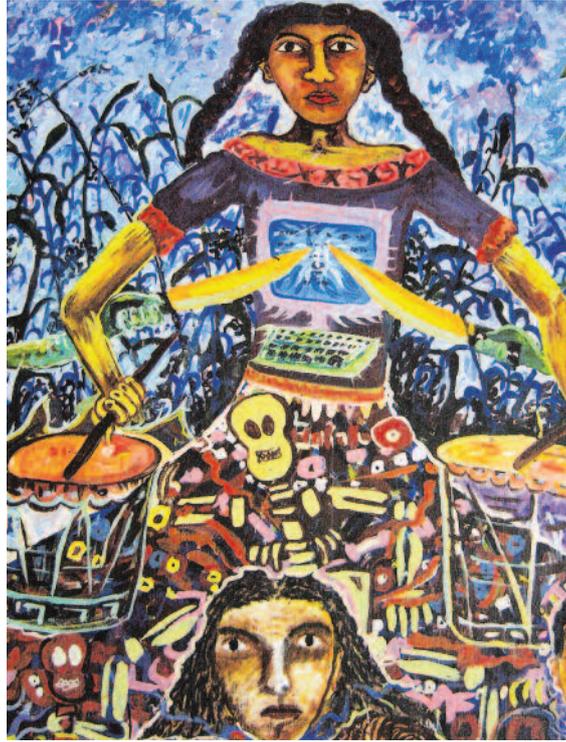
Photos by Rodolfo Uribe.



Ricardo Hernández Morales, *The Head is a World in Itself*, n.d. (acrylic on paper).



Feliciano García Salvador, *Traditions* (mural), n.d. (acrylic).



Jaime Salvador García and David José Domingo Velázquez, *The People's Traditions* (mural, detail), n.d. (acrylic).

A third generation of young painters has already come into being, keeping the ten-year process alive, a process mainly made up of painting and teaching to paint.

found a “painting school.” Soto, a Cuban artist and then cultural promotor of a government-run Montessori educational project, accepted the challenge and designed a creativity workshop in step with the community’s life and the initiatives of the young students.

The project has been a success, particularly considering that it is independent of any public or private institution, it has no permanent structure and the teacher himself has been absent for the last 10 years. Nevertheless, a third generation of young painters has already come into being, keeping the process alive, a process mainly made up of painting and teaching to paint, as well as in developing creative capabilities in all kinds of artistic endeavors.

The project’s survival can be explained by the young people’s determi-

nation to keep painting and giving creativity classes despite the non-existence of any formal institution. At the same time, this refusal to be absorbed by official institutions has been what has allowed them to give their work continuity. From the beginning, the workshop was registered as a civic association, with the support of the regional UNESCO committee and the Foundation for the Protection of Children, enabling it to get both public and private funding. Thanks to one donation, the group was able to purchase a piece of land where it built a multi-use thatched pavilion that serves as its headquarters. However, the group’s real headquarters have been the homes of the young people themselves, established from the beginning as satellite workshops. However, for several years, an



Emmanuel García Salvador, *We are Crazy* (sequence in four formats), n.d. (acrylic on paper).

alternative school called Young Art of Tocoal functioned in a shed loaned to them in the town of the same name, coordinated by René Germán Maldonado with the support of Carlos Velásquez and Héctor García.

Also from the beginning, the group tried to integrate itself with local and regional community and social life. It has painted the facades of houses and

stores in the community, the local health center and the central park, as well as the church, for patron saint activities; a temporary mural on the wall of the Carrefour shopping center in Villahermosa; and, more recently, designed the municipality's float for the 2004 state fair parade. In addition, several workshop members are painting teachers in public and private schools.

Among current Treasure of Tamulté members are Carlos Enrique Velásquez, 28; Enrique Valencia, 25; Ricardo Hernández, 18; Emmanuel García de Salvador, 19; Héctor García Salvador, 28; and Eleazar Valencia, 25. They are all studying high school or university and working in the city, like any other young person in the community. For the moment, they are in charge of getting funding, organizing and teaching summer courses each year to community children in the town's plaza, and gathering the materials sent to the different exhibitions they are invited to participate in.

The strong feeling of individuality characteristic of the Yokot'anob people is clearly seen in the intentions and themes of each of these young artists' work.

Eleazar prefers to paint landscapes hinting at the presence of local fairies, the masters of surrounding areas. That is why he says that more than copying nature, he seeks to invent things and



Javan Velázquez and Mauricio García Morales, *Indecision* (mural), n.d. (acrylic).

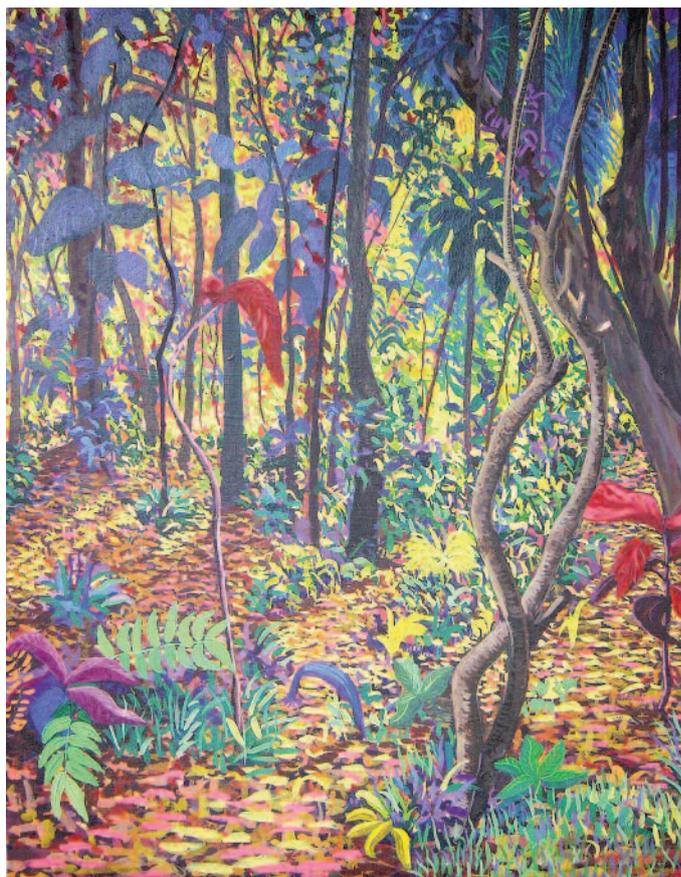
All the work testifies to an indigenous generation that is going through a period of social and cultural transition, with the resultant loss of its own culture.

fill them with color so that the colors “invent other angles that do not exist in real life.” Ricardo has chosen abstract landscapes, saying, “Short brush strokes were hard for me, and I leaned toward large brushes,” which is where his style comes from. He prefers conceptual works because, “The public can enter into a painting when motivated by the theme; I want people to think about what I want to express.” Emmanuel, in contrast, wants to “be a builder” and leans toward finding ways of integrating sculpture and painting, as he studies architecture in the local university. And Héctor, a pioneer of the first generation, says his moods show up in his work, explaining, “Lately I paint about life because it makes me sad that the wrong people die.”

Viewers immediately note the chromatic intensity with which they work and the dynamism of their figures. On the one hand, they show the technical influence of their teacher, but there is also an appropriation of styles and an individual development all their own that allows them to deal with the themes and feelings they want to express in an individual way. This is the consequence of the content of all the workshops, which always aim to develop each artist’s sensitivity to desires and their own condition. The result can be seen in the paintings, sculptures in wood and other materials and collages that deal with indigenous life without surrendering to the lure of anthropological folk art.

The young people use both the local landscape, the swamp, and local legends, ceremonies and beliefs, particularly those linked to the local “lord” K’antepec, as their starting point. Thus, in the dance “The Little White Horse,” we see maize becoming a person, a

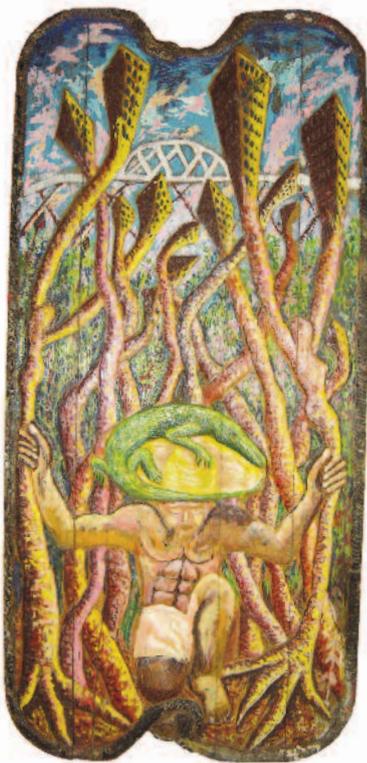
golden lizard, the spirit of the earth, who lives under the local church, and a naked old man, K’antepec, the master of the animals and the spirit of abundance. But, we also perceive the contradictions of life today, a product of the urbanization of a community near the capital in an oil-producing state, where media penetration has had a big impact. All the work testifies to an indigenous generation that is going through a period of social and cultural transition, with the resultant loss of its own culture and the abandonment of their elders’ main occupations: fishing and agriculture. In the work of these young people, the recovery of indigenous content becomes a means for becoming aware of the current situation of their community, state and youth.



Eleazar Valencia Valencia, *Magic Dawn*, n.d. (acrylic on canvas).



Carlos Enrique Velázquez García, *Human Values*, n.d. (acrylic on canvas).

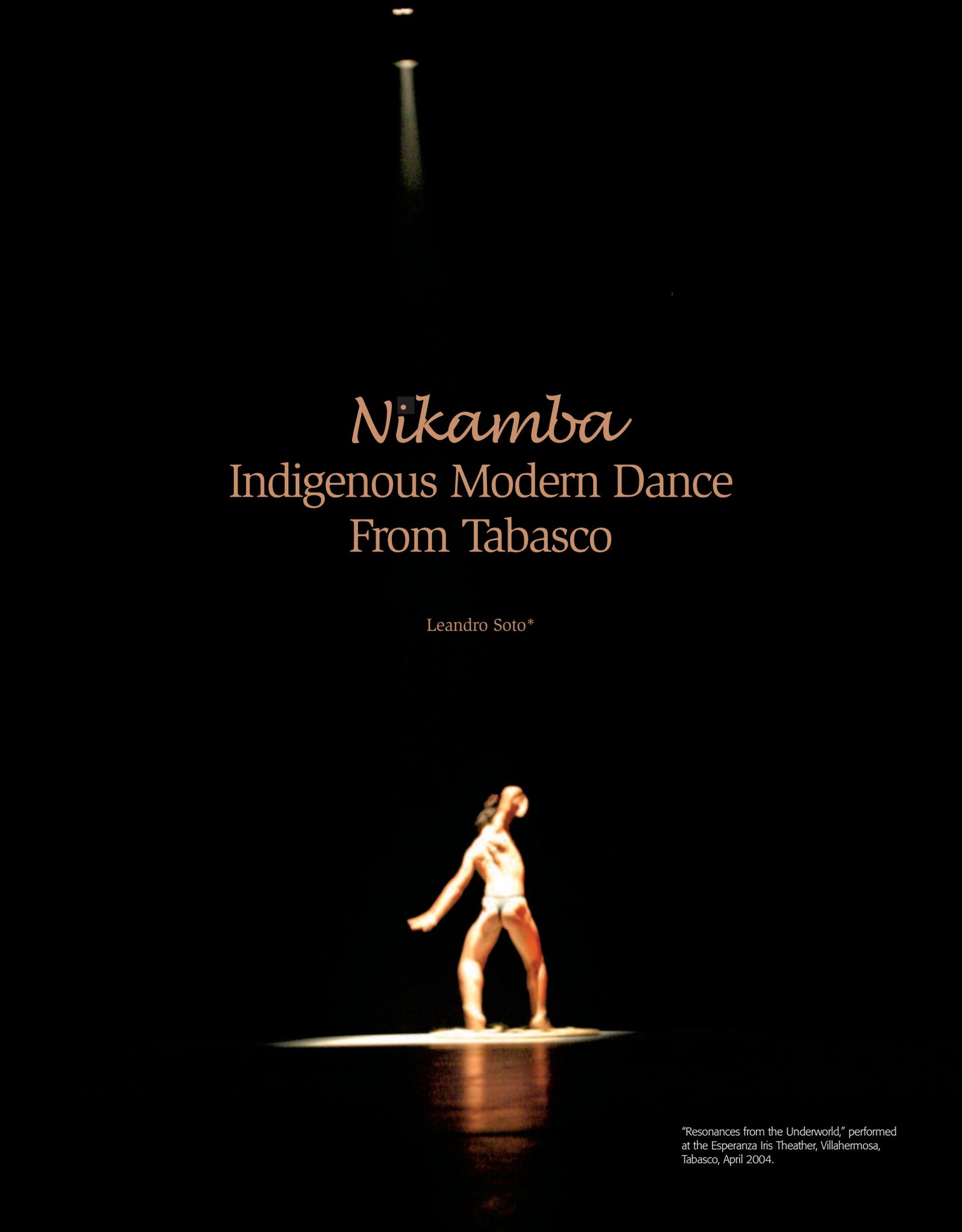


Ricardo Martínez Morales, *Evolution*, n.d. (enamel on carved wood).

On the other hand, a great deal of the work they have produced has been fleeting, in accordance with life today and Tabasco's humidity and heat, which make it necessary to repaint walls every few years. All the murals, except the one in the association's pavilion, which is protected, have disappeared. If we add to this the fact that their work has sold very well at exhibitions both in Villahermosa and in the United States, it is difficult to bring together a retrospective, especially of those who participated in only a few workshops and have since stopped painting. This is the natural result of an autonomous, flexible organization.

The other price that has to be paid for this freedom is a certain "invisibility" because they are indigenous, which means that the media and local cultural institutions do not recognize them (their funding has come mainly from social relief institutions). But this has not prevented them from being applauded abroad, where the artistic merit of their work has been fully recognized.

The young painters of the different generations of the Treasure of Tamul-té have participated in collective exhibitions outside their native state in Mexico City's Carrillo Gil Museum (1989) and El Chopo University Museum (1989); at the New York University at Buffalo (1998); in the cloister of the Veracruz Cultural Institute (1989); in the Augusta Savage Gallery at the University of Massachusetts (2000); at the Eleana Ortega Cultural Center at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts (2001); in the Ardent Music Studio/Gallery in Milwaukee; and in the University of Arizona library in Phoenix (2002), just to mention a few. In addition, their multi-disciplinary training has allowed them to participate in events like the International Hispanic Theater Festival (Miami, 1994), where they won the Carbonell prize for set design; and in the Intersection events in the University of Massachusetts in 2000 and the Phoenix Hispanic Festival (2004). Also, in 1994, five members of the first generation gave a multi-disciplinary workshop in El Paso, Texas. **NMM**



*Nikamba*  
Indigenous Modern Dance  
From Tabasco

Leandro Soto\*



"Resonances from the Underworld," performed  
at the Esperanza Iris Theater, Villahermosa,  
Tabasco, April 2004.

What makes Nikamba special and unique in Mexico's dance scene are its aesthetic forms, based essentially on the visual arts, which both in Mexico's pre-Columbian and mestizo cultures are outstandingly rich and varied. The indigenous cultures have kept the visual arts alive down through the centuries, enriched by exchanges produced by both internal and external migration. Also, the visual is a very vibrant component of global culture, today valued as a discourse, a language of its own, a means of communication that involves all media.

In the group's choreography, in addition to acrobatics and dance on the stage, participants recreate corporeal groupings, visual compositions that evoke the pre-Hispanic paintings of Bonampak, the Mayan reliefs of Palenque,

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\* Cuban painter, currently artist-in-residence at Arizona State University at Phoenix, west campus.

Photos by David Trujillo.

the still un-decoded symbolic figures in the codices. The group's members, based in the Tabasco town of Tamulté de las Sabanas, with their youthful, energetic presence, breathe life into something that seems to belong to the past. A similar starting point was used by the famous dancer Isadora Duncan, inspired in ancient Greek reliefs for her improvisations, or Hindu dancer Yamini Krishnamurti who as a child, after visiting with her father the temple of Shiva, full of sculptures of the dancing god, decided she wanted to dance like him.

The group uses the stage in a conceptually consistent way in all its pieces: its composition is like a painting. The dancers move from one point to another with the corporeal awareness of the visual composition they are presenting to the audience. While this is common to all dance pieces, the visual is the basis for Nikamba's work: from there the other languages—sound, music and narrative—are incorporated into the performance.



They play with visual metaphors, with images in sequence that suggest rather than describe something specific.



The group's work has the definite intention of playing and recreating a scene with elements of its own culture.

In addition, the group's work has the definite intention of playing and recreating the scene with elements of its own culture, with the people's activities: fishing, planting, the animals, the voices of the Yokot'an language (which anthropologists call Chontal), among many other suggestions.

All of this is done with visual metaphors, with images in sequence that suggest rather than describe something specific. Using an open system of integration typical of the Caribbean—and Tabasco is part of the Caribbean—Jo-

sé Isabel Morales, known as Chabelo, the group's founder and director, incorporates music into his dance pieces from contemporary composers who live in Mexico City or Massachusetts, choruses of women's voices from Bulgaria, or rhythms from Cuba. Tabascan drums alternate with synthesized sounds and voices in the indigenous language. Even having assimilated all these facets, the aesthetic result is authentic and original. We could say that, using its region's cultural resources as a starting point, the group explores an aesthetic that fits



perfectly with the parameters of post-modernity: the local, the idiosyncratic, is assumed from the perspective of experimental, interdisciplinary art.

In the traditional context of an indigenous community, this perspective is an intelligent response to the challenge of how a culture reproduces itself to stay alive amidst the dominant process of globalization. The group is proof that it is possible to open up new ways forward and explore one's own cultural forms both inside and outside the country at a time when young people the world over are being bombarded by the media, imposing consumer tastes and aesthetics that are very often foreign to the cultural and political geography where they live their daily lives.

The group's creator and choreographer is a visual artist, a painter trained from adolescence by international masters who have come to his town attracted by the Tamultec talent for art in general and the visual arts in particular, in different techniques like painting, sketching, sculpture, Japanese Sumi-é, performance and installation. And it is from that initial training in the visual arts that the choreographic images flow.

The pieces have a visual mystery that touches the beauty of poetry. Leonardo Da Vinci was right when he used to say that painting and poetry both speak in images. Thanks to this visual poetry brought out by the participants, Chabelo creates a polysemous discourse. A good dance critic could enumerate some of the components: movements that come from yoga asanas, Tai Chi Chuan, "contact" techniques, contemporary Cuban dance and even certain elements of classical ballet. Many elements originated in the Creation Workshop of Cuban choreographer and former member of Cuba's National Ballet, Humberto González, invited to the town to set up dance workshops between 1991 and 1994. He taught the young people movement techniques, dance improvisation, Asian exercises and other disciplines for the body. Chabelo, a teenager at the time, was part of that first group.

It is well known that a work of art is more than the sum of its parts, and in Nikamba there is an aesthetic that goes beyond all the sums. This can be found in the time of the movements, in the rhythm, in the way of moving through

We could say that the dancers have a ceremonial attitude, a way of giving themselves over to creative work from within.



The pieces have a visual mystery that touches the beauty of poetry. This visual poetry brought out by the participants creates a polysemous discourse.

space that is typical of the region: in Tabasco, the tropical temperatures do not allow for moving too quickly. The dance pieces do not contain violent movements or negative emotions; there is a unique way of moving and being on the stage. We could say that the dancers have a ceremonial attitude, a way of giving themselves over to creative work from within, from their interior beings: ceremony is essential in America's indigenous cultures. Visually, the treatment of the body—with very articulated positions—harmonizes with the proportions of the dancers' young bodies, making them look larger to the observer. One of Nikamba's artistic achievements is having crystallized an aesthetic appropriate for the body at this age, when it is still developing, and giving the town's young people creativity and discipline, on a road toward human growth through the arts. Writer Carlos Ocampo wrote in an article published in the Mexico City daily newspaper *Reforma*,

Extremely flexible, to the point of creating the illusion that they have no bones, they move like jellyfish at the bottom of the ocean. Spontaneous but well trained, the youths take over the proscenium with the wisdom of those who have always lived there....Mexican dance is enriched with a contribution of the first magnitude.

Last year, the group performed in Phoenix, Arizona, both at the State Uni-

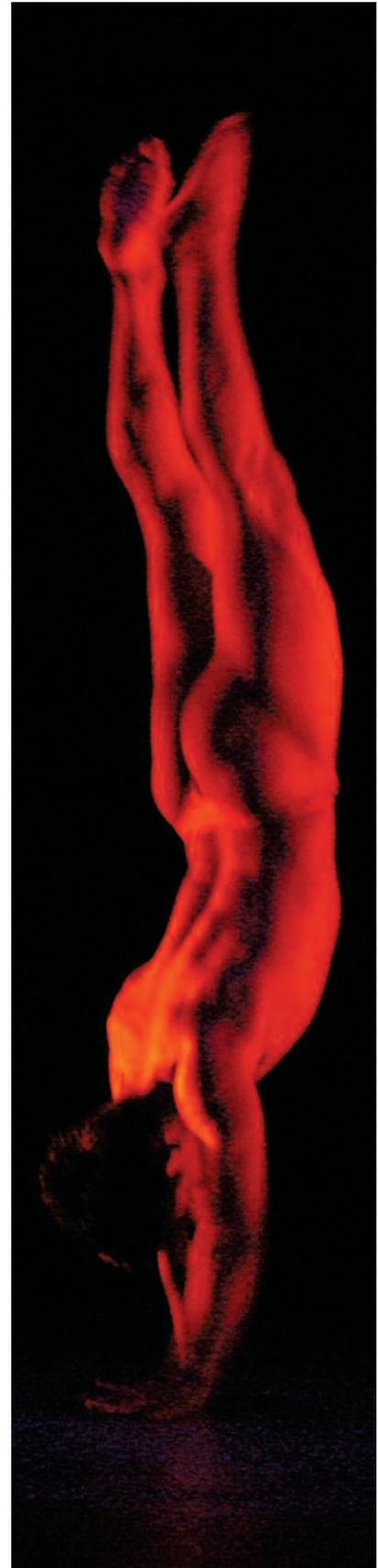
versity and at the Phoenix Mexican Cultural Institute, as part of the celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month. The impact on the community of young Mexican-Americans was enormous. The group's proposal was awe-inspiring: you can use the specific as your starting point and still be universal.

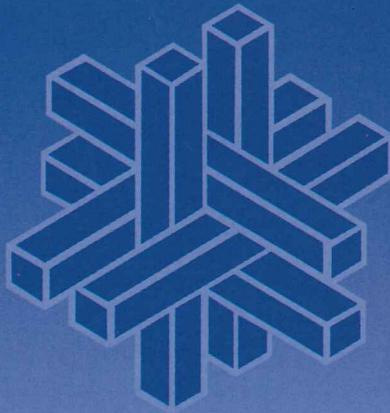
It also revealed a new way of working with roots from the indigenous vision, a way that does not deny what is current but rather appropriates it. Taking into account the age of its dancers, Nikamba is on the cutting edge of Mexican culture.

Perhaps a new tradition is being created in Tabasco, founded by the youth who want to seek self-expression without betraying their "grandparents" or ancestors, but by showing the world the creative power of their roots in a language that incorporates the new from a unique vision.

Chabelo and his group Nikamba are an example of what discipline united with an artistic vocation can do and also how important it is to support cultural and artistic projects in the communities that keep their culture alive. In today's mosaic where there is no longer "a single way of doing things," but "many ways of doing," specific voices are becoming more and more important.

This group's achievements reaffirms art as a universal language and prove the truth of the Tabascan saying that "in the town of Tamulté, anyone who doesn't paint, dances." **MM**





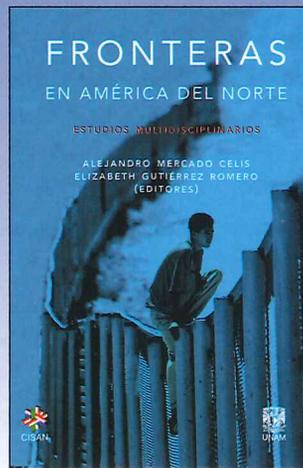
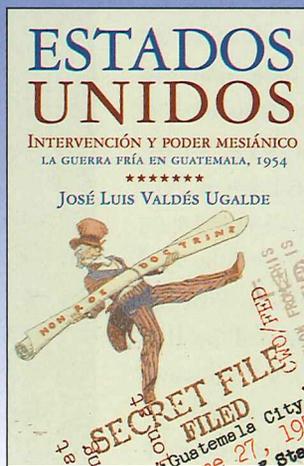
# CISAN

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

**Estados Unidos: Intervención y poder mesiánico. La Guerra Fría en Guatemala**

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde

The outstanding feature of this book's analysis of the 1954 intervention in Guatemala is that it is sensitive to the need to present a comprehensive image of Washington's actions, taking into account both internal and external factors, local and international dynamics, as well as power relations and the issues contained in its discourse.



**Fronteras en América del Norte. Estudios multidisciplinares**

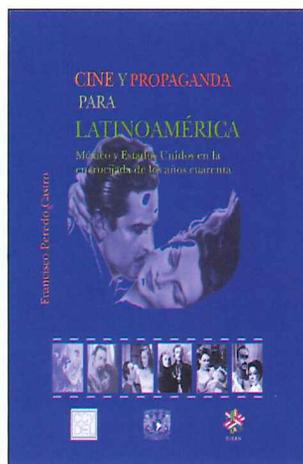
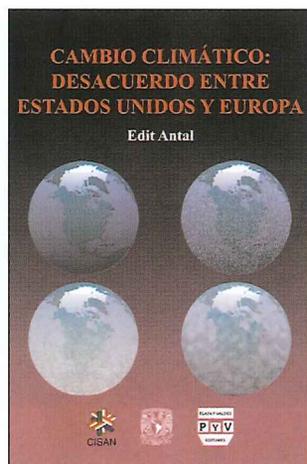
Alejandro Mercado and Elizabeth Gutiérrez, eds.

This book compares the Mexican and Canadian borders with the United States, singling out the regional as opposed to the national and debates theoretical and empirical questions from a rich multidisciplinary perspective.

**Cambio climático: desacuerdo entre Estados Unidos y Europa**

Edit Antal

This book uses a constructivist focus to explain the differences between the United States and the European Union with regard to climatic change. The United States takes no preventive measures until the damage has been proven and can be measured and refuses to revise its way of life, production and consumption. Europe, on the other hand, is more cautious and is making ready to take measures even at the expense of economic losses.



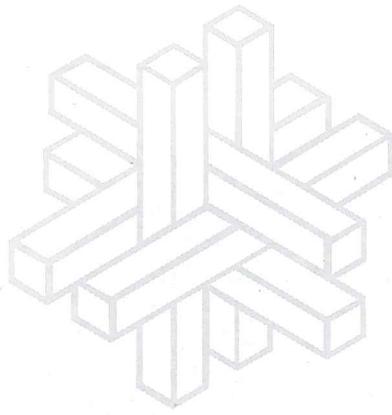
**Cine y propaganda para Latinoamérica. México y Estados Unidos en la encrucijada de los años cuarenta**

Francisco Peredo Castro

When in the late 1930s, fascist propaganda films threatened to flood Latin America, the allies reacted rapidly, from Mexico to the north and Argentina to the south. In a film production project coordinated by the United States and Mexico at a time of diplomatic tension and international intrigue, Mexico emerged as the region's firmest ally. For that reason, it would later receive fundamental support to consolidate its movie industry and achieve its cinematic "Golden Age."

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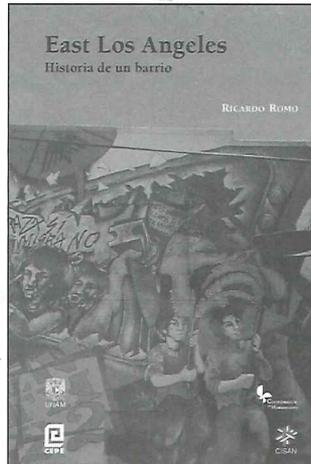


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p u b l i c a t i o n s

**East Los Angeles.  
Historia de un barrio**

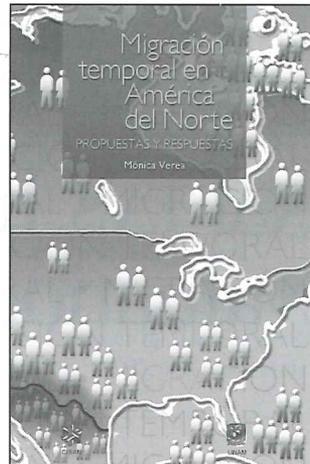
Ricardo Romo



This book, a classic in its field, traces the history of the largest and most important Mexican American community in the United States, East Los Angeles. It is a detailed review of the development of a community that has had to construct and defend its identity to survive in what were often hostile surroundings. The book also sketches the beginnings of the Chicano movement and the emergence of Mexican-American political and social organizations.

**Migración temporal en  
América del Norte.  
Propuestas y respuestas**

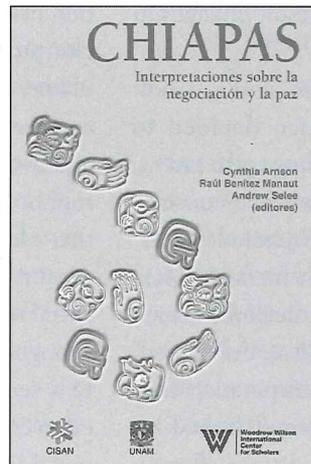
Mónica Vereá



The author puts forward the causes behind international migration and studies the evolution of policies on temporary migrants (tourists, businessmen, workers and students) to the United States and Canada, their impact on the integration of Latino communities in general and Mexican communities in particular, and how the September 11 attacks were a turning point in the regional migratory debate.

**Chiapas.  
Interpretaciones sobre la  
negociación y la paz**

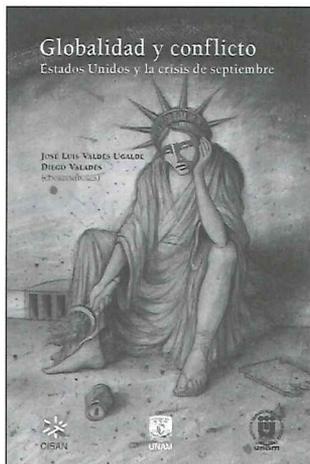
Cynthia Arnsón,  
Raúl Benítez Manaut,  
Andrew Selee, comps.



This book presents the debate on the Chiapas peace process and the causes behind the failure of the negotiations. Mexican and foreign academics, as well as some of the conflict's protagonists, analyze its structural causes, indigenous rights and the San Andrés Accords.

**Globalidad y conflicto.  
Estados Unidos y  
la crisis de septiembre**

José Luis Valdés Ugalde  
and Diego Valadés, comp.



The events of September 11, 2001 have prompted the concepts of security and globalization to be posed in different ways and have given them new meaning. This book is the first Spanish-language academic publication in which specialists from different fields analyze these issues.

**Forthcoming:**

*Una herida por otra. Testimonios de latin@s en Estados Unidos sobre 11/s.  
La política energética estadounidense, ¿asunto de seguridad o de mercado?  
La controversia sobre el aborto en Estados Unidos*



J. Guadalupe Pérez/Cuartosuro

# NAFTA'S Institutions An Evaluation Ten Years On

Luis Quintana Romero\*

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is part of the broad process of institutional reforms begun in the 1980s as a result of the country's trade opening. In that sense, the agreement stems from the change in formal institutions effected in those years. At the same time, it is a specific source of institutional change, particularly domestically, where it has been behind modifications in the obligatory nature of Mexico's legal system,

and has spurred important changes in legislation.

When scholars look at the conditions in which Mexico decided to begin the process leading up to NAFTA, they usually concentrate on economic asymmetries with the United States. However, most do not mention Mexico's institutional framework, which corresponded essentially to the "closed" economy model of a corporatist, centralized political system.<sup>1</sup> It had an insufficiently defined system of property rights (particularly with regard to land ownership, the use and extrac-

tion of natural resources and intellectual property rights) and lacked a regulatory framework that could sanction anti-competitive practices and fraud, and a clear legal system without corruption, etc.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, we can say that Mexico sought NAFTA without the country having an operating institutional framework corresponding to the changes that it would bring. This led to a series of reforms partially oriented to comply with some of the institutional prerequisites implicitly demanded so that our trade partners would approve the treaty, but also as a way to

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\* Professor in the UNAM Economics Department, Acatlán campus.

strengthen the institutional framework with the massive changes in the economy during the period before the reforms. These changes are rarely explored in research on NAFTA because institutional matters are considered included in the conventional economic analysis.

NAFTA AND THE INSTITUTIONS

In principle—and according to Douglas North<sup>3</sup>—we know that institutions are the rules of the game in a society and can be formal (legal rules) or informal (conventions or codes of conduct).

In contrast with the European integration process, NAFTA did not give rise directly to a large number of institutions regulated by the treaty itself. This is justified to the extent that NAFTA is an elementary and very limited form of integration.

NAFTA's organizational structure is regulated in a few pages of the official treaty and very generally in its Chapter 20, Section A, and in the environmental and labor side-bar agreements. Its formal bodies are:<sup>4</sup>

- a) The Free Trade Commission (Article 2001): This is NAFTA's central body, made up of cabinet-level representatives from each of the three countries. Its function is to supervise the treaty's implementation and future development. It contributes to resolving conflicts of interpretation and supervises the work of the treaty's other formal institutions. It meets at least once a year.
- b) The Secretariat (Article 2002) is established by the Free Trade Commission and made up of national sections. Its general aim is to facil-

**TABLE I**  
**NAFTA COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS**

<b>A. Committees</b>	
Committee on Trade in Goods	Art. 316
Committee on Trade in Worn Clothing	Annex 300.B, sec. 9(1)
Committee on Agricultural Trade	Art. 706
Advisory Committee on Resolution of Private	
Commercial Disputes Regarding Agricultural Goods	Art. 707
Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures	Art. 722
Committee on Standards-Related Measures	Art. 913
Land Transportation Standards Subcommittee	Art. 913(5)
Telecommunications Standards Subcommittee	Art. 913(5)
Automotive Standards Council	Art. 913(5)
Subcommittee on Labelling of Textile and Apparel Goods	Art. 913(5)
Committee on Small Business	Art. 1021
Committee on Financial Services	Art. 1412
Advisory Committee on Private Commercial Disputes	Art. 2022(4)
<b>B. Working Groups</b>	
Working Group on Rules of Origin	Art. 513
Customs Subgroup	Art. 513(6)
Working Group on Agricultural Subsidies	Art. 705(6)
Bilateral Working Group (Mexico-United States)	Art. 703.2(A)(25)
Bilateral Working Group (Mexico-Canada)	Annex 703.2(B)(13)
Working Group on Trade and Competition	Art. 1504
Temporary Entry Working Group	Art. 1605
<b>C. Other committees and working groups established by the agreement</b>	
<b>Source:</b> <i>Tratado de Libre Comercio de América del Norte. Texto Oficial</i> , vol. 1 (Mexico City: Ed. Porrúa, 1998), and <a href="http://www-tech.mit.edu/Bulletins/nafta.html">www-tech.mit.edu/Bulletins/nafta.html</a> .	

In contrast with the European integration process, NAFTA did not give rise directly to a large number of institutions regulated by the treaty because it is an elementary, limited form of integration.

- itate the agreement's functioning and, to that end, it must aid the commission and give administrative support to the panels and committees created for the review and resolution of disputes.
- c) The Commission for Environmental Cooperation was created under the parallel North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation in 1994. The secretariat of the Environ-

- mental Commission takes note of the events and facts among the countries in order to report whether environmental legislation is being enforced. Also, in accordance with the side-bar agreement, the parties may convoke an arbitration panel against anyone who has failed to enforce the laws.
- d) The Commission for Labor Cooperation, created by the September

**TABLE 2**  
**CASES PRESENTED BEFORE THE NAFTA SECRETARIATS (1994-2000)**

Total Cases until August 2000	65
Cases under NAFTA Chapter 19	61
Cases under NAFTA Chapter 20	3
Extraordinary Challenges Committee	1
<b>Source:</b> <i>Libro blanco del TLCAN</i> (Mexico City: Secofi, 2000).	

**TABLE 3**  
**REQUESTS FOR NAFTA PANEL REVIEW (1994-2000)**

<b>Requests for panel reviews before the Mexican section</b>	<b>11</b>
Country involved: U.S.	6
Country involved: Canada	3
Panel reviews requested by Mexican companies	2
<b>Requests for panel reviews before the U.S. section</b>	<b>33</b>
Country involved: Canada	14
Country involved: Mexico	19
<b>Requests for panel reviews before the Canadian section</b>	<b>17</b>
Country involved: U.S.	12
Country involved: Mexico	5
<b>Source:</b> <i>Libro blanco del TLCAN</i> (Mexico City: Secofi, 2000).	

Mexico has been passive, not taking the initiative to use the institutional dispute framework established by the agreement.

This has led to tension among Mexican producers.

1993 North American Labor Cooperation Accord. This commission does not have the ability to review events and facts as the Environmental Commission does. However, it does have national offices in each country and it can hear complaints pertaining to the violation of labor legislation.

e) Working groups and committees (Appendix 2001.2), created to facilitate investment and trade and ensure the implementation and effec-

tive administration of the treaty. The commissions and working groups are structured by sector and controversial items in the treaty, as Table 1 shows.

f) The North American Development Bank and the Border Ecological Cooperation Commission were created based on a November 1994 agreement between Mexico and the United States. Their aim is to finance environmental infrastructure projects. The

projects funded by the bank must be certified by the commission and linked to drinking water supply, the treatment of waste water or municipal solid waste management, and be located along the border between the two countries.

Even though NAFTA's organizational structure is very simple, it has operated in the context of tremendous changes in the country's formal institutions. Since 1991, the year in which Mexican authorities initiated the negotiation of the free trade agreement with the United States, radical modifications began to be made to Mexico's internal legal system. The aim was to adjust to the changes implicit in the strategy of opening the economy, trade, the financial sector and services to the outside world.

In the period after NAFTA came into effect, important constitutional changes have been made in the electoral system, re-privatizing the banking system, giving the Central Bank autonomy, improving the defense of human rights, opening up the rural property market and, finally, strengthening the fight against drug trafficking.<sup>5</sup>

Numerous changes in federal legislation have also been made; as shown in the graph 1, practically 50 percent of relevant legislation has been changed since 1991.

The new federal legislation passed since NAFTA was a qualitative change with regard to the previous stage; it meant a shift in orientation, putting a priority on the renovation of the legislative framework, mainly vis-à-vis the economy. To comprehend these transformations, suffice it to say that between 1991 and 1996, almost 60 percent of federal legislative changes

dealt with the economy: trade (20.3 percent), communications and transportation (11 percent), natural resources and the environment (9.4 percent), the fiscal system (7.8 percent) and the public administration (7.8 percent).<sup>6</sup>

Once the main institutional changes were established in the context of NAFTA, we can now examine their repercussions. In the first place, we will consider the formal performance of the organizations constituted under NAFTA since, according to Douglas North, they represent the agent of institutional change.<sup>7</sup>

The agreement's so-called "white book" deals with the results of NAFTA's formal bodies' operations, which do not seem to have been very active, particularly in the Mexican case, as can be shown by the following.<sup>8</sup>

Between 1994 and 2000, the NAFTA commission only met six times. Its main agreements dealt with the two rounds to speed up the schedule for eliminating tariffs (This sped up the elimination of 500 mutual tariffs and the United States did the same regarding some chemicals and textiles for Mexico.); the approval of alternative mechanisms for controversy resolution for private trade disputes; and the establishment of a working group on agricultural norms and classification. In this same period, the committees and working groups met 207 times (an average of 30 times a year) and dealt with 65 cases.

From the beginning of the treaty until 2000, 65 cases were presented before the NAFTA secretariats (see Table 2), of which 62 were antidumping and countervailing duty cases. Mexico has been involved in 33 of these (see Table 3). Since NAFTA's inception, 13 investigations have been brought

YEAR	CASE
1994	Import of flat coated steel products originating in and exported from the United States (dumping). Based on a complaint by Industrias Monterrey.
1994	Polystyrene and impact crystal from the United States (dumping).
1995	Seamless line pipe originating in the United States (dumping).
1996	Imports of cold-rolled steel sheet originating in or exported from Canada (dumping).
1996	Imports of rolled steel plate originating in and exported from Canada (dumping).
1996	Imports of hot-rolled steel sheet from Canada (dumping).
1997	Imports of hydrogen peroxide from the United States (countervailing duty).
1998	Imports of high-fructose corn syrup from the United States (dumping).
2000	Imports of urea from the United States (dumping).
2002	Bovine carcasses and half carcasses, fresh or chilled, originating in the United States (countervailing duty).

**Source:** Data from the *Libro blanco del TLCAN* (Mexico City: Secofi, 2000) and the NAFTA Secretariat.

The "white book" deals with the results of NAFTA's formal bodies' operations, which do not seem to have been very active, particularly in the Mexican case.

against the United States by Mexico. Among the most important are the ones about 42- and 55-grade high-fructose corn syrup and about cattle. Mexico has been passive, not taking the initiative to use the institutional dispute framework established by the agreement. This has led to tension among Mexican producers, like, for example, in the case of farmers who have been demanding the agreement be re-negotiated instead of requesting

an investigation for products around which they think the United States is practicing unfair trade, such as beans and corn.

Table 4 shows that the cases brought by Mexican producers involve sectors in which there are large companies, with information and sufficient organizational capacity to defend their interests. This is the case of steel, petrochemicals, sugar and cattle raising, areas in which companies like Indus-

**TABLE 5**  
**GOVERNMENT FACTOR INDEX FROM**  
**THE WORLD COMPETITIVENESS YEARBOOK**

COUNTRY	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Canada	26	28	29	23	10	9	7	12	15
Mexico	17	16	9	39	38	29	25	28	20
USA	8	8	8	9	7	7	13	15	10
□ Mex-Can	6.4	8.5	14.1	11.3	19.8	14.1	12.7	11.3	3.5
□ Mex-U.S.	6.4	5.7	0.7	21.2	21.9	15.6	8.5	9.2	7.1

□ Standard deviation.

The index orders countries hierarchically from 1 to 47 according to government efficiency in minimizing its participation in business, creating competitive conditions for business, providing predictable social and macroeconomic conditions that minimize external risk for businesses, flexibility in adapting its economic policies to the changing international environment and promoting equality and justice, ensuring social security for the population.

**Source:** Created by the author using data from the Institute for Management Development, past rankings for government factor, <http://www.imd.ch>

**TABLE 6**  
**INTERNATIONAL TRANSPARENCY INDEX FOR THE NAFTA REGION**

COUNTRY	1980-85	1988-92	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Canada	8.41	8.97	8.87	8.96	9.1	9.2	9.2	9.2
Mexico	1.87	2.23	3.18	3.3	2.66	2.3	3.4	3.3
USA	8.41	7.76	7.79	7.66	7.61	7.5	7.5	7.8
□ Mex-Can	4.6	4.8	4.0	4.0	4.6	4.9	4.1	4.2
□ Mex-U.S.	4.6	3.9	3.3	3.1	3.5	3.7	2.9	3.2

□ Standard deviation.

The corruption index orders countries on a scale from 0 to 10 in which 10 is the cleanest and 0 is the most corrupt. The index is constructed using the perceptions of businessmen, analysts and citizens about the level of corruption of their governments.

**Source:** Created by the author using information from Transparency International.

trias Monterrey, Altos Hornos de México, Hylsa and Industrias Resistol are among the complainants. This suggests that Mexican producers cannot use NAFTA's dispute resolution mechanisms because they lack information, advisory services and organization.

#### NAFTA AND PERCEPTIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE

For a better appreciation of these institutional changes, the perceptions of economic agents are very useful. Some attempts have been made to measure the institutional factors, basically with the aim of comparing countries to highlight the institutional deficiencies many of them have. World Bank researchers have tried to include institutional performance in the broad concept of governability, defined as the exercise of authority through formal and informal institutions and traditions for the common good.<sup>9</sup> Different indicators have been developed based on this concept. These indicators come from the official data in the different countries, international bodies and surveys of experts and the public. The following is a review of them vis-à-vis NAFTA:<sup>10</sup>

a) The Institute for Management Development, headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland, has published the *World Competitiveness Yearbook* since 1991. It calculates an indicator called "government factor," constructed for 49 countries using 4,000 surveys and including issues such as government policy transparency, political risk, etc. Table 5 illustrates this indicator's results, emphasizing two basic aspects of the differences among the institutional spheres of

the NAFTA economies. In the first place, the differences in the period prior to NAFTA are not relatively very large. They increased in the first years after the agreement was signed and then began a process of institutional convergence after 1996, reaching slightly lower levels of asymmetry than the ones that existed in the early 1990s.<sup>11</sup>

b) Transparency International built an index based on the perception of corruption in different countries. Its results can be seen in Table 6. The figures indicate that since NAFTA came into effect, there is certain convergence among the countries vis-à-vis corruption. After 1995, however, the process bogged down, and in 1996, it reversed itself and re-

emerged in the last two years of the period analyzed.

c) Freedom House is a nongovernmental organization headquartered in New York which evaluates political rights and civil liberties in 192 countries. Since its indicator was constructed in 1978, it has the advantage of having one of the longest series of measurements.

Table 7 shows that the variability of the indexes of political rights and civil liberties improved slightly in 1996-1997 and then returned to its historic trend. It was not until 2000 with the National Action Party's presidential win that these indexes became comparable to those of the 1970s. This means that NAFTA does not have a direct, lasting

effect on the convergence of political rights and civil liberties in the region's countries.

In summary, the indicators reviewed do not clearly prove that NAFTA in and of itself has meant a new set-up and hierarchy of institutional forms for Mexico.

#### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The results of an analysis of institutional change express a problem linked to law enforcement. That is to say, while under NAFTA important changes in the legal system have been made formally, just as we showed in the previous section, in practice, problems persist that affect the quality of the institutions, problems like corruption, low

**TABLE 7**  
**FREEDOM HOUSE FREEDOM INDEX IN THE NAFTA REGION**

#### POLITICAL RIGHTS

COUNTRY	1972-73	1975-76	1980-81	1985-86	1990-91	1991-92	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Canada	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mexico	5	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	3
USA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Mex-Can	2.8	1.4	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	1.4	2.1	2.1	2.1	1.4	1.4
<input type="checkbox"/> Mex-U.S.	2.8	1.4	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	1.4	2.1	2.1	2.1	1.4	1.4

#### CIVIL LIBERTIES

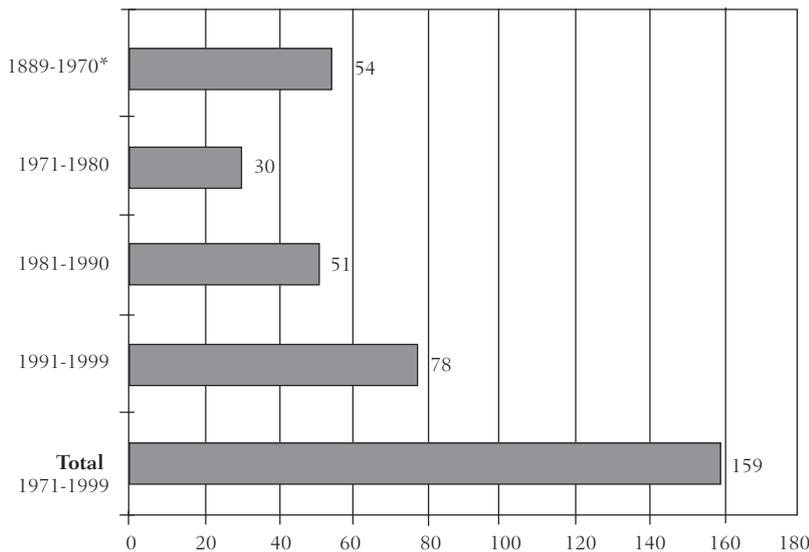
COUNTRY	1972-73	1975-76	1980-81	1985-86	1990-91	1991-92	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Canada	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mexico	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	3
USA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Mex-Can	1.4	1.4	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	1.4	2.1	2.1	2.1	1.4	1.4
<input type="checkbox"/> Mex-U.S.	1.4	1.4	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	1.4	2.1	2.1	2.1	1.4	1.4

Standard deviation.

The index grades freedom in each country: from 1 to 2.5 is considered free; from 3 to 5.5 partially free; and from 5.5 to 7, not free.

**Source:** Created by the author with data from Freedom House, <http://freedomhouse.org>

### FEDERAL LAWS ON ECONOMIC ISSUES STILL IN FORCE (BY YEAR PASSED)



\* Of the 54 laws passed, 34 were amended between 1971 and 1999.

**Source:** Sergio López Ayllón and Héctor Fix Fierro, “¡Tan cerca, tan lejos! Estado de derecho y cambio jurídico en México (1970-1999),” *Boletín Mexicano de Derecho Comparado* new series, no. 97 (Mexico City), 2000.

competitiveness, the informal market, drug trafficking, contraband, poverty, etc. As jurists Sergio López Ayllón and Héctor Fix Fierro say, the positive effects of legal reforms are compensated by negative factors that obstruct and resist change. This means that you can have a legal system without the social support needed for it to function appropriately.<sup>12</sup> Thus, despite the existence of a formal structure of new laws, norms and regulations that have emerged because of NAFTA—even if incomplete and fragmented—they are insufficiently enforceable. Therefore, an important informal structure is maintained that resolves coordination problems in the Mexican economy’s functioning and operation. ■■■

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Víctor Godínez thinks that the economic reform was carried out without either political or institutional internal counterweights. In this way, the reform was validated via the forms and customs of the old corporatist system. Víctor Godínez, “México: consecuencias económicas del reformismo autoritario,” *Persona y sociedad* vol. 10, no. 2, published by the Instituto Latinoamericano de Doctrina y Estudios Sociales (ILADES) (Santiago, Chile), August 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Arturo Díaz de León extensively analyzes the historic evolution of property rights over the land and labor rights in Mexico, showing that the main formal regulations are contained in Articles 127 and 123 of the Constitution. He outlines a wide-ranging description of the insufficiencies of the regulatory framework for private, state and communal property in Mexico, showing the negative effects this has on productivity in the countryside as a result of the existence of small holdings and latifundios caused by legislation on land ownership and, finally, the abuses of the most elementary labor rights (low

wages, denial of social protection, child labor, among many others) because labor legislation was not appropriately adjusted. Arturo Díaz de León, “Los derechos de propiedad de la tierra y el trabajo,” Leopoldo Solís, comp., *Los derechos de propiedad en México* (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigación Económica Lucas Alamán, A.C., 2000).

<sup>3</sup> Douglas C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance. Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Douglas North distinguishes between institutions and organizations: institutions are the rules of the game and organizations are the players. Therefore, the structure of NAFTA’s players is very simple and in concordance with the relatively limited degree of integration of a free trade area.

<sup>5</sup> Javier López Moreno presents a detailed review of each of these constitutional changes. Javier López Moreno, *Reformas constitucionales para la modernización. Una visión de la modernización de México* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Sergio López Ayllón’s and Héctor Fix Fierro’s work shows that the new orientation of Mexican legislation is characterized by “the acceptance of an open market economy, the reduction of the size and functions of the state (privatization and deregulation, respectively), a new institutional set-up with the objective of greater equilibrium between the executive and the other branches of government (political and judicial reforms), as well as between the federal, state and municipal governments, and, finally, the strengthening of civil and political rights.” Sergio López Ayllón and Héctor Fix Fierro, “¡Tan cerca, tan lejos! Estado de derecho y cambio jurídico en México (1970-1999),” *Boletín Mexicano de Derecho Comparado* new series, year 33, no. 97 (Mexico City), 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Douglas C. North, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> The white book was the log for following up NAFTA activities that the Ministry of Trade kept until 2000.

<sup>9</sup> World Bank, *The Quality of Growth* (New York: World Bank-Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 137.

<sup>10</sup> We included only indexes with information prior to and after the signing of NAFTA in order to be able to identify and compare the changes due to the treaty.

<sup>11</sup> The convergence indicator used is the standard deviation between the countries’ institutional indexes. This measurement is known as the sigma convergence in the specialized literature.

<sup>12</sup> López and Fix, op. cit., pp. 157-158.

# Ten Years of NAFTA The New Labor Market Part 1

Javier Aguilar García\*



Pedro Valiente/Cuattrocuro

Globalization and the national processes of economic modernization, faithfully accompanied by so-called liberal policies, have brought about profound changes in many nations, particularly in their labor markets.

Let us look at the three great issues in Mexican society in the last two decades and particularly the last ten years

since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into effect: a) sustained growth in the maquiladora sector; b) growth of the economy and informal employment; and c) the eruption of migration to the United States and Canada. In this first article, I will examine the first two points.

It is true that these three elements are an “escape valve,” as the governor of Mexico’s central bank has said, both for the labor market and for the economy as a whole. However, they should

not be seen as a real way out for the economic and social problems plaguing Mexico, which require profound, consistent—not momentary or circumstantial—solutions.

## THE MAQUILADORA SECTOR

The Miguel de la Madrid administration (1982-1988) opened up the borders and made sweeping reforms to facilitate the establishment of maquiladora

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**TABLE 1**  
**EMPLOYEES IN MAQUILADORA PLANTS BY JOB CATEGORY 1994-2003**

YEAR	NUMBER OF COMPANIES	TOTAL EMPLOYEES	PRODUCTION WORKERS		TECHNICIANS	CLERICAL WORKERS
			MEN	WOMEN		
1994	2,085	583,044	192,991	284,041	64,656	41,357
1995	2,130	648,263	217,557	314,172	71,098	45,436
1996	2,411	753,708	257,575	359,042	82,795	54,296
1997	2,717	903,528	312,457	422,892	103,855	64,324
1998	2,983	1,014,006	357,905	465,656	118,516	71,929
1999	3,297	1,143,240	408,432	514,444	138,246	82,119
2000	3,590	1,291,232	468,695	576,706	153,392	92,439
2001	3,684	1,198,942	432,340	524,929	149,583	92,009
2002	3,251	1,071,209	389,435	463,149	136,278	82,348
2003	3,245	1,063,827	386,418	455,034	137,295	85,008

**Note:** When new regulations came into effect, a considerable number of companies were removed from the maquiladora program according to a review by the Ministry of the Economy. As a result of this review, the Maquila Industry series were adjusted as for 2001.

**Source:** Estadística de la Industria Maquiladora de Exportación, INEGI; Vicente Fox, *Tercer Informe de Gobierno*, 1 September 2003, Appendix, pp. 227 and 347; INEGI, *Encuesta Nacional de Empleo Urbano*, Press Bulletin, 21 January 2004, pp. 1-7; STPS, "Estadísticas laborales, personal ocupado en plantas maquiladoras por posición en el trabajo," [www.stps.gob.mx/index2.htm](http://www.stps.gob.mx/index2.htm); 21 January 2004.

plants. A new economic sector emerged in Mexico and grew steadily. By 1980, the maquiladora plants employed 119,000 people; by 1985, 202,000. In 1986, 890 maquiladora plants employed 250,000 people; by 1988, 1,396 factories employed 369,000.

By 1990, in the second year of Carlos Salinas de Gortari's term (1988-1994), the number of plants had soared to 1,703, with 446,000 employees, and at the end of his term, in 1994, there were 2,085 plants with 583,000 workers.

In 1997, the third year of Ernesto Zedillo's term (1994-2000), the country boasted 2,717 maquiladoras with 903,000 employees. By the end of his term in 2000, there were 3,590, with 1,291,000 workers. This was the high-

Globalization and the national processes of economic modernization, faithfully accompanied by so-called liberal policies, have brought about profound changes in labor markets.

est employment level in the sector; after that the maquiladora plants began to decline.

In 2001, there were 3,684 plants, but the number of employees dropped to 1,198,000; and in 2002, 433 plants went out of business and the number of workers dropped to 1,071,000.

Halfway through Vicente Fox's administration (2000-2006), the figures had also dropped: 3,245 plants employed 1,063,000 people, 250,000 fewer than the highest point (see table 1).

The government and companies argued that this happened because of

the U.S. economy's 2001-2003 slump, which hit Mexico disastrously given its high level of exports north.

About 300 maquiladora plants closed. It is also said that this is due to Mexico's high labor costs and that the plants ran away to Central America and China, where they are lower.

Both companies and the government also argued that they closed because Mexico has not made the structural reforms in finance, energy and labor relations that have repeatedly been presented to the legislature but not passed.

**TABLE 2**  
**EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN MEXICO**  
**(1980, 1990 AND 2000)**

	1980	1990	2000
TOTAL POPULATION	69.6 million	81.2 million	97.4 million
Population 12 years and over	45.1 million	55.9 million	69.2 million
Work force	21.2 million	24.0 million	34.1 million
Employed	21.2 million	23.4 million	33.7 million
Unemployed	669 thousand	660 thousand	424 thousand
Open unemployment rate	0.3%	2.6%	2.0%
Number affiliated to IMSS or ISSSTE	6.5 million	10.2 million	13.0 million
Business owners	1.2 million	1.5 million	854 thousand
% Owners/Work force	5.6%	6.2%	2.5%

**Source:** INEGI, *XII Censo General de Población y Vivienda, 2000*, [www.inegi.gob.mx/](http://www.inegi.gob.mx/); Javier Aguilar García, "Estadísticas económicas de México, 1980-2000," mimeographed paper published by the UNAM Institute for Social Research, 2001; Javier Aguilar García, *La población trabajadora y sindicalizada en México en el periodo de la globalización* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica/IIS-UNAM, 2001).

A large part of free trade policy contained in NAFTA is encountering problems for growth in different economic sectors. Thus, it is showing its drawbacks and weaknesses in the maquiladora sector.

However, from another standpoint, we could add that the maquiladora plants ran away because they do not trust the government, because they see no concrete, definite plan to clearly promote economic growth, a plan going beyond official rhetoric. A large part of free trade policy contained in NAFTA is encountering problems for growth in different economic sectors. Thus, free-trade policy is also showing its drawbacks and weaknesses in the maquiladora export sector. There is no doubt, however, of the sector's impact on the Mexican labor market.

#### *Maquiladora Labor Market Outline*

Some of the outstanding characteristics of labor in Mexican maquiladoras include:

- a) The feminization of its work force. In 1994, the industry employed 193,000 men and 284,000 women; by 2000, the figures had jumped to 469,000 and 577,000 respectively. In 2003, despite the drop in the number of plants and unemployment, women continued to be a majority with

386,000 men and 455,000 women employees.

- b) A high number of technicians. In 1994, maquiladoras employed 65,000 technicians; in 1997, 104,000; and in 2000, 153,000. However, from 2001 to 2003, the number dropped from 149,000 to 137,000.
- c) Growing number of employees in administrative positions. In 1994, 41,000 people had clerical jobs, the figure grew to 64,000 in 1997; and reached its highest point, 92,000, in the year 2000. By 2003 it went down to 85,000 jobs while there were one million production workers.
- d) Flexible labor relations. Creating flexibility means the absence

Despite the problems in the maquiladora sector, there is no doubt that it has become one of the main “safety valves” for the formal economy, since part of Mexico’s unemployed have poured into it.

of legal, respected collective bargaining agreements; low wages; long work days; job insecurity; the lack of health and safety services; lack of benefits like access to the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS). What we find here is sweetheart contracts and unions docile enough to join the “official union confederations” like the Workers Confederation of Mexico (CTM), the Revolutionary Confederation of Workers and Peasants (CROC), the Mexican Regional Workers Confederation (CROM), etc.

Many workers switch constantly from company to company, first of all because often

they are not directly hired by the maquiladoras themselves, but by sub-contractors. Secondly, many only work a short time to save enough money to go to the United States. This rotation increases the maquiladoras’ contempt for workers’ collective and individual rights.

- e) Low national input in production or assembly. Only approximately 2 percent of inputs are of Mexican origin.
- f) Special considerations for maquiladora plants given by both Institutional Revolutionary Party (1982-2000) and National Action Party (2000-2006) administrations, including cheap or even free

land; cheap electricity and gas; tax breaks for several years; low cost access to highways and railroad lines and telecommunications, etc.

In broad strokes, this is the maquiladora sector, which was practically non-existent in the 1970s, NAFTA’s clearest and most concrete contribution to the Mexican economy, but above all the most distinct expression of free-trade policy. However, despite the problems in the sector, there is no doubt that it has become one of the main “safety valves” for the formal economy, since part of Mexico’s unemployed have poured into it.

**INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT**

The informal economy and employment have grown in all of the country’s largest cities and in all areas: agricul-

	1980	1990	2000
Work force	21.2 million	24.0 million	34.1 million
People affiliated to IMSS or ISSSTE	6.5 million	10.2 million	13.0 million
Owners	1.2 million	1.5 million	854 thousand
People affiliated to IMSS or ISSSTE plus owners	7.7 million	11.7 million	13.8 million

**Source:** INEGI, *XII Censo General de Población y Vivienda, 2000*, [www.inegi.gob.mx/](http://www.inegi.gob.mx/); Javier Aguilar García, “Estadísticas económicas de México, 1980-2000,” mimeographed paper published by the UNAM Institute for Social Research, 2001; Javier Aguilar García, *La población trabajadora y sindicalizada en México en el periodo de la globalización* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica/IS-UNAM, 2001).

**TABLE 4**  
**THE INFORMAL SECTOR IN MEXICO**  
**(1980, 1990 AND 2000)**

	1980	1990	2000
Work force	21.2 million	24.0 million	34.1 million
<b>Minus</b> the unemployed	669 thousand	660 thousand	424 thousand
<b>Equals</b>	20,531,000	23,340,000	33,676,000
<b>Minus</b> those with jobs and owners	7.7 million	11.7 million	13.8 million
<b>Result</b> = Informal sector and underemployed	12.8 million	11.6 million	19.8 million

**Source:** INEGI, *XII Censo General de Población y Vivienda, 2000*, [www.inegi.gob.mx/](http://www.inegi.gob.mx/); Javier Aguilar García, "Estadísticas económicas de México, 1980-2000," mimeographed paper published by the UNAM Institute for Social Research, 2001; Javier Aguilar García, *La población trabajadora y sindicalizada en México en el periodo de la globalización* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica/IIS-UNAM, 2001).

The informal sector has grown in all of Mexico's largest cities and in all areas because of downsizing in the public sector, blindly fostered free trade, a lack of fresh investment and low economic growth.

ture, industry and services, particularly informal sales.

It is difficult to pin down numerically, but studies indicate that it is growing steadily and enormously.<sup>1</sup>

For Mexicans who have lost their jobs and are part of the potential work force, informal unemployment has become the lesser of two evils which allows them to survive, albeit precariously, in the country's deplorable labor market.

Informal employment has been synonymous with precarious employment; those with no other option—men, women, young people, adults and seniors—risk their very physical safety by working in the street.

Figures on informal employment vary from one source to another. According to National Statistics Institute (INEGI) figures, 11,180,000 people were employed in the informal sector in 2000. However, *Estudios Políticos* (Political Studies), a magazine published by the UNAM's School of Political and Social Sciences, puts the figure at 19.8 million Mexicans, or 58.1 percent of the work force.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Estimating Mexico's Informal Work Force*

To estimate the size of the informal work force, researchers must look at

official statistics from, among others, the National Statistics Institute (INEGI), presidential reports, the IMSS rolls, State Workers Institute for Social Security and Services (ISSSTE) records and Labor Ministry information. For these institutions, the informal work force is difficult to quantify and evaluate, and therefore, their efforts to deal with it are small and get correspondingly meager results.

Their main argument is that this population does not work in fixed places, does not pay fees and taxes, etc., and therefore the government does not have the resources to do a census and provide consistent information about the universe of several million Mexicans dedicated to craft production, small-scale retail sales, piecework in homes and other inappropriate locations, small agricultural production, field work without contracts, etc. All

of this is not enough for the government to consider these people worthy of registering in a census of informal labor.

For the Mexican government, the category “informal” hides part of the active population that international statistics would classify as unemployed since, according to Mexican statistics, unemployment practically does not exist: in 2000, for example, unemployment was listed as 2 percent nationwide.<sup>3</sup>

According to INEGI, in 2000, 424,000 Mexicans were completely unemployed out of a total active population of 40 million. Isn't this surprising? If this information were correct, our country could be considered one of the few nations of the world with full employment.

How does the government measure unemployment? It does a quarterly survey asking people if they worked at least two days in the previous week, without verifying anything more about the nature of the work done, the working conditions or the legal status of the job. Anyone who states that he/she has worked at least two days is considered employed.

Based on official surveys, then, the government can say that unemployment is extremely low (2 percent in 2000). This same instrument determines that informal employment is extremely low or does not exist at all. In this way, the government eliminates two entire sectors: the unemployed and those with informal employment.

### *A Proposal for Calculating Informal Employment*

We should remember that a large part of the informal population is made up

A large part of the informal work force  
is made up of those who have no contract, no job security,  
no benefits and no health coverage. They accept these conditions  
because they have no alternative.

of those who have no contract, no job security, no benefits and no health coverage. If they accept working under these conditions it is because they have no alternative and need some kind of income to survive. Therefore, I proposed a procedure using the same official sources making it possible to measure this sector.

The results were that in 1980, there were 12.8 million Mexicans in the informal sector; in 1990, 11.6 million; in 2000, 19.8 million. How did I get these figures? Using a simple procedure:

- a) I started with the 1980, 1990 and 2000 calculations of the work force.
- b) I subtracted from that number those classified as bosses or owners since I considered that this group does have access to health services and economic benefits (among other things, they resort to banks and their companies themselves for benefits).
- c) Then I subtracted the number of people affiliated to the IMSS and ISSSTE from the active population (the IMSS and ISSSTE rolls include people working for companies that give them access to most benefits such as a contract, job security, health coverage and retirement).
- d) Finally, I also subtracted the completely unemployed, using INEGI and Labor Ministry figures gathered from censuses and employment surveys.

Let us look at the example of the figures for the year 2000:

- a) The work force, or economically active population, was calculated at 34.1 million people. From this, we subtract the number of owners (854,000), leaving 33,246,000.
- b) From this number, we subtract the 13 million people signed up with the IMSS or ISSSTE, for a total of 20,246,000.
- c) Finally, we subtract the unemployed, or 424,000, for a total of 19.8 million people who are not owners, have no social security coverage and are not fully unemployed.

These 19.8 million people are the informal sector. This means that they carry out some kind of activity and work in very precarious conditions. Their income is low, usually below the legal minimum; their work day is very long; they lack hygiene and safety conditions; neither companies nor social security institutions provide health care for them; they have no days off or vacations; they have no individual contracts or collective bargaining agreements; and they have no job security. They are continually rotating from one business to another, from one activity to another, seeking better incomes, a better work day, always subject to management's rules, whether the business be small, medium-sized or large, domestic or foreign-owned.

Since these Mexicans represent 58.1 percent of the 34.1 million people in the work force, policies to deal with their situation are urgently needed (see tables 2, 3 and 4).

Unions have done studies about the growth of the informal economy. In 2001, the CTM put out a document called "Perspectivas laborales y nivel de ingreso en México" (Labor Perspectives and Income Levels in Mexico), emphasizing how bad the lack of job creation was and the worrying increase in informal employment, which the document put at 66 percent of the work force, or 26,448,000 people.<sup>4</sup>

The INEGI considers the employment rate in the non-structured sector, reported in the quarterly national employment survey, as the main indicator of informal employment. This rate includes people working in non-agricultural micro-companies, mainly working out of their homes, with no name or legal standing. They are not registered with the authorities or business associations and offer no contract or social security benefits.

In accordance with this definition, 10.6 million people were employed in the informal sector in 2002 and 10.7 million in the first quarter of 2003.<sup>5</sup> However, other publications put employment in the informal sector at 23,713,000 in 2003.<sup>6</sup>

Statistics aside, the surprising thing is the lack of political will to create projects for decent employment. On the contrary, the current National Action Party administration wants to turn the informal sector of the economy into a potential source of tax revenues. An analysis by the Tax Administration Service (SAT) entitled "Tamaño del sector informal y su potencial de recaudación" (Size of the Informal Sec-

tor and Its Potential as a Source of Revenue) states that the highest earning informal sector should be incorporated into the formal economy, that is, "since the aim is increasing tax revenues, it makes no sense to try to indiscriminately incorporate the informal sector." This means that it should only be done in big cities, where the main potential for collecting taxes is.<sup>7</sup>

The federal government is beginning to see the informal sector as a source of tax income. Not so the leaders of the Confederation of Industrial Chambers (Concamin), the Owners' Confederation of Mexico (Coparmex) and the Mexican Institute of Financial Executives (IMEF), who have criticized the government for betting on the informal sector continuing to exist. They say this only increases the crisis of the IMSS and limits the stability of public finances, potential growth and competitiveness.<sup>8</sup>

More than fixing blame, businessmen and government should foster policies that do not depend on the U.S. economy. That is to say, we cannot wait for it to improve and quietly anticipate its effects on the Mexican economy.

The limited view that only cheap labor will allow businessmen to keep afloat in the national and international market must also be overcome, because, in the end, the social and political cost will be very high.

Until today, the government views the informal sector favorably since it has reduced the pressure on the formal sector. On the other hand, it does not accept the idea that the informal sector has grown because of recently implemented policies of down-sizing the public sector, blindly fostering free trade, a lack of fresh investment in agriculture and industry and the low economic growth of the last 20 years.<sup>9</sup>

It should be remembered that in the mid-1970s, the informal sector was very small. But in the 1980s, as the economic model changed, informal activities and participants grew rapidly while formal activity stagnated.

Under these conditions, the basic question is whether the future of Mexico and Latin America will hold only informal unemployment and increased poverty. For the time being, we should recognize that the informal economy has been a determining factor for staving off the outbreak of social unrest in our country. ■■■

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Javier Aguilar García, "¿Existe una política para desarrollar el empleo en México?" *Estudios Políticos. Revista de la Coordinación en Ciencia Política* (FCPYS-UNAM), no. 32 (Mexico City), January-April 2003, pp. 191-218.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 216-218.

<sup>3</sup> For the first half of 2004, the INEGI acknowledged unemployment rates of between 3.5 and 3.8 percent, still incredibly low in relation to other countries. [Editor's Note.]

<sup>4</sup> "Irrecuperables los empleos perdidos: CTM," *El Financiero* (Mexico City), 18 June 2001.

<sup>5</sup> *Reforma* (Mexico City), 22 May 2003, p. A-1; <http://www.inegi.gob.mx/inegi/default.asp> and <http://www.stps.gob.mx/>

<sup>6</sup> Ángel Hernández, "El desempleo de mal en peor," *Vértigo* no. 32, 28 September 2003, pp. 34-36.

<sup>7</sup> Orquídea Soto, "Evalúan el impacto de la informalidad," *El Universal* (Mexico City), 19 February 2004, at [http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/pls/impreso/noticia\\_busqueda.html?id\\_notas=38460&tabla=finanzas\\_h](http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/pls/impreso/noticia_busqueda.html?id_notas=38460&tabla=finanzas_h)

<sup>8</sup> *La Jornada* (Mexico City), 19 August 2003, p. 24 at <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2003/feb03/030219/045n2soc.php?origen=soc-jus.html>

<sup>9</sup> About the drop in investments, see Ministry of the Economy and Bank of Mexico figures in *El Universal*, 21 February 2004, p. A-21 at [http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/pls/impreso/web\\_historico](http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/pls/impreso/web_historico)

# REVISTA DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE MÉXICO

NÚM. 8

OCTUBRE 2004

NUEVA ÉPOCA

## 75 años de la autonomía universitaria

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**Humberto Musacchio**  
*Carta a un monje dalmata*

**Jaime Labastida**  
ensayo

**Ricardo Pozas Horcasitas**  
poemas

**Mauricio Molina**  
cuento

**Claudio Isaac**  
sobre cine mexicano

**Roald Hoffmann**  
entrevista

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**Pura López Colomé**  
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reseña

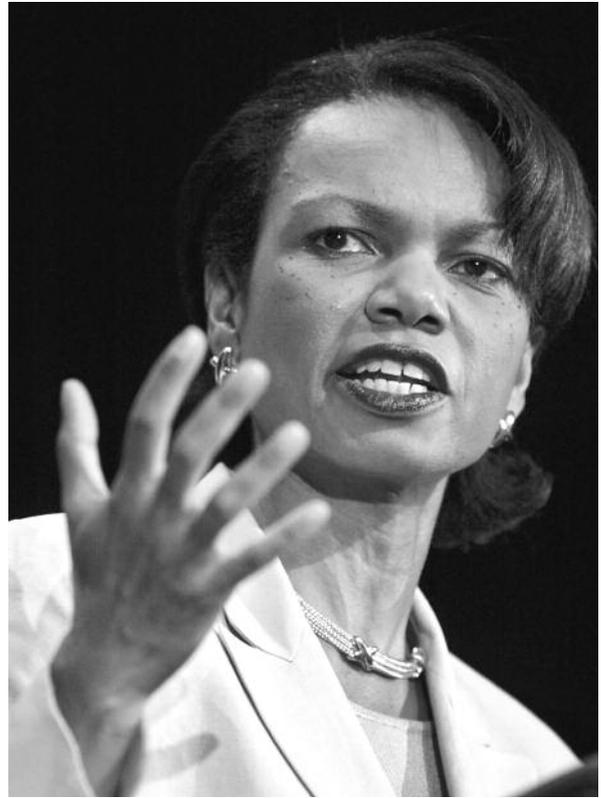
**Reportaje fotográfico**  
de Claudia Flores Lobatón

# The Candidates and the Security Debate in the United States

Leonardo Curzio\*



Larry Downing/Reuters



Joe Skipper/Reuters

Donald Rumsfeld and Condoleezza Rice, the main actors behind U.S. National Security strategies under the Republicans.

Something is wrong when a senator as well known as Edward Kennedy is stopped by security before boarding a plane because he is on a list of people suspected of links with terrorism.

Something is wrong when after three years of unrelenting pursuit, the most wanted man in the world, Osama Bin Laden, still has not surfaced dead or alive.

Something is wrong in the world when Tom Ridge's office has to periodically raise the alert level based on vague information because they really have not managed to neutralize the forces of

international terrorism that continue to threaten the West.

And what is wrong is nothing less than the security system of the world's most powerful nation. In the months immediately after the September 2001 attacks, Americans closed ranks around their president to confront the terrorist threat. With profound patriotism, Democrats supported the president's mea-

\* Researcher at CISAN. The author wishes to thank Laura Elena Cervantes, who always finds exactly the right document.

asures, since what was at stake was national security. Some of these measures, like the approval of the Patriot Act and the war against Iraq, have created polemics both inside the United States and abroad because neither has brought forth visible results that increase Americans' sense of security, but they have spurred criticisms and recriminations. The anti-terrorist alert levels continue to rise, frequently very high, and the tension can be felt in U.S. streets and airports. The treasured prize of tranquility has not been recovered.

Shortly after the 2001 attacks, society, the media and even the Democratic Party opted to avoid criticisms that could be wrongly interpreted. They trusted the government with the responsibility of guiding and developing the security strategy and supported it in the decisions that the executive considered fundamental for guaranteeing the nation's security. In that context of national unity, criticism was buried and formulated discretely to avoid any hint of mistrust or reservations.

However, like in any consolidated democracy, and particularly the U.S. one, unrestricted support for the government is of limited duration, and, given the scant results and numerous problems that Bush's policy has posed, in this electoral year, the entire government strategy for dealing with security threats has been drawn into the debate by candidate John Kerry. The methods used to neutralize the problem have been roundly criticized and, from the Democratic viewpoint, the results of the war on terrorism have been meager.

Another important element that contributed to opening up the discussion about the issue was the work of

the 9/11 Commission presided over by Thomas H. Kean and Lee H. Hamilton. Thanks to this commission, whose findings were published recently,<sup>1</sup> the U.S. public was able to appreciate the deficiencies of its security system and decision-making process.

#### THE ELECTORAL DEBATE

President Bush knows that an important slice of the U.S. electorate still thinks he is the ideal person to continue handling U.S. security matters. That is why he has said that he is a war president and has tried to steer the elec-

toral debate toward issues of national security.

Kerry, who knows himself to be weaker on this issue in the public mind, has taken up the gauntlet with vigor and precision.<sup>2</sup> He says that it is possible to develop a more comprehensive, effective strategy to win the war on terrorism. Among the main criticisms made since the beginning of the year are those centered on the impossibility of arresting the head of Al Qaeda and the mistakes in the Afghanistan campaign. The first of these errors was turning over the waging of the war to Afghan leaders, who basically had neither genuine loyalty to the United States nor a true interest in trapping Osama.

The second mistake is not having understood in time that international terrorism is not a single, perfectly hierarchical organization based in a specific territory. It is rather a swarm of

tiny, highly autonomous, radicalized groups that plan their attacks erratically.

Another issue that causes disquiet today is the thesis that terrorism is a clash of civilizations, an irremediable struggle between the West and the Muslim world. One of the most important contributions of Richard Clarke's book is precisely the need to understand the dynamic and the conflict within the Muslim nations.<sup>3</sup> For his part, Kerry maintains that terrorism cannot be situated as a clash of civilizations. The true dilemma is between civilization and barbarism.

The deepest criticism is formulated from the standpoint of the U.S.'s

Some measures against terrorism, like the approval of the Patriot Act and the Iraqi war, have been polemical, but they haven't increased Americans' sense of security.

allies' growing incomprehension. The doctrine of unilateral preemption has thwarted the support of many countries allied to the strategy. In addition, for political reasons, George Bush has mixed his pre-2001-attack objectives with the fight against terror. The war against Iraq, one of the issues most central to the debate, is proof of that. In the first place, this is because the argument about the weapons of mass destruction could not be proven after the invasion, and it was never proven that there was a link between international terrorism and the regime of the dictator Hussein. But if that war, waged without the backing of the UN Security Council, has caused debilitation, the Iraqi wasps' nest has become one of the Republican administration's weakest points, because peace has not been consolidated there, nor has a precise date been established for U.S.

forces to withdraw. In an interview in *The New York Times* in late August, for the first time the president himself recognized that there had been a miscalculation about the post-war period in Iraq and that the outcome of the military mission there was still not clear.

Throughout recent years, the Republicans have used the fear of terrorism politically, and the Democrats have accused them of having come to a kind of *modus vivendi* in which, while U.S. territory has not been hit again—and this is undoubtedly an achievement—the terrorist threat continues to be present and is frequently used to mobilize public opinion. At

rectly supports terrorists, and above all, developing trustworthy intelligence for making decisions.

Clearly, the main victories in the fight against terrorism have been the result of a combination of U.S. efforts and working with local intelligence services. Experiences in Pakistan, Arabia and Spain have shown that it is not necessary to bomb an entire city to break up whole terrorist cells, but rather to have a good plan for searching, police infiltration, follow-up, reliable information and, although it might seem obvious, a good working knowledge of Arabic. Today, it may be more important to have a good group of case offi-

ble with democratic values and individuals' rights, which are visibly infringed by some parts of the Patriot Act.<sup>4</sup>

The main challenge faced by the United States in the fight against terrorism is situated, in short, on two levels.

The first is guaranteeing cooperation with other countries and assuming the leadership of the free world with clear objectives that are compatible with the respect for human rights, because for the international community, just as important as the fight against terrorism is the need to make sure that human rights and international law are not violated in the name of that fight.

The second is a domestic issue: efficiently coordinating the security agencies so they can pursue common objectives, share information and not wear themselves out in a bureaucratic dispute, and that external intelligence agencies work in a coordinated way with domestic security forces. This is an issue that has been added to the electoral campaign, as we already pointed out, by the 9/11 Commission.

It is surprising that Americans were able to deal politically and institutionally with the work of a commission that literally uncovered a series of weaknesses in the security system.

bottom, the impression still exists that it is in the Bush administration's political-electoral interest to keep terrorism alive—even though at bay—and not implement a decided strategy to fight and defeat it. Beyond speculations leading nowhere, Kerry's proposal hinges on two major elements. The first is working with other countries instead of planting seeds of mistrust and resentment among the allies. Preserving the vital interests of the United States will be guaranteed by having the broad backing of the international community. That is, the idea is to proceed in a fashion diametrically opposed to Bush. The second element is to make sure that the strategy not be based in the main on military power. Kerry's proposal includes renewing alliances, improving law enforcement, particularly in pursuing money laundering that directly or indi-

cers who speak Arabic and are totally trustworthy than thousands of troops laying siege to mosques.

Kerry's plan for homeland security covers five broad issues. The first is improving intelligence systems, particularly operational information about the identity of terrorists, so that it can be used in a timely fashion by all security officers. The second is bettering technology so ports and borders are safe and effective for people crossing with legitimate aims. The third is securing high impact targets that might cause mass casualties (for example, nuclear and chemical plants). The fourth is improving security forces' capabilities in all areas, from their communications systems to training in civil protection. The fifth and last is perhaps the most important: the defense of civil rights and the system of freedoms. The security system must not be incompati-

#### THE COMMISSION'S WORK

It is surprising that only a few years after the attacks and amidst a situation in which the perception of a threat continues to be very much alive, Americans were able to deal politically and institutionally with the work of a commission that literally uncovered a series of weaknesses and, in some cases, incoherencies, in the security system.

The commission carried out its work publicly. It held 12 hearings in which governors, federal agents, academics, high-level officials and former officials testified. The immense majority of its sessions, including the one

Some people still have the impression that it is in the Bush administration's political-electoral interest to keep terrorism alive, and not implement a decided strategy to fight and defeat it.

in which Condoleezza Rice participated, were broadcast live on television to the entire world. This demonstrated the strength of U.S. democratic institutions to world public opinion. For obvious reasons, two of the few hearings held behind closed doors were the ones in which the president and vice-president appeared, but a report has been presented for public perusal, entitled *Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States*.

For the communications media and the public, the issues dealt with during the commission's sessions became an agenda for debate about national security. The first session, held in New York, shook the nation when they heard the testimony of survivors and victims' families, particularly those of the heroic passengers of flight 93 who understood what was happening and rebelled against their captors. The emotional impact of the testimony cast the mistakes in matters of prevention and counterintelligence, also presented before the commission, in a frankly dark tone. In those moments, "America" confronted a naked truth, no patriotic speeches or generic excuses. In addition to the criminal mentality of Al

Qaeda and its determination to profoundly damage the United States, generally speaking, the security system had severe gaps.

The next sessions went deeper into different issues like Islamic terrorism and the challenges opening up with regard to Muslim countries. But the public paid very special attention to the forms of gathering and evaluating intelligence data and security mechanisms on borders and at airports. Finally, the commission's long report includes a number of elements, testimonies and recommendations that will not be dealt with in this article. However, one issue became very important, increasingly so when Central Intelligence Agency Director George Tenet was replaced, and that is the dispersion in the efforts of the different security agencies in the fight against terrorism. It is very grave that after the Cold War, U.S. intelligence services have fragmented in such a way that they have lost the ability to join forces in the effort to reach a common objective. The recommendation that the candidate who wins in November will most certainly adopt is clear and centers on the need to join forces:

The current position of the Director of Central Intelligence should be replaced by a National Intelligence Director with two main areas of responsibility: 1) to oversee national intelligence centers on specific subjects of interest across the U.S. government, and 2) to manage the national intelligence program and oversee the agencies that contribute to it.<sup>5</sup>

Several issues are definitely open in the national debate on security, ranging from the conflict in Iraq to the re-engineering of the intelligence system. The United States has broad options in foreign policy that affect the entire world, such as the dilemma between unilateralism and multilateralism. The decision of the electorate next November will determine which options the hegemonic power will adopt in the next four years. **MM**

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *The 9/11 Commission Report* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.johnkerry.com/pressroom/speeches>

<sup>3</sup> Richard Clarck, *Against All Enemies* (New York: Free Press, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> See [http://johnkerry.com/issues/homeland\\_security/homeland\\_plan.html](http://johnkerry.com/issues/homeland_security/homeland_plan.html).

<sup>5</sup> *9/11 Commission*, op. cit., p. 411.



#### Errata

Photograph on page 69 of the last issue of *Voices of Mexico* (July-September 2004) is from Reuters Agency and not Cuartoscuro, the correct photo credit should be: Tim Wimborne/Reuters.

# The U.S. Elections And Boosted Republican Dominance

César Pérez Espinosa\*



Jason Reed/Reuters

While the media has given broad coverage to the U.S. presidential race, the House of Representatives, one third of the Senate and some governors' seats are also up for election November 2. Trends over the last ten years have favored the Re-

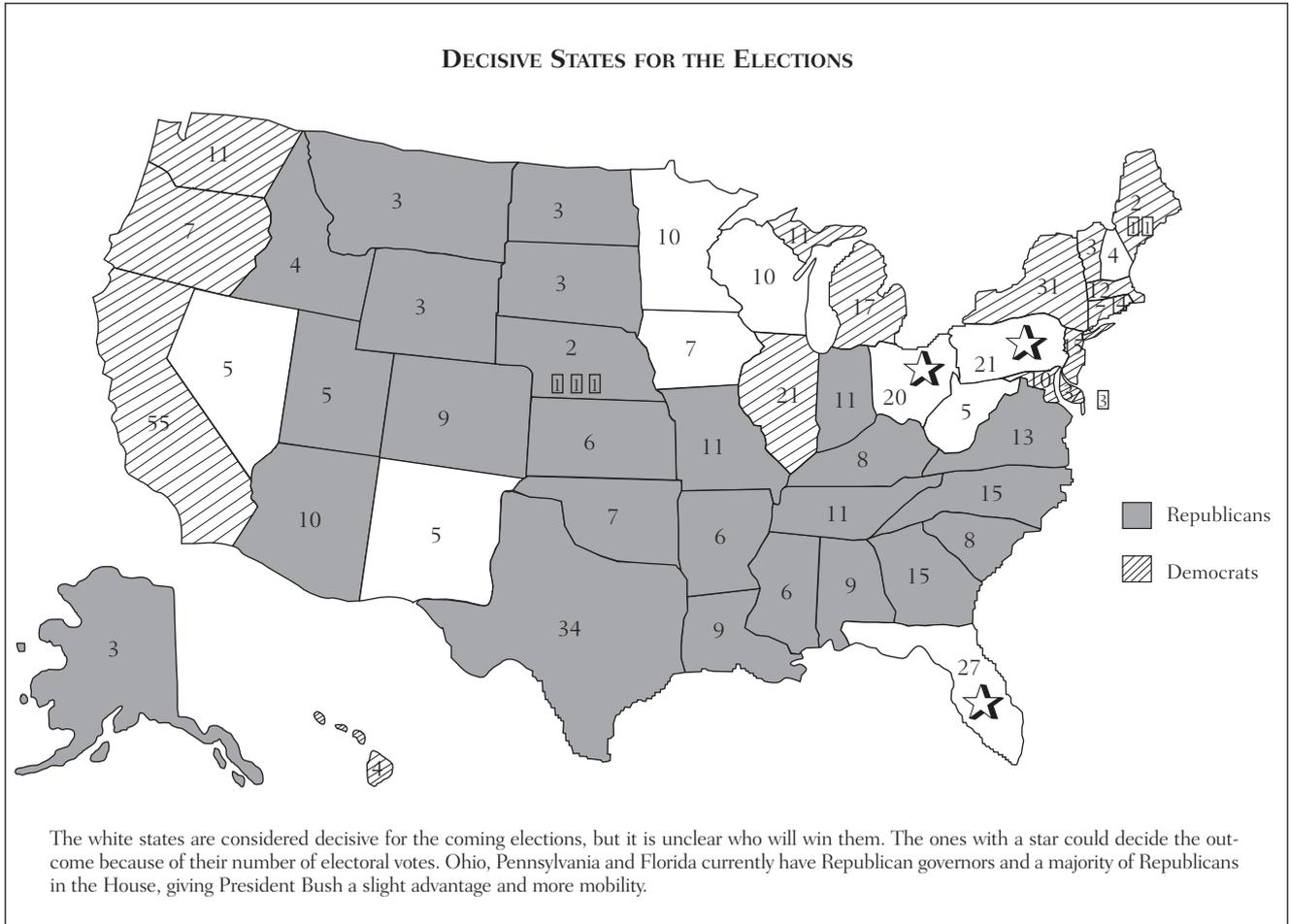
publican Party, above all in the House, but the current campaign, with the withdrawal of Democratic politicians and the close race for three states that may well be won by the conservatives, may lead the Democratic Party to lose not only the House, but also the Senate by a larger margin than in the last election. If this happens, the Republicans will be cel-

ebrating their first decade of undisputed electoral dominance, which began in 1995 under the leadership of the now forgotten Newt Gingrich.

The shift in the U.S. government under the Republican leadership and majority has been seen by some as a "conservative revolution." For others, it is the continuity of a project as old

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\* Academic secretary of the CISAN.



The way the Republicans have selected their candidates seems to show that they are building a political class that combines experience with new-style politicians.

as the nation itself. What they can all agree on is that the shift has been noticeable both domestically and in foreign policy. Undoubtedly, the issues of security and terrorism dominate the presidential contenders' discourses, and seemingly, the Republicans have known better how to sell the idea that they, and not the Democrats, are the ones who the voters should "trust." Bush campaign strategists try to project the image of a tough leader, capable of making swift decisions. How-

ever, the Republican candidate uses old tricks in his electoral discourse, like invoking society's old values and repeatedly reiterating that the United States is a nation chosen by God, something best preserved by the dominance of the Republicans and the interests they represent. However, because of their crisis, the Democrats do not seem to have the same ability to renew their cadre, at least in Congress, or to build an image of their candidates that would attract the average

citizen, much less the elites. The Republicans have been doing exactly the opposite: a glance at their candidates for the Senate and governors' slots clearly shows that in the last ten years of victories, they have learned the importance of their cadre being politically mobile and of the shot in the arm to their cause that a new generation of conservative politicians can be.

Everything indicates that once again the ability to mobilize that the Republican Party has demonstrated

since the 1994 elections will be fundamental for getting its voters out on November 2, traditionally wealthy, white men, WASPS and seniors. However, it will be interesting to see how many women and young people vote Republican. Undoubtedly, with the possibility of a tie looming, both John Kerry and George W. Bush will zealously cultivate the undecided voters who today represent the decisive segment for a win at the polls.

Traditionally high abstentionism will make a repeat appearance this November. However, in theory, a higher number of voters would benefit the Democratic candidate, since it has been proven that high abstentionism favors the Republicans because its hardcore vote is located in increasingly important states like Ohio and Michigan, among others.

The way the Republicans have selected their candidates seems to show that they are building a political class that combines experience with new-style politicians, a strategy designed to continue heading up the legislative branch in coming years. While the internal congressional rules ensure that the Democrats cannot be excluded from the game, increasingly dominated by the Republicans, they are at a disadvantage in training young cadre and are very behind in terms of the political imagination needed to face down the conservative project, both domestically and in foreign policy.

Only days before the elections, the two candidates will try to examine their political proposal and take advantage of their opponents' mistakes, although winning Congress could be more difficult for the Democratic Party, and the Republicans seem to once again have the advantage for winning both

houses. If Kerry wins, he will have to deal with a divided government, and, given the rules and customs of the legislative process, he will have a hard time governing without conceding something to the opposition party.

The political arteriosclerosis of the electoral system for the legislature means that the races will really only be close in 26 districts. In that context, Hispanic legislators, particularly those of Mexican or Mexican-American descent, take on more importance because they are young and have effective control of their districts. After 28 years, Hispanics may win a Senate seat: the last Latino senator was Joseph Montoya, a Democrat from New Mexico, who lasted 13 years in office. Now both parties have Latino candidates in the race: the Democrats are running Ken Salazar, of Mexican origin, in Colorado, and the Republicans, Mel Martínez, of Cuban origin, in Florida.

If the Republicans win the elections again, the administration will prob-

The concern for millions of voters is that the dire straits of the democratic system do not seem to matter to the two hegemonic parties, which seem to increasingly agree when it comes time to make important decisions.

Democratic leaders have managed to set up a campaign infrastructure nationwide that allows them to have a minimal but organized sector of voters, that is, a participatory minority that will legitimize a system based less and less on consensus. While that system will be questioned in the rest of the world because of high abstentionism, it seems to be only minimally affected by these criticisms, in contrast with factors such as the need for pressing changes in world politics and the debilitation created by facing increasingly noticeable differences in the United States' social and political development.

Seemingly, having a less and less competitive electoral system is not a serious problem for the U.S. political class. After the controversial 2000 elec-

The Democrats are at a disadvantage  
in training young cadre and are very behind in terms of the political  
imagination needed to face down the conservative project.

ably have more room for implementing its political agenda in all sectors, spearheading with its anti-terrorist policy, that may continue to be inoperative as it has been until now.

The existence of third parties is another factor that benefits the Republican strategy since Ralph Nader gleans his support from voters with liberal views on social issues. However, some voters think his party does not represent a substantial difference, which makes it far from a real option for change.

tions, U.S. citizens concerned about their system's lack of credibility and representativeness have witnessed how the federal government and some state governments have responded only with a few more or less superficial changes in regulating campaign financing, particularly "soft" funding; restricting the terms for which legislators can be reelected and reducing the enormous advantages big corporations enjoy for intervening in the elections —big scandals like the Enron debacle and

ELECTION RESULTS (1984-2000)					
ELECTION	PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION YEARS*				
	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Presidency	Ronald Reagan (R)	George Bush (R)	Bill Clinton (D)	Bill Clinton (D)	George W. Bush (R)
House of Representatives	Democratic Majority 269 166 (D) (R)	Democratic Majority 258 177 (D) (R)	Democratic Majority 267 167 (D) (R)	Republican Majority 204 230 (D) (R)	Republican Majority 211 223 (D) (R)
Senate	Republican Majority 54 46 (R) (D)	Democratic Majority 55 45 (D) (R)	Democratic Majority 56 44 (D) (R)	Republican Majority 52 48 (R) (D)	Republican Majority 54 46* (R) (D)

\*This table does not include mid-term congressional elections.  
**Sources:** <http://www.senate.gov/> and <http://clerk.house.gov/>

Any hopes the Democrats may have for a victory  
 can only be centered on the Oval Office, since they are very far from being able  
 to regain control over the two Houses of Congress.

their links to the political class do not seem important to voters. Making real reforms in these areas would undoubtedly damage the hegemony of the two main parties and, given the political priorities of the moment, these issues will probably be far from the priority in coming years.

Preserving equilibrium to avoid falling into authoritarianism seems to be a goal far from the Republicans' political practice; they tend to strengthen conservative, exclusionary policies that promote greater social inequality.

In a political system in which money continues to be a central factor, achieving that equilibrium is what makes Nancy Pelosi popular even among the

most conservative Democrats. Undoubtedly, this new leader will be enormously responsible for the political fate of a party which in recent years has dedicated itself to putting forward a project that brings together the United States' different anti-Republican groups.

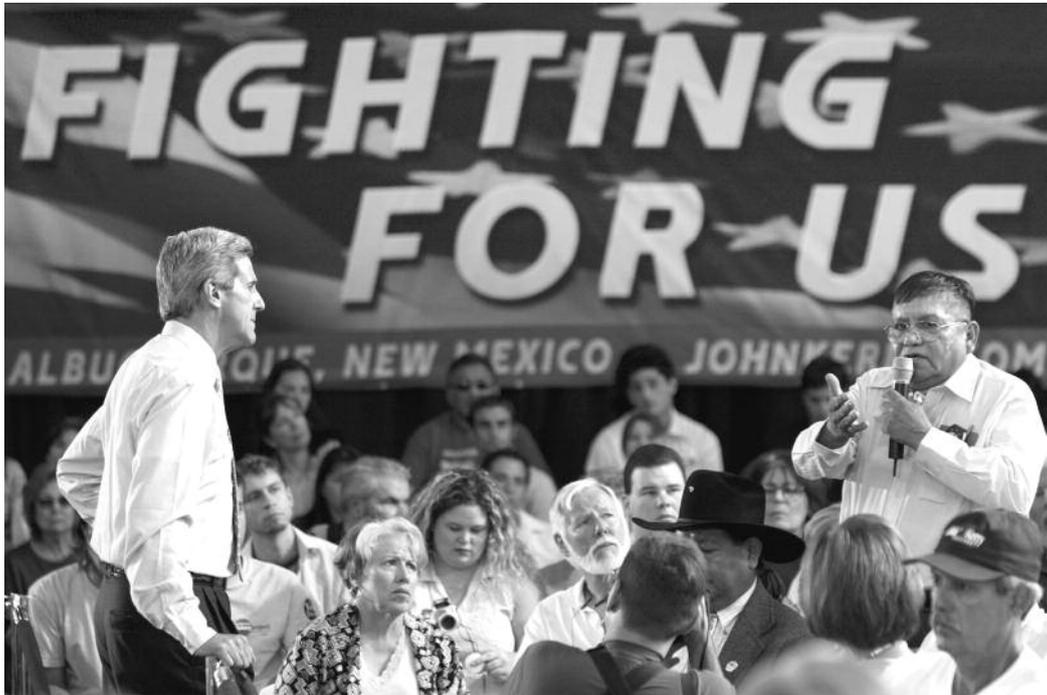
The 2002 electoral results showed the inertia of the U.S. population in its move toward conservatism both on the foreign agenda and domestic issues. The coming elections will probably not reverse that trend.

Undoubtedly, any hopes the Democrats may have for a victory can only be centered on the Oval Office, since they are very far from being able to regain control over the two Houses of

Congress. Their old party leader Richard Gephardt retired after an unfortunate showing in his party's primaries. Counterposed to this is the promising leadership of Nancy Pelosi who, even if she achieved internal consensus in the Democratic caucus, would have to admit that she does not have the formula for getting the Democrats out of the profound political crisis they are in today: it is a party that not only has few good candidates, but also few alternative policies, so necessary for fulfilling the expectations of many Americans and of most of the peoples of the world, so unhappy with the Republicans' warlike-conservative control and tired of the Bush dynasty's lies. **NMM**

# John Kerry's Perspective on Mexico

Alejandro Becerra Gelóver\*



Bryan Snyder/Reuters

Despite studies suggesting that Democrat Kerry will be the next president, results have put the two candidates only between one and three points apart, which statistically speaking is considered a tie. Unless something transcendental happens to the U.S. economy or on the Iraq front this tie will probably persist up to election day.

Experts have dubbed the November 2 U.S. elections as the closest in years, and different national opinion polls seem to confirm that judgment.

Most of the poll results released between June and September confirm the president's drop in popularity and

give the advantage to the Democratic candidate. Between July 6 and August 12, 56 national polls were taken (Zogby, Rasmussen, *The Economist*, Gallup, Pew), 49 of which predicted a win by John Kerry, six a win by President Bush, and one a tie. Despite most of these studies suggesting that Democrat Kerry will be the next president, the results have put the two candidates only between one and three points apart, which

strictly statistically speaking, can be considered a tie. This shows just how close the race is.

Unless something transcendental happens to the U.S. economy or on the Iraq front or in the fight against Al Qaeda in coming weeks, this tie will probably persist up to election day. In that framework, a careful review of each candidate's electoral strategies, the definition of their target publics, the calcu-

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lations of electoral engineering and campaign promises will play a central role in the outcome of the race.

At the time of this writing, three debates are planned for the presidential candidates and one for the vice-presidential hopefuls. These debates could have an influence on the tie and even decide the race in favor of one of the contenders. What is on the immediate horizon is very close competition in which either candidate has practically the same possibility of moving to the front. Thus, intelligent proposals, clear oratory and speeches, as well as the ability to deal with the skirmishes of the debate will be a determining factor in convincing still undecided voters.

#### JOHN KERRY, PRESIDENT

Bush's relationship with Mexico has been documented during the four years of his administration. However, an exercise supposing that John Kerry will be the next president of the United States is not without interest. His victory would have a significant impact on foreign policy toward Mexico, thus making it necessary to gauge the position he takes vis-à-vis Mexico in the next four years. Before looking at the perception of Mexico in Kerry's electoral campaign, we should admit that U.S. presidential candidates plan their strategies according to the concerns of the people who are going to elect them. In that vein, Americans pay attention first of all to domestic issues like the economy, employment, social security or crime, and only after that look at international issues.

In this specific case, as the world's only superpower, U.S. foreign policy

concerns are mainly centered on Europe, Russia, Canada, Japan and China, and now the situation in Iraq and the fight against terrorism. Only after that does it zero in on Third World countries like Latin America. From that point of view, we can understand the secondary status that Mexico has in presidential elections. Nevertheless, specialists like Madeleine Albright say that Mexico should get special attention because of the large number of domestic and international issues that link our two countries.

#### KERRY'S DISCOURSE ON MEXICO

In general, Democratic presidential candidates' domestic policies center on the

antee of a more indulgent relationship with Mexico in which the issue of security will always be present.

John Kerry has spoken relatively little about the position he will take with regard to his neighbor to the south; in fact, some observers say he has been ambiguous. Something noticeable since the beginning of his bid for the presidency in February of this year was that Senator Kerry said nothing in his speeches about Mexico. This is even more important because Kerry was a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for several terms. Though he made no reference in his speeches to Mexico, he did mention in general terms his position on Latin America, international trade, migration and border security measures.

During the first months of the campaign, until his June 26 speech to Latino leaders, Kerry made no reference in his speeches to Mexico. Some observers say he has been ambiguous about his neighbor to the south.

defense of minorities, civil rights, employment, the fight against poverty and equal opportunities. In foreign policy, in addition to dealing with traditional U.S. concerns, they give relatively greater importance to regions like Latin America. Thus, traditionally, Democrats have been seen by Latin Americans in a better light than their Republican counterparts. Perhaps for that reason, in theory, one would expect more openness and approachability on the part of a Democratic administration for dealing with foreign policy matters with Mexico. Possibly this is why an August 4 Reforma Group survey says that 55 percent of Mexicans prefer John Kerry to George W. Bush.<sup>1</sup> Of course, the Democratic tradition is no guar-

It was not until June 26 and then during the National Democratic Convention that Kerry began to speak more directly about Latin America, and specifically about Mexico. He emphasized that if he became president, he would establish more intense, closer relations with Latin America, inspired in John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, with the aim of creating a new Community of the Americas.<sup>2</sup> This would include the creation of an investment and social development fund for the region to promote democracy, fight against poverty and invest in education, health and economic development. This would make for a shift in U.S. foreign policy for the region, because the Bush administration's policy has

been almost exclusively based on promoting free trade, military aid, the war on drugs and decreasing foreign aid.

About international trade, Kerry has said that he will review current U.S. trade agreements with other countries, including the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), in order to strengthen them and turn them into more useful instruments for the United States. It is doubtful that Kerry will propose greater trade integration with Canada or Mexico. On the other hand, he has also come out for a reform of current U.S. immigration legislation, to include a program for illegal residents, a position that coincides with the one Mexico has promoted over the last four years. Kerry's intention would be to favor family reunification by legal-

the United States, Canada and Mexico. As the electoral campaign proceeds, statements about Mexico are expected to be more precise, above all with regard to security, the border, trade and international cooperation, which are a current part of the bilateral agenda.

In the last stretch of the campaign, Mexico is expected to be reassessed as an ally in the fight against international terrorism and an important trade partner for the development of the U.S. economy. At the same time, comments are expected about the two countries' growing interdependence, the progressive institutionalization of their relations and the demographic and social importance of the Mexican population in the United States, which is now the largest minority in the country.

Kerry has expressed his opposition to the militarization of the border with Mexico, but he has been emphatic in supporting the "intelligent borders" program in a framework of strong, reliable security measures.

izing immigrants. The Democratic Party's presidential electoral platform states that tax-paying undocumented immigrants without criminal records should have the road open to a well-earned full participation in the United States.

With regard to border security, Kerry has expressed his opposition to the militarization of the border with Mexico, but he has been emphatic in supporting the "intelligent borders" program that aims to facilitate the movement of goods and individuals along the border in a framework of strong, reliable security measures. In that context, he has come out for forming a "U.S. security perimeter" to coordinate migration, customs and travel policies among

Perhaps this is why John Kerry and his electoral strategies have attempted to pay special attention to the Latino vote, as an important factor in the final outcome of the elections. Voters in states like New Mexico, Arizona, Florida and Nevada represent 47 electoral votes, and it should be remembered that four years ago, candidate Bush won the presidency with Florida's 27 electoral votes. This is why Kerry has focused on winning the Hispanic vote and has tried to get closer to Mexico.

The candidates are still even in the polls and the debates are still to come. Kerry has a greater possibility of winning than President Bush, from his comfortable position as the oppo-

sition. The Democratic candidate will focus on criticizing the current administration's policies and programs and pointing out its mistakes. The problems in the economy, the situation in Iraq, the 9/11 Commission report suggestions and, in general, everything related to terrorism will be used to the detriment of the president to impress the electorate. The resident of the White House has to defend the "reasons of state" and national security that motivated him to make decisions about Iraq, whose effects are evident in the U.S. economy. It remains to be seen whether the president will be able to convince voters that his administration should continue. Kerry has a real chance of winning.

If that happens, it should be remembered that the electoral platform presented at the National Democratic Convention in late July stated, "Mexico has made steady progress toward building a mature democracy, and we will make relations with Mexico a priority in order to best address economic, environmental and social issues of concern." We Mexicans hope that Kerry's position will not be ambiguous and translates into better forms of understanding, with the prospect of inaugurating a more mature, pro-active and productive relationship with the United States from which both countries can benefit. **NMM**

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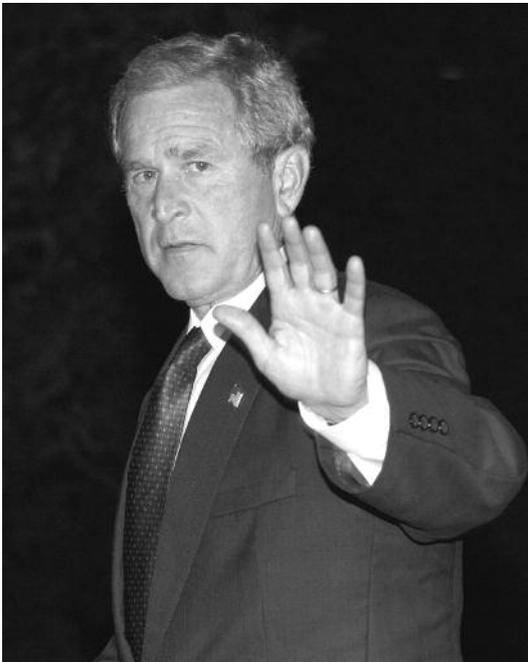
#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> "Crece el apoyo a John Kerry en México," *Reforma* (Mexico City), 4 August 2004.

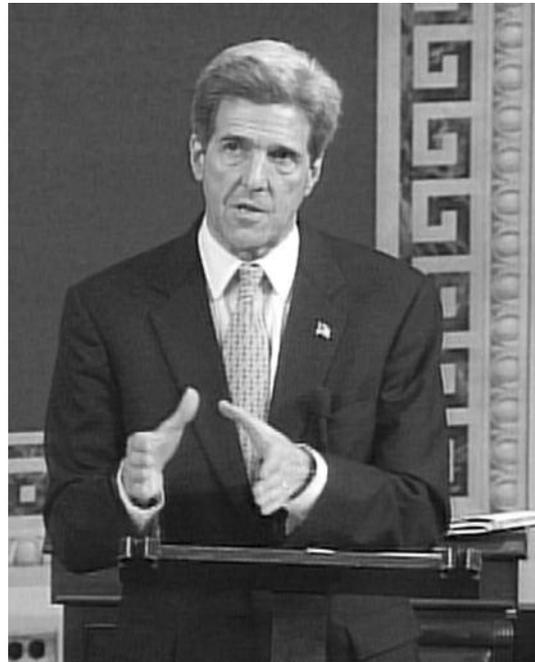
<sup>2</sup> Democratic Platform for America, "Strong at Home, Respected in the World," Democratic National Convention, 26-29 July 2004; John Kerry's speech to the National Association of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO), 26 June 2004; and *The Miami Herald*, 30 June 2004.

# The U.S. Presidential Elections After 9/11

Antonio de la Cuesta\*  
Jesús Velasco Grajales\*\*



Mannie García/Reuters



Reuters TV

Massachusetts Democratic Senator John Kerry and Republican President Bush are honing their weapons to meet the challenge of an election that some specialists think might be even closer than in 2000. In that year, Bush secured the White House in a difficult and *sui generis* election: he won the Electoral College but lost the popular vote. This had not happened in the United States since Republican Benjamin Harrison won

in 1888 with 95,000 fewer votes than his Democratic opponent, Grover Cleveland. This year, Bush could be the first president who having lost the popular vote in his first election was reelected for a second term. The other three incumbent presidents who lost the popular vote the first time around did not serve second terms: John Quincy Adams lost to Andrew Jackson in 1828; Rutherford Hayes decided not to run again in 1880 after his first term; and Grover Cleveland finally beat Benjamin Harrison at the polls in 1892. George W. Bush aspires to continue in office at a time of great political polarization in the United States, sharpened by the uncertain out-

come of the U.S. intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan in the framework of the so-called “war against terrorism.”

Conservatives and a large part of the public who have successfully been sold the idea that Washington is the only force on earth capable of defeating the “terrible terrorist threat” —one out of four Americans feel they are targets of a possible attack— are enthusiastic about a possible reelection. Other parts of the population —many not precisely Kerry or Democratic supporters, but opponents of Bush— feel tricked by the president who they think led them into to a vengeful, senseless war. Internationally, his administration’s intervention-

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ist, unilateral policy has created discontent and suspicion even among important Western powers like France and Germany. In any case, no matter how much it wanted to, a Kerry administration would not be able to reverse all the policies implemented during Bush's term. Recently, the president even presented a bill to gradually withdraw U.S. troops from European bases in places like Germany and Spain, an idea Kerry did not share. For countries closely linked to the United States like Mexico, a second Bush term would not seem to change much more than a new Democratic administration would. The preponderance of the security issue is not likely to disappear in the short term, with or without Kerry in the White House. Therefore, the Mexico-U.S. bilateral agenda will continue to be subordinated to the anti-terrorist paranoia.

How much does the "war against terrorism" continue to influence the U.S. electorate? In light of the two main candidates' electoral rhetoric, what can Mexico expect for the basic issues on its bilateral agenda with Washington?

#### STRETCHING THE VEIL OF FEAR

The events of the morning of 9/11 were a weighty argument for the Bush administration to initiate a more aggressive foreign policy in the Middle East and against regimes it considered hostile to the United States, freedom and democracy. The terrorist attacks also presented Bush with an opportunity to show his leadership abilities in difficult times and to gain the support of the majority of the public, which he had not won at the ballot box a few months before. According to an *ABC-Washington Post* poll, Bush had a 55-percent

approval rating in early September 2001. Just days after the destruction of the Twin Towers, on October 9, his popularity had soared to 92 percent.

In the following three years, the Bush administration, more successfully some times than others, has managed to extend the paranoid veil of the terrorist threat not only to its advantage in its aggressive foreign policy strategy, but also to center the public's attention on issues that its party has traditionally dominated in the national debate. For example, before the 2002 mid-term elections the White House was agile enough to manipulate the legislation on the Department of Internal Security, distracting attention from the priorities the country was facing, like the corporate scandals involving Republican officials such as Vice President Dick Cheney or the crisis in education and social security. This opportunistic handling of nationalist rhetoric, together with the Democrats' inability to respond imaginatively, made for a Republican victory, giving them control over the presidency and both houses of Congress for the first time since Eisenhower. Also, the Democrats opted to support President Bush in his dearly sought-after operation to bring down Saddam Hussein, a decision approved by, among others, Senator John Kerry himself.

On April 9, 2003, Bush achieved what his father could not 12 years before: he concluded the invasion of Iraq and ousted Saddam Hussein from his palaces. Today the president has the chance to consummate another of his father's unfulfilled objectives: reelection.

Bush's opponents feel  
tricked by him: they think he led them into  
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tion. So, what does the son have that the father did not? In 1992, the year George H. W. Bush was defeated, the U.S. economy grew 3.3 percent. In 2003, the most recent year for which we have complete data, U.S. economic growth was 3.1 percent. Therefore, economic boom is not the answer, even though, according to the early September 2004 *ABC-Washington Post* poll, 47 percent of the population approves Bush's handling of the economy. The answer to the riddle may lie in the sphere of security and international policy. In the current campaign, these issues have taken on special importance, to the president's advantage. The same survey said that 57 percent of Americans approve of Bush's work to fight terrorism. A Pew Research Center poll taken just before the Republican National Convention on September 2 revealed that 41 percent of those surveyed said the war, foreign policy and terrorism were the most important problems the nation was facing, while only 26 percent put a priority on the economy.<sup>1</sup> Numbers like these had not been seen since the war in Vietnam, and they are not good news for Kerry, who has been accused of being unstable and a johnny-come-lately on these issues.

#### THE LAST MINUTE ALSO HAS 60 SECONDS

Despite the enormous weight of the fight against terrorism among electoral debate issues, Bush's reelection is not completely assured. It is true that Kerry's

spurt in the polls after being highlighted at the Democratic National Convention —he gained an average five-point advantage over the president— was not as strong as the one Bush experienced after the Republican Convention, when he topped his opponent by up to 11 points. However, Kerry still may overcome the disadvantage (in the first half of September, Gallup-USA Today polls gave the victory to Bush, 55 percent to 42 percent, while the ABC-Washington Post survey cited the president's advantage as 50 percent vs. 44 percent) or break the technical tie (the Pew Research Center published the figure of 46 percent for a survey done between September 11 and 14).<sup>2</sup> Kerry's last chance will come during the three face-to-face debates between the two.<sup>3</sup>

During the first debate, Bush was hesitant and had a hard time presenting convincing arguments to defend himself from Kerry's attacks on his foreign policy, which is why most post-debate polls gave the Democrat the win. The October 8 face-off, with its town-meeting format, centered on security and the occupation of Iraq. Bush seemed more decisive and challenging, but had a practically identical discourse. According to the polls, it was a tie, but many U.S. analysts gave the victory to Kerry again. According to the October 11 ABC/Washington Post survey, Bush still has the lead over Kerry, 51 percent to 45 percent.

Kerry could take advantage of the coming Arizona State University debate, which is closer to polling day, to convince the public on domestic issues, in which he apparently has the advantage, as long as he does not fall into the trap of centering the discussion on Middle East policy, which could favor Bush.

The security issue is likely  
to remain at center stage, with or without  
Kerry in the White House.

In an article published in *The Washington Times*, William Niskanen, director of the CATO Institute, a conservative Washington-based think-tank, argued that the debate in this race is not dealing with the issues that are important to the nation.<sup>4</sup> Niskanen thinks it will be very difficult for Bush to keep his promise to reduce the fiscal deficit by half between 2005 and 2009 because of the still unconsidered high costs of reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan and recent hikes in the budgets for agriculture, defense, education, energy, internal security, Medicare, aerospace research and transportation. At the same time, Niskanen criticizes Kerry for not yet presenting a serious plan to clean up public finances. On the contrary, an estimate by the U.S. National Taxpayers Union Foundation shows that the Democratic hopeful's main economic proposals would increase public spending by U.S.\$226 billion in 2005 alone.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, a major factor for determining the election's outcome is voters' increased partisan polarization. Recent studies show a significant reduction in the number of independent voters, with Democrats and Republicans dividing the majority in equal parts. Therefore, the candidates are concentrating on the small number of undecided voters, especially in states like Iowa, Arizona, New Mexico and Florida, where a small number of votes may change the results. All of this is happening in the context of scant electoral participation. In general, about 50 percent of registered voters do not go to the

polls in presidential elections (49 percent in 1996 and 50.7 percent in 2000).

Electoral polarization in the U.S. is clear when examined region by region. In the 1930s, the Democrats controlled the South, but that changed when, after World War II, President Harry S. Truman came out for Afro-Americans' civil rights in 1948. Since then, a gradual but constant change has come about, with southern voters expressing greater preference for the Republican Party. In the last presidential election, for instance, Bush took all the southern states. The Republicans also dominate the Great Plains and Rocky Mountain states. The Democrats, for their part, control the Northeast, the East and both coasts. In past presidential elections, the Democrats won 93 percent of the East's electoral votes, while George W. Bush swept the South with 100 percent. Everything seems to indicate that these regional differences are still growing.

#### MEXICO AND THE MIGRATORY ACCORD

Fortunately, since the 9/11 "Black Tuesday," the United States has not suffered from terrorist attacks of a similar magnitude. However, U.S. allies have suffered terrible tragedies, like the March 11, 2004 bombings in Madrid, the attacks on Western targets in Bali and Djakarta, or the recent slaughter of children in Russia, and small daily Hells like the constant wave of kidnappings in Iraq since the fall of

One of the victims of 9/11 was  
the illusory migratory accord between Mexico  
and the United States.

Saddam Hussein. In addition, U.S. concern for strengthening anti-terrorist security has been exported to almost every corner of the Earth, with the corresponding economic consequences of the investment of large sums in research, development and implementation of new security technologies and strategies.

Mexico could not escape this. According to Robert Pastor, former member of the U.S. National Security Council, "There is no country in the world that has suffered more from the eclipse of September 11 and the laser focus of the Bush administration on bin Laden than Mexico."<sup>6</sup> In the first place, the Mexican government's elation at being called the United States' most important friend among the world's nations by George Bush lasted only a couple of weeks. The U.S. president had made that statement during President Fox's visit to Washington just a week before the terrorist attacks. By September 20, during his unofficial "declaration of war against terrorism" speech to Congress, the title of "best friend" reverted to the traditional ally, Great Britain. Also, fundamental issues for the bilateral agenda like drug trafficking, trade and migration soon took second place to security. The White House left no room for doubt: it was at war and everything had to revolve around that.

Unquestionably, one of the victims of 9/11 was the illusory migratory accord between Mexico and the United States, so sought-after from the beginning of Vicente Fox's presi-

dency. Actually, even before the attacks, Washington did not show the slightest intention of creating a broad, far-reaching migratory pact. It was also predictable that such an ambitious, large-scale accord would never be approved due to vested interests in the United States. Nonetheless, the early stages of the 2004 presidential campaign gave a false sign for hope around the issue. Both contenders for the White House made statements about migration, but they both pointed more to satisfying their clientele and strengthening their voter base than to solving the problem.

On January 7, 2004, President Bush announced a new guest-worker program focused on regularizing the migratory status of millions of undocumented workers. He was seeking to please businessmen and ultra-conservative sectors of the Republican Party who do not want to legalize or give amnesty to undocumented workers. The president continually denied that his proposal was an amnesty like the Simpson-Rodino Act, presented during the Reagan administration. According to the Center for Immigration Studies, at least 55 percent of Americans would like to see fewer new immigrants.<sup>7</sup> This time, the president's proposal would give a temporary, three-year visa to people who prove they have a job offer in the United States and pay their application fee. The original proposal stipulates that the visa could be renewed once, but that at the end of that period, the worker would have to return to his/her place of origin where, accord-

ing to Bush, he/she should find sufficiently satisfactory living conditions so as to not want to return to the United States. Bush promised to work with the governments of sending countries so that they could offer well-being and prosperity to their citizens.

More than a few people have interpreted President Bush's proposal as fundamentally an electoral ploy. And this is true, but imprecise. If Bush's aim were only to get more votes from the Hispanic minority, he would already be well on his way to failing. Raúl Yzaguirre, the president of National Council of La Raza, the country's largest Latino organization, stated that "Hispanic Americans are deeply disappointed with the president's announcement...on immigration policy, [because it] appears to offer the business community full access to the immigrant workers it needs while providing very little to the workers themselves."<sup>8</sup> Yzaguirre's words show Hispanic organizations' opposition to a guest-worker agreement. They support, in contrast, amnesty. Another example of the fact that the president's campaign staff sees no electoral advantage in putting this accord at the center of the debate is its virtual disappearance from Bush's speeches in the last eight months: the proposal has not even been mentioned a dozen times. Wayne Johnson, Republican campaign consultant in Sacramento, California, says, "Immigration is the kind of issue you deal with when you're not dealing with election rhetoric."<sup>9</sup> The strategy of taking immigration out of the limelight in the Republican platform —although it is present and it was referred to at the convention— is an attempt to avoid serious friction with the party's extreme right, which sees Bush's proposal as

an amnesty in disguise. The Republicans are divided on some central social issues.

For his part, Kerry has said very little about relations with Mexico. Actually, the three most important events linking the Democratic candidate to our country are his June appearance before the National Association of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO); his sister, Diana Kerry's visit to Mexico City last July; and his participation in the September 15 Congressional Hispanic Caucus gala.

On June 25, before NALEO, one of the country's most important Latino political organizations, John Kerry promised to foster measures like reducing remittance costs, creating a poverty-fighting fund, building a U.S. security perimeter to avert terrorist attacks in the region and coordinating customs and migratory affairs with Mexico. Kerry has also expressed his intention to favor the legalization of undocumented immigrants. In that vein, he has promised that in his first 100 days in office, he will send Congress an ambitious migration reform bill. "Good people who are living here, working hard and paying taxes should have a path to equal citizenship in the American community," he said.<sup>10</sup> His statements were well received by Latino Democratic sympathizers and by U.S. unions, part of the Democratic Party's traditional clientele. These groups do want an amnesty, but oppose a guest-worker program. The Republicans, for their part, called the proposal pure bombast.

Diana Kerry, who heads up Americans Overseas for Kerry-Edwards (AOK), visited Mexico City as part of her campaign to register potential U.S. voters abroad. Approximately 1.1 mil-

lion Americans live in Mexico and, in a close election, their participation could be key.

Lastly, during the Congressional Hispanic Caucus event, part of Hispanic Identity Month, John Kerry called the Latino vote a critical factor in voting the Republicans out of office in the coming elections. He criticized the Bush administration for constantly breaking its promises to the Latino community around issues like immigration, business loans and bilingual education.

#### CONCLUSION

Just days before the first presidential election since the 9/11 attacks, the outcome is still uncertain. Undoubtedly, the central issues have changed focus from domestic matters to foreign policy and security. The president seems to be taking advantage of the inertia of his display of leadership and determination since the terrorist attacks. However, John Kerry could also take advantage of the ideological polarization caused by the White House's aggressive foreign policy and the difficult situation in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The "war against terrorism" has already marked this generation, not only in the United States, but throughout the world. For the moment, there seems to be no turning back in this fight against faceless fear, and we must be aware of that. Regardless of Kerry's promises to work with and depend on the United Nations for solving the world's main conflicts, the possible exit of the Republicans from the White House will not guarantee an end to U.S. interventionism and unilateralism. Equally, the continuation of George W. Bush in the presidency until January

2009 will not make for the slaughter of the world's innocent peoples.

It will not make much difference to Mexico who resides in the White House for the next four years, not because their projects do not have different focuses, but because bilateral relations are solidly structured through channels that make them advance more or less smoothly. Our country has tried to take advantage of the new situation which emphasizes security issues to advance with the U.S. government on matters such as border control and has even tried to link a possible migratory accord to U.S. anti-terrorist policies and strategies. Also, a large part of the Mexico-U.S. agenda does not go through the executive, but through the legislature, which is why it will be very important for our country to see what the new U.S. Congress looks like. Nothing is carved in stone, but, as we finish this article, everything seems to indicate that George W. Bush is closing strong. **MM**

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> <http://people-press.org/>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> This article was finished in mid-October. [Editor's Note.]

<sup>4</sup> William Niskanen, "What Candidates Aren't Discussing," *The Washington Times*, 13 September 2004.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Tim Weiner and Ginger Thompson, "Mexico Lower on Bush's List Since Sept. 11," *The New York Times*, 29 December 2001.

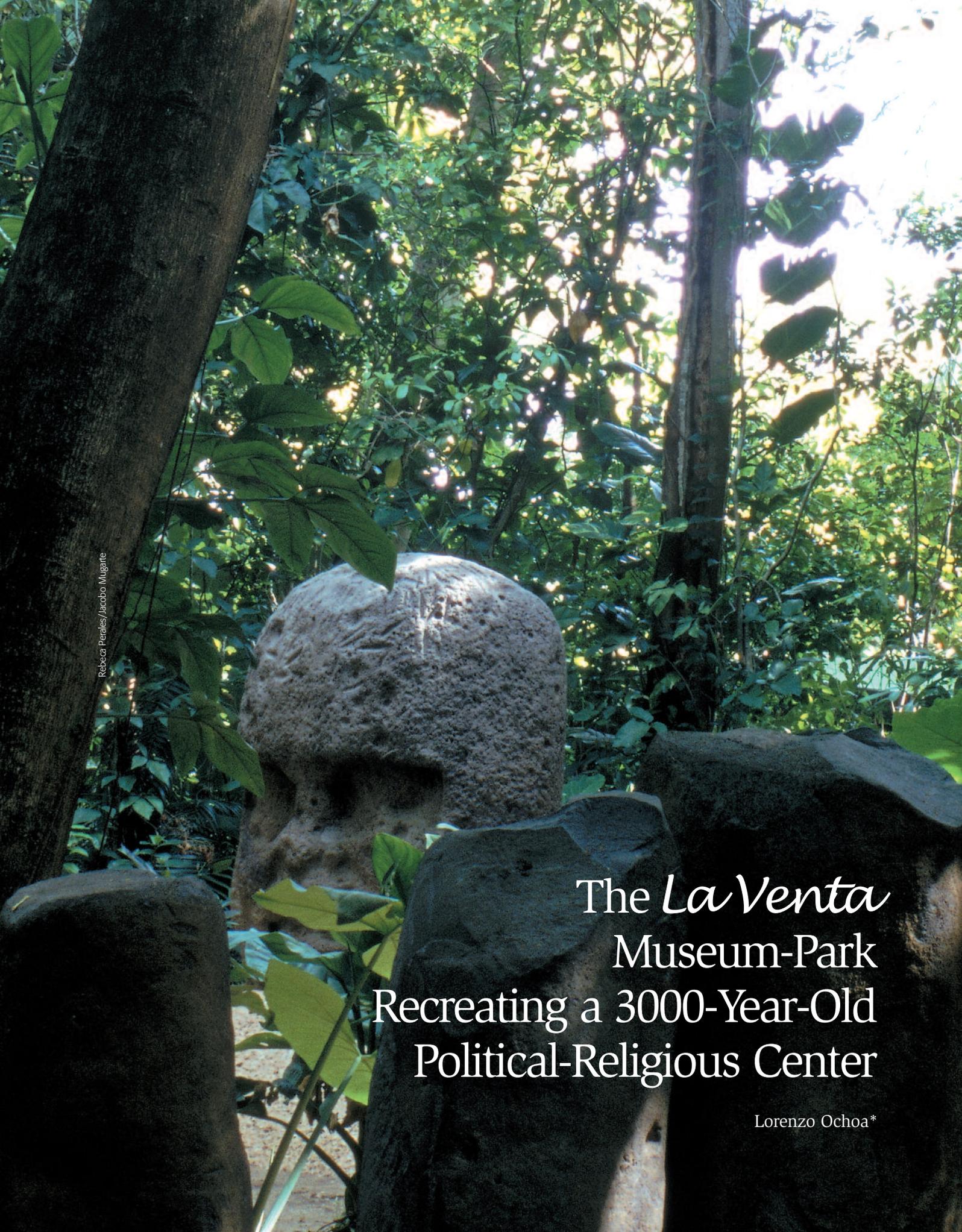
<sup>7</sup> Center for Immigration Studies, [www.cis.org](http://www.cis.org)

<sup>8</sup> Laura Bonilla, "Bush Immigration Overhaul Plan Gets Poor Reviews from Immigrant Groups," *Agence France Presse*, 8 January 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Curl, "Bush's 'Guest-Worker' Proposal on a Back Burner," *The Washington Times*, 1 September 2004.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.johnkerry.com/pressroom/speeches/spc\\_2004\\_0626.html](http://www.johnkerry.com/pressroom/speeches/spc_2004_0626.html)

Rebeca Perales/Jacobo Mugarte



The *La Venta*  
Museum-Park  
Recreating a 3000-Year-Old  
Political-Religious Center

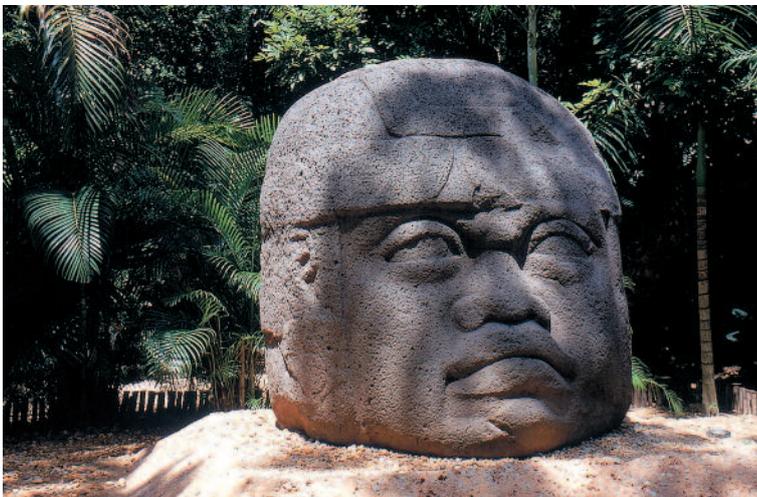
Lorenzo Ochoa\*



Monument 4, La Venta.



Monument 68. Unfinished head.



Monument 1, La Venta.

Just by going through the heavy iron railing that leads into the La Venta Museum-Park in Villahermosa, time seems to come to a standstill. Behind us we leave the oppressive deafening noise of modernity. In its place is only the silence of the jungle interrupted by the sharp buzz of thousands of insects, the howl of the spider monkeys, the jaguar's long yawn, the badgers' scampering and the steps of the *tepezcuintles* (agouti paca) over the withered leaves, accompanied by the song of the birds and the swaying branches of the centuries-old silk-cotton trees, the cedars or the palms. Murmurs with prolonged silences that we are no longer used to, murmurs that guide us through the quiet flow of more than 3,000 years accumulated in the dozens of Olmec sculptures that loom out of the weeds here and there.

Inspired by the original idea that Carlos Pellicer conceived poetically in three dimensions in the 1950s, today's La Venta Museum-Park attempts to recreate the scenery of the jungle and water that this Tabascan poet thought existed at the original site where the sculptures on display came from, an environment missing only the swamps and mangroves.

In this way, using the natural environment of the Lagoon of Illusions, as Pellicer did in the early 1950s, different animals from the region and a broad variety of vegetation were introduced into the new museum and, with the freedom allowed a poet, mixed with others brought from far-off regions and latitudes.

Especially outstanding in this landscape, uncommon for a museum, are species that were and continue to be very important to the inhabitants of rural Tabasco and Mexico's Southeast: some used as construc-

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\* Researcher at the UNAM Institute for Anthropological Research.

Photos by Elsie Montiel.



The La Venta Museum-Park attempts to recreate the scenery that its creator, Carlos Pellicer, thought existed at the original site.

tion materials, others as medicine, in addition to simple ornamental plants, fruit trees, or sacred plants. Trees destined for building houses and *cayucos* or dug-outs: cedar, *zapotillo*, pepper, *chicozapote*, elephant's ear tree, *maculí*, *guano*, *ramón*; those with medicinal uses like the trumpet tree, the *guácimo*, the gumbolimbo and avocado trees, the *cocoíte* and the *zapote de agua*. Ornamental species like the *guayacán*, *bromelias*, orchids, "elegant leaf" and the bird of paradise; fruit trees like the star apple, the *chicozapote*, the *nance* or the *jobo*; others that please the palate like cacao or those whose sap is in great demand for industry like rubber trees. Over all of these rules the centuries-old *ceiba*, or silk-cotton tree, a sacred tree *par excellence* among the ancient Mesoamerican peoples.

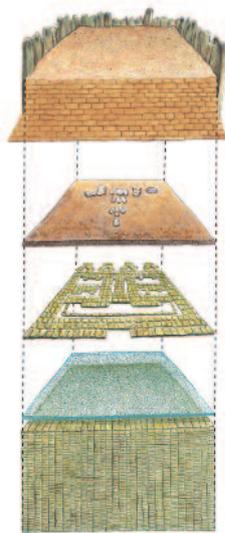
Although today the scenery in the thousand-year-old place where the political-religious center of La Venta was erected is totally different, our imaginations let us in to the tropical jungle. We should point out, however, that what we know today makes it obvious that the environment recreated in the museum park is not what originally existed on the site where these monuments are from. There, although most were out in

the open, they most certainly were not erected amidst the vegetation. However, the museum's discourse, which amalgamates archaeological ambiance and natural scenery, serves as an underpinning for the relationship of this ancient culture and the spectator.

In this way, after advancing only a few meters, we find a room where old, faded photographs introduce us, not to Olmec history, but to some of the first explorations done at the site by researchers from the National Geographic Society.

These faded photographs also allow us to imagine the way the monuments were recovered and later taken to the place picked by Carlos Pellicer: a large tract of land located on the banks of the Lagoon of Illusions. In 1957,

Carlos Pellicer wrote a letter to the director of the National Institute of Anthropology and History, Eusebio Dávalos Hurtado, saying, "To the extent that the limited space (seven hectares) allows me, [I have managed to] reproduce as far as possible the order in which the little figures were originally found." And although it could not preserve the same arrangement that they



The jaguar mosaics were originally part of underground offerings.



Jaguar mosaic.

had had in La Venta, once it had achieved its goal, finally, on March 4, 1958, the museum-park opened its doors to the public.

But, I return to the center of the introductory room, where there is a model of La Venta, which reproduces to scale the A, B, C, G and Stirling Acropolis architectural complexes and the approximate location of the different monuments. But the builders of this political-religious center were not

only thinking of the earthly world; they also explained the cosmos to themselves. Under the surface is the underworld, seen in the tombs and their offerings, which can be observed through a series of windows on the lower sides of the model, showing the approximate location. The tomb made of basalt columns, Monument 7, can be seen through one of these windows, and we will be able to see it in all its glory later during the visit through the museum-park. Thanks to this model, the visitor can see that the massive offerings and the mosaics with the stylized jaguar faces were not located in open spaces like they are in the museum-park, but rather were imagined hidden, as an offering to the earth.

Distributed here and there, replicas of different sculptures from the same political-religious center—the originals are in assorted museums—illustrate the magnificence of the Olmec visual arts. Also there, the original remains of an aqueduct and an enormous basalt receptacle narrate wordlessly how they fulfilled a more sacred than utilitarian function. Samples of hatchets carved in sandstone and green stone, clay objects, ceramics for daily use and for special occasions, together with tools made of different kinds of stone and a few drawings of maps and photographs of the landscape introduce us to the fascinating world of Olmec archaeology, at the same time that they prepare us for admiring each of the monumental sculptures.

As we leave the room, everything seems to change. From out of the weeds, a wanderer or ambassador seems to emerge, carved in bas-relief, inviting the visitor to look at parts of a codex created from 700-600 B.C. to 400 B.C. A dynamically moving figure, preceded by a foot-shaped hieroglyph, he is carrying a flag in his left hand. In front of him, a circle, a bird's head and a three-leaf clover seem to announce "proto-writing." In this monument, the intellectual complexi-

ty achieved by the Olmecs in their last phases in La Venta is evident. There, underneath the immensity of a silk-cotton tree, the sculpture known as The Grandmother, carved between 700-600 B.C. and 400 B.C., seems to flash a playful glance at the visitor. From there on, the archaeological monuments protected by the museum-park's ever-green jungle crisscross the weeds, rattan and vines.

During the visit, a symphony of textures, colors and stelas, altars, colossal heads, thrones and freestanding sculptures, some unfinished, is unleashed. Understanding the role the mosaics made of pale green serpentine played in the sculptors' thinking is beyond our imagination. The row of monolithic basalt columns which in the original La Venta site formed the perimeter of a sacred space, made of the same material with which they built a tomb that, like the other monuments, lies in the visitor's path, makes us ask about the profound significance they all embody. The stelas, for example, are a late innovation in Olmec art. They mark a stylistic change, both technical and in iconographic language. They hold a political-religious message rendered in bas-relief scenes. One of them, erroneously classified as Monument 63, includes a symbol: the shark, related to the highest level of the political-ideological sphere. Eroded by the sand that covered it for 3,000 years, just like Stela 2, this is from the last Olmec stage of the political-religious center, dating from between 700-600 B.C. to 400 B.C.

What we now call altars were really not used as the name implies in Western thinking. And though the representations found on these monuments may be quite different, the content of the central cosmic discourse is reflected in almost all of them: figures that emerge to communicate the interior world with the exterior world through a cave. These monuments were considered so important that the oldest were carved in the first cen-

turies that La Venta was inhabited, around the years 1200 to 1000 B.C. and they continued to be made up until the very last, in 400 B.C.

Considered chronologically, the giant heads demonstrate the Olmecs' genius as sculptors, both because of their mastery of carving techniques in the hard stone and their high artistic quality, and also because of their ideological content. But they did not always achieve their goal: in some cases, such as with Monument 68, when they were just beginning to delineate some of the features, the stone was severely cracked and the work had to be abandoned. The colossal



Freestanding sculptures have profound religious meaning.



The introductory room with the model of the La Venta site.



Altars reflect a cosmic discourse.

heads, with their almond-shaped eyes, thick lips and wide, flat noses, are a challenge to interpret. But, is it feasible to think, because of the way they were arranged in the political-religious center's holy ground, that perhaps they represent the protecting ancestors, dead rulers?

One trait that until now distinguishes La Venta's inhabitants is the custom of making massive serpentine offerings. They are deposits of several layers of colored clay on top of which they made a clay mosaic of the face of a jaguar or another fantastic being, which they

covered with another layer of colored clay. These offerings, which can still be seen, were placed in such a way that only those who made them knew about their location; the rest of the Olmec people ignored their existence.

We can interpret the political-religious content of many other monuments. The basalt tomb, the thrones, the freestanding sculptures have profound religious meaning. We cannot look at all of them here. They remain in our imagination, protected by the perennially green jungle, mingling with the La Venta Museum-Park's weeds, rattan and



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# Comalcalco

## Ancient City of Brick and Stucco

Lorenzo Ochoa\*



Rebeca Perales/Jacobo Mugarte

**T**abasco is the point furthest to the Northwest that Mayan cultural remains can be found: monumental architecture using the false arch or Mayan vault; the ball game; poly-

chromatic ceramics; inscriptions on stelas and altars; and knowledge of writing, mathematics, astronomy and the calendar. Many cities, large and small, from the coast to the foot of the mountains and from the Chontalpa to the river region, developed from the first centuries of the Christian era on: Comalcalco, El Tortuguero, Santa Elena, Pomoná, Reforma, Revancha, El Arenal, Jonuta, San Claudio and several others. These

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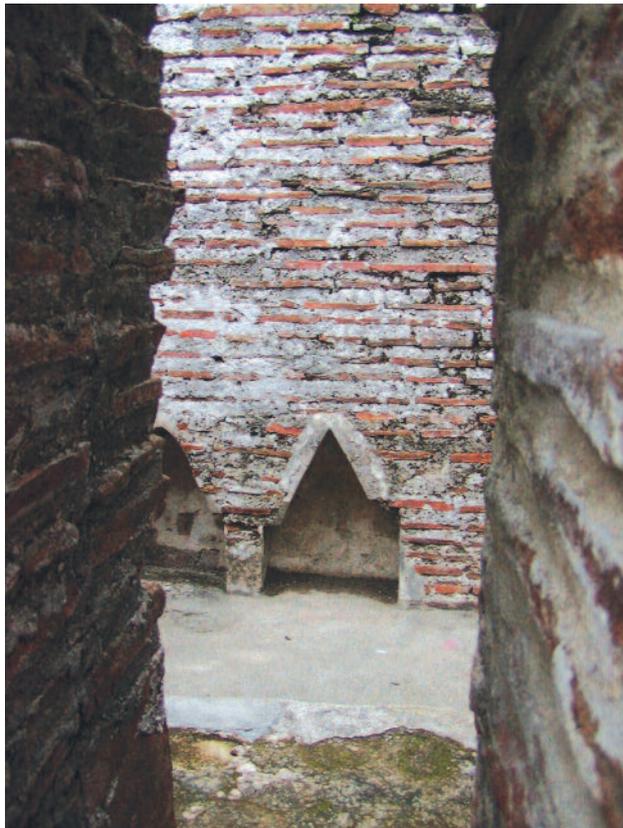
Photos reproduced by permission of the National Institute of Anthropology and History, Conaculta-<sup>INAH</sup>-Mex.



Petra Reynoso

Captive, southeast corner, Temple I.

Now we know a little more about the history of that ancient city that the Chontals built with brick, covered in stucco and later abandoned.



Rebeca Perales/Jacobo Mugarte

Comalcalco reveals its secrets little by little.

cities show the achievements of Tabasco's Maya-Chontal people. Despite their outstanding knowledge and culture, no one has recognized their fundamental contribution to the foundation and development of Palenque, the regional capital of one of the most important autonomous states of the Mayan lowlands.

At the height of the development of Mayan culture, wars between cities were very common; this was the case of Tabasco as well. During one of these wars, between the armies of Comalcalco and Tortuguero in December of A.D. 649, Balam Ahau, the ruler of Tortuguero, captured and sacrificed Ox Balam, the sovereign of Comalcalco, which surrendered to the victors. As befitting his rank, the remains of Ox Balam were returned to his home city. This version of historical events comes from the interpretation by Marc Uwe Zender of the inscriptions on bone, shell and manta ray bones found in offerings placed together with the ancient king's remains and recovered in 1998 by Ricardo Armijo from temples in Comalcalco's North Plaza.<sup>1</sup>

Comalcalco has revealed its history and secrets little by little. Until not long ago, it was famous for its bricks, decorated using different techniques, described in most detail in the catalogue written by Luis F. Álvarez, Guadalupe Landa and José Luis Romero.<sup>2</sup> The only other information we had were a few dates from the eighth century and their emblem glyph, carved on three clay tablets made known by José Luis Romero in 1990.<sup>3</sup>

According to Zender, Armijo and Judith Gallegos, other inscriptions describe how, in the late eighth century, a "temple guardian," the "Lord of Fire," called Ah Pakal Tan celebrated rituals in honor of the god Chaak for 12 years. He was praying for an end to the long droughts that may have punished the Mayan lowlands and, as I have submitted in other places, may have been one of the causes of the Mayan civilization's collapse.

Now we know a little more about the history of that ancient city that the Chontals built with brick, covered in stucco and later abandoned. Comalcalco would remain there, buried under the weight of the centuries and oblivion until the

late nineteenth century, when it began to be visited by travelers and researchers.

#### COMALCALCO'S PLACE IN MAYAN ARCHAEOLOGY

After the collapse of the Mayan culture, many of Palenque's inhabitants emigrated; some settled on the coastal plain and the San Pedro and San Pablo Basin, from Jonuta to Comalcalco. In those lowlands prey to flooding, the Chontal constructions were made of brick, as a substitute for stone, unavailable in the region. The most widely known city made of brick is Comalcalco, which began to be visited after Desiré Charnay published *Les Anciennes Villes du Nouveau Monde* (The Ancient Cities of the New World) in 1885. About the same time, another visitor, Captain Pedro Pablo Romero went there, commissioned in the Columbus Expedition headed up by Francisco del Paso y Troncoso on the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America. However, little is known about this visit; Romero added nothing important in his report to what Charnay had written, but he was the first Mexican to visit the city for archaeological reasons. He did not even mention if he had visited the site before (a possibility, since he was originally from the town of Comalcalco).

The real role this city plays in Mayan archaeology would only be recognized when the first of the two volumes of *Tribes and Temples* was published in 1926-1927, a seminal work for anyone interested in the history, scenery, archaeology and customs of early twentieth-century Tabasco. This work was the result of the expedition led in 1925 by Frans Blom and Oliver la Farge, sponsored by Tulane University.<sup>4</sup> Later, in the 1950s, Gordon F. Ekholm, from the New York Museum of Natural History, worked there; in the 1960s, George Andrews, from the University of Oregon, did his research there, as did Román Piña Chan from Mexico's National Institute of Anthropology and History. Finally, Ponciano Salazar Ortégón worked the site until his death. In the early 1990s, Ricardo Armijo took charge of the research into the ancient city.



Rebeca Perales/Jacobo Mugarte

Stucco decoration, Temple VII.

Chontal constructions were made of brick, as a substitute for stone, unavailable in the region. The most widely known city of brick is Comalcalco.



Petra Reynoso

East view of Temple I.

## CITY OF BRICK AND STUCCO

Although Comalcalco was settled long before, the city grew to a large size after the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. and reached its political, cultural and commercial height around A.D. 500. Its golden age would then last until the eighth and ninth centuries. Two clay tablets found by Ponciano Salazar in Temple I have inscriptions, one of the city's emblem glyph and another saying that an important personage died in the year 846. Unfortunately, because we do not know the context in which these tablets were found, we cannot add more information. The impressively monumental Temple I closes off the extreme western end of the North Plaza of one of Comalcalco's most important architectural complexes. A chapel built of perishable materials crowned the building in the last period that the area was inhabited. A broad stairway rising 20 meters above the level of the plaza provides access to the chapel. As with other buildings, the Chontals modeled the stucco with absolute mastery. Human and fantastic figures that today can barely be discerned are depicted carrying out rituals of human sacrifice on the southeast corner. Temples II and III flank the northern and southern corners of Temple I. Several buildings are aligned with these temples from west to east, although some have only been partially explored. It was in Temple III and Temples

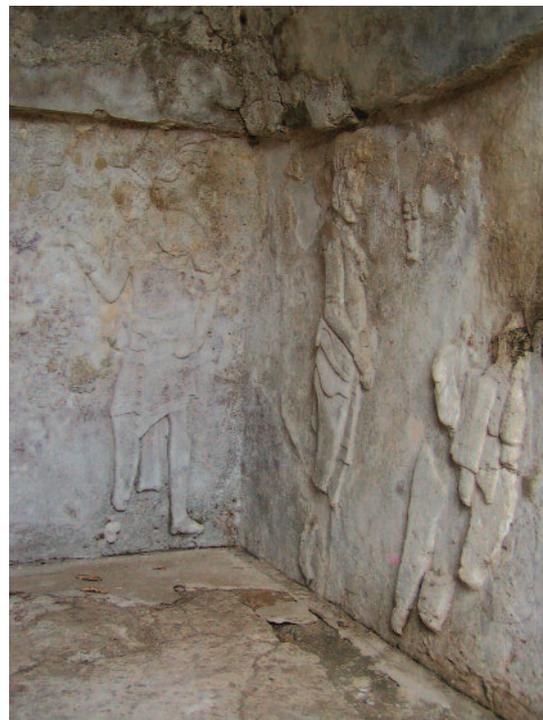
II and IIA where Ricardo Armijo recovered several dozen objects carved in bone, shell and manta ray bone from clay urns that were part of funeral offerings.

Apart from these buildings, the Great Acropolis includes the palace, extended by its two long, narrow galleries. A little lower, slightly to the southwest of the palace, is a tomb, described by Frans Blom and Oliver La Farge in the first volume of *Tribes and Temples*. In 1925, when they discovered it, it still had clear remains of red and several figures modeled in stucco decorating its walls: they noted each one's position, clothing and ornaments, including pectorals and bracelets. Finally, they traced the head of figure seven because they thought it one of the most exquisite examples of Mayan art they had ever seen. In general, they considered the tomb's stucco figures masterfully and very freely done, as had never before been seen in Mayan art. Today, only a few traces remain of this great stucco work.

Lower down, toward the Great Acropolis's northwestern edge are Temples VI and VII. Temple VI is only about 2.8 meters high, with a base



View of the palace.



Stucco figures inside the Palace.

Rebeca Perales/Jacobo Mugante

Rebeca Perales/Jacobo Mugante



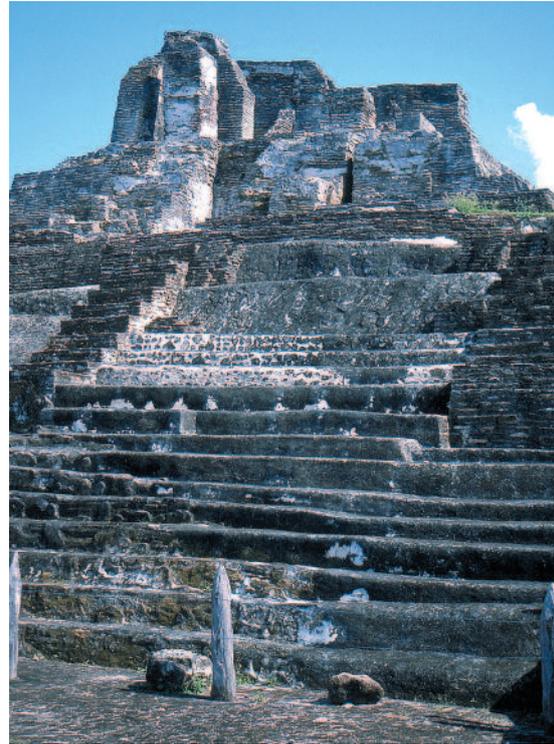
Petra Reynoso

Kinich Ahau mosaic, Temple VI.

Comalcalco grew to a large size after the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. Its golden age would then last until the eighth and ninth centuries.

of three superimposed earth-filled tiers, covered with a layer of stucco, with a stairway at the center. On top is the temple, made up of two rectangular rooms divided by a wall and with pilasters gracing the entrance. Walls, vault and pilasters were made of stucco-covered brick. Román Piña Chan dubbed this the “mosaic basement,” since on the front of it, modeled in stucco, is an extraordinary face of the sun god, Kinich Ahau. Researchers recovered a human head modeled in stucco representing a bearded personage with a scarred face (a characteristic of individuals of high social rank among the Mayan elite) from the rubble. On the building’s west side is Temple VII. On its south side, a series of richly ornamented, seated human figures also modeled in stucco are depicted. The city was at its height.

At that time, merchants from central Veracruz visited Comalcalco and other urban centers of Tabasco’s coastal plain. Later, groups of Nahuatl origin from central Mexico arrived and settled in a place the Spanish later named Provincia de Cimatanes. So, when the Spanish conquered the region in the sixteenth century, the Cimatecs, who exercised important economic influence in the entire region, had taken refuge in the abandoned city. By then, the political-economic importance



Petra Reynoso

South side of the Great Acropolis.

of Comalcalco and the Chontals was a thing of the past. No one remembered the city’s original name. No one remembered the wars that it waged against the river region city, Tortuguero, in the eighth century, or the rituals that centuries before the priests had to perform to invoke rain during the great droughts that punished the area. The years of splendor of the ancient city of brick and stucco, a city that covered more than six square kilometers, had been buried by time. Temples, tombs, palaces, plazas: all these would fall captive to the jungle. ■■■

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Ricardo Armijo, Miriam Gallegos and Marc Uwe Zender, “Urnas funerarias, textos históricos y ofrendas en Comalcalco,” *Los investigadores de la cultura maya*, vol. 8 (II) (Campeche, Campeche: Universidad Autónoma de Campeche, 2000), pp. 313-323; and Ricardo Armijo, “Comalcalco. La antigua ciudad maya de ladrillo,” *Arqueología Mexicana*, vol. 11, no. 61 (Mexico City: Editorial Raíces, 2003), pp. 30-37.
- <sup>2</sup> Luis F. Álvarez, Guadalupe Landa and José Luis Romero, *Los ladrillos de Comalcalco* (Villahermosa, Tabasco: Gobierno del Estado de Tabasco, 1990).
- <sup>3</sup> José Luis Romero, “Tres tablillas de barro con inscripciones glíficas de Comalcalco, Tabasco,” *Tierra y agua. La antropología en Tabasco*, no. 1 (Villahermosa, Tabasco: Gobierno del Estado de Tabasco, 1990), pp. 7-14.
- <sup>4</sup> Both volumes were published by Tulane University.



Rodolfo Uribe

# In the *Swamps* There's Nowhere to Stand

Rodolfo Uribe Iniesta\*

When you visit the houses in the towns along the Usumacinta River bank, people always talk about space. They ask you, “Where did you leave your car?” because the only raised ground is the narrow highway. And a peasant will explain to you, “You can leave your truck instead of just pulling it off to the side of the road thanks to the sweat of my brow.” And he is right. All the high ground on the Tabasco coasts, starting with the pre-Hispanic Olmec cities like La Venta, or the Mayan cities like Jonuta and Comalcalco, built directly on the swamp thanks to enormous brick and soil terraces, is artificial. As late as the 1960s and 1970s, to build highways to indigenous towns like Tuca and Tamulté de las Sabanas, the materials were taken completely from the pyramids still standing on site. In the 1980s, when the Usumacinta highway was built, it was first laid out on the raised land found

there. But, local inhabitants were violently opposed because these were the handmade embankments fashioned from houses, patios and cattle corrals. Thus, the history of impressive efforts was made known: since this region was settled 60 years ago, the Usumacinta has moved further and further north, forcing the first colonists to move their houses at least three times. They had to take on the immense job of building new terraces with their own shovels and bare hands, to be able to live above the water. And even then, they are accustomed to living with the water up to their ankles or higher for one month of the year, when the November “rise” comes.

These towns are the last remnant of what life was like in most of Tabasco. The state is actually a big swamp, a big plain crisscrossed by 30 percent of Mexico’s fresh water supply, covered every autumn by a huge sheet of water. Today, it is fashionable to see swamps as merely a matter of “ecology” and “sustainable development.” But the truth is that the vast swamp area of the Tabasco coast

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has to be understood as a “landscape,” that is, a cultural product that involves above all an enormous effort, as the first Spanish colonists also discovered. What the inhabitants of Santa María de la Victoria, the first Spanish capital in the Grijalva delta, suffered in order to move inland, as they described it to the Spanish crown, was impressive.

But, as Graham Greene discovered in his visit to the port of Frontera in 1938, the swamp is also a particular mood. It is even more a special form of downheartedness, a moment suspended in time. Water is rhythm, but in the swamp, it is above all a dense calm, a great silence vis-à-vis the unlimited horizon and the almost always intensely blue sky. But it is a silence felt rather than heard because, in reality, the further into the reed-mace or *popal* groves you are,<sup>1</sup> the more the voices of thousands of birds dominate, birds that in spring find their favorite nesting places here thanks to the exceptional abundance of fish. There is no experience to equal going in through a quagmire on horseback or by water in a *cayuco*<sup>2</sup> to feel the incomparable sensation of getting to the heart of the swamp. Here, local traditions say that at mid-day, when shadows disappear, you can get lost if you hear a rooster crow, followed by the far-off

sound of indigenous music, the echo of life in the enormous pre-Hispanic cities that are supposed to be buried beneath the mud.

Sixty percent of Tabasco’s surface is floodplain and 30 percent is covered with permanent bodies of water like coastal lagoons, interior lagoons, *cibales*,<sup>3</sup> watering holes, *popales*, reed-mace groves, *tulares*<sup>4</sup> and, of course, its great rivers with their many canals and streams. Thus, it is no surprise that 80 percent of indigenous *ejido* collective farm land is flooded. It is merely a vestige of the Spanish occupation that took over all the high ground that later became plantations and pastures. In fact, from the heights of the city of Villahermosa at the 18th parallel to the Gulf beaches 60 kilometers away, almost everything is more or less swamp.

Tabasco is nothing more than an enormous alluvial sponge produced by the Grijalva, Usumacinta and Tonalá Rivers that for millennia have deposited their silt there, moving the coastline from the Chiapas mountains to where it is today. It is an enormous plain dominated by the rhythm of the water. In the most far-flung parts of the swamps of the Usumacinta, you have to watch out for the tide so as to avoid having to drag the *cayuco* over dry sand. In addition, there is a year-

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ly tide: in spring the sea's salt water penetrates the Usumacinta up to 60 kilometers up-river, and in fall, the tide is a sea of fresh rain water that comes down from Chiapas and Guatemala covering everything.

These conditions have spurred the creation of important civilizations such as those that made it possible for the Olmecs, the creators of the Meso-American number system and calendar, to build their metropolis. Or, more recently, the Yokot'anob, a people dedicated to long-distance commerce starting in the ninth century, developed an entire culture synchronized with the swamp that was finally cornered by the Spaniards.

Based on the Mayan civilization model that saw life as produced together with time through exchanges regulated between the different dimensions of the universe, between humans and the different supernatural beings, and among human beings themselves, the Yokot'anob produced a system of life centered on "the offering." Priests and anthropologists always complained that the Yokot'anob did not separate religion from the economy and did not want to listen to them: it was a way of "making life," which is why it is at one and the same time a social way of organizing religious life and a way of organizing production.

When asked what it means to be Yokot'an, they always mention this way of life: "A Yokot'an is a peasant who plants and fishes in the swamps." The system established a delicate balance between environmental and social processes. The key to the system is the same as for the *pajarales*, where migratory birds nest: the abundance of fish. Socially, this is manifested in the participation in offering tribute to supernatural beings and the "companions" for the production of food, curing and every other end. Offerings can be individual, requesting a special favor; or they can be "promises" in which an entire family or group of families participate. They also have to be made before every collective productive undertaking: planting, harvest, fishing, building a house. When the town fair is held, other towns come visiting and the first pick of the harvest is offered up to the patron saint in what is called the *enrama*. This ceremony symbolizes exchange and at the same time permits the organization of social networks for work, cooperation and kinship. The patron saint, or *chuj' o uyum*, is offered food with a request made in Yokot'an made by a "recommender" (a wise man who knows the prayers for making requests of the saints). He spreads smoke over the offerings or persons to protect them and give them



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over to the saints, who are also presented with drum and flute music. The gods can only be reached through smoke and music, and they only understand the language of the earth.

Participation in the different kinds of offerings is divided up into different kinds of activities performed at different times according to natural rhythms and techniques. The women from one nuclear family may raise animals and produce food in their backyards. They gather together in the kitchen, the most important and largest room in the house, which, in contrast to the rest of the building, never has a cement roof, to cook for several families and make decisions involving the community that the men then take to the meetings. The men gather together to go fishing for a week at a time, to build houses, to clean an *acahual* (land left to lie fallow and be covered by low vegetation), or plant or harvest collectively (called “*manovuelta*,” a system of cooperation among the peasants whereby they rotate working in their neighbors’, relatives’ and friends’ fields). Planting times depend on flood levels, which means that lands of different altitude can yield up to three crops a year. In the town fairs, entire communities come together to trade; also, from time immemorial, some people have made their living by trading, practicing what they call “changed life,” a system of commerce based on the circulation of merchants who barter products from different

communities. This means that they have understood perfectly that through these products, what was being exchanged was effort or life itself.

The growth of cattle ranching and the environmental impact of large hydraulic works and the oil industry changed the rhythm of the waters and contaminated them along with the soil and the air. This has made productivity and farming decline. The water circulates less and less and is not fed with new nutrients because now there are areas that are permanently flooded and others that are usually dry but suffer catastrophic flooding. The urban development that followed the advent of oil drilling has meant that most people now work in the city. The offering is increasingly a mere symbolic ritual system, but its norms for equitable exchange are now being used as the ethical and cultural basis for obtaining government services and negotiating compensation payments for damage done by oil drilling. **MM**

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#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Parts of the swamp are covered with these plants, the reed mace (*typha latifolia* L.) and the *popales* (*thalia geniculata* L.).
- <sup>2</sup> *Cayucos* were originally dug-outs made by hollowing out a tree trunk. Today, they are made of fiberglass.
- <sup>3</sup> *Cibales* are lagoons formed by the residue left from flooding.
- <sup>4</sup> A *tular* is a swamp area dominated by *tular* plants (*typha dominguensis* Pers.)



Rubén Vázquez

## *Tabasco's Cuisine* A Deluge of Aromas, Colors And Flavors

Jorge Priego\*

**M**exican cuisine is recognized the world over for its broad variety of regional dishes rooted in ancient, diverse cultures. However, some regional cuisines enjoy well-

deserved fame while others remain practically unknown. This is Tabasco's case, despite its rich variety of dishes made with local products, ingredients that are truly exotic for the non-native.

Tabasco's cuisine is based on the sage integration of indigenous and Spanish cooking, enriched by the creativity of our grandmothers, who, when they lacked certain spices and condiments, substituted what Nature provided around them.

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We thank Mexico City's Club France restaurant for allowing us to photograph the dishes it prepared during Tabasco Week.

Among Tabasco's edible vegetables, in addition to those introduced by the Spaniards, are yucca, the sweet potato and *macal*; *chaya* or Mayan spinach, avocados, *chinín*, squash and *chayote* squash; plus corn, used to make different foods and drinks. As seasoning, nature has also provided spices like *malagueta* pepper and various aromatic herbs like *chipilín* (from a legume), *momo* (elsewhere known as *acuyo* or *hoja santa* [holy leaf]), *muste*, parsley and *epazote* or pigweed.

The varieties of game and fish are practically infinite: there are the mammals like deer, wild boar and pig, *tepezcuintle* or agouti paca, armadillo and *manatí*; fowl, like the mountain turkey, the *chachalaca*, the *hoco* pheasant, the *cocopato*, the *pijije* or whistling duck, and the Canadian duck; the fish include the snook, the *pejelagarto* (alligator-head fish), the wreck fish, the *topén*, *guabina*, baby shark and the delicious *castarrica*, *paleta*, *tenguayaca*, *zacatera* and *colorada* two-banded bream. As if that were not enough, Tabascans also eat reptiles like the iguana and the *azpoque*, as well as the crocodile or lizard, a very important part of the Chontal indigenous diet; tortoises and turtles like the Central American river turtle; the Mesoamerican slider, a freshwater turtle; the *guao* and the *chiquiguoao*, two varieties of musk turtle; and snapping turtles.



Amashito chile pepper sauce is a must on the Tabasco table.

They have also always eaten shellfish like crab, mollusks like *shote* and oysters, and crustaceans like shrimp and *pigua*.

With all these meats and vegetables, how could they not develop a varied, delectable cuisine. And if we add to this the immense profusion of products that have come to Tabasco from across the sea, we find that the number of dishes offered in this humid, tropical corner of Mexico has multiplied enormously.

Authentically native dishes, true delights for the most demanding palate, include *ulich* or *uliche* (an indigenous word with the root *úlum*, meaning turkey, and *ich*, or chile pepper or *ají*, the dish's main ingredients). Another is *maneas*, a kind of tamale, traditional during November festivities honoring the spirits, and served during patron saint celebrations. Old books mention these dishes, saying that during Chontal Day of the Dead celebrations no one could refuse to eat *ulich* (also known as *caldu benditu*, or "blessed broth") without running the risk of angering the spirits, who would avenge themselves on the offender, visiting upon him/her a disease the doctors would not know how to cure. *Ulich* is a simple, healthy, delicious food, made solely of turkey broth thickened with corn meal and seasoned with garlic, onion, cumin and salt.

Tabasco's cuisine is based on the sage integration of indigenous and Spanish cooking, enriched by the creativity of our grandmothers.



Alligator-head fish salad, an up-to-date recipe for a traditional ingredient.

Another excellent, unique Tabascan food is called *verde*, or “green”, used to dress pork, *pejelagarto*, turtle, Mesoamerican slider, alligator snapping turtle or *mondongo*, another name for beef stomach. *Verde* is made with ground *chipilín* and Mayan spinach (*chaya*) leaves and *amashito* chile pepper, which are then beaten with water or beef broth cooked with garlic. This mixture is strained through a cloth, seasoned with salt, onion and sweet chile peppers, thickened with green plantain and then added to the meat to cook.

*Chirmol* is one of the most common dishes in Tabasco’s indigenous and rural areas, although it is eaten by people from every social class throughout the state. It can be prepared with different kinds of meat like *pejelagarto* or crab, but it is usually made with duck or beef, to which corn meal, toasted tortillas, *achiote* (annatto) paste, *epazote*, garlic, tomatoes and onion are added.

Tabasco’s extreme climate forced its inhabitants to find the best way to preserve game, domestically-raised meat and fish: salting the flesh was the solution. This means that Tabasco’s cook-

We could not leave out tamales. They come in different colors, forms, consistencies and flavors.



Alligator-head fish is one of Tabasco’s most common dishes.



Tabasco meringues are a real treat.

Rubén Vázquez

ery includes dishes with salted beef or pork, wreck fish and other fish, numbering among them black beans with salted beef or pork, a dish called “little face beans with salted pork.”

The wide variety of vegetables offers good color and delicious flavour to both *puchero* and *mondongo* (cooked beef stomach). Both dishes include pieces of *chayote* squash, squash, yucca, *macal*, corn, ripe plantain, sweet potato and, sometimes, “soup bread,” the fruit of the bread tree, brought to Tabasco during colonial times.

White turtle, now an endangered species, was a luxury dish for many years for Tabascans, cooked in *verde*, stew or in blood. White turtle cooked in blood is one of Tabasco’s most delicious dishes, its distinctive flavor stemming from two basic ingredients: green plantain cut in rounds and parsley, flavored with tomatoes, onion, sweet chile peppers, garlic, oregano, cloves, Castile pepper and cinnamon.

Many dishes are recreations of Spanish or Central Mexican fare, like stews made of turtle, turkey, hen or chicken, flavored with garlic, onion, tomatoes, salt, cinnamon sticks, olives, capers, almonds and raisins. Tabasco enchiladas are filled with equal parts of cooked, finely minced pork and beef and fried with garlic, onion, tomatoes, raisins, olives and almonds. After tortillas are cooked on a grill, they are passed through very hot lard or oil, but not fried; then they are soaked in a sauce made with liquified, drained *ancho* and *pasilla* chile peppers, tomatoes, garlic and onion, and fried; the tortilla is then filled, rolled up and covered with a spoonful of sauce, dusted with Tabasco-made cream cheese and garnished with rounds of sliced purple onions, blanched in hot water.

We could not leave out tamales. They come in different colors, forms, consistencies and flavors, from the “lordly-prey-in-the-middle” tamale, made from cornmeal dough strained through a cloth with a “prey” or piece of turkey, hen or pork in the middle, and accompanied by a special sauce that gives it a delicious flavor, to the humble, pre-

Hispanic *manea*, unstrained cornmeal dough mixed with beef, pork, or in olden times, lizard, cooked in very little grease. Little *chipilín* tamales are the most popular: they are prepared with strained cornmeal dough, *chipilín*

leaves and pork lard, and bathed in a tomato, garlic and *amashito* chile pepper sauce. One variety of these little tamales has shredded pork. “Little road” tamales are made from strained cornmeal dough, with a strip of cooked meat down the middle. It can be beef, pork or alligator-head fish, which are a positive delight. *Chanhamitos* are round tamales made of unstrained cornmeal dough colored an orange red with *achiote* (annatto), with lots of fat and pork wrapped not in banana leaves like all the others, but in *joloche*, the Tabascan name for dried corn husks.

Although many other dishes could be listed, I will instead mention the most popular drinks. In one of his most celebrated poems, the great poet Carlos Pellicer said, “I, who am from Tabasco / with knots of Mayan blood, / where ground cacao / gave new meaning to water,” describing the birth in his homeland of the product known as Tabasco’s gift to the world: chocolate. Sweet and bitter chocolate have both been used from colonial times on in Tabasco, the first, beaten together with milk and the second, with water. Originally, the drink was prepared with water because milk was not introduced until after the conquest. Besides chocolate, the region boasts two other beverages that use cacao as an ingredient: *pozol* or *chorote* and *polvillo*. *Pozol*, or white *pozol*, a nutritious, refreshing drink, is prepared with boiled, ground corn mixed with water. When ground, toasted cacao is added, it is called *chorote* or simply *pozol*, which can be drunk fresh or fermented. *Polvillo* is made from *pinole*, or toasted corn flour, and finely ground cacao, mixed with water and sweetened; it can be served cold or hot.

The immense variety of fruits from the humid tropics (*guanábana* [custard apple], *jujo*, cacao, *ma-*



Mashed plantain stuffed with ground meat.

*rañón*, *pitahaya* [a variety of prickly pear], watermelon, cantaloupe, pineapple, oranges, grapefruit, limes, etc.) are the basis for dozens of refreshing beverages when mixed with water, coconut juice or even milk.

Another delicious drink is *matalí* ade, made with *matalí* leaves (from a plant known in central Mexico as “chicken grass”), beaten with water, lime juice and sugar.

Tabascan desserts, mostly made with local fruit, include coconut, *nance*, plums, red currants, coco plums, and the popular “monkey ears” (halves of wild papaya fruit soaked in dark brown sugar that gives them a blackish brown color making them look like monkey ears). Tabascan meringues are delicious; some are flavored with *guanábana*, an unparalleled treat. Among the dozens of sweets, I have to mention the fragile, delicious *panal de rosa*, made with conch rose petals, which give it a unique flavor and aroma.

Finishing up this brief sketch of Tabascan cooking is difficult. Dozens of dishes, desserts and beverages have been left out, waiting to be discovered by the curious in search of new flavors. **MM**

Tabasco’s gift to the world: chocolate was originally prepared with water because milk was not introduced until after the conquest.



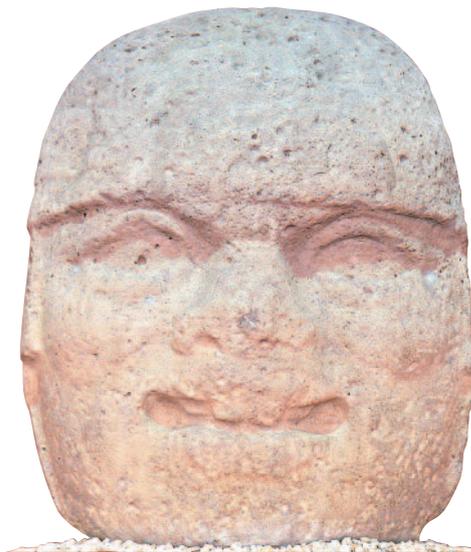
Crema of Mayan spinach (*chaya*) soup.

Elsie Montiel



# The *Carlos Pellicer Cámara* Regional Anthropology Museum

Rebeca Perales Vela\*



**T**wenty-five years after Villahermosa's Regional Anthropology Museum opened on the banks of the majestic Grijalva River, we cannot talk about its importance in preserving the legacy of Mexico's

main pre-Hispanic cultures without mentioning its principle mentor, poet Carlos Pellicer Cámara, who the museum is named after.<sup>1</sup> The celebrated poet gathered the museum's collection for what was then the Tabasco Archaeological Museum, in 1948, invited by Governor Francisco J. Santamaría.

In 1951, the director of the National Institute of Anthropology and History, the architect Ignacio Marquina, commissioned Pellicer,

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\* Archaeologist and director of the Carlos Pellicer Cámara Regional Anthropology Museum.

Photos by Elsie Montiel, except for Pellicer Glass (p. 112) and the Snail Vessel (p. 110) by Rebeca Perales.



The museum has been dedicated to Mesoamerican cultures, which is why Pellicer referred to it as “a national museum in the provinces.”

who by then was working at the National Fine Arts Institute, to organize and direct Tabasco's Regional Museum. Its first site was located across from the Arms Plaza and was inaugurated in 1952.

The museum has always been dedicated to Mesoamerican cultures, which is why Pellicer himself continually referred to it as “a national museum in the provinces.” The main collection is made up of the monumental and smaller Olmec sculptures from the La Venta archaeological site in Huimanguillo, Tabasco. This is the state's most significant collection not only because the Olmecs are considered the first Mesoamerican civilization, possessors of a wealth of knowledge, styles and ideology that preceded the development of pre-Hispanic Mexico's great cultures, but also because of the many obstacles Pellicer and the Tabasco state government had to overcome to get authorization to move the sculptures from their original site since they were threatened by oil extraction in the region.

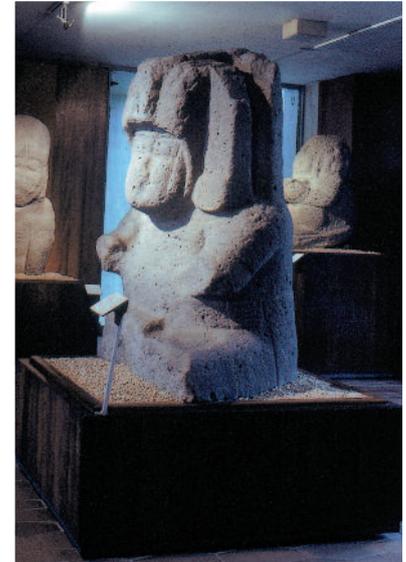
In 1951, Pellicer obtained National Institute of Anthropology and History authorization to move the “Smiling Head” from La Venta to the museum. This was followed

by the relocation of other monumental works that are now part of the museum's collection.

The Smiling Head (see previous page), placed at the entrance of the new museum site, inaugurated in 1980, welcomes visitors. In addition to this piece, the museum exhibits an important number of monumental sculptures from the Olmec culture, recognized for its extraordinary artistic style, in which the theme of humanized jaguars predominates. This is the case of Monument 11 (see below), which represents a seated figure with jaguar features looking upward. Its position has led different researchers to associate it with the observation of the heavens. We can also say that the museum has some of the best examples of smaller-scale Olmec art; the ceramics and stone carvings prove the existence of a group of specialized Olmec artisans.

The Mayan culture makes up a fundamental part of the museum's exhibit. The importance, quality and diversity of the work shows visitors the grandeur of the Mayas settled in Tabasco in the classical and post-classical periods. Works of beautiful, multicolored manufacture, like the “Pellicer





The museum brings together the splendid pre-Hispanic cultural patrimony that Pellicer gathered as a legacy for his people and the world.

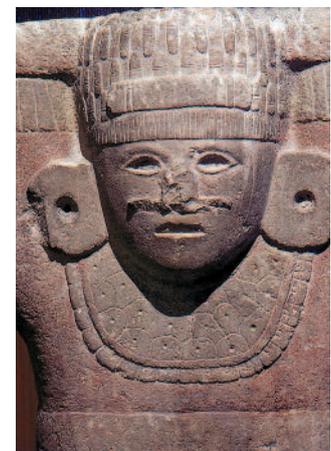
glass” (see page 112), beautifully finished like the “snail vessel” (next to the seated figure on previous page), and extremely complex, like the incense holders, all from Tacotalpa Mountain caves, show the world view and religiosity of the Mayan peoples settled in what is now Tabasco. We also have the monolithic stelas with glyphs from the Reforma and Tortuguero site; a funeral urn and bricks from Comalcalco; and objects of bone, shell and silex from the Usumacinta region. They all help us understand the social process of the lowland Mayans. The stucco sculptures, mostly from the Palenque site, the Atlantes from Chichén Itza and a wide variety of small figures from Jaina Island complete the pieces representing this culture.

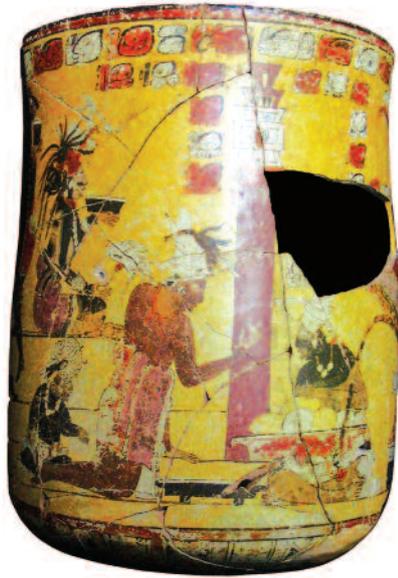
Pellicer’s interest in all Mexico’s pre-Hispanic cultures and his desire to found a national museum in the provinces prompted him to visit not only all of Tabasco, but also other important museums and archaeological sites to find works that could be included in the Tabasco museum’s collection. Archaeologist Alfonso Caso and Hum-

berto Ruz contributed to this effort, as did state Governor Francisco J. Santamaría and the whole Tabascan population. They managed to gather a splendid collection of originals from the entire the pre-Hispanic period, covering 3,000 years of cultural history, displayed on the building’s three floors.

From the central highlands, the museum boasts the female figures known as the “pretty women,” from Tlatilco’s pre-classical period; alabaster masks, anthropomorphic figures, representations of the god Tláloc and typical Teotihuacan glasses from the classical period, as well as Aztec stone sculptures and ritual objects.

The Gulf Coast is represented by several cultures: from the Mixtequilla culture, the “smiling faces” occupy a significant place because of their manufacture and expression; from the Totonacs, we find a jaguar with wheels and the sculpture of yokes, hatchets and palms. From Remojadas, we have warriors, large-nosed gods, animals and figures from daily life decorated with tar. The Huastec region is included with a stone sculpture.





From Monte Albán, Oaxaca, we find incense holders, examples of the Zapotec culture which was very important in Mesoamerica before the Christian era. It reached its greatest splendor in the middle classical period around A.D. 400.

Although the cultures of Mexico's West were not great builders, they are recognized for the realism of their scenes of daily life painted on clay. Three extraordinary models representing human activity also show us the architecture of their houses.

The poet of America, Carlos Pellicer Cámara, died February 16, 1977. He did not live to see the museum's new building, which would hold the fruit of his efforts, enthusiasm and love for the past. On February 16, 2005, we will commemorate the twenty-eighth anniversary of Carlos Pellicer Cámara's death and proudly celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of a museum that brings together the splendid pre-Hispanic cultural patrimony that the poet gathered as a legacy for his people, the Tabascan people, and the world in general. **MM**

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The museum belongs to the Tabasco state government and is managed under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Sports' Office of Cultural Patrimony.

MUSEO REGIONAL DE ANTROPOLOGÍA  
CARLOS PELLICER CÁMARA  
AVENIDA PERIFÉRICO CARLOS PELLICER 511  
COLONIA CENTRO, CICOM ZONE  
VILLAHERMOSA, TABASCO  
C.P. 86000  
OPEN TUESDAY TO SUNDAY,  
FROM 9 A.M. TO 5 P.M.

#### OTHER FACILITIES

The museum also includes the Tabasco Regional Information and Documentation Center, with a library, and recording and videotape collections, open to the public Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The complete collection is made up of archaeological and historical objects and items from the indigenous peoples of Mexico. It is shared with the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples, previously the National Indigenist Institute (INI).

In May 1998 a special room for differently-abled persons, displaying more than 80 reproductions of pre-Hispanic works in different materials, was inaugurated. The blind and visually impaired can touch the displays to feel textures, shapes and finishes, and listen to the sounds of rattles, ocarinas, whistles, conch shells and drums, part of the wealth left to us by ancient Mexicans. Explanations in Braille put the finishing touch to the guided visit of the grandeur that was ancient Mexico. The three-story building also has an auditorium with a capacity for 70 spectators and two temporary exhibition rooms.

# The Centla Swamps

Eduardo S. López-Hernández\*



Photos by Elsie Montiel

Observation tower. Water House, Centla Swamps Interpretation Center.

The Centla Swamps are located on the delta of the Grijalva and Usumacinta Rivers in eastern Tabasco, near the Campeche border. The way these two rivers join together, creating an enormous number of lagoons,

swamps and other large expanses of flooded land, turns this area into a truly noteworthy ecosystem that is part of the National System of Protected Areas and is classified as a biosphere reserve. The reserve is contained in the municipalities of Centla, Jonuta and Macuspana, covering 302,706 hectares divided into two nucleus zones and a buffer zone. Nucleus I covers 57,738 hectares and Nucleus II,

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Metal reproduction of a mangrove tree. Water House.

75,857 hectares; the buffer zone makes up the more than 150,000 hectares left. Its great biodiversity makes for good catches of both shrimp and fish and excellent hunting. It is also an important nesting area for both resident and migratory water fowl.

The first colonizers of the Tabasco lowlands built small villages there around A.D. 1500. At least 19 archaeological sites in the swamp areas, among them Aguacatl, Atasta and Santa Rita, prove their existence. It is thought that this valley was one of the most densely populated parts of the lowlands before the conquest; one of its legacies is a certain kind of fine orange ceramic ware. The ancient inhabitants settled on the banks of rivers

and lagoons or in the middle of mangroves. To avoid flooding, they elevated the land, making piles of clay mixed with oyster shells, which becomes very compact when dry.

Today, settlements are also located on the edges of the rivers. The largest town is Quintín Arauz, with 2,000 inhabitants, who speak Yokot'an (or Chontal) and still preserve their religious traditions and fiestas. The entire area is home to about 15,000 souls, the majority of whom are either Chontal or mestizo, and who live in very precarious conditions with very little income.

Almost 60 percent of the population works in agriculture, fishing, cattle ranching and day labor, all occupations typical of the countryside. The remainder work in manufacturing and services. Residents of the region have developed vast knowledge about local vegetation. Until today, 198 useful plant species have been identified, 50 percent of which are edible; the rest are used in building, as fuel, in crafts and medications and even as ornaments. Local fauna is similarly numerous and varied.

From 1951 on, Mexico's state-owned oil company, Pemex, has been exploring and exploiting fossil fuels in the area, concentrating in eastern Centla, Jonuta and northern Macuspana. This has become a threat to the environment because the use of the soil has changed in the reserve's area of influence. Currently, it is used for exploration for oil and pumping oil wells, extensive cattle ranching and cultivation of basic crops like corn and squash. Other activities include the production of charcoal with mangrove-tree wood, fresh-water and high-altitude fishing and fish packing plants. Some forestry activities are also carried out, including logging of mangrove trees, plus illicit hunting of different species of turtle.

Nevertheless, its biodiversity still makes this biosphere reserve very important internationally. Fifty-two new species have been discovered in the reserve and recorded. Among them, mushrooms are one of the most important species, particularly the macromycetes and the myxomycetes, of which there are 55 species. The flora boasts more than 737 species, of which 637 are wild and represent almost 25 percent of all the flora found in the state of Tabasco.

From the ethno-biological standpoint, there are 198 species used for traditional purposes, plants normally utilized for eating, ornaments and medications by those living in the reserve, who use their stalks, fruit, leaves and flowers. Most of these plants can be found in both family gardens and in the wild.

Gastropods (a kind of mollusk) are the animals most studied in recent years. Nineteen species—which may be new altogether—have been discovered on the reserve. Five of them have been found for the first time in the state of Tabasco. A wide variety of vegetation has made a welcome habitat for a large number of vertebrates. The swamp is home to 30 species of fish, 30 kinds of amphibians, 68 different types of reptiles, 104 sorts of mammals and 255 kinds of birds. Aquatic and semi-aquatic animals predominate.

Except for three species, all the freshwater fish are neo-tropical. The most common fish is the bream, of which there are six different genera. Among the most common birds are the herons, the peregrine falcon, the fishing eagle, the *caracolero* snail kite and the toucan; among the

The Centla Swamps are part of the National System of Protected Areas and an internationally important reserve because of their biodiversity.



The meeting of the Grijalva, San Pedrito and Usumacinta Rivers.

THE CENTLA SWAMPS ARE ABOUT 70 KILOMETERS FROM VILLAHERMOSA, THE CAPITAL OF TABASCO, AND CAN BE REACHED BY THE VILLAHERMOSA-FRONTERA FEDERAL HIGHWAY, WHICH GOES TO BARRA DE SAN PEDRO. ANOTHER ROAD CONNECTS TO THE ARROYO POLO COMMUNITY AND LEADS TO THE PAVED JONUTA-FRONTERA HIGHWAY, WHICH CAN BE USED TO REACH THE CENTLA SWAMPS BIOSPHERE RESERVE SUPPORT STATION, WHICH WELCOMES TEMPORARY VISITORS AND BIOLOGISTS DOING RESEARCH. THE GENERAL PUBLIC CAN GO TO A VISITORS' CENTER KNOWN AS THE "WATER HOUSE," WHICH PROVIDES INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESERVE.



reptiles, the swamp crocodile or black lizard and the white turtle; among the mammals, the jaguar, the ocelot, the howling monkey, the tapir, the *manatí*, the *tepezcuintle*, the deer, the porcupine and the racoon.

Among the biologically interesting, threatened species of plants and animals, included in Mexico's official norms, are many kinds of orchids, palms, legumes

and red, *botoncillo* and white mangrove trees from the *Rubiacea* and *Euforbiacea* families, among others.

The species of endangered animals include the *carao*, the yellow-headed vulture, the *caracolero* snail kite, the merlin, the peregrine falcon, the howling monkey or *saraguato*, the spider monkey, the *manatí*, the swamp crocodile, the white turtle, the jaguar and the ocelot,

the river otter, the tapir, the green iguana, the royal duck and the reserve's largest rodent, the *tepezcuintle*.

As already mentioned, the Centla Swamps are a protected natural area with a great number of neo-tropical birds registered worldwide in the marshes, internationally important for biodiversity of birds. Among the most important are the *jabirú*, the queen of the storks, a species declared endangered nationwide. According to the most recent studies, only 20 specimens of this species exist in Mexico, in the Centla Swamps and the Lagoon of Terms, which has the majority. Among the rare birds are the *almizclero* duck, the *tular* tiger heron, the *eurípiga* and the cinnamon hawk.

The Centla Swamps are facing grave threats, among them: 1) the non-integra-

tion of local inhabitants into conservation activities proposed by reserve authorities; 2) several contradictions in the federal government's implementation of the environment management program; 3) vegetation is periodically burned during the dry season, thus depleting resources, because inhabitants have no alternatives for production; 4) federal agencies are not appropriately organized to foster reserve maintenance policies; 5) industrial, agricultural and urban pollution is on the rise because there are human settlements in areas near the nuclei zones; 6) oil extraction; 7) the system is drying out because dams have been built in the highland basin of the neighboring state of Chiapas; 8) roads are being built, agriculture is disorderly and resources are being over-exploited for illegal sale. ■■■

#### THE CENTLA SWAMPS RELEVANCE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The Centla Swamp's functioning and water's role in it produce environmental goods and services that directly or indirectly satisfy many human needs. This includes:

- a) Renewing bodies of water. The swamps retain a large quantity of water that, when filtered to underground tables, can be used for human consumption.
- b) Decontamination. The swamps neutralize the negative effects of contaminants generated by people and carried by the Grijalva and Usumacinta Rivers.
- c) Flood control. The swamps act as a sponge that lowers the force of the rivers' flow.
- d) Stabilization of the coast line and erosion control. The alluvium deposited on the plain of the Centla Swamps creates sediment accumulation, creating dry land where the ocean had once been, and stabilizes the coast line. Without it, the sea's erosion of the land mass and the increase in salinity would continue.
- e) Export of biomass to the Gulf of Mexico. The nutrients produced in the swamps are exported to places like the Gulf of Mexico, benefiting an important number of fishing grounds.
- f) Protection against storms/windbreaks. The mangroves on the banks of the rivers close to the coast help dissipate storms and reduce damage.
- g) Refuge for wildlife. The abundance of food and the diversity of the wealth of vegetation make the swamps ideal for the reproduction, feeding and development of innumerable species.

Taken from the "La Casa del Agua, Centro de Interpretación de los Pantanos de Centla," leaflet published by Espacios Naturales y Desarrollo Sustentable, A.C., n.d., pp. 3-4.

# *Teodosio García Ruiz* Irreverence and Nonchalance In the Tropics

Miguel Ángel Ruiz Magdonel\*



In the last 200 years, literature in Tabasco has leaned toward poetry and the novel. People like José Eduardo de Cár-

denas, Arcadio Zentella, Manuel Sánchez Mármol in the nineteenth century and the enormous pleiad of twentieth century authors including Carlos Pellicer, José Gorostiza, Andrés Iduarte, Josefina Vicens, José Carlos Becerra, Dionicio Morales, José Tiquet, Álvaro Ruiz Abreu, Bruno Estañol, Ciprián Cabrera Jasso, Ramón Bolívar and Francisco

\* Essayist and poet; professor of literature and director of cultural dissemination of the Juárez Autonomous University of Tabasco.

Drawings by Héctor Ponce de León.

Magaña, and the new generation of writers born in the 1960s and 1970s have woven a complex literature that opens up many roads. But underlying all of them is the dichotomy of festivity-melancholy characteristic of men from this land.

In the framework of this tradition, Teodosio García Ruiz (born in 1963) began to publish irreverent, un-archetypal literary work in the 1980s. He was then just a youthful poet shooting like a meteor through his first 20 years of life in Tabasco, marked at the time by the death of three of its greatest authors: José Carlos Becerra in 1970, José Gorostiza in 1973 and Carlos Pellicer in 1977. These prolific writers were the center of that literary tradition and simultaneously prevented the emergence of new poetic languages or excursions on untraveled roads that could be traversed by the burgeoning generations.

Teodosio García Ruiz published *Sin lugar a dudas* (Without a Doubt) in 1985, a book that would scandalize the state's cultural centers with its poetry thirsty for day-to-day life, immersed in both the purulence and vitality with which urban existence quivers. This writing was closer to the fierce figures of modern poetry, Gregory Corso, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Charles Bukowski, to the now far-off futurists of Marinetti, to Latin American figures such as Nicanor Parra and Antonio Cisneros (but particularly his dealings with Ecuadoran poet Fernando Nieto Cadena) and to Mexicans Gerardo Deniz and Efraín Huerta. Nothing at all, not a single verse, was reminiscent of the tradition he came out of. It was the vision of a new world for Tabasco-born poets, leaving behind metaphysics and scenery to make way for a new poetic subject, the city, the axis of the poetry written by all the writers whose shadows and echoes can be distinguished in *Without a Doubt*. In that sense, Teodosio García Ruiz is situated among the most contemporary of the poets of Tabasco's new generation.

Up until now, García Ruiz has published ten books of poetry: *Sin lugar a dudas* (Without a Doubt) (1985); *Textos de un falso curandero* (Texts of a False Healer) (1985); *Yo soy el cantante* (I Am the Singer) (1990); *Leonardo Favio canta una canción* (Leonardo Favio Sings a Song) (1992); *Furias nuevas* (New Furies) (1993); *Bananos* (Banana Trees) (1998); *Palimpsestos* (Palimpsests) (1998); *Sueños de la estirpe* (Dreams of Ancestry) (2001); *Poemas y canciones para la infanta* (Poems and Songs for the Infanta) (2001); and *Nostalgia de sotavento* (Nostalgia for the Leeward Side) (2003). He also has one novel to his credit, *Eco de lluvias* (Echo of the Rain) (2001); a volume of chronicles, *Villahermosa, peligro para caminantes* (Villahermosa, Danger for Walkers) (1997); and three anthologies: *Eroticom plus* (2000), *Para un ambiente sin hombre* (For an Environment without Man) (2001) and *Odiseo* (Odysseus) (2001).

This entire body of work reveals a singular, playful universe, based on the recovery of language and popular tastes, fundamentally urban ones, with an initial, fresh scatology, beautiful in its naturalness, without variegation or falseness. Henry Miller said that obscenity is a healing process, and this poetry, from the very first, reveals this with force, like a scalpel that pares scum and pus off of society. So, if the obscene irritates us, it is because it reminds us of our weaknesses, our imaginings and coercion, and, not uncommonly, our crimes. And all of this against a background of the urban scene and its orgies.

Because this is the way that organism called the city is conceived in this work: as a voluptuous, palpitating body, whimsical in its brilliance, but whose Dionysian nature will lead it to concupiscence, unending excess, just as a dictator must use violence to keep himself on the throne. This is why it is opposed to the image of the countryside, which continues to represent equanimity and contemplation.

Teodosio García Ruiz's poetry of this stage must be understood in the light of this knowledge, in the light of this vision of the city as an organism corrupted and that corrupts, that offers and degrades. Nicanor Parra says, "The modern world is composed of artificial flowers/ grown in glass bells that look like death." The Beat Generation insisted profoundly on the bitter, poison side of the city; García Ruiz is more inclined toward the Dionysian in it, toward the wonderful day-to-day life where music plays a predominant role, just as was the case for the American poets. In this way, García Ruiz's early poetry could well be worth other epigraphs: luminosity of the walls or transparency of the walls, or another: the fiesta in the streets and —why not?— the end-of-century carnival. Because this poetry of García Ruiz's is that and much more; an excessive party, an inexorable celebration from begin-



ning to end that manifests itself in a predilection for everything Latin American: its language, its music, its women. If the sun was central to Pellicer, life is central to García Ruiz. Its vitality hits one in the face just like Pellicerian colors blind our eyes. If Cabrera Jasso's pain and Gorostiza's loneliness depress and petrify us with their ice, Teodosio's warmth is an apotheosis that kicks us out into the street, gets us dancing amidst car horns and whores' chatter. García Ruiz's tumultuous words are only comparable to the vertigo of Becerra's first books. Words that are torrents and torrents that are words.

The appearance in 1993 of his fifth book, *New Furies*, was an exciting discovery for his readers since the living space in which the poet moves is no longer the city, but something broader and at the same time diffuse: the kingdom. And, as we know, kingdoms are not of this time: they are suspended between the reality of literature and the imagination of men. *New Furies* will thus be a long epic about the region, sung in a mythical, thousand-year-old voice, suspended in time. The city is now merely a minuscule space in that kingdom. And even if the city is Villahermosa and its events are modern, they are sung with that archaic voice of the timeless men of the road, with the heroic voice of the rhapsodists who travel from kingdom to kingdom, carrying with them only their priestly, prodigious voices.

With that new poetical interval in his work, García Ruiz did not contradict his initial discourse; rather, he broadened it out because the new poet that emerged was unexpectedly wise, capable of experiencing the abysses that have lacerated the souls of men for all time. In reality, the figure of Teodosio García Ruiz was the best omen in the birth of Tabasco's new poetry. With him, the break was ensured, but also, invariably, the enrichment of that literary tradition that emerges from the tropics of southeastern Mexico to carry its colors and shadows to the world. **MM**

# New Poetic Languages

## Teodosio García Ruiz

### SELF PORTRAIT<sup>1</sup>

And I, priest of the oldest vintages,  
harvester of women already born,  
close to mountain ranges  
where the dense smoke of mercy dissipates  
as the days go by,  
I look for the image and semblance of this body  
diluting in the fury of paranoid infants obsessed  
with the steps of the vanquished,  
to change the direction of love: its warm incidence over the debris.

<sup>1</sup> Taken from Teodosio García Ruiz's book *Furias nuevas* (Mexico City: Fondo Editorial Tierra Adentro, 1993), p.11.



### NOSTALGIA FOR THE LEEWARD SIDE (Fragments)<sup>2</sup>

I hate my parents  
their useless advice to take care of the world  
to not digress when the phenomenon occurs  
when the rain is no longer rain  
my fallen arms  
will rise with fury to grasp the world  
I hate their clumsy caresses like those of a pitiful bitch  
their whining advice and the fear of the gods  
the education they avoided and now promote  
their fetid food of faith encrusted in the salt-marshes  
and in the coconut palms with their yellow and sickly fronds  
keeping with tradition, I hate my parents  
because they deny what they want to be and because of their  
old and perverted cookie-cutter morals

Because of their damned jaws like those of hungry rams  
because of their rituals of untempered lust during a full moon  
because of their drooling and the simple pleasure of hating without meaning to  
because of the age in which one writes the bluish parricides  
because of the myopia of their species mistaken within destiny  
because I chose the road they didn't see  
and now I regret not being like them.

\* \* \*

We left behind the dust and sounds in the dog days  
of the destroyed distance.

We are technicians of petrochemical doubts, harmonious chains  
of alkanes and aldehydes: bonds to double knot the skirmishes  
of the tropics: that lively calm of moderate rain showers skilled  
in the cleansing of arrhythmias and hypochondrias off the skin  
of natives.

We are the front line, deep in the jungle, of a civilization under construction  
with logs, *cochinita pibil*\*, barbecue from Orizaba, Jaliscan *pozole*\*\*  
regional imprints of an identity scalded in finger foods and pregnant  
beers in each encampment of exploration.

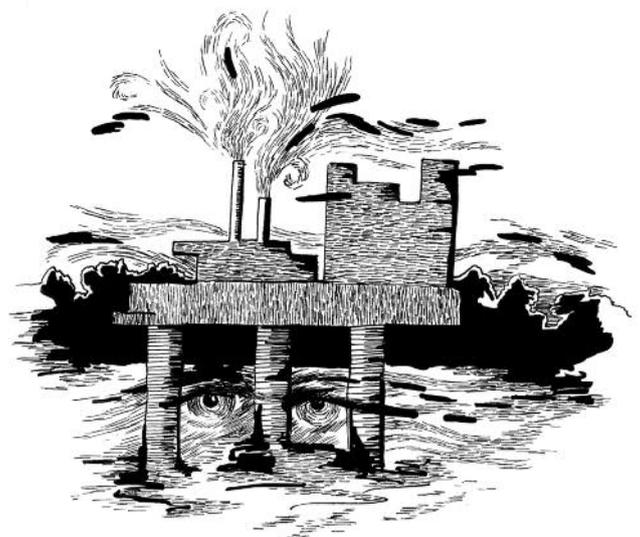
We left behind the dust and our music, over there where cars and  
nightclubs dilute in the smoke of week-end hangovers.

We only left infancy there, because in these places life begins and  
creates us anew.

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\* *Cochinita pibil* – a typical pork dish from Yucatán, cooked and served in a red  
sauce made of *achiote* (a paste of annatto seeds), garlic and tangy oranges.

\*\* Jaliscan *pozole* – a stew made with pork and hominy with lime juice.



\* \* \*

A spider is the iron oil rig that suctions the  
supreme lineage of the ancient medusas from the earth.

A spider, the bittersweet taste of the earth's brains, opened  
and hardened by the hands of the one who drills for food  
in these quiet and lonely densities of death and life, and the  
indecisive harvest in the hands of industries; because not only  
cheeses and suckling pigs and canned mangoes circulate  
around the jaws of technicians and the hordes of laborers  
darkened among the rains and suns and dog-day malaras;  
no, that's not all we are in the jungle; we are also the permanent  
fear of the gods' rage.

And what fear; because the laborers and the fields have died of anxiety;  
the stagnant water from the future.

\* \* \*

The drop is glow  
impure dawn  
blasphemy of the dew that feeds on infamies  
herbs only behind the gums  
haggard hollows of cattle  
piled up impure on the rocks.  
The drop is an instrument cast onto the microscope  
face of shadowed dead lands  
cadavers of earth that begin another cycle  
validity of death in the spark  
that does not ignite  
the drop is only  
a drop that dawns.

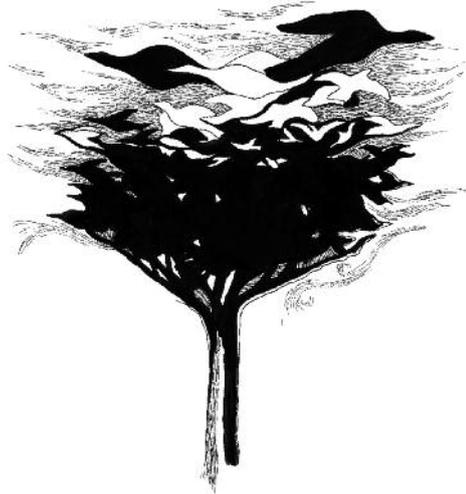


Before the glow a tree  
mature streets  
the rowdiness of birds  
scorched afternoons  
tender walks  
young ladies  
food  
thick celeries  
ladies smelling of soaps and jerkins

Later sad bleak plateaus  
abandoned city from  
the blue hydrocarbon subjected to liquid fantasies

Today you are guilty of nothing  
again sad liquid of the tedium  
of a beer that recalls the glow.

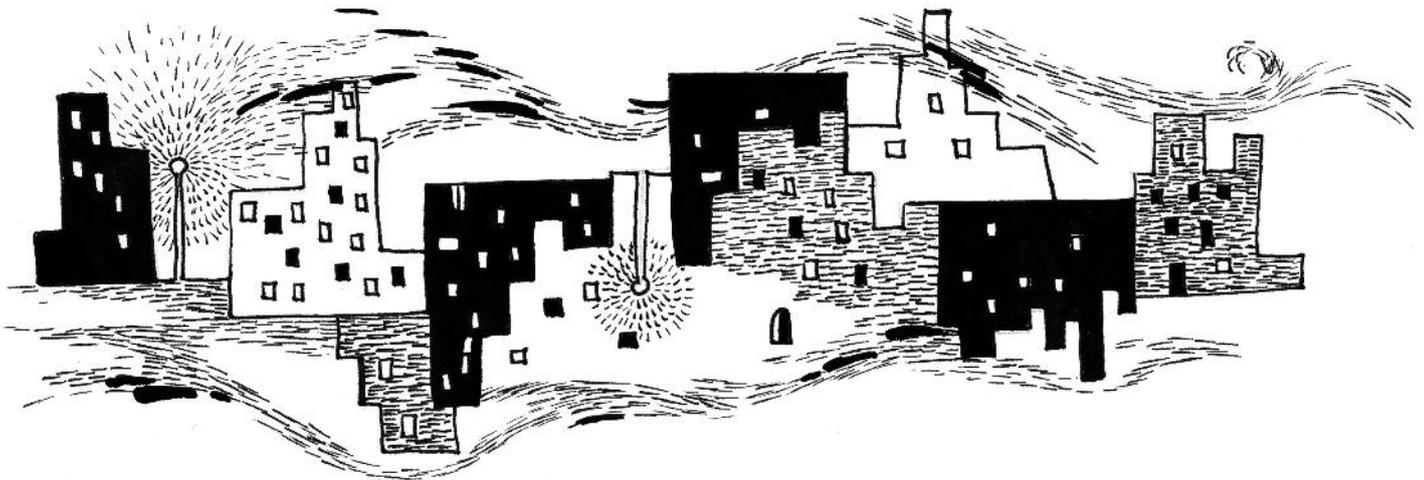
The city is a new Christmas tree\*  
 that floods the streets  
 tree of life in black boats  
 absurd shrieks of faceless characters  
 just as always the city is slow  
 vertiginous because of its inescapable arrises  
 it hides its walls it elevates its turrets  
 it keeps its blackbirds and cormorants as guardians  
 the city is this  
 a hidden Christmas tree  
 reality behind the fog  
 streets and more streets  
 pipes  
 ducts  
 platinized machines  
 combustibles  
 the city is this  
 hope hidden from men  
 the ghosts asleep with slow eyes of a latent color  
 the city is this Christmas tree  
 the village\*\* never more.



\*Oil workers in Tabasco call the oil rigs "Christmas trees."  
 \*\*Unfortunately, by translating "villa" into village, one loses  
 the simultaneous reference to the city of Villahermosa,  
 Tabasco.

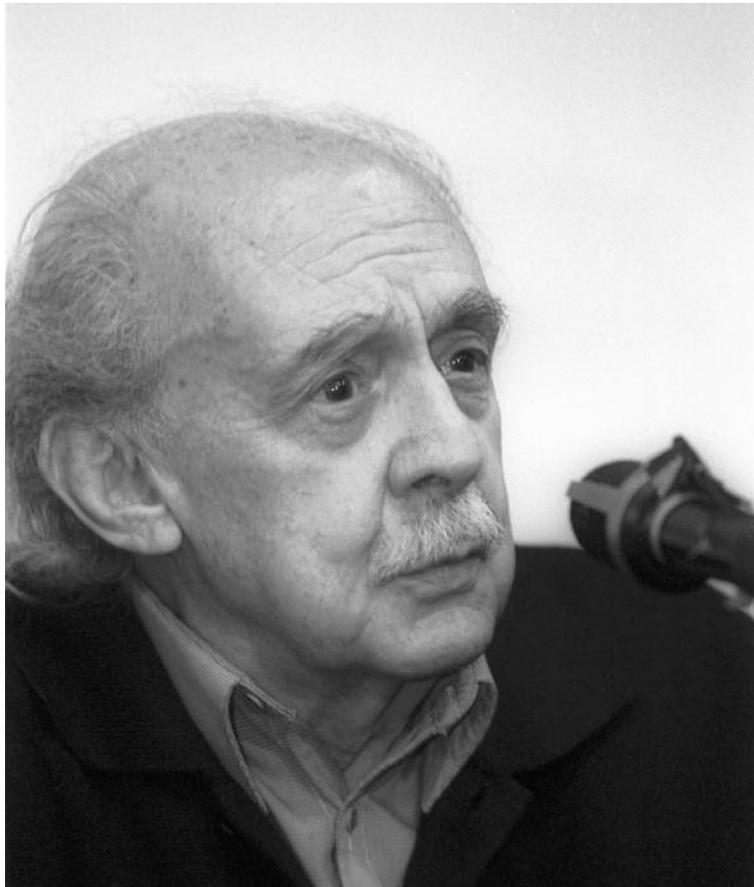
*Translated by Margarita Vargas*  
 Drawings by Héctor Ponce de León

<sup>2</sup> All the following poems taken from *Nostalgia de Sotavento*  
 (Mexico City: Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco, 2003).



# Gastón García Cantú (1917-2004)

Cecilia Haupt\*



Juan Antonio López Olguín

**G**astón García Cantú was born in the city of Puebla, November 3, 1917. After studying law, he began to teach at the old State College High School. His participation in the defense of the Dean's House, one of this colonial city's most emblematic buildings, forced him to leave his

native state.<sup>1</sup> He decided to go to Mexico City, where he began working as a journalist as co-editor of the cultural supplement *México en la cultura* (Mexico in Culture), then headed up by journalist and researcher Fernando Benítez, who revolutionized the concept of cultural supplements.

From 1961 to 1966, García Cantú worked for different government institutions, such as the National Indigenist Institute and the

\* Academic assistant at the UNAM General Libraries Office publications department.

Ministry of Public Works in the areas of information and publications. In 1966, he was invited to the UNAM by Rector Javier Barros Sierra to take over the General Office of Cultural Dissemination. Among his initiatives, we should remember the creation of the magazines *Punto de Partida* (Starting Point), which writer Margo Glantz enthusiastically coordinated, and *Controversia* (Controversy), in which a group of young academics concerned with different political issues participated. We should also remember that he broadened out the literary project *Voz Viva* (Live Voices) to *Voz Viva de América Latina* (Live Voices from Latin America).<sup>2</sup>

A fundamental achievement of his administration was the professionalization of the UNAM Philharmonic Orchestra under the batons of Eduardo Mata and Armando Zayas, who opened up spaces like the School of Philosophy and Letters Justo Sierra Auditorium, among others, making the greatest music of all time available to the university community.

Those of us who were studying in the UNAM at that time remember that the campus had the same lay-out its originators had given it in 1954. The Cultural Dissemination Offices occupied the tenth floor of the Rector's Tower and other cultural spaces like University Radio, for example, were near the schools. This immediacy, this contact between the research and dissemination institutions must surely have increased the spirit of belonging to the university itself; and Gastón García Cantú, with an unprecedented spirit of openness, facilitated practically unrestricted access to these cultural spaces not only to the university community, but to the populace in general.

During the heated months of the 1968 student movement, García Cantú headed up the UNAM Information Office, which he led with intense vision and commitment to the university. This office put out communiqués about the development of what was then a

His unprecedented spirit  
of openness facilitated practically  
unrestricted access to the cultural spaces  
of the University City.

movement of practically unsuspected repercussions. Those months, those tense and intense days and hours are preserved in some of the pages written by our academics, by our university poets like Rubén Bonifaz Nuño, and in a *Voz Viva* recording of Rector Barros Sierra's words at the end of the first demonstration (taped by researcher Raúl Hellmer Pinkham with the tape recorder he was never without).

In those unforgettable, unrepeatable moments emerged a fundamental work for understanding Rector Barros Sierra's behavior and García Cantú's thinking: 1968: *Conversaciones con Gastón García Cantú* (1968: Conversations with Gastón García Cantú), a long dialogue that has been reprinted several times. In one paragraph, the book reads, "The conflict begun in August 1968...was the attempt at freedom given the consciousness of tyranny," a reflection of these intellectuals' position vis-à-vis the causes of the student movement, a true watershed in the history of social movements.<sup>3</sup>

That attempt at freedom was something that concerned García Cantú. A brief look at some of the titles of his works shows that in *El pensamiento de la reacción mexicana. Historia documental (1810-1962)* (The Thinking of Mexican Reactionaries. Documentary History [1810-1962]), in *Las invasiones norteamericanas en México* (U.S. Invasions of Mexico), and even in *Los intelectuales y el poder* (Intellectuals and Power), he reflects about the moments in which the country, its institutions and the legal order have been threatened, assaulted, by clashing ideological tendencies, by radical groups or by foreign

A brief look at the titles of some of García Cantú's books shows that freedom was one of his main concerns.

powers. Thus, with a masterful power of summary, he writes in the prologue to the first work:

In 154 years, we Mexicans fought 11 years for our independence from Spain; 35 years to establish Republican institutions; [we experienced] sieges from Europe; the separation of the vast territory of Texas; a war of conquest, the result of which was that they seized more than half our territory; three years of civil war to impose respect for the liberal Constitution; four years of French intervention; two dictatorships for 34 years (almost three years in Santa Anna's two terms and 31 years under Porfirio Díaz); and more than 100 armed invasions, raids and attacks by the United States.<sup>4</sup>

Another facet of this high-level intellectual endeavor was teaching, which occupied García Cantú from 1972 to 1976 in the International Relations Center and the Political Studies Center of what is now the UNAM School of Political and Social Sciences.

By invitation of then-Minister of Public Education Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, he became the director of the National Institute of Anthropology and History between 1976 and 1982. Under his direction, the excavation and conservation of the Central Temple in downtown Mexico City was completed, as well as the establishment of the boundaries of the city's Historic Center and intense work to recover hundreds of archaeological sites in the Gulf of Mexico.

Once he left the chancy world of the public administration, García Cantú went

back to work that was more gratifying academically and intellectually. For more than ten years he produced a Saturday radio program at the Mexican Radio Institute station. He was also a distinguished contributor to the *Excélsior* daily newspaper and went every week to his hometown, Puebla, to give series of lectures to students.

He died in Mexico City last April 3 before he could see the finished version of his book *Temas mexicanos* (Mexican Themes), published by the Vicente Lombardo Toldano Center for Philosophical, Political and Social Studies, a work which came out posthumously.

Consistent with his political thinking and as a return to his roots, he donated his splendid library to his *alma mater*, the Autonomous University of Puebla.

An intellectual of many talents, historian, university professor and official by choice and journalist by decision, Gastón García Cantú leaves a legacy that deserves to be remembered. **MM**

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The building was so named because it had previously belonged to a dean of the Puebla cathedral. When a proposal was made to demolish it to make way for a movie theater that is now next door, a battle ensued over this cultural patrimony. Only part of the house was salvaged. In 1953, murals that had been hidden for several years were discovered and their historic value made public; this was the weightiest argument to prevent the building's total demolition. [Editor's Note.]

<sup>2</sup> These projects brought together some of the most important representatives of Latin American literature to tape readings of their own work, recordings produced by the UNAM. [Editor's Note.]

<sup>3</sup> Javier Barros Sierra, 1968: *Conversaciones con Gastón García Cantú* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1972), p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Gastón García Cantú, *El pensamiento de la reacción mexicana. Historia documental (1810-1962)* (Mexico City: Empresas Editoriales, S.A., 1965), p. 7.

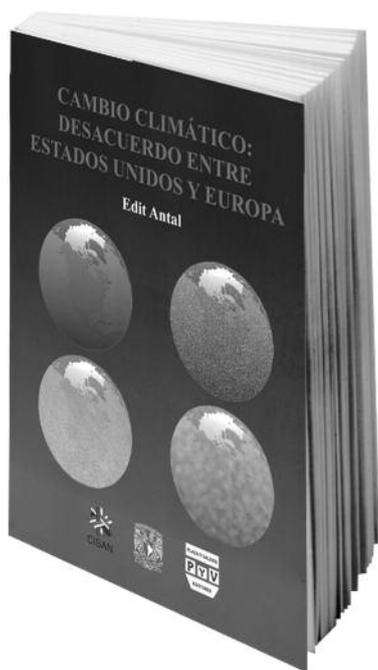
# Reviews

## **Cambio climático: desacuerdo entre Estados Unidos y Europa**

(Climate Change: Disagreement between the United States and Europe)

*Edit Antal*

CISAN-UNAM/Plaza y Valdés Editores  
Mexico City, 2004, 243 pp.



The international community is facing a big challenge in the shape of the struggle against global climate change. For the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol to be successful, all the actors involved will have to opt for the global good and disregard their own specific interests. This is probably the greatest challenge, since behind the interests of

every country are a series of political, cultural and economic priorities that explain the difficulty of achieving international cooperation.

There have been indications of climate change since the nineteenth century. In 1896, Swedish scientist Svante Arrhenius had already calculated that as a result of fossil fuel emissions, the duplication of atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide could increase the average global temperature from 4 to 6 degrees Centigrade. However, it was not until the 1992 Rio Summit that 180 governments decided to do something about it and signed the FCCC in order to, as it states in Article 2, “achieve...stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.” The FCCC includes fundamental principles of international law like that of common but differentiated responsibilities and the precautionary principle. It recognizes the responsibility of industrialized countries as well as the need that they exercise leadership in adopting mitigating measures and in supporting developing countries to deal with the negative effects of climate change.

The negotiations for the Kyoto Protocol concluded in 1997, and, in contrast with the FCCC, it includes quantitative commitments for developed countries and the economies in transition, known as Annex I. Kyoto established an average reduction of 5.2 percent for 2008-2012, using 1990 as the reference point. Since Kyoto, international negotiations about climate change have concentrated on the definition of the protocol's operating details and the strengthening of FCCC implementation.

For the Kyoto Protocol to come into effect, 55 parties to the convention must ratify it, including the Annex I countries, responsible for at least 55

percent of this group's emissions, using 1990 as the reference point. Until now, 124 countries have ratified it, but only part of Annex I countries (including the European Union, Japan and Canada), which together generate 44.2 percent of emissions. By contrast, two of the world's greatest producers of greenhouse gases, the United States and Russia, responsible for 36.1 percent and 17.4 percent respectively, have not yet ratified the protocol.

The reasons behind the European Union's and the United States' positions are linked to a series of economic, political, cultural and scientific factors that have influenced their decision making. In *Cambio climático: desacuerdo entre Estados Unidos y Europa*, Edit Antal analyzes these complex processes that explain the different countries' positions on the international climate change regimen. She concentrates on two of the most important actors in this negotiation process and explains what is behind the U.S. position, detailing the different phases in its decision-making process, the interest groups with the most influence and the specific weight of each of them in making environmental foreign policy. She also looks carefully at why the European Union has played more of a leadership role with the aim of diminishing the adverse effects of climate change.

Antal points to the complexity but flexibility of the European Union's decision-making process, the product of different bodies set up for dialogue among all the actors involved. This allows it to come to international negotiations with a defined position that facilitates agreements. In contrast, in the United States, while government agencies come to agreements in the preparation stages of international negotiations, the legislature does not participate in developing the proposals, relieving it of commitments and leaving a great deal to its discretion. This dynamic was clear in summer 1997 when, even though the Clinton administration had signed the Kyoto Protocol, the Senate voted it down 95 to zero.

Legal and political processes are not the only elements that explain these two actors' divergent positions. As Antal points out, the U.S. position

is based on its abundant supply of cheap fossil fuels and on a very specific culture rooted in that. This country is the world's main producer, consumer and importer of energy. Therefore, its weight in the world balance of energy supply and demand is very important. In contrast, Europe's relatively scant supply of fossil fuels has led it to take measures to diminish its dependency on them. Thus, in recent decades, the E.U. has fostered the use of alternative energy sources like hydroelectricity, nuclear power and natural gas.

For the United States, a country that has based its development on the extensive use of coal and oil, considered a strategic resource, policies to reduce the use of fossil fuels will have a considerably greater impact on the economy. Another obstacle to ratification is that developing countries have not signed any commitment to reduce emissions. The U.S. argument is that countries like China, India, Brazil and even Mexico release considerable quantities of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and that the international effort will not be complete without everyone's participation. In comparison, by ratifying the agreement and taking on the commitments, the European Union has been able to design a strategy for climate change based on integrating national and regional environmental policy with energy and other relevant policies such as transportation, research on renewable energy sources and regulation of the economy.

Perhaps the greatest contribution to research on this issue is the methodology for comparing U.S. and European Union environmental policies. Applying economic, political and cultural variables that take into account both the economic sectors affected by climate change and the perception and conception of nature and these actors' political style, including the relationship between science and policy and the importance of the institutions and actors involved, the author created comparative tables that will be highly useful for scholars.

Edit Antal's book is very timely, a valuable contribution to the still limited literature on the issue of climate change in Mexico. This work will be of great interest to the general public because,

in addition to her analysis of E.U. and U.S. positions, she explains simply and in great detail the general outlines of the international regimen for climate change, including existing legal instruments, the science behind the words, the history of the negotiations and the positions of other

actors, all indispensable to understanding the current stage of negotiations.

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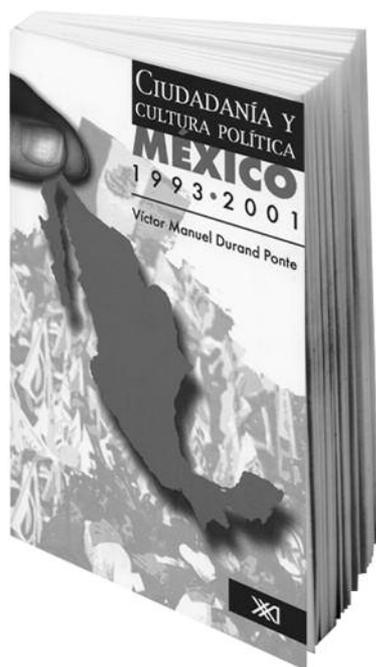
**Ciudadanía y cultura política  
México, 1993-2001**

(Citizenship and Political Culture  
Mexico, 1993-2001)

Víctor Manuel Durand Ponte

Siglo XXI Editores

Mexico City, 2004, 354 pp.



The transition to democracy in Mexico has been fundamentally a process of institutional change. We have gone from the era of the hegemonic party to a multipartisan system; from manipulated, disputed elections to transparency; from mistrust to trust in electoral institutions; and from presidentialism to a limited presidency in the

framework of a real system of checks and balances. However, Mexican society has not completely made the transition from the authoritarian culture to one of democracy. This transition is decisive for consolidating democracy in Mexico and, based on a fully democratic citizenry, for avoiding any risk of a return to authoritarianism.

This concern is one of the reasons that led Víctor Manuel Durand Ponte to carry out the research he presents in his book *Ciudadanía y cultura política. México, 1993-2001* (Citizenship and Political Culture. Mexico, 1993-2001). Durand Ponte received his doctorate in sociology from the National Autonomous University of Mexico's School of Political and Social Sciences. He has published numerous articles and several books about politics, social movements and political culture in Mexico.

Of his two previous books, his *Etnia y cultura política. Los mexicanos en Estados Unidos* (Ethnic Groups and Political Culture. Mexicans in the United States), published in 2000, is very timely given the framework of the debate launched recently by Samuel Huntington about the "Hispanic challenge." Durand Ponte concludes in his study that, "U.S. residents of Mexican origin...integrate slowly and in a contradictory way. The characteristics of the population include aspects that make participation and cultural change difficult, not only because of the legal status that marginalizes an important sector, but also because of the predominance of young people still not old enough to exercise full civic rights. Some of those born in the United States, socialized in school with American values, and in the family and neighborhood with Mexican values, suffer from bi-culturalism that slows down their inte-

gration. The arrival of new immigrants reinforces the values of the place of origin in the community and strengthens community and neighborhood identity, but limits the move of individuals into the new system. And discrimination by Anglos reinforces the community's isolation."<sup>1</sup>

*Citizenship and Political Culture. Mexico, 1993-2001* demonstrates Durand Ponte's broad experience in empirical research and is based on a solid theoretical and historical framework. The aim of the work is to deal with "the transformations that political culture went through between 1993 and 2001. The period is defined by two surveys on the issue by the author in October 1993 and January-February 2000, plus a third carried out by the Ministry of the Interior in June 2001."<sup>2</sup> The study was part of a research project about culture and political transition to democracy in five Latin American countries: Chile, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico and Venezuela.

The research hypothesis is that "political culture would change more slowly than the regimen. This was due to its being the product of a long period of time and that citizens need a process of re-elaboration, reflection, critique and comparison of the old system with the new to be able to process cultural changes and change their beliefs, their values, their attitudes, their ideology."<sup>3</sup>

Durand Ponte proves his working hypothesis by analyzing three central aspects of political culture in Mexico: a) values, attitudes and ideology; b) an evaluation of the political regimen, government and political institutions; c) political participation of the citizenry. In all three categories there were insufficient changes toward democracy. Durand Ponte's diagnosis of the three aspects—to each of which he dedicates a chapter—coincides with studies by other authors who also observed important deficiencies in the democratic profile of Mexico's citizenry.<sup>4</sup>

In his conclusions, Durand Ponte says, "We have shown that Mexicans have a very bad opinion of political institutions. They do not trust them. Also, they are not effective as citizens: they do not think they are competent to be heard, to communicate their demands, to be attended to and influence in government decisions. There is a clear separation

between individuals and the institutional system, and that clear separation is precisely the lack of full citizenship, which is part of the legacy of authoritarianism."<sup>5</sup>

Given this disheartening panorama, Durand Ponte offers a ray of hope by recognizing the existence of "an increasing number of citizens with democratic political values, who defend democracy, trust in others, are tolerant of those politically opposed to them, believe they can be competent citizens and participate; the only thing is that they are still a minority."<sup>6</sup> Certainly, this minority of citizens makes it possible to envision a more democratic future for Mexico, as long as democratic institutions are not undermined by a lack of agreements between the executive and legislative branches, insufficiently satisfied demands for goods and services by the public, a self-interested use of the legal system by those in power and other factors that weaken the governability of our budding democratic system.

The effort Durand Ponte put into his book is praiseworthy and should continue to be part of academia's valuable contribution to politics, the rigorous and systematic studies of our public life which allow political actors, including the citizenry, to see themselves in a full-length mirror, as well as objectively value the advances and challenges of democracy in Mexico.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Víctor Manuel Durand Ponte, *Etnia y cultura política. Los mexicanos en Estados Unidos* (Mexico City: Miguel Ángel Porrúa/UNAM, 2000), p. 113.

<sup>2</sup> Víctor Manuel Durand Ponte, *Ciudadanía y cultura política. México, 1993-2001* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores, 2004), pp. 10-11

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Héctor Aguilar Camín, *México: la ceniza y la semilla* (Mexico City: Cal y Arena, 2001); Mauricio Merino, *La transición votada. Crítica a la interpretación del cambio político en México* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Durand Ponte, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274.

