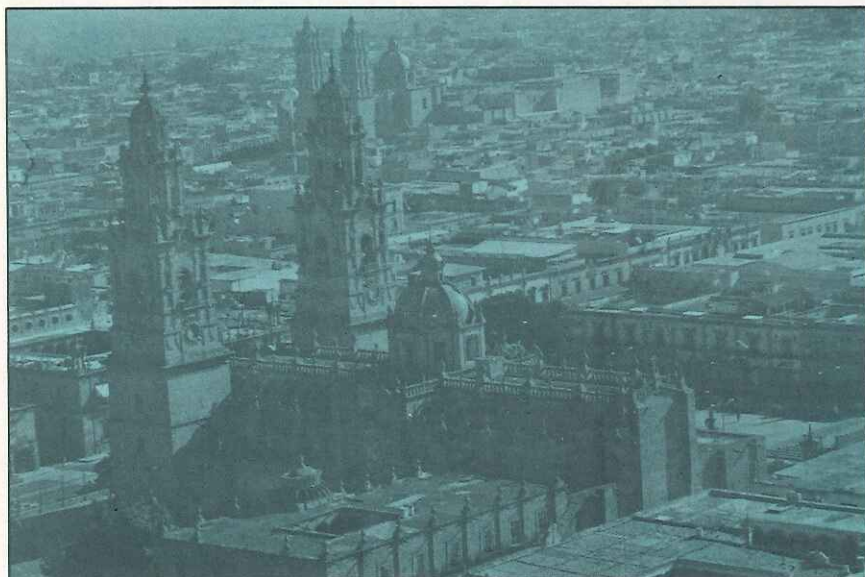


THE BEAUTIFUL CITY OF MORELIA, capital of the state of Michoacán, is celebrating this year the 450th anniversary of its founding. Many festivities have been organized to commemorate the event. Both the local government and civil organizations have made a great effort to pay homage to a city which since January 1990, by presidential decree, has been officially designated part of our national heritage.

Anniversary of the founding of Morelia



Panoramic view of Morelia.

The city is outstanding not only because of its great architectural wealth, but also because it is rich in political, cultural and artistic activities. Its inhabitants have never been isolated from what was going on in the nation, and the most divergent forms of thinking have found expression here. Morelia may be characterized as being simultaneously aristocratic and conservative, liberal and jacobin, and even proletarian and socialist.

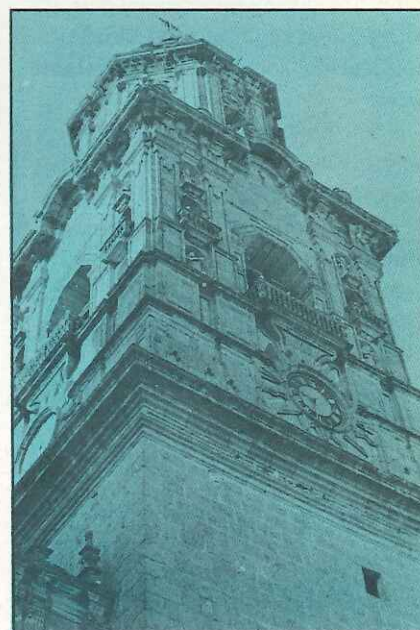
Founded on the 18th of May 1541, on the slope of Guayangareo, with the name of *New City of Mechoacán*, Morelia represented the new vision of expansion and population strategies for New Spain

drawn up by the first Viceroy, Don Antonio de Mendoza. A connoisseur of Italian Renaissance ways of thinking, Mendoza rejected the Spanish soldiers' and friars' desires to erect, in the conquered territory, the old feudal and theocratic organizations. Instead, the new town was to be part of a vast network of cities and monasteries scattered strategically so as to most effectively take over both the territory and the souls of its inhabitants.

At the beginning of 1578 the name *New City of Mechoacán* was changed to Valladolid, and on the 12th of September 1828 the Second Constitutional Legislature of the state decided to call it Morelia, in honor of

José María Morelos y Pavón, a hero in the struggle for independence from Spain who had been born there.

Morelia has never stood aside from the social processes that have transformed our country throughout its history. Its very foundation was characterized by the conflict with the neighboring town of Pátzcuaro which considered that it, not Morelia, should have pride of place as the province's political center.



The belfrey of the Cathedral.

Later on, particularly in the 18th century, Morelia took part in the cultural movement of the Enlightenment. It made a significant contribution to the ideological and

material formation of the Mexican nation, as various leaders of the independence movement had been educated in its schools.

After Mexico achieved its independence, the city passionately welcomed liberal ideas of the mid-19th century. In the early part of the 20th century it reflected the swelling tides of the Revolution, and grass-roots organizations of workers and peasant's unions sprung up in the twenties. Today the city represents a bastion in the intense awakening of the Mexican people to democracy.

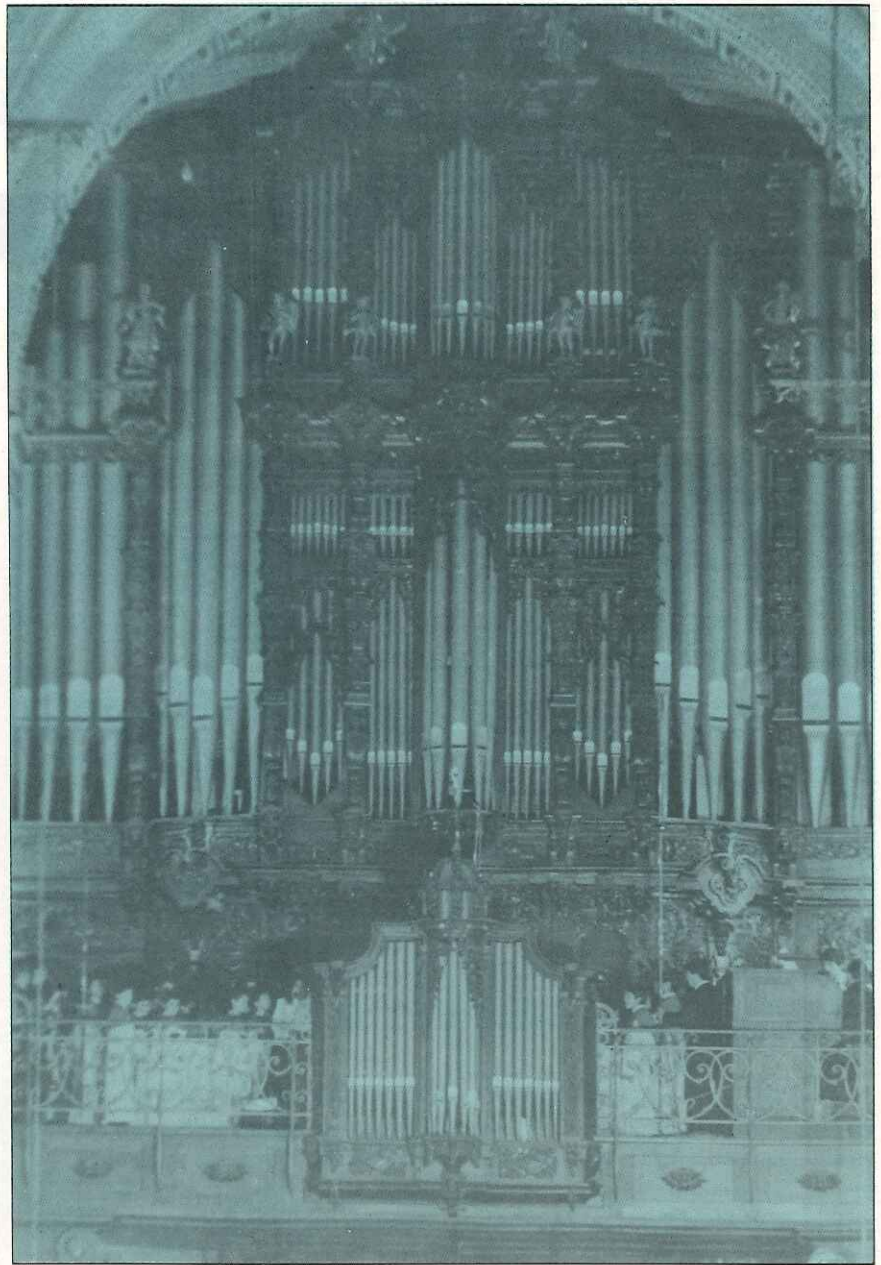
From the cultural and artistic point of view, the buildings that form the historic center of Morelia impress one by the beauty and sobriety of their architecture, as well as by their historical and cultural importance.

Among the most outstanding are the state government building and the San Nicolás de Hidalgo University, both of which were important centers for secondary and university education during the colonial period. Many of the key figures in Mexico's political and social life were educated there.

The present state government building was started in 1732 by the clergy to house the Tridentino Seminary, while it lasted, and finished thirty-eight years later in 1770. The Seminary taught Latin, Greek, Spanish and French (the classical languages), and law, philosophy, literature, theology and scripture among the humanities. It also had a branch for primary studies.



San Nicolás de Hidalgo University.



World renowned organ.

Many important national heroes, such as José María Morelos y Pavón, Melchor Ocampo, Agustín de Iturbide and General Mariano Michelena studied there. In 1859, when its students came out in favor of Maximilian von Habsburg's imperial regime, the republican general, Epitacio Huerta, turned the building over to his troops as a barracks.

The former San Nicolás College, now the University of Michoacán, is the second oldest in the Americas; it arose from the merging of two colleges, San Nicolás Obispo and San Miguel. Its most famous rector was Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, a creole priest who is considered to be the father of Mexican independence. During the first century after the conquest, the college was the only



The fountain of the Tarascan women, and the aqueduct.

place where young men could be ordained properly, by virtue of a privilege granted by King Phillip the Second.

Another majestic building is the Cathedral, which took 104 years to construct and was finished in 1744. Here one can admire the monumental organ dating from 1905 and which is considered to be the most beautiful in Latin America, because of its 4,600 pipes which produce 4,600 tones or registers.

For the last twenty-five years, the International Organ Festival has been held in the Cathedral with leading organists from Europe, Latin America, the United States and Mexico taking part. Every year 15-20 applications are received from famous organists who wish to take part in the Morelia festivals. Thanks to them, the city has become the center for organ music in Mexico.

The Las Rosas Conservatory,


founded in 1743 and located in a very handsome building, was the first of its kind in Latin America and has a long-standing tradition for the quality of its graduates' musical talent. In order to foster excellence in its studies and musical performance, it has become the headquarters for the International Music Festival of Morelia which was held for the third year running in 1991.

This festival is characterized by its advanced courses in all symphonic instruments. This is thanks to the fact that specialists travel to Morelia to join the festival orchestra, where they devote a part of their time to giving classes in the Conservatory.

The Third Morelia Festival took place from the 20th of July to the 3rd of August and, for the first time in its history, was broadcast live, by satellite, to all the America continent.

Civil architecture in Morelia is also astounding. The Aqueduct,

after it was no longer used for its primary purpose, was preserved for its aesthetic value and is a landmark in the streets of the city. Domestic architecture, in spite of demolitions and new buildings, still enables us to glimpse what the old city had

Morelia has lived intensely during its 450 years and deserves, as well as any other, to be considered a worthy representative of the political, social and cultural wealth of Mexico throughout its history 

Elsie L. Montiel

Assistant Editor.