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# VOICES *of Mexico*

CISAN • UNAM

## Mexico's Diplomatic Asylum Policy

Roberta Lajous

## The Crisis of U.S. Elections

Paz Consuelo Márquez Padilla  
Gabriel Guerra Castellanos

## Fourth International Watercolor Biennial

Alfredo Guati Rojo

## Morelos: Sugar Haciendas, The Original Zapatistas and Ecological Parks

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Scale model of *The ds*, Gabriel Orozco.



Santa Cruz Vista Alegre Hacienda, Mazatepec, Morelos.

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Francisca de Diego, Mexico, *The Magician*,  
80 x 60 cm (watercolor).

# OUR VOICE

The surprising, contradictory events of the U.S. elections are a lesson for all the world's champions and architects of democracy: no matter how solid a democracy seems to be, it is never exempt from threats and risks. Democracy and its institutions are not indestructible. Even if people think a single vote does not seem to have a real impact on an election, the U.S. experience of last November 7 teaches us that every vote counts, and it is responsible citizens who, individually, define the course of democratic government. November 7 also showed that confidence in the electoral process is essential in building a democracy.

The electoral machinery cannot be allowed to rust. Although infrastructure for organizing elections is expensive, efficient mechanisms and clear rules for voting without confusion are indispensable, as are the scrupulous organization of elections and their ample monitoring, just as occurred in Mexico's elections of last July 2.

Every actor in the electoral process must comply with his/her responsibilities seriously and professionally. Having rights also means meeting obligations. While it is true that the ballots caused confusion in Florida, it is also true that they were approved by representatives of all the parties. In this case, confidence was undercut because of electoral officials' ineffectiveness.

The deeper meaning of the lesson that we have all learned is that we must be increasingly alert to holes in the democratic process. In the case of the United States, the negative effects of this much-talked-about election will probably be felt even after the January 20 inauguration and, of course, will also have an impact on other democracies in the rest of the world.

The right to information guaranteed by U.S. law will surely prompt different civic and interest groups to organize a continued recount of the votes, even though this will not have any legal ramifications. The obvious question is, then, what would happen if in six months, with President Bush in office, information comes out showing that Albert Gore won Florida and, therefore, both the Electoral College and the popular vote?

Our "United States Affairs" section deals with this polemical election in two articles. Gabriel Guerra Castellanos' article ponders not only the post-electoral uncertainty, but also takes a look at the apparently "normal" aspects of the process, like the indirect election of the president and the influence of big capital and special interests in deciding candidacies, an influence heartily rejected by the public.

In the other article, I venture my thoughts on the problems and conflicts that arose out of the elections, as well as the unprecedented action of the Supreme Court which finally made the definitive decision.

On the complex bilateral relations between Mexico and the United States, internationalist Alejandro Becerra has contributed an article for the "Mexico-U.S. Relations" section. In it, he seeks an explanation of the frequent controversies and conflicts between our two countries, finding it in our different religions, political ideas and cultural traditions, which influence the perception that each people has of the other. It is precisely these different histories and feelings that delineate the problems.

In this issue, our “Politics” section is dedicated to two fundamental topics in our foreign policy. On the one hand, Roberta Lajous, Director of the Foreign Relations Ministry’s Matías Romero Institute of Consular and Diplomatic Studies, delves into Mexico’s diplomatic asylum policy. Traditionally, ours has been one of the nations which has most often opened its doors for those persecuted for their ideas and political activities, a humanitarian practice and political principle that must be maintained. Lajous exemplifies this policy with the cases of the Spaniards and Latin Americans who have found in Mexico a refuge that has allowed them to continue to develop. Analyst Bibiana Gómez Muñoz’ article deals with the diversification of our foreign policy. While pointing out that the Mexican government has always been interested in diversification, she also concludes that the different attempts to achieve it have not been very effective. The proof is the enormous weight that bilateral relations with the United States retain in every area: the economy, politics, society and culture. The author predicts that Vicente Fox’s new administration will try to turn to Latin America more than to Europe –as did Zedillo before him– and alerts us to the need for closer ties with Canada. It remains to be seen whether this new attempt will be successful.

With the victory of Vicente Fox and the coalition formed by the National Action Party (PAN) and the Green Ecologist Party of Mexico, some analysts and political players have begun to voice concern about a possible political resurgence of the Catholic Church, particularly because of its historical and ideological proximity to the PAN. It is still too early to predict the outcome, but we do think it is important to begin the discussion on the issue.

In our “Society” section, specialist Oscar Aguilar contributes an article about the new power of the church, saying that the fears of a political resurgence of the church hierarchy with Fox taking office are exaggerated. In his opinion, the existence of a plural society, a divided government and three large political forces strongly rooted in the population would make it very difficult to implement a conservative Catholic agenda. He also thinks that this same pluralism will of necessity give the church a stronger voice, requiring both religious fundamentalists and Jacobin anti-clericalists to moderate their positions and learn to establish a dialogue in the new democratic context.

In our “History” section we present our readers an article by Texas scholar Christopher Ohan about the role of the Catholic Church in the Mexican Revolution and the Cristero War that followed it. Contrary to the vast majority of interpretations of the revolution, Ohan presents us with an audacious hypothesis about the “revolutionary” role of the church, which mobilized masses against the state in an eminently subversive movement.

Job opportunity gender inequality in Mexico motivated four well known Mexican economists to propose a full employment program for women. Alejandra Arroyo, Eugenia Correa, Alicia Girón and Patricia Pérez Licona conceived of their program as a strategy to fight inequality and substantially improve Mexican women’s condition at the same time that it would promote a reactivation of the economy as a whole. The program would be implemented gradually and would include fiscal measures to make it viable. But above all it requires a radical change in the way public policy about women is made. We printed it in this issue because we consider it an original proposal and a possible way out of this age-old problem of Mexican society.

Watercolor painting, despite its beauty, has been largely forgotten in favor of other genres. In Mexico, work by people like Alfred Guati Rojo has contributed to its being disseminated in all its richness and splendor. Our “Science, Art and Culture” section includes an article by Guati Rojo about the Watercolor Museum and the most recent biennial celebrated there. We continue with an unorthodox article about an unorthodox Mexican artist: Angélica Abelleyra

writes about Gabriel Orozco's very personal aesthetic proposal. The section concludes with an article on a topic that has inspired a certain amount of polemics and caused concern in some sectors of society: genetically modified plants and crops. In her article, Yolanda Massieu Trigo considers that they should be scrupulously regulated because they can generate negative as well as positive effects in agriculture and the food supply, and since little is known about their long-term effects, more should be invested in researching them.

In "Canadian Issues," Athanasios Hristoulas presents his conclusions about changes in Canadian foreign policy in recent years. Hristoulas considers that Canada's move toward centering its international policy on human security is motivated by post-nationalist aims that both emphasize the ethics of political action and at the same time serve Canada's practical interests. He explains how, despite Canada's original aim of maintaining ties with Europe, it has been forced to open up to exchanges and deeper relations with the countries of its own hemisphere, turning inevitably into a "country of the Americas."

Our "The Splendor of Mexico" section in this issue centers on articles about the history and natural resources of the state of Morelos in central Mexico. The center of the sugar industry during the colonial period and the first century of independence, many sugar haciendas were built in this state, magnificent examples of the architecture of their time. Architect and restorer Alfonso Toussaint has contributed an article on this topic. Morelos, just south of Mexico City, was where one of the most genuine, radical social movements of the Mexican Revolution originated: the Zapatista movement. Cinematographer and documentary-film maker Francesco Taboada offers our readers a revealing glimpse at last surviving Zapatistas, all centenarians, whom he interviewed about their struggle, their frustrations and their views on the Zapatista movement almost 100 years later. Las Estacas is a natural paradise in the state of Morelos, renowned for its beauty, splendid climate, thermal waters and flora and fauna. Topiltzin Contreras and Fernando Urbina write about this center for eco-tourism and its owners' ability to reconcile a business proposition with the creation of a culture of respect and care for the environment.

The Brady Museum of Cuernavaca is the legacy of artist-collector Robert Brady, who chose Cuernavaca to live the last years of his life amidst his collection of objects and works of art from all over the world. Sarah Sloan, the current director, has contributed an article about the museum to this issue.

Our "Ecology" section includes an article by Gerardo Ceballos and Jesús Pacheco about the Chihuahua habitat of the prairie dog and the efforts that have been made to protect this native of Northern Mexico from extinction.

Once again we dedicate this issue's "Literature" section to promoting the work of young Mexican writers. Playwright and stage director Carmina Narro exhibits her ability to write a tight plot that goes to the very heart of the most contradictory human feelings. We present our readers with her *Shadow Boxing*, accompanied by an article by critic Rodrigo Johnson about the new directions young Mexican playwrights are taking.

*Voices of Mexico* pays homage in this issue to Amalia Hernández, probably the best known and most successful exponent of Mexican dance in the last century. Dance critic and historian Alberto Dallal writes about her career and its significance for Mexico's culture.

Paz Consuelo Márquez Padilla  
**Director of CISAN**



# Mexico's Diplomatic Asylum Policy

Roberta Lajous\*



Octavio Nunez/AE

Mexico's Foreign Relations Ministry.

## INTRODUCTION

Mexico was already a stronghold of diplomatic and territorial asylum in the nineteenth century, but even more clearly throughout the twentieth century. Mexican diplomats take enormous pride in the great names associated with our

country's practice of diplomatic asylum: Gilberto Bosques, Luis I. Rodríguez, Vicente Muñiz Arroyo and Gonzalo Martínez Corbalá. The list of individuals and national groups who have benefited from generous protection in Mexican diplomatic missions abroad is very long. It includes Spanish Republicans, Austrian and German anti-fascists, Russian revolutionary ideologues, Guatemalan nationalists, anti-Duvalierist Haitians,

Chilean and Uruguayan socialists, Peronists and anti-Somozan and Salvadoran Farabundo Martí activists. The long list of names includes José Martí, Rómulo Gallegos, César Augusto Sandino, Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, Fidel Castro, Alaíde Foppa, Hortensia Bussi de Allende, Leon Trotsky, Luis Cardoza y Aragón, José Gaos, Pablo Neruda, Nicolás Guillén, Luis Buñuel, Ofelia Guilmain and Rigoberta Menchú.

\* Director of the Foreign Relations Ministry's Matías Romero Institute of Consular and Diplomatic Studies.



Octavio Naveja/VE

Nobel Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú was exiled in Mexico.

In promoting  
the right to asylum,  
Mexico has had no object  
other than to protect the life  
and liberty of all individuals.  
Its practice has benefited  
persons persecuted  
for their ideas.

#### MEXICO AND DIPLOMATIC ASYLUM

By asylum, we understand “the protection that a state accords an individual who seeks refuge in its territory or in a place outside that territory.”<sup>1</sup> In contrast to territorial asylum, which is granted by a state within its own territory as its sovereign right, diplomatic asylum is that granted in a state’s diplomatic mission to which an individual comes requesting protection. People who fear for their lives for political or ideological reasons go to a diplomatic legation seeking protection when they find themselves amidst political instability or violence, as happens during coups d’etat, insurrections, serious disruptions and revolts. According to experts in international law, “the inviolability of the mission’s residence is the basis for the doctrine of diplomatic asylum.”<sup>2</sup> The Conventions of Havana (1928), Montevideo (1933) and Caracas (1954) establish the inter-American framework for both diplomatic and territorial asylum.

Mexico was the first country to ratify the First Convention on Asylum, signed

in Havana at the Sixth Inter-American Conference, which established that the right to asylum of so-called “political delinquents” would be respected as long as the laws, conventions or common usages of the country of refuge permitted it as a right or for humanitarian reasons. This instrument, while novel, had certain deficiencies since, as jurist César Sepúlveda said, “in addition to being very brief, it was also very obscure.”<sup>3</sup> Later, in 1933, Mexico actively promoted the Convention on Political Asylum at the Seventh Inter-American Conference in Montevideo. This convention introduced a new element that would be a significant legal step forward: the state which granted asylum would decide what “political delinquency” was. According to Sepúlveda, this convention sought “to discipline the practice of diplomatic asylum, not create a body of law for individuals.”<sup>4</sup> At the Tenth Inter-American Conference in 1954 in Caracas, Mexico made important contributions to the Convention on Diplomatic Asylum. In fact, Mexico’s contributions were the basis for the negotiation of that instru-

ment.<sup>5</sup> According to Sepúlveda, the Caracas Convention “has the advantage over its predecessors in the sense of not making asylum depend on customs or local laws, but legal, contractual considerations. The state that ratifies it has the duty to admit the practice of diplomatic asylum.”<sup>6</sup>

In promoting the right to asylum, Mexico has had no object other than to protect the life and liberty of all individuals. Its practice has benefited persons persecuted for their ideas or for committing actions which, although they may qualify as political crimes, do not contradict the ethics shared by the world’s nations.

The Foreign Relations Ministry is not only the institution directly responsible for granting diplomatic asylum requested of the Mexican government, but also the first to be interested in disseminating the principles and legal reasons that have led Mexico to play a vitally important role in the protection of a considerable number of people persecuted for political reasons. (And I use the word “vitality” in the sense of its Latin

Mexico's support for the Spanish Republic during the Civil War is a memorable episode in the history of our foreign policy.



Fondo Editorial Gustavo Cassola

Refugees from Franco's Spain.

root, *vitalis*, meaning “of life.”) For Mexico, “the criteria for granting asylum have been based on international human rights, on common law in the Americas and on our solid political institutions, which have won for our country internationally recognized prestige in this area.”<sup>7</sup>

#### DIPLOMATIC ASYLUM AND THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

The practice of granting asylum is an outstanding characteristic of our foreign policy. Mexico's support for the Spanish Republic during the Civil War is a memorable episode in the history of our foreign policy.

The defense of the Republic by Narciso Bassols and Isidro Fabela before the League of Nations and our material aid to the Republican struggle were only the beginning of the support, which culminated with the arrival of more than 40,000 Spanish refugees to Mexico.

Between 1936 and 1942, Mexico opened the doors of its embassy in Spain

and its missions in France to grant asylum to every Spanish Republican who requested it.

When Germany attacked France, President Lázaro Cárdenas gave instructions to his representative, Luis I. Rodríguez, who headed up the Mexican legation there, to inform the French government that Mexico was willing to accept all refugees residing in France.

On August 22, 1940, the Franco-Mexican agreement on Spanish refugees was formalized between Mexico and the Vichy government under Marshall Pétain. This agreement benefited not only the Spanish Republicans, but members of the International Brigades and anti-fascist and anti-Nazi fighters. Mexico's consulate in Vichy also gave protection and asylum to dozens of Italians, Austrians, Poles and Jews to whom it gave documents so they could leave France.

This support ended on November 14, 1942, when the Mexican legation was attacked by Nazi troops and the Mexican diplomats taken prisoner and sent to Bad Godesber.

#### DIPLOMATIC ASYLUM FOR GUATEMALANS

A little known part of our history is the asylum Mexico gave to hundreds of Guatemalans fleeing from the political upheaval that plagued their country between 1944 and 1954.

In 1944, the popular revolts that overthrew the dictator Jorge Ubico, in power since 1931, and the government take-over by his former ally Federico Ponce increased the number of people seeking asylum. This happened again when Ponce's government fell and was replaced by Juan José Arévalo: both leaders were later granted asylum in Mexico.

The Mexican government, true to its tradition, gave asylum to the members of opposing factions, regardless of ideology or political tendency. As Foreign Minister Ezequiel Padilla said about the Guatemalan situation:

Our government's policy on this matter [asylum] is inspired exclusively in broad humanitarian considerations....The idea

is to make certain that men who have not really committed a crime and whose lives may be of use to their homelands do not fall victim to the passions and circumstances of the moment.<sup>8</sup>

In 1951, Colonel Jacobo Arbenz's victory at the polls made things worse instead of better. A large sector of Guatemalan society became radicalized and took a strong anti-communist position, which made for new instances of repression, deportations and requests for asylum.

In 1954, a military coup put an end to Arbenz's reform government and prompted another wave of exiles, among them the deposed president himself. About this question, the Mexican Foreign Ministry's report for 1954 states:

From September 3 on, a total of 318 persons who had sought asylum in Mexico's embassy in Guatemala began arriving in Mexico...On September 9, Colonel Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán, former president of Guatemala, arrived after taking refuge in our embassy. He was accompanied by family members and high government officials.<sup>9</sup>

In the years after Arbenz's overthrow and until the end of 1996 when peace was signed between the Guatemalan government and guerrilla movement, Mexico was the most important destination for thousands of Guatemalan refugees and exiles who made our country their home.

#### THE DIPLOMATIC EXILES FROM THE SOUTHERN CONE

In the 1960s and 1970s, different political events caused the collapse of insti-

tutional life in the Southern Cone of the Americas. Once again, Mexico implemented its policy of asylum and became a refuge, the land of temporary or definitive exile for thousands. In this period also, our embassies played an outstanding role in protecting those who placed their trust in Mexico.

There were coups d'état, military repression and social polarization in Chile and Uruguay in 1973 and in Argentina in 1976. As a result, many leaders and activists of left social and political organizations, journalists and public officials were forced into clandestinity or to leave their countries to save their lives. One of the ways of trying to leave their countries was to request asylum in the Mexican legations in Santiago, Montevideo and Buenos Aires.<sup>10</sup>

While scholars agree that there were particularities for each nation, "Mexico's policy on asylum in the three nations was very similar: absolute respect for constitutional mandates, for foreign policy guidelines and for inter-American norms on asylum."<sup>11</sup>

In the case of Argentina, the number of exiles was relatively low (about 65), with long stays in the legation in some cases, such as former president Héctor Cámpora, Héctor Pedro Cámpora and Juan Manuel Abal Medina. A sign of the political instability prior to the coup d'état, some of the exiles arrived at the legation long before the actual military take-over on March 24, 1976.<sup>12</sup> The two countries maintained diplomatic relations despite the tensions generated by the slowness in the issue of safe-conduct passes for the Cámporas and Abal Medina.

In the Chilean case, more than 800 exiles sought sanctuary in Mexico's embassy, most of whom were admitted in the days immediately after the Sep-

tember 11, 1973 coup. The presence of such a large number of people and the long, drawn-out process of getting safe-conduct passes for them created enormous pressures in terms of daily living.<sup>13</sup> This experience has been eloquently narrated in detail in the memoirs written by our ambassador in Chile, Gonzalo Martínez Corbalá.<sup>14</sup>

Martínez Corbalá himself says, "The decision of the Mexican embassy to grant asylum to any Chileans and Latin Americans who came to its doors was based on the precepts contained in the Convention [of Caracas of 1954]."<sup>15</sup> He would later add that Mexican diplomats' actions were also based on the fact that "we could not ignore the main value that must rule the relations among individuals, which is the preservation of the lives of one's fellows. Neither could we put to one side Mexico's historic tradition of making our territory the sanctuary for all those seeking freedom and dignity."<sup>16</sup>

In the period after the coup, when the situation was the most complex, Martínez Corbalá's opinion was that relations should not be severed "until the enormous problem of having almost 500 exiles under our protection and diplomatic responsibility was solved."<sup>17</sup> After relations between the two countries deteriorated and once pending problems of asylum had been solved, the Mexican government severed diplomatic relations with Chile on November 26, 1974.

Finally, in the Uruguayan case, more than 400 people requested diplomatic asylum at the Mexican legation over a period of several years, with the numbers increasing as military repression rose after the June 27, 1973 coup. In many cases, the Uruguayan government facilitated their departure without recognizing their status as exiles, giving them

special documents in lieu of safe-conduct passes.<sup>18</sup> In this case, diplomatic relations between the two countries remained discreet.

## CONCLUSIONS

The occasions on which the Mexican government has protected those persecuted for political reasons by giving them diplomatic asylum undoubtedly constitute some of the most brilliant chapters in the history of Mexico's diplomacy and foreign policy. Taken as a whole, the experiences of the Spaniards, the Guatemalans, the Chileans, Uruguayans and Argentineans, as well as different individuals, show the continuity in the practice of diplomatic asylum throughout the history of Mexican diplomacy. This has both saved the lives of people perse-

cuted for their political beliefs and validated a practice closely associated with Mexico's foreign policy. **NMM**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Cecilia Imaz, "El asilo diplomático en la política exterior de México," *Revista Mexicana de Política Exterior* 40-41 (autumn-winter 1993), p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> Max Sorensen, *Manual de derecho internacional público* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1978), p. 399.

<sup>3</sup> César Sepúlveda, *Derecho internacional* (Mexico City: Porrúa, 1977), p. 155.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>5</sup> Luis Miguel Díaz and Guadalupe Rodríguez de Ita, "Bases histórico-jurídicas de la política mexicana de asilo diplomático," Silvia Dutrénit Bielous and Guadalupe Rodríguez de Ita, *Asilo diplomático mexicano en el Cono Sur* (Mexico City: Instituto Mora/Acervo Histórico Diplomático, 1999), p. 75.

<sup>6</sup> Sepúlveda, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

<sup>7</sup> Imaz, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>8</sup> AHDREM, Exp. II-708-1-(I), "Declaraciones del canciller mexicano a la prensa sobre derecho de asilo" (Mexico City), 27 June 1944.

<sup>9</sup> "Memoria de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores de enero a diciembre de 1954" (report to the Federal Congress by Foreign Minister Luis Padilla Nervo, printed by Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1955), p. 20.

<sup>10</sup> Silvia Dutrénit Bielous and Guadalupe Rodríguez de Ita go into this experience in great detail in their book. *Op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> Guadalupe Rodríguez de Ita, "Experiencias de asilo registradas en las embajadas mexicanas," Dutrénit Bielous and Rodríguez de Ita, *ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 135-137.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 138-144.

<sup>14</sup> Gonzalo Martínez Corbalá, *Instantes de decisión, Chile 1972-1973* (Mexico City: Grijalbo, 1998).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>18</sup> Rodríguez de Ita, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-149.

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# Integration or Diversification

## Mexican Foreign Policy Options

Bibiana Gómez Muñoz\*



Left to right: Foreign Minister Jorge Castañeda, President Fox and presidential spokeswoman Martha Sahagún.

Vicente Fox's victory in Mexico's recent presidential elections has undoubtedly generated both expectations and conjectures about the new administration's profile. Of undeniable importance for contemporary Mexico, alternating in office has brought with it a myriad of questions about the policies the former opposition will now implement both domestically and abroad.

Several concerns come to the fore about the future of Mexican foreign

policy. For example, how will it change given the ascent of a new political-business elite? Will there be a break with regard to the last two administrations? And, what will the Fox administration's priority or priorities be in today's international context?

These questions are obligatory given the horizons of the debate and the thinking about Mexican foreign policy, that is, the choice between integrating our economy with the United States or diversifying relations with other members of the international community.

In this sense, Vicente Fox's first trip abroad after winning the election cre-

ated great expectations. His tour through Chile and to three countries of the Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay) occasioned a series of conjectures about a possible change in international priorities through the reactivation of the diversification in Mexico's trade and political contacts, as well as the old yearning to concretize Bolívar's ideal of Latin American integration.

From that point of view, it is worthwhile mentioning a few considerations not only about that possible diversification, but also about that strategy's chances in terms of the country's recent history. The diversification of interna-

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tional relations has been a traditional Mexican foreign policy objective, particularly given our marked historical dependence on the United States. The first attempt at diversification took place at the end of the nineteenth century under the Porfirio Díaz regime, as it attempted to create a counterweight to the growing influence of our neighbor to the north through deepening ties with other powers or empires outside the Western Hemisphere, like Japan and certain European countries.

More than a century later, diversification seems to continue to be a Mexican foreign policy priority, still with the aim of creating a counterweight to the excessive economic dependence on the United States. Despite this constant, however, diversification today is set in a very different national and international context than 100 years ago.

In fact, more than a decade ago our foreign policy began to go through significant changes given, on the one hand, the structural changes in the Mexican economy in the early 1980s, and, on the other, the transformations in the world situation after the bipolar Cold War world order ground to a halt. Thus, the new logic of Mexico's foreign policy was based primarily on the predominance of economic questions and Mexico's insertion into the globalized economy.

In this context, the Mexican state substantially modified its relations abroad. The change with the greatest impact both domestically and internationally has been the integration with the United States and Canada in the framework of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). However, as an alternative to this integrationist

process, diversification was set up as a priority in Mexican foreign policy, although no attempt has been made to substitute it for the privileged relationship with the United States.

The diversification implemented in recent years, then, seeks to establish greater equilibrium in Mexico's foreign relations. As conceived of in the Nation-

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al Development Plan for 1995-2000, diversification is a necessary strategy given the intensity of Mexico's relations with its main trade partners, and aims to broaden out the country's room for manoeuvring and consolidating its international negotiating ability.<sup>1</sup>

With this goal in mind, Mexico has signed several trade agreements since 1994 in addition to NAFTA: with Bolivia, Costa Rica, Venezuela and Colombia in 1995; with Nicaragua in 1998; with Chile in 1999; and with the European Union, Israel, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, the European Free Trade Association and Singapore in 2000.

The paradoxical thing about this policy is that until now, the concretization of these treaties has not effectively diversified trade. The following fig-

ures are illustrative: of Mexico's entire foreign trade for January to August 2000, 83.8 percent was with the United States and Canada (97.4 percent of that was with the United States); while with our second trade partner, the European Union, it was only 5.9 percent.<sup>2</sup>

This disproportionate concentration of trade has several explanations. The first—as has already been mentioned—is undoubtedly the Mexican economy's historical structural dependence vis-à-vis the United States. The second is that diversification has not been planned as a state policy shared by several administrations. The third reason is linked to the different weight that Mexican foreign policy has given to the integration of North America in the last 10 years. The fourth reason, derived from the third, follows from the fact that in a process of economic integration, intra-regional trade increases considerably, as can be seen in both the European Union and NAFTA. In the latter case, Mexico's foreign trade with the United States and Canada has increased 150 percent and 131 percent, respectively, since 1993, the year before NAFTA went into effect.

In this sense, we should remember what Peter H. Smith says about the variables that influenced events in Latin America after the end of the Cold War. Smith says that the international options of the region's countries—including Mexico, of course—were aimed at finding “a viable position in the newly emerging global economy, a niche that could provide a foundation for long-term development and growth [and at forging] a response to changing patterns in the distribution of international power... in particular, the intensification of U.S. hegemony within the Western Hemisphere.”<sup>3</sup>

In their attempt to concretize these options, Smith says that Latin American countries have alternated among the following strategies: a) unilaterally undertaking programs of economic liberalization and strengthening commercial and financial ties with major power centers [such as in the Chilean case]; b) finding new ways to join with the North, more specifically with the United States, as Mexico has done; c) achieving regional (or subregional) economic integration mechanisms, such as in the Brazilian case and Mercosur; and d) seeking extrahemispheric partnerships, Brazil's priority, and Mexico's option through its diversification strategy.<sup>4</sup>

Mexico opted mainly for the first and second alternatives. The Mexican government made a priority of integration with the United States and Canada, although it also chose to attempt to create a counterweight by instituting closer ties to countries or regions that represented power similar to that of the United States, such as the European Union. It was no coincidence that the Zedillo administration's diversification strategy priority leaned toward signing a commercial treaty with the European Union in the framework of the Agreement of Economic Association, Political Negotiation and Cooperation in March 2000.

This is the scenario in which Vicente Fox's tour of South America and his subsequent tours of the United States, Canada and some of the European Union countries in August and September should be situated. As a whole, they provided a glimpse of some of the roads that his administration will follow in foreign policy.

We can foresee continued experimentation with this parallel process of

integration and diversification, since, seemingly, one of the Fox administration's objectives will be to establish negotiations for the long-term creation of a North American Common Market similar to Europe's through the deepening of relations with the United States and Canada.

On the other hand, the European Union and Latin America will be two

The European Union and Latin America will be two poles which can be counterweights to lessen Mexico's historical dependence.

poles which can be used as counterweights to lessen Mexico's dependence on the United States and at the same time increase the chances for developing certain sectors of the national economy. This is the reason that the deepening of ties with both regions—through the consolidation of the trade agreement with Europe and a future negotiation with the countries of Mercosur—will be the priority in the diversification strategy.

It should be pointed out that Mexico's intentions to diversify will certainly meet with a very positive response since they are backed up by a process of alternating in office and democratization, both cherished European principles and requirements.

In this context, it may well be plausible to suggest the hypothesis that the last 12 years' changes in Mexican foreign policy have begun to ease the tension between diversification and integration that for so long characterized a both active and defensive foreign policy.

Whether that hypothesis is confirmed or not, special attention must be paid to the fact that—as I already mentioned—the attempts to diversify the country's relations have not yet reduced our excessive economic dependence on the United States. Also, we cannot disregard the fact that closer ties to our northern neighbor have not served to settle conflicts on bilateral issues such as trade, drug trafficking and migration. In any case, we must forge closer political, cultural, economic and financial ties with Canada in the framework of NAFTA, which might well even favor a relative diversification within the framework of regional integration itself. ■■■

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 1995-2000*. The National Development Plan is the Mexican government's plan of action that sets forth the main thrust of its policies.

<sup>2</sup> For the same period, Mexico's foreign trade came to U.S.\$219.77 billion, of which U.S.\$182.11 billion and U.S.\$4.66 billion was with the United States and Canada, respectively. Trade with the European Union totalled U.S.\$12.99 billion. (<http://www.secofi-snci.gob.mx>)

<sup>3</sup> Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle. Dynamics of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 319.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 325-346.



# The Place of the Church In Mexico's New Democracy

Oscar Aguilar Ascencio\*



Blair Clark

Spanish colonial saints from the Museum of International Folk Art Collections, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Vicente Fox himself may not have imagined the political impact two photographs taken during his campaign and published on the front page of the influential daily *Reforma* would have. In one, shot a few days before formally beginning the campaign, he is waving the standard of Our Lady of Guadalupe in a gesture reminiscent of Father Miguel Hidalgo, who

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\* Political consultant.

launched the struggle for Mexico's independence. Fox was the first presidential candidate to openly use the country's best known religious symbol to publicly reaffirm his faith. And, even though the electoral authorities fined him for breaking the law, Fox made it very clear that he would not be intimidated by political reaction to this kind of rash move.

In the other photograph, taken after his election, Fox is receiving commu-

nion at Sunday mass at his ranch in Guanajuato. Previously, no political figure of the party in power, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), had been photographed at any religious service or activity. Without uttering a word, Fox broke that seven-decade-long anticlerical tradition as eloquently as he possibly could.

Liberal fears among academics, intellectuals and Jacobins are rising. Does Fox's victory mean the Catholic

Church will have the political opportunity to recover its privileges and have an ally in government so it can impose its moral agenda? After all, the president is a fervent Catholic and his party, the National Action Party, is known for its strict social conservatism.

Concern on the part of liberal and anticlerical groups makes perfect sense in the light of the tumultuous history of relations between church and state in Mexico. In contrast to the United

Liberal fears among academics, intellectuals and Jacobins are rising: the president is a fervent catholic and the PAN is known for its social conservatism.

States, where the separation of the two was a constituent part of the new nation's founding, in Mexico, that separation came out of a nineteenth-century civil war, the War of the Reform, in which the victorious liberals stripped the church of its privileges and economic and political power. Before that, the church controlled education, hospitals, cemeteries and the registration of births through baptismal documents (which to this day still serve as proof of birth date for Mexican migrants in the United States) and possessed large expanses of land that turned it into the government's main creditor. In fact, the church was a state within the state.

For the liberal elite, it was clear that any attempt to build a modern state would have to contend with the opposition of the clergy, which also exercised absolute control over a populace that was in its majority, rural, illiterate and Catholic.

The liberal victory and the resultant separation of church and state did not eliminate the power or the influence that the church had in politics. Porfirio Díaz, a liberal but pragmatic general



Norberto Rivera Carrera, archbishop of Mexico.

who governed from 1864 to 1910 (with a brief, four-year break) understood that perfectly well. He had to seek the support of the church to pacify a nation that found in a dictatorship the means to achieve the political stability that would make Mexico's first wave of industrialization possible.

The Catholic Church's marriage to Díaz led it to make political errors that would take decades to overcome. It underestimated the strength of the political elite who made the Mexican Revolution and finally toppled Díaz from power. Through the National Catholic Party, it harshly questioned Francisco I. Madero, Mexico's first demo-

cratically elected president in the twentieth century. Worse still, it supported the coup d'état against Madero in 1913, a coup which would give rise to a truly bloody phase of the revolution in which 1.5 million Mexicans would die, 10 percent of the total population.

It is not surprising that, once in power, the revolutionaries saw the Catholic Church as their worst enemy and that when writing the new Constitution in 1917, they decided to go further than the liberals of 1857: they eliminated the church's legal standing, prohibited the clergy from criticizing the laws and from wearing clerical garb in the street or saying mass outside the churches. From 1926 to 1929, Mexico experienced an insurrection against President Plutarco Elías Calles' religious policy, which, among other things, compelled all priests in the country to register with the state, designated a specific number of priests per number of inhabitants and forced bishops and priests to close many churches. A civil war, known as the Cristero War, originated in Western Mexico. Many historians estimate that the death toll was 200,000, four times more than the number of U.S. soldiers killed in Vietnam. Finally, the need to stabilize the country forced the revolutionary generals to strike a political pact with the church. They arrived at a *modus vivendi* in which the state would not apply the anticlerical constitutional articles and laws, while the church would not question the new regime that had emanated from the revolution, nor would it involve itself in political activities. This arrangement, forged in 1929, would last more than five decades until then-President Carlos Salinas pushed through constitutional amendments to reestablish the church's legal standing, although he maintained important lim-

itations, such as not allowing it to own any mass media or take a public position against existing legislation.

This quick overview of the past is repeated daily in the debate about church-state relations and when liberals and anticlerics express their fears about Fox's affinity with the Catholic Church. The fears are well founded, but perhaps exaggerated. Mexico is no longer the rural country it was in the 1920s, nor are illiteracy levels what they were in the past. The advance of new religious groups is a fact and in some southern states like Chiapas and Tabasco, the population is divided among Catholics and a myriad of other religions. The Ministry of the Interior's Office of Religious Associations has registered more than 5,000 religious groups nationwide. Nevertheless, the fears are grounded given Fox's social conservatism: he is an opponent of abortion and critical of homosexuality. But above all, they are grounded in the policies his party has enforced at a local level: local PAN officials have caused scandals by censoring photographic and painting exhibits; in 1995 in Guadalajara, they forbid female public employees from wearing miniskirts; in Mérida, the city government has banned films and paintings showing nudity; in Monterrey, they prohibited table dance; and in another city, a bust of Benito Juárez—the main icon of Mexican liberalism, the man who decreed the separation of church and state—was taken out of the town's main plaza and replaced by a statue of the Archangel Gabriel, unveiled by the state governor, also a PAN member.

Two other episodes in which the PAN confirmed its complicity with the Catholic Church had an even greater impact and received broader coverage in the

Mexican media. In the first case, state officials in Baja California prevented a young girl, impregnated by her rapist, from aborting, even though she had both the legal right and court's authorization to do so. In the second case, the legislature of Guanajuato, Fox's home state, approved a law a few weeks after the presidential election prohibiting abortion across the board, including cases of incest, rape or congenital deformation. Reaction was so strong nationwide that



Samuel Ruiz García, former bishop of Chiapas.

Guanajuato's governor, also a PAN member, had to veto the law after being coaxed by Fox himself and members of his team exercising damage control. The incident showed that Fox, together with the moderate wing of the PAN, almost undistinguishable from the outside because of the clerical veil that covers the whole party, are aware that a modern PAN must be tolerant and distance itself from scandals rooted in matters which are not relevant to the country's political and economic agenda: the fight against poverty and inequality, the consolidation of a political reform and the modernization of the economy.

What the Jacobins and the liberals do not understand is that the country's political opening, reflected in greater freedom of expression and demonstration, has also been taken advantage of by the Catholic Church and groups close to it like the Pro-Life organization, nationally recognized for its fight against abortion, to exert pressure on the authorities. The new political situation has opened up the way for the church to continue taking advantage

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of the spotlight the media usually shines on it to express its position or to publicize its pastoral letters.

But for those who are anticlerical, accustomed for decades to a church silent on political matters and which only recovered its voice little by little as the ancien régime collapsed, the church's political activism is not read as an inevitable part of the freedom that democracy brings. A more objective vision of the role of the Catholic Church in the new political situation should take into account at least three key points: first, the power and influence the church actually has and is perceived to have; second, its agenda and inter-

ests as an institution; and, finally, its place in the new political and social pluralism of a more modern Mexico.

#### JUST HOW BROAD IS THE CHURCH'S INFLUENCE?

A paternalistic view of the population is all-pervasive in Mexico. The reason the 1917 Constituent Assembly restricted the Catholic Church's political activities was its belief that the priests could manipulate and organize the populace against the new state born of the revolution. The framers of the Constitution thought that limiting the church but not individuals' exercise of religious belief would make it possible to defend the state from possible political attacks. That is, from the very beginning the political elite assumed that religious influence over the population was equivalent to an ability to politically influence its behavior. Although even today in rural areas the priest is the community's natural leader, and in some cases that influence is used, in effect, to political ends, this impression of the church's power to manipulate grew in recent years after the incredible mobilizations during the Pope's visits to Mexico or given the important role in the conflict in Chiapas of the former bishop of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Samuel Ruiz, seen by a local and federal political elite as the person responsible for the existence of the guerrilla movement in the state.

Nevertheless, one thing is the exceptional response during the Pope's visit, the outpouring on city streets, the response of a popular Catholicism or the tradition of pilgrimages to different sanctuaries throughout the country. Something quite different is the degree to

which the church is able to influence politically, and observers often forget that there is no automatic correlation between the two. In fact, the bishops themselves recognize the great pastoral challenge what they call the divorce between faith and life is, the separation between believing and behaving according to certain values. The advance of non-Catholic denominations in the country, the prevalence of so-called

The new political situation has opened up the way for the church to continue taking advantage of the media to express its position.

“anti-values” on television, in films and in other media even makes one doubt the effectiveness of the church's 500 years of evangelizing.

On the political level, the perception of the church's power was linked to its ability to question the electoral frauds of a regime that had neither credibility, nor an effective way of assuaging that criticism given political parties' and nongovernmental organizations' efforts to defend the vote, plus the criticisms of national and foreign press. The media played an important part in this perception when it disseminated the criticisms of certain bishops which the government had no way to

counter. On one occasion, after Sunday mass outside the cathedral, a reporter asked the former cardinal and archbishop of Mexico, Ernesto Corripio, what it felt like to have so much power. Corripio replied, “I have no more power than you journalists give me.” And he was right.

The political activism of Bishop Samuel Ruiz —today honorary bishop in retirement— in Chiapas also contributed to increasing the image of a politicized church, although that does not take into account the fact that the country has 110 bishops in 58 dioceses and 14 archdioceses, of whom no more than eight regularly make statements to the national press. It also does not take into account the fact that Mexico, the country with the second largest Catholic population in the world, has fewer priests (around 12,000 for a population of about 75 million Catholics), fewer bishops and even fewer cardinals (three) than the United States (which has nine).

There are even some rather surrealistic situations that favor the political perception of a powerful church, ignoring its weaknesses: in the last five years, the Mexican government has awarded two papal nuncios (Gerónimo Prigione and Justo Mullor) the highest decoration that can be given to a foreigner; PRI members and politicians in general condemn the Catholic Church's “participation” in politics, but presidential candidates —as well as candidates for governors' seats and other elected posts— meet with bishops and priests; federal officials attend sessions of the Bishops Conference to explain specific issues of economic policy or the current status of reforms on the national agenda; in 1999 President Zedillo was the guest of honor at the inau-

guration of the cathedral in Ecatepec, a municipality in the Mexico City metropolitan area with more than a million inhabitants, an event the likes of which had not occurred in Mexico for a century. In the last elections, the left presidential candidate, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) proposed broadening out the clergy's political rights, among them the right to run for public office; but the PRD general secretary in Mexico City —of which Cárdenas had been mayor— asked the Minister of the Interior to admonish Mexico's cardinal archbishop for criticizing the PRD's support of a bill to decriminalize abortion.

Now that Mexican democracy has passed the test of alternating in office, the church's political strength cannot be measured against an administration with which it shares fundamental tenets of social conservatism. Today, the true political strength of the Catholic Church will be measured by its ability to impose its moral agenda on an increasingly diverse, plural society and to successfully lobby for its institutional agenda.

#### THE CHURCH'S AGENDA

The road ahead looks rocky. The church is against abortion; it supports religious education in public schools; it wants the right to acquire its own media, although many bishops would prefer that the market be closed so as not to have to compete with other religions better prepared to use the media. All this would imply that it should become stronger vis-à-vis not only an administration that it is ideologically akin to, but also a more mod-

ern, diverse society, particularly in the large urban areas.

Nevertheless, the Fox administration does not have a majority in Congress (the PAN has 206 out of 500 deputies and 46 out of 128 senators); 19 out of 32 states are governed by the PRI; and society is increasingly plural and diverse, making the imposition of a conservative agenda not at all easy or automatic. Neither the PRI nor the PRD would

Anti-clericalists, accustomed to a church silent on political matters, do not see its political activism as an inevitable part of the freedom of a democracy.

support an agenda that gave more freedom to the Catholic Church, and around issues like abortion, things are even more polarized. Religious education in public schools is a very delicate question and would have to overcome, among other obstacles, the opposition of a more-than-one-million-strong teachers union with a solid anticlerical tradition. Allowing the Catholic Church to own communications media will open up the market to all the different religious organizations, some of them better equipped than the Catholics for acquiring a broad audience through them.

With democracy, the Catholic Church is discovering that to effec-

tively implement its agenda, it will have to take on a public role that has often made it uncomfortable because of the criticism that its activism will inevitably draw. But it will have to assume that role because it will not be enough to politically agree with an administration if the latter does not have the clout to reform the legal framework that still restricts the church's field of action.

#### WHAT IS THE CHURCH'S PLACE IN A DEMOCRACY?

Enrique Tarancón, cardinal archbishop of Madrid, said that the Spanish church's most important challenge after Franco was to find its proper place in a democracy. In Mexico, liberals will have to accept and recognize the rights of an institution like the Catholic Church. Bishops and priests will increasingly have to recognize more values like tolerance, pluralism and diversity and will have to subject their ideas to debate with others who, even though they disagree with the clergy's positions, must be capable of establishing a dialogue that will strengthen what has taken so long to build in Mexico: a democracy that goes beyond elections.

To the extent that the criticisms of the Catholic Church's political participation give way to criticisms of its positions, and to the extent that the church itself accepts a debate about what until now it has considered unquestionable with those who oppose its agenda, democracy will find a place for an institution with an undeniable and inevitable social and political presence, but will also contribute to preserving the essential pluralism of a new regimen that will take time to consolidate. ■■■



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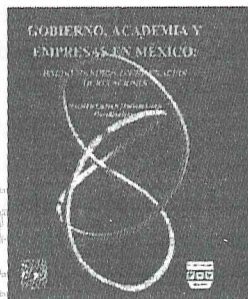
Valencia, Tita  
Coordinación de Difusión Cultural  
Dirección de Literatura  
Textos de Difusión Cultural  
Serie Diagonal  
2000, 95 págs.

"Para la privilegiada mayoría, ser mexicano y ser guadalupano es uno y lo mismo: esencia y presencia. Somos el multitudinario devenir de una aparición. Aparición muy anterior a los signos del Tepeyac... Forma singular, que desde la perspectiva del siglo XX... abarca la pluralidad de todo lo que hemos sido: somos y seremos. La Guadalupeana es el pueblo mismo [Siendo una, es en el fondo, toda 'guadalupe' mexicana; de ahí sus múltiples coros y alabanzas]. En *Esencia y presencia guadalupanas*, Tita Valencia recopila un aspecto indiscriminado de fervores," recomponiendo un complejo mosaico con diversos tiempos y espacios históricos que empujan con la imagen elaborada en plumas de colibrí, balbuceo indígena de lo sagrado, cuyas voces anteceden, anuncian, profetizan y, finalmente, proclaman el milagro guadalupano.

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## GOBIERNO, ACADEMIA Y EMPRESAS EN MÉXICO: HACIA UNA NUEVA CONFIGURACIÓN DE RELACIONES

Casas, Rosalba y Luna, Matilde  
Coordinación  
Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales  
2ª edición: 1999  
348 págs.



El tema de las relaciones entre los sectores académicos, productivos y gubernamentales es, actualmente, uno de los ejes centrales de la discusión sobre las políticas de desarrollo en el contexto de la globalización, donde se considera que la educación y las capacidades científicas constituyen el principal recurso competitivo de las economías nacionales. Este libro contiene una descripción y un análisis de las formas en que han evolucionado la visión y las estrategias de vinculación de la academia, las empresas y el gobierno, así como de los mecanismos generados con el fin de promover e intensificar sus acciones de colaboración. La información se presenta en cuatro partes: —La vinculación en el contexto internacional. —Actores centrales de la vinculación en México. —La vinculación en las instituciones de educación superior. —Experiencias de vinculación para el desarrollo tecnológico y la formación de recursos humanos.



## REYES, TUMBAS Y PALACIOS. LA HISTORIA DINÁSTICA DE UJAXACTUN

Valdés, Juan Antonio, Fashen, Federico y Escobedo, Héctor L.  
Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas  
Centro de Estudios Mayas  
Instituto de Antropología e Historia de Guatemala  
Colección Cuadernos 25  
1999, 123 págs.

"El trabajo interdisciplinario que se está llevando a cabo en varios sitios mayas ha permitido empezar a hablar, con más bases objetivas, acerca de la evolución social, política y religiosa de sus diversas ciudades y de las relaciones entre ellas." Los tres investigadores guatemaltecos registran información del material recuperado, y al conjuntarla con la que proporciona la nueva epigrafía, empiezan a reescribir la historia dinástica expresada en los conjuntos arquitectónicos y monumentos del sitio, *Ujaxactun*, de *uaxac*, "ocho", *tun*, "pie-dra, año" y a los nombres de los gobernantes anexas sus hechos y descubren cuál fue el lugar de su reposo.

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## IDENTIDADES ÉTNICAS Y CONFLICTO AGRARIO EN EL NORTE DE CHIAPAS, 1914-1940. CHOL'OL /KAXLAN

Alejos García, José  
Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas  
Centro de Estudios Mayas  
1999, 340 págs.

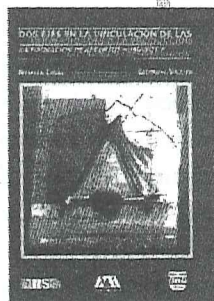
"*Kaxlan* es una palabra del idioma ch'ol que nombra al otro, al 'castellano', al forastero, a todo lo originado en Occidente. Los ch'oles llaman *Kaxlan* a una diversidad de gente asociada a ese mundo extraño y dominante, con quienes ellos han interactuado desde la primera invasión hasta el presente. *Kaxlan* es todo ser distinto al ser indígena, al *winik*, a la gente originaria del lugar. *Kaxlan* es el extranjero, el poderoso, aquel que por sus costumbres, artes y ciencias ha dominado al *winik*, al ch'ol. Este libro trata acerca de un momento de esa difícil relación entre ch'oles y kaxlanes ocurrido en las montañas del norte de Chiapas en la primera mitad del siglo XX. Es una historia de guerra, de lucha por la tierra, de incompreensión entre el *winik* y el *kaxlan*, en el marco de la Revolución mexicana en Chiapas."



## DOS EJES EN LA VINCULACIÓN DE LAS UNIVERSIDADES A LA PRODUCCIÓN. LA FORMACIÓN DE RECURSOS HUMANOS Y LAS CAPACIDADES DE INVESTIGACIÓN

Casas, Rosalba y Valenti, Giovanna  
Coordinación  
Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales  
Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana  
Plaza y Valdés Editores  
2000, 272 págs.

Se subraya el papel básico que realizan las "instituciones de educación superior y los centros de investigación como formadores de recursos humanos en ciencia y tecnología," creadores de conocimientos útiles para los retos que enfrentan las empresas en un contexto dinámico de competitividad. Mediante el estudio de casos se discute la contribución que al respecto puede hacer ese tipo de instituciones a los procesos de innovación en los ámbitos productivos. Se hace referencia a las características y problemas de las relaciones entre las universidades y el mundo de la producción en varios países.



## CIEN MIL LLAMADAS POR EL OJO DE UNA AGUJA: UN ANÁLISIS ANTROPOLÓGICO DE LA APERTURA DE LAS TELECOMUNICACIONES EN MÉXICO

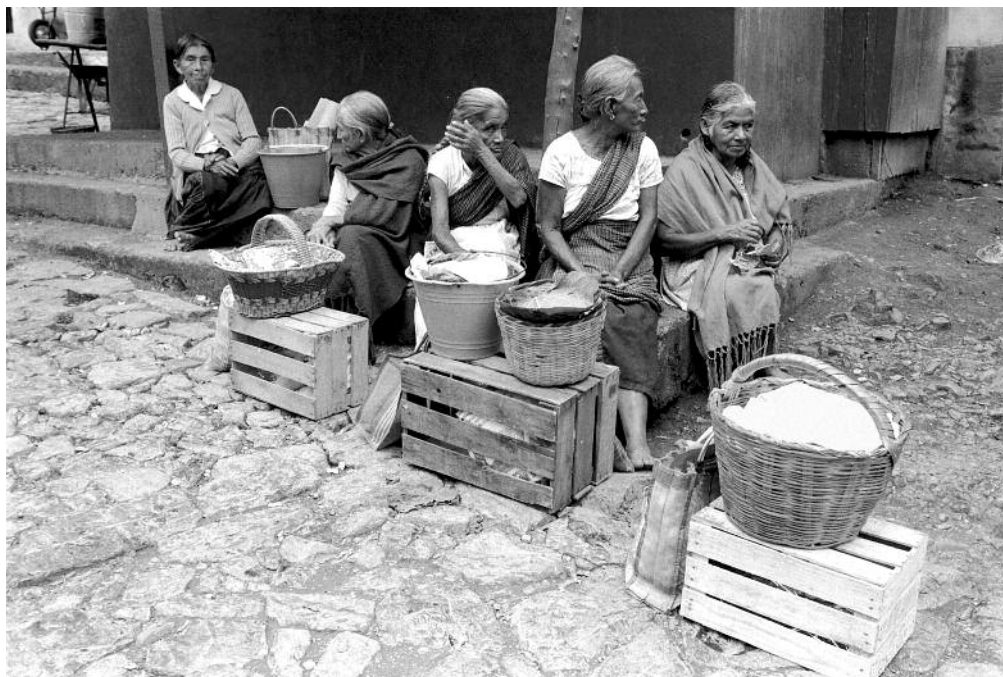
Santos Corral, María Josefa  
Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales  
Colección Cuadernos de Investigación 27  
2000, 212 págs.

Desde sus inicios, los servicios y la industria de las telecomunicaciones presentan dos aspectos aparentemente contradictorios que sólo se explican en función de su naturaleza: por un lado, tienden a ser homogéneos y globales y por el otro, tienden a cambiar rápidamente. Estas dos características determinan que las telecomunicaciones se constituyan en un sector dinámico en el que se incrementan actividades de investigación y desarrollo tecnológico así como nuevas formas de organización. El propósito de este libro es analizar los cambios técnicos y los mecanismos de operación que siguieron las principales empresas de telecomunicaciones para encontrar un lugar en el escenario de la apertura de los servicios de larga distancia. Como estudio de caso se selecciona a Teléfonos de México (Telmex).



# Women and Full Employment<sup>1</sup>

Alejandra Arroyo<sup>h</sup> Eugenia Correa<sup>§</sup>  
Alicia Girón<sup>k</sup> Patricia Pérez Licona<sup>e</sup>



Angeles Torreón / Imagenlatina

Peasant women from Pahuatlán, Puebla.

## INTRODUCTION

In a free and democratic society, it is every woman's right to have a decent, paying job. In this article we propose a full employment program to offer unlimited jobs to Mexican women with little or no schooling. Our aim is to create awareness about the possibility of in-

creasing social well-being. From our perspective, the work ethic must be recovered and used as the legitimate basis for increasing well-being and involving individuals in society mainly through business and wage relations.

Since most women in Mexico have low levels of schooling, unstable informal jobs and low incomes, the Full Employment Program for Women will make it possible to:

- a) create an occupational and wage floor that will slow the growth of poverty;
- b) increase and maintain the level of aggregate demand, with a multiplying effect in the economy and public finances;

- c) produce goods and services needed to increase social well-being;
- d) foster the culture of waged work as a substantive basis for increasing social productivity;
- e) combat gender inequality;
- f) curb illegal migration;
- g) incorporate families, from women's perspective, into the work ethic and education.

Recently, different countries have set themselves the task of reclaiming human values. It is well known that these values are learned in the family and that women's role as mothers — and as teachers in schools — has been to instill and preserve them, making it

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All authors are members of the International Association for Feminist Economists.

possible to maintain and strengthen the democratic institutional framework all societies aspire to.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to reproducing social values, women's biology makes them the reproducers of labor power. Women's employment and the hours they spend outside the home are very important not only because they take up time that they could dedicate to the family, but also because they make them an active presence in society and in the home. For that reason, their employment should be designed so as to allow them to shoulder twenty-first century family responsibilities without neglecting the reinforcement of human values.

In the last few years, public awareness of the challenge that poverty and inequality represent has increased throughout the world.<sup>3</sup> However, different assistance programs have not been able to stop their spread. The World Bank proposes that the reduction of poverty must be achieved today by "economic growth based on the productive utilization of the most abundant resource among the poor: their labor power."<sup>4</sup>

However, in our society, women's working outside the home has not in and of itself been a factor for a profound

change in their sociocultural position, particularly because their jobs have been badly paid, or not paid at all, and linked to traditional productive structures. Paid work that encourages training will put women into direct contact with values that will make them "agents for change," which will be the basis transforming their condition.

#### WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN MEXICO

According to the most recent employment statistics available (1998), in Mexico there are 49 million females, 16 million of whom are under 15 years of age and 2.6 million over 65. The rest, approximately 30.2 million women are between the ages of 15 and 64.<sup>5</sup>

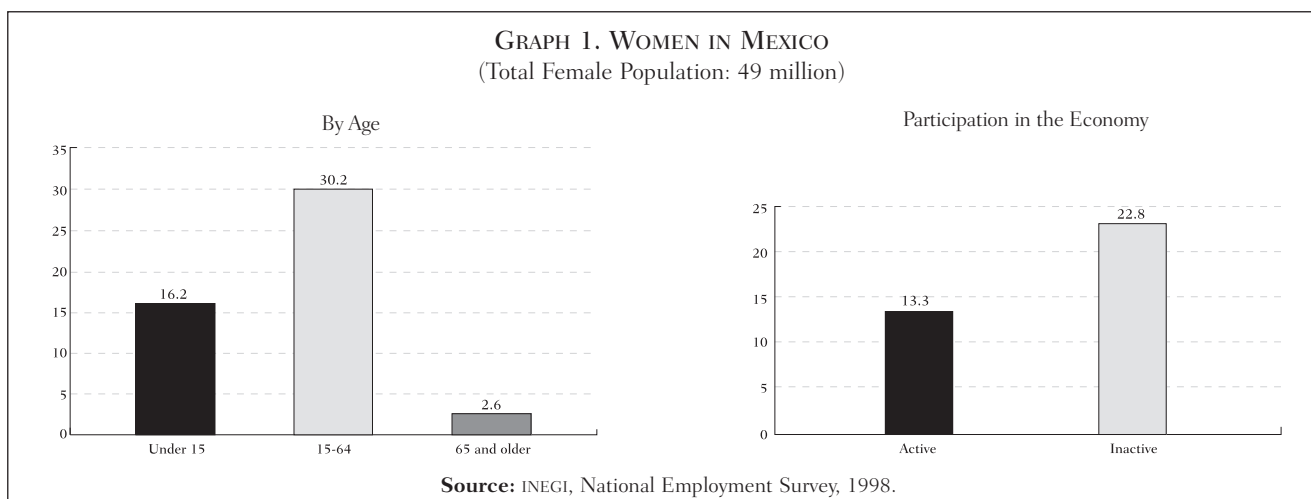
The female work force, which includes women and girls 12 years and older, is 13.3 million strong. Of this number, 12.9 million are employed and 400,000 are openly unemployed. By age, the female work force includes 388,000 girls between the ages of 12 and 14, 402,000 women over 65 and 12.5 million between the ages of 15 and 64. Given that the male work force is 26.2 million strong, we can see

that out of every three Mexicans employed one is a woman and two are men. What is called the economically non-active population (that is, those who are not employed nor have recently sought employment) includes about 22.8 million women. Of this group, 2.9 million are between the ages of 12 and 14, 2.2 million are over 65 and more than 17.5 million are between the ages of 15 and 64.

Of the 13.3 million women in the work force, 8.7 million have less than a secondary school education, and 6.9 million live in urban areas, while of the 22.8 million women who are economically inactive, 18.5 million have a less than secondary school education and 10.4 million live in urban areas.

By sector, the female work force is divided as follows: 1.7 million are professionals, technicians or teachers; 1.7 million are clerical workers; 2.6 million are sales personnel; 1.6 million are domestic workers; 1.1 million work in agriculture; 2.4 million are artisans or factory workers; and 1 million earn their living in the service sector.

Analyzed according to the job categories they occupy, only 237,000 women are employers; 2.8 million are self-





employed, mainly in commerce and services; 7.6 million are wage earners (only 1.7 million in industry and the rest, more than 6 million, mainly in commerce and services); 600,000 are piece workers in industry and commerce; and 2.1 million work with no pay at all. Of the entire female work force, 5 million have no fixed physical work place and 3.2 million work out of their homes.

In terms of income, 7 million women earn less than twice the minimum wage (3.3 million earn minimum wage or less and 3.7 million earn between minimum wage and double that). In contrast, only 111,000 women earn more than 10 times the minimum wage. Of the 2.1 million women who earn nothing at all for their work, almost one million work in agriculture and the rest mainly in commerce. Six million receive no fixed wage. Of the 7.8 million women who are wage earners, 3.2 million have only a verbal contract: about 500,000 in industry, 500,000 in commerce and 1.5 million in services. In addition, 7.7 million women workers receive no benefits at all.

For 9 million women, the work week is 48 hours long or more. It is interesting to note that approximately 800,000

women employed in the maquila industry create even more wealth than oil exports. Lastly, there are hardly any indicators to characterize the situation of the 22.8 million women considered economically inactive: the most that can be said is that 5.2 million of them are students and 15 million are housewives and carry out other kinds of activities.

We could conclude that the vast majority of these women are mothers of three or more children who get unskilled jobs with no stability, no contract, no benefits and 48-hour-a-week schedules or longer. In addition, in general, poor working women are not included in the statistics and appear as part of the inactive population doing housework even though part of what they do and the procurement of non-monetary goods and services represent a proportion of the family income, a portion which is more important the lower the family's income level.

#### A JOB WITH HEALTH AND RETIREMENT BENEFITS

The full employment for women program we are proposing would make an

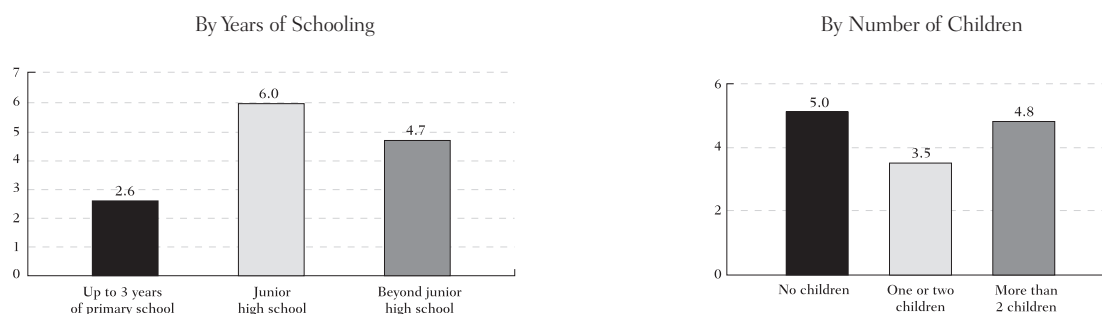
unlimited number of minimum-wage, full health and retirement benefit, six-hour-a-day jobs available to Mexican women. As we already mentioned, the program would target mainly women with little or no schooling and job training and, therefore, would have to include conditions to increase their educational and training levels.

We think that when operating at full capacity a program like this could offer jobs to about 8 million women, including those who are already employed and earning either nothing at all or under minimum wage. The program would exert an anti-cyclical influence in the economy: the demand for jobs increases precisely when supply drops in all sectors of the economy. Its anti-cyclical function would consist of attenuating the economic slump and offering the most vulnerable, impoverished sectors of the populace a minimal way of defending themselves at those times.

We propose carrying out the program in four stages.

The first stage would target towns of fewer than 100,000 inhabitants, mainly with the idea of stabilizing the conditions that have driven workers out of those towns into the cities and

GRAPH 2. WOMEN IN THE WORK FORCE



Source: INEGI, National Employment Survey, 1998.

raising living standards in locations with the highest levels of extreme poverty. At its highest point, this stage would involve 4 million women.

The second stage would include launching a pension program for women over 65 who can no longer work, to benefit about 1.5 million women.

The third stage would target cities of over 100,000 inhabitants in the regions with the highest poverty levels, covering a maximum of about 3 million women.

The fourth stage would encompass the entire country. The economic effort of a program like this one would be enormous since it would mean increasing the population covered by health care and pensions by at least 50 percent.

#### FUNDING SOURCES

Funding would be centralized while the program itself would be decentralized and run by municipal and state governments.

Paying the program's minimum wage plus health and retirement benefits would require gradually maintaining and increasing the purchasing power of these payments. This would be achieved

through legislation to guarantee women's full employment, which, in addition to specifying government commitment to the program, would include the need to increase disbursements yearly according to price hikes in basic consumer products, plus at least 1 percentage point over the real economic growth rate.<sup>6</sup>

At the peak of its functioning, this program could cost about 288 billion pesos, which comes to about 5.5 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) for the year 2000.<sup>7</sup> We estimate that this is the equivalent of 70 percent of the total amount of government income from VAT and the tax on earnings (ISR) in 1999. Therefore, we propose the program be implemented by stages, as long as the federal government is able to increase its revenues through taxation.

Although other sources of funding could be established, the main one must be the increase in tax earnings. And they can be increased with the specific aim of funding this program; this is called "earmarking taxes."

To make this possible, it is necessary to:

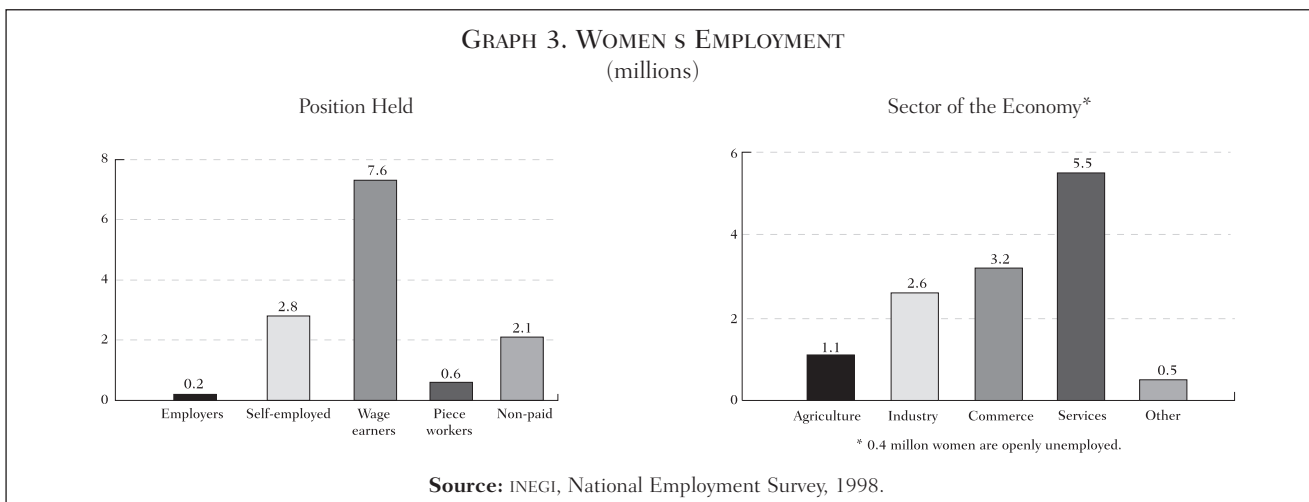
a) Increase the tax base. In 1998, the government had 6.4 million taxpay-

ers (divided into 5.9 million individuals and 500,000 companies). Obviously, it is urgent that this number be increased, something that could be done rapidly with the appropriate legal oversight mechanisms, particularly in the case of companies with high earnings.<sup>8</sup>

b) Permit a government budget deficit equivalent to 3 percent of GDP. In the year 2000, this would have been about 174 billion pesos, a level which would not have been inflationary if we consider that the European Union, for example, has an average deficit of 3 percent with much lower inflation than ours or even that of the United States.

c) Create a special tax earmarked to fund this program. We propose taxing real financial earnings of the largest depositors and holders of government titles by 0.2 percent. This tax would be the equivalent of 30 percent of the real earnings of holders of Cetes and Bondes, for example, and would make for 18 billion pesos in annual tax earnings.<sup>9</sup>

Other sources of funding could also be acquired through negotiations. For



example: a) A discount of 50 percent in the amount of real interest on the foreign debt, which would make it possible to maintain the real interest rate at over 2 percent and would generate for Mexico about 45 billion pesos at the current exchange rate. b) A tax convergence agreed upon by the U.S. and Mexican governments for taxing companies would make it possible to increase these earnings to reach at least the equivalent of 3 percent of Mexico's GDP.

In the first stage (targeting all communities of fewer than 100,000 inhabitants), the program could reach a maximum of 4 million women, with an estimated cost of 158 billion pesos in the year 2001. However, if the program only operated partially, in the first year it could require about 100 billion pesos, which represents about 28 percent of estimated tax earnings for that year, a figure that is lower than income from oil sales.

Even though the budgetary effort is enormous, the possibility of partially implementing the program by stages would make it possible to advance as tax earnings rose. At the same time, it would also make it possible to correct and improve the instruments for its implementation, and in a period no longer than four years be able to achieve complete coverage.

#### THE MINIMUM WAGE

An extremely important point is determining the initial minimum wage level for the program. If it is too low, in addition to possibly making the program ineffective, it could have a deflationary effect on the general level of wages and salaries. It could also be insufficient to satisfy some of the basic necessities that

would make it possible to slow the rhythm of growth of poverty and extreme poverty. On the other hand, a very high minimum wage to start out with could not only encounter immediate financing difficulties, but could also slow the expansion of medium-sized and small companies that operate on the basis of paying their workers minimum wage.

The Mexican economy is facing increased integration with the U.S. economy. When determining the initial minimum wage for the program, the wage and productive convergence of the two economies that should be aspired to should also be taken into consideration.

The full employment for women program we are proposing would make an unlimited number of minimum-wage, full health and retirement benefit, six-hour-a-day jobs available to Mexican women.

For example, if the starting point is the Mexican minimum wage in the year 2000, and we take the U.S. minimum wage as a constant in real terms, the wage convergence would take 54 years with a 4 percent yearly rise in Mexico's minimum wage. If the latter rose 5 percent a year, then convergence would take place in 48 years.

Our proposal is that the starting minimum wage be 76 pesos a day. In the scenario with a real annual increase of 4 percent, this would make convergence possible in 29 years.<sup>10</sup> In addition, this wage is the equivalent of almost 50 percent of the annual cost of the basic food basket for a family of five, without taking into consideration the cost of education, apparel, shoes, housing, health, leisure and culture.<sup>11</sup> Thus,

the initial wage proposed is less than the average wage in industry or the service sector, which means that wage selected for the program will not radically modify the existing structure in the short term.<sup>12</sup>

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF EMPLOYMENT AND THEIR MULTIPLYING EFFECT

Women's earnings are lower than men's even for jobs requiring the same or similar training. This can be explained by the cultural mores that cause gender discrimination.

What this program offers is non-skilled jobs for women, mainly in service to the community: the construction of roads and bridges; installation of drinking water and irrigation systems; work in public buildings, parks and gardens; pest extermination and clean-up; participation in educational and literacy programs; removal of rubble and care for the environment; participation in community orchestras; painting walls; care for the aged; assisting in public schools; collaborating in security measures for streets, airports and other public places; lending assistance in community day-care centers, etc.<sup>13</sup>

The program combines several objectives: promoting full employment, giving jobs mainly to the poorest sectors of the work force; producing public goods

and services needed to increase general living standards; and, lastly, educating and training people for employment.

On the other hand, this proposal tends to increase demand and, with it, allows for an increase in public income, contributing in this way to compensating for greater public spending incurred in financing the program itself.

In recent years, net public expenditures dropped drastically: from 36 percent of the GDP in 1981, they plummeted to 22 percent in 1999. The existing social deficit is a first restriction. Tax earnings are barely 10 percent of the GDP. The circle of lower spending-lower tax earnings has led not only to slow and unstable economic growth, but also to an increase in unemployment and underemployment. Changing this dynamic through a program like the one we are proposing would be a step forward in the construction of a society that is more democratic and more just in gender terms. A work ethic that offers the means to clarify and order certain norms like the pursuit of justice and equity would be able to prosper in a society in which gender difference were recognized, but not used to maintain inequality.<sup>14</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

This proposal seeks to gradually close the gender equality gap by building a minimum employment and income base nationwide. The program requires an interdisciplinary team and an adequate social wage to implement it; not scholarships, not coupons, not "poor cards." It is a response to the urgent need to generate jobs to fight the poverty that over the last two decades has devastated most poor, low-schooling-level

families' incomes. It would first seek to provide full employment for women and then increase education programs designed for them. It is unacceptable that at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Mexican women, shouldering most family responsibilities, have formal jobs without the corresponding formal wages, and that household continues to go unpaid and unrecognized by society. **MM**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> A prior version of this article was presented as a paper at the Seminar on Public Policies for Women organized by the Mexican Federation of University Women and the Association of University Women of Hidalgo on November 4 and 5, 1999 in Pachuca, Hidalgo, as well as at the meeting of the International Association for Feminist Economics at Bogazici University in Istanbul, Turkey, in August 2000. The authors wish to thank scholarship recipient Elizabeth Concha for her support.

<sup>2</sup> Javier Alatorre and the GIMTRAP Coordinating Committee, *Las mujeres en la pobreza* (Mexico City: Centro de Estudios Sociológicos: Grupo Interdisciplinario sobre Mujer, Trabajo y Pobreza [GIMTRAP]-El Colegio de Mexico, 1997), p. 126.

<sup>3</sup> The income gap between the fifth of the population which lives in the world's richest countries and the fifth that lives in the poorest was 30 to 1 in 1960, whereas it was 74 to 1 in 1997. According to figures from the United Nations 1999 Human Development Report, the 200 richest people in the world doubled their net worth in the last four years, increasing it by more than a trillion dollars, and the wealth of the world's three richest people is greater than the output of all the countries where the 600 million poorest people live.

<sup>4</sup> World Bank, 1990b and 1992.

<sup>5</sup> These figures are from the National Statistics Institute (INEGI) 1998 National Employment Survey.

<sup>6</sup> Between 1988 and 1999, Mexico's median annual economic growth rate was 3 percent. We should expect that with the implementation of this program, economic growth would average at 4 percent annually in coming years.

<sup>7</sup> If these wage expenditures were made immediately, it would increase wage earners' incomes to about 27 percent of the GDP, a figure much lower than the 40 percent they represented in 1976. This means that the program we are proposing is completely viable.

<sup>8</sup> According to the Finance Ministry, Mexico is one of the countries with the lowest tax burden in the West. Compared to the size of our economy, the tax burden is 15 percentage points lower than those of the other OECD countries and is lower than that of other Latin American countries like Argentina, Brazil and Chile. Government income from tax on earnings (ISR) dropped as a percentage of the GDP from 5.1 percent in 1994 to 4.5 percent in 1998. Mexico also has one of the lowest burdens of corporate earnings in the world (1.9 percent of the GDP). Mexico's VAT is applied to one of the smallest ranges of products and services, leaving whole sectors and a great many goods and services unaffected. The average effective VAT rate in Mexico is 8.9 percent. Non-tax revenues have been extremely volatile given that they include non-recurring earnings like those derived from the sale of state companies, income from the Central Bank's operations and those derived from oil extraction, subject to international oil prices. The fact that in the year 2000, tax revenues may be lower than those of 1994 forces us to think about the mechanisms that should be put in place to avoid the grave consequences of not having sufficient resources to alleviate the backlog in social spending program coverage or to invest in programs vital for growth.

<sup>9</sup> The estimates have been determined on the basis of figures contained in President Ernesto Zedillo's Fifth Address to the Nation in September 1999.

<sup>10</sup> The economic asymmetries between our two countries, which are now on a course of commercial integration, are enormous. However, the trade opening itself is rapidly leading to the transformation of both countries' relative price structures. Even so, the process of harmonization of productive, price, wage and fiscal structures will take many years.

<sup>11</sup> This approximation was developed by the UNAM School of Economics Center for Interdisciplinary Analysis.

<sup>12</sup> Data from President Ernesto Zedillo's Fifth Address to the Nation.

<sup>13</sup> The United Nations recognizes the need for moving forward in international cooperation in the next century through the participation of the nations of The world in the production of what are called "world public goods," like activities to stop pollution, cleaning up the environment and ecological recovery, actions to eradicate diseases, to advance or consolidate democracy, uphold the law and foster the rule of law.

<sup>14</sup> About this need, see Marta Lamas, comp., *El género: la construcción cultural de la diferencia sexual* (Mexico City: Miguel Angel Porrúa, 1996). The present article is supplemented with our paper on education and sustainable development. Hopefully, with both programs together, the average years of basic schooling for children will rise, making it possible to have higher employment for women and averting the need for adolescents to seek employment, repeatedly interrupting their studies. See the paper by Eugenia Correa and Patricia Pérez, "Educación y desarrollo sustentable," presented at the Women and Education Seminar organized by the Federation of University Women in November 1997.

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#### SIGLO VEINTIUNO EDITORES



#### EL *Bandolero*, EL *Pocho* y la Raza

Imágenes cinematográficas del Chicano.

de David R. MACIEL. / Prólogo de Carlos MONSIVÁIS

Esta obra proporciona una visión panorámica de las imágenes y el discurso cinematográfico referentes al pueblo mexicano en Estados Unidos plasmados en el celuloide. El libro es un estudio pionero que realiza una innovadora comparación acerca de la manera en que esta comunidad ha sido representada por Hollywood, por el cine mexicano y por el mismo cine social chicano. Metodológicamente, el libro combina la historia cultural con la crítica cinematográfica.



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# A Single Reality? The Reasons Behind Different Perceptions of Mexico-U.S. Relations

Alejandro Becerra Gelóver\*

Historically, Mexico-United States relations have been very complex and asymmetrical in terms of power, and, today, they are markedly interdependent in a number of fields. The relationship is defined by the geographical proximity between the most powerful country in the world and a developing nation.

The complexity of the relationship is increased by the role that each plays on the international stage. Both nations perceive, value and interpret the bilateral relationship and the world that surrounds them from their own perspective. They each act on the basis of their own cultural values and beliefs and to preserve the permanent or temporary interests that they pursue through their foreign policy.

Internationalists like Carlos Rico and John Coatsworth point to the importance that the formation of perceptions has on the decision-making process in world politics, saying, "The behavior of international actors is conditioned by the cultural filters through

Ours is a bilateral relationship between a country that has the greatest aggregate of interests in the world and another that plays the leadership role of a medium-sized power.

which each receives and interprets information about the other players. Culturally conditioned images, even stereotypes, thus exert a powerful effect upon decision-making."<sup>1</sup> This explains why Mexico and the United States frequently interpret a particular event differently, as in the case of the Riverside incident in 1996.<sup>2</sup>

The formation of cultural perceptions or stereotypes in each country depends on the level of global influence that each has worldwide and a series of geographic, cultural, historic, economic and political conditions coming

together. At the same time, these characteristics are the source of the formation of each country's profile as perceived by the other. This article summarizes these elements as they apply to the specific case of Mexico-United States relations.

## AN ASYMMETRICAL RELATIONSHIP

The asymmetry of the relationship is determined by the influence and leadership role that each country plays in the world, as well as the international responsibilities each society has taken on and accumulated historically. Ours is a bilateral relationship between a country that has the world's greatest aggregate of interests, commitments and responsibilities and another that plays the leadership role of a medium-sized power, and consequently has assumed a series of regional interests, responsibilities and commitments. It is the meeting and relationship between countries with asymmetrical leadership roles and potentials.

It is worth asking ourselves how a power with global interests relates to one with regional influence and vice

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versa. The United States' commitments and responsibilities force it to concentrate and divide its attention in the areas of the world where its priority interests lie, and only then concern itself with those regions or countries where it has second-level interests, like Mexico. By contrast, historically and even today, the United States has been and will continue to be Mexico's priority in matters of foreign policy. This explains the difference in the degree of interest that each country attributes to bilateral issues since what is important to Mexico is not always important to the United States. That is why we can say that the asymmetry of the relationship conditions the formation of mutual perceptions.

#### PROGRESSIVE INTERDEPENDENCE

To paraphrase Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye,<sup>3</sup> the international order built in the 1970s has been characterized by the establishment of progressive interdependence among nations. In this sense, the notion of interdependence is understood as mutual dependence or reciprocal effects among two or more countries involving their vital interests and in which all participants are affected by the actions of the others.

In the last three decades, Mexico-U.S. relations have been expressed through a broad, growing network of governmental and nongovernmental, political, economic and social channels. On many occasions, the situation arising from this overshoots the institutional or legal framework set up to deal with it, such as in the case of migratory flows or money laundering. These kinds of links show the mutual

dependence in different areas like trade,<sup>4</sup> investment, drug trafficking, migration or the environment, with reciprocal effects for both parties. Given the trends in this relationship, we see that at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the two countries' interdependence will be even stronger and will therefore be an important source in the formation of perceptions.

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#### HISTORICAL CONDITIONING FACTORS

The national histories of Mexico and the United States would each be inexplicable without the other. Common periods of historical development of each nation have determined the way we have perceived each other, becoming perhaps the most important source of the formation of perceptions. Obviously, this process has been explained differently in each country, according to the interpretation that their governments and historians have wanted to give to a shared history.

In tune with the asymmetry and interdependence of the bilateral rela-

tionship, the historical legacy of the United States presence in the life of Mexico is much greater than the reverse. The loss of more than half of Mexico's national territory to its northern neighbor, the different U.S. invasions of Mexico, including the most recent, the 1914 invasion of Veracruz, and the constant U.S. attempts to extend its borders even further (the McLane-Ocampo Treaty) have left a deep mark in the historical consciousness of the Mexican people and created a defensive, distrustful attitude with regard to Mexico's northern neighbor and the international scene in general.

For the United States, on the other hand, Mexico has been a second-level priority in its global perspective. As Rico and Coatsworth say, "The United States is much more a real and concrete part of Mexican reality and political discourse than vice versa. In fact, the United States constitutes a crucial variable in the definition of Mexico's modern political culture....The United States holds a central place in the history of Mexico; Mexico's place in U.S. history is quite limited."<sup>5</sup>

#### GEOGRAPHICAL PROXIMITY

If Mexico and the United States did not border on one another, would their histories have intertwined? Would the bilateral relationship be so special, complex, interdependent and often tense? Would the migratory problem between them be so acute? Undoubtedly, their sharing a common border, which goes back to the frontiers established by Spain in the eighteenth century, has been a determining factor and has conditioned their relationship right up until today. This geographic proxim-



ity has spurred events that still have an impact on daily relations between neighbors. U.S. territorial expansionism at the cost of its southern neighbor, the uninterrupted migration of Mexicans north, the controversial definition of boundaries, the inclusion of Mexico in the area of U.S. strategic security or the creation of a trilateral market together with Canada would hardly have happened if the individual histories of these two countries had not coincided or had as a backdrop the geographical proximity.

#### CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Mexico and the United States are heir to totally different cultural traditions expressed in marked distinctions between their economic systems, political ideas, social organization, ways of thinking, day-to-day attitudes, philosophy of life and systems of values and beliefs. They perceive each other, then, and therefore their bilateral relations, very differently.

Certain traits mark the cultural contrast between the two. In Mexico, the values of the Catholic religion, mestizo ancestry, the pre-Hispanic past, the public figure of caudillos or strongmen and the formation of a national consciousness that has had its historic relations with the United States as a catalyst are all held in high regard. In contrast, Americans generally place value on Protestant values and decentralized organization; they take pride in being part of a majority white population with Anglo Saxon origins and a history of successes that has made them a leading power in the world today and given them an optimistic view of the future. They have

formed a national identity molded by only the remote possibility of foreign intervention by European powers; Mexico has never really represented a threat to their sovereignty. These factors have been cultural filters through which both countries see the world.

As Rico and Coatsworth point out, while it is true that perceptions do not totally determine government

When conflicting perceptions are not accompanied by a culture of tolerance, they can become prejudices or misconceptions that can have an influence on bilateral relations.

decisions, they do influence them.<sup>6</sup> This argument makes sense in that cultural stereotypes of other countries are believed by large parts of society, and the leaders of these nations take their voters' opinions into account, as is the case with Mexico and the United States. Also, when perceptions are not bolstered by information and accompanied by a culture of tolerance that can clarify them, they can become prejudices or simply misconceptions that can have an influence on bilateral relations.

In that sense, it is worth remembering the observation of Mexican diplomat Matías Romero, twice ambassador

to the United States in the nineteenth century, who said, "My experience has taught me...that on both sides there are prejudices born of the lack of sufficient knowledge of the other, but that could be eliminated to reach greater understanding." This comment could well describe current relations between Mexico and the United States, at the beginning of the new millennium. ■■

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> John H. Coatsworth and Carlos Rico, "Images of Mexico in the United States," *Dimensions of United States-Mexican Relations* vol. 1 (San Diego: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, 1989), p. 61.

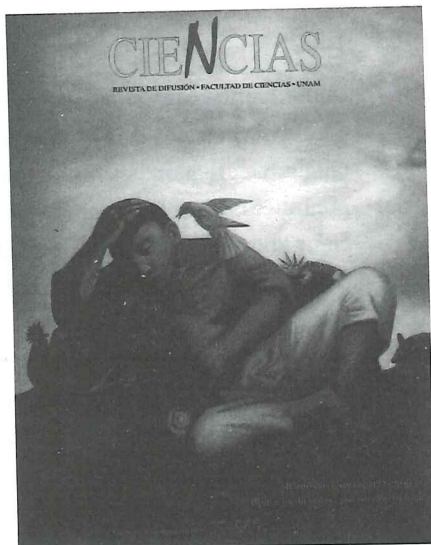
<sup>2</sup> This refers to the U.S. Border Patrol's extremely violent treatment of two undocumented Mexican migrants in Riverside County, California, April 1, 1996. The incident was widely covered in the media because it was filmed by television cameras. The interpretation of the incident on the two sides of the border was totally different and, in some cases, diametrically opposed.

<sup>3</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence. World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1977), Chapter 1.

<sup>4</sup> Just to give one example, the border between our two countries is recognized as having the world's greatest amount of border traffic, with approximately one million crossings daily and a great many important economic activities.

<sup>5</sup> John H. Coatsworth and Carlos Rico, op. cit., p. 10.

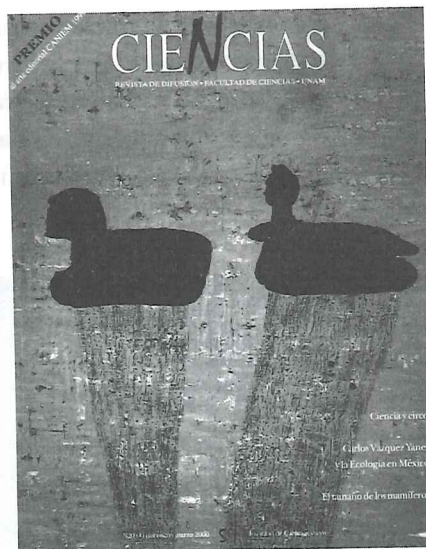
<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.



**Julio - diciembre 1999**

- Melancolía y ciencia en el Siglo de Oro
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- Trenzas
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- De volantines, espirógrafos y la flotación de los cuerpos
- Plantas, curanderos y prospección biológica
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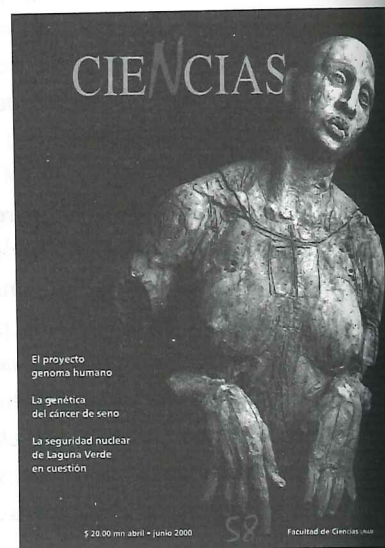
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# Fourth International Watercolor Biennial

Alfredo Guati Rojo\*

Making Mexico a world center for disseminating watercolor painting and presenting an overview of the aesthetic concerns of watercolorists from different countries of the world was the aim of the Fourth International Watercolor Biennial, organized by Mexico's National Watercolor Museum. Its success has shown that the museum is not alone in its efforts to renovate this genre, as for the first time it brought together a considerable number of associations of watercolorists from different parts of the world.



Roberto Angulo, Colombia, *Reflections*, 56 X 76 cm.



Jaime Tarín, Spain, *Detail Facade, Sacred Family*, 50 X 70 cm.

In Mexico, the art of watercolor painting was reborn in the second half of the twentieth century, but this has not yet been fully appreciated by either art critics or the cultural media.

The first Watercolorists Salon, convened in 1957 by the Art Institute of Mexico, was the beginning of a kind of movement which brought important changes to this genre of painting. Since

then, this salon has been held every year, bringing together artists who have parented the evolution of contemporary watercolor painting.

The founding of the National Watercolor Museum was also a special event. The first of its kind in the world, it has set itself the tasks of recovering the country's artistic patrimony in this field with works from both the past and the present and creating a space for the watercolorists of the world.

The museum's main commitment since its founding has been to continue to hold the year-

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\* Director of the National Watercolor Museum.

Photos reproduced courtesy of The National Watercolor Museum.



Victor Tarenko, Russia, *Sleeping Under the Moonlight*, 49 X 69 cm.

ly salon, including prizes and incentives for participants.<sup>1</sup>

The first international watercolor exhibition was part of the Cultural Olympics organized at the same time the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games were held, with 50 works from New York's American Watercolor Society (AWS), an exhibition which attracted many visitors. In return, the museum was invited to take the work of Mexican painters to the AWS's annual exhibition in 1970. Another Mexico-U.S. show was held in New York in 1980 and Washing-

ton's Smithsonian Institute sponsored a two-year tour of the show's Mexican paintings in several U.S. cities.

In the interest of establishing relations with groups of watercolor painters in other countries, the museum has hosted exhibitions of paintings from Spain, Italy, Canada, Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Japan, Australia, Russia, Finland, New Zealand, Sweden, Germany, Denmark and Iceland. It has organized four international bienials since 1994. The most recent one, held in 2000, boasted the participation of painters from



Ei Nakamura, Japan, *Child of the Wind*, 75 X 56 cm.

15 countries on four continents, among them South Korea, England, Belgium and Panama.

Since its founding 33 years ago, the museum has been supported by private donations from its founders, Alfredo Guati Rojo Cárdenas and his wife Berta Pietrasanta, who have also served as its directors. This has not been an easy task and, given the lack of official subsidies or funding from other private sources, has required an enormous effort.

The museum's first venue was the Art Institute of Mexico, founded in 1954 for the teaching of visual arts. However, that building was destroyed by the earthquake that hit Mexico City in 1985. Two years later, on April 29, 1987, the museum was reopened at its present venue in Coyoacán, donated by then-President Miguel de la Madrid. The museum's international efforts have received support from the National Council for Culture and the Arts and the Foreign Relations Ministry.

In its 13 years in Coyoacán, the museum's facilities have been constantly renovated. Its approximately 4,000 square meters include both gardens and the house-museum with seven permanent exhibition rooms that cover pre-Hispanic watercolors, with examples of codices and murals; nineteenth-century precursors; contemporary watercolors; and paintings from abroad. The facilities also include an art library, offices, a conservation and restoration laboratory, a museography workshop and a storage area for watercolors not being exhibited.

The museum's collection consists of 300 modern and old works, dating from pre-Hispanic times until today, gathered by its director, a watercolorist himself, for the purpose of leaving this legacy to Mexico.

#### THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL WATERCOLOR BIENNIAL

In 2000, the museum's work culminated with the celebration of the Fourth International Watercolor Biennial and the Forty-Fifth National



Alison Musker, England, *London*, 44 X 61 cm.



Nadia Tognazzo, Italy, *The Glacier*, 72 X 50 cm.



Ana Laura Salazar, Mexico, *Transparencies into the Wind*, 51 X 76 cm.



Diomira Rodríguez V., Venezuela, *Gramp s Odds and Ends*, 56 X 76 cm.



Jaime Galdeano Moreno, Spain, *Vínuesa*, 50 X 70 cm.





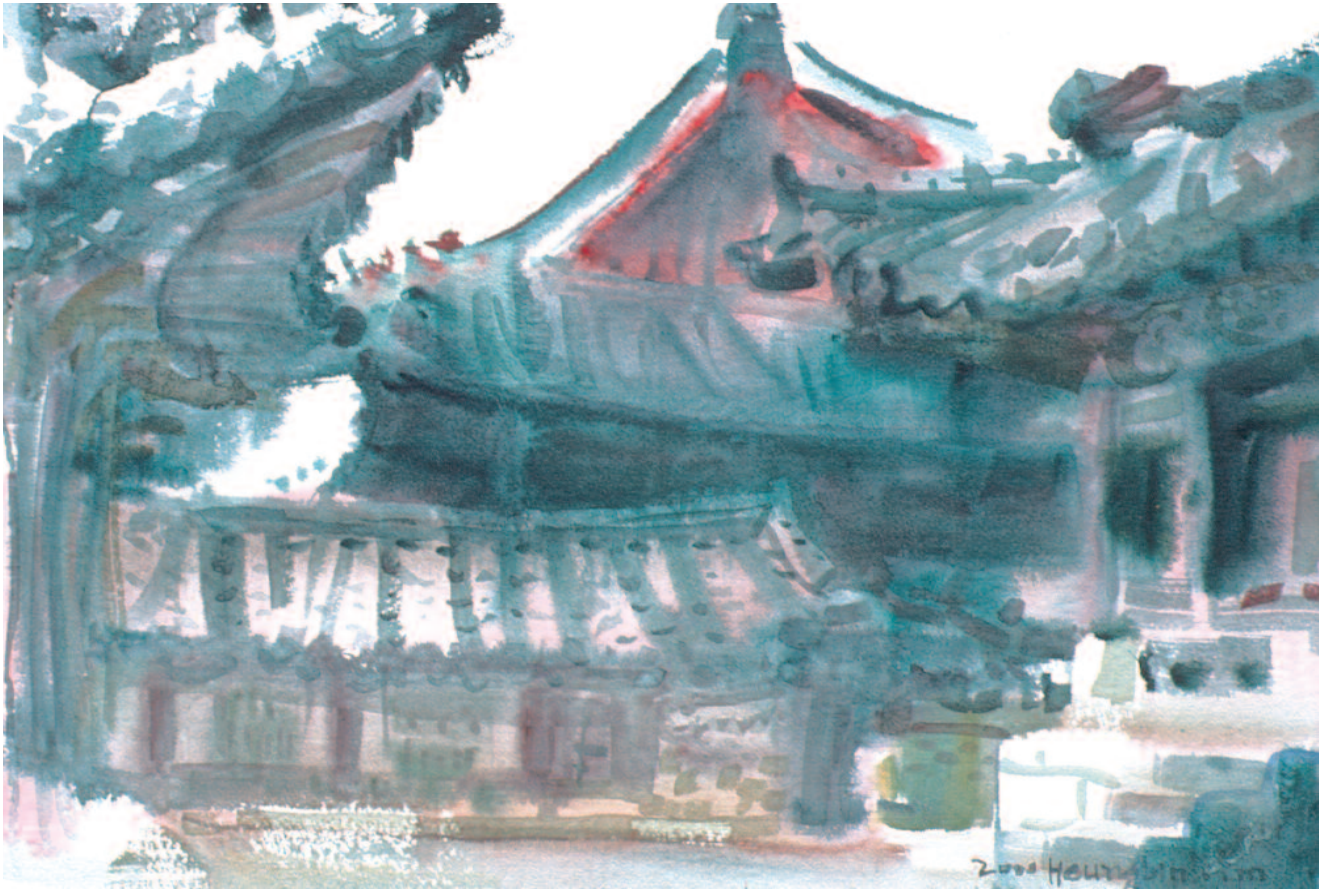
Yeqiang Wang, Canada, *Red Still-Life*, 77 X 54 cm.

Salon. Their success confirmed the validity of making Mexico a world center for disseminating watercolor painting and presenting an overview of the aesthetic concerns of watercolorists from different countries of the world.

The Fourth International Watercolor Biennial has shown that we are not alone in our efforts to renovate this genre of painting. The museum's achievement has been to bring together for the first time a considerable number of associations of watercolorists to make joint efforts in this direction.

When asked, "Why watercolors?" I always answer that our work aim to sow seeds for the future so that talent and genius can reach their potential.

A brief analysis of the 116 watercolors shown in the biennial reveals the painters' passion and interest in moving toward new forms of expressing their aesthetic message. Among the Mexican participants, the change has been total and definitive, revealing that watercolor painting in Mexico has developed greatly in the twentieth cen-



Heungbin Lim, South Korea, *Stillness in Motion*, 58 X 77 cm.

tury. Each of the eight Mexican artists who exhibited has his/her own very individual style and has abandoned both the traditionalism and themes of the nineteenth century.

The achievements can be appreciated by simply looking at the size of the works: they have gone beyond the small format characteristic of works in the past that were mainly intimate and minor paintings. Its different forms of expression reflect the renovation and different contemporary art movements that have advanced while respecting the specificities of watercolor painting. The works of Mexican watercolorists are outstanding for their quality and use of color.

Trophies were given to the 15 participant countries and to ten painters whose work deserved

special mention: Swa Claes from Belgium; Ye-qiang Wang from Canada; Roberto Angulo from Colombia; Heungbin Lim from South Korea; Jaime Tarín and Jaime Galdeano from Spain; Alison Musker from England; Nadia Tognazzo from Italy; Ei Nakamura from Japan; and Frederic Bates from Australia. **NMM**

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The museum has also held an Annual Amateur Watercolorists Contest to foster and discover new talents; a New Watercolor Salon, which aims to nurture the genre's evolution, enriching its techniques and new expressions; a Children's Watercolor Competition; and collective and individual shows by artists from all over Mexico.



Ping-Pond Table, 1998

# Gabriel Orozco The Subtle Gestures

Angélica Abelleira\*



I Wish I Could See All Insects at Once, 1998.

Inverting the use of nicknames, Martínez is a miniature greyhound, and “The Bird” is an artist named Gabriel Orozco.

Martínez is Orozco’s grey pet whose tiny size and playful spirit create a commotion on the streets of New York and Mexico City.

“The Bird” is a 38-year-old Mexican artist, born —to be more exact— in Xalapa, Veracruz, whose work breeds both “philes” and “phobes.” It is full of subtleties, obviousness, surprises, acci-

dents, irrelevance and meaningless acts —just to mention a few of the attributes ascribed by the critics and the general public to his installations, photographs, videos and sculptures. Some pieces are priced at up to U.S.\$200,000.

Known in the galleries, museums and biennials of Europe, Asia and the United States, Orozco has now come to a contemporary art venue in Mexico, his native country, where he has been discussed less. The floor, roofs and walls of the Rufino Tamayo Museum of International Contemporary Art in Chapultepec Park are covered with dozens of pieces offered up to viewers’ trepidation, complacency, indignation, enthusiasm and rejection.<sup>1</sup>

\*Free-lance cultural journalist.

All photos by Daniel Munguía.  
Reproduced by permission of the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art and the Rufino Tamayo Museum.



*Models, detail, no date.*



*Four Bicycles-There Is Always One Direction, 1994.*

Here, placed as if by mistake, lies an empty shoe box; there, a one-of-a-kind ping-pong table with a basin in the middle stands near a chess table with no pawns, bishops or castles, but only knights; at the center are a compressed Citroën, a shortened elevator, fans with their blades festooned with toilet paper, a skull with quadrangles drawn on it in graphite and billiard balls hanging like Foucault's pendulum.

These pieces were created from 1990 to 2000 in Germany, Holland, South Korea, England, France, Mexico and the United States. They are presented in the museum without regard to chronological order, inviting the viewer to wander at will.

#### TAKING OFF

Although Gabriel dislikes emphasizing his origins and the mark that his father may have left on him—his father was muralist Mario Orozco Rivera, a man of the left with a weak body of work—we should say that he studied at the UNAM National School of Visual Arts (1981-1984) and the Fine Arts Circle of Madrid (1986-1987) and was artist in residence at the DAAD Gallerie, in Berlin. But what really had a profound effect on him was the workshop he directed for four years, from 1987 to 1991, in

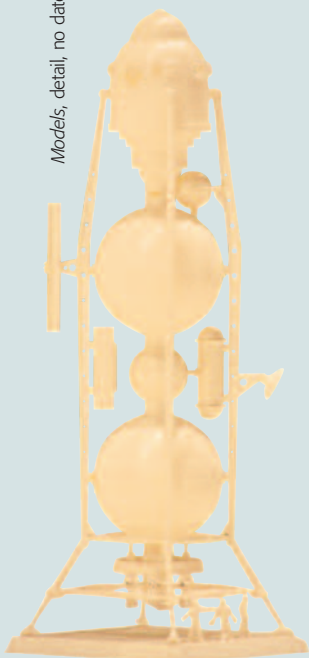
his own home with four other young people, all art students, musicians, sketch artists or tattoo artists: Gabriel Kuri, Damián Ortega, Abraham Cruzvillegas and Jerónimo López.

According to Cruzvillegas, the workshop was notably different from a formal space and was a far cry from aspiring to be an artist's atelier. With sessions every Friday, Orozco never gave instructions to work in any particular way or deal with particular topics. The collective effort consisted in criticizing others' work and discussions about artistic questions of the moment, plus music, beer and fiestas.

It was the beginning of the 1990s, and many alternative spaces were opening up in Mexico to present the public and the critics with ephemeral art, installations and object-art. Several foreign artists' studios in Mexico's historic downtown area were venues for exhibitions, as well as houses and vacant lots.

Orozco, together with Mauricio Maillé and Mauricio Rocha, had already won the first prize for "Alternative Spaces" given by the 1987 National Art Salon organized by the National Institute of Fine Arts for their wooden structure simulating a house on the point of collapse being shored up (a frequent sight in Mexico City after the 1985 earthquakes). Later Gabriel participated in the collective piece "On Purpose," a kind of homage to Joseph Beuys made

*Models, detail, no date.*





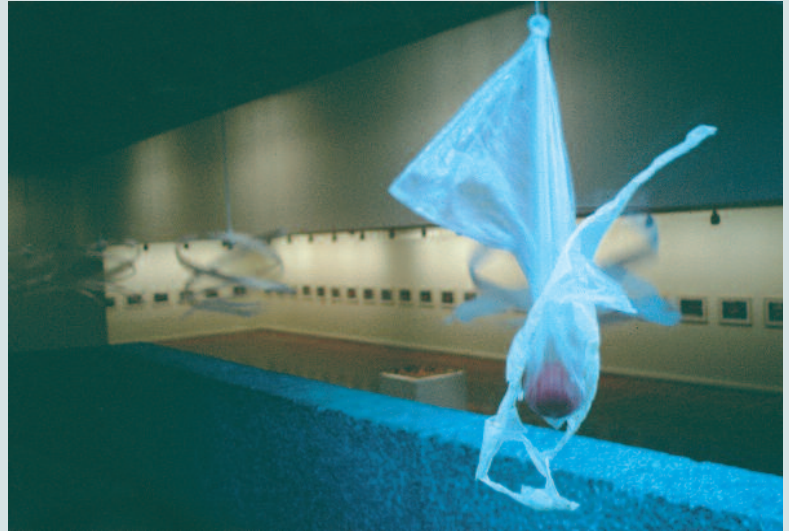
*The D. S.*, 1993.

up of installations in the museum situated in the former Desierto de los Leones Convent.

In the early 1990s he would start to take off. “The Bird” began to travel. Once settled in Manhattan, he received an invitation from New York’s Museum of Modern Art (MoMa) to present a project. He occupied the garden, the escalator, a few columns and many of the museum’s exterior windows for his objects: hammocks, an interminable phone book and insecticide container tops. But the part that stirred the most enthusiasm was his involving the museum’s neighbors by asking them to put one or more oranges in their home or office windows every day.

This made Gabriel one of the three only Mexicans who have had individual showings at the MoMa: Diego Rivera was the first in the 1930s, followed by Manuel Alvarez Bravo six decades later. Orozco’s show was in 1993, when he was only 30, which prompted a series of both favorable and unfavorable comments, but above all, a variety of questions: What do people see in his work? Is this art or just publicity? Why is there an Orozco phenomenon?

And it is this phenomenon that has been analyzed, praised and reviled at exhibitions as prestigious as those at Paris’ Modern Art Museum, Amsterdam’s Stedelijk, London’s Institute of Contemporary Art, Chicago’s Museum of Con-



*Mixiote*, 1999.

temporary Art and Kortrijk, Belgium’s Kanaal Art Foundation; or international biennials in Venice, São Paulo and Kassel, Germany’s Documenta X; or private collections in Spain, Paris, London, Florida, Guadalajara, Mexico City, Los Angeles, Athens, Munich and New York.

#### NON-REVOLUTIONARY ART

The cover of the Rufino Tamayo Museum exhibit catalogue displays Gabriel as a child on horseback, dressed in a traditional Mexican *charro* cowboy outfit, a typical Sunday-outing photograph, while inside, several art historians try to dilucidate his work and answer the questions it engenders.

Alma Ruiz, the curator of the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art and organizer of this exhibit, underlines his work’s most outstanding characteristics: “his fondness for recording daily life, the relation of objects to his own body and his ongoing interest in movement.”<sup>2</sup> Ruiz says that his work “does not attempt to be revolutionary” nor does it introduce novel techniques or use innovative materials. What is interesting about it, she says, is the multiplicity of objects used, thus favoring unexpected associations and conceptual linkages that go beyond the formal ones in a “multifaceted” body of work and



*Cats and Watermelons, 1992.*

“an analytical mind, an intellectual curiosity that relishes what is unassuming, novel and undiscovered.”<sup>3</sup>

Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, for his part, centers on the formal and conceptual changes in sculpture in the last 30 years, situating Orozco in a hybrid trend and at an “aesthetic, geopolitical and historical distance”<sup>4</sup> with regard to the experience of the object.

Art history professor Molly Nesbit looks at the links between Orozco and the work of composer John Cage and writer Jorge Luis Borges. Between Orozco and Cage, she sees the common-

ality of their idea of unifying life and art; between Orozco and Borges, the idea that knowledge does not necessarily make for progress. “The center everywhere, the circumference nowhere, the perfect labyrinth is the desert.”<sup>5</sup> This is Orozco a faithful admirer of Borges, quoting him; Orozco, an enthusiast of subtle gestures and the wake that people and things leave behind.

Former Orozco workshop members Gabriel Kuri and Abraham Cruzvillegas both wrote for the catalogue, along with colleague Damián Ortega, who contributes a comic strip.

#### VAGUENESS AND EVASION

A lot of ink has been used in newspapers and magazines to deal with the Tamayo exhibition. The critics have focused on the series of polemical objects and installations.<sup>6</sup>

Analyst Cuauhtémoc Medina comments that Orozco’s work shows “an inclination to more or less circumspect good taste that suggests a state of melancholy grace that seduces the eye with fleeting moments of passiveness.” But he also chides the artist for “evading definitions” and for his “vagueness,” explaining that his success is



*Black Kites, 1997.*



*Toilet Fans*, 1997.

partially due to “the fetishization of the receiver” and the tendency to idolatry the artist as “the Latin American whose proximity with Cage’s methodology and Borges’ spirit may be able to dissipate the ‘baroque-izing,’ noisy ‘bad taste’ of the American Latino in the 1990s.”

Writer and critic Olivier Debrouse parodies one of Orozco’s installations in Paris, “Clinton Is Innocent” (alluding to the U.S. president’s sexual affair or his questionable job as world leader or the corruption of his administration —take your pick, just as the U.S. public has), entitling his critique “Orozco Is Innocent.” Debrouse reaffirms the artist’s strategy of “perturbing perceptions, giving objects not a significance, but an unforeseen function.” He also strenuously objects to the accolades signed by Gabriel’s colleagues in the catalogue.

Historian Teresa del Conde laments the catalogue’s emphasizing Orozco’s life more than his first years as a sculptor. She situates him as a “rag-picker” who deploys “a not-quite-so-free form of association with intelligent results. It seems to me that he proceeds more by metonymy than by metaphor, thus indicating a special ability to give names to his own objects.”

Another visual artist, Mónica Mayer, deems Orozco’s work “ingenious” and “cold,” saying that

on few occasions he does have poetic qualities (for example, the billiard table, the ping-pong table and the fans), and on others he offers no proposal at all, but rather the “god-like” posturing of a “genius.”

#### THE SILENCE IS ACTIVE

From Costa Rica, Gabriel Orozco responded to some of these observations.<sup>7</sup> Any polemical work, he said, “is neither passive nor circumspect nor institutional nor vague. People get upset; they talk about what they see; they laugh; they don’t understand. If they were passive objects sunk in vagueness, people wouldn’t talk about them. Perhaps they could be described as silent objects. But the silence is active and can cause more discomfort and mystery than noise.” He also points out that the essays about his work are written by people qualified to talk about it. They are “perfectly professional individuals who represent other voices that are telling the history” of art.

Overall, he says about the critiques of his work, “The interesting thing about the articles is that many analysts feel uncomfortable about

the work and me as a person. They try to tear it down in the typical PRI fashion by disdain and belittling the person more than the ideas. The vagueness that they say my work suffers from is their own and their observations become personal, predictable and limited. None of them manages to come up with a serious critique. I feel sorry for them.”

#### FAITH IN THE SMALL THINGS

In different interviews,<sup>8</sup> Gabriel has talked about his work. “I still have faith in the small things. Even when in sculptures you try to create a whole universe, I’m also interested in comets. I want to show how a simple gesture can sometimes have more repercussions than a monument.... My relationship with objects is first sensual, like with women or fruit, because of their color, their flavor or smell. Then there is the approximation to each object, but generally I’m slow and I never have an immediate solution. I can’t stand compulsive artists. I have everything in my head and then I retrieve it, or I replace it, or I redo it. I don’t care if they say I’m great with my hands or a great technician. I prefer they say that I picked what I do up off the sidewalk. I love that because it’s a way for an object to become a real thing, more than a language.

“I prefer small pieces that are integral, necessary parts of a large whole. And I like them because I choose subtle gestures. I don’t like grandiloquence and virtuosity. I’m looking for the connection between the artificial and the natural, the organic and the geometric, the new and the old, dust and shine. I act based on collapses, contrasts.

“What is the value in objects? It lies in the condition that separates them from language and a play of signs. In the thing that turns them into a stone on the street or into a puddle or into a bad building. Into something that separates them from art and brings them close to reality. What I do—which doesn’t even have a name because I don’t know if it’s installation or

sculpture—tries to get close to what is real and to establish a different relationship with space and with the body, just like what happens out there every day on the sidewalk.”

\* \* \*

An eternal traveler, “The Bird” flew away again. He was in Costa Rica for a time. He went back to New York, and then he will go to Japan, where two museums have requested his work and his participation in the Yokohama Triennial of 2001. In addition, Manhattan awaits a public sculpture of his, and two other pieces will occupy spaces in France and Germany.

Not only sculptures and cities await him. Martínez, his miniature greyhound does, too, so it can run through the streets and perhaps help him find objects that will become pieces for galleries, a collector’s room, the wall of a museum or just to lie next to the pillows where Martínez jumps and sleeps. **MM**

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This exposition was put together by the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, where it was shown from June to September of 2000. The showing in Mexico City will last until February 4, 2001, after which it will be at the Monterrey Contemporary Art Museum from February until May 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin H.D. Buchloh et al., *Gabriel Orozco*, catalogue of the exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (Mexico City: The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles/Conaculta/INBA/Museo Rufino Tamayo, 2000), p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.156.

<sup>6</sup> The opinions of Medina and Debroise are from *Reforma* (Mexico City), 25 October 2000 and 2 October 2000, respectively. Teresa del Conde’s comments are from *La Jornada* (Mexico City), 24 October 2000 and 7 November 2000; and Mónica Mayer’s from *El Universal* (Mexico City) 7 October 2000.

<sup>7</sup> The author received these observations from Orozco by e-mail.

<sup>8</sup> Quotes are taken from the author’s interviews with Orozco in October 1993, August 1998 and August and November 2000.



# Genetically Modified Plants Panacea or Profit-makers?

Yolanda Massieu Trigo\*



With the introduction of engineered crops, what does the future hold for Mexican corn?

**T**oday, applied genetic engineering in agriculture deals mainly with genetically modified organisms, plants into which

a single or several genes have been artificially incorporated. These techniques are unprecedented: previously, genetic crop improvement meant the cross-breeding of entire plants with their full genetic make-up, a process in which to induce a specific desired trait in a stable improved variety, a whole new generation had to grow, which could take up to 15 years.

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Fulvio Eccardi

Genetically modified cotton grows well in Mexico because climatic conditions are similar to those of the U.S.

This has changed radically thanks to genetic engineering techniques that make it possible to induce new traits in plants with great precision and in a single step. By genetic engineering, we mean “the possibility of artificially creating new organisms through the combination of the genes of totally distinct species.”<sup>1</sup> That is, the new combinations of genes would never have occurred in nature. The procedure does not always imply inserting alien genes; it sometimes means inducing changes in the genetic structure of the plant itself. What is new about this is that a gene with the particular information desired (for example, that of the bacteria *bacillus thuringiensis*, which contains the code for producing an insect-fighting toxin) is located and then inserted into the organism in question.

From this point of view the new technology saves a lot of time and makes for greater precision in agricultural improvement. But, at the same time, the risks of commercially cultivating these new plants have not yet been sufficiently studied.

The possibility of commercially appropriating agricultural and germoplasm<sup>2</sup> innovations

has attracted large corporations to this branch of production. This is clear in their presence where genetically modified organisms are cultivated<sup>3</sup> and has determined that a large part of the research into the question is done along the lines of profitability.

The few products utilized in developing countries are those whose cultivation requirements coincide with those developed for industrialized countries. For example, in Mexico, cotton is the most widespread of these products because the varieties grown in the United States can be cultivated here without difficulty. But no products have been created specifically for the needs of developing countries.

The challenge for many of these countries, then, consists in developing their own scientific and technological capabilities, as well as the institutional means needed to introduce technology useful to the most vulnerable producers. They also must insert the technologies in production recognizing the market differentiation and segmentation and making the best possible use of the market niches that are of no interest to large corporations.

**Table 1**  
**Vavilov Centers of World Diversity**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Crops that Originated in the Region</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central America</li> <li>• Andes</li> <li>• Southern Brazil, Paraguay</li> <li>• Mediterranean</li> <li>• Southwest Asia</li> <li>• Abyssinia</li> <li>• Central Asia</li> <li>• Indo-Burma</li> <li>• Southeast Asia</li> <li>• China</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corn, the common bean, sweet potato</li> <li>• Potatoes, lima beans, peanuts</li> <li>• Cassava</li> <li>• Oats, rape</li> <li>• Rye, barley, wheat, peas</li> <li>• Barley, sorghum, millet</li> <li>• Wheat</li> <li>• Rice, dwarf wheat</li> <li>• Bananas, sugar cane, yams, rice</li> <li>• Fox-tail millet, soybeans, rice</li> </ul>
<p><b>Source:</b> Germán Vélez and Mónica Rojas, "Definiciones y conceptos básicos sobre biodiversidad," <i>Biodiversidad, Sustento y Culturas</i>, Workbook I (Bogotá, Colombia: Programa Semillas, 1998).</p>	

In developing countries the maze of social and institutional networks for the dissemination of technology are incomplete or partial and the links needed to make it accessible to the poorest sectors of society are non-existent. This means that the potential risks and benefits of new technology must be carefully evaluated.

Corporations limit their discourse to saying that the new genetically modified plants contain the technology in their seeds themselves, but they do not take into account that the management of these new varieties requires greater specialization both on the part of producers and of public employees and officials who must deal with safely using agricultural biotechnology.

One of the most debated risks is the possible change in biodiversity. By biodiversity, we understand "the wealth, quantity and great variety of living beings in a specific area. It includes all the species and varieties in a territory, in the soil, in the water and seas; in the forests, on agricultural land and the different ethnic and cultural groups that live there."<sup>4</sup>

The possible health risks to anyone who consumes these new plants are also a polemical

issue. Since this article will deal with environmental risks, let me just mention that, while it has not been conclusively proven that these new foods are harmful, neither has it been proven that they are harmless. What is clear is that more research is needed, just as some environmentalist organizations demand.

#### THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The evaluation of possible environmental impacts on biodiversity of the new genetically modified plants is neither unique nor static, but rather place-specific and variable over time in different types of ecosystems. Countries with great biodiversity like Mexico should be particularly careful about today's products.

The majority of the world's most important centers of biological origins and diversity are in the tropics and sub-tropics, where the plants originated and the most developed agriculture was practiced in ancient times. According to the Vavilov classifications,<sup>5</sup> the world has 10 main centers of biodiversity (see Table 1).

All the components, structure and functions in agroecosystems relevant for agricultural production are vital for future generations' food security.

The mega-diverse countries located in these Vavilov regions are Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, Zaire, Madagascar, India and Indonesia. The rapid deterioration of this biological wealth is clear in Mexico: in 1998 the public was already being warned that if the current process of deforestation and depredation continued, in less than a decade 96 species of birds, mammals, reptiles, fish and amphibians and 66 species of plants and fungus would disappear.<sup>6</sup>

A great deal of discussion has been generated by biotechnology's making it possible to own living organisms. Although the world's biological wealth has for many decades been the source of different substances for pharmaceutical companies that have made endless use of them with no limitations whatsoever, today, this becomes even more critical.

Agrobiodiversity—defined as “the total of components, structure and functions in agro-ecosystems relevant for agricultural production”—<sup>7</sup> is vitally important for the food security of future generations. It can be used to combat new plagues and diseases, to resist climatic change, to face the challenges posed by the growing human population, to deal with changes in consumption habits and to make production more sustainable.

In general, in modern agriculture, since the Green Revolution technological model came on the scene in the 1940s and was widely applied in the 1950s, agrobiodiversity has been paid scant attention. Genetic diversity has been considered a function of improvement, such as in the case of the new form of producing food based on the cultivation of “super-plants,” capable of producing their own insecticides and of tolerating drought and which have a series of other favorable traits.

However, the negative effects that the constant quest for high yields has had on genetic diversity have been ignored.

Nevertheless, genetically modified organisms are not dangerous per se. The problems arise when the new traits—or a combination of them—produce undesired effects on the environment. These plants cause different kinds of problems depending on the new genes they contain, the characteristics of the mother crop and the surroundings in which they grow.

#### CONCERN IN ACADEMIC CIRCLES

Because the crops and genes are so many and varied, the identification and classification of the potential risks of genetically modified crops is a real challenge.<sup>8</sup> For Jane Rissler and Margaret Mellon of the Union of Concerned Scientists of the United States, putting to one side for the moment the health risks to those who eat these new foods, two kinds of dangers exist on the environmental level: those stemming from the transformed plants themselves and those linked to the transference of genes to other plants.<sup>9</sup>

The first risk implies that the new characteristics of the modified plants would allow them to become weeds in agricultural ecosystems or propagate outside the fields being cultivated, disturbing non-modified ecosystems.<sup>10</sup>

The second kind of risk involves the relocation of transferred genes to the crop's parent plant. This could happen when the genetically modified variety is planted near related vegetation growing wild; this could give rise to new weeds and/or alter the gene pool of the predecessors of a crop. This concern has been voiced with regard to corn in Mexico, the place where it originated and where two of its wild relatives still exist: *teocintle* and *tripsacum*.<sup>11</sup> A similar case is that of the potato in Peru.

A risk derived from this is the possibility that the gene added to the modified organism could be part of a virus. In that case, new viruses could be created that would cause unknown diseases.<sup>12</sup>

Field tests of engineered crops, carried out under controlled conditions to prevent the flow of pollen from the plants to their surroundings, do not necessarily imply that their biosecurity is satisfactory on a commercial level. The ecological risks of these new crops depend on random events caused by the interaction of the modified plants with a specific environment. The absence of such events under controlled conditions in field tests does not mean that they could not arise in normal use.

Other studies conclude that biotechnology in general and genetic engineering in particular can also have a positive effect on the environment, helping to maintain genetic diversity through conserving germoplasm in different ways, using biodiversity to increase efficiency in improvement techniques and reducing the use of pesticides by increasing resistance to blight.<sup>13</sup>

However, the fact that a tolerance to herbicides is the first characteristic of genetic modification speaks to the fact that genetic engineering's contribution to improving the environment is not the main concern of biotechnological multinational corporations. These new plants resist greater quantities of herbicides—often produced by the same firms—such as Roundup, made by Monsanto (whose patent ran out in 2000), which also produces many genetically modified organisms resistant to it.

The engineered crops resistant to herbicides are by far the largest group. In Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, 60 percent of the field tests centered on this resistance, particularly a tolerance for two: Monsanto's glyphosate (the base compound of its famous Roundup herbicide) and AgrEvo's gluphosinate. Although the companies' argument is that the genetically modified plant's resistance to these compounds will mean using less of them, thus improving the environment, Monsanto is increasing its production capacity for glyphosate in Argentina and Brazil by U.S.\$135 million and U.S.\$410 million respectively. This increase in herbicide sales is due to the growing cultivation of Roundup Ready

Genetically modified organisms are not dangerous per se. The problems arise when the new traits produce undesired effects on the environment.

soy beans, particularly in Argentina, where its commercialization has already been authorized and cultivation has expanded spectacularly: in 1998, two million hectares were planted with it, half of all the country's cultivated land.<sup>14</sup>

In 1999, of all the land planted with engineered crops, the herbicide resistant ones accounted for the majority (71 percent). The second place was occupied by those resistant to insects (22 percent) and third place, those resistant to both (7 percent). The two latter categories which include resistance to insects are called biopesticides.

Making use of the benefits these crops offer and minimizing their risks require a change in agricultural practices, including implementing programs that would stave off insects' developing a resistance to the toxins the plant is now producing. These programs are called resistance management. In addition, the strategies proposed must be monitored to see if they actually work and to remain alert to possible unexpected effects arising from the interaction of the genetically modified crops with the environment and their cultural and productive surroundings.

This implies the capacity to manage engineered crops. In a country with the enormous contrasts of Mexico, where highly technically advanced producers work side by side with subsistence farmers, the requirements that these crops pose may shunt to the side producers with less training and access to technical assistance. In addition, the lack of appropriate governmental supervision may not only put the usefulness of the technology at risk, but also make some of its potential negative effects a reality. ■■■

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Humberto Tomasino, "Los cultivos transgénicos ¿los trans...qué?" in *Biodiversidad, Sustento y Culturas*, Workbook 3 (Montevideo: Redes-AT, 1999).
- <sup>2</sup> Germoplasm is all living things that can be stored, particularly seeds, plant sprouts and micro-organisms.
- <sup>3</sup> This comes to 39.9 million hectares in the world, an area that has increased steadily since 1996. The largest areas commercially planted with these kinds of crops are in the United States, China and Argentina.
- <sup>4</sup> Germán Vélez and Mónica Rojas, "Definiciones y conceptos básicos sobre biodiversidad," *Biodiversidad, Sustento y Culturas*, Workbook 1 (Bogotá, Colombia: Programa Semillas, 1998).
- <sup>5</sup> The Russian biologist Nicolai Vavilov identified these centers of world biodiversity.
- <sup>6</sup> "En menos de diez años desaparecerían 96 especies animales," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), 29 June 1998, p. 43.
- <sup>7</sup> Bert Visser, "Effects of biotechnology on agrobiodiversity," *Biotechnology and Development Monitor* 35 (Amsterdam) June 1998, p. 2.
- <sup>8</sup> Since 1991 Mexican academic circles have been voicing concern about the negative impact of agricultural biotechnology on the environment.
- <sup>9</sup> Jane Rissler and Margaret Mellon, *The Ecological Risks of Engineered Crops* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1996), p. 22.
- <sup>10</sup> The history of the introduction of kudzu hay into the United States is illustrative. This grass was introduced at the end of the nineteenth century as an ornamental plant in gardens in the South. In the early 1900s it was promoted as fodder and to reduce soil erosion. After 1930, kudzu spread out of control and now infests 28.3 million hectares of the U.S. Southeast, despite repeated efforts to eradicate it.
- <sup>11</sup> José Antonio Serratos, "El maíz transgénico en México," in "Los vegetales transgénicos, el ambiente y la salud," *La Jornada Ecológica*, supplement (Mexico City) 31 August 1998, p. 4.
- <sup>12</sup> Jan Rissler and Margaret Mellon, op. cit., p. 24.
- <sup>13</sup> Bert Visser, op. cit., p. 5.
- <sup>14</sup> Genetic Resources Action International (GRAIN), "Los cultivos transgénicos invaden el Sur," *Biodiversidad, Sustento y Culturas* 18 (Barcelona/Montevideo: GRAIN/Redes-AT, 1998), pp. 6-7.

## AUTHOR'S NOTICE

Raúl Cid, author of "Mexico's Pavilion At Expo Hanover 2000" (*Voices of Mexico* 53, pp. 48-52), wishes to acknowledge that the pavillion was conceived, designed and built by historian Enrique Krauze and Ricardo Legorreta with the collaboration of the Papalote Children's Museum.

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# The Role of the Catholic Church In the Mexican Revolution

Christopher Ohan\*



Archivo Iconográfico/Editorial Clio

Revolutionary leaders saw little use for the Catholic Church despite the fact that it obviously created social stability.

Few would deny that one of the most pervasive elements of Mexican society is the Catholic Church. In fact, in the 300 years between the conquest and the Mexican Revolution, church and state were virtually one and the same. As the church spread throughout Mexico, it became difficult to encounter a Mexican who did not call himself/herself “Catholic.” Witnessing the thousands of pilgrims who come to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe each day, it seems ap-

parent that the church, even today, remains the greatest unifying component in Mexico.

If the church has occupied such a prominent place in the social makeup of Mexico, why did it find itself abandoned by the Revolution? Every revolutionary leader from Madero to Calles saw little use for the Catholic Church despite its obvious characteristic of providing social stability. This study, by examining revolutionary attitudes concerning the church, will show that after the first decade of the Mexican Revolution it was not the government but the church that actually adopted a rev-

olutionary character in an attempt to retain its powerful hold over Mexican society.

## A NINETEENTH-CENTURY INTRODUCTION

Before examining the role of the church in the Revolution, it is necessary to consider Mexico’s leanings toward liberalism in the nineteenth century. Although church and state were one in the colonial era, attitudes began to change with the French Enlightenment. The writings of Voltaire and Rousseau stimulated the minds of a generation

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of young aristocrats causing them not only to take up arms against the Spanish crown, but also the church that supported the crown. Thus, with Independence in 1824, the beginnings of anticlericalism took hold.

As liberalism grew in the mid-nineteenth century its followers became increasingly secularly minded. Robert Quirk points out that while the church, with its then-medieval outlook, saw the ultimate solution to the social problems in terms of the assurance of eternal salvation and happiness, the liberals viewed the matter of eternal salvation as an unfathomable mystery that had no practical bearing on the present.<sup>1</sup> In fact, like their European counterparts, the Mexican liberals were optimistic about the future of mankind. Man, according to them, was perfectible in this life if he followed his own reason and rejected the superstition of the past.

While the liberals did not control the government of Mexico, their influence was formidable. In the 1857 Constitution, the moderate-controlled Congress placed the first formal limitations on the power of the church. As John Rutherford points out however, the church was defeated and removed from political power only on paper.<sup>2</sup> It was not until the Reform Laws of 1859 that church and state became physically separated. Under the liberal president, Benito Juárez, the groundwork for the conflict between church and state during the Revolution was laid.

Displaying striking similarities to the Revolution, the Reform had a delayed impact on the popular classes of Mexico. Jean Meyer argues that the Reform Laws of 1859 pitted an unstable state against a stable church firmly grounded in continuous tradition. The

people of Mexico, uninvolved in events in Mexico City, the international wars and American invasion, became aware of and violently reacted to the Reform Laws only when the sacred aspects of daily life such as charitable activities became secularized.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, as church lands and responsibilities increasingly became secularized under a liberal anticlerical administration, the people of Mexico adopted a clerical outlook.

Meyer calls the changes by the Mexican government in the 1850s and

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tradition.

early 1860s a *Kulturkampf*.<sup>4</sup> In other words, Mexico was breaking out of its colonial church-dominated cocoon into the modern world. Like the situation in the *Vendée* during the French Revolution however, the devout Catholics had to be forced into compliance. There are countless episodes of barbarism on the part of the government and martyrdom on the part of Catholics. The account of General Socorro Reyes provides an excellent example of the latter.

He was a straightforward and honorable man. In all his public declarations he was frank and truthful, and when asked who had encouraged him to take part in the revolution, he said, "my conscience commanded me." On being taken to the

place of execution, he asked permission to say a few words, but this request was denied. However, he asked forgiveness for any offenses that his soldiers might have committed.<sup>5</sup>

Obviously, the Mexican people preferred the side of the Cristeros, or the Catholic fighters to the seemingly barbarous government. Because of widespread public support the fighting took on characteristics of guerrilla warfare where neither side was able to gain the upper hand.

It is out of this turmoil that the young Porfirio Díaz saw an opportunity for peace through conciliation. Although Díaz fought for the government he recognized that

There are no...uprisings of the people except when attempts are made to undermine their most deeply held traditions and to diminish their legitimate liberty of conscience. Persecution of the Church...means war, and such a war that the Government can only win is against its own people, through the humiliating, despotic, costly and dangerous support of the United States. Without its religion, Mexico is irretrievably lost.<sup>6</sup>

Mexico and its church operated under this simple philosophy for 35 years. Neither the 1857 Constitution nor the Reform Laws were repealed but the government chose to ignore most of the restrictions placed on the church. The battle between church and state had been rehearsed and postponed only to re-erupt in the 1920s when the anticlerical legislation expressed in the 1857 Constitution and embodied in the 1917 Constitution was enforced.



## THE CHURCH ON THE EVE OF REVOLUTION

The policy of conciliation represented a *modus vivendi* for both the liberal politicians and the church. Díaz had satisfied the liberals by retaining the anticlerical laws of the 1857 Constitution. The fact that these laws were not enforced seemed a moot point. The church, while aware of its precarious position, began a course of reform that included internal reform, administrative reorganization, improved training of the clergy and an increase in their number, the mobilization of the laity, the expansion of the Catholic press and of Catholic education and the renewal of the strength of the church in rural areas.

The church even began to address the social problems within Mexico. Deprived of their privileged legal status, the church looked to the masses for support. With the publication of the *Rerum Novarum*, the church had an open invitation to foster support by addressing the problems of the Mexican workers.<sup>7</sup> The letter from the Bishop of Querétaro to a wealthy government official clearly demonstrates the church's attempt to remedy social problems.

The worker, in return for this terribly exhausting labour, receives between 18 and 25 centavos a day, which is paid partly in seeds and partly in cash, and even with these low wages, there are some landowners who find ingenious ways of reducing them further.... We understand Socialism.... You rich men, there is no other way open: either you must open your hearts to charity and reduce the hours of work and increase wages, or you are accumulating hatred

and resentment...and your riches and you yourselves will be buried.<sup>8</sup>

The traditional role of the church in terms of good works was being replaced by a role of increased social action. With the loss of Díaz, the church, under the leadership of the archbishop of Mexico City, formed its own political party to stand up against the threat posed by those liberals who sought to enforce the anticlerical laws passed 50 years earlier.

Clearly the church had its own program to remedy the social ills of Mex-

Zapata's ideas  
for land distribution  
seem similar to the church's  
desire to improve the plight  
of Mexican workers.

ico. Unfortunately, however, its legal standing prevented any direct action. When the Revolution broke out in 1910, the church was forced to sacrifice its social programs and concentrate on its own survival.

## REVOLUTIONARIES AND THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CHURCH

Madero's entry into Mexico City in 1911 did not signal the end of the Catholic Church in Mexico. According to Ramón Eduardo Ruiz, Madero did not carry the banner of a revolutionary but, instead, sought to cleanse the Mexican government of its corrupt autocratic rule by the president and state governors.<sup>9</sup> The church, therefore,

gave Madero cautious support. The 1857 Constitution could be enforced against the church at any time and the Catholic leadership sought to continue the policy of conciliation initiated by Díaz.

Madero's idealistic stance soon convinced Catholics that conciliation would fail. As stated in his *Presidential Succession*, Madero felt that the 1857 Constitution contained the essential ingredients for an effective state. Díaz had ignored its principles and the natural remedy, according to Madero, was merely its implementation. In addition, Madero believed that the cardinal remedy for the ills of society was education. Since the church still provided the majority of education in Mexico and abhorred the 1857 Constitution, its reaction was not surprising. A letter to the U.S. State Department sums it up well.

The Catholic support, which had been one of Madero's chief assets, and has materially strengthened his candidacy, would be withdrawn within the next few days on account of Mr. Madero's policies.<sup>10</sup>

Although Madero believed in the 1857 Constitution and its liberal ideology, he blindly refused to acknowledge the church's strong unifying influence. When the Catholic party withdrew its support, Madero lost 40 percent of his strength.<sup>11</sup>

When Huerta seized power and had Madero killed, official Catholic reaction appeared conciliatory. In fact *La Nación*, the official organ of the Catholic party, referred to him as "don Victoriano" and opposed further revolutionary activity. According to the paper, the road to true peace was through the religion of



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The Mexican people preferred the side of the Cristeros to the seemingly barbarous government.

Christ, not rebellion.<sup>12</sup> To the church, Huerta represented the restoration of order. In the eyes of the revolutionaries, however, the church had committed the unpardonable sin of being identified with military reaction, terrorism and debauchery.

While the church gave support to Huerta, Emiliano Zapata, Francisco Villa and Venustiano Carranza were unanimous in their opposition to the “usurper.” Their common condemnation of Huerta, however, was the only thing that united these men. Zapata was an uneducated rebel of lower-class origin. Ruiz calls him

A complex man of simple revolutionary faith... [who] never captured the imagination or loyalty of the man on the street. He was always a provincial figure.... only Zapata truly made the plight of the rural poor his special passion.<sup>13</sup>

Zapata’s ideas for land distribution, described in his Ayala Plan, seem to be similar to the Church’s desire to improve the plight of the Mexican worker as described by the bishop of Querétaro. As Quirk points out, however, Zapata’s

plan had no ideological content. Zapata was naive and parochial. In fact, while he controlled Morelos from 1911-1919 the state had no government, no administration, and no schools.<sup>14</sup>

Concerning the church, Zapata’s stance seemed ambiguous. He is described as a conservative Catholic who wanted no quarrel with religion or the church. At the same time he could shoot a priest without hesitation.<sup>15</sup> In the eyes of the church, Zapata was an anarchist who represented the excesses of the Revolution. Beyond his program of land distribution, Zapata had no agenda. Therefore, he was neither supported by nor an ardent supporter of the church.

Unlike Zapata’s take-it-or-leave-it attitude concerning the church, Villa was a staunch clerophobe. He once told an American reporter that he believed in God, but not in religion.<sup>16</sup> After his break with Carranza, however, Villa reversed his attitude and became a defender of the church. In a letter to Carranza he writes:

I accuse you of destroying freedom of conscience by persecuting the Church,

and of having permitted governments to prohibit religious worship and even to impose fines for activities that are definitely allowed by law, and of having grossly outraged the religious sentiments of the people.<sup>17</sup>

This devotion to Catholicism, however, appears suspect. Quirk recounts a story of how Villa treated several priests on his trek toward Mexico City. Trying to learn where the priests had hidden their money, one of Villa’s men, Fierro, locked the priests in one room and interrogated them in another. In the interrogation room with the other priests listening

Fierro ordered the priest to reveal where the Jesuits kept their buried treasures. The priest insisted that they had no treasures.... Fierro repeated his question. The priest was silent. Fierro fired his pistol.... As death loomed large in their [the priests in the adjoining room] hearts they prayed for the departed soul.... One after another they were led from the room, and the succession of noises was repeated. As the last priest was dragged into the adjoining room, he found all the priests, not dead, as he expected, but huddled silently together.<sup>18</sup>

Villa, while often using these scare-tactics, never personally engaged in religious persecution and even intervened to save several priests from the firing squad.

The leader most associated with persecution of the church was Carranza. Leading the fight against Huerta, he and the Constitutionals concluded that the 1857 Constitution had legally decided the church-state issue. His only responsibility was to insure that those principles of separation and subordination were carried out.

Meyer states that the Carrancistas believed that the priests had turned the people against them by their own propaganda, and that all enemies were in the pay of bishops.<sup>19</sup> He abhorred the accumulation of wealth he saw in the church. His plan for saving Mexico not only involved returning to a constitutional order, but also supporting a more equitable distribution of wealth.<sup>20</sup> Infamous for its cruelty, Carranza's army was feared by both supporters and non-supporters of the church.

The strong opposition found by the Constitutionalists in some cities under the form of social armed defenses was not a sign of sympathy toward Huerta, but it was occasioned by a kind of horror toward the revolutionary soldiers, whom the Catholic clergy made appear bandits who intended to take possession of towns and villages in order to rob, loot, violate and murder.<sup>21</sup>

Of the three main sources of opposition to Huerta, Carranza was the most anticlerical. When he deposed Huerta and assumed power in 1917, the church was to pay dearly.

#### THE CONSTITUTION OF 1917

The victory of Carranza in 1913 signaled the death knell for the independent church in Mexico. The church's support of the counter-revolutionary Huerta and Carranza's personal attitudes regarding religion would greatly influence the Constitutional Congress, which met in Querétaro in late 1916. The chairman of the Constitutional Committee, Francisco J. Mújica, not only represented the liberalism of the nineteenth century, but also encour-



The 1917 Constitution placed severe restrictions on religious practices in Mexico.

aged a radical change in the social fabric of Mexico. Speaking to the Congress his attitude was clear:

I am a foe of the clergy, because I consider it the most disgraceful and perverse enemy of our people. What has the clergy given...our nation? The most absurd ideas, the greatest contempt for our democratic institutions, the most unrelenting hatred for the very principles of equity, equality, and fraternity taught by the first democrat, Jesus Christ... What sort of morality, gentlemen, will the clergy teach our children? We have seen it—the greatest corruption...<sup>22</sup>

The resulting document was more repressive and restricting to the church than the 1857 Constitution.

Although the new Constitution guaranteed the freedom of religious beliefs, it placed severe restrictions on religious practice. Article 24 stated that every religious act of public worship must be performed inside churches, which were under governmental supervision.<sup>23</sup> The most devastating for the church, however, was Article 130. Under its provi-

sions every aspect of religion in Mexico was subjugated to the supervision of the state. No longer could priests hear confession or legally perform a marriage ceremony. Not only were state legislatures made responsible for determining the number of priests in a locality, but priests could not speak or publish anything dealing with national political matters or "public information." In addition, members of religious groups were banned from political participation and from owning or inhabiting land without government consent.<sup>24</sup>

Church leaders, however, did not accept the new Constitution passively. Those clergy who remained in Mexico and those who had fled the religious persecution were mobilizing support in the United States and in Rome to defend the traditional rights of the church. In addition, as Meyer points out, Mexican anticlericalism, though the work of a minority, was that of a minority in power.<sup>25</sup> Most Mexicans were Catholics who had no desire to see their religious rituals changed. When the ruling anticlerical minority sought to impose their liberal ideology on the

Catholic majority a clash was inevitable. In fact, the Catholic response was, arguably, one of the only instances of a true revolutionary character in the Mexican Revolution.

#### THE CATHOLIC “REVOLUTION”

When Carranza seized power in Mexico City, the archbishop, José Mora y del Río, who had supported the dictatorship of Huerta fled to the United States where he led the exiled Catholic opposition to Carranza and the 1917 Constitution. In a collective letter of protest to the Mexican people the exiled leaders stated that they had no desire to meddle in political matters. They maintained, however, that they could not accept a constitution so contrary to God’s law. The bishops pledged to work within the law to change the existing conditions between the church and the Mexican government.

Mora y del Río backed up the protest in a *Pastoral Letter* to his archdiocese. The church was “a perfect society, founded by God himself,” he said, and, because of its origins, was “independent of every human power.”<sup>26</sup> According to Mora y del Río, no man had the right to oppose the divine constitution of the church or attack its rights. From Rome, Benedict XV condemned the new Constitution and expressed his approval of the actions of the Mexican bishops. “Some of the articles of the new law,” stated the pontiff, “ignore the sacred rights of the church, while others openly contradict them.”<sup>27</sup> With the support of Rome, the Catholic leaders began an aggressive campaign against the government in Mexico. In fact, the battle became international as they attempted to enlist the

support of not only American Catholics, but also the U.S. government.

Shortly after the Constitution had been adopted, an assembly of the American Federation of Catholic Societies in Kansas City adopted a resolution condemning it.<sup>28</sup> In addition, the U.S. bishops, meeting in Washington, drew up a similar letter of protest. Although it was not sent to President Wilson because many believed that he was too preoccupied with the European war to concern himself with Mexican affairs, it did demonstrate growing

Pancho Villa  
never personally  
engaged in religious  
persecution and even  
saved several priests  
from the firing  
squad.

concern for the Mexican church by U.S. Catholics.

The reasons for concern temporarily subsided, however, as President Carranza found himself focused on Mexico’s worsening economic situation. He was, in fact, criticized by the radicals because he not only ignored the radical articles of the Constitution, but he also wanted to revise Article 3 so that private or church education could relieve the inadequate and under-funded public education system.<sup>29</sup> While the Catholic situation may, in appearance, have temporarily subsided, the opposition to Mexico’s Constitution did not. While some, like Mora y del Río, sought to resurrect the rights of the church diplomatically, those within Mexico began to employ revolutionary tactics.

The church’s constitutional opposition within Mexico came from a very unlikely candidate. Francisco Orozco y Jiménez, the archbishop of Guadalajara, was described as a proud aristocrat. Although he used his funds for religious and public improvements, one of his fellow priests called him “a great prelate-politician in the court of a medieval monarch.”<sup>30</sup> Quirk, in fact, calls his attitude toward the lower classes kindly, but condescending.<sup>31</sup> Despite his attitudes and upbringing, he was a tireless defender of the rights of the church. While other priests fled Mexico to gather support abroad, Orozco y Jiménez remained in Jalisco building support for the church and calling on the faithful to denounce the Constitution.

Now is the time to revive within ourselves the true Catholic spirit, to eliminate all compromise with modern errors, which are condemned by the Church, and to separate the chaff from the wheat. Then the splendor of high Christian virtue will shine forth; then the enemies of the Church will recognize and glorify God and His Christ!<sup>32</sup>

If revolution can begin from conservative or right-wing elements then Orozco y Jiménez must be labeled a revolutionary. He not only challenged established authority, but he also launched a successful campaign of passive resistance in Jalisco which eventually led to his capture and expulsion from Mexico.

In July 1918 the situation between church and state came to a head in Jalisco as the state legislature made it necessary for priests to register and obtain permission before holding religious services.<sup>33</sup> This law which placed the church directly under the control of

the state and the offending articles of the 1917 Constitution prompted church leaders to condemn the government's Jacobin policies.

The Committee has asserted that we must prevent the distorted interpretations which are the result of religious instruction...but this does not go far enough; it should follow the logic of its Jacobin premises; it should not be content...with smashing the images of the Saints, pulling the rosaries to pieces, tearing down the Crucifixes, getting rid of Novenas and suchlike frivolities, shutting the door against the priests, and abolishing freedom of association so that nobody can go to Church to make contact with the clergy; it should destroy religious freedom altogether, and after that, in an orgy of sated intolerance, the committee will be able to promulgate this one article: in the Mexican Republic there will only be guarantees for those who think as we do.<sup>34</sup>

Refusing to abide by the new legislation, the priests in Jalisco decided to withdraw from all the churches until the government withdrew its order. According to Quirk, this movement of passive resistance proved effective. As public religious activity ceased, the people, robbed of their access to the traditional sacraments, actively supported the church. Catholics in Jalisco organized an economic boycott that corresponded to the church strike. From August 1918 through March 1919, churches as well as many businesses in Jalisco stood empty and silent. Bowing to economic pressure, the state legislature rescinded Decree 1927 and priests and laymen ended their strike. By giving in, however, the state government had sent a clear

message to church leaders: revolutionary laws could be modified.

In 1920, after the death of Carranza, Alvaro Obregón became president of Mexico. As Quirk points out, Obregón's presidency began a new radical phase of reform.<sup>35</sup> Unlike his predecessors who embraced nineteenth-century liberal political views, Obregón concentrated on social and economic reform. In an address to the archbishops and bishops in 1923 he said, "The present social program of the Government is essentially Christian, and it is

Archbishop Mora  
y del Río proclaimed  
Article 130 and the entire  
Constitution contrary  
to religious  
freedom.

complementary to the fundamental program of the Catholic Church."<sup>36</sup> Although it appears that he tried to make peace with the church, Obregón was merely using the church's system of education until the public system could be established and funded. When questioned about the legality of his position, Obregón replied

Yes, it is illegal, and we are not unaware of the menace of these Catholic schools, whose aim is to inculcate anti-government and antirevolutionary propaganda. But at the present there is not money enough, nor facilities for the government to teach all Mexican children. It is preferable that they receive any instruction, rather than grow up illiterate.<sup>37</sup>

Like Díaz and Carranza, Obregón was granting the church its traditional rights and privileges in spite of the legality of such measures. The most striking constitutional violation was Obregón's consent for a public ceremony to erect a monument to Christ the King near León, the geographic center of Mexico. When the ceremony took place in 1923 thousands of Catholics attended to, in the words of Quirk, recognize Christ as supreme Sovereign and King.<sup>38</sup> The symbolism of this apparent counter-revolutionary religious ceremony stands in stark contrast to the revolutionary aims of the government.

If, as it has been proposed, men like Carranza and Obregón are true revolutionaries, why did they permit the traditional church customs, which are termed counter-revolutionary, to continue? Counter-revolution in any form or for any reason is always the enemy of the revolutionary. The government's revolving door of prohibition and tolerance would eventually cause a role reversal where the church would lead a revolution from the right and the leftist reformers would have no choice but to yield.

#### THE CRISTERO REVOLT

As the government violated its own constitution in order to stabilize the situation in Mexico, the church regrouped and prepared for a showdown. Although not ready for a conflict with the state, by 1926 the church gave the appearance of an unassailable fortress of unalterable and irrefutable truth. When Obregón stepped down, however, he handed the presidency to Plutarco Elías Calles, a revolutionary general and obstinate enemy of the church.

The Obregonian period of conciliation had given way to a period of strict adherence to the revolutionary laws.

In late 1925 many state legislatures began the implementation of the anti-clerical Article 130. Immediately, Archbishop Mora y del Río re-proclaimed the article and the entire Constitution contrary to liberty and religious teachings. Calles seized this opportunity to attack the church on two fronts. First, Mora y del Río was brought to trial for his remarks, and second, the president would immediately implement not only Article 130 but also Article 3 which prohibited schools operated by the church. Calles' actions proved to be the breaking point for the church. Church officials decided that beginning August 1, no religious ceremonies or services of any kind would be conducted in the churches of Mexico until the anticlerical laws had been amended. The church was on strike.

Calles, however, did not count on the church receiving popular support. According to Meyer, the people were not always sure why the churches were closing. What they did understand was that they would be denied access to the traditional sacraments of the church, the most unifying aspect of popular Mexican culture. As a result, the strike took on a crusading spirit against the government.

Better to die than deny Christ the King, without fearing martyrdom or death, in whatever form it might come! Sons, do not be cowards! Rise up and defend a just cause! At the same time, everybody was repeating in chorus the cries of "Long Live Christ the King!"<sup>39</sup>

In addition to the church strike, the National League, the political arm of

the Catholics, proclaimed an economic boycott. As Quirk points out, however, the poor harvest of 1926 and the general economic problems within Mexico diminished its effectiveness.

Mexican Catholics did receive support from U.S. Catholics. In a collective pastoral letter, the American bishops stressed the virtues of the American system of toleration. In addition, they stated that "all men, Mexicans included, are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty,

With the support of Rome, Catholic leaders began an aggressive campaign against the government. In fact, the battle became international.

and the Pursuit of Happiness."<sup>40</sup> Calls for American-type religious tolerance were not endorsed by Mexican bishops. They held fast to a medieval doctrine of the primacy of the Catholic religion in their country. To them it was a question of restoring traditional rights. It was the restoration of a religious system that had operated in Mexico for centuries. They desired a true revolution.

At the end of 1926 it was apparent that the economic boycott had failed. In addition, the Mexican Congress refused to consider the Catholic's demands. The only choices open to the church were surrender or revolt. Since the bishops could not advocate armed rebellion, the fate of Mexican Catholi-

cism fell into the hands of laymen, especially the National League. As the church hierarchy faded into the background, the movement against the government took on a more recognizably revolutionary appearance. They embraced the banner of Christ and the battle cry "Viva Cristo Rey" (Long Live Christ the King). Their enemies dubbed them "Cristeros," and it is by this name that the Catholic revolutionaries came to be known.

While the rebels gained small successes by blowing up trains, bridges and stealing mail, the government was never in serious danger of defeat. The rebels' determination was encouraged, however, when the Vatican refused to sanction any compromise with the Mexican government. *Osservatore Romano*, the semi-official voice of the Holy See, announced that there could be "no accommodation whatever" with the "unjust" Mexican laws.<sup>41</sup> Papal support, however, did not diminish the determination of President Calles who implemented Article 130 by presidential decree in late 1926.

Catholic leaders soon realized that the only effective means for change lay outside Mexico. The bishop of Tabasco, Pascual Díaz, who had been deported for anti-revolutionary activity in early 1927 headed up the campaign to gain foreign support for the Catholic cause. Díaz viewed the U.S. oil man William Buckley as a solution to the crisis. Buckley could not only supply funds for the Cristeros, but also, because of the American oil interests in Mexico, pressure the U.S. government to intervene on behalf of the Catholics. When the National League refused to allow Buckley to use the Cristeros, Díaz went to Rome. Unfortunately, the Vatican could not afford

to provide money for the Catholic cause in Mexico. The Vatican did issue a statement demanding that Calles “mend his ways.” As Quirk states, however, “The Vatican in 1928 lived in a dream world, believing that the head of a secular state would still heed the words of a pope.”<sup>42</sup> Calles was not a medieval monarch concerned with the welfare of his soul.

Foreign influence, however, was not doomed. In late 1927, Dwight Morrow came to Mexico as the new U.S. ambassador. Although his main concern was the question of U.S. oil holdings in Mexico, he did act as a peace-maker in the church-state conflict.<sup>43</sup> Morrow, who quickly became a trusted friend of Calles, was convinced that resolving the religious controversy would improve Mexico’s international standing. In fact, he proposed that some of the laws might destroy the identity of the Church in Mexico and worsen relations with the papacy. By late 1928 Calles, who was in desperate need of loans from the United States, weakened his position against the Church. Although the Constitution was not changed, he did provide some assurances.

In the end, Morrow provided a settlement acceptable to both sides. The despised registration law for priests was reinterpreted to mean that the state could not appoint or assign priests who had not been assigned by their hierarchical superiors. In addition, religious instruction could take place within church confines. Finally, a general amnesty was agreed on as was a decision to return confiscated church residences. In the words of Quirk, “the strike ended with a *modus vivendi*, an agreement to disagree peacefully.”<sup>44</sup>

#### THE SEMANTICS OF THE MOVEMENT

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Mexican Catholic Church was considered one of the most progressive. Obviously, one reason for this classification is the fact that, for most of the period, the church took a defensive stand against liberal and radical anticlerical ideologies. From the standpoint of the church, the Revolution of 1910 was not a revolution but merely an enforcement of laws already in existence. While Ruiz is correct in labeling

American bishops stressed the virtues of the American system of tolerance, but for Mexican bishops the issue was getting their traditional rights back.

1910 a rebellion, he fails to consider the reaction of the church in the early 1920s. The church wanted to go back to a time when it had exercised great power. It desired a classic “revolution.” At first the church sought redress through peaceful methods. When these proved ineffective, it was forced to adopt revolutionary measures.

In the final analysis, the Catholics, although labeled counter-revolutionaries, were the true revolutionaries of the Mexican Revolution. Not only did the Cristeros employ violent measures, but they also sought foreign support and intervention. It was, in fact, foreign intervention that resolved the church-state conflict. In addition, the church had a clear ideological pro-

gram that included social action and a system for working with Mexico’s secular leaders.

The church had effectively asserted its diminishing power. When the churches reopened after almost three years of silence, the Mexican people flocked into them for days. The bishops and other church leaders must have been proud of their accomplishments. The church had, however, regained only a fraction of its former power. It remained, in fact, under direct state control. Despite these limitations, the Mexican church had entered the modern age. Mexico had experienced an industrial surge in the final years of the nineteenth century. The church, with its medieval outlook, stood as an obstacle to modernization. Although it fought to retain its former status, it ultimately failed to attain its goals.

As in all revolutions, the years after the Cristero episode marked the beginning of the Thermidor for the Mexican Revolution. While the Mexican Catholic Church retained a powerful spiritual hold over Mexican society, it lost all legal power. The location of churches and governmental buildings in most Mexican towns and cities provides a reminder, today, not only of the church’s lost status, but also its failed revolution. The words of a Mexican short story provide a good description.

In the middle of the white dust he appeared, at once, the black point of a disheveled corpse, sad, persecuted.... He was blind with anguish, a pale green mass. On all sides he had been beaten.<sup>45</sup>

Portrayed in the words of a Mexican novelist, this was the vision of the Mexican church after the Revolution. Like most intellectuals, José

Revueltas criticized the Revolution for its lack of social reform. In his work, *Dios en la tierra* (God on Earth), Revueltas seems to support the church as the only true revolutionary force. In the end, however, he characterizes the church as a transparent liquid that had the ability to provide life to the people but ended by betraying them to the state. Although God, according to Revueltas, had been a force in Mexico, the church's betrayal caused Him and the Revolution to pass away without accomplishing anything. ■■■

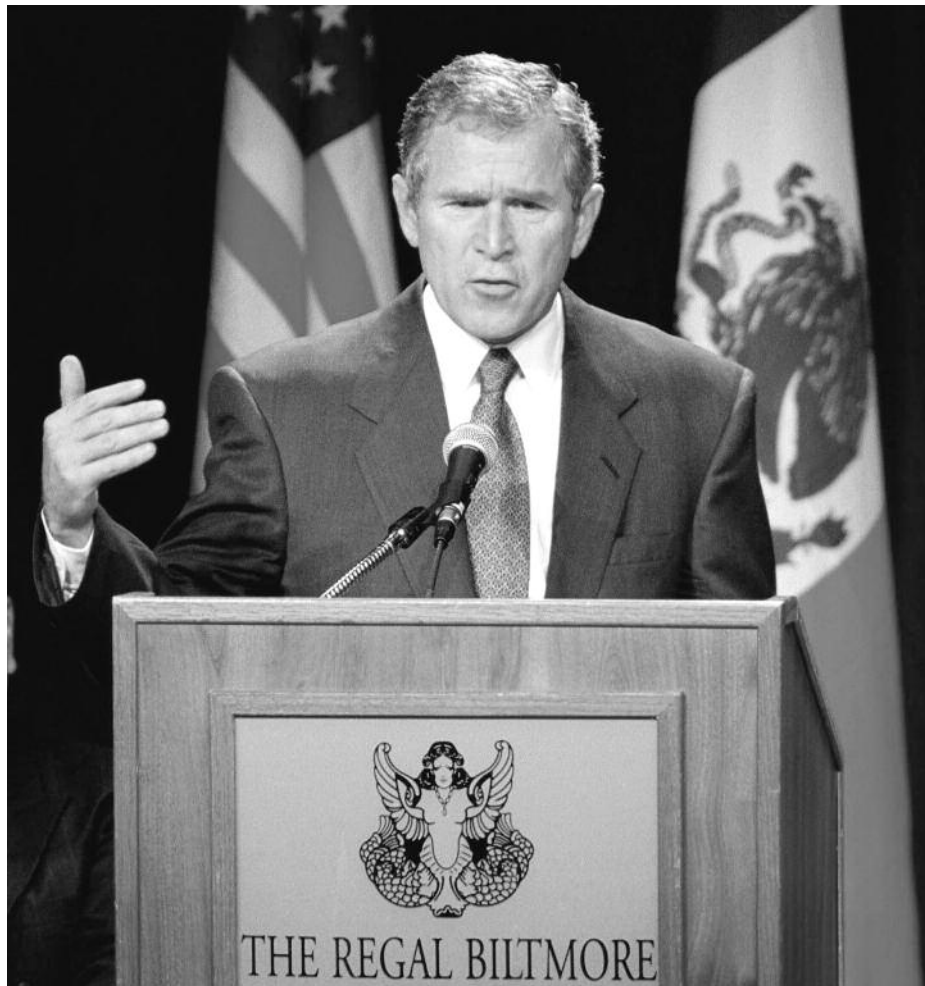
## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Robert E. Quirk, *The Mexican Revolution and the Catholic Church* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), p. 8.
- <sup>2</sup> John Rutherford, *Mexican Society During the Revolution, A Literary Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 279.
- <sup>3</sup> Jean A. Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion: The Mexican People Between Church and State, 1926-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 5-6.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- <sup>5</sup> Ciro Ceballos, *Aurora y ocaso. Historia de la revolución de Tuxtepec*, as quoted in Meyer, op. cit., p. 7.
- <sup>6</sup> Paul Murray, *The Catholic Church in Mexico*, vol. 1 (Mexico City: Editorial EPM, 1965), p. 301.
- <sup>7</sup> Interestingly, while the Catholic Congresses between 1903 and 1909 addressed this question, the revolutionaries never directly focused on the plight of Mexican workers.
- <sup>8</sup> Banegas y Galván, Bishop of Querétaro, as quoted in Meyer, op. cit., p. 9.
- <sup>9</sup> Ramón Eduardo Ruiz, *The Great Rebellion: Mexico 1905-1924* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1980), p. 143.
- <sup>10</sup> "Embassy of the United States of America, Mexico to the Secretary of State, Washington, September 2, 1911," Gene Z. Hanrahan ed., *Documents on the Mexican Revolution*, vol. 3 (Salisbury, N.C.: Documentary Publications, 1978), pp. 42-43.
- <sup>11</sup> "Memorandum of Mr. Dearing's interview with President De la Barra on September 5th 1911, Re: Political Manifestations," Hanrahan, op. cit., pp. 49-50.
- <sup>12</sup> *La Nación* (Mexico City), 20 February 1913, p. 3.
- <sup>13</sup> Ruiz, op. cit., p. 200.
- <sup>14</sup> Quirk, op. cit., p. 42.
- <sup>15</sup> Ruiz, op. cit., p. 204.
- <sup>16</sup> Quirk, op. cit., p. 42.
- <sup>17</sup> Murray, op. cit., p. 301.
- <sup>18</sup> Quirk, op. cit., p. 53-54.
- <sup>19</sup> Meyer, op. cit., p. 13.
- <sup>20</sup> Carranza believed in the strict enforcement of the 1857 Constitution, which barred priests from any effective political role.
- <sup>21</sup> Luis Cabrera, "The religious question in Mexico," quoted in *The Purposes and Ideals of the Mexican Revolution* (Philadelphia: The American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1917), p. 13.
- <sup>22</sup> "Diario de los debates," *El Pueblo* (Mexico City), 17 December 1916, p. 2.
- <sup>23</sup> *Constitution of Mexico, 1917* (Washington, D. C.: Pan American Union, 1968), p. 8.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.
- <sup>25</sup> Meyer, op. cit., p. 30.
- <sup>26</sup> José Mora y del Río, *Instrucción pastoral*, as quoted in Quirk, op. cit., p. 100.
- <sup>27</sup> Pope Benedict XV, *Carta a los arzobispos y obispos de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*, as quoted in Jesús García Gutiérrez, "La Iglesia mexicana y los constituyentes," *Todo*, 23 September 1954, p. 20.
- <sup>28</sup> For an excellent look at the dialogue between Mexican and American Catholics see Francis L. Broderick, ed., "Liberalism and the Mexican Crisis of 1927: A Debate Between Norman Thomas and John A. Ryan," *The Catholic Historical Review* 95 (October 1959), pp. 309-326.
- <sup>29</sup> Quirk, op. cit., p. 103.
- <sup>30</sup> Jesús García Gutiérrez, "Calumnia. Que algo queda," *Todo*, 17 January 1946, p. 40.
- <sup>31</sup> Quirk, op. cit., p. 105.
- <sup>32</sup> Francisco Orozco y Jiménez, *Memoir*, as quoted in Quirk, op. cit., p. 106.
- <sup>33</sup> This law (Decree 1927) virtually severed the Mexican Church in Jalisco from any meaningful relationship with Rome.
- <sup>34</sup> *Diario de los debates del Congreso constituyente*, as quoted in Meyer, op. cit., p. 14.
- <sup>35</sup> In fact Quirk terms the period from 1920-1924 "The Obregonian Renaissance." Quirk, op. cit., p. 112.
- <sup>36</sup> Narciso Bassols, *Obregón* (Mexico City: Editorial Nuestro Tiempo, 1968), pp. 165-167.
- <sup>37</sup> Obregón as quoted in Quirk, op. cit., p. 120.
- <sup>38</sup> Quirk, op. cit., pp. 132-133.
- <sup>39</sup> Meyer, op. cit., p. 49.
- <sup>40</sup> *Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Episcopate of the United States on the Religious Situation in Mexico*, as quoted in Quirk, op. cit., p. 185.
- <sup>41</sup> Jesús García Gutiérrez, "Peor está que estaba," *Todo*, 14 October 1954, p. 37.
- <sup>42</sup> Quirk, op. cit., p. 232.
- <sup>43</sup> Following Theda Skocpol's argument, the influence of foreign powers placed the Cristero revolt in an international context and, therefore, brings it closer to a true revolution. See Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 14-22.
- <sup>44</sup> Quirk, op. cit., p. 245.
- <sup>45</sup> José Revueltas, "Dios en la tierra," in *El cuento hispanoamericano*, ed. Seymour Menton (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1986), p. 264.



# U.S. Democracy in Crisis?

Paz Consuelo Márquez Padilla\*



After a prolonged political and legal battle, President-elect George W. Bush.

When this issue of *Voices of Mexico* was in the planning stages, we agreed to include an article about democracy in the United States that would encompass the November election results. No

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one ever imagined the hair-raising political uncertainty that the United States would still be experiencing. How can one of the oldest modern democracies suffer from this kind of paralysis at the beginning of the twenty-first century?

Perhaps one of the most interesting and successful political experiments

of modern times has been the U.S. democracy. Federalism's founding fathers created a normative structure to balance popular participation with good government. They appealed to the people but distrusted the masses and established filters to avert both anarchy and tyranny. More than an ideal soci-

ety, they sought to create laws that would resolve the problem of order without falling into either absolute power or unredeemed populism. This meant that they did not imagine and aspire to an ideal society, but that, à la Hobbes, recognizing individuals' interests, passions and selfishness, they attempted to build not a Leviathan, but a filigree of checks and balances that would result in, if not the best of

from the whole process. Nevertheless, if we compare U.S. democracy with that of other countries of the time, in 1776, we can indeed see just how innovative its great political experiment was.

Today, Afro-Americans, women and young people can vote. However, the U.S. continues to have indirect elections: through this system, the winner of the popular vote—even if only by

ing only the popular vote, campaigns would ignore small states and put all their efforts into those where the majority of the population resides. If we look at the two main campaign strategies in the recent elections, we can see how Albert Gore concentrated almost exclusively on the large states, while George W. Bush designed a strategy that also tried to win the small ones. There is really very little incentive, then, for small states to change the current electoral system, which gives them great importance in their cherished federal system.

The 2000 election is undoubtedly a watershed in U.S. political life and its effects are still not completely clear, its rhythms and undesired consequences still not completely tangible. This poses several questions.

The first question that I would like to ask is why we are not celebrating a landslide victory for Democratic candidate Al Gore, as the positive economic indicators over the last few years would have led us to believe likely. The economy grew by 4.5 percent and unemployment dropped to one of its historic lows, 3 percent. The economy grew constantly in the eight years of Democratic President William Clinton's administration, a record without precedent in the last century. In my opinion, Al Gore was unable to reap the rewards of those successful Clinton years because his campaign strategy included the need to also distance himself from the outgoing president with regard to moral questions. He did not want to base his campaign on Clinton's victories, perhaps because of his own personal relationship or his own personality. Unfortunately for the Democratic Party, he managed to distance himself not only from the

The electorate lost its place and was unable to tell the difference between the compassionate conservative and the new Democrat on the different issues. That confusion was reflected in the outcome.

governments, minimally the least bad of governments.

One of the great dangers envisaged by Jay, Hamilton and Madison was the threat of power in the hands of the masses, easily manipulated by powerful economic groups, that could become either a tyranny of the majority or anarchy.

Their idea, curiously, was to defend the minorities; not, obviously, the minorities of today, with their own interests and origins, but the minorities of large property owners, in contrast to the majority: the dispossessed masses.

That was why they did not opt for direct elections and designed a complex electoral system. What is more, the founding fathers thought that those who did not pay taxes should not have the right to vote: to have rights, you had to also shoulder obligations. And forget about Afro-Americans, women and young people, all totally excluded

one vote in a state— takes all the electoral votes for that state. The only exceptions are Maine and Nebraska, which gives a certain number of electors to the winner and the rest to the loser. This electoral system has worked well except on four occasions in the nineteenth century. However, some surveys have shown that, following the post-November-7 controversies, more than 65 percent of the population thinks the electoral system should be changed. This will probably not happen, however, mainly because such a change would require a two-thirds vote in both the House of Representatives and the Senate and approval by a majority of state Congresses.

Support for such a reform would be difficult to gather mainly because the small states would almost certainly come out against it. If elections for the presidency were direct, consider-



Gore distanced himself not only from Clinton's morals, but also from his achievements.

Clinton presidency's morals, but also from its achievements.

When he picked Joe Lieberman, a Democratic senator who had attacked Clinton during the impeachment process, to share the ticket, the vice president separated himself from the moral criticisms of the president during the Lewinsky case. Gore's campaign speeches did not, however, clearly recognize Clinton's successes, which, despite the moral problems, still give him among the highest job-approval levels for any president in the last year of his term.

Albert Gore seemed to be the perfect candidate. On the plus side, he was part of an administration that had scored undisputed victories in the economy, and he personally seemed

morally beyond reproach. Today we should be watching his landslide victory, but as things stand, no matter which of the two candidates is proclaimed the winner, he will not have a clear, decisive mandate.<sup>1</sup>

As things stand now, if George W. Bush confirms his narrow victory in Florida, he will have sewn up the majority of the Electoral College. However, Gore will have won the majority of the popular vote. The difference at the time of this writing was only 537 votes, which means that if new districts count their votes again, Gore could take Florida. We must not forget that this is a fight for the most important political post in the world. Therefore, neither candidate will be willing to step down because of mis-

takes in the count, mistakes that usually go unnoticed but that in this election have become crucial because they make the difference between being the president of the United States or not. For that reason, the peculiar situation in Florida—governed, by the way, by the Republican candidate's brother, Jeb Bush—favors Gore when he argues for the need to do a recount “for the victory of democracy.”

Whoever wins and takes office January 20 will, in the best of cases, be presiding over a divided government and, even worse, a society in conflict electorally. Even though the Republicans have a majority in the House, it is only by 8 or 9 seats. So, even with a Republican president, Republican representatives will hike up the cost

of their votes since it would take only a handful of them to upset or even block the executive's work by throwing their support to the Democrats. The Senate will probably be even, with 50 Democrats and 50 Republicans, if the last seat in dispute goes to the Democrats. Under these circumstances, clearly the future president will have difficulties in governing.

with a Congress divided almost down the middle between the two parties with a slight advantage for the Republicans. We would be talking about a constant threat of gridlock and paralysis of the administration.

Clearly, neither of the two candidates could carry out the major changes they promised and, curiously, they would have a very similar agenda. Who-

of the chief executive is fundamental. Also, the effects that political uncertainty may have on the U.S. economy and that of the world as a whole are considerable.

During the campaign, both candidates resorted to what seemed the best salesmanship in the political market. Both presented themselves so much at the center of the spectrum that it was practically impossible to tell them apart. They were extremely cautious about the key questions: for example, Bush on abortion or Gore on gun control. We can say that the electorate lost its place and was unable to tell the difference between the compassionate conservative and the new Democrat on the different issues. That confusion was reflected in the outcome. If we look at the voting results, Bush chalked up points from the hard Democratic vote and Gore from the Republicans. According to the first analyses, the undecided voted for both candidates in equal numbers.

The candidates' differences, although on fine points, were not as insignificant as the campaigns would seem to indicate. In the Florida conflict the Democrats demanded counts and recounts of the votes until the voters' real intentions were clear; while the Republicans thought the rules should not be changed in the middle of the process, because it seemed to them a threat to U.S. democracy and the rule of law.

For Americans, federalism is a fundamental part of their political system. For that reason, it is no small matter for federal bodies to intervene in local matters. Nevertheless, today's circumstances might lead to an intervention in which the final decision about the elections could even be

The 2000 election is undoubtedly a watershed in U.S. political life, and its effects are still not completely clear, its rhythms and undesired consequences still not completely tangible.

Let us imagine the scenario if Bush is the winner. There is a danger that the most conservative groups—knowing that they have the presidency, a Republican Congress and the possibility of naming four Supreme Court justices—could try to dominate the three branches of government. The Christian Coalition could impose an agenda on its Republican president to carry out the longed-for “conservative revolution” that Newt Gingrich talks so much about. What would be almost impossible for a president with a Congress so evenly divided between the two parties would be to try to make any profound, polemical reforms. George Bush, despite controlling the majority of the three branches of government, would not have a mandate and real, total control.

In the other scenario, with a victory for Al Gore, the obstacles a Democratic president would face are clear,

ever finally sits in the Oval Office will have to deal with the challenges of education, the problems of social security and access to health services and medicine for senior citizens. What is more, a weak president would be more tempted to resort to confrontation and war in his foreign policy since the U.S. public always supports presidents more in times of crisis overseas.

I should also point out the role that both parties' centrist groups will play in Congress, given that they will have to build the bridges needed for the government not to become paralyzed.

This means that, regardless of who is president when this issue of the magazine goes into circulation, the winner will have little room for manoeuvre. What should be a concern for us, given that, is that he will also have little room for manoeuvre in matters of foreign policy, where the leadership

made by the Supreme Court and the federal Congress —U.S. legislation and political traditions both make it a possibility— when they make use of their attributions to ratify or rectify the vote in the Electoral College. The Supreme Court, in fact, has already announced its intervention by agreeing to hear the suit brought by the Republicans against the new vote recounts in Florida and the Democrats' suit against the decision to certify the vote in Florida and the assignation of its 25 members of the Electoral College to George W. Bush, giving him 271 votes, versus the Democrats' 267, the closest vote in history. The checks and balances between federal and state powers must respect each body's jurisdiction to a maximum. Each state has its own electoral laws and designs its own ballots.

It is highly probable that this election will stimulate an interesting discussion among academics and politicians alike about the U.S. electoral system. But in the end, the most likely outcome is that it will remain the same. Nevertheless, U.S. citizens should remember —just as we know very well in Mexico— that democracies are expensive, and similar federal procedures and rules are needed to ensure greater certainty about election results.

The most delicate question at this crucial moment was that no one could clearly see the outcome. And the proof is the interminable series of suits and appeals that have complicated matters more and more, leading everyone into an unpredictable legal labyrinth.

Undoubtedly, the 2000 electoral process has been a major learning experience for U.S. citizens, many of

whom did not vote at all because they either thought things were fundamentally all right or that their vote would not make a difference. In 1996, only 49 percent of the electorate voted, and in 2000, just 50 percent did, also a low turn-out. More than 65 percent of those who did not vote this year, later said they were sorry when they realized that their votes really did

The 2000 electoral process was a learning experience for U.S. citizens, many of whom did not vote at all because they either thought things were fundamentally all right or that their vote would not make a difference.

make a difference. The important lesson here is that the degree to which citizens participate, even in the most consolidated of democracies, is the factor that decides the political future of nations.

Given everything we have considered, we can again ask ourselves the question: Is U.S. democracy in a fundamental crisis, a crisis so severe that its very existence is threatened?

For there to be a constitutional crisis, one of the branches of government would have to not follow the orders that another branch rightfully gave it, or the members of the Electoral College would have to not take a vote. None of that was out of the realm of possibility, even though it did not happen.

The United States is going through a critical moment, but, as I have already said, this experience will serve as part of a general revaluing of its democracy

and electoral system. Other countries would probably have been the scene of major unrest if they had had elections that close. In the United States, in general, people resorted to the right mechanisms to try to deal with the situation. Its democratic structure was effective enough to resolve an extremely difficult situation and the loser will finally accept defeat. Nevertheless, this does

not mean there have been no costs. I will just mention three: first, the institutions themselves were brought into question by accusations of partisan dealings; second —and this is more sensitive— the legitimacy of the presidency has been questioned since, whatever the result, presidential power will be objected to by a large part of the population; third, some people have talked about usurpation of functions in different bodies of the complex structure of checks and balances in U.S. democracy. ■■■

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> At the close of this edition, the Supreme Court had voted to stop the recounts and Al Gore had recognized George W. Bush as president-elect. [Editor's Note.]

Í n d i c e

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HERNAN CORREA ORTIZ

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# An Illegitimate Election In the Perfect Democracy

Gabriel Guerra Castellanos\*



Seldom has it been so difficult to differentiate the two candidates for president.

If anyone had dared to predict the circus that the U.S. presidential elections would become, he or she would surely have been branded naive, deluded or just plain ill willed.

Not even a hack author of best sellers could have thought up a plot like this one: in the world's most advanced democracy, no one knows who won the presidential elections.<sup>1</sup> Most believe that the popular vote favors the Democratic candidate. The majority of votes in the Electoral College may well go to

the Republican hopeful. The pivotal state, Florida, is governed by the brother of one of the candidates, and a badly designed ballot has caused 19,000 votes to be invalidated while another 3,000 people —most of them Jewish— voted by mistake for a candidate known for his anti-Semitic views whom they abhorred. The official who approved the confusing ballot design, which could mean Gore's defeat, is a member of his own party. The first recount came up with different numbers than the original count, but many are now alleging that if there were a manual recount, that result would also be different. The

absentee ballots took forever to arrive and when they finally did, they were not all counted. Both candidates' lawyers have rushed into battle in Florida, and the Republicans threaten to demand recounts in Iowa and Wisconsin if Gore does not accept defeat. Meanwhile, with no prompting from anyone, New Mexico has declared that its vote counts may be wrong due to computer errors.

The validity of the election is in doubt; three weeks after election day, no one knows who the next president will be. The whole world is laughing at the United States.

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Days and weeks are going by and what seemed a simple counting problem with a quick solution is becoming more and more complicated. Incredible, isn't it? And if the novel continued, revealing that on that same election day, the wife of the outgoing president was elected to the Senate—as was a dead governor—we would all think it was a work of science fiction—and a bad one at that.

And this science fiction novel wouldn't end there. The spectacle unfolding in the United States is truly impressive, not only because of the comedy of errors—that would be funny if it

the presidential election, but also exhibits severe organizational deficiencies before, during and after the elections. Let's start from the beginning.

Every four years, the United States makes preparations for its party well in advance. The presidential hopefuls prepare politically, emotionally and, above all, financially for their party primaries. Months beforehand, they flutter around the states of Iowa and New Hampshire, the sites of the first primaries, which, given such a short time for competition, can be critical. At the same time that they hold town meetings, the

The spectacle unfolding in the United States is truly impressive, not only because of the comedy of errors but also because of what it has shown us about the fragility of the U.S. institutional structure.

weren't taking place in the world's most powerful country—but also because of what it has shown us about the fragility of the U.S. institutional structure.

So, this political fiction has given birth to something truly worrying. In the world's most technologically, economically and—we thought—politically advanced country, nobody knows what to do about a close election. This is not just a problem of the dysfunctional electoral college system, which has shown itself to be a total anachronism, but something much more serious. In the perfect democracy, there is no mechanism for the agile, effective, unquestionable resolution of disputes.

Let's look at things one by one. First of all, we have the baroque, muddled electoral system, which not only makes it possible for the candidate who receives fewer votes to come out the winner in

hopefuls do fund raising, gathering the ammunition they need for the first battle, the battle of campaign funding, in which they need to show not only public presence and popularity, but also the ability to survive. The U.S. primaries are really the second test that these aspiring presidents must pass; the first is raising enough funding to be competitive, at least during the initial stages.

The most serious and recognized candidates begin this task well in advance and from the start have considerable funds at their disposal to be able to meet the needs of the whole process as well as to intimidate their less fortunate rivals. The millions needed for their war chests—which are poured in with no hope of recovery since they are not yet considered campaign expenses—automatically exclude many. Money, however, is no guarantee of success.

U.S. democracy, an example for many, has its peculiarities, and they are particularly noticeable in times like these: from the disproportional weight that money gives candidates making it possible for personalities like Ross Perot or Steve Forbes to become contenders to be feared, to the role the media plays, not only because of the scandals they uncover during campaigns, but also because of the negative influence of television newscasts which increasingly force candidates to encapsulate their messages and—at the same time—allows them to not have to explain them.

The system for campaign financing in the United States is incredibly complex, brimming with measures to limit the amount of contributions and at the same time full of chances to get around the rules.

Let's take, for example, "soft money," on which there is no limit. These funds—which cannot be used to support a candidate, but are allowed for supporting specific topics or issues—have to be donated to the parties, and that is what campaigns are made of.

Without soft money, the television battles would not last as long, nor would they be as intense. The particularly hard fought contest for the Congress, given that the Republicans had a majority of only six seats, also required substantial funding. Curiously, most congressmen or women have their reelection guaranteed: in the last election, a full one-fourth of the candidates had no one running against them. In the 2000 elections, at the most 40 districts were really hotly disputed. And, of course, that is where the money was concentrated.

In the limited space available, I do not intend to go into great detail about the baroque workings of campaign



funding. Suffice it to explain “soft money” to see how ineffective the barriers are in stopping the river of dollars that threatens to overflow the system. The upper limit of contributions for each donor to a candidate in a federal election is U.S.\$1,000. The idea, both clear and praiseworthy, is to make sure that certain donors cannot try to influence the candidates unduly. It sounds good, but in addition to those U.S.\$1,000, the generous donor can give U.S.\$5,000 to a political action committee which can in turn use it for the campaign.

Well, some would say, it still is not very much money. But that is just the beginning of the story. The limits on contributions apply only to federal campaigns, so additional money can be sent along to associations or groups that promote specific policies and that can also support certain candidates. Unions, religious groups and organizations of all kinds can raise funds and use them in favor or against a party or a candidate. Donors can also, of course, give money to local campaigns, not covered by federal limits, so in a given state a party can receive all the funds needed to indirectly support its federal candidates.

That is soft money, so difficult to control that it has already caused several major scandals. In 1996, the controversy around campaign donations reached a crescendo. It became public that Asian businessmen had made donations in the millions to both the Democrats and the Republicans, although it was the Democrats who were in the limelight. That same year there was a quite a flurry in the media about invitations to big Democratic Party donors to have coffee at the White House and sometimes even stay over-

night. It was common practice, both then and now—but to be fair, it was common in other administrations also—for the president or other high officials to attend party fund-raisers.

To get an idea of campaign costs, we should remember that in 1996, the bill for the presidential election was close to U.S.\$500 million. On a single night in January of that year, the Republicans raised U.S.\$16 million at a Washington dinner. The money, of course, is not used to buy devotion or votes, but it does smooth the way. While the candidate who spends the

up with U.S.\$21 million, and the tobacco industry gave U.S.\$7 million. The whole question of money naturally leads us to question the democratic essence of the system. Just as an example: a Houston law firm raised U.S.\$185,000 among its lawyers and partners. From one company to the next, the democratization of individual donations is slowly being eroded. But even beneath the surface, the whole process of the primaries presents other, much more serious and profound questions.

These are questions that go to the heart of the electoral system itself in

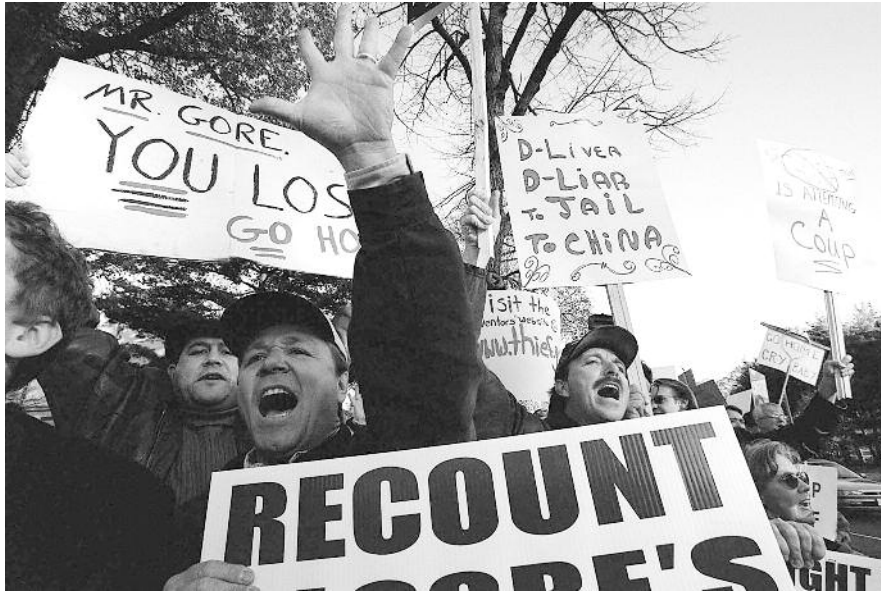
The system for campaign financing in the United States is incredibly complex, brimming with measures to limit the amount of contributions and at the same time full of chances to get around the rules.

most does not always win, it is certainly the case that no candidate can survive the exhausting round of the primaries if he/she does not have strong economic backing. There are many examples of talented, imaginative hopefuls who have had to withdraw in the first stages of the process for lack of funds.

So, where does this money go? With the supposed limits on individual donations, you might think for a moment that hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of U.S. citizens participate in the exercise of democratically financing campaigns. But that is not the case. Money comes mainly from large companies, particularly those with something to win or lose in Washington. According to a CNN report, in 1996, the financial, insurance and real estate sector kicked in with U.S.\$45 million. Communications and electronics came

the country that sets itself up as an example of a democracy to the world. And the answers lead us to conclusions that can only make us more skeptical.

Let us remember the 2000 primaries. Everything pointed to close races, races that could shake up the rigid schema of the two main parties. Well, the pleasure only lasted two months. What promised to be an exciting primary campaign in which the Democratic and Republican Parties would pick their candidates for the presidency in an exemplary exercise of democracy with the participation of all sectors of U.S. society ended abruptly. The byword was “the independent vote,” and that is just what the two candidates and the two big parties set out to get. John McCain showed during his short challenge the enormous importance that this almost forgotten sector of the



If vote counts and procedures were reviewed in other states, we would undoubtedly be faced with more than one disagreeable surprise.

U.S. electorate can have. Since Ross Perot launched his campaign to shake up the system with his millions and ended up being a presidential candidate twice, and with the creation of the Reform Party, Democrats and Republicans alike had alternated between discrete flirtation and disinterest in this group that is so diverse and unconventional that it seemed impossible to court.

Once they got over their shock at Perot's first campaign in 1992, when he received a respectable number of votes and probably cost George Bush, Sr. his reelection, both the Democrats and the Republicans apparently thought that those votes were irretrievably lost, rebel ballots that would be impossible to recapture.

That reasoning persisted until Jesse Ventura, an ex-wrestler and now governor of Minnesota, appeared on the scene. Ventura shook up the establishment of his state with his victory at the polls, but even then he was seen as more of a colorful phenomenon than

anything else, and in no way as a sign that a sufficiently important sector of the electorate was sufficiently disenchanted to vote for someone like him to put him in the state house.

John McCain's strategy of ignoring the party organization and leaders seemed to destine him for political demise long before he actually disappeared from the game. Declared a non-competitor from the start by George W. Bush and the Republican leadership, the senator from Arizona was able to spark surprising interest and sympathies among a part of the public who would not normally have bothered to vote in the primaries, much less in the Republican primaries.

At times, it seemed that McCain's insurgent campaign was going to revive interest in politics among people who had been alienated from it. Democrats and independents voted for him, but so did young and old disenchanted with the predominance of big money and the lack of concrete pro-

posals for changing the system of campaign funding. With no more of an innovative proposal than that, and with an even more conservative agenda than Bush on everything else, McCain was able to kindle enthusiasm the likes of which had not been seen for a long time among voters in more politically unsophisticated areas.

For many, McCain represented a return to the basics, a nostalgic look at a past—in reality, non-existent, or at least idealized—in which politics was a more noble endeavor and money had less influence.

The current system of primaries failed all these prodigal sons who were suddenly interested in politics again. Not only because less than half the convention delegates had been elected when the convention's outcome was already a foregone conclusion, or because almost half the electorate had still not decided whom it was going to vote for in November, but because the very peculiar system and tight schedule

of candidate selection practically ensure the victory of whoever raised the most money earliest and got the support of the party patriarchs (and matriarchs) in the key states, who are, naturally, the first to choose their delegates.

The defeats of Bill Bradley and McCain were preordained from the start, even though McCain managed to strike a few blows before succumbing to the organization, capital and Bush's contacts. The rules for the primaries, which vary from state to state, also made his life difficult; in New York, he even had to fight to get his name on the ballot. Born to lose? Perhaps. But the challenge from the insurgents simply underlined just how baroque and unequal this selection process is.

It's not that any of this is by any means strange or special. In the last analysis, everywhere in the world, the system or party old guards try to hold on to their influence and privileges. What makes the U.S. process different is that, amidst growing disinterest and apathy, this time there seemed to be a light at the end of the tunnel for people who wanted to hook up to their country's political process. In the end, though, the light was the head lamp on the train of big money and special interests that ran over more than one naive spectator.

So those were the primaries. Then came the formal campaign, and we saw both candidates try to turn themselves into apostles of the center. Seldom has it been so difficult to differentiate the two candidates for president, and the reason is that, in addition to trying to get the independent vote, both men decided to seek out the votes of the political center, that undefined, political Nirvana.

The social mobility that so characterizes the United States does not seem to apply in politics. The two presidential hopefuls are proof: Gore, in addition to being vice president, is the son of a very famous Tennessee senator, a legend in Washington. George W. Bush makes great use of his middle initial to try to differentiate himself from his father, former President Bush. So, the two contenders for office are not precisely revolutionaries. Not just because of their family history —after all, they cannot be blamed for that— but more because they are two men who have

self, but not too much. In the end, nobody in the United States is fighting against the economic growth and prosperity that have accompanied this administration, and these are perhaps Gore's main strong points. So, he was left only with the possibility of pointing to the enormous moral difference between himself and Clinton, without actually criticizing him: Gore's administration would be "for the family," with no big breaks with the past.

George W. Bush was also his party's clear favorite, having only recently come onto the political scene when he

Seldom has it been so difficult to differentiate the two candidates for president because, in addition to trying to get the independent vote, both men decided to seek out the votes of the political center, that undefined, political Nirvana.

gotten as far away as possible from any political extreme; both are the "most centrist" men of their own parties.

In contrast with his boss, Clinton, Al Gore is much less passionate about social policy, although he does share Clinton's pro-business leaning. A conservative in family matters, the only passion Gore is known to have is for science and technology.

Addicted to the most complex, convoluted details, Gore can get totally immersed in technical discussions with technicians and win. His interest in the environment, his calling card for years, is less visible today. Gore faced the difficult dilemma of wanting to follow an enormously successful, popular president who at the same time had lots of vulnerable spots. So, as a candidate, he tried to differentiate and distance him-

was elected governor of Texas. When he won, at the Republicans' darkest hour, he sought to distinguish himself from his party's radical wing, proclaiming himself a "compassionate conservative." He never denied his party's main positions, but he tried to "soften them" to make himself more inclusive. Some people remember how his father tried to distance himself from the excesses of Reaganism by describing himself as kinder and gentler. His son tried to find the political center without distancing himself from his electoral base. He was betting on reclaiming moderate voters who disliked the Clinton scandals but did not share the crude discourse of many other Republicans.

Why was the race so close? If politics were logical, in a country at peace,

prosperous as never before, victory seemed served up for the vice president. But it didn't work out like that.

Gore decided to break with the past and distance himself from Clinton, demanding that the latter stay away from the floodlights for the whole campaign. A risky strategy: if there is anything Clinton knows how to do, it's campaign.

Bush bet on his personal charm, above and beyond national issues. And his bet seems to have paid off. The "compassionate conservative" was convincing.

Secondly, third party candidates can aspire to nothing more than aiding in the defeat of one of the two main hopefuls. Except in the recent case of Ross Perot, who spectacularly financed his own campaign, there is no decent space available for other political alternatives. Nader's vote count is pathetic if we compare it to the attention he got in the media or what his candidacy cost Gore. And Buchanan and his Reform Party are better off not even being mentioned.

The McCain phenomenon was temporary and ephemeral. His con-

in Florida has put it all in even greater relief. Neither the Electoral College nor the courts seem to be up to dealing with such a disputed, contentious and contested election. The results are not very transparent and the possibilities for manipulation countless.

This doesn't involve only Florida, although some would like to think it does. If vote-counts and procedures were reviewed in other states, we would undoubtedly be faced with more than one disagreeable surprise. U.S. democracy and its until recently exemplary electoral system have shown their vulnerability. An Achilles heel the size of an entire state.

But it's not clear whether Americans actually realize this. In its December 3 editorial, *The New York Times*, traditionally acerbic and skeptical, said, "...disgruntlements will take place against a backdrop of full public confidence in the resilience of the political process....Any wise observer —domestic, foreign, or interplanetary [sic]— has to conclude that Americans' final verdict...will be that theirs is a country in need of new voting machines, not a new electoral system."

With this degree of self-criticism on the part of a media institution, it will be difficult to expect that anyone — even a cynical New Yorker— will have learned anything from this incredible election that just went on and on. **NMM**

This election's lesson should be that the U.S. electoral system is out of date, ineffective and perhaps even not very democratic. The results were not very transparent and the possibilities for manipulation countless.

Even with the uncertainty about the final outcome, we can point to certain decisive elements: Ralph Nader, the Green candidate, who took votes away from Gore; the power of special interest groups, like unions or the National Rifle Association; and, of course, the parties' ability to mobilize their sympathizers. Despite the decline of politics and ideology, parties still seem to be good for something in the United States.

Regardless of the parties' effectiveness —or lack thereof— the fact is that this election has revealed a political system which, first of all, is incapable of getting more than half the voters out on election day. No topic on the U.S. electoral agenda is important enough to interest the other half of the voters: not tax issues and not abortion, much less a reform to the electoral system or campaign funding.

Continued presence in the Senate is no guarantee that his favorite issue, campaign finance reform will be examined, much less after the post-electoral bloodletting.

No matter who wins, he will sit in the Oval Office in such a weakened state and with such a shaky mandate that he will not be able to initiate great reforms or even try to be a proactive president. The balance of forces in Congress would make it difficult in any case, but the lack of legitimacy or the smidgen of it that the winner will have will make his victory a pyrrhic one.

This election's lesson should be that the U.S. electoral system is out of date, ineffective and perhaps even not very democratic. Money plays too big a part, as does handling the media. We already knew that. But the quagmire

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> When this issue went to press, the U.S. Supreme Court had voted 5 to 4 to stop the recount of votes in Florida and return the case to the state Supreme Court. The next day Albert Gore accepted defeat and congratulated George W. Bush as president-elect of the United States.

# Canadian Foreign Policy And Latin America Morality or Pragmatism?<sup>1</sup>

Athanasios Hristoulas\*



Photos by Dante Barreira

Toronto's most visible landmark, the CN Tower.

In recent years, Canada has emphasized the role of morality in the formulation of its foreign policy. This morality, referred to as human security, is broadly defined as “safety for people from both violent and non-violent threats. It is a condition or state of being characterised by freedom from

pervasive threats to people’s rights, their safety, or even their lives.” More precisely, Canadian foreign policy decision makers understand human security as an alternative way of seeing the world, in other words, “taking people as its point of reference, rather than focusing exclusively on the security of territory or governments.”<sup>2</sup>

Canada’s role is to serve as a model political-economic system for other less developed states in the international

system. Canadian decision makers argue that the country’s democratic institutions, its excellent human rights record, its ability to integrate peoples and cultures from different parts of the world make it an example for others to follow. And as others and I have argued in different contexts, this makes Canada a post-national state.

Post-nationalism places emphasis on the idea that the international system has changed dramatically since the end

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of the Cold War and that the classic definitions of national and international security (defense of the territory and sovereignty of the state) are less than useful constructs upon which to base policy. States need to redefine these concepts in order to take into account less traditional threats such as human rights violations, the global environment, international organized crime and corruption, just to name a few. Second, in order to resolve these new security threats, states need to cooperate, not compete. State competition in the area of security is considered not only outdated in the post-Cold War world, but dangerous. Third, this cooperation may require a pooling of resources—what is often referred to as collective security. In turn, to make collective security function properly, states must be more flexible in their definitions of sovereignty.

Policy-makers and academics alike have extensively criticized this reorientation in Canadian foreign policy as being either idealistic—and therefore unworkable—or interventionist—and therefore a violation of the principle of state sovereignty. The purpose of this article is to examine the first criticism by suggesting that human security has and will continue to serve Canadian interests in the post-Cold War period.

#### HUMAN SECURITY, COMPETING AND COMPLEMENTARY EXPLANATIONS

Three explanations can be employed to understand the motivations and interest Canada has in human security. The first emphasizes the fact that civil society groups and public opinion inside Canada agree with the policy. Partly correct, this perspective suggests that human security buys votes. A second

Since joining the OAS officially in January 1990, Canada has seen itself as taking on a “leader’s” role, pushing forward consensus on issues such as landmines, institutional renewal, human rights and drugs.

perspective argues that human security gives Canada international prestige and serves as an important tool to distinguish the country culturally and internationally from its more powerful cousin to the south, the United States. A much more practical third perspective suggests that human security directly affects Canada’s economic interests. This political-economy approach links human security to Canada’s global trade policy.

To understand this final and extremely practical explanation for human security one needs to look at Canada’s historic relations with the Europeans. As argued by Sberro, the common perception of Canadian-European relations is that they are essentially peaceful and mutually prosperous.<sup>3</sup> Canada and Europe enjoy a common history and culture, and Canada maintains strong political ties with Great Britain and France. Canada was the first American nation to participate in World War I, and later in World War II; along with Great Britain and the United States, it was instrumental in liberating large parts of Western Europe. During the Cold War, Canada maintained a large

military contingent in Europe under the auspices of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and with the end of the Cold War, Canada still maintains its presence in Europe by participating in collective security operations throughout the region.

However strong the political-cultural-security linkage between Canada and the Europeans may be, the same cannot be said with respect to trade. The value of Canadian exports to Europe is minuscule when compared to total European Union imports (2 percent in 1997) and is expected to get even smaller.<sup>4</sup> Canada has lost significant market share in Europe over the last 30 or so years, leading Sberro to argue that Canada is the country that apparently maintains the least far-reaching and far-seeing relations with the European Union in the whole Western Hemisphere.<sup>5</sup> The most obvious reason why this has occurred is that Canada is too small economically to be of interest to the Europeans. Canadian governments throughout the twentieth century have implicitly recognized this fact, which is why they have emphasized the cultural and common historical links to continental Europe and Great Britain. In essence, the argument for why the Europeans should pay attention to Canadians is that in some important ways, Canada is European. To demonstrate this, Canadian governments have historically been very active in political-security matters in Europe.

As mentioned before, Canada participated actively in World Wars I and II and was instrumental in designing and implementing Cold War security structures, namely NATO. Part of this, of course, has to do with genuine cultural ties to the continent, but a more

cynical observer could argue that Canada's historic participation in Europe is the result of an effort to gain political and, more importantly, economic favors from the Europeans. In brief, NATO as a security institution was designed not only to help defend against possible Soviet aggression but also to keep Canada in Europe. However, throughout the Cold War, "Canada started to become increasingly disillusioned with the Europeans precisely because it did not see any kind of economic benefits from active political-security participation."<sup>6</sup>

Given this perspective, the end of the Cold War was not the best event as far as European-Canadian relations are concerned. With no obvious role for NATO (and therefore Canada), Canadian decision-makers began to realize that the country needed to diversify its relations (both economic and political). The response to this new post-Cold War reality was Canada's opening up to Latin America and joining the Organization of American States (OAS).<sup>7</sup>

So where does Canada find itself now with respect to its relations with Europe? Canada still has a very strong interest in keeping NATO alive because it guarantees Canadian access to Europe. Therefore, when its members were able to redefine the purpose of the security institution in the 1993 Treaty of Rome, Canada breathed a temporary sigh of relief. The problem does not end there, however, because more and more, the Europeans are talking about what they call a Common Foreign and Security Policy (or CFSP), which is a political-security union designed to complement economic association. The CFSP, of course, would necessarily exclude Canadian and U.S. participation. Thus, the closer the Europeans get



Canadian decision makers are starting to pay more attention to Latin America.

to a CFSP, the more nervous Canadian decision-makers will become.

However, what makes Canada even more nervous is the prospect for the expansion of the European Union (E.U.) into Eastern Europe. A growing E.U. poses a triple problem for Canada:

1. Canada will continue to lose its already small market share in Western Europe, which will become increasingly autonomous and self-sustaining with the inclusion of Eastern European states.
2. Canada will lose its market share in Eastern Europe, as it will no longer be able to maintain autonomous trade relations within an enlarged E.U.
3. Canada is in a weak bargaining position in comparison to the Europeans; a larger E.U. will make that problem even worse.<sup>8</sup>

Given the likelihood of the E.U. expanding geographically as well as in its functions and roles, Canada is likely to place much more attention on Latin America in the future. And as Nossal has argued, Canada in the post-Cold War period has finally become a "coun-

try of the Americas." However, given the fact that many Latin American states have a long way to go in terms of democratization, economic partnerships with these countries will be questioned domestically. In other words, Canadian public opinion will not readily accept economic linkages with countries with high levels of corruption or that systematically violate human rights. In that sense, human security serves an important public opinion purpose within Canada: it demonstrates that Canadian foreign policy is not only trade policy and that, therefore, Canada will condition future economic cooperation with Latin America on how successful these countries are in modernizing their political and social systems.

A second possible and practical explanation for the emphasis on human security in Latin America stems from the Canadian belief that in order to establish a successful economic relationship with a country, that country must be a political success as well. Pressure around issues such as human rights, electoral reform, social justice

and the emphasis on collective security questions like peacekeeping and peacemaking are considered necessary in order to assist Latin American countries in achieving political stability. Ultimately, this political success will ensure economic success, which in turn directly benefits Canadians. Indeed, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien highlighted this linkage recently when President-elect Vicente Fox suggested that a priority for the new Mexican government will be the eradication of poverty. Chrétien's response was that this was good for Canada because Mexicans will now be able to buy Canadian products.

#### APPLYING HUMAN SECURITY IN THE AMERICAS: THE OAS<sup>9</sup>

Over the last decade, Canada has pushed the human security agenda within the context of the OAS. Since joining the organization officially in January 1990, Canada has seen itself as taking on a "leader's" role, pushing forward consensus on issues such as landmines, institutional renewal, human rights and drugs. According to statements by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), Canadian human security priorities include eight specific areas.

The first priority identified by DFAIT for the General Assembly is promoting the concept of human security itself. DFAIT statements repeatedly explain the importance of the concept, arguing that globalization and the changing nature of the international system necessitate a redefinition of our understanding of security. The second priority area for the OAS General Assembly from the Canadian perspective is the

illicit trade in drugs. However, rather than framing the issue as a challenge to legal systems and state sovereignty, Canada has attempted to bring the states of the region to look at the issue in the light of human security. The third and fourth priority policy issues have been landmines and firearms. Largely due to Canadian initiatives, the organization has signed agreements to eliminate landmines in the hemisphere in the long term and to control manufacturing and trafficking of firearms. The Canadian government argues that each of these issues has an obvious human security aspect, though other states in the region again associate these two areas with questions of national sovereignty and traditional security. Human rights and the promotion of democracy are the fifth and sixth priority areas for Canada in the OAS in the 1990s. These two issues demonstrate the truly radical nature of Canada's redefinition of security, for human rights violations and non-democratic systems can be included under the heading of violent and non-violent threats. The eighth area that reflects the influence of the human security paradigm is Canada's drive to strengthen civil society throughout the Americas. The influence of civil society in the Canadian foreign policy process is largely responsible for the human security agenda, and now Canada seems to want to bring about similar social and policy structures throughout the region.

#### CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The greater the pressure within Europe to expand the roles, functions and geographic scope of the E.U., the greater the emphasis Canada will place on

Latin America. Canada would have preferred strong links to Europe given cultural and political similarities. However, Canadian access to Europe is less than certain, and Canada is searching for new partners in Latin America in order to guarantee its economic success.

The emphasis on human security within this context can be explained by the fact that many of Canada's new partners are still developing politically. In the minds of Canadian decision makers, human security is a way to help Latin America become a stable and reliable trade partner. Ultimately, human security may be an attempt to make Latin America look a little more like Europe. ■■

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank the Mexican Association of Culture for its ongoing financial assistance.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca>.

<sup>3</sup> Stephan Sberro, "Canadá y la Unión Europea: una relación posmoderna," *Revista Mexicana de Estudios Canadienses*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2000).

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca>.

<sup>5</sup> Sberro, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> B.W. Muirhead, *The Development of Canadian Trade Policy: The Failure of the Anglo-European Option* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1992), p. 176.

<sup>7</sup> Kim Nossal, *The Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy* (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca>.

<sup>9</sup> The OAS-human security discussion presented here borrows heavily from Duncan Wood and Athanasios Hristoulas, "Pragmatic Idealism in Canadian Foreign Policy? Human Security and Latin America," *Comercio Exterior* (forthcoming, 2001).



# Amalia Hernández Dancer and Choreographer

Alberto Dallal\*



Amalia Hernández was a pioneer in creating the Folk Ballet of Mexico, a vast yet compact company that became an institution which acquired a certificate of naturalization and its own legitimacy before larger and larger audiences both in Mexico and abroad.

Modern dance in Mexico owes its beginnings mainly to a group of splendid dancers and choreographers who, starting in the 1940s, unleashed a veritable Mexican movement of modern dance. One of these brilliant women was Amalia Hernández, born September 19, 1917. In addition to being an outstanding dancer and chore-

ographer, she used her energies to create professional, monumental performances, that originated and were inspired in folk and vernacular dance. Her abilities and gifts as a maker of works of modern dance inspired by nationalism allowed Amalia to retrieve the essential elements of folk dances that, nationwide, over several centuries, had become representative of the zeitgeist, the ceremonies, the yearning for grace and dance talent, as well as the most direct, colorful and agile expressions of the Mexican way of being itself.

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\* Writer, art critic, researcher at the UNAM Institute for Aesthetic Research and current director of *Universidad de México* magazine.

Like other members of her generation, Amalia sought out and compiled basic information, rhythms and stage production secrets both through specific studies and her eloquent, direct experience. She added to this, however, a quality that in today's world has become basic to the functioning of all the performing arts: organizational ability.

Amalia Hernández was a pioneer in creating a vast yet compact company that became an institution which, at the same time, acquired a certificate of naturalization and its own legitimacy before larger and larger audiences both in Mexico and abroad. When she founded the Folk Ballet of Mexico, then, in 1952, she was fully aware of the implications and had her hand on the pulse of the many details involved in a dance company's professionalism. She made sure, for example, that all the different elements that went into it were functional: the artistic director, the rehearsal choreographer, the *régis seur*, the rating of the dancers according to aptitude and technical training, the stage manager and his/her assistants, the wardrobe master/mistress, the set designer, the teachers of the different dance techniques (mainly classical), the business manager, etc. Amalia clearly mastered all these aspects and foresaw the need to either train people for them or shift responsibility to a professional to oversee them. At different times she oversaw not two, but three or four permanent or traveling companies that brought to wide audiences in Mexico and abroad a brilliantly staged repertory that has won the company to date more than 200 nation-

al and international prizes. Amalia herself was given the National Prize for the Arts in 1992.

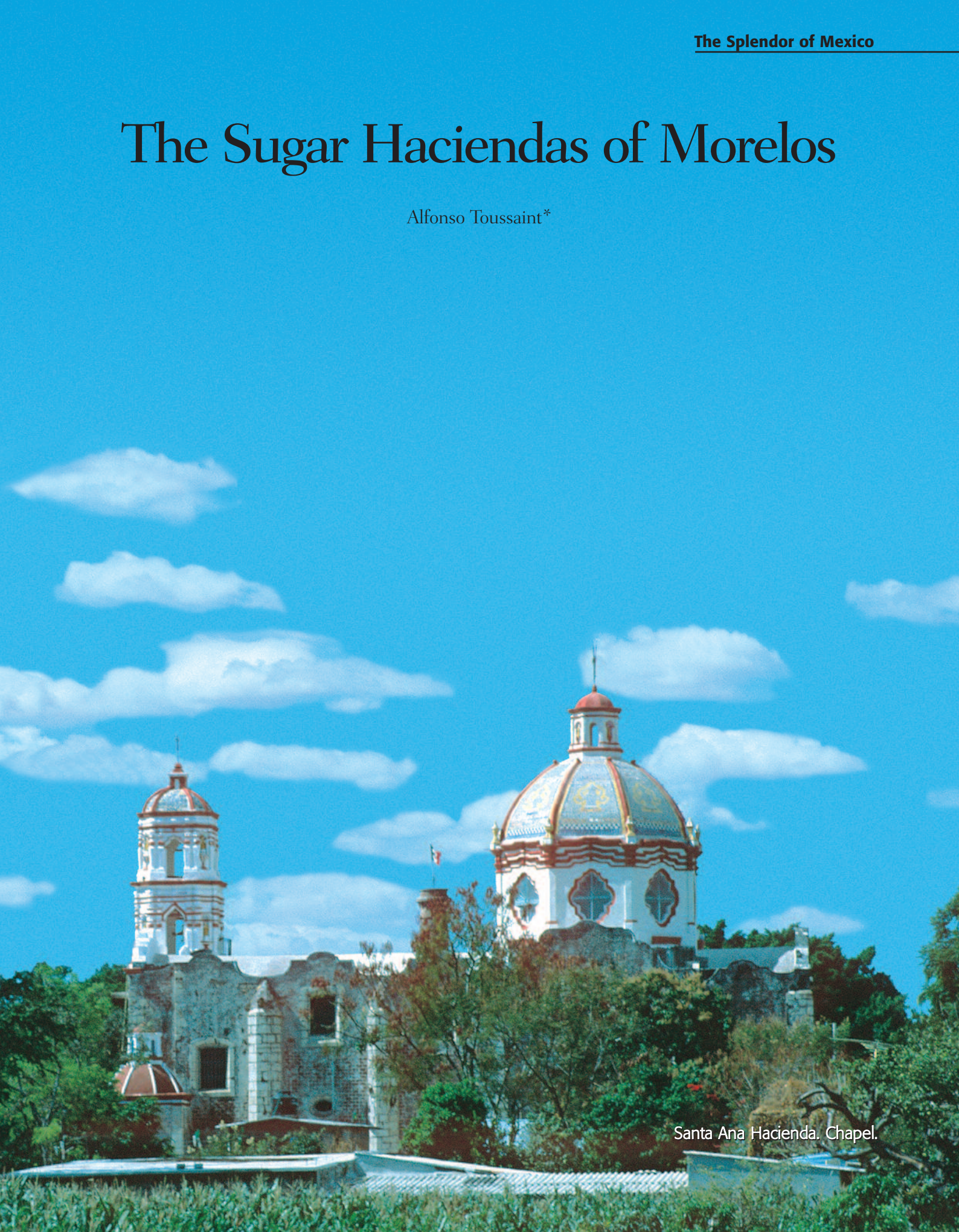
An important and little known side to Amalia Hernández was her profound love of all forms of dance. Despite having immersed herself as a choreographer and dancer in modern and folk dance, she never stopped supporting classical and contemporary dance, both through personally hiring teachers, dancers and choreographers and by supporting the production and the very existence of companies and groups in these two genres. Amalia also offered scholarships and direct financial support to dancers in both genres so they could study here in Mexico and abroad.

Amalia Hernández was part of the historically special group of talented, beautiful women who established modern dance in Mexico, the direct predecessor of today's theater and contemporary dance, women like Guillermina Bravo, Ana Mérida, Josefina Lavalle, Martha Bracho, Rosa Reyna, Guillermina Peñalosa, Raquel Gutiérrez, a stunning generation that was clearly a precursor of Mexico's feminist movement. But Amalia Hernández added to these talents her lucid vision and her detailed organizational efforts aimed at recreating before the eyes of the world the popular dance that we as Mexicans always favor with joy or community solidarity, as spectators or participants. Amalia's death on November 4, 2000, is a respected and respectful threshold for future generations of Mexican dancers and choreographers to continue and broaden out their exemplary professional efforts and work. **MM**



# The Sugar Haciendas of Morelos

Alfonso Toussaint\*



Santa Ana Hacienda. Chapel.

What is now the state of Morelos was once almost completely included in the Marquisate of the Valley of Oaxaca, awarded to Hernán Cortés by King Charles I of Spain (better known as Charles V, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire).

In his pursuit of wealth, Cortés tried different crops and finally—probably based on what he had seen in the Antilles—decided to establish a large plantation and sugar mills on his lands.

\* Architect and restoration expert living in Morelos.

For the rest of his life, he retained the monopoly on this crop, which then passed on to his son Martín, the second marquis. His grandchildren preferred to rent out the land, and so many different factories were established, giving rise to a great sugar-producing center that lasted until the twentieth century.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, Cortés introduced sugar cane cultivation to the mainland of the Western Hemisphere when he founded Morelos' first sugar plantation in Tlaltenango and gave his steward, Bernaldino del



Photos by Daniel Munguía

San José de Vista Hermosa Hacienda, Tequesquitengo. Aqueduct.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, Cortés introduced sugar cane cultivation to the mainland of the Western Hemisphere when he founded Morelos' first sugar plantation in Tlaltenango.



Santa Cruz Vista Alegre Hacienda, Mazatepec. The "big house".



Entrance to San Gabriel de las Palmas Hacienda, Amacuzac.

Castillo, permission to establish another at Amalco. A third plantation in Axomulco, owned by Antonio Serrano de Cardona, was their keen competitor. The three were pioneer sugar haciendas in the state.

The royal concession of the marquisate to Cortés slowed the development of other sugar complexes in the area, and it was not until the end of the century that royal grants were given in Oaxtepec and Casasano, which lay in the royal lands of Plan de Amilpas in the Cuautla-Huautla River Basin. When Don Pedro Cortés

y Ramírez de Arellano, the fourth marquis and the conquistador's grandson, came into his title and inheritance, he decided to free up control and earn some easy money giving out grants at every turn. This made for a proliferation of small and large plantations that took advantage of the growing demand—and therefore the hike in prices—to set up numerous factories.

For 300 years, the procedure dubbed “direct heat” was used to refine the sugar, and this determined the typical architecture of the main houses of Morelos' sugar haciendas.

Practically all the ex-haciendas still have the “big house,” the boss' residence. These buildings were usually large enough to house several families at a time.



Santa Cruz Vista Alegre. Its chapel and smokestack are worth seeing.



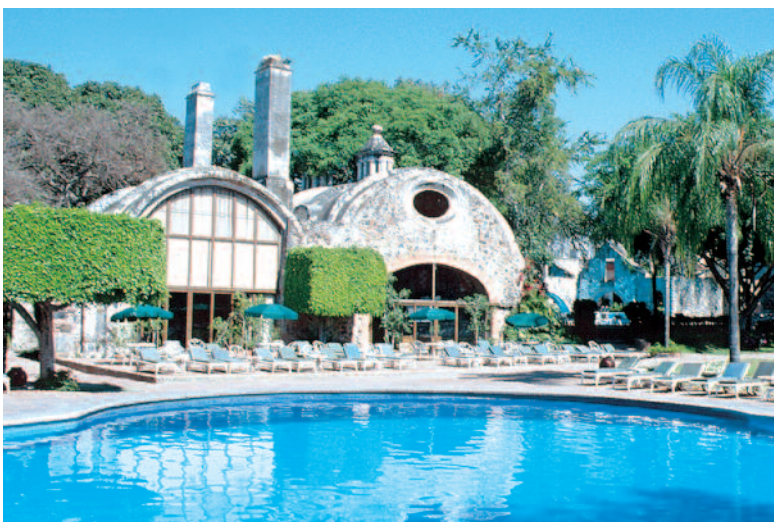
San José de Vista Hermosa. Founded in 1529 by Hemán Cortés.



Santa Ana Hacienda. Its beautiful church still offers religious services.



During Colonial times San Gabriel de las Palmas was first a Franciscan monastery and then a sugar plantation.



Cocoyoc. The *trapiche* is now a discotheque.



Santa Cruz Vista Alegre produced large amounts of sugar even during the Revolution (1912-1913).

The *batey* was a large patio where the cane was received and stored before going into the *trapiche* or mill. Here the juice—or *guarapo*—was extracted from the cane in the grinding machine, usually with three rollers—the *trapiche*, strictly speaking—powered first by animals and later by a hydraulic wheel. A press was sometimes placed near this building or inside it to extract even more juice from the cane.

Almost all the sugar plantations that used hydraulic power to move the grinder built aqueducts—veritable works of art—that carried the water over exquisite arches. In addition to driving the mill, the water was used to irrigate the fields and service different parts of the main buildings.

The “direct heat” was applied in the boiler house to large copper vats called *tachos* or *tachas* (which should not be confused with later steam boilers). In defecation tanks the sugar juice was treated with lime, evaporated and filtered to separate out scum and sediment and make what was called the *melado*, the liquid ready to be crystallized into sugar. Workers who became highly skilled in handling the product were known as “masters” or “sugar *maeses*” and held a privileged position at the mills. At one end of the same building was the cooling and drying area. Surrounding and underneath the building was a system of canals or conduits through which the water for washing, the residuals and foam (called *cachazas*) and the sugar juice itself ran.

Next to the boiler room was the *hornalla*, a space usually covered with a barrel vault where the remains of the sugar cane was stored after being sun-dried in its special patio. The fiber was used as fuel for the direct heat process which was applied through ingenious conduits to the bottom of the boilers or vats in the next room. The smoke escaped through one or several *chacucos* or chimneys built directly over each burner.

Also next to the boiler room were the tanks, sunken deposits for washing and preparing the clay funnels needed in the boiler room.

The funnels were left in the *purgar*, a long room with little or no ventilation, inside large

earthen jars that gathered the syrup that could not be crystallized, which was poured out and stored in sunken tanks. To purge the juice and whiten the sugar, the purest possible clay was used. Given the conditions required, they used the basement of the main house itself, as well as those of other buildings.

The cheapest possible agent, the sun, was used to dry the sugar loaves and whole patios were used for that purpose. Later it became common to use rooftops. Sophisticated systems of moveable shingled roofs were even designed to protect the sugar at night or on rainy days. Remains of some of these roofs still exist.

Other buildings were needed to conclude the process (sending the paper-wrapped sugar, packed in leather sacks, or the syrup in clay jugs on mules to their destination), as well as for the company's general operations: storerooms, warehouses, a carpenter's workshop, a blacksmith's shop and a potter's shed, used to replace the clay funnels, jugs and items needed for maintenance like shingles, pots, balusters, etc. In some places we can still see the corrals for mules, bullocks and horses, as well as the *trojes* or granaries whose weekly rations of corn supplemented workers' wages.

Practically all the ex-haciendas still have the "big house," the boss' residence, whether he was the owner, administrator or a renter. These buildings were usually large enough to house several families at a time, with room left over for visitors. The living quarters were normally on the second floor, with storage, the purging room or offices on the ground floor. Very often the houses boasted beautiful arches, reminiscent perhaps of the symbol of the power of the conquistador Cortés, his palace in Cuernavaca, in turn probably inspired by the Diego Colón's castle in Santo Domingo. They had interior patios, innumerable, spacious —if scantily furnished— rooms beautifully decorated in stone, mortar or wrought iron, and orchards that shaded the inhabitants from the harsh sun of this hot land, provided delicious fruit and offered the perfect place for romantic moonlight meetings.



San Gabriel de las Palmas. The company store attracted customers from far and wide.



Cortés' Hacienda was one of the wealthiest under the Viceroy.



Santa Ana, together with Santa Clara and San Ignacio, was one of the region's most important haciendas.



San Gabriel de las Palmas. Kitchen.



San Salvador Hacienda. Facade.

The chapel was an essential. Sometimes it was part of the main house itself, but usually it was an independent, occasionally exaggeratedly large, structure. It served the needs of both workers and owners, who sometimes had a private entrance that came directly from the “big house.” Today, these buildings are evidence of the magnificence of some of the haciendas: in some cases their rich decoration has survived, and often they have been converted into the church of the towns that sprang up around the central buildings of the haciendas. These ancient walls have seen many a fiesta, baptism and wedding in their time.

The hacienda’s central buildings were surrounded by walls that served both to delimit their area and for defense. Some have embrasures (those vertical slits that allow the inhabitants to aim a rifle from behind the walls in relative safety) in strategic places. The main door is usually under an arch, with a belfry, a bell tower, a coat of arms or a cap, on which often a date or the hacienda’s name is carved. Each of these walls would have doors to the fields, pasture lands and the rest of the land around the main buildings, doors that would be much simpler than the main entrance, through



San José de Vista Hermosa. Chapel and smokestack.





Santa Cruz Vista Alegre. Purging room.



San José de Vista Hermosa, destroyed by the Zapatistas during the Revolution, was restored in 1945 to become a hotel.



Santa Cruz Vista Alegre. Chapel.

which carts laden with sugar cane would be brought into the patio to be unloaded with a crane.

Each hacienda had its own *tienda de raya* or company store, usually next to the main door, sometimes with a porch of its own, sometimes as an adjunct of the warehouses or independent granaries. These stores often developed into veritable commercial emporia, famous for miles around, attracting customers from far away. The company store was very important in company-worker relations because a large part, if not all, wages were paid in kind.

When new production techniques were introduced in the second half of the nineteenth century, mainly the use of steam, new, many-storied buildings called “stoves” were built to facilitate the purging process, as well as rooms for the dynamos or electric generators and sometimes special rooms for the new steam boilers. Also required were buildings for making spirits and the imposing smokestacks that could then be built out of bricks reinforced with metal, or later on, out of concrete.

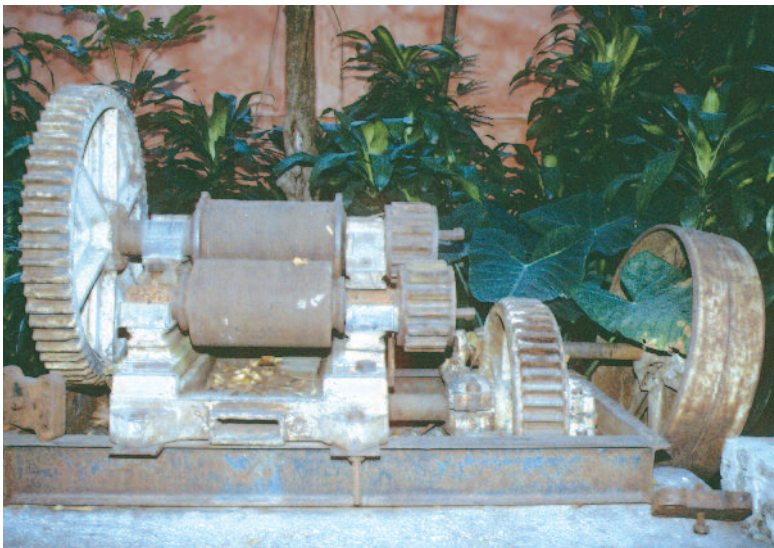
Since the haciendas did not exclusively process sugar cane, some of the remaining buildings were originally used to mill wheat or for the produc-



San Gabriel de las Palmas. Dining room.



San Miguel Cuahutitla. *Hornalla* storage area.



Cortés' Hacienda. Mill.



San Carlos Borromeo Hacienda. Smokestack.

tion and processing of indigo or coffee; some are grain silos or saw mills; and almost always there are the remains of alcohol factories.

With time, the main buildings of the haciendas changed, adapting to the needs of the new techniques. In some cases, the evolution they have experienced is clear to the eye. It is interesting to see, for example, in the mortar work used to increase the height of a free-standing

wall that all kinds of materials have been used, including sugar molds and jugs.

Today, the public can visit many of these old haciendas because they have been turned into hotels, resorts, rest homes, rice mills or warehouses. Others have been abandoned and await the hand of teams of restorers who could return them to their former grandeur and breathe new life into them again. **NM**

# The Last Zapatistas Forgotten Heroes

Francesco Taboada Tabone\*



Photos by Sarah Perrig

Born in 1896, Colonel Emeterio Pantaleón still fights for peasants' rights in Morelos.

*We are not fish that we live from the sea,  
We are not birds that we live on air,  
We are men who live from the land.*

A peasant from Morelos

The sacred book of the Maya, the *Popol Vuh*, says that man was made from corn. Anyone who has visited the Cacaxtla murals painted by the Chicalanca Olmecs in the eighth century will already know how important these origins are throughout Mesoamerica. One of the paintings depicts a corn field in

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\* Film and documentary maker residing in Morelos.

which all the ears have human faces. We Mexicans are men of corn. But we have forgotten this; so much so that most of the corn consumed in Mexico is imported.

When Mexico-Tenochtitlan fell on August 13, 1521, Cuauhtémoc (or “falling eagle”), the last Aztec *tlatoani* made a prophesy, now part of Mexico’s oral tradition: Our sun has left us, he has left us in the shadows, we know he will return to illuminate us once again. While he dwells in the house of the dead, there in our houses, mothers and fathers must teach their children how one day we shall rise reunited gaining strength from the new sun to fulfill our destiny. These words spelled hope for a people condemned at the time to domination.

The war of independence, the nineteenth-century civil wars including the war of the Reform and the Revolution were fought among criollos, people of mestizo blood or foreigners.

Indigenous people were never protagonists in any central struggle in Mexico; repeatedly used as cannon fodder, their voice was always forgotten. That is until 1910, when Emiliano Zapata headed up a revolution against the established order. Even though he began by defending the land in his native Anenecuilco, his struggle attracted supporters all over the country and became a

national movement, the first that really included “profound Mexico” in a national project. The taking of Mexico City and the triumphal entrance of Francisco Villa’s and Emiliano Zapata’s peasant armies December 6, 1914, is the only historical event in Mexico in which indigenous people participated as the origin and aim of the struggle. Cuauhtémoc’s prophesy seemed to be coming true. Hope was transformed into victory. Nevertheless, neither Zapata nor Villa had political ambitions, and so they formed a revolutionary government to represent their struggle and left for home to be near their people. This is how the Zapatista Commune was formed, an attempt to carry out a national project based on Mexican specificities and roots. For the entire year of 1915, the state of Morelos was truly free and sovereign. “For us, the commune was the triumph of the revolution,” says 98-year-old veteran Mauricio Ramírez Cerón, a Zapatista intelligence agent. “For the first time we were autonomous and we worked for ourselves, not for a boss or the corrupt government. I remember how enthusiastically everyone worked. It was like a miracle. But it wasn’t a miracle that had come out of thin air. It was a miracle we had fought for and that we deserved, a miracle for which many of our comrades had given their lives.” But



Pictured here with his wife, Private Valeriano Villamil joined Zapata’s army to avenge the government’s murder of his father.



Mauricio Ramírez Cerón, born in 1903, acted as a spy when he was still a child.

the Zapatista miracle could not survive. “Venustiano Carranza had no stomach for us Indians being free. I think he was jealous...and that was when he brought in the whole army to finish us off.”<sup>1</sup>

With Villa defeated in the north, Carranza used all his forces to fight the last holdout of “barbarism” that stood in his way to the presidency of Mexico. But the residents of Morelos considered themselves Zapatistas first; so, when he went up against Zapata, he went up against the entire state.

With the constant government attacks, Emiliano took refuge in the mountains and kept the struggle alive using guerrilla warfare until 1919. In that year, he circulated a manifesto originally written October 20, 1913, which read, “We will not cease for a moment in our struggle until, victorious, we can guarantee with our own head the advent of a time of peace based on justice and, as a result, economic freedom. It must always be remembered that we do not seek honors, we do not hope for rewards, that we will simply live up to our solemn commitment to give bread to the disinherited and a free, peaceful, civilized homeland to the generations of the future.”<sup>2</sup>

A few days later, Emiliano Zapata would be gunned down, betrayed by Pablo González and Jesús Guajardo, who were applauded by Pres-

ident Venustiano Carranza. The hope of redemption, or simply of a life with dignity for the peasants and indigenous people of Morelos lay on the ground at the Chinameca hacienda April 10, 1919.

Two years ago, I set myself the task of seeking out the last “men of corn,” the last surviving combatants of the legendary Liberating Army of the South, the last Zapatistas, to do a documentary film.

Little by little, I made friends with them. These centenarians had experienced slavery on the haciendas, the revolutionary war and 70 years of PRI dictatorship and were now part of Mexico’s supposed transition to democracy. They were men with much more far-reaching opinions than I had expected.

After living in the countryside for months, I found a history that was completely different from the one told in textbooks. These men’s absolutely realistic testimonies showed the true face of the history of Mexico.

“One day my father and I saw how the hacienda owner shoved a peon, one of my father’s fellows, because he had answered him back,” says soldier Felipe Ramos Vargas, born in 1901. “The peon fell into the tank of sap and was cooked to death.”



Feliciano Mejía, a courier who hid messages in his sandals, is now a sculptor.



Doña Concepción was one of many *soldaderas* who served in Zapata’s army.



Private Concepción Amazende Choca, born ca. 1889, was a pottery merchant when he joined up.



Felipe Ramos Vargas (1901-1999) joined the army at 13 after being beaten by a hacienda owner. He served directly under Zapata.



Don Feliciano.

“Carranza brought the Yaquis to fight Zapata. They forcibly recruited them in their homelands and brought them here as cannon fodder. I heard Obregón himself tell them, ‘Go on, go on [into battle]! If you die, you’ll all be reborn in your homelands.’ And, since what they wanted was to go home, they fought all the harder... And all that just to end up dead on the battlefield.” This is the declaration of foot soldier Valeriano Villamil, who added, “The government gave the Yaquis and their soldiers a marihuana cigarette and a piece of brown sugar before every battle to make them fearless.”

“To make a bomb, we used any kind of skin, a cow hide or a pigskin. We would fill it with bits of iron and wrap it up and put a fuse on one end. When the government came, we would light it and throw it at them from about 10 meters away. It would slaughter people,” said Colonel Eme-terio Pantaleón. “The houses had double walls with hidden entrances so that when the government came all us women would hide there,” says *soldadera* (a woman foot soldier) Irene Clara Villalba.

“I remember one day my mama was saving the last hen we had so we could eat it, and then the Zapatistas arrived. So, my mama hid my little brothers and me together with the hen under the covers, but the hen started to suffocate and cackle. The Zapatistas found us and my mother begged them not to take the last hen she had. The head of the troops said not to worry, that they weren’t going to touch the hen. My mother was happy, but the commander said that they were going to take me along because they needed a *soldadera*. So they took me away. That man was later my husband, but he’s dead now,” says *soldadera* María García Rogel widow of Sánchez.

The most controversial event was the death of Zapata: many from Morelos refused to accept that it had happened. “No, he didn’t die. His close friend died because another friend took Zapata away, an Arab friend; he took him to Arabia and that’s how we know he didn’t die because Nicolás Zapata [Zapata’s son] told me. ‘Don’t you believe it, Audias,’ he said to me,

‘Don’t you believe what people say. My father is alive and any day now I’ll take you to him,’” says Audias Anzures Soto, a 102-year-old Zapatista soldier. This messianic vision of the return of Zapata is linked to other testimonies that identify him with the myth of the reincarnation of the priest Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcóatl, a myth deeply rooted in the towns around the Tepozteco mountain in Morelos.

Colonel Emeterio Pantaleón, born in 1896, says that on his way to the meeting with the traitor Guajardo, Zapata met some washerwomen at a stream and, “The women said that they hadn’t come to wash but just to make time to be able to tell Zapata that the night before they had been serving dinner to Captain Guajardo and had heard about the treachery and that he should go back and not go into the hacienda because they were going to kill him. With that, General Jesús Salgado said to Zapata, ‘Listen, compadre, I know you’re brave but they’re going to kill us, penned in in the hacienda patio, they’re going to give it to us. We’ve loved each other all our lives and I promised to give my life for you, and I’m going to.’”

Hope for the return of the hero, a local interpretation of Cuauhtémoc’s prophesy, has kept the peasants in the Morelos countryside united.

However, today, this Zapatismo is confronting an enemy that it never imagined it would have. The mass media has begun to sow discord and division in the countryside, as it broadcasts messages that foment ambition, envy and other vices engendered by the wish to “have,” counterposed to the desire to “share” that until recently was the rule in the area. This, together with the Carlos Salinas administration’s changes in Article 27 of the Constitution to promote the sale and purchase of the land, have sunk Morelos in a chaos of urban and rural development, whose most noticeable symptoms are unemployment, crime, prostitution and drug use, not to mention the ecocide plaguing the region. “What used to be cultivated fields is now covered with buildings and foundations for supposed housing projects in places that don’t even have basic services



Private Marcelino Anrubio Montes said, “Zapata wanted something beautiful: for all of us to have a safe place to live and enough to eat”



The land left to Lieutenant Galo Pacheco Valle by Zapata was taken away from him by Morelos Governor Jorge Carrillo Olea in the 1990s.



Matías Cruz Arellano, a corrido writer, picked up a guitar instead of a gun.



Captain Baldomero Blanquet accompanied Zapata and Madero in Mexico City. "We put Madero in the National Palace and then he dismissed us courteously and left Porfirio Díaz's people in our place. They betrayed him. That was his mistake."

yet," says agricultural engineer Wolfango Aguilar Flores. "The peasants who have had to sell their lands often end up as beggars on the streets of Cuautla, Cuernavaca or Mexico City, and others have had to emigrate abroad because selling their land makes them outcasts in their towns for having betrayed the legacy that General Zapata left them at the cost of fire and blood."

"We're returning to the times of the latifundia under Porfirio Díaz!" shouts 104-year-old Lieutenant Galo Pacheco Valle. "Today injustice, ambition and tyranny reign, and that's the truth!" Private Audias Anzures pounds his cane on the ground for emphasis, saying, "What good was Zapata's revolution to us if we can no longer grow crops because all the water is contaminated, because the fertilizers and insecticides the government gives us have eroded our lands, because the foreign companies have eradicated the trees and now there's no rain? What good did the revolution do? None, because today we're worse off than we were during the Spanish inquisition."

This rethinking of this part of Mexican history needed a form of expression. With the support of the Autonomous University of the State of Morelos, photographer Manuel Peñafiel, Sarah Perrig and I were able to film all these survivors

for a documentary entitled *The Last Zapatistas. Forgotten Heroes*.

Of all the Zapatistas we interviewed, only eight are still alive. The others have gone, gone with the pain of an ailing homeland that had forgotten them. When we asked 101-year-old Captain Manuel Carranza Corona what his demands would be if today he found he needed to take up arms again, he answered with only two words. But we did not hear his answer because a moment later, he stopped breathing. The next day, when I had the time to view the rushes of the interview, I raised the volume and I could clearly hear those two words. "Land and Liberty," he said.

For those of us who have had the chance to work on this project and, in general, for me, meeting these forgotten heroes has been a reconciliation with "profound Mexico" and the most rewarding experience of my life. ■■■

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> All quotes from Zapatista soldiers are from interviews with the author.

<sup>2</sup> Emiliano Zapata, *Manifiestos* (Mexico City: Ed. Antorcha, 1986), pp. 23-31.





# Las Estacas A Natural Sanctuary in Morelos

Topiltzin Contreras-MacBeath\*  
Fernando Urbina Torres\*

The state of Morelos is renowned for its natural resources and climate. That, together with its proximity to Mexico's political and economic center, has made it a favorite watering hole for Mexico City residents and celebrities from abroad. In pre-Hispanic times, the Emperor Moctezuma established the first known botanical gardens in what is now Oaxtepec, then a resort for Aztec emperors. Later, Hernán Cortés established his residence in Cuernavaca, and in the nineteenth century, Maximilian had his summer house in what we now know as the Borda Gardens.

Throughout the state, we find a mosaic of natural ecosystems that range from temperate forest in the higher regions to low deciduous jungle in the subtropical areas. Also, thanks to the flow of underwater streams in the Chi-

chinautzin Mountains, the Morelos valleys have more than 50 springs that make urban development, agriculture and industry possible, in addition to tourism, particularly the state's 39 water resorts. Morelos boasts several traditional resorts with springs like Agua Hedionda, Los Canarios and El Papagayo and some technologically developed ones, like El Rollo and Oaxtepec. The Las Estacas Aquatic Park, however, is renowned for its natural endowments, its design and administration.

#### NATURE

The wellhead of the Las Estacas spring spews out more than 7,000 liters of water a second, creating a river of crystalline waters surrounded by the riparian forest that looks like a tropical jungle. Sixty-eight species of plants have been found here, and its upper reaches are dominated by fig

\* Researchers at the Morelos State Autonomous University Center for Biological Research.



Photos by Daniel Munguba

Las Estacas has been recently declared a state reserve.

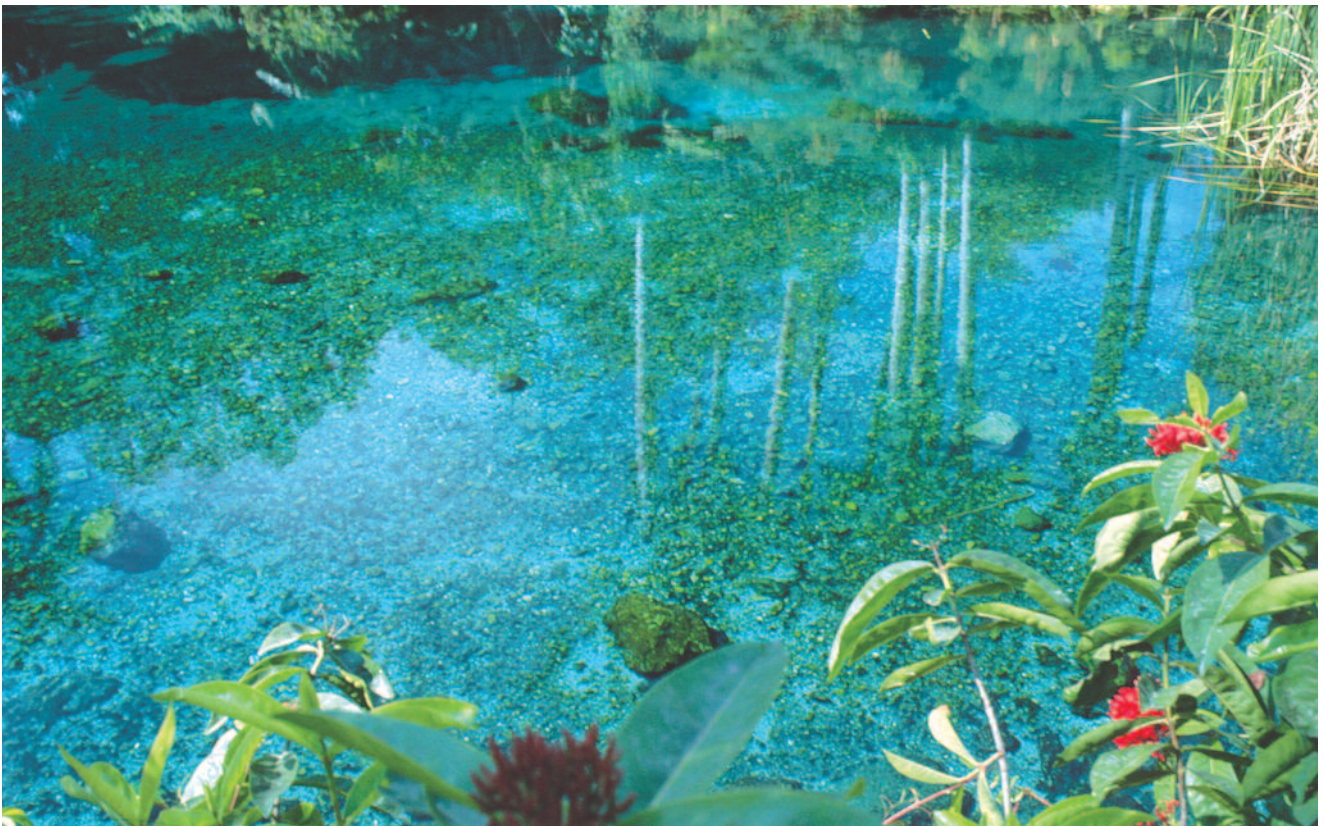
trees and palms. Thanks to the abundant water, this vegetation stays green all year round, making it a refuge for many animals, among them 132 species of birds (including 12 kinds of hummingbirds), 8 kinds of mammals and different reptile species. But the spring itself also holds other species: 11 kinds of aquatic plants and 9 species of fish, some of which are native to this area. All this makes it a veritable sanctuary, particularly given the serious deterioration of the region's aquatic ecosystems.

#### THE HISTORY

On a sunny winter morning in 1941, Don Julio Calderón Fuentes took his daughter Margarita to see one of the most beautiful natural sights in central Mexico. Months before, on a hunting trip, Don Julio had found an amazing wellhead

that created a river of cold, crystalline waters surrounded by luxuriant vegetation contrasting sharply with the dry land around it. From that day on, Don Julio fell in love with the place and moved heaven and earth to get enough money to buy the land; he could think of no better legacy for his favorite daughter.

Fifty years later, in the shade of an ancient fig tree, Doña Margarita de González Sarabia tells us the marvelous story of Las Estacas, a history that dates from the twelfth century when the Tlahuica people settled in the area. During the conquest, some of the Tlahuica towns—among them Yautepec and Oaxtepec—became villas belonging to the Marquisate of the Valley, owned by Hernán Cortés. In the early seventeenth century, the Barreto and Temilpa haciendas were built. A little later, Temilpa became a sugar plantation and refinery, using the river water to drive its mill, incorporating Las Estacas into the hacienda.



Before the revolution, President Díaz would bathe in Las Estacas' mineral-rich waters when he felt ill.



Vegetation stays green all year round making the area a refuge for many animals.

During the War of Independence, the royalist army laid siege to Cuautla, commanded by José María Morelos y Pavón, who picked Generals Ayala and Galeana to break through the enemy lines. They managed to get out of Cuautla, but the royalists defending the haciendas trapped them in Temilpa. The two rebel generals defended themselves until the enemy set the hacienda on fire and killed most of their men. During the 30-year regime of Porfirio Díaz that ended with the Mexican Revolution, the Temilpa hacienda belonged to Manuel de Alarcón, the governor of Morelos. When Díaz felt ill, he would bathe in the spring, seeking to cure himself with the mineral-rich waters. During the revolution, Zapata picked Tlaltizapán as his general headquarters, which would lead us to think he visited Las Estacas. It was in that period that the Temilpa hacienda was destroyed and abandoned by the Alarcón family.

#### THE STRATEGY

Seeking to preserve the natural wealth of the area for present and future generations, for the last three years, Doña Margarita Sarabia and her children have been working closely with a group of conservation biologists from the Morelos State Autonomous University Center for Biological Research. Their efforts are aimed at developing and implementing a proposal for sustainable management of the area that would provide visitors with both leisure activities and comfort, as well as promoting environmental culture. The project includes different kinds of activities, from the design of the concept and image of the park to concrete proposals for conservation and ecological restoration.

Among the important results to date of this group's efforts is the fact that Las Estacas has been declared a state reserve, which at least ensures that no new development projects will



Las Estacas is an example of what can be achieved by people committed to preserving the environment.

be carried out there without taking into consideration existing environmental legislation. In addition, a nursery specializing in plants from the low jungle will be the basis for a reforestation program in the entire protected area as well as the propagation of some endangered species like the *pegahueso* (*Euphorbia fulva*).

One of Las Estacas' successful projects has been environmental education through the "Explore" program, offering training courses and workshops on all educational levels. These include one or several days of land and aquatic activities, such as the observation of nocturnal birds and mammals, or underwater observation of river fish.

Las Estacas may well be the only project nationwide that works to conserve and restore endangered fish species; its efforts include protecting Balsas River Basin species like the native cichlid perch (*Cichlasoma istlanum*) and the Balsas River catfish (*Ictalurus balsanus*).

What can be achieved by linking business people committed to the environment —like the Sarabia family— with research groups is truly remarkable. This work has rendered its first results with the changing attitudes among visitors and the awards given: for example last year Doña Margarita was given the José María Morelos y Pavón medal for ecological merit, a yearly honor bestowed by the state of Morelos to those who have worked to defend the environment.

In 2000, the park itself was given an honorary mention in the "company" category as a recipient of the National Ecology Prize, awarded each year by Mexico's president as part of the celebrations of World Environment Day.

While enormous strides have been made, a great deal is still left to be done. Undeniably, however, there is real commitment to conserving this invaluable natural patrimony of the state of Morelos. ■■■

# The Brady Museum

## A Collector's Item in Cuernavaca

Sarah Sloan\*



Photos by Daniel Munguia

Entrance to the museum from the patio.

When visitors walk through the massive carved cedar doors they enter the private world of Iowa-born collector and artist Robert Brady (1928-1986) whose will stipulated that his “house be open to the public as a museum.” The original adobe and stone sixteenth-century structure has been added to and remodeled over the centuries. Now it is filled with more than 1,200 objects of arts and crafts exactly as Brady arranged and enjoyed them.

The Brady Museum bears the imprint of someone who not only loved artistic objects from all cultures of the world, but who had the

taste and the courage to display them in his own way. Visitors enjoy the decor in the red bedroom, the yellow living room and the tiled kitchen and bathrooms surrounded by the effusive semitropical vegetation of the gardens and the patios.

Since childhood, Robert Brady loved painting and drawing, no doubt encouraged by his mother who gave art classes. The first piece of art he collected, at age 13, was a small ebony figure of a Balinese dancing girl, now on exhibit in the master bedroom of the house-museum. After high school, Brady pursued a career in the fine arts which led him to a degree at Temple University then on to further study in the Barnes Foundation outside Philadelphia. The arrangement of the art in the Brady house as well as the

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\* Director of the Robert Brady Museum.



Clay figures from the state of Guerrero.



The main patio.

variety of cultures and countries in the collection reflect the teaching of his mentor, the collector, Dr. Albert C. Barnes. With his formal schooling behind him, Brady left the United States, never to reside there again permanently. After two years of travel in Europe, Brady settled in Venice for six years, from 1953 to 1959. Among his many friends in Venice was Peggy Guggenheim, who like Brady, left her home, the Palazzo Venier dei Leoni, and art collection as a museum. Peggy is buried in her garden next to her dogs in Venice, as her “Mexican” friend, Robert Brady, is in Cuernavaca. Brady’s portrait of her hangs in the Cuernavaca house. It is an unusual, full-length portrait of Peggy wearing outrageous sun glasses and surrounded by her dogs. This and other paintings by Brady were exhibited in Europe and the United States before he left the Old World for the New in 1961.

Attracted by the exotic, the foreign and the colorful, in 1961 Brady visited Mexico and fell in love with the country. From then on he considered Mexico his “spiritual home.” The following year, he purchased an old house called Casa de la Torre at number 4 Netzahualcōyotl Street, adja-

cent to Cuernavaca’s magnificent Cathedral. Originally, the house was part of a Franciscan monastery built by the conquering Spaniards in the mid-sixteenth century. During the 24 years that Brady lived there, he dedicated much time and effort to the colorful decoration of the house and the iconoclastic placing of his art.

The Casa de la Torre became the perfect setting for the artist to work in and —gracious host that he was— to entertain in. Brady continued to paint until the early 1970s, when he started designing large colorful tapestries which he had woven by a family of craftsmen from the town of Chiconcuac. Guest books in the Casa de la Torre read like a collection of theater playbills, glittering with names like Rudolf Nureyev, Lily Pons, Sophia Loren, Dolores del Río, Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontanne, Erich Fromm, Octavio Paz, David Hockney, Brady’s close friend, Josephine Baker, and his devoted neighbor, Helen Hayes. The list is punctuated with the names of diplomats, artists and jet setters, many of whom have returned to the house since it became a museum. At first they are



Shanti Lesur, life-size Brady rag doll.



The kitchen.



Bedroom.

taken aback to see that so little has changed and they almost expect their former host to greet them warmly as he always did.

Brady not only produced art but collected it as well. He collected everything from Balinese masks, Senufo chairs, pre-Columbian pieces and African padlocks to canvases by internationally well-known painters. Unswayed by trends and fashions, Brady acquired only what he liked and for this reason the many pieces in his eclectic collection have marvelous consistency. Brady's eye —his love

of color, design, pattern and form— served to unite the seemingly unrelated objects. Some of the juxtapositions of the art are startling: Huichol beaded doves perch atop a beaded table from Cameroon; Mexican colonial carved crucifixes hang beside similar images from Puerto Rico, Nigeria and Italy; a French wooden doll of Josephine Baker clad only in her famous banana skirt stands beside an African female Fanti figure. Was this whimsy or insight? Probably both.

The collection on exhibition in the Brady Museum numbers more than 1,200 pieces.

Unswayed by trends and fashions, Brady acquired only what he liked, and for this reason the many pieces in his eclectic collection have marvelous consistency. His love of color, design, pattern and form served to unite the seemingly unrelated objects.

Among the best-known artists represented are Rufino Tamayo, Frida Kahlo, Graham Sutherland, Marsden Hartley, Milton Avery, Paul Klee, Maurice Prendergast and Miguel Covarrubias. Curiously, some of the Mexican art was acquired in the United States and returned to its country of origin —for example, Rufino Tamayo's outstanding 1937 "Still Life" which hangs in the bright yellow living room. Fine examples of anonymous carvings and canvases from colonial Mexico abound, as do first-rate pieces of tribal art from Africa, Oceania and the Americas, enlivened by Mongolese belts, Nepalese goddesses and Egyptian Faience figures.



Mali, harvest fertility symbol.





The pool.



Covered terrace filled with primitive art, mostly pre-Columbian and African.

Fine examples of anonymous carvings and canvases from colonial Mexico abound, as do first-rate pieces of tribal art from Africa, Oceania and the Americas, enlivened by Mongolese belts, Nepalese goddesses and Egyptian Faience figures.

After Brady's death in June 1986, preparations began for converting the private residence into a public museum. Two parallel foundations were established: the Robert Brady Foundation in Mexico and a similar non-profit organization in the United States, both supported by private donations.

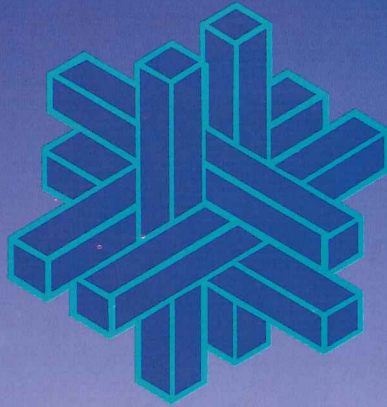
Once the legal structure was in place, work began on the house and the collection, which needed repair, cleaning and restoration. Although Cuernavaca's much acclaimed year-round "eternal spring" is kind to residents, the voracity of the local termites offsets the meteorological benevolence. The adobe walls of the sixteenth-

century structure were sound but most of the beams in the roofs were hollow, and many wooden statues and frames had been invaded by the local vermin. A team of skilled restorers from the National Institute of Anthropology and History in Cuernavaca worked for more than two years conserving and restoring the art, while a crew of architects, masons and carpenters worked on the structure. Paintings were relined, frames and mats replaced, the damaged beams changed and electronic security and museum lighting installed. However, while everything was done to preserve the house and its contents for generations to come, extreme care was taken to make sure that none of the original beauty and symmetry of Brady's house was altered, so that visitors will find this unique collector's item intact.

The house-museum is open to the general public from Tuesday to Sunday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. It has a small cafe in the main patio, a gift shop and an audiovisual projection room. Several areas are available for private luncheons and dinners. In 1999 the museum received over 24,000 visitors from Mexico and foreign countries. **MM**



Brady's favorite piece, the head of a saint.



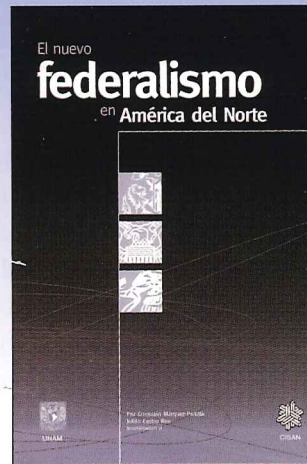
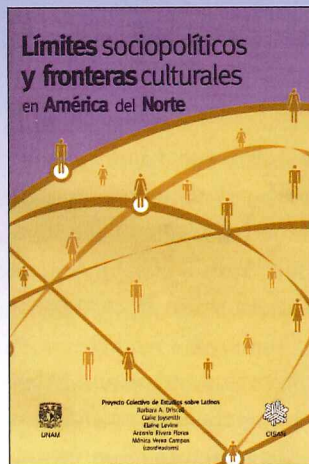
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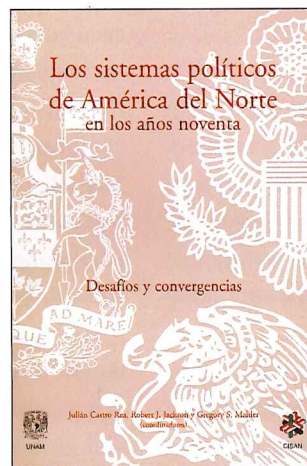
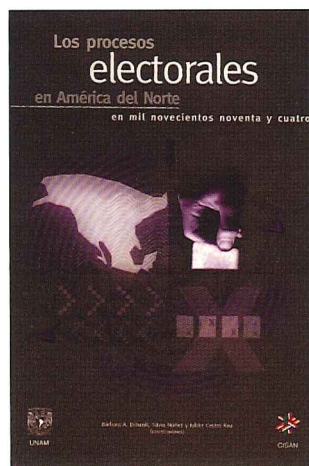
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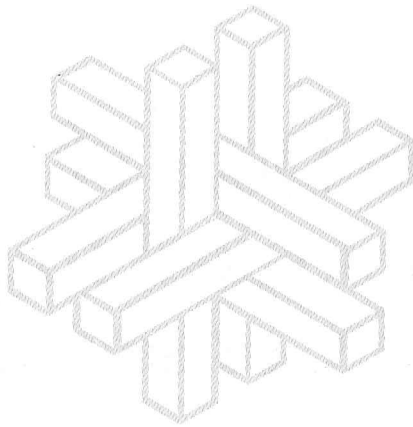
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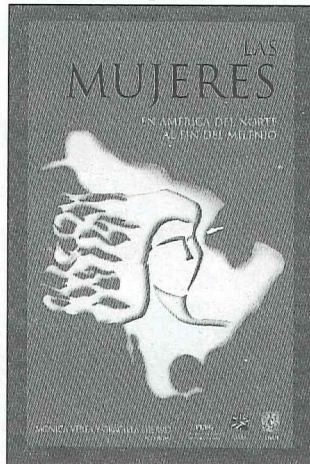
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***Las mujeres al fin del milenio en América del Norte***

Mónica Verea and Graciela Hierro, compilers

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***Estados Unidos y Canadá ¿Signos conservadores hacia el siglo XXI?***

Mónica Verea C. and Silvia Núñez G., compilers

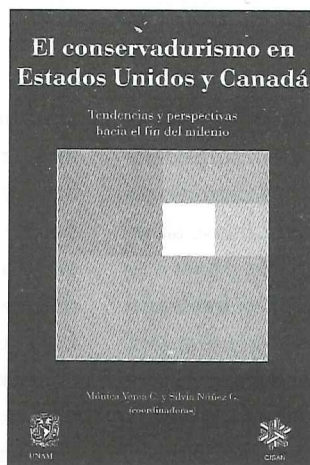
An exploration of conservatism in both countries. It points to the questions the North American societies are going to have to answer in the next century.



***El conservadurismo en Estados Unidos y Canadá. Tendencias y perspectivas hacia el fin del milenio***

Mónica Verea C. and Silvia Núñez G., compilers

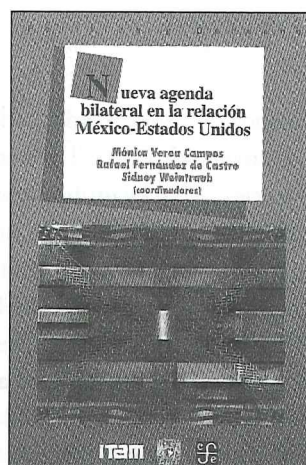
Different analytical approaches and scholarly perspectives to characterize what is generally called "conservatism". The authors start from a recognition of multiple theoretical, conceptual frameworks in their endeavor to overcome stereotypes.



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# The Prairie Dogs of Chihuahua Their Biological Importance And Conservation

Gerardo Ceballos\*  
Jesús Pacheco\*\*



Gerardo Ceballos

Fine dust that clung to your whole body had been a problem for the last part of the long trip, particularly for those at the end of the caravan. It was the intense heat, however, sometimes as high as 43 degrees Celsius, that had made the journey so hard. Major Edgar A. Mearns wiped the sweat from his face and was glad to see the San Luis Mountains on the horizon, the border between New Mexico in the United

\* Researcher at the UNAM Ecology Institute.  
\*\* Biologist working at the UNAM Ecology Institute.

States and Chihuahua and Sonora in Mexico. The scenery was surprisingly beautiful: wide plains dotted with mountains like islands; the fauna, abundant and magnificent. He decided to camp in a poplar-filled gallery forest near a seasonal stream, and stay a few days. Mearns was the army surgeon in charge of the health of the American mission of the U.S.-Mexico International Boundary Commission. His interest in natural history had prompted him to obtain permission from the U.S. government to also collect plants and animals between

1892 and 1894 as the commission set the monuments that would mark the new boundaries between the two countries. During his work at the San Luis Mountains camp, he was able to observe mule deer, white-tailed deer, peccaries, great herds of pronghorn antelope, bighorn sheep, wolves, black and grey bear, beaver and many other mammal species. However, what surprised him the most were the immense prairie-dog towns (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) stretching for hundreds of kilometers. In the foothills of the San Luis Mountains and in the Las Animas

Valley in New Mexico, he found a town of millions of prairie dogs, a sight he would never forget.

#### INHABITANTS OF THE PRAIRIES

Prairie dogs are mammals of the squirrel family (*Sciuridae*); they have stocky little bodies and weigh about one kilogram. Mexico is home to two of the five species of this kind of rodent: the Mexican prairie dog (*Cynomys mexicanus*) and the black-tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*). The Mexican prairie dog is endemic to Mexico and lives in an area of less than 1,000 square kilometers in the states of San Luis Potosí, Nuevo León and Coahuila. The black-tailed prairie dog is the species that has spread the most in the hemisphere, living as it does in the area from southern Canada to northern Mexico, where it inhabits exclusively the grasslands of northwest Chihuahua and northeast Sonora.

The prairie dogs' color varies between a yellowish and a reddish grey buff—sprinkled with black hairs here and there—their bellies are lighter and the ends of their tails are black. They are herbivore rodents with semi-digging habits, their ability to dig being one of their most noteworthy characteristics. Their burrows form elaborate tunnels up to 34 meters long and five meters deep, with a variable number of chambers used for different purposes. The earth that they dig out of their tunnels is accumulated at the entrance to the burrows, forming cone-like mounds, giving their colonies a very special look. Among other things, these mounds serve both as observation posts to detect the presence of predators and as barriers to protect them from hail and rain dur-

ing the frequent downpours that completely flood the prairie during the rainy season.

Prairie dogs are gregarious creatures: they live in groups of thousands and even millions, which has an important impact on the structure and composition of prairie vegetation. They have a high degree of social organization; their behavior is one of the most important factors for their adaptation and survival



Gerardo Ceballos

in the great prairies. The colonies, also called “towns,” are made up of family groups usually composed of an adult male, from one to four adult females and their young under the age of two. These family groups display very aggressive territorial behavior vis-à-vis other groups, with the males in constant alert to keep other males out of their territory.

Another aspect of prairie dogs' gregarious life is their communication through different “calls.” This keeps them in contact with the rest of the colony and also prevents attacks by predators. When

a predator enters the colony, the sentinel makes a sound like a bark, which is what gave them their name. This sound indicates to the predator that he/she has been discovered and alerts the other prairie dogs, who quickly run back to their burrows. A few minutes later, they cautiously peep out of their holes to inspect the horizon and renew their activities. Other behavioral traits involve corporal contact between indi-

viduals, whether it be touching noses, bodies or occasionally incisors to identify or recognize each other.

#### CURRENT DISTRIBUTION

Mearns did not know it, but when he visited the San Luis Mountains, densely populated colonies of prairie dogs still occupied about 400 million hectares of grasslands. That would change drastically in the following decades. By the 1960s, their distribution had been reduced by



Jesus Pacheco

98 percent, and they only occupied about 600,000 fragmented, isolated hectares of prairie lands. By 1980, it had already been decades since the last colonies in Arizona and New Mexico had been exterminated. What had happened to the prairie dogs in Chihuahua? The latest available reports—from 1972—situated them in the Casas Grandes area, on the plains near the San Luis Mountains.

In 1988, we organized an expedition to Chihuahua to search for them. We decided to use Nuevo Casas Grandes as a base camp. Grasslands around the city are scanty, most having been turned into fields for cultivation, which means that very little of the natural environment survives. Approximately 60 kilometers north of Nuevo Casas Grandes is Janos, a town we passed through on the way to the mountains along a dirt road in terrible condition. Lost in the labyrinth of dirt roads, we left several Mennonite towns and collective *ejido* farms behind. The landscape was a mix of brambles and different kinds of grass, with cattle scattered as far as the eye could see. After

several hours on the road, as the sun began to set, when we had almost lost hope, the landscape began to change. Little by little the arid brambles began to break up giving way to a huge prairie, sprinkled with mounds and countless prairie dogs. The spectacle was amazing. We had found the prairie dogs of Chihuahua, a complex made up of hundreds of towns and millions of animals. We called it Janos-Nuevo Casas Grandes. We did not know then that we were looking at the last great prairie-dog town in the hemisphere, a scene out of the nineteenth century.

#### AN ECOLOGICALLY KEY SPECIES

Prairie dogs are closely associated with prairies and grasslands, which are characterized by grass and low bush. Their towns are usually surrounded by high grass and brambles with abundant bushes. They are considered an ecologically key species because when they establish themselves in colonies thousands-

or millions-strong, they have a great impact: they change the landscape, increase environmental heterogeneity, and have an impact on biological diversity. Their activities, particularly digging burrows and destroying high, standing vegetation, have a direct influence on the environment's physical characteristics, on the physical and chemical properties of the soil, on the hydrological cycle, on the structure of vegetation, the decomposition of vegetable matter and on the specific interaction of vertebrates and invertebrates. Prairie dogs are essential for maintaining grasslands and impeding desertification and the invasion of mesquite, since they destroy both mesquite and other plants that invade grasslands and that proliferate in over-grazed areas.

The environmental heterogeneity caused by prairie dogs' foraging and burrowing activities propitiates colonization and permanent residence of many species of vertebrates and are the basis for maintaining regional biological diversity. In the Janos-Nuevo



Casas Grandes Complex, species such as the bison (*Bison bison*), the badger (*Taxidea taxus*), the kit fox (*Vulpes velox*), the golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), the ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*), the burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) and the mountain plover (*Charadrius montanus*) are closely dependent on the prairie dog towns.

#### THE CONSERVATION OF PRAIRIE DOGS

Since we found the Janos-Nuevo Casas Grandes Complex prairie-dog towns, we have carried out different studies in the area about these animals' distribution and ecology with our colleagues Eric Mellink, Rurik List, Patricia Manzano, Mario Rollo, Andrés García, Erika Marcé and Georgina Santos. These studies have shown that these colonies constitute the largest remaining prairie-dog complex in North America, covering almost 40,000 hectares. However, this area is diminishing due to the deterioration

and fragmentation of their habitat. This brings with it a loss in the biological diversity associated with their colonies. The fragmentation of these colonies makes them susceptible to extinction through disease, in-breeding or natural catastrophe. The study and preservation of the prairie dogs of the Janos-Nuevo Casas Grandes Complex could be the basis for the design and instrumentation of management programs suited to maintaining the grasslands in the short, medium and long term, which would benefit both wild animal species and local inhabitants. The project's goal is to establish a biosphere reserve that would permit the conservation of regional biodiversity, the preservation of the native ecosystem and the maintenance of evolutionary processes. **NM**

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# From the Theater of the Unloved

Rodrigo Johnson Celorio\*



In contrast with other literary genres like narrative and poetry, Mexican theater boasts a large group of women writers who fortunately have not made women's questions a leitmotif.

From Sor Juana in the seventeenth century to today, women playwrights have told their stories from a more universal perspective. In the twentieth century, figures like Elena Garro and Luisa Josefina Hernández opened the way for new generations. Sabina Berman, Beatriz Novaro, Bertha Hiriart, Leonor Azcárate, Elena Guiochins and Carmina Narro are only examples.

Narro is worth taking a closer look at. She is a young writer who in a relatively short time has

managed to consolidate her own presence and a very particular voice. Carmina Narro writes mainly in two genres, modern tragedy and comedy. She always uses a realistic setting, jettisoning easy metaphors and turning to her characters' complex internal psychological world, where conflicts originate from their most intimate contradictions and primary emotions, evolving to create unique personalities.

In *Credencial de escritor* (Writer's Credentials), Narro explores conflicting emotions: ambition and envy clash with gratitude and duty. A literature teacher with three students endows a scholarship for studying in Paris. This source of dissension shakes the characters' little world, bringing them face to face with their own most

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\*Mexican stage director.



profound pettiness. The professor, on the other hand, personifies power and the authority figure, manipulating the situation to his liking, exercising unlimited dominance.

In contrast with Eugène Ionesco's *The Lesson*, Carmina Narro unmask the depravity of power in ordinary daily life in the classroom. Violence becomes internal and a bitter sense of humor wanders freely through the vicissitudes of the human comedy.

Carmina Narro is also an actress and director. A play she has directed was recently running in Mexico City: *Mexican Beauty (el armario)* (Mexican Beauty [The Wardrobe]), written by Alejandro Cabáñez, a young writer who is her student at the Writers' Association of Mexico (Sogem) school.

Narro has directed all her plays and, while it would be good if in the future other directors took over, clearly the productions have benefited her writing, created for actors, the lines direct, thought out for the stage with simple spaces, unity of time and rigorous structure. Her plays invite staging, with human stories to challenge the actors and few production requirements.

In contrast with other playwrights of her generation, Narro's theater keeps its distance from fantasy and the historical. Her stories develop in the contemporary world and her characters are ordinary people. Their thoughts are revealed through keenly honed language and the extreme situations in which she places the beings that people her world.

In *Aplausos para Mariana* (Applause for Mariana), until now perhaps her most ambitious play, she uses the world of theater dressing rooms to tell a story of desolation, secrets and guilt. Mariana is an actress of about 40, an alcoholic whose past includes incest with her brother who, because he adores her, has become her dresser. Here, the play's director occupies the place of the teacher, the being with absolute power who mocks and plays with other people's lives, showing just how pathetic senseless authoritarianism is. In her production of *Aplausos para*

*Mariana*, Narro had all the characters use orthopedic apparatuses as an image of the fragility and the malformations that their internal blocks cause them.

Toward the end of the play, when we see the performance that the characters have prepared, Mariana directs all her hopelessness at the audience, firing a gun into it, and three members of the audience fall out of their seats, shot.

Broadening her range and on the opposite end of the spectrum, Carmina Narro plays with comedy in *¡Ay mi vida qué tragedia!* (Oh, My Darling, What a Tragedy!), a title reminiscent of vaudeville—still a favorite with Mexican audiences—in addition to overlapping with drama.

A forty-ish divorced father, Santiago, unexpectedly welcomes his 21-year-old daughter into his home after she had lived with her mother. The woman he is having a stormy romance with is the same age. The generational clashes and conflicts within the couple this causes again remind us of the enormous loneliness of the individual and his selfishness, all framed with a fine, biting sense of humor.

As part of a trilogy of short plays about love relationships, Narro wrote *Round de sombras* (Shadow Boxing), which we print in this issue of *Voices of Mexico*. The piercing quality of the subtext becomes decisive, terrible action, in which once again disfigurement and mutilation are a constant. As with all her productions, this piece's style is somewhat reminiscent of a Chekhovian tone of deep comedy and modern tragedy, and Juan Carlos Onetti's melancholic air marked by absences. Her characters have nothing left over; they lack everything. Human beings' deficiencies and their consequences are a constant theme in her work. Stories of the lack of love and hopelessness, which, face to face with a vacuum, resolve themselves violently. Forceful endings that, like the outcomes of perfect stories, knock out the audience which is taken by surprise.

Carmina Narro is currently preparing the production of her most recent play, *La luna en escorpión* (The Moon in Scorpio). **MM**

# Carmina Narro Flores

Born in Los Mochis, Sinaloa, in 1969, Carmina Narro Flores studied with Héctor Mendoza and Raúl Quintanilla at the Theater Studies Nucleus. She went on to study playwriting in Hugo Argüelles' workshop; theater analysis with Vicente Leñero; and direction with Juan José Gurrola, with whom she also worked as assistant director. She is also a short story and script writer and an actress.

She has written and directed five of her own productions:

*Recuerdos de bruces* (Memories of Falling Headlong) (1992), her first professional work as playwright and director, which won the Theater Critics Association Salvador Novo Prize for a newcomer; *Credencial de escritor* (Writers' Credentials) (1995), awarded the Bravo Prize for Best Comedy of the year and published by *Tramoya*, a theater magazine edited by Emilio Carballido; *Round de sombras* (Shadow Boxing) (1996); *Ay mi vida, qué tragedia* (Oh, My Darling, What a Tragedy!) (1997), published in the magazine *Documenta CITRU*; and *Aplausos para Mariana* (Applause for Mariana) (1997).

She also adapted and directed *Look Back in Anger* by John Osborne in 1994.

In June 1998, Narro participated in the series of play readings called "Work in Progress" with her play *Memories of Falling Headlong*.

She has published short stories in the *Sábado* (Saturday) supplement of the national daily *Unomásuno*; in the UNAM's *Los Universitarios* magazine; *Galeras* (Galley Sheets) published by Fondo de Cultura Económica; and *Nitro* and *Complot* (Conspiracy) magazines, among others; as well as in anthologies like *Látex azul cielo* (Sky Blue Latex), put out by Moho publishers. She has written theater criticism for *Correo Escénico* (Stage Newsletter) magazine and scripts for film and television, including a soap opera (*El amor de mi vida* [The Love of My Life], produced by Productora Argos from 1998 to 1999).

In 1999 she taught playwriting at Mexico's Writers' Association (Sogem) school.

Her acting credits include parts in *Autos* (Cars), by Martín Morales (1986), for which she won the best actress award at the Fourth Mexico City Theater Interward Contest; *Fefú y sus amigas* (Fefú and Her Friends), by María Irene Fornés (1990); *El criminal de Tacuba* (The Criminal of Tacuba), by Víctor Hugo Rascón Banda (1991); *Criaturas del aire* (Creatures of the Air), by Fernando Savater with the monologue *La gorda Margot* (Fat Margot) (1996); and in *Ellas solas* (All by Themselves) two Lanford Wilson comedies (*The Great Orion Nebulous* and *The Ludlow Fair*) (1997-1998). In addition, she has acted in different television programs, videos and short subjects.

# Shadow Boxing

Carmina Narro

This play opened in 1996 as part of the cycle “In This Corner” at the Contemporary Theater Forum, run by Ludwig Margules.

*Cast:*

Andrés Belaunzarán      ALVARO GUERRERO  
Julia                              SURIA MCGREGOR

*Set and Lighting*

Carlos Trejo

*Director*

Carmina Narro

*Scene:*

*The time is now. On the stage is a long, narrow table, one by nine meters, with two chairs, a candelabra with candles, a bottle of red wine and two wine glasses. The upstage end of the table is partially set for an extremely romantic dinner; the audience may sit at the downstage end.*

*The room has a coatrack and three doors: one is the entrance, and the other two lead to the kitchen and the bedroom.*

Drawings by Lydia Peña



*Andrés enters from the kitchen. He is forty-ish, although it is difficult to be exact about it. He brings in two table settings and table napkins. He is so meticulous setting the table it becomes exasperating. He exits to the bedroom.*

*There is a knock at the door, and a few moments later Julia enters after opening with her own keys. She is wearing a mini-skirted tailored suit and a trench coat. She is in her early thirties. Andrés comes in wearing a bow tie.*

JULIA: And those glasses?  
 ANDRÉS: I bought them today, for today.  
 JULIA: I bought these shoes, but not for today.  
 ANDRÉS: You don't have to tell me that.

*(Julia takes off her coat and moves toward the coatrack.)*

JULIA: Does it still fall over?  
 ANDRÉS: No, I fixed it.

*(She hangs her coat on the coatrack, which falls over from the weight.)*

ANDRÉS: Fuck!  
 JULIA: Forget it. It's okay.  
 ANDRÉS: I swear I did fix it—I thought—for today.  
 JULIA: I'll put it on the chair.



ANDRÉS: No, wait, I'll put it in the bedroom.

*(Andrés exits. Julia looks with almost imperceptible deprecation at the set table. Andrés enters.)*

JULIA: So you've had a lot of free time...  
 ANDRÉS: Yeah, I've hardly gone to the lab.  
 JULIA: Did you have a relapse?  
 ANDRÉS: No, I gave myself a vacation. But do sit down, please.  
 JULIA: I thought you were never going to say it.  
 ANDRÉS: Why do I have to say it? This is your house.  
 JULIA: That's news.  
 ANDRÉS: It's in your name.  
 JULIA: Then you should pay me rent. *(Pause.)* Sorry. Could you pour me some wine?  
 ANDRÉS: It has to breathe.  
 JULIA: More?  
 ANDRÉS: No, of course not.

*(He pours her a glass of wine.)*

JULIA: Well, I wanted to talk...  
 ANDRÉS: I made duck in plum sauce with applesauce.  
 JULIA: Too sweet.  
 ANDRÉS: ... and sauerkraut.  
 JULIA: Why red wine, then?  
 ANDRÉS: You don't like white.  
 JULIA: You eat fowl with ...  
 ANDRÉS: With the wine of your choice! *(Pause.)* Sorry.  
 JULIA: How have you been doing?  
 ANDRÉS: Not good.  
 JULIA: Mmmm...  
 ANDRÉS: I haven't been doing well at all, Julia.  
 JULIA: You haven't asked me how your son is.  
 ANDRÉS: If something were wrong, by this time you'd have had me hunted down and locked up.

*(After a moment, Julia laughs spontaneously.)*

ANDRÉS: Lately, I've come to the conclusion that the only reason you married me was that I made you laugh.

JULIA: It's a good reason.

ANDRÉS: For you, maybe. Shall I serve dinner?

JULIA: No, not yet. I'm not that hungry.

*(Julia goes to pour herself some wine. Andrés gets up.)*

ANDRÉS: Let me.

JULIA: No, please, don't Andrés. *(Pause.)*  
Don't try so hard...

ANDRÉS: No, no way. *(He gives her the bottle.)*  
You do it.

*(Pause.)*

JULIA: I called you at the lab because I wasn't going to come, but you say you're on vacation.

ANDRÉS: Yes, I was at the lab.

JULIA: The answering machine picked up.

ANDRÉS: Yeah.

JULIA: Why didn't you answer?

ANDRÉS: Because I was with the rats. My little rats.

JULIA: That's why you didn't answer?

ANDRÉS: I was petting them, well, one of them.

JULIA: What?

ANDRÉS: Well, I was going to .... operate on her. I told you about this.

JULIA: No, you never told me you went to the lab to pet rats.

ANDRÉS: The little things know it when you're going to kill them, and I have to pet them so they feel you love them before you open up their little bellies. Fuck! I work with them, how can I not love them? I cry a lot when I open up their heads and eyes. Their little eyes...

JULIA: So you cry over the rats...

ANDRÉS: Yes.

JULIA: Mmmmm.

*(Short pause.)*



ANDRÉS: Shall I serve dinner?

JULIA: Please, you're talking about disemboweled rats and you want me to have dinner.

ANDRÉS: It's the only thing I can talk about.

JULIA: And your *assistant*? Why didn't she answer?

ANDRÉS: I fired her.

JULIA: Why?

ANDRÉS: Because she put a wheel in their cage. You know, the kind they make spin themselves when they walk.

JULIA: That's why you fired her? She did it so they could have some fun.

ANDRÉS: You don't understand.

JULIA: What don't I understand?

ANDRÉS: I've never seen anything crueler.

JULIA: Well, if you took them for a ride on a roller coaster you might lose them.

ANDRÉS: Don't you understand? They run and run endlessly believing they're going somewhere and never move from that spot ... and then I come around with my scalpel...

JULIA: Oh now, don't start crying...

ANDRÉS: No, I've learned to control myself.

JULIA: Andres, I wanted to talk about...

ANDRÉS: Not hungry yet?

JULIA: No. I want to talk to you.

ANDRÉS: We are talking.

JULIA: It's always the same.

ANDRÉS: Julia, you know...

JULIA: I can't live with you. I can't. Do you understand that?

ANDRÉS: Why not? We live in the same city.

JULIA: I tried my best, my very best.



ANDRÉS: Where have I heard that? Where have I heard that?

JULIA: I did everything possible...

ANDRÉS: Curiously enough, the only one who believes in those “possibilities” is you.

JULIA: Don’t start, Andrés.

ANDRÉS: Because to me, the only thing clear are your “impossibilities.”

JULIA: It doesn’t surprise me that you think that... It surprises me that you’re treating me to your duck in plum sauce—which really is not your forte at all, by the way—and that you are dumb enough to come up with the sissy idea of setting up these ridiculous candles when the only thing I want is to have nothing to do with you. Am I making myself clear?

ANDRÉS: How’re things at the brokerage house?

JULIA: Am I making myself clear?

ANDRÉS: At least you’ve learned to say, “Am I making myself clear?” instead of the unbearable, “Do you understand?”

JULIA: Yeah, Andrés, whatever you say.

*(Andrés gets closer to her.)*

ANDRÉS: Julia... *(He touches her gently.)* Julia... I’ve put up with a lot from you, a very lot. Heavy stuff. You know it. And you haven’t taken it into account.

JULIA: Don’t talk to me like that.

ANDRÉS: You have to be with me. *(He moves away from her.)* Do you want more wine? *(He pours. She drinks.)* Drink, drink a bit more. You’re a better person when you drink.

JULIA: You can stay here all your life if you want. The only thing I need is...

ANDRÉS: When you drink you become more... loving? Don’t you miss me? Because I miss myself with you. I miss “us.”

*(Pause.)*

JULIA: Your son wants...

ANDRÉS: My son is not invited to this dinner.

*(Andrés exits to the kitchen. Julia is tense. He comes back with snacks on a plate.)*

ANDRÉS: How about some crackers with oyster mousse?

*(He hands them to her, she eats reluctantly. He takes out a small dark coloured flask and puts it on the table. Julia is disconcerted and talks with her mouth full.)*

JULIA: What’s that?

ANDRÉS: Acid.

*(Julia spits out the cracker.)*

ANDRÉS: What kind of manners are those, Julia? *(Short pause.)* Well, I always

knew elegance was not your thing. Despite your Italian suits. What's missing is elegance of the mind.

JULIA: Why do you have that here?

ANDRÉS: I am a biochemist. I'm Andrés Be-launzarán, glad to meet you.

JULIA: Why do you have that? Why put it on the table?

ANDRÉS: Are you scared of me?

*(Julia gets up and walks to the door.)*

JULIA: Have dinner by yourself. Alone. Do you hear me? Alone.

ANDRÉS: You'd better not think of leaving. *(Pause.)* I just want to finish our conversation. The duck isn't bad. If you don't want to try it, that's okay. Sit down. *(Pause. Julia sits down.)* You don't treat a man who had cooked for you like that. I'm ashamed of you, Julia. "Julia." What a lovely name.

JULIA: What's this all about? Please tell me.

ANDRÉS: Let's say it's because of the fuzz on your cheeks. I remember once, I came home late and you were asleep. Driving through the city I kept thinking I would catch you in my bed with another man. I came in, you weren't with anybody else and you had left the light on. I took my shoes off so as not to waken you, and I crawled to the bed on all fours to smell you to find out if you had been fucking somebody. And, oh, yes, you smelled of sex, but then I saw fuzz on your cheeks. I came closer, just a centimeter away from your face to see it... See it... Your breathing filled the room. You woke up and let out a tremendous cry. *(Pause.)* Such bad taste. Remember?

JULIA: How can I forget.

ANDRÉS: You want a cracker?

JULIA: No, thanks.

ANDRÉS: No acid in them.

JULIA: What are you getting at, Andrés?

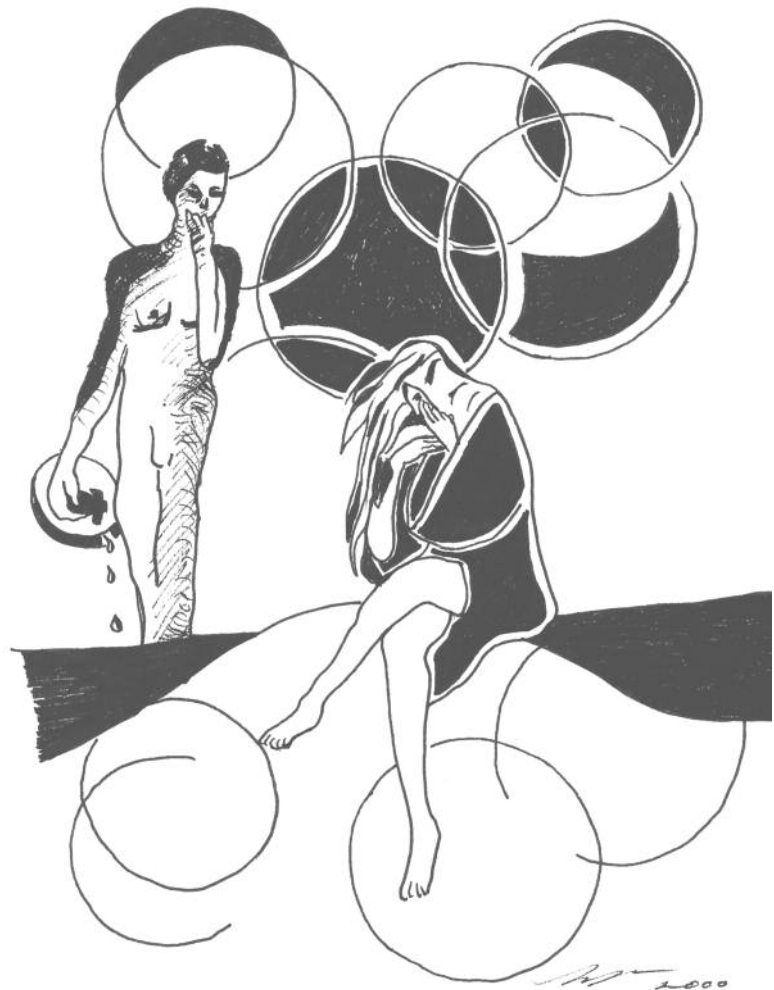
ANDRÉS: Do I have to be getting at something? Ever since you arrived, you've been unsociable.

JULIA: I don't believe anyone could be sociable with you.

ANDRÉS: Why? Because I haven't fucked the whole neighborhood? That's why I'm not sociable? I'm not sociable because I can't stand people. I don't need them. You need people because you can't go through life surrounded by mirrors so you can look at yourself all the time.

JULIA: Why do you want us to be together? To get back at me because I never loved you?

ANDRÉS: I know you love me. But I have to



protect you against yourself. *(Pause.)*  
 Unbutton your blouse. *(Pause.)* I said,  
 unbutton your blouse.

JULIA: No.

ANDRÉS: No?

JULIA: I'm not doing anything with you.

ANDRÉS: Neither am I. Show me your breasts.  
*(Pause.)* Though it is interesting to  
 sleep with a woman who has been  
 in the bed of every man she ever met.

JULIA: You talk as if you really cared. I'm  
 not going to feel guilty about it at this  
 stage of the game.

ANDRÉS: I don't believe you left a single  
 friend of mine alive.

JULIA: You don't have any friends.

ANDRÉS: Show me your breasts.

*(Julia gets up to leave.)*

ANDRÉS: You want me to smack you? Do you  
 know how many times I'd rather you  
 hit me instead of having to listen to  
 your insults? You know why? Because  
 I'll never be able to forget them. I do  
 have a good memory. *(Pause.)* If you  
 stay the shock might give me amnesia.

JULIA: I'd rather die.

ANDRÉS: "I'd rather die." You're so cheap, real-  
 ly. Stop looking at that bloody flask  
 and pay attention to me!

JULIA: You're the cheap one. You've always  
 settled for a little attention.



*(Pause.)*

ANDRÉS: Julia, Julia, Julia... It would be good  
 if so much pain were to some pur-  
 pose... if it went somewhere... or  
 became something beautiful... but I  
 don't believe it would, really. I've  
 always wanted the impossible...

*(Pause.)*

ANDRÉS: I know I'll always miss you. But it  
 doesn't really matter. Believe me. I'll  
 be just fine.

*(Pause.)*

ANDRÉS: I'll get your coat.

*(Andrés goes to the bedroom while Julia breathes  
 a sigh of relief. He comes back and opens the  
 coat behind her, but Julia is uneasy about him  
 being behind her.)*

ANDRÉS: Please...

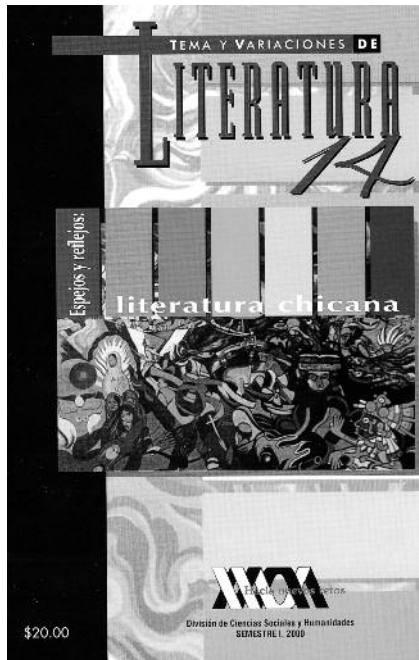
*(Julia accepts with mistrust. Andrés takes a rag  
 with chloroform out of his trouser pocket and  
 puts it over her face. They struggle a while until  
 she passes out. Then he sits her carefully on a  
 chair that by this time must be with its back to  
 the audience. He takes out a rope and quickly  
 ties her hands and feet to the chair. He sits in  
 front of her and looks at her for a moment, tak-  
 ing a large drink of wine from his glass. He gets  
 up and nimbly picks up the flask of acid and  
 pours it on Julia's face without looking at her.  
 Julia screams horribly, tries to free herself, but it's  
 useless. Slowly she becomes still.)*

ANDRÉS: You're going to have to understand,  
 that the way you look now, I'm the  
 only one who can still love you.

*( Fade out.)*



# Reviews



## **Tema y variaciones de literatura 14 “Espejos y reflejos: literatura chicana”**

(Literature, Theme and Variations 14  
“Mirrors and Reflections: Chicano Literature”)  
División de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades  
Autonomous Metropolitan University,  
Azcapotzalco Campus  
Mexico City, September 2000, 431 pp.

As part of the variety of styles and diversity of focuses that a magazine must include, this publication brings us everything from analytically and theoretically rigorous essays and critiques to less formal, more polemical texts and interviews. They all make for useful reading, necessary for any student of the topic, as well as for Chicanos themselves, who continue to be partly Mexican.

The articles, by specialists from Mexico, the United States, South America and Europe, analyze mainly the

images of Chicanos and Mexicans from both their perspectives to see whether they are reflections or distortions, although they don't only focus on questions of otherness and difference between Chicano and Mexican realities or between the Chicano and Anglo realities.

As its title suggests, this issue of the magazine examines variations on the theme of literature, a history of Chicano literature, critiques of novels, poetry and stories, as well as theoretical linguistic studies and inquiries into Chicano culture in general, thinking about the historical-political importance of Chicano-ness as a social movement and the relationship between literature and film and the visual arts.

The articles warn against falling into the relativism of thinking too much about difference, an absurd, ironic attitude common among Chicanos and Mexicans that stems from their mutual fears, particularly the fear of meeting up with the “other” who furiously demands its own identity/authenticity. That is the worst mistake we could make, a mistake arising from exaggerated nationalism on the part of Chicanos and Mexicans alike “Life ... has no specific nationality, race or language,” says Ignacio Trejo Fuentes on page 231 in his study of novelist John Rechy.

From very different perspectives, the authors of these essays contribute to averting a clash of passions and try to continue to build bridges of knowledge. Without simply using the cliché according to which more things unite than divide us, the writers not only analyze, critique, study and create different genres of literature, but also seek to destroy myths and erase cultural borders—whether real or imaginary—thereby crossing borders through literature.

The general view in these essays is that Chicano literature should be analyzed as a vital part of U.S. American literature, given the way it reflects the Chicano struggle for civil rights. Specific studies, like those of poets “Corky” Gonzales and Tito Villanueva, are outstanding in their profundity and present novel outlooks.

Joaquina Rodríguez Plaza's study of Daniel Venegas' *Las aventuras de don Chipote o cuando los pericos mamen* (The

Adventures of Don Chipote, or, When Parakeets Suckle) (1928) situates it as a picaresque novel. Oscar Mata exemplifies the so-called “epic of misery” in Miguel Méndez’s *Peregrinos de Aztlán* (Pilgrims from Aztlán) (1974); and Ezequiel Maldonado classifies *Klail City y sus alrededores* (Klail City and Environs) (1976) by the “Chicano Faulkner” Rolando Hinojosa as mature literature.

Other articles include a very original text about the Chicano character Jack Mendoza in José Revueltas’ novel *Los motivos de Caín* (Cain’s Reasons), and Ignacio Trejo Fuentes comments about John Rechy’s novel *City of Night* (1963) that a great many young Chicanos today do not speak Spanish, are not interested in learning it or in the questions that concern Chicano communities committed to the quest for an identity.

The chronology at the end of the magazine that spans literature from Cabeza de Vaca’s *Naufragios* (Shipwrecks)

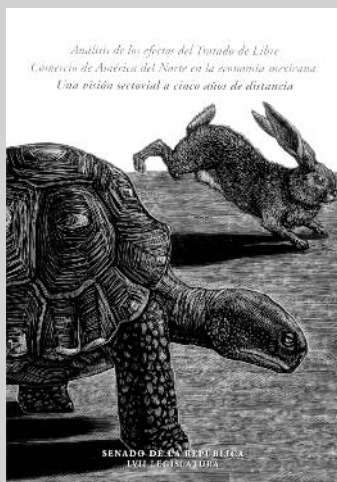
(1542) to Guillermo Gómez-Peña’s *The New World Border* (1996) is very useful.

The section with original literature offers five poems by Alfonso Rodríguez, three short stories and a brief piece in English, a contemporary metaphor about Chicano-ness, and two essays on novels centering on detective stories and the affairs of the different Chicano communities.

Regarding “the history both shared and rejected” (p. 53), we find very well documented essays about the Chicano community’s passive and active resistance in the face of political and economic repression in the United States.

The magazine is proof of how a perspective as different from that of the social sciences as that of the arts can teach us a great deal about one facet of life in the society of our neighbor to the north: the life of the Chicano community.

Teresita Cortés Díaz  
Staff writer



### Análisis de los efectos del Tratado de Libre Comercio en la economía mexicana: una visión sectorial a cinco años de distancia

In our last issue we printed a review of this book. Unfortunately, the information about the author was incomplete: José Luis Valdés Ugalde, in addition to being the research director, is also the author and editorial coordinator.

**De México  
para el Mundo**

música, noticieros y programas culturales

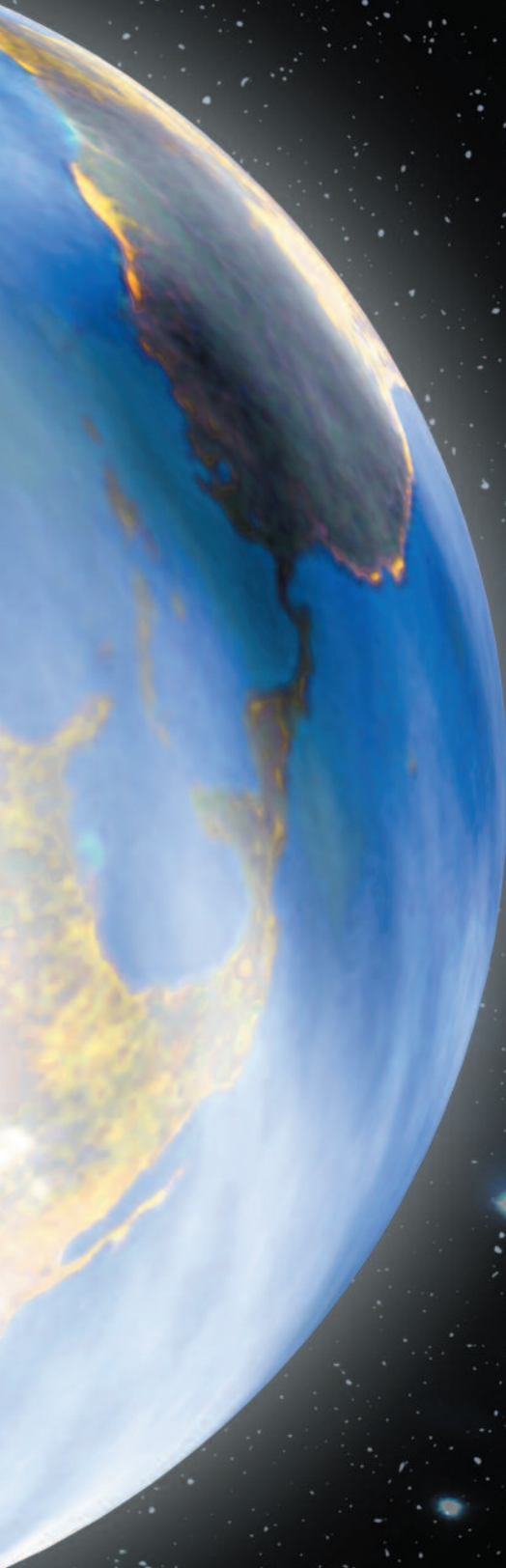
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RADIO EDUCACIÓN onda corta**  
Una cobertura amable

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**AÑO 2001**

**XXII Feria Internacional del Libro  
del Palacio de Minería**

22 de febrero - 4 de marzo, Ciudad de México



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