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Fiscal Reform in Mexico

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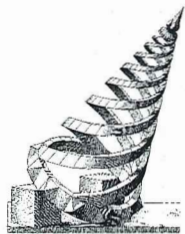
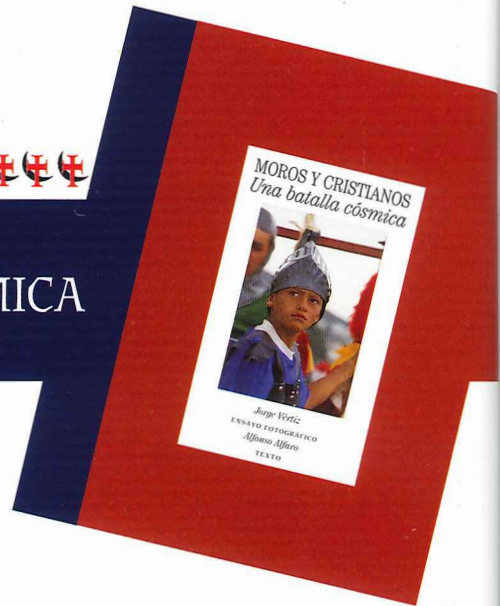
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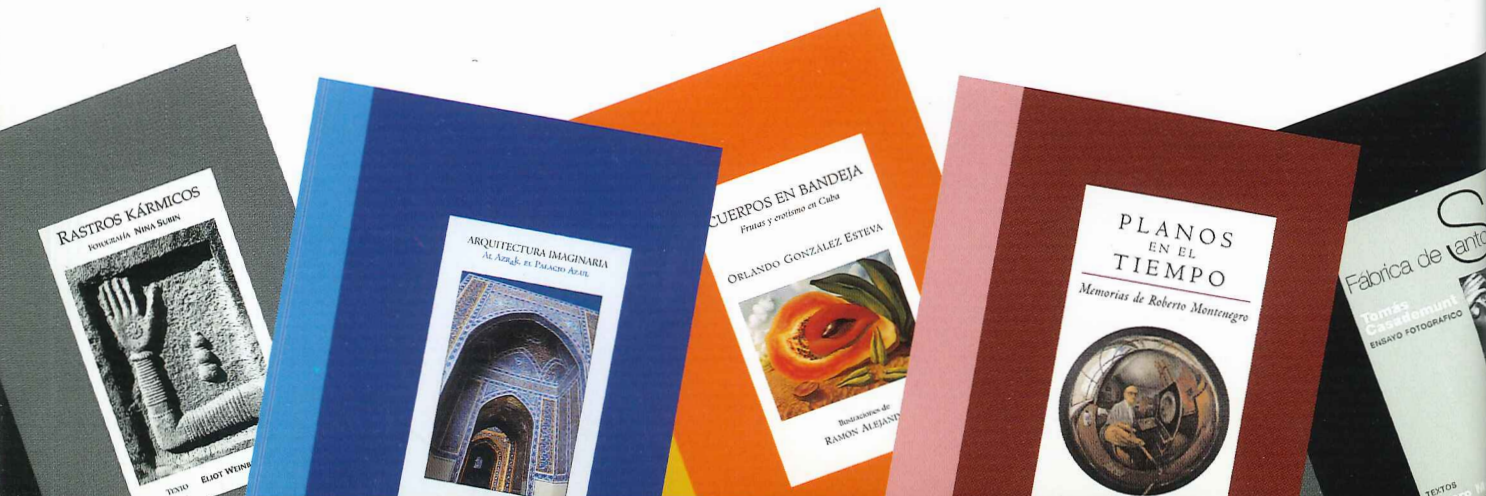
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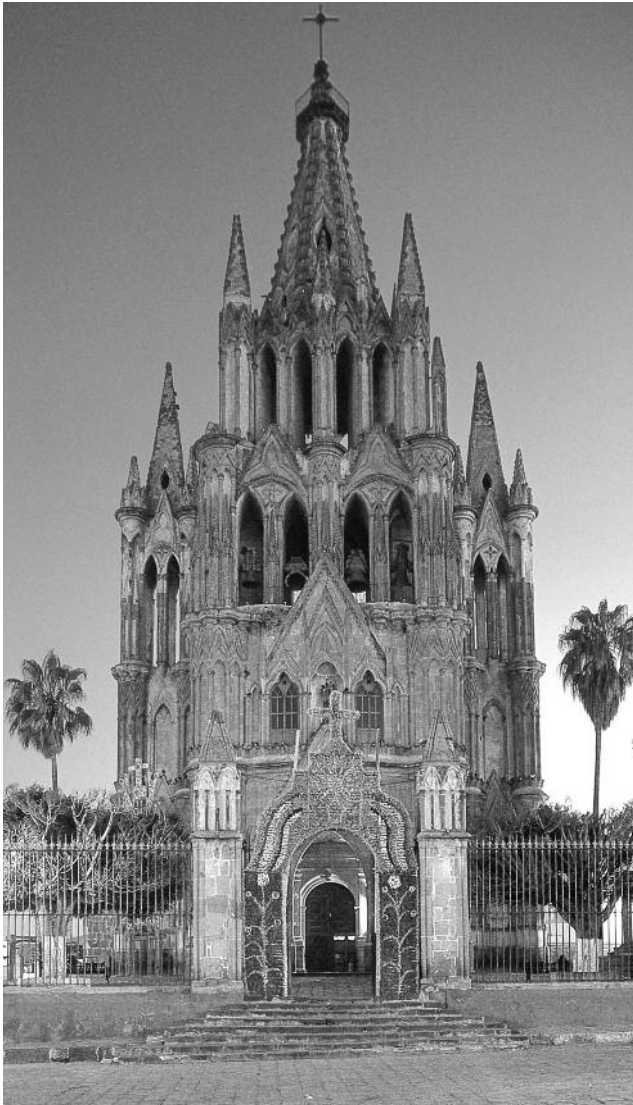
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Cover

Jesús Gallardo, *Temezcuitate* (detail), 80 x 122 cm, 1967 (oil on canvas). Ma. del Carmen Carrillo vda. de Gallardo Collection.

Back Cover

Jesús Martínez, *Dog of Waters*, 25.5 x 20.5 cm, 1983 (watercolor).

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OUR VOICE

After the close of this edition, we have faced a new stage in the international conflict that began with the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. It all stems from the crisis which began September 11, date of the most serious terrorist attack that any Western country has ever suffered in peace time, an attack that shook the whole world. On the same day that Washington and London began their attacks on his training camps in Afghanistan, Osama bin Ladin, the leader of Al Qaeda and main suspect of being behind the September 11 attacks, said "I swear that the United States will not experience peace until Palestine does and until the Western armies of the infidel leave the Holy Lands." In this statement, we find both a declaration of principles and even war bordering on fanaticism and a turning point in relations between the West and the Arab world. It is probably also the beginning of a fourth stage in the long process of changes that the international system has gone through since the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, the end of World War II and the destruction of the Axis and the end of the bipolar era. From now on, September 11 will be recognized as the date that changed the eventful period following the end of the Cold War. The implications of the events we are witnessing will probably escalate enough so that we see a partial repetition of something like the Cold War. Conflicts will once again make their appearance on the international scene. However, the most important thing may be seeing the clash between the private Islamic fundamentalist cells that operate inside countries which they target for revenge, such as the United States, and the response of the states affected by this new threat.

The consequences of the terrible September 11 events remain uncertain and difficult to determine in the international concert. Much reflection is also needed. The world, which had not had time to effect a relatively harmonious change although —why not?— it did have the expectation of achieving a certain equilibrium, has been rendered silent by the magnitude of events. For now, we can say that the international system has been bound even more tightly by 1) the historic relationship between globality and conflict; 2) the absence of a balance of power and the preeminence of unipolarity; 3) the lack of definition of matters of order vis-à-vis those of justice, with today's absence of international institutionalization; 4) the conflict around the question of a civilizing mandate; and 5) regional instability as a new focus of conflict. Given this scenario, traditional equilibriums will be changed and traditional alliances will be based on highly sophisticated security strategies. What is more, the United States will see an unprecedented regimen of domestic security and U.S. society will go through a critical stage, also unprecedented, in which the traditional security standards that were thought to make it the world's safest society will be seriously affected. All of this will have a permanent effect on its domestic norms and its social practices. In that sense, we could say that just as we are seeing the modification of the paradigm within which terrorism has traditionally operated, we are also directly witnessing the effect on the paradigms of physical security and emotional stability of the entire U.S. populations (including the impact of the threat of biological warfare). This will, of course, have long term implications for life, social organization and eventually the social and political systems in the United States.

Naturally the terrorist attacks on U.S. objectives and their consequences mean a crucial readjustment of international relations in the near future and will significantly affect Mexico, just as they will all the world's nations. A first sign of this is the unconditional support given to the United States by both President Fox and Foreign Minister Castañeda. For this reason, in our "Mexico-United States Affairs" section, North

American national security specialist Raúl Benítez Manaut describes in detail why Mexico must participate in the alliance against terrorism and in what ways. Given the outbreak of war Mexico will have to take positions based on strategic considerations.

Just as with this question, most political, economic and social affairs are determined by supra-national actors and interests. In our “Politics” section, we include an article by legal expert Luis T. Díaz Müller about the transformations in ideas about human rights in a world immersed in an on-going process of globalization.

Almost a year has passed since the change in the federal government in Mexico. Our “Politics” section also presents an article by analyst Ricardo Becerra about the first nine months of the new administration on the occasion of the first annual address to the nation of a president who is not a member of the Institutional Revolutionary Party. Has Fox’s presidency lived up to the expectations for change he created in the public? While Becerra does say it is early days yet for an objective balance sheet about the achievements and mistakes of the new administration, he postulates that it has not really assimilated the significance of the new democratic conditions and a divided government, leading to a certain degree of paralysis in the government and a slow-down of important reforms needed for the consolidation of democracy.

We have dedicated our “Economy” section precisely to one of the matters pending with regard to the reform of the state: we have included two contributions by Mexican economists about the much-talked-about fiscal reform. For Enrique Pino, while Fox’s proposal recognizes and presents solutions for one of the Mexican fiscal system’s main historic problems, low revenues, it also has a serious defect because it does not propose a structural, inclusive transformation that would deal with, for example, the immense backlog of bank tax debt. He also catalogues the proposed reform as inequitable because it includes exemptions and tax breaks for the low- and high-income groups, in detriment to a broad sector of middle-class taxpayers. Francisco Sevilla thinks that the proposal’s main deficiency is that it does not include a clear way forward to increasing the tax base, incorporating measures, for example, to include people in the informal economy once and for all. This, he says, will mean that a very small tax base will continue to shoulder most fiscal responsibility.

We continue with an analysis of the emergence of new political actors in North America. In “Society”, Hernán Yañes talks about the new dynamics of organized civil society in the Greater Caribbean, where one of its main actions has been to build transnational networks of nongovernmental organizations in order to try to have a more effective impact on the processes of globalization and regionalization. The same section includes an article by Celia Falomir about women and AIDS from the perspective of gender equity. She shows how in Mexico there is a trend toward feminization of the disease, which she attributes to women’s social and psychological vulnerability in our society, both of which increase their risks exponentially.

Our “History” section continues in the examination of the role of social actors with an illustrative article by Javier Torres Parés, who writes about international solidarity and coordination of struggles in the past and today among union and social movements in the United States and Mexico.

In “Canadian Issues”, Canada’s ambassador to Mexico, Keith H. Christie, visualizes an optimistic future for relations between our two nations, especially because of the new dynamic created by NAFTA and Mexico’s new democratic political life, particularly given the unusual emphasis put on relations with Canada by President Fox.

Once again, we have dedicated most of our cultural sections to the state of Guanajuato, one of the country’s richest regions artistically, culturally and historically. In “Art, Science and Culture” we present the work of two of the state’s most important visual artists, recognized nationally and internationally. Jesús Gallardo is one of the country’s most important engravers and landscapers whose nationalism evidence a particular vision of “Mexican-ness.” Jesús Martínez, for his part, is recognized as one of Mexico’s most cre-

ative painters in the fields of innovation and artistic experimentation. The section continues with an interesting article by Fabiola García about the work of Carl Nebel, perhaps the most important U.S. artist to depict the entry of U.S. troops into Mexico City in 1847. As García explains, however, regardless of its artistic merit, Nebel's vision, depicted in most of his lithographs, did not reflect the real atmosphere and events as they occurred. We also offer our readers a stimulating piece about what may be the most important and ambitious binational scientific project carried out by Mexico and the United States in the history of science in our country. Astronomer Alfonso Serrano writes about the work on the large millimeter telescope currently under construction in Mexico with the participation of many academic, scientific and public institutions from both nations. We close this section with an article by journalist Alejandro Acevedo about Mexican rock music at the beginning of the millennium; he explains how it has grown over recent years and transcended our borders to have an impact internationally.

The sections "Splendor of Mexico," "Museums" and "Ecology" are completely dedicated to Guanajuato. We begin with an article about the splendid colonial city of San Miguel de Allende, rich in history and tradition. Historian Beatriz Cervantes writes about indigenous fiestas and traditions—specifically those of the Otomí culture—and their decisive contribution to the city's cultural dynamism. Luis Serrano contributes an interesting piece about mining history, which has decisively marked the state. We also include a photographic sampling of Guanajuato's vast body of folk art, recognized both throughout Mexico and abroad. We offer a small piece by architect Arturo Joel Padilla Córdova on state government efforts to restore monuments that are examples of colonial religious architecture, in this case the Friar Juan de Sahagún Ex-monastery in Salamanca, Guanajuato. Another contribution reviews the Friar Bernardo Padilla Museum in the Acámbaro region, an example of widespread community cultural activity, which exhibits very different artistic pieces giving the visitor a glimpse of the history and grandeur of the local culture. Biologists Soledad Vázquez, Juan Frías, Víctor Olalde and Gerardo Vázquez write about the social and environmental importance of the mesquite tree, not only one of the states's natural symbols, but also very important to region's economy, society and ecosystems.

In our "Literature" section, we anticipate the national homage that will most certainly be carried out next year on the occasion of the seventieth birthday of Juan García Ponce, one of the twentieth century's most important and influential representatives of Mexican letters. In this issue, we present our readers with his short story "El gato" (The Cat), undoubtedly a paradigmatic work which has made its influence felt not only in Mexican narrative, but in other national cultural manifestations, like film. We accompany the short story with a penetrating essay by the young critic and writer Juan Antonio Rosado, who discusses García Ponce's indisputable contributions to universal erotic literature.

In this issue, we also pay homage to Mexican poet Manuel Ulacia in our "In Memoriam" section in an article by Adolfo Castañón. Ulacia, known for both his profound work and his ever energetic activities in Mexico's community of writers, which led him to preside over the Mexican chapter of the P.E.N. club, died tragically last August at the height of his creativity and in the most mature stage of his literary production.

José Luis Valdés Ugalde
Director of CISAN

Regional Integration and Human Rights

A Neostructuralist View from Latin America

Luis T. Díaz Müller*

Method and content express themselves in the neostructural view in the principle of universal totality to explain in an interdisciplinary manner questions related to the scientific-technological revolution, the new world order, the distribution of global power, and, of course, the domination of research and development and science and technology.

INTRODUCTION

Thinking about issues linked to integration and human rights in the new world order means delving into the complex system of world market relations. Integration should be a driving force for Latin American development. Globalization of human rights, like the right to health and development, universalizes the culture of industrialized societies and underdeveloped countries.

The conceptual framework of our research is based on the neostructuralist focus for stating “profound causes,” the big issues and challenges of new realities: human rights, technology, the

new world order, integration, knowledge and its products —genetic engineering, biotechnology, automation, computer sciences, new materials—that is, the whole gamut of the new technologies.¹ The neostructural focus proposes to cover all of today’s social sciences, reformulating the problem of development.² Method and content express themselves in the neostructural view in the principle of universal totality to explain in an interdisciplinary manner questions related to the scientific-technological revolution, the new world order, the distribution of global power, and, of course, the domination of research and development and science and technology.

The twenty-first century has brought a substantial, profoundly qualitative

neostructural change of the problem of knowledge. The commodity of this millennium is knowledge: the idea as a fundamental value in every corner of the globe, that is, culture, technology, education, human rights and integration; sports, oceans, the spiral of knowledge and the triad of power. In a word, I maintain that neostructural theory can explain the profound global changes of the new world order to come.³

THE NEOSTRUCTURAL FOCUS ON INTEGRATION IN THE GLOBAL WORLD

From the neostructural perspective, looking at the issue of integration implies delving into, explaining and predicting the problem of development and

* Researcher at the UNAM Institute for Legal Research.

collective identities. The drama of national construction is a central issue of this reflection; it is the starting point, as will be seen in the following section. In the same way, governability and democratic stability seem to be basic principles for inclusion in a new integration model.

The neostructural focus, as its name implies, sees structure as a basic category for explaining social processes like integration. The focus based on systems theory—born out of physics during World War II—would later expand

the nation-state.⁴ It also puts forward the idea that the central aim of integration is integral development. From that point of view, we can distinguish between the circumstantial and the neostructural causes of integration. *Verbi gratia*, the circumstantial causes of integration can be equated with episodic phenomena: a war, an earthquake, or border integration, where natural circumstances and geographic proximity determine the autonomous or dependent nature of the integration. This is the case of Mexico and the United States.

The modern national state today is seeing its classical sovereign structure changed, particularly because the universalization of human rights has caused a “transnationalization” of the legal borders of sovereignty.

toward social systems, as can be seen in the current’s classic book, *The Political System* by David Easton (1953). Previously, Talcott Parsons and Robert Merton had already put forward the problems of the integration and disintegration of social systems. I must recognize that systems theory may advance in an explanation of social systems; however, neostructural theory is even more explanatory, comprehensive, inclusive and totalizing because it tries to analyze and understand global processes of integration and, finally, answer the central question: Why do national actors integrate?

The neostructural view of integration points out the obstacles and profound benefits of the movement that leads to a greater, supranational actor, which implies the delegation of the principle of external sovereignty and a certain fading of the classic structure of

As a matter of fact, the globalization process is an integration mechanism with global aspirations spearheaded by the market and financial globalization. It would seem that financial globalization has become the Achilles heel of the unifying, harmonizing, horizontal process that is globalization itself. The “financial crises” and the collapse of the Asian countries cause and extend the financial crisis to a world scale.

Modern integration plans, such as the Mercosur or the swift political and economic process experienced in Europe, show that the creation of economic blocs and regional and sub-regional agreements for integration cause a double effect: a) on the one hand, they may constitute containing walls vis-à-vis the social costs of globalization; b) on the other hand, it would seem that this process is inevitable in the vicinity of the market. With this, the inte-

gration processes simply add themselves to this hegemonic globalization, particularly with the end of the Cold War.⁵

THE NEOSTRUCTURAL VISION OF HUMAN RIGHTS: FIVE THESES

1. *The structuring of the nation-state constitutes the basis for greater integration.* Latin American development theories sparked profound polemics in their time. Marginality theory and dependency theory broadly analyze the dual or dependent nature of colonial development and, after World War II, the expansionist proposal of the transnational mode of development.⁶ At the bottom of this discussion is “the question of the state,” that philanthropic ogre, the guiding instrument of the national project. The unification of the state with the nation constitutes the modern national state which today is seeing its classical sovereign structure changed, particularly because the universalization of human rights has caused a “transnationalization” of the legal borders of sovereignty (Article 2, No. 4 of the United Nations Charter) to move toward the world of unique, universal human rights that make it possible for me to speak of “market human rights”: the globalization of human rights goes hand in hand with the globalization of the economy.

2. *Human rights are a fundamental prerequisite for democracy.* A discussion of the “problem of democracy” in Latin America goes beyond the limits of this article. The fact remains, however, that for a democratic regimen to exist, there must be profound respect for integral human rights: civil rights, social rights, the right to solidarity.

3. *The law of globalization goes beyond globalization in other sectors of national and international life.* With the change in the world order, classical international law, markedly Western in origin, provokes political, cultural, economic and technological globalization. This does not mean that we can affirm the possibility of a world system of law. In effect, we must clarify that the new legal-economic realities foster the emergence of an immense spectrum of options and new legal categories: joint ventures, holdings, factoring, mergers of companies and strategic alliances among multinational companies.

The transnational model of development has given way to the global model of market relations. Therefore, as law expands in the framework of a neoliberal legal system, it cannot escape the fundamental limitation caused by "legal regionalisms": European, Anglo-Saxon, African, Latin American regional law. Regionalism and globalism do not contradict each other. Rather, they are new legal realities in a global world in transformation.

4. *The impact of the new technologies in the new world order.* Since the 1953 revelations about DNA (Watson and Creek), development of new technologies has accelerated. As I have mentioned, the new world order in transition, or the society of knowledge, is based on new technologies. This is what I call the world order of the twenty-first century.

But, to what extent does the scientific-technological impact affect human rights? To a great extent. For starters, we have the phenomenon of "technological unemployment," or the elimination of human labor thanks to automation of the world society. New technologies

have a powerful impact on the world of work. Companies with cutting-edge technology completely upset the classic schema of Fordist production. A powerful network of horizontal communications within cutting-edge technology is beginning to be built in which the unequal distribution of power is focused on the large international centers: 1) Japan and the Pacific Rim; 2) the European Union and the former Eastern Europe; and 3) the United States and Latin America, particularly through the Enterprise for the

There is a "feudalization" or "ghetto-ization" of social groups in the midst of unstable and uncertain Latin American regimens in which the transitions to democracy are a dance on a cliff.

Americas, with the aim of creating a free trade zone in the hemisphere. The potential of China in this changing world should not be forgotten.

Technology and human rights make up a fundamental ethic dilemma. For example, in the case of genetic engineering, what are the limits of scientific research? The risks of human genetic engineering are abysmal and difficult to predict. The right to science and technology cannot surpass the limits imposed by pure research itself. This ambivalent nature of science and technology and technical progress poses questions, and the only thing that seems clear is the possibility of increasing the scientific-technological gap.

5. *Globalization affects the world of culture and communications.* The big problem here is that hegemonic globalization is causing a profound system of exclusion. Thus, the system-world

transcends borders and creates uniform consumption habits; telecommunications invade minds and homes. Competition, the prison society, competitive advantage, in the last analysis, the realm of the market, are all creating a greater number of the excluded: migrant workers, displaced persons, ethnic minorities, marginalized from the hard nucleus of the consumer society and the market. Are we entering the new Middle Ages? Complex identities and multiculturalism are diluted in the authoritarian structure

that causes a disintegration of society resulting in catastrophic individualism.⁷ The disintegration of the national order throws up serious obstacles for a possible regional or sub-regional integration. In addition, with the withdrawal of the state from economic life, national and international civil societies are reactivating the demands for respect for human rights. This series of political-social situations is causing the emergence of extra-institutional social movements, such as the informal sector, the dispossessed, the underemployed, migrants, foreigners, in a climate of the lack of individual and collective identity. There is, in a manner of speaking, a "feudalization" or "ghetto-ization" of social groups in the midst of unstable and uncertain Latin American regimens in which the transitions to democracy are a dance on a cliff (Pinochet).

GLOBALIZATION AND TECHNOLOGY
THE CASE OF HEALTH AND
DEVELOPMENT

The scientific-technological paradigm, with all its social, cultural, economic and political implications, is the “frontier” of globalization.

In the case of development, technological globalization is breeding a certain “structural marginalization” of the Latin American countries in light of the appropriation of technological goods, the investment in research and

Globalization has in transnational actors its main agents of technological goods production, investment and market expansion. The transnational actors recognize no borders; they move and confront or negotiate with national states, particularly in this “short century”⁸ in which the failure of industrialization by import substitution forces the governments of underdeveloped countries to seek new sources of financing given the drop in domestic savings, financial crisis and the burden of the foreign debt. This is

As law expands in the framework of a neoliberal legal system, it cannot escape the fundamental limitation caused by “legal regionalisms.” Regionalism and globalism do not contradict each other. Rather, they are new legal realities in a global world in transformation.

development, the transition from the industrializing paradigm to the scientific-technological paradigm (in the sense of a model). The possession of cutting-edge technology requires an increasingly greater creative effort, which means that an underdeveloped country would have a technological culture at the service of the majority, a very doubtful eventuality.

In the area of human rights and health, I will cite the cases of genetics and biotechnology, in which the change of the paradigms is quite radical. In the case of new technologies, the new world order reaches its “outer limit” in the field of health with the research on memory, the brain and the mind, genetic surgery, the study of human diseases, artificial intelligence, social mathematics, the science of chaos, the determination of time and the infinite: science and technology at the service of man.

why there is insistence on the idea that the economic blocs and integrations could constitute themselves as powerful tools for the growth and development of our countries when faced with the globalized world.

NEOSTRUCTURAL THEORY
AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

The classical structuralist view comes from the field of linguistics, from the structuralist studies on language and its uses (Ferdinand de Saussure). Umberto Eco says that structuralism is a method; Roland Barthes, that it is a succession of mental operations; Jean Bastide, in a very interesting contribution, calls it a unifying function of knowledge.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, for his part, considers structuralism a doctrine. Jean

Piaget and Frages deem it a scientific method.⁹ Therefore, it is this “critical mass” of knowledge that makes it possible to speak of a neostructuralism that contains the method and content based on a particular principle of totality. Nation-state, new world order, human rights and regional integration are all signifying structures of a particular principle of totality.

NEOSTRUCTURAL BASES
OF THE NEW WORLD ORDER
IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The neostructural theory of the new world order studies the “profound causes,” the new world order’s basic notions of new technologies and their circumstantial and structural implications:

- 1) Basically, if the structure is the “hard nucleus” of the internal analysis of a particular principle of totality, the first neostructural base of the new world order would be the market, or rather, world market relations.
- 2) A second neostructural actor would be the nation-state considered in its relations of external sovereignty.
- 3) The new technologies constitute a third element.
- 4) Migration and displaced persons comprise a fourth element of globalization.
- 5) The hegemony of the great powers or centers of world power would be the fifth element in this conceptual construct.
- 6) Multinational actors make up the sixth neostructural element.
- 7) Since globalization is unfinished, it would not constitute a determining factor with regard to the principle of totality.

8) The culture of human rights and the consumer society are also basic elements of the new world order.

The interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary nature of neostructural theory applied to the principle of totality of the new paradigm of the twenty-first century (integration, human rights, technology and new world order) constitutes the basic structure of the neostructural vision.

I think method and content unify in the principle of totality that analyzes and explains the global social order.

Although it may be debatable, I believe that the field of human rights allows for particular basic structures: dignity, freedom, security, health, housing, education, peace, development, environment, science and technology.

The central idea, if I understand correctly, is that neostructural theory of human rights is capable of analyzing, explaining, predicting and suggesting solutions to the arduous problem of these basic human rights structures. This means that the neostructural vision leads us to the notion of political system and social system as integrating or disintegrating elements of social life. In that sense, one can speak of an ideology of human rights. Neostructural theory provides the method and content of that ideology.

On the other hand, in the framework of globalization, human rights, to paraphrase Isaiah Berlin, appear as elements that counteract the dominant world system.¹⁰

In effect, when the neostructural bases of the new world order are analyzed, we can observe that international market relations constitute the strength-element of the new situation.

However, the market is not precisely a structural element concerned with human rights. It is true that the market spreads and becomes universal (“the end of geography”), especially after certain breaks—the dismemberment of Eastern Europe, the reunification of Germany, the end of the Cold War—that are part of the world economy’s political processes. I do not know to what degree the counter-trend represented by the individual can confront the market. What is clear is that the individual does demand his/her fun-

Never before have the great majorities of history been so vulnerable and devalued vis-à-vis the current process of world restructuring as at this beginning of century and millennium.

damental rights and for national, regional or international society, the possibility of the democratization of social relations, of a just and lasting social order.

This is the extent of the “open dialectic” caused by globalization, on the one hand, and the ideology of human rights, on the other. Nevertheless, between these two neostructural actors is a “no-man’s land” represented by national and international civil societies. Civil society—in this case, in Latin America—emerges with greater transparency with the military dictatorships of the 1970s. Therefore, two complementary currents appear today: the nongovernmental organizations of civil society (NGOs) and the institutions for the promotion and defense of human rights such as the ombudsman and national and state commissions.

CONCLUSIONS

We must ask ourselves about the social movements “excluded” from the unfinished globalization process and about the insertion of Latin America in the political-economic new world order and the new human rights world order. I will limit myself to expressing a few ideas. Globalization is really causing a severe process of structural exclusion and marginalization: migrants, displaced persons, the poor, underemployed, workers in the infor-

mal sector, indigenous communities, the world of minorities within industrialized societies, the new division of labor, the possibilities for access to education, health and housing.

A consideration about the future may allow us to say—in my own view and without a catastrophic vision—that these powerful social movements of the “excluded” from the knowledge and consumer society will eventually cause severe social crises, even internationally.¹¹

The transnationalization of poverty could lead to the transnationalization of social violence, above and beyond the already existing structural violence. It would seem that the social rule of law should recover its main functions, above all in societies like those in Latin America. The “social costs,” recognized by the World Bank, have led the ECLAC to put forward the

idea of “productive transformation with equity.”

The inertia of the market and the withdrawal of the state as neostructural actors make it necessary to rethink the role of the welfare state in this era of economic blocs and regional integration. Never before have the great majorities of history been so vulnerable and devalued vis-à-vis the current process of world restructuring as at this beginning of century and millennium. ■■■

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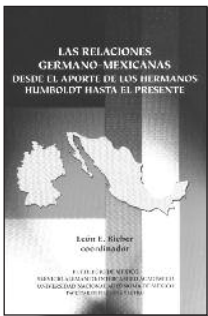
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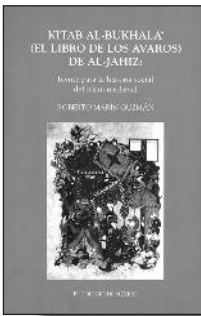
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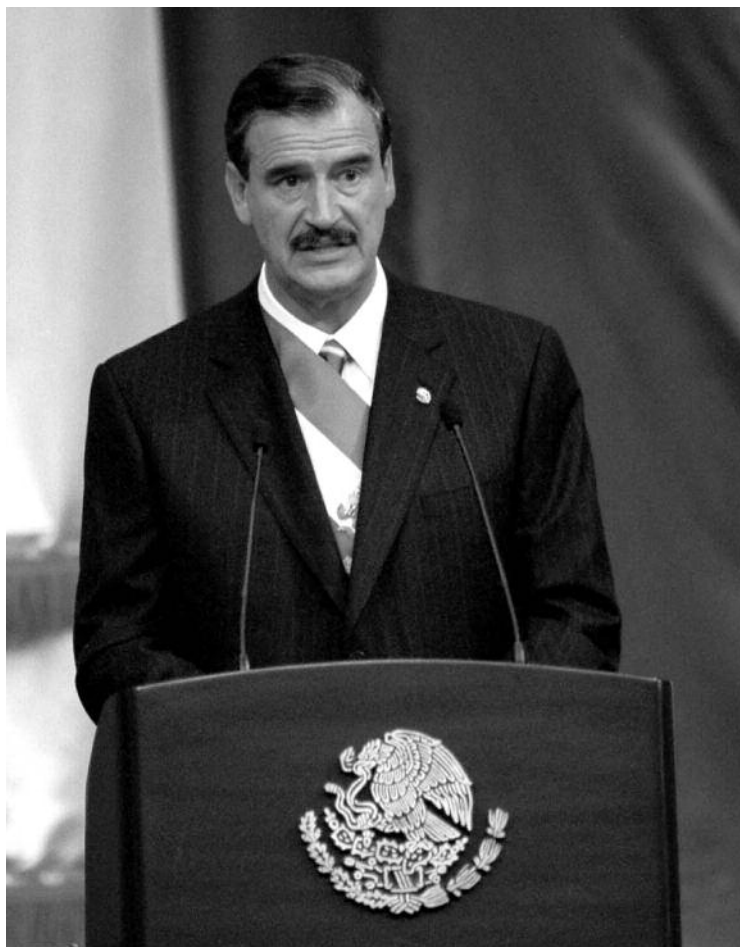
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The First Year Of the Fox Administration

Ricardo Becerra*



President Fox making his first yearly address to Congress and the nation.

The administration's central initiatives are bogged down; its agenda has been held up and it cannot find its way out. These are the political facts that defined Mexican President Fox's first yearly address to Congress.

* Political analyst.

Many things are working, but the fundamental changes, the transformations promised, continue somewhere in the future. The indigenous law approved by Congress was one the president did not want and that the Zapatistas reject. The fiscal reform is in the air, amidst an uncertain mass of contradictory, disconnected proposals; and

the proposed changes in the electricity sector have not been carried out, let alone the reform of the state and the much-made-over, pompous new Constitution. The president's relations with the main opposition party (the Institutional Revolutionary Party- PRI) are bad; his relations with Congress as a whole are not good either; and he does not

even get along with his own party. All of these conditions tend to lead to problems with the ability to govern. The question we must ask ourselves is: How did we get here?

Everything started December 5 of last year. Vicente Fox, the president of the epoch-making alternation in office, the one who defeated the PRI after

the PAN. Then, in a race against the clock, Fox sent Congress his tax reform bill, “The New Public Finances,” a difficult proposal in itself, laced with polemical points (applying value added tax to medicine and foodstuffs and income tax cuts for Mexico’s rich). A problematic package, full of social and political problems, that had to be dealt

After nine months of the new administration,
the main lesson is that the president has to make policy,
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a handful of strategic bills.

70 years in power, picked Chiapas as the scene for his first great political operation. He wanted to show that his administration—overconfident because of its democratic stamp of approval—could quickly solve what the PRI was unable to in seven years. For that reason he sent Congress a bill developed by a commission of deputies from the previous legislature (the Cocopa). First mistake: the party that had most vigorously opposed the bill was his own, the National Action Party. (Why he sent it continues to be a mystery.) Then, he tried to overcome the resistance in Congress through a campaign before the public that was noisy but, in the end, ineffective. In the end, Fox pleased no one: not legislators, not the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), not indigenous organizations and not the public.

Four months wasted in showing his friendship with the personage from the Lacandon Jungle and...nothing. Instead, he won the enmity of many important deputies and senators from the two biggest caucuses: the PRI and

with in 23 days! Once more, he tried to overcome resistance inside Congress from without, through a media campaign, but (fortunately) he did not manage it. His great reform, the one that was to bring definitive tranquility to “the markets,” was postponed.

What were the results of all this? A tense relationship with his own party; a rocky relationship with Congress and the political parties; and the most serious effect: a stymied administration agenda. He could do no more; it no longer made sense to try to continue with the agenda. The other bills dealing with great structural matters were held up: the reform to the energy sector (Pemex, the government oil company, and the Federal Electricity Commission); the revision of the Constitution; and the reform of the state. Lack of experience and clear priorities led to a carefree waste of the administration’s immense legitimacy, its seal of democracy, in an erratic and sometimes willful excursion into governing.

All this is due to what seems to be the essential error of Foxism (equally on

the part of the president himself, his ministers and his advisors): not recognizing that the exercise of constitutional government has changed radically precisely because there is now democracy. This means that the presidential ship is more compact; it has fewer leverage points; it has fewer political resources to promote its bills precisely because democratic change translated immediately into a real distribution of power. Let us look at this in more detail.

The arithmetic of the 500-member Mexican Chamber of Deputies could not be more complex: the PAN has 206 deputies; its ex-ally, the Green Ecologist Party of Mexico (PVEM) has 17 (the PVEM announced its break-off with Fox the same day as Fox’s address to Congress). If they reestablished their alliance, they would total 223 deputies, that is, less than the majority needed to pass laws. Now, let us suppose that all the small parties in the Chamber of Deputies are suddenly invaded by an inclination for the administration: they would come to a total of 232 deputies. Again, they would not have a majority.

So, the president must seek out his most decided adversaries, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and the PRI, parties interested in demonstrating that Foxism is not viable and who are working to make things difficult for his administration. But Fox needs them desperately: to be able to govern he must convince some of the 50 PRD deputies or some of the 211 PRI deputies.

The PRD has already said it sees itself as a party that is resisting a right-wing government and demands almost everything as a pre-condition for negotiations, including an overall change of the economic model. The PRI, which

was defeated by Fox and harbors a historic resentment of him, is, however, a much more pragmatic animal and more willing to negotiate. Everything seems to indicate that the president will do battle on two fronts: in his own party (which is going through a very complicated period, but that is a matter for another article) and with the PRI.

Fox has no escape. In the first half of the year, his administration sought media short-cuts and failed. He thought that the congressional opposition majority could be defeated by a vast operation before public opinion and that led to his first big reversal. The lesson is clear: either he dives into lobbying in the hallways and meeting rooms in Congress or his administration will fail again.

We should take note of a change at this point: Fox is a different kind of president, hemmed in and truly limited by the new balance of forces that democracy has left him. Even if he wants to, he cannot govern according to the old canons of presidentialism. We should underline that the ship he is steering has changed drastically because of the new, real distribution of power.

All this brings us face to face with a decisive factor that had remained hidden for decades: according to our Constitution, most political leverage and government decisions are not in the hands of the president, but in those of Congress. Our admirable presidentialism is suddenly revealed as one of the weakest and most complicated of Latin America.

Just compare the constitutional prerogatives that Congress has: almost 50, from the creation of new states to monitoring public spending, from the designation of Supreme Court jus-



PRI Deputy Beatriz Paredes, left, made the official congressional response to Fox's address.

tics to approving the budget or ratifying nominees for attorney general. The president's constitutional prerogatives are more modest: there are a few more than 20 and many of them must first go through the filter (and therefore depend on the mood) of the legislature.

Under these conditions, governing Mexico means creating an expeditious, fluid relationship between the executive and Congress. Building a majority legislative coalition is an essential condition for governing.

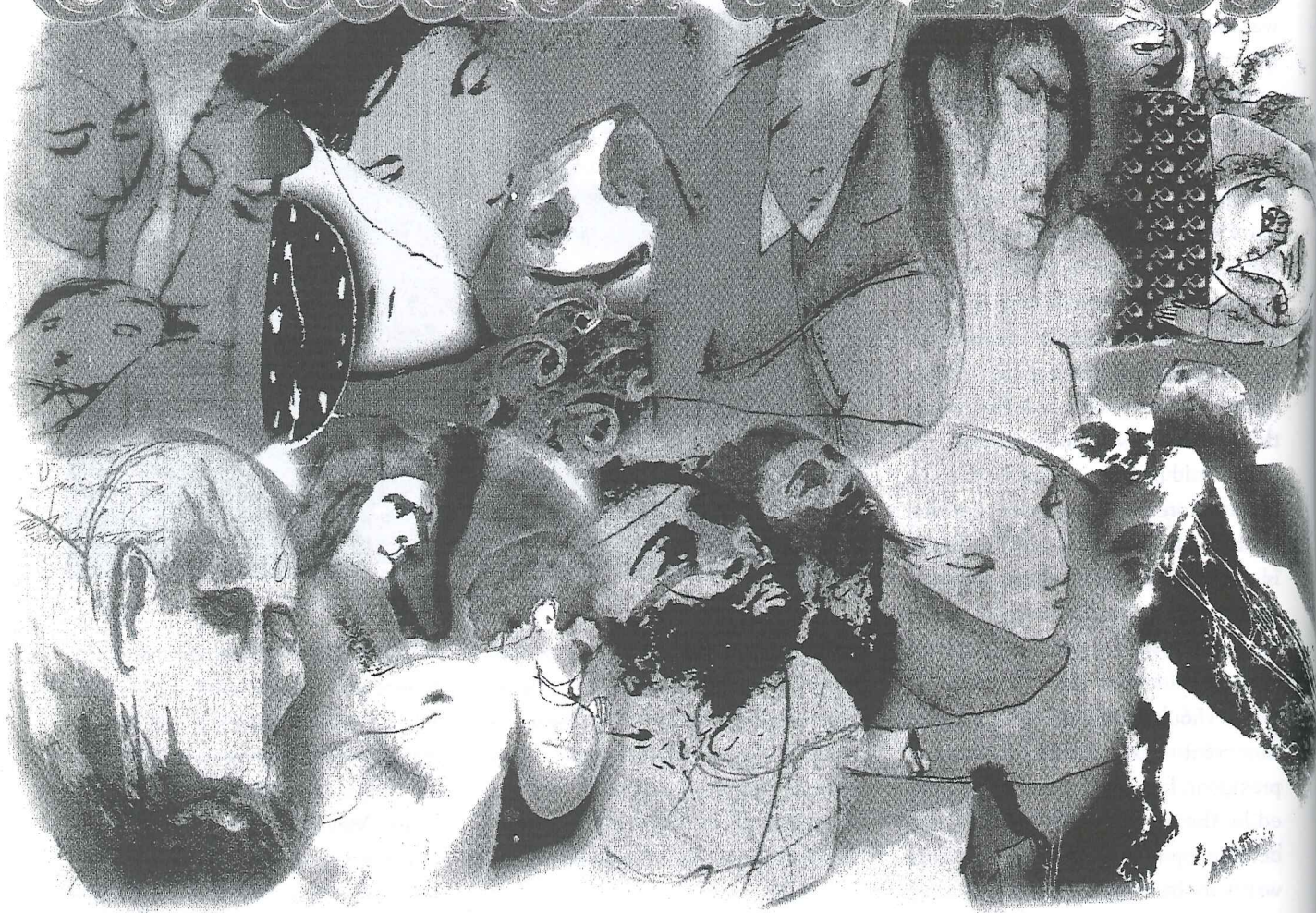
The urgent calls by the Minister of the Interior about the need for a national pact point to this: either a programmatic understanding is achieved among the branches of government, or alternation in office could be a failure.

This enterprise demands very delicate use of the available building blocks, real agreements that go beyond the short term among the administration, the PAN and —how ironic!— the PRI. The playing field on which they will have to come to these agreements is mined because the fourth player, the

PRD, will do everything possible to denounce any possible pacts, pointing out their defects, consequences and the inevitable costs that the measures President Fox proposes will have.

So, Mexico's first president who represents alternation in office could do no more than bring bad news to the nation about the first nine months of his administration. He may continue to enjoy a high popularity rating in the polls; he may be a star in certain foreign media; but that is good for little to a country that urgently needs changes and political leadership. As was clear in the tone and content of his speech before Congress, the honeymoon is nearing its end. After nine months of the new administration, the main lesson is that the president has to make policy, build agreements with his party and others and forge an explicit coalition based on a handful of strategic bills sent to Congress (not against Congress). It has taken nine months to learn that the president must be something more, much more, than the nation's great inspiration. **MM**

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Who's Afraid Of Fiscal Reform in Mexico?

Enrique Pino Hidalgo*

Convinced that he will maintain the broad public support he received in last year's elections, Mexico's President Vicente Fox presented an ambitious tax reform bill to the Chamber of Deputies, a bill that will put the political capabilities of the entire cabinet to the test. This reform will be a strategic battle that will mark the way forward for his administration. The bill confirms his economic orientation, marked by the continuity of a neoliberal, privatizing model that the country has followed since the beginning of the 1980s.

Among the measures Fox is proposing are extending the 15 percent value added tax (VAT) to food, medicine, books, school tuition and public transportation; reducing income tax (ISR) on wages, honoraria and corporate earnings from 35 and 40 percent to 32 percent;¹ cutting special taxes in some sectors of production and services, particularly on alcoholic beverages and cigarettes. He is also proposing to modify preferential treatment for agricultural activities, fishing and trucking.

The bill has been criticized and rejected by the political opposition, including some people from Fox's own National Action Party (PAN). On May Day, thousands of workers from inde-

Mexico's tax earnings
are less than
the average for
South American countries.

pendent unions and the old, official unionism demonstrated against levying VAT on basic consumer items while exempting financial profits from taxes and postponing the collection of U.S.\$47 billion in back taxes from private banks.

President Fox assures that his tax program is the fulfillment of a "campaign promise" to the public. To emphasize his administration's financial difficulties because of the loss of oil income, he announced a "very broad economic package" that will generate 30 billion pesos (more than U.S.\$3 billion) in "savings to society." This money will come from massive firings included in the "voluntary retirement" programs for tens of thousands of public employees and the sale of a few parastate companies like the Hidalgo Insurance Company. Meanwhile, the Mexican economy will experience a frank retreat in the third and fourth quarters limiting growth to one percent, in the best of cases.

In this article, I will examine the content and effects of President Fox's proposed fiscal reform, as well as reac-

tions from society, political parties and Mexico's social organizations. I will also formulate a few predictions about negotiations and the outcome of the administration's bill. The entire process will put the new government's policy orientations to the test vis-à-vis the public's general expectations of positive economic and political change, expectations expressed in last year's presidential elections.

MEXICO'S TAX SYSTEM

The Impact of Public Debt on the Crisis in Public Finances

Mexico's tax system is inefficient, inequitable and vulnerable. Tax earnings represent 10.4 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP), a very low proportion compared to the 26-percent average for members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In Latin America, Mexico's tax earnings are less than the average for South American countries; Brazil, for example, takes in the equivalent of 13.2 percent of its GDP in taxes.

With current structuring of VAT, the Mexican system's potential earnings should be equivalent to 5 percent of GDP, but only 3.3 percent actually comes in. This inefficiency is confirmed by real revenues for the category of tax

* Economist, researcher and professor at the Autonomous Metropolitan University (UAM), Iztapalapa campus.

TABLE 1
TAX REVENUES OF NAFTA COUNTRIES 1980-1995 (PERCENT OF GDP)

Year	Canada				United States				Mexico			
	Total	Direct	Indirect*	S.S. Payments**	Total	Direct	Indirect*	S.S. Payments**	Total	Direct	Indirect*	S.S. Payments**
1980	31.6	17.8	10.4	3.4	26.9	16.3	4.7	5.9	15.9	5.3	8.3	2.3
1985	32.7	17.7	10.5	4.5	26.1	14.6	4.9	6.6	17.0	4.1	11.0	1.9
1990	35.6	21.1	9.3	5.2	26.6	15.1	4.6	6.9	17.1	5.2	9.6	2.3
1995	35.5	20.6	9.0	5.9	27.9	15.9	5.0	7.0	16.3	4.6	9.0	2.7

Indirect taxes.*

Social security payments.**

Source: Nafinsa, *Mercado de valores* (Mexico City), July 1999.

on income and earnings (ISR) coming to only 4.7 percent out of the potential 8 percent. Efficient collection of both taxes would bring in an additional income of 5 percent of GDP. In Mexico, for each peso the public pays in VAT, the government only actually sees 59 cents; the other 41 cents remain in the commercial sector that charges the tax. This practice, a kind of tax fraud, means that of the 250 billion pesos that the Treasury should receive for VAT, it only receives 135 billion (just over U.S.\$13.5 billion).

For the last 10 years, income from Mexico's oil production have represented an average of 31.5 percent of all public revenues. This dependence makes public finances very vulnerable to rapid changes in international oil prices and world demand. The crises of 1982, 1998 and 1999 have confirmed the risks of this structural fragility of public finances and therefore, of the Mexican economy itself.

President Fox's administration has left out a key factor in the current

fiscal crisis in defending his bill: the financial obligations linked to the U.S.\$290-billion public debt. An important part of these financial obligations stems from the bank bail-out when the government's Savings Protection Bank Fund-Bank Savings Protection Institute (Fobaproa-IPAB) purchased overdue loan portfolios. The basic problem of public finances is the year 2001 budgetary difficulties in paying the interest on government debt. Almost U.S.\$30 billion is lacking, representing a fiscal deficit of 5 percent of GDP. The monies that the tax reform would generate would be earmarked to finance the interest on the debt and decrease the deficit. According to the Fox administration tax reform, the additional funds from levying VAT on food, medicine, books and transport would represent between 120 and 140 billion pesos that would cover the inefficiency of the tax system. The new "redistributive fiscal finances" would not correct structural failures; they only broaden out the collecting mechanisms that

will weigh in against the middle- and low-income sectors of the population.

THE ADMINISTRATION'S "NEW PUBLIC FINANCES"

At the end of last March, President Fox presented his bill to the Chamber of Deputies under the suggestive title of "The New Public Finances, A Shared Commitment." The proposal was publicized as a reform that would have a "distributional" effect, a reform that would help build "a Mexico with fewer inequalities." In its argumentation, the federal government emphasizes the need to strengthen the tax base, which in Mexico represents only a modest 10.4 percent of GDP, saying that the increase in tax revenues would make it possible to finance economic growth and increase social spending in education, health and economic and social infrastructure.

During his six-year administration, President Fox hopes to achieve a goal

of increasing tax revenues by 5 percentage points of GDP (two from VAT and three points by fighting tax evasion).

His proposed fiscal guidelines include the following measures:

Regarding value added tax (VAT):

- 1) Levying a 15 percent VAT on food, medicine, school tuition, public transportation, books, etc.;
- 2) Levying the 15 percent tax on employee benefits like supermarket and gasoline vouchers, important wage supplements;

Regarding income tax (ISR):

- 3) Reducing the maximum rate on company and personal income (ISR) to 32 percent (currently, the maximums are 35 and 40 percent);
- 4) Changing the tax credit applied to wages and the differentiated income rate, as well as exempting personal incomes equivalent to four times the minimum wage (60,000 pesos, or slightly over U.S.\$6,000, a year) or less from ISR;
- 5) Exempting stock-market and fiscally consolidated corporations' profits from tax payments;
- 6) Eliminating the existing 5-percent tax on dividends to corporate stockholders;
- 7) Eliminating special categories as well as the ISR exemption on activities in agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing, silviculture and publishing;
- 8) Encouraging investment by eliminating taxes on company earnings of up to 4 million pesos a year (U.S.\$435,000);
- 9) Reducing rates of the Special Tax on Production and Services on alcoholic beverages, beers and cigarettes;

10) Eliminating invoices and registering bank statements;

Regarding the environment:

- 11) Charging for water rights now under the aegis of municipal governments;
- 12) Differential treatment in the application of ecological taxes on "clean" and "dirty" automobiles.²

Actually, Fox's fiscal proposal is part of a broader project that includes other financial and budgetary reforms.³ What is being called "The New Public Finan-

The new "redistributional fiscal finances" would not correct structural failures; they only broaden out the collecting mechanisms.

ces" includes 13 bills that deal with issues as diverse as the opening of branches of foreign banks, limiting the right to banking secrecy, the review of different kinds of mortgage plans, reforms to stock exchange activities, etc.⁴ According to government plans, the central aim of the financial reform is to consolidate, foster and make transparent the activity of financial intermediaries, extending their services to broader sectors of society, and to increase domestic savings. It also proposes to increase supervision and regulation of financial intermediaries; for example, with regard to the stock exchange, it plans stricter sanctions for undue use of privileged information and measures for the creation of an equities clearing house.

It is also proposing a Popular Savings and Credit Law and the creation of new kinds of mutual funds for managing private pension funds as well as the creation of the National Mortgage Society

that would support housing programs. The text of the budgetary reform offers to reorient public spending "focusing on results," subjecting the budget to a formal measurement of performance and rigorous accountability for the funds spent. It also proposes setting up guidelines under which Congress will be able to modify the budget proposals (both for revenues and for spending) known as the "economic package." For example, if Congress and the president do not agree on an economic program, the president could use his right to veto. Also, any addi-

tional spending proposed by the legislature would have to be accompanied by proposals of funding mechanisms. Mr. Fox's project aims to limit the legislative branch's attributions with regard to the budget, broadening those of the executive.⁵

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL EFFECTS OF THE FISCAL REFORM

In preliminary reviews of the negative and positive impact of the fiscal reform, analysts have pointed to the following. First of all, the new income it would generate would help reduce the government's fiscal deficit, as well as its financial dependence on oil earnings. It would probably also facilitate Standard & Poors' granting Mexico's public foreign debt "investment grade," confirming the economic stability favorable to investment and employment. Interest rates would continue their des-

TABLE 2
SOURCES OF MEXICAN TAX REVENUE (1997)

Tax	Percentage of tax revenue
Income and corporate earnings tax	34
Tax on oil (does not include proceedings from direct sale)	35
Value added tax	20
Special tax on production and services*	2
Import duties	5
Others (tax on new autos and vehicle registration)	4
Total	100

* Applied to alcoholic beverages, tobacco, beer and soft drinks.
Source: Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público, Mexico City, 1998.

cent, which would hopefully stimulate the demand for loans and their repayment. In addition, a decrease in the ISR, which benefits both individuals and companies, and the immediate investment deduction would also have positive effects in high-income categories.

In a climate of stability and confidence, the entry of new capital would strengthen the peso vis-à-vis the dollar. And finally, stock prices would increase because of high expectations. These are some of the positive effects most often cited in defense of the Fox administration's fiscal project.

Among the negative effects is, in the first place, an 8- to 9.5 percent inflation rate due to price hikes stemming from the application of the VAT to food and medicine; according to the National Statistics Institute, food and medicine represent 27 percent of the consumer price index. This price increase would more severely affect the over 50

percent of the population who have low incomes since they earmark more of their earnings for basic goods and services. As a result, disposable income among these sectors would drop. The government would have to broaden out and strengthen compensatory programs to avoid greater impoverishment.

Increased taxes would inevitably weaken the domestic market and with that accentuate the difficulties faced by small and medium-sized firms, important sources of employment. The new fiscal arrangement could even stimulate further the informal economy. Preliminary estimates of the Scotia-bank-Inverlat Brokerage indicate that the fiscal reforms could cause a temporary reduction in domestic consumption, with effects differentiated according to sector of economic activity. For example, the industries whose sales would be most affected would be textiles, beverages, food and commerce.⁶ In general, all companies linked to the produc-

tion and commercialization of wage-goods would be affected.

Interest rates would stay at current levels, at least during the period in which prices increase due to taxes. The currency would increasingly be over-valued because of the influx of new capital.

SOCIETY AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES RESPOND

The administration's proposal has caused an uproar and an intense debate in political and business circles and among social organizations. The media has paid particular attention to this debate, whose initial results did not favor the Fox administration. The fiscal reform proposal has not achieved consensus among the public, but in the end, it will be the Chamber of Deputies that will make the decision.

The most polemical proposals are the ones imposing VAT on food, medi-

cine and other items that were previously exempt and the elimination of tax breaks on agricultural, fishing, transportation and publishing activities. This puts the fiscal reform at risk because the two measures are at the center of the administration's proposal given its urgent need for income.

One of the most frequently repeated criticisms is that the fiscal reform is not equitable and that therefore the new proposed tax system cannot fulfill its aim of redistributing income. The VAT will negatively affect more than half the population who earn under twice the minimum wage. The administration proposes setting up a compensatory program that consists of distributing 108 pesos a month—it has been debated whether this would actually cover the VAT a family of five would pay out—to 5.3 million families, barely half the poor families affected. The case of Mexico City is a significant example: it has 3 million poor inhabitants who are not part of the federal government Progresá compensatory programs and therefore would receive no compensation at all.⁷

The fiscal reform is inequitable because it taxes these sectors' consumption at the same time that the federal government has decided not to charge the country's banks back taxes owed to the tune of 45 billion pesos (U.S.\$4.5 billion). If Mexico's bankers paid 15 percent of their back taxes, the federal government would take in 6.7 billion pesos, the equivalent of all the income expected from the VAT applied to medicine and books.

After five months of debates and analysis, the administration's fiscal project has not achieved an affirmative answer or consensus in society. Quite to the contrary, the main reactions have

been disapproval and rejection. Unions and peasant confederations have stated that the fiscal reform injures people's basic rights to food, health and education.

With the exception of the powerful Bankers Association of Mexico, the chambers of commerce and industry have also expressed their skepticism regarding the government's project. The National Chamber of Publishers called applying VAT to books an "attack on culture" that would accelerate the sector's already existing crisis. The Business Coordinating Council, one of the

Increased taxes would inevitably weaken the domestic market and accentuate difficulties faced by small and medium-sized firms.

country's most influential business organizations, said that the reduction of the ISR to 32 percent would only benefit the rich and the poor, leaving the middle class without any form of government support that would compensate for the negative effects of applying VAT to more goods.⁸

In this atmosphere of disagreement, the changes to and eventual rejection or approval of the new tax laws will be decided by Congress, in particular the deputies of Mexico's three main political parties: the governing National Action Party (PAN), the former governing Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the center-left Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD).

A PROBABLE NEW PAN-PRI CONGRESSIONAL MAJORITY

It is a fact that the Mexican economy has stagnated as a result of the reces-

sion in the United States and the impact of governmental budget cuts that have slowed investment and domestic consumption.

The 200,000 new jobs the administration had planned to create from January to March did not materialize, meaning it will not reach its goal of 700,000 new jobs this year (1,200,000 new people enter the work force yearly). In addition, the economy will only grow one percent this year.

This is the social and economic context in which the Chamber of Deputies, where none of the three largest

parties has a majority, will discuss the proposed fiscal reform and have to come to some kind of a decision.

During an economic recession, the fiscal reform will also put the legislative branch to a rigorous test as a counterweight to the executive branch, particularly the political parties and deputies as elected officials.

The final outcome will be a good estimation of the level of independence that the legislature has vis-à-vis the executive. The public will be able to measure the truth of Fox's statement during his inaugural address that "the president proposes and the Congress decides."

The PAN's congressional caucus supports the bill in general terms but has strong objections to some of the proposals about levying VAT on more products. The caucus does not have a majority and will have to negotiate the terms of the compromise proposal with the PRI and the PRD, and even with the

executive branch itself. The terms of that negotiation seem to be clearly outlined by the fact that the PAN caucus has 207 votes and needs only 44 votes more to have a majority in the Chamber of Deputies. Those 44 votes could come from the PRI (which has a plurality of 209 votes) or even from the sector of the PRD (with 51 votes) headed up by its president, Amalia García, who has proposed a conciliatory policy toward the Fox administration.

The new congressional majority will probably be forged between the PAN and some of the more conservative sectors of the PRI itself that have confirmed their agreement with President Fox's neoliberal economic strategy. This kind of an agreement has a precedent in the recent controversial approval of the constitutional amendment about the rights of indigenous peoples. Under these circumstances, President Fox's original proposal would undergo important modifications.

The political-electoral costs of approving Fox's VAT proposal could be considerable for both the PAN and the PRI, whose deputies already approved in 1995 an increase in the VAT tax from 10 percent to 15 percent.

A decision like this could cut short the electoral recovery the PRI has had in the recent state elections in Oaxaca and Tabasco.

The PRD has expressed its overall rejection of Fox's tax proposals. This party, the country's third electoral force, is sharply divided and made a bad showing at the most recent federal elections, despite having retained the Mexico City mayor's office. A congressional agreement between the PAN and sectors of the PRI could once again exclude the PRD from the real process of negotiations about tax reform.

SOME PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

In the new political context marked by parties alternating in the presidency, an attempt to come to a consensus about tax reform requires first of all a reform of the public administration, guaranteeing transparency and efficiency in the use and assignation of public funds. Otherwise, taxpayers are not going to be very willing to increase their payments or even become part of the fiscal system. This prerequisite has not been guaranteed by the new administration.

A state with weak finances sees its ability to foster economic development seriously restricted. A successful fiscal reform must cover certain minimal bases and clearly defined objectives. First of all, it should guarantee the principle of equality, achieve a consensus among the different economic actors and social sectors and operate in the framework of legal security. Mexico needs a fiscal reform that will eliminate inequalities and inefficiency and strengthen public finances. Only under these conditions will the state be able to fulfill its obligations in financing national development.

In a context of crisis in public finances, passing the fiscal reform bill promoted by the Fox administration is a task of the highest order. However, the characteristics of the bill itself do not fill the expectations of a progressive economic change that broad sectors of the population are waiting for. Its eventual approval without substantial changes would also make the political parties that voted for it very vulnerable politically and electorally.

The Mexican economy has stagnated as a result of the U.S. recession and the impact of federal budget cuts that

have slowed investment and domestic consumption. At the same time, unemployment continues to rise. In this difficult social and economic situation, the Chamber of Deputies will negotiate, change and approve a final version of the fiscal, financial and budget reforms.

Negotiations among the main congressional caucuses is inevitable given that none of the three has a majority. Under these circumstances, we should not be surprised if the PAN comes to an agreement with sectors of the PRI since they agree overall on the federal government's neoliberal economic model. **NMM**

NOTES

¹ Mexico's income tax (ISR) is applied to different kinds of income both personal and corporate, including wages, honoraria, dividends, interest, and corporate profits. ISR is also applied to rent, real estate purchases and sales and purchases of goods and services.

² "Llegó la propuesta; no hubo cambios: SHCP," *El Universal* (Mexico City), 4 April 2001, p. A6.

³ The broader government proposal includes a new law on earning and value added and reforms to the Special Law on Production and Services and to the Federal Law on Automobile Tax, among others. In the financial realm, the administration is projecting a new national law on mortgages, a law to create the National Savings and Financial Services Bank, reforms to the Law on Credit Institutions and changes to the charters of the National Finance Institution, the Rural Credit Bank, the Foreign Trade Bank, the Army Bank and the Bank of Public Works and Services. With regard to the budget, it is planning amendments of different articles of the Constitution to allow the president to push forward the yearly Expenditures Budget Decree. (Chamber of Deputies, *Gaceta Parlamentaria*, 4 April 2001), Appendices.

⁴ Cámara de Diputados, *Gaceta Parlamentaria*, 4 April 2001, Appendices.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "La reforma fiscal reducirá el consumo en general," *Milenio Diario* (Mexico City), 4 June 2001.

⁷ "Declaración del jefe de gobierno del Distrito Federal sobre la reforma fiscal," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), 19 April 2001.

⁸ "Condiciona la iniciativa privada apoyo a la reforma fiscal," *Milenio Diario* (Mexico City), 5 April 2001.

The Limits of the Fiscal Reform

Francisco Sevilla*



Nava / AVE

Protests against charging VAT for food and medicine.

Mexico's lack of resources for economic growth has been a constant and is the context for the debate on tax reform.

Amidst the economic recession that has characterized the first nine months of President Vicente Fox's administration, the greatest challenge that our incipient democracy faces is regaining the path of sustained economic growth lost for almost three consecutive presidential terms.¹ Our economy, which depends mainly on manufacturing exports, has been adversely affected by

the deceleration of the U.S. economy and growth expectations have dropped from 7 percent to 0.5 percent.²

Under current conditions, to grow again, we need to reactivate investment in production and reorient the economy toward increasing the domestic market. The administration wants the fiscal reform to be the instrument that will allow the state to achieve higher revenues and stimulate economic growth.

The federal executive has sent the Chamber of Deputies a tax reform bill whose main objective is strengthening state finances by increasing revenues by 117 billion pesos (over U.S.\$12 billion). It also sets oft-repeated general goals: fighting tax evasion, simplifying

accounting procedures and mechanisms for tax collection, redistributing income more fairly and equitably, increasing investment in production, making public spending more transparent, etc.

Even though the proposed fiscal reform's objectives are acceptable and all the political forces in the country concur that they should be achieved, analysts agree that the proposal is limited both because of its practical applicability and because the real possibility of increasing taxes is very slim.

It would be very complex and costly to exercise control over taxes paid by small-scale itinerant salespeople who sell agricultural items like limes, onions and apples on the street. It would be

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equally difficult to establish just what the income of taxi or mini-bus drivers is.

On the other hand, tax collection is concentrated among a small number of companies and individuals who currently bear the brunt of the burden, and these would in fact end up paying the increased taxes proposed in the fiscal reform. This group also has the most resources and means to make their protests heard.

The current balance of forces in the Chamber of Deputies—where the president's National Action Party (PAN) does not have a majority and where presidentialism no longer operates—makes it possible to predict that the executive's proposal to apply the value added tax (VAT) to basic foodstuffs, medicine for chronic illnesses and basic health care, books and public transportation will be rejected. Some processed foods are considered luxury items and certain products are passed off as medicine when they are actually cosmetic treatments; no one will oppose the VAT being applied to them. But it will be very difficult to get approval for eliminating the tax exemption on basic foods and most medicine, books and public transport. The exemption is considered a victory of the poor, and deputies would find themselves very hard put to explain to their constituents why they had voted to eliminate it.

CONCENTRATED TAX REVENUES

We should ask ourselves two questions. Up to what point can large companies, who consider themselves the target of the tax hike—since they are a captive tax base that provides most tax revenues—really absorb the increase? And,

would they really be willing to be—in solidarity—a part of this project?

Because of the concentration of income, the country's large companies play an important role in public finances. One percent of companies provide 75 percent of federal government tax revenues: according to Finance Ministry figures, of the 3,130,714 registered companies, 31,307 supply 75 percent of tax income (income and corporate earnings tax [ISR], VAT and others).³

On the other hand, tax revenues from the other 99 percent of compa-

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nies are very dispersed because in the main they are small firms over which the Finance Ministry's administrative infrastructure (which is shrinking) has less control. In this category are many companies who only manage to subsist by evading taxes.

Currently, 20 percent of tax revenues from foreign trade, which has increased its fiscal contribution in recent years, comes from tariffs, a figure unlikely to increase. Although Mexico has signed free trade agreements with the European Community and several countries in Central and South America, and although talks are underway to establish future agreements with Japan and other countries, the trend in free trade is precisely to suppress tariffs.

Mexican income tax (ISR), the single largest source of federal tax revenues, is also highly concentrated. A mere 5,000 companies contribute almost half of this kind of taxes. This shows the high concentration of income and the difficulty in increasing the rate in this category, where the bill stipulates a maximum of 32 percent.⁴

OIL-BASED FINANCES

Pemex, the country's largest company and the federal government's largest taxpayer, contributed 37 percent of all tax revenues in the year 2000.⁵ The company predicts a reduction of its contribution, both because oil prices are dropping and because Pemex growth requires large investments put off during the period of so-called "neoliberalism," the last three administrations. Some of these investments are for maintenance and cannot be postponed; this means that if tax monies are not freed up to do it, debt will have to be incurred.

Until now, public finances have been maintained by taxing oil income, but the fiscal reform aims to give the company room to grow by encouraging investment. Of the estimated 289 billion pesos (over U.S.\$31 billion) in tax monies that Pemex should generate in 2001, 109 billion (U.S.\$11.8 billion) are needed for reinvestment in production and maintenance work that has been postponed over the years.⁶

PERSONAL INCOME TAX

There is also little room for maneuvering around the proposal to increase personal income tax. On the one hand,

among high-income groups, the top 10 percent of families concentrate 40 percent of all income; these people pay 88 percent of all personal income tax and oppose an increase even though they have the ability to pay. On the other extreme of the spectrum are the 60 percent of poorest homes with absolutely no capability of paying taxes. It is important to mention here that they pay no taxes on their personal incomes because doing so would reduce considerably their ability to purchase basic foodstuffs and medicine and use public transportation.⁷

This concentration of income can also be observed in wages: of the 14.5 million wage-earners registered as taxpayers, 60 percent earn the equivalent of three times the minimum wage or less and therefore, by law, pay no ISR. On the other end of the spectrum are the top-earning nine percent (1,305,000 wage earners) who earn over ten times the minimum wage and who contribute 93 percent of wage-earners' ISR. This is the segment where taxes could be raised, but if the crisis continues, there will be fewer earnings to tax because in the first eight months of the year, almost half a million workers have lost their jobs.⁸

VALUE ADDED TAX

The Fox administration hopes to increase tax revenues by 117 billion pesos (over U.S.\$12 billion) by applying VAT to new products. This amount would have to be adjusted down with any changes that Congress might make to the bill. After the adjustments, analysts estimate that between 30 and 40 percent of the goal could actually be collected. Current VAT revenues, which

represent 30 percent of government revenues, also come from a relatively small number of people. The 20 percent of the population with the highest incomes pays 64 percent of all the VAT collected, while the other 80 percent only contributes 36 percent.⁹

THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

The informal economy, which includes all unregistered economic activities carried out in units of under five per-

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sons, is responsible for the largest amount of tax evasion of any sector. A mechanism has to be created to integrate the informal economy into the formal sector and, of course, levy taxes on it. This is necessary because, measuring by its size and economic resources, it represents an equivalent of 8 percent of the GDP that is simply not counted in national accounts. In addition, during the current recession, it is the most dynamic part of the national economy. This sector's very rapid development is attributable to excessive regulation, the lack of job opportunities and the relative simplicity with which the unemployed of the formal sector turn into itinerant salespeople with high profit rates because they pay no taxes.

According to National Statistics Institute studies, more than 8 million people work in the "underground economy," that is 21.7 percent of the economically active population, which generates 40 percent of the GDP in sales.

This is the sector with the greatest potential for increasing tax revenues because this is where the most tax evasion is occurring. According to the Chamber of Deputies' Finance Commission, tax evasion may amount to about 138 billion pesos (over U.S.\$14.8 billion), more than the entire increase in tax revenues Fox hopes for from his fiscal reform.

CONCLUSIONS

Regardless of whether we accept the aims of the fiscal reform, the real possibilities of increasing revenues are limited because high-income groups already pay relatively high taxes, and it will be very difficult to justify an increase.

To be able to incorporate the informal economy into the formal economy and increase taxes paid by people with middle-class incomes, the state machine will have to be expanded, which represents a cost that may not be justified.

If the government opted for increasing the price of fuel, given the difficulties in increasing taxes, it would be the high-income sector that would end up paying for the increase.

To be able to negotiate the fiscal reform, all sectors of society would have to come together to reach a national accord, with long-term objectives. They would have to start by making the state viable, through the appropriate func-

tioning of an economy in sustained growth based on three premises:

- 1) An overall fiscal reform that would include the basic guidelines for the federal budget (with regard to both revenues and spending) so as to avoid what happens now, which is that every year, Congress has a rushed debate and ends up establishing a series of transitory measures in the part of the bill called "Miscellanea."
- 2) Establishing bankruptcy and guarantees legislation to ensure legal security for investments and to allow the operation of the entire business system.
- 3) Restructuring the whole banking and financial system to reincorporate it into the productive sector.

THE MODERN STATE

This national accord has projects that could immediately be put into effect to reactivate the economy based on

investments that would have a repercussion on the country's domestic economy:

- a) The construction of Mexico City's new airport;
- b) Private investment in petrochemicals;
- c) Private investment in electricity generation;
- d) The construction of a railroad network that would connect nearby cities to Mexico City's metropolitan area.

The new administration will have to face the task of making the Mexican state both strong and smaller than it is today, but more efficient and with a greater ability to fulfill its obligations to society. It must be a solid state based on an economy in sustained growth that would foster job creation to ensure employment to most people of working age. That is, a state in which paying taxes is not an unwarranted burden on anyone. ■■■

NOTES

¹ According to Central Bank figures, gross domestic product (GDP) growth from 1982 to 1994 surpassed that of population growth only five times, and Finance Ministry data puts GDP growth per inhabitant at only 4.77 percent for the entire period between 1994 and 1999.

² Compare Vicente Fox's campaign proposals and recent declarations of Guillermo Ortiz, the governor of the Central Bank.

³ Interview with José Guzmán, head administrator of foreign trade, *Reforma* (Mexico City), 19 May 2000.

⁴ Interview with Fernando Pérez Noriega (PAN) and Jorge Chávez Presa (PRI), members of the congressional Finance Commission, *El Universal* (Mexico City), 31 July 2001.

⁵ *Reforma* (Mexico City), 27 August 2001.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática, *Encuesta de ingresos y gastos* (Mexico City: INEGI, 1998).

⁸ Figures from the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS) about workers who lost their jobs taken off the rolls.

⁹ Interview with Deputies Fernando Pérez Noriega (PAN) and Jorge Chávez Presa (PRI), members of the congressional Finance Commission, *El Universal* (Mexico City), 31 August 2001.

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The Border and Social Movements In Mexico and the U.S.

Javier Torres Parés*



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The mutual influence between Mexico and the U.S. has affected the formation of the proletariat of both nations.

Down through history, social movements in the United States have maintained close relations with Mexico and the other Latin American societies. The nature and results of these contacts deserve more research.

In this field we find numerous instances of a history —shared by Latin Americans and the U.S.— of both so-

lidity and conflict. For our analysis to advance, we need a more detailed understanding of the profile of U.S. popular movements, whose role in the dynamics of the society itself is often underestimated. Conceiving U.S. history as the simple result of advances in the business world would be to ignore important, broad conflicts and the social movements that have been part of the building of the country itself. The mutual influence between Mexico and the United States, particularly intense along the border, has affected

the formation of the proletariat of both nations and the development of social rights and democratic demands in both countries.

FROM THE U.S. SOCIAL MOVEMENT
TO LATIN AMERICA

The characteristics of the historic formation of the proletariat in the United States, the nature of its main organizations and the very existence of broad, powerful social movements there were

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a spur to the establishment of relations with workers in the rest of the hemisphere. First of all I would like to touch on the multi-ethnic nature of the formation of the proletariat in the nineteenth century United States.¹ It is particularly important to note the presence of workers of Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban origin from the end of the nineteenth century and that of Central Americans more recently, who

lic and the expansion of capitalism toward the rest of the hemisphere were the cause of passionate debates and prompted positions and attitudes among U.S. workers ranging from racism to anti-imperialism and antimilitarism.

The different currents' political and organizational alternatives competed in Latin America to attain hegemony over relations with workers there. One example is the clash that divided the

ico and Latin America intensify notably: one that spans the first two decades of the twentieth century, the years after the 1929 crisis and the current period. The first period, which spans years of great social turmoil in the United States and several countries of Latin America, left a lasting mark, with U.S. workers' social protests and the revolution in Mexico as starting points. The international workers' experience of that time were some of history's richest, showing the way for other countries in the region.

Important experiences in the relation of U.S. workers with Mexicans on both sides of the border made it possible to create in the U.S. Southwest and Mexico's North a single region for workers' mobilization during certain periods that were, while brief, very intense.³

From that perspective, several fundamental international movements can be pointed out, although they have been studied little. The best known research on these topics has restricted its attention to official pan-American organizations and "workers' diplomacy" spearheaded by their leaders,⁴ and tends to leave to one side the numerous exchanges and contacts among workers from these countries. These links were forged regardless of the workers' membership in union confederations and political parties by middle-level leaders and rank-and-file members of these organizations.

If we take a broader view, we begin to see that more significance can be assigned to international social processes like the movement for freedom of expression, the agitation and mobilizations against interventions and imperialism and the antimilitarist resistance to the outbreak of the Great War. We

Important experiences in the relation of U.S. workers with Mexicans on both sides of the border made it possible to create a single region for workers' mobilization.

made New York, Chicago and the border states with Mexico centers of learning and political and cultural experimentation that they then transmitted to their own countries.

I am also referring to the development of many political currents and social movements spread by the different waves of immigrants. Their efforts led to the creation of very active, radical anarchist groups and the growth, particularly intense in 1911 and 1912, of a large Socialist Party with an enormous number of local chapters, the strengthening of national and local union federations and the development of popular movements with worker participation. Among the latter are the populist and progressive movements that shook U.S. society and, in different ways, had an influence in Mexico and the rest of Latin America.² For all these movements, immigration and, in general, relations with Latin America, were a focus of their attention and political definitions. Their reaction to events like the Mexican Revolution, the U.S. intervention in Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic

U.S. workers movement between the defenders of industrial organization and those who unionized by trade. This resulted in a face-off of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and led to an important split in the Socialist Party in 1912 and to the creation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in 1938 that tried to offer a different road to that of the AFL's trade-oriented organization. Today we can see that these old differences are resurfacing in the polemic about the creation of organizations capable of recruiting recent immigrants, the unorganized and the unskilled. They are also present in the incipient clash between a multitude of independent organizations and the United States' large union confederations.

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' MOBILIZATION

We can identify three periods in which this kind of U.S. relations with Mex-

would also have to include on this list the movement to defend Sacco and Vanzetti, at its height during the 1920s.⁵

In all these cases there were joint mobilizations, sometimes simultaneously, that aimed to support revolutionary efforts by workers in the United States or Mexico. Different groups of workers from both countries used public demonstrations, strikes and boycotts, rebellion and armed struggle to strengthen international solidarity. Workers of Latino origin in the United States, like the Cuban workers, for example, also expressed their support for the Mexican revolution.

The antimilitarist activities of workers from Tampico, Tamaulipas, illustrates one of the social processes I have mentioned. A group of leaders from this oil port, members of different unions that belonged to the House of the World Worker (Casa del Obrero Mundial), launched a campaign to defend antimilitarist activists who had been repressed by both government and management. *Germinal* was the name of the publication that expressed the ideas of solidarity of the region's unions.

In October 1917, a Workers' Convention was held in Tampico that proposed forming a national union. Taking advantage of the tensions arising out of the European conflict and the political situation in Mexico, the press unleashed a campaign against convention participants, linking the *Germinal* group to German interests, a campaign which led to arrests and deportations, paralleling what was going on in the United States under similar pretexts.

In February 1918, *Germinal* denounced the repression it was being subjected to, its editors explaining that the persecution against them was an attempt to make it impossible for anti-

militarist positions to reach a broad audience in the United States. *Germinal's* dissemination among the U.S. proletariat replaced some U.S. publications, whose circulation had dropped because of repression. It published numerous articles and manifestos by organizers of different California anarchist groups, by the IWW and by Latin American unions who were trying to provide orientation to workers around

Different groups of workers from both countries used public demonstrations, strikes and boycotts, rebellion and armed struggle to strengthen international solidarity.

the questions arising out of U.S. participation in the war.

The links created in this way made it possible for Tampico workers to express their solidarity with striking miners in Arizona, whose production was key for the war effort, calling on Mexicans to not accept jobs in those mines. It was these kinds of efforts that formed the basis for the international experience of the workers' movement, which had a clear influence on the formation of the Mexican movement itself.

PROJECTS AND ORGANIZATIONS

We should remember the attempts to extend the organizational and political options developed in the United States to Latin America. The close relations between Puerto Rican anarchists and the IWW and the existence of IWW locals all the way from neighboring Mexico to distant Chile are examples of the attempts to organize Latin American workers on an industrial basis.⁶

The Socialist Party of the United States also attempted to penetrate the region with its ideas about building socialism. However, this did not stop socialist leader Morris Hillquit from proposing the restriction of immigration of "backward races" to the United States from as early as 1904,⁷ or the National Executive Committee from opposing in 1907 the import of "cheap labor" from China and Japan, since it

threatened—according to some leaders—to destroy workers' organizations.⁸ On the question of black workers, the party's right wing, headed by Victor Berger, thought that "Negros were inferior, depraved degenerates who went around raping women and children," and that socialism would achieve the complete segregation of blacks and whites.⁹ Obviously, this party did not particularly concern itself with organizing Mexican and Latin American workers in the United States. However, I should point out that several socialist organizations, particularly in border states with Mexico, ignored their leaders and linked up with workers of Mexican origin and the revolutionary process south of the border.¹⁰ Daniel de Leon, the founder of the Socialist Labor Party, tried to approach Puerto Rican workers and get them to adopt a radical, industrial version of socialism.

Lastly, in a very brief summary, I can mention the existence of hemisphere-wide organizations that put forward different union projects which expressed the relations of workers of Latin Amer-



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In the early twentieth century, joint mobilizations aimed to support revolutionary efforts by workers in the U.S. and Mexico.

ica and the United States. The Pan-American Federation of Labor (PAFL), which linked the AFL and the CROM as its initial launching pad for expansion in Latin America, is one. Another is the Continental Workers Association (ACAT-1929), a short-lived anarchist organization, and its contemporary, the Latin American Union Confederation

(CSLA), of Communist orientation. The Confederation of Workers of Latin America (CTAL), founded in 1938 and headed up by Mexican unionist Vicente Lombardo Toledano, was opposed by the AFL, but established better relations with the CIO, the organization that, as a result of a broad radicalization among U.S. workers again put

forward the idea of industry-wide organization.¹¹ These and other organizations that emerged in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and other countries of the region were victims of the Cold War polarization and were forced to either second AFL policy or resist it.¹² This is yet another of the ways that U.S. workers have influenced Latin America.

TOWARD A NEW PERIOD OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL MOBILIZATION?

Relations between U.S. and Mexican workers are constantly changing, even today. President Reagan's immigration legislation had clear effects on workers in his own country, Mexico and Central America.

Given globalization and its constant crises, restructuring and the establishment of a new international division of labor, emerging social and workers movements face problems that by nature transcend national boundaries.

A single economic and social phenomenon confronted some workers with "plant flight" and "job flight," as well as the reduction of their previously won conquests, like in the United States. For others, the same phenomenon means a greater reduction in living standards—depressed for years—like in Mexico. For workers on both sides of the border, this makes for unemployment and, increasingly, the destructuring of their old union organizations and the need to come up with new forms of organization and resistance.

To get rid of unionized workers, some companies reduce the size of their plants and try to decentralize, sending production processes to other regions where they enjoy modern facilities and cheap labor. The Mexico-U.S. border area is attractive for this operation. In some cases, such as the auto industry, companies build plants on both sides of the border, making geographical proximity another advantage. In addition, regional concentration is increased through multinationals' locating different parts of their production processes on either side

of the border, at the same time that they attempt to defuse potential protests by Mexican workers against their extremely low wages and miserable working conditions.

These changes show some of the ways that capital is internationalized. This seems to define and concretize the common challenges that workers and social activists face in both countries. James D. Cockroft's warning sev-

Given globalization and its constant crises, emerging social and workers movements face problems that by nature transcend national boundaries.

eral years ago that "these tendencies have the potential of revitalizing the class struggle on both sides of the border" seems correct.¹³

At the heart of this complex series of conditions created by the dynamics of the development of the United States and Mexico are undocumented workers. The main impact of amendments to U.S. immigration law has been on labor questions. This has happened when "illegals"—mainly farm, textile and auto workers, among others—tried to create political and union organizations, which were soon threatened by U.S. labor and immigration policy.¹⁴

The weakened U.S. workers' and union movement and the increasingly broad social protest movements (given the impoverishment of broad sectors of U.S. society) are faced once again with the need to take a position on organizing recent immigrants, the unorganized and the unskilled. Workers, farmers, employees, religious groups and students in the United States are increasing their efforts and activities around the question of ethnic minori-

ties and on the particularly serious problem of the private appropriation of nature's genetic resources. The dubious genetic modification of basic foodstuffs is something that new popular movements are focusing on at the same time that they attempt to deal with the problems that Mexico and the rest of Latin American countries are facing.

The development of social movements has led U.S. unionists to par-

ticipate in the new social struggles. In September 2000, the conservative AFL—which despite everything, does have 13 million members—"derailed" the Seattle meeting of the World Trade Organization and programed nationwide protests against the international bureaucracies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, seen as the imposers of economic programs responsible for poverty in many countries and enemies of labor rights. The AFL began a campaign called Jobs with Justice.¹⁵

The response of unions and different social groups to these problems are diverse and contradictory. However, it would seem that a new period of intensification of the international dimension of popular struggle is upon us, in many cases with increasing participation of workers, students and other social groups radicalized by circumstances, who have an influence in Mexico and are sensitive to Latin American struggles. This makes it important to know first hand and deepen our understanding of popular move-

ments in the United States and their relations with other countries in the hemisphere. **NMM**

NOTES

- ¹ Willi Paul Adams, *Los Estados Unidos de América* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1985), Chapters 4 and 5.
- ² About these movements, see, among others, Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment. A Short History of the Agrarian Revolution* (Oxford-London-New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) and Gabriel Kolko and John D. Buenker, "The Progressive Movement. Liberal or Conservative?", Gerald N. Grove and George Athan Billias, eds., *Interpretations of American History. Patterns and Perspectives*, vol. 2 (New York: The Free Press, 1982), pp. 163-208.
- ³ Javier Torres Parés, *La revolución sin frontera. El Partido Liberal Mexicano y las relaciones entre el movimiento obrero de México y el de Estados Unidos* (Mexico City: UNAM-Ediciones

y Distribuciones Hispánicas, 1990). The examples given in this article are documented in this book, which looks in more detail at the international dimension of workers' mobilization from 1900 to 1923.

- ⁴ Harvey Levenstein, "Labor Organizations in the United States and Mexico. A History of Their Relations," *Contributions in American History* 13 (Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1971); also Sinclair Snow, *The Pan-American Federation of Labor* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1964).
- ⁵ A very good study about the mobilization around this case can be found in Ronald Creagh, "Sacco et Vanzetti," *Actes et mémoires du peuple* (Paris: La Découverte, 1984).
- ⁶ David Viñas, "Anarquistas en América Latina," *Antología de América Latina I* (Mexico City: Ed. Katún, 1983).
- ⁷ Ira Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement 1897-1912* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1968), pp. 276-277.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 131-133.

- ¹⁰ James Robert Green, *Grass Roots Socialism. Radical Movement in the Southwest, 1895-1943* (Bâton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978) and Emilio Zamora, *El movimiento obrero mexicano en Texas, 1900-1920* (Mexico City: SEP-Frontera, 1986).
- ¹¹ Leo Huberman, *Historia de los Estados Unidos. Nosotros el pueblo* (Mexico City: Ed. Nuestro Tiempo, 1977), pp. 415 on.
- ¹² Julio Godio, "El movimiento obrero latinoamericano 1960-1980. Diagnóstico y perspectivas," *Latinoamérica. Anuario de Estudios Latinoamericanos* 18 (Mexico City: UNAM, 1985).
- ¹³ James D. Cockroft, "La migración mexicana y la internacionalización de la lucha obrera," *Cuadernos Políticos* 35 (January-March 1983), pp. 68-82.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.
- ¹⁵ "Protestas en EU coincidirán con acciones en Praga contra el FMI," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), 19 September 2000.

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Jesús Gallardo The Art of Landscape¹



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La Bufo Hill in the Mist, 100 x 120 cm, n.d. (oil on canvas). Jorge Videgaray Collection.

J. Gallardo

Jesús Gallardo is heir to a highly developed regional sensitivity to the profound cultural roots of mestizo groups from Mexico's Central Highlands, specifically the Bajío area: La Luz, León, Guanajuato, San Luis Potosí, whose deep feelings of identification with their rural and urban surroundings made up a psychology that tended toward intimism, subjectivism, romanticism, melancholy and contemplative catharsis.

This condition of the spirit oriented his vocation toward the figurative arts and identified his inclinations with those of a very dynamic group of painters who would reclaim landscapes as another manifestation of cultural nationalism: among others, José Chávez Morado, Alfredo Zalce, Luis Nishizawa, Nicolás Moreno, Francisco Moreno Capdevila, Amador Lugo, Feliciano Peña and Celia Calderón. They all had rigorous academic training and shared their passion for the art and pop-

ular manifestations that somehow identified their surroundings.

SOMETHING ABOUT HIS LIFE

Gallardo was born in León, Guanajuato, in 1931. His father's death, when Jesús was 13 years old, changed his life radically. He and his mother moved to Mexico City where he finished his primary and secondary education, taking his first sketching classes there from a Professor Nieto.

He was already beginning to perceive his artistic vocation. His family, disconcerted, finally told him that if he wanted to be an artist, he should talk to a professional about it; they sent him to watercolorist Rafael Muñoz López, who, after seeing Jesús' drawings, suggested that he take his work more seriously since he did show promise.



Summer Landscape, 80 x 120 cm, n.d. (oil on canvas on wood). Marcela and Fernando Guzmán Bretón Collection.

Muñoz's opinion motivated Jesús, but he had to overcome his mother's misgivings, since she had heard that students learned little or nothing good from art schools. In the end, Jesús managed to enter the San Carlos Academy in 1947, at a time when the academic environment at the National School of Visual Arts was very rigorous, dynamic and diverse. Among his most memorable experiences is watching Diego Rivera at work for a year, between 1950 and 1951 on the frescos in Mexico City's National Palace.

Gallardo finished his studies in 1951 and the next year returned to Guanajuato. He maintained links to his alma mater, however, and to the capital city's artistic milieu. He went through the local government to get an interview with the dean of the University of Guanajuato, Antonio Torres Gómez, who supported him by asking him to organize a visual arts workshop, which in-

roduced graphic production to Guanajuato. It was spacious, comfortable and had everything necessary for working on etchings and engravings.

There, Gallardo painted and did his first professional work, both in painting and in engraving, all in the company of his students. The Guanajuato workshop brought Mexico its first monumental-sized rolling press, which Gallardo acquired thanks to his relations with Japanese artist Yukio Fukasawa. This was an important precedent since monumental graphics have been one of the most prolific currents of Mexican art in recent times.

A VOCATION IN MOVEMENT

The discipline he acquired at the National School of Visual Arts gave Gallardo the technical and



Wood, 80 x 120 cm, 1995 (oil on canvas on wood). Erika and Francisco Arroyo Collection.



Barren Hills, 60 x 90 cm, 1970 (oil on canvas). María Gallardo vda. de M. del Campo Collection.



Pot Plateau, 80 x 120 cm, 1992 (oil on canvas). Casa de Gobierno de Guanajuato Collection.



Temezcuicate, 80 x 122 cm, 1967 (oil on canvas). Ma. del Carmen Carrillo vda. de Gallardo Collection.

didactic resources he needed to develop important educational work in his native state, where in addition to the workshop, he founded the University of Guanajuato School of Visual Arts. Immersed in that project, he researched techniques for gravure or intaglio engraving, which increased his proficiency and enriched the repertory of his resources for expression.

As an etcher, he achieved extraordinary virtuosity. The richness of his attacks has made him one of the best engravers of our time. His tonal variations are the product of the patient alchemy of an appropriate selection of varnishes, able handling of the stylus and a succession of acid baths programed with method and ingenuity.

Using all these elements, Jesús Gallardo gave himself fully to landscapes, holding a permanent dialogue with the topography and the light of the Bajío region. He created a passionate vision of the highlands in which his existential concerns and world view are projected in prototypical forms that we can categorize as follows: first works, the Mexico Basin and environs; Guanajuato, the river and mines; abysses and horizons; summits and unusual rocks.

His landscapes of Guanajuato reveal a deliberate dramatic—even tragic—treatment, with skies that like an immense, foreboding bird darken the atmosphere, reminding us that the glory and splendor that came out of mineral wealth was accompanied by pitiless exploitation.

Gallardo projects his bond with life and his homeland with summits, abysses and mountains, through an analytical spirit that leads to the poetic moment. The manipulation of matter, conceits and consideration give him abilities that could be summed up as the serene greatness of the classical ideal of Greco-Roman antiquity, but which in our times could be defined as the ambiguously monumental and intimate character of Mexican-ness.

Unusual rocks move us to surprise at what Thomas Mann called the deep well of history, given which human beings can only experience wonder and an awareness of their own diminu-



Peaks, 150 x 100 cm, 1987 (oil on canvas).
Jorge and Tere Rangel de Alba Collection.



Stone Geometry, 150 x 100 cm, 1983 (oil on canvas).
Private collection.

Jesús Gallardo gave himself fully
to landscapes, holding a permanent dialogue
with the topography and the light of the Bajío region.

tive size. Megalithic formations without testimony of a past, with which Man shares only the primary, material condition. But the artist discovers in them the infinite patience of a nature that builds, transforms and pulls asunder to begin again. Perhaps for that reason, Gallardo often paints them under storm-swept skies and bursts of blizzards and dust.

As counterpoint and complement, the fields of the Bajío reflect a tranquil, toning feeling, Virgil-like visions where the wildness of the terrain is tempered by the fragrance of vegetation. It could be said that Jesús Gallardo portrays the

spirit of the people of his state through a poetical representation of its topography.

THE PATHS OF A STYLE

Stylistically we can situate Gallardo without undue complication among the Mexican nationalists. His landscapes have clear precedents in the Central European romanticism brought to Mexico by Eugenio Landesio, the teacher of José María Velasco, cornerstone of Mexican landscape artists and precursor of post-revolu-



Old Woman of the Skulls, 48.5 x 78.5 cm, 1969 (etching-mixed technique). Jesús Gallardo Collection.

tionary realism. Velasco, in turn, taught Gerardo Murillo (known as Dr. Atl) and Francisco Goitia, who together with Pastor Velázquez, Leandro Izaguirre and Saturnino Herrán, laid the technical and conceptual bases for art teaching in the first half of the twentieth century at the National School of Visual Arts.

On the other hand, certain expressionist tendencies manifested above all in his landscapes of the rivers and mines of Guanajuato, but also in his unusual rocks, have their origins in Mexico's post-revolutionary romantic tradition that merged with the legacy of folk art and the regional spirit of ethnic groups and communities.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Gallardo's work would become significantly simpler, making way for paintings with a great economy of elements, almost abstract, that would recover the synthesis of spirit of some German romantics like Caspar David Friedrich, Overbeck and Cornelius, who in the perfectionism of simplicity

revealed a profound mysticism, like a kind of quest for the secrets of Man's existence on Earth.

Today, Jesús Gallardo is —together with José Chávez Morado, Alfredo Zalce, Luis Nishizawa and Nicolás Moreno— a landscape artist who represents the continuity of this genre in Mexico. His characteristics allow him to be at one and the same time and without contradiction a representative of the spirit of the Bajío, an outstanding member of a generation of Mexican artists who have managed to express the post-revolutionary period, but, above all, to be himself, exactly who he dreamed of being when he decided to dedicate his life to landscapes. **VM**

NOTES

¹ Abbreviated version of José de Santiago Silva, *El paisaje de Jesús Gallardo* (Guanajuato: Gobierno del Estado de Guanajuato, 1994).

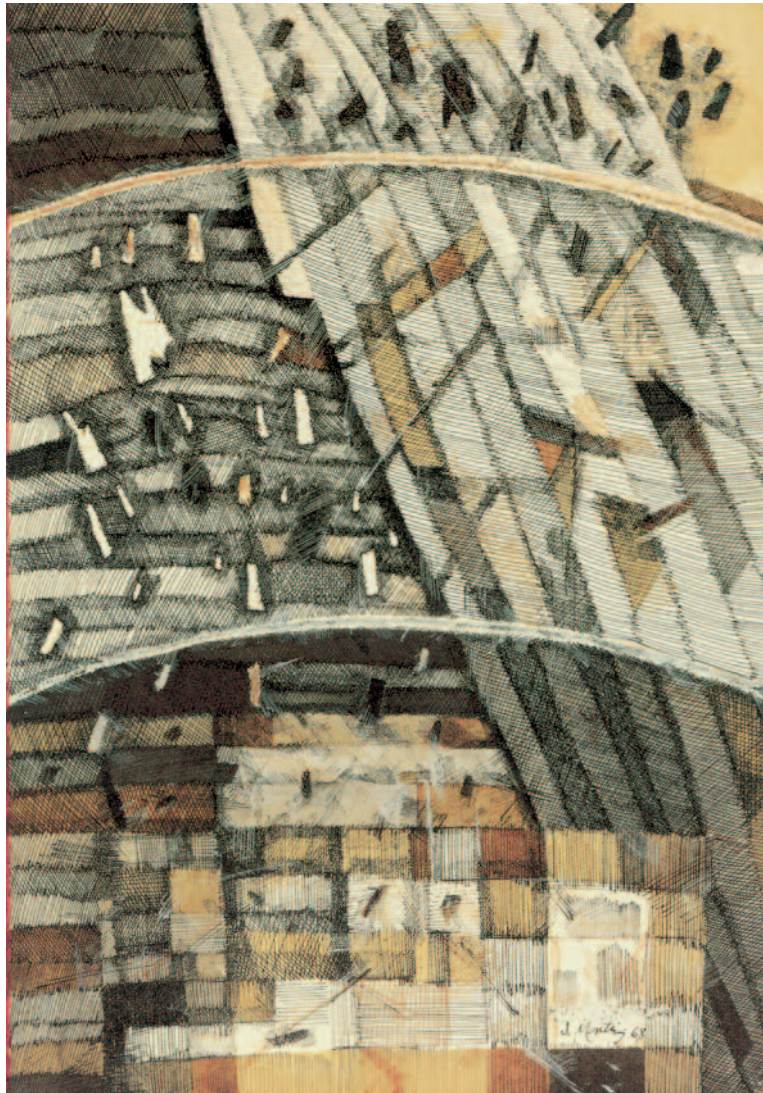
Jesús Martínez A Passion for Engraving¹



Photos reproduced courtesy of the Guanajuato State Cultural Institute

The Grandmother, 16 x 12.5 cm, 1966 (dry point).

Jesús Martínez



Memory, of the "Horror Vacui" series, 49 x 31 cm, 1969 (ink on paper).

A passion for engraving and research have characterized the work of Jesús Martínez, one of the few artists who has limited his work to sketching and prints, who has understood the value of multiple images over single images and enjoyed the work of printing plates filled with images made originally for that medium. His firm conviction that the appropriate vehicles to represent his ideas are sketching and engraving (emancipated from painting and with their own lexicon) has won him an outstanding place in national graphics as both artist and teacher.

ENGRAVED FROM MEMORY

Born in 1942 in Los Sauces, a tiny hamlet near León, Guanajuato, Martínez's parents were rural teachers in the times of Lázaro Cardenas. So, he spent his childhood in different parts of Mexico's Bajío region: Santa Ana del Conde, Colonia Nuevo México, Silao and later in the city of Guanajuato. He remembers the *huizache* bushes and the mesquites "like squiggles," like Nature's whimsical, irregular writing on the landscape. He also finds graphics in the first scratches he made in the dirt to play marbles

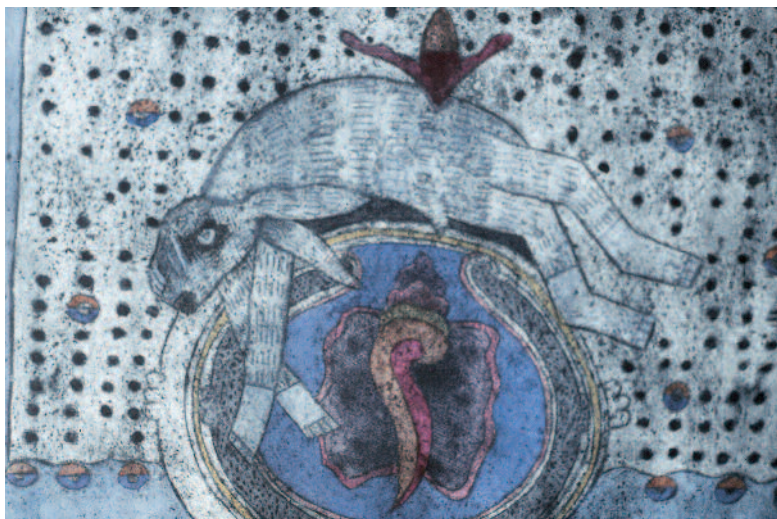


Crucified, 41 x 31 cm, 1982 (collage, oil on pastel).

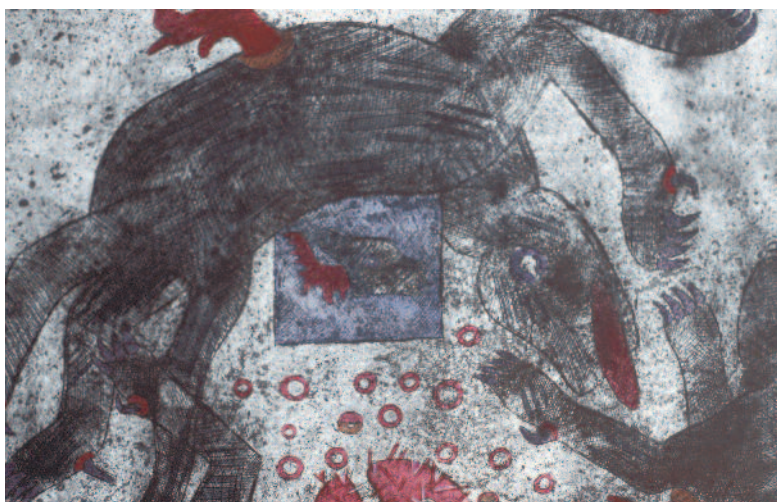
and in the business of plowing rows to prepare the earth for planting.

However, it was not until 1969 that several different events decisive for the maturity of his work and his particular roads of expression occurred: an album of his engravings was published accompanied by Juan Bañuelos's poem "No consta en actas" (It's Not in the Record), about the criminal repression of the 1968 student movement; he had his first individual show in Mexico City in the French Institute for Latin America Gallery, then directed by art critic Antonio Rodríguez, where Martínez pre-

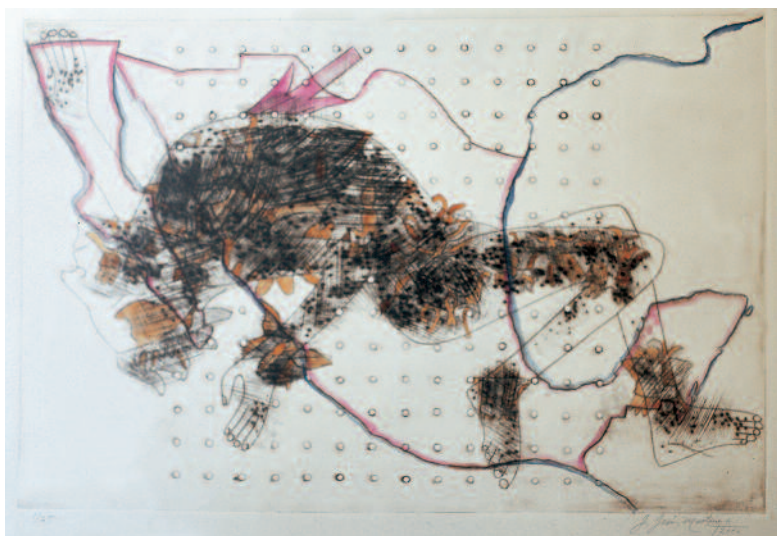
sented a series of 17 drawings, *Horror vacui*, also about the student conflict, and 15 splendid engravings on different themes. Lastly, a series of his sketches, *Narcosis*, were presented at the National Polytechnic Institute, with which he closed his thematic cycle on the events of 1968 and which marked his political and social activity and established the basis for the purified sketching that would be seen in later exhibits. On the basis of the series of engravings and sketches that he presented in his first exhibition, he established two different forms of expression that run parallel throughout his work: drawing



Time of Sacrifices 1, 100 x 100 cm, 1997 (etching).



Time of Sacrifices 2, 100 x 100 cm, 1997 (etching over aquatint).



Borders, 50 x 100 cm, 2001 (dry point over acrylic).

Sketching and engraving have won Martínez an outstanding place in national graphics.

in ink and engraving with traditional techniques (to which he added photo-engraving).

Once the passion and pain brought on by the violent events of 1968 subsided, he began a process of introspection and broadened his knowledge about Mexican history, particularly the pre-Hispanic period. This scrutiny of his origins and his bedazzlement by the artistic production of the time would bring forth their best fruits in a later series of engravings where the topic occupied a central place. By this time, he was working with more experienced artists like Adolfo Mexiac and Francisco Moreno Capdevila.

TO THE TUNE OF HIS OWN LINE

Jesús Martínez's early work experience was of undoubted importance for his graphic vocation, since it was in publishing that he familiarized himself with the uses of photography, photo-engraving, type-setting and materials like "dragon's blood," shellac, nitric acid and resins like asphalt that he would later use in his engravings. He also ventured into journalism as an illustrator. He began to draw without any training. To educate himself, he took drawing and painting classes with Salvador Zúñiga in a school that would later become the Francisco Eduardo Tresguerras Regional Cultural Center in Guanajuato. He stayed there for several years before moving to Mexico City.

In the search for his own voice, Jesús Martínez pushed aside his taste for both the "interiorists" and Rufino Tamayo and Carlos Mérida. But his determination to find his own lexicon of forms and techniques dates back to his 1967 participation in the group "New Engravers" which sought to make engraving in Mexico jibe with

Martínez's interest in poetry is a central part of his graphic production.

the new times. As the catalogue in his first exhibition says, engraving had stagnated notably in Mexico and developing a broad, vigorous movement was urgent.

His relationship with photography in this experimental phase is worth some attention, since he picked up fragments of reality that he would later put onto a metal plate through photo-engraving. This, combined with traditional techniques (etching and aquatint), constituted a very defined tendency in his style.

Through an imaginative combination of techniques and trusting in his capacity for synthesis, Martínez achieved good results in prints like *Km 13*, *Textural*, *Asphalt* (for which he won a prize in the Buenos Aires 1970 Second International Biennial of Engraving) and *Necrópolis*, in which he expressed his interest in walls and fences tattooed with urban inscriptions and in automobile junk yards. Art critic Raquel Tibol saw in *Asphalt* "a visual metaphor for urban death."²

POETIC IMAGES: LIGHT AND WRITING

Jesús Martínez's interest in poetry, the necessary companion and source of inspiration for his images, is a central part of his graphic production. The link between text and image has been fundamental in creating the nine albums of engravings that he has produced, from *It's Not in the Record* (1969) to *Andante with G Major* (also translatable as *Walker with a Larger Sun*) (1989). His work is not that of an illustrator who sticks to the text, but of an engraver who dialogues with the work of another artist, the poet. Chiapas-born poet Juan Bañuelos says about the unity of text and engraving, "Martínez confronts his reality with that of the poems



Panel of Hearts, 100 x 100 cm, 1997 (etching).



Time of Sacrifices 5, 100 x 100 cm, 1997 (etching).



Landscape, 55 x 75 cm, 1995 (sumi-e ink).



The Tortoise, 24.5 x 20 cm, 1981 (etching over aquatint).

and sees them as twins....He underlines the junction of his artistic endeavor with the essence of humanity, and once again we see how it is history that achieves the expressive media in art.”³

The 40 works in the exhibit “To the Tune of the Line” presented in the Mexican Salon of Visual Arts in July 1980 reveal the maturity the artist achieved in his drawing. In the 1980s, Jesús Martínez repeatedly used pre-Hispanic forms. Our colonial past has appeared only in his series of crucifixes (sketches and pastels done in 1982) and in two portfolios of engravings of the city of Guanajuato.

Martínez repaid the city where he spent his childhood and that nurtured him with its forms and ambiance with the album *Landscape in Seven Acts* (1986), which is a historical-graphic trip through Guanajuato from its foundation until today. Combining leaf-marking, etching and photo-mechanics, he made a coherent collage where his own images consort with others’ and traditional techniques congregate side-by-side with modern ones. Full of discoveries, this portfolio is the best example of how Jesús Martínez made engraving something alive, malleable, to bring us a renewed Guanajuato cityscape.

In the series *Dog of Waters* (1983), he uses hybrid language: pencil and watercolor. In some works the color weighs more while in others it is more discreet and circumscribed to specific areas, putting more emphasis on graphic expression.

Jesús Martínez has not been satisfied with mastering graphic techniques, but has explored the expressive characteristics of each of them to make engraving malleable.

THE OTHER JESÚS MARTÍNEZ

Parallel to his activity as a graphic artist, Martínez works in cultural dissemination, an undertaking that has benefited many.

In 1968 he collaborated with critic Antonio Rodríguez in the Cultural Department of the

National Polytechnic Institute, becoming part of the department’s film workshop. In 1972, he began a collaboration with poet Óscar Oliva in the Autonomous University of Puebla’s Cultural Department where he founded and coordinated the Visual Arts Workshop and did a collective mural with his students. In that same year he designed books, pamphlets and posters for the National Institute of Fine Arts Literature Department. In 1974 he designed scenery for the dance group *Expansión Siete*.

He has been the founder or advisor to different engraving workshops, as well as the editor of albums at the Cincolote publishing house, founded by his wife María Eugenia Figueroa, Juan Berruecos and Mario Rangel Faz. Outstanding among the albums they have published of works by established artists and Martínez’s students are *11 Engravers* (1978), *5 Images 5 Texts* (1980), *Saurios* (1982) and *Marine Animals* (1984), accompanied respectively by articles by Efraín Huerta, Álvaro Mutis, Óscar Oliva and Carlos Pellicer.

In the 1980s, he faced two challenges that enriched him as a print-maker. The National School of Visual Arts commissioned a re-printing of nineteenth-century academic artists’ plates. Then, the National Institute of Fine Arts asked him to do the same with the plates of José Guadalupe Posada. Today, artists of the standing of Luis Nishizawa also entrust him with their plates because they know the care he takes with his work.

Jesús Martínez’s passion has trained a great many talented young people who have quickly achieved some standing thanks to their strong grounding in technique. His own work has allowed him to put down deeper roots, base himself on tradition and, at the same time, revitalize its visual language. **NM**

NOTES

¹ Abbreviated version of Gutierrez Aceves, *Jesús Martínez: grabador y dibujante* (Guanajuato: Gobierno del Estado de Guanajuato, 1995).

² *Ibid.*, p. 16.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

The Entry of U.S. Troops into Mexico City

The Vision of Carl Nebel

Fabiola García Rubio*



Illustration 1. Carl Nebel's *General Scott's Entrance into Mexico* (1851).

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Memory left us an image and, now, from the image springs what happened 150 years ago: Tuesday, September 14, 1847, between 7 and 9 in the morning, the U.S. army under General Winfield Scott took over Mexico's capital. This was the military and diplomatic defeat of the invaded country, the end of a stage of clashes

and combat, and the forced relaunching of peace negotiations, that is, for the conditions of final surrender.

General Scott's Entrance into Mexico, Carl Nebel's lithograph for the album *The War between the United States and Mexico Illustrated*, drawn at the request of George Wilkins Kendall, portrays the moment.¹ Its main theme is the successful entry of the U.S. troops, affirmed and reinforced by the U.S. flag waving over Mexico's National Palace. The idea that comes to mind when the viewer looks at it is that of a vanquished capital city, reinforced by the figures that, each

in his/her own way are witnesses to the scene from the windows, balconies, rooftops or the plaza itself (see illustration 1).

When Nebel did the illustration, he was already familiar with Mexico City's main plaza, or Zócalo; in fact, the architectural elements he uses are the same as those used for his *Picturesque and Archeological Trip to the Most Interesting Part of Mexico* only a few years before (see illustration 2).² Also, by 1851, when *The War between the United States and Mexico Illustrated* went on sale, Nebel had already had the opportunity of seeing other images of it done almost im-

* Student at the Master's in History program of the José María Luis Mora Research Institute. Her work on Carl Nebel's vision won first prize in a contest organized by the CISAN, in the best bachelor's thesis category.



Illustration 2. *Grand Plaza* by Carl Nebel.

We should not forget the discussion about whether Nebel was present at the battles that he illustrated or he heard accounts of them by eyewitnesses.

mediately after the occupation, which means that it would not be surprising if he had used some of them in his own work (see illustration 3).³ In addition, the similarities between the two lithographs are so great that one might think that the first had been the basis for the second.

We should also not forget the discussion about whether Nebel was present at the battles that he illustrated for the album. If he was not present, probably he heard accounts of them by eyewitnesses and participants.⁴ In any case, the fact that the book's lithographs were com-

missioned implies a particular arrangement of events, geography and the characters who appear. That is, it has a clear aim: to show the triumph of U.S. expansionism. This is why the author opted to disseminate the victory of General Scott in Mexico City's Zócalo, with the Stars and Stripes waving over the most important building of the invaded capital. The uniforms, arms, buildings and witnesses all contribute to this. As Kendall mentions in the accompanying text, the work was an homage to those who participated in the war, marking the character of both illustrations and text.⁵

Nebel's image shows the decisive moment: the moment when, very early in the morning, General Scott entered the capital's Zócalo. However, it also shows rejection and expectation among the Mexican population. The presence of different kinds of Mexicans and the still defensive attitude of the invaders are clear.

We see a ceremony of war: the cannon, the arms, the military formation, the uniforms and the observers tell us so. It is also clear that it is part of an invasion: what is being celebrated is the arrival at an objective, in this case, Mex-



Illustration 3. *The Occupation of Mexico's Capital by the U.S. Army in 1847* by P. S. Daval and Shussele (1848).

Reproduced by permission of the American Antiquarian Society

Nebel's image shows the decisive moment when General Scott conquered the capital's Zócalo. However, it also shows rejection and expectation among the Mexican population.

ico City's most important plaza. Clearly the army's efforts have been successful; the entrance of the commanding general is evidence of the army's prolonged efforts.

Now, should we suppose that things happened exactly as shown? What can be said about the elements in the picture? At the same time, what can be said about what does not appear but that we know happened? What can be explained about the beginning of the famous "uprising of the wretched"? Had it already begun, or was it just about to start?

To make a complete analysis of the lithograph, we have to take into account

both the elements present and those absent, those that we know happened, but that the artist did not include. If we contrast the written accounts with the lithograph, we will see that the story presented in the latter does not coincide with the former.

Among the facts not included in the illustration are the large groups of poor people who staged an uprising against the arrival of the U.S. troops at the Zócalo; the prisoners that Antonio López de Santa Anna had let free before fleeing the city; the bodies and blood of the injured in the clashes between the Mexican populace and U.S. troops; the destruction of the streets and build-

ings themselves; the white flags demanding a cease fire; and the multicolored flags indicating the different nationalities present.

In the illustration, the Mexicans' attitudes, shown in the album for the first time clearly defined and illuminated, are varied. The clouds of dust, the shadows, the darkness and the battles have ended, so the vanquished can be represented. In fact, each figure has its own value, a specific weight to emphasize U.S. interests.

On Plateros Street (today Francisco I. Madero Avenue), a lone poor person stands next to the "vinotería" preparing to launch a stone against the invading



Illustration 4. *General Scott's Entrance into Mexico*, as reproduced in Mexico's official history books.

Among the facts not included in Nebel's illustration are the large groups of poor people who staged an uprising against U.S. troops at the Zócalo.

army. Why is there only one, if the fact was that a mass of the poor rose up to attack the recent arrivals? The first answer is that we might suppose that a large group would have diminished the importance of General Scott's triumphal entrance into the city. The whole idea of the lithograph, we must remember, is an awards ceremony: the victors were imposing their triumph. However, the silhouettes of the sharpshooters on the roof of a building on the same street are supporting the tattered figure with the rock preparing to attack. The doubt persists: why was nothing more included? Had the uprising not yet begun? Perhaps the idea was to show that these

attacks never posed a real threat to the troops or the wretched state of the Mexicans vis-à-vis U.S. power.

There were also other kinds of Mexicans, wealthy Mexicans, like those to one side of the cathedral, who are observing the ceremony, threatened by the cannon, and seem to collaborate and even be accomplices—are they forced?—in this dramatic event in Mexican history. Here the differences among the city's populace, but above all the lack of national unity, showed through.⁶

The shadows of the scene indicate that it is early morning, just as the chronicles say. The majesty of the colonial constructions that the Americans hoped

to find on their arrival is also depicted. It was the city that William Prescott had told them about: the one that was strategically besieged, the city of the ancient Aztec empire, where the Spaniards, headed by Hernán Cortés, wept on that long-ago "Sad Night" of 1520.

This is the image that Nebel showed the U.S. public in 1851. The efforts and sacrifices of their army had had their reward: the conquest of the Mexican capital, a capital great because of its past, of which the Americans already formed a part. The Stars and Stripes waving on the National Palace represented barely a part of the triumph of territorial expansionism.

The moment proposed by Nebel had a concrete objective, which was not to disseminate the events just as they happened that day. *General Scott's Entrance into Mexico* represented a particular vision because it was done for a society that needed to see the development and victories of the war. What had happened for more than two years in Mexican territory? How did the stories that the soldiers told when they went home actually unfold? What were the "Palaces of Moctezuma"?⁷ And, of course, what lands were those that had been recently acquired thanks to the consummation of Manifest Destiny? To answer these concerns, the witnesses had to publish pamphlets and books in which they related their own feats and taught that the conflict had been very vast, so vast that a hero was created in every battle, in every event of daily life or every time the sacrifices made in the name of American freedom were remembered.

One of the reasons the lithograph was well received among Americans seems obvious: it represented victory after more than a year of fighting and showed the Stars and Stripes waving outside the country. The angle Nebel chose presented an ordered, clean and, to a certain degree, peaceful event; it displayed a vision that not only does not jibe with the rest of the eyewitness accounts from both nationalities who speak of the taking of Mexico City, but even contradicts them. Because on that morning there was no discipline; the volunteers were not wearing their grey or blue uniforms; much less did they have on clean clothes, as is depicted in the illustration. The American standard was smaller and only later was it changed for a larger one. The shops were all closed against the fear of the invaders. Thus, there would have been no people

in the wine shop (not to mention the fact that the lithograph depicts a very early hour for drinking).

And then we should ask ourselves, what makes an image accepted by a society for which it was not intended? Why has Nebel's lithograph been disseminated in Mexico? Has its message been carefully examined? Is it pleasing to Mexicans? Is Mexican patriotism represented in this view of the taking of the capital? And, directly, why is this illustration used to talk about national defense? Is it mere chance that when people talk of "Mexican resistance to [U.S.] invasion" they allude to the scene of the Stars and Stripes waving above the National Palace a few scant hours before the anniversary of Mexican independence? Is it a simple coincidence that official history books say, "despite the resistance, Mexico lost the war," and that next to this is an image of Nebel's lithograph, cropped to eliminate the "vinotería" and the U.S. flag over the National Palace (see illustration 4)?⁸

Most of the lithographs in this album are on display at the National Museum of Interventions in Churubusco and the Caracol Museum in Chapultepec. I would like to insist on the question: why are these images so widely disseminated in our country even though they are unfavorable to Mexico?

Although they should not be hidden, probably the most sensible road would be rather to situate them in the context of the period in which they were done, explain their original objectives and what they attempted to do. At the same time, one could argue that in Mexico there are very few lithographs about the war and due to this, we use Nebel's. This, however, would make us ask why, when there are very few images to use, the ones utilized coincide very little with

the discourse that accompanies them and how it is that their content and messages are not specifically situated. Of course, this is a problem that leads to other realms like nationalism, education and national loyalty. In this case, one could take the position that clearly recognizes the value of *General Scott's Entrance into Mexico* in the history of both countries, in order to identify the intentions and proposals that Nebel wanted to disseminate among Americans and what Mexico City—for a short time in the hands of the invaders—was like. ■■■

NOTES

¹ George Wilkins Kendall, *The War between the United States and Mexico Illustrated* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1994). Kendall was a war correspondent and editor of the *New Orleans Daily Picayune* during the hostilities.

² The Spanish edition was published in 1840.

³ In the year of the U.S. occupation, the Italian Pedro Gualdi did an oil painting depicting the U.S. flag flying over the National Palace. P.S. Daval and Christian Shussele also did a lithograph, *The Occupation of Mexico's Capital by the U.S. Army in 1847*, which shows three U.S. flags.

⁴ Ronnie Tyler, *The Mexican War: A Lithographic Record* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1973), p. 18; and Martha Sandweiss et al., *Eyewitness to War: Prints and Daguerreotypes of the Mexican War* (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum-Smithsonian Institution, 1989), p. 32.

⁵ Kendall, op. cit., pp. III-IV.

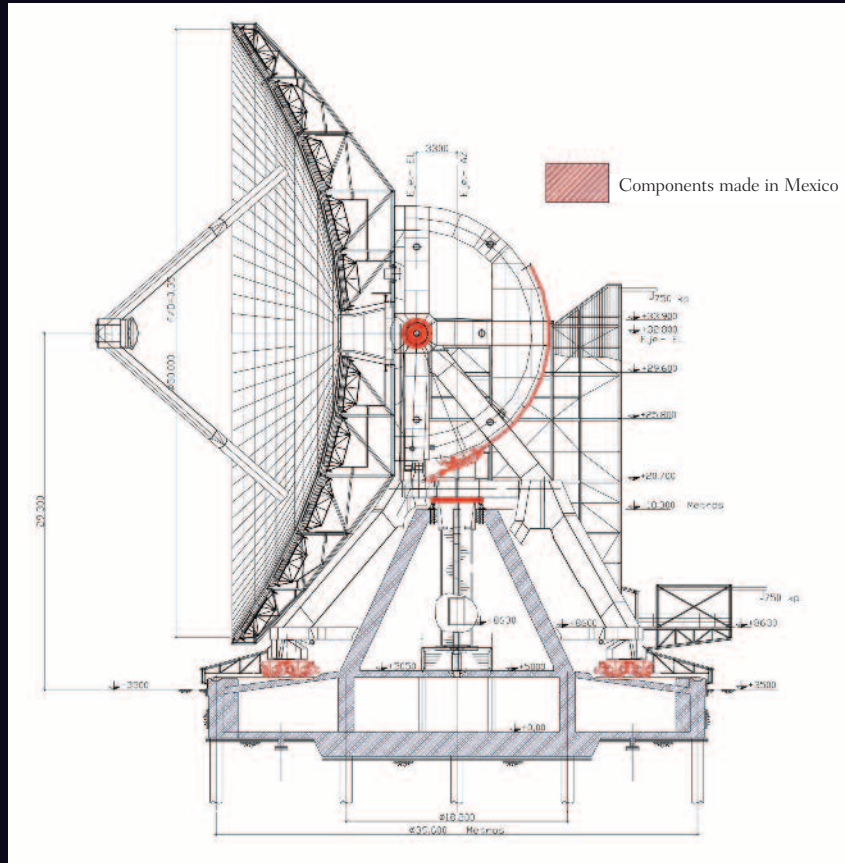
⁶ *Décimo calendario de Abraham López para el año bisiesto de 1848* (Mexico City: Imprenta de Abraham López, 1848), p. 56.

⁷ Army recruiting posters of the time cried, "Ho, for the halls of the Montezumas!" which is how Mexico City was known from then on. David M. Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation. Texas, Oregon, and the Mexican War* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1973), p. 390.

⁸ Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Mi libro de historia de México, Educación Primaria* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1992), p. 50.

The Large Millimeter Telescope

Alfonso Serrano Pérez Grovas*



Courtesy of Alfonso Serrano

Diagram of the telescope.

People have been watching the skies since the great ancient cultures inhabited Mexico thousands of years ago. When the Spaniards arrived, these cultures had a more precise calendar than the Europeans. Today, a group of Mexican scientists has achieved world status in astronomy.

One of the most important prerequisites for bringing together a high-quality group of scientists is international collaboration; this makes

for great demands in both learning and performance. Mexico has benefitted from the generosity of U.S. astronomers, who throughout the twentieth century contributed to the education, training and the development of infrastructure for astronomy in our country.

With this background, it is easy to understand why today, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Mexico and the United States are involved in an unprecedented scientific adventure: the construction of an instrument that will revolutionize our understanding of the universe.

* Principal researcher, Large Millimeter Telescope Project.

THE LARGE MILLIMETER TELESCOPE ORIGINS AND SCOPE

The idea of the large millimeter telescope (LMT), the most ambitious scientific project in the history of Mexico, was born in 1988 during a bilateral discussion in a Mexico City hotel. After a long process of national and international evaluation that concluded in November 1994, a binational project was approved, headed by Mexico's National Institute of Astrophysics, Optics and Electronics (INAOE) and the United States' University of Massachusetts.

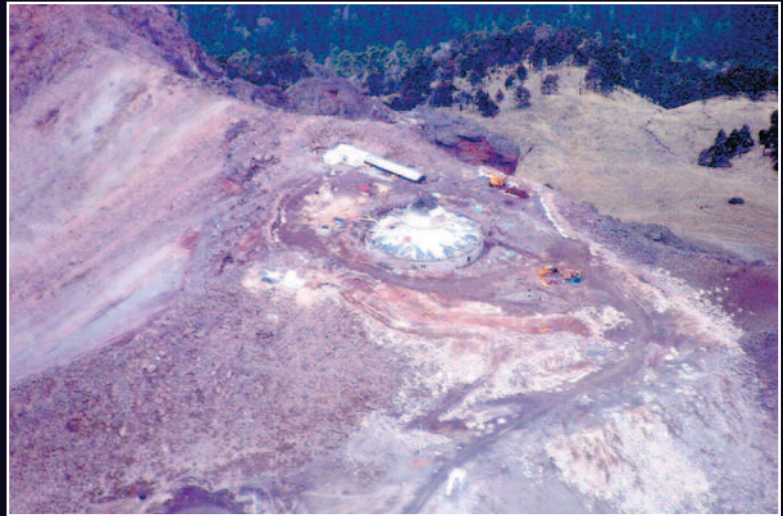
The design of the telescope, the largest of its kind in the world, began in 1995 with the author of this article as Mexico's principal researcher on the project. Today, construction is very advanced, in the stage of assembly at the site, the Tliltépetl, or "Cerro de la Negra" in Puebla, at an altitude of 4,600 meters. It will begin operations in 2003. The work that has gone into the project represents a considerable investment, half of which has come from the U.S., and has had important scientific, educational and technological consequences for Mexico and for our bilateral relations. It will be used by the world's best astronomers and will give Mexican astronomy a big push forward. Even before the telescope is in operation, it has already been the reason for visits by first-rate astronomers who see it as a developmental opportunity that exists in few institutions worldwide.

This telescope will be Mexico's first world-class scientific instrument. There is nothing in the world like it. Its manufacture has created a series of technological challenges that are being met for the first time in history. Across its 50-meter diameter (with nearly 2,000 square meters of reflecting surface), it must be perfect within a fraction of a millimeter, which means that innovative systems of control of an intelligent surface must be used. At the same time, its 2,000 tons of steel must move with the precision of a Swiss watch.

The description "millimeter" refers to the kind of light it can capture, the light in the color of millimeters located between infrared and



The finished cone.



Aerial view of the construction site.

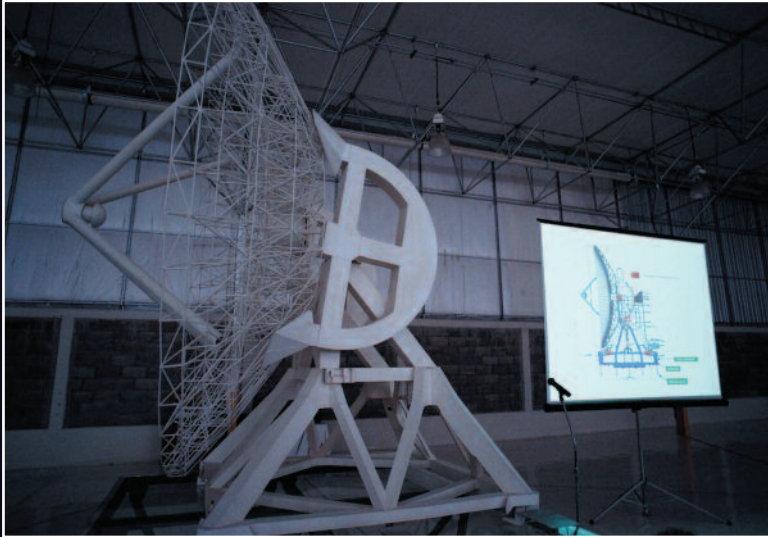


Lower part of the plate.

Courtesy of Alfonso Serrano

Courtesy of Alfonso Serrano

Antonio Nava/AE



Model of the telescope.



Lower part of the alidade.



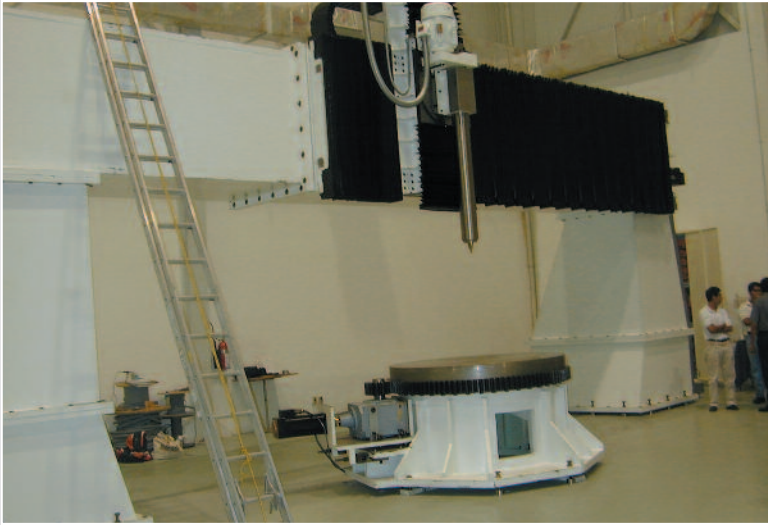
Carbon-fiber factory prototype of the mirrors.

microwave colors, all of them invisible to the human eye; this, of course, will open up a new window to the universe. In this color of light, we will be able to observe the rotation of all the molecules as well as the objects that have changed color due to the expansion of the universe. Thanks to this, we will be able to study asteroids, comets, planets, molecular clouds and their chemistry, the regions of star formation and the spiral arms of the galaxies. But, above all, we will be able to observe that first age of the universe, just after the big bang, when the first stars and galaxies were formed.

IMPACT ON EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Two doctorate programs of excellence have been developed because of the LMT project: one in astrophysics and the other in electronics, today among the country's most important. More than 100 students, both from Mexico and abroad, have already gotten their degrees in these areas. Today we also have a group of specialists in high frequency communications that did not exist when the project began.

A binational team has also been formed with the participation of a large number of national public higher education and research and technological development institutions. Among the Mexican institutions are the National Autonomous University of Mexico, the University of Guadalajara, the Autonomous University of Puebla, the Technological Institute of Puebla, the Center for Scientific Research and Higher Education of Ensenada, the Center for Research and Higher Education in Social Anthropology, the Mexican Corporation for Research in Materials, the Center for Research in Advanced Studies, the Center for Advanced Technology, the Center for Optics Research, the National Metrology Center, the Institute of Ecology and the Center for Scientific Research of Yucatan. Among the international collaborative projects is the work to develop advanced two-dimensional detectors with Caltech and the measurement designs



Polisher for building molds.



Machine for measuring coordinates.



Rails made in Vatech, Morelia.

studied by some national laboratories in the United States.

This project has required the most advanced techniques and the participation of companies able to manage and develop cutting-edge technology. During the process of the telescope's design and construction, we have benefited from the advisory and consulting services of experienced engineers and scientists from different institutions throughout the world, including the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

More than a hundred contracts for design, technical services supplies, manufacture and civil engineering have been bid for and signed: two German, three U.S., one Dutch and several Mexican companies have participated, with 82 percent of the investment in pesos. This will promote Mexican industry, helping it to compete internationally. Infrastructure that had not previously existed in Mexico has already been created for measuring coordinates and polishing of surfaces, which will have significant applications in the auto industry.

This project has led to the creation of the country's most important microwave laboratory where prototypes for high-frequency microwave circuits can be designed, characterized and built. These waves are used to transmit high volumes of information at high speeds. The current market for communication equipment for this kind of microwaves is close to U.S.\$12 billion a year. In this lab, human resources unique in Mexico are being forged, working for science and industry.

A strategic binational alliance among companies has led to the establishment of Mexico's first carbon-fiber components manufacturing industry, creating jobs at the same time.

The new capabilities of the National Institute of Astrophysics, Optics and Electronics (INAOE) have prompted its linking up with the private, public and social sectors, resulting in the creation of electronic water meters, computerized stop-lights, security systems, pointing systems, hearing aids, satellite receivers for education and high-frequency radios, among other projects.



Courtesy of Alfonso Serrano

Digital illustration of the telescope.


The institutional development that this project has involved has set the basis for Motorola company creating two research and development centers in Puebla—one in microelectronics and the other in software development—thanks to the human resources trained by INAOE.

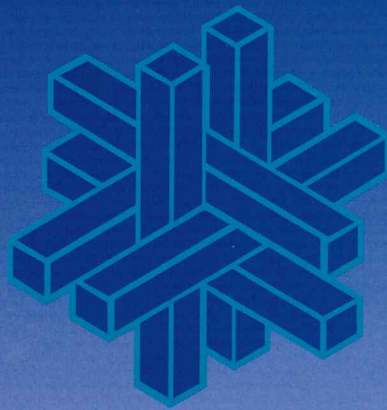
BRILLIANT BINATIONAL COLLABORATION

This project is an example of the fact that in the complex interaction between Mexico and the United States, not everything is a problem: areas of opportunity exist in which the bilateral relationship can be not only mutually beneficial, but can also give both countries a competitive advantage *vis-à-vis* the rest of the world.

Thirteen years after the first discussions about the telescope, we can say with great pride we have overcome the tremendous obstacles that we met on the way. The first of them, on the Mexican side, was the need to absorb the meaning of setting ourselves the goal of an ambitious, world-class project and meeting the capabilities and performance requirements that this implies. We have also had to learn to work binationally, not an easy

task taking into consideration the great cultural differences between our two countries: we had to develop mutual trust and learn to make joint decisions. We had to learn to manage a far-reaching project, with six different funding sources, each with its own rules and limitations. Also, to make the most important decisions, we have had to learn to get advice from the people with the most experience and ability in the world. An entire generation of Mexican engineers has been educated together with this project and in conjunction with outstanding international companies. Mexico's own companies have had to meet quality requirements that they had not previously been used to. We scientists have had to learn to work with engineers, and the engineers with scientists; research centers have had to learn to work with private companies, and the companies with the centers.

The large millimeter telescope is a project that has very effectively combined basic and applied science, specialized training and technological impact. Even though its most important effects will be felt in the future, it is already a matter of pride for Mexican science and engineering and a brilliant example of binational collaboration. 



CISAN

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

Las relaciones de México con Estados Unidos y Canadá: una mirada al nuevo milenio.

Rosío Vargas Suárez,
Remedios Gómez Arnau and
Julián Castro Rea, compilers

This work seeks to answer some of the most frequently asked questions about the future of the three countries' relations by delving into both current and historical issues: trade integration, drug trafficking and migration, as well as other topics more recently included on the agenda like human rights, democracy and national security.



Desde el Sur. Visiones de Estados Unidos y Canadá desde América Latina a principios del siglo XXI, vol. 1.

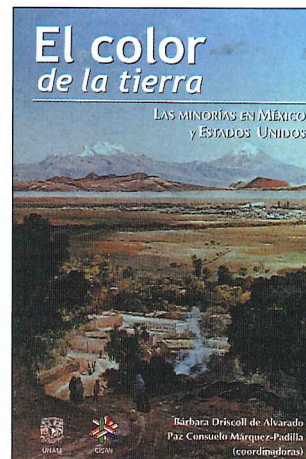
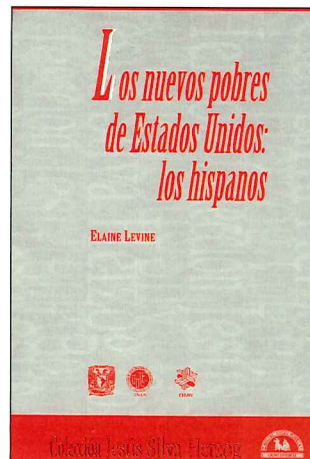
Paz Consuelo Márquez Padilla,
Germán Pérez Fernández del Castillo
and Remedios Gómez Arnau,
compilers

In this volume, Latin American specialists bring their own perspective to a broad spectrum of theoretical, political, social, economic and cultural issues in the United States, including federalism, foreign policy, national defense and security, the environment and the impact of globalization.

Los nuevos pobres de Estados Unidos: los hispanos

Elaine Levine

Since the 1980s, Hispanics in the United States, compared with other groups, have dropped back socio-economically in three overall areas: the labor market, the educational system and social security. This book looks at and analyzes this deterioration and its underlying causes.



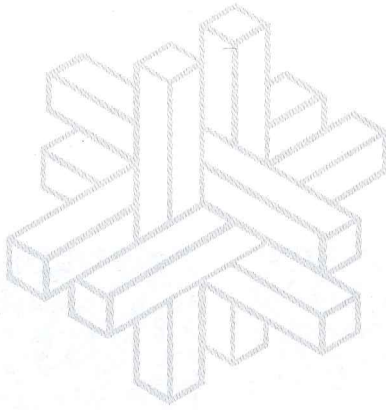
El color de la tierra. Las minorías en México y Estados Unidos

Barbara Driscoll de Alvarado and
Paz Consuelo Márquez-Padilla,
compilers.

This work looks at diversity from different perspectives: in particular, it deals with the construction of the Afro-American identity and the struggles of this group, the implementation of public policies in support of minority groups and the obstacles to their equal integration into all facets of life in Mexico and the U.S.

For further information contact:

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México, D.F. Tel. 5623-0015; fax: 5623-0014; e-mail: cisan@servidor.unam.mx



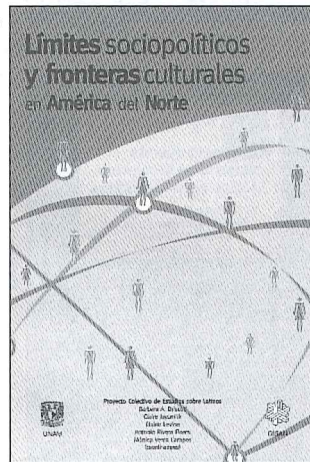
CISAN

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

**Límites sociopolíticos
y fronteras culturales en
América del Norte**

Barbara A. Driscoll, Claire Joysmith, Elaine Levine, Antonio Rivera and Mónica Vereá, compilers.

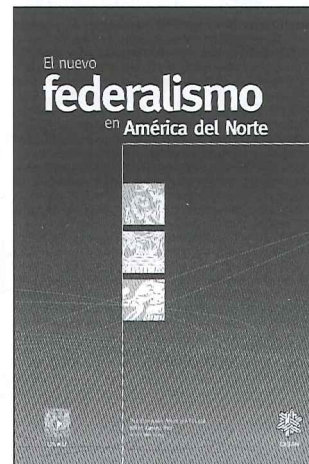
A multidisciplinary group of Mexican and foreign specialists study the growing presence of the Latino community in the economic, political, social and cultural life of the United States.



**El nuevo federalismo
en América del Norte**

Paz Consuelo Márquez Padilla and Julián Castro Rea, compilers.

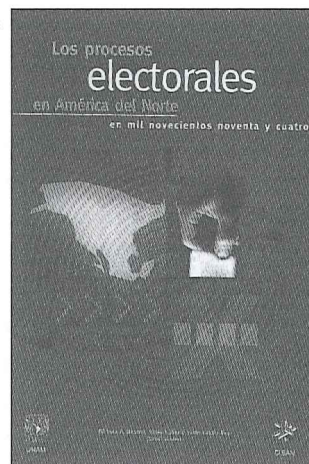
This book explores the origins, successes and contemporary dilemmas of the federal system in Mexico, Canada and the United States. In brief, the book looks at the factors that have an impact on federalism in North America today and recent trends in its transformation.



**Los procesos electorales
en América del Norte**

Barbara A. Driscoll, Silvia Núñez and Julián Castro Rea, compilers.

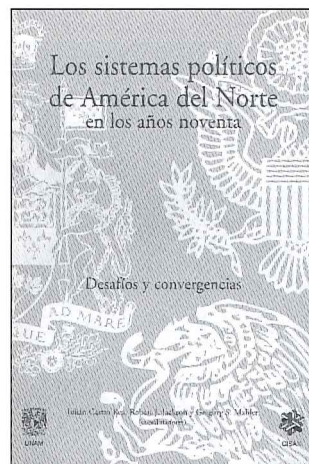
The importance of examining the elections in the U.S., Canada and Mexico in 1994 is that they were the first elections to take place under NAFTA. The convergence of political spaces affected by these elections cannot help but have an impact on all three countries.



**Los sistemas políticos
de América del Norte
en los noventa.
Desafíos y convergencias**

Julián Castro Rea, Robert J. Jackson and Gregory S. Mahler, compilers.

This book takes a comparative approach to the Mexican, U.S. and Canadian legal systems, constitutions, federalism, government institutions, domestic and foreign policies.



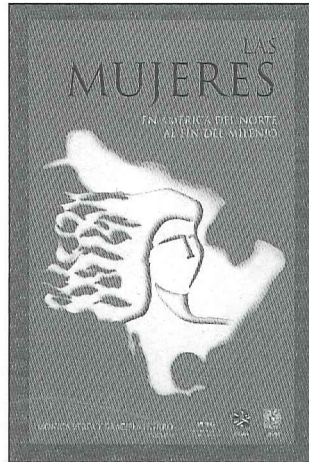
Forthcoming:

La globalización y sus manifestaciones en América del Norte.
Desde el sur. Visiones sobre Estados Unidos y Canadá desde América Latina, vols. 2 y 3.
El nuevo norteamericano: integración continental, cultura e identidad nacional.
Las políticas exteriores de Estados Unidos, Canadá y México en el umbral del siglo XXI.

Las mujeres al fin del milenio en América del Norte

Mónica Verea and Graciela Hierro, compilers.

A pioneering concept, this book is a collective look by Canadian, U.S. and Mexican women academics, officials and artists at the work of today's women and the role they have played in North American societies.



Estados Unidos y Canadá ¿Signos conservadores hacia el siglo XXI?

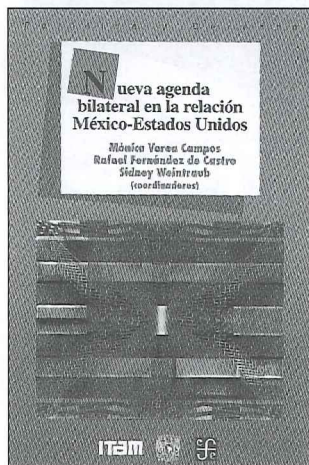
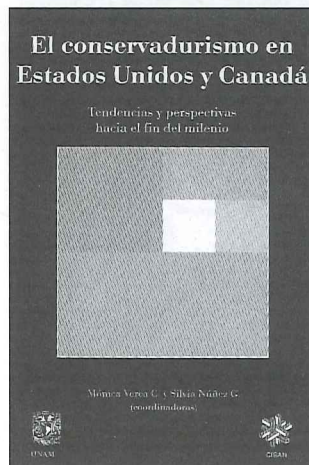
Mónica Verea C. and Silvia Núñez G., compilers.

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., compiler.

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.



Nueva agenda bilateral en la relación México-Estados Unidos

Mónica Verea Campos, Rafael Fernández de Castro and Sidney Weintraub, compilers.

A presentation from different angles of the most important items on the new bilateral agenda for the two neighboring countries.

¿Sentenciados al aburrimiento? Tópicos de cultura canadiense

Graciela Martínez-Zalce, editor.

This work brings together different approaches and opinions about Canadian culture and identity. With a look at music, painting, film, literature, television, theater and history, cultural manifestations inherent in Canadian society, it questions the existence of a national identity and culture.



Me voy pa' Pensilvania por no andar en la vagancia. Los ferrocarrileros mexicanos en Estados Unidos durante la segunda guerra mundial

Bárbara Driscoll

A look at the little known story of nonagricultural Mexican migrant workers in the United States under the Railroad Bracero Program instituted during the Second World War by both the Mexican and U.S. governments.





El gran silencio.

Virgin Mex

Mexican Rock in the Global Village

Alejandro Acevedo*

Around 1960 Mexican radio stations began to play songs like *Popotitos* and *Confidente de secundaria*, the Spanish-language versions of the U.S. hits *Bony Marro* and *High School Confidential*, respectively. Groups like the Teen Tops and Los Locos del Ritmo (approximately “Rhythm Crazy,” in English) made young boys of the time move their Brylcreamed pompadours and teenaged Mexican girls swing their full skirts and petticoats to a rhythm that scandalized parents: rock ‘n’ roll.

In the mid-1960s, rock ‘n’ roll left behind the “courtesy” of the “roll” part and opened up its

most independent, energetic variation: rock. The Mexican government expressed its most decided rejection of rock, an attitude the national record industry was forced to second. For more than two decades, rock was vilified in Mexico; groups like La revolución de Emiliano Zapata (Emiliano Zapata’s Revolution) and the Dug Dugs, among others, saw their work totally blocked in the 1970s and 1980s.

In 1995, the U.S. magazine *Pulse!* explained this, saying, “A succession of Mexican governments never quite warmed up to the idea of rock, with its rebel attitude and non-conformist stance. Still, rock survived in the underground in Mexico for almost 30 years.”¹

Things in our country changed radically in the early 1990s. The Mexican government finally

* Mexican writer, he has written for *Expansión* and *Cambio* magazines and *La Jornada’s Cultural Supplement*, among others.

When stars like Metallica,
U2 and Madonna began to perform in Mexico,
record companies rushed to promote Mexican groups.



Titán.



Julieta Venegas.

changed its point of view. Mexican rock began to come out into the light when President Carlos Salinas opened up Mexico's borders to rockers from abroad. When stars like Metallica, U2 and Madonna began to perform here, record companies rushed to promote Mexican groups. For the first time, people began to see the great creative and commercial potential of the genre in Mexico.

"Yes, they held us back for three decades, but today, Mexican rock is in an unprecedented boom," says Juan José Arteaga, member of a Jaguares fan club.² Maná drummer Alex González sums it up: "The scene today is incredible. Mexico has changed a lot in the last ten years. I'm glad that recent administrations have become more aware about music. There are lots more groups than before; we have better coverage in the media; and the record companies are a lot more interested in rock bands."³

WORLDWIDE INTEREST

"Are there any newcomers to Maverick [the Warner subsidiary headed up by Madonna]?" *Interview* magazine editor Ingrid Sischy asked Ma-

donna. "We've just started a Latin label...and we're trying to sign a band right now called Café Tacuba. Have you heard of them?" "No." "They're unbelievable. They're Mexican, and in fact there's loads of artists that we're trying to sign right now. There's really so much talent, you have no idea. And it's not like your typical kind of Latin pop thing, but much edgier, interesting stuff, things that you wouldn't expect, kind of like the Latin version of Air; you know, that French group, Air."⁴

But Madonna's interest in Mexican rock is by no means an isolated phenomenon. For several years now, international record producers have been turning their attention to Mexico. Molotov, for example, began its career with Surco, a Californian label closely associated to Universal; and the legendary Chris Blackwell of Island Records produced the Baja Californian Nor-Tec's album *Tijuana Sessions*. Jason Roberts from Cypress Hill has produced Control Machete; Titán will produce its next album in Europe with Virgin; and unfortunately for Madonna, Café Tacuba is about to sign with the Music Corporation of America (MCA).

There seems to be a recurring theme among most foreign record executives: the local color that the new Mexican groups are giving to rock.

As David Byrne, formerly of Talking Heads and today a talent scout in the Third World, says, “We’re looking for music outside the international mainstream; the world of pop is tired of groups like Maná because there’s too much of that. We’re placing all our attention on the fusions that groups like Café Tacuba and La Maldita Vecindad are coming up with.”⁵

MAMBO-ROCK, TECHNOCUMBIA
AND MUCH MORE

Foreign producers specifically prefer the hybrids that fuse Latin tunes with Anglo Saxon beats. Says Pepe Mogt, from Nor-Tec, “If you walk along Revolution Avenue in Tijuana at night, you’ll hear hip-hop coming out of a club, mariachis playing on the sidewalk and strains of ‘gruperá’ music coming out of trucks with polarized windows. All this feeds Nor-Tec.”⁶

In its album *Avalancha de éxitos* (Avalanche of Hits), Café Tacuba pays homage to Jaime López (*Chilanga Banda* [Mexico City Band]), Alberto Domínguez (*Perfidia* [Treachery]), Latin American authors who inspire the group to create its own sound. This kind of attitude is

applauded by the industry and the international media. For its video *La Ingrata* (The Ingrate) (a song included in the album *Re*), Café Tacuba was awarded a prize by MTV, while *SPIN*, the influential U.S. rock magazine, included *El Circo* (The Circus) by La Maldita Vecindad among the “90 most important albums of the ‘90s.” *The New Yorker*, for its part, in 1999, saluted our latest newcomer, saying, “[Julieta] Venegas has become one of the brightest lights of Mexican rock.”⁷

Another group with “local color” is Monterrey-based El gran silencio (The Great Silence), made famous thanks to the “cover” it did of *Déjenme si estoy llorando* (Leave Me Alone, I’m Crying), a song originally written by the Brazilian Nelson Ned. *Chúntaro Radio Power* is El Gran Silencio’s most recent production. Tony, a member of the band, explains that “*chúntaro* (or someone kitsch) is a socio-urban hybrid totally unrelated to *naco* (or someone tawdry or tacky); *chúntaros* aren’t born, they’re made. *Chúntaros* take a little from here and a little from there without caring about what people will think. Lupe, a member of the gruperá band Bronco, soldered an iron pedal to the accelerator of his lime-green Camaro... He’s a great *chúntaro*.”⁸

The influential U.S. rock magazine *SPIN* included *El Circo* (The Circus) by La Maldita Vecindad among the 90 most important albums of the ‘90s.



Plastilina Mosh.



Happy Fi / Tongola Recording / EMI



Discos Manicomio / Universal

Control Machete.



Warner Music

Maná.

But today we are not only producing bands that fuse “exotic” elements. We also have bands doing surf (Los Exquisitos and Lost Acapulco); electronic music (Parador Análogo, Dj Perra); and hip-hop (Molotov, Control Machete and Titán, about whom *The Guardian* has said, “Elevator [Titán’s most recent album] could justifiably become a massive hit.”⁹ Marcelo Lara, founder of Discos Manicomio, comments, “Our intention is to foster proposals in which hip-hop and other avant-garde forms all fit.”¹⁰ And independent cultural promotor Arturo Saucedo says, “What you can feel in places like Mexico City, Guadalajara, Monterrey, Tijuana, Puebla or Querétaro is that there is already a territorial form for aesthetic ideas. Today, groups like Linga or No-

pal Beat are creating their own sound that really lets them compete abroad; they’re creating an aesthetic that differentiates them from the overwhelming European production.”¹¹

THE NEXT BIG STEP

Molotov has sold more than a million and a half records; Control Machete, 700,000; El Gran Silencio, 400,000. Plastilina Mosh’s albums have been re-cut in 45 different countries. These numbers are unprecedented in the history of Mexican rock.

After a stay at the multinational labels and their subsidiaries with operations in Mexico



Café Tacuba.

(BMG, Universal, Virgin, Warner, Sony, Discos Manicomio, Tómbola Records, etc.), many Mexican groups hope to jump to the main catalogue of an international label, even skipping over the First World subsidiary labels. “Among other things, this means having a bigger budget,” says Adel Hattem, label manager at Polydor, “This is the big step that several Mexican groups are about to take.”¹²

Café Tacuba, La Maldita Vecindad, Nor-Tec and Titán have surprised the world with their own sound. Stages previously reserved for U.S. and European artists are now offered them. Seemingly, the decades-long dark ages that pop music went through in our country have been left behind. Globalization is welcoming our rock music with open arms. **MM**

NOTES

- ¹ Ramiro Burr, *Pulse!*, August 1995.
- ² Interview with the author.
- ³ Interview with the author.
- ⁴ *Interview*, March 2001.
- ⁵ *El País* (Madrid) n/d.
- ⁶ Interview with the author.
- ⁷ www.julietavenegas.com
- ⁸ www.virgin.com.mx
- ⁹ www.titantitan.com
- ¹⁰ Telephone interview with the author.
- ¹¹ Interview with the author.
- ¹² Telephone interview with the author.

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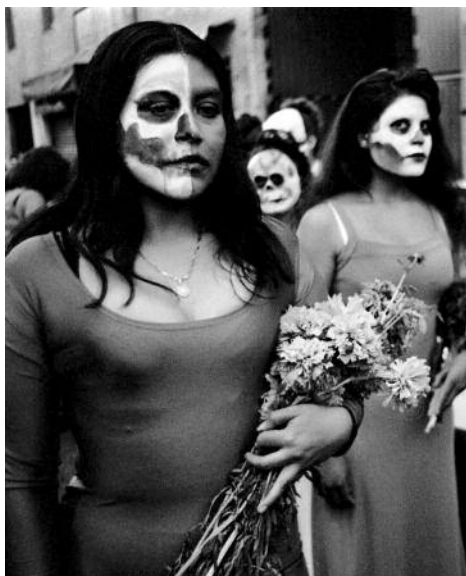
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Women and AIDS in Mexico

Celia Bertha Falomir Morales*



Antonio Nava / AVE



Voices of Mexico Archives

Women's right to health in Mexico has been shunted to one side since they have not been considered a high-risk sector of the population.

OVERVIEW OF AIDS IN MEXICO

Today, Mexico has the third largest number of AIDS cases of all the countries in the Americas, after the United States and Brazil. Taking into account the yearly rate, it is in fourth place in the hemisphere and 72nd place in the world.

The first cases of AIDS reported in Mexico were in 1983. After that, the epidemic advanced slowly until the second half of the 1980s, when it grew exponentially; from 1994 to 2000, its

growth stabilized at about 4,100 new cases a year.

From the beginning of the epidemic until the year 2000, Mexico registered 47,617 cases of AIDS. However, considering belated notification and registration estimates puts the real number of cases at about 64,000 people with AIDS and approximately 150,000 with HIV. Of these, between 42,000 and 60,100, respectively, are men who have sex with men; between 69,000 and 109,350 are heterosexual adults, men and women; between 190 and 200 are women who have been infected by transfusion; between 1,900 and 2,890 are habitual injected-drug users; and be-

tween 3,000 and 4,550 are people serving prison sentences.

About 86.7 percent of the cases mentioned are the result of sexual contact, of which 61.8 percent are men who have sex with other men and 38.2 percent the result of heterosexual relations. Of all the cases over the years, 85.1 percent have been men and 14.3 percent women. The male/female ratio is now 6 to 1 (at the beginning of the epidemic it was 25 to 1; in the early 1990s it went down to 11 to 1). This ratio increases to 9 to 1 for cases of sexual transmission (90.3 percent among men and 9.7 percent among women). However, these figures vary through-

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out the country; in some states, like Morelos, Puebla and Tlaxcala, the proportion is 3 to 1 and in others, like Nuevo León, it is 12 to 1.

Mexico, then, is a country where the epidemic has been concentrated among men who have sex with other men (homosexuals and/or bisexuals), a trend that has begun to slow in recent years as cases increase among heterosexuals.

Studies indicate a drop in the number of cases of HIV infection through blood transfusions (including cases among children) thanks to the measures adopted in 1986 and 1987, such as obligatory testing for HIV antibodies of all units of blood. The first cases of AIDS reported among women in Mexico were due to transfusions.

Today, we also speak of the ruralization of the epidemic since, despite the fact that the highest number of AIDS cases occur in large cities, the proportion of cases in rural areas with high migration to the United States has increased.

WOMEN AND AIDS IN MEXICO

The issue of AIDS and women was taken up by doctors, researchers and health authorities toward the end of the first decade of the epidemic, when world trends began to change. According to UN-AIDS and WHO data, the worldwide trend is for HIV to increase among women. It is important to note that 9 out of 10 zero-positive women live in underdeveloped countries. In 1984 in Brazil, women with AIDS were one percent of all those who had HIV, while by 1994, this percentage had increased to 25 percent. About 45 percent of women with HIV in the world

are from Africa, the majority of whom were infected by sexual contact.

Beyond the statistics, it is important to ask ourselves what the different biological, psychological, social and cultural conditions are behind this increase in AIDS among women. In other words, why are women vulnerable to AIDS?

Different studies relate the increase in the epidemic among women to their biological, psychological, cultural and social vulnerability; this is where the issue of gender comes into play. This concept is defined as a “symbolic elaboration” that cultures create for the difference between the sexes, in which power is an element in the social differences among men and women.¹ Biological differences should not justify social inequalities between the sexes.

Women’s vulnerability with regard to AIDS can be seen in different social phenomena. Some authors call one of them the “feminization of poverty,” which means that women from the poorest countries will pay the highest price for the illness since unhealthy living conditions and drug consumption favor the virus’ spread, which affects not only prostitutes and drug addicts, but also women who get the virus from their male partner (given male promiscuity).

In addition, cultural factors such as the subordinate role and economic dependence vis-à-vis men that many women still experience. This power imbalance accompanies and propels women’s biological vulnerability (which I will deal with later) and leads them to accept risky sexual partners and unsafe sex with their partners.

One of the phenomena that has aided in understanding women’s situations is male bisexuality. In Mexico, the cultural roles and ideals that guide

the male population’s conduct are still rigid and stereotyped, leading to a sexual double standard: they give such an exaggerated value to masculinity (“machismo”) that everything that seems feminine, effeminate or homosexual is devalued. This means that it is acceptable for men to have sex with other men as long as they play the “male” role, since this can reconfirm their masculinity and does not threaten their masculine image. A man who allows himself to be penetrated (playing the “female” role) is seen as a homosexual.

Male bisexuality in our society is practiced in secret given the moral double standard which both tolerates and criticizes it. This affects women since men who exercise their sexuality like this are more susceptible to contagion than other sectors of the population because anal sex makes it very easy for the virus to move from one organism to another.²

Women’s right to health in Mexico has been shunted to one side since they have not been considered a high-risk sector of the population; so, prevention programs have been oriented above all toward sex workers as transmitters of the virus. Most research projects have focused on men and those that dealt with women in the first years of the epidemic limited themselves to studying vertical transmission (from mother to child). Women’s specific condition was left out.

Other situations expressed at the International Women’s Conference in Beijing showed up the violation of women’s human rights in our country: the “cultural obligation” of having non-protected sexual relations (despite the suspicion that the husband might have HIV), as well as women with HIV who become pregnant—whether they know

they are zero-positive or not—because they cannot avoid it given that they have no access to family planning services, and who, if they have an abortion, must do so in secret, putting their lives at risk.

Dangerous abortions and unwanted pregnancies are public health problems that directly affect young women. In undeveloped countries, HIV/AIDS infection among these women is very high. Other social factors that show women's vulnerability to contracting the virus and having an unwanted pregnancy are sexual abuse against young women and girls, early initiation of sexual activity, the lack of access to formal education and reproductive health services, high-risk sexual behavior on the part of their partners and young women's inability to negotiate the terms of their sexual relations.

As I already mentioned, some roles played by women in our society help us to understand their vulnerability. Among them, the traditional role as the main people who ensure cleanliness and sanitation inside the family and the community. They are the ones who take care of the home, the work place, etc., without questioning this role of mothers, grandmothers, sisters, wives, colleagues, etc. In formal health care, women also play an increasingly important role as doctors, nurses, social workers and technicians. Since there are more women than men in this field, the majority of cases of occupational contagion with the HIV/AIDS virus have been among women. Due to the increase of AIDS cases worldwide, the burden of the disease on public health services is so great that community solutions have been sought, which implies non-paid women's work.

In addition to social questions, women are also at risk because of their bio-

logical vulnerability. Research has shown that the vaginal epithelium and the rectum are much more vulnerable to infection than the penis and that HIV remains alive for longer in the former. Infections of the reproductive system in women often include open lesions, ulcers, etc., that make it possible for the HIV to penetrate the tissue and bloodstream much more easily. Menstruation is also a risk factor for women if they have relations during that part of their cycle, as are its effects on hormonal cycles which make it possible for the covering of the genitals to be more vulnerable to HIV. Other risk factors are the use of certain kinds of contraceptives, such as the intrauterine device and some spermicides, and complications due to pregnancy, birthing and abortion.

Psychological factors also influence women's not taking preventative measures against AIDS. Some authors consider that they have the psychological need to feel desired and chosen by the male; therefore, often they cannot openly propose the use of a condom to the man because they have to mask their desire. They cannot be too explicit or "barefaced" because this attitude would be an attack on the male's masculinity. (In psychoanalytical terms, this is called "male narcissism" and is related to a "fear of castration." A woman who shows that much desire is not wanted by the male because he is frightened that he will not be able to satisfy her.)³

From the psychological point of view, women are structured through their desire to be loved, chosen by the other, and only in that way can they love themselves ("female narcissism"). This explains the fact that often they renounce their own personal and sexual demands to please others. At the same time, when a woman demands safe sex, she is an-

nouncing not only her own desire, but also her mistrust, as well as exposing herself to the risk of hostility and rejection.

CONCLUSIONS

The issue of women and AIDS in our country is complex; for that reason it is necessary to work on different fronts. On the level of public health, specific prevention programs are required for women. For that reason it is essential to not only consider them HIV/AIDS transmitters, but also a population at risk. The gender issue must be taken into account, which would mean carrying out informational and sexual education campaigns directed at women's psychological structure in order to have a positive effect on their daily lives. Profound social and cultural changes must also be promoted to allow women to continue winning spaces of power, flexibilizing roles and stereotypes about both the sexes and strengthening their self-esteem, health and right to pleasure. What is required is increasing consciousness among women themselves so that they can participate in the changes that our society must make in the fight against the growth of this epidemic. ■■■

NOTES

¹ Joan W. Scott, "El género: una categoría útil para el análisis histórico," *El género: la construcción cultural de la diferencia sexual*, Marta Lamas, comp. (Mexico City: Programa Universitario de Estudios de Género de la UNAM [PUEG], 1996).

² Ana Luisa Liguori, "Las investigaciones sobre bisexualidad en México," *Debate feminista*, vol. 2, year 6, Mexico City, April 1995.

³ Ana Luisa Liguori and María Antonieta Torres Arias, "La negociación para la prevención del SIDA: entre el deseo y el poder," *Debate feminista* vol. 9, year 5, Mexico City, March 1994.

NGO Networks in the Greater Caribbean and North America

Hernán Yañes*

The question of whether we can speak in the short or medium term about an emerging “transnational” civil society in the Greater Caribbean and North America is linked to the unprecedented, ongoing and still very uncertain process of formation and development of networks, particularly of nongovernmental organizations, new social movements and regional and sub-regional associations of professionals and academics, among others, with an international field of action.¹ I am referring here to non-state agencies and social organizations whose creation, existence and roles are associated with functions and objectives that must be carried out beyond the borders of each nation-state, basically on the regional and hemispheric levels.

My thinking centers fundamentally on networks based in the English-speaking Caribbean and in Central America which include the participation of an important number of Mexican networks and work increasingly with social partners and foundations in the United States and Canada.

Most networks of networks in the Greater Caribbean, like the Caribbean Policy Development Centre or the Regional Coordinating Committee of

The key element of legitimacy and social recognition common to NGO networks in the Caribbean is having formed alliances “from below.”

Economic and Social Research (CRIES) have emerged from “combinations from below” of pre-existing local and national networks. These new actors’ viability has not yet been sufficiently documented and, without by any means belittling their prospects, it may be premature to qualify them as an emerging “transnational civil society.”²

A decisive part of the factors that have influenced the formation of these networks as “emerging societies” has been their extra-national character.³ Among the exogenous influences are the growing weight of the citizenry in politics, particularly in Central American countries, as well as the support in resources and expertise given by the international community. In the case of the networks mentioned as well as the Greater Caribbean Civil Society Forum, substantial assistance has been forthcoming particularly from social agencies and institutions from the United

States and Canada, such as the Ford Foundation, OXFAM America-Central Office, OXFAM America-Central American Program, the University of the Virgin Islands of the United States, the U.S. Virgin Islands’ Island Resources Foundation, CIVICUS, ESQUEL Group Foundation, OXFAM Canada-Central America and Mexico, the Program for Support to Regional Initiatives-Canadian International Development Agency, Inter Pares, the Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO), the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the North-South Institute of Ottawa.

At the different meetings of the Regional Civil Society Forum, different business organizations with headquarters in Washington have been present, such as the Association of American Chambers of Commerce in Latin America, the Caribbean Latin American Action and even some representatives of hemisphere-wide agencies with headquarters in the United States, like the Interamerican Development Bank and the Organization of American States-Unit of Sustainable Development and Environment. Just to give a few examples, the Ford Foundation finances the CRIES’ academic, bilingual, bi-yearly magazine, *Pensamiento Propio* (Our Own Thinking), as well as the Program for Democratic Governableness and Public Security in Central America and the

* Member of the Executive Board of the Regional Coordinating Committee of Economic and Social Research (CRIES).

CRIES' 2001 publication of country reports by well known academics in the form of essays. Another funding source for this on-going project is the IDRC. CUSO's assistance has allowed the Caribbean Policy Development Centre and other English-speaking Caribbean networks to welcome Canadian volunteers who work on different programs and objectives.

The participation of Mexican networks and institutions has significant weight, particularly in the Regional Coordinating Committee of Economic and Social Research (CRIES) and the regional forum, since the Forum of Mutual Support is part of the executive boards of both organizations. In addition, the UNAM's Center for Latin American Studies, the University of Guadalajara's Department of Iberian and Latin American Studies, Mexico's Caribbean Association and the Mexican Network on Free Trade all belong to CRIES.

It has been interesting to see activist organizations (like NGOs), social movements and academic centers gather together in the same networks.

THE CASE OF CRIES

This network, created in 1982 and originally limited to exchanging and generating information, is made up basically of academic centers, although its membership has grown constantly since the end of the 1990s on the basis of its new strategic aims.⁴ The new objectives state that as a network of both research centers and socially active organizations, CRIES must above all work within the framework of the perspectives and interests of civil society in the Greater Caribbean region. In recent

years, the network has sought to contribute to the development of an alternative integration project in the region, a more democratic and participatory alternative. However, because of its current leadership, the extent of the association's mandate will have to be redefined to go beyond regional limits.

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This may be due to the increasing subordination of Greater Caribbean integration to global and hemispheric processes like the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas.⁵

OTHER NETWORKS

The Caribbean People's Development Agency (CARIPEDA), one of the first "transnational" networks of the English-speaking Caribbean with its headquarters in San Vicente, was founded in 1983 as a sub-regional network to answer the needs of information exchange and dissemination and skill and experience development among non-governmental agencies committed to social development.

The Caribbean Network Integrated Rural Development, based in Trinidad and Tobago, was established in December 1985 and officially launched

in Jamaica in March 1988. Its objectives are mainly to promote, support and transform rural development in the Caribbean.

The foundation and development of multinational NGO networks in the English-speaking Caribbean experienced new impetus in the early 1990s. A clear example was the creation in 1991 of the Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC), based in Barbados. The CPDC is probably the farthest reaching network of networks of NGOs, new social movements and academic centers there at the moment. CPDC's membership is made up of regional, sub-regional and national networks or regional institutions from the four main linguistic areas of the Great Caribbean: English, Spanish, French and Dutch.

Generally speaking, the CPDC is oriented to analyzing policies that affect the daily lives of the Caribbean peoples and societies, disseminating that information, contributing to skills development among the Caribbean peoples to have an impact on public policies, in order to support those that are in their interest and change those that are not.

The CPDC has carried out outstandingly diverse and profound actions in the field of policy. Among these actions is its role as the facilitator of the Asian-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP)-Lomé NGO Forum and its participation in the negotiating process of a new post-Lomé accord, as well as in the ministerial assemblies between the ACP and the European Union. Under the leadership of the CPDC Secretariat, progress was made in regrouping the Caribbean Reference Group on External Affairs (CGR), with the participation of CPDC agencies and other civil society organizations from the region like the Ca-

ibbean Community (CARICOM) and the Caribbean Forum (CARIFORO).

The CGR has concentrated on monitoring relations between the ACP countries and the European Union during and after the negotiations following Lomé IV and the Cotonou Accord. In 1999, the CGR hired specialists to lead the studies on these negotiations and civil society's possible impact on them, as well as to evaluate CARICOM's positions, specifically those of the Regional Negotiating Machinery. Supplementary to this, consultations were carried out among different sectors of national civil society in countries like Trinidad and Tobago, the Dominican Republic, Barbados and San Vicente.⁶ The CPCD represents the Caribbean NGOs in the CARICOM's working groups and in its consultation mechanisms (through the Regional Negotiating Machinery), above all with the aim of defining positions about issues like multilateral trade agreements and the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

The CPDC has been coordinating the World Bank's NGO Working Group in the Caribbean and has facilitated its meetings in the area. It has put a priority on women and a gender focus in its cooperation with multilateral NGO networks like Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era (DAWN).

Recently, CPDC's informational work has centered on areas like integration, trade, social development, cultural identity, human rights and institutional development in the Caribbean. In association with the Winward Islands Farmer Association, CPDC has been carrying out a plan for designing alternatives for banana producers in the Eastern Caribbean, given the World Trade Organization's and European Union's policies in this respect. Other studies

coordinated by the CPDC have dealt with problems of local ability to govern and the role of NGOs in the Dominican Republic, Santa Lucía, Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica. CARICOM has invited CPDC to its yearly summits of heads of state since 1998 to make a

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statement in the name of regional civil society.

As we can see, the networking and cooperation in this sector have broadened out intersocietal integration and that of regional and sub-regional networks of NGOs as international actors. The most recent achievement was the creation of the Greater Caribbean Civil Society Forum, inaugurated in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, in December 1997.⁷ The forum's technical secretariat is the responsibility of the Caribbean Center for Economic Research Santo Domingo. A fourth conference is planned for 2002.⁸

Lastly, it should be pointed out that in recent years relations between regional and sub-regional networks of NGOs—as umbrella organizations—and intergovernmental institutions, particularly those of the United Nations system, have advanced greatly. For example, in the English-speaking Caribbean, we could point to the growing cooperation

between NGO networks and community-based organizations and UN system agencies like the United Nations Development Program, the Pan American Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization and others on different programs for poverty eradication, sustainable development, the environment and other issues.⁹

BRIEF BALANCE SHEET

Seemingly, the key element of legitimacy and social recognition common to the main “transnational” NGO networks based in the Greater Caribbean is having formed alliances “from below” particularly from the 1980s on, based on community initiatives, projects and social movements, and having experienced significant expansion in the 1990s. This would allow us to explain to a great extent the advances in the sphere of intersocietal integration.¹⁰

The donations of funds, resources and expertise have played a decisive role in the formation, development and staying power of the main networks. An important part of their funding has come from international contributions from social partners and foundations based in the United States, Canada and Europe, from United Nations agencies and from multilateral and hemispheric organizations like the World Bank and the Interamerican Development Bank, among others.

In general—although there are exceptions—these networks seem to have been able to carry out their activities and programs with a broad margin of autonomy, in accordance with their own objectives and their members' interests. Another common element is that they have managed to retain im-

portant margins of independence with regard both to their governments and donor organizations.

Lastly, seemingly, their transparent methods of accountability have made it possible for the main NGO networks of networks and other social actors of the Greater Caribbean to proceed successfully with the fund raising efforts so key to their existence and development, despite a shrinking number of donors due, among other reasons, to the recent concentration of international cooperation on other areas like Eastern Europe. **MM**

NOTES

¹ Francine Jácome, comp., "La 'otra' integración: procesos intersociales y parlamentos regio-

nales en el Gran Caribe," *Cuadernos del Invesp* 4 (paper read at the First Forum of Greater Caribbean Civil Society held in Caracas, 1998).

² Ibid.

³ Andrés Serbín, "La sociedad civil transnacional y los desafíos de la globalización," Bruno Podestá, Manuel Gómez Galán et al., comps., *Ciudadanía y mundialización. La sociedad civil ante la integración regional* (Madrid: CEFIR-CIDEAL-INVESP, 2000).

⁴ CRIES membership includes 54 academic centers and national, regional and sub-regional NGOs based in 17 countries of the area.

⁵ In 2000, CRIES was officially accepted as a social actor by the Association of Caribbean States, and in 2001, by the Organization of American States.

⁶ Caribbean Policy Development Centre, *Annual Report-Overview* (Bridgetown: CPDC, 1999).

⁷ Francine Jácome, "El Foro Permanente de la Sociedad Civil del Gran Caribe: evaluación preliminar," Francine Jácome, Andrés Serbín and Antonio Romero, comps., *Anuario de la Integración Regional en el Gran Caribe 1* (Caracas: CRIES-INVESP-CIEI-Nueva Sociedad, 2000), pp. 179-198.

⁸ *Primer Foro de la Sociedad Civil del Gran Caribe. Documentos* (Caracas: CRIES-INVESP, 1998); and *Segundo Foro de la Sociedad Civil del Gran Caribe. Documentos* (Caracas: INVESP, 1999).

⁹ See the CPDC's *Annual Reports* 1995, 1996, 1996-1997, 1999 and 2000; and a study on CARICOM integration, "The Role of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)," commissioned by the CARICOM Secretariat, funded by the UNDP and prepared by consultant Rasleigh Jackson, published in May 1998.

¹⁰ Carrie A. Meyer, *The Economics and Politics of NGOs in Latin America* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1999).

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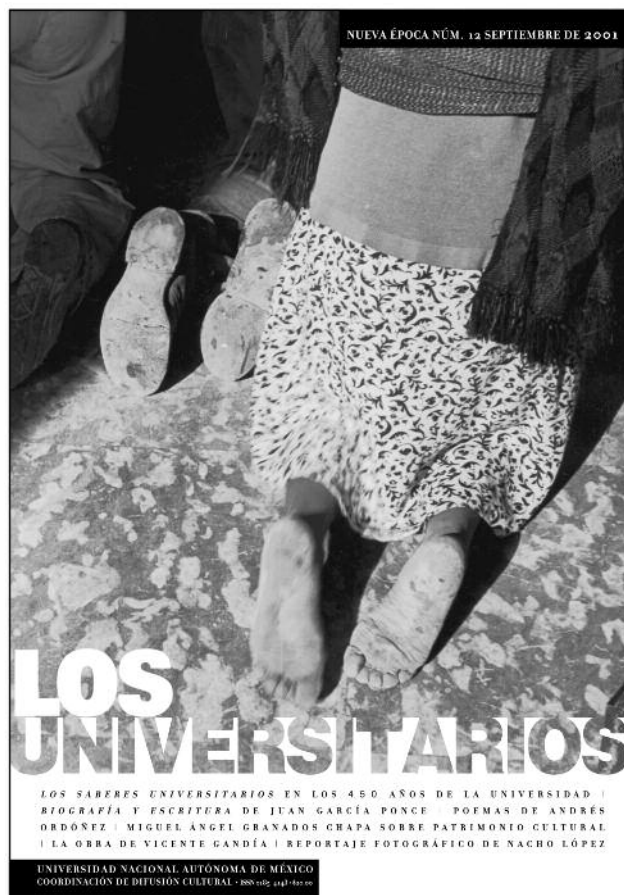
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Mexico and the World Alliance Against Terrorism

Raúl Benítez Manaut*



Courtesy of the President of Mexico's Press Office

President Fox offered Mexico's unconditional support to the U.S. government in the fight against terrorism.

Mexico is one of the world's most demilitarized countries; its foreign policy is based on non-intervention and the peaceful solution of controversies. Since World War II, its armed forces have not been deployed militarily abroad, and it has no Islamic-Arab population of importance.

All this means that Mexico has kept its distance from the tensions caused by the attacks on New York's Twin Towers

and the Pentagon in Washington. However, the attacks by modern extremist Islamic terrorists have certain characteristics that do affect Mexico.

How Does Terrorism Affect Mexico?

1. Many Mexicans died in the Twin Towers. Most were cleaning staff, one of the main occupations of Mexicans who live in the Big Apple.
2. Mexico is a strategic-trade ally of the United States; it has signed the North American Free Trade Agreement

(NAFTA) that has increased trade between the two countries since it came into effect in 1994.

3. Mexico is the southern border of a country under threat. For that reason it can be used as a jumping-off place for terrorist cells entering into the United States. We must take into account that the border is more than 2,000 kilometers long and easy to cross illegally.
4. A great many U.S. citizens live in Mexico and many multinational com-

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- panies that could be terrorist targets have offices here.
5. Our two presidents, George Bush and Vicente Fox, are close friends. The very week before the attack our two governments signed a great many accords, many of them to increase cooperation in security matters.
 6. When U.S. security has been seriously threatened, particularly during World War II and during the 1960s missiles crisis, Mexico has supported its northern neighbor unconditionally.
 7. Mexico is an important supplier of energy to the United States, both in the form of oil and electricity. One of the possible targets, if hostilities break out, could be our oil fields.
 8. Mexico has a large amount of air traffic with the United States, mainly commercial flights. The two companies involved in the September 11 attack, American Airlines and United Airlines, operate a large number of flights between Mexico and the United States.
 9. Mexico is the bridge between Central America and the United States, where borders are very vulnerable.

For all of these reasons, while Mexico is not the immediate main target of international terrorism, it could be the object of attacks on buildings, individuals or airlines linked to the United States, or even on Mexican citizens because it is considered a U.S. ally.

These reasons force Mexico, in defense of its own national interests, its sovereignty and its people, to support the United States. Another fundamental factor is that, for reasons of principle, Mexico has internationally put forward the idea of the need for a system of relations among states based

on cooperation to allow for free trade and our country's fundamental values, such as individual freedoms, a democratic form of government, the respect for human rights and for national sovereignty and the defense of citizens' lives. The terrorist attacks threaten these principles. Many Mexicans are in danger because they live in the United States; and many Mexican interests could be the target of terrorist attacks if the war escalates.

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Another fundamental factor that obliges Mexico to support U.S. efforts is that the Islamic fundamentalist war uses terrorism. Terrorists do not distinguish among nationalities or borders and, therefore, in geopolitical terms, Mexico is a vulnerable part of the U.S. system of alliances for fighting terrorism.

LIMITS OF MEXICO'S WAR AGAINST TERRORISM?

Mexico has limited resources for backing the United States. To support the World Antiterrorist Alliance, Mexico does not have armed forces capable of collaborating in the kind of fighting that will be carried out against the Al-

Qaeda guerrillas in the mountains of Afghanistan or in attacks against Afghanistan or other countries. Mexico's armed forces are defensive and do not have high-tech weapons. For that reason, its participation is circumscribed to the framework of cooperation in the Western Hemisphere in avoiding the entry of terrorist commandos into any country, including the U.S., or their attacking any objective in the United States.

Another means of support is putting Mexico's national security system on alert against terrorism. The danger in this is that the human rights of uninvolved persons may be violated for the simple reason that they are of Arab origin or believers in Islam, and an over-surveillance of borders, installations, etc., could force us to concentrate all efforts against terrorism and to disregard other threats like organized crime and drug traffickers.

One of the most important forms of support is Mexico's becoming part of the international diplomatic efforts to detect and isolate terrorism. Mexico proposed September 7, 2001, that the Organization of American States revise the Interamerican Treaty of Mutual Assistance. Mexico is going to host the 2002 Conference on Hemispheric Security and will also be an important presence in the UN Security Council. In addition, humanitarian aid efforts are going to be needed if the military actions are of a type that affect the civilian population.

One of the most important obstacles in the path of full collaboration with the United States is political and historical: the history of Mexico losing territory to the U.S. in 1848 and the existence of nationalist political forces in our country who oppose the admin-

istration giving any kind of support to the United States (this is the case of some sectors of the party that governed Mexico for 71 years, the Institutional Revolutionary Party, and, on the left, the Party of the Democratic Revolution). We should remember that foreign and defense policies are decided by the president, but must be consulted with Congress, mainly the Senate. And President Vicente Fox does not have a majority in the Congress.

FROM TRADE PARTNER TO STRATEGIC ALLY

Mexico finds itself in an existential dilemma in strategic terms: in addition to being the United States' trade partner, is it also going to be its strategic ally?

Since NAFTA came into effect, the United States and Canada have been talking about the need to move on to strategic commitments in security and defense. In Mexico, there is a great deal of resistance to this by people who hold that the United States has ambi-

tions as an empire and that national sovereignty and the independence of the armed forces should be guaranteed.

With the terrorist attacks, the pressure is on again, but this time in a different context: the United States was attacked and is asking its partners for substantial back-up. From the point of view of Mexican interests, the president, through Foreign Minister Jorge Castañeda, has expressed his complete backing, but a refusal to give military support. One of Mexico's doubts is the form the U.S. response attack will take. Mexico's concern is that a great humanitarian catastrophe may occur.

CONCLUSION

UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT, BETWEEN SOVEREIGNTY AND CAUTION

All the countries of Europe have expressed almost total support for the United States, as have Russia, Pakistan and India. In the United States it is difficult to understand why Mexico does not express similar solidarity. There

are two reasons: if very heavy fighting breaks out and strategic weapons are used, the terrorist response could involve chemical or biological weapons, which people fear that Osama bin Laden has. Mexican territory could be used, and this is a great concern for the public.

Another factor is that the war against terrorism will be prolonged and will employ both conventional military means and non-conventional ones. A protracted war against terrorism is coming that will include responses from Islamic groups. This will force the Mexican government to express two contradictory positions: solidarity with the United States and the defense of Mexican interests. A difficult combination in times of war.

A new kind of war is coming. A great empire, the United States, faces a non-conventional enemy that uses religion and kamikazes who recognize no territorial or humanitarian limits. The world has never seen a war like this. It is a challenge for all countries, including Mexico. ■■



Neighbors at Last Canada and the New Mexico

Keith H. Christie*



Courtesy of the President of Mexico's Press Office

I remember well my first encounter with an External Affairs posting officer shortly after I joined the department in June 1976. We explored together posting options for the following summer. He seemed to think I might have a promising future, but enquired rather sharply about why on earth I would want to go to Latin America as a first posting. Why would anyone who wants to get ahead in the department ever go there?, or words to that effect. I occasionally think of that meeting. So much has changed in these past 25 years in terms of Canada's role in Latin America and its relations, in particular, with Mexico.

TURNING POINTS

Much has changed. It is important to recognize key turning points in Canada's hemispheric relationship, particularly over the past 10 years, and the place of Mexico in that broader context. Among many influences, I would highlight four major events.

First, the long overdue decision by Canada to join the Organization of American States in 1991 with a determination, consistently applied, to make a difference in the revitalization and growth of that central hemispheric institution.

Second, the Canadian government's decision to join the United States and Mexico in the negotiation of the North

American Free Trade Agreement during 1991-1993, at the time a controversial but forward-looking decision that among other impacts certainly heightened the profile of Mexico in Canada and our understanding of Mexican society and markets.

Third, the launch of the Summit of the Americas process in 1994 by then-president Clinton and the Canadian government's decision to make a major commitment to ensuring the success and eventual institutionalization of the summit as achieved through the Santiago Leader's Meeting of 1998 and most particularly the extraordinarily dynamic third summit held in Quebec City last April, with its solid action plan and new Executive Council that

* Ambassador of Canada to Mexico.

will see us through to the fourth summit in Buenos Aires.

And fourth, the democratic transition in Mexico, a regional heavyweight and by far our largest economic partner in Latin America, as a result of the election of opposition candidate Vicente Fox to the Mexican presidency in July 2000. Fox has arrived with a vision and determination to ensure Mexico becomes a full North American partner.

Last year, Mexico exported more to Canada than it did to all 15 member states of the European Union combined and almost as much to Canada as to the E.U. and Japan combined.

In a sense, these four events became feasible and sustainable because of profound changes in the approach of the region towards the key principles of democracy and free markets. These were changes implemented by Latin American leaders and populations themselves. Although faith in each of these two fundamental principles has more than once been shaken over the past 10 years, there is still a remarkable commitment to them particularly when compared to 15 to 20 years ago. Yet each of the four turning points that I have highlighted were not just the result of fundamental shifts in Latin American societies, but they also created their own subsequent dynamic which has helped in turn to strengthen democracy and markets as well as involvement of governments (including very actively the Canadian government) much more directly in promoting these same principles.

Others view Canada, and increasingly Canadians and the Canadian government view themselves, as integral

members of the broader hemispheric family. This hemisphere is our neighborhood. And apart from the United States, this neighborhood for Canada has a strong Mexican look and feel about it as exemplified through our joint participation in NAFTA and the enormous interest created by President Fox's election last year. In the rest of this article, I will briefly describe several key components of that relationship as of 2000

and will then follow with a description of several key themes that President Fox highlighted during his campaign and the first months of his presidency. Finally, I will outline several of the consequences for Canada-Mexico relations that flow directly from the ongoing transition in Mexico under President Fox.

A SNAPSHOT

Bilateral trade has grown by double digits every year since 1996 with a striking 30 percent increase last year to reach U.S.\$12 billion. Mexico is now Canada's fourth most important export market after the U.S., Japan and the U.K. Canada has become Mexico's second most important export market. Last year, Mexico exported more to Canada than it did to all 15 member states of the European Union combined and almost as much to Canada as to the E.U. and Japan combined. Despite the slowdown in the U.S. economy which is affecting the economies

of both its partners, Canada-Mexico trade continues to grow during 2001 (by 8 percent the first quarter).

Canadian investment in Mexico has increased six-fold since 1993 and now stands at well over Can\$3 billion according to Statistics Canada. In fact, the level of investment controlled by Canadian firms is probably considerably higher given that a number of significant Canadian-controlled investments in Mexico are undertaken through subsidiaries based in third countries particularly the U.S. and the U.K. This level of investment, while impressive, has not been as dynamic as in Chile. Nonetheless, it does represent an important stake which could increase significantly in the near future depending on Mexican policy decisions still to be taken in sectors of solid Canadian competitive advantage, such as energy.

Two-way tourism continues to grow impressively. According to data collected by our network of consulates and from Canadian tour operators, the embassy estimates that approximately one million Canadians visited Mexico last year, while an increasing number of Mexicans are visiting Canada (about 170,000 in 2000).

There is a very successful Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program administered through a bilateral agreement in place for 25 years. More recently, the number of Mexicans undertaking seasonal work in Canada (particularly in Ontario and also in Quebec and the Prairies) has expanded steadily to more than 9,000 last year with the expectation that the total could grow to 11,000-12,000 this year. This is a model program clearly to the benefit of Canadian farmers and Mexican workers.

Canadian and Mexican universities and colleges have built a continually

expanding network of some 350 active cooperation and exchange agreements. Canada is increasingly a destination of choice for Mexican students with more than 6,000 having studied in Canada last year. This is particularly impressive when you consider that this total is approaching the number who travel to the U.S. (9,000), and much more than the students who travel to any individual European country—a strong testament to Mexicans' increasingly strong perception of the benefits of study in Canada. Equally as interesting, an estimated 1,000 Canadians are currently pursuing academic courses for credit in Mexican universities largely through exchanges administered under university-to-university agreements.

To manage this broad and expanding relationship, the embassy in Mexico is now one of Canada's largest and is also responsible for the management and coordination of the work of our two consulates in Monterrey and Guadalajara; our network of 7 honorary consulates; and a contract-based border/customs office in Laredo on the U.S.-Mexico border.

PRESIDENT FOX'S PRIORITIES RECURRENT THEMES

Although Vicente Fox raised a large number of issues during his campaign, the five-month transition period before his inauguration last December and the first several months of his presidency, five themes in particular seem salient. They focus on governance, markets and geography. All have immediate and direct implications for Canada, providing us with new opportunities to work with Mexico as an increasingly close partner to ensure economic growth and stability.

The first theme is transparency in government. President Fox believes deeply in the importance of the contribution that civil society can make to ensuring that political and economic processes are more accessible, more understandable and more open to being influenced by many more voices in Mexican society. He holds this belief because in large measure the increasing demands of Mexican civil society

Through a bilateral agreement in place for 25 years the number of Mexicans doing seasonal work in Canada has expanded steadily. This model program clearly benefits both Canadian farmers and Mexican workers.

writ large (NGOs, business associations, media, academics) over the last 10 to 15 years helped to prepare the way for his stunning victory last year. In practical terms, transparency in the current Mexican context includes improved access to government information, the radical recasting of security and intelligence services to function in a democratic society and a much more open, fluid and demanding inter-relationship with the Mexican Congress in which no party has a majority.

A second theme is anti-corruption. The president and several of his principal advisers have spoken openly and eloquently about the need to combat a culture of corruption which had been allowed to infect many public and private aspects of Mexican national life. Some of the implications of this anti-corruption campaign include reform of Mexican customs, reorganization and reform of police forces, more transparent public procurement policies and the simplification and reform of the public service more generally.

Human security and in particular the promotion of human rights is the third theme, by which President Fox means improvement at home in Mexico itself and a remarkably open welcome to outside observers, as well as a more dynamic promotion of human rights issues outside Mexico both in the hemisphere and more globally.

Fourth, President Fox and his team have emphasized the importance of

further economic reform and modernization. Reaching these goals will require political skill and perseverance in the face of a divided Congress. But a good start has been made in further reshaping Mexico, including through significant tax reform to increase government revenue as a percentage of gross domestic product to a level more in keeping with the regional average in order to finance social and economic development; energy sector reform (most immediately in terms of possible further liberalization of private sector participation in the generation of electricity and in the exploration for natural gas which will be the main source of new energy in coming years); a significant restructuring of the state-owned electricity and oil companies so that they are more responsive to market forces, functioning more clearly as properly arms-length state corporations operating in more competitive energy markets; a massive overhaul of labor legislation both to remove inherited corporatist rigidities and to improve union democracy;

and a further decentralization of financing and policy responsibilities to Mexico's 31 states and Federal District.

And finally, I would highlight the administration's inherent continentalism. The Fox administration has been correctly active in promoting Mexican foreign policy and trade and investment interests with partners in Europe, Latin America and Asia. Nonetheless, it is also true that the government clear-

southern neighbors to ensure that both Canada's bilateral relationships (Canada-U.S. and Canada-Mexico) and our joint trilateral relationship remain agile, forward-looking and active if we are to continue to have a major impact on the North American agenda.

Another impact relates to trade. Commercial flows in both directions will continue to increase through private sector transactions and govern-

Further economic modernization in Mexico should open the door to a larger Canadian investment presence in Mexico, with the energy sector as the focus of much Canadian private sector and embassy activity.

ly recognizes that its home is in North America and that Mexican prosperity depends increasingly and inevitably on the stability and prosperity of Mexico's immediate North American neighborhood.

CONSEQUENCES FOR CANADA AND CANADIAN RESPONSES

One clear consequence of the transition underway here in Mexico is that the personal dynamism between U.S. President Bush and Mexican President Fox is strong, with the result that the U.S. administration will look increasingly as much south across the Río Bravo as it does north across the St. Lawrence. This new dynamic is positive in that there is a predisposition to try to resolve several critical issues such as migration, narcotics interdiction and a number of highly contentious NAFTA-related trade disputes. This dynamic also implies that we must continue to work closely with our two

ment efforts to facilitate trade further. Continental pull or gravity will ensure, in and of itself, increasingly greater commercial activity. Indeed, it is likely that within the next 3 to 4 years Mexico will surpass the U.K. to become Canada's third most important export market. But trade and the jobs created by trade could increase at an even faster rate if governments find ways to build on NAFTA to improve further the environment for trade and investment. NAFTA has done much to create prosperity in all three countries, but there remains much untapped potential within the framework of the current agreement, with discussions now underway to explore what a NAFTA plus agenda might look like.

In addition, and as suggested earlier, further economic modernization in Mexico should open the door to a larger Canadian investment presence in Mexico, with the energy sector as the focus of much Canadian private sector and embassy activity at the present time. In close cooperation with

the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Mexico, the embassy has been active in promoting the presence of Canadian energy companies in Mexico, in part through bringing our private sector together not only with members of the Mexican government but also with deputies and senators from the three main parties in the Mexican Congress. More broadly on the energy front, earlier this year the energy ministers of Canada, the U.S. and Mexico created a North American Energy Working Group. This forum will be a valuable means of fostering communication and coordinating efforts in support of efficient North American energy markets.

Another fascinating and growing aspect of cooperation is the promotion of good governance issues in areas identified by the new Fox administration. For example, the embassy and the appropriate federal government authorities have been providing information and advice on such key issues as access to information; appropriate legislation for, including civilian oversight of, Mexico's intelligence agency; budgetary reform and control; the auditing of public accounts by arm's length agencies; and federalism.

There are also important new opportunities for greater exchanges and cooperation with regard to foreign policy, including in the area of human rights promotion in the hemisphere and in UN organizations such as the Commission on Human Rights. In this regard, a good start has been made to encourage a regular dialogue between our two foreign ministries, which will be further deepened. We have also begun a step-by-step exchange of information and experiences on UN based peacekeeping operations. As Mexican foreign policy

becomes more proactive (perhaps most strikingly exemplified by its strong campaign to win a non-permanent two-year term on the UN Security Council), Mexico could gradually shed its traditional hesitation to participate in peacekeeping operations. If so, Canada would clearly welcome such a change. In addition, and still in the area of human security/human rights, it has been gratifying to witness and to encourage the further strengthening of the close working relationship between Elections Canada and Mexico's Federal Electoral Institute (on-going cooperation was recently formally renewed), and between the Canadian and Mexican Human Rights Commissions. On the basis of recent bilateral cooperation and confidence-building, these two commissions were pivotal in organizing and launching last autumn the first-ever hemispheric network of national human rights organizations.

During president Fox's state visit to Canada last April, further steps were made. It was agreed to enhance cooperation in the area of social and human development with an initial emphasis on lifelong learning and social cohesion issues. An additional agreement was signed in the area of natural resources, including energy efficiency, alternative energy, energy supply, air quality, watershed and groundwater management, sustainable development and use of mineral and metals, remote sensing and geomatics. During the same visit, both governments undertook to work toward extending the existing highly successful bilateral cooperation in the area of temporary workers to other provinces of Canada not yet included in the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program and to other economic sectors where labor market de-

mand justifies such an extension to both countries' mutual benefit.

The Mexican Congress is a quickly emerging area of importance to understanding and tracking Mexican affairs and to promoting bilateral and broader hemispheric relations. As a result of the July 2000 federal elections, no party commands a majority in either chamber of Congress and the relationship between the president and

There are also important new opportunities for greater exchanges and cooperation with regard to foreign policy, including the area of human rights promotion in the hemisphere.

his own party caucus in Congress is still being fashioned. Consequently, for the first time in its history, Mexico's Congress is itself still being fashioned. Also, then, for the first time in its history Mexico's Congress has become a critically independent player in Mexico's overall governance structure. The old vertical, top-down president-dictating-to-Congress days are gone forever. Legislation must now be crafted in coordination with Congress and in anticipation of active questioning and debate on all key bills, including those of interest to Canada. As a result, we have established what is only Canada's third Congressional Relations Office at an embassy abroad. Although minimally staffed at present, it is becoming an important feature of our operations in Mexico. It is in Canada's interest to see the new Mexican Congress emerge as a vital and positive force in Mexico's new democracy. It will also be an important player in our on-going dialogue with Mexico on promoting Canadian values and interests in Mexico. Moreover, a

Mexican congressional delegation played a significant and constructive role in the inaugural session last March of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA). This Canadian initiative to promote a greater policy dialogue on hemispheric issues among the region's national legislatures (in a process roughly paralleling the Leaders' Summit process) now has an executive committee led by Canadian M.P. Bill Graham, on

which Mexico also sits. Moreover, Mexico has agreed to host the second annual meeting of FIPA in 2002.

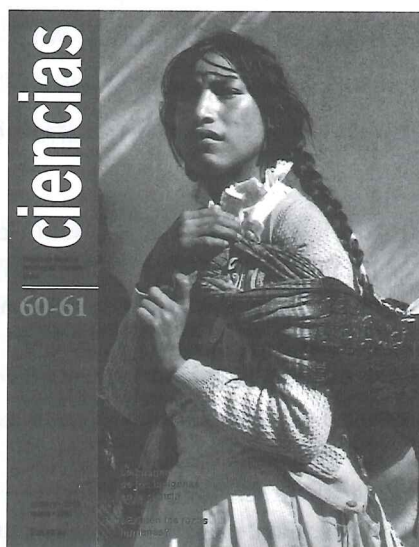
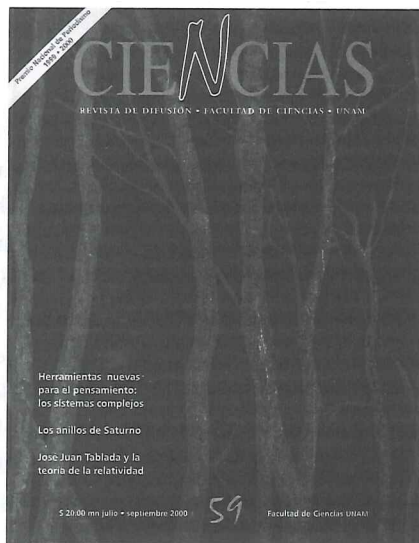
POSTSCRIPT

The previous paragraphs highlight the accelerating, on-going activity already in play before July 2000 and also identify the many new opportunities that are quickly being seized. Partly as a result of Canada recognizing these new prospects early on, President Fox has been to Canada twice over the past year, while approximately two-thirds of the cabinet members of the two governments have met either in Canada or in Mexico (sometimes more than once) to promote this special relationship. The likelihood of further expansion is quite rightly high. Why would anyone...ever go to Latin America? I was asked 25 years ago. The answer is so self-evident today, especially with regard to Mexico, that no one would even dream of asking the question in the first place. **NMM**

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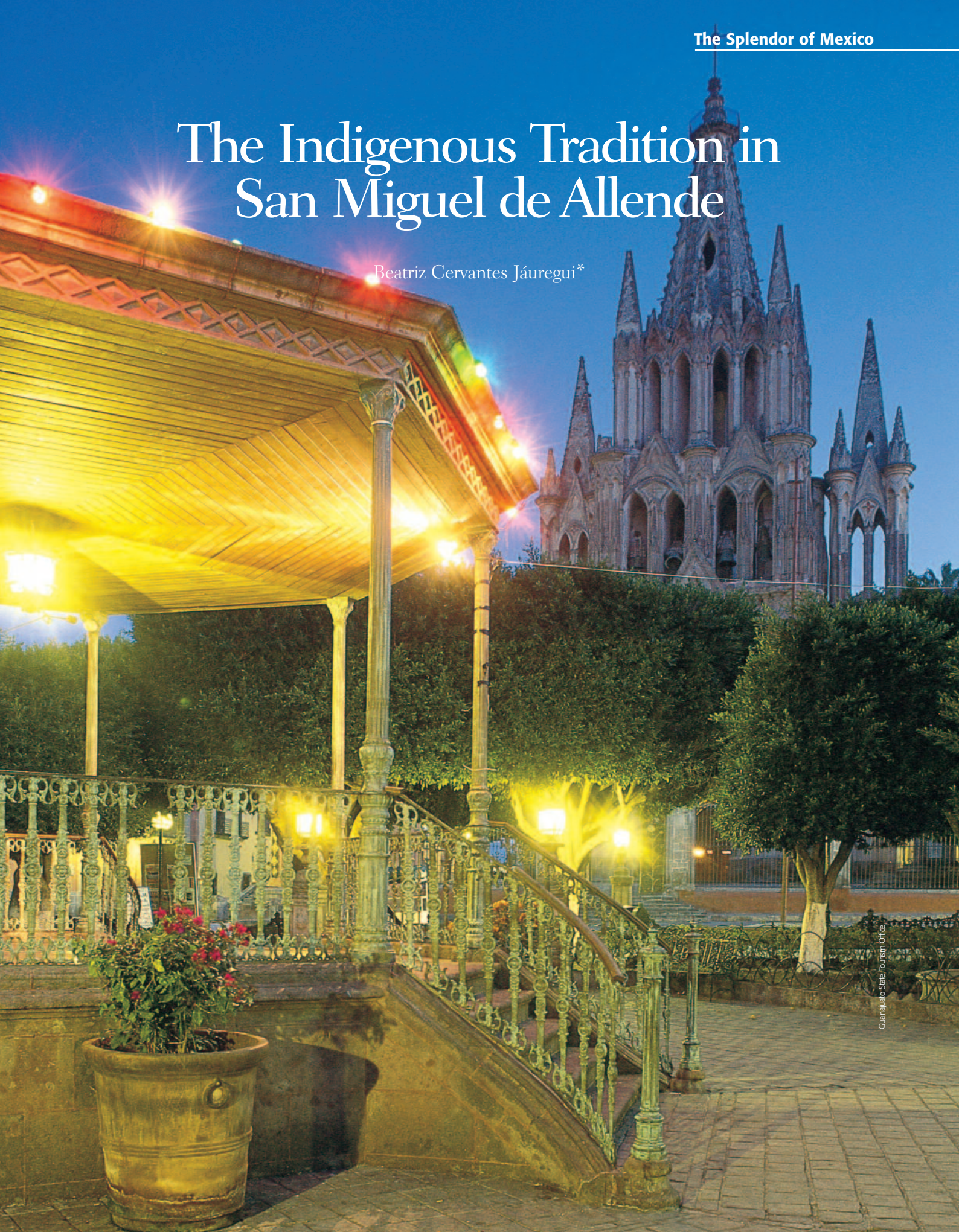
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The Indigenous Tradition in San Miguel de Allende

Beatriz Cervantes Jáuregui*





Guanajuato State Tourism Office

Located in what had been the land of the Chichimecs, the city of San Miguel de Allende was founded and populated in the second half of the sixteenth century.

Friar Juan de San Miguel had arrived in 1542 accompanied by a group of indigenous people who stayed to continue their mission work. A short time later, the discovery of silver in Zacatecas and Guanajuato initiated growing migration and a road had to be built to move carts full of merchandise, mules, horses and cattle.

When the Chichimecs, ancient hunting and gathering peoples who inhabited the region, began to suffer the consequences of the destruction by the Spanish and their cattle on their resources, they banded together and began what is known as the War of the Chichimecs.

The conflict affected the fledgling town, which was attacked by the Chichimecs and abandoned by its surviving inhabitants. Years later, so the legend goes, Friar Juan de San Miguel and his indigenous followers from different ethnic groups moved the town to a more appropriate place. Their dogs located a generous spring at the foot of which the town of San Miguel el Grande developed. Its Nahuatl name, Izcuinapan, means “river of dogs.”

Founded to offer better protection to wayfarers, the town was on an ideal site for settlement because of its pleasant climate, abundant water and the possibility of using the land for both cultivation and cattle grazing.

In the eighteenth century, San Miguel el Grande was already so prosperous that it had a great many orchards and gardens, rich agriculture and many cattle. An important workshop-based textile industry had developed and commerce was growing. The main work force was made up of indigenous people who lived in the town’s neighborhoods and surrounding hamlets.

The criollo population gained economic stature and social and political standing, evidenced

* Researcher at the INAH Center in Guanajuato.

in the city's architecture. Particular circumstances led this group to identify with the insurgents fighting for independence, whose military heads were illustrious natives like Ignacio Allende, in whose memory the town's name was changed to San Miguel de Allende in 1862.

By contrast, the indigenous population, by the eighteenth century mainly Otomí, suffered from poverty, mistreatment and overwork. Given their precarious circumstances, this sector of the population has left vestiges of its existence mainly in its most traditional cultural expressions.

In today's San Miguel, indigenous traditions are clearly seen in some of the fiestas that are most important to the community, such as that of Our Lord of the Conquest, the Holy Cross and, of course, the September 29 fiesta of Archangel San Miguel, the city's patron saint.

THE FIESTA OF SAN MIGUEL

In 1927, Carlos Diez de Sollano wrote, "The Friday before the fiesta the Indian dances arrive: these dances, a very regional attraction, are done by Otomí men and women. They have their generals, captains and lieutenants of both sexes, distinguished by the leadership scepters they carry with them. They dance every year and the leadership passes down from generation to generation; others, the majority, dance because of a vow they have taken."¹ Diez then described their clothing: "The men wear a special suit with short skirts made of brightly colored cloth, reds, blues or yellows, embroidered with sequins and gold; a shirt of a different color, embroidered or decorated; and a feather headdress with colored beads, replete with abundant pictures of saints. On the front, of course, there are images of San Miguel and Our Lady of Guadalupe, and a multitude of long ribbons hang down the back. Many of them also wear fake hair that hangs down their backs and a short cape."

They also wore sandals, brightly colored stockings and strings of paper beads as necklaces. The women wore long, wide petticoats made



Cuernavaca State Tourism Office



Cuajalajara State Tourism Office

of beautiful percale with blouses to match. “They wore their hair loose, heavily greased” and feather headdresses like those of the men.

Diez Sollano states that the dances were accompanied by musicians who played instruments made of armadillo shells, sometimes strung like mandolins, sometimes like guitars. He also writes that “the tunes or *sones* for the dances are very rhythmic and monotonous, the dances themselves very interesting with more than 20 different steps; each step has a different *son*, and they switch from one to another at the shout of the captain general.”

For the San Miguel festival, the communities that followed indigenous traditions have gone to the municipality to hold their fiesta from time immemorial. They also organize and finance it.

Though the fiesta of San Miguel is held on September 29, in the past, festivities began in mid-August with the ritual hunting of the bull that would later be slaughtered at the fiesta. On the following four Sundays, the group went to different places of special significance. They called this “requesting permission to hold the fiesta.” They would take flowers and candles as offerings and sing and pray accompanied by music made with shells.

Indigenous communities from almost the entire state and even from Querétaro came to the San Miguel fiesta, meeting along the road. They spent the night before at a predetermined spot where they would pray together. At this evening ceremony, amid songs and music, they would make the *súchil*, a 2.5-to-10-meter-high structure made out of reeds, decorated with the bone-colored petals from the heart of the *cucharilla*, marigolds and other seasonal flowers and with corn stalks and tortillas painted different colors.

The next day, they set out with the *súchil* and traditional images toward San Miguel to bring together the souls, the *súchiles* and the dances in the place where tradition has it that one of the four conquistador strongmen of San Miguel was killed for having accepted Christianity. The processions always arrived at this



Courtesy of Aurora Jáuregui



Courtesy of Aurora Jáuregui

Many parts of the fiesta have changed but it survives thanks to community interest.

place after noon from the four different directions and the group from San Miguel would go out to meet them. The ritual would then become solemn for at that moment everyone present would declare that they were leaving behind their resentments and problems and were coming to an agreement, the prerequisite for continuing toward the center of the city. According to the elders, this ceremony commemorated the city's moving to its new location in the sixteenth century.

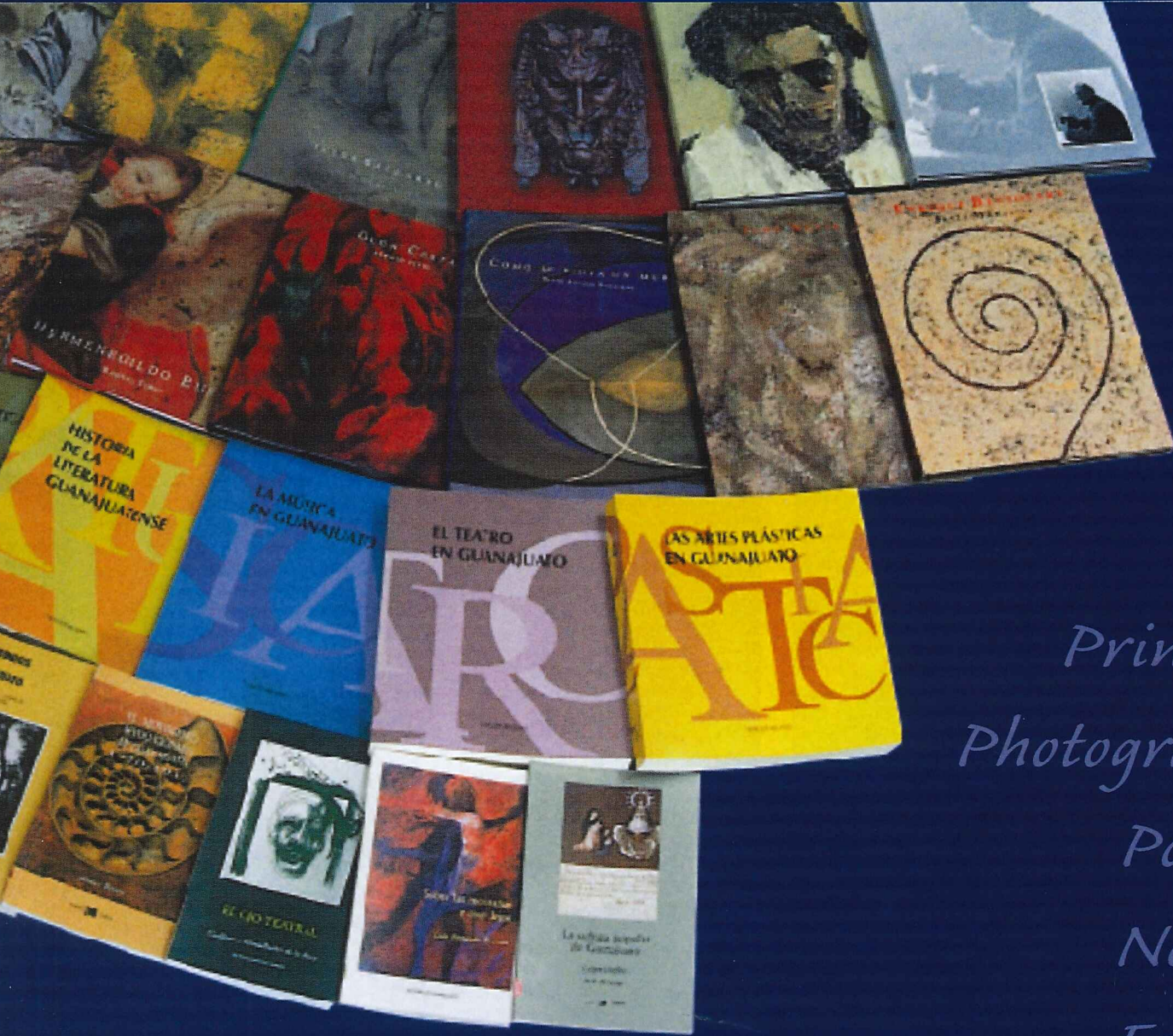
First the captain generals entered with their lieutenants, who carried the flags and standards; after them went the family crosses of the old *caciques* or strongmen. Then a dance was performed and a *súchil* went in, and so on. They arrived dancing through the streets until they reached the main garden, which they circled three times, dancing all the while. On their first turn around the garden, the stewards used to go to the jailhouse to feed the prisoners in a show of solidarity. On the last turn, they would come out of the jail and, as the dances continued, put the

súchiles in the atrium of the parish church. The dances continued until evening fell, when the towers of fireworks were lit. The next day, they entered the parish church on their knees carrying offerings of flowers, fruit, candles and food. Later the priest would celebrate responsories for the souls of their ancestors. The celebrants left the church crawling backwards on their knees.

Today, many parts of the old fiesta of the Archangel San Miguel have changed; some have disappeared or been transformed, as surely has always been the case. But the fiesta survives because there are still communities that organize it despite their economic limitations and because there is a society that accepts it, needs it, appreciates it and encourages it. ■■■

NOTES

¹ All quotes are from Carlos Diez de Sollano, "Las fiestas de San Miguel," *Revista Mexicana de Estudios Históricos* 1 (Mexico City: Editorial Cultura, 1927), pp. 213-227.



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From Splendor to Crisis Contrasts in Guanajuato's Mining History

Luis Serrano Espinoza*

In one of the narrowest canyons of the eastern Sierra Madre mountain range, north of the fertile lands of the Bajío area, as if risen from an enchanted spell, sits the city of Guanajuato. Its buildings, planned to cling to the

sides of its hills and to hang from the heights of the walls of its underground streets, are crowded together around irregular plazas and along twisting alleyways, mute witnesses to the mining bonanza, the origin of the settlement, but also to hard times.

* Architect and winner of the National Council for the Arts' 1993 Francisco de la Maza Prize for his work *Eighteenth-Century Architecture in the City of Guanajuato*.

Mining is one of the most uncertain, chance-ridden productive activities there are. Mining has always been associated with adventurers



Photos by Daniel Munguia

The Valenciana mine made its owner the richest man in New Spain in the eighteenth century.



Mining was not always profitable.



Ruins of what was the Rayas mine.

and fortune-hunters hoping to rapidly become tycoons. The history of Guanajuato mining is full of stories of poverty and riches, the result of chance; it is also a sack full of dreams come true and acts of faith...as well as unbridled avarice.

As Doris Ladd said, mining was the riskiest kind of production in colonial Mexico. To achieve modest profits, millions in investment were required, most of which went into mines that were short-lived and usually did not yield the profits expected. The ones that did make a profit for 30 years in a row were considered extraordinary finds and true exceptions to the rule.¹

Guanajuato is an example of the kinds of fixes the mine owners found themselves in: underground rivers constantly flooded their mine shafts and tunnels, making ore extraction impos-

sible, causing large financial losses and requiring more investment in drainage and drying out the deposits. We would have to add to this the difficulties in obtaining loans and fresh capital to continue with their mining and metal-working projects. This, given the enormous amount of works that had to be built before getting the first kilograms of ore out of the ground, made the mining industry the least profitable of the Viceroyalty.

While the city's evolution is the immediate and natural consequence of mining, the area's first colonial establishments were built on the site of old indigenous communities and by the Spanish agricultural-cattle-raising lands.²

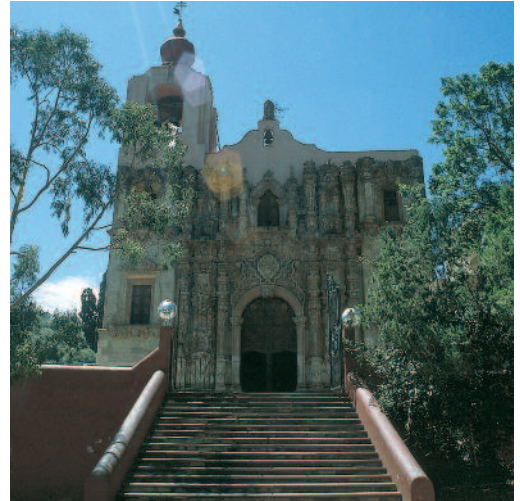
Documents found in the Pátzcuaro municipal archives show that the first recorded min-



Guanajuato's evolution was the immediate and natural consequence of mining.



Mineral wealth was not always as spectacular as legend has it.



Cata Church, built with mining profits.

ing sites in Guanajuato date from about 1552.³ In the following decade, the ore for the mines of Rayas and Mellado was discovered and several years later, that of Cata, which coincided with the first prospecting in the area of Valenciana.⁴

During the first centuries of the Viceroyalty, the city of Guanajuato managed to create a modest mining-based economy, but in no way was it among New Spain's most important mining centers. The eighteenth century, however, brought a rise in production that allowed some mine owners to amass enormous fortunes; Antonio de Obregón y Alcocer, the first count of Valenciana, became the richest man in all of New Spain.⁵

To a lesser extent, the other mines in the area, like the Mellado and Cata, provided their owners with respectable incomes, and the ex-

tremely rich lode of the San Juan de Rayas Mine, afforded their owners the Marquisates of San Clemente and San Juan de Rayas.

Nevertheless, according to documents of the time, it is false that mineral wealth had made Guanajuato itself one of the richest cities since most of its inhabitants were either miners or owners of claims that were not very valuable, and their capital came to much less than the spectacular fortunes that nineteenth-century legends say were made in Guanajuato. It is true that the city's mines became the most productive of all those in the Spanish colonies in the second half of the eighteenth century.⁶ However, these riches were concentrated among a handful of fortunate family emporia that can be counted on one hand: the Busto y Moya fam-



The Valenciana mine, one of those still in operation.



Guanajuato mining is full of stories of poverty and riches;
it is also a sack full of dreams, acts of faith
and unbridled avarice.

ily (Marquises of San Clemente), the Sardañeta y Legaspis (Marquises of San Juan de Rayas), the Obregón-Rul-Pérez Gálvez multi-family consortium (the Counts of Valenciana, Casa Rul and Pérez Gálvez, respectively) and, finally, the Oteros, well-known trading partners of the Valenciana corporation who aspired to the nobility in 1804.

In Guanajuato, processing the ore was unprofitable due to its low mineral concentration, the high price of industrial inputs like quicksilver, the high quotas paid to the owners of ore-processing haciendas and the difficulties in finding fresh credit for these companies.⁷ These conditions made it impossible for the great majority of local mine owners to make large profits in the eighteenth century. For this reason, they sank into debt and poverty and were forced to sell their claims to other, more fortunate miners whose claims bordered on theirs.⁸

The high incomes from mines like Rayas, Cata, Mellado and Valenciana by no means guaranteed their owners that they would maintain their fortunes intact and the lifestyle of the New Spain aristocracy. The case of the Marquisate of San Clemente best illustrates this: the first marquis, Francisco Matías, trusting to the large profits from his Cata and Mellado mines, sought large loans from local and Mexico City merchants; upon his death, his unpaid debts were so large that paying them off required at least half of his estate.⁹

The War of Independence was particularly hard on the city's mining, and production dropped spectacularly from 1810 to 1820 when income from all the Guanajuato mines brought in only 22 million pesos, in contrast with 47 million of the previous decade.¹⁰

In an effort to weather the first financial crisis of independent Mexico, the miners of

Guanajuato struck up a partnership with Mexico City's Vivanco and Fagoaga families to found the United Company of Mexican Mines in 1822 with English, French and Mexican capital. This new association was moderately successful for a couple of decades until the following, inevitable mining crisis broke out in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, sinking the city in another important recession of the silver extraction industry.¹¹

The *Porfiriato* (Porfirio Díaz's 30-year dictatorship) and its support for foreign investment in primary industry gave Guanajuato another period of mining splendor, whose profits can be seen in the buildings that gave the city its current look. One of the most famous foreign companies, The Guanajuato Mines & Reduction Company, worked the Valenciana mine; to it, we owe the renovation and functioning of the shafts in that area, making it possible for one of Guanajuato's richest mines to recover important production levels.

The pendulum of contrasts again swung in Guanajuato in the early twentieth century during the armed 1910 Revolution, one of the city's worst times; foreign companies were forced out of the mines, which they left in the hands of the Santa Fe de Guanajuato Mining and Metalworking Cooperative Society, which today still oversees the workings of the area's main, most famous deposits. Falling silver prices in the second half of the twentieth century caused another industry recession, making silver extraction from the Guanajuato deposits unprofitable. Today, the mines keep running thanks to the gold found during the refining of other ores. As in the past, the end of the twentieth century brought prosperity to some mine owners—particularly those with gold ore; their yields have reached noteworthy levels nationally, putting Guanajuato back on the map of the country's precious metals producers.

History teaches us that there were more poor and ruined miners than happy millionaires whom luck smiled upon in the tunnels through the bowels of the earth. The few who did benefit

turned the city into the world's greatest silver producer in the second half of the eighteenth century. Now, Guanajuato has learned from the contrasts and ups and downs of mining and has diversified its sources of income; therefore, now its economy is also based on university and governmental activities and, of course, tourism.

Today, visitors can see the magnificent mining, civic and religious buildings erected during the brief periods of bonanza of Guanajuato's mineral deposits. Guanajuato, then, stands triumphant despite the innumerable crises that weighed heavy on the spirits of its inhabitants, proud of her periods of splendor, arrogant about the poverty that she has had to survive, revealing the strength of her foundation and the temper of her character—agricultural by birth, but mining in her growth and at heart. **MM**

NOTES

¹ Doris M. Ladd, *La nobleza mexicana en la época de la Independencia. 1780-1826* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1984), p. 48.

² María Guevara Sanginés, *Guanajuato diverso: sabores y sinsabores de su ser mestizo (siglos XVI al XVII)* (Guanajuato: Ediciones La Rana, 2000), p. 79.

³ Mariano González Leal, *Crónica de un palacio guanajuatense* (Guanajuato: Gobierno del Estado de Guanajuato, 1985), p. 9.

⁴ Lucio Marmolejo, *Efemérides guanajuatenses o datos para formar la historia de la ciudad de Guanajuato*, vol. 1, with handwritten notes by Agustín Lanuza (Guanajuato: Imprenta del Colegio de Artes y Oficios, 1883-1884), p. 165.

⁵ Ladd, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

⁶ Alexander von Humboldt, *Tablas geográfico-políticas del reino de la Nueva España y correspondencia mexicana* (Mexico City: Dirección General de Estadística, 1970), p. 149.

⁷ Manuel José Domínguez de la Fuente, *Leal Informe Político-Legal* (1774 document) (Guanajuato: Ediciones La Rana, 1999), p. 125.

⁸ Archivo Histórico de Guanajuato (AHG), *Protocolo de Cabildo*, vol. 1778 (Guanajuato), p. 149.

⁹ Ladd, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 227.



Probably the oldest hotel in Guanajuato and certainly the best known, the Posada Santa Fe is the place to stay in town. Not only does it house a venerable collection of the works of local artist and historian Manuel Leal, it also has the most desirable tables for soaking up the local atmosphere - right on the lively Jardín de la Union.

Enter the magnificent lobby and you could be in one of the finest hotels in Mexico. Lofty beamed ceilings, delicate chandeliers and antique chairs all fade into insignificance alongside the giant paintings dominating the walls. The off-lobby restaurant has the same setting, as does the lounge, with antique chairs and couches perfect for pre-dinner cocktails.

Guest rooms are approached up a winding staircase, with a colorful tile surround. The rooms themselves vary from the high ceiling suites at the front of the hotel to simpler decor at the back. All



have a certain charm, a slightly faded grandeur, yet updated with modern facilities.

The hotel has been owned and managed by the same family for several generations, and although there are exciting plans for future improvements, the emphasis is on retaining the historic and the traditional.

Meals served in the restaurants are as good as the setting, and the location is the best in town. Guanajuato itself is not short of attractions and your only problem could be trying to drag yourself away.



Guanajuato's Folk Art

An enormous variety of symbols,
signs and wonders express the creativity of Guanajuato.

The ingenuity and workmanship of the artists of both town and country
make the folk art of Guanajuato one of the most diversified and genuine in all of Mexico.



PRE-HISPANIC

In Guanajuato, the production of objects both useful and artistic has an unparalleled precedent: the ceramics of Chupícuaro (A.D. 900 to 1500), distinguished by the perfection of their burnished clay and a diversity of forms and colors. The ability to process the clay and decorate it was very developed in what is now Guanajuato since before the arrival of the conquistadors. Objects of carved stone are graceful because of the solidness of their forms. Plant fibers, age-old raw materials for folk art, are still used today. Agave fiber, cane and reeds, among others, are woven into baskets used for everything from transporting seed to holding bread at traditional festivals.

Note: All quotes taken from the catalogue for the exhibition "Folk Art in Guanajuato; An Overview into Our History", Museo del Pueblo de Guanajuato (Guanajuato City: Instituto Estatal de Cultura, 2001).

Photos reproduced courtesy of the Guanajuato State Cultural Institute.



EUROPEAN - ARABIC

The Spanish conquest brought new raw materials and techniques to craft production in the region. Both the original designs and those from Europe and the Orient underwent changes because of the intensive mixing of the races that molded our culture. Over three centuries of colonial life, wool, vitreous ceramics and cut-paper decorations became idiosyncratic substances and forms integral to our identity.



MAGICAL AND RELIGIOUS

Magical and religious feelings are one of the most deeply rooted sources of expression. The perception of the transcendental is perpetuated in a cyclical view of the world in an intense calendar of festivities. This pious practice is not without its joyful vision of existence; the mixture can be seen in a great number of objects destined to express the eternal questions about the mysteries of life and death.

DAILY LIFE

Before the advent of the empire of technology and industrial production, each piece had a significance that transcended its original, strictly utilitarian value. Cooking utensils, clothing, ornaments and religious objects all fulfilled the purpose for which they had been created and at the same time gave their owners the on-going enjoyment of the beauty of their manufacture, making them unique pieces whose grace and delicacy often meant they were lovingly preserved from generation to generation.



FANTASTIC AND PLAYFUL

Heir both to the world view inextricably intertwined with death that characterized the pre-Hispanic cultures and to the variegated symbols and forms of the Spanish baroque,

Guanajuato's fantastic art is characterized by the ominous appearance of its creatures born of fears and nightmares in which, however, a trace of irony can always be detected.

By contrast, papier-mâché dolls, piñatas, the sweet pieces of candy made of *alfeñique* paste and wooden or tin toys systematically take us all back to the limbo of childhood, where a flight of fancy always points to the future.



UNDER THE SIGN OF FREEDOM

When the time came to rise up against Spanish domination, one of the most decided groups to join the independence movement were the craftsmen. The potters from Dolores and other parts of the state immediately and from then on began to include in their work motifs alluding to independence.



MODERN TIMES

The arrival of modernity in Guanajuato was not sufficient to eradicate the taste for beautiful, traditional household items. Craftsmen have concerned themselves with introducing novel techniques and materials in making the objects that preserve traditional forms and uses; one example is high-temperature fired ceramics. At the same time, new designs have been developed using traditional techniques and materials, such as in the case of stippled brass or wood carving.



Salamanca's Friar Juan de Sahagún Ex-monastery

Arturo Joel Padilla Córdoba*

New Spain's monastery architecture was the ideal tool for gathering scientific knowledge and manifesting the Christian missionary spirit. And the Augustinian monastery complex in Salamanca, Guanajuato, is no exception. It was built during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, noted for the baroque in Mexico. The whole complex originally had a church in the shape of a Latin cross, a small cloister, a large cloister and an orchard and gardens, irrigated by waters of the Lerma River.

The large cloister was built in the eighteenth century to create an Augustinian University,

* Architect and monument restorer.

imitating the Pontifical University of Salamanca, in Spain. Work began in 1750 and the monastery was finished under the direction of Friar Nicolás de Ochoa in 1761, when it was dedicated to Friar Juan de Sahagún. Once finished, the Augustinian's idea of founding a university was quashed because the Franciscan friars of Celaya had already founded the Royal Pontifical Franciscan University. Felipe II's royal patent prohibited the foundation of missionary institutions like these in towns so close together.

In the nineteenth century the buildings were damaged considerably: the French intervention and Juárez's Reform Laws were the basis for



The Augustinian monastery complex was built during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, noted for the baroque in Mexico.



Photos courtesy of Arturo Joel Padilla Córdoba

their partial destruction. The church bells were melted down to make canons and contempt for religious buildings favored pillage and theft.

The twentieth century was even more devastating. During the Revolution, the large cloister was turned into an army barracks and the losses were enormous. Later, in 1950, the oil workers union used it as a sports and recreation center, holding parties and boxing and wrestling matches there. Others later made spontaneous, improvised use of it, almost always occupying part of the building: as an arts and trades school, a primary school, a municipal jail, a Masonic lodge, a fire station and for tenement-like living quarters.

Two centuries of abuse made for very important architectural changes: barrel vaults and buttresses were demolished; sentry boxes were built while it was a jail, and anything that impeded visibility was eliminated; whole walls and corridors were ripped out; spans were walled up and exercise yards built for the prisoners. In addition to all of this, the excessive use of

underground water deposits has depleted them drastically, making the subsoil subside and cause a diagonal crack on the southeast corner of the building.

In an effort to recover this part of Mexico's colonial patrimony, conservation work began in 1999 on the building. Its priorities are very concrete:

1. Consolidating the building's structure so that it can withstand the movements of the subsoil in order to avoid more fissures.
2. Detecting the building's original features and evaluating their degree of deterioration in order to restore them.
3. Taking out the elements at odds with the original conception of the architectural space and those that—as long as they are not original or have no historic value—overwhelm the design.
4. Promoting uses of the building that will allow it to be preserved in decent condition and also made available to the public. **MVM**

During the Revolution, the large cloister was turned into an army barracks and the losses were enormous.



Friar Bernardo Padilla Museum



Located in Nuevo Chupícuaro, a short distance from Acámbaro in the state of Guanajuato, the Museo Fray Bernardo Padilla (Friar Bernardo Padilla Museum) preserves fragments of the history of a community expelled from a virtual paradise in the name of modernity, fragments recovered thanks to collective memory and action.

Inaugurated in 1993, this small community museum's three rooms fulfill two objectives: 1) they bear witness to the grandeur of the Chupícuaro culture that flowered between the Michoacán lakes and Guanajuato's River Lerma region about 2,500 years ago through its ceramics and items of daily use; and 2) it narrates how, in the twentieth century, Chupícuaro residents had to leave their homes, their lands and their memories because a dam was built. This change brought them uncertainty and poverty, and the museum shows



The museum preserves fragments of the history of a community expelled from a virtual paradise.

how their relocation in an inhospitable region ended up by turning them into a migrant people who managed to hold onto their past.

THE FLOODING OF PARADISE

Located on a strip of land between the Lerma and Tigre Rivers, the Chupícuaro community ventured into the first decades of the twentieth century without want: fishing and hunting in abundance plus fertile agriculture made for plenty. However, when construction on the Solís Dam began, things would change. Chupícuaro and 17 more communities were located in the 7,700-hectare area the dam would flood. Most of the communities were small hamlets and it was not difficult to convince their inhabitants to relocate, but Chupícuaro had more than 2,000 residents who did not want to move.

It took 10 years, from 1939 to 1949, to build the dam; during that time, despite protests, residents were relocated. By 1949, the community found itself in a very different new home: a line



Photos by Daniel Munguía

A Small Cultural Adventure

of small concrete houses on top of a barren hill, without land or animals for their survival.

They brought us to a barren wilderness where only mesquite grew. They assigned us houses according to the ones we had had before, different kinds of houses, but in the end, they were all the same. We always got lost and had to ask which house we lived in. They were cold and there wasn't even any firewood. In the street we asked each other who had something to eat; the crops, the grass and the fruit trees had been lost; the chickens we brought with us had been snatched by coyotes; there were so many coyotes that we were afraid to go out at night. Those were hard times. (Testimony of a resident exhibited on one of the museum's displays.)

Nuevo Chupícuaro would survive thanks to community efforts. Today, some still demand land and reparation payments, but many lost hope very quickly and decided to go north. From there they sent money to help those who remained to build houses, the church, parks

and even a museum to tell their story. Every year they come home for the fiestas bringing their children with them so they do not lose their links to the land that saw their fathers and grandfathers grow up.

This is the story that part of the museum tells with photographs, letters, diaries, maps, furniture, clothing and other objects from that time, all gathered and donated by the community. Photos from the nineteenth century showing the way of life in old Chupícuaro: its inhabitants, the centuries-old church (from which a stone cross was rescued and placed in the esplanade in front of the new church), tools, typical dress. Photographs of the dam at different stages of its construction, diaries and a small jewel: a map of old Chupícuaro between its two rivers, with the names of each family inscribed on their plots. Nothing is left of the houses originally built by the authorities but

All the pieces on exhibit were donated by the community of Nuevo Chupícuaro.





the memory and a few photographs in the museum cases.

TESTIMONY OF A GLORIOUS PAST

The construction of the dam brought not only desolation, however. During the excavations, anthropologists from the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH), who knew of the existence of vestiges of pre-Hispanic societies in the region, requested permission to open up their own digs. They dug in the plaza, behind the church, in the graveyard and in the area around an old bridge; soon they found nearly 360 graves. Thanks to this, they recovered innumerable vestiges of the grandeur of the culture dating back to 450 B.C. next to the human remains were hundreds of receptacles of different forms, sizes and colors, human figures of different kinds, from miniatures to larger hollow, polychrome figures and objects made of obsidian, precious stones, necklaces and conch and spiral shells.

These finds were decisive in giving the Chupícuaro culture its own identity. The remains of monumental architecture were not necessary: inhabitants of the Chupícuaro culture lived in reed, grass and mud huts; they practiced agriculture, hunting and fishing and carried on intense trade with other regions of Mesoamerica.

Most of the objects found were sent to Mexico City and others enriched the collections of different museums throughout the country. The pieces exhibited in the Nuevo Chupícuaro mu-

seum were recovered by inhabitants of the old town or found by those who participated in the excavations before the INAH officials prohibited individuals from keeping pieces. So, with community collaboration and the help of experts, the museum exhibits a small but varied and rich collection of registered pieces that help describe the culture's glorious past.

The museum also boasts three murals painted by Don Pedro Cruz from the neighboring city of Acámbaro, paid for with community funds, depicting different moments from the pre-Hispanic past and old Chupícuaro.

SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

In addition to its testimonial character, this museum is a community center, with guided tours for school children, artistic and cultural activities and different kinds of workshops for the general public. It also supports students and researchers who come to study the museum's collections; they repay this help with lectures and the development of catalogues or museum inventories. Nuevo Chupícuaro is probably not on most tourist maps, and its museum is probably not in the catalogue of Mexico's greatest museums, but for local residents that is not the important thing. The idea is, above all, to keep alive the community spirit that has allowed people to use their own resources to make this small cultural adventure possible.

Elsie Montiel
Editor

The Social and Ecological Importance Of Mesquite in Guanajuato

Soledad Vázquez Garcidueñas*

Juan T. Frías Hernández**

Víctor Olalde Portugal***

Gerardo Vázquez Marrufo***



Gerardo Vázquez Marrufo

Among the most important woody plants in Mexico's arid and semi-arid areas are the species from the *Prosopis* genus, popularly known as mesquites. They have been very valu-

able to humanity since pre-Hispanic times. Used extensively by indigenous groups in Mexico's desert areas, mesquite played an important role in the culture and economy of their peoples.

The mesquite species native to Mexico are characterized by having curved or straight-shaped fruit (pods) and growing like bushes, from two to three meters high, or like trees, from seven to ten meters high, depending on soil conditions and available moisture.¹ Although there are 44 known species of mes-

quite in the world, only the *Prosopis laevigata* species has been found in Guanajuato.

In the desert areas of the state of Guanajuato, like in other regions with arid climates, the mesquite is a plant from which traditionally, a great many products can be extracted. The pod has high protein and energy content, making it a good food source with which flour is made for human consumption. In some rural communities, the pods, together with the leaves, are used for

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forage for domestic animals including pigs and fowl. The leaves, gum, trunk and pollen of the flowers are used in traditional medicine to treat different maladies including eye and respiratory diseases. The nectar of mesquite flowers is used by some bee-keepers in the region to produce honey of a particularly delicate flavor. The wood is used to make furniture and crafts, fence posts



Juan T. Frijas Hernández

lowering wind velocity near them. The plant's roots establish an association with *Rhizobium* bacteria, characterized by its ability to introduce nitrogen into the soil, thus contributing to the tree's optimum development.

In this way, mesquite contributes to improving the microorganism and nutrient content of the soil in arid and semi-arid regions of Guanajuato state, in-



Gerardo Vázquez Marañón

Mesquite brings ecological benefits to the arid regions of the state of Guanajuato.

and railroad ties and traditional toys. Mesquite trunks chopped up for firewood and to make charcoal burn very well, making it an important fuel for many rural communities in Guanajuato state.

In addition, mesquite brings ecological benefits to the arid areas of the state of Guanajuato, benefits difficult to measure. They are the habitat of many species of wild fauna, including birds, mammals and reptiles that feed, mate and take refuge there. The *P. laevigata* trees act as climatic regulators by moderating extreme temperatures, increasing moisture levels and

creasing fertility and propitiating the growth of other plant species. Thus, the growth and optimum development of *P. laevigata* trees can represent an important factor for lowering erosion.

Despite the economic and ecologic benefits, appropriate management of mesquite trees does not yet exist in Guanajuato. The spread of agricultural areas and the indiscriminate harvesting of mesquite for its wood and to make firewood and charcoal have fragmented and considerably diminished the state's mesquite forests.

Guanajuato has ranked among the country's first five states in profits from

the exploitation of mesquite, carried out in 53 municipalities, among them San Luis de la Paz, Dolores Hidalgo, Comonfort and San Miguel de Allende. In the Adjuntas del Río community of Dolores Hidalgo municipality, for example, around 45 carpentry workshops have been making mesquite furniture for more than 25 years. Each workshop consumes at least one tree a day. Although

this activity creates jobs and supports a good many families, it has also been an important factor in the decrease in the number of *P. laevigata* trees in the region.

In addition to excessive logging for sale and to clear the land for agriculture, another problem affects the *P. laevigata* plants in the state. On the tree's leaves grows an epiphytic plant called locally *paixtle* (*Tillandsia recurvata*), which can reach levels of biomass that prevent the trees from photosynthesizing properly, thus reducing their productivity.

Given the social, economic and ecological importance of mesquite in Guanajuato and the increasing deteriora-

tion of the areas where it grows wild, two of the authors of this article (Frías Hernández and Olalde Portugal) have been doing basic and applied research on Guajuato mesquite to develop strategies for its conservation and rational use.

Productivity studies in the northern, arid part of the state have shown that rational use of the *P. laevigata* can yield about four times more income

studies have improved our knowledge of other flora associated with mesquite,³ the composition of soil microorganisms associated with it⁴ and the nutritional value of its pods.⁵

Currently, our working team is interested in studying the genetics of *P. laevigata* in order to evaluate its genetic diversity in the state and see which varieties are most endangered. The

² J.T. Frías Hernández, J.J. Peña Cabriaes and J. Ocampo, "Comparación de dos metodologías de remoción de leña en árboles de mezquite (*Prosopis laevigata*) en zonas áridas de Guajuato," *Manejo de Pastizales*, vol. 6, no. 1 (Mexico City), pp. 1-8.

³ José L. Flores Flores et al., "Características de la vegetación herbácea en una comunidad semiárida dominada por mezquite (*Prosopis laevigata* [Humb. & Bonpl. Ex. Wild] M.C. Johnst)," Juan T. Frías Hernández, Víctor Olalde Portugal and Vernon Carter, eds., *El mezqui-*



Juan T. Frías Hernández



Juan T. Frías Hernández

The sustainable use of mesquite prevents environmental deterioration caused by bean and corn cultivation.

than the cultivation of rain-fed corn or beans. In addition, the sustainable use of mesquite prevents the environmental deterioration caused by bean and corn cultivation, averting the adverse effects on the soil, water and other wild vegetation. Also, selective and regenerative pruning of *P. laevigata* makes it possible to obtain firewood and fodder without damaging the tree, at the same time that it is the best treatment for the damage caused by the *paixtle*.²

Recently, the study of mesquite has intensified in order to design strategies for conservation and its rational use. The

studies will also make it possible to select individual specimens resistant to different factors of environmental stress that would be more likely to survive reforestation.

We only hope that time and deterioration do not defeat us in the battle to conserve this important, beautiful species of our region. **MM**

NOTES

¹ S.A. Galindo and E. García Moya, "Usos del mezquite (*Prosopis laevigata*) en el antiplano potosino," *Agrociencia*, vol. 1 (2) (Chapingo, Mexico), 1991, pp. 57-62.

te: árbol de usos múltiples (Estado actual del conocimiento en México) (Mexico City: Jaime Editores, 2000), pp. 81-107.

⁴ Víctor Olalde Portugal, Juan Frías Hernández et al., "Caracterización microbiológica de suelos de islas de fertilidad de mezquite (*Prosopis laevigata* [Humb. & Bonpl. Ex. Wild] M.C. Johnst) en ambientes semiáridos," *ibid.*, pp. 95-108.

⁵ Fernando Ramírez Saldaña, Juan T. Frías Hernández et al., "Caracterización proteica de la vaina de mezquite (*Prosopis laevigata* [Humb. & Bonpl. Ex. Wild] M.C. Johnst)," *ibid.*, pp. 153-160.

ERRATA

In our last issue, number 56, on page 105, we mistakenly printed a photograph that was not of the Santa Rosa Forest.



Guanajuato

Una ciudad fascinante...

*Patrimonio
de la Humanidad*

*Sede del Festival
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A Walk Through Downtown Guanajuato

We're in downtown Guanajuato; we begin with a view of the almost 100-year-old, majestic Juárez Theater. To the right, the San Diego Church. And between the two, what is left of the San Pedro Monastery. Standing here in the Union Garden, we begin our tour, raising our eyes to the monument dedicated to Mexico's hero of the War for Independence, Pípila.

We go to the left, along Sopeña Street, picturesque and lined with balconies and attractive buildings, to the end of the street where a space opens up to reveal, under the bronze gaze of Miguel de Cervantes, author of the novel *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, the Museo Iconográfico del Quijote (Iconographic Quixote Museum), with the world's most important collection of Quixote items. Across from the museum is the San Francisco Church, sober and simple. We continue to the left until we get to the Casa Santa (Holy House), an austere chapel that evokes the colonial past.

We decide to continue to the left toward a plaza that attracts us, the El Ropero Plaza, with its circular fountain at the center.

And then we decide to change course. We take a few steps back but on Cantarranas Street and then go up to the right where at the end of a wide alleyway is the Mexiamora Plaza with the foliage of its ash and rubber trees, just like in a sunny patio.

To the left, we go down the Callejón de las Ánimas (Souls' Way) behind the Main Theater; or, we take the front way, to meet up with the curved Callejón de la Cabecita (Little Head's Way). In either case, we make our way to the Baratillo Plaza and its spectacular metal fountain with figures of fish at the base.

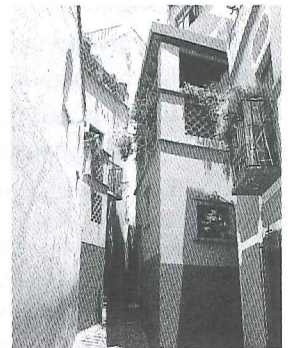
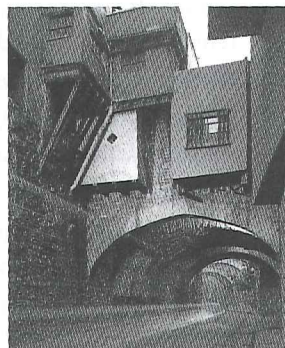
Kitty-corner from where we enter the plaza we get a glimpse of a short flight of stairs that will take us up to San José Church from where we can see the imposing Church of the Company of Jesus. Its special vault, its resounding bells, its painting gallery and

its harmonious interiors and atrium, all of which represent a splendid period of architecture, make the Church of the Company of Jesus a delight to the eye. Ahead, we find Lascuráin de Retana Street and the University of Guanajuato.

With renewed enthusiasm, we leave the university behind and descend by a little lane toward Peace Plaza, considered one of Mexico's most complete and beautiful architectural spaces. Many of its buildings invite closer inspection of their majesty and balance: from the basilica, where Our Lady of Guanajuato wears her intricate crown, to the Legislative Palace, the official home of the state Congress and an outstanding example of taste in the late *Porfiriato* (1870-1910).

We still have to see the Hidalgo Market. We go down the center of Juárez Street and we could go toward the Angels Plaza, next to which we would encounter the Callejón del Beso (Kissing Alley); or, we could take the shortcut to the market: to the right we see the San Fernando Plaza with its high ash tree and delicate little fountain; beyond, slightly up is the San Roque Plaza, where every year Cervantes' three *Entertainments*, which gave rise to Guanajuato's International Cervantes Festival, are performed. The San Roque Plaza boasts a church and twisted lamp posts on either side of the cross. Further on, we can see a very old, enormously large laurel tree, a sign that we have reached the Reforma Garden. And just beyond it is the market's metal crest with its clock.

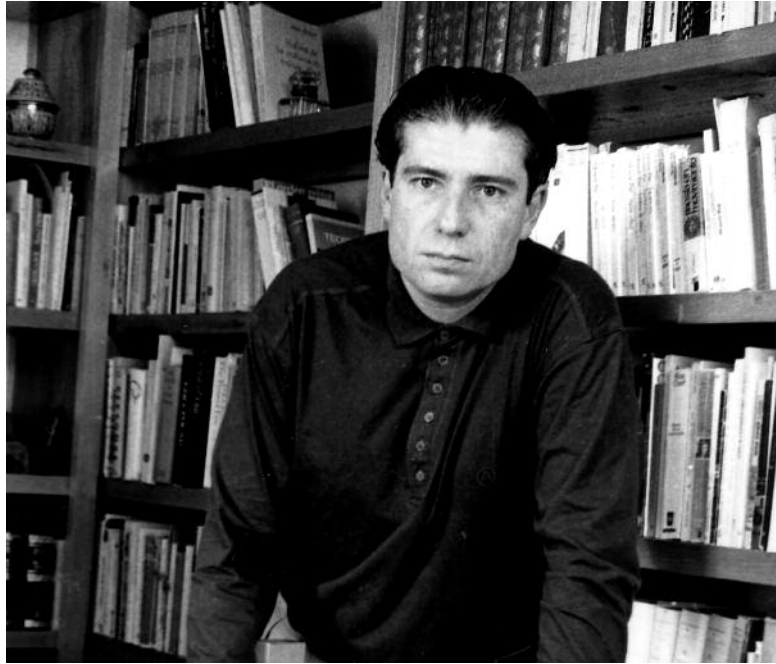
We have seen a lot, happy and thankful for so much city. But we still have a lot to see: the Alhóndiga de Granaditas, the museums, the well in the Cantador Garden, the intense variety of alleyways, house-churches, colors, spaces. There's enough city for many days, for many years. There is enough Guanajuato for a whole millennium.



Manuel Ulacia

Something Very Luminous Lost

Adolfo Castañón*



Courtesy of Isabel Ulacia

A grandson of Manuel Altolaguirre, the Spanish poet who moved to Mexico, Manuel Ulacia was born in Mexico City May 16, 1953 and died in the ocean in Zihuatanejo, Guerrero, August 12, 2001. Like his grandfather, Manuel Ulacia was a poet and from his earliest years, lived in contact with the myths, the world and the voices of poetry. In *Origami para un día de lluvia* (Origami for a Rainy Day)¹ (1990), perhaps his longest and most ambitious poem, he remembers his meeting with Luis Cernuda, the poet of *La realidad y el deseo* (Reality and Desire).

Throughout the poem, Ulacia explores his own past through a monologue in which the rain serves

as a mirror that returns to him different images of his own life, his desirous days and nights, transformed, transmuted paper in the form of poetry like origami. The search for love, the desire for desire, the nostalgia for an impossible union with the faithful/unfaithful homosexual partner gives body and form to this poem that exudes desire and nostalgia but whose ultimate key is the quest, through the rain and the letters, for him who “listens to the rain” and “is already another” even though the rain is “the same as ever.” Like all real poets, Manuel Ulacia rooted his truth in the fervor with which he assumed his own personal and literary quest.

To this intensity should be added a natural elegance and kindness that give his other books —*La materia como ofrenda* (Matter as Offering) (1980), *El río y la piedra* (The River and the Rock) (1989) and

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El plato azul (The Blue Plate) (1999)— precision and weight, gravity and purity.

Even in the riskiest moments of the merging of poetic and amorous communion, Manuel Ulacia is capable of being both measured and extreme.

In his poetry, we can hear the ascending echo of Octavio Paz, a friend and admirer of Luis Cernuda, Manuel Altolaguirre and of Manuel Ulacia himself. Hearing echoes of Paz in a young Mexican poet, born in 1953, is by no means unusual. These echoes can also be heard in other authors of the same generation such as Alberto Blanco and Luis Cortés Bargalló, among others, with whom Ulacia created the independent poetry magazine *El Zaguán* (The Gate) that he would be editor of from 1975 to 1977 and to which Octavio Paz gave a poem for its first issue.

In addition to being a guide both poetically and even personally, Paz would nourish Manuel Ulacia's reflection and literary curiosity. One of his works, *El árbol milenario. Un recorrido por la obra de Octavio Paz* (The Thousand-Year-Old Tree. A Voyage Through the Work of Octavio Paz)² (1999), is an attempt to reconstruct Paz's poetic and literary itinerary. In it he aspires to unveil or reveal Paz's sources and reconstruct the different dialogues Paz established with the poetic traditions and the poets who nourished him, from Mallarmé to the Tantric Buddhist tradition, from Pessoa to Zen Buddhism. *The Thousand-Year-Old Tree* is vast and ambitious, but, written with simplicity and clarity, it is the book both of a professor (Ulacia studied and taught at Yale) and of a poet. *The Thousand-Year-Old Tree* is also a transparent tree, not only because of what it reveals or explains about Paz's poetic work, but also for what it reveals about Manuel Ulacia's literary curiosity, his rigorous appetite for aesthetic experience and poetic knowledge.

Without that fervent rigor, there would be no explanation for his translation of the great U.S. poet James Merrill's book *Reflected Houses*.³ We know from Manuel himself that Merrill (1926-1995) was able to read the translation of his anthology before his death, and, after approving it, gave a few pieces of advice. I like the fact that Manuel said that Merrill—a poet close to Dante— had

given him some advice. One of Manuel Ulacia's virtues was knowing how to listen: that is why he was a good disciple of Emir Rodríguez Monegal. That is why he could hear his own story told by the rain in *Origami for a Rainy Day*, or, in *The Blue Plate*,⁴ tell a love story that took place in Europe during the war as though it were a poem. (It seems to me, by the way, that James Merrill's poem "Bronze" and Manuel's *The Blue Plate* have some points in common.) This ability to hear the voices of the living and the dead, the voices from inside and from beyond is perhaps one of the lessons that can be learned from Manuel Ulacia's body of work, cut short by his death.

Ulacia died devoured by the sea on a Sunday afternoon on the beaches of Zihuatanejo in the state of Guerrero in August of this unhappy 2001. He was 48 years old, at the height of his power, and, in recent years, seemingly more and more understanding and kind since he spoke out more often and better. The last time I saw him was at his home at a meeting of the Mexican chapter of the P.E.N. Club, which he presided over with enthusiasm and disinterested industry. He was organizing a gigantic Pan American writers' congress and many were present, a sign of his ability to attract people, and—why not say so?— the esteem and affection that many of us had for him. When I heard of his death, I thought of "Adonais," Shelley's elegy for his friend Keats, that was later translated by Manuel Altolaguirre:

*He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely. (XLIII)*

NOTES

¹ Manuel Ulacia, *Origami para un día de lluvia* (Valencia: Pretextos-Poesía, 1991), pp. 14-15.

² Manuel Ulacia, *El árbol milenario. Un recorrido por la obra de Octavio Paz* (Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg-Círculo de Lectores, 1999), 410 pp.

³ Manuel Ulacia, ed. and trans., *James Merrill: Reflected Houses (Casas reflejadas)* (Mexico City: El Tucán de Virginia-Fideicomiso para la Cultura México-Estados Unidos, 1992), 295 pp.

⁴ Manuel Ulacia, *El plato azul* (Mexico City: Ditoria, 1999), 34 pp.

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The Need for the Voyeur

Juan García Ponce's "The Cat"

Juan Antonio Rosado*



Drawings by Héctor Ponce de León

Yucatán-born writer Juan García Ponce summarizes the passion and discipline with which he has assumed his craft as follows: "Living and writing are the same thing. My life has been making books; my books have made my life." Born in Mérida in 1932, for almost 50 years this prolific writer has been faithful to his literary vocation. A student of writers Jorge Ibarguengoitia and Luisa Josefina Hernández, García Ponce appeared in the world of letters in the mid-1950s when in 1956 he won the Mexico City Prize for his play *El canto de los grillos* (Crickets' Song). Later, he would participate in the important group Poetry Aloud and in the *Revista mexicana de literatura* (Magazine of Mexican Literature), open to universal culture, which he edited from 1963 to 1965. But per-

haps one of the most intense cultural moments experienced in Mexico City were the years in which Juan Vicente Melo was director of the House on the Lake cultural center from 1963 to 1966. Octavio Paz's presence among the writers who gathered there was decisive. "He taught us that we had to open up," comments García Ponce, whose generation of writers includes Inés Arredondo, Juan Vicente Melo, Huberto Batis, Sergio Pitol, José de la Colina and Salvador Elizondo, among others.

Through the years, Juan García Ponce has collaborated in a great many magazines. He was a staff writer of *Plural* from 1973 to 1976 and of *Vuelta* (Turn) from 1976 to 1998. He also founded the magazine *Diagonales* (Diagonals) in 1985. He was awarded a fellowship from the Mexican Writers Center in 1957-1958, but when he was given another for the years 1963-1964, he refused it saying that "its literary demands were abom-

inable and ridiculous." He did accept fellowships from the Rockefeller Foundation (1960-1961) and Guggenheim Foundation (1971-1972). He has also received many awards, among them the Ninth Anagrama Prize in the Genre of the Essay (1981), the National Prize for Literature (1989) and recently, the Eleventh Juan Rulfo Prize for Latin American and Caribbean Literature (2001).

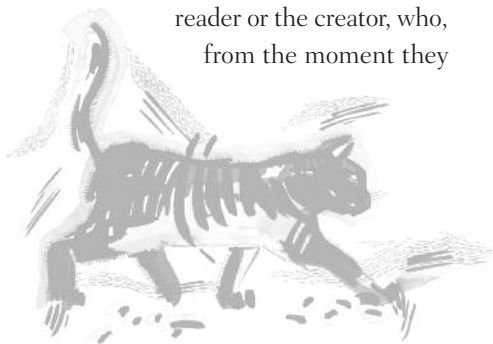
If it is possible to imagine divisions in the vast body of his work, work characterized precisely by its profound unity and coherence, its constant reference to the themes that have always pursued him, it can only be in accordance with the world view that he has tried to fashion. The author himself once noted a revealing change in his narrative: while the stories from *La noche* (The Night) (1963) are, in his own words, "inspired by a world view that can and should be considered negative," his next works, without abandoning his concerns, offer

* Writer. Winner of the Juan García Ponce Award for the Essay, 2000.

us “another vision of the world,” an essentially affirmative one. Little by little, García Ponce became convinced that the writer’s craft “should be used to show the virtue of ways of life condemned by society, by prevailing moral values.”¹ This virtue corresponds to the erotic, life-celebrating impulse that his main characters show on making visible the fact that certain sexual behavior that is part of eroticism and the transgression of conventional morality is not in the last analysis bad for anyone, but, to the contrary, pleasurable. The pleasure principle underlies these stories because in intimist literature there is no pretension at all to objectivity or social or political commitment. For example, D’s work in the story “El gato” (The Cat) is “comfortable” because the character must live and experience his intimacy without social or work pressures. He has a methodical job that takes a few hours a day and for which he receives sufficient pay to live on.²

Intimacy is the space par excellence for the realization of love and eroticism, for the eruption of what traditional Western morality would classify—negatively—as “disorder,” but it is nothing other than the eruption of a fiesta of sensuality, of the celebration of the senses. This is why the word “innocence,” among many others, recurs in García Ponce’s vocabulary: not

the innocence of the critical reader or the creator, who, from the moment they



are situated outside the text, can never be innocent, but rather, the innocence of the characters’ erotic experiences. Octavio Paz says about the innocence associated to sexuality in García Ponce’s work:

It is not really a moral or scientific term, but a religious one: innocence is the plenitude of being in the same way that sin is absence. Innocence is abundance, sin is want. Lawrence knew this perfectly well and, referring to his novels in a letter to a friend, said that all of them turn around the enigma of sexuality “and have been written from the depth of my religious experience.”³

Precisely from this world view, the vitalism, the virtue of certain forms of life, innocence, is one of García Ponce’s most important books written: *Encuentros* (Encounters) (1972), made up of “The Cat” and two other stories, “La plaza” (The Plaza) and “La gaviota” (The Sea Gull). “The Cat” is undoubtedly one of his most representative and “fruitful,” since from it emanate over several years a series of links with other works. In effect, when he saw the possibilities and expressive richness of this story, Juan García Ponce used it as the basis for his novel *El gato* (The Cat) (1974)—in which D becomes Andrés and his friend becomes Alma—and also certain passages in his play *Catálogo razonado* (Reasoned Catalogue) (1982) and in his novel *De anima* (1984).

In this sense, representation as an obsessive insistence on themes and situations in García Ponce means a quest through art and communication among the arts, all of which produces a mix of reality and fiction.

In all these works, except *The Night*, the cat is present and, as a whole, they constitute a *mise en abîme*, a game of mirrors, in which the center or only sign is the woman open to the exterior, not like a thing, but as an object in the sense of finality and quest: an artistic object abandoned to contemplation. We read in “The Cat”:

Whenever D was by himself remembering his friend, he imagined her... offering her body for contemplation with a total abandon, as if the one reason for its existence was that D admired it and in reality it did not belong to her but to him and perhaps to the furniture in the room as well and even to the branches of the trees on the street, which could be seen through the windows, and to the sunlight entering through them, radiant and diffuse.

Now, both in this story and in the novel of the same name, the sign for the encounter is precisely the cat, whose sensual entrance into a Sunday morning like any other separates the couple from the day-to-day world, from the “profane” world in which they live their lives, to unite them with its gaze so that the animal not only gives meaning to the erotic-love relation-

The pleasure principle underlies García Ponce’s stories because in intimist literature there is no pretension at all to objectivity or social or political commitment.

Both in "The Cat" and in the novel of the same name the third party in the triangle is the feline, the curious gaze that lands on the couple's pleasure.



ship, but also makes it possible, just like the viewer makes a work of art possible with his/her gaze, or the priest, a ritual. In the story, the cat's attitude, surprising and ambiguous, becomes necessary. Sitting on the woman's breasts, the cat touches her nipple with one of its paws and D sees how it gets hard and pointy "as when he touched her while making love." Then D also feels the desire to touch her. She accepts the cat to the point of comparing her body's reactions to it to those that she has under her lover's hands. The woman's compassion when she refers to the cat saying, "Poor little thing!" is inverted when the cat leaves: now it is she and her relationship with D that is a poor little thing. "I need it. Where is it? We have to find it," murmurs the woman.

Let us look at the necessary triangle of desire caused by the cat. When talking specifically about animals in an interview, García Ponce says that their sexual connotation has "the conceptual value of forgetting oneself".⁴

In "The Cat", the animal opens up the vacuum that existed in the couple to definitively unite them in impersonality: "And so it was the cat, the presence of the cat, that filled the void that seemed to gape open inevitably between the two of them. In some way, it united them definitively." There is a triangular relationship marked by the gaze of the feline, but also by the tracks that the cat leaves in the woman's back. When the cat leaves, she waits for it; she cannot sleep or rest; she needs

the cat because it is practically a part of the couple itself: the element that breaks up their loneliness, their tedium, the boredom and their day-to-day existence, that discovers and invents it, that makes it be. In the end, the cat "comes back to life": "Then the two of them heard the long plaintive meows immediately outside the door in a transport of ecstatic happiness."

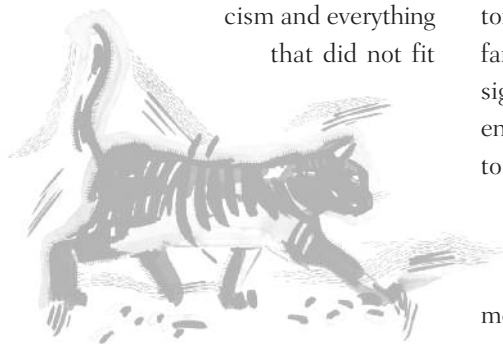
The author aspires to conceiving this allegorical meaning as a concrete fact: making the possibility of the lovers come about. To do that, the total destruction of the personal self is indispensable since love is located outside the self, which is projected and dissolved in it. Nothing more impersonal than animals, that Rilke used to talk about "what was open," what did not belong to the world but rather is the world: the impersonal, the immortal. It really does not matter who the cat belonged to, the cat that seemed to belong to the whole building, because it is like the dark brown hair of D's friend, like art or like the body itself: something impersonal. The narrator in "The Cat" refers to the woman's body saying, "there was something remote and impersonal about her body's deliberate self-abandon and its surrender to contemplation." In the same way, while it is true that it is an animal, when acting as a "third party," the cat, with all its sexual connotations, spiritualized the relationship, testified to it and therefore, drew it away from its pure animal nature by intensifying its eroticism as ceremony, ritual, representation.

In his book *El erotismo* (Eroticism), Georges Bataille analyzes this phenomenon as something eminently human: animals lack eroticism because they have no awareness of death. Eroticism is sterile, uninterested in reproduction, interested only in pleasure: it is ceremony, ritual in which one body continues in another like the ocean's waves; that is, discontinuity, individuality, the self is nullified to succumb to ectasis, which etymologically means "being outside oneself," like someone who is absorbed in a painting. That is why it is paradoxical that García Ponce has used the metaphor of animals surely as a resource whose initial aim was to draw an "open" character in the Rilkean sense, and the eminently impersonal nature of animal-ness.

Both in "The Cat" and in the novel of the same name the third party in the triangle is the feline, the curious gaze that lands on the couple's pleasure, a couple who finds meaning in their relationship thanks to that gaze: the cat is the presence, the apparition of the mysterious third entity that provokes a real encounter between the lovers. But the cat's gaze is also the gaze of the narrator and the reader-voyeur, which testifies to the relationship and rescues it from oblivion through art. The cat shares the curiosity that arises from instinct, that makes moving and an unlimited quest possible. For all of this to be possible, however, the gaze must exist, related to

curiosity because it is often born of it. From the gaze comes the desire that maintains the characters in constant encounters, which often in the body of García Ponce's narrative are the retouched or more exact ritualistic, obsessive, reiterative repetitions of previous situations that have already been experienced. The gaze always spurs a transformation. While paying attention to Alma's figure, Andrés's expression in *The Cat* changes to one of love, tenderness and dazzled curiosity. The direction of the gaze is often the direction of desire. Underlying the title *Encounters* is precisely the role of the gaze, which brings us closer to the representation of the other and of ourselves through the other. Eroticism, like mysticism, puts us in contact with the other and, therefore, in ecstatic contemplation, makes us the others. The cat, then, is also the eruption of the sacred, the prohibited, of that third party that is included and disrupts the traditional monogamous relationship. In this sense, we should keep in mind that García Ponce, like other members of his generation, use as their starting point Nietzsche's statement that "God is dead," without abandoning, however, the notion of the sacred as understood in the time prior to Christianity. According to Bataille, Christianity is a religion that reduced the sacred to the idea of a good and loving God, eliminating therefore that which was "im-

pure" and sacred: eroticism and everything that did not fit



into a Christian world view, interested only in reproduction and alien to eroticism.

Pierre Klossowski substitutes Rober- te for God; García Ponce, the unlimited woman, regardless of her name. For the attainment of the erotic ritual, the presence of a voyeur is necessary; in the story in question, the voyeur is the cat. In other of García Ponce's works, the cat as voyeur will be substituted by a person or persons, often artists (photographers, painters or writers) who through their art testify to and fix the realization of the erotic ritual. This also happens in Klossowski's *Las leyes de la hospitalidad* (The Laws of Hospitality).

Definitely, the third included party, the curious gaze of the voyeur—such as that of the cat— plays an indisputable role, emerging as the first step in finding the other and for the self finding itself as phenomena of desire, intuiting the other as such, desiring him/her, penetrating him/her and trying to recover the impersonality that all fusions or unifications aim for, even though not for long, and for that reason the communion is repeated obsessively; its characteristics reiterated, repeated again and again, but never hopelessly. Only through the eyes, through the sense of sight, says García Ponce in his essay "La pintura y lo otro" (Painting and the Other), "can we find the spirit."⁵ He agrees at least on this point with the fifteenth-century Platonic author León Hebreo who in his famous *Dialogues of Love* says that sight is in effect a spiritual sense: grace enters us through sight and moves us to love beauty. In other words, the third party or the gaze in García Ponce is the intervention of art in life and of life in art, a fundamental theme of his entire body of

work. The function of the third included party is—and this should be emphasized—that of being consciousness, that of constituting a sexual relationship as something that transcends the purely animal nature of it to become an artistic image.

The phenomena of desire, a sensation that takes on material form, contain the meaning of its movement; and instinct, an eminently irrational and innocent force, does not allow these phenomena to be destroyed. It seeks the means to multiply them, regardless of the fact that they include the negation of the self, the dispossession, the separation or inclusion of the third party or voyeur. All this happens in "The Cat" and is repeated with other shades of meaning in a good part of the narrative of this prolific author. ■■■

NOTES

¹ Juan García Ponce, "El autor y su obra: *La noche*," *Textual* 4, vol. 1 (Mexico City), August 1989, p. 44.

² Juan García Ponce, "The Cat," *Encounters* (Higiene, Colorado: Eridanos Press, 1988). All quotes from "The Cat" are taken from this edition.

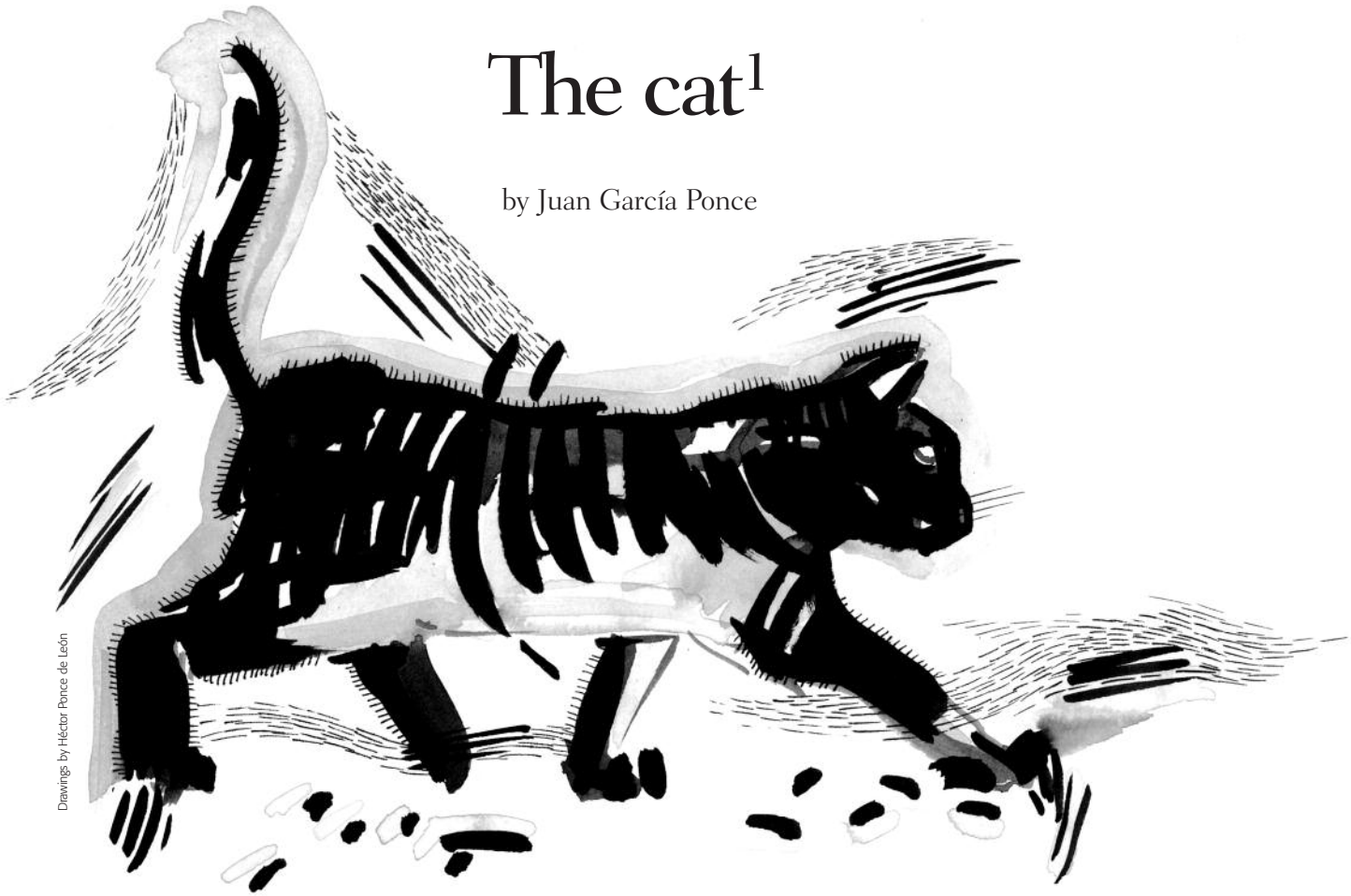
³ Octavio Paz, "Encuentros de Juan García Ponce," *Obras completas 4: Generaciones y semblanzas. Dominio mexicano* (Mexico City: Círculo de Lectores-Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996), p. 383.

⁴ Jorge Ruffinelli, "La perversa candidez de Juan García Ponce," *Plural* 39 (Mexico City), December 1974, p. 28.

⁵ Juan García Ponce, "La pintura y lo otro," *La aparición de lo invisible* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1968), p. 203.

The cat¹

by Juan García Ponce



Drawings by Héctor Ponce de León

The cat appeared one day and from then on was always there. It did not seem to belong to anyone in particular, to any of the apartments, but to the whole building. Even its attitude led one to suppose that it had not chosen the building, making it its own, but rather that the building had chosen it, so perfectly was its figure superimposed upon the general appearance of the hallways and stairs. That was how D started seeing it, in the late afternoon, as he left his apartment, or at night sometimes, as he returned to it: gray and small, stretched out on the mat outside the door of the apartment halfway down the hall on the second floor. When D, having climbed the first flight of stairs, turned to walk down the hallway, the cat, gray and small, a young cat still, turned its head round toward him, wanting him to look into its eyes, of an odd yellow, burning

amid its soft gray fur. Then it half closed them for a moment, till they became a thin slit of yellow light, and turned its head back round, ignoring the gaze of D, who went on looking at it nonetheless, touched by its lonely frailness and a little uncomfortable because of the disquieting weight of its presence. At other times, rather than in the second floor hallway, D would suddenly come across it curled up in one of the corners of the vast lobby or walking along slowly, its body hugging the wall, paying no heed to the warning of strange footsteps approaching. At other times still, it would appear on one of the flights of stairs, twined about the iron balusters, and then it would go down or up the stairs in front of D, starting off without turning round to look at him and getting out of his way just as he was about to overtake it, coiling about the balusters once again, shy and frightened,

though once he had gone past, D could feel its yellow gaze on his back.

The building D lived in was an old but well-preserved one, constructed with the sage architecture of 30 or 40 years ago which valued and reserved a place for accessory elements, the style of which had become anachronistic owing to its very character and yet had not lost its sober beauty. The downstairs lobby, the stairwell and the hallways occupied a vast space in the building and set their own solemn, antiquated stamp upon the entire edifice. A few days, perhaps a few weeks before the cat appeared, the unpredictable will of the doormen, as old and imperturbable as the building and all crammed in together with their children and grandchildren in the custodians' cubbyhole on the ground floor, keeping a mistrustful eye on the tenants as they came and went, had removed from the lobby the two heavy, threadbare velvet sofas and the small but solid wooden writing desk whose age-old presence accentuated the singularly conservative character of the building, untouched by the passage of time, and it seemed to D that the cat was now occupying

the place of the furniture. In some way or other, its inexplicable presence went well with the tone of the building and, significantly, D never saw it among the large round earthenware containers filled with broad-leaved tropical plants which the young couple in the apartment next to his had taken it upon themselves to place on the stair landings to liven up the hallway. The cat seemed to be averse to this remote reminiscence of a garden; the bare, spare elements of hallways and stairs were his territory. And so, in the same way that he had become accustomed to the two sofas and the writing desk that had filled the empty space of the lobby and now missed their presence, D became accustomed to coming across the cat all of a sudden and receiving its usual indifferent look and to seeing it go down or up the stairs in front of him without wondering who it belonged to.

D lived alone in his apartment and spent in it most of the time not taken up by his easy job, from which, in exchange for a few hours a day of methodical work, he received enough to live on; but his solitude was not total: a girlfriend visited him almost every day and stayed in the apartment every weekend. The two of them got along well together, and it might even be said, if it is of any importance, that they loved each other, although on a plane conditioned and determined by their bodies, which to the two of them, at least, appeared to be satisfactory enough. A pleasure D never tired of was to look, from almost every angle of the little apartment, in the idle hours that stretched out before them on Sunday mornings, at the naked body of his friend lying indolently on the bed, shifting from one attractive position to yet another that unfailingly accentuated even further a nakedness, which, owing to the awareness on her part that

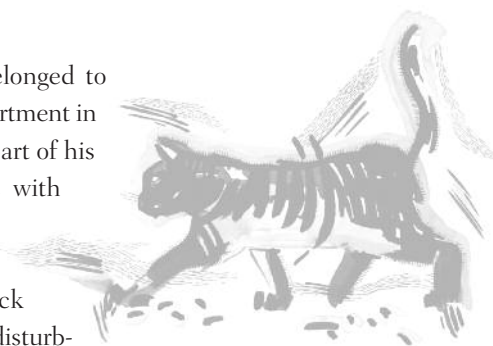


he was admiring her and finding satisfaction in the exposure of her body, was almost insolent. Whenever D was by himself remembering his friend, he imagined her that way, stretched out lazily on the bed, with the bedclothes that might cover her invariably thrown back even when she was dozing, offering her body for contemplation with a total abandon, as if the one reason for its existence was that D admired it and in reality it did not belong to her but to him and perhaps to the furniture in the room as well and even to the branches of the trees in the street, which could be seen through the windows, and to the sunlight entering through them, radiant and diffuse.

Sometimes her face remained hidden in the pillow and her dark chestnut hair, neither long nor short, almost impersonal in its absence of relationship with her facial features, crowned the long line of her back extending downward till it disappeared in the ample curve of her hips and the firm outline of her buttocks. Farther on were her long legs, parted at an arbitrary angle, yet closely related. At such times her body to D was almost of the nature of an object. But also when she was lying facing him, allowing her tiny breasts with their bright nipples and the magnificent stretch of her belly with no more than a hint of her navel and the dark area of her pubis between her open legs to show, there was something remote and impersonal about her body's deliberate self-abandon and its surrender to contemplation. Beyond question, D knew and loved that body and could not fail to experience the reality of its presence as it came and went from one place to another in the apartment carrying on those little everyday activities whose meaning becomes lost owing to the mechanical way in which we get them over and done with. And he likewise felt it when she undressed in front of him or when it was she who moved, still naked, from one place to another in the apartment, suddenly turning toward D to make a trivial remark. Hence, the presence of his friend, their shared solitude, the deep, calm sensuality of their relationship, in which she

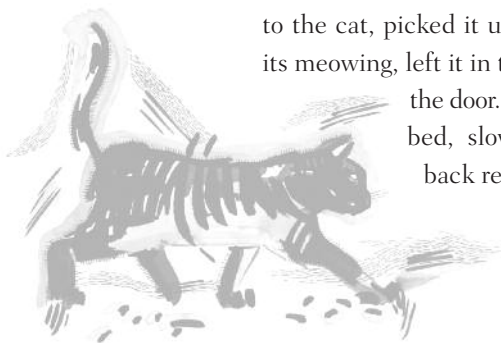
was always naked and belonged to him, formed part of his apartment in the same way that it was part of his life and when they were with other people the knowledge of this relationship would suddenly come back to D, involving him with a disturbing force that made him feel for the skin underneath her clothes and separated him from everything while at the same time it made him sense that the knowledge he had of her was projected toward the others as a sort of need to share her secret attraction with them. So to him she was like a bridge that one and all must cross in the same way that the light coming in through the windows fell on her body as she lay stretched out on the bed and the way that the furniture in the apartment seemed to look at her along with him.

On one of those Sunday mornings when she was lying drowsing on the bed, D heard, through the closed door of the apartment, pitiful, insistent meows, rolling back on themselves till they became a single, monotonous sound. D realized, to his surprise, that this was the first time the cat had marked its presence in this way. His apartment was directly above the one in front of the door of which, one floor below, the cat lay on the mat; but the meows seemed to be coming from somewhere much closer, giving the impression that the cat was inside the apartment. D opened the front door and found it, small and gray, almost at his feet. The cat must have been right outside the door, aiming his wails at it. Without leaving off its caterwauling, it raised its head and stood staring at D, half closing its eyes till they became two narrow yellow slits and then immediately opening them again. Instinctively, D, who a moment before had thought of going out to buy the newspapers as he did every Sunday, picked it up in his two hands, set it down again inside the apartment, went out the door and closed it behind him. In the hallway and on the stairs he could still hear its meows, insistently rolling on and



on and on, as though they wanted something and weren't about to give up till they got it, and when he returned, with the newspapers under his arm, they had not changed. D opened the door and went inside the apartment. The cat was nowhere in sight and its meows sounded as if they were not coming from any one particular place but, rather, were occupying all the space in the apartment. D went on through the living room-dining room, onto which the front door opened, and through the other door, at the far end, leading to the bedroom, he could see his friend's body in the same position in which he had left her, drowsing with her head buried in the pillow. The covers pushed down to the foot of the bed made her more stark-naked still. D entered the room, enveloped in the pitiful meowing, and saw the little gray cat, its eyes riveted on the naked body, standing on all fours in the middle of the other door to the room, as if it were unable to make up its mind to go in. The layout of the apartment permitted access to the bedroom from the entry hall by either of its two doors; one could go directly through the front room or go the long way round through the kitchen and the little breakfast room that opened directly onto it and onto the bedroom. D caught himself wondering whether the cat had taken this roundabout way or gone straight to the bedroom and was now merely pretending it couldn't make up its mind to go inside. Meanwhile, in the bed, beneath his gaze and the cat's, his friend changed position, stretching out her long leg and placing it right next to the other and putting one arm round the pillow without raising her head or allowing her chestnut hair to fall to one side and reveal her face. D went over to the cat, picked it up without its leaving off its meowing, left it in the hall again and closed

the door. Then he sat down on the bed, slowly stroked his friend's back recognizing the feel of her skin against the palm of his hand, as though it alone could take him to the depths of the body



stretched out before him, and leaned over to kiss her. She turned over with her eyes still closed, threw her arms around his neck raising her body so that it clung to D and with her mouth to his ear whispered to him to get undressed and continued to cling to his body as he obeyed. Later, as the two of them lay side by side, with their legs still entwined and enveloped in the mingled odor of their bodies, she asked him, as though she had suddenly remembered something that came from much farther back, whether at some point or other he had let in the cat that had been meowing outside.

"Yes. When I went out to buy the paper," D answered, and realized that the meowing had stopped now.

"Where is it then? What did you do with it?" she said.

"Nothing. I put it out again. There was no reason for it to be here. I wanted it to surprise you while I wasn't here," D said and then added: "Why?"

"I don't know," she explained. "I had the impression all of a sudden that it was inside and it surprised me and pleased me at the same time, but I couldn't make myself wake up..."

His friend stayed in bed till late in the morning, as D, sitting on the floor, alongside her, read the papers he had left on the table as he came in. Then they went out to have lunch together. The cat had not meowed again and it was not in the hall, or on the stairs, or in the lobby, and the two of them forgot the incident.

During the following week, though he did not hear it meowing again, D came across the cat several times, gray and small, looking at him for a moment, imperturbable on its mat in front of the apartment downstairs, curled up between the iron balusters on the stairs, going up or down in front of him without turning round to look at him, as though running away from him, or walking very slowly, right up next to the wall of the lobby, and when he closed the heavy glass door opening onto the street, leaving the cat behind, it seemed to him that it was acting more and more as though it owned

the building and waiting mistrustfully for D to come back exactly the way the custodians did, feigning indifference there on its mat or curled up between the balusters on the stairway, with its frail and delicate look of a young cat that is never going to grow up and yet does not need anybody. Despite the fact that at times its silent presence was disquieting, there was always something tender and touching about it that made one want to protect it, giving one the feeling that its proud independence could not conceal its weakness. On one of these occasions, D came across it as he was going up to his apartment with his friend and she, noting the small gray figure, asked who it belonged to, but was not surprised when D was unable to answer her and immediately accepted as though it were the most natural thing in the world the supposition that perhaps it didn't belong to anyone, but had simply entered the building one day and stayed on in it. That night they were in the apartment till very late and as on many other occasions his friend, who always said she preferred it if D stayed in the apartment after being with her, did not want him to get up to take her home. The next time they saw each other, she remarked that when she left she had come upon the cat on the stairway and it had followed her down to the lobby, stopping only as she was about to step outside, as though it wanted to go out into the street and at the same time was afraid to, so that she had to be very careful as she shut the door.

"I felt like picking it up and taking it with me, but I remembered that you said it had chosen the building," his friend concluded, smiling.

D made fun of her love for animals and forgot the little gray figure again; but the following Sunday, on coming back after buying the papers he came upon the cat, which he had not seen as he went out, curled up between the balusters on the stairs. He went by it without



its starting up the stairs in front of him and D, in surprise, turned round, picked it up, and went into the apartment with it. His friend was waiting in bed as usual and D, who had left her awake, tried not to make any noise as he closed the door, so as to surprise her. He was still holding the cat in his arms and it had curled up comfortably on his bosom with its eyes half closed. D could feel its little body, warm and frail, palpitating next to his. On entering the bedroom he saw that his friend had fallen asleep again, stretched out full-length on the bed, with her legs together and one arm over her eyes to shield herself from the light flooding in through the windows. There was no sign of expectation in her body. She was simply there, on the bed, beautiful and open, like a graceful, indifferent figure that held no secret for herself and yet at no time was unaware of the silent play of her limbs and the weight of her body, which gave form to its inherent reality, and was capable of causing her to be desired and of desiring herself in a double movement oblivious of its own starting point. D went over to her with the gray body curled up in a tight ball on his bosom and after looking at her for a moment with the same odd excitement as when he sometimes saw her fully clad in the company of other people, he very carefully set the cat down on her



body, very close to her breasts, where the little gray figure appeared to be an object barely alive, fragile and terrified, unable even to move. On feeling the weight of the animal, his friend took her arm away from her face and opened her eyes with a look of recognition, as though she had imagined that what had touched her was D's hand. Only on seeing him standing facing the bed did she lower her eyes and recognize the cat. It was lying motionless on her body, but on seeing it she gave a start in surprise, and the little gray figure rolled down alongside her on the bed, where it lay still again, unable to move. D laughed at her surprise and his friend laughed with him.

"Where did you find it?" she asked then, raising her head without moving her body to look at the little cat lying motionless at her side still.

"On the stairway," D said.

"Poor little thing!" she said.

She took the cat and set it down on her naked body again, close to her breasts, in the

same place where D had put it before. He sat down on the bed and neither of them stirred as they watched the cat on her body.

After a moment, the timid gray figure drew its paws out from under its body, stretching them out first on her skin and then setting off in an uncertain attempt to walk along her body only to come immediately to a dead stop again, as though unwilling to risk leaving it. Its yellow eyes turned into two narrow slits and then closed altogether.

D and his friend again laughed in amusement, as though the cat's attitude were unexpected and surprising. Then she

began to stroke its back with a gentle repeated motion and finally picked the little gray body up in her two

hands and held it in front of her face, repeating over and over, "poor little thing, poor little thing, poor little thing," as she rocked it slightly from side to side. The cat opened its eyes for a moment and then immediately closed them again. With its paws hanging down, free of the hands holding it up by its body, it seemed much larger and had lost something of its frailness. Its hind paws began to strain downward, as though trying to support themselves on the body of D's friend and she stopped moving it from side to side and slowly lowered it, setting it down carefully on her breasts, where one of its extended paws directly touched a nipple. At her side, D saw how the nipple grew hard and erect, as when he touched her while making love. He stretched his arm out to touch her too and along with her breast his hand encountered the cat's body. His friend's eyes stared at him for the space of an instant, but both of them immediately looked away. Then she laid the animal aside and bounded out of bed in one leap.

For the rest of the morning they read the papers and listened to records, exchanging the same casual remarks as usual, but between the

two of them there was a secret current, perceptible only from time to time and allowed to die down by tacit agreement, unlike that of all the Sundays before. The cat had stayed in the bed and when D's friend stretched out lazily on the sheets, without covering herself, as she did each Sunday so that the sun would touch her body along with the air that was coming in through the open window and D's gaze began to become one with that of the furniture, she stroked the little figure from time to time or placed it on her body to watch the way the cat, which appeared to have recovered the ability to move on its own, walked on top of her, placing its delicate feet on her belly or her breasts, or walked from one side of her to the other across her long legs stretched out on the bed. When D and his friend went into the bathroom, the cat stayed on in the bed, asleep amid the rumpled covers that she had cast aside with her foot; but when they came out they found it standing stock-still in the living room, as though it had missed their presence and been looking for them.

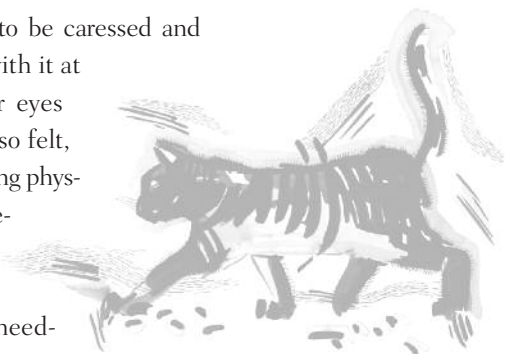
"What are we going to do with it," his friend said, still wrapped in a bath towel, pushing her chestnut hair to one side and looking at the cat with mingled affection and doubt, as though they had realized all along that ever since the innocent joke at the beginning it had been with them the whole time.

"Nothing," D said in the same casual tone of voice. "Leave it in the hallway again."

And though the cat followed them as they went into the bedroom again to get dressed, when they came out D took the cat in his arms and unconcernedly left it on the stairs, where it stood, motionless, small and gray, watching them as they went down.

From that day on however, whenever they came across it, silent, small and gray, in the hallway with its yellowish half-light spotted with dark shadows, in the lobby or on the stairway, his friend took it in her arms and entered the apartment with it. She would put it down on the floor as she undressed and the cat would then

stay in the room or wander indifferently about the living room, the breakfast room, or the kitchen, and then climb into bed and lie down on her body, as though from the first day it had become quite used to being there. D and his friend watched it, laughing, delighted at the way it made itself at home on her body. Every so often, she would caress it and it would close its eyes till they narrowed to a thin yellow slit, but most of the time she simply let it be there, hiding its head between her breasts or slowly stretching its paws out on her belly, as though it had not noticed her presence, until as she turned to embrace D it placed itself between the two of them and she pushed it aside with her hand. When D was waiting for his friend in the apartment, she always came in with the cat in her arms and one night when she announced that she hadn't found it in any of the usual places, the small gray figure suddenly appeared in the bedroom through the closet door. However, one day when she tried to feed it, the cat refused to eat a single mouthful, though she even tried taking it in her arms and bringing the dish up to its mouth. From the bed, D felt an obscure need to touch her as he watched her clasp the long slender figure to her and called to her to come to him. Now, on Sundays, the small gray figure had become indispensable next to her body and D's vigilant gaze noted its precise whereabouts, seeking at the same time to discover her reactions in its presence. She for her part had also accepted the cat as something that belonged to them both without belonging to anyone and compared her body's reactions to it with those which contact with D's hands produced in her. She never caressed it now, but instead waited to be caressed and when she lay drowsing with it at her side, on opening her eyes after falling asleep she also felt, as though it were something physical, covering her completely, the fixed gaze of the half closed yellow eyes on her body and then she needed to feel D next to her again.



Shortly thereafter, D was obliged to stay in bed for a few days with an unexpected attack of fever, and she decided to arrange things so that she could stay in the apartment taking care of him. Dazed by the fever, plunged into a sort of constant half-sleep in which the dim consciousness of his aching body was at once unpleasant and pleasant, D noted almost instinctively his friend's movements in the apartment. He listened to her footsteps as she went in and out of the room and thought he saw her bending over him to see if he was asleep, heard her open and close one door and then another without being able to tell exactly where she was, perceived the murmur of water running in the kitchen or the bathroom and all those sounds formed a dense, continuous veil onto which day and night were projected without beginning or end, like a single mass of time within which only her presence was real, simultaneously near and far, and through that veil he seemed to note the extreme to which they were united and separated, as each one of her

actions brought her into view before him, apart and secret, and for that very reason all the more his in this separation wherein she knew nothing of him, as though each of her acts were situated at the end of a taut, vibrating rope that he was holding onto from the other side, in the middle of which there was only a void impossible to fill. But when D finally opened his eyes all the way between two dream intervals without number, he could also see the cat following each of his friend's movements, without ever coming much closer to her, always a few steps behind, as though it were trying to pass unnoticed, but, at the same time, could not leave her alone. And so it was the cat, the presence of the cat, that filled the void that seemed to gape open inevitably between the two of them. In some way, it united them definitively. D went back to sleep with a vague, remote feeling of expectation, which perhaps was simply part of the fever itself, but in the space of which there reappeared, again and again, distant and unreachable at times, immediate and perfectly drawn at others, invariable images of his friend's body. And then that very body, concrete and tangible, slipped into bed alongside him and D received it, feeling himself inside it, losing himself in it, beyond the fever, as at the same time he apprehended, through those very sensations, how she was always there before him, unreachable even in the most intimate closeness and therefore more desirable, and how she sought his body in the same way, until she left him alone in the bed again and began once more her obscure movements about the apartment, prolonging the union by means of the fragmented perception of them that fever gave to D. During those long moments of concrete rapprochement, the cat disappeared from D's consciousness.



On one occasion, however, he realized that it too was in bed with them. His hands had come upon the little gray figure as they wandered over his friend's body and she had immediately moved in such a way as to make the meeting more complete, but this end was never wholly realized and D forgot that there was an alien presence next to her. There had been no more than a brief ray of light in the middle of the dark lagoon of the fever. A few days later the fever broke as unexpectedly as it had come on. D began going out again and was with his friend in the company of others. There appeared to be no change in her. Her fully clothed body held the same secret that D suddenly wanted to bare before everyone; but as the moment approached when they would ordinarily have gone to the apartment, she began, despite herself, without her apparently being consciously aware of it, to show clear signs of uneasiness and tried to hold off their arrival, as though there awaited her in the apartment a confirmation that she was unwilling to face.

When, after a number of delays inexplicable to D, they finally entered the building, the cat was not in the lobby, nor in the hallway, nor on the stairs, and as they made their way along them D noted that his friend was anxiously looking about for it. Then, in the apartment, D discovered a large reddish scratch on her back. They were in bed and when D pointed the scratch out to her she did her best to get a look at it, breathing hard, straining as though she were trying to feel it outside her own body. Then she asked D to keep rubbing the tip of his fingers over the scratch as she lay motionless, tense and expectant, until something seemed to break inside her and with panting breath she asked D to take her.

The cat did not appear on the following days either and neither D nor his friend spoke of it again. In reality, both of them thought they had forgotten it. As before the appearance of the fragile little gray figure between them, their relationship was more than sufficient for the two of them. On Sunday mornings, as always,

she lay stretched out full-length on the bed, open and naked, displaying her indolent body as D whiled away the time carrying on the usual little everyday activities; but now she was unable to doze. Hidden behind her indolence and completely alien to her will, there appeared, more definite by the moment, an evident attitude of expectation which she tried to ignore, but which obliged her to keep changing position without finding repose. Finally, on returning after going out for the newspapers, D found her waiting for him with her body raised up off the bed, leaning on it with one elbow. Her gaze was frankly directed at D's hands, searching without even noticing the newspapers and on failing to find the hoped-for gray figure she let herself fall back on the bed, allowing her head to loll almost out of it and closing her eyes. D went to her and began to caress her.

"I need it. Where is it? We have to find it," she murmured without opening her eyes, accepting D's caresses and reacting to them with greater intensity than ever, as though they were one with her need and capable of provoking the appearance of the cat.

Then the two of them heard the long plaintive meows immediately outside the door in a transport of ecstatic happiness.

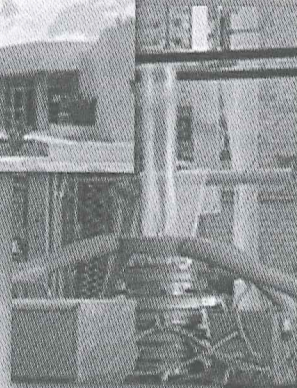
"Who knows," D said in a barely audible voice, almost to himself, as though all words were unnecessary, rising to his feet to open the door, "maybe it's simply a part of ourselves."

But she was unable to hear him, her body awaiting, tense and open, only the little gray presence. **MM**



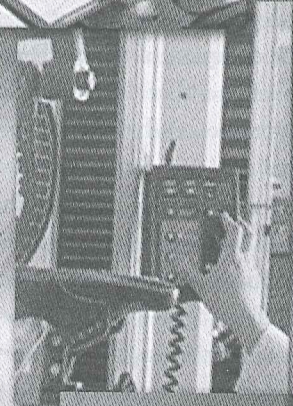
NOTES

¹ Originally published in *Encounters*, translated by Helen Lane, with an introduction by Octavio Paz (Hygiene, Colorado: Eridanos Press, 1988), pp. 5-22.



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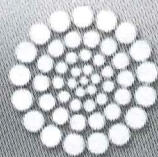
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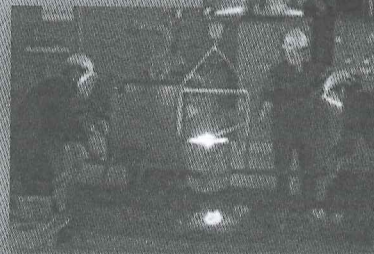
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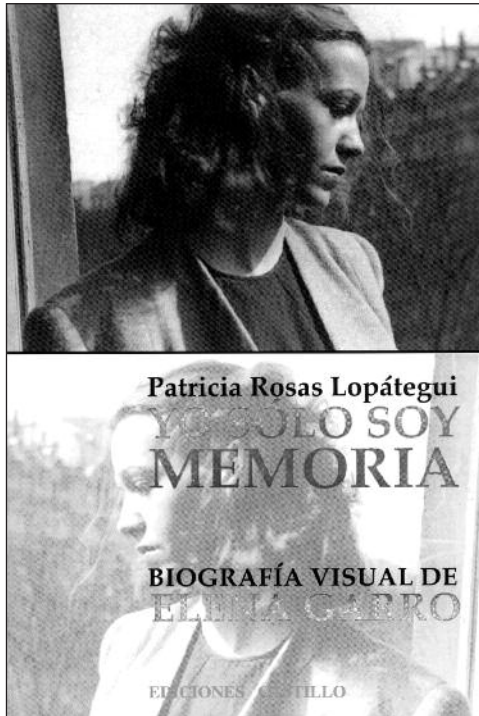


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Reviews



Yo sólo soy memoria. Biografía visual de Elena Garro
(I Am Only Memory. A Visual Biography of Elena Garro)
Patricia Rosas Lopátegui, ed.
Ediciones Castillo
Monterrey, Mexico, 2000, 130 pp.

The title of this pictographic homage to Elena Garro resonates with the thematic obsession ever present in her life and literary work: “Yo sólo soy memoria y la memoria que de mí se tenga” (I am only memory and the memory that you have of me), as quoted from *Los recuerdos del porvenir* (1963) (translated as *Recollections of Things to Come* [1986]), her best known novel, for which she won the prestigious Mexican literary award Xavier Villaurrutia in 1963.

A memory, however, is not all that lingers of Elena Garro, one of Mexico’s foremost twentieth-century women writers, as this, the only exclusive and authorized pictorial biography of the author, reminds us. Garro, one-time wife of Mexican poet laureate Octavio Paz, returned to Mexico in 1993 after 21 years of self-imposed exile that began after her conflictive participation in the events related to the

1968 student movement. Known as a polemical and defiant intellectual, and a feminist ahead of her time, Garro nonetheless died three years ago in Mexico without due literary and personal recognition, in the company of her daughter and faithful companion, poet Helena Paz, and her many cats. As history has often proved, however, it is literary worth which is finally the measure of a writer and which endures after all else is reduced to memories and recollections.

And there is no doubt as to the quality of Garro’s literary talent. The force of her best poetic prose is entrancing, relying on shifts in consciousness and conveying a kaleidoscopic sense of time and space in language that lingers as pure magic, yet is carefully crafted. The aforementioned novel, *Los recuerdos del porvenir* (1963), and a short story such as “La culpa es de los tlaxcaltecas” from the volume entitled *La semana de colores* (1964), to offer a couple of examples, are unquestionably classics. With the exception of the short plays collected in *Un hogar sólido* (1958), most of her other works remained unpublished until many years after they were written, such as her novels *Testimonios sobre Mariana* (1981), *Reencuentro de personajes* (1982) and *Mi hermanita Magdalena* (1998), the novellas *La casa junto al río* (1982), *Matarazo no llamó...* (1989), *Inés* (1995), and *Busca mi escuela y Primer amor* (1996), the volumes of short stories *Andamos huyendo Lola* (1980) and *La vida empieza a las tres... Hoy es jueves... La feria o De noche vienes* (1997), as well as the play *Felipe Ángeles* (1979).

Garro, an avid reader from an early age and defiant from the word go, was considered something of a child prodigy as well as a promising literary figure. At 17, having studied with one of Pavlova’s dancers, she became choreographer of Julio Bracho’s University Theater and was attending literature courses at the National Autonomous University of Mexico at a time when not many women in Mexico went to the university. One day, on her way to a Latin exam, she decided to go to the public registry and marry Octavio Paz instead. Life changed for Garro after that in both positive and highly challenging ways. In this pictorial biography that contains illuminating unpublished material, the early and lesser known part of Garro’s story comes to life, continuing with episodes that are better known but can now be seen anew within the graphic context offered by *Sólo soy memoria*.

The chronological focus proposes five prominent spaces temporally and thematically: “Infancia: bajo los signos de la magia, la imaginación y los libros” (Childhood: Under the Signs of Magic, Imagination and Books): 1920-1934; “Adolescencia y matrimonio con Octavio Paz” (Adolescence and Marriage to Octavio Paz): 1934-1963; “1968: el signo de la calumnia” (1968: The Sign of Slander): 1963-1972; “El silencio y la soledad en el exilio” (Silence and Solitude in Exile): 1972-1993; and “El reencuentro con México” (Re-encounter with Mexico): 1993-1998. Each of these chapters (as they are labelled) is given a short biographical introduction by Patricia Lopátegui, Garro’s U.S. literary agent and a Garro scholar for many years, followed by a captioned pictorial narrative.

In this visual testimony Garro reluctantly poses as a child, looks naively arrogant as an adolescent, is caught dancing or offers dramatic poses for the eye of the camera: she stands with her daughter as a baby or next to her as a young woman, poses, nonchalant, smoking a cigarette or with her cat in her Mexico City house or standing on the balcony of her Paris home; she also appears, smiling, among some *campesinos* or in Xochimilco and Chapultepec with friends and intellectuals. Other photographs show her next to Octavio Paz and yet others in the company of such figures as Carlos Fuentes, Picasso or Bioy Casares. The older Garro also makes her appearance, no longer caring to pose, perplexed still by the animosity leading to her exile.

Yet there is a certain recurring, haunting and haunted gaze, an almost wistful look that tells a story all of its own. Glimpses of a deep and complex inner world are revealed, a sure and unsettling knowledge that all is not what it seems and that this remains essentially unshareable —except, perhaps, in her most poignant writing— as if she were a permanent exile from the surrounding world, perpetually on the razor-edge of anguish, often translated outwardly as perplexity, intellectual cynicism or even haughty nonchalance.

One also notices inevitably that she is rarely smiling, even in photographs taken during her childhood, although she describes those years as being “*tiempos felices, aventureros y gloriosos*” (happy, adventurous and glorious times). In the strange magic at the core of her work, in its sense of sad inevitability, it is as if she clairvoyantly perceived her story as some kind of fiction and history as a narrative told by others than the true protagonists. As if, with equal clairvoyance, she perceived this simultaneously as a highly sensitive child-woman and as an intellectual critic able to

bring apparent contradictions together within the realm of fiction transmuted into a reality depicting the unsaid and the not-seen. Much of her narrative reminds us that magic realism, in its inception, has deep, dark roots in Mexican soil and comes closer to unveiling the truths of the unsayable, the unwrite-able, than what is perceptually and intellectually superimposed as “possible.”

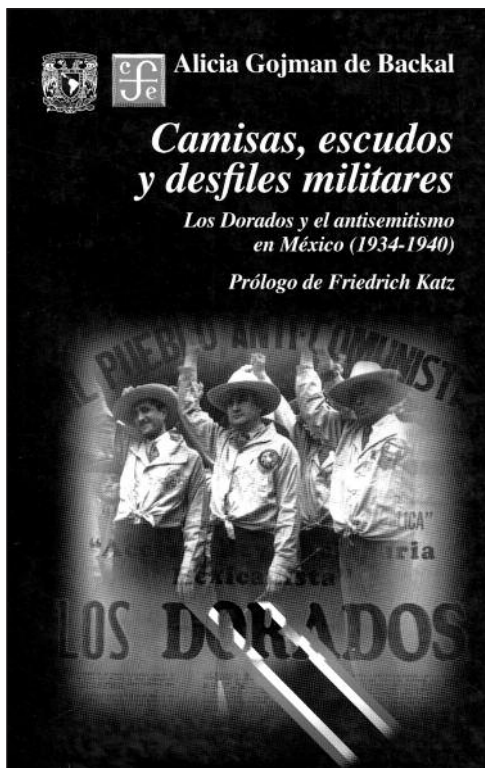
An interesting feature of this fascinating book on Garro’s life is the way many of the captions under the 130 or so photographs become a means for an unusual self-narration within a biographical setting and with editorial intervention, since Garro’s direct commentaries on some of the photographs were taped by Lopátegui. And these commentaries in addition to the inserted fragments from her work take their cue precisely from memories —in resonance with Garro’s concern with memory and time that the book’s title also echoes— memories shaped directly from photographic images frozen into (or, one wonders, out of?) time and in a specific space where the pictorial is allowed to write its own narratives, for once dis- and re-placing the word from the realm in which Garro was a true sorceress. This volume, as Lopátegui explains, is soon to have a sequel in which the word will take its rightful place in relation to Garro’s literary work and status.

Worthy of mention in *Sólo soy memoria* is the graphic design: by picking up fragments of images and repeating them, printing several copies of the same photograph, inserting, juxtaposing and clipping images, a different and playful reading is suggested, keeping the reverent mood company, a game Garro herself might have enjoyed playing, in fact.

For anyone interested in Garro, this book is a good companion to her written work, not only because of the unpublished material it affords the reader, but due to the different kind of stories it tells. Roland Barthes claimed in *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography* that through photographs the dead return, and we could say that Garro returns —quite hauntingly so— in this pictorial biography to claim her right to memory.

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Camisas, escudos y desfiles militares.

Los Dorados y el antisemitismo en México (1934-1940)

(Shirts, Coats of Arms and Military Parades.
The Gold-Shirts and Anti-semitism in Mexico
[1934-1940])

Alicia Gojman de Backal

Fondo de Cultura Económica

Mexico City, 2000, 566 pp.

Sad were the days when people tried to build a nation, attempting to overcome the inertia and obstacles of the past, when rationality was confronted with the passions and the subjectiveness of personal points of view. Many and varied elements intervened in the construction of the future, elements that counterposed traditions with the modernity that imposed itself despite everything. Ideas, values, prejudices were all immersed in the networks of political control and in the social and political manifestations based on different ideologies.

Sad were the days in which the lack of policy definition had an impact on the emergence of movements, even movements that could be considered very negative for society. With a state weakened by its own contradictions and by the lack of its own political project, proposals emerged that were

allowed to develop on their own and no equilibrium was achieved in their actions which, far from reaching stability, fostered the crisis. And we must speak of crises when the values that form the basis of a humanist culture are forgotten or pushed to one side.

Alicia Gojman de Backal unfolds her knowledge and—why not?—her feelings to tell us a controversial story in which the most minimal rationality found itself confronted with the most irrational prejudices. Mexico did not escape xenophobia, as can be seen first in the persecution of the Chinese and then anti-semitism, with the distress it caused for those who lived through it.

As the author points out from the beginning, the book's topic is a personal matter because she heard and experienced close up part of a history that led her to become a historian and perspicacious observer of the Jewish question. This is the basis of her sensitivity and awareness of being very close to what she narrates in her book on three levels: Europe and the rise of Naziism; World War II and the persecution of the Jews; and, lastly, Mexico and ultra-right movements in the international context. All these levels are interrelated in the description of the defense of an identity that survived the pogroms and other manifestations of irrationality. They are elements that allow us to familiarize

ourselves with a history that is not always told because it goes against the official version and because of fear about difficult-to-explain phases that unfortunately had repercussions in Mexico's social and state organization.

It was the crisis or the lack of a political project that was behind the nationalist campaign sponsored by the Pascual Ortiz Rubio government of 1930 to 1932. The campaign did not manage to penetrate society and was victim of the unfettered power of Plutarco Elías Calles, who, even though he proclaimed the end of the age of *caudillos* or strongmen, himself became one in his attempt to maintain power behind the scenes, contrary to the development of the very institutions that his government had contributed to creating.

We should mistrust nationalist campaigns, but Ortiz Rubio found no other way to slow the economic crisis that was spreading through Mexico after the United States' Black Thursday in 1929. It was a mistake to suppose that the crisis could be met with an attack on what were presented as "foreigners'" businesses, although they were really the shops and small workshops owned by immigrants who had made Mexico their new home. But the ideological factor was definitive because the nationalist campaign was aimed above all at Chinese- and Jewish-owned businesses, although immigration restrictions involved other groups such as those from the Middle East, including Turks and Arabs, indistinguishable to Mexicans.

The story Alicia Gojman tells actually becomes several stories: the stories of immigrants, colonizing projects, international espionage, Latin American nationalism, European fascism and Naziism, international readjustments on the eve of the world conflagration, oil interests, the reconstruction of Mexico after a revolution with huge social costs, different styles of governing by presidents as close together in time as they were far apart in conceptions of statesmanship (like Pascual Ortiz Rubio and Lázaro Cárdenas) and, at the center, that unfortunate organization that was Mexicanist Revolutionary Action, led by Nicolás Rodríguez.

In 1929, there were 30,116 foreigners in Mexico City's Federal District, and between 1929 and 1930, 33,329 more entered the country. Despite allowing their entry, the Ortiz Rubio administration propitiated ambivalent situations: for example, in an attempt to defend native Mexicans from foreign competition, it allowed the expulsion of 250 Jewish merchants from the La Merced market. The president's actions jibed with the general atmosphere of the time; as early as 1925 the *El Universal* daily had spoken of "the flood

of Jews our country has been subjected to"; *El Universal* cited the figure of 10,000 Jewish immigrants, while *Excelsior* spoke of 100,000. This false information is an important example of the kind of rumor-mongering that intensifies in crisis periods.

And in this disheartening atmosphere of a country broken apart after a revolution, with grave economic and political problems, came the nationalist campaign: it promoted food products being made with domestic ingredients, clothing being labeled with its place of manufacture, remembering that the best tobacco was Mexican tobacco, people not buying foreign magazines and newspapers, preferring medicine made in Mexico and, in addition, practically making it high treason to send money abroad. That was how, on June 1, 1931, the "Great Nationalist Demonstration" was organized by the General Committee of the Nationalist Campaign, the Confederation of Chambers of Industry, the Confederation of Chambers of Commerce, the French Chamber of Commerce and the Mexico City government's Department of Transportation. The day was declared a day of rest for Mexico City's Federal District government and school employees (although it should be remembered here that many of them were already on strike because, since the government's coffers were empty, they had not been paid in several months).

The nationalist campaign continued under Abelardo L. Rodríguez's presidency, another weak administration that allowed any group with power to do what it liked. Under Rodríguez, demonstrations against Jewish and Chinese merchants continued throughout the country. It was the perfect time for reactionary organizations to proliferate; in 1931, Mexicanist Revolutionary Action had already been founded, preceded by the "Pro-Race Committees," claiming a membership of 40,000. In 1935, the Anti-China and Anti-Jewish Leagues were founded; later the Mexican Nationalist Union was founded, and, in 1937, the Mexican Nationalist Legion. Similar organizations also opposed Chinese and Jewish individuals and groups, organizations like the Spanish Anticommunist Association, or the Falange, willing to support the struggle of Francisco Franco. The list of nationalist committees and leagues in Gojman's book is overwhelming and, even though it does not specify how many members they actually had, it is still an important indicator of the growth of the Mexican right.

The declaration of principles and the pamphlets of those who soon came to be known as "Gold-Shirts" because of the

color of their shirts and coat of arms is something no reader should miss if he/she wants to know just how far foolishness mixed with ignorance can go. Suffice it to mention the exaggerated allusion to their supposed values —race, homeland, family, morality, progress, order and civic duty— to distrust them. The association's ideals, summarized by the author, "called for the unity of Mexicans who had been engaged in a permanent struggle against one another; demanded that the divisions among parties be ended and a fight for the Mexican homeland be waged, for the land that belonged to them as Mexicans. According to this creed, the homeless Jews who had been forced to live outside their own land were breeding irreconcilable hatred toward the rest of humanity and, to survive, had organized themselves to exploit and dominate all the peoples of the earth, from a very advantageous position" (p. 212).

During Cárdenas administration, things began to change. It should not be forgotten that Cárdenas' first important action was to highlight the distance he took from the Supreme Chief (Plutarco Elías Calles), seeking out the support of the organized peasants and workers. As the author rightly says, his government was based on three ideologies: liberalism, fascism and communism. Lázaro Cárdenas was a pluralist; this can be seen in his defense of the Spanish Republic, the asylum he granted to Leon Trotsky, his ideology in favor of self-determination for all peoples, and his respect for foreigners, not to mention the dissemination of free, obligatory, socialist education.

The first two years of his administration were marked by "a profound collective depression and the loss of faith in the political institutions created by the revolution, which gave rise to social criticism, violence and uncertainty" (p. 74). Threats of rebellion, strikes and social conflicts were common between the time of Calles' expulsion from Mexico and 1938 and 1939 when right-wing groups acquired particular importance after the expropriation of Mexico's oil industry which, among other factors, was the justification for General Saturnino Cedillo's rebellion. By that time, the Nazis were identified in Mexico by their exaggerated violence and their expansionist pretensions, strongly linked to German interests. Several German representatives were detected in Mexico and Ernest von Merck, who was close to the rebel general, was among the most talked about.

The Cárdenas administration maintained that the doors of the country were open to all foreigners who, without any sort of humiliating superiority complex, "nor antisocial,

selfish privileges, come to our country to foster agriculture, industry, science and the arts" (p. 113). However, just like that of the United States (remember the 1924 restrictive policy, even though Roosevelt sought a solution to the problem of the thousands of refugees), his policy was ambivalent.

In that context, Vicente Lombardo Toledano began to use the term "popular front" to refer to the unity of the government and antifascist groups against imperialism and the reactionaries. This was the root of the strong social alliance that served as a protective shield around Cárdenas and the Cardenist project.

On November 20, 1935, during the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution, the "Gold-Shirts" participated in the parade. But together with other similar organizations, they ended up in an open confrontation with the Popular Front, among whose contingents were the Mexican Electrical Workers Union, the League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists, the United Confederation of Mexico and the Proletarian Defense Committee. At about two in the afternoon, drivers who belonged to the United Front of Drivers tried to block the "Gold-Shirts" who were on horseback. The fully documented incident was a singular fight between automobiles and horses that included the use of bombs, pistols, knives and rocks, and resulted in dozens of wounded. The "Gold-Shirts," claiming the clash had been a provocation by the Communists, took over the offices of the Mexican Communist Party on Tacuba Street in retaliation and shot up Lombardo Toledano's house. These kinds of disturbances continued in other parts of the country until Cárdenas decided February 27, 1936, to expel General Nicolás Rodríguez from Mexico. From abroad, Rodríguez engaged in all kinds of attempts to bring down the Cárdenas government, paradoxically a government of Mexico's great nationalist president.

The author dedicates an interesting chapter to Mexican society's reaction to Mexicanist Revolutionary Action, in which she explains that fortunately many groups both in the capital and the rest of the country opposed its ideology and forms of action. Even foreign legations expressed their disagreements in different documents. The Jewish community, for its part, organized and created the Israelite Chamber, making contact with President Cárdenas and the representative of the Jewish Congress. They also sought the support of U.S. Jews against anti-semitism and in 1937 published the newspaper *La Verdad* (The Truth) which

joined other publications oriented toward countering the anti-semitic campaigns fostered by the conservative papers *Omega* and *El Hombre Libre* (The Free Man), sometimes augmented by commentators in well-established papers like *Excelsior* and *El Universal*.

The United States tried with all its might to stay out of the European war that had broken out in September 1939, the year that Mexico stopped the oil sales that it had begun to Germany after expropriating its oil companies. The context of the war allowed Cárdenas and the following president, Manuel Ávila Camacho, to pursue a singular policy with regard to war refugees, which eventually led them to review the country's policy toward foreigners.

However, conditions were not always so very favorable and the number of times that Cárdenas had to reverse his intentions of supporting foreign immigration, particularly that of Jews, is widely documented. The great Mexicanist historian Friedrich Katz reminds us of a polemic that has still not been resolved regarding a denial of admittance of Jews during Cárdenas' administration. Katz justifies the denial on two grounds: first, because, having to choose among

people forced to emigrate, the president was right in opting for the Spaniards over the Jews because of the difficulties receiving both groups would bring; and second, because "some low-level officials of the Mexican government, particularly in the Foreign Relations Ministry, still showed anti-semitic tendencies and tried to limit the access of Jews to Mexico" (p. 13). This reminds me of the metaphor of the serpent's egg, and I still think it was very serious that even Cárdenas could not destroy these tendencies.

This book stirs our consciences and shows us that there are moments in our history that we Mexicans must not forget if we aspire to respecting the freedom of others to decide their ideology, religion and customs. Alicia Gojman de Backal's book exposes a chapter of intolerance in Mexico that must not be forgotten; only by remembering is it possible to overcome the past and build the present.

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CÓMO MANTENER A RAYA A LA PLEBE

ENTREVISTAS POR DAVID BARSAMIAN

NOAM
CHOMSKY

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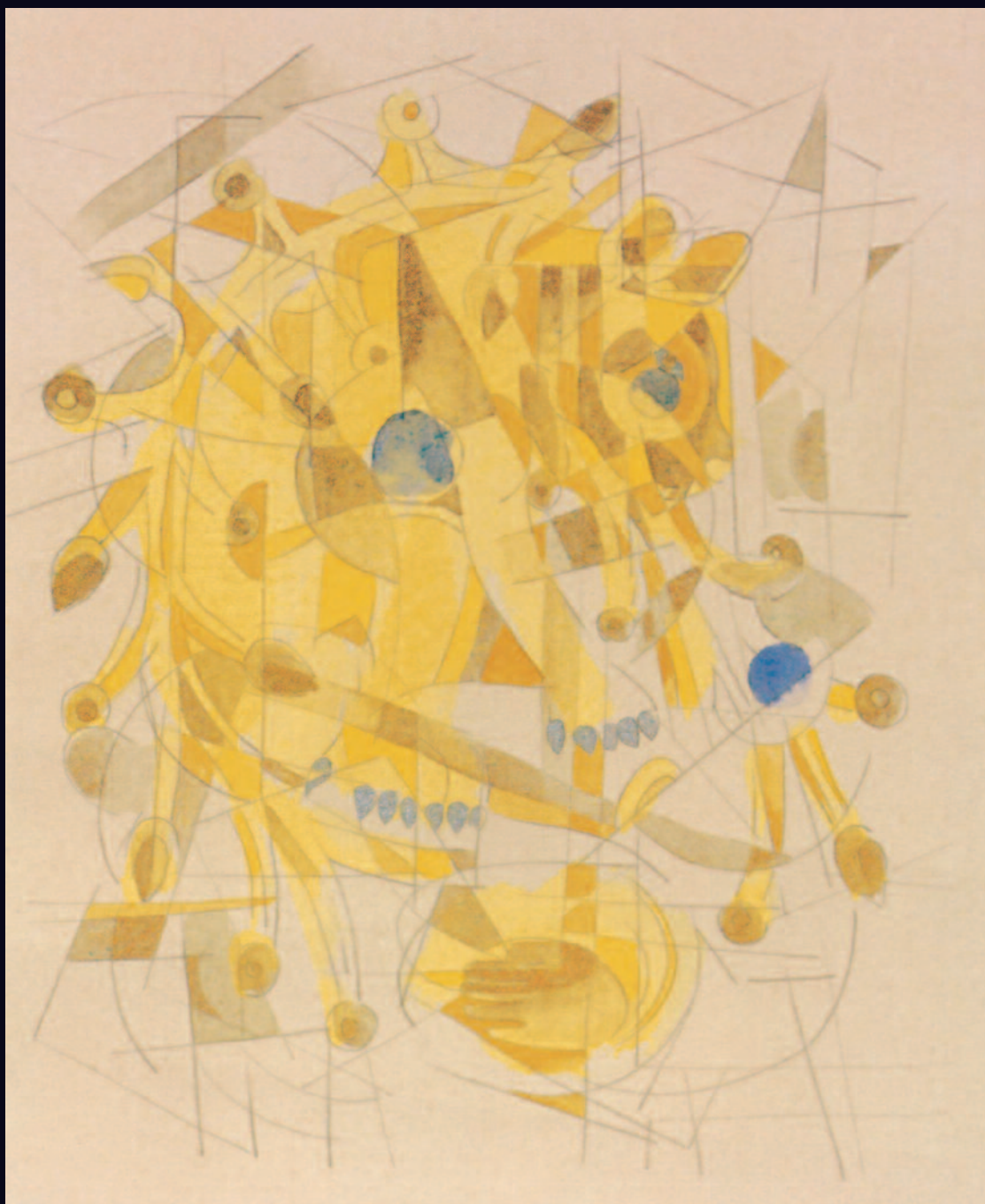
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