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VOICES of Mexico

CISAN • UNAM

Mexico's Fiscal Reform Postponed Again

Pablo Ruiz Nápoles

Aging and Pensions In Mexico

Articles by Víctor M. Soria
And Carlos Welti

Discrimination And Politics in Mexico

María José Morales García
And Jesús Rodríguez Zepeda

The North American Fossil Fuel Market

Miguel García Reyes

Ten Years of NAFTA

Bibiana Gómez Muñoz

A Journey Through Veracruz Cities

Nature in Extinction The Vision Of Mexican Painters



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El misterio de la máscara de serpiente

Viateur Lefrançois

Una coedición de Artes de México y el Gobierno de Quebec

**Dos niños acróbatas, una aventura
en la zona maya y muchos
enigmas por
descifrar...**



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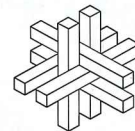
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Cover & Back Cover

Arturo Márquez, *Lost Icon*, 100 x 80 cm,
2002 (acrylic on canvas).

ERRATA

In *Voices of Mexico* no. 65 the photograph on page 89 is by Daniel Munguía, not Verónica López. We apologize to our photographers.

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Daniel Munguía

OUR VOICE

O Saddam Hussein's mid-December arrest makes it possible to conceive of repositioning the policy of the United States and its main allies. Of the greatest importance for developments in that part of the globe, internally it changes the balance of forces and paves the way for stabilizing Iraq's current precarious equilibrium. Also, domestically, President George Bush's credibility shows signs of recovery with a view to his reelection in November 2004.

With regard to the first point, we can say with some degree of certainty that with Saddam Hussein under arrest, the United States and its forces will be able to recover control over operations and neutralize the remains of the ancien régime that has caused so many casualties both for Washington and its leading allies. However, everything seems to indicate that when he was captured, Hussein had already distributed a large part of the millions of dollars he took out of the public treasury before being overthrown. Presumably, these resources are in the hands of his followers' organized cells. Thus, his jailing does not necessarily signal the end of the actions of the forces opposed to occupation, particularly those with their origins in the old structures. In that sense, it would be a mistake to assume that with Saddam Hussein's arrest, the anti-U.S. resistance—both armed and civilian—will come to an end. There are powerful signs to the contrary, and Washington will have to be prepared to resolve the fundamental reasons behind the high level of discontent with its presence in the region. These reasons involve the unipolar nature of the Iraq war and the fact that bringing order to the country demands a different representative body than the existing Provisional Governing Council and the rapid withdrawal of occupying forces so that this is possible. If the United States does not capitalize on its victory in arresting Hussein in these terms, it will not have understood that this may be the most appropriate moment for contributing to establishing the conditions needed to stabilize the internal political process, conditions that will have to be built in a context of broad international and national consensus.

On the other hand, we could think that, together with recent growth figures for the U.S. economy, the fact that Hussein is in U.S. custody could offer George Bush fertile ground for being reelected to a second four-year term in the 2004 elections. Nevertheless, if the arrest of the Iraqi leader does not contribute to stopping or at least reducing the wave of terrorist attacks unleashed in Iraq in recent months, we will face a complex escalation of violence and uncertainty that will have a direct impact on the U.S. elections, perhaps definitively affecting Bush's chances of reelection. It will be important to watch developments closely to determine the implications that Hussein's arrest will have given the elements of analysis mentioned above. Too much is at stake to not take into consideration these two factors as vitally important for guaranteeing the regional and global stabilization that the conflict in Iraq begins to increasingly demand.

* * *

The dramatic story of the never-concluded Mexican fiscal reform entered another frustrating chapter in December 2003. The fiscal reform is a process of modernization of the Mexican state that all the political forces think necessary for the country's development and its better insertion in the global economy, but most Mexicans do not understand why their elected officials (both in the executive and legislative branches) cannot come to an agreement or consensus in the matter. This inability of the country's main political institutional actors—whether they be the president, governors or political parties—may have untoward consequences for Mexico's fledgling democracy. It may even cause greater disillusionment among the populace than that which already exists about politicians, which would lead to unwanted scenarios of a return to authoritarianism and civic disinterest in politics. Neither the president and his cabinet nor the deputies and senators have been up to the tasks posed by the times.

Our “Politics” section deals with the non-passage of the fiscal reform or of any other important reform: political economist Pablo Ruiz Nápoles looks at some of the Mexican economy’s possible scenarios for the next three years, none of which invite optimism. Paralysis of the administration and stagnation in the legislative branch are undoubtedly a problem of democratic governability. Political analyst Pedro Aguirre contributes an article about the relationship between the branches of government in the new Mexican democracy, observing how, to avoid ineffectiveness, transitions to democracy must include a broad reform of the state and its institutions, an exercise in change that has not gone well in our country. Probably one of the most urgently needed innovations is a complete re-engineering of the rules of Congress and legislative activity; for some specialists like Fernando Dworak, particularly, legalizing the reelection of legislators is one of these changes that cannot be postponed. The section concludes with an interview by political commentator Leonardo Curzio and journalist Jesús Esquivel, correspondent of the influential weekly *Proceso*, with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Roger Noriega, who clarifies his country’s strategies for fostering free trade in the hemisphere despite the disappointing results of last November’s Miami summit, strategies that will probably put the emphasis more on bilateral treaties than on a multilateral accord such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas project.

The administration’s paralysis and the political forces’ inability to produce changes benefiting the country have already shown their negative consequences in different spheres of national life. In the economy, for example, foreign investors look increasingly to China to the detriment of our industry. Specialist John Adams begins our “Economy” section with a very complete analysis of the historic, political, social and international policy conditions that have caused Mexico to lose the race against the giant of Asia and other countries for international investment. Bibiana Gómez draws a balance sheet for Mexico of the North American Free Trade Agreement 10 years after it came into effect. She looks at several aspects, among them, trade and the economy, but also those linked to foreign policy and the international institutions that have been created in this regionalization process.

The social challenges Mexico will face in coming years are varied and of great concern. The viability of democratic construction with social development will depend on the way they are faced and the solutions found for the different problems. *Voices of Mexico* will dedicate its “Society” section in 2004 to analyzing these challenges: specialists will deal with demographic and population challenges, health, education, labor and social justice problems, issues of security and swift effective justice, all fields in which historic backlogs must be attended to immediately and public policies put in place or reinforced. We thus begin with an article by María José Morales and Jesús Rodríguez Zepeda about discrimination in Mexico; the authors state that beyond “persuasive” actions like publicity and educational campaigns, we need a legal framework and administrative structure, like the new National Commission for the Prevention of Discrimination which began operations in January 2004, that will establish sanctions and real penalties for those who discriminate in the terms stipulated by law. We also present articles about the aging of Mexico’s population and the country’s retirement and pension system, by academics Carlos Welti and Víctor Soria, respectively. Welti maintains that the population dynamic is such that measures must now be taken to ensure the basic conditions of life to an increasingly aged population. This requires above all changes in political practices and our country’s social and labor culture. Not taking these steps now could make for a catastrophe in the future. Soria’s article maintains that the current design of the pension system, with privately managed retirement funds (Afores) not only has not proven to be a solution in other countries like Chile, but has proven to go against workers’ interests given the exorbitant commissions charged by the fund managers. A critical evaluation of the design of a strategy to avert the medium-term collapse of pensions in Mexico is a task that cannot be postponed any longer. The section concludes with an article by Sofía Gallardo, a specialist in civic movements and nongovernmental organizations, who presents a sweeping analysis of the role and activities carried out by international NGOs to advocate fair trade, focusing particularly on their actions at the last WTO summit in Cancún, where the great pressure they exerted was one of the factors leading to the meeting’s failure.

Undoubtedly, economic integration and globalization have had their particularities in North America. In our “North American Affairs Section,” energy researcher Miguel García Reyes looks at the issue of United

States vulnerability with regard to oil and natural gas, a vulnerability that has led it to develop hemisphere-wide integration strategies for energy. “Canadian Issues” offers us Gustavo Emmerich’s balance sheet of former Prime Minister Chrétien’s 10 years in office now that he has decided to retire at the age of 70.

* * *

We dedicate this issue’s “Art and Culture” section to different facets of nature, as a resource that must be defended, as scenery and space that inspires creation, or as a place for discovering the finiteness and inherent quality of the individual. We offer our readers first a review of the exhibit “Nature in Extinction,” in which more than 40 painters and visual artists offer their vision of nature, an often pessimistic vision that goes beyond protest and achieves a reconciliation with our surroundings. Curator and art critic Miriam Kaiser writes about the sculpture of Ángela Gurría, an example of how nature can stimulate the artist’s sensibility to create. Lastly, we include an article about the life and travels through Mexico and the Americas of the famous early-nineteenth-century German naturalist, humanist and scientist, Alexander von Humboldt, who had a decided influence on the piecing together of knowledge of what was then called “the New World.” On the 200th anniversary of the start of his journey, the National Autonomous University of Mexico decided to pay him homage with a series of commemorations, including the exposition we review here.

Veracruz is one of the states of Mexico with the greatest artistic and cultural heritage, among other reasons because of its cities. For that reason we open “The Splendor of Mexico” section to this state once again (see *Voices of Mexico* no. 60). Margarita Montalvo Dehesa and Elsie Montiel write about the state and the port of Veracruz, where the Spanish conquistadors first landed in 1519, the French invaded in the nineteenth century and the U.S. invaded in 1914; it is famous for its architectural beauty, food, its carnival, music and the joy of its people. Historian Jesús Jiménez Castillo offers us a warm introduction to the beautiful city of Xalapa, internationally famous for its gardens and parks and its intense cultural life, which has led some to dub it “the Athens of Mexico.” If Veracruz has an Athens, it also has a Venice. The section closes with a contribution from architect Humberto Aguirre Tinoco about the river port of Tlacotalpan, a small city with such charm that it has been decreed a World Heritage Treasure.

The “Museums” and “Ecology” sections are also about Veracruz. Cecilia Santacruz Langagne introduces us to the Veracruz State Art Museum in the city of Orizaba, where visitors can see the country’s best collection of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and twentieth-century Veracruz painters. Photographer and ecologist David McCauley contributes an article and photographs about Los Tuxtlas, its fauna and flora, explaining the deforestation that has occurred in this area, declared a special ecological preserve.

To celebrate the admittance of Mexican writer and editor Adolfo Castañón to the Mexican Language Academy, our “Literature” section includes an evocative essay about his work from the pen of writers Marcela Solís-Quiroga and Juan Antonio Rosado; the authors emphasize Castañón’s having made irony and paradox a literary plus. We also celebrate his work presenting our readers a translation of a fragment of his famous poem “Memories of Coyoacán.”

Two illustrious and dearly loved National University academics recently passed away, and we pay them homage in our “In Memoriam” section. Graciela Hierro’s life was dedicated to feminist philosophy and the women’s movement. Arturo Warman will be remembered for his contributions to the study of the Mexican countryside and indigenous communities and his profound love for poor peasants. Both these academics leave behind them a shining example of dedication, commitment and effort, a legacy to their hundreds of disciples in our university’s classrooms.

José Luis Valdés Ugalde

Fiscal Reform in Mexico Postponed Again

Pablo Ruiz Nápoles*



Pablo Zamora/Cuartoscuro



Sandra Perdomo/Cuartoscuro

Elba Esther Gordillo (left) and Emilio Chuayffet (far right) headed up the two factions of the PRI caucus, divided because of diverging positions on the fiscal reform.

Congress passed Mexico's 2004 budget after a long confrontation between the executive and the legislature and between two factions of the Institutional Revolution-

ary Party (PRI) caucus, the largest caucus in the Chamber of Deputies.¹ The final result was an agreement negotiated inside the opposition that really satisfied no one and did not resolve the central problem of low tax revenues. As a result, we again face the

prospect of low revenues for the state. This demonstrated that the federal government is incapable of getting bills through Congress, in this case that of the fiscal reform. This is nothing new for the current administration: since the bill to build a new airport for the

* Economic and political analyst.

nation's capital failed, practically all of its bills have been rejected by the population in general or by specific interest groups. The government has not been able to politically overcome this lack of acceptance.

The tax bill was particularly important because, halfway through its term, of the four substantive reforms the executive has proposed (the fiscal system, energy production, labor rights and the reform of the state in general), this was the only truly strategic one; for some analysts, it was also the one with the greatest chances of success. After this failure, it will be very difficult for the administration to implement reforms or changes that pay off in real, credible

revenues, particularly after the bank bail-out in the mid-1990s that increased real public debt and requires high interest payments every year. The attempts to broaden the tax base and, above all, check tax evasion by high-income groups and the informal sector have failed. As a result, most of the tax burden falls on the shoulders of the middle class, captive in the tax system, whose upper strata pay developed-country tax rates while receiving in exchange the services of an underdeveloped country. Another large taxpayer in the Mexican system is Pemex, the state oil company, which transfers a significant part of its income through tax monies to the state. Partially because of that, it stopped investing

my and cover educational and health needs without creating a public deficit. The Fox administration has not been able to achieve this because the party that supports it, the PAN, has not had the majority in Congress as the PRI almost always had when it was in office. This new political situation is behind the need for lobbying, negotiation and agreements, that neither the president nor his cabinet have been able to get either from the opposition parties or from the real power groups like unions, chambers of commerce and peasant organizations. The president has only been interested in the media, which today wields important political clout, but first and foremost vis-à-vis his image.

The fiscal reform was also badly formulated from the start. It concentrated on proposing that the value added tax (VAT) be applied to foodstuffs and medicine, which had never been taxed by previous administrations. This caused an immediate drop in the president's popularity and made a gift of these issues to the opposition. The proposal to reduce income and corporate tax was also dimly viewed because no one ever explained that this actually meant higher revenues since it would tend to decrease tax evasion. But perhaps the proposal's worst mistake was that the 2004 budget for programmed public spending was based on the idea that there would be no change in revenues with regard to the previous year, and was structured in such a way as to increase funding for socially unimportant items and de-fund sensitive items like higher education, science and technology. In addition, the president's package proposed the sale of certain state scientific research, higher education and cultural institutions, incurring the wrath of groups

Attempts to broaden the tax base and check tax evasion by high-income groups and the informal sector failed. Thus, most of the burden falls on the middle class.

economic and political terms over the next three years so that the National Action Party (PAN) can be reelected in 2006.

THE NEED FOR FISCAL REFORM

For quite a while, Mexico has been a tax haven for some of its inhabitants compared to other countries—both developed and developing—of similar size. Total state revenues as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) are barely one-fourth of those in places like Scandinavia. The reduction of the state apparatus as a result of the sale of its companies and the closing of public institutions since the mid-1980s has not lessened the need for public

in its own modernization years ago, enormously complicating the possibility of increasing its productive and refining capabilities, its productivity and even putting at risk its very existence as a state company.

WHY THE ORIGINAL PRESIDENTIAL BILL FAILED

All of this is behind the current administration's proposing up front a fiscal reform that would allow it to increase tax earnings, make tax collection more democratic by eliminating privileges and reduce the middle class's tax burden. At the same time, it would create additional resources that, if appropriately channeled, could stimulate the econo-

of scientists and intellectuals. All this was clearly a negotiating strategy aimed at getting Congress to approve the bulk of the fiscal reform, but without having a back-up plan in case the executive's proposal was rejected, which it was.

THE DEBATE AND APPROVAL OF THE 2004 BUDGET

The president's bill differed very little from those of previous years. What was new was the administration's attempt to get a majority vote in Congress by allying itself with a sector of the PRI whose influence was thought to be decisive.

With this budget we cannot expect
that 2004 growth objectives will be achieved,
even though they are limited.

Elba Esther Gordillo, then the PRI caucus leader in the Chamber of Deputies —today she has been replaced— amended the bill and managed to get it through the Chamber's Finance Commission.² The unexpected obstacle on the road to approval was the president of the PRI himself, Roberto Madrazo, who, after having praised the proposal, reversed his position, dividing the PRI caucus in two and coming to an agreement with other parties to defeat the bill in the final vote. The central objection to the bill amended by his own party, the PRI, was a tax on producers and intermediaries of food and medicine, which supposedly was not to be passed along to the consumer. This tax, the mechanisms of which were never convincingly explained, was understood

as a disguised VAT, and the bill was defeated by a small margin of votes.

The political dispute between the president and Congress, on the one hand, and inside the PRI, on the other, continued and the PAN presented a similar bill which was defeated in the commission. The opposition proposed a miscellaneous tax bill, differing little from the one passed for 2003, but with a few changes in the structure of public spending.³

PROSPECTS

In summary, there was no fiscal reform and budgetary changes in spending

tration to try for the other three reforms with any chance of success. Therefore, it is very probable that in the next three years, none of President Fox's campaign promises will be kept. Even if he had been able to pass all the reforms, he probably would not have been able to completely implement his political and economic project, a project which was never really fully explained to the public.

In any case, this failure, together with the previous ones, creates a very difficult political panorama for the president's party vis-à-vis the 2006 federal elections. This scenario will facilitate either the return of the PRI or the PRD being elected. To avoid that defeat, some political analysts think the president has to reshuffle his cabinet this year, particularly with regard to those responsible for seeking political agreements, which seems to have been one of the weakest areas.⁴ ■■■

NOTE

¹ Mexico's annual budget is actually made up of two separate documents, the Expenditures Budget and the Federal Revenue Law. [Editor's Note.]

² Gordillo was one of the most influential and controversial figures in the PRI, particularly during the Salinas administration, when she was the general secretary of the powerful National Educational Workers Union. [Editor's Note.]

³ A miscellaneous tax bill is one which proposes a few changes that do not affect the broad structure of the tax system. [Editor's Note.]

⁴ The author is referring here to the Ministry of the Interior, headed up by Santiago Creel Miranda, one of the presidential hopefuls. [Editor's Note.]

Governability and Democracy In Mexico and Latin America An Impossible Mix?

Pedro Aguirre*



Pedro Mera/Cuartoscuro

The Mexican Chamber of Deputies.

During the last decade, the Mexican political system has been drastically transformed. “Pragmatic hegemonism” has disappeared,¹ and a regimen of free and fair electoral competition is being built in its place. We live on the threshold of an unprecedented era in Mexico, which will bring enormous challenges to all political par-

ties, who will be responsible for leading the nation on the road to governability and the consolidation of democracy. We must put to ourselves the need to establish constitutional and electoral formulas that will make the democratic system function better.

During the long hegemonic period, the mechanisms used to elect the country’s legislature were designed to ensure the permanent over-representation of the party in power to the detriment of the opposition. Even when congressional seats

began to be distributed by proportional representation, the formulas used only operated as a way of compensating the minority parties, rather than as an electoral mechanism that would guarantee the existence of a genuinely competitive system. Later, with the successive political reforms, creating impartial electoral bodies and equal conditions for competition became a priority, but the issue of profoundly revising the formulas for electing the Congress was relatively neglected. And, even though, of course, significant

* Political analyst and president of the Foundation for Social Democracy of the Americas.

changes have been made in this area, they have not satisfied important parts of the political class and the public, who demand that it now be a priority, in an atmosphere of free electoral competition, to revise the electoral formulas regarding the election of the president and of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies.

Also, a new culture of civic participation demands that new forms of direct democracy be introduced and that the importance of the increasingly numerous and influential nongovernmental organizations and non-partisan political institutions be recognized.

Free electoral competition gives full meaning to the system of checks and balances. The executive no longer has the legislative branch's tacit support; this creates situations that could lead to institutional chaos if what some analysts and critics of the pure presidentialist system have called a "train wreck" comes about, which happens when agreements between executive and Congress become impossible.

The Mexican electorate reiterated its desire for a divided government in the 2003 federal elections. The National Action Party (PAN), currently in office, lost almost 60 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, which will be dominated by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), and where the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), the third force, almost doubled its number of deputies. Mexico's president, reluctant to recognize mistakes, has not been able to concretize a single one of the liberal projects that he dazzled the public with in 2000. The economy, which contracted during his first year in office, grew in 2003 by less than one percent and prospects for coming years are not encouraging.

On the other hand, the 2003 elections left us with important lessons about the need to have a more effective, credible political class. The notorious banality of Mexico's extremely expensive electoral campaigns has been a determining factor in producing a scandalous 60 percent abstention rate. While the candidates wallowed in frivolity, waste and insults or debated whether the president should make publicity spots or not, issues of major national importance affecting a country of 100 million inhabitants weighted down by poverty, imbalances and corruption were shunted to one side.

A historic abstention rate and a major defeat (by four percentage points) for the ruling party at the hands of a reborn PRI leave the president, a member of

The notorious banality of Mexico's extremely expensive electoral campaigns has been a determining factor in producing a scandalous 60 percent abstention rate.

the PAN, at the mercy of the legislative opposition, three years after he had buried the single party amidst popular jubilation. But generations of absolute power do not evaporate overnight and the PRI, which, in addition, won back four of the six governor's seats up for election, has shown that it still controls large parts of Mexican life. The apathetic 2003 elections, touted as a plebiscite on the Fox administration, have not resembled the 2000 democratic fiesta very much. Frustrated by the thwarted expectations of change created in 2000, the Mexican people have punished the head of state at the ballot box, forcing him to negotiate with the opposition for the rest of his term around

the questions of labor, energy or tax reform that he had promised.

In short, our incipient democratic regimen faces challenges that the government should meet with sensitivity and intelligence and the entire political class should deal with with an enormous sense of responsibility. But, is this really possible? Are there sufficient incentives to ensure that the country's leadership will put national interests before partisan ones?

LATIN AMERICA: DEMOCRACY'S
NEW MISFORTUNES

The fall of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada's government in Bolivia, together with similar events in other nations like Ecua-

dor, Argentina, Paraguay and Peru, have reopened the debate about the viability of democracy in Latin America. Many hypotheses have been put forward, but two are of note: the first says that aspirations of political democracy and liberal capitalism are incompatible; the second emphasizes that the increased number of protagonists, and, even more, excessive participation, make democracy ungovernable.

Democracy presupposes the values of freedom and equality. Capitalism assumes an implicit inequality in the right to property and operates by stimulating other inequalities when it urges competition. In the most advanced democracies, this conflict has been sur-

mounted by the state, which promotes equality. In our democracies, in contrast, the absence of a state that effectively promotes equality is at the root of the problems of governability.

The last Latinobarómetro survey,² published recently, shows that 64 percent of Latin Americans prefer democracy, but only 53 percent are satisfied with its results as a means for resolving economic and social problems. This is not surprising if we think that half of all Latin Americans live below the poverty line and that the gap between rich and poor is widening.

Democratic governability is a concept in construction. If we dare to try to pin it down, we could say that it means the ability a democracy has to deal with people's expectations and needs.

Democratic governability is more than Congress's willingness to vote the executive's bills. It implies a citizenry that integrates political, civil and social rights.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said in the last Human Development Report that "Governability is perhaps the most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development." Democracy corrects itself with better democracy. Dialogue, participation and establishing an inclusive paradigm can be the road to recovering democratic governability.

Democratic governability demands more participation of citizens than simply voting regularly. Participation may be one of the most highly touted political discourses at the same time that it is the most resisted by those who talk about it.

Participation has also acquired macro-economic, managerial legitimacy

today. The macro-economic legitimacy is due to its being the basis for social and human capital, currently valued as a condition both for economic and human development. Its managerial legitimacy comes from the fact that the most participatory organizations are also the most productive.

In addition to increasing managerial efficiency, participation guarantees equity in distributing costs and benefits of different initiatives and, by creating capacities, it ensures sustainability. To participate is to share power, and this is the key to the resistance to it. This deeply-rooted objection is often disguised with arguments like the idea that participatory exercises take time and results are urgently needed, or that people with no education are not able

to participate, or that a hierarchical organization is more effective than a horizontal one.

As we have seen, our countries suffer from a colossal increase in social exclusion. To a great extent, it is possible to attribute this to the failure of the "trickle-down theory," which presupposed that, once economic growth had been achieved, its benefits would inevitably be distributed among all layers of society. This theory created the illusion of an "automatic syntony" of capitalism and democracy, which reality demolished.

For more than 10 years, the United Nations has been publishing reports on human development, proposing the

replacement of economic development with this concept as the paradigm for progress. Human development presupposes guaranteeing a long and healthy life, access to education, the availability of indispensable material goods and full participation in community life. It is an inclusive paradigm and, as such, is a more solid basis for legitimizing democracy than economic development and the trickle-down theory.

If in Mexico during the 1990s, instead of being dazzled by the growth rate of the gross domestic product, we had looked at the results in terms of human development, we would have had a real measurement of the way in which the state harmonized democracy and capitalism.

Democratic governability is much more than Congress's willingness to vote the bills sent by the executive branch into law. It demands much more than a political reform of the kind that has been announced and never concretized. It implies the construction of a citizenry that integrates political rights with civil and social rights. It requires new institutions that foster participation as a means and end in themselves. It must include spaces and habits of dialogue inside and outside the institutions as a permanent option counterposed to violence and populism. **MM**

NOTES

¹ The author refers to the 70 years of political hegemony of a single party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party. [Editor's Note.]

² Latinobarómetro is a well-known Mexican company that specializes in opinion polls. [Editor's Note.]

The Myth of No Reelection And Democracy in Mexico

Fernando F. Dworak*



Sandra Perdomo/Cuatoscuro

Today, deputies' terms last three years without the possibility of immediate reelection.

A political myth is a story that refers to the past, subject to historical interpretation, that contributes keys to the present to illuminate and justify certain of Man's vicissitudes or forms of social organization. Far from any ethical value judgement, it is a constituent part of the theory and practice of power and therefore has a mobilizing and legitimizing function for

the regime that created it. However, the social dynamic itself, subject to constant change, reformulates the bases for political power and makes some myths change and even disappear, replaced by others.

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MYTH OF NO REELECTION

In Mexico, one of these myths is so deeply embedded in the collective consciousness that it is printed on all offi-

cial documents: "Effective suffrage, no reelection." Thus, it has been thought that the prohibition of reelection for public office is an achievement of the Mexican Revolution that has made it possible to introduce new ideas onto the political scene and has prevented the political class from becoming rigid or handing itself over to foreign interests.

However, Francisco I. Madero, the author of the aforementioned phrase, only rebelled against the reelection of then-President Porfirio Díaz. The original version of the 1917 Constitution

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The prohibition of reelection to the legislature weakens our burgeoning democracy by taking away the citizen's ability to demand accountability from elected officials.

even included the indefinite reelection of federal and local legislators and municipal officials.

Actually, legislation prohibiting reelection, imposed in 1933, came into being because of the need to centralize political authority around the National Revolutionary Party (PNR), the predecessor of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), given that its de facto head, known as the "Supreme Leader,"¹ and later the president, would have the prerogative of naming the candidates to public office. This imposed rigid control over the political careers of legislators and over their votes in Congress.

In 1964, an attempt was made to resurrect careers in the legislature when a bill doing so was passed in the Chamber of Deputies, but it was rejected by the Senate in 1965. At that time, this reform would have been counterproductive because no competitive electoral system was in place.

Political alternation in Mexico came about with help from the electoral reforms passed in 1977 and 1996, broadening out partisan participation and creating certainty about vote counts. This reactivated democratic institutions like the Congress and local legislatures, making them effective counterweights to the federal and state executive branches. However, the prohibition of reelection to the legislature weakens our burgeoning democracy by taking something away from the popular vote: the ability to demand accountability from elected officials.

WHY IS LEGISLATIVE REELECTION NECESSARY?

Our democracy is only procedural since it limits itself to guaranteeing a fair electoral campaign and transparent counting of the votes. However, since the citizen does not have the ability to reward or punish his/her representatives by ratifying them or not in their posts through the ballot, the link of responsibility that should exist between the public sphere and the citizenry is broken. That is, the citizen elects his/her representatives on the basis of candidates' expectations and promises instead of taking into account his/her performance. Therefore, the absence of reelection creates a political class that is not responsible to the citizenry because the latter does not have the instruments needed to force accountability, understood as the way in which it has acted in favor of the interests of those it represents.

Another consequence is that since legislators know that the parties will be the only agents that can guarantee them a public post when they finish their terms, they do not remain loyal to the citizenry once elected. For that reason, many of them do not return to their districts to get to know the public's demands and needs, and they lack incentives to become specialized in issues on the legislative agenda. In this way, Congress and state legislatures are not able to maintain continuity in supervising the government or even to bring the knowledge or expertise necessary to the treatment of public matters.

While there have been attempts to overcome this problem by creating permanent professional advisory bodies, they have not prospered because they would require a parliamentarian to get to know them over a longer period of time to create relations of trust.

ARGUMENTS PRO AND CON

This shows that the prohibition of reelection of legislators is something that blocks the consolidation of democracy in Mexico: it is necessary to overcome this political myth. Many arguments both pro and con have already been presented.

Those who propose the reelection of legislators say that it would make citizens' votes effective because they would be able to ratify legislators who defended their interests and withdraw those who did not. This would substantially improve Mexican democracy by renovating the link between the political class and the citizenry.

It is also argued that reelection would make the legislator responsible to the citizenry because he/she would know that his/her career depended on the popular vote. In this way, they would create continual channels of information with their districts by attending to their demands. A culture of accountability would also be fostered since the opposition would take advantage of any negligence or mistake in performance to use it against them. Lastly, paying attention to his/her district's demands would make the legislator specialize in those matters dealt with in legislative commissions which were of greatest interest for his/her constituents.

Those against reelection of legislators argue that this reform would reactivate systems based on local strong-

men or *caciques* because they would be able to intervene more directly in the selection of candidates and in the elections themselves. It is thought that this would mean that deputies and senators would tend to remain in office too long, preventing the entry of people with new ideas.

This argument is unsustainable once a trustworthy, competitive electoral system is in place like the one we have now, with a mature electorate, capable of discerning its political options. In addition, while there may still be some regions where local power groups would impose their will, the culture of accountability that would come with reelection of legislators, together with the opening of the political parties to the citizenry, would surely erode that authority.

The possibility of reelection does not automatically guarantee electoral victories. Those who defend this argument base themselves on the experience of the *Porfiriato* (the 30-year dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz that ended with the 1910 Revolution), in which reelection rates were about 90 percent. However, that electoral system, where the citizen voted for delegates who would then elect deputies, was designed so that local groups could control the process, something that does not happen today. Therefore, this argument solely seeks to perpetuate a myth extrapolating the past into a situation that does not fit with it.

Another argument against permitting reelection of legislators is that a professional legislator would tend to defend local or sectoral interests instead of those of his/her party leadership. Therefore, the political parties would practically stop existing as parliamentary actors given the elimination of discipline at the moment of voting.

Not permitting the reelection of legislators elected by proportional representation would result in the parties losing important margins of political operating room.

Actually, this argument gives too much weight to the possible effects. While discipline would relax slightly (in some cases in which a specific bill affected the interests of a given district), it would not be eliminated to the extent feared because legislation about campaign funding does not allow candidates to receive funds from private sources, but only public funding. Thus, political parties become the agents that can facilitate or block the campaigns of legislators who were either constantly loyal or rebellious.

While it is true that the fierce discipline we are accustomed to would relax, the trade-off is that there would be constant negotiation about bills both inside congressional caucuses and among them. In this way, politics would become a true search for agreements among the different political actors with a collective goal of the common good, as happens in every democratic regimen where popular representation is effective.

REELECTION MODELS

The debate about reelection to the legislature takes in three facets: the number of reelections permitted, the kinds of legislators who could be reelected and when the measure should come into effect. Positions on the number of reelections are divided between those who want to authorize unlimited reelection and those who want to limit the number of terms a legislator can aspire to. Although some think that allowing

reelection but limiting the number of terms would be an improvement for Mexico's Congress, other countries' experiences show that the benefits of implementing a political system that encourages parliamentary careers among its legislators are only fully realized when politicians understand that continuing in Congress will depend solely on their parties' and the citizenry's support, without previously established time limits.

Some proponents defend the reelection both of legislators elected by district majority and those elected by proportional representation, and others are inclined to favor it only for the former. Currently, 19 countries of the world have mixed electoral systems in which the legislators elected by proportional representation are precisely those who are part of the parties' strategies to consolidate their parliamentary influence because they perform technical, political-operational, or ideological functions both inside their caucuses and in congressional committees. Therefore, not permitting the reelection of proportionally elected legislators would result in the political parties losing important margins of political operating room. In addition, two categories of legislators would be spawned: those who accumulate experience and those who do not, which would contradict the principle of the effective, egalitarian collegiate work of any legislative body.

Lastly, some defend the idea that reelection should be put into effect immediately and others think the measure should come into effect in the

following legislative session. These arguments give rise to a vicious circle because the deputies would approve a bill that favors them, but they do not dare because they feel that the public would think they would be trying to take personal advantage of the measure (even though there is actually no guarantee that they will be reelected, but simply that they would be allowed to run again). On the other hand, they would not be willing to pass a bill that benefited others. Faced with this dilemma, some analysts suggest that the reform should be approved, but not go into effect in the successive legislative session, but rather in the following one so that the deputies who passed it would be able to compete for the first Congress that would benefit from the change.

CONCLUSION

All institutional arrangements exist to resolve the problems faced by a specific society at a given moment. For that reason, once they are resolved, the institution disappears or is transformed. This was the case of the prohibition of reelection of legislators. Today, our democratic institutions are going through a process of reorganization given the transition from a hegemonic party system to one in which political pluralism is a reality. Therefore, it is necessary to review their performance, and this process should begin with the question of whether we are already a modern state. Once this question has been answered, a process of transformation in accordance with the needs of the moment can begin.

In that context, I think that the reelection of legislators is the reform that would bring Mexican democracy up to date and put it on the level of other modern democracies. With this perspective, it is important to immediately and effectively begin this process of review and transformation that has been called the Reform of the State, understood as a permanent evaluation of our institutions' performance in order to adapt them to a changing reality. ■■

NOTES

¹ The author is referring to Plutarco Elías Calles, former president of the country and founder of the PNR in 1929 who continued to run the country after leaving office. [Editor's Note.]

The advertisement is for the 'Colección Lecturas Jurídicas' (Legal Readings Collection) published by the Facultad de Derecho (Faculty of Law) of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). It features three distinct series of books:

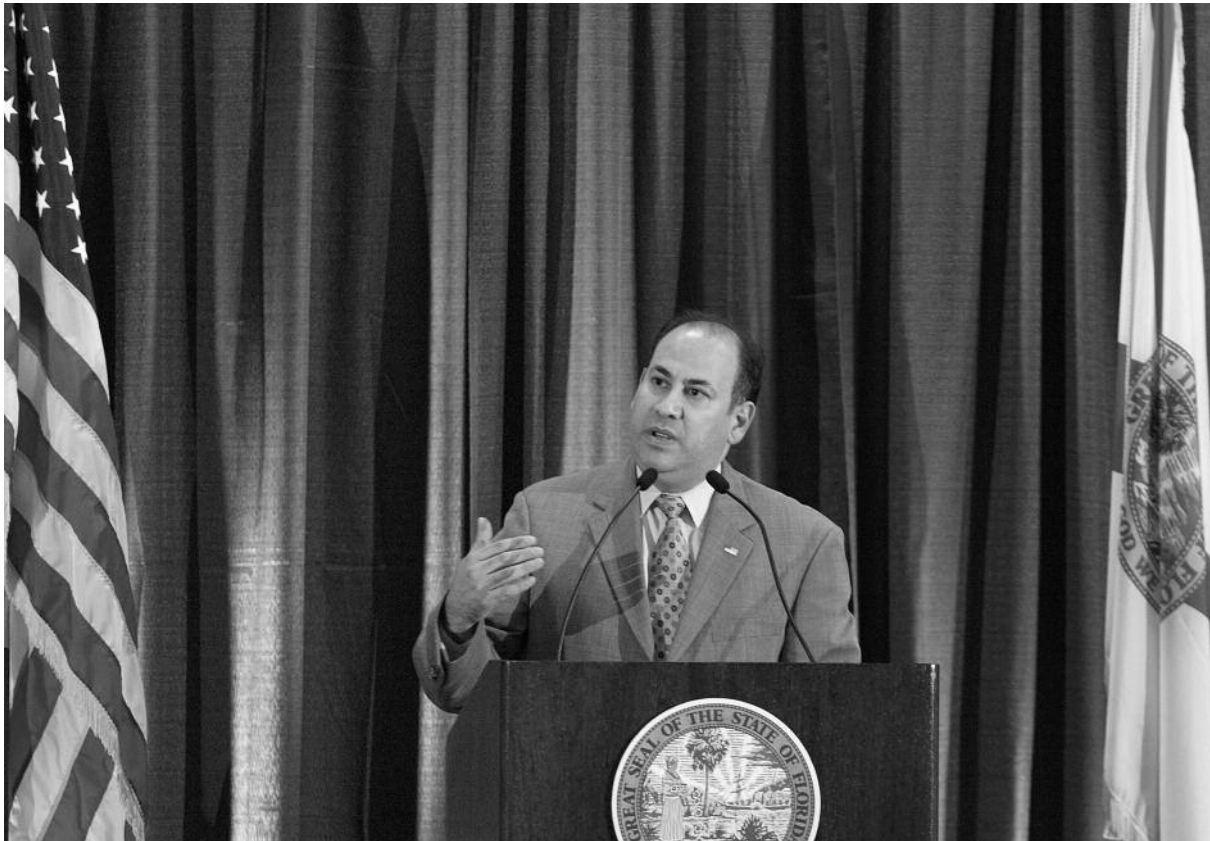
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The FTAA and Migration

An Interview with Roger Noriega¹

Leonardo Curzio* Jesús Esquivel**



Gary I. Rothstein / Reuters

Assistant Secretary Noriega at last November's Miami summit.

"How can the U.S. achieve a multilateral accord? It may be complicated, but it is very important, and we have to at least try to achieve that objective.

If we cannot, the United States will explore the possibility of establishing bilateral accords with those countries that are willing to at least ensure an advance of the trade issue among our countries."

The following interview was done on the eve of the Hemisphere Security Meeting held under the auspices of the Organization of American States in Mexico City in late October 2003. For that reason, and because Noriega is very familiar with the issues involved as he was previously the U.S. permanent representative to the OAS, the first question speaks to hemispheric security. The interview later deals with Mexico's situation after abandoning the Inter-American Mutual Assistance Treaty (IAMT). The assistant secretary looks at other issues such as the November 12 binational meeting, the future of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and the Americas Summit to be held in January in Monterrey. Finally, it puts bilateral relations between Mexico and the United States into perspective.

LEONARDO CURZIO: Mr. Noriega, you were your country's ambassador to the Organization of American States, and you worked very directly with the commission that has discussed the issue of hemispheric security. Is the United States satisfied with what has been achieved in matters of hemispheric security?

ROGER NORIEGA: Yes, very frankly, I believe that the October declaration on hemispheric security which the ministers finally approved represents a very broad, very profound consensus on the issue. We talk in that declaration about the new threats, the new challenges to hemispheric security, but also about the traditions. And we discuss

in it the existing mechanisms to confront the problems in a practical, comprehensive and constructive way. It represents a very important commitment. It is a political document, a very profound commitment, and a very broad consensus about the issue of hemispheric security.

LC: Does Mexico's decision a few days before the tragic events of New York and Washington to leave the Inter-American Mutual Assistance Treaty have an effect? Does the fact that Mexico is no longer in the treaty and that

LC: Mr. Noriega, we have advanced a great deal in inter-American dialogue. One example is the certification process which used to create friction between societies and governments and has now been replaced by a multilateral certification system that I think has helped everyone. I am referring to the fight against drugs. What is Washington's opinion of this matter?

RN: Well, our government still has an instrument to determine which countries are not making the efforts needed to deal with drug trafficking, but it is a

“Obviously, there are challenges, but there are also important opportunities to strengthen our North American community.”

the commission meeting was held in Mexico create a bad atmosphere, particularly when you have said—as have other American dignitaries—that the IAMT continues to be functional for dealing with threats?

RN: In my opinion, no. This declaration includes a reference to the IAMT as a mechanism that deals with the issue of the threats against the Americas, but the declaration also recognizes that there are other mechanisms that deal with other non-traditional problems, new challenges. We are really satisfied because that document recognizes the importance of the IAMT as an inter-American legal instrument to coordinate our efforts about foreign threats, but it also recognizes the viewpoint of the Mexican government that other challenges, other threats can be dealt with using other mechanisms and other instruments that we have in the inter-American system.

separate action and identifies the very problematic countries. We are talking here about only two or three countries in the world. There is also a multilateral mechanism, different from the one you mentioned, to coordinate efforts, to measure countries' policies and also provide them with technical help to ensure that all countries in this inter-American community are participating in the fight against drugs, particularly within their own national borders.

LC: Mr. Noriega, before getting into bilateral affairs, would you tell me, what are the United States' expectations about the Americas Summit in Monterrey?

RN: Well, we are seeking a good opportunity for the heads of government from our region to dialogue about the challenges the hemisphere is facing. Obviously, there are challenges, but there are also important opportunities

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** *Proceso* magazine correspondent in Washington, D.C.

to strengthen our North American community. We are also working with our colleagues from Latin America, the Caribbean and Canada to devise an action plan that includes concrete measures that the governments will have to implement to deal with the problems we face, for example, extreme poverty. The only way to improve this situation is through economic development, which includes international trade, investment, etc. A type of economic development in which everyone in our countries can participate and contribute to the fight against extreme

“The fight against corruption is also
one of the hemisphere-wide strategies
for the coming years.”

poverty. We should come to accords about our governments' commitments to investing in their own people, in the well-being of their own people to ensure that people have access to health and education programs, to ensure that they have the tools they need to improve their own lives, to build a better life for themselves, for their families and for their children.

Another important issue is good government practices, to ensure that administration in our countries is open, transparent, effective, honest. For that reason, the fight against corruption is also one of the hemisphere-wide strategies for the coming years. The most important thing is to develop an action plan with concrete tactics and strategies to attack the problems we are facing.

LC: About trade issues, previous Americas Summits have set a calendar for ad-

vancing with the FTAA. Some say that after the failure of the Cancún WTO meeting and the results of the Miami meeting, the FTAA would still take a long time to be made a reality. What is your opinion? What does the schedule of the FTAA look like to you?

RN: Well, our policy is to continue negotiating in a multilateral forum to come to a regional agreement. From our point of view, it would be very important to have an agreement that included all the countries that want to participate. We can talk about bilateral accords, as you

well know. We have bilateral accords: Mexico has 25 bilateral accords with other countries of the world, for example, including NAFTA. But that implies trade just between countries participating in those bilateral accords. We want to continue the efforts to achieve a multilateral accord because trade among neighboring countries is much more important than trade with the United States. For example, trade among the Andean countries really implies much more economically speaking in terms of the development of those countries' economies than the trade of those countries individually with the United States. This is why the objective of a multilateral accord is very important, and fundamental for our policy. We are talking with our Brazilian partners, who are co-chairing the FTAA, to ensure that we continue with that objective. How can we achieve a multilateral accord? It may be complicated, but it is very

important, and we have to at least try to achieve that objective. If we cannot achieve a multilateral accord, the United States will explore the possibility of establishing bilateral accords with those countries that are willing to at least ensure an advance of the trade issue among our countries.

JESÚS ESQUIVEL: In Mexico-United States bilateral relations, migration is very important. What is President Bush really going to offer the Mexican government vis-à-vis migration? Can we expect something soon or is simply nothing going to happen?

RN: I would prefer to talk about our relations in a comprehensive way. We have to understand and remember that we cooperate widely about issues that are very important for the well-being of our countries, among other things, matters of the economy, investment, security, the fight against drugs. Migration is part of that, and we are going to consider alternatives. It is also important to know that this issue does not interfere with dialogue between our countries. We understand perfectly well that it is a priority for the Mexican government, but it might be a problem if we focused all our attention on it and based our relations solely on the migration issue. We have other sub-issues that we also want to talk about. Undoubtedly, we are going to dialogue about migration, but I am not expecting new initiatives about this issue soon. **NM**

NOTES

¹ This interview was done October 24, 2003. Roger Noriega is the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs at the U.S. State Department.



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Mexico vs. China

John A. Adams, Jr.*



China's Prime Minister Wen Jiabao visited Mexico December 12.

China is sucking away Mexico's jobs. Globalization is entering a fateful new stage, in which the competitive perils intensify for low-wage developing countries much like the continuing pressures on high-wage manufacturing workers in the United States and other advanced economies.

In the "race to the bottom," China is defining the new bottom.

WILLIAM GREIDER

The global trade landscape changes daily, but no more sweeping change occurred than that of the accession of China to the World Trade Organization (WTO) on September

17, 2001. And in the process, it is most ironic that Mexico, the nation with the most bi- and multi-lateral trade agreements was, up until the last moment, strongly opposed to China's membership in the worldwide trade body. In fact, it was because of their emergence as a major manufacturing platform as

well as their external trade expertise through the 1990s and into the turn of the century that Mexico perceived China clearly as a long term threat. Their arguments and objections were not without merit.¹

The darling of the investors during early 1990s, the "Mexican Miracle" had

* Executive director and CEO of the Laredo Development Foundation.

Mexico's maquila experience was vital to its gradual steps toward globalization and abandonment of bankrupt policies such as those of the 1950s and 1960s.

been touted as the model for the emerging markets and economies of the so called “newly industrialized” nations. The Mexican model, given the 2,000 mile border with the United States, is not a pure example or benchmark for the emerging world at large. Mexico inked the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), survived a radical peso devaluation in late 1994, made its political leap into a broader acceptance of democracy—witnessed by the election of Vicente Fox in 2000—and by 2000-01 began gradually to reap the benefits of its transitions to a more open economy, undergirded by a steady inflow of foreign direct investment, that averaged \$12 billion plus per year from 1996-2002. NAFTA, for all its pre-approval hype, proved a major success for Mexico.

Before that, since the mid-1960s, there have been over a dozen changes in the Mexican off-shore investment laws as well as a new layer of international accords such as GATT-WTO and NAFTA that have modified the maquiladora sector. However, in its sum total, by the late 1990s the maquila industry was the number one hard currency generator in Mexico, surpassing revenues from both oil exports and tourism. Mexico's maquila experience was vital to its gradual steps toward globalization and abandonment of bankrupt policies such as the import substitution industrialization (ISI) regime of the 1950s and 1960s.

In concept and in fact, the maquila industry envisioned in the late 1960s

was one of labor-intensive low-paying jobs. Taking advantage of tariff laws as well as abundant and inexpensive labor, foreign companies were able to do piece work and/or assemble and re-export the component parts, or garments back to the parent company in the U.S. for final assembly and packaging. Driven by the global cost of doing business and the increasing need to lower cost and increase profit margins, Mexico gradually became a tremendous complement and/or option for companies looking for economical and cost effective high-volume off-shore production in order to take advantage of tariff laws. Herein lies the paradox as noted by James Gerber, “If the maquiladora sector indeed represents purely comparative advantage-based development, then it is simple to predict the evolution of the industry. As Mexico workers gain skills, incomes are likely to rise, and unskilled assembly production will move to a lower cost environment.”²

As the years passed the Mexican work force proved to be both highly trainable and cost effective for high volume repetitive production operations. As the cross-border infrastructure into Mexico by road and rail improved, as

well as the addition of more attractive investment laws, foreign firms flocked south of the border. The number of off-shore foreign plants in Mexico grew from 160 operations in 1970 with 20,300 employees, to 1,789 by 1990 with 460,283, and in mid-2002 numbered over 3,200 with 1.1 million workers. By 2002, virtually all of the Fortune 1000 (some 700 companies) had a portion of their operations, production components or affiliates in Mexico. The proximity to the growing U.S. market has been an overwhelming comparative competitive advantage which the NICs of Asia could not replicate without locating operations in Mexico.³ However, during the early 2000s it became apparent that due to a combination of factors (including entry into GATT in 1987, NAFTA, changes in the investment and tax laws as well as the impact of FDI and technology transfer to Mexico) the role and scope of the competitiveness of the maquila industry had begun to gradually change. Furthermore, tremendous progress had affected competitive advantage offered via the foreign maquila operations due to the direct impact on the expansion of the domestic Mexican industrial base.⁴

Technology transfer via the maquilas as well as the growth and development of indigenous Mexican firms gradually changed the nature of production worker skills and demands on labor as well as intensive automated processes.

The proximity to the growing U.S. market has been an overwhelming comparative advantage which the NICs of Asia could not replicate without locating operations in Mexico.

Examples of emerging companies that made major strides via the direct and indirect exposure to foreign technology transfer include Grupo IMSA, Grupo Alfa, Cemex, Vitro, and Apasco. While labor costs have remained relatively low in terms of the U.S. and European market rates, the foreign-owned plants in Mexico were gradually moving toward more value-added jobs due in large measure to the increased specialization of machinery and production processes as well as new means to compensate workers, such as pay-for-knowledge. In essence, fewer workers were needed, while output increased—due to the changing technology—allowing both high quality and cost effectiveness.

PRODUCTION SHIFTS

The shift to more high-tech manufacturing operations is evident at such firms in Mexico such as Visteon, Emerson, AT&T, GM, Delphi, and Caterpillar. For example, efforts to enhance both production and quality were augmented by pay-for-knowledge programs in place of old style longevity-seniority models. While time on the job is considered for certain benefits and vacations, the stress gradually shifted to knowledge-based quality production. This shift to a values-based management style is a clear indication of ongoing changes throughout both the foreign-owned maquilas as well as domestic

Initially, lower paying jobs shifted from
the U.S.-Mexican border region to southern Mexico.
Gradually the exodus was global in scope.

Mexican operations. One key measurement of the pay-for-knowledge programs is that, while production and quality are expected to be high and rejected parts low, the average hourly pay is often double the average pay in other old style plants. Furthermore, this compensation model may be a key element to also reducing employee turnover.

Since the early 1990s Mexico has fully known that as long as investors felt safe in the country and labor remained competitive, they would be attractive to foreign direct investment, due in large part to the proximity of the U.S. market and plants in the mid-west. While FDI remained steady and actually increased over the 1990s, it became apparent that the low-end labor-intensive jobs were in jeopardy of being lost to other countries. Initially, lower paying jobs shifted from the U.S.-Mexican border region to southern Mexico. Gradually the exodus of low wage jobs was global in scope, and not just in Mexico. The transition was primarily in three industry sectors—textiles, electronics, and any low-tech labor-intensive assembly, i.e. paper products, packaging material, furniture or bicycles. Generally the primary reason for relocation of a

labor intensive process is wages. The most volatile and price sensitive sector has been the textile and garment industry. Thus, by the early 1990s, companies began to look for areas of lower wages, minimal industrial restrictions and adequate infrastructure. In terms of Asia, a production shift occurred as companies flocked to Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. For some labor-intensive firms in Mexico, the gradual change was first to the Caribbean Islands, Honduras and El Salvador followed by Costa Rica and Nicaragua and to a lesser extent in Guatemala and Panama. By 2002, some 250 off-shore operations in Mexico moved to El Salvador. In Honduras, U.S. and Korean firms have established the majority of the over 200 maquilas with an estimated workforce of 100,000. Thus, much of the shift of jobs out of Mexico predates both NAFTA and China's WTO membership. Furthermore, as select companies departed Mexico there has been a net positive inflow of new investment to establish new operations as well as expand existing facilities. This is further evidenced by the fact that the number of maquiladoras in Mexico has grown from 2,300 in 1995 to over 3,200 in 2002.⁵

The increase in higher paying, more technical jobs was welcomed in Mexico, yet there was a fear of the impact due to the loss of lower wage positions. The downturn of the U.S. economy, which began in early 2001, signaled a change (in the wake of the 2000-01

As select companies departed Mexico, there has been
a net positive inflow of new investment to establish new
operations as well as expand existing facilities.

dot-com melt down in the U.S.) as demand declined for automobiles, textiles and electronics. It is important to note that the U.S. economic downturn and the impact of the sluggish growth in cross-border trade with Mexico predates the September 2001 terrorists attacks, as also do Mexico's concern with the entry of China in the WTO.⁶

In the eyes of Mexico, China has been the problem primarily of the United States and to a lesser degree of the old Soviet Union, both in terms of global strategic posturing dating from the Cold War as well as the thawing of commercial relationships. By the 1990s, U.S.-China relationships hinged around the yearly review of the "most favored nation" (MFN) status. MFN, fueled primarily by non-trade items such as human rights, dominated discussions that in turn shaped trade policy. The Clinton administration attempted to demystify the MFN concept—which is, despite its name, a nondiscrimination clause—by calling it "permanent normal trade relations." However, China's primary intent, above and beyond MFN, was to be a member of the WTO. Since the inception of GATT in 1947, forerunner to the WTO, China had been shut out of the mainstream of global trade accords. Not until the transfer of Hong Kong by the British back to the Chinese on June 30, 1997, did they begin the final push for membership.⁷

CHINA KNOCKING AT THE DOOR

Mexico's concerns about the impact of China—primarily expressed in their worry that low wages and relatively high productivity could quickly undercut any competitive advantage enjoyed with the U.S. market—resulted in its efforts to

block WTO membership or at least negotiate for terms that would prevent China from dumping products in Mexico (or the U.S.) and displacing workers by offering lower wages. Fears of a sudden impact on the manufacturing sector and the resulting job loss as well as the potential flight of FDI were well founded.⁸

In less than two decades China went from essentially no workers in "foreign-owned" domestic manufacturing operations to over 18 million by 2002—more than either France or Italy. Thus, while most observers in the Western world credit China with both its large land

In less than two decades, China went from essentially no workers in "foreign-owned" domestic manufacturing operations to over 18 million by 2002, more than either France or Italy.

mass and vast population, few realize the potential magnitude of the impact of China not only on trade with the U.S. and Mexico, but also worldwide implications of a new and redefined Chinese new millennium version of the "Open Door"—opened and targeted at the world, and hallmarked by an export-led growth strategy.

For over two centuries, and some argued maybe as many as 10 centuries, China has been wrapped in self imposed isolation. In the last 20 years, China has grudgingly opened to the world. Coupled with the forces of communism and the Cold War through 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall ended in the collapse of the old Soviet Union in 1991 and unquestionably opened discussions among hard liners in Beijing on the future course of interaction with the West. The Chinese strategy, a na-

tion with a population over 1.3 billion, to reclaim a place on the world stage is marked by contrasting features and dynamics—political, economic, and cultural—that the world at large has yet to fully grasp.⁹

The very country that will host the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing has over 70 million people in abject poverty and another 100 million—equal to the total 2001 population of Mexico—living on less than U.S.\$1 per day. As the seventh largest economy in the world at the turn of the century, China is currently second only to Japan in Asia. Agriculture still dominates the Chi-

nese domestic economy. Of the many East-West dissimilarities is China's struggle with open market economics and the old line insular communist planned economy model—so often flaunted, yet so long a domestic failure.

In retrospect, one of the most pivotal moments for China was the return of Hong Kong and the emergence and creep toward a market economy via the theme "one county - two systems." Fully aware of the economic, technological, and industrial gains in the West, with the return of Hong Kong, China now lay claim and ownership to a true and enduring icon of a free market success. The economic impact and dynamic nature of the few square miles of capitalist Hong Kong was a marvel even the communist People's Party leadership could not deny. China wanted entry in the broader global economy via the

WTO primarily on their terms. For example, shortly after the return of Hong Kong, China took its first significant plunge into the world capital markets—albeit on a very modest scale—by raising U.S.\$3.9 billion in an offering of a mere 10 percent of PetroChina, the world's fourth largest petroleum company.

Fashioned by the aging Deng Xiaoping, architect of China's modern reform era in the wake of the disastrous years under Mao, China in terms of its economy—not political structure—turned, albeit gradually, to more western oriented open market policies.¹⁰ The Four Tigers of Asia were obvious models in

U.S.\$52.7 billion, surpassing the United States as the world's leading recipient. During the decade of the 1990s, inflows of FDI increased tenfold as China grew at an average annual rate of 9.7 percent. In spite of the tremendous FDI, the country has relied on massive government spending for domestic growth. And in the process government debt has spiked sharply up.¹¹

The Western influence on the industrial areas of the Chinese coast has not been without pain and conflict ever since the Treaty Ports of Europe imposed their influence in the 1850's. In spite of the economic activity, hard

nese yuan is in effect loosely pegged to the U.S. dollar, concerns persist about both the dynamics of the world markets with regard to the weakness or strength of the dollar as well as the impact on domestic inflation which has periodically hit China. To maintain stability in the wake of change and foreign influence will be critical as more and more of the population has contact with the West and the Internet. Thus, for all the apparent hype of the “new” China, as a challenge to other nations for manufacturing investment and job creation increases with the sudden surge of growth and euphoria with WTO membership, there will also be risk. A risk that the political dynamics and transition in China will not keep pace with the rush to globalization. A very close observer of China's transition noted: “Policy making in Beijing is like steering a supertanker—it takes a long time before a policy gets approval and becomes a reality, and even then the central government has limited power over a vast country.”¹²

China would foster the new industrialization in an effort to absorb surplus labor migrating from the interior, encourage technology transfer and increase FDI.

the area of export-led economic development and growth, attraction of FDI, generation of hard currency and domestic job creation. During the 1990s GDP per person rose 5 percent annually in the developing countries, such as Mexico and South Korea, opening their economies to international trade and the attraction of FDI. By 2001, the GDP per person in Mexico was over twice the output of China. Thus, China's strategy has been to develop its coastal areas into a world class trade zone—called Special Economic Zones (SEZs). Much like the wave of development along the U.S.-Mexican border in the late 1960s to create an investment-friendly region, China would foster the new industrialization in an effort to absorb surplus labor migrating from the interior, encourage technology transfer and increased FDI, which in 2002 reached a record

liners in the communist party today routinely express concern about the political impact. Not unlike those who were concerned about President Fox getting too close to the United States, the old guard in China are concerned about China getting too close to the western world. Privatization—or as it is referred to in China “corporatization”—of state-owned companies has been difficult. The demise of these inefficient and overstaffed wards of the state have given the party reason for concern due to the loss of millions of jobs as well as the loss of revenue for the central government. Furthermore, the banking system remains underdeveloped and overextended; corruption persists; reform is needed for the creation of property rights; and the dismantling of export subsidies will prove controversial in a state-run society. While the Chi-

THE MEXICAN RESPONSE

Mexico is truly at a crossroads. Official figures indicate employment in the maquila sector down nearly 18 percent in 2002, and tending to further decline in the next decade. The move to high-tech jobs and the challenge posed not only by China but a host of low-wage countries, spells a clear signal that there will be a flight of low-tech labor-intensive jobs in the garment, electronics, some automotive components and footwear industries. The recession of the U.S. economy in 2001-2002, coupled with a strong peso, caused concern about the fundamental direction of the Mexican economy. President Fox

Mexico needs to maintain a continuous watch-and-wait attitude because China's rise will in fact prove highly disruptive in the next two decades.

noted that Mexico's export-led model, that had been underpinned by decades of investment in off-shore assembly plants, "to some degree is worn out." While Fox urged more home-grown research and design, little mention was made that domestic Mexican companies have seldom invested adequately in that area. What looms as more critical to the health of the Mexican economy is the increased dependence on the North American market. By 2003 the United States bought between 80 to 85 percent of all Mexican exports.¹³

Fox took office with the promise to maintain the nation's steady growth and declared rather dramatically that the target for his administration was a 7 percent GDP growth. The dynamics of the world markets had already begun to shift jobs out of Mexico. In spite of the continued positive flow of FDI, the banking sector was unable to provide the level of local financing needed to expand the domestic base and industrial sector. While the large corporations were able to go to the international financial markets, their new found capital sources increasingly were used outside of Mexico to expand or acquire new markets.¹⁴ Thus, a program was needed to address the dynamics of the region.

A pre-inaugural meeting with Fox and the presidents of Central America, representatives of the Inter-American Development Bank (IBD), the Central American Bank of Economic Development (CABEI) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the

Caribbean (ECLAC) on November 30, 2000 resulted in a bold proposal to create a framework for sustainable region-wide economic development projects and attraction of FDI stretching from central Mexico to Panama. The proposal was named the Plan Puebla-Panama (PPP).

PPP AND TAXATION

Little attention was given to the PPP during 2001. However, with the recession in the United States and the flight of jobs from Mexico, the plan received greater attention. By early 2002, the NGO development banks and funds had set aside U.S.\$42 million for the first phase projects in the region. However, in the words of President Fox, in mid-2002 the plan moved from an idea to a "reality" with a pledge of a line of credit of U.S.\$4 billion from a group lead by the Inter-American Development Bank. The multi-year funding package could take as much as a decade to fully implement. Thus, in its initial stage the PPP is divided into eight key areas referred to as the "Meso-American initiatives" to include: sustainable development, work force development and training, prevention and mitigation of natural disasters, promotion of tourism, facilitation of commercial activity to include the attraction of foreign investment, development of the regions, infrastructure (roads, ports, and airports, expansion of electrical services) and enhancement

of the telecommunications network. The idea is to link the region with the economic and commercial zone of the future—not unlike the Special Economic Zones on the coast of China.

By one estimation the six Mexican northern border states employ 29 percent of the active work force, comprise 77 percent of the maquila sites in Mexico and produce 23 percent of the nation's GDP.¹⁵ In order to address the need to maintain the critical role of the northern production area, Fox swiftly created the Northern Border Region Development Program. In large measure, Fox's border czar, Ernesto Ruffo, noted this program marks the first time federal funds have been earmarked for the development of the border, and thus were sent as a signal that the region is important to the national economy. However, in recent years it has not been the desire for attention from Mexico City, but instead a cry for the central government to finally clarify the role and treatment of taxes and duties for the maquila sector. By all appearances, via a constantly changing and reissuing of rules, the central government has undertaken the taxation of the maquilas at whatever maximum level they can extract. These efforts have gained gradual momentum, giving existing operations and potential foreign investors the impression that Mexico is squeezing more and more taxes out of the maquilas to cover declines in other areas. The confusion and concern began in January 2001, when the NAFTA duty waiver was eliminated and no clearly defined import tax regime was developed. In short, three key areas of taxation impact the competitiveness of the maquila sector: import taxes and the impact of NAFTA's Article 303, changes in the confusing and inconsistent taxing of income and assets to include concerns with

avoiding double taxation, and, third, antidumping duties or tariffs on imported goods that are deemed to be a threat to the domestic market because they enter the country below fair market value. Prior to 2001, the maquila sector was exempt from such antidumping duties. Is it possible that the tax authorities at the Finance Ministry think there is no end to the number-one hard-currency-generating sector of the economy? One observer noted, "Despite tax uncertainties and real wage increases over the past five years, maquiladora employment grew at an annual rate of 14.4 percent between January 1995 and October 2000. The pace of growth has been remarkable and contrasts sharply with the notion of a fragile industry

teetering on the edge of uncompetitiveness due to higher taxes and rising wages."¹⁶ Nevertheless, past performance does not in any way portend the future growth of the maquila sector, especially given the lack of transparency in the bureaucratic and taxation regime.

CONCLUSION

Mexico and the world need to maintain a continuous watch-and-wait attitude because China's rise will in fact prove highly disruptive in the next two decades as it attempts to come to grips with a rules-based international system they have long exploited for their singular gain. The very targets and goals of Chi-

na's global penetration signal a fundamental shift in trading patterns, labor concerns and environmental dynamics few can predict. By its own measure, China intends to double GDP by 2010 and its share of world trade will triple to 10 percent by 2020, surpassing Japan at 5 percent and standing second only to the U.S. in the range of 12 percent.¹⁷

Mexico is faced with the possible destabilizing task of dealing with lost jobs, a threat to FDI and the ongoing issue of cross-border immigration with the United States. Nevertheless, Mexico will continue to be critical to the growth and stability of the region. The dynamics of this regional cross-border relationship will be vital to U.S. commercial interests. ■■■

NOTES

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- ⁶ Ginger Thompson, "Fallout of U.S. Recession Drifts South into Mexico," *The New York Times*, 21 December 2001.
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- ⁹ Daniel Yergin and Joseph Stanislaw, *The Commanding Heights: The Battle for the World Economy* (New York: Touchstone, 2002), pp. 189-199; Gerald Segal, "Does China Matter?" *Foreign Affairs* (Washington, D.C.) September 1999, pp. 24-36.
- ¹⁰ James Kynge, "China's capitalists get a party invitation," *Financial Times* (London), 16 August 2002.
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- ¹³ See Bibiana Gómez Muñoz's article "Ten Years of NAFTA" in this same issue of *Voices of Mexico*. [Editor's Note.]
- ¹⁴ The global reach of Cemex is a prime example. The Monterrey cement company expanded operations not only in the Philippines, Spain and South Korea but also Texas.
- ¹⁵ *The News* (Mexico City), 14 February 2002.
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Trends: Mexico vs. China

China is indeed a threat to the stability of the global markets and Mexico with regard to adequate jobs between now and 2010. Furthermore, as China gains an increased market share of the world manufacturing demand via low wages and a failure to adhere to WTO covenants, further FDI will be channeled away from Mexico. Mexico will in fact forfeit its competitive advantage in low-skilled and low-paying jobs at a time between 2010 and 2020 when it will have one of the largest 19-26-year-old work forces in the world outside of China. Fears of China's entrance in the WTO are probably somewhat exaggerated due to the fact that low wage jobs began exiting Mexico prior to 2001; however, in the minds of those who have lost and will lose their jobs the threat is real and lasting.

Danger and Impact

Increased amounts of funding will be needed both as a social safety net and for the training of value-added jobs in the next generation of manufacturing operations that will demand a higher skilled trainable workforce. The lack of jobs in Mexico can lead to domestic unrest and increased migration northward.

The Plan Puebla-Panama or a similar program will need to be developed for both southern Mexico and Central America in order to provide an additional job outlet for a growing regional labor market. Environmental concerns and impediments need to be resolved as quickly as possible given the lead time needed to develop infrastructure. The absence of multi-modal facilities, improved seaports and roads will slow the attraction of private investment in the region.

Danger and Impact

Reluctance to act now to encourage smart development of southern Mexico will pose grave immigration problems for the United States on the northern border, and thus, strained relations with not only Mexico but also with Central America.

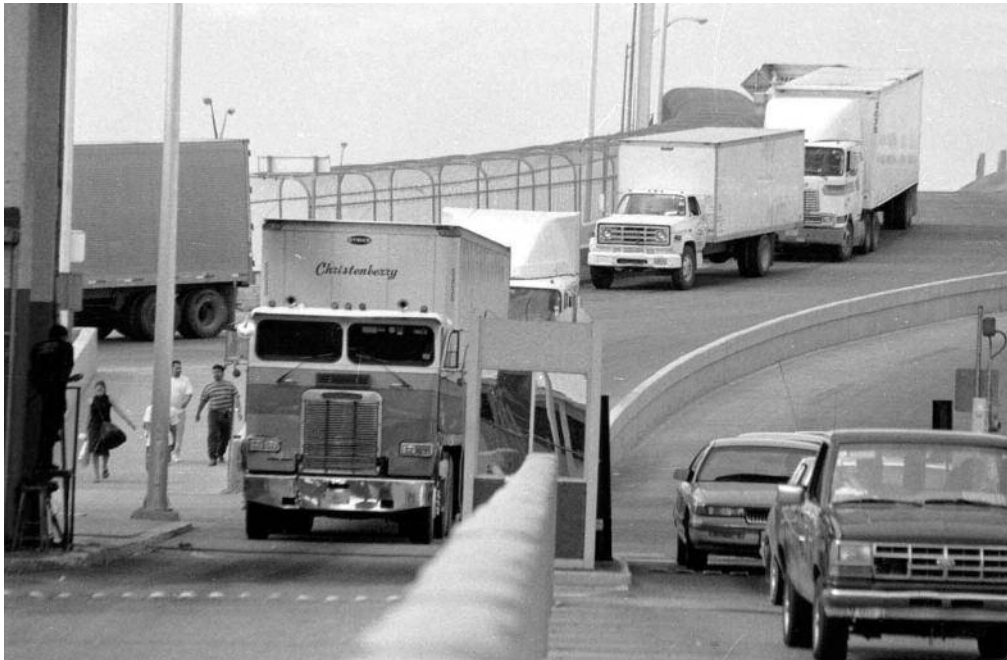
To ensure the competitive nature of the existing maquiladora sector, the continued creation of value-added jobs and the lasting attraction of foreign direct investment, legislative measures need to be taken by the Mexican Congress to remedy the lack of coherent decision-making authority at the Finance Ministry and clearly define an understandable and transparent taxation and duties policy that reduces the administrative burdens at the same time that it supports and fosters the enhancement of the maquiladora sector.

Danger and Impact

Investors will look elsewhere to establish operations and, thus, have a tremendous impact on job creation and government revenues as well as diminish the prime source of hard currency.

Ten Years of NAFTA Evolution and Perspectives

Bibiana Gómez Muñoz*



Guadalupe Pérez/Cuartoscuro

Trade-related border crossings skyrocketed in the last 10 years.

Ten years after the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into effect, questions abound regarding its effects on both Mexico's economic development and the kind of relationship our country has built with the United States and Canada. Equally important for the current debate is NAFTA's future, whether through a deepening of the economic integration of the three countries or through the creation of a balance of interests that would guarantee efficient management of trilateral relations.

* Analyst of international issues.

NAFTA's benefits have been uneven. Agriculture, for example, is one of the sectors that has participated the least.

NAFTA'S EFFECTS

Without a doubt, NAFTA transformed the Mexican economy. The treaty represented an irreversible change in the strategy of economic opening and liberalization that had begun to be implemented from the middle of the 1980s. The negotiation and signing of NAFTA were a central part of a new economic setup that radically changed the relationship Mexico

would maintain with the United States and other countries. NAFTA thus became a useful instrument for inserting the Mexican economy in the main networks of trade and investment worldwide.

NAFTA has had a major impact on Mexico. The main indicators are trade and investment flows. From 1993 until today, Mexico has increased its total trade with the United States by 280 percent. In that first year, our country did

U.S.\$88.87 billion in trade with our northern neighbor; by 2002, trade had risen to U.S.\$249.60 billion. Trade with Canada has increased 265 percent, going from U.S.\$2.74 billion in 1993 to U.S.\$7.29 in 2002.

Clearly, the increase in trade with both countries has been substantial. However, as can be seen in Graph 1, it has concentrated excessively with the United States. This is the result of a historical tendency that structurally links the Mexican economy with the U.S. In that sense, the treaty has fostered greater concentration of trade with the United States. In 1990, for example, 69 percent of Mexico's trade was with the U.S.; by 2002, that figure had risen to 78 percent.

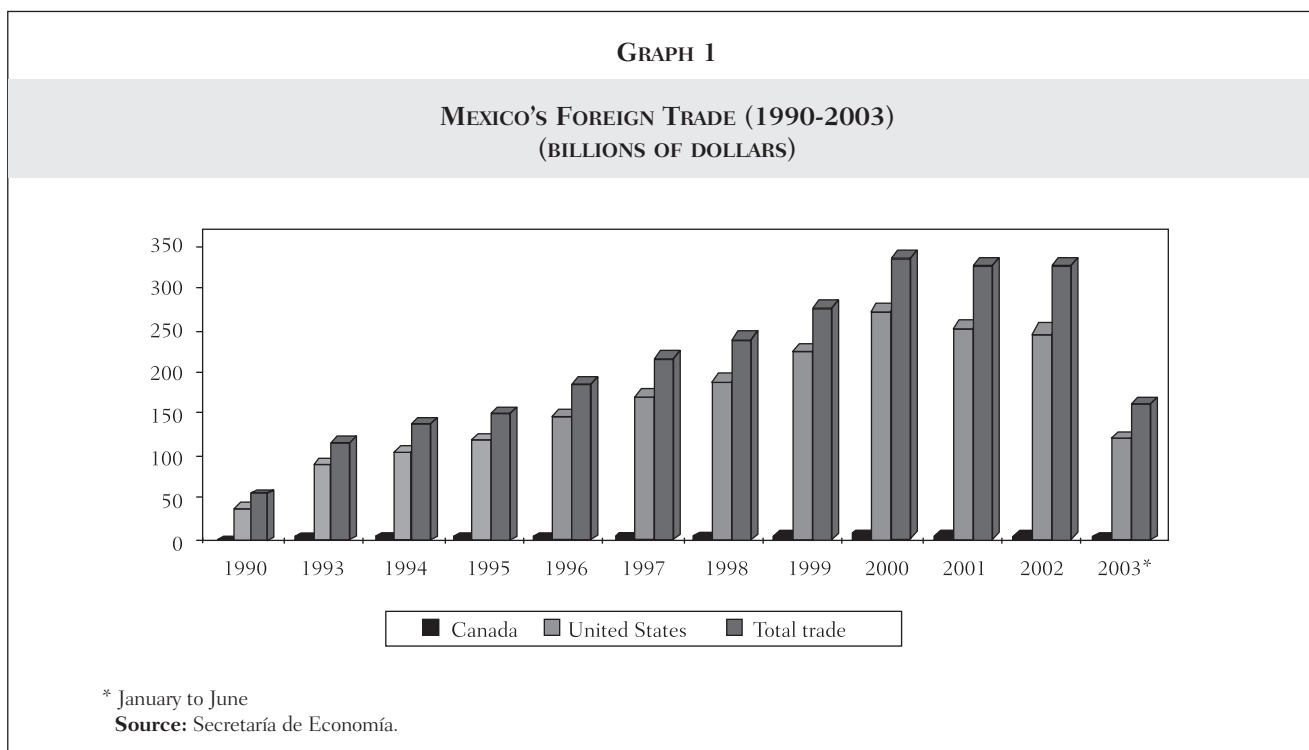
It is also important to point out that this propensity for the United States has favored an increasingly bilateral integration of North America; despite the fact that NAFTA is a trilateral agreement, clearly, most matters are developed bilaterally, with the United States at the center of both Mexico's and Canada's priorities.

NAFTA is not only a trade agreement; it also promotes investment. One of the treaty's effects has been to encourage a considerable increase in the flows of foreign direct investment into Mexico. Graph 2, while showing greater U.S. investment in our country, also registers an increase in investment from countries outside North America due mainly to the attraction of the U.S. market.

When the governments of Mexico, the United States and Canada negotiated NAFTA, the main motivation was to substantially increase trade and investment through the creation of a free trade zone. In that sense, NAFTA has been successful: in 10 years Mexico has become the United States' second trade partner, Canada's first trade partner in Latin America and the world's eighth exporter.¹ Also, the growth of the Mexican economy has been profoundly linked to the expansion of foreign trade since approximately 30 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) depends on exports.²

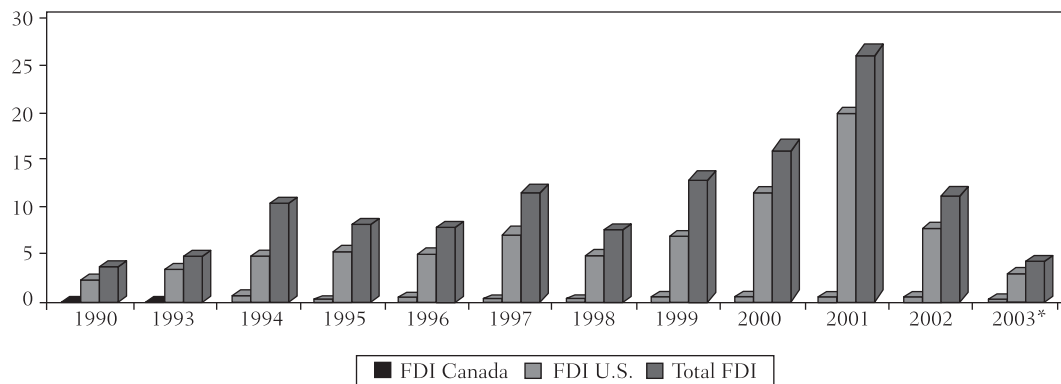
As a region, NAFTA members' foreign trade share is about 19 percent of world exports and 25 percent of imports.³ With this, North America has become one of the main actors in the reconfiguration of the international economy, on a par with the European Union and the Asian Pacific.

Without a doubt NAFTA transformed the Mexican economy. The treaty represented an irreversible change in the strategy of economic opening and liberalization.



GRAPH 2

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT IN MEXICO (1990-2003)
(BILLIONS OF DOLLARS)



* January to June

Source: Secretaría de Economía.

North America has become one of the main actors in the reconfiguration of the international economy, on a par with the European Union and the Asian Pacific.

However, what have the effects of NAFTA been on Mexico's economic and social development? We have seen that the treaty has had a direct impact on the country's economic growth. Since it came into effect, the Mexican economy has gone through greater liberalization as well as a series of reforms aimed at integrating it fully into the North American market.

The structure of Mexican foreign trade, for example, was radically transformed. Since 1994, manufactured goods have made up more than three-quarters of Mexican exports. Together with this new exporting dynamism, job creation in manufacturing, particularly the maquiladora sector, has increased. However, this growth has occurred mainly in large companies and foreign exporting

firms, while small and medium-sized firms have been left on the sidelines.⁴

Thus, NAFTA's benefits have been uneven. Agriculture, for example, is one of the sectors that has participated the least, representing only 2 percent of the country's total exports. Peasant demonstrations in 2003 questioned the treaty's success and even brought up for debate the need to renegotiate NAFTA and come to an agreement with the government that would guarantee the Mexican countryside's productivity.

In addition to these asymmetries both in the participation in exports and the benefits derived from them, our country's "development" has been characterized by a broader economic and social gap between regions: we continue to have an impoverished South,

excluded from the process of integration of North America.

NAFTA has had positive and negative effects. While the implementation of the treaty has had a direct impact on the national economy's growth, it continues to be vulnerable to the zigzags of the world economy: an economy as open as Mexico's will always be exposed to shocks from abroad. Similarly, Mexico's excessive concentration of trade with the United States stimulates this vulnerability. The U.S. recession in 2001 and 2002 had direct consequences for Mexican exports. As Graph 1 shows, trade dropped in those years, with Mexico taking a loss; in addition, our country has had to compete with other economic actors on the international scene like China, which in just a few months in 2003 managed to become the U.S.'s second trade partner, pushing Mexico into third place, at the same time attracting investment with the resulting loss of jobs in Mexico's maquiladora industry.

NAFTA'S FUTURE

Mexico accepted NAFTA as an instrument for the internationalization of the Mexican economy. It is a trade and investment tool that, however, has had a direct impact on different matters of the bilateral and trilateral agenda.

NAFTA has been a fundamental part of Mexico's integration into the North American market, but the dynamic it has caused has gone beyond what is strictly trade-related to shape many other aspects of relations among the three countries, making the future of the region and Mexico's economic and social development depend on it.

In that sense, NAFTA has institutionalized relations among the three countries through the creation of different bodies and regulations like the Free Trade Commission, the Secretariat and the dispute resolution mechanisms, which have both made trade and investment viable and given them certainty.

NAFTA's institutional consequences have fostered the implementation of mechanisms that aim to solve the problems it creates. This is how we should understand the creation of a North American Development Bank by Mexico and the United States and the establishment of a Border Ecological Cooperation Commission. Both these mechanisms aim to develop environmental infrastructure along the Mexico-U.S. border. *A fortiori*, this kind of cooperation is leading the three countries to create a regional space, both trilaterally and bilaterally, that surpasses the political and economic frontiers of a free trade zone.

However, NAFTA's future is still uncertain. We are very far from unifying criteria and preferences to achieve economic and political unity like that of the European Union. In the same fash-

ion, broadening out the accord to other countries of the Americas, as foreseen at least in the region's political debate during NAFTA's first years, seems unlikely. This is particularly the case since the November 2003 Miami meeting about the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in which the Central American countries and others like Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Panama and the Dominican Republic preferred to establish bilateral negotiations with the United States than to negotiate multilaterally.

In essence, NAFTA continues to be a free trade area consisting of Mexico, the United States and Canada. In the short term, it does not look like it will evolve into a customs union, which should be the following step given the dynamic and nature of the trade among the three countries.

Despite this, the links Mexico has established with its North American trade partners have been strongly marked by the gradual creation of accords and institutional norms that aim to more efficiently deal with certain issues on the agenda.

In this general dynamic we can include recent initiatives on issues such as U.S. security and Mexico's regional development. In March 2002, the Alliance for the Border was created to guarantee border cooperation and security with the United States. The Partnership for Prosperity, implemented between our country and the United States on the same date, contemplates the generation of private resources to foster the development of the most marginalized regions of our country.

Initiatives like the Partnership for Prosperity have formed part of Mexico's foreign policy strategy of deepening integration with the United States and Canada. The well-known "NAFTA

Plus" or Vicente Fox's call at the beginning of his administration to create a North American Community sought to strengthen ties with his counterparts through deepening and broadening out integration of the three countries, following somewhat the European model that would create social compensation funds for Mexico's development. However, this kind of initiative was not taken up in either the United States or Canada when it was proposed. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the military intervention in Iraq, any attempt on Mexico's part to foster greater integration in North America has been put on the back burner, which is clear from the non-negotiation of a integral migratory accord.

Uncertainty about the future of North American integration affects our country directly; while we cannot specifically establish what the next steps in this process will be, clearly Mexico's economic and social development is closely linked to NAFTA's results and the economic integration it has generated. ■■

NOTES

¹ According to World Trade Organization figures, Mexico is the world's eighth exporter with 2.5 percent of the world's trade. Organización Mundial del Comercio, "Estadísticas de Comercio Internacional, 2003", http://www.wto.org/english/res_e/statis_e/its2003_e/section3_e/iii01.xls

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³ Secretaría de Economía, *TLCAN. Una década fortaleciendo una relación dinámica*, (Mexico City: October 2003), p. 2. http://www.economia-snci.gob.mx/sphp_pages/publicaciones/pdfs/nafta_spanish1_10_06.pdf

⁴ J. Ernesto López-Córdova, "NAFTA and the Mexican Economy: Analytical issues and lessons for the FTAA," paper 9 (Buenos Aires: Integration and Regional Programs Department of the Interamerican Development Bank, 2001), pp. 14-15.



Photos by Daniel Munguía

Francisco Macías, *Acid Rain*, 100 x 80 cm, 2002 (digital impression).

Nature in Extinction



Jorge Luna, *Restricted Area*, 80 x 100 cm, 2002 (oil on canvas).

Ecological balance —not only in Mexico, but worldwide— is perpetually threatened by the actions of Man.

A lack of information, resources, time, interest or even power: these are some of the many reasons we Mexicans cite to explain the constant and often irreversible devastation of natural resources plaguing our country. Ecological balance —not only in Mexico, but worldwide— is perpetually threatened by the actions of Man, whose zealous quest for progress and profits is destroying the wealth of a planet that seldom has the weapons it needs to defend itself.

Ecologically speaking, Mexico has been very fortunate since its geography has favored flora and fauna rich in endemic, varied species. Nevertheless, just as our scientists frequently discover previously unknown species, many others irremediably disappear before the undaunted gaze of some and the disconsolate gaze of others.

We know that for the last 100 years, the extinction of species has not followed the natural rhythm of a life cycle, evolving or disappearing, but has

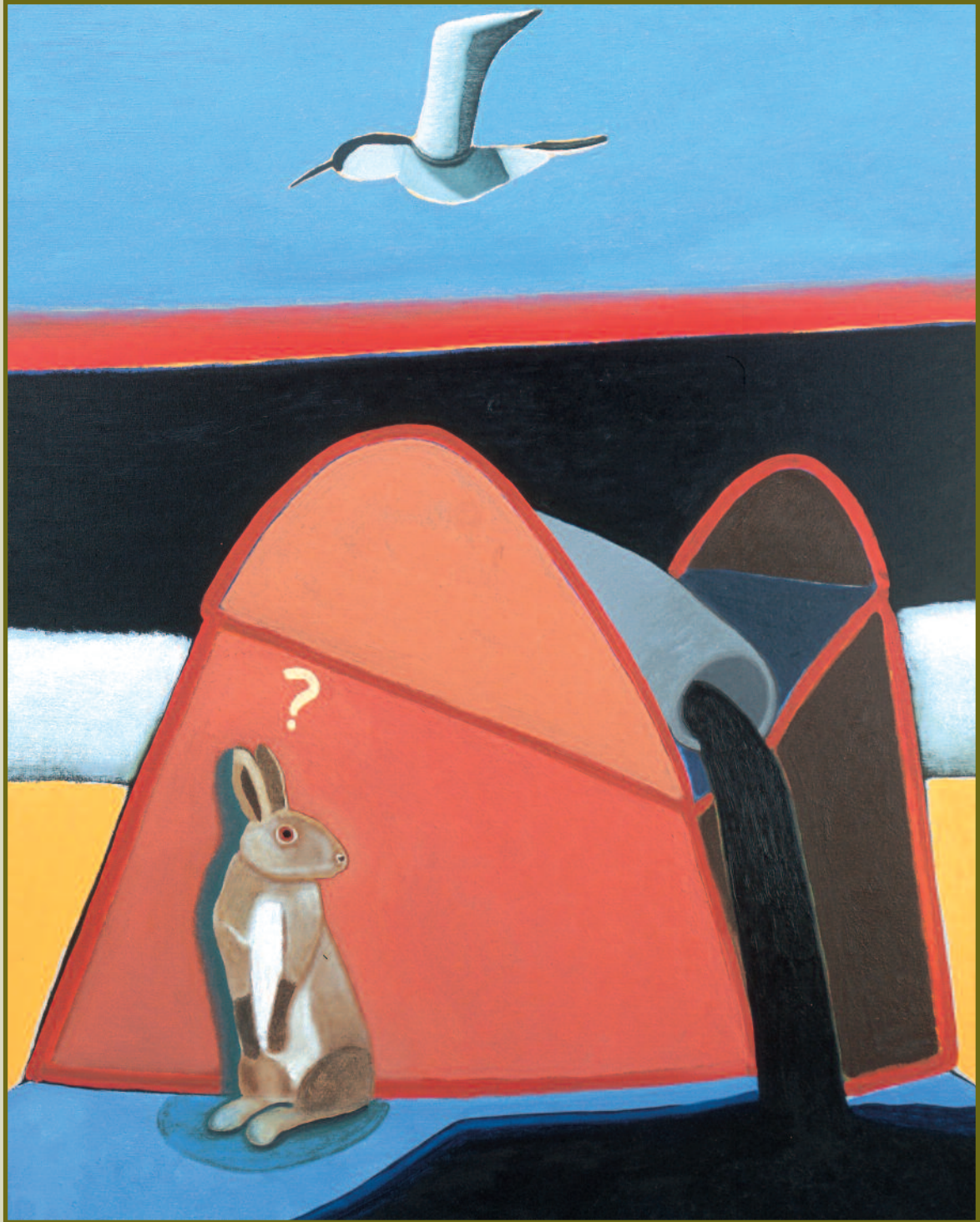


Laura Quintanilla, *Valley of Mexico*, 80 x 100 cm, 2002 (encaustic on canvas).

Art can also be the instrument in a cause by prompting in its viewer a favorable or unfavorable reaction to a given event or fact.

been stimulated and multiplied to the maximum by immoderate cutting of trees, the contamination of water, soil and air, unrestricted hunting and contraband of different species and unchecked technological progress, to mention only a few causes. Given this panorama, different sectors of society have taken up the battle to create awareness about the need to restore ecological balance as much as possible and slow the rapid destruction of our habitat before it is too late.

One of these sectors is the art world. Without losing its aesthetic qualities, a piece of visual art can also be the instrument in a cause by prompting in its viewer a favorable or unfavorable reaction to a given event or fact. This is the *raison d'être* of the collective exhibition "Nature in Extinction." More than forty Mexican visual artists responded to gallery-owner Óscar Román's call to infuse their work with their vision of the unchecked destruction of nature and their interest in making the viewer a co-partic-



Alejandro Arango, *S.O.S.*, 100 x 80 cm, 2002 (oil on canvas).



Guillermo Estrada, *Memories*, 81 x 100 cm, 2002 (acrylic on canvas).

Through their work, our contemporary artists offer ethical and aesthetic testimony to the ecological maelstrom and make a silent call to action.

ipant in the responsibility to aid in closing the wounds inflicted on our planet.

This collective exhibition, inaugurated December 2, 2002 at Mexico City's Óscar Román Gallery, was moved to the Contemporary Art Gallery in Xalapa, Veracruz, where it opened to the public in October 2003, in compliance with the desire to invite Mexico's different states to participate in this kind of artistic endeavor. As Óscar Román says, "If we began an informational crusade in all the states of the country to see which regions were

most affected by the destruction, we could implement plans for recovery with the participation of all of civil society, since not only governments are responsible for the preservation and conservation of our territory."

Voices of Mexico presents a representative selection of the works included in this collective exhibition. Through their work, our contemporary artists offer ethical and aesthetic testimony to the ecological maelstrom and, explicitly or subliminally, also make a silent call to action.



Mario Núñez, *Reflections*, 80 x 100 cm, 2001 (oil on canvas).



José Castro Leñero, *Terminal City*, 80 x 100 cm, 2002 (oil and encaustic on canvas).



Gilberto Guerrero, *And the Catrina Skeleton Went Fishing...*, 80 x 100 cm, 2002 (oil on canvas).

PARTICIPANTS

JAVIER GUADARRAMA, AGUSTÍN CASTRO, ANTONIO CASTRO, LUCIANO SPANO, JOSÉ CASTRO LEÑERO,
ARTURO MÁRQUEZ, FABIÁN VERGARA, JORGE MARÍN, RODRIGO PIMENTEL, ROCÍO CABALLERO,
LUIS FACCHIA, MARCO VARGAS, ALEJANDRO ARANGO, VÍCTOR CHACA, CHANTALE MAZÍN, ALEX HANK,
GUILLERMO GONZÁLEZ, MARISA LARA, ARTURO GUERRERO, LAURA QUINTANILLA, ALONSO GUARDADO,
CARLOS FENTANES, LOURDES ALMEIDA, LUIS FILCER, RICARDO PORRERO, ROSSANA DURÁN, JOSÉ LUIS BUSTAMANTE,
FRANCISCO MACÍAS, MARIO NÚÑEZ, LORENA ISLA, FERNANDO GUEVARA, GILBERTO GUERRERO,
JORGE LUNA, MÁRIU SAAD, LUCERO ISAAC, BENJAMÍN HIERRO, MARIANA PEREYRA,
GALO KERLEGAN, FROYLÁN RUIZ, GUSTAVO SALMONES, ROGELIO FLORES, GUILLERMO ESTRADA,
JAIME SHELLEY, HARTWIG RHODE, BOSCO SODI.

Ángela Gurría

Nature Exalted

Miriam Kaiser*

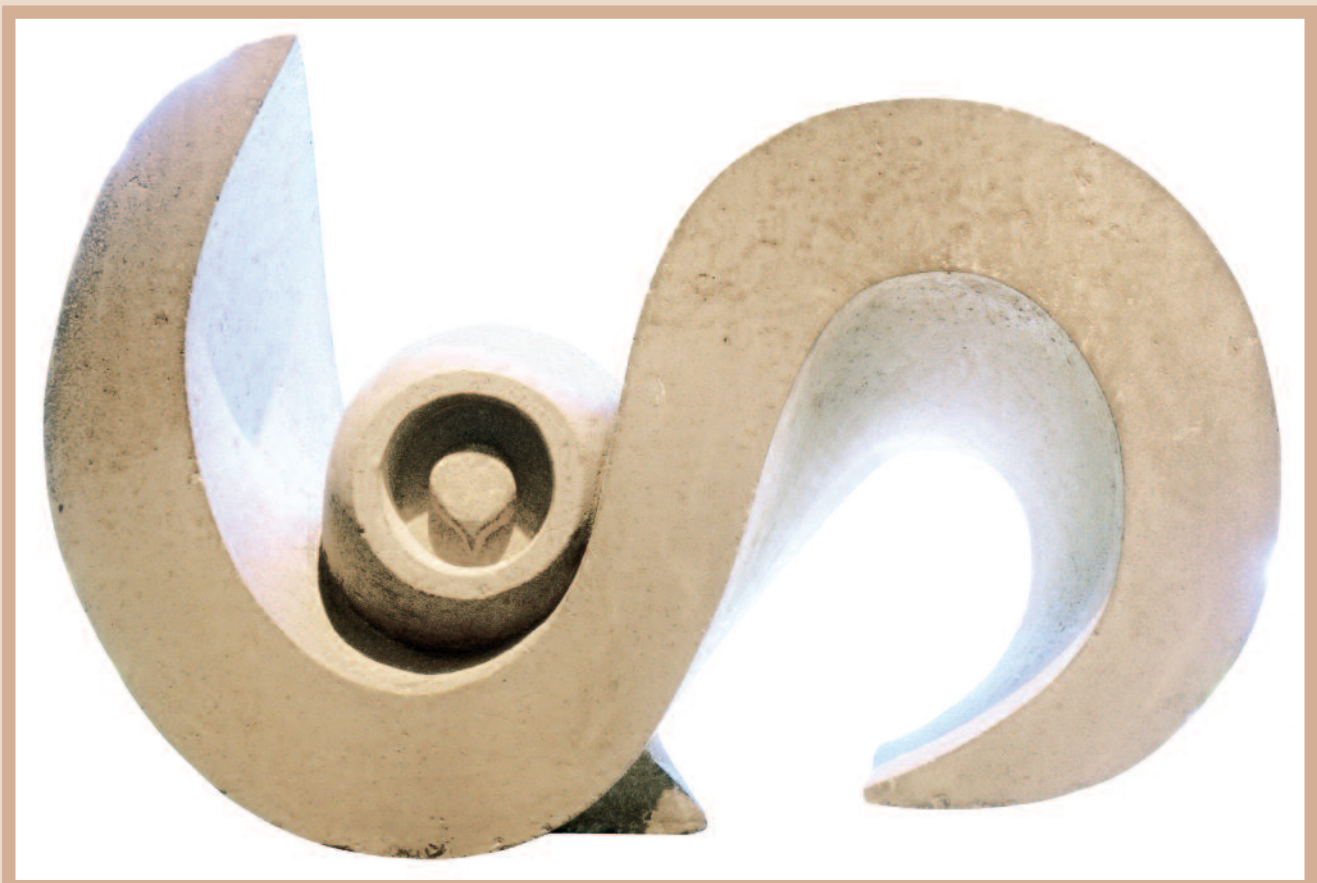
Man has felt the urgency, the need to express feelings, to show his surroundings and for that he must use his talent to create. And what is it he transmits if not what surrounds him: the sky, the sea, mountains, animals, his fellow men and his ways of speaking, singing and being: that is, nature in all its manifestations.¹

* Art critic and curator.

Photos reproduced courtesy of Mexico City's Modern Art Museum.

Artist Ángela Gurría drinks from that infinite spring with her own visual language, through her eternal, constant search and experimentation both with techniques and materials. Her visual proposals come to us transformed into contemporary sculptures.

She is recognized mainly as a sculptress since that is the medium in which she has developed most of her work. However, she has delved into the most diverse techniques throughout her long



Photos by Daniel Munguía

The Dove's Dream, 63 x 96 x 45 cm, no date (stone). Private collection.

career: sketching, as plans for another work or as a finished work, ceramics, the different printing techniques and stained-glass windows, to mention just a few.

As a sculptress, she has handled everything from small works to monumental urban sculpture with the same strength and intention, with the same power. Her large-scale works can be seen in Mexico City, in several places throughout the country and in some cities abroad.

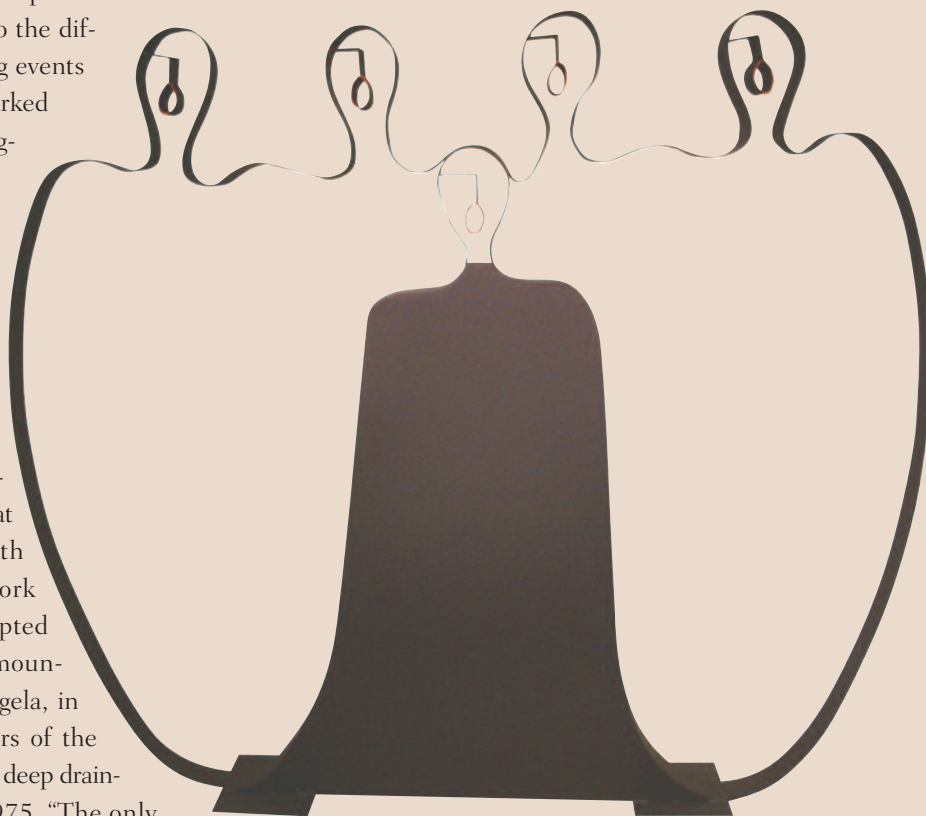
When a sculptor takes on what is today called urban art, he or she is usually invited to do so by an architect, an urban planner or a government official, who commissions the work to celebrate a historical figure or commemorate an event. For example, in 1967, the architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, president of the Organizing Committee of Mexico City's 1968 Olympic Games, conceived of the creation of the Route of Friendship as an activity parallel to the preparations, inviting sculptor Mathias Goeritz to head up the project. Goeritz, in turn, called on a large group of Mexican and foreign sculptors to create the route leading to the different sites where sporting events would be held. Ángela marked the beginning of that magnificent one-of-a-kind route with the black and white sculpture called *Signal*, which today, 36 years after its creation, continues to be a paradigm of contemporary art.

Ángela also paid homage to the workers of Cutzamala, the hydraulic system that supplies Mexico City with drinking water, with a work called *Magic Heart*, sculpted from 1985 to 1987 on a mountainside. According to Ángela, in her homage to the workers of the Tenayuca, State of Mexico, deep drainage system from 1974-1975, "The only thing I did [sic] was to take enormous tubes, cut

them up and turn them into sculptures using several different-sized pedestals."² Another of her monumental sculptures, *Mexico, Monument to Mestization* (1973), is one of the most visited by tourists on the Heroes Walk in Mexico's border city of Tijuana.

I do not know if all sculptors ultimately want their work to be part of the urban scenery, but it seems to me that they do and that this desire can be traced back to the most ancient times of art, although it became stronger during the Italian Renaissance. We should remember the immense sculptures in Asian countries and in India, which, although their creators' names have been lost in anonymity, forcefully remind us of their religions through the monumental representations of their gods and elephants and all manner of animals with religious connotations.

Like in everything, there is both good and bad: there are visual proposals and what I would call "impositions," that in most cases have political



Chorus (Children Singing), 190 x 222 x 10.5 cm, ca. 1980 (steel). Private collection.



Desert pieces.

Ángela Gurría has used the world around her; nature is reflected and recreated in most of her artistic endeavors.

traits or connotations. Other sculptures by well-known artists have been displayed throughout the world, gracing cities and becoming national symbols.

In any case, good large-scale urban art is invariably linked to architects and visionary urban planners who feel the need to integrate sculptures in specific spaces: they are the ones who commission them.

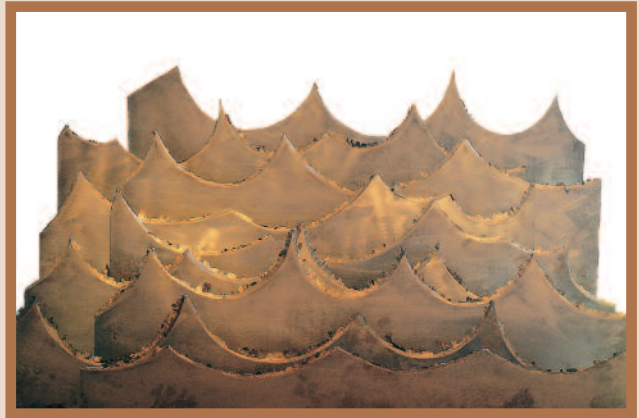
Sculptors usually work in small to medium sizes, on the one hand due to the space available in their workshops, which cannot always accommodate large pieces, and on the other hand for economic reasons. It is no exaggeration to think that many sculptures —usually called sketches or

models— “wait” to be turned into large-scaled works because they are originally conceived in a perfectly proportioned way in case they are someday turned into monumental sculptures for an urban space.

By this, I do not mean, of course, that all sculptures are conceived of as models for a larger work; sculptors will always have creations that were determined by the size of the stone or piece of wood, for example. A piece of marble or stone may languish a long time in a corner of the artist’s workshop until he or she finds the appropriate theme for the material. According to Gurría, this is the case of several of the sculptures that make up the exhibit “Ángela Gurría: Nature Ex-



Mouse, 45 x 35 x 104 cm, no date (directly carved in stone). FONCA Collection at the Yucatán Athenian Contemporary Art Museum.



Landscape, 63 x 92 x 64 cm, 1981 (stainless steel). Academy of Arts Collection.



Snail with Quills, 90 x 130 x 60 cm, no date (iron sheeting). Private collection.



Basilisk, 55 x 144 x 18 cm, ca. 1993 (bronze casting). Pape Library Museum, San Antonio Field, Pape Foundation.

Animals acquire innumerable forms; we see them about to take flight or cross a river, resting, lying in ambush or on guard.

alted,” such as *The Watering Hole* or *The Nocturnal Butterfly*, both in red marble. Here, the theme does not come first; instead, the sculptor sooner or later conveys the theme “as the material requires.” The phrase says it all: apparently, the material “inspires” the sculptor, dictating the form.

But, let us return to the issue of nature in the case of Ángela Gurría. It is clear that the artist has used the world around her, the world that concerns her; nature is reflected and recreated in most of her artistic endeavors. Cacti, whether umbelliferous or organ-shaped, and their flowers, are recreated in stone, marble and metal. Animals—tigers, butterflies, snails, frogs, mice, pigeons,

owls, birds, bulls and tortoises— acquire innumerable forms or “moments”; we see them about to take flight or cross a river, resting, lying in ambush or on guard. Clouds or mountains have also been turned into marble or stone, as have lagoons and human figures. The latter remind us of time immemorial: are they Asian, Greek, from some Mexican ethnic group? In fact, I would dare say that Ángela searches in her knowledge about pre-Hispanic codices and gives free reign to her love for the vestiges and iconographies of this country’s ancestors. This is present in a large part of her sculpture and not only in the human figure: we also identify it in her representation of death, where different materials and forms remind



Couple, 71 x 27 x 23.5 cm, ca. 1965 (stone). Private collection.



Signal (station 1 of the Route of Friendship), 18 m, 1968 (cement).

us of *tzompantlis*, the rows of real or stone skulls found next to ancient temples.

Trees are another motif in her sculptural quest, particularly the ceiba or silk-cotton tree that brings to mind the ancient and the religious connotation attributed to it (one outstanding example is the monumental piece, *Ceiba*, installed in the main lobby of Mexico City's Presidente Intercontinental Hotel in 1977). Water is another on-going theme: rivers have never been left out of her constant dialogue with the elements of nature. Ángela pays tribute to the Usumacinta River and also to watering holes.

But Ángela does not limit herself to her tribute to the elements. Traditional Mexican toys from Metepec in the State of Mexico, known and recognized for its artisans' majestic use of clay for hundreds of years, are also the subject of homage for the artist: magnificent trees of life, full of color and Biblical or humdrum stories, little horses, mermaids, flowers, shuttlecocks and much more. When invited to fill the Paseo Toluca, the majestic avenue leading to the city of Toluca, Ángela recreated some of these toys in stone, distributing them along the thoroughfare.

The sky, the earth, mountains and water are always present in Gurría's sculptures. I would go

so far as to say that even the abstracts remind us somehow of nature. It is, in short, nature exalted: an inexhaustible source of subjects that Ángela looks at and studies to turn them into tactile forms, volumes of different shapes, in accordance with the natural materials she uses in each case.

The most recent selection of her work in Mexico City's Modern Art Museum, not conceived of as a retrospective, is structured by the themes that she has dealt with throughout her long career.

Pieces from very different times speak to us of an artist who repeatedly comes back to her motifs because, far from using them up, each time she returns, she offers both a more comprehensive and playful focus, always revealing the personal, unequaled nature of her artistic endeavor. **MM**

NOTES

¹ This article is an extract from the catalogue *Ángela Gurría: Naturaleza exaltada* (Ángela Gurría: Nature Exalted), published by the National Fine Arts Institute, through the Mexico City Modern Art Museum in December 2003.

² Personal interview with Ángela Gurría, 2003.



Rediscovering Humboldt

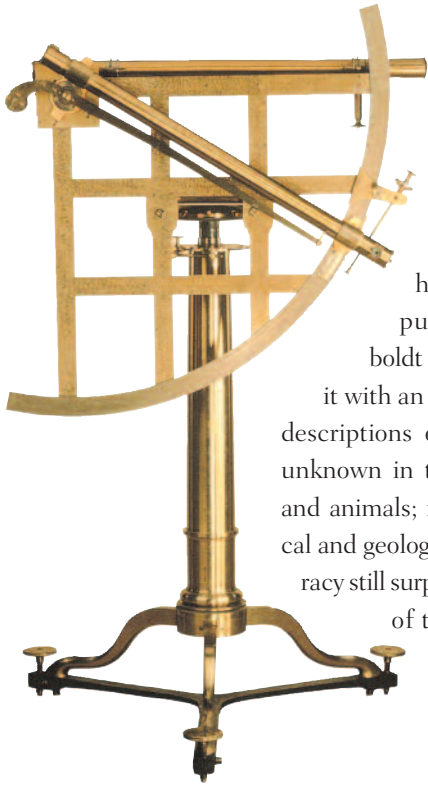
We've been flitting from here to there like demented beings; in the first three days we have not been able to make up our minds; we constantly dropped one thing to grab another one.

Bonpland says he shall lose his mind if all these wonders do not stop popping up soon.

Alexander von Humboldt
Travel Journal

In 1799, at only 29, Alexander von Humboldt first set foot on the Western Hemisphere to begin a journey of exploration that would turn him into a second discoverer of America. Carrying sophisticated measuring instruments and in the company of his friend, physician and botanist Aimé Bonpland, Humboldt traveled

through what are now Venezuela, Cuba, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico and the United States before he returned to Europe in 1804. He brought back with him more than 6,000 plants, sketched maps and landscapes, geological specimens and notebooks filled with data that would later make up 34 volumes illustrated with 1,400 engravings



Quadrant, John Bird, London, ca. 1740.

by renowned painters and engravers of his time.

After his five-year journey, in addition to the six years he took to make ready, and the 30 years that he spent analyzing and preparing the publication of all his results, Humboldt would astound Europe by presenting it with an unsuspected continent: punctilious descriptions of diverse flora and fauna, totally unknown in the Old World; drawings of plants and animals; innumerable specimens; geographical and geological calculations; maps whose accuracy still surprises; and even personal impressions of the social regimes of the places he visited.

To celebrate the 200th anniversary of his arrival in Mexico, the Old San Ildefonso College prepared the exposition "Humboldt's Journeys. A New Vision of the World," which

allows us to discover the discoverer. At the same time, it makes it possible to appreciate, from afar, the immense contribution the German explorer made to the philosophy of science, to scientific knowledge and methodology and to humanism, in an exhibit that includes photographs, engravings, live animals, measuring instruments, facsimiles, videos and interactive presentations.

A UNIVERSAL SCIENTIST

Humboldt's impeccable scientific spirit was based on an immense capacity for wonder, a liberal education and totally independent thinking. His observations, in the service of the progress of the natural sciences, were never clouded by prejudices, much less by a conflict of interests; he paid all the expenses of his expedition to ensure that

Humboldt's impeccable scientific spirit was based on an immense capacity for wonder, a liberal education and totally independent thinking.



The Nevado de Colima Seen from Zapotlán, Johann Motitz Rugendas, 1834 (oil on cardboard).

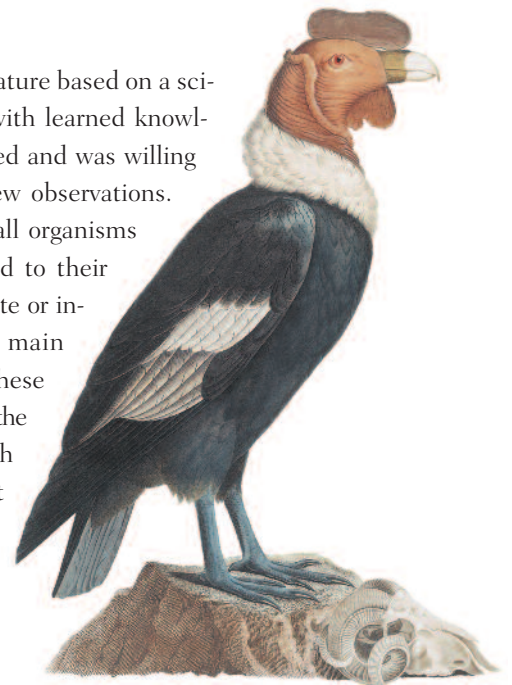
his research would not be plagued by secondary interests.

Born in Berlin in 1769 into a noble Prussian family, his mother brought him and his brother up, giving them a solid education in the natural sciences, languages and literature. Because his family was noble, Humboldt was supposed to enter politics and the military, but he had other interests. He studied economics, mathematics, sketching and engraving, and took university courses in geography, botany, geology and physics, although he never finished a degree. His inclination for research and exploring took him first to France and England. Thus, he began to have contact with travelers, biologists and geographers. When his mother died, he inherited a large fortune that made him independent, allowing him to become a true explorer at the service of science.

Humboldt was no amateur: his trip to the Americas was conscientiously prepared. The aim was

clear: overall knowledge of nature based on a science that was not content with learned knowledge, but rather experimented and was willing to recreate itself through new observations. Humboldt maintained that all organisms were inter-related and linked to their surroundings, whether animate or inanimate, and therefore his main objective was to discover these relationships. This makes him the first ecologist, even though the term “ecology” did not yet exist.

The scientific instruments he took with him were the most advanced of his age; each had its *raison d'être* and all would be used: sextants, chronometers, barometers, telescopes, thermo-



Vultur gryphus (condor), watercolored engraving by Bouquet after Humboldt's sketch corrected by Barraud.

His European origins did not prevent him from criticizing slavery, mistreatment and insulting judgments made by Europeans in the Americas.



The Tip of the Popocatepetl, Johann Motitz Rugendas, ca. 1831 (oil on cardboard).



Alexander von Humboldt, Emma Gaggiotti-Richards, 1855
(oil on canvas).



Humanitas, Literæ, Fruges. Frontpiece, Barthélemy Roger
(copper engraving after a sketch by François Gérard).

meters, quadrants, achromatic lenses and rain gages were just some of the instruments he used with methodical precision and insatiable curiosity to measure temperatures, altitude and longitude, establish coordinates, predict atmospheric and astronomical phenomena, draw maps and describe the light of the zodiac. In addition, he spent days and weeks collecting and sometimes dissecting unknown plant and animal species and cultivating relations with scientists and intellectuals in the places he visited, which increased his fame in Europe and America. Nothing escaped his log. Humboldt described each moment of his trip exactly, each river navigated, each mountain and volcano climbed, each sample taken, each phenomenon observed, each route followed. That this was a titanic undertaking is proven by the 30 years it took to analyze and publish the results.

But the baron was not a scientist foreign to the social conflicts that existed in the colonies he visited. “The idea of colonies is today in and of itself an immoral idea,” he said.¹ His liberal convictions, born of the rallying cry of the French Revolution, liberty, equality and fraternity, led him to make personal observations about slavery, the exploita-

tion of the native population and the discontent that powered the struggle for independence in New Spain. His European origins did not prevent him from criticizing slavery, mistreatment and insulting judgments made by Europeans in the Americas. “How uninhabitable the world becomes with European ferocity.”²

Until his death in 1859, Humboldt dedicated his life to science and the support for liberal causes. Encompassing his discoveries, publications and personal attributes is impossible in a brief text. It is only to be hoped that this homage paid in Mexico will enable people to understand that modern science and morality still have much to learn from a scientist who lived two centuries ago. **MM**

Elsie Montiel

Editor

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¹ The sentence is taken from Humboldt’s quotes from his essay on the island of Cuba, projected on the wall of one of the rooms of the exhibit.

² *Ibid.*

Photos courtesy of the Old San Ildefonso College.

Discrimination and Politics In Mexico

María José Morales García* Jesús Rodríguez Zepeda**



Sandra Perdomo/Cuartoscuro

Physically challenged students take a junior high school admittance exam.

Discrimination is fundamentally a structural mechanism of social exclusion. It is reiterative behavior of social contempt or disdain for a person or group of persons because he, she or they belong to a group that has been stigmatized. It implies a component of contempt which, because of its subjectiveness, seems to come under the heading of the right to freedom of ex-

pression or the freedom of beliefs. However, it is a specific kind of contempt, manifested through limiting access to opportunities or denying rights.

When systematic contempt for a stigmatized group is acted out, it feeds and reproduces a form of specific inequality. That is why the struggle against discrimination is a particular form of the struggle for social equality since it implies the restitution of the ideal conditions of equality that have been undermined. For that reason, it must be articulated politically and in discourse as part of the struggle for the rights of the individual.

In this fashion, effective strategies for reducing discrimination should not be

posed in the language of philanthropy or charity, but must be posed in the language of rights.¹

In effect, all acts of discrimination imply contempt, although not all acts of contempt are discriminatory. Only the contempt that is a regular social practice which excludes, marginalizes and limits rights and opportunities can be considered—rigorously speaking—discriminatory.

For that reason, the right not to be discriminated against has been formulated as a fundamental right of the individual. In the main instruments of international law on human rights, non-discrimination against women, children and other

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vulnerable groups like the indigenous is the direct result of the international community's commitment to human rights.²

In our country, the third paragraph of Article 1 of the Mexican Constitution includes non-discrimination as an "individual guarantee," that is, a right of the individual that the state is specifically obligated to ensure, even, according to our own interpretation, through the right to appeal. This anti-discrimination clause states:

All forms of discrimination based on ethnic or national origin, gender, age, different capabilities, social condition, health,

The struggle against discrimination must be articulated politically and in discourse as part of the struggle for the rights of the individual.

religion, opinions, preferences, marital status or any other condition which attacks human dignity or has as its aim to annul or impair the rights and freedoms of the individual are prohibited.

Constitutional guarantees, as jurist Luigi Ferrajoli says, are protections for all, but especially express the rights of the weakest.³ Guarantees such as non-discrimination are, in effect, "the law of the weakest" (the opposite of the "law of the jungle") because they force the state to not trample on or back anyone else trampling on any individual. In the particular case of discrimination, they force the state to protect negative rights (of protection) and positive rights (of promotion and stimuli) to stop and reverse unequal treatment of persons based on social stigma.

The president signed the Federal Law to Prevent and Eliminate Discrim-

ination June 9, 2003 after it was passed unanimously by both chambers of Congress. It regulates the constitutional provisions against discrimination and attempts to advance the most progressive interpretation possible, that is, understanding it as a lever for equal opportunities and for the protection and promotion of groups that have suffered from secular segregation.⁴

If the law is reviewed in detail, it is clear that it includes some of the international instruments' substantive content with regard to the fight against discrimination and the protection of vulnerable groups that our country has accepted but that have never been im-

plemented. It is no secret for anyone that, despite the Supreme Court judgment that these international instruments are second only to the Constitution itself in legal weight, in Mexico's legal and institutional practice they are barely visible as mechanisms regulating our society's life and the solution of its conflicts.⁵

In that sense, the new federal law against discrimination not only regulates the Constitution's anti-discrimination clause, but also brings into the national legal system principles of international law that, though they should be effective norms in Mexico, are to date only aspirations and unfulfilled demands. And even though their legal nature is clear, we must emphasize their existence as political instruments to transform unequal social relations.

We have said that the struggle against discrimination should not be thought

of as a series of acts of philanthropy or charity, but as a legal and political strategy to guarantee constitutional rights of the first water. What should be emphasized now is that the task can also not be reduced to a voluntarist program that puts "edifying" or well-meaning exhortations before legal change and institutional action. When the "edifying" strategy prevails, the structural nature of discrimination is disregarded and therefore, the government's obligation to punish discriminatory acts, to empower excluded groups and to compensate victims for the existence of historical, undeserved disadvantages is minimized or eliminated.⁶

The state task of non-discrimination consists of guaranteeing real access to rights and opportunities that a society normally makes available to the citizenry. In that sense, the task is to eliminate social exclusion through non-assimilating integration, integration which respects differences but that at the same time seeks to recognize the person as the legitimate source of rights.⁷ Thus, the right to non-discrimination becomes a form of access to rights and opportunities that are often denied to entire groups that have been stigmatized.

However, the right to not be discriminated against cannot be seen as a law of minorities or a statute promoting self-segregation. For example, in the main international instruments against discrimination, the established aim is access by the discriminated group to the mainstream of society's life and the elimination of its subordination and marginality. In that sense, it is a generalized consensus that non-discrimination is a form of social inclusion rather than the affirmation of separate routes for social groups. For that reason, in the case of ethno-cultural differences, anti-

discrimination policies must seek a fair balance between the ethnic affirmation of difference and the harmonizing aims of conceptions blind to differences. That is, they have to offer an alternative to the current debate between the politics of difference, which aspire to deepen differences, and liberal universalist visions, which seek an affirmation of rights over and above ethnic-cultural, sexual and other types of differences.

Precisely because in a national community rights and opportunities exist that are judged socially valuable, the aim is that the law eliminate barriers to their enjoyment. Thus, the logical framework for non-discrimination continues to be the national state, although, of course, what is in doubt is whether this state can be conceived of as homogeneous in its ethnic composition, its ideas of what a good life and happiness are, its religious doctrines, etc.

The federal law recently approved in Mexico is a kind of “new civil rights act,” that is, a norm that is a framework for defending the dignity of persons that can stimulate and be a context for more specific legal and institutional projects. However, because it is a law to defend the rights of the individual, it also has profound social meaning.

Something that is frequently forgotten about non-discrimination policies is their capacity to perfect so-called social rights. In the particular case of Mexico, given that the approval of this law will lead to important transformations in the exercise of social rights such as the right to health, education or work, we can speak of a political process that seeks to perfect access to well-being. Because, in the last analysis, social rights without respect for individuals’ freedom, safety and differences turn

into practices typical of a patronage system or corporatism, while protection of the individual without attention to the context of well-being that he or she requires tends to become nothing but a new form of non-solidarity.

But also, perfecting political rights depends on the appropriate exercise of the new civil right of non-discrimination. Political rights, the rights by definition of a democratic system, are frequently limited by practices of discrimination and social exclusion. For that reason, non-discrimination is crucial for exercising them fully. To conclude, let us look at the case of indigenous communities.

It is a generalized consensus that non-discrimination is a form of social inclusion rather than the affirmation of separate routes for social groups.

Although in Mexico, access to political rights has been normalized for practically the entire citizenry in the last decade, it is clear that the conventional use of these rights does not provide social groups such as the indigenous the possibility to articulate the collective decisions they consider important. The conflict between some traditional decision-making practices and the practices laid out by electoral legislation poses certain dilemmas which must be resolved politically.

In this specific case, it is clear that discrimination limits the democratic right to representation. Although specific studies still remain to be made about each vulnerable group, it can be said that political participation is limited when an abstract norm of political participation is established that disregards community forms of social life in which that right must be practiced.

In our opinion, access to democratic political representation cannot be replaced by traditional forms of decision making in ethno-cultural groups. However, a combination should be sought which would allow for the establishment of general norms of political representation in the framework of the practices and customs considered of value by the members of these groups.

The philosopher Jürgen Habermas, in his book *Between Facts and Norms. Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*,⁸ has pointed out that, in the framework of a plural political community characterized by a variety of cultural traditions (he is thinking

of the European case), the same principles and rights can be affirmed on the basis of different interpretations according to each cultural context. This idea implies that it is possible to have different interpretations of those political rights and principles or, more simply put, that there is no single interpretation of democratic principles.

In principle, each cultural community, with its own political culture, could sustain the same democratic principles that other communities sustain, albeit with their own interpretations. Perhaps this model is appropriate for guaranteeing real access to democratic principles in the case of ethno-cultural groups.

We should not forget, however, that the traditional form of political discrimination against ethno-cultural groups in Mexico consisted of the authoritarian state fostering certain phenomena that already existed in their cultural struc-

ture, like *cacicazgo*, or a power system based on local strongmen. We want to say that the very cultural structure of these communities includes elements that facilitate authoritarian acts; vis-à-vis these phenomena, the formal rules of representative democracy are a superior alternative.

Thus, the political dilemma of discrimination for reasons of race or ethnicity in the case of political rights is a question of equilibria. On the one hand, it is a matter of guaranteeing that legal, institutional usage that becomes obligatory in ethno-cultural communities not clash with these groups' cultural and symbolic usages; and on the other hand, it is also necessary to make sure that the political rules do not simply reflect authoritarian traditions that already exist in some of these groups.

In any case, only democratic politics are capable of building these points of equilibrium. If we abandon the idea that all community traditions are valuable for the simple reason that they are traditions but at the same time recognize that democratic principles and rights must have a meaning that makes them significant for ethnic groups where they have always been absent, then we will be able to find desirable commitment solutions.

The proposal made by Will Kymlicka in 1995 may well continue to be the most appropriate for seeking solutions to this matter. In his book *Multicultural Citizenship*, Kymlicka points to the need to achieve a balance between what he calls external protections and internal restrictions for ethno-cultural groups.⁹ The former are state actions that seek to protect the integrity of the ethno-cultural groups. These external protections include, for example, the group's special rights such as those

that allow for special representation in parliaments for indigenous groups. In this case, it is a question of the state protecting the communities' way of life with a law that recognizes political attributions for them different from those of the majority, which allow them to survive as a group.

These external protections, however, are conditioned to the prohibition of the internal restrictions. The internal restrictions are violations by the group of its members' constitutional rights. Individuals' fundamental rights must be protected against the majority of the group which may be overwhelming and authoritarian.

Naturally, Kymlicka is trying to round things out by combining the right of the groups to maintain their existence and the right of individuals to maintain their legal and moral integrity.

The fight against discrimination and racism in political representation should seek a similar equilibrium. That is the program that theory can give us, but we all know that the arduous task of carrying it out falls to democratic political action. ■■■

NOTES

¹ For a broad understanding of the meaning of the "language of rights" as a specific form of the circulation of political demands in our time, see J.G.A. Pocock, "Languages and Their Implications: the Transformation of the Study of Political Thought," J.G.A. Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time. Studies on Political Thought and History* (New York: Atheneum, 1971).

² Article 7 of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads, "All are equal before the law and are entitled without discrimina-

tion to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination." Other definitions of international law against discrimination appear in UN instruments like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its 21-article Optional Protocol or the International Convention on All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

³ Luigi Ferrajoli, *Derechos y garantías. La ley del más débil* (Madrid: Trotta, 1999).

⁴ "Ley Federal para Prevenir y Eliminar la Discriminación," *Diario Oficial de la Federación* (Official Gazette), 11 June 2003.

⁵ The Supreme Court's November 1999 thesis 77/99 states, "International treaties occupy the second rung on the hierarchy after the Constitution and come before all federal and local legislation."

⁶ For a critique of the so-called "edifying strategy" in the fight against discrimination, see Jesús Rodríguez Zepeda, "Un enfoque teórico para la no discriminación," *Memoria del Foro Internacional por la No Discriminación* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores/UNIFEM/UNPD, 2003). This critique does not negate the desirability of "edifying" appeals to individuals to not discriminate, but does emphasize that a strategy limited to only this voluntarist aspect is condemned to failure. By "edifying" we mean actions that may be positive in and of themselves in terms of values, but which do not achieve a change in the structural dimension of discrimination and are therefore in a certain sense useless, even though they satisfy the good conscience of those who carry them out. The hypothesis held by Rodríguez and in this article is that there cannot be a real reduction of discrimination without legal action and institutional reforms, which implies punishment for acts of discrimination and affirmative action both in the public and the private domain.

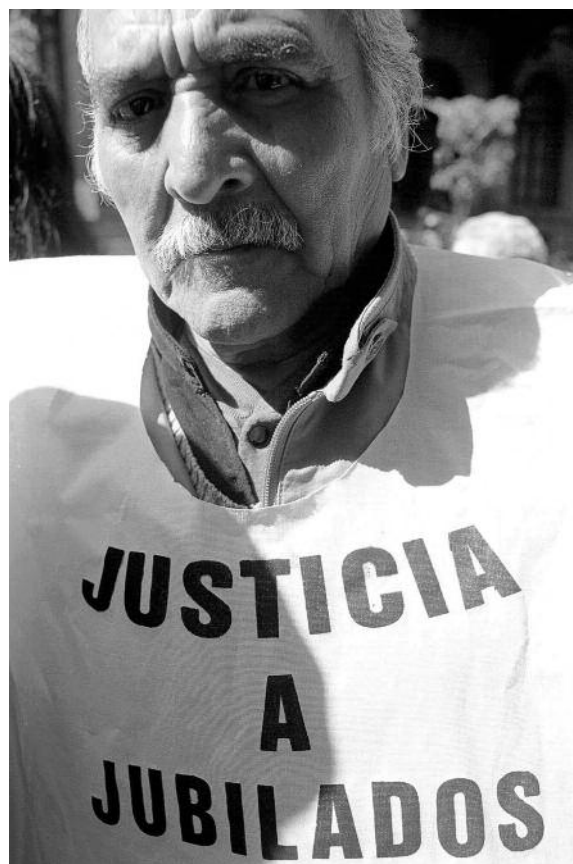
⁷ To say it in Rawlsian language, politically the person must be considered as a "self-authenticating source of valid claims." John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 32.

⁸ The author consulted the Spanish version, Jürgen Habermas, *Facticidad y validez. Sobre el derecho y el Estado democrático de derecho en términos de teoría del discurso* (Madrid: Trotta, 1998), pp. 619-643.

⁹ Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 35-44.

Pensions in Mexico A Long-Term Risk

Víctor M. Soria*



Victoria Valierna/Cuartoscuro

"Justice for pensioners."

With the coming of economic globalization, over the last two decades, pre-existing problems in pension systems in practically all the countries of the world have sharp-

ened. On the one hand, with increased life expectancy, the population pyramid now contains a larger number of retired persons and people of retirement age; the increase in unemployment has lowered the number of contributors to social security systems; and on the other hand, financial liberalization and the economic adjustments brought by globalization

have sharpened pension systems' financial problems.

In Latin America, the crisis of the 1980s and the effects of structural adjustment aggravated unemployment and prompted an increase in informal labor: this led to a financial crisis in pension systems, which motivated increased pension reforms in the following de-

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The most important longer-term risks for our pension system are inflation, the continual deficit in formal job creation and workers' low wages.

cade in 15 different countries, among them Mexico.

Even though pension reforms differ from country to country, their commonality is the private administration of workers' savings funds, replacing systems of distribution or of partial collective capitalization with regimes of full and individual capitalization. This transformation was fostered by the international financial institutions and the Latin American governments themselves in view of the crisis in public finances, and essentially they transfer most of the responsibility to workers and employers, leaving the state to fulfill a role of aid by guaranteeing minimum pensions for those enrolled in pension schemes and poor senior citizens.¹

These reforms sparked a significant debate among important international

institutions like the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the International Social Security Association (ISSA) on the one hand, and the World Bank on the other. The former argued that these reforms' risks would be greater than those that already existed given the presence of unpredictable economic factors like inflation, the volatile yield of pension funds, the fluctuating performance of the gross domestic product (GDP) and the decisions by the workers themselves. Both the ILO and the ISSA rejected the World Bank's opinion that the public pension systems had failed. Both recommended the existing systems be "perfected," or, in other words, a non-structural reform. In contrast, the World Bank proposed a radical (structural) change like the Chilean reform carried out in 1981 which would replace public

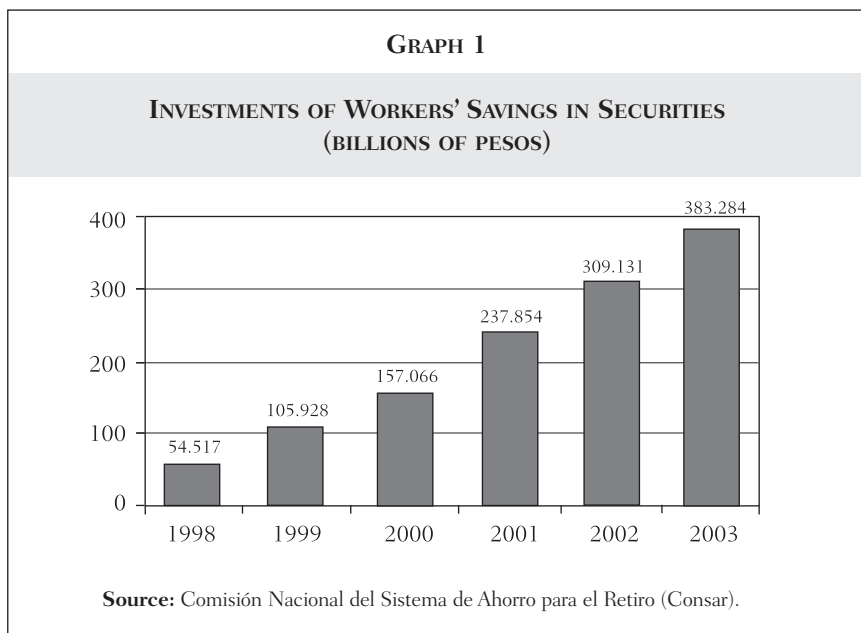
systems with privately managed pensions, saying that they were better.² In addition, the bank mentioned other negative attributes of the public systems: the low pensions, the inequality of the different regimes, the system's non-existent contribution to domestic savings as well as low coverage. Finally, the vast majority of countries with pension problems, including Mexico, opted for the radical reform recommended by the World Bank, i.e. privatization, without realistically gauging its probable social costs.

The Chilean experience, considered the most successful, does not confirm as expected the efficiency of private management. Among other things, the commissions of the Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) are high and, even so, they still have problems of profitability: for example, in 1995, the funds' negative profitability (-4.7 percent) caused losses to the workers. According to Regina Clark, the ex-attorney general of the Institute of Insurance Normalization of Chile and an expert in pensions:

In Chile, fewer than 50 percent of the 6.8 million people affiliated to PFAs contribute monthly; the replacement rate is 52 percent, while the promise was that workers would retire with 80 percent of their last wage; the fiscal cost is 5.9 percent of GDP, while the six operating PFAs handle U.S.\$38 billion, the equivalent of more than 50 percent of GDP.³

THE PRIVATIZATION OF PENSIONS IN MEXICO

Pensions of workers affiliated to the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS) were definitively privatized by the new



IMSS law passed December 8, 1995.⁴ Scheduled to become effective January 1, 1997, the date was postponed until July 1, 1997 due to the state's financial inability to cover its contributions.⁵

The monies collected are managed by the Retirement Funds Administrators (Afores) with an account for every worker.⁶ Each of the Afores is accompanied by a Retirement Funds Investment Society (Siefore), in charge of investing the savings deposited in securities and paying the pension when a worker who retires chooses the programmed retirement option.⁷ The worker may also choose a lifetime income, which he will transact with an insurance company to which the individual account funds will be handed over.

The workers' savings funds have increased significantly: between July 1997 and December 1998, they came to 54.517 billion pesos, a sum which increased seven-fold in the following five years. By 2002, the accumulated savings fund had reached 10 percent of GDP.

The privatization of pensions has been presented as a great achievement for workers and Mexico's economy. It is said that profitability from July 1997 to September 2002 was 28.6 percent a year,⁸ and in 2003, it is estimated at 14.5 percent (from December 29, 2002 to August 29, 2003).⁹ The reality is that yields for workers are much lower when the high commissions charged by the Afores are deducted and inflation is taken into account.

AFORES' AND SIEFORES' PROFITABILITY

Let's look at the Siefores' income statements to get an idea of workers savings funds yields from 1999 to 2003.

A great deal of pressure is being brought to bear
for workers' savings funds to invest abroad with the argument
that it would raise profitability.

We can see in Table 1 that the main revenues come from interest accrued by the savings funds when invested in securities ("real and nominal rate instruments"), which came to 22.59 billion pesos in 2002, representing 82.4 percent of revenue. In second place is the profit from stocks that the Siefores sell to workers (presented as the sale of real and nominal rate instruments), for 4.378 billion pesos, which come to 16 percent of revenues.¹⁰ Finally, there are the other earnings (premiums on government bond trading and other revenues), which represent only 1.6 percent. If general Siefores expenditures (1.032 billion pesos in 2002) are subtracted from total revenues, the result is a net profit of 26.384 billion pesos, which it is understood would go into the workers' savings funds. But commissions come to 10.961 billion pesos, which means that the workers had to pay out the equivalent of 41.5 percent of the net profits obtained by the Siefores in 2002. As Table 1 shows, the highest percentage of commissions was charged in 2002 and the lowest in 2003 (up until October).

We still have to analyze the impact of inflation on the profitability of workers' retirement savings, taking into account that the investments in securities and other assets shown on the Siefores' consolidated balance sheet as of December 31, 2002, came to 309.130 billion pesos. Of these, only the real rate instruments do not devalue because they pay a real yield, while the

nominal rate instruments do drop in value because of inflation. Since 2002 inflation was 5.7 percent, the nominal rate instruments lost 6.085 billion pesos, so that the real value of the investments was 303.046 billion pesos (see table 2). If the 5.7 percent inflation, or 1.504 billion pesos, is subtracted from 2002 net profits of 26.384 billion pesos, and the value of the nominal rate instruments (6.085 billion pesos) is also subtracted, the real net profit was 18.795 billion. Finally, if we subtract from this amount the commissions charged by the administrators, the result is a final real net profit of 7.834 billion pesos, or 2.6 percent of the real value of the 303.046 billion pesos in investments (see table 2).

We can see that the real net yields (see the bottom line of table 2) vary from year to year, with the highest in 1999 (6.8 percent) and the lowest in 2002 (2.6 percent). This shows that the yields for the workers were not as high as the National Savings for Retirement System Commission (Consar) would lead us to believe. In its monthly yields chart for October 2002, it shows a profit of 28.6 percent in the 63 months of operation.¹¹ This, however, does not take into account either the effects of inflation or the commissions charged the workers.

For the owners of the Afores, however, profitability is very high: in 2002, their profit before taxes came to 2.693 billion pesos. They paid 926 million pesos in taxes, which left them with

TABLE 1
SIEFORES INCOME STATEMENTS AND AFORES COMMISSIONS (1999-2003)
(BILLIONS OF PESOS AND PERCENTAGES)

	1999 ¹		2000 ¹		2001 ¹		2002 ¹		2003 ²	
	AMOUNT	%	AMOUNT	%	AMOUNT	%	AMOUNT	%	AMOUNT	%
Interest on investment in securities	14.852	80.8	17.260	78.3	23.783	80.6	22.590	82.4	22.332	74.7
Profit on sale of real and nominal rate instruments	3.335	18.2	4.478	20.3	5.254	17.8	4.378	16.0	7.150	23.9
Borrowing of securities and other revenues	0.185	1.0	0.301	1.4	0.455	1.6	0.448	1.6	0.431	1.4
Total net revenues	18.372	100.0	22.039	100.0	29.492	100.0	27.416	100.0	29.913	100.0
Less general expenditures	0.523	2.8	0.712	3.2	1.143	3.9	1.032	3.8	1.124	3.8
Net profit	17.849	97.2	21.327	96.8	28.349	96.1	26.384	96.2	28.789	96.2
Afores' commissions	6.958		9.780		10.399		10.961		10.021	
Commissions/ net profit		39.0		41.2		36.6		41.5		34.8

¹ From January 1 to December 31.

² From January 1 to October 31.

Source: Afores and Siefores financial statements, Comisión Nacional del Sistema de Ahorro para el Retiro (Consar).

1.767 billion pesos in net profits. If we take into account that the paid-in equity or capital came to 6.936 billion pesos, their real yield was 25.5 percent. In 1999, Afores' profits were 20.9 percent; in 2000, 25.7 percent; in 2001, they went up to 45.6 percent; and until October 2003, they were already at 55.7 percent (these calculations were made based on data published in the Afores' and Siefores' financial statements).

AFORES/SIEFORES UNRESOLVED PROBLEMS

The Afores have committed irregular business practices, among which are misleading publicity; multiple accounts (in two or more Afores); the inappropriate cancellation of accounts; a lack of accounting entries or erroneous entries of contributions, etc. Based on workers' complaints, the National Savings for Retirement System Commission

(Consar) has levied fines on practically all the Afores. For example, in the first two months of 2000, it fined 10 Afores 1.818 million pesos.

In addition to the aforementioned practices, they were also fined for the lack of financial statements about transfers among Afores, late information to Consar about field representatives leaving the Afores' employ and a lack of information about voluntary contributions.¹²

THE RISKS OF THE PRIVATIZED PENSION SYSTEM

The most important longer-term risks for our pension system are inflation, generally linked to the crises of the Mexican economy, the continual deficit in formal job creation and workers' low wages. A bout of hyperinflation could wipe out the real value of the savings funds. For example, during the 1994-1995 crisis, inflation averaged around 60 percent. In addition, the jobs de-

ficit and low wages could prevent the consolidation of the system and result in insufficient savings for a decent life for pensioners.¹³ Thus, of the 30.3 million workers affiliated to Afores in June 2003, only 12.3 million were active because the rest were either out of a job or were not registered with the IMSS; that is, 59.4 percent were inactive workers.¹⁴

In addition, the workers' savings funds are only minimally used in productive investment: Siefores investments in public government debt have reached

up to 94 percent of the total, except in recent months, when they dropped to 89 percent. This investment strategy contradicts the justification given for the privatization of the IMSS pension system. Actually, workers' funds are financing the federal government's public debt. In other words, the state is maintaining the operations of the private administrators.

The de-nationalization of the Afores/Siefores is also becoming a problem. Of the 17 original companies involved

TABLE 2
ESTIMATED REAL YIELD FOR WORKERS
(BILLIONS OF PESOS)

	1999 ¹	2000 ¹	2001 ¹	2002 ¹	2003 ²
Investment in real and nominal rate instruments	105.928	157.066	237.854	309.131	383.284
Investment in nominal rate instruments	12.895	24.802	69.930	106.762	126.932
Annual inflation rate	12.32%	8.96%	4.40%	5.70%	2.68%
Drop in value of nominal rate instruments (2 x 3)	1.589	2.222	3.077	6.085	3.402
Real value of investments (1-4)	104.339	154.844	234.777	303.046	379.882
Net Siefores profit (table 1)	17.849	21.327	28.349	26.384	28.789
Minus annual inflation applied to net profit	2.199	1.913	1.247	1.504	0.772
Minus drop in value of nominal rate instruments (4)	1.589	2.222	3.077	6.085	3.402
Real net profit	14.061	17.192	24.025	18.795	24.615
Minus Afores commissions (table 1)	6.958	8.780	10.399	10.961	10.021
Real yield of workers' savings fund	7.103	8.412	13.626	7.834	14.594
Real yield/real value of investments	6.8%	5.4 %	5.8%	2.6%	3.8%

¹ Form January 1 to December 31.

² From January 1 to October 31.

Source: Afores and Siefores financial statements, Comisión Nacional del Sistema de Ahorro para el Retiro (Consar); inflation rates in accordance with the Bank of Mexico's consumer price index.

The Mexican pension system is not healthy,
given that almost 60 percent of the people signed up in the
Afores make no contributions because they have no job.

when the system began to operate, four had to sell their assets because they did not achieve the market share predicted and because of their low profitability. Of the 13 remaining, 11 became partners with foreign institutions and only Inbursa and Siglo XXI are owned by national institutions. Currently a great deal of pressure is being brought to bear for workers' savings funds to invest abroad with the argument that it would raise profitability, but this disregards the need to contribute to investment in Mexico. These funds would not only be financing the government's public debt, but also financing investment in developed coun-

tries, the ones who least need Mexican workers' savings.

Just as the ILO and the ISSA warned, the long term risks of individual full capitalization saving funds systems have become a reality, in this case for Mexican workers. Even though inflation has been dropping since the IMSS pension system was privatized, from 1999 to 2003 inflation has cost the savings funds 24.01 billion pesos (see table 2). In addition, the high commissions charged the workers make for a cut in the real net yield of almost one-half. It is also clear that the Mexican pension system is not healthy, given that almost 60 percent of the people signed up in the Afores make no con-

tributions because they have no job, or if they do, they are not registered with the IMSS because they work in the informal sector. In the long run, when workers retire, they very probably are going to find that, like in the case of Chile's system, pensions will have a real value that is seriously below the original calculation and insufficient for a decent life.

In summary, the private administrators have all the advantages: by law, they receive workers' savings without having to deal with the collection problems the IMSS has; they charge the workers high commissions; despite Consar regulation, their capital is mostly foreign, and therefore their high profits are sent abroad; they say they are benefitting workers with high yields when the reality is that the yields are low and do not cover the risk of a potential hyperinflation in the long run. And, as if that were not enough, they hold the workers hostage for 25 years with the government's blessing and approval of legislators. ■■■

NOTES

¹ Luis Gutiérrez Urdaneta, "La reforma pensionaria en América Latina," *Economía: Teoría y Práctica*, new era, no. 10 (Mexico City) 1999, pp. 79-80.

² Carmelo Mesa-Lago, "Las reformas de las pensiones en América Latina y la posición de los organismos internacionales," *Revista de la CEPAL*, no. 60 (Santiago de Chile), December 1996, pp. 74-75.

³ Yalin Cacho, "Cuestionan expertos de América Latina el sistema de capitalización individual," *El Financiero* (Mexico City), 1 December 2003, p. 8.

⁴ Until today, the State Workers Institute for Social Security and Services (ISSSTE) pension system has not been reformed, even though there has been strong pressure from the private Retirement Funds Administrators (Afore) for its privatization. In July 2003, 12.4 million workers were affiliated to the IMSS and 2.4 million to the ISSSTE.

⁵ For a summary of the privatization process of

IMSS pensions, see Odilia Ulloa Padilla, "SAR a Afore: o su privatización," *Revista Lux* (Mexico City), March-April 2002, pp. 49-52.

⁶ To make up the pension, the retirement, old-age unemployment and old age insurance (RECEAV) takes into account a quota of 6.5 percent of the base wage used for payment calculation (SBC) (5.15 percent from employers; 1.125 percent from workers and 0.225 percent from the state), plus a state contribution calculated at 5.5 percent of the general minimum wage. In addition, there is a 5 percent quota of the SBC for a housing fund managed not by the Afores but by the INFONAVIT, a housing institute for private sector workers.

⁷ Until now, 13 Afores manage the obligatory savings funds and 13 Siefores invest them. Banamex, Bancomer and Profuturo also manage retirement funds with voluntary contributions through other Afores and Siefores in addition to the obligatory savings funds.

⁸ *El Financiero, Análisis* (Mexico City), 7 October 2002, p. 20.

⁹ *El Financiero, Análisis* (Mexico City), 5 September 2003, p. 20.

¹⁰ This profit inflates the Siefores results. While this is reflected in the increase in the value of the stocks adjudicated to the workers, it is actually fictitious. It is like saying, "I'll sell you stocks at a high price, but that will not hurt you because your stocks include this extra price." The problem is that this inflates the results fictitiously.

¹¹ *El Financiero, Análisis* (Mexico City), 7 October 2002, p. 20.

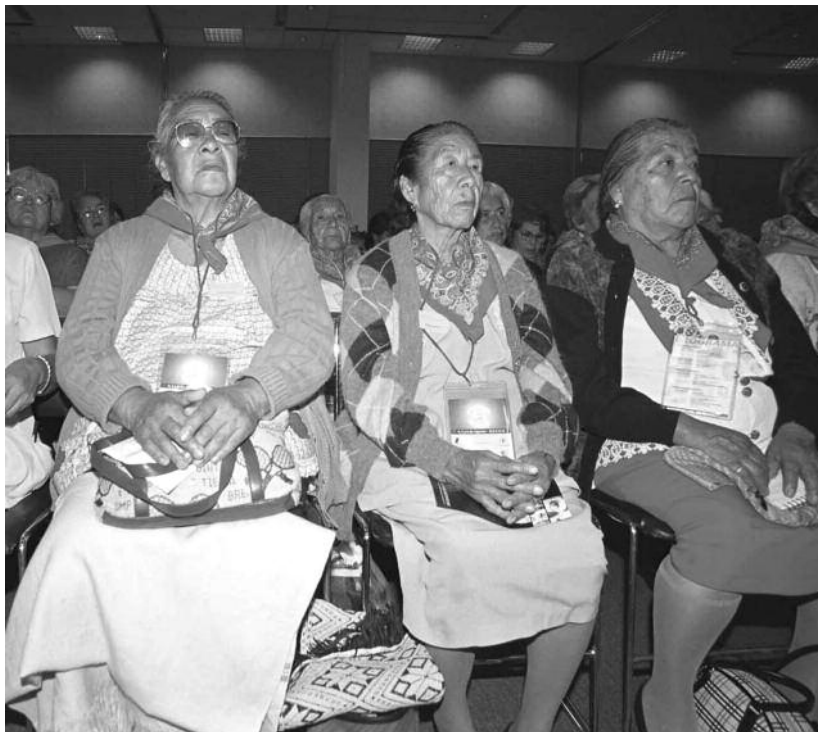
¹² *La Jornada* (Mexico City), 19 April 2000, p. 18.

¹³ Because of growing unemployment and underemployment rates, by December 1997 (six months after privatization began), the Afores already had three million persons affiliated who were inactive, that is, they did not contribute new savings. By the end of 1999, inactive accounts had increased to 6,044,894. *El Financiero* (Mexico City), 21 February 2000, p. 18.

¹⁴ *El Financiero* (Mexico City), 25 July 2003, p. 4.

Aging in Mexico A Demographic Trap

Carlos Welti*



Moisés Pabloy/Cuartoscuro

In 2020, approximately two out of every 10 Mexicans will be 65 or over.

To paraphrase the celebrated words of well-known authors—at least until my generation, when some thinkers have been shunted aside by Fukuyama’s hypotheses about the end of history and the fall of the Berlin

Wall—“A phantom is stalking the world, the phantom of aging.” This is a very good description of the effect of the dynamics of demography on world scenarios. This image becomes more or less precise according to the interest of the actors involved in the discussion of the problems faced by a country like Mexico, problems related to social security

and the survival of old people, problems that involve a large number of public institutions and the family.

Only a few decades ago it was difficult to imagine worldwide concern about aging. The main demographic problem faced by most developing countries was population growth due to high fertility rates; this even came to be considered a

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fundamental factor in explaining economic backwardness. If the obstacle to development was high population growth, we had to decrease it to aspire to economic advancement. The policies that aimed at this achieved their demographic objectives and in Mexico, it is no exaggeration to say that these actions are an example of successful public policy. The results have been such that in many countries, birth rates barely surpass those needed to replace generations and in the future, very prob-

sulted in the transformation of the age pyramid of the Mexican population. Specialized literature widely describes the effect that the drop in fertility has had on the age structure of the population, which, together with increased life expectancy, has meant that the proportion of individuals in the higher parts of the age pyramid is increasing and that, therefore, regardless of other factors, old people's problems become more visible.

This demographic change has created a central short- and long-term prob-

tion that includes both human beings and the material goods required for its development. Therefore, it is these relations that justify a specific level of fertility or certain kinds of family arrangements. Large families clearly fulfilled a role in guaranteeing the survival of their members. Given the enormous transformations taking place in the country, it is worth asking ourselves whether it will be possible to build a society in which "small families live better".²

For the individual, a longer life expectancy caused by the defeat of disease has a positive effect; for society as a whole, it increases the dependency ratio and the need for care for the aged.

The dependency ratio is simply a ratio in which the numerator is made up of children under 15 and adults over 64 and the denominator is persons between the ages of 15 and 64 (the economically active population on which children and the aged depend). If the numerator of this ratio drops, "dependency" will diminish.

In effect, the drop in fertility produced a decrease in this indicator because the number of children dropped. This has been called the "demographic bonus," since we now have a growing sector of the population of working age in contrast to the dependent population. However, this is simply an arithmetic ratio: in practice it does not necessarily mean that the population between the ages of 15 and 64 is actually working. In fact, it is increasingly difficult to expand the proportion of the population who works, and those people who do join the ranks of the employed do so in the informal sector, with its characteristic job instability and lack of benefits. The most significant factor is that together with the drop in fertility and the increased survival of the

For the individual, longer life expectancy
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ably will, like in most European countries, be below that level. However, something that was not taken very much into account in this country is that the Mexican population's high birth rate was a reproductive strategy to counter high infant mortality rates: it was necessary to have many children so that at least some of them would survive. The strategy even considered offspring as "old-age insurance," in a society in which social security coverage only benefits a small sector of the population and in which most senior citizens depend on their children to survive given insufficient pensions or the total lack of them.

Today, only one out of every five Mexicans over 65 has a pension and 69 percent of pensioners receive a monthly check for no more than twice the minimum wage.¹

The so-called demographic transition, that is, the process whereby both death and birth rates drop over time, re-

sulted in the transformation of the age pyramid of the Mexican population. Specialized literature widely describes the effect that the drop in fertility has had on the age structure of the population, which, together with increased life expectancy, has meant that the proportion of individuals in the higher parts of the age pyramid is increasing and that, therefore, regardless of other factors, old people's problems become more visible.

In today's society in which the generations live together for longer and the proportion of the older population is growing, it is fundamental to establish how resources will be used so that living conditions of those who survive into old age do not deteriorate.

As we enter the third millennium, we must ask ourselves how society will resolve the matter of the survival of old people when what was for so long the old-age insurance—children—is now disappearing because of the drop in fertility, and when the existing institutional systems based on generational solidarity are now being transformed into a system of individual contributions to which, paradoxically, few can contribute.

Relations between generations define demographic regimens based on the reproduction of society, a reproduc-

aged, the number of old people who need society to provide them with services is increasing, among them health services which have a much higher cost than those required by children. If we add to this the need to guarantee the survival of the aged through a pension or a job and the difficulties in supplying these, we rapidly approach a “demographic trap” which we will not be able to escape if society does not pay sufficient attention to this new problem.

We need to make it clear that in the analysis of future scenarios, in which the older population will be increasingly important, we must take into account two institutional processes: retirement and the pension system, both of which are state functions which the Mexican state has in recent years decided to transfer to private bodies.

The population over 65, which in 2000 was about five percent of the total, will increase rapidly after the year 2030, reaching almost one-fifth of the national population in 2050. It is difficult to imagine a country like Mexico with this proportion of old people.

Table 1 shows the evolution of the aged sector of the population compared to the total since 1960 according to census data and the projections until the year 2050 developed by the Latin American Center for Demography. The slight reduction between 1960 and 1980 is due to the high level of fertility in those two decades, which made the population at the base of the pyramid maintain its absolute and relative growth.

Some of the consequences of this demographic change and its social impact are easily observable. Consumption by this sector of the population, the majority of which is no longer employed, will have to be financed by its own savings or society’s savings.

YEAR	%	YEAR	%
1960	4.6	2010	5.9
1970	4.3	2020	7.9
1980	3.8	2030	10.9
1990	4.0	2040	15.2
2000	4.8	2050	18.6

Source: Census and CELADE, “América Latina: Proyecciones de Población 1970-2050,” *Boletín Demográfico* 62 (Santiago, Chile: CELADE, 1997).

We are rapidly approaching a “demographic trap” which we will not be able to escape if society does not pay sufficient attention to this new problem.

Supporting a population growing in both absolute and relative terms will require sufficient resources and institutional conditions appropriate to dealing with the specific demands of the older adult population, demands that, as has already been noted, are clearly differential if we compare them with those of other age groups both in terms of physical deterioration (due to biological aging) and in terms of their inclusion in the economic system, given that for an older adult, the joblessness is not temporary. For a large proportion of old people, their exit from the labor market is definitive, with the additional disadvantage of having physical limitations. In the future Mexican society will confront large demographic problems associated with the population’s aging.

In absolute numbers, today’s senior citizen population is about five million people; by the year 2050, it will be 27 million.³ Financing their consumption

(in addition to food, housing and leisure, specialized medical attention and the care needed because of aging) is a fundamental matter which has to be dealt with right away and is another of a long list of demands that cannot be considered in individual terms.

This is even more important when we relate it to life expectancy by sex because, as can be seen in Table 2, the number of years both women and men tend to live once they have reached the age of 65 is increasing. But, women tend to live even longer, which, in conjunction with the drop in fertility, means that we can suppose that an increasing number of women will live out their old age alone, without children. They will also tend to be without resources because, in addition, the possibility of having a pension is decreasing due to reforms to social security legislation, including the increase in the minimum number of weeks that workers must contribute in order to qualify.

TABLE 2
LIFE EXPECTANCY BY SEX IN MEXICO
AFTER 65 YEARS OF AGE (1990-2025)

YEAR	MEN	WOMEN
1990-1995	15.9	17.8
1995-2000	16.2	18.3
2000-2005	16.5	18.8
2005-2010	16.7	19.2
2010-2015	17.0	19.6
2015-2020	17.2	20.0
2020-2025	17.4	20.4

Source: CELADE, "América Latina: Tablas de Mortalidad," *Boletín de Población* 61 (Santiago, Chile: CELADE, 1998).

Senior citizens are increasingly organizing and the lack of attention given them by the state could become a socially significant factor of destabilization.

Women's entry and exit from paid work according to the family life cycle, in which reproduction obviously takes up an important part of their working life, reduces their payments to social security.

This leaves them ineligible for social security benefits, despite the fact that their activity is key to society's survival and development.

Another important factor is that increased life expectancy, because of augmented periods of the life cycle, also increases the number of years lived outside of marriage both because the age for a first marriage rises and women also tend to live more years as widows. In other words, one of the most significant changes in the Mexican population's marital status is to be found among the older age groups because the number of widows increases.

Table 2 shows an 8.6 percent (1.5 years) and 12.8 percent (2.6 years) increase in life expectancy for men and women, respectively between 1990 and 2025. This increase, barring other changes that lower men's mortality in the older age group, will increase the probability that women who have been married spend a longer time as widows. Twenty-first century family arrangements in Mexico will reflect both a rise in the number of people who reach old age without a spouse due to longer survival of women and the greater number of separations and divorces.

It is increasingly clear that in the definition of future demographic scenarios the macro-economic situation is especially important and that factors like inflation, the evolution of life expectancy, the restructuring of social security and older people having jobs are

key variables that will define people's living conditions and inter-generational relations.

Referring to senior citizens when analyzing Mexican society is central for establishing the relationship between the dynamics of demography and the economic structure. One of Mexico's most significant problems in coming years will be linked to financing social security and dealing with the demands of the aged.

Senior citizens are increasingly organizing around their demands, and the lack of attention given them by the state could become a socially significant factor of destabilization.

From the strictly demographic point of view, the youthful structure of a country like Mexico and the time periods in which the process of aging manifests itself have justified the implementation of a new model of social security. In this model, the state transfers its responsibilities to individuals because it has a sufficiently large young work force to support pensioners during the so-called period of transition, wherein a system of distribution in which government agencies guarantee pensions is replaced by a system of capitalization in which each individual is responsible for saving enough for his or her retirement.

In addition, supposedly, the reforms will make it possible to have a series of social dividends from the privatization of the social security systems to shore up the basic education and health services.⁴ The fundamental question is how and when those dividends will be distributed among individuals.

The crisis of social security institutions is undeniable. For social accounting, there is no doubt that the resources the workers have contributed for their

retirement exist, but for individuals they could become only a virtual reality and, as such, when these resources are demanded by their beneficiaries, they may submerge society in a crisis of unforeseen dimensions. The most significant case is that of the State Workers' Social Security and Services Institute (ISSSTE), since it is estimated that of the total contributions to social security the workers have made, only a minimal part actually exists (10 percent, according to the ISSSTE workers union). If we add to this the fact that the actuarial reserve is insufficient simply because the time the pension was to be paid was originally estimated at two years after retirement, when today, this period has increased to almost 20 years. The Mexican Social

Security Institute (IMSS) faces similar problems.

Given this panorama, the solution to the crisis of social security has been the privatization of pension systems so that the survival of the individual will depend on his or her ability to save and that the savings is appropriately invested.

In this way, the basic premises of the new pension systems assume that the stock market will guarantee economic security during old age. If you are not lucky in the market, saving for the future will be a useless effort. Savings for retirement will also disappear with an increase in inflation. Thus, as Thomas Frank has made clear, from now on, everyone should be aware that, "Under

privatization, ... your retirement is tied solely to the size of your portfolio."⁵ **NM**

NOTES

- ¹ The current minimum wage is about 1,300 pesos a month, approximately U.S.\$118. [Editor's Note.]
- ² "Small families live better" was a government population policy publicity slogan in the 1970s and 1980s. [Editor's Note.]
- ³ According to the most recent National Population Council projections, this number could reach 32 million, which would represent almost one-fourth of the total, given that in this projection total population is lower.
- ⁴ The author is referring here to the reforms still being discussed about the total privatization of pensions, public health care and social welfare programs. [Editor's Note.]
- ⁵ Thomas Frank, "The Trillion Dollar Hustle. Hello Wall Street, Goodbye Social Security," *Harper's*, January 2002, pp. 31-38.

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Citizens' Diplomacy And The Cancún WTO Meeting

Sofía Gallardo C.*



German Romero/Cuartoscuro

Protesters at Cancún.

The September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center's Twin Towers and the Pentagon building had dramatic effects in the United States. The deepest damage was U.S. citizens' enormous apprehension about the safety of their way of life (that they had considered a prototype for the world) and their institutions, as well as a tragic awareness of their country's vulnerability. Fear permeated the entire society; the

* Researcher at the CISAN.

economic recession deepened; and the country's foreign policy was questioned.

9/11 AND FOREIGN TRADE POLICY

President George Bush took advantage of the situation created by the attacks to get important support from Capitol Hill. On the one hand, he declared war on Afghanistan and Iraq without UN authorization or taking into account international law to protect the world from

terrorism. He considered the war his administration's number one priority and got approval for large hikes in federal spending. On the other hand, he was successful in his foreign trade policy because he was able—even if only by one vote—to reverse Congress's persistent opposition to fast track. He thus obtained authorization to push forward his dual trade strategy: first to negotiate the formation of free trade areas (like the Free Trade Area of the Americas and the Central American Free Trade Agreement)

and bilateral trade accords (in the case of Chile); second, to negotiate new rules for the World Trade Organization (WTO).

CITIZENS' DIPLOMACY AND WORLD TRADE

To summarize, the current globalization strategy headed up by the United States consists of signing free trade agreements, continued application of multilateral bodies' policies and initiatives to deepen regional integration. This has caused growing tension in the internal political dynamic of different countries, who have to respond to their citizens' demands and the requirements of competition in the world market. It has also made increasingly large sectors of society aware that they are experiencing a growing sharpening of economic inequalities both domestically and among different nations. This has created the impressive emergence of multinational citizens' organizations who are no longer willing to stay away from decision-making centers where their fate is determined and try to exercise the new right of private subjects to intervene in world policy and strategies.

Since the 1990s, these organizations, the majority of which defend individual and collective political, economic, social and cultural rights, have creatively developed what has been dubbed "citizens' diplomacy." This consists of the formation of social movements, networks and local, national, regional and worldwide coalitions committed to the organization of protests and developing fair trade proposals. Citizens' diplomacy has operated in parallel, alternative fora held simultaneously with the meetings of multilateral institutions and international bodies. The aim is

SOME INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS AT THE FIFTH WTO MEETING IN CANCÚN

- International Network of Social Movements
- Third World Network
- Continental Social Alliance
- Global Exchange
- Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
- Oxfam
- Global Alliance for Trade Efficiency
- International Chamber of Commerce
- Greenpeace
- Caritas International

Citizens' diplomacy is mobilizing and developing proposals to stop and revert the growing deterioration in the quality of life for most of the world's population.

to defend their interests and those of certain communities that do not have the capacity to create an international representation, in order to democratize the decision-making process worldwide.

A paradigmatic example is the case of the social mobilizations and spaces for alternative work held at the same time as the failed Seattle WTO Ministerial Meeting, from November 30 to December 3, 1999. The trade ministers of the 148 WTO member countries and 961 civil society organizations from the world over kept these experiences in mind when they met from September 10 to 14, 2003 in Cancún.

FOREORDAINED FAILURE OF THE FIFTH WTO MEETING

The Fifth WTO Ministerial should have concentrated on promoting northern

development in the South in accordance with the Final Declaration of the Doha Meeting (held November 9-13, 2001). However, the mandate of the U.S. trade representative, Robert Zoellick, and his European Union colleagues was to negotiate investment, government procurement, competition policies and trade facilitation, issues that came out of the December 1996 Singapore meeting, as well as keep the questions of agricultural subsidies and intellectual property rights off the agenda.

Even before the Cancún meeting began, the contradiction of interests among the ministers was clear. The countries of the North were determined to advance in the negotiation of the Singapore non-trade issues, while the countries of the South demanded to start from agreements on lowering or eliminating developed countries' agricultural

subsidies and suspending patents for medications in order to avert a national health crisis in the poorest African countries.

Participants in the Cancún WTO Ministerial, as well as the citizens who organized parallel to it, predicted another failure of the multilateral forum. The WTO demonstrated its rigid form of organization incapable of facilitating agreements among its members. Trade liberalization, as stipulated in the WTO, mainly favors the developed countries because it simultaneously maintains their protectionist measures. At the same time, it does not contribute to

prise. The United States, the European Union and Japan did not imagine that these 21 countries were going to come to an agreement and form a common front against their protectionist agricultural policy.

The G21 was formed with the participation of three African countries (Egypt, South Africa and Nigeria), five Asian countries (China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and the Philippines) and 12 Latin American countries: four from the Southern Cone (Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Paraguay), all the Andean countries (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela), two from

The victory of the social movement was due to demonstrations, the discussion of proposals in the parallel alternative fora and to the lobbying of civic organizations present in the official sessions.

the development of the backward countries because their trade rules (like comparative advantages, the omission of criteria about economic asymmetries and the lack of democracy in the negotiations) are structural limitations that counter a debate on policies to help developing countries achieve continued, long-term growth.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE GROUP OF 21

The lack of expectations and frustration about the reality of international agricultural trade sparked the formation of the Group of 21 (G21) at the Cancún meeting. This group of countries from the South, led by Brazil, China and India, represents half the world population and two-thirds of its peasants. The emergence of the G21 was a sur-

prise. Central America (Costa Rica and Guatemala), and, at the last minute, Mexico (a member of the North American Free Trade Agreement), leaving Cuba on the outs.

However, despite this coordinated action by Third World countries, their demands did significantly differ. For example, Brazil and Argentina wanted to lower the duties on their agricultural goods, while Mexico, India and China, with hundreds of millions of peasants living at subsistence levels, pressured to eliminate U.S. and European Union subsidized exports. In fact, what kept the Group of 21 together despite its fragility was the total lack of willingness on the part of the United States and Europe to liberalize their import policies or moderate their demand for open markets in the South. This zero-sum policy was fundamental for “derailing” the Cancún meeting.

CITIZENS' DIPLOMACY IN CANCÚN

The developed countries that have promoted today's globalization and trade liberalization are confronted with developing countries with quashed growth expectations and social resistance movements favoring fair trade. These confrontations among countries and civic organizations are a warning signal of the different and even opposed ideas of development. However, the world does not move forward in black and white, and confrontations among adversaries never resolves anything. Given this panorama, citizens' diplomacy is mobilizing and developing proposals to stop and revert the growing deterioration in the quality of life for most of the world's population.

Most of the organizations, networks and social movements of different nationalities that participated inside and outside Cancún thought the meeting collapsed because of the convergence of several factors. The determining factor was the emergence of the Group of 21, which maintained an unexpected, autonomous position of Southern countries against the trade and non-trade interests of the countries of the North. On the other hand, open contradictions on tariffs, particularly on steel, emerged among the great powers, especially between the United States and the European Union. They also thought that the victory of the social movement given the failure of the meeting, was due to the organization of demonstrations and protests in the streets (including the suicide of the Korean, Lee, who acted in accordance with the slogan “The WTO kills peasants.”); to the discussion and development of proposals in the parallel alternative fora; and to the lobbying of

civic organizations present in the official sessions. All these social mobilizations exerted constant pressure on the governments present there. This participation of civil society acquired legitimacy and is part of the global resistance or global justice movement. They mention other victories such as their contribution to the failure of the 1999 Seattle WTO meeting and the November 2003 Free Trade Area of the Americas summit in Miami.

The global movement that met in Cancún organized a very large number of activities and alternative fora. Some of the most important were the following: before the ministerial meeting began, the Convergence of Alternative Media, the Peasant Forum, the Indigenous Forum, the Fishermen's Forum, the Women's Forum and the Parliamentary Forum linked to the World Social Forum. Some of these fora continued after September 10 when the official meeting began, and other activities were also held: the Youth Camp, the Forum on Macroprojects, the Maquiladora Forum, the Union Forum, the Fair Trade Fair, the Cuba Solidarity Meeting, seminars on forests, the environment, war and free trade and on the specific issues being discussed in the official meeting. In addition, initiatives such as the American Social Forum and the "From Cancún to Miami" campaign were launched. Activities and meetings of the International Network of Social Movements and the Continental Campaign Against the FTAA were also held.

Besides the importance of these alternative debates, protests also played an important political and social role vis-à-vis the multilateral event that brought together most of the world's trade ministers. The first big mobiliza-

tion was called by *Vía Campesina*, a call answered by all the national and international actors present in the city. The most important delegation was the 200 Koreans among whom were peasants, union activists from the KCTU and people from civic and political organizations grouped together in the KOPA coalition. This coalition, with many activities to its credit in Korea, made the long trip to Cancún to participate in an organized, disciplined, combative fashion. The unfortunate suicide of Mr. Lee was interpreted by most of the demonstrators as a dramatic symbolic act about "the victims of neoliberal globalization,"

The resistance movement in Miami demonstrated against the expansion of free trade agreements because it considers them strategies in the construction of an empire based on greed, violence and power.

and was a catalyst particularly for the final demonstration. The Youth Caravan was another central actor who carried out daily street actions. The Center for Convergence also participated with very creative, imaginative activities, as it has in other events of the global resistance movement. The Our World Is Not for Sale Network made an outstanding contribution: accredited in the official ministerial meeting, it made lobbying efforts parallel to the protests and civil disobedience it carried out in the streets through its "inside and outside" coordination mechanism.

Clearly, both in the alternative activities and fora and in the demonstrations and protests, the issue of agriculture was ever present and the peasant organizations from the developing countries played a leadership role and had a broad presence. This was because the

agriculture issue (followed by that of intellectual property rights) was the most important negotiating point and the most conflictive on the agenda due to the subsidies and tariffs designed to favor mainly the United States and the European Union and which were not slated for debate.

According to the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade (RMALC), on September 13 a large demonstration was staged with the participation of unions, indigenous, women's, young people's, peasant, environmentalist, civic and other organizations from 82 countries. The protesters broke down

the double metal barrier that separated them from the police cordon to uphold their right to demonstrate; they symbolically burned the WTO in effigy and gave flowers to the police and then withdrew in an orderly fashion. A RMALC leader pointed to the movement's lessons as follows:

On the 14th the summit collapsed and the actions finished up with an impressive, educational demonstration, with Brother Lee as a symbol of struggle and without any arrests or injuries. The movement can celebrate it; it has left Cancún with a victory and many lessons in everyone's knapsacks.

The movement's ability to connect the global agenda with local matters and to act simultaneously internationally was not totally clearly demonstrated... Not all the international... and national

**SOME NORTH AMERICAN SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS
AT THE FIFTH WTO MEETING IN CANCÚN**

CANADA

- Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance (CAFTA)
- Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT)
- Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-National Office
- Canadian Chamber of Commerce
- Canadian Environmental Law Association
- Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA)
- Centre for Trade Policy and Law (CTPL)
- Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN)
- National Farmers Union-Canada (NFU-Canada)
- North-South Institute (NSI)

U.S.

- American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)
- Citizens Network for Sustainable Development
- Citizens Trade Campaign (CTC)
- Fair Trade Resource Network (FTRN)
- Farm Aid
- Food First
- Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP)
- Manufacturers for Fair Trade Coalition (MFT)
- Public Citizen
- United Steelworkers of America

MEXICO

- National Association of Agricultural Producers' Sales Firms (ANEC)
- Mexican Center for Environmental Law (CEMDA)
- Fair Trade Mexico
- Workers Confederation of Mexico (CTM)
- Revolutionary Confederation of Workers and Peasants (CROC)
- DECA People's Team
- Chiapas Indigenous Ecological Federation (FIECH)
- Mexican Action Network on Free Trade (RMALC)
- Isthmus Union of Indigenous Communities
- National Union of Autonomous Regional Peasant Organizations (UNORCA)

forces that were expected actually came to Cancún. The matter for most concern... was the fact that despite the positive results... both before and during the activities in Cancún, divisions and a lack of coordination momentarily endangered things. There was a wor-

rying rebirth of sectoralist, anti-NGO, hegemony-seeking visions... which had been overcome in the global movement's different spaces in the spirit of multi-sectorial alliances, consensus-based unity, horizontal functioning and respect for each other.... So, despite the victory, the

movement came out of Cancún slightly damaged. And this has to be taken into account for future struggles.¹

The global justice movement recognized the crucial importance of the Group of 21, wondering about its level of integration and its staying power in the short, medium and long term. However, it also maintained a critical approach by underlining that these governments' stance on the agricultural issue was limited because it only dealt with subsidies and access to the markets of the North, leaving aside the central questions of the protection of their own agricultural economies and food sovereignty and security, and taking no position on the Singapore issues.

FTAA "FLEXIBILITY" IN MIAMI

The participation of 12 Latin American countries in the Group of 21 in Cancún was a determining factor for the Eighth Ministerial Meeting of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) from November 19 to 21 in Miami. Real progress on agriculture in Cancún was a precondition for the success of the negotiations of the 34 Latin American trade ministers in Miami. A little over one-third of the ministers concluded that the Cancún WTO meeting lacked the political will to come to a consensus and that the 2005 time limit for the negotiations was unrealistic. For this reason, the FTAA's hemispheric agenda met with serious problems, coming up against the imposition of protectionism at home (the United States) and liberalism abroad (Latin America).

The FTAA project, originally proposed by the United States, was ambitious: it aimed to liberalize the exchange of

goods and eliminate barriers to the flow of capital and services from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego, an area with 800 million inhabitants who generate U.S.\$13 trillion a year in output. The Miami agenda was committed to 10 negotiating issues: market access; agriculture (without touching on the reduction of U.S. subsidies); services; investment; public procurement; intellectual property; competition policies; subsidies; anti-dumping rules; compensatory rights; and conflict resolution.

Nevertheless, with the Cancún precedent, the United States reduced the FTAA proposal to the construction of a “flexible agreement” compatible with the growing differences among the countries of the region about the rhythms and depth of liberalization. This was the result of the rough draft of the final declaration developed by the U.S. and Brazilian teams (these two countries co-chaired the Miami meeting). This means that the 34 countries involved in the process will commit to different levels of economic opening.

In that framework, the United States desisted from negotiating trade agreements by consensus and divided up its objectives. It announced negotiations aimed at trade agreements with four South American countries (Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia), strengthening negotiations it already is carrying out with five central American countries, incorporating the Dominican Republic from the Caribbean region, and beginning talks with Panama. In conclusion, Washington will maintain negotiations with South America, Central America and the Caribbean in a series of steps that weaken the original potential of the FTAA.

On the other hand, Brazil emphasized the differing levels of develop-

PARTICIPATION OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE FIFTH WTO MEETING BY CONTINENTS	
AFRICA	63
AMERICAS	407
North America	
Canada	84
United States	236
México	33
Central America and the Caribbean	11
South America	43
ASIA	41
EUROPE	331
OCEANIA	19
TOTAL	961

Many governments have opposed making the FTAA a “flexible agreement”, prompting a great intensification of citizens’ diplomacy in both the North and the South.

ment in the region’s economies and recognized the FTAA as a minimum agreement that would allow each country to move forward in bilateral treaties and incorporate some of the concerns of the union, environmentalist and peasant groups that have opposed the original proposal in several parts of the hemisphere.

Meanwhile, the resistance movement in Miami demonstrated against the invasion and occupation of Iraq, soldiers’ counterinsurgency training in the School of the Americas and the expansion of free trade agreements like the FTAA because it considers them strategies in

the construction of an empire based on greed, violence and power. Participants declared that these policies are not making the world safer just as their economic policies are not creating prosperity.

On November 20 there was a huge march and rally headed up by 2,000 members of the United Steel Workers of America (USWA), the largest contingent, that also included Brazilians, Colombians, Argentines, Canadians, Mexicans and for the first time representatives from different social organizations from the global justice movement. There were union contingents from the textile indus-

try, government employees, electrical workers, service workers and machinists, alongside retirees, the Black Block, artists and alcoholics, among others. They shouted slogans about the environment, against the privatization of water, in defense of immigrants, against U.S. intervention in Colombia and Venezuela and a broad gamut of issues, all united in their rejection of the FTAA.

March organizers denounced the overwhelming police presence and the systematic violation of demonstrators' human rights in their attempts to silence the protest against the FTAA. USWA international President Leo Girard stated that the police would never be able to stop the movement for economic and social justice in the Americas. The undisputed leadership of U.S. steel workers and their leaders was due to the benefits they receive from U.S. tariffs imposed on steel imports from the European Union and seven other nations (among them Brazil, Japan, South Korea and Switzerland). A decision on the conflict among these countries was handed down by the appeals body, the WTO's highest tribunal, which stipulated that the U.S. tariffs violated the rules of international trade. A few days later, the U.S. government accepted the elimination of duties on steel.

In a parallel forum, the Inter-American Regional Labor Organization (ORIT) hosted a hemisphere-wide labor meeting with representatives from union confederations and associations in which they explained workers' concrete experiences, from the Mexican border's maquiladora plants to the Argentine crisis. Participants included representatives of the Continental Social Alliance, the Landless Movement from Brazil, Vía Campesina, Mexico's Au-

thentic Workers' Front (FAT) and leaders from the AFL-CIO. Everyone present criticized the negative results of trade liberalization policies and privatization for the workers of the Americas.

CONCLUSIONS

In the two years since September 11, the U.S. situation has become more complex. The president has not managed to legitimize the war in the Middle East given the lack of proof to back up his decision or the increase in military spending. This has meant that Bush has unilaterally promoted his foreign security policy. He has not been able to create security and trust in the U.S. public, among whom the fear of international terrorism continues to increase. It is the public that has been the most negatively affected by this, while President Bush's popularity has dropped and his chances for re-election in 2004 have been endangered.

On the other hand, in the third quarter of 2003, the U.S. economy has begun to recover, but the shadow of several years of economic recession and the deficit in job creation continue to prevail. The solution of making the FTAA a "flexible agreement" and imposing trade liberalization and protectionist advantages through the WTO has been opposed by many governments and prompted a great intensification of citizens' diplomacy in both the North and the South.

Millions of voices demanding humanitarian trade participate in a process aimed at bringing together different perspectives to build "an alternative vision based on global social justice and a balanced role for government and the mar-

ket," to paraphrase Joseph Stiglitz in his new book, *The Roaring Nineties*.² 

NOTES

¹ Héctor de la Cueva, "La batalla de Cancún: Balance de una victoria," *Observatorio Social de América Latina (OSAL)*, no. 11 (Buenos Aires: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales, 2003), pp. 6-8. Other views about the resistance movement were taken from the same source.

² Joseph Stiglitz, *The Roaring Nineties: A New History of the World's Most Prosperous Decade* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003).

FURTHER READING

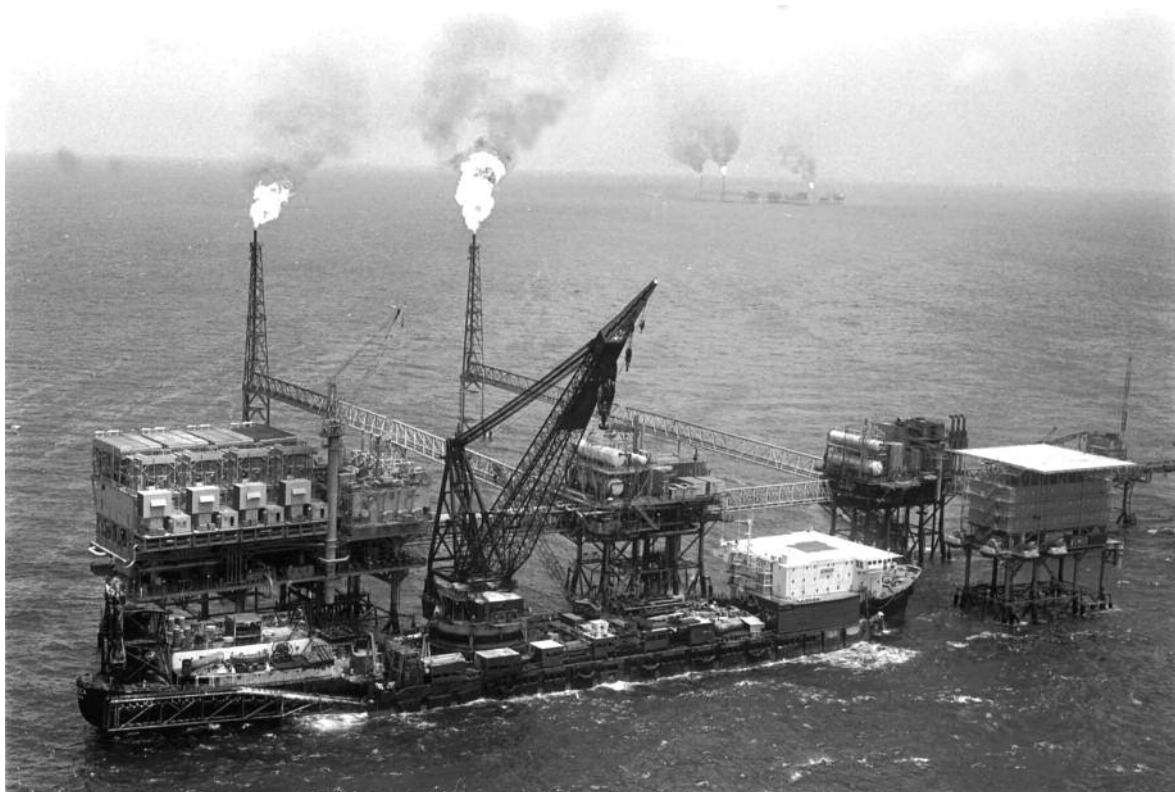
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The North American Fossil Fuel Market

Part 1

U.S. Fuel Weakness

Miguel García Reyes*



Pedro Valtierra/Cuartoscuro

INTRODUCTION

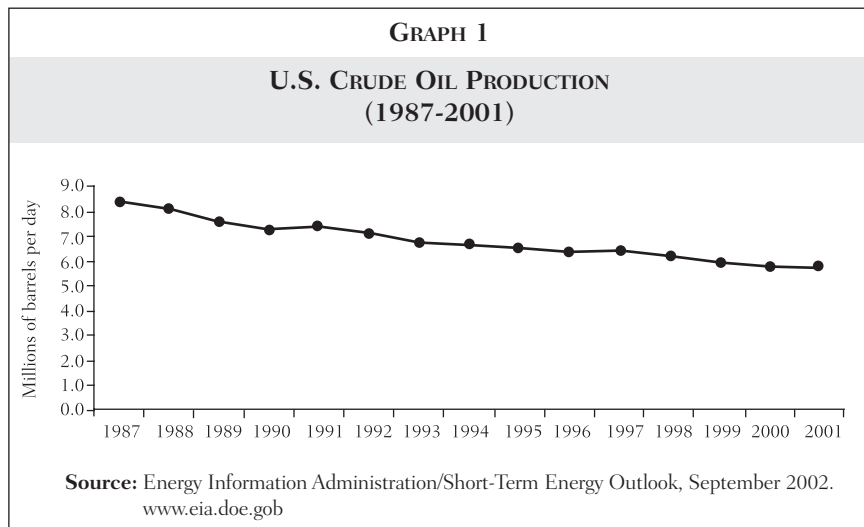
In the framework of the oil crisis that began in the 1970s—first as a result of the 1973 Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) oil embargo and later because of Iran's 1979

adjustment in oil prices—and for national security reasons because a great part of their economic development depends on their use of oil, the industrialized capitalist countries decided to speed up the creation of regional blocs through which they now are trying to ensure the future supply of fossil fuels. At the same time, they also want to put an end to their dependence on distant

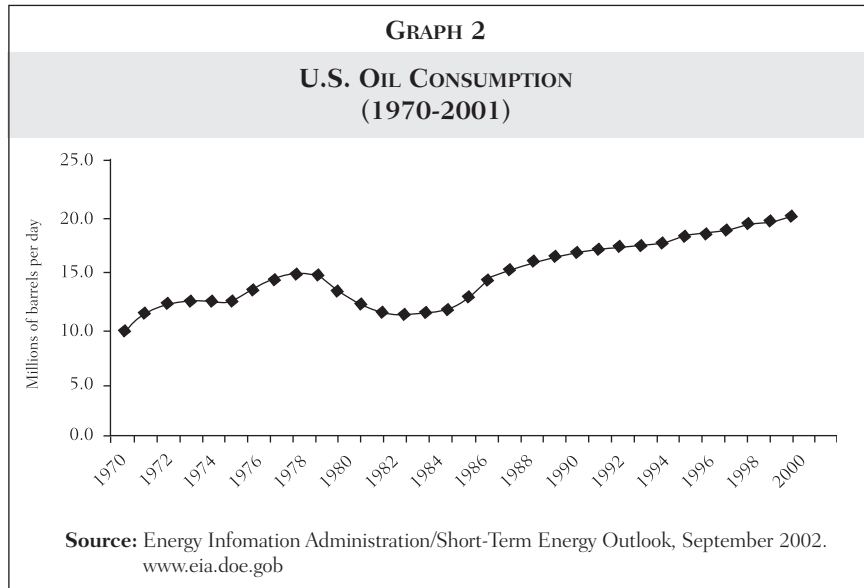
external sources, particularly those that are immersed in political or even military crises.

This is what the United States has been going through since then, and even continues to go through, despite the efforts that its authorities have made to strengthen the domestic oil sector and depend less on crude from abroad, particularly from the Middle East.

* Researcher in the CISAN Strategic Studies Area.



Among the elements that show the weakness of the U.S. oil sector are the decrease in production, above all of crude oil, and the notable increase in fuel consumption.



Today, several elements reflect the weakness of the U.S. oil sector. Some of them are even determining factors in the good functioning of the local economy. For that reason, while today our northern neighbor is an economic giant, at the same time it is an oil midget.

Japan and some Eastern European nations, which depend greatly on oil imports, are just as severe cases.

Among the elements that show the weakness of the U.S. oil sector are the decrease in production, above all of crude oil; the notable increase in fuel

consumption, particularly of natural gas; and the resulting increase in the volume of oil imports. We would also have to add the dangerous decrease in the volume of proven and strategic oil and gas reserves.

Given this, we should not be surprised that in recent years, the different administrations that have occupied the White House, concerned with the weakness of their local oil sector, have developed a series of strategies to ensure oil supplies. These strategies foster everything from continental oil integration, starting with North America, to the physical occupation of territories overseas that possess the black gold.

THE U.S.'S FUEL WEAKNESS

Throughout its history, the United States has experienced fuel problems, particularly with regard to oil and gas products. This was due to the industrial development model followed from the beginning of the last century, based, as everyone knows, on the intensive use of oil derivatives. The origins of this situation date as far back as 1870 when the internal combustion engine began to be used in Europe and the United States. Since then industrialized capitalist societies created widespread dependence on this raw material, strategic because it is limited and non-renewable. However, given its relative abundance and low price, these countries became assiduous oil consumers.

The United States had no problem with its oil and gas supply from either domestic or foreign sources in the first half of the last century. It tapped the rich oil fields of Michigan, Illinois, Texas, Florida and California,¹ and bought from the oil-rich nations of the Middle East,

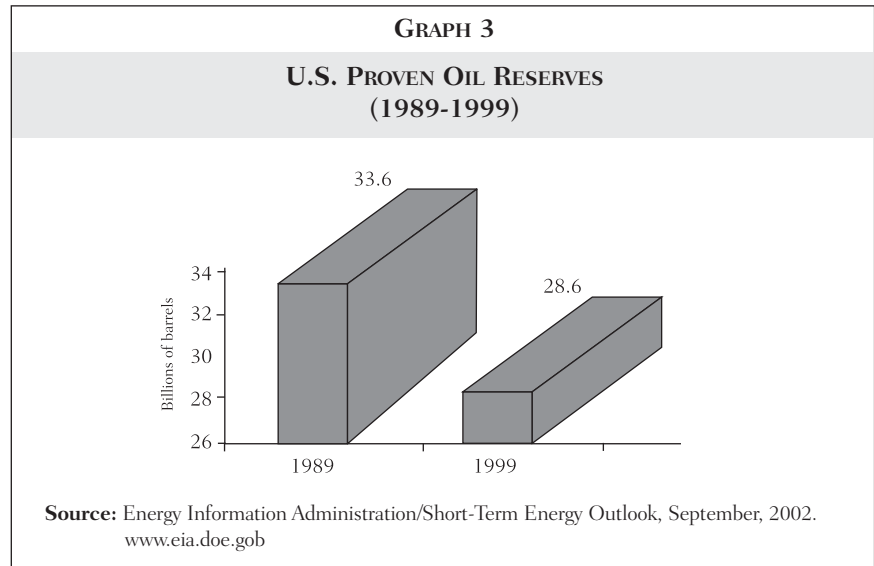
particularly the Arabian peninsula, obtaining marginal amounts of oil and gas from countries of the Far East and Latin America.² The large deposits in the Soviet Union and China were out of its reach.

By the first half of the last century and thanks to the two world wars, the United States was able to achieve a stronger role for its oil companies in lands that until then it had not been able to dominate: Africa and some areas of the Middle East. It also increased its presence in Latin America and some parts of the Caribbean.

Thus, through the use of political and diplomatic instruments, it was able to ensure the satisfaction of its oil needs and, what was more important, it did so at a low cost. This finally allowed it to experience accelerated economic development, particularly in industry, at a low price.

However, in the second half of the twentieth century, the United States began to show signs of “energy weakness” given, among other things, an increase in the population, the high rates of industrial growth and its participation in the U.S.-Soviet arms race. This weakness led to its authorities making a foreign policy priority of the quest for solutions to this crisis. The most dangerous and critical moment of this fuel vulnerability came at the end of the 1970s when the inefficiency of its oil infrastructure was made clear and at the same time, abroad, above all in the Middle East, tensions began to mount due to the increasing activity in the area by the Soviets and the OPEC countries.

Given the danger that the lack of oil meant to the United States, then-President James Carter prepared an oil strategy to solve the crisis,³ which was



While today our northern neighbor is an economic giant, at the same time it is an oil midget. Japan and some Eastern European nations are just as severe cases.

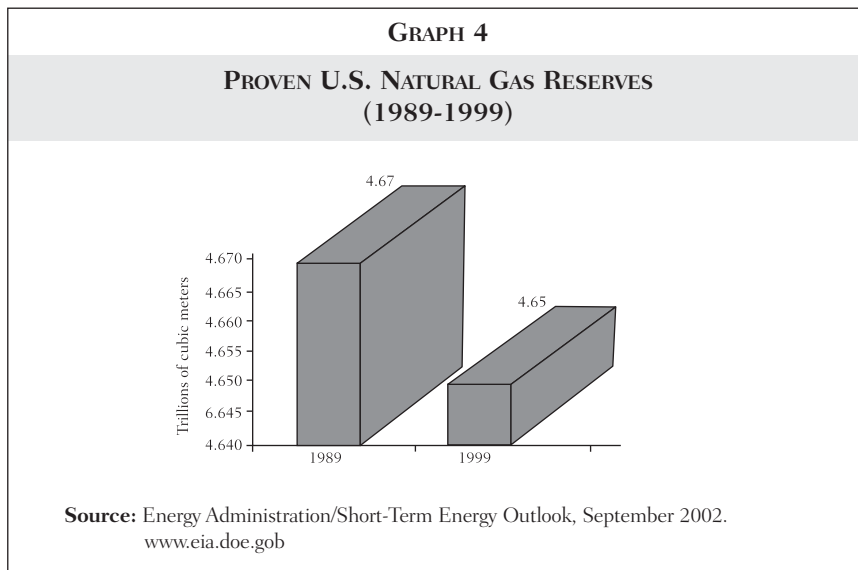
caused, among other things, by the following factors:

- 1) Local oil fields gave out as a result of irrational drilling and pumping, which caused a notable decrease in domestic production;
- 2) The increase in domestic demand and the resulting need to import ever greater amounts of oil and gas;
- 3) The notable loss of U.S. influence in the international oil market, specifically on the part of U.S. oil multinationals, due to the emergence and consolidation of the OPEC.

It should be emphasized that the United States was entering into this oil-weak stage—now a chronic state—despite the fact that in the past its oil multinationals, particularly those that belonged to the Seven Sisters Cartel, had almost completely dominated the

international oil market. That had made for an oil market of low prices which, I reiterate, permitted the capitalist nations to develop economically at a low cost. During the first half of the last century, the price of crude never went over U.S.\$3 a barrel, in sharp contrast with the late 1970s, when a barrel of crude cost more than U.S.\$40.

However, despite the predominant role for many years of the U.S. oil multinationals in the world market, our northern neighbor experienced a severe fuel crisis in the 1970s, a crisis which persists until today. This crisis is explained by the absence of both an effective program for working the domestic oil fields and a long-term geo-political vision that considers oil and gas as a central element. The former reason finally caused a decrease in the production volumes and oil reserves (see graph1); the latter reason caused the United States to be excluded



With current volumes, the U.S. will only have enough oil for 10 years at most, making this an important national security risk.

from the cooperation practiced in certain parts of the world with regard to oil.

All of this became very dangerous for world equilibrium given that it involved a super-power and not a developing nation: that is, it is not the same for one or several countries in Africa or Latin America to run out of oil and gas as for it to happen to the United States, a power willing, as it has shown, to use its political, economic and military superiority to its advantage.

Graphs reveal the general panorama of the crisis the United States oil and gas sector is currently going through. Graph 2 shows the increase in domestic oil and natural gas consumption, due, among other reasons, to their intensive use in transportation and military industrial production, first as a result of U.S. participation in the Cold War and later as the main actor in the construction of a new international order.

When proven oil and gas reserves dropped dangerously beginning in the 1970s, the United States' oil weakness grew. The drop was due to the irrational use of local oil fields and the lack of investment in exploration for new reserves. This state of affairs, very common in oil and gas producing countries, was not necessarily a positive thing in the United States because it is the nation that requires the most crude oil and gas for consumption.

Oil reserves fell by 20 percent in the last 10 years (see graph 3), dropping from 33.3 billion barrels in 1989 to 28.6 billion in 1999. This same trend, though not as pronounced, can be seen in Graph 4 for the case of natural gas.

It should be pointed out, however, that in the case of crude oil reserves, the situation is much more dangerous since with current volumes, the U.S.

will only have enough oil for 10 years at most, becoming an important national security risk. What is more, that figure could drop to one year if the United States had to abruptly and permanently stop its imports of crude oil and gas. That is why the White House's oil strategies recommendations propose that the country maintain its reserves at all costs while, at the same time increase its oil and gas imports, above all from regions that are politically and socially stable, such as Southeast Asia and Latin America.

Graph 4 shows that proven natural gas reserves have not dropped as abruptly as oil reserves, which does not mean that their decrease is not just as dangerous for the U.S. economy. This is particularly the case if we take into account the fact that in recent years, the United States has experienced an important increase in gas consumption, especially for generating electricity.

Finally, oil imports to the United States have also increased dangerously in recent years, which also means that the country depends increasingly on foreign supplies of fuel (see graph 5).

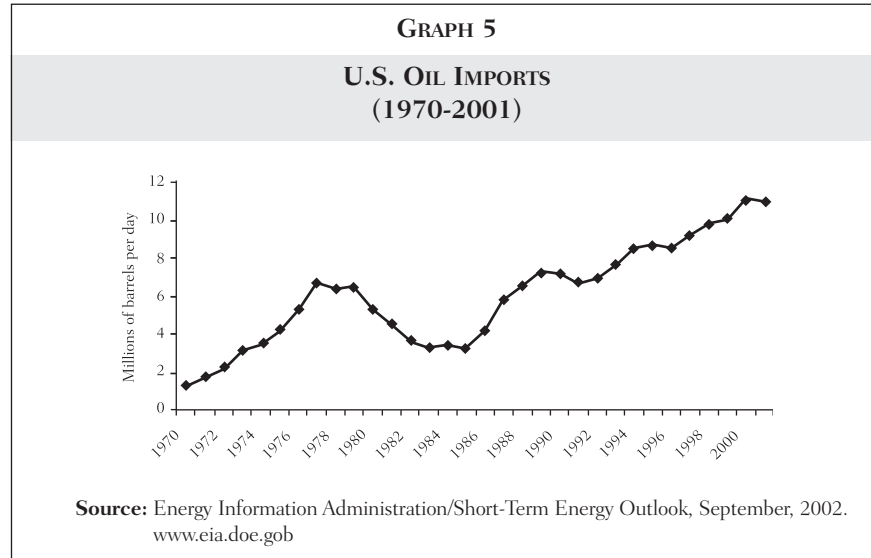
White House planners have had to design a series of international policy strategies to ensure the supply from abroad; their aim is to maintain a constant flow of fossil fuels, but their application has caused significant geopolitical changes worldwide, to the point of even changing the world's geography. What is more, as a result of the implementation of U.S. oil strategies institutionalized since the Reagan administration, Washington has not only contributed definitively to changing the world's political geography, but also to the construction of a new international order in which consuming countries now have control of the market.

Since the 1980s, precisely in the framework of these oil strategies, the United States has had to gradually replace supplier countries from the Persian Gulf with others in less conflictive regions (see graph 6). Thus, the Middle East contribution to total U.S. imports dropped from 35 percent in 1980 to 20 percent in the 1990s. A similar situation is that of producing nations in the Far East, which also reduced their exports to the United States by 20 percent.

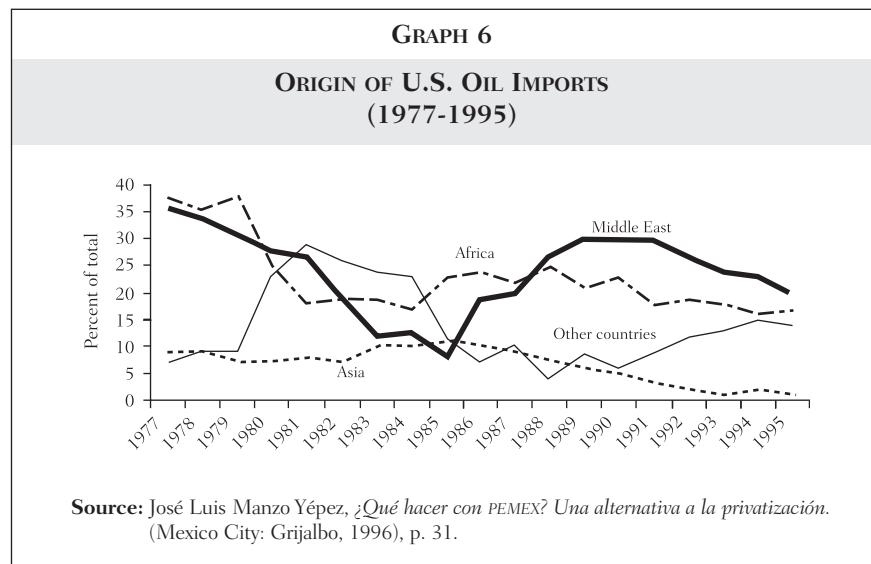
The opposite happened with Canada and some Latin American nations, who benefited from the political strife that began to plague the Middle and Far East. In that context, Mexico managed to increase its exports to the United States by more than 200 percent, going from 400,000 barrels a day in 1977 to a little over 1.5 million barrels a day in 2002. With this substitution of oil and gas suppliers, countries like Mexico, Venezuela and Saudi Arabia have today become the main suppliers of these strategic raw materials to the United States.

CONCLUSIONS

Given the facts and trends explained above, we can confirm the hypothesis that the United States is currently going through a grave petroleum crisis which is the result, among other things, of erroneous policies for developing its domestic infrastructure and of the political uncertainty prevailing today in some oil-producing regions. With regard to the former, we can highlight the lack of investments in new wells; with regard to the latter, we see how, given the most recent international geo-political changes, the United States has reacted



White House planners have had to design a series of international strategies to ensure the supply of fossil fuels from abroad that have caused significant geo-political changes worldwide.



by trying to impose a new international order, which of course includes a new world oil order.

All this also confirms the fact that despite its military might, the United States is more vulnerable now than

ever to the ups and downs of the international oil market. For that reason, and taking advantage of the instruments it has at its command, this single power has prepared and implemented a series of oil strategies that include projects

of fuel integration with its neighbors in the Western Hemisphere. Of these projects, undoubtedly the most advanced is the free trade agreement with Canada, which allows the latter to sell increasing volumes of gas to the United States; just a few steps behind are the North American Free Trade Agreement, the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the Puebla-Panama Plan and the oil multinational Petroamérica.

It is in this context that we can say that the creation of a North American


fuel bloc is a sure thing since it is not just a matter of the political will of those in power, but also—and this is the most important factor— of the existence of real economic and political factors that particularly push the United States to create a regional alliance. In a kind of tri-continental division of labor in the North American region's oil area, the United States is the market for Canadian and Mexican fossil fuels, while Canada and Mexico are on the receiving end of financial and technological

resources that the United States has in abundance in energy development. Lastly, we must not forget that for the three countries, the issue of fuels is a priority on their respective national security agendas. ■■■

NOTES

- ¹ Alain Perrodon, *Historia de los grandes descubrimientos de petróleo y gas* (Moscow City: Moscow Edit, 1994).
- ² Daniel Yergin, *The Prize* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

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The End of the Chrétien Decade¹

Gustavo Ernesto Emmerich*



Jim Young/Reuters

Jean Chrétien (left) hands the government over to Paul Martin.

In late 2003, Jean Chrétien retired from political life at the age of 70. In November he gave up the leadership of the Liberal Party (LP), which he had headed up since 1990. And in December he resigned as prime minister, a post he had occupied since 1993.

* Professor of political science at the Autonomous Metropolitan University, Iztapalapa campus.

He was replaced in both positions by Paul Martin, 65, his eternal rival inside the LP, who had been his finance minister until early 2002. Chrétien's exit, that he had personally announced more than a year before, was partially his own decision and partially due to the growing dissidence in liberal circles headed up by Martin.

In the Canadian parliamentary system, the party with the majority of seats

in the House of Commons is charged with forming a government, and the leader of that party becomes the prime minister. Elected leader of the LP in an ad hoc party convention, and with the Liberals holding a broad majority in the Commons (see graph 1), it fell to Martin to fill the post of prime minister. In any case, he will have to subject his new position to public approval by calling elections to renew the House

of Commons by 2005 at the latest, but more probably in 2004.

1993-2003: PARTIES AND ELECTIONS

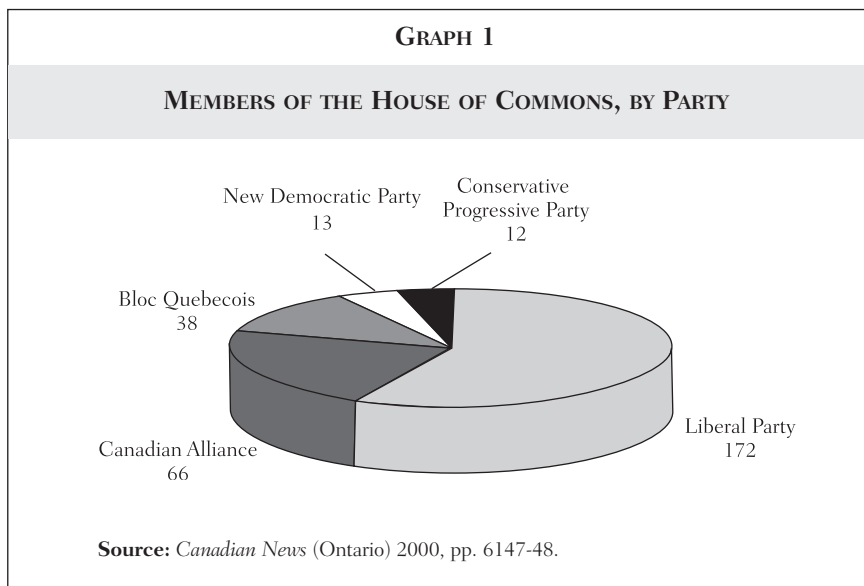
In all its history, Canada has only been governed by the centrist Liberal Party and the moderate right-wing Progressive Conservative Party (PCP). Until 1997, the social democratic New Democratic Party (NDP) was the distant third, always far from being able to aspire to head up the federal government. With Chrétien at its head, the LP won the elections in 1993, 1997 and 2000, gaining absolute parliamentary majorities. In that decade, the party system changed radically. The PCP declined sharply in voters' preferences, to the degree that today it is about to disappear; also, in 2003, it lost the Ontario provincial elections to the Liberals, forfeiting with it the

most populated and economically important province in Canada. The NDP has maintained its vote count at about 10 percent in federal elections, with a small parliamentary caucus, but has governed some provinces. Two new federal parties appeared in the 1990s: first, the Bloc Québécois (BQ), whose aim is for the Francophone province of Quebec to become a sovereign nation, that has run candidates exclusively in that province; from 1993 to 1997 it was the main party in opposition to Chrétien, but since then has seen its vote count and the number of its seats in parliament drop. In 2003 the Parti Québécois (PQ) (the provincial ally of the Bloc Québécois) lost the elections in its province to the Liberals, which does not augur a rosy future for the BQ in the coming federal elections. The other new federal party is the right-wing Canadian Alliance (CA) (previously the Reform Party or

RP), which defends provincial autonomy and has clout almost exclusively in the western provinces. Since 1997 it has become the main opposition party. In December 2003, the PCP and the CA decided to merge, hoping to present a united front against the Liberals.

During the Chrétien decade, the Liberals' electoral and above all parliamentary dominance was very pronounced; some say that at the federal level Canada has evolved toward a hegemonic party regime. The predominance of the LP can be explained by several factors. The most obvious and foremost is that it has been the party which has gotten the highest number of votes in three successive elections. Other factors are the regionalization of the electoral constituencies of the opposition parties, which in practice makes it the only party with an effective national presence; the mechanics of ideological-political competition, which situates it in the center, a position that allows it to capture votes; and the mechanics of the electoral system based on majority-winner-takes-all seat distribution, which gave the LP a number of parliamentary seats considerably above its percentages in the popular vote.

During the Chrétien decade, the Liberal Party's dominance was very pronounced; some say that federally, Canada has evolved toward a hegemonic party regime.



1993-2003: THE ECONOMIC PANORAMA

During the Chrétien government, Canada experienced sustained economic expansion. From the beginning, his administration adopted a controversial policy of cutting public spending; this ended up producing a fiscal surplus which, in turn, made it possible to reduce taxes and increase social spending. Paul Martin, acting as finance min-

ister, fostered economic expansion and tax cuts.

The expansion was the longest since World War II. The gross domestic product (GDP) grew at positive rates while inflation was held down (see graph 2). And growth was not limited to macro-economic figures, but also showed up in a drop in unemployment and improved real wages (see graph 3).

The expansion was based to a great extent on increased exports, which generated significant trade surpluses. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) allowed Canada to send a very large quantity of goods and services to its main twentieth-century foreign market, the United States. The depreciation of the Canadian dollar, which went from 83 cents to the U.S. dollar before Chrétien to 64 cents at the end of 2003, reduced the price of Canadian goods abroad. In addition, Canada diversified its external markets. When the U.S. and world economies weakened in 2001, the Canadian economy followed suit, despite maintaining a clear expansive trend.

CHRÉTIEN'S LEGACY

Jean Chrétien has left an indelible mark on Canada, not because he launched major projects or ideas seeking radical changes in Canadian society or political institutions, but quite to the contrary, because he applied pragmatic, non-ideological, gradualist policies that facilitated consensus and advances on concrete matters and that swept under the rug the more prickly issues, like Quebec sovereignty and the reform of political institutions. In short, if Canada has always distinguished itself for its brokerage politics, Chrétien took this style to

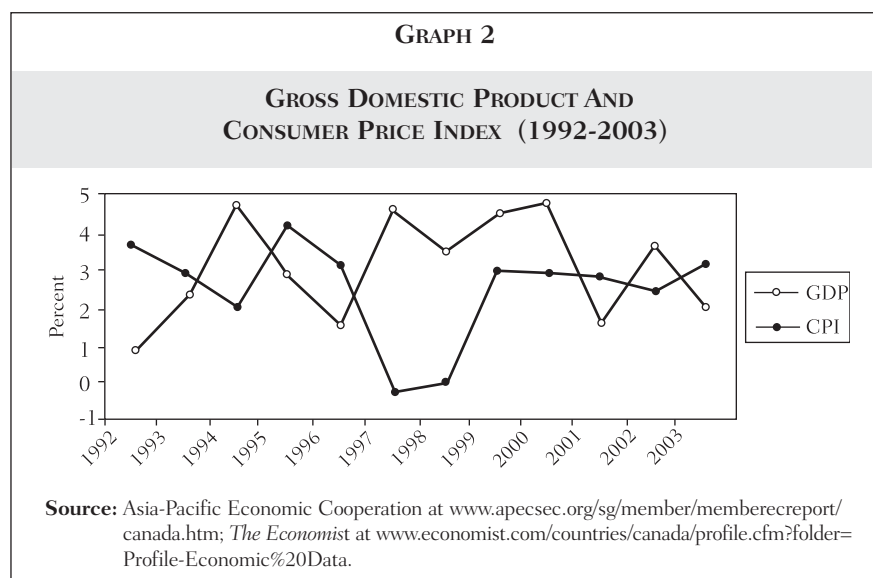
its limit. The former prime minister showed in practice that it was possible to achieve —sometimes problematically— coexistence in a multicultural country that only with great difficulty brings Anglophones together with Francophones and that also recognizes specific rights, including the right to self-government for its indigenous groups. Nevertheless, in recent years, Chrétien was harshly questioned: his go-it-alone style, the rigid discipline he imposed on his party's Members of Parliament and the deaf ear he lent to other parties, together with a few financial scandals involving people close to him were at the center of the criticisms.

The United States is always at the center of the Canadian political scene. Questioned by broad sectors of the public and even by Chrétien himself in 1993, free trade with the United States has turned out to favor the Canadian

economy. However, during the Chrétien government there were serious trade differences with the U.S., mainly with regard to Canadian lumber exports and U.S. subsidies to its agricultural exporters. Most of these differences remain unresolved. In addition, political relations between the two countries deteriorated when Canada refused to support the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

At the end of the Chrétien decade, the main issues in Canada's political debate were the marked political dominance of the LP; Parliament's lack of effectiveness and control vis-à-vis a strong government like the one which just ended; the construction of a consensus about what to do with the fiscal surplus; the appropriate management and coverage of broad social programs and the national health system; Canada's insertion in the new knowledge-based globalized economy;

If Canada has always distinguished itself for its brokerage politics, Chrétien took this style to its limit. Nevertheless in recent years he was harshly questioned.



GRAPH 3

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES AND AVERAGE WAGES (1992-2003)



Source: For unemployment, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation at www.apecsec.org/sg/member/memberecreport/canada.htm; for wages, *Canada Year Book 2001* (Ontario: Statistics Canada, 2002), tables 12 and 14, and *Canada Year Book 1997* (Ontario: Statistics Canada, Ontario, 1998), tables 12 and 15.

While the electorate seems satisfied with how the country is doing, it also seems to have the growing feeling that political institutions should be reformed.

its participation on the international scene and particularly in the fight against terrorism; and its relationship with the United States.

PERSPECTIVES

When Paul Martin assumed leadership of the Liberal Party, he outlined his government program in a document called *Making History, the Politics of Achievement*. There, he talked about three main lines of action. The first is consolidating the social foundations of Canadian life, including improving the national health system; fostering ongoing education and training; solving the housing shortage; achieving better quality of life and dignity for senior citizens; and making a new deal to

ensure more resources for municipalities. The second line of action is building a modern, twenty-first-century economy through solid fiscal management and the constant review of federal government programs. The third line of action is to ensure Canada's place in the world as one of influence and pride; this implies a security policy that would include—but not be limited to—relations with the United States. In addition, the document also mentions democratic reforms that would give members of parliament greater decision-making power, improve the system of accountability, favor collaboration between provincial and municipal governments and allow for solid political leadership.

With this program, Paul Martin and the Liberals are confident that they will

win another victory in the coming elections. They have several things in their favor. Everything seems to indicate that the economy will continue to do well. With healthy public finances, there is no reason at all for social and health programs to be curtailed significantly in quality or coverage. Quebec's perennially disruptive quest for sovereignty is in bad shape. It seems to be Martin's intention to rebuild the relationship with the United States. With this panorama, there do not seem to be reasons for generalized discontent on the part of the voters that might lead them to change the party in office.

However, while the electorate seems significantly satisfied with how the country is doing, it also seems to be dismayed and have the growing feeling that political institutions should be reformed. This is the root of the demands that the electoral system should provide broader representation for minorities, that the Senate—the upper house is not elected—and Parliament have more effective control over the government. It should be no surprise that these kinds of demands become more widespread in coming years and open up a process of reforms that would make Canadian democracy more functional and representative. Seemingly, Martin has already heard the clamor for this. ■■■

NOTES

¹ The International Council of Canadian Studies supported the research necessary for this article with a Faculty Research Fellowship. The author's participation in the Summer Institute on Canadian Studies held in July 2001 at the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies, of York University (Ontario), was fundamental for its development. Daniel Martínez, from that center, collaborated actively and generously with the author, but is not responsible for the opinions and analysis expressed here.



Veracruz Portal of the Americas

Margarita Montalvo Dehesa*

Daniel Munguía

Only 400 kilometers from Mexico City is the coast where the Spanish conquistadors first stepped onto continental Latin America. Mexico's first great encounter with the West took place in Veracruz, where we can still see the splendor of the sun rising over the ocean.

It was not the exclusive privilege of Spaniards to bring a new language, different ways of understanding the universe and other customs to a land that had been occupied only by cultures as solid as the Mesoamericans. In the creation of what is today Mexico and particularly Veracruz, people from the four corners of the earth participated: more than half were Portuguese, and also among them were English, Scots, Italians, French and Greeks. There were Arabs, Andalusians, Lebanese, Jews from everywhere and others of unknown origin. The newly discovered riches required labor and, above all, specialized techniques contributed by different countries. From the beginning, Veracruz was a melting pot of races and diverse cultures.

Its well-defined regions all have their own identity, like the Huasteca or the Totonacapan, with ancient cultures and differentiated, particular roots, as characteristic as the vanilla from Papantla, the "smiling faces" —few cultures in the world have depicted the smile in as widespread a way as the Totonac culture from Papantla did with its clay figurines— or the rhythm of the *huapango*.

The city is built on the subsoil of its ancient history, the port from which the rich Gulf of Mexico culture continues to radiate. In the heart of the Sotavento Plain, amidst the natural exuberance of the coffee trees, surrounded by rivers and waterfalls, as though it were a part of the same telluric impulse, emerges the state's largest population center, spilling toward the periphery, toward the coasts and the

* Director of special projects at the Veracruz Institute of Culture (IVEC).

mountains. Different products like sugar cane, mango, bananas, rice, coconuts, papayas and tobacco draw the state's multicolored map, with the port of Veracruz at its center.

Archaeological research indicates that between 1500 B.C. and A.D.100, one of the most advanced cultures of its time flowered in southern Veracruz. Some of the most spectacular ruins in this part of the world survive on the land of weeds and swamps, tropical forests, pests and fierce beasts, between the Papaloapan and Grijalva Rivers: the monumental Olmec heads, vestiges of a civilization considered the mother culture of Mesoamerica. Here also, archaeologists have discovered very early ceramics, testimony of a culture that predates the Christian era by more than 1,000 years. From the Pre-classical (1300-300 B.C.), we have important vestiges of a local culture that extended from the Orizaba region to the Tlacotalpan basin, known as the Remojada culture; its inhabitants had outstanding ability in making fired clay receptacles and figures, many of them decorated with black paint. Examples of this art are on display at the city of Xalapa's Anthropology Museum.

In the first centuries of the Christian era, a cultural change occurred due to the complex process of urbanization in the cities. From the Post-classical (A.D. 900-1521), archaeological sites like Cempoala and Quiahuiztlan in the environs of the port testify to the contact between Totonacs and Spaniards. The town of Castillo de Teayo, adjacent to Laguna Verde, known for its nuclear plant, is of particular interest: its central plaza boasts an extraordinary pyramid topped with a temple and the area's best collection of representative sculptures of the Aztec-Huastec civilization. And even though archaeological remains do not abound in Veracruz, famous, by contrast, for its medieval fortresses, the little museum in the Santiago Bulwark displays a valuable collection of gold Mixtec-style jewelry, testimony to the first shipments of precious metals that the Spaniards sent home after conquering Mexico.

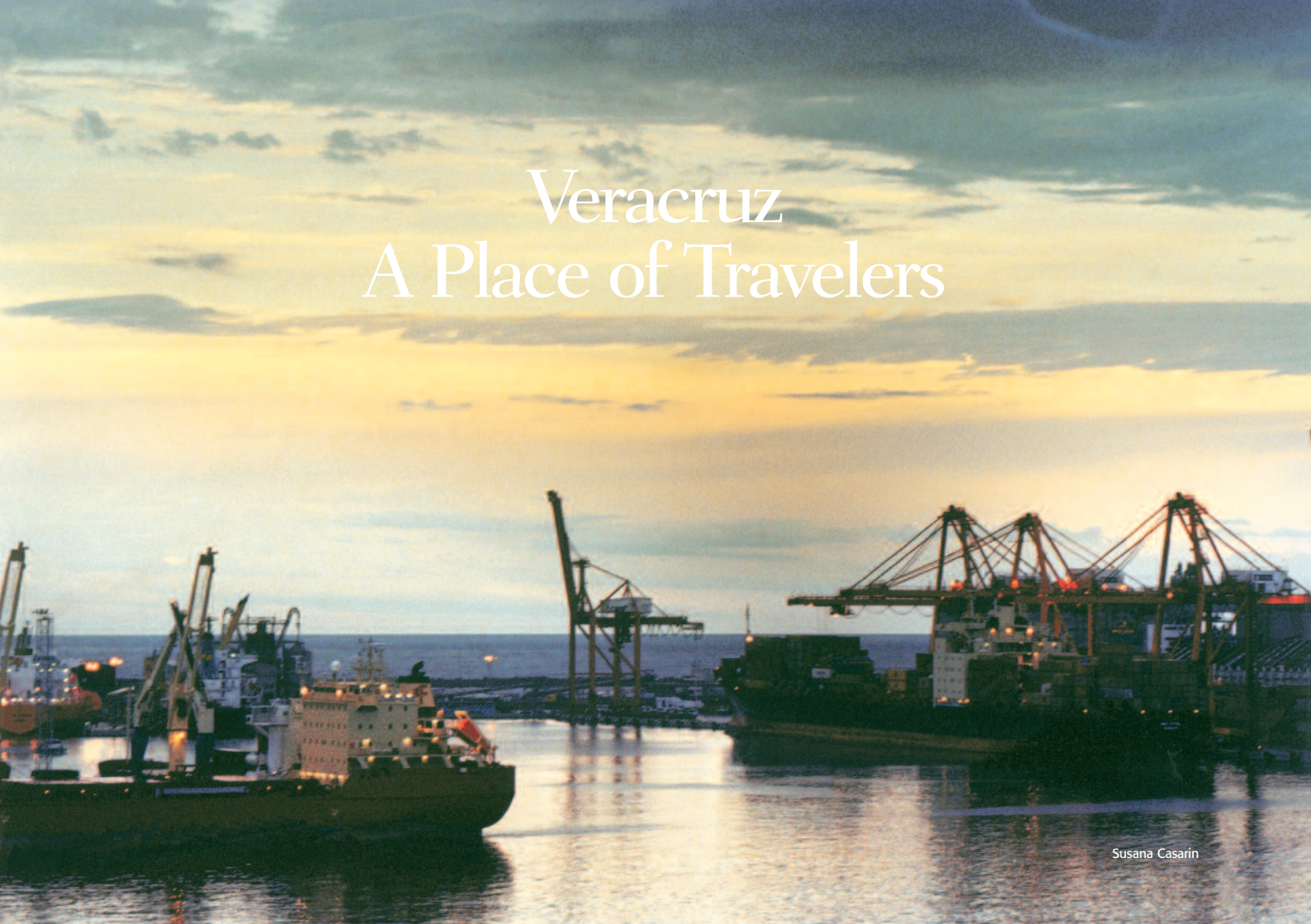
The physiognomy of today's Veracruz —both port and state— has been determined by the activities that molded the recently discovered kingdom: fortifications built on sandy soil to protect against pirates and other attackers who preyed on the coasts; roads sprinkled with inns to give respite to military and commercial travelers and bridges over waterfalls and ravines with their legends of love or stained by bloodshed in the fight for an independent homeland. For example, the house that was temporarily President Juárez's seat of government still exists, now a public registry office. A look-out point for the sea, the fortress of San Juan de Ulúa, with all the weight and solemnity of Spanish domination; limestone doorways that hold the sunlight or splinter it in intense polychromatic hues that envelop the foliage and cherubim of popular imagination. White seaside chapels that contrast with the libertarian and colorful mountain buildings that adorn the expression of local religious art and reaffirm the indigenous idiosyncrasy, so different from the wooden constructions that gave their name to the old Ciudad de Tablas, or the City of Boards, today Veracruz, and that still survive in the old La Huaca neighborhood right in the port's downtown area. History bestowed upon it the title of "Four Times Heroic," since it lived through invasions and wars that partially determined the life of the nation. But its importance lies above all in its being the port through which a large part of the country's commerce flows in the huge ships that come here from the world over, and are part of the city's emblematic landscape, just as much as the traditional sea wall walkway, the Parroquia Café or the Plaza de Armas, now known as the Zócalo Plaza, like in Mexico City.

Veracruz brings together the human elements expressed in music and dance with the old tradition of an ethnic mix: the stage of unending migrations, a place of encounters and one of the sites where popular culture is at its liveliest.

Just like 500 years ago, when the Gulf coasts opened up to welcome the medieval, conquistador, adventurers' world, Veracruz continues to receive everything and everyone with the characteristic generosity of its people. It is still a port and a door, a crossroads and entryway to the heart of Mexico. **MM**

Veracruz

A Place of Travelers



Susana Casarin

*Veracruz, little corner
where the waves of the sea
make their nest.*

*Veracruz, little piece of homeland
that knows how to suffer and sing.*

AGUSTÍN LARA

In Veracruz the aroma of the sea and the attraction of the provinces merge in a morning with the taste of coffee and *picadas* in the city's arched walkways. Regardless of the passing years and the modernization that inevitably plagues it, this port continues to belong to its inhabitants who have not moved aside or turned over their streets and plazas to the indomitable travelers and modern tourists, as has happened in many other places.

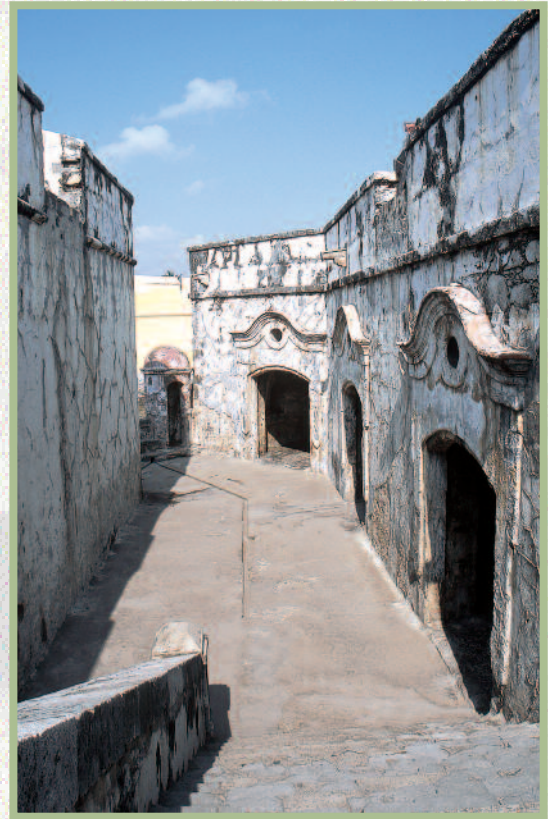
The thing is, people know about travelers in Veracruz. It was born as a jumping off point and

a destination, a port, a refuge for men and women of all races, the port of entry for invaders, a place for the exchange of uncounted riches and novelties. Here, the Spaniards founded their first settlement on continental America, men from unknown lands, so unknown that our people believed them to be gods and gave them their treasures as well as awakening their ambitions. The centuries passed and they never stopped coming, but neither did they stop leaving: from this port, outstanding figures in Mexico's history left, never to return, like Don Porfirio Díaz; but the Spanish exiles also arrived here to build their second homeland in our country. During the colonial period, Veracruz was the most important center for warehousing and trading goods between Spain and New Spain; products from the Philippines made their way from Acapulco by land and were sent to Europe; this turned it into prized booty for pirates and privateers. Four different invading forces landed



Daniel Munguia

The Venustiano Carranza lighthouse.



Daniel Munguia

San Juan de Ulúa fortress.

This port continues to belong to its inhabitants, who have not turned over their streets and plazas to the indomitable travelers and modern tourists.

on its shores: Spaniards, French and Americans attacked it, laid siege to it and sometimes occupied it for months, finally leaving again, with or without having achieved their ends.

A BRIEF LOOK AT THE CITY AND ITS HISTORY

Veracruz is Mexico's largest port, located in a rich, exuberant state divided into four regions along the Gulf of Mexico. Here we find archaeological sites, colonial cities and ecological reserves that justify the Spaniards' first impression when they landed here in the sixteenth century.

The Villa Real de la Vera Cruz was founded in 1519 by the conquistador Hernán Cortés who wanted to empower himself to be able to justify his rebellion against the authorities of the Spanish empire on the island of Cuba. Later, the city was

moved 20 kilometers to the north to a place known as La Antigua, on the banks of the Huitzilapan River. But, before that, his idea had been to move it a few kilometers further north across from Quiahuiztlan Bay, where Cortés had ten of the 11 ships that he had brought with him in his expedition sunk to ensure that his men did not turn on him and return to Cuba. Finally, in 1600, Veracruz returned to its original location. Today, three places close to the city could be symbolic of its history.

Quiahuiztlan, an archaeological site located on its hillsides with its back to the sea, seems to be an old Totonac cemetery made up of innumerable pyramids that bring to mind a stone model more than a pre-Hispanic city. The largest pieces are to be found on the site's highest spot with its spectacular view.

Even closer to Veracruz is Cempoala, another pre-Hispanic settlement. It is thought that Cortés

established an alliance with its ancient inhabitants to face the forces of Emperor Moctezuma. The largest temple, known as the Chimney temple, and the Smiles and God of the Wind buildings are some of the constructions located here.

The passing of the centuries can be felt in La Antigua. At the top of the street from the main plaza, where the ruins of what is said to be Cortés's house are to be found, is the Rosario Hermitage, one of the first in the hemisphere. Its low wall and small whitewashed nave have been silent now for several centuries. When you go down toward the river, you encounter the Silk-Cotton Tree, old and surrounded by a chain, which marks the limit of where the Huitzilapan River used to come. Legend has it that this tree, which used to be immense, caught Cortés' ship. In 1942, a hurricane buried it

and what visitors see now is a new tree that has sprouted from the roots of the original ceiba; the chains surrounding it are replicas of the ones found incrustated in the original.

To continue to dig into Veracruz's past, we will have to talk about the San Juan de Ulúa Fortress, whose history is intimately linked to the port itself. Known above all for the horrors that prisoners endured there for more than 150 years, it is one of the port's most interesting buildings. The main door still allows the visitor to see the materials used to build the entire structure, coral. Built on an island held up by a coral reef, the architects and engineers faced the problem of transporting building materials, so they decided to use large blocks of coral that they joined together with lime and sand. The building was erected in different

Quiahuiztlan, an archaeological site located on its hillsides with its back to the sea, seems to be an old Totonac cemetery made up of innumerable pyramids.



Daniel Munguía



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stages over several centuries, which is why it displays different architectural styles. It was a hospital, a warehouse, a government house, the bulwark of the city and, above all, a prison. The humid dungeons where stalactites formed from water filtration and minerals still hang testify to the darkness and suffocating atmosphere the prisoners had to endure inside its thick walls. The fortress has a museum with old maps, models and information about its history.

Like all important ports, Veracruz was subjected to intense piracy and banditry; this meant that the city and its inhabitants had to be protected by walls. The Santiago bulwark, dating from 1654, is the only one left standing of the seven that were part of the wall that surrounded the city to protect it from pillage. Other places that are part of the paradigm of the city and its inhabitants are the Venustiano Carranza Lighthouse, the Plaza de Armas, the cathedral, the post office and telegraph office buildings, the seawall walkway and the market, all dating from different moments in history.

In Veracruz, a coffee producing state par excellence, drinking coffee is one of the city's indubitable traditions, the explanation of why its residents take the time to enjoy a cup of coffee at any hour of the day. In the afternoon, once a week people dance the *danzón* —an enduring tradition—

in the Plaza de Armas, where to the rhythm of an orchestra the customs associated with this dance are respected, turning it into a symbol of Veracruz' popular culture.

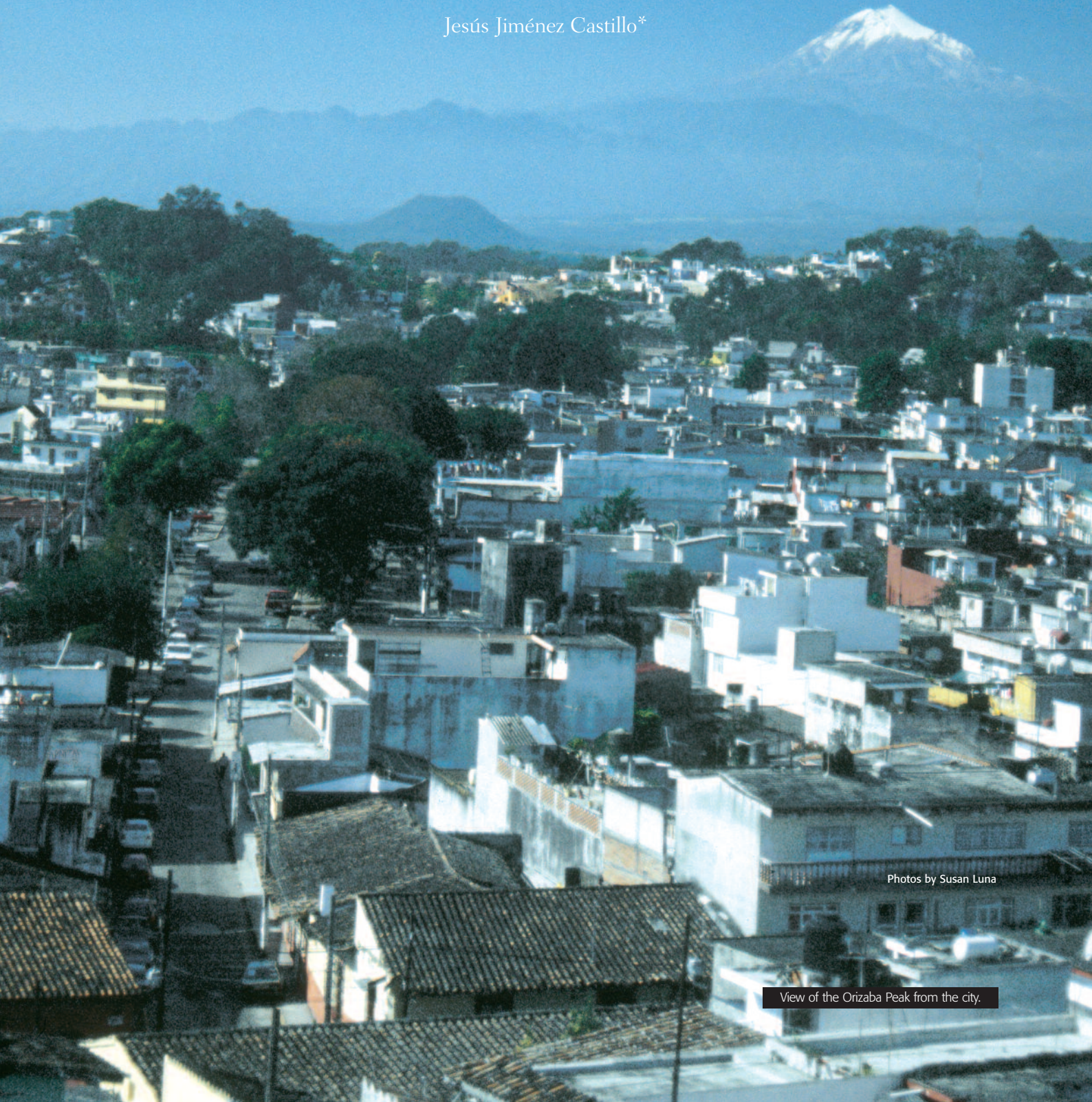
The port's aquarium is one of Mexico's largest, with nine tanks for fresh water marine life and 16 for salt water animals, including the ocean tank that offers a panorama of the fishes' comings and goings. Other species also live in their natural habitat. Endangered tortoises come to lay their eggs on the Isle of Sacrifices, located just off the coast, where the Spaniards found traces of human sacrifices offered up to the god Tajín; and reptiles, birds and sharks also live nearby.

The list of places of interest and the virtues of this port city is as long as travelers and inhabitants decide. This has been the case for five centuries. That is why traditional Veracruz, that skirts the sea and reaches to the wharf from which the San Juan de Ulúa Fortress can be seen, dwarfed by the huge cranes of what is still our country's most important commercial port, has no pretensions other than to be a place that has grown old gracefully and has much to offer the traveler. **NMM**

Elsie Montiel
Editor

Xalapa The Garden City

Jesús Jiménez Castillo*



Photos by Susan Luna

View of the Orizaba Peak from the city.



San José Church. With its baroque style with moorish influence, it is one of the best preserved in Xalapa.

Xalapa was never part of the conquistadors' *encomienda* system, since it was taxed directly by the Spanish crown.



Rojas Alley, one of downtown Xalapa's most traditional places.

Xalapa, the capital of the state of Veracruz, is a unique city. Its name, from the Nahuatl words *xalli*, meaning sand, and *apan*, meaning river or spring, means "spring in the sand." Situated 1,427 meters above sea level in the transition between the Eastern Sierra Madre and the Gulf of Mexico coastal plain, the city developed in accordance with the whimsical geography at the foothills of the Cerro de Macuiltépetl and the eastern spurs of the Cofre de Perote.¹ With a population of about 400,000, Xalapa is privileged in its orography and climate, which create a humidity that fosters diverse, majestic vegetation.

With abundant rainfall in the summer and early fall, the soil is suitable for the growth of deciduous forests (which lose their leaves in unfavorable environments) of holm oak, cedar *chijol*, sea grape trees, *chacos*, poplars and many others. Its green areas' uniqueness is one of the city's main attractions for residents and visitors alike. It is precisely this wealth of flora, one of the country's most important, that has led it to be dubbed "the Garden City" or "the City of Flowers."

HISTORY

We know that four indigenous groups settled in this region in the fourteenth century: the Totonaecs, the Mexicas, the Toltec-Chichimecs and the Teo-Chichimecs. They founded four towns: Xallitic, to the north, today part of one of the city's downtown areas, crossed by a bridge of the same name decorated with a mural that looks like a pre-Hispanic codex, depicting Hernán Cortés's passage through Villa Rica on his way to Mexico City; Techacapan, to the east, whose center was at what is now the corner of Xalapeños Ilustres Avenue and Landero y Coss Street; Tehuanapan (or Tecuanapan), to the south, located on the spot now occupied by the state government palace and extending to José María Morelos Street between

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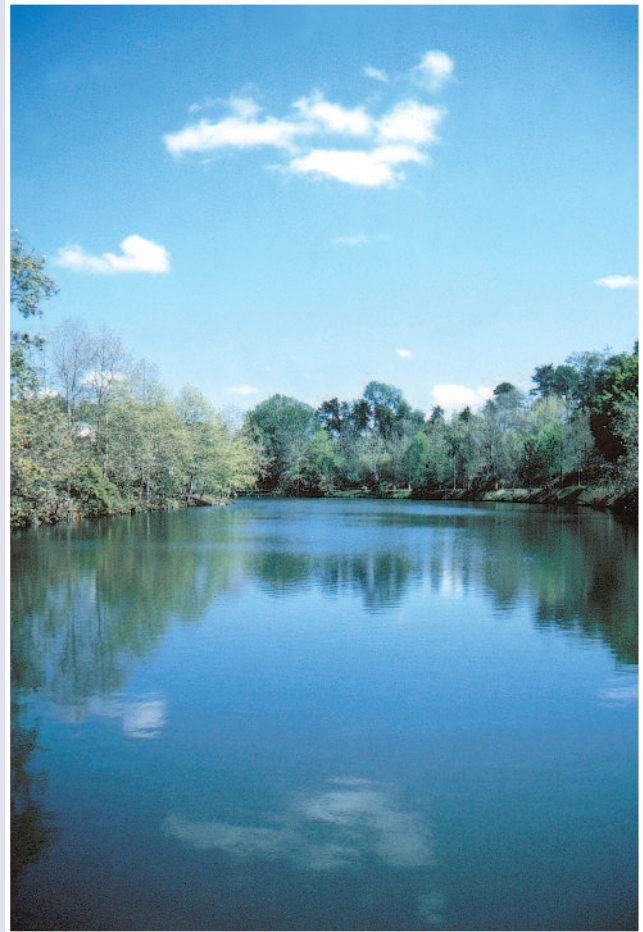
Sebastián Camacho and Barragán Streets; and the town of Tlalmecapan, to the southeast, which extended from the Santiago Chapel to what is today the Mexican Social Security Institute clinic (previously the Railroad Hospital), to Venustiano Carranza Avenue and the country house that belonged to the old Tlalmecapan ranch founded by Don Juan de Bárcena y Gutiérrez.²

As these communities grew under Aztec domination, they joined together to form a single town, later called Xallapan; the Spanish-language version of this name has endured to this day.³

According to Xalapa-born historian Gustavo A. Rodríguez, the first inhabitants of Xalapa were Toltecs from what is now the state of Hidalgo who were migrating south, probably to Yucatán and Guatemala. In the opinion of historian Leonardo Pasquel, the foundation of Xalapa cannot be pinpointed for lack of source material. However, another noted historian, Manuel Rivera Cambas, thinks that it may have been founded in 1313, the year in which legend has it that Mexico City was also founded.

Conquistador Hernán Cortés arrived in Xalapa on August 14, 1519, accompanied, among others, by the man who would years later become the famous chronicler, Bernal Díaz del Castillo. When they arrived, the Spanish changed the names of the Techacapan, Xallitic and Tlalmecapan neighborhoods to Santiago, Santa María de la Concepción and San José de la Laguna, maintaining the name of Xalapa for the town itself.⁴

After 1521, when it became part of Spain's dominions, Xalapa began its slow, difficult growth as an urban center, a process that would take three centuries. Its evolution included long periods of hardships and severe economic depression. In contrast with other towns, Xalapa was never part of the conquistadors' *encomienda* system, since from the beginning it was taxed directly by the Spanish crown. The Spaniards' traveling on the old De las Ventas road that connected the Veracruz coast to Tlaxcala and Tenochtitlan, the construction of a monastery and a hospital and the naming of a *corregidor*, or magistrate-mayor, Alfonso de Buiza, with both civil and criminal jurisdiction, favored Xalapa's development as a city.



Lake Walkway in the university area. In the nineteenth century it was a dam.

Like most of the cities in Mexico, Xalapa became modern in the second half of the nineteenth century.



Nineteenth-century public laundries in the centrally located neighborhood of Xallitic.

At the end of the seventeenth century, Xalapa became an important commercial center thanks to its geographical location, which encouraged its being a gathering place for travelers, merchants and cattle herders who transported merchandise from the port of Veracruz to central New Spain. This was one of the city's most prosperous times,⁵ a prosperity consolidated when the government picked it as ideal for holding the trade fairs for products shipped through Veracruz. Thus, in 1720, the viceroy of Baltasar, the Marquis de Valero and Duke of Orión, decided that the first fair would be held; it began with the arrival of General Fernando Chacón's fleet. Fourteen fairs were held in the city between 1723 and 1778, when Carlos III's Rules and Duties on Free Trade Between Spain and the Indies canceled them.

After independence, like most of the cities in Mexico, Xalapa became modern in the second half of the nineteenth century, mainly during the *Porfiriato* (the 30 year dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz that ended with the 1910 Revolution), when two governors, Juan de la Luz Enríquez and Teo-

doro A. Dehesa, were in office for a little over a quarter of a century, from 1884 to 1911. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, civic architecture became predominant over religious architecture and modern buildings began to be erected, like the government palace, the normal school, the high school and the Xalapa casino. These buildings contrasted with the traditional houses of timber and shingles that characterized colonial architecture. Later, new constructions appeared like the modern beer factory, La Estrella, that contrasted sharply with the Dique and San Bruno plants, old textile factories, while others disappeared. This gave Xalapa the image of a city whose past was rapidly disappearing, immersed in a present completely in tune with the modernization process of the twentieth century.

The twenty-first century presents us a Xalapa with a radically different profile: new, broad avenues; increasingly heavy traffic; its own media (newspapers, magazines, television, radio, cable television, Internet, etc.); modern, efficient commercial areas vied for by both local and outside



Juarez Park and the city hall at the historic downtown area.



Heriberto Jara Corona Stadium.

businessmen that compete with traditional markets and small businesses; large parks that are the pride of the city and one of its most important tourist attractions; protected ecological reserves like the Macuiltépetl Hill, the botanical garden, the university area, the El Castillo Lagoon, and others that symbols of the city, like the Benito Juárez Park, in the downtown area, and the Los Berros Park, near downtown.

Archaeological sites are sprinkled throughout the city, the vestiges of its ancient inhabitants and the cultures that flowered with them, including Macuiltépetl, 21 de Marzo, Lucas Martín, Palo Verde, Los Mísperos, los Metlapillis and Xolostla. One singular monument is the San José Church, built in 1770 in the Techacapan neighborhood. Its austere architecture, representative of the period and well preserved, is of historical importance: here Antonio López de Santa Ana, the much discussed military officer and Xalapa-born politician and former president of Mexico, was baptized. The body of the frustrated emperor of Mexico, Maximilian of Habsburg, also spent one night in this church on its journey to Veracruz on its way to Europe.

Today, Xalapa plays an important role as the dynamic center of the regional and state economy, mainly in the area of cultural and educational services. It is home, among others, to prestigious institutions like the Veracruz University, the Enrique C. Rébsamen Veracruz Normal School, the Ecology Institute, the National Pedagogical University and the Veracruz Pedagogical University.

Cultural activity has been one of the city's hallmarks, for which it is nationally and internationally recognized. It is said that when Baron von Humboldt visited the city 200 years ago, he dubbed it the Athens of Veracruz, and he was not in error. Innumerable spaces are dedicated to cultural, scientific and artistic activities. Among them we can mention the State Theater; the Anthropology Museum (second only to Mexico City's); the Museum of Science and Technology; the El Lencero Museum; the Diego Rivera Picture Gallery; and the Ágora, a space comprised of a picture gallery, workshops, an auditorium where Xalapa's students congregate, and a cafe with a splendid view of the city. Every year, fairs of different kinds are held in the city, attracting hundreds from different parts of

the region and the country, and Xalapa's Symphony Orchestra holds its yearly concert seasons.

Subject to the whims of its geography, this city, submerged for most of the year in fog, is an ecological and cultural paradise like very few others nationwide. **NM**

NOTES

- ¹ The Cerro de Macuiltépetl, situated at 1,580 meters above sea level, is one of the symbols of the city and is part of its heraldry.
- ² Aureliano Hernández Palacios, *Xalapa de mis recuerdos* (Xalapa, Veracruz: University, 1986), pp. 15 and 17.
- ³ The city was renamed Xalapa de Enríquez after the March 17, 1892, death of General Juan de la Luz Enríquez, governor of the state of Veracruz, in honor of his support for the capital.
- ⁴ As a result of efforts by local inhabitants and Veracruz Intendente Don Pedro Corvalán, with the support of the viceroy, the second Count of Revillagigedo, on December 18, 1791, King Carlos IV bestowed the title of "villa" and a coat of arms on Xalapa. The new villa got its first town government three years later in 1794. On December 12, 1830, Xalapa was finally awarded the status of a city.
- ⁵ In the eighteenth century, production of a plant called *la purga de Xalapa* (the Xalapa purge) was very important; its curative properties were widely publicized throughout the old and the new continent. Its name, *Xalapae Convulvis*, printed on thousands of porcelain jars sold in pharmacies, made it world famous. *Purga de Xalapa* was one of New Spain's most important products. Alexander von Humboldt, who visited Xalapa in 1806, estimated that in 1802 the plant had represented 60,000 pesos a year in exports, making it one of the colony's four most valuable products. Alexander von Humboldt, *Tablas geográfico políticas del Reino de Nueva España* (Mexico City: UNAM, 1993), p. 97. An image of *purga de Xalapa* can be seen on the city's coat of arms.



Watercross Park. Humboldt wandered these paths, a favorite of Xalapa residents since the eighteenth century.



Juárez Park's El Ágora cultural center.



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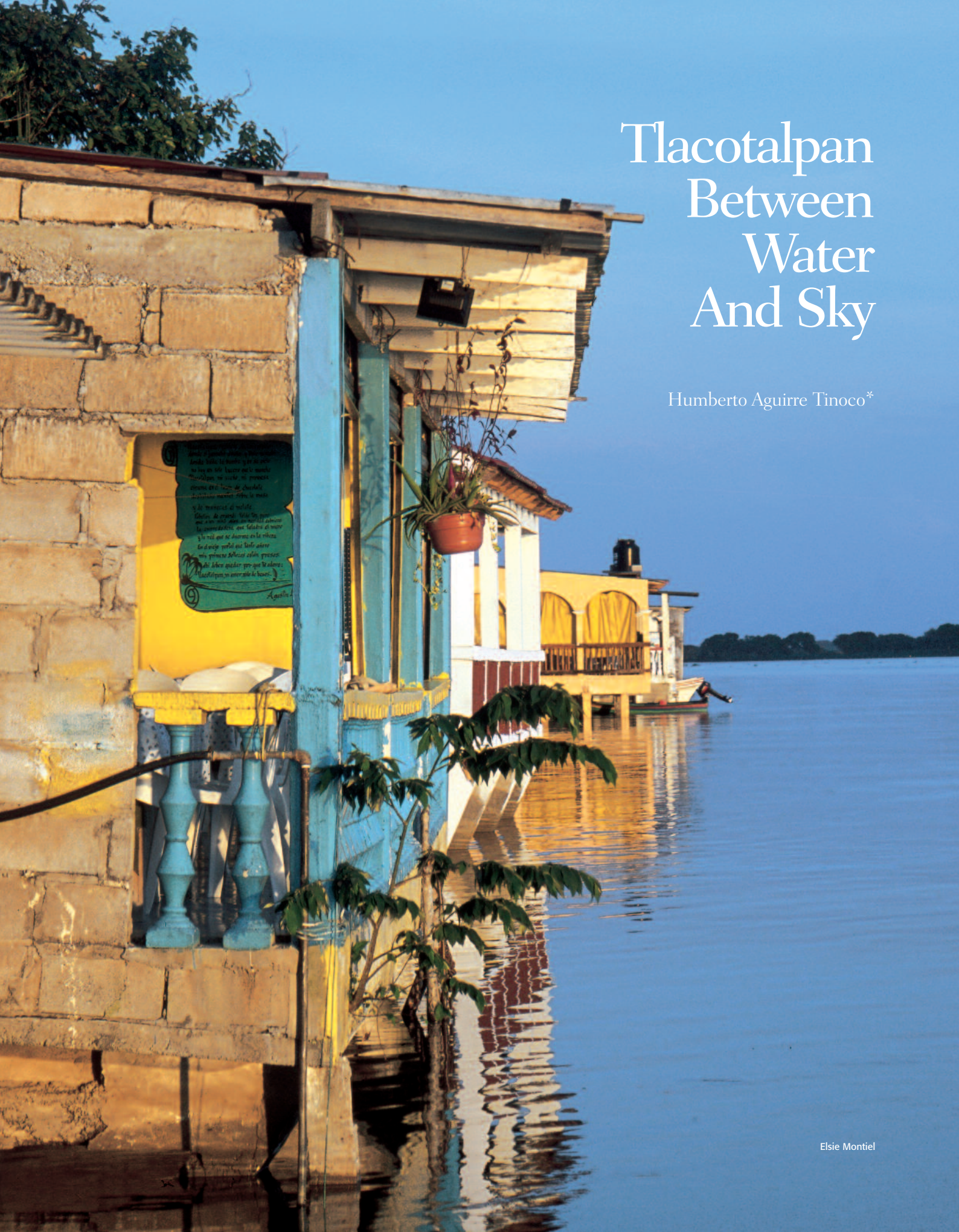
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Tlacotalpan Between Water And Sky

Humberto Aguirre Tinoco*





Daniel Munguia



Daniel Munguia

On the left bank of the flowing Papaloapan River, just across from the point where the San Michapan River tributary feeds into it from Oaxaca's Mije area and that simultaneously drains an important part of the Tuxtla lands, is Tlacotalpan. Other tributaries flowing from Oaxaca's Sierra Madre, from the Puebla Mountains and from the Citlaltépetl or Orizaba Volcano, as well as the Blanco River, which empties out into Alvarado's large salt water lagoon right where the Papaloapan spills into the Gulf of Mexico, all made this place a tranquil internal port. Both river and sea-going vessels came here from places in the Caribbean, North America and also Europe, like Havana, New Orleans, and the United States' Eastern Seaboard, as well as Cadiz, Guinea, the Canary Islands, Cartagena de Indias and Cabo Verde.

Tlacotalpan soon became a comfortable port enclave whose territory included the Papaloapan River basin that covers part of Veracruz, Oaxaca and Puebla, connected by the flow of their rivers into the majestic Papaloapan.

With this natural gate of access, Tlacotalpan was an inland port that offered excellent shelter from the piracy that proliferated in the Caribbean and permanently threatened Gulf of Mexico coasts. This made it important as a lookout point and a center for storing goods and the construction materials needed to build a wall around Veracruz, gun carriages for canon and a ship yard. The local militia mounted permanent guard against possible raids by pirates who arrived on the coast and used the Sontecomapa natural bay as a hideout. For years, piracy also plagued the neighboring port of Alvarado; thus in both places, residents developed a hard-working, vigilant attitude.

Coastal residents were made up of the descendants of Spanish sailors, mestizos, indigenous and freed blacks; all together they formed the so-called "Jarocho" clan, known for their sharp, extroverted characters, men on horseback who experienced the privilege of being and feeling free in their vast territory of the Sotavento Coast under a shimmering tropical sun. Its people, of light blue eyes and tanned skin, inherited the tradition of playing the harp and tambourines. And, emulating gypsy airs and dances and Andalusian fandangos,

* Mexican architect.



Seeing Tlacotalpan is returning to bygone days, not carried by nostalgia, but by the desire to enter into a reality in a retrospective dimension.



Daniel Munguía



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they spent their time in “*areytos*,” or festivities, always gay and wild under the glimmering starry night.

BETWEEN WATER AND SKY

“Just by standing on this land, you become my brother!” says a Tlacotalpan proverb. And, in effect, Tlacotalpan is hospitality, smiles and good living. Julio Sesto, a romantic Spanish poet who visited the town, wrote, “Oh, my brother, if you are weary of suffering, go to the Papaloapan, take the air of the Sotavento; everything is cured in Tlacotalpan, everything forgotten. The soul that when injured is incurable is cured!” And Mexican writer Elena Poniatowska says, “When I want to smile, I remember Tlacotalpan; when you pronounce the word Tla-co-tal-pan, it’s as though you wash your face and laughter comes in!”

And this is because seeing Tlacotalpan on the banks of Mexico’s most beautiful river, the broad Papaloapan (meaning River of the Sun Butterfly), is returning to bygone days, not carried by nostalgia, but by the desire to enter into a reality in a retrospective dimension, to live, feel and move through a city placid by definition. Full of affection for visitors, all the city’s inhabitants greet each other, converse out loud, report, invent, smile and enjoy the scene their city offers. It became a “villa” in 1846 when it began to stand out as a deep-water port and commercial hub, a center of attraction for industrious colonizers. Fifty years later, it already had parks, churches, a theater, a Moorish kiosk, a hospital, tram lines, a children’s park, a five-nave market with products from the air, the land and the sea on sale for the tumultuous crowds visiting it; balloons were launched from there and a band played for the “market dances.”

Later, the steam boats, sailboats and canoes stopped appearing and were replaced by the access by highway. Tlacotalpan changed its means of communication but not its life: there you wander through the streets of an evening; beautiful sunsets color with all the hues of the spectrum the arched walkways and buildings along



Daniel Munguia



Susana Casarin



Susana Casarin



Elsie Montiel

Enjoying a boat ride is a must in this river city, as is strolling on the arch-covered walkways and listening to jarana and harp music.

the river, tranquil in the dry season, but raging and swelling in the floods that make Tlacotalpan a little Venice; and that is how it looks from its river between the sky and the water.

Enjoying a boat ride is a must in this river city, as is strolling on the arch-covered walkways, as legendary a tradition as those of Veracruz, and visiting the Salvador Ferrando Museum, with its paintings, furniture, costumes and Jarocho literature. Listening to jarana and harp music at the fandango festivities, visiting the House of Culture with its important stock of symbolist painting and its space “Lara for Lara Lovers,” with objects that belonged to the poet-musician Agustín Lara, a recalcitrant Tlacotalpan native, are all *de rigueur*, as is visiting the bar where Agustín chatted with his friends and relatives.

Tlacotalpan is still a trip to a good meal of exquisite shellfish, delicious almond and walnut sweets and traditional beverages like *refinos* or *toritos*. The Candlemas fiestas are exceptional, the splendid gallop of 300 pairs of horses entering the town in the late-nineteenth-century style, the bulls that run wild through the streets like in ancient Crete’s labyrinth, the triumphal procession of the Virgin Mary sailing like the brotherhoods used to when

it was done by sailboat in the waters of the Caribbean in the stories of writer Germán Arciniegas.

Now as in the past, a new generation of pretty young Tlacotalpan girls graces attendance at Sunday mass as can only be seen in the provinces... “Oh, my adored homeland!” said Josefa Murillo, the last romantic poet, in the nineteenth century. “When I see you, my soul is pleased and rises up, grateful. Who should conquer laurels to leave you as an offering at life’s end!”

Tlacotalpan, as opposed to big cities, is quiet, spiritual expansion, the delight in leisurely living, and facing vicissitudes with wise philosophy strengthened by integrity. Does nature not glitter like the first day in paradise?

This is a city in which even today, something hidden remains to be discovered. Many, after visiting it, return home with the sadness that comes from not having been born there.

TACOTALPAN AND THE GREAT CARIBBEAN

This small city has been classified as such since May 9, 1865, when the government of the republic bestowed upon it this honor in recognition of

the patriotism of its sons and citizens, who defended it for three years against Napoleon III's French imperialist hosts, who invaded our country in the times of republican President Benito Juárez. Tlacotalpan is the fifth largest city in the state of Veracruz. When peace came to Mexico, Tlacotalpan entered a very important stage of its development as a community, both economically and culturally. Its port opened up to ships to establish foreign trade with the United States and France when the Mexico-Veracruz railroad was inaugurated in 1872. Soon the economic impact of the railroad became clear: the port of Tlacotalpan was called upon to be Mexico's New Orleans due to the number of ships that anchored there. By that time, the town had a hotel and a bath house, a photographer's studio and a local bi-weekly newspaper.

Its historic downtown area has maintained the Renaissance layout "for the foundation and establishment of towns" dictated by Felipe II of Spain in the so-called "Laws of the Indies." With its Plaza de Armas, municipal building and royal jail, as well as the blocks reserved for dwellings laid out as on a chess board fanning out from the downtown area and the royal house.

Given that in the beginning access was mainly by the Papaloapan River, on the left shore to the south of the city center, the edge of the river was deep enough to accommodate ships and had a

dock that still exists on the same site; there was also a dry dock with shipyards for repairing ships, and a beach for mooring river boats.

Tlacotalpan was also connected by the royal road to the west with the haciendas and ranches sprinkled around it that still exist in both the river areas.

Aside from the Patron Saint Cristóbal parish church, facing east in the *villa's* historic downtown, the city has another religious center in the San Miguel Archangel Neighborhood, which belonged to the indigenous community and their Republic of Natives, located outside the town itself, where the Spanish and mestizo subjects, or "the people of reason" as they were called then, lived. They got away with this kind of nomenclature in the times of New Spain.

It only remains to succinctly refer to the imponderable values of Tlacotalpan architecture, which corresponds to the great growth of architecture in the so-called Grand Caribbean, with metropolises in Santo Domingo, Cartagena de Indias, San Cristóbal de la Habana, Santiago de Cuba and many more that drank from the same well of architectural and urban concepts. The important vernacular construction that identifies it is based on Leonardo da Vinci's canons using auric proportions. It is an architecture that developed for over 400 years in our America. **MM**



Daniel Munguía



Daniel Munguía

The Veracruz State Art Museum

Cecilia Santacruz Langagne*



Daniel Munguía

José Justo Montiel, *Lady with Hat, Portrait of Doña Isabel Vivanco Patiño*,
77.5 x 52.5 cm, 1864 (oil on canvas).



The Museo de Arte del Estado de Veracruz (the Veracruz State Art Museum) holds one of our country's most important collections, particularly of nineteenth-century Veracruz art. A product of the genius of outstanding artists who from their own vision and time left us images of exuberant scenery and customs, this collection is the result of the melding in time and space of three important cultures, continents and races: the native indigenous peoples of Mexico, the whites from the Spanish peninsula and the Black peoples of Africa. This important cultural mosaic was the basis for the important patrimony that now belongs to the museum.

THE COLLECTIONS

The museum opened its doors in November 1992 boasting the 700-piece Veracruz state government collection, made up of paintings, sketches and prints from the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

* Director of the Veracruz State Art Museum, under the aegis of the Veracruz Institute of Culture (IVEC).

Photos reproduced courtesy of the Veracruz State Art Museum.

This legacy apparently originated in the late nineteenth century, when the works of Orizaba-born painter José Justo Montiel (1824-1899) that on his death were kept in his hometown workshop were acquired by the state government to create the nucleus of a regional art museum collection. However, the project was not followed through until 1942. After that year, the collection increased considerably and finally, between 1983 and 1986, the Veracruz government acquired most of its works.

The collection includes pieces by the most outstanding Orizaba-born painters trained at Mexico City's San Carlos Academy, among them, nineteenth-century painters José Justo Montiel, Ramón Sagredo (1834-1873), who began his studies in Orizaba in Montiel's atelier, as well as Fidencio Díaz de la Vega and Tiburcio Sánchez; from the first half of the twentieth century, the work of well-known artists and academy graduates Ignacio Rosas (1880-1950) and Gonzalo Argüelles Bringas (1877-1942); Tlacotalpan-born Alberto Fuster (1870-1922) and Salvador Ferrando (1830-1906). Among the distinguished alumni of the San Carlos Academy was Juan Cordero (1824-1884), born in Teziutlán, then part of the state of Veracruz.

The space dedicated to the "Presence of the Academy" exhibits magnificent pieces done in the



Daniel Munguía

José Justo Montiel, *Saint Juan de Dios Saving a Patient*, 180.5 x 114.5 cm, no date (oil on canvas).

The collection includes pieces by the most outstanding Orizaba-born painters trained at Mexico City's San Carlos Academy, among them, José Justo Montiel and Ramón Sagredo.

late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century by masters who exercised great influence on Veracruz's artistic production and left an invaluable legacy, like Eugenio Landesio (1810-1879); José María Velasco (1840-1912); Carlos Rivera (1855-1939); Adolfo Tenorio (1855-1926); Cleofas J. Almanza (1850-1915); Joaquín Clausell (1866-1935); José Obregón (1832-1902); the Spaniard José Escudero y Espronceda, active in Mexico between 1870 and 1900; the Catalans José Cusachs (1851-1908), who would gain international renown as a painter of battle scenes, and Joan Bernardet y Aguilar (1860-1932), who arrived in Mexico in the late nineteenth century and lived in Veracruz until his death.

In addition to the paintings, the museum also boasts different collections of nineteenth-century visiting artists, among whom were the sketch artists and European engravers who illustrated the work of Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) (Marchais, Bouquet and Langlois) and that of the English collector William Bullock (1795-1840) (Brisou and Marlet); the Germans Karl Nebel (1805-1855) and Johann Moritz Rugendas (1802-1858); the Italians Claudio Linati (1790-1832) and Pedro Gualdi (active in Mexico between 1840 and 1850), whose scientific interest or love of adventure prompted them to make the New World known in Europe, with a visual testimony of admiration for and wonder at the culture and beauty

of Veracruz's landscape, particularly places like Citlaltépetl or the Orizaba Peak.

Veracruz's scenery is depicted in two publications commemorating the inauguration of the Mexico-Veracruz railroad: the *Historia del Ferrocarril Mexicano* (The History of the Mexican Railroad) (1874) and the *Álbum del Ferrocarril Mexicano* (The Album of the Mexican Railroad) (1877). The former contains lithographic transfers of photographs and the latter, chromolithographs based on paintings by Casimiro Castro (1826-1889). The participating artists delved into modernity and aesthetic revaluation based on the images of the most outstanding landscape artists of the second half of the nineteenth century.

In addition to excellent painters, experts in one or several branches of scientific knowledge integrate utility and beauty, science and art with a positivist ideal in the depiction of the railroad, incorporating the machine into the exuberant Veracruz scenery.

THE BUILDING

The building housing the museum is the old Oratory of Saint Philip Neri, built in 1767 to worship Our Lady of Guadalupe, and abandoned in 1860.

It is made up of two cloisters on two levels and three patios, taking up 4,000 square meters, and is one of the most representative end-of-century creations, with its rich decoration in mortar relief done by indigenous artisans. The space adapted as a museum currently has nine rooms.

The building has witnessed important historical events and has been modified several times because of the constant earthquakes and changes in its use. An 1819 earthquake did great damage and four decades later the Oratorians abandoned it completely when the Reform Laws secularized Church properties.

In 1862, Napoleon III's French troops used the oratory as a hospital. But another series of earthquakes left the building in ruins in 1864 and 1865;



Daniel Munguía



Elsie Montiel

for this reason it was necessary to demolish and rebuild a large part of the construction. At that time, buttresses were built using neo-classical decoration on the balconies of the central patio, enriching the building's particular style.

In 1867, a hospice for physically challenged children was set up in the building and a hospital established in 1873, later to become the Ignacio de la Llave Civic Hospital. For the next 100 years, it operated as a hospital, with part of the second cloister in use as a women's prison. In 1938, the Civic Hospital rented a large part of the first cloister to found the first Mexican Social Security Institute hospital in the state of Veracruz.

The Civic Hospital closed its doors because of the enormous damage from the 1973 earthquakes; the building in ruins would later be used as an amphitheater, a municipal warehouse and a storage facility for historical documents.

It was in 1990 when a group of Orizaba residents promoted the restoration of the building that would then become a cultural center; and finally it was decided that it should hold the important Veracruz state government art collection in order to exhibit the most outstanding of Veracruz's artis-

tic production. It holds the work of great masters, who dealt with an enormous variety of topics with different techniques and artistic currents and a characteristic style of their own.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The museum offers different activities for the whole family: "Puppets Invite You to the Museum" is a guided tour led by puppets handled by the Arcoiris Group every Sunday at noon; the Cri Cri Regional Playroom, open from Tuesday to Saturday from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.; guided tours for groups; and a wide-ranging cultural program of music, literature, theater and dance, as well as academic activities, festivals, seminars, courses and art fora. **MM**

MUSEO DE ARTE DEL ESTADO DE VERACRUZ
ANTIGUO ORATORIO DE SAN FELIPE NERI
ORIENTE 4, BETWEEN SUR 23 AND SUR 25
COLONIA CENTRO, LA CONCORDIA
ORIZABA, VERACRUZ.
TELEPHONE/FAX (272) 724-3200
OPEN TUESDAY TO SUNDAY, 10 A.M. TO 5 P.M.
e-mail: museoartereveracruz@hotmail.com



Daniel Munguía



Diseño de la Imagen: Museo de Historia de la Ciudad de México, A.C.
1995-1998



XXV Feria Internacional del Libro del Palacio de Minería

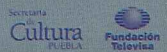
Tacuba núm. 5, Centro Histórico, Ciudad de México
19 al 29 de febrero/2004

Estado invitado: Puebla

Jornadas Juveniles - 23, 24 y 25 de febrero

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México/Facultad de Ingeniería

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Musings of a Photographer And Naturalist on the Ecology Of The Tuxtlas Mountains

David McCauley*



Photos by David McCauley

Every time I visit The Tuxtlas I am impressed by the scenic beauty and diversity of the area. The Tuxtlas Mountains truly represent one of Mexico's natural treasures. In 1998 The Tuxtlas Mountains were designated by then-President Ernesto Zedillo as a special biosphere reserve.

While at first look all appears lush green, the reality is quite a different and disturbing story. The ravages of man are readily apparent in the Tuxtlas Mountains. Within the area of the Tux-

* Photographer and birdwatcher residing in Tlacotalpan, Veracruz. birdingveracruz@yahoo.com

tlas biosphere many threatened species of fauna exist such as: the ocelot, the jaguar, white-lipped peccaries, Baird's tapir, northern ghost bats, *ja-guarundi* and *tayra*. The Tuxtlas Mountains are a magnet for many nearctic and neotropic bird species. Endemic bird species and sub-species to be found in the Tuxtlas include Tuxtla quail dove, long-tailed saberwing (hummingbird), black-headed saltator and plain-breasted brushfinch. Three bird species—the king vulture, the harpy eagle, and the scarlet macaw—have already been extirpated from Los Tuxtlas.

As I see it, there are three basic threats to the ecology of The Tuxtlas.



Violaceous trogon (male) (*Trogon violaceus braccatus*).



Keel-billed toucan (*Ramphastos s. sulfuratus*).

DEFORESTATION

Deforestation is without a doubt the single largest threat to the ecology of the Tuxtlas. Ninety percent of the original rainforest has been cut and replaced by pasture for cattle grazing and/or sugar cane. (Most of this deforestation has occurred within the last 40 years.) Some studies estimate that with the current rate of deforestation the remaining rain forest could be diminished by 50 percent within the next 10 years. If this should occur the effects on the remaining fauna would be devastating, with the possibility of many species being eliminated completely.

UNREGULATED USE OF HERBICIDES AND INSECTICIDES

All along the roads in the region of the Tuxtlas, nailed to the tree trunks of the “living fences” are numerous placards advertising the newest herbicide/insecticide products. These products are being aggressively marketed with some ranchers discovering that herbicides are especially useful in clearing native vegetation from the land so that more pasture can be planted. While birding in the Tuxtlas last spring, I was able to witness the procedure. Approximately one hectare of native vegetation was sprayed with herbicide. After sev-



Passion flower (*Passiflora incarnata*).



Cattle grazing pasture in the Tuxtlas.



Burned area, an example of the destruction from pesticides.



Tree with parrot nest cavity. The opening cut with the machete shows how the young parrots are removed.



Crimson-collared tanager (*Phlogothraupis s. sanguinolenta*).

eral weeks when the vegetation was brown the dry vegetation was torched and the land was effectively cleared for planting of pasture grass (see photo on this page). While both herbicides and insecticides serve a purpose, they must be used responsibly. Herbicide and insecticide runoff are serious threats to wildlife species. Although it is hard to believe, DDT, banned in the 1970s in the United States, is still marketed and used in much of Latin America without restriction.

CAPTURE AND ILLEGAL SALE OF BIRDS AND REPTILES

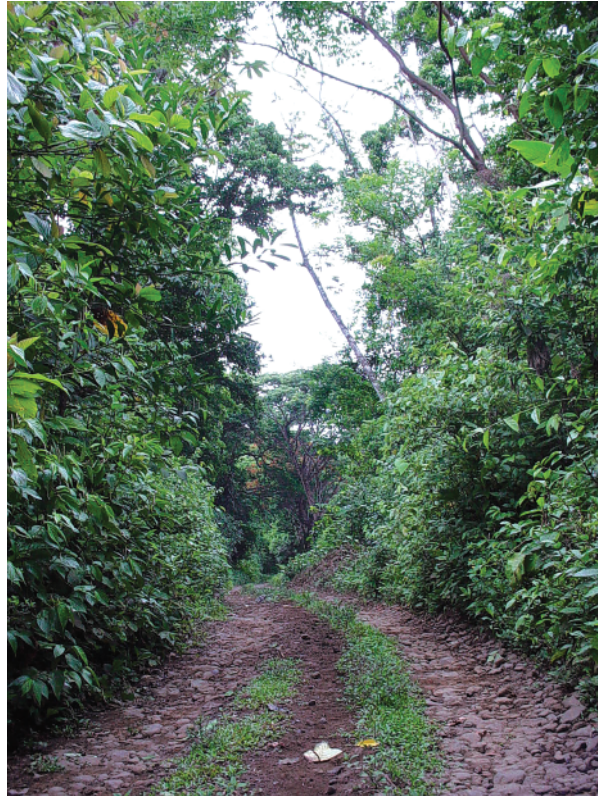
Unfortunately, the capture and illegal sale of birds and reptiles is still a part of the landscape of the special biosphere reserve of the Tuxtlas. The yel-

low-headed parrot *Amazona oratrix* is in danger of extinction based on its capture and sale for the pet trade. The photo on this page of a parrot's nest in a tree cavity that was robbed was taken just across the road from the UNAM biological station. Much work remains to be done in order to protect the illegal capture and sale of these exotic species.

SOLUTIONS

The need for immediate action in the Tuxtlas Biosphere to protect the forest remnants is paramount. A few possible solutions based on my observations are:

- Establish a "buffer zone" surrounding particularly the peaks of San Martin and Santa Marta. A



Vegetation in the Tuxtlas.



team of trained Tuxtlas Biosphere rangers could live in and actively patrol and protect the zones.

- Establish a program of dialogue and education with all residents and especially landowners of the Tuxtlas to make them realize the aforementioned threats and encourage them to respect the existing laws regarding water and habitat. Satellite map technology to monitor possible deforestation abuses is available and could be used on a monthly basis.
- Researchers and scientists have already spent many years studying the area but what is now urgently needed is that they step out from behind their desks and research projects and assume a leadership role implementing immediate

practical, prioritized solutions in conjunction with existing government agencies.

- Some possible projects could be habitat restoration (tree planting), community conservation education to establish a base for eco-tourism, and introducing new strains of pasture grasses to help local ranchers increase cattle production on existing pasture lands (thus helping to eliminate the continued deforestation).

The need for conservation is immediate. What happens in the next few years will define the future of the reserve. The Tuxtlas Mountains are a national treasure; what remains is worth protecting. **MM**



Ferruginous pygmy-owl (*Glaucidium brasilianum*).



Lineated woodpecker (*Dryocopus lineatus*).



Rufous-capped warbler (*Basileuterus rufifrons*).



Moctezuma oronpendola (*Psarocolius montezuma*).

THE TUXTLAS MOUNTAINS BASIC INFORMATION

The region of the Tuxtla Mountains is located 117 kilometers to the south of the port city of Veracruz.

- This coastal ecoregion comprises some 1,500 square miles (about the size of the state of Delaware) and is the northernmost rainforest of the American tropics.
- The Tuxtla Mountains include numerous inactive volcanic peaks, the largest being Santa Marta and San Martin; elevations range from sea level to 5,800 feet.
- The Tuxtla Mountains have an annual median rainfall of 185 inches with average temperatures of 70-79 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Habitats to be found within the Tuxtla Mountains region include cloud forest, tropical moist broadleaf forest, sub-tropical moist broadleaf forest, broadleaf forest, pine-oak forest, mangroves and dunes and coastal beaches.
- Tuxtla Mountains flora and fauna:
 - 940+ plant species
 - 80 varieties of mosses and ferns
 - 1,200+ insect species
 - 122 species of reptiles and amphibians
 - 500+ bird species
 - 115 mammal species
- In November 1998 the Tuxtla Mountains were designated a special biosphere reserve.



**QUINTA BIENAL
INTERNACIONAL DE RADIO**
Del 17 al 21 de mayo de 2004, México

CONACULTA
RADIO EDUCACIÓN · CENART

Bases del Concurso

Inscripción

1. Podrán ser inscritas las producciones radiofónicas que hayan sido realizadas después del 1 de abril de 2002, conforme con las siguientes categorías:
 - Radioreportaje
 - Radiodrama (programas unitarios)
 - Radiorevista
 - Programas infantiles
 - Radio indigenista
 - Radioarte
 - Programas musicalesAsimismo podrán participar, fuera de concurso:
 - Promocionales de identificación de las emisoras
 - Campañas institucionales
2. Por cada producción que se desee inscribir, deberá ser entregado o enviado un sobre que contenga lo siguiente:
 - a) Ficha de inscripción debidamente llenada a máquina o por computadora con el fin de incluir correctamente los datos en el catálogo de participantes.
 - b) Cuatro copias del programa en disco compacto.
 - c) Comprobante original de pago de la inscripción.
 - d) Para los programas cuyo idioma no sea el español, una copia del guion original y tres copias del guion traducido al español.
3. El sobre, las copias de los programas y los estuches de éstos deberán contener los siguientes datos en una etiqueta impresa a máquina de escribir o por computadora:
 - Título del programa
 - Categoría en la que se inscribe
 - Duración del programa
 - País de origen

- Nombre del responsable, a quien en su caso se entregará el premio o reconocimiento, según corresponda
- Teléfono del responsable, incluyendo las claves de larga distancia internacional y regional
- Correo electrónico del responsable

4. El costo de la inscripción por programa es de 400 pesos mexicanos para producciones de hasta 30 minutos de duración, y de 500 pesos mexicanos para las obras de más de 30 minutos.

El pago por concepto de inscripción deberá hacerse mediante:

- a) Depósito u orden de pago a nombre de
Quinta Bienal Internacional de Radio
- b) Tarjeta de crédito a través de la página
www.bienalderadio.com

5. El cierre de inscripciones es el 5 de marzo de 2004, a las 17:00 horas. El sobre deberá ser enviado o entregado en:

Radio Educación

- Ángel Urraza 622, Col. Del Valle, C.P. 03100, México, D. F.
6. Por razones aduanales, cada uno de los discos compactos provenientes del extranjero deberá ser declarado con el valor de un dólar al momento de ser empacado para su envío a través del servicio de mensajería especializada (DHL, UPS, FedEx, etcétera). Los gastos por envío, así como los seguros e impuestos, deberán ser cubiertos por el responsable.

Premiación

7. Se otorgarán los siguientes premios a los ganadores de cada una de las siete categorías del concurso en pesos mexicanos, o en dólares americanos al tipo de cambio vigente al momento de hacer la transacción

Primer lugar: 25,000 pesos
Segundo lugar: 20,000 pesos
Tercer lugar: 15,000 pesos

Los gastos por concepto de transferencias bancarias para el pago

de los premios serán por cuenta de los beneficiarios.

8. Los ganadores serán dados a conocer el viernes 21 de mayo de 2004 durante la ceremonia de premiación y clausura de la Quinta Bienal Internacional de Radio, la cual tendrá lugar en el Centro Nacional de las Artes.

Jurado

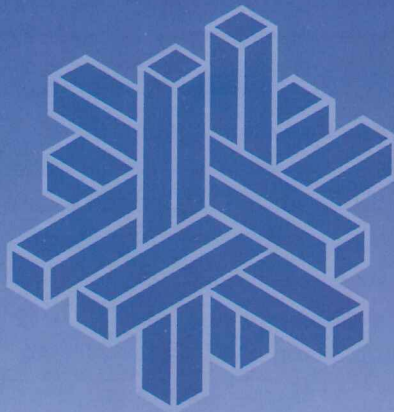
9. El jurado quedará integrado por destacados especialistas. Su fallo será inapelable.
10. El jurado se reserva el derecho de declarar desierto cualquiera de los premios establecidos.

Considerandos

11. La Bienal no es responsable por las condiciones en las que sean recibidos los materiales; tampoco si existen problemas en la reproducción de los programas.
12. Cada programa presentado sólo podrá ser inscrito en una categoría.
13. Las producciones enviadas a concurso no deberán incluir anuncios publicitarios.
14. Radio Educación conservará una copia de los programas para su uso como materiales de promoción y difusión. Los autores de las obras premiadas autorizan a Radio Educación la reproducción, distribución y difusión de sus obras.
15. Las copias de los programas que no resulten ganadores estarán a disposición de sus responsables hasta el 4 de junio de 2004.
16. Los programas concursantes que no cumplan con alguno de los puntos descritos en esta convocatoria serán descalificados. En tal caso, no se devolverá el importe de la inscripción.
17. Cualquier caso no previsto en esta convocatoria será resuelto por los organizadores.
18. La inscripción a este Concurso implica la aceptación de todas las bases descritas anteriormente.

 **Radio
Educación**

www.radioeducacion.edu.mx



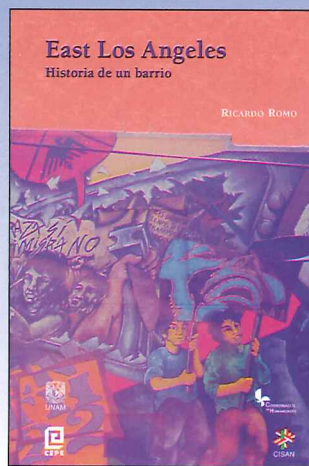
CISAN

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

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

Ricardo Romo

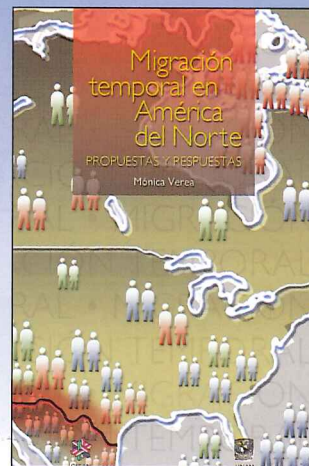
This book, a classic in its field, traces the history of the largest and most important Mexican American community in the United States, East Los Angeles. It is a detailed review of the development of a community that has had to construct and defend its identity to survive in what were often hostile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



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

Mónica Vereza

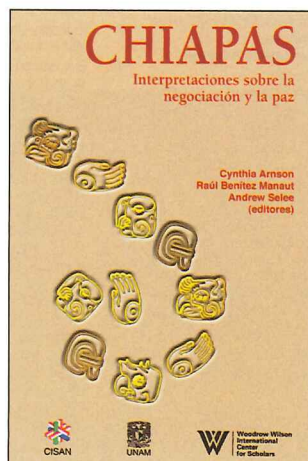
The author puts forward the causes behind international migration and studies the evolution of policies on temporary migrants (tourists, businessmen, workers and students) to the United States and Canada, their impact on the integration of Latino communities in general and Mexican communities in particular,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



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

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

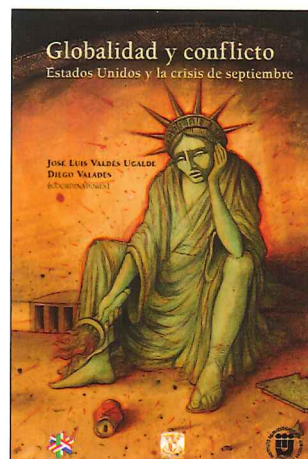
This book presents the debate on the Chiapas peace process and the causes behind the failure of the negotiations. Mexican and foreign academics, as well as some of the conflict's protagonists, analyze its structural causes, indigenous rights and the San Andrés Accords.



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

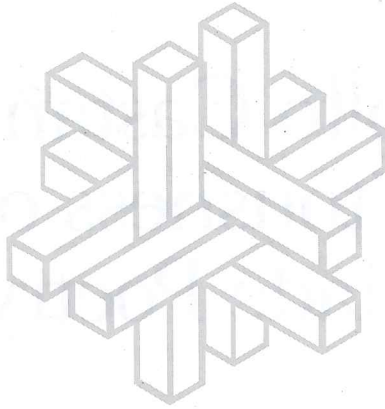
José Luis Valdés Ugalde
and Diego Valadés, comp.

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



For further information contact:

Centro de Investigaciones sobre América del Norte, CISAN,
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Torre de Humanidades II, piso 9, Ciudad Universitaria, 04510,
México, D.F. Tel. 5623-0015; fax: 5623-0014; e-mail: cisan@servidor.unam.mx

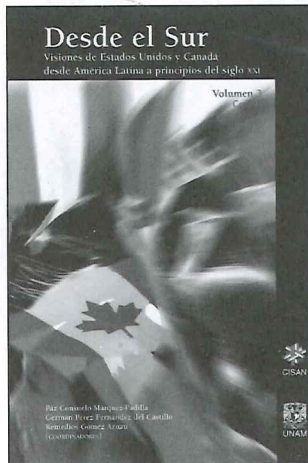


CISAN

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

Desde el sur. Visiones de Estados Unidos y Canadá desde América Latina a principios del siglo XXI, vol. 3, Canadá

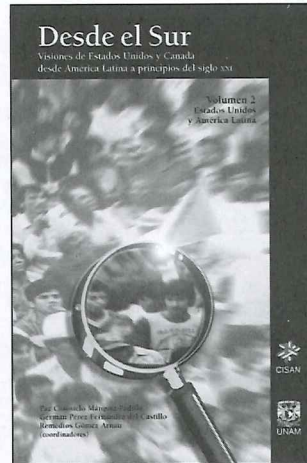
Paz Consuelo Márquez-Padilla, Germán Pérez Fernández del Castillo, Remedios Gómez Arnau, comps.



Stimulating articles by well-known Canada scholars make up the third and last volume of this series, reflecting the country's different characteristics: a post-national, multi-cultural, pro-internationalist and multilateral state, receiver of migrants, a paradigm of economic policies and development and a dynamic player in America's and the world's political and economic concert.

Desde el Sur. Visiones de Estados Unidos y Canadá desde América Latina a principios del siglo XXI, vol. 2.

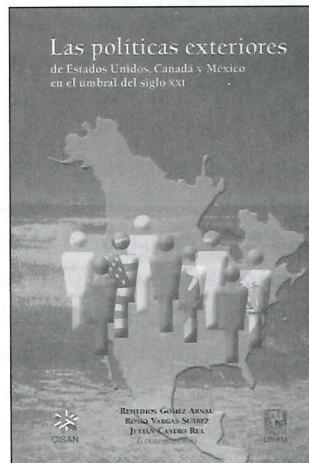
Paz Consuelo Márquez-Padilla, Germán Pérez Fernández del Castillo and Remedios Gómez Arnau, comp.



This book looks at relations between Latin America and the United States. Although national security subsumes bilateral agenda issues, reality demands observers look at other matters of continuing importance: migration and human rights, employment and productivity, international trade and labor, as well as resurfacing nativism in U.S. immigration policy.

Las políticas exteriores de Estados Unidos, Canadá y México en el umbral del siglo XXI

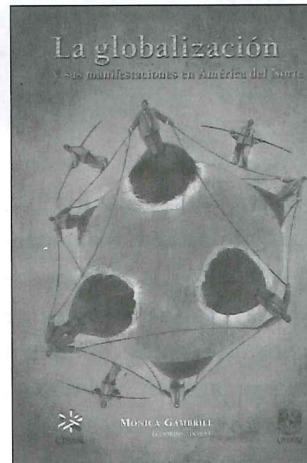
Remedios Gómez Arnau, Rosío Vargas Suárez and Julian Castro Rea, comp.



Foreign policy design in North America has been reformulated with the beginning of the new century. The U.S. faces the choice of acting alone or through multilateral cooperation in matters of national security. Using the concept of "human security", the authors look at the perspectives for Canadian foreign policy. Mexico, for its part, is seen in light of the redefinition of its foreign policy, particularly vis-à-vis its multiple trade agreements.

La globalización y sus manifestaciones en América del Norte

Mónica Gambrell, comp.



In light of the importance of globalization today, scholars from different countries have contributed articles to this book about issues that it affects: the economy, political power, NAFTA, the labor market, drug trafficking, the environment, the judicial branch of government and cultural industries.

Forthcoming:

Fronteras en América del Norte. Estudios multidisciplinares
Una herida por otra. Testimonios de latin@s en Estados Unidos sobre 11/s.
Cambio climático: desacuerdo entre E.U. y Europa

Adolfo Castañón

The Ubiquitousness of Memory Made Poetry

Marcela Solís-Quiroga* Juan Antonio Rosado**



Adolfo Castañón, born in Mexico City in 1952, is undoubtedly a multifaceted, cosmopolitan, diversified poet, faithful to his own dispersion. For him, poetry, essays and short stories are nothing less than faces of a single literary continuum in which image and concept, intensity and humor,

* Mexican poet and essayist.

** Mexican writer. *Las dulzuras del limbo*, a book of short stories, is his most recent publication.

Photo by Dante Barrera

passion and intelligent dialogue are wedded as though they really constituted phases of a poetic unity, since poetry is not only the mirror of a vision of the poet's world but, above all, makes up the creative impulse to sculpt his most intimate recesses. In his religious need, the poet erects what is human (language, consciousness, tradition and their opposites) as the maximum representative and judge of his game. In Castañón, words find their place as essential words: there is a ubiquitous will of form, a constant quest

for the exact word, the musical, rhythmic phrase, with no detriment to their profound content.

In this sense, it is not surprising that Adolfo Castañón has recently been named to the Language Academy: he not only knows the rules of what is permitted in the linguistic game, but experiences himself the passion of fighting in and for the word, to bestow upon it unique aesthetic integrity through his essays, poems and short stories, as well as his translations and editorial work. As a translator, he has known how to be a poet (let us remember his translation of Gil Vicente) when he recreates classical, universal texts but, even more, when he knows how to win over the Spanish-speaking reader and wrap him/her up in that aesthetic will that characterizes him as a man of letters. As an editor, not only does he have authentic editorial sense—which undoubtedly influences his poetry—but he has also known how to think about his craft, putting it at the top of art. *El jardín de los eunucos* (The Garden of Eunuchs) deals precisely with the figure and functions of editors.¹ Castañón has done this work masterfully, starting at *Cave Canem* magazine, all the way to his outstanding role as editorial manager at the Fondo de Cultura Económica publishing house. However, the overall theme of *The Garden of Eunuchs* is books themselves, the printed culture, and the mediations between author, editor, work and readers.

Through words, we capture different realities to give them new meanings. Words retain memory and dilute forgetfulness. For Castañón, as he said in the epigraph of his book *Fuera del aire* (Off the Air),² “Memory is vampire and policeman.” Attentive to the past, to what we were, memory reconstructs and watches us: it gives coherence to an identity that otherwise would dissolve daily. However, at times it stalks us to bleed us in memory. Vampire and policeman, memory would not be sustained without words because, like images, they are the only things that can retain it.

And precisely memory is the most outstanding theme in one of Adolfo Castañón’s most important poems, *Recuerdos de Coyoacán* (Memories of Coyoacán).³ This is a long poem that pays homage to the two figures in twentieth-century Mexican liter-

ature which may have most captured the poet’s attention and thinking: Alfonso Reyes and Octavio Paz. If in his “San Ildefonso” Reyes says, “Perhaps I was not happy since I contemplate / with a doubtful glance / the things of remembrance,” Castañón also begins his poem evoking the past:

I was someone else and I am the same
I don’t know if I was happy:
I walked by night
through the city of memory
The city sleeping
among its names.

Memories of Coyoacán is a poem that can be read on many levels. The images of the city and that country “of half-truths / of pious bilingual lies,” in which only the scenery is real, the musicalization of the macabre rhythm (the “fateful dates” of the calendar) emerge from a sensibility that, on the one hand, isolated itself in reading Jorge Luis Borges, Octavio Paz or the anthropologist Frazer, but, on the other hand, did not leave to one side—how could it?—the generalized farces in which the Devil outshone God.

Rebuilding through articulate language what we were and what has escaped us during a time of uncertainty, of social chaos and political authoritarianism (the theme of 1968); recovering time lost, the memory of that stream of movements, and embodying it in the immobility of a work of art. This is a task that goes beyond putting together a puzzle and that, therefore, is intimately linked to poetic activity: a chain of searches, encounters and mis-encounters. When you read *Memories of Coyoacán*, it is not difficult to imagine a City-Serpent or feel a series of moods that the poet projects amidst a city that dances “grafting the circus on a player piano.” The perception is retrospective and it could be no other way, and far from shouting like Alfonso Reyes, “Wipe clean my memory!” he situates himself inside it to discover that he was another and nevertheless continues to be the same; to conclude, “I am the one who knows / I am the one who is not yet.” We continue being and only death will give us the complete image that, obviously, we will not

know. Nothing is fully realized. We must live and continue living: here is a lesson in true modesty vis-à-vis life. And if Reyes says, “Perhaps I was not happy,” Castañón makes the doubt broader and more emphatic as well as our lack of knowledge about this matter, the past, when he reiterates, “I don’t know if I was happy.” *Memories of Coyoacán*, an autobiographical poem, a poem of memory (or the memory of that poem experienced, lost and then recovered), is also history turned into myth, the biography of a quasi-human city. There is Huitzilac and the murder of Francisco Serrano; there is University City, the Three Cultures Plaza and “so many other innumerable places / like the continual Fiesta.”

As an essayist, Castañón calls the exercise of his intellect and his sensibility, his reflections, essays and different comments “rambles.” That is why it is not surprising that he has gathered his *Paseos* (Rambles) through the world of literature in what has up to now totaled five volumes. This essayist has the will to recover what the work of other authors has prompted in his sensitivity as well as what his own reflective gaze has created. Like the great twentieth-century Latin American essayists, Adolfo is a universal man with profound knowledge of European letters (particularly French and English) and, therefore, of our own tradition. He is an essayist with an intense vocation for Latin America, which has led him to dialogue and travel throughout the continent both in his books and physically. In “Umbral” (Threshold) of *América sintaxis* (Syntax America),⁴ about letters in our America (the fifth volume of *Rambles*), Castañón conceives of America as syntax, that is, as a relationship. He knows very well that we of the Americas rightfully own universal culture, so he does not hesitate to contribute to its recovery through translations of already classic authors like George Steiner. If his *Arbitrario de literatura mexicana* (Arbitrary of Mexican Literature),⁵ the first volume of *Rambles*, is a reflective dialogue with a few Mexican writers and a flood of inter-texts that make the broad field of associations blossom, *Syntax America* is, in the words of its author, “a kind of cordial, intellectual agenda, willful in the sense that taste does not depend on will, as Dr. Samuel Johnson used to say.”

In his short stories and vignettes, we find another facet of the same poet: sensuality and imagination combined with subtlety and intelligent, sometimes caustic, humor, such as in the following “postcard”, which is profoundly ironic, from his first book, *Off the Air*:

The eyes injured by fire and with the fever, the birth of a new memory. Like when something falls into the water, the objects that surround me disappear. Today it is that serene fever not at all similar to delirium. In the same way that it snows, I find the event: sweet, constant, day and night. (The irreparable secretly trickles.) In the daytime, I manage to cross the streets of haze; then, immobile as though I feared breaking something, I spend the afternoons in front of the fire contemplating incandescent forms. The images and their dense desire do not tarry: this afternoon a friend was attacked by three blond men. While one of them hit his head against the ground, the others waited. When I approached they unsheathed their knives and, without violence —almost artistically— they opened my friend’s throat. I have been amazed for some time that I found beauty in all that.

Adolfo Castañón’s vision is essentially poetic. Regardless of the genre he picks, everything he sees can become a poem and be turned into art. His being a poet, far from leading him to a marginal existence, has taken him to the very center of a primogenial, lasting cosmos: the cosmos of the word. **MM**

NOTES

¹ Adolfo Castañón, *El jardín de los eumucos* (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, 1998).

² Adolfo Castañón, *Fuera del aire* (Mexico City: La Máquina de Escribir, 1977).

³ Adolfo Castañón, *Recuerdos de Coyoacán* (Mexico City: Ditoria, 1998).

⁴ Adolfo Castañón, *América sintaxis* (Mexico City: Editorial Aldus, 2000).

⁵ Adolfo Castañón, *Arbitrario de literatura mexicana* (Mexico City: Editorial Lectorum, 1993).

Memories of Coyoacán

(Fragment)

by Adolfo Castañón



I was someone else and I am the same
I don't know if I was happy:
I walked by night
through the city of memory
The city sleeping
among its names
Early in the morning
I would go off to high school
Not the legendary patios
of San Ildefonso
It was called "Prepa 6"
(We had no idea
who Antonio Caso was)
The place: Coyoacán
The year: nineteen 68
The professors? There really
weren't any: just bureaucrats
and candidates (some political,
some for the mob or guerilla war)

journalists on the take
orthodox and heterodox
curcúbitas and hyperbolas
of the Church of the Tie
I don't know if I was happy:
I only know I stayed up late
I was neither myself nor anyone else
I was what was already passing
Outside the generation
paid its quota of blood
The bestial tide of youth
seeking democracy
with a ragged crutch
on the walls of time
flags of flesh and bone
slogans on the walls
songs on their lips
and flowers in their hair
all power to the imagination

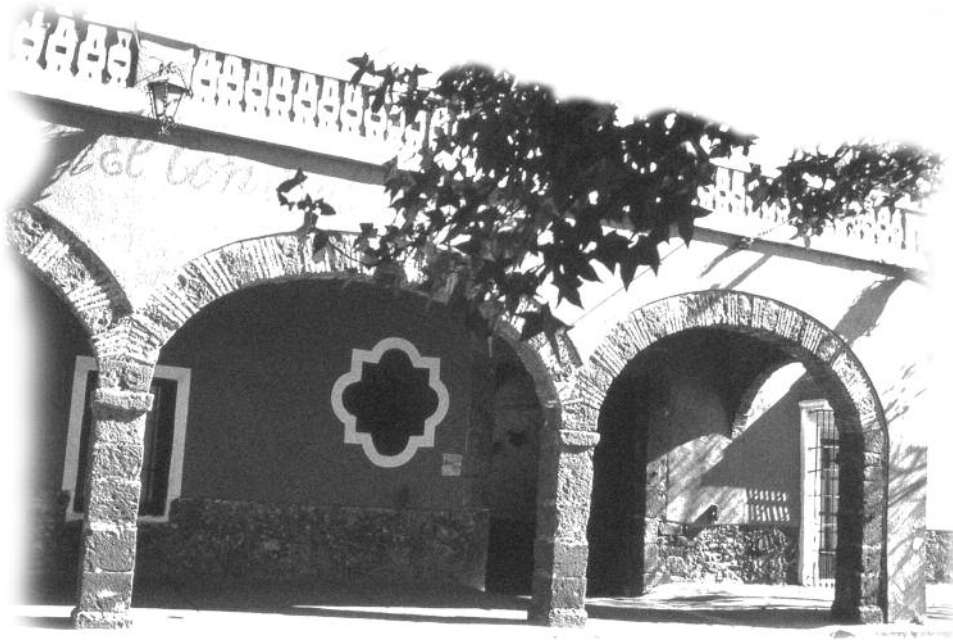
Olympics and rock & roll
(In the distance the pyramids,
I mean the volcanoes
sent up smoke-signals
In the afternoons
the dazzled avenues
made indecisive
castles of sun)

Some read Marx and Marcuse
others Octavio Paz and Julio Cortázar
Some read *The Golden Bough*
I don't know if I was happy
between *The Marble Cliffs*
between *Orlando* and *Vision of Anáhuac*
Ladera este and *Les fleurs du mal*
while in the street they were shouting
Free All Political Prisoners
Times of confusion and hope.
High Times/Amour fou
(Invisible ivy
the music of the organ-grinder
bumpity-bumpity down the street)

The Apostle commanded us to try everything:
Acid peyote and karma
mushrooms and Enlightenment
the answer
blowing in the wind
Tuesday brother of flesh and blood
Wednesday calcinations
which way is the wind blowing?
Ask the watchman
Weatherman, Weatherman
Peyotaris: accelerated children
of time and synaesthesia
old-fashioned and pedantic
supposedly, modern
daring and cosmopolitan
Plenty of movies for sure:
Bergman Buñuel Pasolini
Besides Zen Buddhism and Meditation
Yoga
Tarot & Tantra
Free love Kodak and spirituality
Putting down alcohol

praising sobriety
Voluntary labor
in the armies of pleasure
I don't remember the friends I made
—neither faces nor names —
sometimes
ghosts visit me
their voices and nicknames:
Che, Duckface, Dogbreath
Fátima, Magpie and Cronopio
Cavegirl, Goofy and the Ayrab
dancing the sarabande
spinning the merry-go-round Ayari, Polanco and Calac
Some became guerrillas and landed in prison
— why not death
for the adventurous heart?
Others fasted in monasteries
communal tofu, vegan cuisine
the rest fell victim
to family and employment
got married:
contra-dance:
got divorced
while bumpity-bumpity down the
streets
invisible ivy





with open
eyes
In the crypt
the stone of light
the secret fire
eyes downcast
before the flames of the brazier
the corpse of Moctezuma
unburied drifting in a boat
through canals which today you cross as streets

“Zapata still has his boots on”
The echo of a cavalcade
gunshots far away
in the center of the Plaza
a student fell another centaur
— what dead horseman?
what sleeping knight?
bells toll far away
they have poisoned Benito Juárez
While I walked blindly
 stumbling
 in dreams
spelling out with my feet
looking with my footsteps
my eyes touching light
without a guide:

 the serpent made its nest
under the Cathedral
 the viper

was a spiral stair
 and another
going down
 vault of luminous quarries
in the liquid night
 under the chiaroscuro
 rainbow of memory

Who am I? When did I forget my name?
When did my face shipwreck in the mirror?
If I was another if not the same
if like you...
The voice is a question:
word of light
firmament of the letter?

Joyful Trivium
Happy Cuadrivio
With rage and tasty science
Troubador clown

I only remembered in dreams
I went among ruins and broken roots
while outside
the brothers of the fathers of the sons
were patiently chewing
the dry seeds of the newspaper
looking for the flavor of freedom

Translation John O. Simon

Photos by Dante Barrera.

Graciela Hierro

A Fortunate Woman Who Left An Indelible Mark

Gloria Careaga Pérez*

Graciela Hierro was a great teacher. Beginning in 1966, she taught logic and ethics at the UNAM high school, and continued in the School of Philosophy and Letters after 1972. She was in charge of the interdisciplinary seminar “Ethics, Philosophy of Education and Gender,” ahead of its time when it began in 1978. She was a great teacher not only in the classroom, but in the teachings she imparted in so many other places. For many of us, hers was a fundamental contribution not only professionally, but in our lives as well.

In 1978, she founded the Feminist Philosophical Association, affiliated to the U.S.-based Society for Women in Philosophy. In 1979, she spoke for the first time of feminist philosophy at a round table discussion entitled “The Nature of Women,” at the Third National Colloquium on Philosophy. Dr. Hierro’s classes always looked at the concrete dilemmas that each man and woman faced in life with the aim of helping every individual to face his or her real problems to be able to understand and overcome them: it was a way of recovering the original meaning of philosophy as a discipline which aims to orient life and help find a way forward to self-knowledge and happiness.

Graciela was a great philosopher and also a great political activist, concerned with social justice and human rights. Her work and thinking went down different roads: ethics, education, rights, the phenomenon of aging. But they were always centered on women and feminism. She was a radical fem-



Aurea Hernández Alanís

Her lucid, brilliant mind contributed a joyous feminism and a new ethical outlook on relations between men and women to the knowledge of human nature.

* Academic secretary and current interim director of the UNAM Gender Studies Program.

inist of difference. With a kind smile, she was a master of irony, who defended her convictions at the same time that she looked for ways to encourage women to advance. She was a woman committed to everything she did, very firm and coherent.

In her group, the Queens, Graciela reflected on women's aging in workshops about loneliness, sexuality, mother-daughter relations, love and other matters of equal import. She was a fortunate woman, aware of the respect, admiration and love professed for her. In addition to the many prizes and awards she was given and the success and impact of her work, she spent her days with her friends, with whom she shared her principles: reflection and pleasure. She always shared her ideas and her experiences; thus, she opened up new alternatives in life. Her memoirs leave the mark of her history; how enjoyment, and joy sowed the seed of pleasure and love for those around her. With her, we learned the importance of a sense of humor and even to laugh at ourselves.

Graciela dedicated her life to teaching and research. Her love for the UNAM committed her body

and soul to her work and to constantly contributing new ideas, creating new paradigms that aided in understanding human nature. But above all they aided in putting her ideas into practice in the construction of new, more equitable, fairer forms of relationships between people.

She was a woman of the avant garde, a pioneer in her proposals, always at the cutting edge of humanist thinking. With a different mentality, she was a permanent ally of women. Her lucid, brilliant mind contributed a joyous feminism and a new ethical outlook on relations between men and women to the knowledge of human nature. She put forward the idea of pleasure as the determining concept in a good life, worth living, and as the ultimate criteria for making a decision about the rectitude of actions.

Just like her mother, she did not want to die. And, like Borges, she neither wished for heaven nor feared hell. She imagined her death under a starry sky, but she met it in a flower garden, a reflection of her luminous presence that lit so many roads and was the fruit of all that she sowed. ■■■

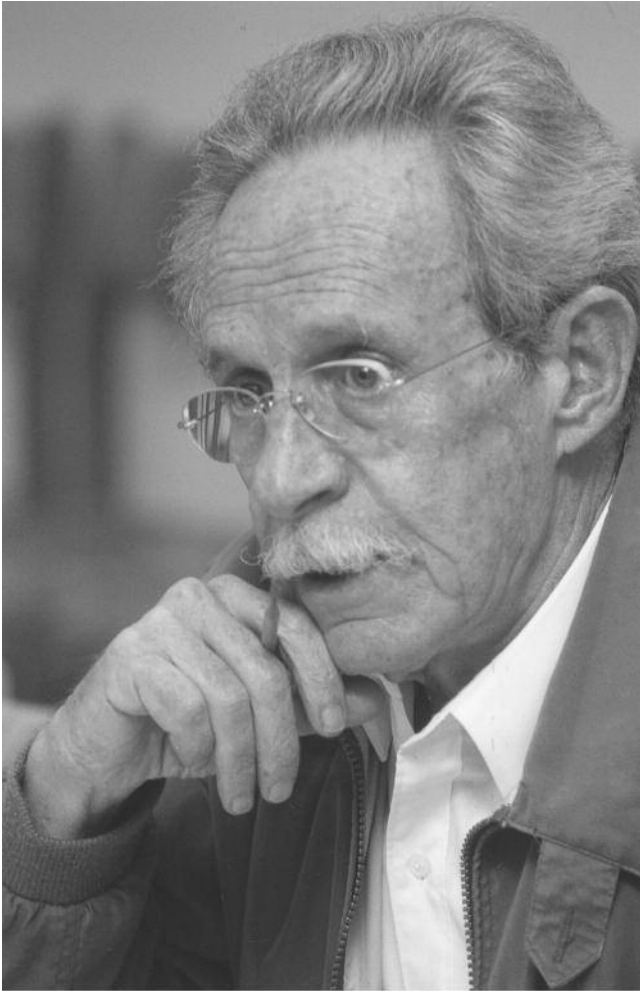
Arturo Warman And Once Again We Beg to Differ...

Leticia Merino, Antonio Azuela, James Robson*

While in a way any death is untimely, the death of Arturo Warman in October 2003, is unreservedly so. Warman's work and presence are important and necessary today in different spaces and with regard to dif-

ferent issues. Arturo leaves a mark and his absence a gaping hole in diverse fields: in the promotion and renewal of teaching and social research at the UNAM, in the development of rigorous, problem-posing interdisciplinary thinking that creates new ways of focusing on environmental issues in peasant Mexico, in the education of young specialists, in advisory work for designing informed,

* Researchers at the UNAM Institute for Social Research.



The rejection of the state's authoritarian, paternalistic control over peasant communities is his most transcendental academic and political legacy.

democratic public policy. Many of us trusted in his collaboration and guidance in various spheres, and we feel his loss in different fields. His work and legacy are solid.

Down through the years, Arturo Warman took on a broad gamut of tasks. He was a promotor of music, popular culture and ethnographic cinema; he was an international consultant, a contributor to newspapers and magazines, the director of research centers, a builder of institutions and a public official. He was a university professor at the National School of Anthropology and History, at

the Iberoamericana University, at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, at the Graduate College, at the Autonomous Metropolitan University, at the Center for Research and Higher Education in Social Anthropology, at the Complutense University of Madrid, at Princeton's Institute of Advanced Studies, at the John Hopkins University Department of Anthropology in Baltimore, at Columbia University's Institute of Latin American Studies in New York and at Cambridge University's Latin American Studies Centre in England.

As a researcher, Arturo was profoundly knowledgeable about the Mexican countryside. From his first works (*Los campesinos, hijos predilectos del régimen* [The Peasants, the Regimen's Favorite Children] and *Y venimos a contradecir... Los campesinos de Morelos y el Estado nacional* [And We Beg to Differ... The Peasants of Morelos and the National State]) to his recent work published in the new millennium (*El campo mexicano en el siglo xx* [The Mexican Countryside in the Twentieth Century] and *Los indios mexicanos en el umbral del milenio* [Mexican Indigenous on the Threshold of the Millennium]), the wisdom, intellectual freedom and the critique of academic dogmatism and political fundamentalism are constants. His proposals about peasants' continued existence in industrial societies, the critique of the persistent and pervasive control of the state over peasant and indigenous societies, and the elucidation of the role of the community in the construction of identities and the governability of indigenous and peasant societies have been central contributions. In addition to their explanatory value, they are part of a political agenda committed to democratizing the countryside.

The emphasis on the diversity of social processes in the rural world and on the need to consider and respond to the complexity of peasant and indigenous societies is another of the cross-cutting themes of his research. Already in 1976, in his work on peasants in Morelos, Warman wrote, "I tried to make sure that [country] people and their activities in all their complexity were clear. The result is barely a pale reflection of the enormous

and true diversity that exists.... I tried to discover what was specific about those activities, what was peculiar to them. I did not find *typical* peasants, but, rather, concrete peasants. But I do not explain what is peculiar to it as such, as a unique case... but rather as one way among many that are used to adapt to general conditions.”¹

Another of the great qualities of Arturo Warman’s work is his mastery of history. Works such as *La historia de un bastardo. Maíz y capitalismo* (The History of a Bastard. Corn and Capitalism), and his writings about contemporary problems reveal a profound knowledge of history, which, in addition to putting processes into their appropriate contexts, leads us to think about the present. As he says in the introduction to *Mexican Indigenous on the Threshold of the Millennium*, “I try to... put the information in a historical context to be able to understand it as an expression of long processes with profound, widespread roots. However, I neither seek nor emphasize what is fixed or permanent; I very much doubt that those eternities can be productively applied to cultural and social phenomena.”²

Certainly, the rejection of the state’s authoritarian, paternalistic control over peasant communities is his most transcendental academic and political legacy. In his different academic works, and in his actions as director of the National Indigenist Institute, attorney general for agricultural affairs and minister of the agrarian reform, this was a continuing concern that mingled with a quest, not for utopias, but for the fostering of rural communities and regions made up of citizens with full rights to property, equality and the exercise of their differences. That was the spirit that guided his advice on the change in Article 27 of the Constitution to release the *ejido* and the community from the tutelage of the government, a tutelage which, throughout the twentieth century, was the source of a long history of abuses and corruption. The change in Article 27 made it possible for the communities and not their representatives and/or government officials to decide about the uses to which their lands and resources would be put.

Arturo Warman maintained academic work’s responsibility to social change, for decades assuming in his actions “a positive correlation between knowledge and the best decisions in all fields, above all in politics, in which ignorance turns into intolerance and brutality.”³ Arturo insisted on the importance of participating as an “academic worker” in the debates on the great issues of the future of the countryside and indigenous societies in the country to “prompt better informed, more serene reflection with the awareness that working through the debate was not a matter for specialists, but for citizens.”⁴

On the threshold of the millennium, the deterioration of the conditions of social and environmental governability is a daily reality in many of Mexico’s rural regions, particularly where the indigenous population predominates. This deterioration involves many factors, including the impact of economic globalization, the lack of public investment (also responsible for the devaluation of peasant spaces and culture) and authoritarian traditions that linger in different spheres and with different justifications. Arturo Warman’s academic and political legacy is invaluable, necessary and timely for taking on current challenges in the spheres of teaching, research, advisory activities and responsible public action. It is the legacy of a liberal, a democrat. The memory we hold dear is that of a generous human being.

Arturo, our shared projects are yet to be realized. **MM**

NOTES

¹ Arturo Warman, *Y venimos a contradecir. Los campesinos de Morelos y el Estado nacional* (Mexico City: SEP-CIESAS, 1976), pp. 11-12.

² Arturo Warman, *Los indios mexicanos en el umbral del milenio* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003), p. 13.

³ Warman, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Reviews

Chiapas: Interpretaciones sobre la negociación y la paz

(Chiapas: Interpretations about the Negotiations and Peace)

Cynthia Arnson, Raúl Benítez Manaut and Andrew Selee, eds.
CISAN-UNAM, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
Mexico City, 2003, 250 pp.

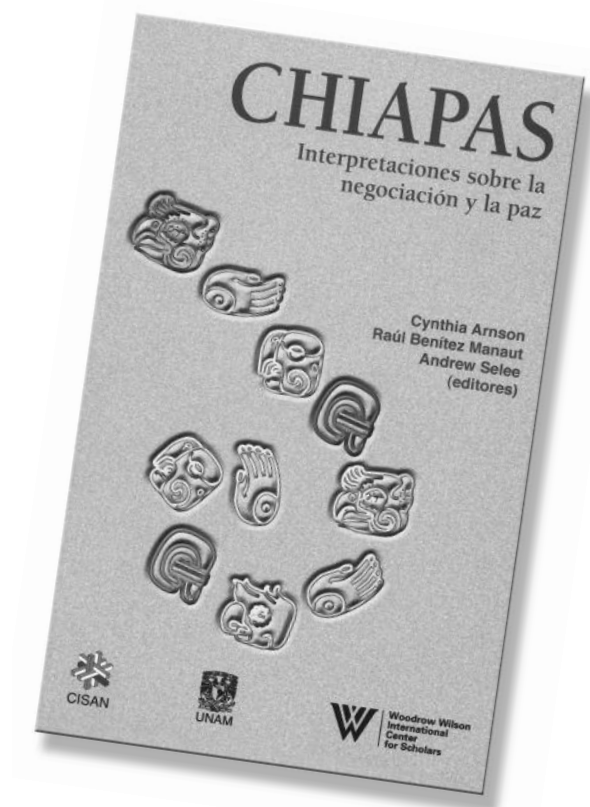
January 1, 2004 was the tenth anniversary of the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, a movement which initially shook up national and international public opinion given that it coincided with the North American Free Trade Agreement coming into effect and the shattering of the idea that Mexico was rapidly becoming part of the first world, evidencing the serious social, economic and political problems plaguing the country.

After 10 years, the international, national and local contexts have changed enormously, with the continual transformation of the actors involved; the Chiapas conflict is more political than military, and peace negotiations have stagnated.

One of the main implications for the Chiapas problem has been alternation in office in both Mexico as a country and Chiapas state, creating both high expectations and costly disillusionment, as well as the local impact of the swift changes globally. Another factor that explains the Chiapas crisis is the inability of the main actors (the federal administrations, the Zapatista National Liberation Army [EZLN] and even the peace negotiators) to find alternatives for the stymied negotiations.

The book *Chiapas: interpretaciones sobre la negociación y la paz* (Chiapas: Interpretations about the Negotiations and Peace), then, is a serious international academic effort to portray the stagnation of the conflict and its causes as well as analyze the prospects for opening up negotiations through an agile, plural structure that would reflect the different national positions on the problem, even though its conclusions are not particularly optimistic.

In the chapter interpreting the conflict, the book's editors, Cynthia Arnson, Raúl Benítez and Andrew Selee, summarize the debate about the peace talks, defending the hypothesis that there is a state of "armed peace," comparing the negotiations in Chiapas with others that have taken place in Latin America, mainly in Central America. The editors maintain that



political will to participate in negotiations is required on the part of the actors in the conflict and that everyone should change their all-or-nothing positions in order to achieve a stable peace and find a solution in which everyone—but mainly the indigenous communities—could benefit. As long as this does not happen, there will continue to be a profound deterioration of Chiapas society, which could have repercussions nationwide.

The main contributions come from two central actors in the mediation process: Monsignor Samuel Ruiz, bishop emeritus of the diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas, who characterizes the situation as a "formal impasse with real deterioration"; and Luis H. Álvarez, the Mexican government's coordinator for dialogue and negotiation in Chiapas, who situates the conflict with the EZLN in a broader framework of social problems that have gone into crisis in Chiapas. These opinions are supplemented by an article by Emilio Zebadúa, former minister of the interior of Chiapas, who reflects on the national nature of the conflict, drawing a balance sheet

about the need to deepen the positive changes in local politics, such as the condemnation and prosecution of paramilitary groups, but also to fight federal government economic and political restrictions on the local government. The second part of the book goes into an enriching comparative analysis of other international experiences of indigenous demands and rights: here, Will Kymlicka analyzes the experiences of autonomy in Canada and New Zealand; Donna Lee Van Cott, refers to the cases of Nicaragua and Panama; Álvaro Pop contributes the experiences of Guatemala's Maya Q'eqchi' Movement; and Guillermo May, a member of the National Indigenous Congress, represents the Mexican indigenous perspective.

Later in the book, other authors look at the structural roots of the Chiapas conflict: Natividad Gutiérrez Chong warns of the need to give more power to indigenous leaders in order to have grassroots spokespersons to dialogue with instead of continuing to accept "interpretations" by mestizo intellectuals. Olivia Gall puts the accent on racism as a historical cross-cutting theme in Chiapas social relations, and the problems encountered in trying to overcome it. Gonzalo Ituarte describes the precarious living conditions of Chiapas indigenous people and the contradictions in federal government policies. And lastly, Guillermo Trejo emphasizes the "changing nature" of the Chiapas conflict, maintaining that, while consolidating its social base, the EZLN is waiting for a change in national political conditions to seek options in negotiations. The last part of the book studies the conditions that would create alternatives for reopening peace negotiations. Miguel Concha deals with the need to see indigenous peoples as subjects of collective rights, which would imply a drastic change in the conception of the nation-state today. Luis Hernández Navarro observes the present federal administration's lack of political capability and the limited institutional channels for a negotiated settlement. Rodolfo Stavenhagen situates the

current state of the conflict as part of the Mexican state's incomplete political transition due to the constitutional reforms not moving forward to recognize the rights of indigenous peoples, a basic precondition for finding ways out in the negotiations. Miguel Álvarez Gándara presents a comprehensive analysis of the conflict, the actors and the lack of conditions for achieving an integral peace, understood as the opening up of institutional channels to fight poverty, discrimination and inequality for indigenous peoples, the structural causes of the insurrection, and the need to change the government's neoliberal policy.

In conclusion, opening up a negotiations process that would build institutional channels aimed at a long term, profound solution to backwardness, marginalization and poverty in indigenous communities is urgently needed. In other words, as the book's authors point out, the Mexican state must be substantially reformed to turn the indigenous communities (who now represent 10 percent of the national population) into full participants, recognizing their history, social and cultural diversity. The solutions to their problems cannot continue to be postponed without running the risk of prolonging the rebellion.

The solution to the Chiapas conflict is an opportunity for the Mexican government to find ways forward to make sure that the recent political change involves the entire population, thus moving ahead in the transition to democracy. Otherwise, as long as this solution is postponed, Mexico's democracy will continue to be incomplete; thus, the future of Chiapas is linked to the integral reform of the Mexican state if it ever happens.

Carlos Rodríguez Ulloa
Research assistant at CISAN

El legislador a examen. El debate sobre la reelección legislativa en México

(The Legislator under Examination. The Debate about Reelection of the Legislature in Mexico)

Fernando F. Dworak, comp.

Fondo de Cultura Económica/H. Cámara de Diputados, Fifty-eighth Congress
Mexico City, 2003, 311 pp.

ARE REELECTION OF THE LEGISLATURE AND DEMOCRACY INCOMPATIBLE?

One of the most intense recent debates in the framework of Mexico's democratic transition is about the possibility of reestablishing consecutive reelection of legislators in both chambers of Congress. This book presents a balanced review of the positions and political situations throughout the post-



revolutionary period promoting this measure (one such attempt was Vicente Lombardo Toledano's bill presented in the 1960s that was frozen in the Senate), together with the arguments for prohibiting it from 1934 to the present. Emma Campos and Maité Careaga deal with these issues in their excellent contributions.

The study also presents us with important evidence about what Congress's behavior would be if reelection were reestablished, looking at professionalization, certainty and effective decision-making in committee work and support and advisory services. Clearly, what stand out are the risks of falling into routine, corruption and general non-cooperation that would block parliamentary work. In that sense, the anti-reelectionists (among them, outstanding figures like the jurists Francisco José de Andrea or Jorge Carpizo) emphasize the lack of a solid party system and of an electorate that acts based on clearly democratic, rational information.

However, when examining moves during Calles' "Maximato" period in Mexico to prevent immediate reelection of

legislators, in Jeffrey Weldon's essay, the measure seems aimed to introduce discipline in exchange for sacrificing effectiveness. The data also shows that conditions for legislators' achieving continuity between 1917 and 1933 were not precisely optimum. But it is obvious that the new controls produced greater discipline and averted the creation of a parliamentary class. This trend was reinforced when the principles of proportional representation were introduced, since these seats are used to "reward" people close to the party apparatus instead of tolerating regional leaders or strongmen who could break up existing loyalties to the party leadership.

With this logic, the thought of a Congress dominated by reelection is not in and of itself an answer to all the structural reforms that Mexico's legislative branch still needs. If we take into account the valuable comparative experience that Fernando F. Dworak contributes, limited reelection (such as the U.S. case of the presidency, though not the legislature) could be a valuable reference point for separating and regulating both the steps to be taken and the depth of an eventual reform that would chase away any hint of dictatorship accompanying these kinds of measures. For this reason, Andrés Mejía's review of the Ecuadoran case shows us that conditions can exist for a return to reelection, as long as the uncertainty caused by forms of voting and the creation of parliamentary caucuses with a tendency to strengthen discipline and the institutional cohesion of Congress itself can be overcome.

The Latin American peculiarity of strong presidents and weak congresses overwhelmingly marks the climate of skepticism for the prospects and conditions for reestablishing reelection in the Mexican case. Thus, it is reasonable to think that the possibility of such a measure being immediately approved undoubtedly requires the action of a strong majority, not only with cooperative voting by diverse political forces, but also to break through the wall historically created by public opinion that has dominated local political and academic debate. This is why the book compiled by Fernando F. Dworak is a splendid example of an intelligent collective exercise that should without a doubt aspire to receive an equally serious and responsible answer from its anti-reelectionist adversaries.

Victor Alarcón Olguín

**Head of the Sociology Department
UAM-Iztapalapa**



A R T U R O M Á R Q U E Z