

VOICES of Mexico

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**Bush's Second
Term and the World**
José Luis Valdés-Ugalde

**A New Look At
U.S.-Mexico Relations**
Andrés Rozental

Absentee Voting in Mexico
Patricio Ballados And
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An Oil Collapse Foretold
Víctor Rodríguez-Padilla
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**Affirmative Action
In Mexico**
Jesús Rodríguez Zepeda

**U.S.-Canadian
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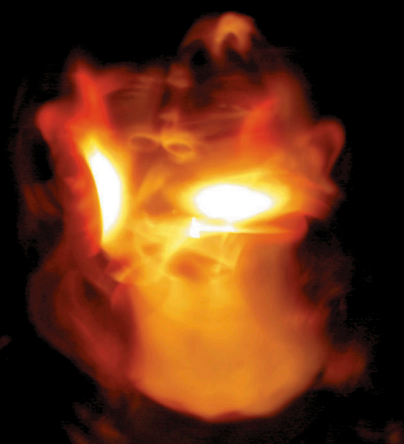
**Three Mexican Women
Photographers**

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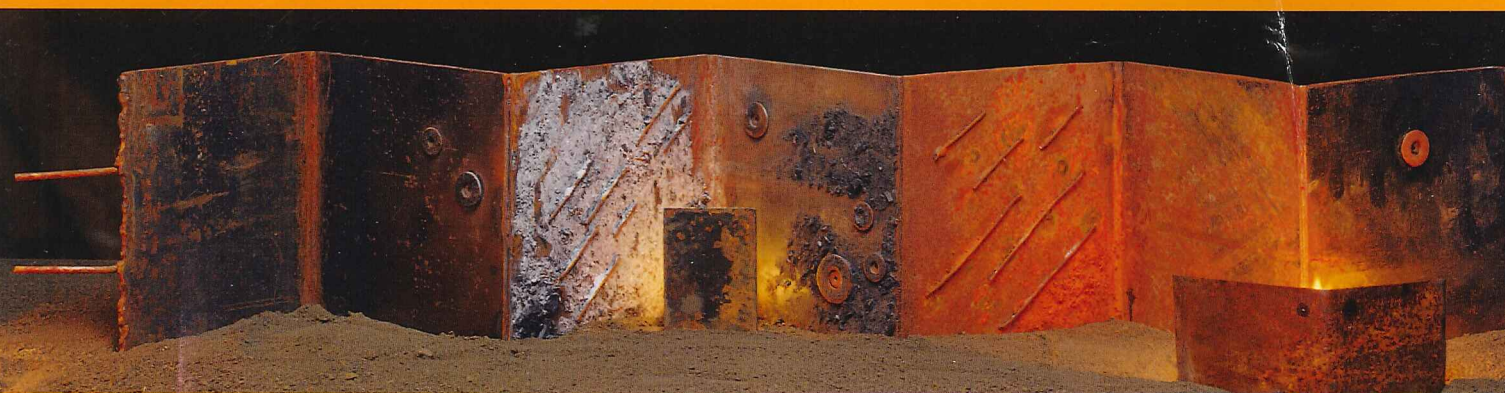


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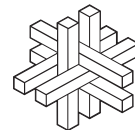
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Collage. Photos by Sofía Felguérez, Ingrid Hernández and Leonor Solís.

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OUR VOICE

George W. Bush's reelection was not a big surprise for many. Even though broad sectors of world public opinion preferred John Kerry, the president imposed himself thanks to a strategy that captured historically abstentionist voters and represented an important segment of the conservative population. In the last stages of the campaign, Bush's strategist Karl Rove bet on appealing to evangelical Christians with an *ad hoc* message that countered some of the more moderate positions among the U.S. public, and the results in Ohio, among other places, showed it. Among these sectors of the public are those who are against abortion, gay marriage and uncontrolled and even regulated immigration.

The state of bilateral and trilateral relations in North America cannot be analyzed beyond the margins of the current political situation in the United States. Two major issues should be emphasized here. Mexico has not been capable of doing effective lobbying in Washington or negotiating at home to convince the central political actors (particularly legislators) that its cause should be taken into account. This means that it has been impossible to effectively negotiate the basis for a platform that would lead to substantive accords, particularly with reference to the undocumented Mexican population in the U.S., which increases daily.

Bush's reelection creates even more difficulties for Mexico, even if we could believe that he is interested in resolving the immigration issue responsibly. We tend to think, rather, that his recent restrictive position on immigration is the result both of his lack of interest in anything beyond a temporary arrangement about guest workers and of the pressure from very broad sectors of society and the political class who for many reasons think it inappropriate to execute a comprehensive migratory reform and legalize Mexican immigrants. These immigrants fulfill their obligations like the rest of the citizenry (like paying taxes) but lack the most basic rights that those other citizens have. This is an increasingly dangerous bilateral problem that is not getting enough attention. In addition, the most serious problem, given the existence of legal and political vacuums, is that the issues pending like this one are being politicized in the discourse of the two governments and societies in large part due to the fact that there are neither norms nor institutions that frame more professionally and clearly cooperatively the relations between the two countries.

Unfortunately, one of the consequences of the current situation is that, on the one hand, the United States has conferred upon itself the right to demand explanations and cooperation from Mexico in matters of its national security even if this means the sacrifice of Mexico's own security interests and defense priorities, and, on the other hand, Mexico reacts and also demands of Washington favorable commitments for our priorities. Relations with our northern neighbor have come to a standstill around some fundamental issues in a way we had not seen for some time. The feeling that nothing has moved forward nor will it move forward is more prevalent than ever and the Waco and Crawford, Texas meetings for the signing of the Alliance for Security and Prosperity in North America last March 23 did not constitute a substantial advance either for relations with the United States or for the consolidation of Mexico's trade and political relations with its two most important partners.

* * *

In this issue's "United States Affairs" section, precisely, I contribute a deeper analysis both of the reasons U.S. voters reelected George Walker Bush to the presidency and of the consequences this second term could have for the world in general and for Mexico and Latin America in particular in light of the transformation of U.S. foreign policy, foreshadowed by the reshuffling of the cabinet and the inclusion in decision-making posts of some of the best known representatives of U.S. neo-conservatism. It is to be expected that for Mexico, Bush's second term will very probably mean continued stymied negotiations on any broad migratory accord, one of the most important issues on the bilateral agenda from the Mexican point of view. In an article in the "Mexico-U.S. Relations," experienced and prominent Mexican diplomat Andrés Rozental offers us a panoramic analysis of relations between the two countries and how they were effected by 9/11, and describes how, since then, security issues have marked bilateral negotiations. All this

has undoubtedly negatively affected negotiations on all other issues, among them, the one most important for Mexico, migration. However, Rozental visualizes in the dynamic of globalization (for example, the integration of Europe, the blocs that have formed in Asia and the emergence of China as a new economic power) undeniable areas for opportunities for Mexico, the United States and Canada to rethink the need to strengthen not only their existing trade agreement, but also to analyze the relevance of going even further toward regional integration, particularly if they do not want to lose competitive advantages *vis-à-vis* other regions.

Of course, this kind of integration presupposes changes and influences in non-economic fields. In “North American Issues,” Pedro Félix Turrubiarres offers us a brief panorama of the historic cultural interdependence between Mexico and the United States, emphasizing above all the cultural changes that the North American Free Trade Agreement has brought with it. Along these same lines, in “Mexico and the World,” journalist John Burstein establishes a thought-provoking parallel between Mexico and Turkey, based not only on their similarities as peripheral countries bordering on two capitalist metropolises (the United States and the European Union), but also the peculiarity that the two nations are, in his opinion, a clear example of how ethnic struggles (that of the Kurds and Mexican indigenous peoples) have contributed to redefining the future of the broad regionalizing projects they are both part of.

The cultural changes that come with globalization and regionalization also relate to today’s borders. Canadian specialist Graciela Martínez-Zalce contributes an interesting article to “Canadian Issues” about the ideological borders between the United States and Canada in an original analysis of two films by well-known directors Michael Moore and Trey Parker.

* * *

Mexican politics is starting to heat up in preparation for the 2006 federal elections. Proof of this is one of the main hopefuls’, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, being stripped of executive immunity as mayor of Mexico City and possibly being barred from running; also, the recent debate about the viability of Mexicans’ voting abroad and the torturous relations between different branches of government during practically the entire Fox administration, particularly between the executive and Congress. We have included articles about the last two topics in this issue’s “Politics” section. Patricio Ballados and Rodrigo Cervantes contribute an analysis of the logistic and legal obstacles that would still have to be overcome in order for Mexicans living in the United States to vote in the 2006 presidential elections. Their main concern is that there is a danger that voting abroad would not be covered by the same levels of trust and certainty that has been achieved in Mexico, and that this kind of scenario could not only stain the 2006 results, but would undoubtedly be an unfortunate step backward for Mexico’s transition to democracy. For his part, political analyst Carlos Casillas describes how in recent years it has not been possible to consolidate a political culture (particularly among the president and his cabinet, state governors and political parties) that accepts that in a democracy there is always the possibility that no consensus is reached and that therefore it is necessary to build institutional mechanisms so that this does not cause administrative and legislative paralysis, a political culture that promotes persuasion and reason over imposition. Undeniably, one of the main indicators of maturity in a democracy is the degree of inclusion and egalitarian treatment that society enjoys, which is inversely proportional to discriminatory attitudes and practices. In his article for our “Society” section, political philosopher Jesús Rodríguez Zepeda reflects about the importance of affirmative action in a society as unequal and historically discriminatory as our own. He therefore celebrates the constitutional reform that establishes state responsibility for implementing compensatory programs for the indigenous population, as well as recent legislation that includes affirmative action for other groups like the alternatively abled and the aged.

One of the reforms that has been constantly postponed by the administrative and legislative paralysis that has plagued the country in recent years is the energy reform, which implies restructuring the state oil and natural gas company, Pemex. In their contribution to the “Economy” section, Víctor Rodríguez and Rosío Vargas alert us to the grave consequences of the current administration’s energy policies, including concessions to foreign private companies for pumping oil and bad management of Pemex’s assets, particularly a fiscal policy that siphons off money into government coffers instead of investing in the company to modernize it. We close the section with an article by economist Enrique Pino, who not only contributes very interesting data about four of the so-called emerging economies (Chile, Mexico, South Korea and

Chinese Taipei), but a very evocative analysis of why the Asian nations have achieved better sustained performance than the Latin Americans. Among the reasons he offers are the greater willingness of Asian governments to intervene in their economies and to be less orthodox than the two Latin American countries in implementing neoliberal economic policies, *à la* the International Monetary Fund.

* * *

This issue's "Art and Culture" section is dedicated to photography. Three young women, Leonor Solís, Ingrid Hernández and Sofía Felguérez, each with a different profession, living in different parts of Mexico, use classic black and white photography, testimonial digital photography and manipulated digital photography to demonstrate this art's infinite range of creative possibilities. Each shares the reasons behind her images. We complete the section with a delectable article by Zaidee Stavely about *danzón*. This sensual popular dance, with its very precise rules and steps, is kept alive in the capital thanks to the fact that on weekends, local inhabitants of all ages gather in public plazas to practice it.

Our "Splendor of Mexico", "Museums" and "Ecology" sections are once again dedicated to exploring corners of Mexico's capital. We start with three neighborhoods, whose histories date back centuries and that developed different styles of architecture and functions. Salvador Padilla writes about stately Tlalpan, a place of pre-Hispanic settlements that still boasts superb examples of old colonial country houses, with narrow, cobbled streets and a plaza that reminds us of times gone by when it was still far away from the capital. Édgar Tavares contributes two articles about the more modern but stately Roma and Hipódromo Condesa Neighborhoods. Their histories, written in the twentieth century, are magnificent examples of the value that used to be placed on space for recreation and the application of different architectural styles that even today, despite city traffic, invite the visitor to be surprised on walks through their streets and parks.

A singular museum dedicated to poetry and its most important resource, metaphor, is located in the Roma Neighborhood. The creators of the Museo Ramón López Velarde (Ramón López Velarde Museum) conceived it as metaphorical, and, with imagination and skill, they have managed to spark surprise, bafflement, but above all interest in knowing more about the work and passions of one of Mexico's most important poets.

"Ecology" deals with a topic vital to the capital, the environmental recovery of our Chapultepec Forest, perhaps the city's most traditional family recreation spot.

Gerardo Piña contributes an interesting article to our "Literature" section about Christopher Domínguez Michael, writer and critic, the worthy recipient of one of Mexico's most prestigious literary prizes, the Xavier Villaurrutia Award 2004, for his biography of Friar Servando Teresa de Mier. Piña also contributes interesting data about Domínguez Michael's literary history, to which we add a translation of brief fragments of the prize-winning book.

Two outstanding members of the university community recently passed away, leaving behind them undeniably important legacies for Mexican universities and society. Horacio Labastida was a Renaissance man, who knew something about practically all topics and was able to tie together the most seemingly unrelated aspects of reality to explain it with great lucidity. An extraordinary academic and cultural official, a consummate bibliophile, a zealous historian and journalist committed to the interpretation of truth, Labastida was without a doubt one of those figures who have become indispensable for Mexico's cultural life. Don Henrique González Casanova made no less of a mark. A writer of delicate prose, he was widely recognized for his dedication to teaching and his existential commitment to the fate of the National University, to where he expressed his academic vocation. He trained several generations, fostered multiple cultural activities and was the soul of some of the most transcendental groups of intellectuals in twentieth-century Mexico. *Voices of Mexico* pays homage to both men, dedicating our "In Memoriam" section to them.

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde



Sandra Perdomo/Cuartoscuro

Government and electoral officials discussing Mexican voting abroad.

Absentee Voting in Mexico Perspectives and Challenges for 2006

Patricio Ballados *
Rodrigo Cervantes**

INTRODUCTION

In past months there has been a resurgence of the debate regarding the right of Mexican citizens to vote abroad in presidential elections starting in 2006. Currently, Congress is discussing a bill that would allow absentee voting in the next federal elections.¹ However, this discussion is neither new nor straightforward. The evolution of the nation-state in the last century has led to a transformation of longstanding concepts such as citizenship, nationality and residence. Realities like increased migration, globalization and multi-citizenship have blurred the view of states as rigid geographic and population units. Accordingly, the concept of polity has been transformed to include persons who do not reside in a certain state, but do have a cultural, political and economic influence in it. Additionally, democratic transformations in the latter part of the last century have resulted in the recognition of citizens' rights, including the right to suffrage abroad.

In Mexico, the debate on this issue emerged in 1996, in light of the constitutional amendment that eliminated the territorial restriction impeding the possible right to absentee voting.² However, there was still an unfinished debate regarding the established concept of polity, including whether it should encompass Mexican nationals who live abroad and, therefore, do not have to deal with

* Chief advisor to the Executive Secretariat, Federal Electoral Institute.

** Advisor to the Executive Secretariat, Federal Electoral Institute.

It should be taken into account that some estimates say that votes cast for one party or another would not be substantially different from the numbers in Mexico.

the consequences of the election result directly, or if it could include the concept of dual citizenship. Regarding the latter, there seems to be a consensus about the feasibility of dual nationality, due to increasing migration. However, the concept of dual citizenship sparks a broad debate because the rights, obligations and consequences of citizenship are often contradictory between different polities.

Apart from this issue, which has yet to be seriously debated in Mexico, there are other aspects—both legal and practical—that need further analysis in order to concretize the right to absentee balloting. Three fundamental questions must be addressed:

- Is it feasible?
- If so, who could vote?
- And, how would they vote?

THE FEASIBILITY OF MEXICANS' VOTING ABROAD

We should take into consideration that in more than 80 countries throughout the world, it is common for nationals living abroad to be able to vote, although using different systems.

Equally, the Commission of Specialists created in 1998 by the Federal Electoral Institute to study the different forms in which Mexicans could vote abroad concluded categorically that it was technically viable to set up a system to do it, as long as it complied with certain prerequisites to ensure that

the confidence in the organization and results of the elections, which have taken decades to build in Mexico, would not be brought into question.³

This is undoubtedly the center of the debate: how can we concretize the universal right to suffrage without infringing on the principles of legal certainty, impartiality and objectivity in electoral matters expressed in Article 41 of the Mexican Constitution? The question is extremely complex since the two sets of values are not necessarily complementary and, if care is not taken, what is an advance for one may represent a step backward for the other. It is important to take this into account when deciding who will vote abroad and how they will do it.

THE UNIVERSE OF VOTERS

First of all, the magnitude of the task should be put in perspective. As everyone knows, the United States' geographic proximity to Mexico has led to one of the largest and most continuous migratory flows on the planet, so now millions of Mexicans live there.

According to the study "Aspectos cuantitativos de los ciudadanos mexicanos en el extranjero durante la jornada electoral del año 2006" (Quantitative Aspects of Mexican Citizens Abroad on Election Day 2006) done by El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (The Northern Border College) on request of the Federal Electoral Institute, around 9.8 million Mexicans were living in the United

States in 2000,⁴ concentrated mainly in four states: California, Texas, Illinois and Arizona. Another 108,000 were spread out over 27 countries, among them Canada, Paraguay Bolivia, Germany and Spain.

The first thing that has to be resolved, then, is whether voting abroad will be extended to the whole world or will be concentrated in the country where 99 percent of Mexican emigrants live. The first option, obviously, would make for serious logistical and budgetary difficulties, whereas the second option would exclude some citizens from the possibility of exercising their right to vote.

Then, we would have to decide if—like inside Mexico itself—only those citizens who had registered to vote and had received their voter cards would be allowed to cast ballots, if they would be able to vote without fulfilling these prerequisites or if some intermediate requirements could be established.⁵ In any of these cases, once again, we would have to weigh the right to suffrage against the elections' certainty and legality, taking into account the fact that the many controls and security mechanisms for issuing voter cards and compiling the voters' rolls have been essential for creating public confidence in electoral institutions.

ORGANIZING THE ELECTIONS

Mexico's electoral norms and procedures are stipulated in the Federal Electoral Institutions and Procedures Law, which exhaustively details practically all aspects of electoral competition and organization. It would be hard to find another piece of legislation as detailed and rigorous anywhere else in the world.

This makes for serious difficulties of different kinds for replicating the manner of organizing elections and regulating political parties' activities abroad. We would have to deal with logistical and administrative questions and have sufficient resources.⁶ And, as if that were not enough, we would have to carefully review current legislation to avoid possible conflicts with laws in other countries.

Just as an example, suffice it to say that in matters of organization of the elections and voting, Mexico is divided into three basic geographical units: the state, the district and the section. To make this division, authorities must have detailed geographical and demographic information culled from very intensive fieldwork. Coming up with detailed maps of the location of possible voters would not only be extremely expensive, but could even constitute a violation of the internal security of the countries in which the work would be done. Without this data, we would not have the same certainty as inside Mexico itself about the location of polling places and the distribution of possible voters.

Different options could be tried abroad, including voting at a distance (by mail, telephone or Internet), but while that would facilitate the exercise of their right for Mexican emigrants, it could also presuppose differentiated and possibly discriminatory treatment that would put voters inside Mexico at a disadvantage. The possibility of voting in a different way from the one used inside the country would only be appropriate if it were extended to all Mexicans, to guarantee equal rights.

In addition, the right to suffrage is not limited to merely going to vote: to be fully realized, it requires conditions

In contrast with most countries, in Mexico political parties are preponderantly financed by public funds and are mandated to report all their income and expenditures.

that allow citizens to exercise that right in a reasoned and informed manner. This presupposes, above all, the possibility of familiarizing themselves with political parties' platforms and candidates' proposals, which means we would have to discuss allowing campaigns to be waged abroad.

This touches on one of the pillars of the electoral system: monitoring of political parties' resources. It should be pointed out here that, in contrast with most countries, in Mexico, political parties are preponderantly financed by public funds and are mandated to report all their income and expenditures. However, outside Mexico's borders, electoral officials would not have the tools they need to carry out this monitoring. This could affect the principle of electoral certainty and could infringe on the equity of competition.

THE POWER OF THE VOTE ABROAD

In the preceding pages we have tried to sketch —though not exhaustively— some issues that would have to be analyzed before making the decision to implement mechanisms so Mexicans could vote abroad. In addition, it would be necessary to go back to the initial reflection: Is it valid or legitimate that citizens residing abroad participate in decisions in their country of origin, above all if, due to their number, they could alter election results?

With regard to this, it should be taken into account that some estimates

say that votes cast for one party or another would not be substantially different from the numbers in Mexico.⁷ Despite the common sense idea that when forced to leave the country for mainly economic reasons, emigrants have voted with their feet (to use the Leninist term) and therefore would be inclined to punish the party in office at the polls, everything seems to indicate that their vote is more decided by the degree of socialization migrants have with their communities of origin. That is, it is common that voters decide how to cast their ballots based on conversations, traditions or the guidance of members of their communities. In the case of voting abroad, it would seem that Mexicans interested in voting would do it largely because they have close ties to Mexico. In that sense, these Mexican citizens would probably be in close contact with their families and communities, which means that their voting patterns could to a certain degree replicate those of their places of origin.

Equally, the weight of the votes of residents abroad depends on the proportion of them who are willing, first, to register to vote and then to actually go to the polls. In this sense, both international experience and estimates for Mexico show that only a very small percentage of emigrants effectively exercise their right to vote.

In 2004, about one million Dominicans resided outside their country, but only 35,000 voted in that year's Dominican Republic elections. In the

case of Brazil, with 1.6 million nationals living abroad, only 0.5 percent voted in the 2002 elections. For Mexico, Cornelius and Marcelli estimate that the number would be about 3 percent in the best of cases.⁸

This eliminates the fear, therefore, that the elections would be decided from abroad.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In our opinion, the implementation of any mechanism for voting abroad must ensure that the certainty won for elections inside Mexico not be brought into question. Mexican electoral legislation has gradually been amended (among other times in 1989, 1990-91, 1994 and 1996) to deal with different issues on the electoral agenda. These reforms have achieved an electoral system that has generated certainty and objectivity in the organization of the process. For that reason, it is absolutely necessary that legislation for Mexicans' voting abroad maintain the levels of confi-

dence achieved for legislation for balloting inside Mexico. Not ensuring this would have negative consequences that would far surpass the benefits of broadening out the rights of our compatriots abroad.

The answer to this apparently insoluble problem could lie in taking a gradual approach. Like with the rest of electoral legislation, voting abroad could be improved gradually based on experience. This is one of the most important lessons in the development of Mexico's electoral system: given the impossibility of solving all the issues in a single try, the different actors accepted and supported gradual reforms that increasingly strengthened Mexican democracy.

This seems to be a good lesson for voting abroad. If we accept gradually developing legislation, improvements could be made based on practice that would be much more helpful than the studies made until now founded on "soft" premises, or hypotheses, since there is no similar precedent for this in Mexico or anywhere in the world. **VM**

NOTES

- ¹ On February 22, the Chamber of Deputies approved a bill currently being discussed by the Senate. Mexican legislation stipulates that a bill must be passed by both chambers of Congress to become law.
- ² The amendment to Article 36 of the Constitution eliminated the obligation of Mexican citizens to vote in the electoral district corresponding to their place of residence.
- ³ The final report of the Commission of Specialists can be consulted on the Federal Electoral Institute's web site at: <www.ife.org.mx>
- ⁴ The study estimates that on election day 2006, there will be 9.966 million Mexican citizens in the United States.
- ⁵ The Federal Electoral Institute's Voter Registry Office estimates that there are approximately four million Mexicans abroad who already have their voter cards, issued in Mexico.
- ⁶ According to Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) estimates, implementing Mexicans' balloting abroad in the 2006 presidential elections following the stipulations established in the Chamber of Deputies February 22, 2005 decision would cost about U.S.\$300 million. See the document "Consideraciones acerca de la Minuta con Proyecto de Decreto que reforma y adiciona el Cofipe en materia de voto de los mexicanos en el extranjero" (Considerations about the Accord and Draft Decree that Reforms and Amends the Cofipe with Regard to Mexicans' Voting Abroad) on the IFE's web site.
- ⁷ See for example, Wayne Cornelius and Enrico Marcelli, "¿Y si los migrantes votaran en el 2006?" *Reforma* (Mexico City), September 14, 2003.
- ⁸ Ibid.

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Christian Palma/Cuartoscuro

Deputies challenge the president with his own words, "I will solve the Chiapas conflict in 15 minutes."

The President and Congress Dangerous Liaisons

Carlos Enrique Casillas*

Over the more than four years of this administration Mexicans have witnessed a relationship in which the distinctive note has been scandals and confrontation between the executive and the legislative branches.

Relations between Mexico's executive and legislative branches hit bottom last December when the Chamber of Deputies decided to approve a federal spending budget for 2005 without the president's backing.¹ The budget became the actual bone of contention, but it was merely the epilogue in a long and complex political relationship that has become more and more complicated as the Fox administration has progressed.

* Professor of political science at the Iberoamericana and Anáhuac Universities. cecasillasmx@yahoo.com

The president and his cabinet's political efforts should have concentrated on trying to create consensus based on convincing and not subjecting Congress.

Since the second half of Ernesto Zedillo's term, but significantly with the kick-off of the Vicente Fox administration, the absence of a clear majority in Congress and the existence of a divided government made it look like we were progressing toward a new model of presidentialism in Mexico. Supposedly, a timid interlude of collaboration between the branches of government would be followed by a period of frank cooperation among those who make the laws and those who implement them, but events contradicted this hypothesis.

What we Mexicans have witnessed over the more than four years of this administration is a relationship in which mishaps and bickering have increased, in which the clash of the branches of government made it impossible to legislate on matters of great importance for the country's development, and in which the distinctive note has not been collaboration, but fights, scandals and confrontation between the executive and the legislative branches.

At the beginning of the Fifty-ninth Congress, in September 2003, conditions seemed to exist for a new understanding between the president and the legislature. When Vicente Fox gave his third report to the nation, he called for putting the priority on politics and sent the message that he was willing to come to an understanding with the opposition.

It seemed to be the implicit recognition of his defeat at the polls three months before and of the fact that the National Action Party (PAN) was a minority in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. It also seemed to be a message that said that without a broad alliance of the administration and the opposition, fundamentally the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the pending structural reforms on energy, taxes and labor would be impossible.

WHAT BEGINS BADLY ENDS BADLY

The experiment of attempting a stable, long-lasting understanding between the executive and the legislature was brusquely overcome by the administration's lack of political experience in the first months of 2001. The political situation and logic ended up imposing themselves, and what seemed to be a good beginning quickly turned into a conflict when the president's priorities clashed with Congress's.

An entrepreneur by profession and a gambler by vocation, Vicente Fox decided to try out the formula as president that had been so productive for him as a candidate: appealing directly to the citizenry to promote his bills. Beyond the naive motivation of this new style of doing politics, the president's maneuver immediately placed

Congress on a roller coaster in full view of the public.

From the constitutional reform about indigenous rights and culture and the first attempt at fiscal change, to the frustrated reform of the electricity sector, every issue on the legislative agenda became a point of contention between the executive and the Congress.

Calls were uselessly made for everyone to avoid the legislative discussion becoming partisan. They were naive given that partisanship was a natural, predictable consequence of the competition of the parties in Congress. While the administration fought to make its vision of the design of the laws and public policies prevail, the opposition sought to differentiate itself from the administration through the priorities it tried to deal with.

The Fox administration has not understood that the opposition is not a decoration in Congress, just testimonial, but a kind of shadow government—to use the English metaphor—which is always seeking to prepare the ground for taking office. It was not understood that it is useless for an opposition party with aspirations of power to be indulgent with the administration and make its life easy; on the contrary, its main mission is to question and confront it.

This means that from the beginning the president and his cabinet's political efforts should have concentrated on trying to create consensus based on convincing and not subjecting Congress. The administration did not understand that, in contrast with the U.S. model, where it is profitable for the president to appeal to the public to pressure members of Congress, in the Mexican case, this strategy is fruitless because, since they cannot be reelected, legislators do not tailor their

actions to the interests of the citizenry, but to those of their parties.

PARLIAMENTARY ARITHMETIC

It was a simple exercise for the federal government and the PAN to look at the indicators on the night of Sunday, July 6, 2003, and understand their consequences. President Fox and his party, the PAN, had lost the congressional elections, and it would be necessary to design a new strategy that could lead them away from the confrontational model they had used in the first three years of their term that led them directly to losing one-third of the seats that they had had until then in San Lázaro, the seat of Congress.

At that moment, the only possible out to guarantee continuity for the presidential project was a long-term accord with the PRI, for the simple reason that the country's oldest party held the key to making changes in the Constitution, and a scenario of confrontation would only lead to the PRI hardening its positions and, in the end, winning the day.

But the very idea of negotiating with the PRI gave the administration and the PAN an allergic reaction. That is why from the beginning of the term, the prevailing presidential discourse *vis-à-vis* Congress was to work on building consensus. Consensus was offered as the magic formula for reconciling interests that would allow the administration and the PAN to justify both their accord with the PRI and the absence of reforms. When things were moving ahead, it was because consensus had been reached, and when they shipwrecked it was attributed to the legislature not cooperating.

That discourse damaged Congress's public image and the relationship of

In our country, it has never been accepted
that democracies have always included the possibility that consensus
will not be reached.

the president with legislators. After four years, consensus still has not been reached, but the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate have been labeled as saboteurs of alternation in office and unequivocal obstacles to democracy.

This false logic has hurt everyone and benefits no one. In our country, it has never been accepted that democracies have always included the possibility that consensus will not be reached because there will always be those who want to go one place and others who prefer another direction. This formula is called a majority, and it is practiced in all parliaments the world over.

LOOKING FORWARD

The administration of Vicente Fox is dying. It will be able to advance only very little in legislative matters in the time remaining to it. Now, based on this experience, the biggest challenge Mexican democracy is facing is how to make the executive-legislative relationship productive from 2006 on.

The first obstacle to overcome will be ousting the taboo that says that all negotiation is dirty. For political parties and a large part of the public, it will be necessary to banish the idea that behind every exchange lurks something murky and ignominious, a back-room deal, a sinister pact similar to thieves distributing their loot in a cave somewhere.

It will be even more indispensable to negotiate since the polls point to 2006 being an election that will give about an even third of the votes to each of the three main political parties. If this happens, it will inevitably make for another divided government and a president without a majority in Congress.

A long history characterized by the absence of democratic practices and the recent improvisation of other practices under pressure until now have not favored collaboration between the branches of government. For that reason, generally, our political negotiations turn out badly and only half finished. Very few people are satisfied and many are unhappy with the results.

We Mexicans must learn to negotiate and understand that the functional logic of relations between the president and Congress in democracies can only exist if there is exchange. For whoever is the Mexico's next president, the Fox administration must be an example of what should not be done and of everything that can be improved. ■■■

NOTES

¹ Today, in March 2005, the debate about the budget is before the Supreme Court, which must decide how much Congress can modify the bill presented by the president and whether the latter has the right to veto it if he does not approve of the changes.



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Affirmative Action in Mexico

Jesús Rodríguez Zepeda*

This article has the aim of evaluating affirmative action in the Mexican political, institutional and legal context. It is, of course, a simple sketch that can shed some light on this strategy to fight discrimination, which has been intensely discussed in U.S. society in recent decades but in our country has received little or no attention. The important thing about this issue is that Mexican law and some of its most outstanding institutional directives obligate the state to act with affirmative actions, but there is enormous ignorance about the nature of this compensatory strategy, leading to frequent misunderstandings and even obvious errors about the role it plays in the construction of an egalitarian society.

Affirmative action has been almost invisible for jurists, social scientists and political philosophers in Mexico. It seems that many consider it something exclusive to U.S. society and meaningless for our country. However, today it would be difficult to conceive of a project of a society capable of offering its citizens real —not just formal— equal opportunities without reference to some type of preferential treatment for groups traditionally excluded and discriminated against.

* Professor and researcher at the Philosophy Department of the Autonomous Metropolitan University, Iztapalapa campus. rozj@xanum.uam.mx

But we should begin by defining the meaning of this much-debated notion. Perhaps we can find the clearest political meaning of affirmative action in President Lyndon B. Johnson’s famous speech, “To Fulfill These Rights.” There, President Johnson said,

You do not take a person who for years has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, “You are free to compete with all the others,” and still justly believe that you have been completely fair.

Thus, it is not enough to just open the gates of opportunity. All of our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates.

This is the next and more profound stage of the battle for civil rights. We seek not just freedom but opportunity—not just legal equity but human ability—not just equality as a right and a theory, but equality as a fact and as a result.¹

Affirmative action, in this sense, presupposes preferential treatment in favor of a specific social group that has suffered discrimination and limitations of its fundamental rights and opportunities. The argument for affirmative action maintains that given the real social conditions in which discriminated persons live, they bear the weight of a series of undeserved disadvantages that regularly lead to the blockage of their access to fundamental rights and a limitation on their taking advantage of opportunities usually available to the rest of the population. Equality can only be reached if it includes the idea of special “compensatory measures” aimed at these groups and promoted and/or supervised and stimulated by the state.

Equality as a social goal demands, then, that in some cases society apply positive, differentiated treatment that promotes the social integration of persons who have been discriminated against and that allows them to take advantage of those rights and opportunities that those who do not suffer from discrimination regularly use.

We should take into account that the ability to exercise rights and take advantage of opportunities offered by a society is not the same for all. For certain groups, prejudices and stigmas cultivated for many years against them make for a real disadvantage. This means

Article 2 of the Constitution
establishes compensatory measures to promote
equal opportunities for indigenous people and to eliminate
any discriminatory practices against them.

that members of those groups experience *de facto* inequality of origin which they are not morally responsible for and which they cannot overcome by a mere act of will. This is because it is rooted in the customs, laws, institutions, culture, models for success, standards of beauty and other aspects of collective life that define the relationships among social groups.

Taking the world as it is and not as an ideal model in which everyone has equal opportunities, what the historic disadvantage of these groups demands is a “compensation” that allows them to balance a situation of competitive weakness that they have suffered from through time. This compensation has to consist of a strategy to favor equality in its constituent sense, which would imply accepting preferential treatment to temporarily favor those who belong to

the historically discriminated against groups.

Affirmative action has at least two definitions: a very broad one and another, more concrete, limited one. In its broadest sense, affirmative action consists of “the fundamental idea of taking the proactive steps necessary to dismantle prejudice.”² Although the term “affirmative action” only began to be used in 1961 in President John F. Kennedy’s Executive Order 10925, the idea of acting pro-actively in favor of the social integration of the black population can be traced back to 1953, when President Harry S. Truman’s Committee

on Contract Compliance urged, “to act positively and affirmatively to implement the policy of nondiscrimination in its functions of placement counseling, occupational analysis and industrial services, labor market information, and community participation in employment services.”³

In this broad sense, affirmative action can be understood as government and even private sector promotion of social inclusion of a group (in the U.S. case, the black population, traditionally discriminated against and excluded). This social inclusion can be achieved through different kinds of measures whose ultimate aim is real equal opportunities.

The other meaning of affirmative action is more restricted, although very important, and is linked to specific measures so groups like women and ethnic

minorities can be represented in a given society's higher, better paid positions in education and employment. Although with this specific form of affirmative action, a direct relationship cannot be established between the benefit to some individuals who are members of the discriminated group and the real compensation experienced by the group as a whole, the goal is to create social leaders among the persons benefited, capable of functioning as examples of social achievement for the rest of the members of their group.

Affirmative action can be differentiated from equal opportunities by the

work as a mechanism that “reserves” a pre-established percentage of slots in jobs or enrollment to be assigned to members of gender or racial minorities. Thus, for example, in the 1970s many U.S. universities opened up dual admissions processes with admissions standards of one kind for white students and another for minority students like blacks or Latinos. Similarly, German legislation establishes job quotas for women in order to give them more representation in decision-making positions.

Perhaps the newest kind of affirmative action is the introduction of obli-

Affirmative action presupposes preferential treatment in favor of a specific social group that has suffered discrimination and limitations of its fundamental rights and opportunities.

meaning the latter has taken on in the traditional discourse of the welfare state; that is, equal opportunities is not defined by belonging to a group that has been discriminated against, while in affirmative action, it is essential.

“Equal opportunity” laws and policies require that individuals be judged on their qualifications as individuals, *without regard* to race, sex, age, etc. “Affirmative action” requires that they be judged *with regard* to such group membership, receiving preferential or compensatory treatment in some cases to achieve a more proportional “representation” in various institutions and occupations.⁴

In its restricted meaning, affirmative action is expressed through a policy of educational or job “quotas” that

gatory quotas in the area of political representation. Having recognized the under-representation of women in the political structure, some European nations have established gender quotas that guarantee a minimum of representation of women in important political positions.

Whether the general conception of affirmative action or its concrete expression identified with quotas is used, it is certainly always put forward as a temporary strategy that should disappear as soon as the disadvantageous conditions that gave rise to it have disappeared. The temporary nature of affirmative action reaffirms its link to the concept of equality, since this compensatory strategy is not seen as an end in itself, but as a means to achieve the desirable objective of equal treatment and opportunities for all members of society.

In the Mexican case, affirmative action measures based on its general meaning are the most common. On the highest legal level, they can be found in Article 2 of the Constitution, which guarantees the fundamental rights, the preservation of the identity and the possibilities for development of indigenous communities. This article establishes compensatory measures to promote equal opportunities for indigenous people and to eliminate any discriminatory practice against them. It points to the obligation of the federal government, the states and the municipalities of establishing institutions and the necessary policies to guarantee the exercise of indigenous rights and the overall development of their towns and communities with the aim of fostering regional development in indigenous areas, strengthening local economies and improving living conditions of their peoples. It seeks to guarantee and increase educational levels, favoring bilingual and intercultural education, literacy, lowering the drop-out rate in basic education, improving training for production and fostering high school and higher education. It also mandates establishing a scholarship system for indigenous students on all levels, ensuring effective access to health care through broadening out national health system coverage; improving conditions in indigenous communities and in their spaces for community activities and recreation through actions that facilitate access to public and private funding for building and improving housing; broadening out the communications network that allows for the integration of communities into society through building more roads, highways and telecommunications facilities; supporting productive activities and sustainable development of indige-

nous communities through actions that make it possible to ensure sufficient income. Finally, Article 2 establishes affirmative actions in their general sense to favor indigenous women, boys and girls, students and migrants.

The National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples Law translates a large part of this mandate into institutional criteria and public policy actions; it can be said, then, that it is the legislation that tries to implement the affirmative actions set out in the Constitution. Similar actions, but in favor of the preservation of indigenous culture and languages can be found in the General Law on Indigenous Peoples' Linguistic Rights.

General affirmative action stipulations can also be found in the Federal Law to Prevent and Eliminate Discrimination. It establishes a series of "positive, compensatory measures to favor equal opportunities," seeking to promote real equal opportunities for women, indigenous, senior citizens, little boys and little girls and the differently abled. In this case, the measures attempt to make the principle of non-discrimination lasting on the basis of stimulating and compensating these groups due to the historic discrimination they have suffered. Something similar can be found in the National Women's Institute Law, which promotes a gender focus for development, the design of public policies and the development of government programs with the aim of achieving "gender equality."

Other general measures of affirmative action favoring groups like women, indigenous or the differently abled can be found in the General Law on Health, the General Law on Social Development and the General Law on Education. More specifically, the Federal Crimi-

nal Code explicitly stipulates that indigenous who do not speak Spanish at all or do not speak it well must have translators during their trials or that their system of usage and customs must be taken into account when trying their cases and sentencing.

Measures of affirmative action in its second meaning, however, obligating the authorities to respect group quotas for important positions, are much less prevalent. In this case, the National Women's Institute Law stipulates that its Board of Governors can only have women members. Perhaps the most important legislative provision is found in the Federal Code of Elector-

The temporary nature of affirmative action reaffirms its link to the concept of equality.

al Institutions and Procedures, which obligates political parties running in federal elections to ensure that no more than 70 percent of their candidates for full (not alternate) membership in the Chamber of Deputies be of the same gender. Under today's conditions, this means that 30 percent of the each party's candidates for deputy must be women.

All these legal norms, the institutional actions that stem from them and the advantages and conflicts that their enforcement may cause have been studied very little. For example, the way in which the legal framing of general affirmative actions is frequently ignored

by the government offices mandated to implement them remains to be analyzed, specifically whether it is due to scarce resources, because they are too general and how to implement them is not clear, or because there are no clear penalties for not implementing them.

By contrast, affirmative actions such as quotas, although they bring with them other kinds of problems, like the accusation of fostering reverse discrimination, have the advantage of being both obligatory and clear and concise. They are obligations that are difficult to avoid and express a model of preferential treatment that could be useful for making the general affirmative actions more precise and for fostering new measures of the same kind.

In any case, the debate about affirmative action has barely begun in Mexico. We would be doing very little toward its felicitous conclusion if we judged it as an issue of minorities and privileges, when actually it involves the access to fundamental rights for the citizenry and, as President Johnson said, equality as a fact and a result. **MM**

◇

NOTES

¹ President Johnson delivered this speech at Howard University on June 4, 1965.

² Manning Marable, "Staying on the Path to Racial Equality," George E. Curry, ed., *The Affirmative Action Debate* (Cambridge, Mass.: Perseus Publishing, 1996), p. 5.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴ Thomas Sowell, "From Equal Opportunity to Affirmative Action," Francis J. Beckwith and Todd E. Jones, eds., *Affirmative Action: Social Justice or Reverse Discrimination?* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1997), p. 100.



Pedro Valtierra/Cuartoscuro

An Oil Collapse Foretold

Víctor Rodríguez-Padilla *

Rosío Vargas**

THE OFFICIAL ARGUMENT

For Fox administration officials, Mexico's oil problem does not center on the country's lack or abundance of black gold, but the state-owned oil company Pemex's inevitably sinking into bankruptcy if it continues to reject private investment. President Fox, Minister of Finance Francisco Gil Díaz, Minister of Energy Fernando Elizondo and the new director of Pemex, Luis Ramírez Corzo, all regularly threaten there will be national chaos if private, multinational capital continues to be barred from fully incorporating into the oil industry with all legal guarantees, even though for a long time now it has been well known that it is already investing.

If we go along with the government's logic, there is reason for concern: oil reserves that had been estimated at 25 billion barrels were down to 14 billion barrels in 2001. If this trend con-

* Professor and researcher at the UNAM Department of Graduate Studies in Energy Engineering.

** Coordinator of the CISAN's Area of Globality Studies.

tinues and we want to avoid Mexico becoming a net importer of crude in the next 10 or 15 years, about U.S.\$20 billion in investments are needed annually. Since that amount cannot be rounded up either with more debt or from the national budget, the solution for averting the paralysis of the industry would be the energy reform to allow the inflow of private capital.

Opposition groups like the National Union of Oil Industry Salaried Workers (UNTCIP) maintain that in the four years of the National Action Party (PAN) administration, energy policy and official discourse have both been based on figures manipulated to show that the only solution to funding requirements is private foreign investment.

What is Pemex's real situation? Where is it going?

THE REALITY

The scare-tactic tone is nothing new. It was inherited from Pemex's former director, Raúl Muñoz Leos (2000-2004), who told Congress that the company's situation was acute and that its liabilities were already unmanageable, and announced its imminent collapse.

The federal government, for its part, boasts that Pemex is one of the world's leading oil companies: it is the third largest producer of crude; the sixth in assets; the seventh in crude oil reserves; the tenth in production of natural gas; the 13th in refining capability; and the fifteenth in gas reserves. In effect, these are comparative advantages, but unfortunately not the most significant ones.

The fact is that Pemex is far from being at the top of the list in terms of availability of capital, particularly risk

capital; the creation of cutting-edge technology; experience in a broad gamut of operational areas; administration of projects, vertical integration abroad; horizontal integration in different energy industries; and strategic alliances throughout the sector's productive chains. Let us just say that in what really matters, that is, the technical-economic control of oil and gas and energy in general, Pemex is far from being like the merged, restructured "majors," and its deficit is not measurable in years, but in decades.

We could say that given restrictive economic policies and the marked ideological bias with which the country's most important company has been managed, Pemex is now incapable of satisfying the demand for oil, natural gas and petrochemicals without resorting to massive imports. It does not refine or sell either gasoline or diesel fuel in the United States, Europe or Japan.

Pemex is known only in Mexico. It does not explore for or produce oil and natural gas in the Middle East, Africa or South America. It is not capable of exploring or producing in deep water, much less in super- or hyper-deep waters. The company declares itself incapable of efficiently managing 1,000 upstream contracts, so it outsources to private companies through multiple services contracts to manage and direct the projects, which, paradoxically, are the smaller and less important ones. Also, Pemex is not part of the liquid natural gas chain. It does not create

technology. It is not a giant in petrochemicals. It does not have sufficient capital and has to resort to massive direct and contingency loans (PIDIREGAS and the Long-Term Productive Infrastructure Project). It does not have a presence in the world electricity industry or in other conventional sources of energy (coal and uranium), much less in alternative sources like aeolian, solar or hydrogen-based energy. Pemex is definitely very far from being an Exxon-Mobil or a Shell, BP-Amoco or Chevron-Texaco. But even so, President Vicente Fox says that without a reform, "Pemex will leave the country."

In summary, the government elite has maintained Pemex as a company specializing in the extraction and export of crude oil. Worse still, for many years now the main place that has received investment and its main source of income has been the exploitation of a single deposit, the Cantarell fields, and selling the oil to the United States. The reason for this specialization is simple: for the governing elite, oil and Pemex represent above all an easy, quick source of fiscal earnings that allows them to stabilize the economy as a whole and tax the rich less. It is also an instrument for collaborating and negotiating with the United States.

The most tragic part of the matter is that Pemex's current directors do not propose taking it off the narrow path it is on. According to their last business plan, the dominant factors in the company's mid-term growth are access and

In the technical-economic control of oil, gas and energy in general, Pemex is far from being like the merged, restructured "majors," and its deficit is not measurable in years, but in decades.



replacement of reserves, the ability to exploit and efficiently process oil and natural gas and the ability to obtain financing. This implies concentrating efforts on:

- * raising the replacement rate for reserves;
- * strengthening exploration and heavy crude production in shallow waters;
- * reducing lags in exploration and production of non-associated gas, marginal deposits and deep waters;
- * participating in downstream segments of natural gas at the same rate as the private sector;
- * continuing to adapt installations to increase refining efficiency and orient production toward light oil products;
- * increasing production and improving results in petrochemicals;
- * continuing to finance projects by resorting to third parties (contractors, suppliers, banks) and issuing debt paper;
- * changing the tax system;
- * reducing operating and administration costs;
- * taking advantage of other companies' experience in exploration

For the governing elite, oil and Pemex represent above all an easy, quick source of fiscal earnings that allows them to stabilize the economy as a whole and tax the rich less.

and production as well as in petrochemicals.

Pemex's general director says that his strategy is based on works that will make it possible to change the shape and dimension of the Mexican oil industry. He adds that they are projects that go from the construction of marine platforms, the exploration and drilling of new areas and investment in duct infrastructure, to the modernization of the refining and petrochemical system. This position needs to be reflected upon.

1) In the first place, the director of Pemex establishes no priorities nor does he state the size of the resources poured into each of the aforementioned actions.

2) In the second place, with the exception of exploration in deep water, Pemex will only be doing more of the same, perhaps more efficiently and

more effectively, but at the end of the day more of the same. It will continue to be circumscribed to Mexican territory in an industry project that is no longer the same as what the world saw during the oil crisis of the 1970s.

Pemex is lagging at least 20 years behind the problems facing the big international oil companies today, and the gap will only become wider and deeper if it continues with that entrepreneurial strategy totally lacking in vision and ambition. The vision of the governing

team is not to make Pemex a large public company that can compete in world energy markets, but to perfect it as an instrument for generating revenue and stabilizing the economy while privatizing it.

3) In the third place, it is not construction that will change the shape of the oil industry, but the adoption of new policies and their corresponding legal expression. In that sense, the director of Pemex is seeking to cover up the fundamental changes that are going on in the company with volume indicators. The central axis of the changes is the penetration of private capital not only in each and every one of the industrial processes, but also—and this is the most important thing—in decision making.

This is happening through the Long-Term Productive Infrastructure Projects (PIDIREGAS), a veritable Trojan horse, since they undermine Pemex's techni-

The Long-Term Productive Infrastructure Projects undermine Pemex's technical capability by outsourcing oil operations to private companies and its financial viability by excessively increasing its debt.

cal capability by outsourcing oil operations to private companies and its financial viability by excessively increasing its debt; if this does not stop, it will lead to an accounting bankruptcy.

The Fox government has wanted to turn Pemex into a mixed-ownership company, allowing the private sector to participate directly in the exploitation of oil and gas. But, since it has not managed to rapidly convince legislators of changing the Constitution, it decided to act in the purest technocratic PRI style: doing it on its own.

The Fox administration, then, has interpreted Article 6 of the law regulating Article 27 of the Constitution in the oil sector to mean that Pemex can outsource any oil-related work or activity to private companies, whether it be geological or seismological exploration; geological modeling; drilling of all kinds; oil and natural gas extraction; transportation and storage of liquid, solid and gaseous oil and gas products; the separation, conditioning and treatment of natural gas; or the fabrication of basic petrochemicals. In fact, there are already private companies carrying out these activities not only in Burgos, but also in the Southeast and offshore. What is more, the current administration thinks that it can use multiple service contracts to hire a multinational company to take charge of the entire industrial process except direct sales. And that one restriction is not because they want to obey the law but for purely pragmatic considerations: maintain-

ing the monopoly on sales is used as a mechanism to control the contractor and make sure it does not lie about the amount of gas and oil it pumped and produced.

Not a few constitutional attorneys have pointed out that this interpretation of the law is unconstitutional. However, the government neither sees nor hears them; it prefers to take its chances in the courts than to retreat. The bad thing about this kamikaze attitude is that Mexico's position will be very weakened *vis-à-vis* the investors when the Supreme Court voids the contracts that it will have to void.

THE POLITICAL SCENE

Even though energy legislation has been amended to include the private sector, up until now the main demand of private investors has not been granted: changing the Constitution to guarantee the permanence and security of their capital in Mexico. Congress has consistently opposed this, with the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) caucuses impeding changes to the Constitution. However, after the strong pressure inside the PRI, it seems that this party's position about the energy sector is changing, even though on the recent anniversary of the expropriation of the oil industry its leaders said that PRI principles defending oil sovereignty remained untouched and

urged President Fox to reverse the process of defunding Pemex. Finally, in the PRI's Nineteenth National Assembly March 2 to March 4, 2005, the party made an about-face to echo administration rhetoric. Assembly delegates blocked adding the defense of constitutional articles 25, 27 and 28 to the party's plan of action, virtually eliminating obstacles in their by-laws to the entry of private capital into the energy sector and ousting the commitment to defend the state's exclusive right to exploiting energy sources.

PRI Senator Manuel Bartlett, the leader of deputies opposing Pemex privatization, emphasized that it is false that Pemex has no resources. PRI leader Ricardo Aldana from the oil workers' union also considered the government argument that only private capital could save Pemex from imminent collapse a fallacy. Both men said that the real intention is to pawn the country's most valuable energy resources through financial means that will only lead to the sale of Pemex and the Federal Electricity Commission using the argument that they are unproductive. The money coming in will be badly disguised foreign investment. They proposed instead creating a new energy policy that would include modernizing the regulatory framework and a profound fiscal reform of public companies.

Manipulating the assembly, party president Roberto Madrazo Pintado favored privatization by getting delegates to approve the exclusion of the constitutional articles from their plan of action. This is the result of commitments he has made to businessmen and other power groups about his political platform in his eventual bid for the presidency in 2006. Governors from northern states also came out in favor

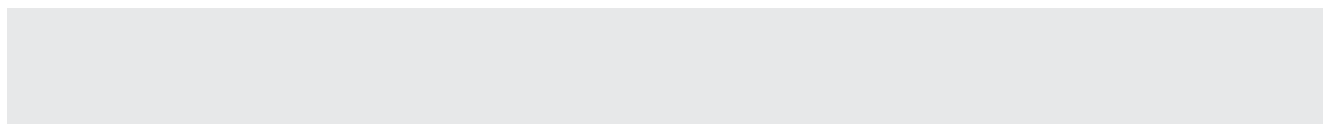
of privatization. A group of delegates from the North, together with those from Oaxaca, defended Madrazo's position of not even debating the issue in the assembly, and the plenary voted an energy plank that left the door open to private capital. Natividad González Parás, the governor of Nuevo León, supported Madrazo's position because the Monterrey Group is interested in getting directly into the energy sector, though it already fosters multiple services contracts and, in practice, is in the business of generating and selling electricity through supposedly self-supplying companies.

The reversal of the PRI's position in the assembly sparked all kinds of opinions. The most critical voices are from the PRD, which predicted that the reform of the PRI's by-laws would not only precipitate its split, but also represents a grave risk for the country's economic stability. Mexico City Mayor Andrés Manuel López Obrador reminded PRI members that Pemex and Mexico's oil belong to the nation and that he therefore roundly opposes privatization of the oil industry.

Those who within the PRI will surely join their voices to the party in power (the PAN) should not be sure of

their victory just yet. As Senator Bartlett said, the PRI could pay the consequences in 2006 since its rank and file and the people of Mexico in general are against privatization of energy resources and the company that exploits them.

Despite the heavy media campaign favoring the government's position and the interests of the groups in power, the people's common sense and nationalism as part of Mexicans' identity are factors that should not be underestimated since they may well produce surprises in next year's presidential campaign. ■■



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The APEC meeting in Santiago de Chile, November 2004.

Development and Economic Performance of South Korea, Taiwan, Mexico and Chile

Enrique Pino Hidalgo*

In late November 2004, the 21 economic leaders of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) met in Santiago, Chile, under the motto “One Community, Our Future.” The very full agenda included issues such as the evaluation of free trade agreements, trade liberalization and facilitation policies and investment. The leaders also analyzed the experiences of exporting companies headed up by women and the problems of small and medium-sized companies.

The discussion about the evolution and perspectives of the region’s economies has been a permanent item on the APEC agenda. In this article, I will examine some long-term economic performance indicators for South Korea, Taiwan, Chile and Mexico for the years 1995 to 2001.

* Professor at the Economics Department of the Autonomous Metropolitan University, Iztapalapa campus. pihen@prodigy.net.mx

TABLE 1
MEXICO'S ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE 2001-2002

	2001	2002
Nominal GDP (billions of U.S. dollars)	623.9	637.2
Percentage change		
Real GDP	-0.2	0.9
Consumption	2.2	0.9
Private consumption	2.7	1.2
Government consumption	-1.2	-1.3
Investment	-5.8	-1.3
Private investment	-4.4	-2.8
Government investment	-13	7.3
Exports of goods and services	-3.6	1.4
Imports of goods and services	-1.5	1.6
Percentage of GDP		
Trade balance	-1.6	-1.3
Balance of the current account	-2.9	-2.2
Balance of the capital account	3.9	3.2
Socio-economic indicators		
Per capita income (in dollars)	6,170	6,220
Unemployment rate (percentage)	2.5	2.7
Inflation rate	6.3	4.6
Short-term interest rate	11.3	7.1
Population (in millions)	101	102.4
Source: APEC Economy Report (Mexico, 2003) at http://www.apec.org/content/apec/member_economies/economy_reports/mexico.html		

A comparison of these four countries' macroeconomic performance refers us to the debate about the benefits and deficiencies of development strategies adopted by the Asia-Pacific and Latin American economies.

The countries I have selected are outstanding members of APEC, and at one time have been considered examples of development. South Korea and Taiwan represent successful experiences of an alternative development strategy to the one inspired in the Washington Consensus.¹ I have included Mexico and Chile because they have also been considered paradigmatic neoliberal-model-based experiences.²

First I will summarize some background information about APEC and then I will present preliminary results showing that the "Asian model" performance has been superior in terms of growth, control of inflation, interest rates, foreign trade and income distribution.

1. SOME FUNDAMENTAL TRAITS OF APEC: HETEROGENEOUS ECONOMIES AND CONSENSUS

One of the most frequently mentioned characteristics of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum is its ability to bring together nations with diverse and even contrasting levels of economic, political and social development in a common space for cooperation.

A second trait is that its agreements and recommendations in economic, technological, cultural and trade matters are decided by consensus and the voluntary compliance by its 21 member countries.

Despite its heterogeneity, APEC has managed to establish collaborative and

exchange links between some of the great powers like Japan, the United States and Canada, and countries of medium levels of development like Mexico and Chile. Naturally, if we go back to the forum's origins, we will have to emphasize the indispensable contribution of the first generation of New Industrialized Countries (NICs) like South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong (China) and Singapore. On the level of the Asia-Pacific region, the scenario would be incomplete if we did not mention the role of the new driving force in the world economy, the People's Republic of China.

The heterogeneity of the member countries' economies is a unique characteristic of APEC. Over the last 50 years, growth of the central and peripheral nations has been severely differentiated as has that among the latter. As we shall see, this differentiation in development levels has shown up in the economic dynamism and performance of the Latin American countries *vis-à-vis* those of the Asia-Pacific rim.

2. FROM THE FIRST GENERATION OF NICs TO THE CHINESE LOCOMOTIVE

As far back as the 1970s, the "first generation" Asian economies captured the imagination of scholars of economic development and governmental institutions. In just two decades, the economies of South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong (China) made enormous strides in industrialization and job creation and, significantly, achieved a progressively equitable distribution of income. Sustained growth and progressive distribution of income were an unprecedented combination in developing countries, particularly in Latin America.

TABLE 2
SOUTH KOREA'S ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE 2001-2002

	2001	2002
Nominal GDP (billions of U.S. dollars)	480.6	547
Percentage change		
Real GDP	3.1	6.3
Consumption	4.2	6.2
Private consumption	4.7	6.8
Government consumption	1.3	2.9
Investment	-2.4	4.3
Exports of goods and services	0.7	14.9
Imports of goods and services	-3	16.4
Percentage of GDP		
Trade balance	3.2	3
Balance of the current account	1.9	1.3
Balance of the capital account	-0.8	0.3
Socio-economic indicators		
Per capita income (in dollars)	10,160	11,490
Unemployment rate (percentage)	3.8	3.1
Inflation rate	2.5	1.7
Short-term interest rate	5.32	4.81
Population (in millions)	47.3	47.6
Source: APEC Economy Report (Mexico, 2003) at http://www.apec.org/content/apec/member_economies/economy_reports/mexico.html		

Thus, the advances of the Asia-Pacific region economies were so clear that the World Bank, always skeptical and hostile to unorthodox experiences in economic policy, had to recognize that, in an environment of macroeconomic stability, the “high-yield Asian economies” had achieved the three essential prerequisites for growth: high capital accumulation, efficient assignation of productive resources and rapid technological advancement.³

The “Asian miracle” can be explained by the fact that the South Korean, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong governments successfully implemented combinations of public policies oriented to bolstering the market with similar forms of state direction of the economy.

These were certainly strategies that successfully joined market mechanisms to state intervention. A theoretical formulation about this combination has even been dubbed “governing the market.”⁴

In the 1980s, specialists came to think that the Asia-Pacific countries’ economic policies pointed to the creation of an “Asian model,” and therefore a paradigm that could be replicated in developing economies, especially in Latin America.⁵ This debate took another direction after the financial crisis of 1997-1998. Everything pointed to the end of the Asian *belle époque* and the theoreticians of neoliberalism seemed to congratulate themselves for the financial collapse of the region’s economies, which only Taiwan and, to a certain extent, Hong Kong were able to escape.⁶

3. RECOVERY OF GROWTH AFTER THE 1997-1998 FINANCIAL CRISIS

Despite the seriousness of the 1997-1998 financial and productive crisis,

The “Asian miracle” can be explained by the fact that governments implemented public policies oriented to bolstering the market and state direction of the economy.

since 1999, once again these countries’ quite rapid recovery was surprising. While it is true that they would be hard put to achieve the high growth rates of the 1970s and 1980s, the recovery of South Korea and Taiwan suggests that the dispute between the Asian strategies and the orthodox policies inspired in the Washington Consensus has still not concluded.

Based on a comparative analysis, I will present an evaluation of the four countries’ economic performance and argue why I think the Asian strategies are superior to those based on the Washington Consensus.

a) *Rapid economic recovery of the Asian economies and stagnation in Mexico*

Output growth is important because of its positive effects on employment and income. For that reason, economic performance is summarized in gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates. At least, it is one of the most representative indicators of an economy’s performance.

The period under review, 1995 to 2001, includes the Mexican and South Korean financial crises of 1995 and 1997-1998, respectively. In 1995, Mexico faced a severe drop in production and a 6.2 percent negative GDP growth while Chile grew 10.6 percent, South

Korea, 6.9 percent and Taiwan, 6.42 percent (see graph 1).

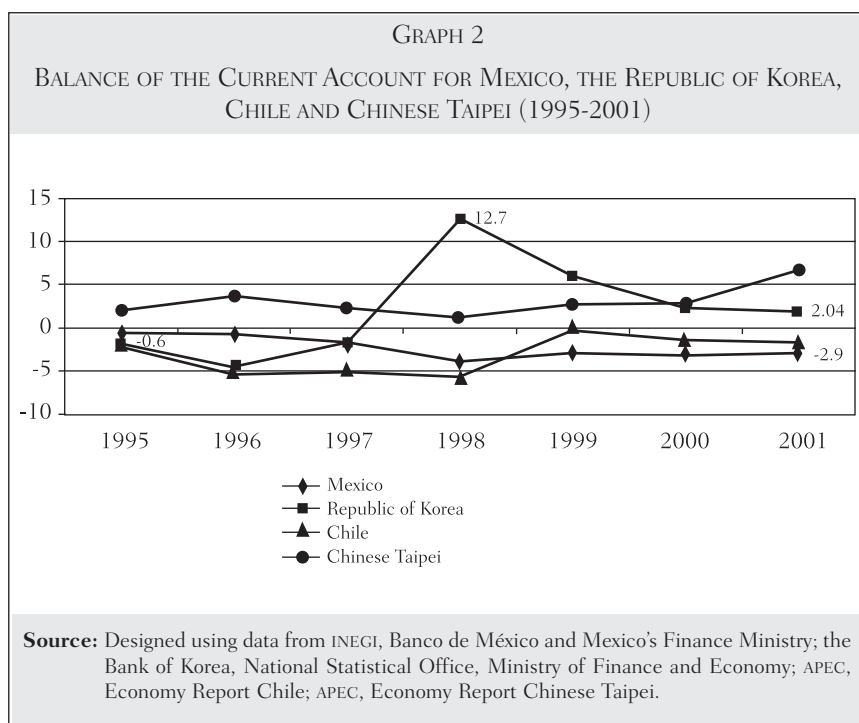
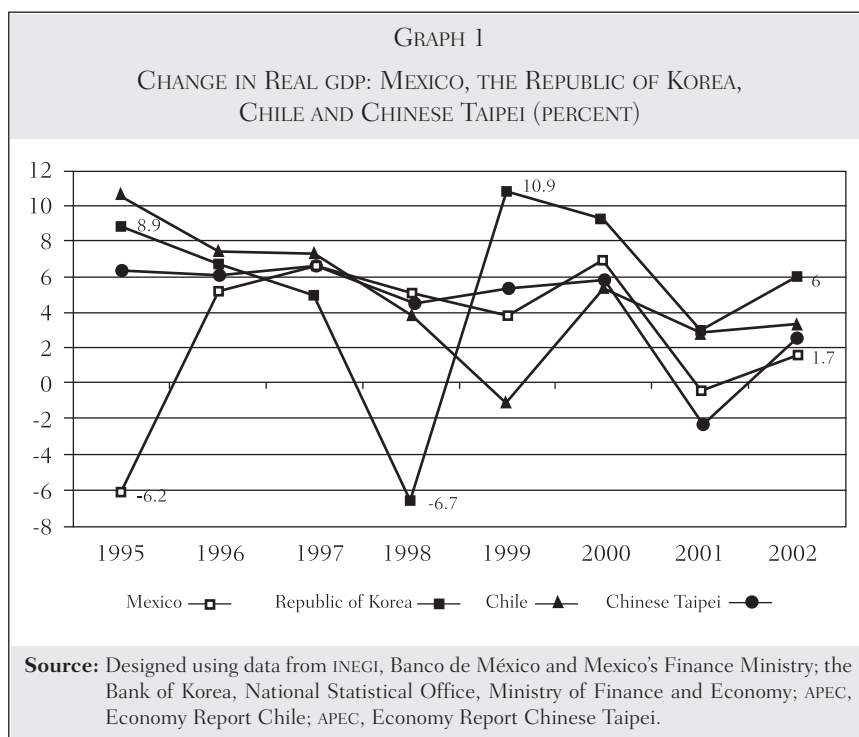
At the time, the rapid recovery of the Mexican economy in 1995 and the South Korean economy in 1998 were noteworthy, with 5.2 percent and 10.9 percent GDP growth rates, respectively. However, neither economy could sustain that rhythm and they began to decline. The Mexican economy performed more unfavorably and could not consolidate lasting growth. After a rapid, high recovery in 1996 and 1997, Mexico began a decline that went into negative growth rates, like -0.3 percent in 2001, or the low, nearly stagnant GDP growth rate of 1.7 percent in 2002. In 2004, the Mexican economy grew 4 percent but there is no assurance that this belated recovery can be sustained. At the same time, in 1999, Chile regressed to a -1.1 percent rate.

By contrast, in 1999, South Korea bounced back with a 10.9 percent growth rate, and Taiwan with 5.42 percent.

At the end of 2001, South Korea was still in the lead with 6 percent, with Chile at 3.3 percent, Taiwan at 2.55 percent and Mexico at 1.7 percent.⁷

b) *Trends in foreign trade and services: surplus in the Asian economies and deficits for Mexico*

The dynamism of exports is a significant factor in the expansion or contraction of GDP in economies oriented toward international markets like these four countries. South Korea, Taiwan, Chile and Mexico are highly sensitive to the demand generated over the last five years in the United States, the European Union and China. In the period we are looking at, the four nation’s exports have dropped, particularly



since 2001, although they did experience a modest recovery in 2002 and 2004 thanks to the reactivation of the U.S. economy and China's dynamism, which makes for a high demand for raw

materials and intermediate and finished goods.

The performance of the external sector marked by the trade balance and the current account is especially

important for economies oriented to international markets. For example, a negative net result in the current account emphasizes the importance of net foreign capital inputs for financing the deficit in the balance of trade and services. This is the case of Mexico since the beginning of the period under review.

Upon examination, the current account exhibits an important change in all these economies. Taiwan consistently maintained a surplus from 1995 to 2001, while South Korea achieved a surplus from 1998 on, a sum that has reached the equivalent of 12.7 percent of GDP, but that dropped to 2.04 percent in 2001, compared to 6.71 percent for Taiwan. The Mexican economy, for its part, consistently showed a deficit, which reached a -3.8 percent of GDP in 1998 and closed 2001 with -2.9 percent. Chile's case is similar with -5.7 percent in 1998 and -1.6 percent in 2001 (see graph 2).

South Korea's and Taiwan's positive results suggest that both economies dealt appropriately with the 1997-1998 Asian crisis. In 2001, Taiwan's economy produced a 6.71 percent of GDP surplus and South Korea, 2.04 percent, while Chile's produced a deficit equal to 1.6 percent of GDP and Mexico a deficit equivalent to -2.9 percent of GDP.

With regard to foreign capital flows, I should point out that from 1995 to 2001, only the Mexican economy had a surplus, although with a moderate tendency to drop. Thus, Mexico achieved a surplus in the capital account equivalent to 5.4 percent of GDP in 1995 and 3.9 percent in 2001. Meanwhile, Chile, which in 1997 achieved a capital surplus equivalent to 9.8 percent of its GDP, began a downward trend that reached -1.1 percent of GDP in

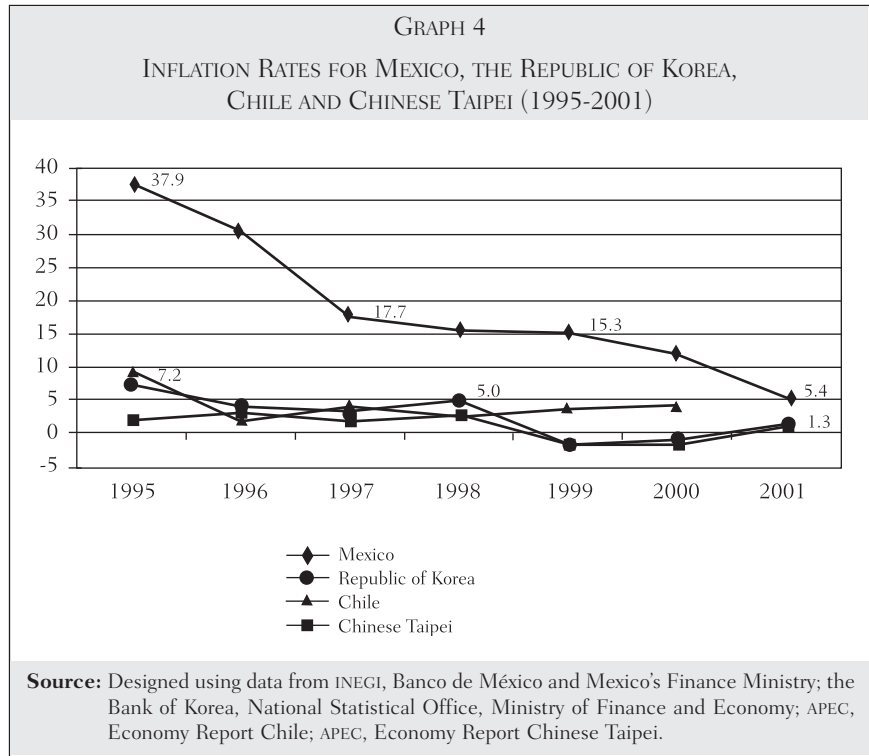
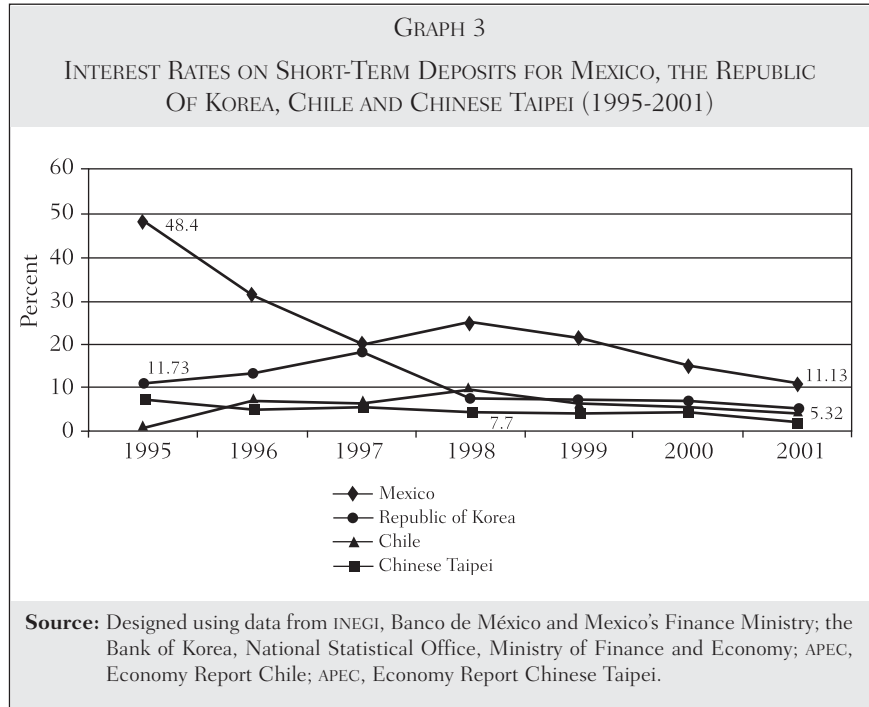
1999. During the following years, the Chilean economy again registered a surplus equivalent to 1.6 percent of GDP, a figure, however, still far below the 9.8 percent of 1997 and the 4.5 percent of 1998.⁸

c) *Tendency for interest rates to drop and stabilize*

When looking at this variable, it is a good idea to remember that lowering prices and interest rates is a fundamental objective of the orthodox model; in fact, these goals are treated as ends in themselves. Monetarist orthodoxy continually emphasizes the benefits of achieving real interest rates that stimulate internal savings as a basic condition of the investment and growth process. Herein lies the importance of interest rate performance, which has an impact on investment decisions and internal and external savings.

In the period under examination, interest rates have consistently dropped except in 1998, when rates rose 24.8 percent and 9.6 percent in Mexico and Chile respectively. These figures contrast with South Korea's 7.7 percent and Taiwan's 4.66 percent. Lower interest rates in South Korea, Taiwan and Chile makes them more competitive and attractive for investment because of lower financing costs which are linked to a drop in the inflation rate.

This trend was confirmed by 2001 interest rates. In South Korea they reached 5.32 percent, in Taiwan, 2.13 percent and in Chile, 4.5 percent, noticeably lower than Mexico's 11.3 percent, not to mention the fact that this figure is for 28-day deposits, which is much lower than the interest rate for bank loans (see graph 3).



In short, the figures show once again that South Korea and Taiwan were more effective in lowering and stabilizing interest rates, particularly in

Taiwan's case with 2.13 percent. This difference in the cost of money is a variable of utmost importance in economic reactivation, sustaining invest-

ment and the growth of the Asian economies.

d) *Tendency to declining and stabilization of prices*

Price performance in the four economies indicates a clear decline throughout the period. In fact, inflation control is the only trend the four economies share. However, without disregarding the progress in price stabilization in Mexico, the economies of South Korea, Taiwan and Chile maintain a considerable advantage of several points, above all if we consider that in 2004, Mexico's inflation was 5.19 percent (see table 1).⁹

In 1995, Chile, South Korea and Taiwan had 10 percent, 6 percent and 2 percent inflation respectively. These rates are significantly lower than Mexico's rate of 37.9 percent. In any case, we should underline the results of the fight against inflation in Mexico that put price increases at 5.4 percent at the end of the period under examination in 2001 (see graph 4).

The greater effectiveness of South Korea's and Taiwan's anti-inflation policies is shown by the fact that in 2000 and 2001, they both had negative price growth levels. Mexico registered 5.4 percent in 2001 and a similar figure in 2004.

A summary of the trends in the four economies suggests that South Korea and Taiwan exhibited more satisfactory macroeconomic performance in terms of the three fundamental indicators: GDP growth, exports and relations with international markets. They also performed better with regard to price stabilization and interest rates.

Vis-à-vis trade in goods and services—the performance of the external sector— Taiwan and South Korea

The performance of the external sector marked by the trade balance and the current account is especially important for economies oriented to international markets.

showed more satisfactory results in their trade balances and the current account (see table 2).

I should also point out that an examination of the indicators suggests that South Korea and Taiwan perform more satisfactorily than Chile and Mexico because they showed an institutional capability that made it possible to have a relatively superior response in the context of the global economy. During the 1995-2001 period, the economies of South Korea, Taiwan and Chile were relatively more dynamic than Mexico's, particularly in recovering from their financial crises.

Certainly, Mexico and Chile showed favorable results in their capital account, which allows them to finance the deficits in their current account. This characteristic of the neoliberal model shows the greater dependence of these economies on the inflows of foreign capital as mechanisms for financing the deficit in foreign accounts, but financial dependence on highly volatile, speculative markets cannot be the best road to development and prosperity for developing countries. ■■

NOTES

¹ The Washington Consensus was the term coined in 1989 by U.S. economist John Williamson to identify the policies delineated by the International Monetary Fund, the Interamerican Development Bank and the World Bank designed to liberalize the region's economy after the so-called "lost decade" of the 1980s. In this scheme

of things, the state should limit itself to *laissez faire* policies and let the laws of the market take care of the rest, including social justice. The Washington Consensus established 10 points outlining the economic policy reforms that "Latin America should face up to": fiscal discipline, reducing public spending, tax reform, financial liberalization, indexing exchange rates, promoting foreign direct investment, privatizations, liberalizing trade, deregulation and protecting property rights. [Editor's Note.]

² From the early 1990s, the Mexican economy has been presented as an example of the correct, successful implementation of free trade, financial deregulation and privatization doctrines. Liberalism's defenders say that Mexico confirms the relative success of the policies derived from the Washington Consensus. See Alejandro Álvarez, "Estados Unidos y México: ¿modelos clave en la resolución de la crisis asiática?" *Comercio Exterior* (Mexico City), February 1999.

³ World Bank, *The East Asian Miracle: Economic Growth and Public Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁴ Robert Wade, *El mercado dirigido* (Mexico City: FCE, 2001).

⁵ Carlos Gómez and Rubén Piñero, "La estrategia comercial de Corea del Sur: una retrospectiva," *Comercio Exterior* (Mexico City), December 1996.

⁶ Actually, without negating the unfavorable repercussions of the 1997-1998 crisis, the Asian countries' progress over the last 20 years in matters of employment, income, education and health was so large that it can hardly be denied. Levels of well-being in South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, etc., remain four times greater than a generation ago. In Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand, per capita income increased fourfold between 1965 and 1996, while in South Korea, income increased seven-fold. See Robert Wade, *op. cit.*

⁷ Central Bank figures quoted in *El Financiero* (Mexico City), January 17, 2004.

⁸ Enrique Pino, "Corrientes de capital internacional y financiamiento en las economías de Asia Pacífico y América Latina," Gregorio Vidal, comp., *México y la economía mundial. Análisis y perspectivas* (Mexico City: Economics Department, UAM-I, 2001).

⁹ Central Bank figures quoted in *El Financiero* (Mexico City), January 17, 2004.

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Uscanga, Carlos, *Transiciones históricas y desarrollo capitalista en el Asia-Pacífico* (Mexico City: FCPYS-UNAM, 2000).



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▲ *The Step of a Dream*, 2002 (analog photography, B/W negative).

So Near, So Far, So Alien, So My Own

Leonor Solís*

Today's world is an interminable mosaic of realities changing at an impressive pace. The days are hurried: there's too much information, too many images and experiences of all kinds; the mixture of emotions we feel about love, friends, places, social contrasts, political changes, environmental problems, cultural transformations and even globalization. We are constantly adjusting to new technologies, new governments, economic outbursts, in a complex combination of the speed of our own lives and that of the world. We barely have time to take a pause, make a space that would let us assimilate it all. This causes that sea of loneliness and depression so characteristic of Man in the modern era.

Actually I didn't plan my road to photography, although I wanted to do it for a long time. I had always loved images, perhaps because they brought me closer to nature. That's why I decided to study biology because I wanted to be in the places that I saw in photos and documen-

* Mexican biologist. She works at the UNAM Center for Ecosystem Research, Morelia campus.



▲ *Shawl Girl*, 2002 (analog photography, B/W negative).

society. So, I discovered a rural Mexico that nobody tells us about, even if we know that it's there, abandoned and transforming itself by leaps and bounds. Above all, poor, with production that barely supports a family; marked by marginalization, spurring migration to the cities and the other side of the border, to the United States. It's a countryside that cannot find its place in this fast-moving world, which may have left it behind, even though it feeds that world, which cannot live without it.

This is where this perception of what is my own and what is alien, what is near and what is far starts from. When I was in the countryside, I realized that that nature, those towns, those people are my own, as though I carried them within myself, as though the poverty reconciled us again with the essence of the human condition, so closely linked to the struggle for survival. I could only feel them as a forgotten part of myself. But at the same time they are alien because I didn't know them personally, neither them nor their universe.

taries. But the whole thing still hadn't come full circle: once I had become a biologist, those landscapes, those other realities awoke in me the need to create images to be able to share my experiences.

Being close to nature transformed my conception of life and the world. Somehow, I remembered what my hurried day-to-day existence had made me forget: the sun, the sky, the air, the mountains, the trees, the earth, the silence. That overwhelming silence that really speaks and asks, and when it does, you want to find yourself in the noise of the city because its questions make you uncomfortable. That same silence, that other times allows you to see clearly what before had seemed so confusing. In those immense open spaces surrounded by mountains, I once again felt fragile, small, mortal; I located my relationship to the universe, the world; a tiny body with so much inside it, so much to do and express.

However, in this country, landscapes are rarely uninhabited; nature is not an isolated element; rather, it exists in communion with

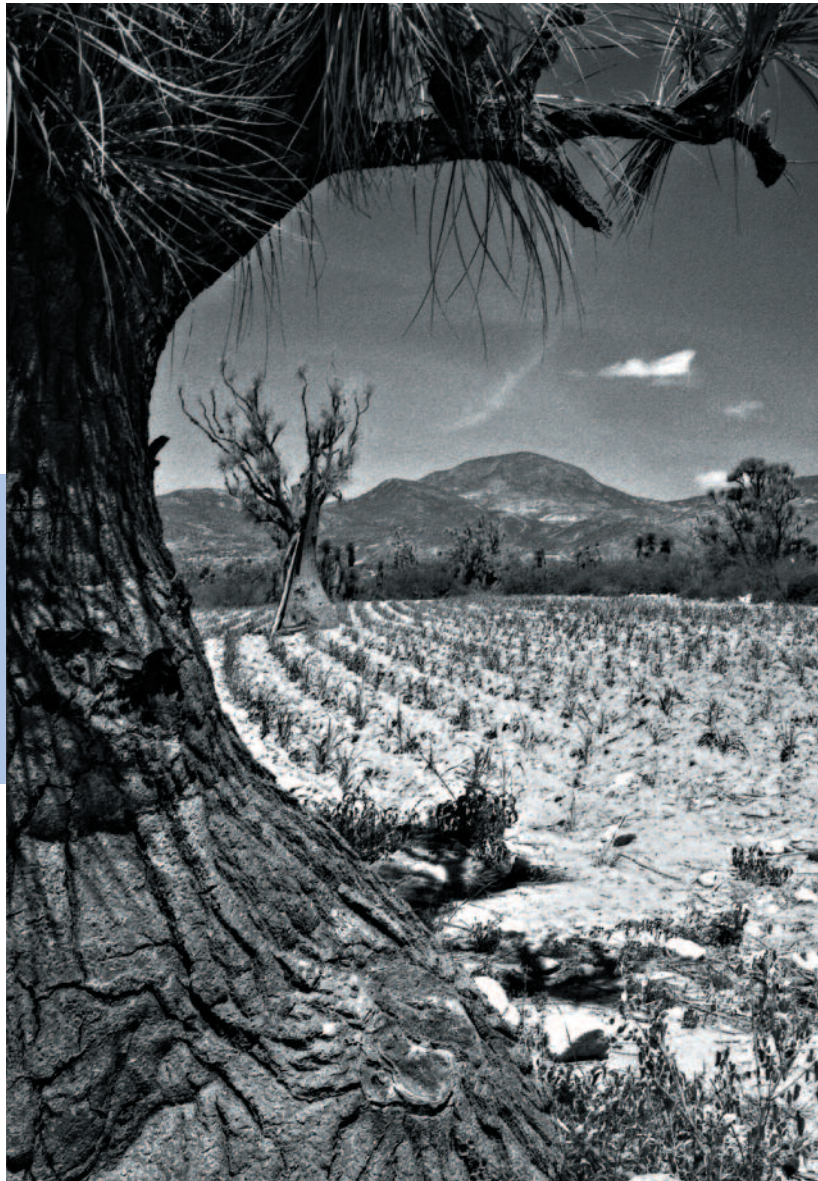


▲ *Before the Rain*, 2001 (analog photography, B/W negative).

Also, I had no idea of what Mexican cultures involved, discovering that each one had its own language, its own customs, its food, its natural resources, its sacred places and its fiestas.

When I perceived this vacuum born of my own ignorance, I realized I was alien to those towns, so completely far from my day-to-day existence. From that duality this photographic work was born. I intended to show what that combination of nature and people awakens in me. To do that, I had to get closer. Some of my photographs were taken in a Cuicatec community in Oaxaca and others in a Popoloc community in Puebla; both these cultures are little known by anthropologists.

I felt above all the urgent need to record daily life so it would not be lost and forgotten, so we could place new value on the opportunity to look, to live. In that countryside where nothing seems to happen, changes occur that are reflected in the disappearance of languages, customs, caused by the times, by migration.



▲ *Field with Elephant's Feet, 2002* (analog photography, B/W negative).

When we can do almost nothing, we content ourselves with just bearing witness, but I didn't want to be a passive witness who steps aside to let things happen. These images are a search and an attempt to express, to communicate what this situation brought about in me and I wanted to provoke in others.

This series is my first work as a photographer. With it, I discovered a universe new to me, while for others it is a well-worn path in Mexican photography. Today some photographers say they are tired of images of the Mexican countryside, and a gap seems to be opening up between those who do direct photography and those who do constructed photography. The change from analog to digital photography is advancing by leaps and bounds. It is said that documentary photography is in crisis, and there are still those who criticize digital work because it is very manipulated by computer.



▲ *Tehuacán Landscape*, 2002 (analog photography, B/W negative).



▲ *From Your Field*, 2002 (analog photography, B/W negative).

This complex dilemma is confusing at first, but then it motivates us because it shows that the way forward has thousands of possible routes. Documentary photography invites us to propose new ways of making documentaries, perhaps experimenting with a hybrid of direct and constructed photography so that instead of widening the distance between the two kinds of photographers, the photo, its substance, can be renewed, reborn and transformed, finding a language of this time, recreating and using all the tools: direct, constructed, analog and digital. At bottom, the important thing is that the basic questions about what we feel, think and want to say through images find their own way forward toward the answers. Those answers will only be validated by time, by people who, when they look at the images feel, share and confirm for us that snapping the shutter at that precise moment was indeed important. **MM**



▲ House made with the backs of television sets, 2005 (digital photography).

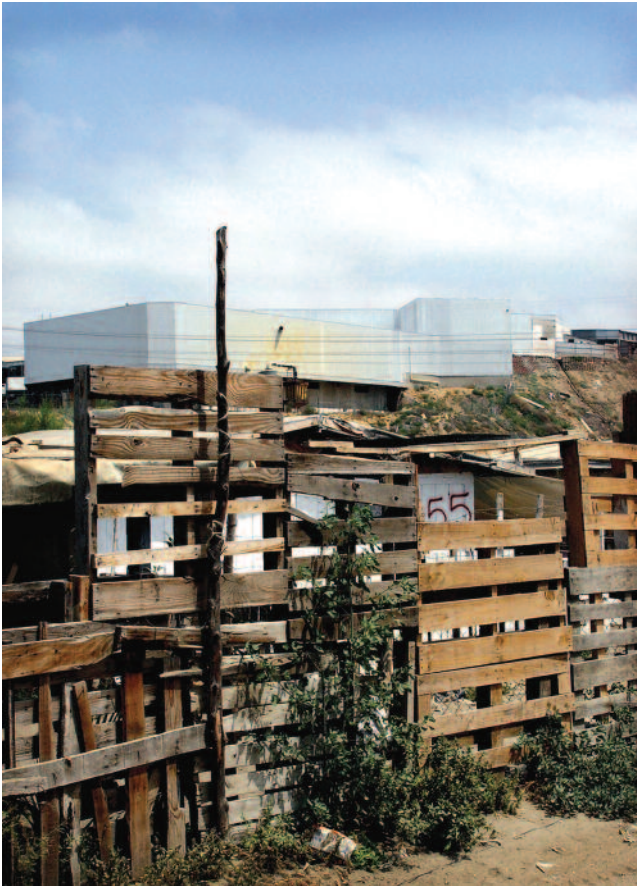
The City Takes the Lead

Ingrid Juliana Hernández*

Wandering through the city is what guides my work. Going off the beaten path to explore its labyrinths has allowed me to meet up with “the other” and “the others” that I then capture in photographs..

Tijuana’s urban landscape is characterized by a lack of planning and its many irregular settlements. Demographically, different cultural groups from the rest of the country who have brought with them specific cultural baggage and their own history all co-exist together. Observing the diversity that emerges from this convergence is geographically easy in a city that has developed as a kind of organized chaos: public housing projects border on shantytowns (whose houses are born from the imaginative recycling of waste materials), in turn surrounded by blossoming maquiladora plants.

* Sociologist and photographer from Tijuana currently researching the uses of space in Tijuana housing using the camera as her tool through the Program to Support Municipal and Community Cultures (PACMyC 2004-2005).



◀ Maquila plant and Nueva Esperanza shantytown, 2005 (digital photography).

▼ Syphoning off electricity, 2005 (digital photography).



On one of my “trips” through the city, I discovered a shantytown called Nueva Esperanza (New Hope); from the government’s point of view, it is illegal. This shantytown was born because of the constant arrival of migrants mainly from Chiapas and Veracruz, but it is also home to people born in Tijuana who have settled in the bed of the Alamar River and built their houses with materials they have collected from the area in the best of cases, or purchased in the market that sells waste materials.

The first encounter with the place has a big impact. The contradictions of the border area are right on the surface. It is impossible to understand right away or design methodologies to simplify its study and comprehension.

The space exhibits the constant conflict, disturbances and tension present in the city. The waste materials from the country next door acquire a new meaning as a result of that exaltation of the imagination produced by the struggle for survival. They are evidence of the capacity for resistance of those who give them new uses.

Tijuana is visually violent, a friend once told me. The houses provoke the observer in a sharp, rough but also playful and emotional way. Here, industrial canvas used as insulation in the roofs.

There, the backs of television sets turned into building materials for walls and roofs. Everywhere, pallets become fences and walls; tires are shoved into the sides of hills used both as stairways and containing walls; walls made with garage doors. These are such popular building materials that on the outskirts of the city, signs advertising “walls for sale” abound, in reference to garage doors.

For me the challenge has been avoiding a simplified, stereotyped reading of the images I come across, images that are so aesthetically overloaded, images that are not static, but constantly acquire new configurations, as ephemeral as the questions and answers that arise when you see them.

You cannot go through the city without thinking about it. This chaotic, intense urbanization is what enriches the experience of its being this city and no other. It is impossible to deny the complexity of the space and the heterogeneity of Tijuana-borderland. Useless.



▲ Entrance to a house, 2005 (digital photography).



▲ Entrance to Nueva Esperanza shantytown, 2005 (digital photography).

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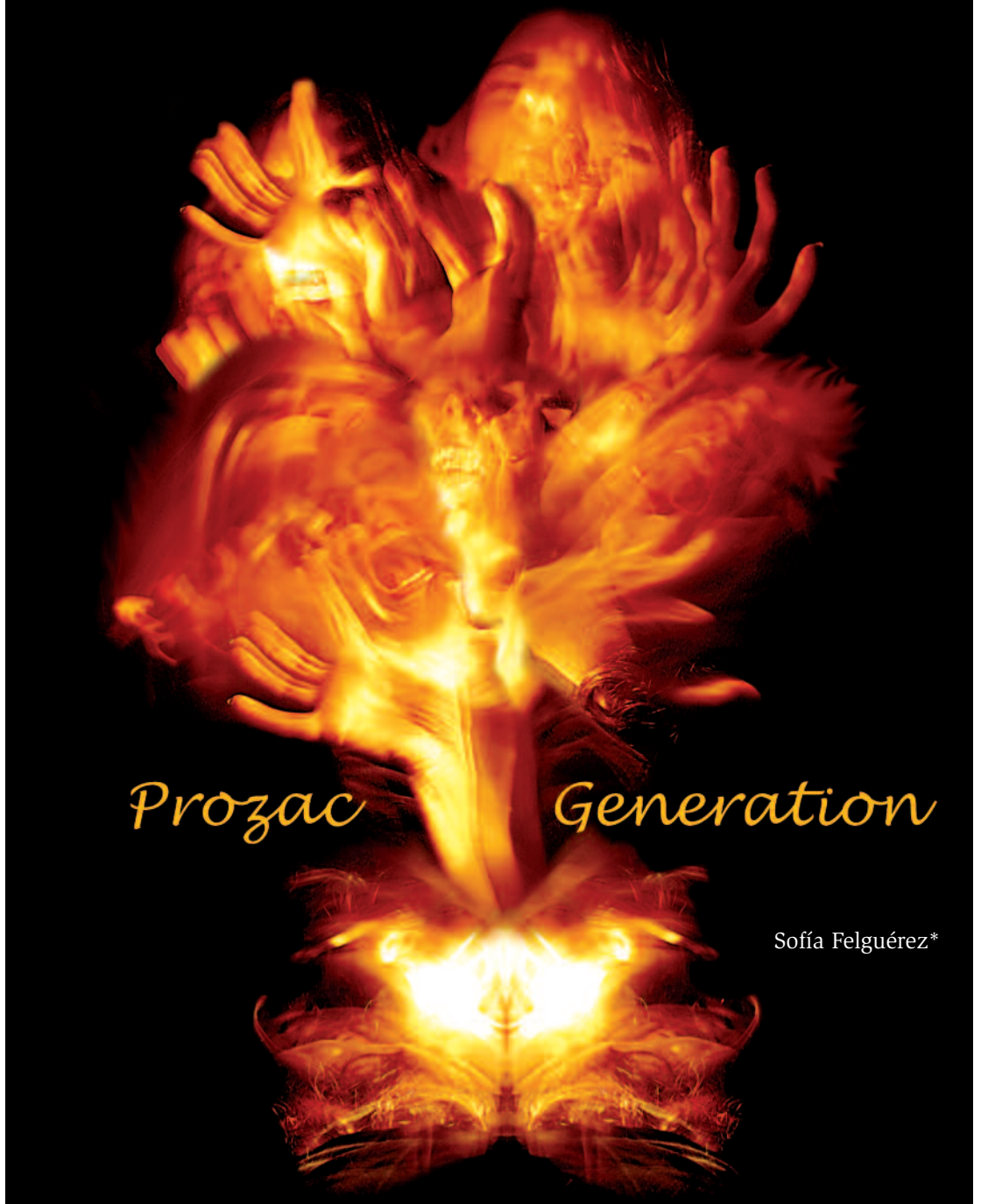
My work is not voyeurism but involvement. In fact, all creation is involvement. I try to apprehend the space and its dynamics using the camera as a tool for intervention. That is why I go through the city losing myself in its geography to prompt encounters that I keep as a record.



▲ House made with platforms, 2005 (digital photography).

I do not try to take portraits of its inhabitants, but to show the alternative use of objects and spaces. Guided by chance and the flow of relationships, I find in the images that I show here the particularities of this new semantics of space and the materials that is born of these spontaneous urban installations.

I also aspire to transcending the limited perspective of the look of the outsider to show the playful, ironic, hilarious and creative side both of these installations and of the intangible element derived from the encounter of this story's actors with space and objects. **NMM**



▲ *Panic Atom*, 2004 (painted with light and digital manipulation).

Depression is a word commonly confused with simple sadness, but in fact depression goes much farther. The diagnosis is very difficult because the pain is not located in a specific organ; it is not like a headache or a stomach ache.

The pain is very deep and impossible to locate, as if it were the soul that hurt. The symptoms are more difficult to detect, and most people who suffer from it are not aware of it.

In my case, depression has been a way of life. I have had it since I was a little girl, and it was not until I had a nervous breakdown that lasted for about three months that I was diagnosed. As soon as I recovered from the breakdown, I began this photography project and began to do research on the topic.

* Photographer and professor of digital photography at the Active School of Photography, Echegaray campus.
sofi felguerez@radioactivo.com



▲ *Soul of a Moth*, 2004 (painted with light and digital manipulation).

Depression is an illness that is spreading very rapidly among young adults. These young adults are part of what has been called “Generation X,” a generation that many have classified as apathetic and without ideals, but without asking the reason. A large number of people in this generation might be depressed.

It is the first generation born of families with parents who have separated, in a world that is polluted and full of fear, with the constant threat of nuclear and chemical weapons, overpopulation, the spread of drugs, AIDS, etc.

I call the part of the Generation X that is depressed the “Prozac Generation.” They were born right at the same time that the first anti-depressants were discovered, and suffer from depression at a time when tricyclic anti-depressants are making a big splash, the most popular being Prozac. A medication that, like others similar to it, allows depressives to move forward and overcome their disease. Anti-depressants and therapy are the essential formula for a successful recovery.

My photography project began with this very personal situation, and I have the feeling that many people can identify with the images in this series.

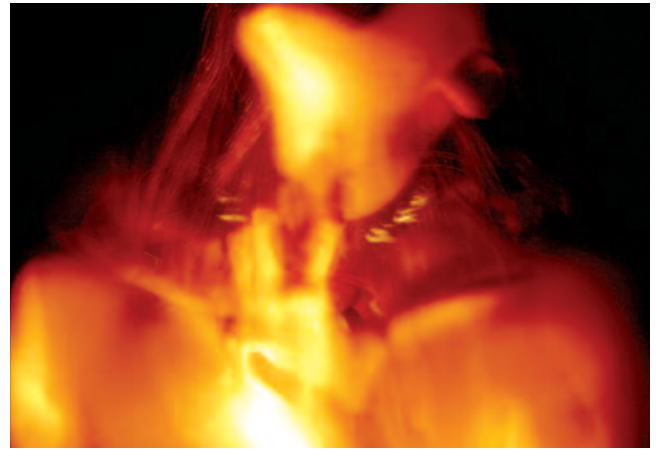
The breakdown I had just a year ago was characterized by severe depression and anxiety, including panic attacks: incapacitated, I couldn’t stop crying; I couldn’t sleep or eat; my whole body shook; and any activity that involved social interaction terrified me. I was ashamed of my behavior, but it was beyond my control. I couldn’t even breathe normally, and I had a constant fear of dying or going crazy. After three specialists and two psychologists, I was diagnosed thanks to a psychiatrist. After a year in therapy, the general state of my health has improved notably.¹

Depression implies much more than a simple drop in energy levels or mood. Someone who is depressed feels a complete lack of confidence in the future and an enormous vacuum. Recovery does not usually come overnight. It is a gradual process, especially if the depression has existed for a very long time.

In my opinion, only those who have experienced this illness at some time in their lives can describe what depression means. Over time, it has been described by different people as a kind of limbo: Winston Churchill called it “the black dog”; others have called it “the black tunnel”, “the dungeon” or “the thick fog.” For me it was like getting close to what could be hell, where the only palpable hope is death.

We know that throughout history, many creative people have suffered from depression. Actually, many have tried to demonstrate a causal relationship between depression and the creative impulse. In my case, depression did lead me to create. I felt the need to communicate what I felt and as a photographer, the only way I could do that was through images.

But the images in my mind at the time of the breakdown were difficult to represent. Analog photography was insufficient for me and, unlike my relatives, I don't paint well at all.



▲ *Release, 2004* (painted with light and digital manipulation).

For me depression was a way of getting close to hell.
But I wasn't willing to set myself on fire to represent the pain I had felt;
that would have been very costly and dangerous.

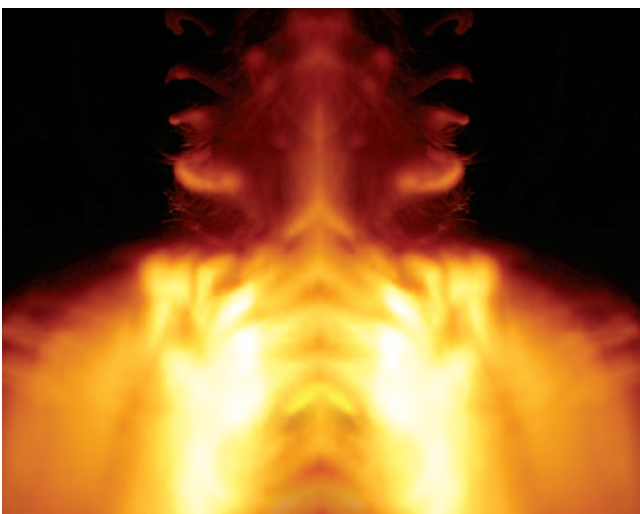
So, I resorted to digital photography, a tool only recently integrated into photography that was the cause of major discussions among image professionals. With digital technology, photography, which in the 175 years since it was created had always been catalogued as a faithful representation of reality, lost that characteristic that described it so well.

But it should not be seen as the enemy. Photography continues to have the same principles. The only thing that changes is that instead of film, we use a charge coupled device (CCD) or a

complementary metal oxide semiconductor (CMOS) image sensor that converts light into electrical charges. And, well, we have to see editing the image as an advantage, a new tool that offers infinite creative possibilities and retouching that will increase the quality of our images.

As I have already said, for me depression was a way of getting close to hell. But I wasn't willing to set myself on fire to represent the pain I had felt; that would have been very costly and dangerous. I would have needed at least one assistant at my side with a fire extinguisher in case the flames got out of control.

Digital technology facilitated my work enormously. I did everything myself with the cam-



▲ *Breaking of the Soul, 2004* (painted with light and digital manipulation).

era's timer and without putting myself in any danger. With just the light of a flashlight I was able to create digital fire. After the image goes through this creative process with the help of a computer and an editing program, photography takes on some of the characteristics of painting. It stops being a representation of reality and allows you to represent more complex things similar to the ones that only the human mind is capable of creating.



▲ *Hell*, 2004 (painted with light and digital manipulation).

In this project, the images were captured with a digital reflex camera. The immediacy of this technology allowed me to see the moment, the frame, the time of exposure I needed, the way I should change my movements or those of the flashlight, and I didn't have to wait to develop the photos to see the results or use polaroids. In the computer, I used these images to create other, more complex ones that allowed me to communicate what I wanted.

It is true that experimenting with this technology requires a very big investment. But that's only at the beginning, and the expenditure can be recuperated after a few months of working with the equipment.

A digital camera, a flashlight and a basic computer were enough to create a series of low-cost images and publish them for free in Internet on Zone Zero, founded by Pedro Meyer, one of the first promoters of digital photography.

A few years ago, many doubted that digital photography could have a future in the professional field. But technology is improving extremely rapidly and prices are dropping with time. Today, it has become indispensable for the professional photographer: delivery times are much shorter and it is in both the client's and the photographer's interest.

Certainly in the not-too-distant future, digital photography will completely replace analog photography, which will only be used as a craft medium for the romantics of photography. ■■■

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¹ Depression is increasing worldwide. In England today, almost 3 million people suffer from depression and as a result, about 400 of them commit suicide every year. This statistic is alarming, but that is not the worst of it: at least one-third of all the people who suffer from this illness have not been diagnosed and therefore receive no treatment.

Messing With The Danzón

Zaidee Rose Stavely*



Oswaldo Ramírez/Cuartoscuro

Arms circled at the elbows, heads lifted high, couples slide in squares across the Plaza de la Ciudadela in Mexico City, swaying to a live orchestra. Men in two-toned shoes, baggy suits and hats dropped down over one eye swagger and talk, eyeing the women sitting on the side, some waving colorful fans, others adjusting short skirts or long coats.

The music is lively but sedate at the same time, a mixture of tropical swing and ballroom perfection. Couples move their feet in slow squares, then curl out from each other to do twists, turns and weaves. This is *danzón*, a nineteenth-century ballroom dance still alive on the Mexico City streets after a long trip from England and France, by way of the Caribbean.

Everyone here has style, from the woman in a flashy sparkling coat to the man without teeth who dances spinning from side to side, showing off his pinstripes, from the saxophone players to the sedate fan-toting *señoras*.

“My *danzón* professor was very strict, but she had a tremendous personality, which is what we show off when we dance. That is the elegance of *danzón*,” remarks *danzón* instructor Jorge García Rojas.

The 16 beat *descansos*, or breaks, in the music, are a mystery to anyone unfamiliar with *danzón* music. At a given time during the song, all the couples stop dancing, separate, applaud the orchestra or fan themselves.

As it turns out, these *descansos*, are the riffs of music which serve as introductions before each melody. A *danzón* consists of an introduction, a first melody, a *descanso*, a second melody, another *descanso* and a *montuno*, the third melody, faster and livelier than the first two.

García Rojas says the *descansos* are similar to musical breaks in romantic songs. “When Juan Gabriel sings, first there is a musical introduction, then he sings, then he stops singing while there is a musical break and then he sings again. It’s the same with *danzón*. You just don’t dance the *descansos*.”

* Free-lance journalist.

The sound system's master of ceremonies, Eduardo Cisneros, however, has another idea.

"The *descansos* exist because, one, live *danzones* are very long, and two, in olden days, women were much more repressed, and couples took advantage of the *descansos* to talk and get to know each other: 'What's your name? When do you go out to buy bread?'¹ Are you in school or working?" he explains.

Certainly *danzón* is a romantic dance. Its more than 300 different steps speak of style, elegance, refinement. But they also have a sort of mysterious flirtation to them.

Francisco Javier Vértiz, 84, and his wife of more than 50 years, Emelia López Morón, move quietly through each song, speeding up their steps with the music and then stopping to rest as do all the couples at each *descanso*.

Vértiz, little and spry, reaches out to grasp his tall willowy partner and they sway knowingly to the music, their smiles sweet. This particular couple comes here to the Ciudadela every Saturday, rain or shine.

"We like *danzón* a lot now that we are older," says Vértiz. "We can dance salsa and cumbia, too, but they tire us out."

Vértiz began to dance at 14 in the *salones*, or ballrooms. After he got married and had a family, however, he had to work and never had time to practice those steps. Now that he and Emelia's youngest son is 30, they have time to enjoy themselves.

Eight years ago the Ciudadela, along with at least five other locations all over the capital, became *plazas de danzón*, where middle-aged and elderly couples come to dance every Saturday. Although live orchestras paid by the city used to accompany the dancers in the Ciudadela every week, now they only come once or twice a month. Most Saturdays, music is piped from a sound system through speakers set up in the trees.

Some deadbeat dancers, such as Prudencio Aguilar, not only come every Saturday to the downtown Ciudadela but travel all over the city to find the best dancing partners and the best music. After Saturday mornings at the Ciudadela, Aguilar takes the subway to La Villa, in the north of the city, where the Cocodrilo Orchestra plays every week, and then shimmies down to the south side in Coyoacán to dance the evening away.

Most of the dancers are senior citizens, but in the midst of the elderly are a few youngsters

and adolescents. Rodrigo Jaramillo learned to dance when he was 10 years old. His parents came to the Ciudadela to watch the dancing, and he wandered off. His father Raymundo told him to sit down next to him, and he said, "No, I'm going to be bored. Teach me to dance." And so, he learned his first steps from his father. At 11, Rodrigo won a championship in *danzón* at the Salón La Maraca, one of many ballrooms still vibrant in Mexico City.

"*Danzón* is my life," Rodrigo, now 17, announces. Today he dances with his mother Alejandra, while his father dances with Sherlyn, his two year-old niece.



Germán Romero/Cuartoscuro

According to the instructors here in the Ciudadela, *danzón* began in England and France as the *contradanza* and was brought to Haiti by French slaveholders. Tropical rhythms were added to the dance in the Caribbean, and in 1879 in Cuba, the first *danzón*, called “Las Alturas de Simpson”, was written by Miguel Faílde.

“He thought to himself, ‘Well, here in Cuba we play *son* music and these guys dance *contradanza*. So if you do *danza* to a *son*, that’s *danzón*,” explains García Rojas.

In the early twentieth century, *danzón* arrived in the Yucatán peninsula, the closest part of Mexico to Cuba, and ended up in Veracruz, the Gulf coast port known for its lively night life. The first *danzón* ballroom in Mexico City was the Salón Colonia, set up in 1927 and known as the “*templo de danzón*,” or the “*Danzón Temple*.”

Everyone here has style, from the woman in a flashy sparkling coat to the man without teeth who dances spinning from side to side.

According to some, the elegant *danzón* of the past, danced at a distance of a fist between a couple’s stomachs, is fast becoming indecorous.

“There are people who throw themselves all over the dance floor,

there are women who lift up their legs and you can see their underwear. *Danzón* was made to show off a man and woman joined at the arms, not letting go. That is how *danzón* should be danced, decently,” says García Rojas.

Today, some couples go all out to dance what is denominated “*danzón floreado*” or “flowery *danzón*”. According to García Rojas, this is a completely Mexico City style, unheard of in any other part of the country or the world, for that matter. In the flowery *danzón*, couples let go of each other and dance circles around each other to show off their steps.

“In Mexico City, we mess with everything and make it better,” says Luis Sánchez, another dance teacher, before going back to his stylish moves, arms outspread, feet in tiptoe, followed by close to 40 students.

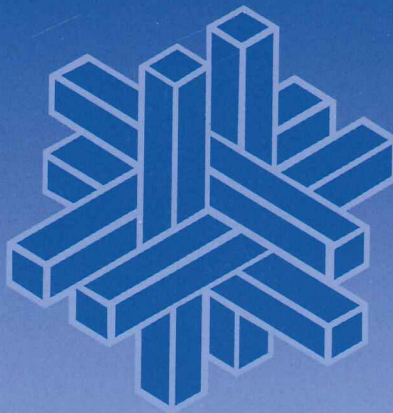
And his words come true. All around the Ciudadela, different personalities infuse the air. A short man in a gray suit flings his arms wide and spins in circles as his partner dances calmly and properly, her gaze fixed into space. A young woman in jeans and a tight blouse sways her hips as she dances with an elderly man in suede. A flash of skin under a red dress. Tiptoeing patent leather, just so. Making the *danzón* their very own. **NMM**



German Romero/Cuartoscuro

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¹ In the old days, when parents were not so lenient, young men found that a sure time for seeing their sweethearts was when she went out to the bakery to get bread for the family dinner.

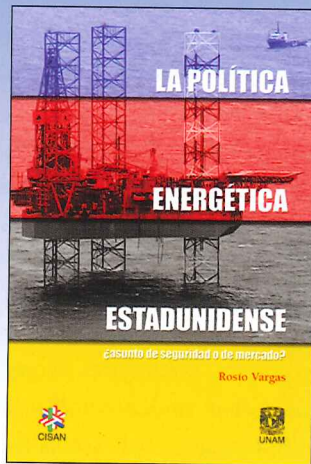


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p u b l i c a t i o n s

La política energética estadounidense: ¿asunto de seguridad o de mercado?

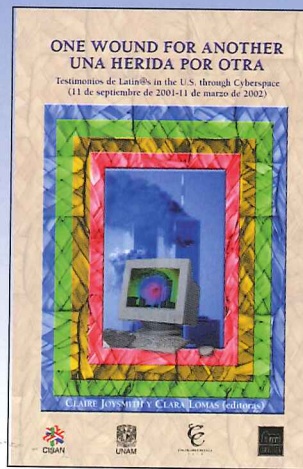
Rosío Vargas



This work contributes to the understanding of the origins, causes and implications of declining oil production in the United States. Events such as the 1970s oil crisis and the current invasion of Iraq demonstrate the role that energy resources can have in changing history. The book combines history, the current situation, an analysis of the international oil market and domestic energy policy in the United States.

One Wound for Another. Una herida por otra. Testimonios de latin@s in the U.S. through Cyberspace (11 de septiembre de 2001-11 de marzo de 2002)

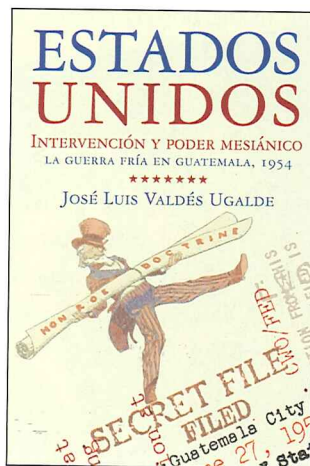
Claire Joysmith and Clara Lomas, eds.



September 11 revealed a multi-ethnic, middle- and working class country among the victims. This book gives voice to that other country, concerned that the response to the terrorist attacks give rise to a different, more representative, plural and just country. 9/11 also means that the U.S. people have become a testimonial people that has to deal with catastrophe, unjustified massacre, irremediable loss, displacement, incomplete mourning and the anger marked by the emergency out of which these testimonies are born.

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

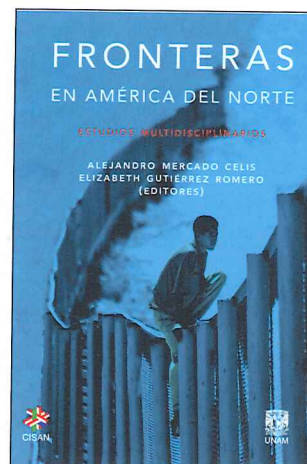
José Luis Valdés-Ugalde



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

Fronteras en América del Norte. Estudios multidisciplinarios

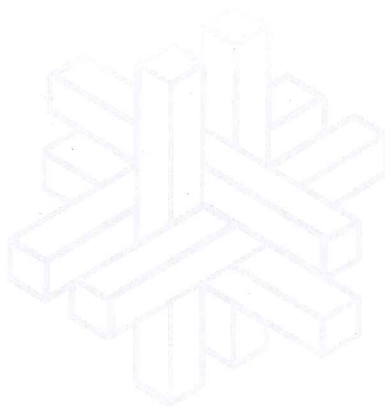
Alejandro Mercado and Elizabeth Gutiérrez, eds.



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

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



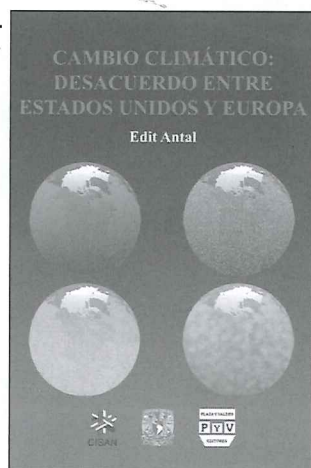
CISAN

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

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

Edit Antal

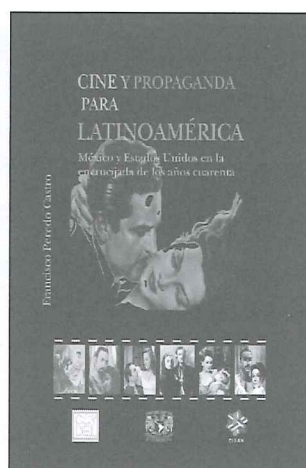
This book uses a constructivist focus to explain the differences between the United States and the European Union with regard to climatic change. The United States takes no preventive measures until the damage has been proven and can be measured and refuses to revise its way of life, production and consumption.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



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

Francisco Peredo Castro

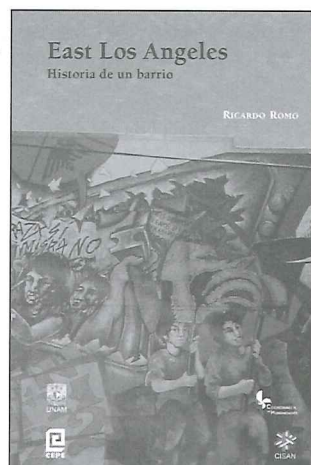
When in the late 1930s, fascist propaganda films threatened to flood Latin America, the allies reacted rapidly, from Mexico to the north and Argentina to the south. In a film production project coordinated by the United States and Mexico at a time of diplomatic tension and international intrigue, Mexico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



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

Ricardo Romo

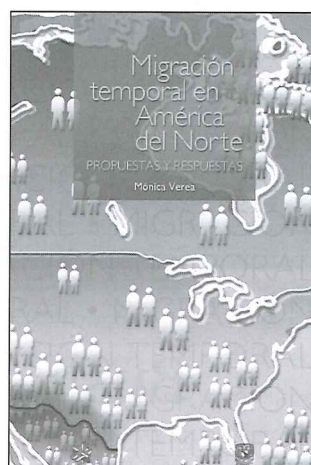
This book, a classic in its field, traces the history of the largest and most important Mexican American community in the United States, East Los Angeles. It is a detailed review of the development of a community that has had to construct and defend its identity to survive in what were often hostile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



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

Mónica Vereá

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



Forthcoming:

Nuevos actores en América del Norte
La controversia sobre el aborto en Estados Unidos
El Tratado de Libre Comercio de América del Norte a los diez años



Hyungwon Kang/Reuters

Bush's Second Term And the World¹

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde*

The United States is not the same country as it was at the end of World War II. It is a nation that dominates the international scene, today a lonelier power than ever with increasingly fragmented legitimacy. To the extent that the United States reinforced its positioning in the international theater, it has also been very difficult for it to do so with full legitimacy, to the point that in this new century it has become “a hard power,” a power that uses coercion, above all military coercion, to “convince.”

In the last 70 years, the world has become an increasingly dangerous and insecure place, especially in the last two decades since the end of the Cold War. Certainly, the peace of the world—the perpetual peace that Kant wanted—is not a guarantee of civilization. To the contrary, once again, it is war that imposes its pattern on the changing world. From that perspective, it is important to say that the chaos that has led to different incidents of war in the modern era contradicts democratic transformations. Today, war is the main enemy of democracy, the interests of civil society and the integrity of democratic consensus, its fundamental space for cohesion.² Proof of the articulation between messianism and the use of force is to be found in Clinton’s Secretary of State Madeleine Albright’s statement, “If we have to use force it is because we are America. We are the indispensable nation. We stand tall. We see further into the future.”³

Cioran said that as soon as we refuse to admit the interchangeable nature of ideas, blood flows. But there is something more transcendental to add to the very existence of the uncontrolled world disorder, which exists either because it is functionally convenient to great powers like the United States or because of their manifest incompetence. The obligatory question is whether the global village’s agenda today will include war as part of the modern democratic arrangement: it is a matter of elucidating to what point war is already part of the social and political consensus. In that sense, it would seem that in the framework of the standards of living offered by the modern world—in some cases more satisfactory than in others—it is power and force, as well as military aesthetics, that strongly attract the clientele of different nationalities and cultures, although more importantly today, the Americans.

The United States is not the same country as it was at the end of World War II. It is a nation that dominates the international scene, today a lonelier power than ever with increasingly frag-

mented legitimacy—in itself a perturbing situation. To the extent that the United States reinforced its positioning in the international theater, it has also been very difficult for it to do so with full legitimacy, to the point that in this new century it has become “a hard power,” a power that uses coercion, above all military coercion, to “convince.” In the current phase, it is difficult for it to come to agreements with its counterparts, particularly the European Union, in multilateral bodies.⁴

The United States has historically been a nation used to reaping enormous benefits with great ease, at the same time becoming a world unto itself.⁵ With regard to its political advances, Alexis de Tocqueville already said, “The great advantage of the Americans is that they have arrived at a state of democracy without having to endure a democratic revolution; and that they are born equal instead.”⁶ For his part, geopolitical scientist Colin S. Gray asked, “Did the United States succeed in nation-building and in forcible nation-restoration because it was virtuous, or because it had Canadians and Mexicans

* Director of the CISAN.
jvaldes@servidor.unam.mx

Colin Powell's replacement by former National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice puts an end to moderation in Washington's international policy decisions.

as its neighbours rather than Russians and Germans?"⁷ With time, the advantageous position of what A.K. Henrikson called the *insula fortunata* would become more evident.⁸

Permit me to argue that the basis which operates in Washington's rational action of intervening in a country is also found in the historic sense of mission with an eye to defense—most of the time a messianic defense—of a destiny: that of making the world a safe place where new conditions necessary for a modern exercise of power in world matters can be created. Intervention was not only conceived as a legitimate instrument of foreign policy to which Washington could resort under the condition that the international normative framework allowed it. It was also used to satisfy the U.S.'s need to affirm its theological vocation and messianic uniqueness, thus officializing its exceptional status as a nation and global power.

Intolerance (an expression of the most conservative Protestantism of the new civil religion in the United States and foundational agent characteristic of its socio-political condition) is the factor that from very early on would play a leading role in this country. It is an extreme Manichaeism whereby this concept of the world explains historic events and social and political actors. This would be done in the name of a concrete abstraction: "the defense of liberty" against all threats. Condoleezza

Rice's libertarian rhetoric is a case in point when after September 11, she said that an earthquake of the magnitude of 9/11 could move the tectonic plates of international politics; that the United States should move to take advantage of these new opportunities since it was a period like the one from 1945 to 1947, when U.S. leadership expanded the free democratic states to create a balance of power favoring freedom.

All these components are contained in past and present official discourses and even in that of some intellectuals, politicians or writers, and reflect, apart from political Manichaeism, an ethnocentric conception of society and politics that will have a negative repercussion in the United States' actions, perceptions and foreign policy. And all in the name of safeguarding the "eternal" integrity of the *insula fortunata*.

The twenty-first century brought an intensified internationalization of domestic politics through the effect of the transnationalization of power, but above all because of a political-cultural climate in which the ultimate argument of the great power is imposed through a process that Toynbee called "anarchy by treaty."⁹ In that same sense, it can be suggested that for this circularity of domination to yield the promised fruit at the highest level of globality, the *Pax Americana* requires organizations or events that promote "instability" with

an eye to a greater involvement in world affairs, in which the need for the threatened stability is what demands its course.

The U.S. democratic system—to a certain extent admirable and an inspiration for many democracies throughout the world—has been exposed once again to a local and global crisis unknown since the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal. This is today's so-called "50/50 society," alluding to the polarization of public opinion around the conflict in Iraq, a polarization reflected in the recent electoral results.

II. The turn to war in U.S. foreign policy, its obstinate crusade in the defense of causes not its own, the old-fashioned (but still existent) missionary tone *à la* Woodrow Wilson and the bias toward radical conservatism are aspects that pressured the political actors and the voters in the 2004 presidential elections. It is very probable that this will give George W. Bush the opportunity to prolong his unilateralist temptation to an ever-more-fragile world, exposed to the zigzags of Washington's exercise of hegemonic power that tries to put other people's houses in order before attending to its own. Richard Barnet says that Calvinism forces people to face the question, "Who will be the sheriff? Who will create order in an unruly world?" And he himself provides the answer: "Those whose virtue has been certi-

fied by world success.”¹⁰ And that is where the second Bush term seems to be heading; to a certain extent, it will owe its possibilities for success or failure to the bases it imposed during the first term.¹¹

Instituting democratic systems in Iraq and Afghanistan has not been as successful as expected. Given the escalation that seems to be becoming a civil war in Iraq, analysts are viewing with growing concern what could turn into the biggest failure in the history of U.S. foreign policy since the Bay of Pigs and Vietnam. This could well be the last war that the United States does not come out the victor in, since its power is insufficient —paradoxically— to wage others.

While recovering Americans’ living standards was in theory the best electoral strategy for Republicans and Democrats alike, the fact is that the post-9/11 situation and the strengthening of the Bush administration, all of which were undoubtedly elucidated by his main strategic mind Karl Rove, made it abundantly clear that for the time being, security, the defense of traditional values and, as a result, a “securized” and even more messianic foreign policy were the issues that dominated the electoral climate and presumably the minds of Americans.

In 2004 the Democratic Party radicalized its political position by saying that what was to be decided in the elections was actually the short-term des-

tiny of the United States, in very, very complicated circumstances for a government hobbled with a badly planned military conflict and an economy that was not functioning for the majority. The Democrats proposed a policy of greater unity over polarization, not without resorting to a discourse in which they also boasted having the best attributes of the “original nation” whose “eternal mission” is to remain united with greater opportunities for all.¹²

The Republicans consolidated their position by openly haranguing U.S. society about basic values, the most conservative values in the United States that today seem to be awakening with great vigor. We are witnessing a return to nativist convictions that in the past were the basis for strong isolationism *vis-à-vis* the rest of the world. The immigration law approved a few weeks ago, restrictive in the extreme, seems to demonstrate this. This is one of the consequences of the 9/11 attacks, which, seen in the framework of the articulation and recovery of this conservative discourse, pushed Americans backward so that today they seem to be questioning some of the liberal and libertarian principles that gave their democracy its original meaning. This revived conservatism, accompanied by an exacerbated nationalism in which Americanism is once again put forward as an entire ideology (“We are Americans first, last and always,” Bush *dixit*), had an impact on the outcome of the

election, noticeably favoring the president. The war kidnapped democracy and, faced with the government’s aggressive policy, Senator Kerry saw no other way forward than getting as close as possible to Bush’s extreme positions in the false hope of getting close to society. If the resurgence of the neo-empire at the expense of the democratic republic had not been enough, the United States condemned the existence of other worlds like Latin America to be forgotten. This new moment of isolation could last if the Secretary of State’s campaign to get closer to its traditional allies is not as successful as expected.

Thus, the strong candidate won, or at least the candidate the Americans perceived as the strong one.¹³ Among the many reasons that Senator Kerry was not elected president, I consider one very important. It is a stratagem used successfully in the past and this time by the Republicans: the extension of the U.S. neo-empire is viable only by obtaining support from the private sector and a kind of evangelism through the conversion to the “American Way”, to which certainly a good number of Americans (the majority) belong who went to vote in large numbers (60 percent) to support Bush’s theological crusade.

Once again these principles were applied impeccably during the campaign and were very useful in achieving a double objective: convincing Americans that security and the war against

Donald Rumsfeld’s confirmation as secretary of defense speaks to Bush’s reticence to recognize the errors of his foreign policy.

terrorism were the two central pragmatic pillars —this is why the politics of fear and intolerance were imposed on the campaign— and compelling Kerry to radicalize his discourse in favor of the use of force in Iraq and in a defense at all costs of security as cross-cutting issues in his foreign policy platform. On domestic issues, the Democratic Party was obliged to take on board the topics imposed by Bush and turn them into their own priorities; to the disappointment of its traditional followers, it watered down its electoral proposal. Kerry not only shifted toward Bush's more conservative positions, including religious principles, but also stopped having a policy of his own on these issues. As a result, Bush's agenda was that of a divided society without the determination to leave its president alone in a moment of danger. That is why people tended to vote —certainly some reticently— for the candidate who best guaranteed them the exercise of force, both necessary, and desired by the majority.

In effect, a paradigm was dismantled if we consider that for the first time in a long time, Americans did not vote for economic well-being but for greater security and in favor of a more aggressive war against terrorism. With things like this, those who believed that this horizon of “securitization” of foreign policy could change and Bush would move toward the moderate center seemingly will have to wait. Colin Powell's

exit from the Department of State and his replacement by former National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice open up room for the most rigid foreign policy positions in the cabinet to prevail.

In fact, it can be said that this long awaited replacement puts an end to moderation in Washington's international policy decisions and signals the advent of a hard-line group gathered around the neo-conservative project. Rice, recognized for winning Bush's favor when he was governor of Texas, is the representative who was missing to make the foreign policy team speak in a single voice, that of the president himself.

This is a voice with all the bureaucratic power of the U.S. diplomatic apparatus needed to ensure continuity for today's international policy and a programmatic basis for more years along the lines of “hard power,” and with that, clinch the successes Bush has proposed, those he promised to achieve in his global crusade against the calamities that arose since September 11, 2001. And it cannot be any other way, despite the relative softening shown in the early stages of his second term.

In any case, it is certain that Rice will bring greater cohesion to the government in its formulation of foreign policy. It is also certain that there will be continuity given that her appointment guarantees the prevalence of a single kind of thinking in the White House's world view. This would seem

to be the tone of Rice and Bush's recent trip to Europe in which they proposed to the European Union nations a re-discussion of multilateralism from the standpoint of the unilateralist idea that Washington encourages; the Europeans received the proposal with a mixture of resignation and distaste.

III. All of this is also reflected in some of Bush's more recent appointments. It is to be expected that at least the presence of Rice as Secretary of State and Alberto R. Gonzales as Attorney General means exactly the opposite of what the official discourse has tried to show and will not favor either the ethnic groups' or binational interests that in theory they represent. It is to be predicted that underneath these appointments lies a high degree of opportunism as they simulate a renewed interest in racial minorities and a different relationship with Mexico. While it is true that to a certain extent Rice and Gonzales are the expression of the culture of hard work that awards anyone who tries hard enough with the “American dream,” it is also the case that they both represent intransigent positions inside the government and are unconditionally close to Bush's ideological positions.

In fact, Donald Rumsfeld's confirmation as secretary of defense speaks to Bush's reticence to recognize the errors of his foreign policy and confirms a historic U.S. tendency in times of world crisis: the well-known prepon-

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is the expression of militarism rooted in an autocratic state is also the measure
of its own latent crisis.

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of undocumented migration.

derance of the Pentagon in the design of foreign policy, with a strong emphasis on defense as the crosscutting axis. The continuity in the Pentagon indicates that Bush, far from including in his administration anyone else from the party who is not from his intimate circle, has chosen to deepen the style that meets with the approval of his conservative base. These are unequivocal signs about his administration's orientation. It also confirms the continuation of the strategy in Iraq and dissipates any speculation about a less aggressive, less unilateral and less arrogant international policy coming out of Washington in the next four years. To evaluate events in a different way, we will have to wait until the United States makes a real self-criticism of its foreign policy in practice. In any case, the fact that the power of the United States is the expression of militarism rooted in an autocratic state is also the measure of its own latent crisis, which today is making its domestic and international policies tremble. In addition to reinforcing the preeminence of the Pentagon *vis-à-vis* other sectors of the government in terms of foreign policy, we can see Bush's determination to implement his policies secretly, without regard to the other branches of government, the Constitution and international law.

In the last four years, we have lived in a virtual state of security cemented by military might.¹⁴ This is unprece-

dent in modern U.S. foreign policy in times of peace. It is also a reflection of the emergence of a new narrative of U.S. hegemonic power onto the world scene, whose central axis is the defense of the epic nature of U.S. history as the central agent of the unfolding of history. Everything occurs on the sidelines of the U.S. Constitution and remits us to a famous —though not pleasant—concept of Henry Kissinger's: "The illegal we do it immediately. The unconstitutional takes a little longer."¹⁵ Thus, the reconfiguration of U.S. power with representatives of minorities included for the first time in high government positions aims to culminate a mission undertaken years ago by a compact group headed up by Bush, and could tend to marginalize the most important interests of those very minorities.

IV. Although it still may be premature to pinpoint the long-term scenarios caused by the reshuffling of Bush's cabinet in his second term, it is worthwhile examining the probable continuation of the neoconservative positions reached in the last four years, although the president is now trying to tone down the harshest parts of his speeches. We can say that it is feasible that Bush will not bet on the modernization of politics and will accentuate some of the more isolationist policies that the United States has undertaken in the last five decades. Both their allies in the Euro-

pean Union and Latin American countries, among others, will see months and perhaps years go by without many of their central proposals to the United States being considered. Thus, the self-fulfilled prophecy will come true and the societies that these governments represent may well have been right when before November 2 they thought that the worst thing that could happen to the world would be that George W. Bush be reelected. Nevertheless, it is probable that the United States will have to pay attention to emerging issues that were neither important nor priorities on its agenda for expanding the doctrine of preventive policies, the backbone of its foreign policy in this second term.

What does it mean that other actors, like the South American countries, at the third South American Presidential Summit held in Cuzco last December 8, mobilize, taking advantage of this transitional moment in the United States as well as Washington's apparent disinterest in their plans and attempts at regional integration? In addition, and given the paralysis of the projects for Latin American cohesion, is it merely fortuitous that two important Latin American actors like Mexico and Chile both try to secure the general secretaryship of the Organization of American States or that Brazil has begun to seek a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council? What are our govern-

If we do not manage to correctly read the signs
of change in Washington and gradually move forward on pending bilateral issues,
Mexico's vulnerability could be exacerbated even further.

ments aspiring to when they try to put themselves in the avant garde of regional and institutional efforts that in the framework of globalization are fundamentally dominated by Washington?

In the coming months, Mexico will encounter several limitations to Washington's sitting down to seriously negotiate highly important issues like the total or partial legalization of undocumented migrant workers. Among them are the nature of George W. Bush's victory and the quality of social backing he received, which brings with it an element of political pressure that, he will not be able to ignore, as well as the recomposition of the cabinet of the newly reelected president.

With regard to the former, we must say that the broad margin of Bush's victory gives him room to position himself on the political spectrum as he considers best in the short and long run. His main campaign banner and the backbone of his victory, the war in Iraq and the war against international terrorism, represent an opportunity to put an end as soon as possible to the threats to Washington's security.

Thus, in this post-electoral period just beginning in the United States, a new stage of the internationalization of domestic politics and the provincialism of international politics will take place there, all with Bush's well known arrogance. Given the weight of domestic politics and how important it is to the neoconservatives to reaffirm their

positions in the political debate and on the national agenda, it would be illusory to think that in his second term Bush will offer Mexico conditions for consolidating its proposals about a broad regularization of undocumented migration or achieving a NAFTA Plus.

And President Bush's second term certainly did begin avidly with three acts that could define the general climate of the future of relations between both our countries. First, the approval (with 56 percent of the votes) of Proposition 200 in Arizona, which bans undocumented migrants from receiving state services, forces the population to denounce them and increases the requirements for proving citizenship in Arizona. Second, the approval by the House of Representatives with support from Bush and Vice President Cheney of the bill that bans undocumented immigrants from obtaining driver's licenses, makes it harder to get political asylum and mandates the completion of the construction of a wall between San Diego and Tijuana. And, finally, Ambassador Antonio Garza's communique warning Americans about safety problems and marking his concern about increasing violence on the part of drug traffickers along the border. In addition to all of this, CIA Director Porter Goss said in his testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee that the 2006 presidential campaign in Mexico will be a potential point of conflict given that it will probably paralyze

the progress of the fiscal, labor and energy reforms and may lead to a left, populist, nationalist government taking office.

If the White House were to move toward the moderate center around these issues and Washington were to accept negotiating different matters on the multilateral agenda with its partners and allies in other parts of the world, it would only happen once the U.S. government had guaranteed victory for its foreign policy (centered mainly around success in Iraq and eventually in the Middle East and other critical spots like Iran and North Korea), overcome its domestic crisis and thus surmounted the pressures that made the country turn in on itself and radicalize toward the right for the last four years.

As a result, if we do not manage to correctly read the signs of change in Washington and gradually move forward on pending bilateral issues, Mexico's vulnerability could be even further exacerbated. We must not again illusorily bet on the exchange "of security for migration," nor on Bush finally accepting all the terms that Mexico has attempted to impose on the pending agenda. In the context of growing radical conservatism, the panorama for Latin America and Mexico does not seem promising, and many of the issues abandoned by the United States in the last four years will be difficult to resuscitate in the current post-electoral scenario. ■■■

NOTES

- ¹ The author wishes to thank the assistance of Adrián Villanueva Delgado for this article.
- ² A deeper analysis of this idea can be found in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude. War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004).
- ³ José Luis Valdés Ugalde, *Estados Unidos: Intervención y poder mesiánico. La guerra fría en Guatemala, 1954* (Mexico City: CISAN-IJ, 2004), p. 111, footnote 257.
- ⁴ The debate on soft and hard power can be found in Joseph Nye's interesting book *Soft Power. The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, Chapter 1.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, Chapter 2.
- ⁷ Colin S. Gray, *The Geopolitics of the Nuclear Era: Heartlands, Rimlands and the Techno-*

logical Revolution (New York: Crane Russak & Co., 1977), p. 1.

⁸ About Henrikson's term, see Geoffrey Parker, *Western Geopolitical Thought in the Twentieth Century* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p. 138.

⁹ Arnold J. Toynbee, "Anarchy by Treaty 1648-1967," Fred L. Israel, ed., *Major Peace Treaties of Modern History 1648-1967*, vol. 1 (New York and London: Chelsea House Publishers, 1967), pp. xiii-xxix.

¹⁰ Enrico Augelli and Craig Murphy, *America's Quest for Supremacy and the Third World: A Gramscian Analysis* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1983), pp. 63-64, and Richard Barnett, *Roots of War* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1972), p. 70.


¹¹ Because of its recent flirtation with the European Union, it is interesting to observe how the Bush administration would seek to soften its unilateralist foreign policy in this second term. It remains to be seen whether it will be able to overcome the structural impediments that it imposed on itself in the last four years.

¹² José Luis Valdés Ugalde, "Triunfo democrata en EU?" *El Universal* (Mexico City), August 5, 2004.

¹³ The Republicans once again have a majority in Congress with 55 seats in the Senate and 232 in the House of Representatives. Also, exit polls indicated that 22 percent of voters cast their ballots based on moral values, while 20 percent did so based on the economy and 19 percent based on terrorism. Finally, 44 percent of Latinos voted for Bush, an increase of 9 points over the 2000 elections. (Source: CNN, *Washington Post*, *Newsweek* and *USA Today*).


¹⁴ This is confirmed by the line-up of the pillars of that parallel state that Rumsfeld built when he fostered the creation of an elite, independent military espionage corps that has operated in secret for more than 24 months and replaces the CIA intelligence corps, the so called Strategic Support Branch.

¹⁵ David J. Rothkopf, "Inside the Committee that Runs the World," *Foreign Policy* (March-April 2005) and Gary Allen, *Kissinger. The Secret Side of the Secretary of State* (Seal Beach, California: '76 Press, 1976), p. 13.




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Parameters of Partnership: Taking a New Look At The U.S.-Mexico Relationship

Andrés Rozental*

The U.S.-Mexico relationship has traditionally been defined in terms of moments in time or place, with the use of words such as “crossroads”, “spirit” (eg. Houston or Guanajuato) or “challenges” (Limits to Friendship, Distant Neighbors, etc). Rarely however is there an opportunity to stand back and look at this unique nation-to-nation link from the perspective of what exactly it is that we want and expect from each other. The current state of our bilateral ties provides a good opportunity for proposing novel approaches in deciding how to define, man-

* Former deputy foreign minister of Mexico and career eminent ambassador. He currently chairs the Mexican Council on Foreign Relations.

9/11 constituted a major setback for the efforts to define a new bilateral migration relationship that would address the real issues and attempt to bring order, legality and predictability to the economic and social forces that move Mexicans to migrate to the U.S.

age and project the relationship between our two countries in ways that better respond to our individual and joint interests.

Since the events of 9/11, the U.S.-Mexico relationship has been running on autopilot. Most urgent issues are being dealt with in one way or another, but there is little preventive diplomacy or forward planning. There is no contingency scenario for what might happen at the border were there to be another terrorist attack on the U.S. The Binational Commission and other mechanisms of the relationship are a distant expression of what they once were. Neither the Bush nor the Fox administrations have defined what they want out of the relationship and where the priorities should be.

In a recent nationwide poll conducted by Comexi in Mexico, people were asked to describe how they felt about the U.S., its policies and its attitudes toward Mexico. It did not come as much of a surprise that a majority of those surveyed expressed admiration for their neighbor to the north and a desire to have comparable standards of living, but the overall pragmatism with which the sample viewed the need for a positive relationship with the U.S. did raise a few eyebrows among the elites. Far from being preoccupied with intangible concepts such as sovereignty or independence, a large number of those surveyed expressed a clear preference for a relationship that res-

ponds to their day-to-day interests, rather than to abstract principles. This translates into a *good* relationship, based on mutual respect, which can deliver tangible benefits to Mexico and its people, especially the millions who migrate to the U.S., or who live there permanently.

What then should be the basic parameters of the bilateral relationship? How can we ensure that temporary junctures do not continue to dominate how we relate to one another, and that both countries take clear steps towards a more permanent, mutually beneficial partnership? For discussion purposes, this paper proposes a set of concrete measures that both governments could take to signal their commitment to such a genuine two-way partnership. These fall fundamentally in the categories of attitudes, reciprocal trade and investment rules, movement of people, cooperation on security, the duty to protect our citizens against crime and illicit drugs, a shared energy and natural resource strategy, the tackling by both countries of the development gap between Mexico and its other two NAFTA partners and, last but not least, the commitment to move toward a more competitive and prosperous North America.

Perceptions are nine-tenths of the equation. If both Mexicans and Americans are educated by their leaderships that the time has come for a new relationship, much of the initial move-

ment necessary to achieving it will have been accomplished. This requires a change in attitudes on both sides of the border. The example of how President Salinas was able to change a Mexican mind-set of historical suspicion and reluctance to deal with the U.S., and successfully negotiate a hugely ambitious free trade agreement is one which we need to update with a similar effort now that NAFTA has been around for over a decade. The coalitions that were built up with such great effort and cost to get the trilateral agreement approved were unfortunately abandoned once the treaty was concluded. These need to be revived and strengthened, particularly in the business sectors of both countries, since these have been the greatest beneficiaries of the expanded trade and investment that has resulted from NAFTA. At the same time, both governments need to overcome their political reluctance to embrace further integration and sell it to their citizens. If there is a short-term political cost to confronting the naysayers and detractors of integration, then it should be borne now, lest it consume much greater political capital later. All sectors of both countries that have benefited directly from economic integration will need to participate in this change of attitudes.

In addition to re-building coalitions, governments need to take simple steps to confirm the new partnership to its

principal stakeholders: our citizens. The best way to achieve this in the short term is to adopt simple initiatives, which can later be built upon with bigger and bolder ones. This requires moving forward on the two major fronts that constitute the most important issues for both our populations: migration from Mexico to the U.S. and the security of the North American homeland against external threats.

The Comexi-WWCIS project has purposely excluded a detailed discussion on migration issues, mainly because these have been amply dealt with in multiple fora over the four years since George Bush and Vicente Fox took office. The events of 9/11 constituted a major setback for the efforts to define a new bilateral migration relationship that would address the real issues and attempt to bring order, legality and predictability to the economic and social forces that move Mexicans to migrate to the U.S. in search of economic opportunity.

However, 9/11 did not change any of the realities of the migration phenomenon. Approximately 400,000 Mexicans still move illegally into the U.S. each year, while the economic and social factors that attract them remain and become even stronger. Labor mobility still contributes enormously to the wealth of many regions in the U.S. and to the individual prosperity of Mexican workers and their families back home. The constantly growing social networks among the Mexican communities in the U.S.—and between these and their hometowns in Mexico—will make it even harder to control or limit the numbers of people who cross the border today as easily as Americans move from one part of a town to another. This fact,

although hesitantly recognized by the Bush administration, needs to translate into a negotiated migration agreement that engages both countries in setting up a temporary worker program and taking steps towards regularizing the situation of millions of Mexicans who are already in the U.S. The essence is simple: in exchange for a significant increase in the numbers of Mexicans that can work and travel to the U.S. through legal and efficient channels, the Mexican government would make its best effort to ensure that the greatest number of its citizens use these routes and are effectively discouraged from crossing illegally.

There are other measures that could easily be taken immediately to simpli-

fy life for the average citizen. All those Mexicans and Americans who legitimately travel between both countries (as well as Canadians) should be issued a special, biometrically secure North American passport or travel document that would allow them to freely move among the three NAFTA countries in a speedier and less intrusive manner than citizens of other countries. The document would not replace national passports, but would be a way of identifying frequent business travelers, academics, tourists and others who have been vetted by all three countries and are classified as *bona fide* visitors. This would free up resources to help move the remainder of our migratory flows through legal channels.

NAFTA visas should be significantly expanded, especially between Mexico and the U.S. More professions should be included, and students who have also been vetted ahead of time should be exempted from the costly and time-consuming measures that have been put into place to shield the U.S. from external threats.

A decision to remove Mexico and Canada from current immigration quotas that still formally apply equally to all foreigners would be a clear signal to our citizens that the new partnership will simplify their lives and allow them to benefit from the integration mechanisms that already apply to goods and services. Customs and immigration pre-clearance at major

If there is a short-term political cost to confronting the naysayers and detractors of integration, then it should be borne now, lest it consume much greater political capital later.

ports of entry and airports in all three countries would also be a visible step to put Mexico on the same level as Canada is today. If NAFTA is about trade and investment facilitation, then other aspects of a closer economic relationship should translate into benefits that all can profit from.

Finally, there needs to be an unequivocal public statement by both presidents to the effect that a new partnership is being established, and that many aspects of the bilateral relationship will be brought under it. If repeated often enough and translated into action, people will eventually get the message.

In the post-9/11 environment it is clear that security concerns are para-

mount and take precedence over all other aspects of international exchanges. The challenge we face is to ensure that security is enhanced without impacting negatively on the many millions of dollars and people that move between our countries. A series of mechanisms and cooperative efforts to achieve this are already in place, but there is still more to do in impressing upon all that we will never be secure as individuals unless we are also safe collectively. In the case of Mexico, the U.S. and Canada, this means a North America with its northern and southern perimeters equally secure. Third-country nationals who enter the region should be able to travel freely within it, once they have been vetted by any one of the three

of the U.S. defense umbrella without contributing to it, even though such a contribution initially has to be modest and commensurate with Mexico's resources and abilities.

Finally, the excellent record of the past few years in cooperating with the U.S. on counter-narcotics operations and the fight against international crime needs to be further expanded and institutionalized. Having accepted the fact that we are much better off working together on these issues than individually, and setting aside outdated concepts of sovereignty and unilateralism, Mexico needs to make these efforts public and engage its population in supporting them. There needs to be a sea change in attitudes toward coop-

petitiveness *vis-à-vis* other economic entities and groupings. The actual pace of our integration has moved more quickly than the framework provided by NAFTA, while governments have acted for the most part as passive respondents to the forces of market-driven convergence. Now we should seize the initiative, agree on a shared vision of how the partnership should evolve and adopt a concrete action plan for realizing this vision over the next decade.

The reinvigoration of Europe, the dynamic growth of Asia and further steps toward the creation of new groupings in other regions of the world means that Mexico, the United States and Canada all face an unprecedented competitive challenge. It is clear that one of the most important measures that can lead to greater competitiveness is increasing and enhancing the comparative economic and social advantages between Mexico and the U.S. Freer movement of goods, services and people within North America, together with the adoption of common strategies *vis-à-vis* third countries, would serve to increase efficiency and lower costs. We need to aim for a "Made in North America" label that is globally recognized as synonymous with quality, cutting-edge technology and competitive pricing.

Bold initiatives are called for along the lines of NAFTA itself when it was first put forward in the 1990s. Some of these could relate to the creation of a North American customs union by 2010, developing a joint approach to smart regulation as a parallel to our Smart Border agreement, reforming outdated and inefficient national rules, developing common processes for approving sanitary, pharmaceutical and licensing procedures, as well as address-

The challenge we face is to ensure that security is enhanced without impacting negatively on the many millions of dollars and people that move between our countries.

countries under similar rules and enforcement standards in each. This would contribute to de-pressurizing North America's internal land borders and allow resources to be shifted toward controlling the real external threats against us. Mexico needs to accept that any threat to the U.S. is also a threat to our own security and as a result must be faced together. The same holds true for Canada. Mexico also needs to discard prejudices and historical baggage related to past conflicts with the U.S. and accept to discuss and participate in the common defense of the region. This means working with institutions that have been set up by the U.S. and Canada to protect North America. We can no longer assume that we are part

erating with the U.S. on issues which also affect Mexico's national security. Our 2004 survey indicates that a majority of Mexicans recognize this fact and are willing to accept it if it means they will be more secure and less vulnerable to external threats such as terrorism.

There are a host of issues that were left unresolved by NAFTA and which have continued to add unnecessary burdens and costs to our bilateral and trilateral economic exchanges. These need to be resolved. Regulatory issues, common standards and certifications, external tariffs, non-tariff barriers and sanitary exclusions are just some examples of areas where more work needs to be done if we are to maintain com-

The reinvigoration of Europe, the dynamic growth of Asia and further steps toward the creation of new groupings in other regions of the world means that Mexico, the United States and Canada all face an unprecedented competitive challenge.

ing the many differences that still plague the adoption of common standards among us. On the freedom-of-movement front, a joint migration agreement is the only way forward, one which recognizes the economic and social realities of the phenomenon and addresses the need for labor in the U.S., the supply of labor in Mexico, the numbers of Mexicans who are already in the U.S. without papers and the development needs of those regions that are the source for most of the Mexican migrants who cross into the U.S.

There are many proposals on the table in both the U.S. and Mexico, but the more urgent task is for both governments —at the highest political level— to reaffirm the commitment to work together on this issue. Unilateral solutions on either side of the border are doomed to fail just as they have in the past. Bilateral migration needs to be perceived as an overall benefit, not as a negative. Giving more Mexicans opportunities at home, and establishing order in the immigration chaos that prevails today, is a task for both countries within the concept of a partnership. The movement of labor is vital to our prosperity, both in terms of the demand in the U.S. for immigrant workers and the growing billions of dollars that they send back to Mexico. Like many other components of a new partnership, this issue is a difficult political bullet to bite on both

sides of the border. However, the ultimate benefits outweigh the costs, and these should be privileged over the difficulties.

On the institutional front there is also a pending agenda. In our desire to differentiate NAFTA from the European model back in 1994, the institutional structures needed by any multinational effort were by and large ignored. It is time to revisit this issue and create a

basic framework within which the U.S.-Mexican —and North American— agenda can be further developed and followed up. Bilaterally, a strengthened Binational Commission, periodic encounters at the foreign minister level and the High-Level Contact Group that was set up to deal with border issues at the local level needs to be revived and enhanced. In addition to both governments, other actors need to play a po-



Guadalupe Pérez/Cuartosuro

licy-making role: state governors, mayors, legislators and think tanks should all be involved in drafting the parameters of the partnership.

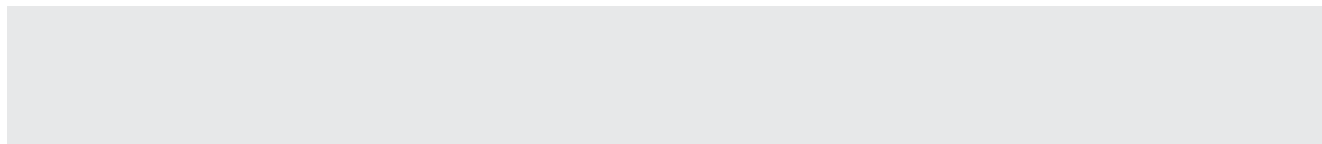
Finally, Mexico's development gap needs to be addressed jointly, as well as in a North American framework. Unlike the model of enormous resource transfers to the less developed new members that took place at each of Europe's successive enlargement stages, we need to come up with a different strategy. The objectives, however, are the same: to invest in the infrastructure and upward harmonization that will


make us more competitive. Whereas the Europeans charged their wealthier taxpayers with this burden, in North America we need to develop a strategy that is responsive to our realities and potential. A North American Investment Fund, giving real substance to the bilateral partnerships for prosperity, and other innovative mechanisms should be developed and strengthened. It is clear that trade and private sector investment alone cannot bridge the gap and that more is needed.

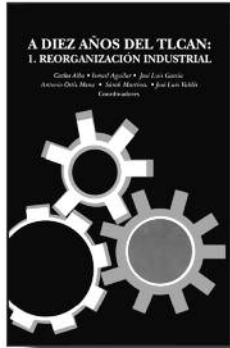
Accelerating Mexico's development is a challenge that all three NAFTA part-

ners must work together to address. Domestic policy reform in the fiscal, energy, good governance and labor sectors is a prerequisite to any major effort to obtain a commitment from the two developed NAFTA partners to invest in reducing Mexico's lag.

These reforms need to be actively pursued by the current and future administrations as a matter of the utmost urgency. Once enacted, the changes that ensue will, in and of themselves, act as genuine catalysts for considerable increases in the flow of financial resources to Mexico. **MM**







El Colegio de México

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Faith Saribas/Reuters

A Mexican-American Looks At Turkey and Sees Mexico

John Burstein*

No matter where they go, Mexican travelers report moments of insight: “All of a sudden I felt we could have been in Mexico!” If not a reference to the countryside—Mexico’s is almost as varied in miniature as the world’s—it is usually to the bustle of an open-air market, indeed universally human. Taking Turkey as an example, and far beyond the visuals mentioned, it seems like Mexico’s geo-political twin. This has to do with globalization. Comparisons between Mexico and Turkey bring up prospects for and dangers in the grand strategies of enlarged regions—North America and the European Union—as well as the determining role of minority autonomy movements in the geo-political project dominating the world at the beginning of this century.

In the nineteenth century, Turkey was irreverently deemed “the sick man of Europe” in much the same way that Mexico in the same period was said to be part of the United States’

* A Mexican citizen of U.S. origin, president of the FORO para el Desarrollo Sustentable in Chiapas (Sustainable Development of Chiapas Forum). This text is the result of a trip he made at the end of 2004.

Turkey and Mexico both have “poverty” profiles very different from those of the capitalist heartlands in North America or the European Union.

“backyard.” This kind of quip is currently out of fashion. What are the reigning metaphors today for this particular relationship, recurring on different continents: the relationship between highly incomparable but inevitably linked neighbors?

On the Mexican side of the comparison, we have lost our taste for imagery, appealing to the metaphysical (“so close to the U.S., and so far from God”) or resorting to make-believe geography. That is, the “North American” Free Trade Agreement is not only geologically dubious (I learned that the north-south continental divide is drawn along the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.) but socio-culturally nonsensical: what Mexican thinks she is (or wants to be) part of North America?

Turning to Europe, the ruling metaphor —self-chosen— is “the club”. Will Turkey be invited to join it? The decision by the members of the European Union after a chilling public debate was a time-qualified “yes.” Turkey’s membership in the Club is on track, but, as France, Germany and the rest determined in October 2004, it is on the “slow track,” estimated at 15 years.

NAFTA was accepted in the U.S. only because its Congress approved the presidential request for “fast track,” foregoing deep-consensus debate, limiting themselves to a yes-or-no vote. The contrast in the velocity of these blocs is logical: one dashes to a near goal and the other moves more slowly to a far-

ther one. While NAFTA is restricted to trade, the European Union is a far more complex alliance. Final membership in the latter is pending determination of whether Europe accepts not just trade, but forging a far more common identity with Turkey (in a “Europe” already rapidly expanding toward the East). One wants to be sure there are sufficient socio-political compatibilities minimally required to be part of the same club.

Again, there is the problem of a lack of a customary name for the new geographic division. Though it is the “European Union,” that continent ends very cleanly at the Bosphorus, leaving a very large Anatolia (Asia Minor, to be specific), just kind of not recognized.

But if the Amerindians can call themselves Indians, Mexicans can call themselves North Americans and Turks can learn to call themselves European. Geographic semantics aside, the debate, raging during last year’s E.U. vote and continuing today, is formulated as the question, “Is Turkey part of Europe?” with “Europe” understood as a socio-political entity. When answered in the affirmative, the arguments marshaled are based on economic dependence/inter-dependence and defense alliance.

The fundamentals of Mexico’s membership in “North America” are the same. Of course, on this continent it was economics that dominated the debate when it raged 11 years ago, though the defense alliance —in fear

of Central American immigrants before, and now, of course, even more of international terrorists— was always an implicit goal of the U.S. The immigration debate was postponed for later; it still is. Increasing political linkages could imaginably be pursued in the context of the Organization of American States but the fate of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) will determine whether the U.S. pursues a more complex regionalization with Mexico, or an economy-based drive into the rest of the South American continent.

It is lost on no one that there are alternative paradigms for interpreting these re-regionalization projects: 1) Are they (one or both) “colonial” in nature, or 2) “post-modern internationalist” in nature? Surprising as it is for analysts trained in Smith/Marxian economism, the cultural component appears to be of determining importance in opting for one or the other interpretation of the moment.

Though notable for being downplayed, the cluster of cultural factors differentiating Mexico from the North and Turkey from the West make it obvious that these southern additions to the integrated powerhouses are —unless you squint— “other.” Linguistically, of course, they differ from the rest; the linguistic challenge is as daunting for monolingual U.S. residents (and bilingual Canadians) as for polyglot Europeans, few of whom study Turkish. Needless to say, Turkey and Mexico both have “poverty” profiles very different from those of the capitalist heartlands in North America or the European Union; not only is the proportion of poor much higher; the population is far more rural than that of their prospective bloc partners (25 per-

cent in Turkey and Mexico). Mexico and Turkey are youth population time bombs, the strategy for which is presumably defusing without much more immigration-diffusion, and hopefully no explosion. Education, then, should prepare youth to live wherever the economy drives them, and should be secular-liberal, especially to help mature the fledgling formal democracies of Turkey and Mexico. No longer is it quite logical to play the long-used, now-played trump card of nationalism, nor—God forbid—promote the conservative religious currents growing in the world.

This sounds like a perfect project of “Washington Consensus” liberalism, which is, Rubicon style, expanding beyond and into qualitatively less liberal societies, at a moment in history in which “culture wars” are identified as the likely result of a post-nation-state global reordering. But cultural complexity is precisely a characteristic shared by Mexico and Turkey that can be read in favor of the re-regionalization projects at hand.

In both Turkey and Mexico (known by other names) extraordinary civilizations flourished within a similar timeframe: the Byzantine Empire (450 to 1453) and the Amerindian civilizations (300 to 1492). The Ottomans, originally from Asia, took over Anatolia (and jumped the Bosphorus and headed for Vienna) at the same time that the Spanish conquered more of the “New World.” Islam defeated Orthodox Christianity; Catholic Christianity defeated Amerindian culture. With or after these cataclysms of the late fifteenth century, the ethnic majority secured political power. With the Ottoman Empire, the non-Turks either died, left or assumed minority ethnic-

ity positions. In Mexico, after the depletion of the Indian population in the sixteenth century, the new mestizo majority ethnic group eventually secured power.

In short, culture wars are not new to either Turkey or Mexico. The outcome of these states forged by the cataclysmic imposition of one empire over another is the creation of complex, layered societies, prone to caste-like social organization and ethnic groups with long memories.

A secular, liberal, capitalist revolution might be expected when the secular, liberal, capitalist model had shown its potency. Mexico’s and Turkey’s were within a decade of one another, at the beginning of the twentieth century. One still finds founding father Atatürk’s portrait, or often a bust, in every room of every public building in the Turkish Democratic Republic; one thinks, here, of Benito Juárez, blending into Zapata, in the public spaces of our equally foundationally secular (Mexican) United States. Then there is a closed-but-to-kin Turkish bourgeoisie, mistakable for the Mexican Revolutionary Family, both of which, in the 1990s, were shaken up by—but finally shook down—neo-liberalization programs, *à la* Salinas. In Turkey the stabilizing hand applied to quell political unrest at that time took the form of their army’s “Soft Coup.” In

In both Turkey and Mexico extraordinary civilizations flourished: the Byzantine Empire (450 to 1453) and the Amerindian civilizations (300 to 1492).

Mexico—softened by the strategically applied para-military repression decades before—it was only necessary to rearrange an election after the fact. (That typifies a difference in intensity between the two social processes.)

Since then both countries have had significant achievements in the functioning of their systems of electoral democracy, helped unquestionably by processes very linked to the re-regionalization phenomena, whereby the need to look better to the powerhouse leads to acting better. The abuse of human rights continues to plague both countries; it is probably worse in Turkey than in Mexico, though both populations are inured to it, making it hard to tell. Bureaucratic corruption continues to be discussed in exactly the same terms in the conversations of the political class of one country or the other.

Social strain always comes with economic transformations, which in the Mexican and Turkish cases are notably internationalizing in their nature. Tourism (as well as its cousins, retired persons and other long-term transplants) is in the top three foreign-currency strategies of each country, and though the kind known as “sun, sand and sex” occurs in Club Med-like relative seclusion, the influx of foreigners with higher incomes, as well as differing socio-cultural norms reinforces the hegemonic consumer-society cultural messages we have wept about for many a decade. Below the airplanes heading south are roads and trains on which immigrants from each country head to the powerhouses’ heartland. Who knows whether the remittances from poor, rural Turks, gone to Germany, produce a greater or lesser pro-

portion of GDP than those of poor, rural Mexicans, gone to the U.S.?

A progressive observer (an identity as easy to feel as it is hard to summarize) is at first shocked, then, by one enormous inconsistency between these two great social shifts. Mexico's left, including the human rights and pro-democracy community, did not rally to, nor does it now support the North American Free Trade Agreement. They do not trust the intentions of the wooing party. All the Turks with whom I spoke favored—and wanted nothing short of—full membership in the European Union, expressly looking for the benefits in terms of increased rule-of-law and democratic practice (not to mention economic prosperity, about which they were less sanguine).

Waiting for a desired proposal does not build self-esteem. Finally, in October of last year, a slightly begrudging, certainly conditioned invitation to join the E.U. came out of a highly deliberative public debate (“Is Turkey part of Europe?”), subject to critical review of Turkey's political attractiveness, during the 15-year engagement period—uncomfortable for those desiring consummation—that was thus set in motion.

The French government (which had just forbidden the use of the veil in schools, affecting the 15 percent of its population who are Moslem) had been particularly reticent. Neither sophisticated multiculturalism nor old-fashioned liberalism is as dominant in their political culture as many Europeans frequently portray both to be. But the dominant position of the Turkish human rights movement, in any case, is clear: Turkey's inclusion in greater Europe is seen as the key to progress and so this extended engagement peri-

Education should be secular-liberal, especially to help mature the fledgling formal democracies of Turkey and Mexico.

od is the large window of opportunity for advancing its agenda.

If in this foreign policy matter the Turkish human rights movement is in a tactical alliance with the country's leading political-economic powers, nevertheless, there is a deep (*México bronco*-like) opposition to the foreign policy-constructed project, perceived as the re-founding of Turkish state-hood through de-nationalizing, semi-incorporation into Europe's liberal, advanced-capitalist regional bloc. This opposition, subject to control and even repression, is ill formed in political terms. It takes the form of reasserting Muslim identity.

The potential force of this movement comes from its religious-cultural predominance (over 90 percent of Turks are at least nominally Moslem). That force is enormously strengthened by the internationalist Moslem revitalization movement (today an obsession in the world) arguably dominant in the (counter-) region to which Turkey also—secondarily, at present—belongs: the Middle East. What is more, the Kurds, 15 percent of Turkey's 70 million citizens, opt for significant autonomy of their territory on Turkey's eastern border. (Since their armed independence movement has lost steam, the tactical benefits of E.U. re-regionalization now appear to be more salient than the pan-Kurdish na-

tionalist current, which is always an historic claim.)

In the case of Mexico, the nationalist revitalization movement, not incomparable to Turkey's, opposes the presently prevailing political-economic project grounded in cultural terms (extending to economic and geo-political ones); rejecting “North Americanism,” Mexican nationalists would strengthen the country's unique identity, as well as reclaim significant membership in the (counter-) region of Latin America.

More than just an interesting similarity exists between Amerindian and Kurdish claims for territorial, cultural and political autonomy.¹ Their autonomy projects are likely to strategically define the future of the grand re-regionalization projects in which each is embedded.

Seen from the perspective of the national capitals, the Amerindian and Kurdish autonomy movements have Mexico City and Ankara about evenly offended, defensive, perplexed and negating. The Indians, of course, are protectively enshrined as one of the two source-folks of the Mexican nation, while the Kurds are far more vulnerable to being cast as the subject-people on territory the Turkish state is not about to relinquish. But, seen from the perspective of the capitals of the re-regionalizing blocs, neither Washington nor Brussels shows signs of confusion regarding their respective priority: achieving the political stability on the border necessary for the grand re-regionalization project. The complex configuration approximately balances: Mexico's greater national commitment to the Amerindians combines with Washington's hardened realpolitik regarding rebellious minorities with a

result similar to Ankara's hardened realpolitik regarding rebellious minorities combined with Brussels' commitment to patchwork multiculturalism with strains of human rights language regarding the self-determination of peoples.

Could ethnic autonomy really be the crucial shoal that the project of North American re-regionalization either clears or on which it runs aground? If the comparably important Kurds did not feel re-regionalization beneficial for achieving their individual and national aspirations of economic development and autonomy, respectively, they might well look east rather than west. Since the Amerindians can perfectly see the poverty and isolation in which North America cordons off their brethren, and note Washington's ideological inclination to rather favor a canceling centralist federalism (like in Iraq) as its contribution to the lively and urgent world debate on the *right of self-determination* of minority peoples, and since there is little hope in the villages regarding the NAFTA-promised economic transformation (even with the large migration of their industrious youth, insultingly deemed "illegal" due to U.S. self-interested confusion), clearly there is a strong tendency among the Amerindian peoples to look toward alternative projects to North American re-regionalization.

It is reasonable to project that the phase of secular economic restructuring and socio-political harmonization will take roughly 15 years in both re-regionalization projects. In the meantime, Mexico and Turkey are conditionally identified partner-allies. It is difficult to imagine that 15-year phase without crises. Given the United States' (coincidentally Marxian) predilection for economism-based interpretation

and subsequent economy-based solutions to everything, the lack of concern, much less sympathy, for Amerindian peoples' self-determination may indeed prove to be a surprisingly important crisis in this would-be expanded region.

Let's suppose it is not. The question of minority peoples' self-determination, expressed in various forms of autonomy, will nevertheless be an issue to deal with in the North American context, precisely because it is certainly profiled to be one on the still grander stage of international affairs. What is "writ small" (Kurdish or Amerindian claims to autonomy in Turkish and Mexican politics) is "writ large" in this age of a Muslim-dominant challenge to the nation-state system, coinciding interestingly with a universal (capitalist secular liberal powers included) rethinking of the nation-state dominated and dominant system.

Even if the autonomy movements in the border zones of the North American and European re-regionalization strategies do not destabilize the conditional allies in which they are embedded, they will still be relevant for some time as secondary reference points in the new East-West conflict and the hot/cold "culture wars" in which that conflict is already finding its expression.

In a first possible scenario, one or both powerhouses could come under such stress in the East-West grand theater that they could abandon the

project of including their prospective, presently conditional associates, to concentrate on the former. The minority peoples' autonomy movements would find themselves relocated in countries pulled toward their respective counter-regions. Turkey would recast its identity as a Muslim society. Mexico, in this lively scenario, might find itself participating in a Bolivarian paradigm. Looking at this world from the minorities' perspectives, the inter-social Muslim re-regionalization project is unlikely to favor Kurdish empowerment. The native peoples of Latin America have not so far been featured in the still-emerging "Bolivarian" vision of a strong Latin American re-regionalization. They would certainly be hard to ignore, however, considering that various, including the Andean, countries have large, sometimes majority Amerindian populations and that, culturally speaking, some sort of privileged status would be expected for the native "folk" of the continental counter-regionalization.

Even in the scenario that presently seems more likely, in which the European and North American versions of re-regionalization succeed in their objectives, processes redefining post-modern states are implied, in which functions and powers are redistributed among the centralized and decentralized political units, renewed or of new formation, based on having negotiated and appropriated, anew, the terms of

Amerindian and Kurdish claims for territorial, cultural and political autonomy are likely to strategically define the future of the grand re-regionalization projects in which each is embedded.

economic, socio-cultural, environmental and political development. One way or another we are going through a moment of historic transitions. In the re-regionalization projects under consideration, the Indian and Kurdish autonomy movements cannot but be strategic wedges in the processes underway. The reason is, simply, that the predicament of these minority peoples —politically semi-disenfranchised, economically unjustly incorporated, and environmentally/politically well-endowed— is central to the most salient issues of the day, made much more so by virtue of the impressive consolidation of their organized political expression today.

The minority peoples' autonomy movements thus are recast as spearheads in the general thrust for political renovation in our time. Formal (electoral, representative) democracy is widely viewed as having offered what it could and now "participative democracy" is deemed wanting and needed for even basic political stability in many parts particularly of the developing world. Traditional peoples with community constructions of their own are properly identified as a potential vanguard and even replicable models of a sort still to be discovered. This reversal of traditional concepts is still highly hypothetical.

The entrenched view, especially in the home countries, is that of traditional peoples stuck in poverty, socio-politically backward. That view is cracking under pressure, though, even in the home countries. This opens up a set of new challenges: even were there equitable resources and power awarded to these autonomy experiences, the greatest threat would lie in the institutionalization of civil liberties in these imagined entities.

Happily, the autarkic impulse is little evident in the autonomy movements discussed here. Indeed, in the case of the Amerindians, they must fairly fend off any unwanted alliances with forces from outside: religious groups and political parties, human rights and ecology movements, neo-tribal acolytes of various sorts, non-governmental organizations of all stripes. The autonomy-minded movement must constantly calibrate and successfully judge where opportunities exist and limits lie in the complex political environment, internally, nationally and in the ambitious heartland involved. Certainly it is an opportunity that devolution of governmental power and responsibility (in Europe attended by a grounding in international law) is well favored generally today; that is, of course, as long as it is confidently contextualized within the limits of political stability. The centralized states are even eager to rid themselves of responsibility for social policy (though too often preferring privatization to decentralization). Clear limits exist in any direct challenge to the economic model, turning the challenges into lightning rods for strong or overwhelming heartland discouragement; indirect challenges of the sort may be accommodated. (The Chiapanec Zapatistas showed their evaluation of that when the movement passed predominantly from a class-based to an ethnic-based ideology.) Cultural pride is smiled upon, as long as it does not revert to cultural supremacy. All can see the layered nature of respect for rights over natural resources: autonomies' rights over oil, for example are denied, but may still be possible for forests.

Having doubtless been globalized, the world is now going through a dyna-

mic struggle to become differently divided. In the old tit-for-tat, the U.S. toehold in South Korea balanced Moscow's in Cuba (with extreme counterpositions in contiguous North Korea and Miami, respectively). Today Washington and Brussels want regions-plus, boldly eying neighbors, though they be socio-economically "other." If the re-regionalizations are more than neo-colonial projects, they must be part of the effort to fashion a post-modern state of nations in which the cultural dimension prevails—even challenging the dominion of the economic dimension—in a way not seen since the Middle Ages. The Crusades, of course, were a harbinger signaling the dangers of monolithic super-nations defined around religion and culture. Regional autonomies, based on a formulation of the right of self-determination, made possible by complex political realignments, reinforced by a diversity of alliances, constitute a great opportunity/pose a great challenge. The opportunity/challenge is great due to the autonomy movements in question being the form of struggle of historically disadvantaged and unjustly treated minorities. The challenge has to do with the enormity of the task. The opportunity, too: offering both re-regionalizing powerhouses and emerging polities the chance to act creatively toward, not so modestly, contributing to sustainable development and human dignity. ■■■

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¹ They are even roughly equivalent in numbers, with over 10 percent of the 110 million Mexicans being Amerindian.



Cultural Aspects of NAFTA in Mexico

Pedro Félix Gutiérrez Turrubiarres*

Mexico shares with Canada one of the world's most complex and difficult neighbors: the United States. The Canadian people have three legacies: the English majority; the French, with its old separatist yearnings; and the indigenous peoples spread throughout its territory.

For more than 200 years, creating good relations with the United States without being absorbed by it has been a permanent dilemma that has made for an unpredictable, torturous game of attraction-rejection for Canada, including periods of armed clashes with the U.S.'s orig-

* Writer, journalist and researcher, founder of the National NGO Council in San Luis Potosí.

For the last 150 years, Mexico has felt the might of its neighbor:
in the nineteenth century, half its territory fell into U.S. hands, and in the twentieth century,
its economic dependence on the United States was consolidated.

inal 13 colonies. The Canadians have always fought for their identity and for being distinguished from the Americans.¹

Alan Riding, former head of the *New York Times* bureau in Mexico, says in the prologue of his book *Distant Neighbors* that probably nowhere else in the world do two countries as different as Mexico and the United States and that understand each other so little co-exist side by side. More than just by levels of development, these countries are separated by language, religion, race, philosophy and history. In addition, the United States, which has existed for a shorter time, has already entered the twenty-first century, while ancient Mexico continues subject to its past.

For the last 150 years, Mexico has felt the might of its neighbor: in the nineteenth century, half its territory fell into U.S. hands, and in the twentieth century, its economic dependence on the U.S. was consolidated, with enormous U.S. industrial, financial and commercial interests in Mexico.²

More than 500 years after the Spanish conquest, we Mexicans continue to be trapped by the contradictions that gave birth to us. It is important to recognize that the nation-state develops as it seeks a cultural identity and with the creation of its own signifiers that peoples transform and recreate throughout their history. As Montoya Martín del Campo says, “Mexicans define themselves clearly *vis-à-vis* for-

eigners and only with great difficulty *vis-à-vis* themselves.”³ As a country, Mexico has an extraordinarily rich identity, in which the ancient and the modern, the traditional and the avant garde, the indigenous and the Spanish, the Eastern and the Western all co-exist. Its complexity may reside in both the clash and the merger of these opposites.

To supplement this not-so-loving triangle among the countries of North America, J.J. Fonseca points out that the United States is the richest, most powerful, bellicose, capricious and mixed-race country in the world, since the migration of people without hope, in need and persecuted from Europe was the basis for its productive strength and wealth; but also, every immigrant brought with him or her the age-old customs of his/her place of origin, including the language. So, the Poles, Russians, English, Italians, Chinese, French and Jews, among others, contributed to making up today’s *gringo* in just two generations.

Traditions in the United States are of relatively recent making. Among its cultural icons we find very few liberators and more gunmen (Billy the Kid, Jesse James, Dillinger, Al Capone), and some empty spaces are filled with sports stars or entertainers. Advertising has created and standardized a mass media culture in which actors are successful candidates for public office. Everyone has seen them on television and at the movies and nothing more is needed.

It is very common for U.S. advertisers to take events, values or symbols from other cultures and distort them to make them funny, convincing or pleasant for the people their publicity is aimed at.⁴

All of this is watched over by the Judeo-Christian god of the majority and by laws and precepts that do not always manage to impose loyalty and obedience. When all else fails, the system has the electric chair.

There are relatively few studies about Mexico’s trade partners in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), that, compared to Europe, although they have not existed very long, place value on their history: “Euro Disney offers a summary of the U.S. utopia by depicting the four myths of its historic rise: in the nineteenth century, conquest and adventure; in the twentieth century, fantasy and discovery. From East to West Coast, the four have the same root and speak to us of the same desire; travel in time and space, the ever-retreating border that responds to the contemporary challenge of astronauts, rockets and satellites; both broaden out space, a new history that brings together candor, innocence and violence.”⁵

Recently we have seen the unification of national states into confederations to deal with global problems surpassing their individual capabilities; one example is the creation of supranational bodies like the European Union. Equally, we see that free trade

agreements are also forged to deal with economic globalization. NAFTA is a treaty set up to facilitate the purchase and sale of industrial and agricultural products among the three countries of North America, gradually eliminating tariffs or duties paid on products that enter another country and establishing the norms to be respected by producers as well as mechanisms for solving differences that may arise.⁶ It also included rules for the purchase and sale of services: land transport, telecommunications, professional services and those of banks and insurance companies. Today, this exchange, which is unequal for Mexico *vis-à-vis* its trade partners, comes to millions of dollars and 11 years after its coming into effect, there is talk of the need to reformulate some chapters.

However, Mexico's asymmetry with its NAFTA partners has forced it into a necessarily subordinate role *vis-à-vis* the United States' economic, political and military strength and Canada's economic development and relatively greater wealth. In contrast with the European process, in NAFTA these asymmetries are very important with regard to production, technology, per capita output and wage levels. In addition, the scope of the two integration projects is qualitatively different, as are the motivations of the nations. While the European countries seek to accelerate their integration to constitute a mega-nation in this century, the United States conceives of itself as a self-sufficient pole



Iván Stephens/Cuartoscuro

that is pulling in its wake the rest of the hemisphere with its cultural "backwardness," its histories, its religions, its educational, production and political deficits; and it considers Canada part of its own European and American legacy.⁷

In his article "Duración de la eternidad" (The Duration of Eternity), Carlos Monsiváis writes, "Culture is what firms up links, keeps barbarism away and distributes goods."⁸ Without denying the validity of this statement, we would add that culture is broad enough to include everything produced by Man, the sum of all knowledge, ways of life and, according to anthropology, the repertoire of each specialized area of knowledge; what is particular to groups, individual behavior, artistic tendencies, the national wealth, in which we would

include master works, creators, programs and educational projects.

Mexico forcibly and completely opening itself up for the first time implied changes on all levels, including the cultural. The awareness that we have entered a new century has had an impact on the psyche of the entire world's population, including Mexicans, and worldwide today, practices and customs, conventions and treaties are being questioned. With the end of the Cold War, continues Monsiváis, "Pluralism flourished, with, however, two facets: a pride in our own identity and another facet, resentful of old humiliations that certain ethnic groups, nations or cultures have perpetrated against minorities or those weaker than they."⁹

The disappearance of the bi-polar world is clear in the twenty-first cen-

Mexico's asymmetry with its NAFTA partners has forced it into a necessarily subordinate role *vis-à-vis* the United States' economic, political and military strength and Canada's economic development and relatively greater wealth.

tury's international order, which is diverse, a sign of the post-modern perspective that is visible above all in the political and economic side of cultural industries, which generate products that, in addition to being commodities, are forgers of identities and models of behavior (I am referring here to film, the publishing and recording businesses, radio and television).

In matters of culture, the European, Asian and American continents will have to more effectively abide by the Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice. This human rights instrument states that culture, a product and patrimony of all of humanity, and education in its broadest sense, provide more effective means for adaptation, which

not only let people know that they are born equal in terms of their human dignity and rights, but that the right of all groups to having and developing a cultural identity and life must be respected.¹⁰

The constitution of a culture and system of values for all peoples and nations, including Mexicans, is the result of a historic struggle for the right to freely express their way of being, maintain their idiosyncracies and particularities. With globalization and the advance of technology, will we preserve our place and identity? **MM**

NOTES

¹ Antonio Ávila Díaz, "Carta de Montreal, Canadá. La difícil vecindad," *Nexos* (Mexico City), April 1992.

² Alan Riding, *Vecinos distantes. Un retrato de los mexicanos* (Mexico City: Joaquín Mortiz, 1985).

³ Alberto Montoya Martín del Campo, "Apuntes para entender el posicionamiento de México ante la actual circunstancia histórica mundial," *Globalización y sociedad civil* vol. 2, no. 2, 1996, p. 43.

⁴ J.J. Fonseca, "Réquiem para B.F. Skinner. Los conductistas también mueren," *Ovaciones* (Mexico City), August 22, 1990.

⁵ Jean Claude Masson, "De Miguel Ángel a Mickey Mouse. La vuelta de los días," *Vuelta* (Mexico City), March 1993, p. 61.

⁶ *¿Qué es el TLC?* (Mexico City: Secofi, 1992), p. 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁸ Carlos Monsiváis, "Duración de la eternidad. Cultura: todo lo que usted quiso saber sin apagar la tele," *Nexos*, no. 172, p. 35.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/race.html> consulted February 17, 2005. [Editor's Note.]

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Michael Moore and Trey Parker Two Interpretations of the U.S.-Canadian Border¹

Graciela Martínez-Zalce*

Why should we use two U.S. films as an example of the representation of the U.S.-Canadian border? Well, precisely because by taking an ironic look at the representation of both sides, they subvert the traditional idea of nationalism and recycle national values to de-mystify them.

Michael Moore, today world famous thanks to his work as an anti-Bush documentary film maker, shot the film *Canadian Bacon* in the mid-1990s. A few years later Trey Parker and Matt Stone (also famous thanks to their television series) produced *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut*, a title which is an obvious intertext of *Canadian Bacon*.²

The border condition, accentuated by the force of the waterfall, is present from the beginning of *Canadian Bacon*. During the credits, a panoramic take of Niagara Falls, the natural border between the United States and Canada, accompanied by the ironic musical score (“God

* Researcher at CISAN.

The stereotype is perfect for ironically developing the absurd idea that anyone who seems different is a threat, even more so when in the collective imaginary Canadians and Americans share so many similar traits that the former could be culturally absorbed by the latter.

bless America again/ You must know the trouble that she is in”) in which the singer says that America is like a mother to him and that he cannot understand what is wrong with her, situates us in the space where the plot will unfold.

What sparks the conflict? The loss of jobs and the closing of plants thanks to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In one of the first scenes, an unemployed worker paints graffiti on a billboard that reads, “Welcome to Niagara Falls, home of Hacker Dynamics.” (Hacker is the plant that closed.) On the photo of the plant’s owner, he paints a balloon that says, “See ya in Mexico, suckers!”

How can such an unfortunate situation be turned into a comedy? By turning the plant into an arms factory that is totally useless given the end of the Cold War. The director utilizes Americans’ fascination with weapons to underline the absurdity of the situation: the factory organizes a close-out sale where the highest bidder can take home everything from light weapons to missiles in the trunk of his car.³

South Park also starts by situating the audience in a border town (“quiet, little, redneck, podunk, white trash USA”), a quiet mountain town where the pure white snow is only a reflection of its perfect children: they all look like Jesus and are of pure, open mind. They are fragile children who can be contaminated by the corrupt, urban world.

Because it is made of cartoon characters, we immediately know that its interpretation of reality has no aspirations to mimetism. *South Park* is a parody of a musical comedy and an homage to *Canadian Bacon*.

Two opposed visions of the border are used to counterpose U.S. and Canadian identities in the movies. Both exploit the stereotype to underline their critiques of war-mongering as irrational and as the worst trait of U.S. society and government.

In the glossary of the table of values used in his survey of both U.S. and Canadian citizens, Michael Adams defines national pride as, “Defining one’s identity through national pride and believing that America should hold a strong position in the world.”⁴ This definition supports the idea of the border as a defensive line for maintaining the uniformity of the individuals who belong to a community and that, therefore, identify with each other by differentiating themselves from the others, in this case, Canadians.

The center of the conflict in *Canadian Bacon* is precisely national pride which, irrational and without basis, makes it possible to manipulate the masses. The president’s advisors (played, among others, by Alan Alda) discover that the end of the Cold War has made his popularity drop continually and fatally; they threaten him constantly with the phantom of reelection. Wars will give him an aura of power and therefore win him people’s respect. The idea,

then, is to find a dangerous enemy to defend the nation from.

The center of the conflict in *South Park* is also national pride, but in a different sense: the idea here is uniformity, that there is only one correct way to think and act, which immediately turns the other into the enemy.

The stereotype is perfect for ironically developing the absurd idea that anyone who seems different is a threat, even more so when in the collective imaginary Canadians and Americans share so many similar traits that the former could be culturally absorbed by the latter.

The acid humor of both comedies is based on the improbability of thinking that Canada might be a military threat to the United States. And because of this, the construction of the enemy as a figure that is simultaneously abstract and concrete is one of the most interesting points of analysis of the two films

In *Canadian Bacon*, we learn what Americans think of Canadians through the dialogue and the situations presented. All criticisms have to do with the Canadians’ good manners, which bothers the Americans. In that sense, several scenes are emblematic: the two Niagara sheriffs go to a hockey game across the border (of course, hockey, considered the Canadian national sport, is part of the construction of the stereotype of their identity) and ask themselves if that thing in the middle of the flag is a marijuana leaf and then



Lucy Nicholson/Reuters

refer to the national anthem as “that song.” The voice over the sound system tells the public that “littering and swearing are prohibited.”

When the frustrated American heroes (John Candy and Rhea Perlman) disembark, they know they have crossed the border because the place is clean and their first act of aggression against the country, their first act of war, is to litter by emptying bags of garbage onto a river bank. Even important buildings have no locks on the doors, and the guards are always terrified by the foreign visitors’ violence.⁵

For the characters, who have always had prejudices against their neighbors, it is very easy to react against the media onslaught. Moore reproduces news programs’ harping on an issue and the paranoia they manage to very intelligently create with that. The president’s advisor says that the American people will believe everything they are told as he watches a news clip on the nightly news program with the highest ratings. First you have to disseminate

What are borders good for? According to Moore and Parker, for defending yourself from those who believe in freedom of expression, those who think differently.

alarming data (Canada is the world’s second power; the Canadians can cross the border, mix in among Americans and go unnoticed.). Then, you have to come up with a report that simultaneously infuses both hatred and fear (which seems impossible given that “they are whiter than us”). Moore creates a parody of contemporary journalism:

Voice off: The Socialist majority in Canada, a country known for its cleanliness and good manners, has decided on a military build-up along the U.S. border./ Little girl: I don’t like Canada. It’s too cold./ It has more property in the United States than in any other country.

A take of an anonymous crowd walking down a crowded street states, in capital letters, that “Canadians walk among us.” And then, a photo montage

(William Shatner, Michael J. Fox, Mike Myers, Alex Trebek) and a list of names (Peter Jennings, Morley Safer, Leslie Nielsen, Lorne Green, John Kenneth Galbraith, Leonard Cohen, Mary Pickford, Paul Anka, Joni Mitchell, Rick Moranis and K.D. Lang, among others).

All this is reinforced with talk shows and round table discussions in which politicians and intellectuals develop a defensive discourse, talking about the implications of being invaded by Canada: paying homage to a maple leaf, putting mayonnaise on everything, having winter 11 months out of the year, listening all day to Anne Murray. And, since living on the border means becoming the first line of defense, citi-

zens’ initiatives immediately emerge in the form of placards (“Bomb Canada”) and yellow ribbons on the doors of homes; distributing weapons for free; destroying road signs that point to Canada; banning Molson beer; all of this in short scenes depicting people preparing for war in general, people who want to defend themselves from the fearsome Canadians, not knowing that it is all simply a simulation, because they really fear for their lives.

In *South Park*, the movies, a medium for children to learn when their parents do not have the time to take care of them, are a vehicle for perversion. Terrance and Philip, simultaneously a reflection and parody of the characters in the cartoon series the movie is based on, with filthy mouths, are un-

disputed heroes who counter the ideal of children's behavior. Here also, the influence of the movies on audiences is capable of changing behavior and leading to evil. Because it is a parody text, *South Park* turns the stereotypes around: the stereotype says that the irrepressible force of American culture will end up annihilating Canadian identity. However, here, American youth is damaged by the coarse, Canadian sense of humor: scatological and full of "bad words" due to which, according to PTA common sense, you would be fated to share Hell with Hitler, Gandhi, George Burns and Saddam Hussein (the Devil's lover, who turns out to be effeminate, a romantic solitary dreamer, exiled for



Trey Parker and Matt Stone.

Fred Prouser/Reuters

Incrusted in daily life, popular culture helps understand how a nation is perceived. These two films are an excellent example that proves the rule.

remaining faithful to his beliefs, curious about life in the world and sexually enslaved by Saddam, who even in bed is a tyrant). Of course, the nightly news is also broadcast in Hell.

However, here it is not the government, but family authorities who begin the conflict. Adams points out that U.S. values have regressed to the degree of believing that only the traditional family model is valid.⁶ Thus, mothers become the vigilantes of community morals, defending children's innocence at the expense of the death of soldiers and citizens. "Let's kill those damned Australians." "We're killing Canadians." "Australians, Canadians....what's the difference?"

The irony resides in a paradox: the mothers who defend decency have no

qualms about torturing their children to clean up their language. Neither do they oppose the death penalty for those whose only fault is being scatological, nor the absurdity of war, as long as they can limit freedom of expression and show that they are right, that they are the bearers of the truth.

Parodying the parody, paying homage to its predecessor (the one about the other Canadian war), *South Park* makes fun of itself for the horrible, elementary animation and for basing its situations and language on scatological humor.

The climax comes with a sung declaration of war, in which the enemy is also intelligently constructed, but much more directly than in Moore's film since the words of the song express all the

stereotypes that Americans have about Canadians:

Times have changed, our kids are getting worse; they won't obey their parents, they just want to fart and curse.../Should we blame the government? Or blame society? Or should we blame the images on TV?/ No, blame Canada!/ Blame Canada and all their beady little eyes and flappin' heads so full of lies/ Blame Canada, blame Canada/ We need to form a full assault, it's Canada's fault/...Well, blame Canada, blame Canada, it seems that everything's gone wrong since Canada came along/ Blame Canada, blame Canada, they're not even a real country anyway.../ Blame Canada, blame Canada/ with all their hockey hullabaloo and that bitch Anne Murray, too/ Blame Canada, blame Canada/ the smut and trash we must bash, the laughs and fun must be undone,/ we must lament and cause a fuss, before somebody thinks of blaming us.⁷

Why invade your neighbor? The border has to be crossed to save the Canadians; save them, of course, from themselves. A country that has eliminated its national beauty contest to elect the contestant for Miss Universe is a threat. Those attitudes could be contagious.

Then, what are borders good for? According to the irony of Moore and Parker, for defending yourself from the onslaught of the leftists, of those who believe in freedom of expression, those who think differently. Political incorrectness is the vehicle for irony and making fun of the Canadian identity is the means for magnifying the defects in the idea of perfection that American society has of itself.

"The American government thinks it has the right to police the world; your government will kill two Canadians, an action condemned by the U.N.; home of the free, indeed. This is about freedom of speech, about censorship," says the Canadian ambassador before the United Nations in *South Park*.

If we take into account that these two cultural products were created and distributed before the September 11 terrorist attacks, which engendered the "axis of evil" as a central part of the U.S. presidential discourse, it is surprising that this "axis of evil" can be applied to Moore's and Parker's ironic reading of their country's national identity *vis-à-vis* that of their pacifist neighbor. "Now you're in charge of the world. Don't be a bad winner," says the Russian premier, wolfing down Kentucky fried chicken, to the president of the United States. "Where can I get an enemy?" asks the leader of the free world, whose duty it is to guide a society that apparently does not know how to live without visible enemies, a leader

who does not know how to lead a nation that only feels powerful when it has somebody to confront.

It is true: incrusting in daily life, popular culture helps understand how a nation is perceived. These two films are an excellent example that proves the rule. At the end of the credits, Moore finishes with the statement, "No Canadians were harmed during this production," but it is impossible not to ask ourselves how many Americans felt that they were. ■■■

FILM CREDITS

Canadian Bacon

(1995) Written, directed and produced by Michael Moore; Co-producer, Kathleen Glynn; Editing, Wendy Stanzler and Michael Berenbaum; Photography, Haskell Wexler, ASC; Cast: John Candy, Alan Alda, Billy Nunn, Kevin J. O'Connor, Rhea Perlman; 1 hour 35 min.; MGM DVD.

South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut

(1999) Director, Trey Parker; Producers, Scott Rudin, Trey Parker, Matt Stone; Written by Trey Parker, Matt Stone and Pam Brady; Director of animation, Eric Stough; 78 min.; Warner Brothers DVD.

NOTES

¹ The author wishes to thank the UNAM's PAPIIT Program for its economic support for the collective project she co-chairs, "North American Borders. Crossroads, Encounters and Divergences. Comparative Studies of Mexico and Canada."

² Synopsis of *Canadian Bacon*: Because of the U.S. president's declining popularity, his advisors decide to initiate a war with Canada. To demonstrate his patriotism, the sheriff of Nia-

gara decides to invade the neighboring country to stop the nuclear threat that, according to him, is harbored by the CN Tower. In the end, mere coincidence averts a war. Synopsis of *South Park*: At the showing of a Canadian film, children from South Park start swearing. One of their mothers starts a campaign against Canada, leading to war.

³ Americans' fascination with weapons was the fundamental theme of *Bowling for Columbine*, the documentary that made Moore world famous.

⁴ Michael Adams, *Fire and Ice. The United States, Canada and the Myth of Converging Values* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2003), p. 163.

⁵ We should remember the sequence in *Bowling for Columbine* in which Moore goes through several Toronto neighborhoods opening doors in houses that are not locked to prove that the media has created fear among the American public, prompting the increase in gun purchases and fostering violence as a result.

⁶ Traditional family (the reverse of the flexible family), with the family defined as a married man and woman with children. See Adams, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

⁷ "Blame Canada" by Trey Parker and Matt Stone.

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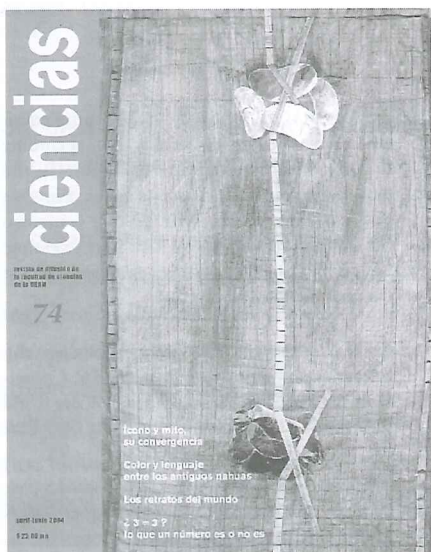
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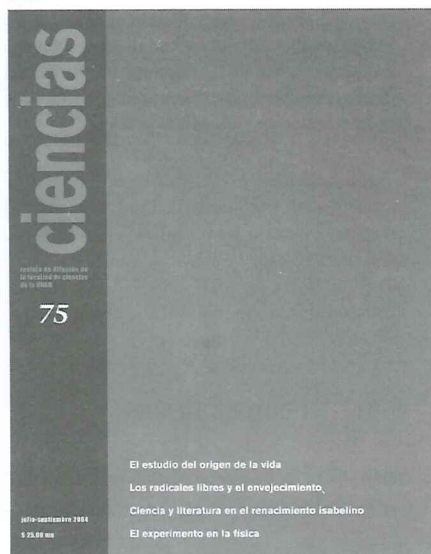
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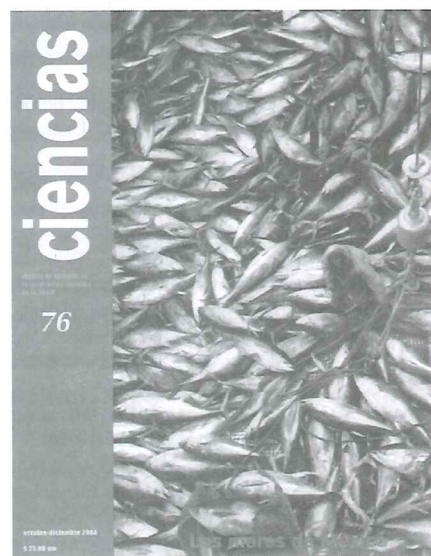
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*San Agustín
de las Cuevas
City of Stone
and Water*

Salvador Padilla Aguilar *
Leilani Padilla Carrillo **





Upper left: Jesús Pliego's house. Lower left: Rosario Chapel. Upper right: cloister. Lower right: Count of Regla house.

The ancient village of San Agustín de las Cuevas is located 18 kilometers south of Mexico City. Its current name, Tlalpan (meaning “on solid ground”) comes from the fact that it was situated far from the lagoon, never on its banks. An ancient Tecpanec domain, it was founded as a Catholic town around 1532 by the barefoot Franciscans. Later, the Dominican friars continued the process of Christianization. Like other towns, Tlalpan has gone through a long period of being absorbed by Mexico City, particularly throughout the twentieth century, until, to the detriment of its old ways, it became one of the capital’s neighborhoods.

The old San Agustín de las Cuevas is located in the mountains. Its highest peak, the Ajusco volcano, lends its name to the southern mountain range, the main source of water and oxygen for Mexico City. There is another volcano, the Xitle, whose last eruption buried Cuicuilco, the most prosperous lake basin civilization 2,000 years ago. The resulting lava bed was dubbed “Tetlan” by the indigenous and “Malpaís” by the Spaniards. The lava formed large caverns, giving the town its other name, “de las cuevas” or “of the caves.”

Agriculture recovered from the eruption thanks to the ash that served as fertilizer and the water from the local springs. Fuentes Brotantes (Bubbling Springs) was the main source, but water was

* General secretary of the Tlalpan Chronicle Council.

** Interpreter and translator.

Photos by Gustavo Sotomayor.

abundant in other places also. Local inhabitants produced corn, beans, amaranth, crab apples and *capulines*. Later, they also grew Hispanic fruit like apricots, apples, peaches and chestnuts.

During the colonial period and after independence, many well-known figures from Mexico City acquired property in the town because of its benign climate and the beauty of its forests. Country houses and estates proliferated, giving San Agustín its characteristic look: enormous orchards; long, tall adobe or volcanic rock walls; solitary, cobbled streets, and clear, murmuring water flowing through the outlying *apaniles* or canals.

The Bubbling Springs, el Calvario, el Cedral and the caverns attracted many visitors. On market day and holidays, indigenous came to the town offering different traditional goods (fowl, torch pine, coal, flowers, fruit, tortillas and *pulque*) or crafts (receptacles, mats, mortars and pestles, braziers, tables and chairs). The economy was shored up by visits from important personages like the Viceroy of Mendoza, the Marquises of Mancera and Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz.

Tlalpan's fair turned San Agustín into the social capital of the country for three days a year. Merchants offered different luxury goods: tobacco, liquor, wines, jewels and fine cloth. After a

During the colonial period and after independence country houses and estates proliferated, giving San Agustín its characteristic look: enormous orchards; long, tall adobe or volcanic rock walls; solitary, cobbled streets, and clear water flowing through the outlying *apaniles*.

solemn mass, there were fireworks, music, banquets, bullfights and cock fights. The fair ended with a dance on the Calvario plain. After the fair, outsiders with purchasing power left town, and life went back to a subsistence economy. However, since it was a stopping-over place, the religious, medical services, public baths, inns, horseshoeing, ironworks and shops for repairing saddles remained. The government employed judges, sheriffs and night watchmen; the local farms offered the local indigenous, the majority of the population, jobs as foremen, cooks, gardeners, drivers and servants. But the Spaniards ruled town life.

The town had been a stopping-over place from pre-Hispanic times. The ancient inhabitants of the lake basin crossed the region on their way to Malinalco, Chalma, Xochicalco and Oaxtepec before the Conquest. After the Spaniards came, San Agustín was an obligatory stopping-off point on the trip from Mexico City to Cuernavaca.

After independence, the *criollos* replaced the Spaniards as dominant and political matters underwent severe changes. In 1824, the State of Mexico was founded with Mexico City as its capital. But on November 18, Mexico



Mural at the Government Palace (detail).



Left: San Pedro Apostle Church. Right: The main plaza's kiosk.

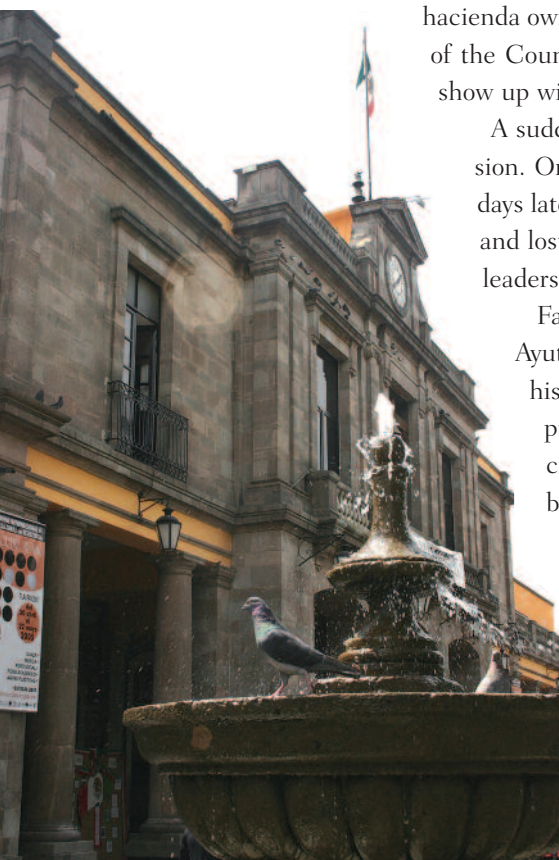
City's Federal District was created and became the country's capital. The state Congress was forced to pick another capital, and it chose San Agustín de las Cuevas, which recovered its indigenous name, Tlalpan, and was ranked as a city. It remained the capital from June 15, 1827 to July 12, 1830, founding educational and economic institutions for the development of the state. But sharp clashes with the federal government because of the cities' geographical proximity forced the change of the capital to Toluca on July 12, 1830.

This move returned Tlalpan to keeping to itself except during the Tlalpan Fair. This state of affairs lasted until the second half of the nineteenth century with the presence of hacienda owners and industrialists like the Marquis of Vivanco or the descendants of the Count of Regla. Politicians also went there: General Santa Anna used to show up with his entourage at local gambling houses.

A sudden occurrence would interrupt Tlalpan's routine: the American invasion. On August 17, 1847, General Worth's forces charged into Tlalpan. Two days later they left, headed for the Padierna Ranch, where a battle was fought and lost by Mexico on August 19 and 20, more due to Santa Anna's criminal leadership than to the invaders' superiority.

Famous figures visited the town. In 1855, Juan Álvarez culminated the Ayutla Revolution (1854) that finally expelled Santa Anna. He headed up his cabinet and governed for 11 days from Tlalpan as president of the Republic. Years later, Maximilian and Carlotta used to go to Tlalpan for social and government engagements. Manuel González and Porfirio Díaz, both Liberal presidents, also visited frequently.

Until 1830, the basis for Tlalpan's economy had been agriculture and services. In 1831, industrialization began with three factories that soon became important: Peña Pobre, La Fama Montañesa and San Fernando. La Fama Montañesa was set up in 1831 with backing from the Banco de Avío (a nineteenth-century bank that loaned money for production) in Mexico's first industrial revolution. The size of these industries led successive governments to introduce modern transportation and communications: the telegraph (1866); the steam railroad (1869), the telephone (1878), animal-drawn trolleys (1891) and electric trolleys (1900). Together, Peña Pobre and



Government Palace.

La Fama Montañesa offered the largest number of industrial jobs in the area in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and they both survived until the end of the latter.

With economic activity came construction and the erection of buildings that have come to symbolize Tlalpan: the parish church, the Rosario Chapel, the cloister and the atrium. The oldest and most splendid civic works include, among others, the Chata House (or Little House), the Moneda House (the Mint), the houses of the Marquis de Vivanco and the Count of Regla and the arched walkways in the main plaza. More recent buildings include the La Paz Market, the government palace, Don Jesús Pliego's house and the Quinta Soledad, from the time of Porfirio Díaz. In addition to its buildings, Tlalpan's greatest attribute is its layout, which dates from 1794 when the Viceroy, Count of Revillagigedo, Don Juan Vicente de Güemes Pacheco y Padilla, ordered the 52 streets of San Agustín to be straightened and paved with stones. For some reasons, among them its relative distance from downtown Mexico City, its lava-bed foundation and the existence of monasteries and seminaries, Tlalpan has not been as devastated as Mixcoac or Tacubaya, with a few exceptions. In the early 1950s, businessman Jorge Pasquel tore down several old houses on Real Street to build a *frontón* hand-ball court across from the main plaza. Another property owner caught the fever and tore down the Santa Inés Tower for a similar ignoble purpose.

The biggest danger today to the town's patrimony are the unbridled trends of the merciless laws of the market. Real estate companies are acquiring large plots of land to erect modern projects, usually condominiums. This normally leads to the destruction of estates and their orchards. Another threat stems from unemployment. Many jobless people have taken refuge in itinerant street sales with no regard for traditional areas. Their arbitrary location and the garbage they generate do violence to the town's historic patrimony.

The authorities are not free from guilt either. In the past they have permitted the devastation, but it is important that they use the tools at their command to discourage future attacks. Their task must involve more than just that, however, and with the support of civil society, they must begin to reverse the destruction, recovering plazas, parks and streets for their original use and restoring elements of the urban image like cobblestones and fountains. If they did this, it would be a sign that perhaps, in the beginning of the twenty-first century, we have begun to feel equally responsible and, as a result, to cooperate for the preservation of our patrimony. ■■■



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[1]



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The Hipódromo Neighborhood A Flavor All Its Own

Édgar Tavares López*

The Colonia Hipódromo (Hipódromo Neighborhood) was one of the first land developments created at the end of the Mexican Revolution. In contrast with the others, it was laid out in a modern, dynamic way, breaking completely with the rectangular system used up until then. This neighborhood boasts the first valuable examples of modern architecture combining the neocolonial, functionalist, Californian and especially art deco styles, giving it a flavor all its own.

It is traditional in our city for the names of neighborhoods to almost always be decided in accordance with some natural, cultural or historic characteristic of the land where they were established. The Hipódromo is no exception: it was built on the land occupied by the Condesa race track promoted by the Jockey Club of Mexico, a group set up in 1881 by society's elite.

In the early twentieth century, the Jockey Club bought 300,000 square meters of land from the Colonia de la Condesa Land Development Company to build a race track and other sports

[1] The interior of the Basurto Building in the shape of a horseshoe.

[2] Stairway in the Armillita Building. Photos: Gustavo Sotomayor

Woman with jars at the entrance to the open-air theater in Mexico Park. Photo: Rubén Vázquez ▶

* Architect and researcher. Author of *Colonia Roma*, published by Clío, and *Colonia Hipódromo*, published by the Mexico City government.





Ironwork on entrances to buildings on Amsterdam Avenue. Photos: Gustavo Sotomayor

arenas. The Condesa race track was inaugurated October 23, 1910, with the cream of Mexican society in attendance, elegant gentlemen and fine ladies in their best clothing. The entrance was located on what is now Nuevo León Avenue and the stands on what was later to become the intersection of Parras and Amsterdam Avenue. The outbreak of the Revolution meant that the race track only operated a short time, and in the next few years it was used as a stadium for sports and military events, motorcycle and automobile races (in which the vehicles went as many as 75 times around the track). On November 18, 1924, the Jockey Club signed a contract with the Hipódromo de la Condesa Land Development and Construction Company to divide up, urbanize and sell the land on which the former race track had stood.

Architect José Luis Cuevas was in charge of designing the development's general project, originally called Insurgentes-Hipódromo. His initial plans showed a very dynamic design above all along Hipódromo Avenue (today, Amsterdam Avenue), following the race track's oval shape. Along that same avenue, he placed three plazas: Popocatépetl, Citlaltépetl and Iztaccíhuatl. The corner lots sold for between 35 and 40 pesos per square meter; the ones across from the Mexico Park for 28 pesos per square meter; the most expensive ones, located in the northern part of the development between Insurgentes, Yucatán and Popocatépetl Avenues, cost 50 pesos per square meter; and the cheapest ones, along the southern side of Campeche Street, went for 19 pesos a square meter.

Many people confuse the Colonia Hipódromo with the Colonia Condesa. The Hipódromo neighborhood originally had the following borders: to the north, part of Jalisco Avenue (today, Álvaro Obregón) and Yucatán Street; to the east, Insurgentes Avenue; to the south, Aguascalientes Street; and to the west, Nuevo León Avenue. Like in the Colonias Roma and

Condesa, the streets of this area continued to be named after Mexico's cities and states: Celaya, Teotihuacan, Loreto, Sonora, etc. On Amsterdam and Sonora Avenues, several cement benches covered with tile and attached to a lamp post were installed.

The park we all know as Mexico Park has been officially named General San Martín Park since October 25, 1927, and was inaugurated December 6, 1927. Its creators, architect Leonardo Noriega



Reproductions of the original benches on Amsterdam Avenue. Photo: Gustavo Sotomayor

and engineer Javier Stávoli, included many benches shaped like tree trunks but actually made of concrete, as were the lamp posts. The main entrance to the park was at the intersection of Mexico and Sonora Avenues, near the Amalia Castillo Ledón Library.

The stupendous open-air theater with its high colonnade cost 72,500 pesos to build; it holds 8,000 people, and its entrance was divided in two by a fountain designed by José María Fernández Urbina. The fountain boasts the sculpture of a robust nude woman holding two jars pouring water at her feet. The theater was given the name of a foreigner, Charles Lindbergh, who visited our city in late December 1927. North of the theater, a small waterfall lent a touch of freshness to the area, together with three artificial lakes with their—in those days— crystal-clear water. In the southern part of the park, local residents enjoyed an octagonal tower with a clock and a powerful radio transmitter.

The Hipódromo neighborhood is one of the world's few large-scale art deco residential areas. This distinctive air comes from buildings erected in the style that emerged from the International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Art held in Paris in 1925. The style can be seen in the geometric forms of its reliefs, the scaling of the volumes in the facades and the use of new materials such as polished marble, steel, bronze and aluminum. Some examples are the Jardines buildings, with their multi-arched entryways; the Del Parque building, with its elegant granite planter; the Picadilly building, with its artistic geometric reliefs; and the San Martín building, recently restored to display its original beauty.

The Hipódromo neighborhood was also fertile ground for developing a new architectural concept that came from Europe, rationalism, known in Mexico as functionalism. Internationally renowned Mexican architect Luis Barragán built a couple of houses in this style on Mexico Avenue. The Basurto building was built between 1942 and 1946. Its splendid horseshoe-shaped lobby reaches 11 stories upward. An excellent example of the architectural style similar to “ships run aground” that emerged in the 1930s can be seen in the Armillita building, originally owned by the famous bullfighter Fermín Espinosa. It was built in 1939 and still preserves the pergolas



The Basurto Building. Photo: Gustavo Sotomayor



Column Clock in Mexico Park. Photo: Rubén Vázquez

of its roof garden. The colonial Californian style, fully developed in the Polanco neighborhood, one of Mexico City's most exclusive areas, was first seen in the Hipódromo area, where there are still numerous houses with the decorative elements of this current: spiral-shaped columns on terraces and windows, baroque frames, mixed curved and straight-edged caps and tiled gabled roofs.

Over its 80 years, the Hipódromo neighborhood has been home to noteworthy figures like Agustín Lara, Mario Moreno "Cantinflas" (who had his offices in the Rioma Building on Insurgentes Avenue), the musicians Pablo Moncayo and Ricardo Palmerín; the actress Maricruz

Olivier; writers like Salvador Elizondo, Guillermo Sheridan, Paco Ignacio Taibo I and Luis Rius, among many others. Other well-known figures in the neighborhood were Don Hilario, who rented bicycles to children to ride around the Mexico Park; Don José Ruiz Gómez, better known as "blondy", a shoe-shine man, who shined Cantinflas's shoes for 36 years for what was then a hefty 10-peso tip.

Many shops and locales in the Hipódromo neighborhood have become traditional not only for residents, but for many other inhabitants of Mexico's capital: the old Lido Movie Theater, inaugurated in 1942; the Flor de Lis, a tamale shop established between 1935 and 1940; the La Naval grocery shop; the Gran Vía pastry shop; the La Espiga bakery; the Las Américas Movie Theater, and many others.

We should not forget that the Hipódromo neighborhood was originally a Jewish area, since that was the first place this community went to live when their downtown businesses flourished. Several schools like the Yavné and the Hebrew Tarbut school, founded in 1942, were set up there. Among the Jewish public figures who have lived there are the poet Jacobo Glantz, who had to stop going to class and sell bread to make a living; rabbis Jacobo Goldberg and David Shloime Rafalín; painters Leonardo Nierman and Moisés Zabludovsky; actors Susana Alexander and Wolf Rubinsky; and news anchor Jacobo Zabludovsky and his wife Sara, who lived on Benjamin Franklin Avenue. Some of the traditional establishments included El Buen Trato; the Hipódromo Bakery, which made delicious black, onion and Sabbath braid bread; the Rody House and the Kadima Club, where prayers and social and recreational activities were held, as well as being the headquarters for a time of the Jewish Boy Scouts of Mexico.

It took less than 20 years for all the lots in the Colonia Hipódromo to be occupied, from 1926 to 1945. This was a very successful business venture for the developers, and architecturally, its buildings were very uniform in style. This stylistic unity has undergone some transformations in the beginning of the third millennium and some traditional buildings have been sacrificed to put up loft apartments whose designers have made no efforts whatsoever to adapt them to the neighborhood's original style. The erection of monstrous condominiums has also changed the original face of Amsterdam Avenue, and on Insurgentes, enormous billboards rest on traditional buildings, whose ground floors have been turned into store fronts. Thanks to the local residents, the Mexico Park has been saved from some hairbrained schemes like the 1993 proposal to build an underground parking lot there. Despite everything, the Hipódromo neighborhood continues to be one of our city's urban architectural jewels. ■■



*The Roma
Neighborhood
A Glorious Past*

Édgar Tavares López*

The Witches' Castle, Rio de Janeiro Plaza. Photo: Elsie Montiel



Upper left: Island on Álvaro Obregón Avenue. Upper right: Façade of an art nouveau building at the corner of Mérida and Guanajuato Streets. Lower left: Romita Plaza. Lower right: Balmori Building's private street. Photos: Elsie Montiel



The Colonia Roma, or Roma neighborhood, has some of Mexico City's longest-standing traditions. Founded December 30, 1902, it was the first residential area of the twentieth century. The neighborhood was developed by the Chapultepec Avenue Land Company, headed up by English businessman Eduardo Walter Orrin, founder of the famous Orrin Circus. The land the new neighborhood was to be built on bordered a little pre-Hispanic town called Aztacalco, which means "in the house of the herons." In the eighteenth century, this town was re-baptized Romita ("little Rome") because it had a beautiful tree-lined avenue (Chapultepec Avenue) that went all the way to the Chapultepec forest, which was very similar to one that existed in Rome, Italy. When the land for the new development was laid out, it took the name of the old town.

Around 1530, the Santa María de la Natividad Church was built in Romita, where Friar Pedro de Gante baptized the local indigenous, and which to this day preserves one of the crucifixes sent by Carlos V, an image of Our Lord of Buen Ahorcado and a series of interesting eighteenth-century paintings by Antonio Torres. In the 1940s, the quarter was declared a "typical

* Architect and researcher. Author of *Colonia Roma* (The Roma Neighborhood), published by Clío, and *Colonia Hipódromo* (The Hipódromo Neighborhood), published by the Mexico City government.

area” and in the 1990s, its picturesque plaza, located one block from Cuauhtémoc Avenue, was restored. The streets and alleys of Roma were silent witnesses to the filming of the movie “Los olvidados” (released in the U.S. as “The Young and the Damned”) directed by Luis Buñuel. Among its traditional watering places is the famous *pulquería* or *pulque* saloon “La hija de los apaches” (The Daughter of the Apaches).

In the century-old Roma neighborhood, three fundamental factors came together to distinguish it from its contemporaries: the urban, the social and the architectural. The Roma neighborhood was the first residential development to offer all necessary infrastructure and services: drinking water, paved streets, sidewalks, street lighting, a drainage system, trees and finished houses.

The Roma neighborhood exhibited innovative urban concepts like its broad streets (usually 20 meters wide), such as Orizaba and Yucatán, with their novel central islands covered in grass with marble and bronze sculptures of lions. The 30-meter-wide Veracruz Avenue (today Insurgentes) was designed for quite a bit of vehicle traffic and with time, would become the city’s longest street. Another contribution of the Roma neighborhood was 45-meter-wide Jalisco Avenue (today Álvaro Obregón Avenue), with its ample central island flanked by two lines of magnificent trees, then described as a “Parisian boulevard.” Another novelty were its street names, the names of Mexican cities and states, since by that time numbered streets, in vogue since 1887, had become confusing. It is said that streets in the Roma neighborhood were named after all the places the Orrin Circus visited on its tours.

In the heart of the neighborhood a beautiful garden was built called the Roma Park (today known as the Rio de Janeiro Plaza), with a simple circular fountain at the center. The lots were large: the smallest measured 400 to 600 square meters. In 1906, the land cost 25 pesos per square meter and the houses sold for between 14,000 and 18,000 pesos.

The Colonia Roma has been home to many famous people, well known not only in the city, but nationwide. There were historic figures like Álvaro Obregón; the poet Ramón



▲ The Gallego Center on Colima Street. Photo: Elsie Montiel

▼ The Sacred Family Church. Photo: Mónica Tapia





Left: Façade on Jalapa Street. Upper right: Replica of Michaelangelo's David. Lower right: Art nouveau façade on Chihuahua Street.
Photos: Rubén Vázquez

The area boasts splendid examples of eclectic and French-style art nouveau buildings that have become landmarks.

López Velarde; Sara Pérez, the widow of President Madero; Father Miguel Agustín Pro. From the world of business came Nequib Simón, the first owner of the Mexico Bull Ring, and, Don Adolfo Prieto, one of the founders of the Monterrey Iron and Steel Foundry; writers like Fernando del Paso, Pita Amor, Sergio Pitó; great artists and musicians like Andrea Palma, María Conesa, Enrique Alonso “Cachirulo,” Enrique Bátiz, Leonora Carrington, Katy Orna, Arnold Belkin. The list would be endless.

Some historic events took place there, such as the failed assassination attempt against General Obregón and the religious persecution of the second half of the 1920s during the Cristera War, which in the Roma neighborhood led to mass being prohibited, the Sacred Family Church being closed and the celebration of clandestine masses in basements by Father Pro. Places, objects and events live on in the memory of local residents: the Son-Sin, Kukú, Eréndira and Donaji restaurants; the El Globo cafe; long-gone nightclubs like the Río Rosa, the Quid, the Monte Blanco, the Nacatamal; the former Royal, Balmori and Roma movie theaters; the Chiandoni and La Bella Italia ice cream parlors, followed by the Álvaro Obregón Biscuit restaurant; schools like the Vallarta, the Oxford, the Mexico, the Renacimiento and the Anglo-Español, among others; the ice cream cart La Heroica that used to stand at the corner of Orizaba and Álvaro Obregón; the fiestas organized by Father Benjamín Pérez del Valle at the Vanguard Cultural and Sports Center; the celebrations of San Francisco Javier in the town of Romita and the Silent Procession.

The third outstanding factor is its architecture. The Roma neighborhood was the last place that eclectic and French-style art nouveau buildings that characterized the Porfirio Díaz regime were built. The area boasts splendid examples that are now landmarks like the Witches' Castle, the Sacred Family Church, the National Autonomous University's Book House, the Renaissance Institute, the Balmori

Building, the Lamm House (today a cultural center), the Gallego Center, the Parián; three magnificent examples of art nouveau style, one at Chihuahua 78 and the other two at the corner of Guanajuato and Mérida; and a series of French-style houses on Tabasco, Colima and Durango Streets. Taken all together, they give us an image of what the Roma was like in its golden age.

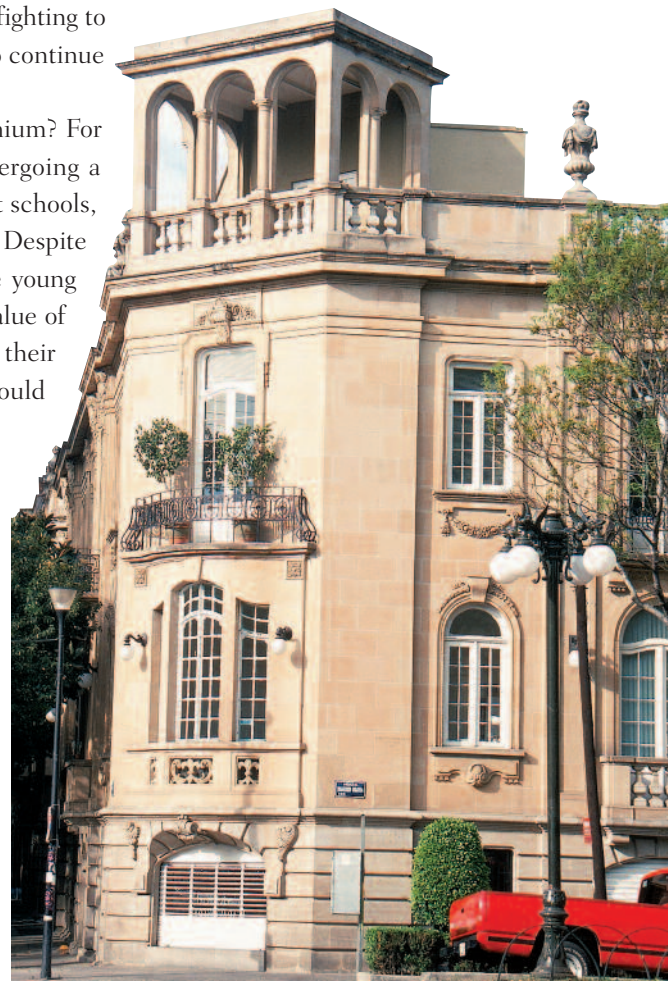
After the 1940s, the neighborhood was invaded by the middle class, a large part of whom came from Mexico's Southeast. This led the monied families to move to new residential areas in search of tranquility. The new residents demanded housing, education, work, recreation. They also established small businesses —mom-and-pop corner stores, bakeries, dry cleaners, etc.— which began to transform the neighborhood's initial residential character. In the 1960s the Roma neighborhood became mainly an area of shops, schools and offices, with the resulting increase in population flow and vehicles, plus the noise and crowding that they bring with them. Its traditional tranquility has been disturbed down through the years: to be precise, six high-speed avenues crisscross the Roma today.

We should also not forget that the Roma was one of the areas most affected by the devastation of the 1985 earthquakes; some of its many contemporary buildings collapsed, four of them bringing down old buildings with them.

For obvious reasons, the Roma today is far from being just a residential district. Its proximity to Mexico City's Historic Center makes it part of it. Its layout has changed somewhat, with for example, the construction of the Insurgentes Subway Station Plaza; the elimination of the island in the middle of the first Orizaba Street; the replacement of the intersection of Durango and Orizaba Streets by the Rio de Janeiro Plaza. Many of the great figures and families who lived there have gone forever. But today, a few remain: painter Leonora Carrington, historian Guillermo Tovar de Teresa, Gilberto Aceves Navarro. More than 1,000 buildings that are representative of its golden age (1906-1939) are still preserved today, fighting to remain standing, and giving the area its identity, struggling to continue to be functional and, of course, to be admired.

How is this neighborhood dealing with the third millennium? For the last few years, the Roma neighborhood has been undergoing a rebirth, becoming a cultural area with a series of galleries, art schools, bookstores and museums that have opened their doors there. Despite pressure from a current real estate boom, fortunately some young architects, companies and institutions have reassessed the value of the Roma's early-twentieth-century constructions, facilitating their restoration, conservation and maintenance. The aim here would not be that the Roma become a big static, lifeless museum, dedicated only to the contemplation of its old buildings, but rather that the material characteristics that gave it its particular style and still distinguishes it from its surroundings be preserved. In this enterprise, zoning regulations should be compatible with the quality of life aspired to by its inhabitants, those who work there, go to its schools or just visit, and that that quality of life improve every day. Every time a building is destroyed or changed for mercantile reasons, the identity of this neighborhood is damaged; now, entering into its second century, the Roma is fighting to preserve and continue to exhibit its glorious past. **MM**

The Balmori Building at the corner of Álvaro Obregón Avenue and Orizaba Street.
Photo: Mónica Tapia ▶



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A Metaphorical Voyage

Housed in a Porfiriato-era building in the stately Roma neighborhood, the Museo Ramón López Velarde (Ramón López Velarde Museum) was conceived by its creators, Guillermo Sheridan and Hugo Hiriart (both poets themselves, of course), as a metaphorical museum to celebrate the world and poetry of Ramón López Velarde, who lived and died in these rooms.

Visiting it can become an act of initiation. Its preamble is meticulous: we enter by a side door, go up the stairs, turn to the right and admire the space dedicated to two other Mexican poets and writers, Salvador Novo and Efraín Huerta, whose personal libraries are housed here. It is inevitable to dissert a little about their differences in personality because it springs to mind: separated by a metaphysical line are their desks, pens, books and bookcases.

Elsie Montiel



Elsie Montiel

Rubén Vázquez



Rubén Vázquez

After exploring the reading room and consulting the library with its thousands of volumes, we retrace our steps and head again toward the stairway where a closed door awaits.

When it opens, we enter the archetype of what must have been a middle-class household of the city's early twentieth century, with its flat ceilings, furnished with objects like those that must have filled Ramón's rooms.

Here, with just a few objects, we slowly begin our approach to the poet: a trunk containing López Velarde's personal effects also includes clues about his mundane inclinations and his unrestrained eroticism: two women's garters, left there almost by mistake. The desk and the bookcase, indispensable proof of a life dedicated from a very early age to words. On the walls, portraits: of his mother and sister; of friends, also poets; and an image of the Sacred Heart, proof of his religious fervor. The forged iron headboard on the bed whose geometric forms remind you of the runes of power and wisdom. The quilt and bedspread, with the poet's initials embroidered on them, confirm his loving relationship with his mother and sister. The shoes under the bed make us think that he comes back to sleep in it every night. The household remedies and medicine chest on the nightstand, unable to save him from a deadly pneumonia contracted on one of his many walks through the city and probably aggravated by syphilis. On the hat stand, a black hat and coat, his uniform as an adult, reminds the visitor of the mourning López Velarde kept for his father from the age of 20 to his own death. A premature death at the age of 33, like Christ.

The trunk-suitcase above the wardrobe symbolizes the poet's pilgrimages between city and provinces, never seeing the fruition of his desire to have his own house. A desire that only

now, many years after his death, is realized. Since, as its creators say, this is the house that Ramón López Velarde never had because his memory resides here.

We have not been in the place very long and we feel we already know the poet. Only one object remains to be examined: the wardrobe.

The absolute protagonist of all Mexican bedrooms for years until they were replaced by built-in closets, more than just clothing and personal effects were kept in the wardrobe. Parts of our lives were also kept there. Secrets, hopes and dreams included. Whenever possible, you kept it like an old friend. Perhaps for that reason they chose the wardrobe in this room to initiate the metaphoric adventure.

Behind its doors, we will be victims of a surprise assault on reason that will only strip us of our incapacity to draw with words, of our incapacity to discover all the possible worlds that are liberated by a poet's pen.

THE POSSIBLE WORLDS

Novel and unusual are the precise adjectives to describe what happens then, when we face a series of apparently unrelated objects with no reference point in reason. Mirrors fringed in neon light, green, white and red, that return to us a thousand angles of ourselves that we did not know before; a clock without hands that leans in, almost saluting our approach; across from it, a piece of furniture in festive, childish colors that inside has two circles whose meanings oppose and meet each other; a chair that looks giant compared with the train that crosses its seat. The well, the receiver of fantasies and a place of predictions. The confessional, behind which we find the secret for overcoming the temptations of the flesh. Masks that return to us luminous images of a place which can no longer be the same. And, at bottom, the intangible lady of the black gloves...

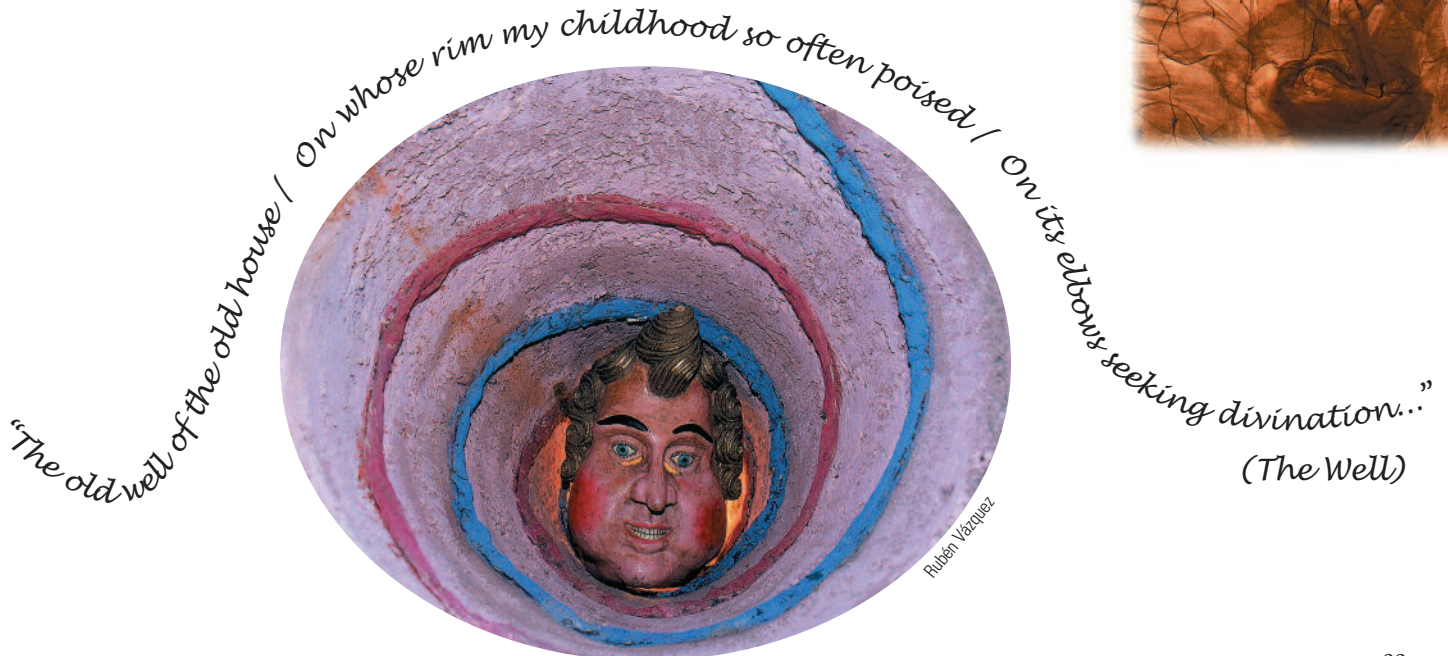
But there is no cause for concern. We are entering into a stimulating imaginative game with the help of López Velarde's poetry, the identity card of every object displayed. And it all takes on meaning: his passions, his dualities, his losses, the reason he is one of Mexico's most admired poets.



Rubén Vázquez



Elsie Montiel



Rubén Vázquez

Elsie Montiel



*“Suddenly you come out to meet me,
resuscitated and with your black
gloves...” (I Honor you in Fright)
Dedicated to Fuensanta.*

No conventional museum could remit us to the innumerable meanings and imaginative experiences that a poet can with his pen. That is why this homage was conceived this way, like a metaphorical game that eludes the literal meaning of words and the objects that represent them and launch us into the world of a passionate poet who, in the words of Hiriart, “is capable of transfiguring in his interior chemistry the misery of existence into the clean crystal of verse.”¹ Here, pleasure arrives together with our freedom to react before the weight of his poetry.

WHAT DO WE DISCOVER ABOUT RAMÓN LÓPEZ VELARDE?

That at 12 he set off on the rocky road of unfulfilled love. That he never married, but loved three women passionately and fervently, without avoiding the demands of his sex. That of the three, Josefa de los Ríos, better known as Fuensanta, eight years his senior and who died before him, is the best known by history. That his imperturbable religious fervor was only comparable with his unstained erotic temperament. That, loving his native Jerez, Zacatecas, he was irremediably drawn to Mexico City, which was only a reflection of a life always immersed in contradictions. That he foresaw that his life would be short.

That his education moved between the seminary and Law School. That he practiced law but from his teens knew that his life was irremediably paired with

words. That he wrote with mastery, lucidity and originality, cultivating poetry with the patience of a goldsmith.

That he labored in the choice of adjectives, to the point of leaving blank spaces in his poems to give himself time to find the exact word, the one that would interest or baffle the reader. That his second book of three, *Zozobra* (Anguish), was received by the critics as “the most intense, the most daring attempt to reveal the hidden soul of a man,”² and his most renowned poem, “Suave Patria” (Sweet Land), was celebrated for its “magnificent manufacture, its novel lyricism,” and for exhibiting “a baroque elegance never before foretold in Mexican poetry.”³

In summary, we discover enough for curiosity about his life and his poetry to last a very long time after visiting his house.

Let us recapitulate: in a world for which large museums require remarkable architects, spectacular buildings integrated into

Rubén Vázquez



*“Sweet Land: your house is
still so vast that the train
rolling by seems only a
diminutive Christmas toy.”
(Sweet Land)*

the landscape and collections of incalculable value —as though art needed luxurious clothing to exist— there is still room for a metaphorical museum, for a museum that bases its fame and fortune only on poetry, that unfinished human good that requires an attentive ear and a new convert every day to perpetuate itself. The trip through this museum will be brief or eternal, depending on the eye that looks at it and the gaze that discovers it. **MM**

Elsie Montiel

Editor

NOTES

¹ Hugo Hiriart, *Casa del Poeta. Museo Ramón López Velarde* (Mexico City: Casa del Poeta, 1991).

² Baltasar Dromundo, *Vida y pasión de Ramón López Velarde* (Mexico City: Editorial Guaranía, 1954), p. 75.

³ *Ibid.*

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The museum houses the libraries of Efraín Huerta and Salvador Novo, made up of more than one thousand volumes which can be consulted during museum hours. School visits, book launches, lecture series and other cultural activities are also held. Another interesting space is the Las Hormigas Cafe Bar which hosts events and is open from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Saturdays.

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Saving Endangered Species In Mexico City's Chapultepec Park

Gerardo Ceballos *

Juan Cruzado**

In the chronicles of the discovery and conquest of New Spain, stories abound about the biological riches in the extraordinary central region of what is today Mexico. In his letters to Emperor Carlos V, Hernán Cortés described in detail how when he arrived at Tlamacas (or Cortés Pass, as the lowest point between the Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl Volcanoes is today known), he witnessed a sight he could hardly forget: in the distance, at the bottom of that hydrological basin was one of the country's most beautiful regions, rich in flora and fauna. There, five shallow lakes, the Zumpango, Xaltocan, Texcoco, Chalco and Xochimilco Lakes, covered more than 150,000 hectares, mixing crystalline waters with others covered with aquatic plants like tules or cattails, *ninfas* and *papas de agua*, a kind of wild potato. Ducks, herons, tortoises, *ajolotes* and fish were also plentiful.

In the center of the lakes was Tenochtitlan, the capital of the Aztec Empire. Down through the centuries, it was to become one of the largest, most highly populated metropolises on the planet. Today, Mexico City covers 100,000 hectares and has 20 million inhabitants.

The environmental impact of the city's growth has been devastating. The lakes, their fauna and their flora gradually disappeared, devoured by cultivated land and the advance of the city itself. In the twentieth century, enormous works of infrastructure, like the deep drainage and the grand canal, built to avert flooding, put an end to the last vestiges of the lakes.

That silent crisis went almost unnoticed, even for scientists. Among the most profoundly affected species were the fish and the reptile known as the *ajolote*. Two types of *ajolotes* (*Ambystoma mexicanum* and *A. velasci*), frogs (*Rana tlaloci*), and several kinds of fish including the white fish or shortfin silverside (*Chirostoma humboldtiana*), the mesa silverside (*Chirostoma jordani*), chubs (*Algansea tincella*, *Evarra eigenmanni*, *E. thahuacensis* and *E. bustamantei*) and *mex-*



*Professor at UNAM's Institute of Ecology, interested in the conservation of vertebrates.

**Graduate student at the Institute of Ecology, working with vertebrate conservation.

Photos courtesy of the authors.



clapiques or the Chapultepec goodeid (*Girardinichthys viviparus*) all lived in the lakes. All these species were widely used for human consumption; some, like the *ajolotes* and white fish were especially valued for their exquisite flavor. Today, that kind of frog and three chubs of the *Evarra* genus, native to Chalco and Xochimilco (one of which was scientifically discovered only in 1957), are already extinct. The white fish and the spottail chub (*A. tincella*) disappeared from the region, although they survive in other regions of the State of Mexico and Michoacán. The other species can be found in isolated groups throughout the whole valley, besieged by advancing urbanization, the introduction of other species and exotic diseases and pollution. When will they be an item for the history books? Like that of other species, will their disappearance go unnoticed?

Despite this difficult situation, the end of the story still has not been written. Part of that story, an example of nature's plasticity, adaptability and vitality, is unfolding in the heart of Mexico City, in the Chapultepec forest park. This is the city's most famous park because it was the scene of a very important part of the country's history: here, the Child Heroes fell to their deaths as they defended the last bastion of resistance against the U.S. invasion in

the battle of September 13, 1847. Also, for more than 400 years, a considerable part of the city's water came from springs located here, springs that formed a great lake.

Chapultepec welcomes more than 7 million visitors a year, which is why we were very surprised recently to learn that it was still home to an interesting number of the species that originally lived there. Who would have imagined that in its forests, practically isolated from other green areas, you could still find more than 100 species of birds and some mammals like the ringtail cat, the opossum and squirrels, despite the racket of the thousands of cars that speed along surrounding streets? What other secrets does this ancient forest hide?

It was even more surprising to find endangered aquatic organisms, vestiges from better times, in Chapultepec's lakes, whose water is of very low quality because it is contaminated with sewage and garbage. This is good news for conservationists because it implies that even in landscapes dominated by human activities it is possible to preserve a fraction of the original biological diversity, sometimes including endangered species.

The aquatic species were rediscovered at the beginning of a project under the aegis of the park's management, which included, among other things, the conservation and restoration of Cha-

pultepec's flora and fauna. The project, headed up by Juan Cruzado, began in late 2004 and is expected to end in mid-2005. Its basic aim is to reverse the dangerous conditions of the lakes, which have deteriorated because of decades of intensive use and scant maintenance, to ensure the survival of their native species.

Emptying tons of garbage and mire from the bottom of the lakes, a technically complex task, necessitated the temporary removal of the aquatic fauna. This revealed that there continue to be populations of mesa silverside, *mexclapique*, Mexican *ajolote* and *acocil de Moctezuma* (*Cambarellus montezumae*), a kind of crayfish. These species are endemic exclusively to Central Mexico and today they live in very few localities, making them critically endangered. The mesa silverside also reproduces in other Valley of Mexico lakes like the Xochimilco and the Nabor Carrillo. The *mexclapique* has fared better and can still be found in shores, dams and some lakes. The *ajolote* can only be found in Xochimilco and, as we now know, in Chapultepec. The probability of these species' extinction is directly linked to the number of localities in which they are found, so rediscovering them in Chapultepec and the efforts to improve their habitat provide hope that they may live for a long time. How long will they con-

tinue to live in these lakes, safe from urban growth?

Fortunately, what happened in Chapultepec is not the only example. As mentioned above, other urban and suburban parks are the refuge of a considerable part of the flora and fauna of the region, which includes endangered endemic species. For example, the Nabor Carrillo, Xochimilco, Zumpango and Tláhuac Lakes and Canals provide refuge to thousands of migratory aquatic birds, fish and *ajolotes*. The El Pedregal ecological preserve, an area covering about 140 hectares in the National Autonomous University of Mexico's University City, is still home to 20 species of mammals like gray foxes, ringtailed cats and spotted skunks, as well as hundreds of species of birds, reptiles, amphibians

and plants. Worth noting, for example, is that this is the only place where a small cactus, *Mammillaria sanangelensis*, continues to exist tended by man and which conservationists are trying to reintroduce into the Pedregal preserve.

On this cold afternoon, we are looking at a small artificial pond in Chapultepec's children's recreational area where we have put more than 15,000 of the two species of fish. It is incredible that in this tiny space, so many fish can be held without being visible to the casual observer. In a few weeks, after the lakes have been dragged and cleaned, they will be returned there. Soon it will be dark. The last rays of light fade away. We walk slowly away from the pond amid the construction materials and the dust, holding onto the hope that the pro-

ject will be successful. Looking at the restored lakes, the city lights and the chaotic noise of the heavy traffic seem to be a different world. Soon it will be dark. We hope it will never be too dark to shed the light of life on these forgotten species. ■■■

◇

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Henrique González Casanova The Great Teacher

René Avilés Fabila*

Times have been bad for the country recently. The government is rudderless, completely disoriented. As a result, we Mexicans do not know exactly what to do. The federal and Mexico City governments are stumbling along, ruining the future. And not only that: unfortunately, a great many worthy Mexicans

with vocations in literature, academia and journalism have disappeared from the scene. The list is excessively long: Francisco Liguori died, as did Raúl Prieto (better known as Nikito Nipongo), Carlo Coccioli, Ikram Antaki, Roberto Vallarino, Gastón García Cantú, Leopoldo Zea, Mauricio Achar. For different reasons I had long and fraternal relations with all of them, and I feel obligated to write about them all.

* Writer and journalist.

Henrique González Casanova died recently. I met him personally in 1961 at the School of Political and Social Sciences during one of the National Autonomous University of Mexico's, and particularly the school's, best periods. UNAM authorities created the Pilot Group, a memorable academic experiment in which a small number of full-time students would have the best professors. I remember some of them well: Pablo and Henrique González Casanova, Francisco López Cámara, Víctor Flores Olea, Enrique González Pedrero, Ernesto de la Torre, Arturo Arnaiz y Freg and Carlos Bosch, among others.

I studied with all of them. With some I had a close relationship, with others it was distant, but in all cases it was respectful regardless of the differences we may have had. With Henrique González Casanova, it was something special. For someone like myself who wrote literature, his name was important. In addition to a great teacher of writing and journalism, he was a prestigious literary critic. I used to read his wonderfully written articles in the supplement edited by Fernando Benítez and Gastón García Cantú, *México en la cultura* (Mexico in Culture), and in the *Revista de la Universidad* (University Magazine) that he edited for a long period. From the very first class, we had an affinity. In the field of literature, I was a disciple of Juan José Arreola, and politically, I was a young man close to José Revueltas. González Casanova's classes, as I have said in books of memoirs, were marvelous. His culture, his depth, his razor-sharp mind, his generosity were all laid out before us in beautiful, perfect Spanish, whose words we could see in the air with appropriate punctuation. I cannot speak for my fellow students so many years later, but I personally was impressed by his melodious, well-modulated voice pointing out, for example, the characteristics of a good novel or an excellent journalistic piece. Once, he dedicated his class to Andrés Henestrosa's Spanish, and another time, to creating a memorable vision of the

marvelous literature of Juan José Arreola and Juan Rulfo, both dear friends of my teacher.

But his work and his vocation went beyond the schoolroom. I once invited him to give us a couple of talks about literature. He accepted with pleasure. I remember him asking me about the topics and I didn't know what to answer him exactly. "About letters," I said. "Well, I'll talk about poetry and some important poets of this century," he responded clearly and decisively.

The talks were given at the now defunct Carmel café, in the middle of Mexico City's Pink Zone before it was invaded by itinerant street hawkers and ruffians (the Carmel, by the way, was owned by Margo Glantz's father, Don Jacobo, always happy to welcome writers and painters to his pleasant café). It was at that time, around 1961 or 1962, that I consolidated my friendship with González Casanova. Once, when he noted that I was hesitating about my vocation, he told me not to go to another school before completing my course of studies in political science, and when I was about to finish, he encouraged me, "Get your degree, René. I'll get you a job." I accepted his advice gratefully. Above all, he was a teacher and always concerned about his students.

At one point in his life, Henrique González Casanova accepted a diplomatic post and spent a long time outside the country in Portugal and Yugoslavia where he was a very dignified ambassador. But when he returned, he immediately went back to the UNAM. There, we ran into each other and talked very early in the morning in the halls of the new School of Political Science building when I was a teacher there. It was an extraordinary pleasure to listen to him, his advice and valuable literary and journalistic recommendations.

When the noteworthy novelist Alberto Bonifaz Nuño died, at the wake, trying to ameliorate the pain of his brother Rubén, Mexico's greatest poet, Henrique González Casanova brought up a series of beautiful memories about the old times at the UNAM,



He belonged to that group of academics who do not see academia as a kind of trampoline, but who dedicate their whole lives to it.

when it was full of great teachers and restless students. Suddenly, González Casanova stopped short and said, “René, I see that you and Rubén speak in the familiar form, and you and I don’t.”

“That’s impossible. I would never dare,” I responded.

“No, please, I beg you that we stop using the formal form of address. We’re friends, and you use the familiar form with my best friend.”

I didn’t know what to do and I had to accept, even though I first explained that I had met Rubén in 1967 or 1968 when we had both just put out important books with the Fondo de Cultura Económica Publishing House in the Mexican Letters Collection, and we had also been out together several times. Rubén Bonifaz Nuño had not been my teacher and that gave me certain freedom in my dealings with him, even though he was such an eminent poet and translator. It was difficult, but I finally managed to speak to Henrique González Casanova in the familiar form. I enjoyed meeting him at the end of class and sharing his fine, elegant culture. Not long ago, my teacher and friend suffered a very deep emotional blow, and I think that

aggravated his health problems. The news of his death found me out of the country and pained me enormously. Curiously, I was never friends with Pablo González Casanova, despite being his student. But, I did know and have affectionate and respectful dealings with another brother, Manuel; we worked together in the UNAM. I didn’t know what to do, whom to give my condolences to. For that reason, I decided to write these lines to underline my sorrow. Henrique was clearly a great teacher and, consequently, a generous man, an extraordinary Mexican. Once when I had been very severe with a fashionable novelist, he recriminated me elegantly as he left his classroom, saying, “René, enemies are combated for their ideas, not their personalities.” He was right, particularly in journalism, for convincing readers.

I have the impression that his enormous legacy is basically for the UNAM. He was a full-time teacher and never stopped thinking about it. He belonged to that group of academics who do not see academia as a kind of trampoline, but who, like his brother Pablo, dedicate their whole lives to it; and he gave almost all of his. He leaves a gap almost impossible to fill. ■■■

Horacio Labastida A Likeness¹

David Ibarra*



Horacio Labastida was an intellectual who joined his generous, proverbial cordiality to his recognized wisdom. His long, fruitful, intelligent life was never dedicated to subscribing to other spurious interests that we all know about and painfully suffer from, but to the kind though devastating critique of ideologies presented in packages of supposedly irrefutable certainties, sold and disseminated *urbi et orbi* by the dominant powers and the communications media.

Labastida was a judge, the rector of the University of Puebla, head of the UNAM's Office of Cultural Dissemination and then of Social Services, as well as editor of his magazine. He was a founding professor of the UNAM School of Political and Social Sciences and a member of its Institute for Legal Research, a journalist, international public servant, legislator and ambassador to Nicaragua, the author of more than 20 books on topics ranging from politics, philosophy and sociology to literature and the arts.

In his distinguished career, he always tried to passionately study and teach our country's history as a means to shed light on solutions

* Mexican economist.

to contemporary problems, without breaks, assuming the characteristics of the culture, institutions and, above all, aspirations of all Mexicans. For Horacio Labastida, true humanism was based on the notion that history is made by man in his capacity to create knowledge and make mistakes. Humanism, then, is not a neutral, unfeeling science like mathematics, inured to human suffering and limitations, but a necessarily historic discipline, capable of unexpectedly finding untrodden ways forward, of coming up with innovative solutions, whether in the social and political or the scientific and technological realms.

Labastida would agree with Jürgen Habermas that the tasks of the Enlightenment had not been completed and that they should be, because with-

He denounced the old practice of violating or amending our constitutions to legalize the illegitimate acts of whoever was in office.

out emancipating equality, no democracy is possible. For this reason, together with Amyarta Sen, he subscribed to the principles that freedom should include the right to economic, cultural and political development for all citizens, and that peace is indeed precarious in the absence of equality. He would agree with the Marxist, structuralist and post-modern philosophers that Man, regardless of his individuality, is to a great degree a product of the society in which he lives, that there are cultural and institutional differences and differences in perception between the pretensions of universalism of Western civilization and the realities of other peoples and groups (particularly of those excluded from power and from the exercise of established rights), differences that should not be overcome through segregation, oppression or violence, whether within countries or among them.

This is why he looked at the historic documents by José Joaquín Granados and Friar Bartolomé de las Casas in his book *La grandeza del indio mexicano* (The Grandeur of the Mexican Indian) with the aim of emphasizing the unjust

conditions to which Mexico's indigenous had been subjected in the colonial period and underlining their contributions, rivaling those of the Spaniards and the *criollos*, to the society of their time.² Similar reasoning led him to criticize Juárez's laws of amortization and nationalization because they legislated the confiscation of the poorest peasants' communal lands.³ And for that reason, he also defended sovereignty and nationalism as necessary tools in the defense of relations between the weak and the powerful, between those who have little and those who have everything. With the historical background of colonial liberation and Napoleon III's expansionist onslaught, when the North American Free Trade Agreement was negotiated, he warned of the danger that the industrial powers could seek once more to exchange our nations' sovereignty for the will of an ecumenical empire. And he added, "No material well-being—which has not been forthcoming with globalization—justifies the spiritual malaise of an undesirable commitment."⁴

An enemy of hegemonic presidentialism, of authoritarianism, he denounced the old practice of violating or amending our constitutions to legalize the illegitimate acts of whoever was in office and then invoking them in the defense of the government or using them against the political opposition.⁵ He distinguished, then, between legality and legitimacy: legality is a juridical value (sometimes falsified), while legitimacy is a moral value. Legality denotes agreement with legislation, legitimacy with the people.⁶ Thus, he pointed out that the Mexican project of 1917 constitutionally established "a social, not an individualist, democracy leaning toward the social justice demanded since the time of the debates of the constituent assembly of 1856."⁷ As a result, he was wary of the privatization and de-Mexicanization of the banking system and the sale of public companies, as well as the changes to the Constitution in agrarian matters and many, many other areas that tend to tailor the legal regime to the demands of trade liberalization.⁸ At the same time, he thought that the supposed economic or political truths in vogue were not universal or applicable to all times and

places, above all when they ride roughshod over the culture and institutions of poor countries. He found here a depraved attempt based on the economy to surreptitiously breathe new life into an authoritarianism that, with globalized trappings, sought to put an end to national sovereignty and restore foreign will (a risky undertaking since only self-determination guarantees cultural unity, the identity and legitimacy of collective actions).⁹

The last point I want to make to finish up this incomplete review of Horacio Labastida's work is something enormously relevant to the crisis we are going through. In the transition to democracy and in an open, interdependent, competitive world economy, we do not seem to be able to manage to agree, which we need to do to deal with changing

He also subscribed to the principles that freedom should include the right to economic, cultural and political development for all citizens.

planetary problems. According to Labastida, in every plural, democratic society, it is only natural that there be different, contradictory points of view about social objectives. Despite this, there must be a balance and mutual influence between social and economic development so that one supports and promotes the growth of the other. Or, more directly in the spirit of the 1917 Constitution, economic development must be a democratic instrument of social justice.

The mechanism for resolving those tensions and satisfying those objectives is none other than the healthy game of politics.¹⁰ But a kind of politics freed as much as possible from the iron-clad universal economic paradigms that today run counter to the legitimate aspirations of the citizenry, make a caricature of democracy and create more poverty than well-being.

This idea gives Labastida's 1976 work *Pongámonos de acuerdo en lo fundamental* (Let's Agree on What's Fundamental) enormous timeliness. In it, he reminds the reader of the liberal formula that solved the crisis resulting from the Santa

Anna decades, emphasizing common interests, putting aside differences and cementing consensus, which made it possible to rebuild Mexican society in the nineteenth century. If only he could be heard today.

It can be said that Labastida's language, regardless of its linguistic rigor, is not the language of post-modernity. He could even be accused of somewhat overlooking the demanding realities of economic interdependence that make the concepts of nation-state and the Westphalian idea of sovereignty obsolete. However, the values of social democracy Labastida defended have not lost their relevance, nor has history ended, even if the struggle must be renewed and we must wait until the global economy is limited, humanized by the establishment of social rights of a similar, that is, universal scope. **MM**



NOTES

- ¹ Horacio Labastida Muñoz died December 22, 2004. This article was first published January 14, 2005 in the "Economy" section of the Mexico City daily *La Jornada*. [Editor's Note.]
- ² Horacio Labastida, *La grandeza del indio mexicano*, Cuadernos del Archivo Histórico Universitario Collection (Puebla: Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 2001).
- ³ Horacio Labastida, "Presidencialismo autoritario y transición democrática," *La transición difícil* (Mexico City: La Jornada Ediciones, 1998).
- ⁴ Horacio Labastida, *Semanario político 1988-1994* (Mexico City: UNAM, 1995), p. 697.
- ⁵ Horacio Labastida, "Presidencialismo..." op. cit., p. 95.
- ⁶ Horacio Labastida, *El PRI ante la realidad de la nación*, 17th National Assembly of the PRI in Zacatecas, 1996.
- ⁷ Horacio Labastida, *Filosofía y política, cinco ensayos* (Mexico City: Editorial Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 1986).
- ⁸ Horacio Labastida, "Elites intelectuales en la historia de México," Octavio Rodríguez, comp., *Reflexiones del futuro* (Mexico City: Colegio Nacional de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales, 1994).
- ⁹ Horacio Labastida, "Evaluación política del Presidente Fox," Samuel Schmidt, comp., *La nueva crisis de México* (Mexico City: Aguilar, 2003).
- ¹⁰ Horacio Labastida, *Filosofía y política...*, op. cit., p. 60.

Domínguez Michael A Defiant Voice In Mexican Literary Criticism

Gerardo Piña*



Critics are like horseflies that prevent the horse from ploughing. The horse works, all its muscles drawn tight like the strings on a double bass and a fly settles on its flanks and tickles and buzzes... he has to twitch his skin and swish his tail. And what does the fly buzz about? It scarcely knows itself; simply because it is restless and wants to proclaim, "Look I am living on the Earth. See, I can buzz, too, buzz about anything."

Anton Chekhov in a letter to Maxim Gorky

This year, Christopher Domínguez Michael has won one of the most prestigious literary prizes in Mexico: the Xavier Villaurrutia Prize. Voted best book published in Mexico in 2004, Domínguez Michael's *Vida de Fray Servando* (The Life of Friar Servando) (Ediciones Era 2004) tells the story of Servando Teresa de Mier (1763-1827), a Mexican priest persecuted because of a sermon he delivered December 12, 1794, the day of the Virgin of Guadalupe. In this sermon, Servando expressed his doubts concerning the apparition of Mexico's patron saint. (According to tradition, she appeared before a Mexican Indian, Juan Diego, and told him to build a church dedicated to her on that very spot.) Servando's alternative version of the apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe scandalized the Mexican Church after which he had to take refuge overseas, an experience that would change the destiny of the Mexican revolutionary independence process.

Christopher Domínguez Michael was born in Mexico City in 1962. He has published several books, including *Antología de la narrativa mexicana del siglo XX* (Anthology of Twentieth-Century Mexican Narrative) (1989 and 1991); *La utopía de la hospitalidad* (The Utopia of Hospitality) (1993); *Tiros en el concierto. Literatura mexicana del siglo V* (Shots at the Concert. Mexican Literature of the Fifth Century) (1997); *Servidumbre y grandeza de la vida literaria* (Servitude and Greatness in Literary Life) (1998); *La sabiduría sin promesa. Vida y letras del siglo XX* (Unpromising Wisdom. Life and Letters in the Twentieth Century) (2001); *Toda suerte de libros paganos* (All Kinds of Pagan Books) (2001); and, more recently, *Vida de Fray Servando* (The Life of Friar Servando) (2004).

* Mexican writer, translator of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (Siglo XXI Editores) to Spanish and author of *La erosión de la tinta y otros relatos* (The Erosion of the Ink and Other Stories). gh_pina@hotmail.com

He is a columnist of the literary supplement *El Ángel* (The Angel) and of the literary magazine *Letras Libres* (Free Letters) His book *La sabiduría sin promesa* (Unpromising Wisdom) won the Guillermo Rousset Banda National Prize for Literary Essay and Political Criticism.

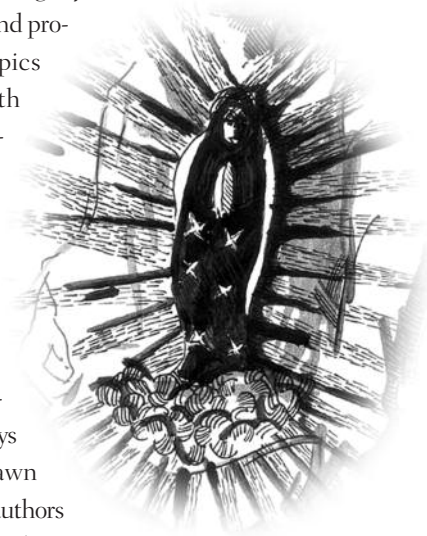
The fact that Domínguez Michael has won this year's Xavier Villaurrutia Prize should come as no surprise to those who have read his books and his columns in newspapers and magazines. He is an attentive reader, a critic with a pungent, biting style.

He writes extensively and profusely about many topics and authors, from both Western and Eastern traditions (something not that many of today's critics are wont to do).

His criticism moves swiftly from Beckett and Nabokov to Lukács and Walter Benjamin. Through his essays and articles he has drawn attention to important authors

not often read in Mexico (e.g. Rafael Cansinos-Asséns, Hermann Broch or Yasunari Kawabata). In recent years, when "terrorism" became a recurrent topic in the news and in politics, he was perhaps the only critic in Mexico who reminded us to read or re-read Dostoevsky's *The Devils*, a novel that skillfully explores that theme.

Often identified as a right-wing author, Domínguez Michael is not afraid to reaffirm his position as a critic of literature rather than politics. In one of his finest essays, *Hesse o la desaparición de los oráculos* (Hesse or the Disappearance of the Oracles) he explores the theme of "adolescence" as a poetical metaphor in the works of authors like Hermann Hesse or Goethe. His analysis of the "Bildungsroman" is refreshing and noteworthy. However, after discussing the great qualities of Goethe's



Drawings by
Héctor Ponce
de León

and Hesse's novels, he does not hesitate to declare that:

Goethe's endings are uncomfortable: Werther's narratively unconvincing suicide is the whim of an idiot (as Stendhal said) that stupefied thousands of young people; Faust's salvation, forgiven by God after making a pact with the Devil, has been interpreted as a metaphor for Nazism; and the conclusion of *The Apprenticeship of Wilhelm Meister* has a provincial, petit bourgeois reek.¹

On Harold Bloom's *Western Canon of Literature*, he remarked:

Bloom calls the Spanish critics who protested against the Black Legend that clouds the *Western Canon* a "pack of idiots". It is sad that Bloom, like so many British professors before him, believes that Cervantes is the be-all and end-all. I happily join the line of idiots: if Bloom can do without Quevedo and Góngora, Calderón and Lope, too bad for him. A canon is inconceivable without the Golden Century. And Shakespeare, whom Bloom sees as the one true God, is inconceivable without seventeenth-century Spain.²

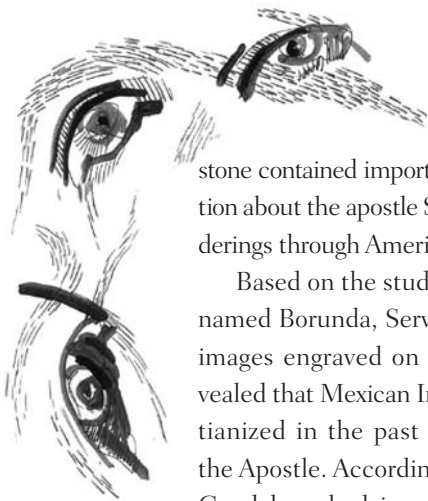
With all its passion and defiance, Domínguez Michael's style does not always steer clear of poetical exuberance: "I venerate Kafka as the Law and Proust as Literature, and all my intimate chorus of novelists as the music that sweetens (or dramatizes) my Sundays."³ Nevertheless, he is an author of admirable analogies. In his book *Tiros en el concierto* (Shots at the Concert), he follows the figures of Aeneas in the works of Alfonso Reyes, and of Ulysses in those of José Vasconcelos, with remarkable clarity. After identifying specific symbols in the works of different Mexican authors (e.g. José Vasconcelos, Alfonso Reyes and Martín Luis Guzmán), he plays with them using images that are both polysemic and accurate:

The Mexican Revolution brought a masterless, schoolroom classicism up against the firey test of historic violence. Vasconcelos, Reyes and Guzmán were already intellectually formed by 1910. Without the upheaval, it is possible to believe that they would have become petrified in academicism. But the fiesta of bullets and exile tempered them. The wrath of Mars turned them into Vulcan's goldsmiths. Prophetic exaggeration like Vasconcelos's can only be carried off by someone who, having freed himself from a storm, believes himself capable of provoking one and the other.⁴

As for Friar Servando, the main character of his most recent book, Domínguez Michael adopts a concise and beautiful style to remind us that "[he] believed in the wanderings of Saint Thomas the Apostle and, like him was incredulous, a traveler and prisoner. With a broken arm, he used his pen as his staff and preached the world over, learning to exorcise demons."⁵

In the 1790's, archaeologists digging under Mexico City's Plaza Mayor discovered the *Piedra del Sol* (better known as the Aztec Calendar). Friar Servando declared that this





stone contained important encrypted information about the apostle St. Thomas and his wanderings through America in the sixth century.

Based on the studies of an archaeologist named Borunda, Servando thought that the images engraved on the *Piedra del Sol* revealed that Mexican Indians had been Christianized in the past by the Saint Thomas the Apostle. According to him, the Virgin of Guadalupe had impressed her own image on St. Thomas's mantle. He had been worshipped as Quetzalcoatl (the Aztec divinity represented as a plumed serpent), while the Virgin of Guadalupe had been known as Tonantzin. That is what Servando said in his sermon of 1794. Why did it scandalize the prelates and particularly Archbishop Núñez de Haro?

Núñez de Haro read the December 12 sermon better than anyone. His was a prophetic reading, that of the genius of an imperial politician; he understood that the story of Thomas, the old criollo complaint, should be treated as a pernicious novelty because it came at the same time as the French Revolution. If the apostle had brought Christianity to the Indians, the archbishop reasoned, the Spanish presence would be unnecessary....The archbishop perceived the threat of independence and warned that history did not favor the Spaniards. On September 15, 1810, Father Hidalgo proved him right in the town of Dolores.⁶

In *Vida de Fray Servando* (The Life of Friar Servando), Domínguez Michael describes the history of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Mexico as seen by Servando Teresa de Mier. He follows the priest during his time in prison, and from Veracruz to London and Paris. He unmasks a Servando who tried to hide from posterity through his contradictory writings. He seems to have a conversation with Friar Servando and the reader at the same time and lets us witness those crucial moments of Mexican history when the

war of independence against Spain was inevitable.

Friar Servando is a polemical figure. He was one of the most influential men of nineteenth-century New Spain. Perhaps that is why Domínguez Michael, an agnostic who, paraphrasing Borges, has declared that he sees religion as fantastic literature, chose to write a book of 700 pages about him.

Vida de Fray Servando is an important work for various reasons. It is a great book for those who want to know more about nineteenth-century Mexican history. It is impressively well documented and written with such clarity and precision that it reminds us that any theme can be interesting when it is well presented. Finally, it is an important book within Domínguez Michael's own bibliography, because it reaffirms his universality, which rests not only on the diversity of the themes he writes about but also on the way he approaches those themes. Always looking at past and present, at Eastern and Western traditions as far as his eyes allow him, he does not care about borders in the vast world of literature. I like to think of him not as one of those horseflies Chekhov complained about, but as a plough horse, clearing his own path on solid ground. ■■

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NOTES

¹ Christopher Domínguez Michael, *La sabiduría sin promesa. Vidas y letras del siglo XX* (Mexico City: Joaquín Mortiz, 2001), pp. 97-98.

² *Ibid.*, p. 158.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁴ Christopher Domínguez Michael, *Tiros en el concierto. Literatura mexicana del siglo V* (Mexico City: Era, 1997), p. 440.

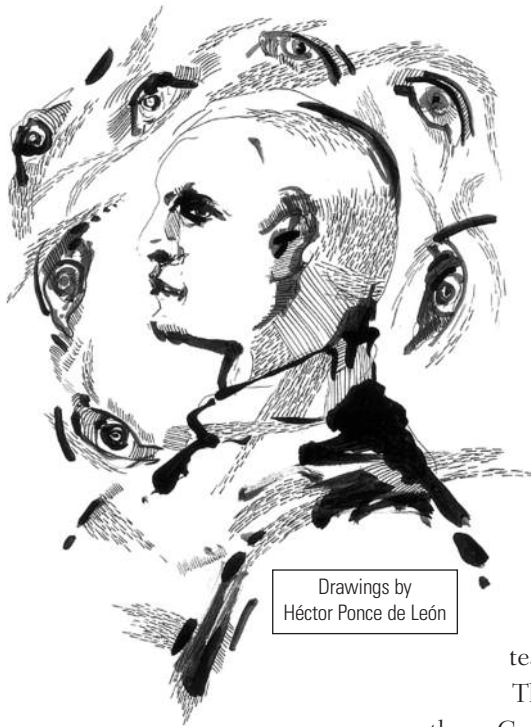
⁵ Christopher Domínguez Michael, *Vida de Fray Servando* (Mexico City: Era, 2004), p. 25.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

The Life Of Friar Servando

Fragment

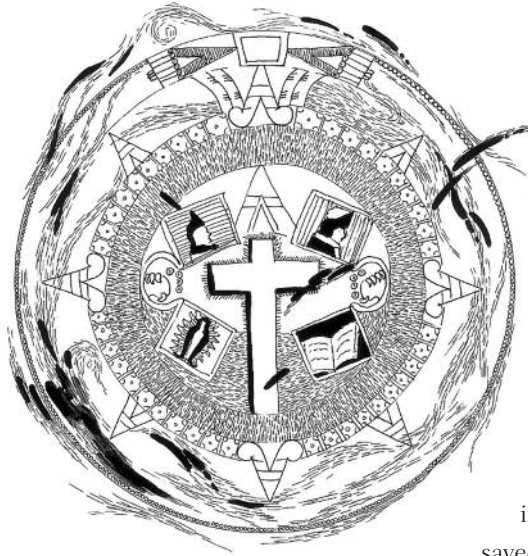
By Christopher Domínguez Michael



Saint Thomas the Apostle was far removed from miracle-working and betrayal. His fame stems from a more worldly quality: doubt. He did not believe in Lazarus's resurrection and vacillated about Jesus's until He subjected him to the test of touch. Thomas's doubt seems a small thing next to Simon Peter's denials. But, thanks to the apocryphal traditions, Thomas is linked with the craft of writing, which the moderns sustained in the art of doubting. Sober in the New Testament, Saint Thomas expresses himself fully in the apocryphal Gnostic Gospels. Stories of Jesus's childhood are attributed to him in which Thomas, called the Israelite, tells the tales of the clay sparrows and of the doctors. A book about the teachings of the Nazarene is also attributed to him.

The hyperbolic, apocryphal Gospels —not all of them Gnostic— were the culture in which a blossoming religiosity grew and, with arms from Hellenism and Judaism, simultaneously popularized and complicated the life, miracles and nature of Jesus Christ. Once the Gospel quartet of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John was established, the heretical or simply legendary narratives sweetened the ears of those who found the canon dry or sparse. In apocryphal literature, Thomas occupies a prominent place not only because his Gospel is the only one completely extant, but because of his exciting powers as an apostle who doubts and bears witness. Another Gospel of Thomas was discovered in the Nag Hamadi Cave in 1945, in Coptic; this Gospel has the particularity of being sapiential and not hagiographic.

The Syrian Tacian, a prominent second-century thinker, lived in Rome and was a student of Saint Justinian. He headed up the Encratites, rejecting marriage and the reproduction of the species, arguing that it reproduced sin, the devil's work, in every being. A succinct spirit, he wrote the so-called *Diatessaron*, a summary of the canonical texts used by the Syrian liturgy until the fifth century, which only adds to Thomas's doubt the question of what he thought about during the eight days he had to wait to believe.



More important—between heresy and proto-orthodoxy—was the work of Valentinus, the first doctor of the Alexandrian Gnosis in the second century, who preached in Rome about the year 155. According to his *Book of Faithful Wisdom* or the *Valentinus Gospel* (refuted by Iranaeus and Tertulian, attributed to Valentinus or to his school), after Jesus’s resurrection, he spent 11 years on Earth teaching the apostles the enigmas that he found in the heavenly spheres. Jesus tells the story of the aeon Sophia, Faithful Wisdom, and how she, swept away by her inordinate desire to know the light in the distance, falls into material chaos. Sophia is saved because, contrary to Thomas, she believed in Jesus before having seen him. Ernst Renan considers that the

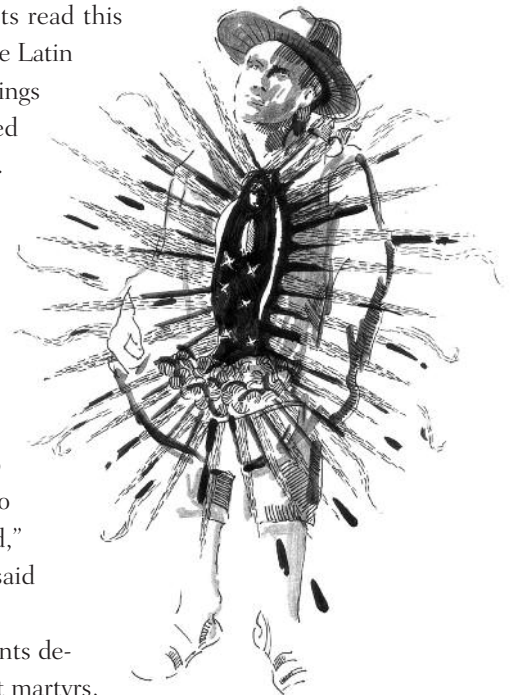
apostles played an “almost ridiculous role” in the Valentinus text, a story as beautiful as it is prolix, just like Gnosticism in general, that illusory, extravagant adolescence of Christianity.

During the sessions, the Christ, who in the three days of his resurrection returned to Galilee to meet with some of his apostles, questions the chosen. Thus, in the Valentinus Gospel, Thomas is called upon to interpret the first mystery and explain the salvation of Faithful Wisdom. Valentinus adds a new detail. To lessen Thomas’s doubtfulness, he says that the apostle was cured by Jesus of a disease, perhaps a broken right arm (XXIII, 26).

Thomas means *abyss* and *duplicate*. The second meaning coincides with a Greek term that was passed on to the New Testament and that is why he is called Didymus, which in Greek means “twin.” Some philologists read this division as a split, given that there is a similarity between the Latin word *Thomas* and the Greek word *thómos*. Different meanings reveal an ingrown image of the apostle because he enjoyed the privilege of penetrating the divine flesh of Jesus Christ. While the rest of the disciples only knew divinity in one fashion, Thomas saw it resuscitated and felt it. He plunged into the wounds. His act of faith was individual and, according to the interpreters of the text, he received double proof of the resurrection of the Lord.

Following the Latin expression of the term *totum means*, which means “he who saw everything,” in *From the Contemplative Life*, Prosperus said that Thomas wanted to see the Lord in his full magnificence. It is also possible to surmise that the noun “Thomas” comes from *theos*, “God,” and *meus*, “mine”, which was precisely what the apostle said when he verified the resurrection.

The Golden Legend is a compilation of stories and events derived from the New Testament and of the lives of the first martyrs.



Many stories reputed to be from the Bible actually come from this book, one of the most discretely popular in history. This work by Jacobus da Voragine (c. 1230-1298), the archbishop of Genoa in the thirteenth century, finished turning Thomas into an eccentric, closer to the feats of a miracle worker than to the severe piety of the apostle. While in Cesarea, the Lord appears to tell him that Gundafor, the king of India, seeks an architect, and Thomas, after begging not to be sent to India, ends up going there because he will be recompensed with the palm of martyrdom. The preacher will become famous as violent and impatient for punishing a wine server who buffets him on the head because he is abstemious; Thomas punishes him by making a lion appear and devour him. Finally, a black dog places the hand of the blasphemer at the apostle's feet.

Saint Augustine rejected this view of Thomas, more comical than Manichaeic. He says that these were the preacher's stratagems to sow the fear of God among the inhabitants of India, whom he converted and baptized. With his fame as an architect, he drew a map of a sumptuous palace for Gundafor and, after being rewarded, disappeared. Despite the king's later apostasy, his brother Gad prostrated himself before the apostle. The legend cannot be discarded out of hand because a sovereign by the name of Gondophernes or Guduphara ruled what is now Afghanistan, Baluchistan and the Punjab in the year 46.

In India, Thomas cured the sick with the power of lightening and baptized 9,000 people. Frequently made prisoner, Thomas miraculously escaped from his pursuers and divine providence saved him time and again from ridicule and death. He was also asked to commit idolatry, demanding that he make sacrifices to the Sun. He knelt and asked a demon to destroy the idol, and it came to pass. When the friars and scholars of the New World swore they had proof of a visit of Thomas to the New World, they ap-



pealed to the saint's reputation as an iconoclast, a hunter of souls and an enemy of human sacrifice.

In the end, a high priest of the pagans pierced the heart of Saint Thomas and killed him.

* * *

The so-called Thomas cycle was very popular because of its apocryphal, Gnostic character. This is no paradox given the popular liking for hermetic texts. In addition, *The Facts of Saint Thomas* fictionalized the Christian message among the growing gentile public, avid for the novel intricacies of the new religion.

* * *

In New Spain, the Dominican Friar Servando Teresa de Mier (1763-1827) must have read this literature, of such bad repute in his time, but which was part of the scant stock of novel-like literature, so to speak, that the theology students and readers at the Royal Pontifical University of Mexico had. Mier, however, did not need the apocryphal nor the Byzantine stories. He was heir to one of the great novels of history, the preaching of Thomas in America, of which he was the last great apologist. An extremely controversial topic in the criollo discussions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was Servando who took it to the end of the viceroyalty: in 1820 he was still contemplating—with growing criticism—the feasibility (more theological and political than historiographic) of that mission. The son of the Santo Domingo monastery, Servando neither could nor wanted to separate his own life from the mythical, poetic or religious force of the message of the Gospel.

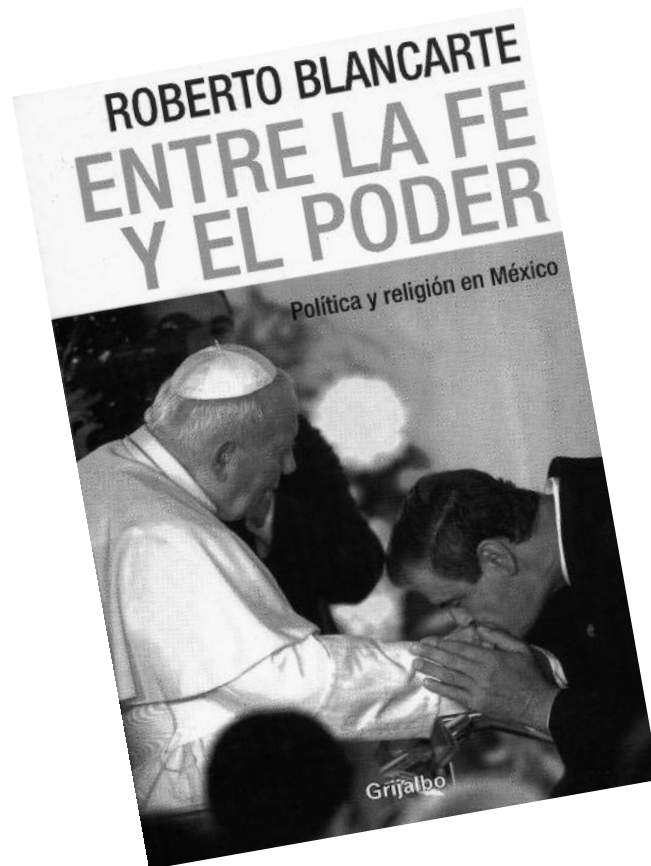
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Friar Servando Teresa de Mier believed in the pilgrimage of Saint Thomas the Apostle and, like him, was a doubter, a traveler and a prisoner. With a broken arm, he used his pen as his staff and preached the world over, learning to exorcise demons. **MM**

All fragments taken from: Christopher Domínguez Michael, *Vida de Fray Servando* (Mexico City: ERA, 2004), pp. 19-25.



Reviews



Entre la fe y el poder.
Política y religión en México
(Between Faith and Power. Politics
And Religion in Mexico)
Roberto Blancarte
Grijalbo
Mexico City, 2004, 351 pp.

Writing a weekly commentary on current events requires the author to pay constant attention to what is going on and to be enormously creative so that the piece can always offer the reader a chance to think on his/her feet, a way of increasing his/her information, vision and judgment, a means to relate the breaking news he/she has heard to broader processes. In a word, to form an opinion as a citizen. I imagine that this is a task under-

taken with great enthusiasm. But it is a commitment that acquires its true proportions as the weeks go by. In the case of Roberto Blancarte's book, we are dealing with a compilation of more than 200 commentaries that intelligently collate daily events with broader processes like democratization, the construction of a lay culture, the redefinition of public policy regarding religion.

It is necessary to recognize that to carry out this task, the author has acquired human capital both from his academic and political activities. First of all, because of his long academic training under the direction of eminent historians and analysts of religion like Ruggiero Romano and Émile Poulat, with whom he has continued to dialogue throughout his

This analysis is indispensable for understanding the intense political and social processes that this country is experiencing.

own work as a researcher. And in the second place—but no less importantly—because of the perspective he has gained thanks to collaborating in Mexico’s diplomatic mission to the Holy See and in the Ministry of the Interior’s Vice-Ministry of Religious Affairs. I mean that this work has given a unique slant to his vision of the relations between the churches and the state. In his articles, we can hear both the indignation that can be sparked by the innocent invitation of the Pope to President Fox’s inauguration (because it was counter to diplomatic canon) and the technical legal critique of the proposed bill to regulate the Religious Associations Law because it contradicted the spirit of the statute. It is not common to find this combination of experiences.

Thanks to this experience, the author has developed a diagnostic analysis of religion in Mexico, not only in relation to the state, but as a sphere of social life with close links to modernization, democratization and the construction of a citizenry. In his spot-on analyses of specific situations, Blancarte presents some key concepts for interpreting this complex relationship between faith and power in the Mexican context. Probably the most important of these is the secular character of the state and its responsibility in procuring the common good. This word is not only a legal term: it is a principal of optimum social organization that, far from turning the state into the enemy of reli-

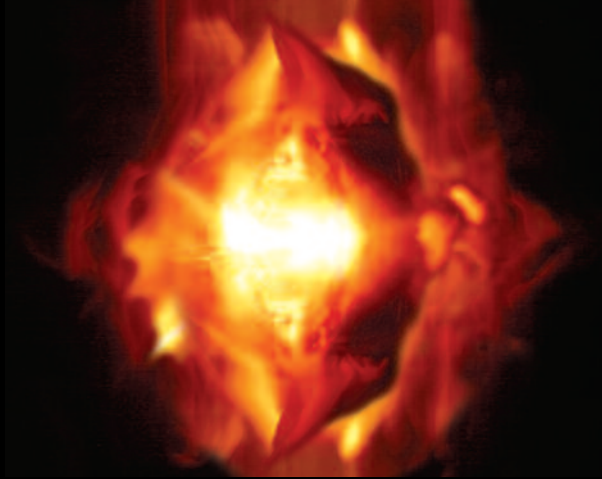
gions, is what makes possible the freedom of religion in a new situation of multiple options, and the best guarantee for developing an autonomous individual conscience. Throughout the period he analyzes (which stretches from the beginning of Vicente Fox’s presidential campaign to early 2004), the author presents his position based on applying this principle. To what degree did the shift of the Fox administration from the Mexican liberal tradition as it had been interpreted by the PRI governments move closer to or further away from the point of equilibrium represented by that principle? To what degree did the different public policy proposals made by the religious associations regarding reproductive health or ownership of the media benefit the common good? To what degree do these initiatives represent their congregations or are they rather initiatives from their leaders?

This is an analysis that week by week, and now as a whole, is indispensable for understanding the intense political and social processes that this country is experiencing and in which we discover, thanks to authors like Blancarte, how our historical experience comes into play and what the best way forward for us as a society will be.

Cristina Gutiérrez Zúñiga
Researcher at the Jalisco College



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