

# MEXICO: WHAT LIES AHEAD?

## An interview with the press on the elections

For Mexico, this is an election year without precedent. The opposition parties, more belligerent than ever, intend to make their voices heard in the July elections, although they still appear to lack the support needed to win the presidency. *Voices* spoke with three political columnists who represent a broad cross section of Mexico's press on the election year and its implications in an interview by our reporter, Jorge Luis Sierra.

*The presidential succession is perhaps the most intense and crucial moment in Mexico's political history. The electoral conflict engulfs all of Mexico's political organizations with each attempting to define the nature of the next administration. Despite the highly antagonistic relations between different sectors, all political forces are committed to the electoral process. No organization promotes abstentionism.*

*The Mexican press is no less committed to the succession process. The campaigns of the six presidential candidates are receiving front page coverage in almost all of the newspapers in Mexico. The role of the press is all the more important when, as is the case this year, the public is faced with candidates espousing a wide variety of ideologies and political programs.*

*The columnist interviewed in this issue of **Voices of Mexico** all pertain to the best tradition of the written press in Mexico. Analysts of power and critics of its excesses, the three columnists have exercised a journalistic freedom conquered over the years. Their columns, in the dailies **Excélsior** and **La Jornada**, and in the weekly magazine **Proceso** and **Siempre** have a wide impact on public opinion and contribute to an understanding of the enormous complexity which characterizes Mexican politics.*

*León García Soler, Miguel Angel Granados Chapa and Froylán López Narváez are three Mexican journalists who speak freely about their work. They have founded national newspapers and magazines. They have offered the public an immense flow of information. At present, García Soler is an editorialist for the widely respected newspaper **Excelsior**. Granados Chapa is the subdirector of **La Jornada**, the youngest national newspaper, and columnist of the weekly **Siempre**. Granados Chapa attempts in his columns to make public political affairs which previously had remained in the private domain of those in power. López Narváez is the editorial coordinator of the political weekly **Proceso**. The weekly has developed a reputation for investigative and critical reporting.*

*García Soler, Granados Chapa and López Narváez are now on the other side of the microphone. They speak to us about the presidential succession, the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the political opposition and the role of the*

**In most local newspapers now we see that the six Presidential candidates get first page coverage. This is a very unusual thing in Mexico**



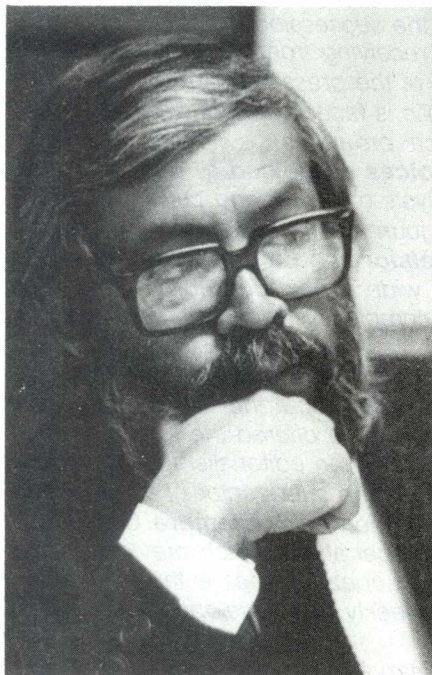
press in the electoral process. Their intention is not solely to inform, nor to limit their criticism to abuses of power. Instead, they hope to contribute with the written word to the democratization of antiquated methods of governing which have remained unaltered in Mexico for more than fifty years.

**Voices of Mexico: The concept of change has characterized the political discourse of the Institutional Revolutionary Party's (PRI) candidate, Carlos Salinas de Gortari. Given the country's current condition, what possibilities are there for such a change?**

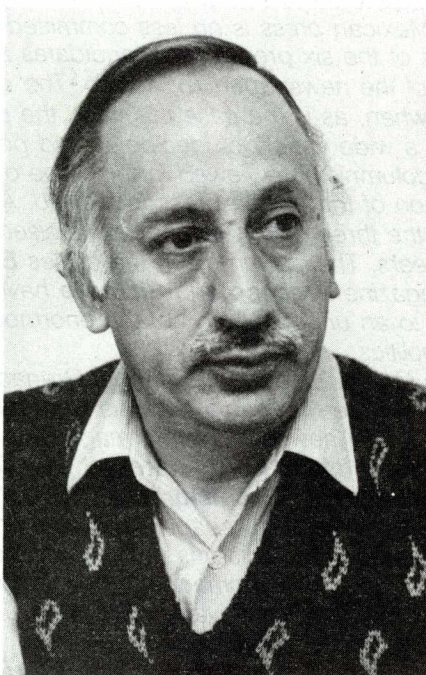
**It's difficult for opposition parties to have capacity and experience on the national level**

*León García Soler:* In fact, we're already involved in this process of change. The change that PRI's candidate, Carlos Salinas de Gortari has talked about, is part of a process that is going on, whether different ideological groups like it or not. Changes are occurring in the political reality of Mexico, but also throughout the world. These changes are evidently producing a political transformation. At the moment, the "neoliberal" system dominates the global economy, with its transnational companies and financial systems. And in this "neoliberalism," we find patterns of change that are not necessarily in accordance with the Mexican revolutionary project. Possibly there are points in common, but they should be established in strict, rigid constitutional terms. While mechanisms to reform the Mexican Constitution do exist, they have concrete limits. If national sovereignty is denied, the constitution would no longer have validity as this nation's normative mechanism. If the Mexican state's claim to be the original owner of national territory is denied, the state would no longer be valid.

This change which is going on—including that mentioned in the speeches of Salinas de Gortari— involves changes within the power structure. It implies new means of participation which will perhaps alter the structure of the ruling party. In fact, members of this party are revising how to reconcile the internal structure—made up of three sectors: workers, peasants and popular organizations—with authentic representation. But, going beyond this conflict about party structure, power relationships have to be revised. It's obvious that when we jump headlong into changing realities, we come face to face with a new social relations: population explosion, urban concentrations, a rebellious banking system, oligarchical tendencies in the accumulation of capital, concentration of economic power, capital flight, political pressures and disappearance of unions. What is the role of each of these phenomena in the new relation of social forces? This question has been



Miguel Angel Granados Chapa. (Photo by Laura Cano)



Froylán López Narváez. (Photo by Laura Cano)



León García Soler. (Photo by Laura Cano)



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**The obligation to reform institutions which have been unable to keep up with the nation's growth and its problems now seems indispensable**

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considered in the project of all the presidential candidates. The obligation to reform institutions which have been unable to keep up with the nation's growth and its problems now seems indispensable and inevitable. If we believe that it is the Mexican who exercises his or her vote who will decide who is capable of governing this country, that it is the citizens who will give the mandate, we can begin by asking those who govern if we are already on the road to already on the road to change and where this change will lead us. We Mexicans can see the change, but we're not sure where it is taking us.

*Froylán López Narváez:* It doesn't depend on him (Salinas). It doesn't depend on official judgements or political campaigns. Real profound change has to come from actions by citizens. Of course, if Salinas becomes president—as everything seems to indicate he will—he will be able to dictate measures. But for the change to be real, important social mobilizations, the enforcement of laws and competent, honest public officials are necessary. Then there would be capacity for social mobility. If the peasants, workers, employees and citizens in general take effective political actions, we will force the system to change. Thus, change does not depend on the PRI candidate. That's just another falsehood. Any official, even the most high ranking one, has ample power, but he does not have it all, nor does it have it forever. Change will occur as response to popular social actions: but if people do not protest, if they don't go out on the streets, if they don't go on strike or write letters, if they don't carry out all kinds of political activity, then there won't be any change. In fact, every politician, of the right, left or center, has to say that he's going to change things. He's supposed to have formulas which will initiate change, but change will only happen when citizens obey or disobey that project.

*Miguel Angel Granados Chapa:* They're not only going to permit it, they're going to force it. I believe that Salinas will be president. Votes for the opposition will increase a lot, while votes for the PRI will go down. But they won't go down so much that the PRI becomes one of the smallest minorities. Most probably, the PRI will result the biggest minority, and thus will be able to legitimately install Salinas as Mexico's president. But when he becomes president, Salinas will confront many contradictions and tensions—so many, that unless he's suicidal, he will have to institute economic and political reforms. It's interesting to examine the case of former president José López Portillo and the bank nationalization. Nothing was further from the political creed and personality of López Portillo than the nationalization of the banks. And although he did decree their nationalization, as well as currency control, it wasn't because he was convinced of the advantages of these measures, but because he saw them as his only alternative. He was on the edge, and if he hadn't taken such a profound measure—although this later was not carried out profoundly—he would have fallen into an unforeseeable abyss.

He was on the edge of this abyss, and instead of taking a step and falling, he carried out a totally unimaginable reform. Just a week before, López Portillo had praised the bankers and their activities. And here there was no problem of hypocrisy: circumstances imposed a radically different behavior. I have the impression that for someone like Salinas who is just beginning his government will face a similar situation. That is, he will be on the edge, and his choice will be, either take steps backwards and fall, or take steps ahead with measures and mechanisms totally different from those he had formulated. I think, then, that objective necessity will not only favor, but will oblige these changes, almost independently of the president's will.

*Voices of Mexico:* **Mr. Granados Chapa: What will these tensions be? What will they consist of? and what reforms will the next president be obliged to make?**

*Miguel Angel Granados Chapa:* The most visible, though not the most important, is an electoral one. I believe the opposition will win a large number of votes, and consequently will probably win seats in the Senate and a high number of seats in the Chamber of Deputies, specially in the Federal District [Mexico City]. It is not going to be so simple for the PRI to win all the Deputies' seats. In the 1985 elections, the PRI had only one vote less than all the opposition votes put together. But because of the majority system, this was enough for the PRI to win all the seats for the Federal District. In these elections, many seats in the capital, in Chihuahua, Jalisco, Sinaloa, Durango, Nuevo Leon and Yucatan will be won by the opposition.



**I would not be surprised if Salinas, as president, promoted a radically different program from the one he promoted as Budget and Planning Minister**

The government will have to hand over these seats. Thus, the number of opposition deputies is going to increase, and the doors of the Senate will also have to open.

Public discontent with the way elections have been held requires a measurable response, and I believe this response lies in giving the opposition access to the Senate, as well as greater access than it has had, up to the moment, in the Chamber of Deputies. The other great issue in the country is the economy: inflation, unemployment, the excessive burden of the debt, the peso-dollar exchange rate. I would not be surprised if Salinas, as president, promoted a radically different program from the one he promoted when he was Budget and Planning Minister, thus betraying his own former policies. The simple fact that Salinas changes places, makes him see things from a different point of view. For example, the perspective that you have of this room is different from the one I have. You see pictures and windows that I don't see, and I see pictures and windows that you don't see. If we change places the perspective is different. And so, Salinas' change of place, from being a cabinet minister —and besides, a cabinet minister in search of the president's good will so he could become president— to being the head of state, means changes in his state of mind as well as in his political situation. These changes will impel him to carry out a radically different kind of program, which will involve a significant reduction in the service of the debt and a focus on Mexico's internal market. At the moment, everything resolves around the link between our country and the world economy. I believe we might be witness to 180 degree turn and we will begin to emphasize the importance of the internal market as the engine of economic activity.

**Voices of Mexico: What are the electoral possibilities of the opposition in the next elections?**

*Miguel Angel Granados Chapa:* The opposition will always be the opposition. It's not going to be able to win, to govern. Even parties which might have been able to unite, to govern such as the Democratic Front, which supports Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the Mexican Socialist Party (PMS) and the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT) could not agree on one candidate. It is even less thinkable that an alliance of that kind would include the National Action Party (PAN) and the Mexican Democrat Party (PDM). As long as the opposition remains in fragments, it will keep on being a minority. I believe it will be a long time before the PAN wins the presidency by votes. The PRI is going to be a party with a continually declining level of electoral support. But it will still be the party that wins the elections, because in our majority system the winner needs just one more vote more than the rest to win. I can't



Carlos Salinas de Gortari's presidential campaign. (Photo by Marco A. Cruz)



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**No party that governs Mexico can be ostensibly, permanently and systematically opposed to the U.S.**

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imagine one sole opposition candidate —this seems to me to be an event which is not foreseeable at present. The course that I foresee is a decrease in votes for the PRI, but not a triumph for the opposition. I believe that weight of the PRI within the Congress will decrease considerably. But I can't see in the medium term, and much less in the short term, any substitution in its role as the dominant party.

*Froylán López Narváez:* Their chances are weak, because they're fighting against a much more powerful political apparatus. It's likely that the PAN will once again win the protest votes. I believe most citizens don't know about the political projects planned by the PAN. Third place in the elections will probably be won by the so-called "Cardenism." The Cardenas coalition has ample support because it is a protest within the PRI itself, because it represents the only important experience of the post-revolutionary governments which has earned constant sympathy, and because the candidate is General Cardenas' son. Fourth place will surely go to the PMS. This party is new, although it has the oldest, most radical and most consistent political traditions of the country. However today the PMS is experimenting with a new coalition, a very recent fusion that coincides with the electoral process, and which complicates its work and efficiency in these elections. The Socialist Party is not a party that bases its principal labor in the elections. It incorporates itself with the legal system, participates in the elections, but its real plan is to change the power relations of this country. For the Socialist Party, what matters is that citizens realize that it is the only party with a real project to change the political, economic and moral relations of Mexico.

*León García Soler:* The ruling party criticizes the opposition parties for their lack of experience, their lack of organization and their incapacity to field representatives through out the entire nation. And sadly enough, this is true, but you can't blame them for this. Organized opposition in Mexico is very young. During recent elections in Chihuahua there was an authentic insurgence of the conservative right wing called "Neopanismo". Francisco Barrio, PAN candidate for the Chihuahua governorship, together with sectors of the Catholic Church, industrialists, ranch owners, bankers, and the rich managed to create a forceful conservative movement that was very much in tune with local popular discontent. However, in spite of the great pressure applied by these groups —which were not by any means, isolated groups lacking economic resources— the PAN was unable to field candidates for local mayoral races in half of the state's municipalities. Nor was the PAN able to present poll watchers throughout the state. With this weakness, it's difficult to advance. Nowhere in the world and at no point in time, can you trust the competitor to count and recount and then tell you what happened. By this I don't mean to say that the opposition parties will face a fraud, what I'm trying to demonstrate is that opposition parties suffer from weak organization. I repeat, we can't accuse them of being slow and incapable; there is a long story of formal and informal repression by the government. And in other cases, the left, they're suffering from the ruling party's decision to adopt their slogans. One just can't imagine that given the current difficulties in our country, a political party, armed like *Huitzilopochtli* [Aztec god of War] is going to appear, with representatives in each of the states, capitals, municipalities, towns and ranches that exist in this country. This means that the PRI doesn't even need to effect a direct electoral fraud. Of course, the opposition parties are right when they say that fraud begins when mechanisms do not exist to prevent the ruling party's use and abuse of national property and symbols. The authorities act like party members, not like a government. In the United States, the contending Republican and Democratic parties have a fundamental agreement: that their system is the best in the universe. They believe that their system does not have to be changed, either because God gave it to them, or because that's how the people established it. For those of us outside the U.S. political culture, it is surprising that sometimes we can't distinguish between a Democratic or a Republican president, even though they tell us that they are different. And as time goes by and unions continue to lose the strength they had in the peaceful times of Franklin D Roosevelt, we can see less differences. There is a basic agreement in the United States: anything goes, but the system will not be change. They respect their system, and competing parties are not going to change it. Those who thought they could change it were eliminated in the historic process.

Although our parties are obliged to accept the rules of the electoral game, on



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**The United States exercises some influence on Mexican elections, as a country where there is a possibility of power changing hands from one party to another**

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the eve of elections with five opposition candidates and one from the PRI campaigning, it seems that they the oppositions are not calling on the people to vote, but to rebel. The PRI has said that opposition actions are illegal, and that "measures must be taken," forgetting that that is a function of the government, not of the party. The great variety of our political parties—which truly reflect the points of view of Mexican public opinion—are not subject to that restriction, that graceful and pleasant agreement that this is the best system in the world and therefore it is not to be changed. Here, each party has its idea and vision of how to change this system which *is worth nothing*. The only thing left to hope for is that any or each of these parties, in the unavoidable change that's coming, respects those things which are history. For example, all Mexicans know how difficult it would be to reverse processes that were products of revolutionary nationalizations, such as the oil expropriation. This can be reversed, but it would set the country on fire. Because with this nationalization, Mexico began or at least caught sight of the possibilities of economic independence. Those—with or without power—who still dream about abolishing collective ownership in the countryside, could do it, but they would set the rural areas on fire. I don't know if there is the possibility that at some point in time, at some stage, this country might have political parties which agree on some fundamental points in common. It would be ideal, to have something substantial, that we respect, that won't be changed, even if it wasn't dictated to us from God in high.

*Voices of Mexico:* **In the opposition parties, is there capacity to govern? Is there a political party in the opposition capable of governing the country?**

*Miguel Angel Granados Chapa:* I believe so. I believe they are all capable of governing. The ruling party at the moment had no experience in governing when it began. Its roots are in the Mexican Revolution, not so much its ideological roots, but the historical ones. The ruling class, the generals who replaced Carranza during the 1920s had never governed, they learned as they went. I think governing is like swimming and walking, you learn by swimming and walking. To argue that opposition parties are not able to govern seems to me a falsehood manipulated by particular interests. There are a number of people with similar intelligence and training to those who are visible in the government. Clearly, they lack experience, but we must not fall into the vicious circle: the opposition is not going to govern because it has never governed. Anyway, referring to possibilities, I believe the opposition has them all.

On the other hand, the opposition has had real governing experiences,



Cuahtémoc Cárdenas, presidential candidate for the National Democratic Front. (Photo by Tomás Martínez)



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**The PRI is going to be a party with a continually declining level of electoral support, but it will continue to win the elections**

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though it is true that these experiences have been reduced to municipal level. But the opposition has governed in very difficult places, with ample administrative dimensions. For example, it has governed in Mérida, Hermosillo, San Luis Potosí, Juchitán, Guanajuato and Zamora, just to mention some of the most important cities. The governing experience has not been bad, although of course it has not been completely successful because it has been affected by adverse factors which were deliberately imposed. Municipal governments cannot be completely autonomous, because they depend on finances that are managed by the state legislature or by the federal government. These circumstances make the task of governing much more difficult. The work that these opposition municipalities have done cannot be considered inadequate, and in none of the cases can we talk about an absolute failure due to incapacity to govern. In Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, there have been opposition authorities and we can't talk about an administrative disaster. Thus from these partial experiences, which can easily be documented, we can see that even when it's the first time, the opposition parties can govern. There is capacity and talent—in some parties more than in others—which give these parties governing possibilities. And then, reaching the limits of irony, judging by the situation of the country, it can't be said that the current governors have had excessive capacity to govern. To govern is to manage the circumstances and to navigate between them. And we have crashed against circumstances more often than we have been able to manage them adequately.

*León García Soler:* Obviously there is, but no one can prove it. We've had more than half a century with one party in power. But to your question about if there is a political party in the opposition able to govern, the answer is yes—though there are plenty of people who affirm the contrary. Nobody can prove who is right because the experience hasn't happened. We have to remember that Mexico, in spite of the grand political movements of the 19th century, was late in forming parties of a national character. It was not until 1929 that a party was formed that could be described as national. When the National Revolutionary Party (PNR) was founded in that year, not only revolutionary chiefs, local and regional forces joined, but also parties that had been formed earlier, including some that today would be in the opposition, such as the Socialist Border Party or the Southeast Socialist Party. The new party was a great concentration of all the groups and parties that guided the revolution, and was the first Mexican in-depth attempt to integrate a national party. At the moment the opposition faces the elections with the notable absence of the Mexican Communist Party (PCM) which has now become part of the Mexican Socialist Party (PMS). The National Action Party (PAN) was only formed in 1939. The opposition represents a recent attempt by the authorities and other groups and parties to direct unrest and ideological thinking of different groups towards the legal order.

It is difficult for opposition parties to have capacity and experience on the national level, even in moments that are so difficult for the government and the governing party. But you can't simply put organization where discontent exists. The organization has to be made, like it or not. You could argue, in classic PRI style, that no other party can prove it's able to govern Mexico. But it's not a matter of credentials, of university titles or even of party experience. It is plainly and simply a matter of popular will expressed through voting to give a mandate. Thus, in the last instance, I would say the only person with capacity to answer the initial question, is the Mexican voter. If the voter expresses his or her discontent, disgust or lack of confidence with the ruling party through the electoral system, he or she gives a mandate, orders one party or another to govern. It's a matter of seeing what kind of government that party will form.

*Froylán López Narváez:* Yes, all of them. If we consider the incapacity of public officials to govern the country, at least we can be hopeful. We are living through a grave crisis. In this sense, the national and state governments are not governing, they are "disgoverning", they are inept. None of the presidents has ever been trained to be president, he learns it. Nobody knows how to carry out the job. Thus, this question seems senseless to me: neither De la Madrid nor López Portillo was prepared to be president. Why can't other citizens learn? There have been opposition parties who have held power in municipalities, local legislature, and a growing number of opposition parties are represented in the Chamber of Deputies. Thus it seems to me very uninteresting to ask this question, because, I insist, it's



something that is learned. Housewives learn to administer their homes, and those who establish a business also learn how to do it. As well, I repeat, there is legislative experience and a legality which conducts public opinion. This question seems to me an insidious one, really stupid.

*Voices of Mexico:* **The Mexican society has number of important characteristics that we could say, imitate the U.S. model. The overlap of both societies is so wide and complex that it causes us to ask: What influence, participation or determination does the U.S. society and the U.S. government, have in the current Mexican electoral process?**

**The opposition has had real governing experiences, though it's true that these experiences have been reduced to municipal level**

*León García Soler:* All and none, which seems to me a contradiction. There is no direct influence in our electoral process. There remains the "black legend" that our neighbor influences in some obscure way who will be the next president. I believe that the direct influence of the United States is not always present or efficient. The United States tries to penetrate all nations, not only its neighbors. And besides, they have a global vision of their presence, be it in the Indian Ocean or in Central America, in Ciudad Juarez or Piedras Negras. They have appointed themselves as the protectors of democratic purity in the world. There might be an outcry in the circles of power in Washington if Rosario Ibarra de Piedra, presidential candidate of the trotskyist Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT) were to win the elections. I don't believe that the United States can directly influence our electoral process.

*Miguel Angel Granados Chapa:* There's no direct intervention. Or it has very little significance. Undoubtedly it is possible to establish links between some sectors of the PAN and some powerful groups in the United States, but these are not significant in the sense that they don't change the natural course of the elections. However I believe that the United States does exercise some influence on the Mexican elections, in that the United States appears as a democratic model, as a paradigm of a society where the citizen's vote is respected, where there is a possibility of power changing hands from one party to another, where the ruling party doesn't necessarily win, where election results are not mechanically foreseen. In this way, the image of the U.S. society, extended through the Mexican middle classes by television, film and other ways, does become a model with determined forms of behavior. The U.S. government also makes conditions, but not mechanically. It doesn't tell the Mexican government what it should do. The rumor, spread mainly by Vasconcelos, that Ambassador Morrow



Demonstration for electoral democracy. (Photo by Andrés Garay)



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**We Mexicans can see the change, but we're not sure where it is taking us**

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had invented the ruling party, and that Calles was a docile follower of the U.S. Ambassador's instructions, has very little in with the reality. But the factor of domination, the presence of the United States in Mexican life, is very strong. No Mexican president, no party that governs Mexico—that is, the PRI— can be ostensibly, permanently and systematically opposed to the United States. Mexican interests would not resist a seige, or systematic opposition from the United States. We are too dependent on the U.S. economic system to confront it. Two-thirds of Mexican trade is with the United States. There are many economic, political and judicial mechanisms which could strangle the Mexican economy if the Mexican government were hostile toward the U.S. government. There can be autonomy in the bilateral relations, but not hostility. This fact evidently determines the role of the Mexican government in its relations with the United States. And if the United States prefers a certain kind of electoral behavior, the [Mexican] government cannot be insensitive to this preference. The U.S. government is now in a diabolically comfortable position. I think that U.S. interests are protected whether there is political stability or instability in Mexico.

*Voices of Mexico:* **Political columnists have become a strong and important source in the creation and formation of public opinion. What is the role of the work you do? What is the role of the media in the current electoral juncture?**

*León García Soler:* In most local and statewide newspapers the six presidential candidates now get first page coverage. This is a very unusual thing in Mexico. Of course, the opposition parties complain that the PRI gets more space. However, we're living in a capitalist society, like it or not. The right-wing parties get offended for example, if more journalistic space is given to the official candidate in a newspaper or on private radio or television networks. Unfortunately, state television is handled with immensely bureaucratic criteria. I am of the opinion that if candidates want to buy space, then it should be sold to them. According to our laws, the media have the right not to sell it, but our electoral laws are very deficient. Here there should exist a mechanism similar to "equal time" in the United States.\* We don't have this. In contrast we have a system that's more advanced in democratic terms where the air time which belongs to the state is divided among each of the contesting political parties. I believe that the media play an important role, for good and for bad, in the construction of public opinion, and that in spite of all their problems, the media have made enormous progress. There are really valuable people from the newspapers' management to the editorial pages, although there are also others who are not professional.

*Froylán López Narváez:* We live in a capitalist nation, and therefore the fragmented interests of the social classes are what dominate. *Televisa*, the newspapers *El Heraldo*, *La Prensa*, *Excelsior*, *Novedades*, the radio networks *Núcleo Radio Mil* and *Acir* benefit from the political and economic system. Thus the role they play is that which suits their interests, and they consider that the appearance of opposition parties in their media to be the appearance of their adversaries. According to the Mexican Constitution and electoral reforms there should be a great aperture, but interests get in the way and dominate. If the mass media are private industries for profit, if they are concessionaries or businesses, well they'll respond according to their own interests. These interests don't end with publicity in favor of the PRI—an opening to other parties falls within the rules of the business. But this opening is limited by class interests and by official pressures to open or close spaces. People generally believe that it's "free play" in clean political fight, but there is no fight, only hypocrisy and bad faith. With respect to *Proceso*, it does not belong to any political or commercial organization. *Proceso* belongs to no party. The owners are a broad based group of citizens who founded the company to provide the public with information, as a service to the community. Our readers want to know what happened and we tell them. Our judgement does not depend on parties, official interests or any political doctrine. The role we play is strictly informative and is in accord with our class standing.

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\* Editors note: "Equal time" regulations require a radio or television station to provide a political candidate with air time equal to any time an opponent receives beyond the coverage of news.



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PRI street propaganda. (Photo by José Fuentes)

*Miguel Angel Granados Chapa:* I believe that the press does play a role. I would prefer to talk about my intentions, rather than about the results, as I know the former better. My work consists in contributing to an understanding of the political phenomena we experience. One of the main problems in this country is that people are not politicized, and this in turn is due to the fact that public affairs are not public. Public affairs are handled the way priests handle theological mysteries, as if they were something that should be received in secret or at least with relative discretion, because from this secret or discretion a certain power is derived. Something similar occurs in Mexican politics. What I try to do as a journalist is make public what should be public, and ventilate and express opinions and behaviors that are not normally made public.

The column I write is called *Public Plaza*, because it aspires to put affairs that belong to all of us in a visible place, in the public plaza. There's a column in the newspaper *La Prensa* called *Politics from the Palace* that has exactly the opposite effect of what I try to do. My job is to make public political affairs, so that it's not the private property of those in power. I don't know what effect it has. I do know that the press has an effect in creating and picking up on public opinion. And it's clear that the written press has a quantitatively less important role than television or even radio. I think that television forms the opinion of one third of the Mexican population. There are some 25 or 30 million persons with no other contact with reality than television, which of course is not their immediate reality. Television deforms the political opinions of this third of the Mexican population. In contrast, the public which relies on the written press to form their political criteria has an infinite number of possibilities. The written press is very diverse, in spite of many limitations of every kind. It offers its readers a bigger, richer and wider panorama than the other mass media. Due to a cultural tradition and a number of other reasons, the press is still the instrument of the ruling circles. In this way, qualitatively, it can create public opinion and directly monitor what is being discussed in society. □