

MEXICO AND SPAIN: TWO DIFFERENT POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES

José Francisco Ruiz Massieu

It is difficult to understand the Mexican political situation without analyzing its connections with the main historical motivations which have led to the construction of such a diverse and complex society as ours. Our recent political history has been marked by the domination of one sole political party over a period of sixty years, but this is being questioned today by an electorate which is increasingly critical of the existing system, and by opposition parties with strength and influence enough to aspire to being government parties. In this section, José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, Governor of the state of Guerrero - a state where the opposition has considerable electoral presence - analyzes Mexico's political transition processes, and compares them to those experienced in Spain over the last decade.

Mexico and Spain: Nearness and Distance

The almost explosive flowering of Spanish democracy after the death of Franco (1975) and the speedy break up of the last Franquista regime have, in the words of Stanley G. Payne¹, captivated Western political analysts, especially those in Mexico.

The ambivalent attitude we Mexicans have had towards Spain, be it in the psychological or emotional realms or in the intellectual political arena, has changed considerably since the Spanish Transition (1976-1982) and the dynamic growth of democracy in the peninsula.

The transition from Franquism to democracy was embraced with great enthusiasm in Mexican circles in general and, in particular, by the Mexican government, which made two eloquent gestures: President Echeverría in a controversial measure heatedly denounced the Franco regime for killing several young Basques; and President López Portillo greeted the new era in Spain by officially breaking diplomatic relations with the Republic in Exile.

The Allure of the Spanish Transition

The *Spanish Democratic Transition* was received in Mexico by a long tradition of alienation, stereotyping, and hispanophobia.

The political system shaped in Mexico since the Revolution, has never lost sight of its electoral bearings

But, once the transition was underway, the Mexican government, intellectuals and politicians began to approach the Spanish process and reestablish contact with the principal agents in this process.

The allure of the Spanish transition —even greater with the dramatic encounters of other transitions in Argentina and the Philippines— grew quickly after the *Mexican Moment* (1987-1989) which was characterized by

Governor of the State of Guerrero



The results of the elections were questioned by members of the PRI and the PRD. Photo by Rosa María Torres.

breakdowns in the Revolutionary party and problems with the political system: the shelving of historically established understandings among the major political figures; the effects of the economic crisis in the electorate; the emergence of the National Democratic Front; and the radicalization of the National Action Party.

This turbulent phase which lasted from July 6 to December 1 1988, led some notable opposition spokesmen to suggest that the new government carry out a *Mexican transition*, that is a *Mexican Transition, Spanish Style*, to the point of abolishing the present party system and installing a multi-party parliamentary system.

The desires of the opposition were motivated by various causes: mistrust and prejudice which led to a total condemnation of the party in power; ignorance of the essential nature of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)—the internal and external understandings which structure it— and of its vigor; the confusion into which not a few leaders of the PRI fell; and a sincere optimism along with ingenuous aping which made them forget that political transplants are not viable.

The Similarities

There are not many similarities between the Mexican and Spanish political processes; although, in the Nineteenth Century, some points of similarity can be found that are not easily dismissed.

In Spain, save a brief republican interlude, the monarchy has prevailed, while in Mexico, save for two ephemeral parentheses, it is the Republic that has triumphed.

Military leaders in Spain have often become head of state and in Mexico, president. In both countries the military have been virtual arbiters of political life.

The lack of prestige and the ineptitude of the leaders of the two countries—Fernando VII, Maria Cristina, Isabel II, Amadeo, in Spain and above all Santa Anna in Mexico—plunged their countries into political instability and national malaise. Although some fifty years apart, two equally unjust international wars demoralized the two societies last century. The Mexican American War of 1848 mutilated Mexican territory and threw the fledgling nation into a state of frustration while the Spanish American War of 1898 put an end to the Spanish Empire and brutally revealed the degree of decadence into which the old nation had fallen.

The turbulent phase which lasted from July through December, 1988, led some notable opposition spokesmen to propose that the new government carry out a Mexican transition, Spanish style

Another characteristic apparently shared by Mexico and Spain in the Twentieth Century is that both were rocked by social movements which were to determine the course of their histories. The Spanish Civil War divided Spain in two and should be considered as a violent schism within the Spanish family. The Mexican Revolution, on the other hand, despite an important phase of civil strife from 1910 to 1920 was precisely that, a revolution which put paid to the old economic, political and social structures, and created new ones.

The Imaginary Analogy: the Real Differences

The *Spanish transition*, and on this point I will have more to say, is a restoration of party democracy. In Mexico, on the contrary, we are struggling to strengthen, purify, and update a democratic regime which has been developing, albeit slowly, for the seventy years of the regime founded by the Revolution. The *Spanish Transition* is the transition from a dictatorship, in which there were no elections and therefore no political parties, to a pluralist democracy.

In Spain, the death of Franco and the ascent to the throne of Juan Carlos as Head of State initiated the changes that made a multiparty democracy possible; in Mexico, the reforms which led to the opposition's holding 48% of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies began with the conciliatory political work of Luis Echeverría, and were strengthened under López Portillo with the 1978 Political Organization and Electoral Process Act, which gave greater parliamentary voice to a political plurality, and culminated in the constitutional amendments and laws passed under Miguel de la Madrid.

From the beginning there were no political parties in the Franco regime and those that had existed before, such as the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (Partido Socialista Obrero Español) or the Communist Party (Partido Comunista) fled into exile or were reduced to a completely clandestine existence. The Falange (La Falange Española Tradicionalista) and later the National Movement (El movimiento nacional) were never really political parties but only organs of the State based on corporate structures which grouped the citizenry in order to control them politically and bind them to the State.

The principal goal of these groups was quite obviously not that of electoral politics, which is by definition the aim of a political party. Julian Marias brutally characterizes the Franco regime as follows:

The Spanish Civil War resulted in a total elimination of political liberty, not only in fact but in principal. No government post, at any level, even a town mayor was elective; this extended to professional or academic entities —Universities, Colleges, Academies, professional associations, etc. All printed matter, even a seed catalogue, had first to go through the censors. The same was true for theater, movies, and radio. A safeconduct was necessary to travel to the next town. And one's duly documented and witnessed "loyalty to the regime" was a condition for aspiring to any official post".²

The Mexican Revolution put paid to the old economic, political and social structures, and created new ones

In Mexico, on the other hand, the Mexican Revolution, even during its violent phase from 1910 to 1920, fostered the participation of political parties in elections: from the National Antireelection Party, which brought Madero to power; to the Liberal Constitutionalist Party, associated with Obregon; to the Communist Party, founded in 1919 to counter the bourgeois-democratic slant of the Movement of 1910.

The political system shaped by the Mexican Revolution, in contrast to that forged by the Spanish Civil War, never lost its electoral bearings. Despite events that might have invited de facto solutions (the civil war of 1914-1920; the Agua Prieta Rebellion; or the disappearance of Obregon in 1928), elections were seen as the only way of legally renewing the right to govern. It is worth remembering that Carranza was elected president in 1917 ending his aconstitutional naming as Supreme Head of the Constitutionalist Army; after the provisional presidency of De la Huerta, Obregon came to power through the ballot. On the assassination of Obregon, Calles handed over the reins to the interim President Portes Gil on the exact legal date, calling immediately for a special election; and so forth.

Another difference which, as it is an essential one, should make us see that the transplanting of the solu-

REPORT FROM THE CITIZENS' INDEPENDENT TRIBUNAL

Without regard for affiliation or political preference, a group of notable citizens from the political and cultural arena of the country decided to form an independent tribunal that would objectively analyze the results of the July 1989 elections for representatives for the local Congress in the state of Michoacán. At the same time that representatives of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) declared separately that each had obtained the majority of seats, the Citizens' Independent Tribunal proceeded to conduct its own investigation in order to detect even the smallest irregularities that were committed during the electoral process. The results of that analysis as well as the very existence of the Tribunal demonstrated the increasing preoccupation of the civil society to eradicate electoral corruption which, within the Mexican experience, has led to fraud and to a lack of respect for the will of the majority. Due to its importance, but also because it is a unique experience in electoral history in Mexico, we present the final results of the work of the Citizens' Independent Tribunal.

Verdict of the Citizens' Independent Tribunal on the July 2 elections in Michoacán

The results of elections held on July 2, 1989, for local representatives by relative majority and for six representatives by proportional representation for the 18 electoral districts of the state of Michoacán, were analyzed by the CITIZENS' INDEPENDENT TRIBUNAL along with the evidence provided by the PAN, PARM, and PRD, which could not be compared with that of the PRI insofar as this party was not willing to give us access to them either in Morelia, Michoacán, or in the Federal District.

Having as its only intention that of ascertaining the truth of what occurred, the Tribunal—a group of independent citizens exercising our constitutional rights—addresses public opinion in order to make known the results of our labor. We went to Morelia, Michoacán on August 2 and 3 in order to gather evidence, documents, and oral testimonies. According to this evidence, we have arrived at the following conclusions that can only be rectified by comparing them with documents to which the PRI has denied us access.

It is important to note the crushing abstention at the polls, which reached 70% of all registered voters. The problem of abstentionism is not only present in the state of Michoacán but is national. The lack of respect for voting is the principal cause for distrust in electoral processes. Abstentionism is a great threat for the present and the future of the country insofar as it expresses a lack of interest induced by the prevailing political culture. One of the principal causes of the high rate of abstentionism is the vast distrust of the population in the electoral mechanisms controlled by the PRI, and its authoritarian manipulation of voting booths and of district Committees,

with the resulting partiality of the electoral organisms in favor of the PRI. The lack of credibility, the frequency of frauds committed, and the pretense of giving partiality a legal veneer in order to mend or remake electoral reality, is one of the great obstacles on the road to democratic fluidity.

V15

This Tribunal was able to show that there were great anomalies in the electoral process, attributable to the electoral authorities in order to favor PRI candidates. The opposition parties contested these, but were ignored. In numerous cases of protest, elements introduced by the parties and the candidates were thrown out by decision of the electoral authorities who did not receive proofs, nor accept declarations, nor carry out the due procedures. All of this indicates that the people have been placed in a state of legal defencelessness.

The State Electoral Commission, which selects the five members of the Electoral College, is totally controlled by the PRI. Without a doubt, this affects its credibility.

For the reasons just mentioned, the Citizens' Independent Tribunal has reached the conclusion that the official results of the electoral process are very different from the will of the citizens of Michoacán, because in a considerable number of cases, the voting was not respected.

We include a synthesis of the results in each of the electoral districts. The Citizens' Independent Tribunal, with the civic spirit which encouraged its formation and labor, places the results of its investigation at the disposal of the public. We know that this has no legal value. We are sure that the sense of our deliberations is that the civil society derive the moral and political conclusions that it deems necessary. We have done our work convinced that the example of Michoacán is not limited to that state, but rather reflects the situation of the entire country and that this destroys its democratic possibilities.

First district: Northern Morelia

Due to numerous irregularities including polls which were not installed, unjustified annulments, and calculation of illegal votes, very probably the revision of results and the elimination of irregularities would give some 14,000 votes for the PRD and 11,000 for the PRI.

Second district: South Morelia

According to the district figure, the PRD won with 10,000 votes as opposed to 6,346 for the PRI. However, the illegal calculation of polls where the counting of votes favored the PRI and the unjustified annulment of polls with votes in favor of the PRD, gives the PRD a smaller majority than it should have. If the counting of votes had been correct, the party representative would have had access to the Electoral College.

Third district: Pátzcuaro

The PRD candidate obtained slightly more votes than were officially recognized: PRD, 13,096 votes; PRI, 7,349 votes.

Fourth district: La Piedad

The PRD candidate obtained a majority of votes over the PRI candidate. According to the Tribunal's analysis of the legal dispositions applicable in this case, the evidence received and the polls' revision, the official results were illegal, and unduly accorded 7,254 votes for the PRI and 382 votes for the PRD, for which the results according to the Law were the following: PRD, 9,691 votes; PRI, 7,763 votes. The majority vote for the PRD could



Transparent ballot boxes are used in efforts to prevent electoral fraud. Michoacán, December 1989. Photo by Rosa María Torres.

be expanded and the minority for the PRI reduced if due investigation and revision were to occur. The Tribunal recommends revision of the official results in Polls 17 and 23 of La Piedad, 4 of Ecuandureo, 9 of Numarán, 9A and 10A of Penjamillo, and 1 of Zináparo, and also recommends an urgent investigation of the penal, political, and administrative responsibilities for violations of the law.

Fifth district: Zamora

In this district, there were so many irregularities, some in the poll affidavits, others in the district ones, and others detected due to additional information received, that the Tribunal reached the conclusion that article 185, fractions I, II, III, V, and article 186, fraction III, of the Electoral Law of the State of Michoacán should be annulled.

Sixth district: Uruapan

The irregularities committed are not so grave as to alter the overall outcome of the voting, so that the counting of votes can be considered valid in the district affidavits, which give the triumph to the PRD candidate.

Seventh district: Tacámbaro

As opposed to the previous case, the results emitted in the affidavit of the District Committee are 11,387 for the PRI and 6,999 for the PRD. The examination of the poll affidavits compared with the affidavit of the District Committee results in the following: PRI, 6,109; PRD, 6,263, thus favoring the PRD.

Eighth district: Zitácuaro

The violations of the law in more than 50% of the polls indicate the need to annul the election results in this district.

Ninth district: Apatzingán

The PRD candidate obtained a majority of votes over the PRI candidate.

Tenth district: Ciudad Hidalgo

A massive and documented fraud in voting in more than 70% of the 144 polls renders unacceptable the elections results in this district. It is enough to observe that in the official affidavit of the district calculation, not even one of the polls' vote counts was recorded, thus openly violating article 160 of the Electoral Law. Just this is cause enough to annul the election results in accordance with the articles 185 and 186 of the Law, independently of the multiple causes of nullity derived from the reply founded in the vote counts of more than a hundred polls.

Eleventh district: Zacapu

In this district, as in Uruapan (VI) the results of the district count should be accepted because the irregularities observed do not alter the election results which are favorable to the PRD.

Twelfth district: Paruándiro

The district vote count is accepted here which favors the PRD because there are no irregularities which substantially affect the results. However, it is important to note that the PRD candidate obtained more votes than were officially recognized.

Thirteenth district: Jiquilpan

This Tribunal proposes the annulment of this electoral district, based on fraction III of article 186 of the Electoral Law, because of the large number of violations and irregularities committed which substantially alter the preparation, development and results of the election.

Fourteenth district: Los Reyes

The PRD candidate obtained a majority vote over the PRI candidate. In accordance with the applicable legal dispositions, the evidence received and the poll revisions which the Tribunal analyzed, the official results illegally and unjustly extracted 4,029 votes from the PRD and 875 for the PRI so that the results according to the Law are the following: PRD, 9,064 votes; PRI, 7,441 votes. The majority vote for the PRD could be expanded and the minority vote for the PRI reduced if there were due investigation and consequent revision. This tribunal recommends the revision of the official results in the following polls: 10 of Tuxpan, 7, 19, 20 and 21 of Epitacio Huerta, 11 in Senquio, 13 of Tlalpujahuá, and 24 in Los Reyes, and a general revision of the penal, political and administrative responsibilities for violation of the law.

Fifteenth district: Maravatío

The PRD candidate obtained a majority vote in contrast with the PRI candidate. In accordance with the applicable legal dispositions, the evidence received, and the poll revision which the Tribunal analyzed, the official results illegally and unjustly attributed 915 votes to the PRI and extracted in the same way 261 votes from the PRD, so that the results according to the Law were the following: PRD 8,005; PRI, 7,810. The majority vote for the PRD could be expanded and the minority vote for the PRI reduced if there were due investigation and consequent revision. This tribunal recommends the revision of the official results in the poll 11 of Tingíndin Municipality, and recommends an urgent investigation of penal, political and administrative responsibilities for violations of the law.

Sixteenth district: Coalcomán

The PRD candidate obtained a majority vote over the PRI candidate.

Seventeenth district: Lázaro Cárdenas

As in the case of the II, VI, XII, and XIII districts, the results in the district affidavits are accepted because irregularities affecting the results were not detected.

Eighteenth district: Huetamo

This Tribunal estimated that given the sum of the polls whose vote count should be annulled in this district due to manifest irregularities and whose results favor the PRI, the official results should be modified with the elimination of votes corresponding to these polls, and in which case, the triumph in the district corresponds to the PRD.

Sincerely
For the Citizens' Independent Tribunal

Mariclaire Acosta, Julio Faesler, Rodolfo González Guevara, Jaime González Graff, Jorge Barrera Graff, Emilio Krieger, Salvador Nava Martínez, Elena Poniatowska, Rogelio Sada Zambrano, Samuel del Villar y Carlos Monsiváis.

tions from the Spanish transition to the present Mexican moment would not be viable: democracy in Spain adopted a parliamentary form which supplanted the absolute monarchy in the nineteenth Century, while Mexico, historically, has adopted a strong presidency.

In Spain a parliamentary system is a relevant restoration of a political constant in the democratic process with roots in the nineteenth Century, whereas for Mexico it would be an inviable implant.

Spain created a new Constitution in 1978, while political parties in Mexico have accepted, tacitly or directly, the 1917 Constitution

In Mexico, neither during the party electioneering before July 6 nor in the year following was the abrogation of the 1917 Constitution of Queretaro ever proposed. On the contrary, the platforms and sundry pronouncements

of the major opposition parties, the National Action Party and the National Democratic Front, directly or indirectly incorporated constitutional principals and provisions to which they had long taken exception. Furthermore, the transformation of the Mexican Socialist Party, the third version of the old Communist Party of 1919, into the Democratic Revolution Party caused it to throw off its socialist concepts and tacitly or directly accept the position of the Mexican Revolution.

In modern democracies constitutions serve to bring together the social covenants which unite the essential will of the body politic. The Constitution of 1978 dissolved the Franco regime and the Constitution of 1917 did away with the Porfiriato. Both establish a nation of laws.

The role of the King represents another difference between the Spanish transition and the changes occurring in Mexico. Although the King functions as the Head of the Spanish State with restricted powers, it is recognized that he has in fact played a decisive role in the various landmark decisions in the democratization process through the discreet, and undeniably able handling of the political situation; as for example, the naming of Adolfo Suárez, the proclamation of the Constitution, the defeat of Tejero, and the acceptance of the first Socialist



Voters in Michoacán elect their Municipal President in December 1989. Photo by Rosa María Torres.

Worker government. Juan Carlos carries out the functions vested in him by the constitution with exceptional skill.³

On the other hand, the positions of Head of State and Head of the government are not separate in the Mexican system. The President of the Republic carries out both functions and in so doing embodies the continuity of institutions and governs national life, but at the same time he is himself involved in the wheeling and dealing of party politics, especially in general elections. As is the case with all heads of government in Western democracies, the President is the head of the party in power (PRI) and therefore is exposed to all the conflicts of party politics.

Another change which took place during the remarkably active period of the Spanish transition was that the armed forces, one of the principal actors on the political scene during the Franco regime, ceased to play a major role in the processes of democratization, except for its rash initial, often underground attempts to retain power. In Mexico, this change had already come about in the fifties.

The political, and even the legal status of the Roman Catholic church in Spain has been modified by the transition which withdrew the church's privileges and deprived it of its remaining powers.

In Mexico, on the other hand, the political status of the Church, although it has changed somewhat in the last few years, was defined in Article 130 of the Constitution, the religious amendment, which provided for a sensible coexistence.

There cannot be, therefore, a true democracy in which political parties are not the major players on the political scene

The Parties

It has become a commonplace among political scientists that contemporary democracy is forcibly and inevitably a democracy of political parties, a partyocracy as some have called it, given that it is the parties that constitute the intermediaries between State institutions and society and that help to integrate them to mould popular opinion and to make representative institutions work. There cannot be, therefore, a true democracy in which political parties are not the major players on the political scene.

The Spanish transition which began in 1976, embodied an extremely competitive multiparty system which replaced a regime characterized by some as a one-party system (the National Movement), and by others as a system with no parties at all, given that the Movement was really an organ of the State with the political functions of social control and legitimization of the regime, and not those of participation in the electoral process and the functioning in representative bodies.

The Franco regime prohibited the historical parties, both conservative and liberal parties, as well as the leftist parties, and instituted the Traditionalist Spanish Phalanx

(Falange Española Tradicionalista, or FET) as the State party, the sole party, on the Italian Fascist model.

Later, perhaps due to pressure from the Western democracies, the dictator relegated it to a lesser role until the fifties when it became the National Movement (Movimiento Nacional or MN). The Movement was assigned a number of tasks: filling a substantial number of upper positions in the bureaucracy, controlling the trade unions, and broadcasting the ideas and programs of the regime through its propaganda machine.

There are points of seeming similarity between the FET-MN and Mexico's National Revolutionary Party (Partido Nacional Revolucionario or PNR) but their essential nature is radically different.

The FET-MN, from the moment of Franco's coming to power until 1977 when it was dissolved, was a sole party and other parties were prohibited by law. In Mexico, on the contrary, although the election returns and the fact that the PRN held almost all the elective offices made it seem to act as a sole party, the opposition parties always has complete legal freedom of action even at the polls.⁴

The FET-MN was never a party which participated in elections; under Franco, popular representation was never determined by popular vote but only through established State bodies. The PRN-PRM-PRI, on the other hand, has participated in each and every election.

In Franco's Spain the separation of powers was revoked and all institutions (the courts, the government, the territorial entities) were subject to the will of the Head of State; which is why the Movement never carried out the political functions that the PRI has historically exercised.

Having cleared up this point it is useful to review the role of the political parties in the Spanish transition to further drive home our point of an imaginary analogy. The Political Reform Act of 1977, and the demise of the Movement fomented the emergence of new partisan groups and established the legal existence of the parties that had been proscribed.

Two stand out among the first of these partisan groups to appear: the Democratic Center Union (UCD) of Adolfo Suárez, the former General Secretary of the Movement and President of the government, which was a center-right coalition; and the rightist Popular Alliance, directed by Manuel Fraga Iribarne, the former Minister under Franco and an important figure in one of the wings of the old regime. Both groups with obvious shades of difference between them shared the characteristic of distancing themselves in large measure from the Franco regime without directly aligning themselves with the historical rightist parties.

On the opposite side of the political arena we find two long-standing parties: the Socialist Workers Party, founded in 1879 by Pablo Iglesias; and the Communist Party directed by Carrillo, both of which had gone underground in the days of Franco.

The UCD, with the advantage of having at its head the former head of the government, came to power in 1977, although without an absolute majority and in 1982 it practically disappeared, going from 168 seats to 12 in those five years.

Suárez responded to the rapid decay of the UCD as shown in successive local elections by defecting and creating a new party, the Social Democratic Center (Cen-

tro Democrático Social or CDS). The CDS was an attempt to move towards the left-center.

The PSOE, which had shown promising gains in 1977, winning 30% of the votes and seats, received 46% of the vote and 202 parliamentary seats in 1982, and so came to power. The PSOE took full advantage of the charisma of its historic roots but left behind its traditional leaders and moved towards the center avoiding confrontations. This pragmatic tendency has continued during the seven years the party has been in power, much as has been the case, as we all know, with Mitterand's Socialist Party.

In the 1982 general elections, the Popular Coalition, which was formed around Fraga's Popular Alliance, became the second force in the government, winning 25% of the vote and 105 seats. The Communist party which had garnered nearly 11% of the vote in 1979 plummeted in the next elections five years later to a mere 4%; the UCD won only 7% and Suárez's new CDS only 3%.

In Mexico in 1988 the picture was radically different. The PRI, in contrast to the UCD, is not a political coalition. Even though the UCD was created at the instance of the government headed by Suárez, as was the PRN-PRI under Calles in 1929, it is worth noting that at the time of the Spanish general elections of 1982, the UCD has been in power for a scant five years and that at the

time of the 1988 elections the PRI had been in power for six decades.

It is worth noting that at the time of the Spanish general elections in 1982, the UCD had been in power a scant five years, while in Mexico in 1988, the PRI had been in power for six decades

The Mexican system of government has one essential difference that has been overlooked by the boosters of the Spanish transition. Spain has a parliamentary system; the Legislative and the Executive branches are so intertwined that all power emanates from the party, or the coalition, that achieves a majority of the seats in the Congress. Mexico has a presidential system which, like in the United States, is characterized by a separate and autonomous configuration of the Executive Branch and the two houses which form the Legislative Branch. Even when a party, or a coalition, achieves absolute majority

ELECTORAL REFORM

Omar Ocampo

The electoral reform law approved in the extraordinary period of the Chamber of Deputies, from last August to October, was the necessary result of an electoral history in which the electoral process had lost credibility. All the parties which participated in its elaboration declared the reform to be insufficient and partial, especially in the context of presidential elections questioned by the opposition and the presumed electoral fraud which, according to the evaluation of the Independent Citizens' Tribunal, occurred during the recent elections for state deputies in Michoacán.

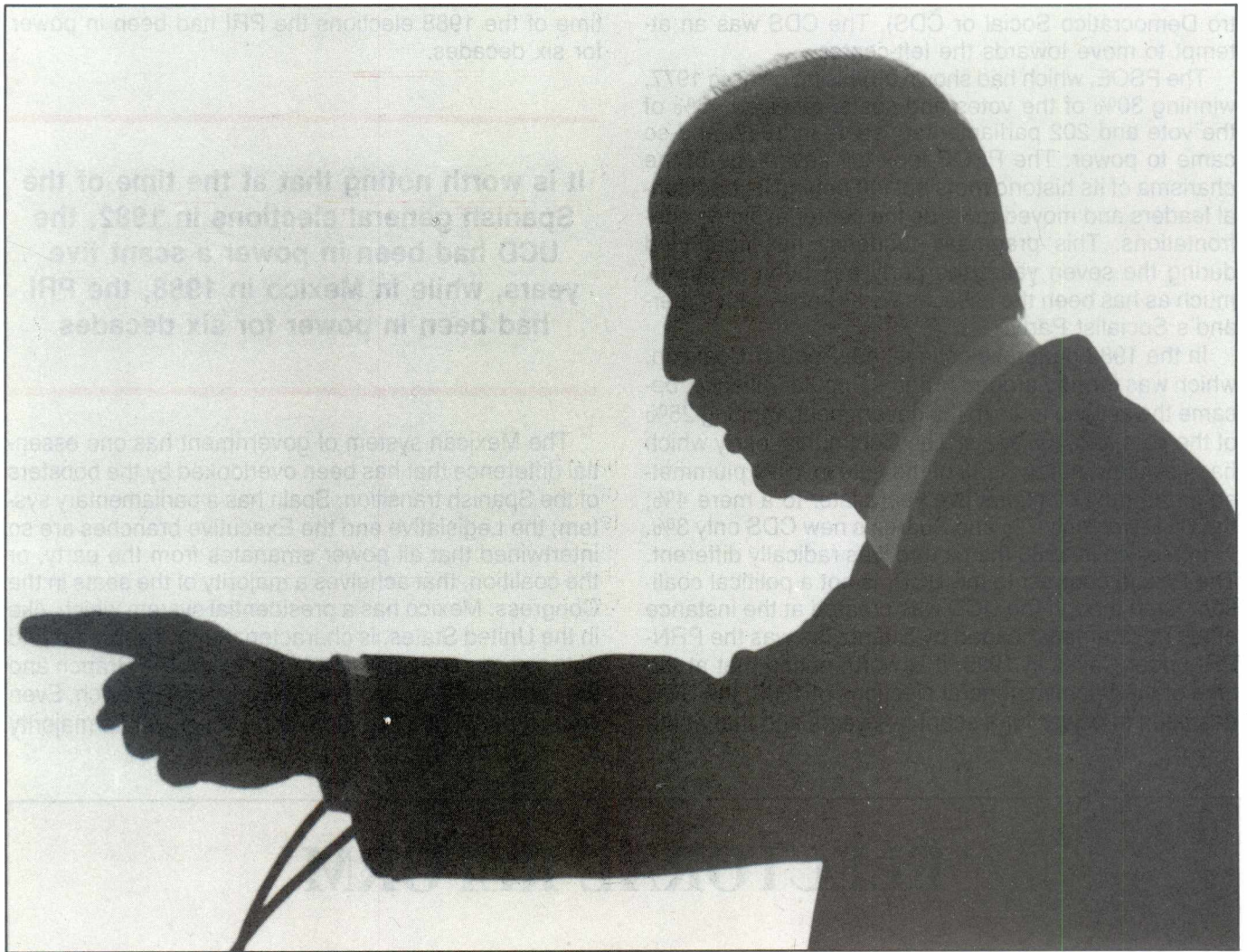
At the beginning of his term, the administration of Carlos Salinas de Gortari proposed, at the express demand of the opposition parties, the elaboration of an electoral reform and the necessary constitutional modifications in an extraordinary period of the Congress. In order to modify the Constitution, the approval of two thirds of the deputies of this body is needed. The task of reforming the electoral legislation and modifying it constitutionally required the establishment of alliances, agreements and consensus in a Congress in which no single party had the majority of votes.

In order to discuss the different initiatives, the Commission of Government and Constitutional Matters of the Chamber of Deputies created two working groups, each made up of six deputies of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI, in power) and four opposition deputies from the parties National Action (PAN), Democratic Revolution (PRD) and the Cardenist Front for National Reconstruction (PFCRN). Although the fact that the working groups contained a majority of deputies from the PRI was declared to be an anti-democratic manner of integrating the groups, the discussion progressed in two general areas: the first concerning electoral organisms, political rights and responsibilities as well as evaluation and procedures regarding electoral conflicts; the second of which referred to the integration and functions of the chambers of deputies and senators, parties and the po-

litical situation of the Federal District, with the proposal to convert it into the state of Anahuac.

One of the themes that produced a great deal of debate was the relation between the executive branch and electoral organisms such as the Federal Electoral Commission. The PRI held that the organization of elections was a task which required the intervention of the Executive, to provide financial and logistic resources as well as to preside, through the Interior Ministry, over the electoral process. The PAN as well as the PRD maintained an opposing opinion. They argued that elections should be organized and presided over by representatives of the legislative branch and they criticized the fact that the Electoral Commission had an overrepresentation of the official party.

At the beginning of the extraordinary period the possibility of an alliance between opposition forces (principally PAN and PRD) to achieve substantial modifications of the electoral system was foreseeable. However, in spite of this initial possibility of an alliance between the two parties, the proposal of the Institutional Revolutionary Party, which received the support of the National Action Party at the very end of the extraordinary period, prevailed. PRI and PAN presented a joint proposal, which was later approved in the Chamber of Deputies in a vote opposed by the PRD and then ratified by the Chamber of Senators: 1) The creation of a new Federal Electoral Tribunal whose magistrates and counsellors will be named by the executive and legislative branches and ratified by two thirds of the Chamber of Deputies; 2) a new national registrar of citizens, which will give out identification cards with photographs, and whose principal function will be to clean out and give credibility to the electoral register; 3) respect for citizens' freedom of political affiliation; and 4) electoral colleges subject to the decisions of the Tribunal.



President Salinas faces the challenge of giving greater credibility to electoral processes. Photo by Marco Antonio Cruz/Imagenlatina

in the Congress, the Presidency can constitutionally fall into the hands of another party. Such is the case at the moment in the United States, which served as a model for our presidential system. The Democratic party dominates the House and the Senate (even in the number of Governors) but the President is a Republican.

In 1982, the oppositions —and not the opposition, given that by the last quarter of this year the National Action Party and the FDN clearly walked different paths— went from 35% of the vote in 1985, to 48%, and in the case of the House of Deputies took 240 of the 500 seats; but the PRI kept its absolute majority, albeit reduced to 52% of the vote and 260 deputies, 20 more than the oppositions combined.

One must also take into account that, this absolute majority in the government of the Federal District and in the District's Representative Assembly, the 31 governorships and in the 31 state congresses, as well as more than 90% of local governments, all of which have to do only with popularly elected institutions.

Political Parties at the Forefront

During the first post-Franco years —that is, during the Arias Navarro and Suárez governments— and later throughout Felipe González's two governments, Spanish politicians (the real wonder-workers of the democratic adventure) showed one and all that the backbone of the Spanish transition would be the political parties and that

the party system would be the base of the democratic regime, of Spanish democracy.

The parties, conscious of their responsibility, agreed to bring forth a founding constitution (1978) from the Moncloa Pacts, an event which united the most significant political currents. This Constitution, with the Political Reform Act of 1977, permitted national and local elections, and legalized parties.

It is clear that even if the surprising results of the July 1988 elections perplexed many in the PRI, they also unnerved many in the opposition parties

Had the principal democratic institutions —the Government, the Judicial Branch, the Constitutional Tribunal, the Comunidades and local governments— not worked efficiently under the aegis of mature political parties, the military menace —which reached a tragicomic level with Tejero—, Basque terrorism and governmental ineffectiveness would have undone Spanish political society, humiliated the transition and the new-born Spanish democracy, opening the way to the real centers of power from the sidelines of the multiparty system.

ELECTIONS IN MICHOACÁN AND GUERRERO

State elections were held in Michoacán and Guerrero on Sunday December 3, 1989. In Michoacán, these were the third elections in less than 18 months: the federal elections of July 1988, the voting for deputies to the State Legislature in July 1989, and the last elections in December for municipal authorities. In Guerrero, the December elections were for both State deputies and for municipal authorities. The most important parties contending these elections in these neighboring states were the Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), while the main challenge was the election of representatives of local government in both states, where local landlords (*caciques*) have maintained ancient powers which have obstructed respect for decisions made by the communities. Thus, anger and resentments accumulated over various decades were aired during and after the voting processes in elections once again marked by abstentionism, by various forms of electoral fraud and by incidents of personal revenge.

In Guerrero, the parties except the PRD signed a pact before the elections which was to guarantee electoral transparency, but voting was carried out in the midst of general doubts about this. The Party of the Cardenist Front for National Reconstruction (PFCRN) considered that electoral fraud was generalized in the state elections. As well, old rancors and the tortuous electoral processes, decided upon by officials whose behaviour was not always considered to be impartial, resulted in explosions of violence in various regions—such as Tecpan, Teloloapan, Cutzamala, Taxco and Coyuca de Benítez. This last municipality was the scene of violent combats on January 1, the day that the elected municipal president from the PRD, was supposed to take office. The new year began in Coyuca de Benítez with violent fighting with fire-arms, dynamite and bombs, between members of the PRI and PRD, resulting in the death of four persons, three of whom were members of the

PRD. Police forces disoccupied various municipal offices which had been occupied by the opposition and dissolved demonstrations with violence—for example in Taxco, the National Action Party (PAN) accused the PRI of fraudulently quitting them their victory in that city, and was violently thrown out of the municipal offices, which they had occupied some days before, during the early hours of the morning of January 2 by police who used truncheons and tear gas. This is the second time the PAN has suffered violent repression in dispute of electoral results—last November in Culiacán, Sinaloa, the municipal offices were burned down during fighting after elections.

In Guerrero, according to official figures, 69 of the 75 municipalities of the whole state have been computerized, and assure that PRI won in 56 of them, the PRD in 9, the PARM in 2, the PFCRN in one and the PRT also in one. Six more localities will celebrate extraordinary elections due to the irregularities in the ordinary polls, according to Governor Ruiz Massieu.

The PRD has held dialogues with important leaders of the PRI and of the Government in Guerrero, and has presented computerized voting results which prove the victory of the PRD in 9 municipalities, and is currently demanding the destitution of state authorities and a political judgment against the Governor of Guerrero, José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, for his supposed responsibility in the use of state resources in favor of PRI candidates, and for being the intellectual author of fraud committed against the citizens of Guerrero. Meanwhile, the State Electoral Commission has determined that, apart from the main political parties already mentioned, other political groups have obtained a municipal victory—the PRT (the Workers' Revolutionary Party, which although it is not registered as a political party on a national level, is recognized and allowed to participate in state elections), the PARM (Party of the Authentic Mexican Revolution) and the PFCRN.

In Michoacán, the PRD began the new decade

with the Government of almost half of that state's municipalities, after the State Electoral Commission declared that of the 113 municipalities, 56 has been won by the PRI, 52 by the PRD, 3 by the PAN and 1 by the PARM, while in the city of Uruapan, the elections were declared null and void, and where citizens will face another election soon. In Uruapan, the state's principal commercial center, due to its booming avocado production, members of the business community have traditionally voted for the PAN, which formed an electoral alliance with the PRI, but even so these parties have not been able to establish that they won a clear victory at the December polls.

Violence also broke out in various regions of Michoacán, such as in Zitácuaro, Benito Juárez and Jungapeo, among others, where political battles took place. Although the majority of municipal governments were assumed pacifically by their new authorities, some communities have parallel municipal offices, following the refusal of one party to recognize the other's supposed victory. In Benito Juárez, local members of the PRI and PRD made their own arrangements, desobeying orders from party headquarters: they agreed to divide local territory, population and budget. The same is occurring during the first few days of the new year in other communities, and in this way the permanent threat of violence has been detained. Even so, although the electoral process has now ended, some thirty municipal offices are still occupied in Michoacán, due to various causes, principally because of fraudulent actions committed against members of the PRD—which party has strong affiliations in Michoacán, birthplace of General Lázaro Cárdenas and of his son, PRD leader and presidential candidate in 1988, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas.

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The parties' efforts to come together as the principal agents of this new political life, pushing away the privileged Franquist agents such as the armed forces, upper-echelon bureaucrats, the clergy and heavy-weight capitalists, made it possible for social conflicts that are natural to systems in transformation, as well as political demands, to find an outlet in the parties themselves, and kept violence locked away in the Basque question.

The scant year that has gone by is not enough to measure accurately the role played by political parties in the Mexican moment, given that electoral behavior is very dynamic, as is the morphology of parties in any democracy. Nonetheless, it was clear that even if the surprising results of the July 6 elections perplexed many in the PRI, they also unnerved many in the oppositions.

Each society is clearly building its own democracy, but each by its own path, rhythm and with its own solutions

With one side perplexed and the other unnerved, dysfunctions occurred: various opposition factions' behavior on September 1 (President De la Madrid's last report to the nation) and on December 1 (President Salinas' inauguration) made it clear that their aim was to block political institutions; and that working out a basic con-

sensus between the party of the absolute majority, the PRI, and the opposition was not probable; and much less, an understanding with the Executive Branch that would assure a political foundation on which the new government could build its program. The outcome was clear: the atrophy of the Congress, which for all practical purposes enacted nothing during its first ordinary session (September-December, 1988).

In 1989, one saw the disarticulation of the National Democratic Front and the transformation of PMS into the Democratic Revolution Party (PRD). This transformation can be explained as a dramatic act of survival and change of direction in the light of having gotten only 4.5% of the vote.⁵ As I have already pointed out, the PRD is heir of the Communist Party of 1919.

The other FDN parties, each in its own way, have split with Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and again, each in its own way, have begun to reach preliminary understandings with the PRI government.

The PAN has acted ably, consistently and even maliciously, as befits a party which would be a loyal opposition and which would negotiate its contribution to whatever tack the Mexican political system may take. On December 3, it began a dialogue with the PRI government which, in spite of all its ups and downs, has not been suspended.

Epilogue

The similarities are so weak and the differences so marked between the Spanish transition (1976-1982) and the Mexican moment that to postulate a Spanish-style Mexican transition can be but a polemical device or the result of the heat of a political moment. The deep nature —the true nature— of the Franco regime and the Mexican regime, as seen in the parties which are the great agents in Mexican and Spanish political life, makes it clear that the changes that have taken place in recent years are most certainly headed towards the building of each society's democracy, each by its own path, rhythm and with its own solutions.

Even if July, 1988 is a milestone in the Mexican democratic process, it does not mean the downfall of a political regime, but rather implementation of political institutions that the party in power and the other parties have managed to put together through years of patient and lucid political work.

One last conclusion to do away with the imaginary analogy: the PRI is not the UCD, nor is the FDN Adolfo Suárez; nor can Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas be considered Mexico's Felipe González. And so: the Mexican moment is not the Spanish transition; it is all just an imaginary analogy. □

Notes

¹The North American political observer (*El régimen de Franco*. Alianza Editorial 1987) identifies several Franquist regimes throughout 40 years.

² *España inteligible*. Alianza Universidad. 1985. pp. 374-375.

³ Article 58 provides that "the King is the Head of the State symbol of its unity and permanence. (He) arbitrates and moderates the regular functioning of the institutions".

⁴ Vasconcelos' National Democratic Party also took part in the first presidential elections the PRN ran in.

⁵ One must remember the distribution of opposition votes in 1988: PAN: 18.3%; PPS: 9.4%; PDM: 1.3%; PFCRN: 9.5%; PRT: 0.5%; PARM: 6.2%.