

BOOKS

Biotechnology, University and Politics

At first glance, it has apparently not been made clear that the technological development of a country is intimately related with its politics and the attention it gives to its universities. In **Biotechnology, University and Politics**, Daniel J. Goldstein studies the genesis of several biotechnological research projects in order to illustrate this problem.

We are led to suppose that the scientific projects carried out in any country respond to well defined necessities of the population; however, who really decides what research is carried out or not? In his book, Goldstein gives us very precise examples of how big companies such as Kodak, Bayer, etc., finance research in universities and private research centers which will earn them millions of dollars annually. What's more, there is great competition between various companies, and not only in the pharmaceutical industry, to obtain new products or to improve those which already exist. Thus, third world countries remain marginated in their scientific and technological development, always depending on the developed nations, because, apart from the small or non-existent support and interest of transnational companies for third world development, the very universities of these countries provide ridiculous sums for research.

In the specific case of biotechnological development, the impact is even greater,

whether it be a matter of obtaining new analysis techniques, or new medicines for the health of human beings, or the search for further exploitation of plants and animals in creating medicines.

Little by little, the author makes clear how advances in physiological knowledge about some mechanism, for example, coagulation and fibrinolysis, lead to the development of new medicines and new detection techniques, which later become new treatments for certain diseases. At the same time he warns us of some dangers of this increase in knowledge, in the specific case of genetic manipulation.

The author emphasizes the fact that there are two biotechnologies: that of the "First World" and that of the rest of the world, or, said in another way, that of the rich, which is in permanent expansion and is oriented to generate wealth, and that of the poor - which either is not biotechnology, or is a metaphysical entity lacking intellectual originality.

With respect to the Third World, and especially in reference to Latin America, Goldstein proposes a strategy which would permit biotechnological development, that consists of fighting for an independent pharmaceutical industry, one that is autonomous and internationally competitive. This would only be possible if excellent and original research in universities is stimulated, because biotechnological capacity is linked to the existence of frontier molecular biology.

Latin America cannot afford to do without its own modern biotechnology, its autonomous administration and exercise of science and technology, and it also needs to make profound changes in industrial strategies.

The book is rich in biological and chemical concepts, which, thanks to the way they are explained and to the final glossary of terms, make its information readily accessible to every reader, regardless of his or her formation.

Biología, universidad y política (Biotechnology, University and Politics). Siglo XXI Editores, México, 1989.

Rocío Alatorre

Editorial Activity in the UNAM

The National Autonomous University of Mexico periodically publishes and re-edits textbooks with varied themes, products of well-known and not so well known writers. At the same time, the distribution of these texts is managed by Editorial Promotions, a university branch created for this purpose.

We would like to take this opportunity to give **Voices'** readers the chance to get to know some recent UNAM publications.

Everything Mexican is part of the culture. And culture itself has multiple aspects. Mexican means Mexicans. But, in this eternal return to Mexican-ness that has already given us important books (such as **The Profile of the Man and the Culture** by Samuel Ramos; **The Labyrinth of Solitude** by Octavio Paz), the book **The Mexican: Cultural and Psychosocial Aspects** by Raúl Béjar Navarro brings us up to date in autochthonous mutation.

The nationalism of Mexicans has many ridges as well as corners. Thus, according to César Garizurieta, inventor of the phrase "All who live beyond their means, live in error", that which is Mexican is not attainable by rational Western means, but rather through feelings, with which one is authorized to approach reason reunited with bedlam: "It could be studied in the asylum of Castañeda because in crazy people the Mexican character does appear, as if seen in a magnifying glass. There it is, in the sum of all of them, that which constitutes the way to be Mexican..."

Béjar Navarro goes beyond this and relates that which is Mexican, North American, and Chicano as that border which continues to worry us because it is the scar so well named by Carlos Fuentes. **The Mexican: Cultural and Psychosocial Aspects**, published by the UNAM and in its fifth edition in 1988, should not be forgotten.

Studies of Maya Culture is a periodical publication of the

Center for Maya Studies of the UNAM. In 1988, Volume XVII was published with studies in English, French and Spanish; "the articles in this new volume...cover a long period of the history of the Mayan peoples. From the prehispanic era we include five articles on archaeology, arithmetics, epigraphy and iconography...Then, there are six articles about the Colonial period which, in reality, has been a poorly studied time frame (maybe because of the astounding cultural achievements of the prehispanic Mayas)...Following this are two articles on linguistics and a critical analysis of the Mayan concept of time; and finally, the volume ends with a book review and bibliographic information." Particularly interesting is a text by Robert Hill entitled "Instances of Maya Witchcraft in the 18th Century Totonacapan Area", which describes practices and beliefs in local witchcraft. This volume offers excellent information on the Mayas, going beyond the touristic viewpoint.

Luis J. Molina Piñero wrote **Contributions to a Theory of Mexican Government** published in new edition by the Institute for Legal Research of the UNAM in 1988. In this work, the real factors of power are reviewed not only in regard to ideology, politics, and history, but also with regard to Constitutional law and the theory of the state...Theoretical aspects of constitutional reform mechanisms are proposed...Reference is made regarding the political stability of the Mexican government. The first edition of this book was published in 1983. Since then, many things have happened with reference to the State.

Editorial Promotions, new series, is the monthly information bulletin of the General Administration of Editorial Promotions of the UNAM. In each issue, an interview with a well-known university scholar is presented. It announces the publication of the most recent University publications, and gives extracts of some texts in order to illustrate editorial problems.

Thus, in Number 25, of January 1989, there is an interview with the philosopher Ramón Xirau, who remembers having difficulties writing because he simultaneously spoke Spanish and Catalan, "his poetic language". Apart from his poetic work, he says that he has been writing some