

ROBERTO MORENO DE LOS ARCOS

A Passion for History and for the University

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IN MEMORIAM



Photos: Ma. del Refugio González

As though it were his destiny, Roberto Moreno de los Arcos unflinchingly took upon himself the duty of protecting those close to him from suffering.

No one in pain or in need, even if practically a stranger, was left without his support, because he always tried to create joy, consciousness, freedom and the happiness of others.

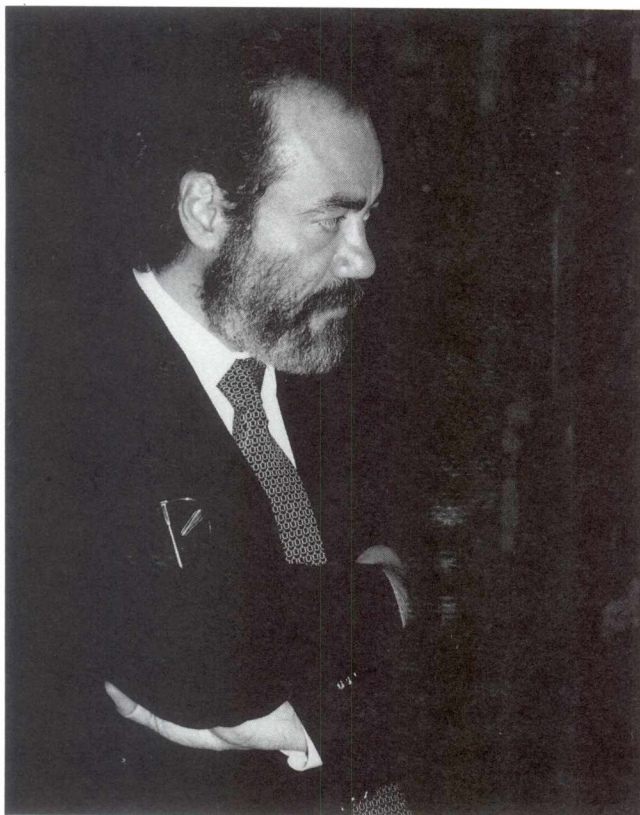
Like other illustrious Mexicans, Roberto Moreno de los Arcos found in the National Autonomous University of Mexico the appropriate sphere for his ethical and intellectual growth. His actions there are an example of the way he behaved in all facets of his life.

He studied in the UNAM's Department of Philosophy and Letters his bachelor's, master's and doctorate in history. He worked as a professor and researcher, and he held important posts such as head of the Institute of Historic Research and the Humanities Coordinating Department. His work was always an example of how to resolve conflicts in the university.

In all his activities, he continually showed that kind of open-handedness which expected nothing in return, that natural goodness which is its own permanent reward.

As a student he was a cordial leader of his fellows and a respectful and loyal follower of his teachers, some of

* Mexican poet.



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whom he helped through the loneliness and sadness that came with age and death. As a teacher, he taught the value of free and original thought. As a researcher, he left a large and celebrated body of work; one quick look at the titles in his bibliography reveals his impassioned interest for Mexico and the defense of this enormous, misunderstood country.

There are those, unfortunately, who see high administrative university posts in terms of power. Roberto Moreno de los Arcos never made this mistake. For him they were just what they are: an opportunity for public service. He showed this in the way he carried out his duties. Appointed twice by the UNAM Board of Governors to be Director of the Institute of Historic Research, he attempted, and often succeeded through friendship and sheer work, in remedying its deficiencies and strengthening its good points. The same can be said of his performance as Coordinator of Humanities, to which he applied a wise mix of honesty and justice.

Just like Mexico, the UNAM is often surrounded by people who would destroy it. Roberto Moreno de los Arcos opposed these efforts unceasingly, efficiently and courageously and contributed tenaciously to its victory.

Roberto Moreno de los Arcos is dead. And the way of his death illuminates his life, making its meaning clear: it was determined by the constant protection of others, by the attempt to alleviate suffering and ignorance in others. His dedication to these ends is thrown further into relief when it is compared to the absolutely manly attitude with which he confronted his own suffering.

It is clear: more than seeking his own happiness, Roberto Moreno de los Arcos charted his life around fostering the happiness of others. Or perhaps it is better said thus: he achieved his own happiness by making other people happy.

The way he faced the last part of his life is an example of the heroism of human solidarity which characterized the whole. ❧

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ROBERTO MORENO DE LOS ARCOS

A B r i e f B i o g r a p h y

Roberto Moreno de los Arcos was born in Mexico City, November 15, 1943. He received his bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in history from the National University of Mexico. His life was almost completely dedicated to academia and the UNAM, where he held several posts. He was the director of the Institute for Historical Research for two periods, from 1979 to 1985 and from 1985 to 1989. He was also briefly the Coordinator of Humanities between 1989 and 1990. In all these posts he supported historical and humanities research and was an outstanding promotor of publications, as evidenced in the great number of books and periodicals produced in those periods.

His passion for books and libraries led him to concentrate a great deal of his efforts as a historian on research about Mexican bibliography. His texts, all published by UNAM, are classics: *Ensayos de bibliografía mexicana. Autores, libros, imprenta, bibliotecas* (Essays on Mexican Bibliography. Authors, Books, Printers, Libraries), and *Un caso de censura de libros en el siglo XVIII novohispano. Jorge Mas Thephoro* (A Case of Censorship of Books in Eighteenth Century New Spain. Jorge Mas Thephoro). Another outstanding contribution was the publication of José Toribio Medina's books *La imprenta en México (1539-1821)* (Printing in Mexico [1539-1821]) and *La imprenta en Puebla de los Angeles (1640-1821)* (Printing in Puebla de los Angeles [1640-1821]). In 1967, he began a collaboration with Mexican bibliographer José Ignacio Mantecón to publish six issues a year of *Bibliografía mexicana* (Mexican Bibliography) for 11 years. Moreno de los Arcos' *Catálogo General (1939-1989)* (General Catalogue [1939-1989]), for the student library at the UNAM (Biblioteca del Estudiante Universitario) is still the obligatory reference work for students, professors and researchers.

Another of his major areas of interest was research into the development of science and technology in Mexico. On April 6, 1970, he became a member of the Mexican Society for the History of Science and Technology, which he headed up from 1988 to 1990. His books on this topic include *La polémica del darwinismo en México. Siglo XIX. (Testimonios)* (The Polemic on Darwinism in Mexico in the Nineteenth Century), *Ensayos de la historia de la Ciencia y la Tecnología en México* (Essays on the History of Science and Technology in Mexico), *Linneo en México. Las controversias sobre el sistema binario en México: 1788-1798* (Linnaeus in Mexico. Controversies on the Binomial System in Mexico: 1788-1798), and *Ciencia y conciencia en el siglo XVIII mexicano. Antología* (Science and Consciousness in Mexico in the Eighteenth Century. Anthology).

Roberto Moreno had a broad variety of interests, all related to Mexico. His intellectual rigor in consulting sources and archives led him to share some of the tenets of the historiographic current known as micro-history. His work on the history of Mexico City parishes and his wide knowledge of the influence and activities of the different religious orders in colonial times is particularly outstanding.

He was nationally and internationally recognized for his enthusiastic work on the Enlightenment in eighteenth century Mexico, particularly the annotated editions of the works of Sigüenza y Góngora and José Antonio Alzate, well-known thinkers of New Spain. His contributions to the cultural history of pre-Hispanic Mexico should also be mentioned. According to the specialist in Nahuatl philosophy, Miguel León Portilla, Moreno's article "*Los cinco soles cosmogónicos*" (The Five Cosmogonic Suns), published in 1963, is still the best starting point for entering the luminous world of the culture of our ancestors.

It was precisely a discourse on Nahuatlisms in modern Spanish which gained him his membership in the Mexican Academy of History on May 19, 1979.

Among the most important scientific and academic associations he belonged to are the Mexican Academy of Language; the Academy of Scientific Research; the Royal Academy of History of Spain (corresponding member); the Spanish Society of History of the Sciences; the Royal Spanish Academy of Language; and the History of Science Society of the United States.

Moreno de los Arcos was also well known as a dedicated teacher. He gave undergraduate and graduate courses in the UNAM's History Department.

He also wrote for popular publications and as a cultural journalist. Many Mexicans remember the passionate articles in his columns "Biblos," "Tabaco y Cultura" (Tobacco and Culture) and "Amor Venal" (Veneal Love) in the national daily *Unomasuno's* cultural supplement, *Sábado* (Saturday). ❧