



Jorge Carpizo

An Exemplary University Career

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Our dear friend and colleague Jorge Carpizo distinguished himself as a brilliant academic and senior official of our beloved National Autonomous University of Mexico, where he was a popular teacher in his School of Law; an outstanding researcher at the Institute

for Legal Research, which he also headed up as director; and as UNAM president in a period that is still remembered for its many achievements and contributions. But he was also an outstanding public official, known for his exemplary honesty, dedication, and commitment: he was a member of the Supreme Court; founder of the National Human Rights Commission, of which he was president; attorney general, minister

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of the interior, president of the General Council of the Federal Electoral Institute, and Mexico's ambassador to France. Given space limitations, I will only briefly outline here his brilliant work as an academic and distinguished member of the university community.

I worked long years —almost 20—in the federal judicial branch, first as an employee and then as a judicial official, particularly at the Supreme Court, and for several years I was clerk to the court. But in 1964, I decided to focus completely on my academic work. It was then that I applied for a job as full-time researcher at the UNAM Institute of Comparative Law, now known as the Institute for Legal Research, where I had already been collaborating since 1956. I quit my job in the judicial system and entered the institute.

This gave me the privilege of coming into contact with an inquiring, brilliant student at the School of Law, Jorge Carpizo, who had a scholarship from the Humanities Coordinating Department, at that time headed up by his teacher, the illustrious Mario de la Cueva, who had also been the academic advisor for Carpizo's bachelor's thesis on the Constitution. The young Carpizo constantly visited the institute to work in the library, which, thanks to the efforts by Spanish exile jurist Javier Elola Fernández, was considered to have the most modern method available at the time. We got to know each other because Jorge consulted me about his thesis, and we established a friendship that would endure, unchanged, from then, 46 years ago, until his death.

At that time, the institute had four full-time researchers: the distinguished Spanish jurists Niceto Alcalá-Zamora y Castillo, an illustrious expert in procedural law who I consider my academic father; Javier Elola Fernández; Modesto Seara Vázquez; and myself, the only Mexican citizen of the four. Six or seven jurists, both Spanish and Mexican, also collaborated with the institute on specific projects, and there were two research assistants.

In April 1966, a serious conflict in the university ended with the resignation of one of the UNAM's most illustrious presidents, Dr. Ignacio Chávez, who was replaced under

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very difficult circumstances by the no less outstanding engineer Javier Barros Sierra. At that time, the director of our institute, renowned Mexican jurist and diplomat Roberto Molina Pasquel was appointed legal director of the Ministry of Foreign Relations and had to withdraw from the UNAM. Because of this, and since I was the only one who fulfilled all the prerequisites for the post because I was Mexican by birth, together with the need to have a full-time director—which the previous directors had not been—and despite my lesser qualifications, my colleagues decided to ask the UNAM president to propose my name to the Board of Governors, and I was appointed to the post that year.

Once in the job, I remembered young Carpizo, who was about to take his final examination for this bachelor's degree. Despite the fact that his enormous capacity had earned him a rather important appointment in the Ministry of Public Edu-



cation, I invited him to act as the institute's academic and administrative secretary, an invitation he immediately accepted, marking the beginning of his admirable academic career.

As the new director, I had the great fortune that Barros Sierra implemented the Program for Educating Academic Personal, originally proposed by President Chávez. This program selected the most brilliant students from each school and faculty for a scholarship that would allow them to finish their theses, and, after receiving their bachelor's degree, provided another scholarship for graduate studies abroad, either in Europe or the United States. The first generation of scholarship winners, all students at the School of Law, who entered the institute in 1968, was quite brilliant. Among them were Diego Valadés, José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, Manuel Barquín, and Ignacio Carrillo Prieto, who have all had outstanding careers both in academia and in important public posts. They all successfully concluded their graduate degrees and came back to the institute. Even though I had friendly relations with all of them, the friendship that emerged with Jorge Carpizo and Diego Valadés became fraternal and permanent. Despite the age difference between them and myself, we were able to work together on many academic and university projects.

When Jorge Carpizo returned after completing his doctoral studies in England, he was so well known that, when he reentered the institute in 1970, President González Casanova appointed him UNAM sub-director of legal affairs; despite his youth, González Casanova's successor, President Sobrón, appointed him consul general in 1973. Those were very difficult times for our house of higher learning, and Carpizo, as was his custom, made a very efficient, unerring job of that complicated post. In 1977, he moved on to head up the Humanities Coordinating Department, which was also a complicated job, as, in addition to coordinating the institutes, it was responsible for the UNAM's General Publications Office. He was also charged with coordinating the celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the UNAM being declared autonomous in 1929; this implied numerous academic, cultural, and artistic activities. To give the reader an idea of the size of this job, the studies presented during those festivities were published in 14 large-format volumes in 1979.

When I finished my second six-year period as director on October 15, 1978, by almost unanimous request by the academic and administrative staff of our institute, the outgoing president included Jorge Carpizo in the three-person proposal he presented to the Board of Governors. He was

chosen as director for a six-year period, with the possibility of being reelected for another. Since the festivities for the fiftieth anniversary, which Jorge had coordinated very successfully until then, had still not concluded, President Sobrón requested that he continue doing so until they came to an end.

Despite this additional task, Director Carpizo intensified the quality and quantity of research activities at the Institute for Legal Research, not only by raising the number of academic, technical, and administrative personnel, but also thanks to a significant increase in regular publications that resulted from new research. This required forming a technical editorial team that even today continues to distinguish itself for its efficiency and quality, as is shown by the institute's growing number of publications. In addition, Jorge Carpizo fostered the development of several transcendent collective works. Some were published during his tenure as director; others were finished shortly afterward; and all continue to appear in new, revised editions. Among them should be mentioned the *Diccionario jurídico mexicano* (Mexican Legal Dictionary), which has been integrated into the *Enciclopedia jurídica mexicana* (Mexican Legal Encyclopedia), published under the tenure of Diego Valadés as the institute's director; and the *Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos. Comentada y concordada* (Constitution of the United Mexican States, Commented and Tallied), whose first edition came out in 1985, when Jorge Carpizo was president of the UNAM.

In October 1984, Jorge Carpizo finished his first six-year period as director of the institute, and, in accordance with his own most cherished belief that reelection to university and public posts was incorrect, he would not seek another appointment. At the end of that year, when the first period of President Rivero Serrano was about to conclude, an important sector of the university community expressed its wish that Dr. Carpizo be designated his successor. Since I was at that time a member of the university's Board of Governors, I was able to perceive during the consultations that numerous

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groups of academics, students, and administrative workers were expressing their support for Carpizo being chosen as president. The Board of Governors convened the candidates mentioned by the university community, and, after listening to their work plans, decided to appoint Jorge as the new president.

It should come as no surprise that Jorge Carpizo took on these high-ranking responsibilities with his customary dedication, enthusiasm, and diligence. I want to mention something very important: President Carpizo's concern with greatly increasing the university's academic quality in its essential functions, research, teaching, and the dissemination of culture. To achieve this ambitious project, he called on the best university experts, and with their support, presented in 1986 the best diagnostic analysis of the university's situation that had ever been done, *Fortalezas y debilidades de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* (Strengths and Weaknesses of the National Autonomous University of Mexico), which was widely disseminated in university circles and nationwide. Based on this diagnosis, the president proposed and the University Council approved a series of concrete, immediate measures for overcoming grave university problems.

However, as has often happened, different student leaders emerged who, with support from outside and using mass assemblies, objected to the measures. They unleashed a movement that culminated with the paralysis of numerous schools, faculties, and institutes, several of which were occupied by force. As a result, both the president and the University Council had to change this ambitious project and adopt other measures of lesser scope to avert greater damage. However, even with the obstacles he had to overcome, President Carpizo achieved transcendent academic advances, widely recognized even today. For all these reasons, he would have had no trouble being appointed for another term. Despite the numerous requests that he accept, he declined to be a candidate for president again.

I have made my best effort to summarize and simplify Jorge Carpizo's academic career, which, I confess, has turned out to be very difficult. I have made no reference to his strictly academic body of work, which was vast and distinguishes him as one of the Spanish language's main theoreticians of constitutional law. His work concluded only with his unfortunate death, and many of his projects were left unfinished. ■■■