

# voices of MEXICO

News, Commentary and Documents on Current Events in Mexico and Latin America

## Mexico: What Lies Ahead?

A Conversation with the Press on the Elections

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Japanese Business  
Moves into Mexico

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Decentralization: Key  
to Mexico's  
Development

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As Pollution Crosses  
the Border, Mexico  
and U.S. Move to  
Cooperate

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The Three Faces of  
Mexican Television

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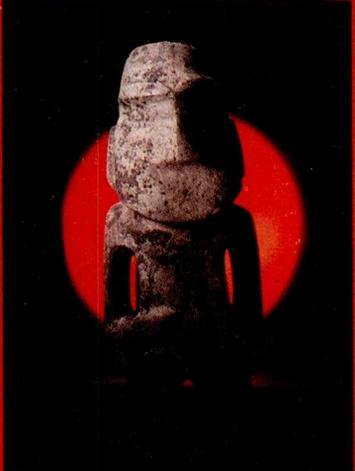


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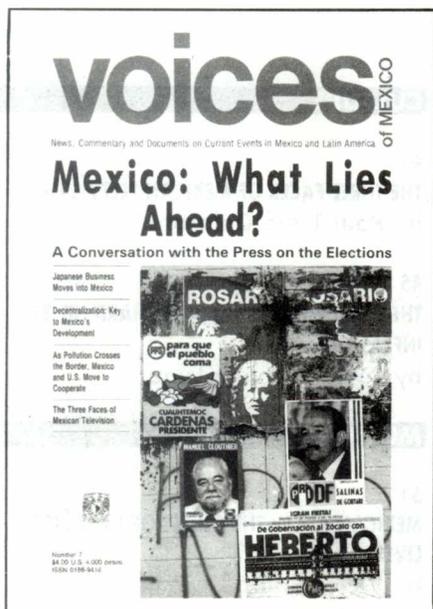
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# THIS ISSUE



Cover photo by José Fuentes.

In this issue, which marks two years since **Voices of Mexico** began publication, we present three important themes in Mexico today: the electoral process; bilateral relations with our most important trade partners, the United States and Japan; and the cultural industry and its impact on the nation's life. These three issues, marked by the greatest economic crisis through which our country has lived, are facets of one problem. From different angles, they demonstrate how Mexico's society and government are confronting the dual fact of being a developing country and, at the same time, the neighbor of the most important capitalist power in the present world. This fact requires us to simultaneously resolve old problems and face new challenges.

In *Features*, we present three articles dealing with our relations with the United States and Japan as well as an article on the urgent need to decentralize Mexico's government and the country's economy in order to move toward modernity. In this section, we also highlight the conflict in Panama: a situation which constitutes a serious problem for Mexico's national security.

*Point of View* is dedicated to Mexico's electoral process which will culminate in elections in July. In an interview with three prominent political columnists, we approach the issues of possible changes within the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the advances of the political opposition, the role of the press in this political year and the possibility of U.S. influence in the electoral process.

The *Report* deals with the problem of pollution along the Mexico-U.S. border: a highly sensitive issue which demands immediate solutions from both nations.

Finally, in *Culture*, we publish a panorama of the present state of television, book publishing and rock and roll in Mexico. Each of these three areas express the richness of Mexico's contemporary culture but also reveal Mexico's inherent contradictions and the effects of the present crisis.

**Mariclaire Acosta**

# CHANGES IN U.S. LEGISLATION: THE CONSEQUENCES FOR MEXICO

Manuel Lois Méndez

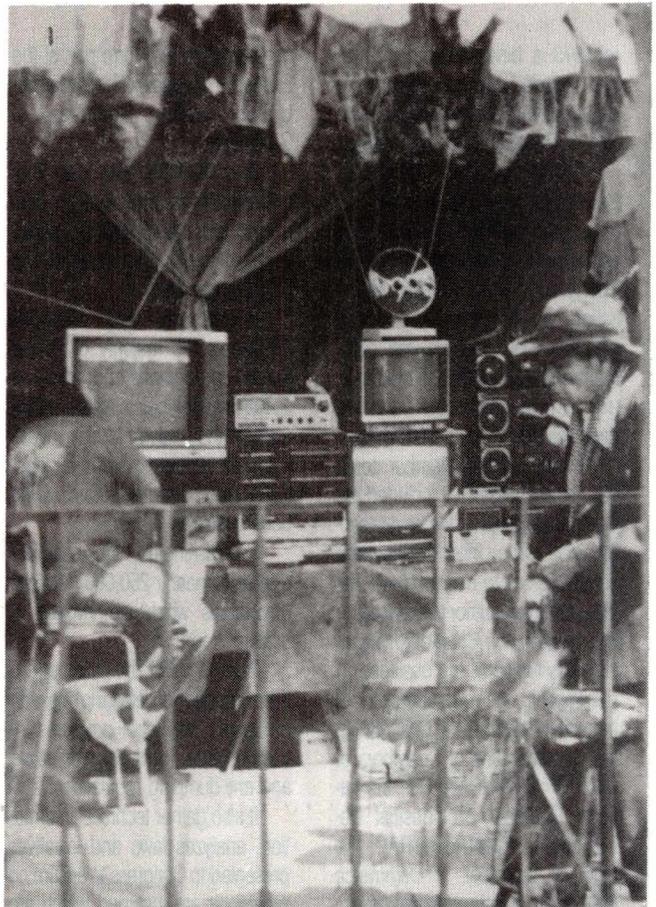
The enormous federal deficit in the United States — 166 billion dollars in fiscal year 1987 — has forced U.S. government officials to adopt a series of corrective measures to improve the country's economy. While the measures will have an impact on the U.S. domestic economy, they will also effect relations with the United States' largest trading partners including Mexico.

On the domestic front, the Federal Reserve Board has pushed for higher interest rates in an attempt to keep inflation under control and reduce government spending. The dramatic crash on the New York Stock Exchange last October was the first important effect of the Federal Reserve's policy. In one day the Dow Jones Index dropped 95.46 points, only to be followed by an even sharper fall on October 19, when the Dow Jones plummeted more than 500 points representing some 600 billion dollars — breaking the previous record set on "Black Tuesday" in 1929.

The sustained, albeit modest, growth over the past few years in the U.S. economy has been threatened by the upward pressures on interest rates as the fear of recession returns. Undefined, and at times, contradictory policy decisions have become the natural state of affairs. Thus, while Citibank, Chemical Bank and Marine Midland have reversed the trend of higher interests, the Federal Reserve seems set on cutting the deficit at any cost — even if that means higher interest rates — in order to reduce the dangerous dependence on foreign capital.

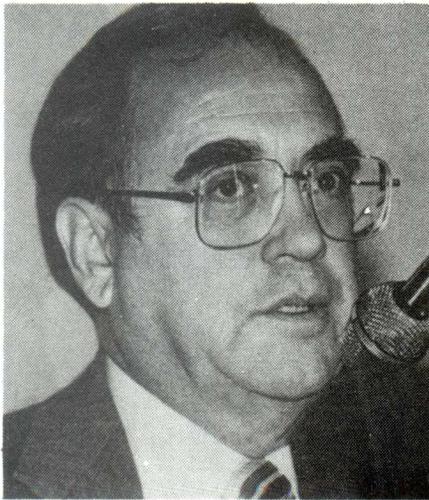
Democratic leaders in the Congress have blamed "Reaganomics" and rising interest rates for the instability affecting virtually the entire capitalist world. Lloyd Bentsen, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, stated "These strategies have been important causes in the decline, especially the administration's failure to recognize the existence of problems that everyone knows about." He added that the stock exchange's drop was also fueled by the "country's persistent trade and budget deficits. Whoever says otherwise is not in touch with reality."<sup>1</sup> In contrast, Treasury Secretary James Baker blamed the

Democrats for the Wall Street crash, saying that it was caused by the "panic produced by Democratic Party proposals calling for tax increases." Democratic Congressmen Jim Wright and Dan Rostenkowsky called Baker's comments "absurd and ridiculous."<sup>2</sup>



Contraband goods being sold in Tepito market in Mexico City.  
(Photo by José Fuentes)

Professor of economics at the Autonomous National University (UNAM).



**Héctor Hernández Cervantes, Minister of Trade and Industrial Development.** (Photo from Novedades archive)



**U.S. merchandise confiscated by Mexico's Customs Office.** (Photo from Novedades archive)

## MEXICO-U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE: A HISTORY OF COOPERATION

In 1973 a binational organization was founded with the objective of broadening relations between Mexican and United States businessmen.

The Mexico-U.S. Chamber of Commerce was the brainchild of José Juan de Olloqui, then Mexican ambassador to the United States. De Olloqui's aim was to form an organization which could resolve the difficulties which the Mexican diplomatic corps encountered in promoting trade interests among businessmen in the United States.

This binational chamber could only be successful if it included the direct participation of the private sector since in the United States more credit is given to businessmen that to government authorities. Based on this criterion, the Chamber is sponsored by Mexico's top business organizations: the Confederation of Industrial Chambers (CONCAMIN), the Confederation of Chambers of Commerce (CONCANACO), the National Chamber of Industrial Development (CANACINTRA), the National Chamber of Commerce (CANACO) and the National Association of Importers and Exporters of Mexico. The presidents of these or-

ganizations in turn form part of the Executive Council of the Mexico-United States Chamber of Commerce.

The chamber also has U.S. representatives who work in conjunction with the Executive Council. It has offices in Washington, Los Angeles and Mexico.

In Mexico, the chamber represents the majority of United States' corporations and acts as a spokesman for their interests, particularly in the fields of foreign investment tax problems, industrial legislation and "maquiladoras" or in bond assembly plants.

In Washington, the chamber represents nearly 250,000 Mexican corporations which are involved in bilateral trade.

From its outset, the chamber has been involved in defending Mexican producers with legal problems involving taxes, compensation taxes and anti-dumping regulations.

It also gather technical information, analyzes laws and initiatives presented to Congress to ensure no provisions are included which are unfavorable to trade between the countries.

The chamber is active in lobbying on Capitol Hill and often participates in the public hearings in order to ensure that legislators take into account the concerns of Mexican corporations.

Another fundamental task of the binational organization is to promote exports and imports between the two countries. Once or twice a year the chamber holds seminars and conferences to draw businessmen and executives of both countries closer together. Moreover, it offers free advice on the formal requirements which must be met in order to import or export.

Guillermo Ramos Uriarte, general director of the Mexican Coordinating Committee, adds that the chamber is trying to promote investments and joint investments through the buying of foreign debt in the hope that this will create 40,000 to 50,000 new jobs. Businessmen who buy part of Mexico's foreign debt receive a 30 percent discount off the real value.

These "debt swaps" amounted to 2 billion dollars in 1987 in the areas of industry, tourism and "maquiladoras." Ramos Uriarte points

out that they have sought to promote growth in the "maquiladora" industry because of the advantage of Mexico's cheap labor which would otherwise swell the ranks of the unemployed. He indicates that the interest in the "maquiladora" industry is reflected in the approximately 1,050 plants throughout the country which employ nearly 300,000 workers, mostly women.

The United States can derive enormous advantages from investing in this sector. In the United States a worker is paid five dollars per hour for the same work, which in Mexico a worker will receive three dollars for eight hours.

Another area of interest for the Mexico-United States Chamber of Commerce is the tourist industry, although to a lesser degree given the greater capital need. The chamber's work in tourism, is restricted almost exclusively to promotion.

Finally Ramos Uriarte stressed the important role the chamber has played in developing commercial relations between the two countries.

Within this context of mutual accusations, very little has been said about what will be the impact on foreign countries of U.S. measures to balance its trade deficit. The consequences of such measures could have a profound effect on Mexico's economy.

Mexico-U.S. commercial activities totaled some 30 billion dollars at the end of 1987. Sixty-six percent of Mexican imports come from the United States, and 65.2 percent of total Mexican exports are sold there. Nearly 81 percent of Mexico's non-oil exports are sold on the U.S. market.<sup>3</sup> During the first six months of 1987, the exchange of goods and services between the two countries produced a positive balance for Mexico of more than 3.5 billion dollars—ten times more than for the same period in 1986.

Yet the Reagan administration's corrective financial measures—such as higher interest rates—mean additional debt service payments for Mexico to the tune of some 500 million dollars. At the same time, an exchange rate war among strong currencies could provoke an even greater deterioration in the terms of trade by lowering the cost of Mexican export products.

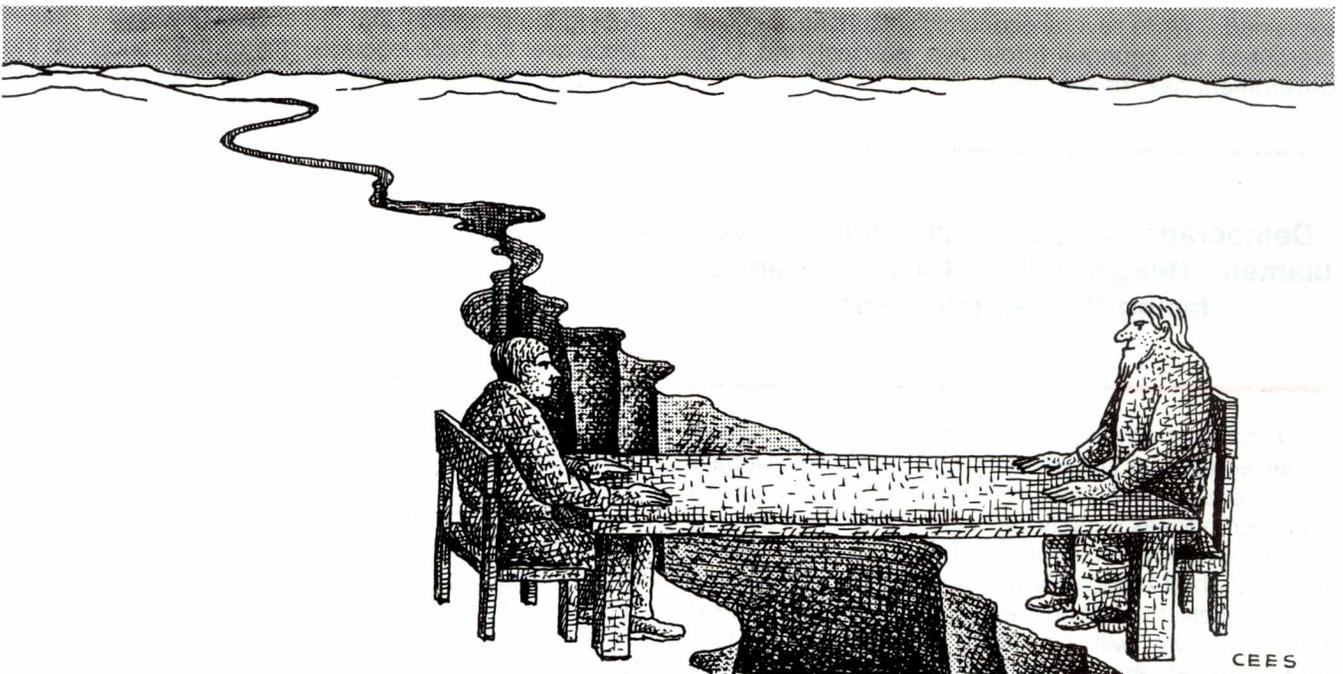
Nonetheless, the Democratic alternative is not very encouraging for Mexico either. A tax increase could well lead to a reduction in consumer spending, opening the way to a recession and therefore, to even greater U.S. protectionism.

It is clear that trade relations between the two countries cannot be divorced from the U.S. corrective economic strategy. This fact underlies the importance of the high-level, bilateral talks which led to the U.S.-Mexico accord on commerce and investment.

economic constitution for North America." Canadian reactions were not long in coming, evidence of the high political costs to the Progressive Conservative Party government for having signed the trade pact. New Democratic Party opposition leader Ed Bradbent voiced his "serious fears" concerning the bilateral treaty, which he stated "if consummated, within 25 years will mean the disappearance of the Canadian border... Canada will be absorbed, *de facto*."<sup>4</sup>

In Mexico's case, the discussions leading up to a parallel accord were carried out in strictest secrecy. Information on the talk's progress was available only to a very reduced group of government officials and leaders from the Business Coordinating Council (CCE), Confederation of Chambers of Commerce (CONCANACO) and the Mexican U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Nonetheless, some information has been leaked to the public. It is known that the talks went on for more than a year and were considered difficult, lengthy and arduous. The document, finally signed in November 1987, was called the "Framework of Principles and Consultation Procedures on Commerce and Investment Relations between Mexico and the United States." While it deals with virtually all aspects of the two country's economic relations, it emphasizes trade and U.S. investments.

One of the Mexican negotiators, Minister of Trade and Industrial Development Héctor Hernández C., stated that the bilateral agreement "will mean greater security for exporters and investors and will facilitate" their activities. Major industrial and private trade leaders expressed their support for the accord. Agustín Legorreta, CCE leader, explained that signing the accord represents "a step forward which will help resolve trade problems," while warn-



### Origins of the Accord

The precedent for this new agreement was set by the "Canada-U.S. Free Trade Pact." After a long period of public debates, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney finally signed what President Reagan termed "a new eco-

ing that "it will be necessary to continue the struggle against protectionist actions, not only in the United States, but in other industrialized countries as well."<sup>5</sup>

Despite Legorreta's warning against protectionist measures, CONCANACO's José A. Chapa Salazar was more enthusiastic. Commenting on U.S. protectionism, he

## THE LINK BETWEEN DRUGS AND CONTRABAND

It is a common fact that in the United States drug shipments are paid for with goods as a means of "laundering" money generated by the drug trade, according to Alberto Conic, Director of Mexico's Customs Office.

Conic argues that when Mexico decided to enter the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) one of the obligations undertaken was to eliminate import licenses and reduce tariffs. Mexico's compliance with the GATT has meant that there are now countless products which were previously prohibited but which are now easily available in Mexico.

"At present," Conic says, "only 3,500 products require import

licenses. Moreover, tariffs are being reduced so that some no longer exceed 20 percent of the value of the article."

As a result of this financial measure, according to the Mexican official, it is now quite common to buy legal goods which have an import license. For example, domestic appliances, televisions, refrigerators, sound systems etc. can be found in some stores and even in Tepito, Mexico City's most important market for contraband goods, known commonly as "fayuca".

Conic outlines some of the changes carried out by the Customs Office to improve trade relations with the United States. Administrative procedures for international trade have been simplified and free advice

is offered to users of the 54 customs offices. He claims that this has helped reduce unfair commercial practices, including contraband.

He goes on to say that Mexican customs authorities continuously work to prevent the introduction into Mexico of goods which have not paid duty or which are prohibited.

The Customs Office, through air surveillance is also responsible for preventing the introduction of illegal goods by planes using clandestine airstrips. Such planes transport products "sent from the United States where they have all the facilities at their disposal and are often a connection for drug traffickers to launder money and pay for drugs with those goods," claims Conic.

Conic stresses that those planes

which smuggle goods into Mexico generally return to the United States with drug shipments. U.S. authorities, adds Conic, "should see to it that vehicles do not leave for Mexico with [illegal] shipments because although it is certainly true that our country is adversely affected by the facilities put at the disposal of smugglers, U.S. authorities should worry that this is precisely what promotes drug production and, consequently, damages the health of the most valuable sector of society; children and youth".

Conic concludes with the conviction that if the United States saw to it that goods were not introduced into Mexico, both countries would benefit significantly.

explained, "While several economic sectors have in fact pressured for stronger [protective policies], the U.S. government has resisted them."<sup>6</sup>

### Democratic congressional leaders have blamed "Reaganomics" for the instability facing the capitalist world

A different view is expressed by Gary Holick, former undersecretary for imports at the U.S. Commerce Department. Better informed about the implications of the accord and freer to speak publicly than other government officials, Holick claims that the approval of new U.S. trade legislation would hurt Mexican sales of ammonium, cement and gas products. In addition, he warns that "during the next ten years we will not have a system that fully guarantees access for Mexican products to the United States." He also explained the trade agreement between the two countries could only provide a "theoretical framework for the multilateral negotiations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)." Holick's argument is especially interesting since it reveals, in principle, a conflict between U.S. trade legislation and the bilateral accord.

Following the former undersecretary's logic and ex-

cluding the possibility that the accord might take precedence over the trade legislation, the central concern in the U.S.-Mexican negotiations is the regulation of U.S. investments in Mexico. Even with the accord in place, trade negotiations would remain subject to the norms established in the GATT.

The accord represents a simple consultative mechanism for controversial trade situations, an effort to improve on traditional negotiating mechanisms used by exporting countries to overcome the obstacles to marketing their goods and services.

### Trade Strategies

In a very synthetic form, we can define four most commonly employed strategies for resolving trade conflicts: protest; the mobilization of allies in the United States; threats and retaliation; and technocratic measures. Protest is commonly used by developed countries and often yields excellent results such as the repeal of surcharges. Nonetheless, protests by the less developed countries — especially Latin American nations — have rarely been taken into account. Such countries lack the resources to be able to make the exchange rate concessions that accompany this measure.

The second strategy involves mobilizing "allies" within the United States such as U.S. business interests involved in the controversial deal. In 1970 an attempt was made in the U.S. Congress to amend tax legislation which would have eliminated deductions for conventions held outside the United States. That proposal, which would

have seriously affected the economies of Caribbean countries, was withdrawn as the result of pressure from U.S.-based hotel corporations. While the effects of these kinds of actions are difficult to evaluate, in international trade disputes they can often yield better results than foreign policy or bilateral agreements.

**The Mexico-U.S. Accord is hardly a panacea, but it represents the beginning of what will likely be difficult and long discussions**

Threats and retaliation represent a more radical strategy, similar in certain ways to declaring a moratorium on the debt. Although this strategy generally leads to failure or to responses that harm already weak countries, its extreme nature has occasionally produced positive good results when the implementing government is in a position of strength. One example is the 1969 conflict between Canada and the Mexican government over Mexican textile exports. Canada demanded that they be limited. When Mexico refused, Canada imposed a 50 percent surcharge on them. The Mexican Ministry of Trade and Industrial Development retaliated by denying import permits for goods coming from Canada. This caused general alarm and forced Canadian officials to seek a rapid settlement in order to avoid an even more serious trade war.

The technocratic strategy is the most commonly used in Latin America. It requires a command of the technical details of the business in question, pertinent laws, as well as having influence among intermediate-level officials. This strategy includes contracting a prestigious Washington law firm to head the negotiations with government lawyers from the commerce sector and simultaneously mobilizing groups with related interest. The technocratic strategy has produced the best results. The Mexican and Brazilian governments have used this strategy to prevent or reduce compensatory taxes on products as diverse as steel sheeting, asparagus, and leather handbags and shoes.

The lack of pragmatism in the accord lead us to conclude that these four strategies will continue to be used most often in resolving trade problems. Nonetheless, it is important to have a framework for working out differences which recognizes the two country's unequal levels of development. The accord seeks to establish mechanisms for discussing problems in some of the most conflictive sectors, such as textiles, steel, intellectual property and services. Thus, it is an encouraging sign when compared to the stormy days ahead if new U.S. trade legislation is enacted.

The accord does not establish a free trade zone, despite that having been one of the original objectives. Mexico's Minister of Trade Héctor Hernández was very clear on this issue, "We did not give or receive any preferential trade [arrangements], and in matters related to direct foreign investment, we will strictly follow the legal dispositions stipulated in the Law to Promote Mexican Investment and Regulate Foreign Investment."<sup>7</sup>

During the signing of the agreement, U.S. Ambassador Clayton Yeutter stated "that his country will not close its markets." This, of course, is not the real issue. The real

question is what conditions will the United States impose in return for keeping its markets open?

Bernardo Sepúlveda, Mexico's Foreign Minister, commented on the accord: "Our diplomacy during the past five years has devoted exceptional political resources [to the relationship with the United States], and as a result, the political atmosphere and the relationship between the two countries has improved. We aspire to a permanent attitude of cooperation on both sides of the border, based on friendship and on reciprocal respect, [the latter being] an essential element for establishing that friendly relationship."<sup>8</sup>

Under these conditions, the signing of the accord is no panacea; instead it represents the beginning of a conflictive period of discussions. But at least they will be laden with good intentions. It never hurts to talk. □

<sup>1</sup> *Excelsior*, October 20, 1987

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Uno más Uno* October 19, 1987

<sup>4</sup> Cited by John Saxe-Fernández, in *Excelsior* October 20 1987

<sup>5</sup> *Uno más Uno*, October 14, 1987

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Excelsior*, November 7 1987

<sup>8</sup> *Uno más Uno*, October 15, 1987

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Edgar Celada

# JAPANESE BUSINESS MOVES INTO MEXICO

1988 is a special year for Mexico-Japanese relations. It marks the 100th anniversary of official trade and diplomatic ties.

Mutual respect and the absence of any important difficulties are characteristics of these commercial and financial relations according to Armando Martínez, sub-director of the Japan External Trade Organization's Mexico offices (JETRO) who was asked to evaluate the 100 year-old relationship.

While officials in both countries stress the importance of the centennial, important ties between the two nations have only begun to develop since the mid-1970s and have intensified in the 1980. At a time when Mexican leadership has placed a priority on industrial reconversion and modernization, improved relations with the world's foremost technological, financial and trade power are virtually imperative.

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## **While Mexico and Japan have had official relations for 100 years, trade has only been important during the last ten years**

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President Miguel de la Madrid's trip to Japan in December 1986 and the tour a few months later by Carlos Salinas de Gortari, then Budget and Planning Minister and currently the ruling party's presidential candidate, underscore the political and economic priority assigned to strengthening Mexican-Japanese relations.

There are currently more than 180 businesses with Japanese interests operating in Mexico. That figure reaches close to 400 if trade representatives and official and semiofficial agencies are also included, explained Martínez. Japan has become the world's second most im-

portant buyer of Mexican products, surpassed only by the United States. And unlike its trade balance with the U.S., Mexico has maintained a positive balance with the Asian power since 1982.

The latter is clearly due to Japanese imports of Mexican oil. Japan must obtain practically all of its oil on the international market, and the strategy from Tokyo has been to avoid depending on a single supply source. Thus, Japan's interest in increasing its oil purchases in Mexico goes hand in hand with its efforts to diversify its supply sources.

In 1987, Japan bought 180,000 barrels of Mexican crude a day, and a contract for a similar amount has already been renewed for this year. This figure represents 14 percent of total Mexican crude oil exports in 1986.

In analyzing trade between the two nations in 1987, Mexican officials emphasized the growth of non-oil exports with its Asian trading partner. In 1986 non-oil exports totaled some 600 million dollars, a figure that doubled last year to 1.2 billion dollars.

Despite the fact that this increase in the value of non-oil exports was accompanied by greater diversification in the products sold to Japan, Mexican officials responsible for foreign commerce are far from satisfied. Last year Mexico produced 149 different exportable products, including oil, but just 18 percent of that list accounts for 96 percent of sales on the Japanese market.

These officials are pleased, nonetheless, that Mexico has been able to maintain a positive balance with its second, largest trading partner. 1984 was the best year in this respect, with a hearily 1.4 billion dollar trade surplus. In 1986 the trade balance was 408 million dollars, and during the first eight months of 1987, it was 389 million dollars.

The most dynamic aspect of Mexican-Japanese relations is in the area of direct investment. Attracted by cheap and abundant labor, comparatively lower installation and production costs, fiscal incentives and the proximity of its principal market—the United States—, Japanese investments in Mexico have increased since the beginning of the 1980s.

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Correspondent in Mexico for the news agency Acen-Siag.

**Prospects for Investment**

With the exception of the dramatic drop in new investments in 1983, the current decade has been characterized by both absolute and relative increases in direct Japanese investment (see Table). While in the 28 year period from 1951 to 1979, cumulative Japanese investment in Mexico totaled 376 million dollars, the figure more than doubled for the next eight year period, with the 1980-1987 cumulative figure reaching 781.7 million dollars.

Japanese investments represented 6.5 percent of all direct foreign investment (DFI) in Mexico, as of June 30, 1987, making it third on the list of foreign investors. While it is far behind the United States, which has 11.5 billion dollars invested here, representing 64.6 percent of the DFI, Japan could soon surpass West Germany, currently in se-

cond place with 1.4 billion dollars invested, or 8 percent of the total.

Sergio González Gálvez, Mexico's ambassador in Japan, believes that Japanese investment here could reach 3 billion dollars in 1988. This optimistic projection, which does not coincide with the statistical trends, does however reflect the Mexican government's interest in attracting even more Japanese capital into increasingly diversified areas of the national economy.

**Japan purchased 14 percent of total Mexican crude oil exports in 1986**

Speaking before the 18th Plenary Session of the Mexico-Japan Bilateral Businessmen's Committee, Trade and Industrial Development Minister Héctor Hernández Cervantes stated that one characteristic of Japanese investment in Mexico is its concentration in a small number of industries, mostly in large-scale operations. Automobiles, iron, steel, basic chemicals and household appliances are the most important industrial sectors from this perspective.

In December 1986, of 138 firms with Japanese capital participation, 86 (that is, 62.3 percent) were involved in manufacturing, 4 in extractive industries, 21 in commerce and 27 in services. In particular, the last three years have brought a notorious increase in Japanese investment in *maquiladora* industries (in-bond assembly plants). Of the 19 firms of this type with Japanese capital in Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez, only five were established before 1985.

The increase in Japanese *maquiladoras* was encouraged by the Law for the Promotion and Operation of *Maquiladora* Export Industries. Passed in August 1983, it grants certain benefits and incentives to these industries, such as duty-free imports of raw materials, machinery and equipment; allowing 100 percent foreign capital composition; tax incentives and preferential treatment in changing foreign currencies. The *maquiladoras* also take

**CUMULATIVE JAPANESE DIRECT INVESTMENT IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, BY SUBREGIONS**  
(Fiscal years 1951-1984)

| Subregions  | Billions of Dollars | Percent of Total |
|-------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Subregion A | 6.947               | 53.4             |
| Subregion B | 5.419               | 41.6             |
| Others      | .653                | 5.0              |

Subregion A includes Panama, Mexico, Bermudas, Dutch Antilles, Cayman Islands and Puerto Rico.

Subregion B includes Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Chile and Venezuela.

Others includes all other countries, those where cumulative investments do not reach 100 million dollars.

Source: Office of Information and Research on Foreign Investment, Ministry of Trade and Industrial Development. Mexico, City.

**JAPANESE INVESTMENT IN MEXICO**

(millions of dollars)

| Year         | New Investment | Cumulative Investments | Total Value DFI | Percent of Total |
|--------------|----------------|------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1951 to 1979 |                | 376.0                  | 6 836.2         | 5.3              |
| 1980         | 123.1          | 499.1                  | 8 458.8         | 5.9              |
| 1981         | 212.1          | 711.2                  | 10 159.9        | 7.0              |
| 1982         | 65.4           | 776.6                  | 10 786.4        | 7.2              |
| 1983         | 3.8            | 780.4                  | 11 470.1        | 6.8              |
| 1984         | 35.6           | 816.0                  | 12 899.9        | 6.3              |
| 1985         | 79.3           | 895.3                  | 14 628.9        | 6.1              |
| 1986         | 142.2          | 1 037.5                | 17 053.1        | 6.1              |
| 1987*        | 120.2          | 1 157.7                | 17 798.4        | 6.5              |

\* Through June 30.

Source: Foreign Investment Office. Ministry of Trade and Industrial Development.

# JAPANESE INVESTMENT IN LATIN AMERICA

One indicator of Japan's surprising economic recovery since the end of World War II has been its transformation from an importer to a net exporter of capital. While in 1945 Japan was not on the list of financial resources exporters, by 1960 it would have some two billion dollars invested abroad and in 1987, 5.9 billion dollars invested in the United States alone.

Today Japan is what specialists call a "mature" creditor nation, needing to recycle some 25 billion dollars each year in long term capital in the international financial system.

Due to questions of geographic proximity and a kind of international division of spheres of economic influence, Japanese capital was initially oriented preferentially toward other Asian countries. But during the past two decades, the structure of Japanese foreign investment began to change noticeably. By 1978, cumulative Japanese capital investment in Latin America since 1951 represented 16.3 percent of all Japanese foreign investment, making it the third most important region for Japan, exceeding Western Europe (12.7 percent) and following behind Asia (28.6 percent)

and the United States (25.2 percent). In 1985 the United States absorbed 30 percent of Japanese investment, Asia 25.2 percent and Latin America 18.5 percent.

In absolute figures for Latin America, these percentages represented 200 million dollars in 1952 and grew to more than 13 billion dollars by March 30, 1985.

The bulk of Japan's direct investment at the end of its 1980 fiscal year (March 30, 1981) was concentrated in five countries: Brazil, Mexico, Perú, Chile and Venezuela. These five countries absorbed some 4.5 billion dollars or 81 percent of Japan's cumulative investment. Of that amount, more than half —2.9 billion dollars— was in Brazil.

In the 1980s, however, there was a new trend for investment to be channeled away from the southern part of the Latin American continent, toward the subregion made up of Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean. Panama and Mexico have been most favored by this trend. Panama listed 4.9 billion dollars in direct investments in 1985, directed primarily to the transport sector and banking activities.

It is well known that Panama provides attractive fiscal benefits for merchant ships sailing under its flag, at the same time its capital city is one of the world's most important financial centers. Panama City is home to branch offices for Japan's 11 largest banks.

Even Central America's small economies are increasingly attractign Japanese capital. Since the beginning of the present decade, the region's five countries have been testing a new development model based on promoting non-traditional exports, including products.

This model has taken on a more concrete form since the implementation of the U.S. Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI). As a result, the region is now flooded by investment coming from Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.

Just as in Mexico, the Central American countries and some of the Caribbean islands are trying to create fiscal "havens" and take advantage of their cheap and abundant labor forces to attract *maquiladora* plants. These operations will produce primarily for the U.S. market, using the mechanisms created by the CBI.

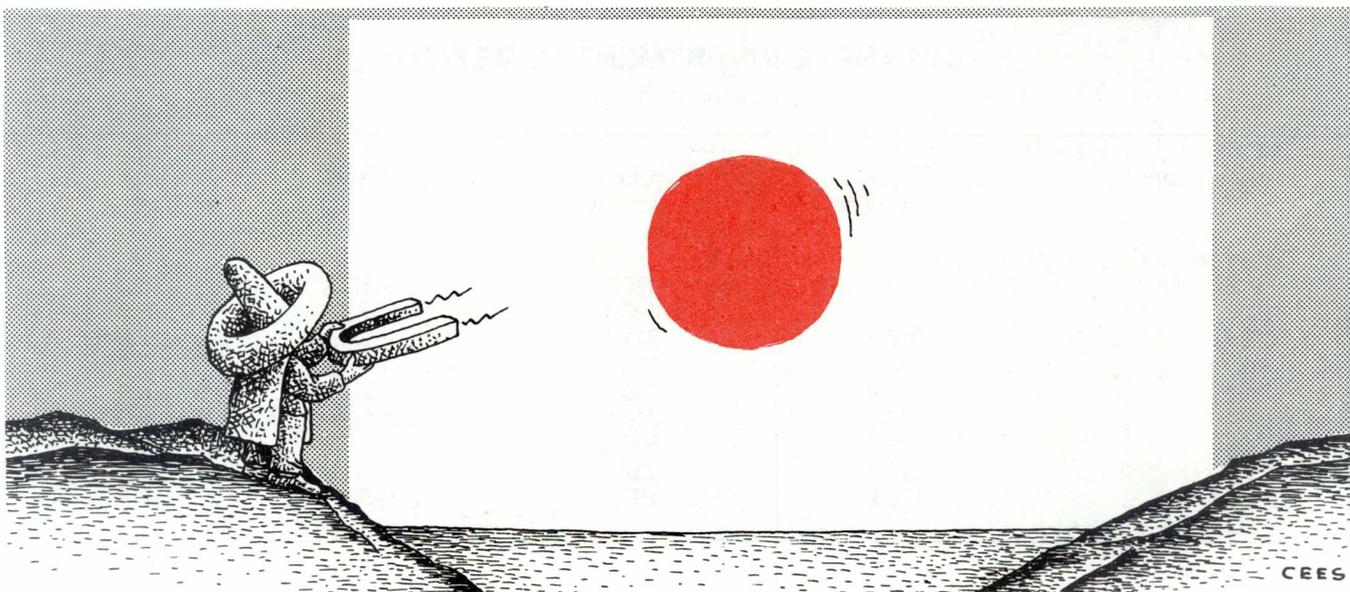
advantage of the proximity to U.S. —markets an hourly wage rate eight times lower than in the U.S.— and installation costs per square meter of productive plant three times lower than in Mexico's northern neighbor.

Some of these firms have adopted the so-called "Twin-Plant" system, whose main characteristic is the division of productive process between plants belonging to the same company, some located in Mexico, others in the

United States. *Maquiladora* plants are most commonly used for labor-intensive aspects of production, thus optimizing the advantages of their lower labor costs.

## Substituting the Debt

Japanese businessmen have also been very active in the SWAPS program, in which they exchange investment for



**Attracted by low labor costs and Mexico's proximity to the U.S. market, Japanese investment has increased in Mexico since the early 1980s**

a part of the public debt. This has allowed them to acquire interests in a number of previously state-managed enterprises and to carry out operations worth more than 125 million dollars as of March 1987.

In a recent trip here, Hirotake Fujino, executive director of JETRO, lamented the Mexican government's decision to suspend the SWAPS program at the end of last year. He expressed his government's interest in having this novel investment plan reopened. This January, the Japanese National Tributary Agency announced tax exemptions for companies that invest in the capitalization of the foreign debt in Third World countries.

While certain manufacturing industries have attracted most Japanese investment, other sectors—especially services—are just beginning to be more important in this regard. Only a few months ago, in November 1987, the Nikko-Mexico Hotel, a jointly financed investment project worth more than 100 million dollars was inaugurated in Mexico City.

The flow of Japanese capital to Mexico has still another

channel: loans. By 1982, some 12 percent of the Mexico's foreign debt corresponded to loans from private Japanese banking institutions. By the end of 1987, when Mexico owed a total of 70 billion dollars to foreign private banks, 13 billion dollars, or 18.6 percent were owed to Japanese banks.

This figure does not include the loans coming from the Export-Import Bank (Eximbank). On the occasion of President De la Madrid's visit to Japan at the end of 1986, Eximbank provided one billion dollars worth of financing to be invested in the Pacific Oil Project, the Lázaro Cárdenas-Las Truchas Ironworks and in a program designed to promote the export of Mexican manufactured goods.

In the recent meeting of the Mexico-Japan Bilateral Businessmen's Committee, the Japanese delegation expressed its desire to see changes in the Mexican economy which could make it an even more attractive country for investments. They requested greater clarity in the laws regulating foreign investment, improvements in support infrastructures for *maquila* industries, quicker procedures for obtaining government authorization and permits and better training for the potential labor force.

These concerns confirm that for Japan's businessmen, the increasing flow of their capital into Mexico is no temporary matter. To the contrary, today Mexico has become the new attractive pole for Japanese investment in Latin America. □

# Universidad de México

REVISTA DE LA UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTONOMA DE MEXICO  
marzo 1988 446

◆ *José Juan Tablada: Dos poemas recobrados*

◆ *Raquel Tibol: Lázaro Cárdenas y los artistas plásticos*

◆ *La Mujer Fatal: una topografía*

*y en el número 447 de abril:*

*Viena, un laboratorio para el fin de los tiempos*

◆ *Juan García Ponce* ◆ *José María Pérez Gay*  
◆ *Jorge Luis Borges* ◆ *Kraus* ◆ *Musil* ◆ *Weininger*  
◆ *Schorske* ◆ *Magris* ◆ *Berman* ◆ *Svevo*

# DECENTRALIZATION: KEY TO MEXICO'S DEVELOPMENT

Raúl Olmedo

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## There is still much to do to strengthen state and municipal governments

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The economic, social and political structure of present day Mexico conforms to the model of centralized growth which the country adopted after the second half of the 19th century. At that time it was necessary to unify and promote national growth. Thus began the excessive concentration of people and economic activities in Mexico City. The main factors which favored this concentration were the first big hydro-electric plants to provide energy and the city's consolidation as the seat of political and economical power, as the principal market for goods and labor and as the main absorber of the federal government's funds.

The trend towards centralization gathered more energy after the 1910 revolution when industrialization and the building up of infrastructure benefitted the capital city in particular. The national road network has Mexico City as its central axis.

Mexico City uses 90 percent of all energy pipelines. The city has a sophisticated communications network with 2.6 million telephones, 55 radio stations, 8 television channels and 34 dailies which publish 2.2 million newspapers. It has the most advanced scientific and higher education system in the nation. All this makes it a large, modern city which contrasts with the basic deficiencies that the rest of the country has to tolerate.

The federal government was the most suitable body to start this work through the centralization of the infrastructure.

The process of industrialization, urbanization and modernization of agriculture also evolved within the framework of centralization, a fact which provoked uneven growth between regions and social classes leading to large marginalized sectors and the accelerated disintegration of communities and families.

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Professor of Political and Social Science at UNAM and columnist for *Excelsior*.



The National Palace. (Photo by José Fuentes)

The intense migration of people and resources to the city must be checked. Steps have been taken in this direction but it has become more urgent than ever to accelerate the pace. It is necessary to reorganize economic activity in order to recover our own territory, to exploit our natural resources fully, in short, to increase the wealth of our nation and distribute it among our people.

Uncontrolled urban growth and the dispersion and neglect of rural areas are also a reflection of the centralization which has hindered the full development of regional potential.

In 1960, for the first time in history, the country's urban population outnumbered the rural. The country's total population at the time was 35 million with 50.7 percent living in cities, the main centers being Mexico City with little over 5 million inhabitants, Guadalajara with 850,000 and Monterrey with 700,000.

In 1980, the total population rose to 67 million and the urban population increased from 18 to 44 million, that is, from 50.7 percent to 66.3 percent of the country's total.

The number of people in Mexico City grew from 7 to 15 million during the period 1960 to 1980 and in Guadalajara from 700,000 to 2 million. Rural areas had already become important exporters of labor which migrated to large cities in search of work and better living conditions. A great majority of these migrants only succeeded in settling in the fringe areas and shantytowns of the cities or migrated to the United States.

But, hand in hand with this tendency to centralize there was also the tendency for the rural population to disperse. In 1980 there were 123,000 places which had fewer than 2,500 inhabitants but with a total population between them of nearly 22 million.

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### **It is now clear that Mexico's traditional political organization no longer meets today's circumstances and demands**

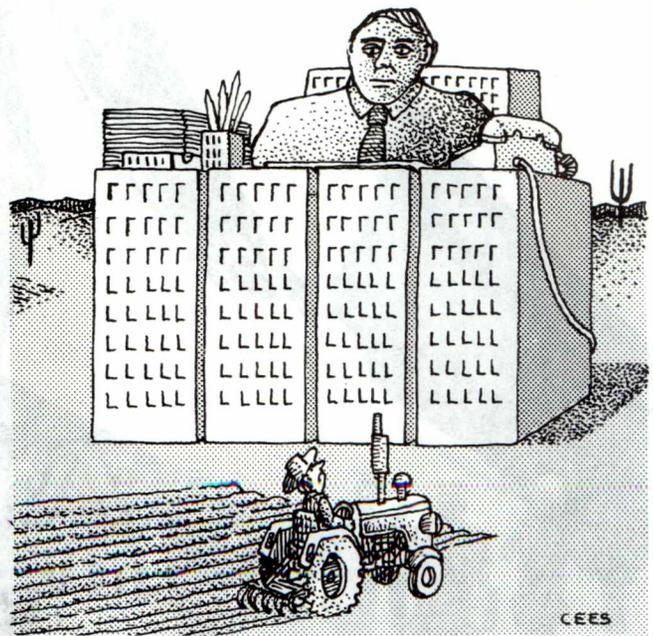
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Although the total number of inhabitants in rural areas increased from 13 million to just over 27 million between 1940 and 1980, in relation to the urban population it fell from 65 percent to 35 percent. The figure of 27 million is higher than that for the population of the whole country in 1950 which was below 26 million. In the year 2000 rural areas are expected to have 35 million inhabitants, as many as is expected for the whole of Spain.

Migration from rural to urban areas is the best reflection of the process of neglect and impoverishment which afflicts agricultural regions as a result of centralization.

#### **Migration and Distribution of Productivity**

The concentration of resources on the part of industry eventually translated into a reduction of agricultural activities which is reflected in the drastic fall in agricultural production and the constant decrease in the possibilities of maintaining job levels in this sector. The number of people employed in agriculture in 1950 was 57 for every 100 Mexicans, in 1980 it was only 26 out of every 100. While agricultural production per capita was 1,368 tons in 1970, it was 1,217 tons in 1986.




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### **Centralization has caused uncontrollable urban growth and has hindered the development of Mexico's rural areas**

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Migration is, therefore, a phenomenon which reflects the inequalities of productivity between regions, states and municipalities. People migrate from poor areas to rich ones, from less productive to more productive regions. Migration exists in our country because there has not been a balanced distribution of productivity.

On the other hand, the expansion of federal power gradually stripped states and municipalities of their resources and thereby weakened them. The nation's revenue began to be concentrated in federal hands with only a minimal amount given to the states and municipalities.

Thus, while in 1929 the federal government took in 71.1 percent of the nation's revenue, the states 21.2 percent, and the municipalities 7.7 percent, by 1982 this had changed in a way which highlighted the levels of impoverishment of local governments. In that year, the states took in 8.3 percent of the revenue and the municipalities only 1.1 percent in relation to the federation's 90.7 percent.

Indeed, for decades, the regulation of the state's economic growth was done by the federal government.

Nowadays it is clear that Mexico's traditional forms of political organization no longer answer the new circumstances and demands. The centralizing style of our federalism and the economic and cultural model reached a level of diminishing and even negative returns some years ago thereby halting the growth of productive forces.

It is necessary to fight against centralization, against the trend which has widened the rift between poor and rich states, between productive and unproductive municipalities.

If we want to live in a strong country we must strengthen regional development and we must simultaneously discourage urban concentrations and marked rural dispersion.



Honoring the Mexican flag. (Photo by Rogelio Cuéllar)

### State and Municipal Reform

To modify demographic as well as productive plans is an obviously federalist task. Decentralization is rooted in social power. Only social power, that is to say, total democratization, is able to oppose the centralizing tendencies of the economy. Only the strengthening of local governments, through the strengthening of social power in a given territory provides the compensating force of the congested, industrial urban centers.

The decentralization of duties and resources from the federal government to state governments, especially in areas of health and education, is already under way. In the country's 31 states, development planning committees have been set up to allow local governments to decide on the use and allocation of federal funds in each entity. The Tax Coordination Law has also increased the states' share of federal taxes.

But decentralization is also based on the measure of freedom given to each municipality.

The amendments and additions to Article 115 of the Mexican Constitution sent to the Congress by President Miguel de la Madrid, outline the power and authority of the municipalities and provide the basis from which the town councils and communities become the promoters of their growth.

The main authority granted municipalities by the new Article 115 includes the strengthening of political independence of the municipal institution, the power to make regulations, and political pluralism of all town councils. Article 115 also defines the public services over which the municipality has exclusive administration, it delimits fiscal duties and specifies municipal responsibility in town planning.

These are remarkable advances in decentralization. But, naturally, the historical lag is so great that there is still much to do strengthen state and municipal bodies so that local governments can fulfil their responsibilities properly.

Building a solid administrative infrastructure at the state

and municipal levels is a task to be undertaken now. Apart from generating economic resources, it will be necessary to reinforce the ranks of civil servants and technical staff of the state and municipal administrations. At the same time, state governments and town councils will have to invite the community to cooperate with the authorities in an organized way in the key tasks of development.

The challenge now is to strengthen the political and technical power of local authorities. Decentralization is the process which marks the beginning of a new era for the country to confront the challenges of the future.

President de la Madrid has laid the foundations of this important political reform which will bring about the economic reform, social reform and cultural reform of the country. But so great is the backwardness of the states that it is necessary to concert all our energies in order to advance quickly.

State and municipal reform are necessary in order to reactivate the economy in the states and to slow the tendency of population growth in big cities. The objective is to decentralize power towards the states and municipalities and to stimulate the community's participation in order to mobilize productive forces and to consolidate the harmonious growth of the entire country.

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# DE LA MADRID AND REAGAN MEET IN MAZATLAN

Gerardo Arreola

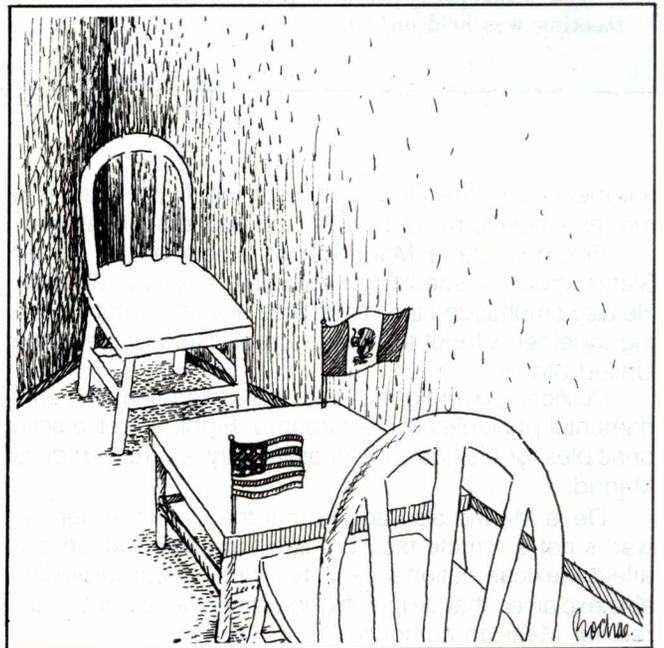
Mexico and the United States have entered a new period of adjustment in their relations, where they must combine mutual interests with their national security requirements. Presidents Miguel de la Madrid and Ronald Reagan began an open discussion during their meeting in Mazatlan, their sixth and last meeting. The discussion will have to be continued by their successors, since general elections are being held in both countries this year. Mexico's next president will enter office in the first week of December, while the next U.S. president will be sworn in late January 1989.

In the Mazatlan reunion the two leaders had before them the largest agenda they have looked at in their five previous meetings. This year, economic issues attracted most of their attention with talks aimed at consolidating cooperation.

During 1987, bilateral trade had a value of nearly 34 billion dollars with a surplus for Mexico of 6.1 billion dollars. Mexico is the United States' fourth largest trade partner and one of the most important recipients of U.S. investments. It is also one of the main markets for U.S. agricultural exports. The fact that some 3,000 U.S. companies have official representation in Mexico indicates the degree of shared economic interest on both sides. The United States is the main buyer of Mexican exports, and each year, U.S. tourists constitute the largest group of visitors to Mexico. Meanwhile, Mexico is trying to increase its participation in U.S. textile, steel and agricultural markets, and in technology transfer.

A comprehensive agreement on textiles was signed at the end of the Mazatlan meeting. It is also expected that an agreement on satellite and information transfer will be signed in the near future.

The two presidents agreed that commercial collaboration is fruitful and can be improved, particularly after the signing of the commercial accord in November 1987, which established a bilateral mechanism for permanent consultation.



De la Madrid and Reagan underlined, as often as they could, the possibilities open for improving economic relations. They invoked their personal friendship and declared that their series of high level meetings was an example of the mechanisms used by the two countries to keep open a privileged channel of communication. A typical result of this favorable climate is the close association between both governments in facilitating renegotiations on Mexico's foreign debt. The exchange of bonds for debt allows Mexico to reinvigorate its finances and provides the United States with the guarantee that Mexico's debt crisis will not follow an unpredictable path.

The presidents also discussed points of conflict in bilateral relations. Mexico would like to strengthen its bargaining position by developing stronger ties with other Latin American countries. Thus, de la Madrid declared that "the new concept of regional security arising after the sum-

## SIX YEARS OF PRESIDENTIAL SUMMITS

MAZATLAN — Before the meeting held in February in this Mexican port Presidents Miguel de la Madrid and Ronald Reagan, had already met five times.

The first meeting took place on October 9, 1982, in sessions alternately held in Tijuana and Coronado. De la Madrid was then President elect. He did not take office until December 1 that year. However the meeting served as an opportunity to express a mutual desire for cooperation.

The second presidential meeting was held on Au-

gust 14, 1983, in La Paz, on the southern tip of the Mexican peninsula of Baja California. The first and only summit of the Contadora group had just taken place, and the Central American crisis was the dominant theme of the talks. On this occasion the presidents signed the Agreement on Cooperation for Protection and Improvement of the Environment in the Border Area, and also reached agreements on U.S. credits to be given to Mexico for the purchase of basic food products.

Reagan received his Mexican colleague in Washington from May 15 to 17, 1984. Again, Central America was a central theme in the talks, with both countries expressing widely different opinions. While the presidents acknowledged their differences, they expressed mutual interest in continuing discussions.

On January 4, 1986, President de la Madrid received his U.S. colleague in Mexicali. Central American affairs were still of interest, but they no longer had first priority on the agenda. Greater in-

terest was placed on the external debt, the Latin American economic situation, and drug trafficking.

The fifth presidential meeting was held in Washington from August 12 to 14, 1986. Central themes in the discussions were Mexico's economic recovery and the struggle against drug trafficking. De la Madrid and Reagan agreed to look for ways to increase trade and investment and they fixed a one-year period to conclude an agreement which would serve as framework for further negotiations on these commercial issues.

mit meeting of the Group of Eight last November, is a model of new forms of political and economic relations."

President de la Madrid advocated that the United States should respect the new Latin American alliance. He also emphasized the importance of these countries acting together without the presence or interference of the United States.

Political sovereignty and self-determination, fundamental principles of the Group of Eight, are also solid principles for Mexico's national security, expressed de la Madrid.

De la Madrid also added that the Central American war is not a remote fact, but is a turbulence which can affect Mexican national security. The Mexican president also explained that drug trafficking is another source of unrest for Mexican authorities.

### Reagan's Reply

Reagan responded to the Mexican president's speech, by calling on Mexico to join the "struggle against totalitarianism." He said that because the two countries share common principles, such as peace within democracy, Mexico should join the struggle against totalitarianism. Reagan insisted that totalitarianism is represented by the Soviet Union, Cuba and Nicaragua.

When the U.S. President began discussing totalitarianism at the official dinner offered by Mexico the faces of the Mexican officials, including that of de la Madrid himself, became downcast and some members of the Mexican delegation exchanged apprehensive looks. The Mexicans probably did not expect such a bellicose and ideological declaration. From the general tone and atmosphere, many observers had expected that at last the presidents would meet without conflictive elements.

The differences of opinion were so notable that a joint communiqué was not produced, despite agreement in the areas of trade, investment and border cooperation. Nor was there a joint press conference. Officials from each nation separately explained the outcome of the meeting to news media.

The Mexico's Foreign Minister, Bernardo Sepúlveda, and U.S. Secretary of State George Schultz each declared that the meeting was successful, but they qualified their statements with the different points of view of their respective governments.

There was no further debate on strategic perspectives, but the lines had been drawn a —Latin American alliance which tries to promote national development with respect for the self-determination of each nation on the one hand, and the proposal for a military association against totalitarianism on the other.

### While economic cooperation was on the top of the president's agendas, Central America and drugs cropped up

The issue of drug trafficking was an important item in the talks. Although de la Madrid tried to discuss the drug problem solely in judicial terms, so that it would not extend into other diplomatic areas and affect bilateral relations, Reagan managed to carry the theme into the field of political discussion. Thus, de la Madrid was forced to insist that Washington should make greater efforts to combat drug consumption within its own territories.

Drug trafficking could become a pretext used by the Reagan administration to justify greater intervention in



Presidents Miguel de la Madrid and Ronald Reagan. (Photo by Pedro Valtierra)

other countries. Whether this will be the case with Mexico remains unclear, although Mexico has consistently rejected the suggestion that U.S. troops participate directly in the fight against drug trafficking. The United States has not insisted on the use of U.S. troops over the last two years.

But whatever direction is taken in the next few months, it is clear that the debate will not be limited to a judicial discussion. The crux of the conflict lies in United States' accusations that Mexico has made insufficient efforts to combat drug trafficking, while Mexico declares that its efforts have not been properly recognized by the United States. Mexico also complains that while it does not have insufficient resources to combat the problem, the world's biggest drug market flourishes across the border.

The theme of drug trafficking could begin to create new conflicts between the two nations. The United States could use it as an element to pressure Mexico to collaborate with the United States' plans in Central America. Mexico will resist but it has to overcome pressures exercised by the U.S. government and press.

The conflict cannot go too far. The United States cannot put unlimited pressure on Mexico, since it is clear that the United States wants a strong and stable government here. At the same time, Mexico cannot prolong the confrontation with its northern neighbour which represents a substantial part of its economic present and future. To resolve this difficulty in a manner satisfactory to both sides is the principal challenge that must be solved by both presidents, and especially by their successors. □

# diagonales

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## La CLANDESTINIDAD:

el tema de nuestro tiempo

Director  
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Raúl Benítez Manaut

# PANAMA: U.S. PRESSURES FOR CHANGE IN CANAL TREATIES

The mass media and public opinion in general have turned their attention to the political crisis in Panama and to the conflict between General Manuel Noriega and the United States. Without a doubt, Panama occupies an important position in U.S. geopolitical interests both because of the Panama Canal and the complex of military bases located there which serve as headquarters to the U.S. Southern Command. The country's proximity to Central America and its active role in the Contadora Group are other factors that make it of strategic importance to the United States.

Current Panamanian strongman, General Manuel Antonio Noriega is the focus of a multitude of accusations. He has been charged with such dissimilar activities as having trained Nicaraguan *contras*, given unconditional support to Daniel Ortega's government, provided arms to the Salvadoran guerrillas and headed a network to smuggle cocaine into the United States. The principal charge and subject of a two law suits brought in Florida is his alleged involvement with the Medellín Cartel, the major Colombian drug-trafficking organization. Those proceedings make it impossible for Noriega to travel to those countries with valid extradition treaties with the United States.

Panama's current political crisis first erupted in June 1987 on the heels of public declarations by Colonel Roberto Díaz Herrera. However in order to understand the effects of the declarations, it is important to point out that Panama has one of Latin America's most fragile economic and political systems.

Since its independence in November 1903, the country's economy has been controlled by the United States. Since construction was finished on the canal in 1914, Panama's economy has been structured around providing services to the canal. After World War II, the Canal Zone and the establishment of the U.S. Army's Southern Command Headquarters gave the country a new strategic-military role. Until the Torrijos-Carter Treaty was signed in 1977 and implemented in 1979, the Southern Command housed 22 bases, garrisons and military installations: 11

belonging to the U.S. Army, seven to the U.S. Navy, two to the U.S. Air Force and two other bases used jointly by the different branches of the U.S. military. It was also home to the famous School of the Americas, where 82,965 officers from all over Latin America were trained between 1950 and 1979.<sup>1</sup>

A new element was introduced into the Panamanian economy in the 1970s: international finance capital. This was facilitated by the fact that Panama does not have its own currency and bank deposits are freely converted to dollars, as well by the lack of restrictive legislation or banking controls. Approximately 130 banks from around the world now have branch offices in Panama. Money laundering is an important part of their operations, a service much in demand as a byproduct of South American cocaine production and its sale in the United States.

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## The principal obstacle for changing the treaties lies in the legacy of Torrijos, still present in Panama's army and government

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Given the fragility of an economy based on commercial and financial services, the Panamanian government turned in the 1970s to foreign loans to keep the country afloat. Today Panama has one of the highest per capita debts in the world.

In political terms, the 1960s are key to understanding the events unfolding today. There was a resurgence of nationalism after a bloody massacre in January 1964, when a group of high school students attempted to scale the walls that separated the Canal Zone from Panama City. That incident eventually led to a *coup d'état* by a group of National Guard officers in 1968 against President Arnulfo Arias.

Omar Torrijos was an important figure in the coup. Torrijos's charisma and his determination to replace the infamous Hay-Bunua-Varilla Treaty—a 1903 accord that

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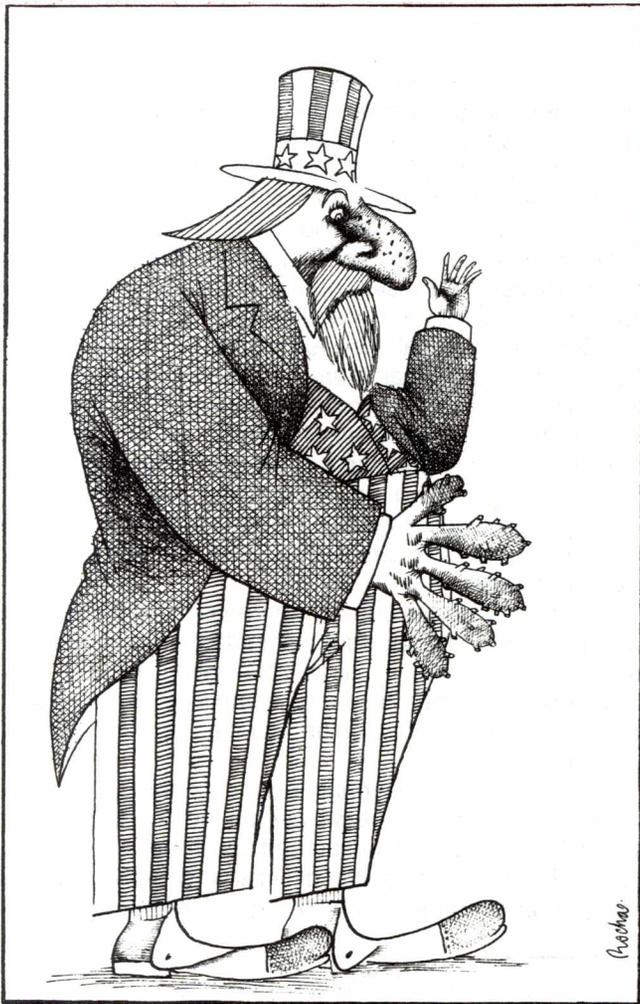
granted the United States the concession to construct the canal and control the adjacent zone—made him one of Latin America's most important leaders.

### Changes in the Treaties

The Torrijos-Carter treaties requires the United States to turn the canal installations over to Panama, return the territory in the Canal Zone to Panama and dismantle its bases and other military installations by December 31, 1999. The treaties also provide that the canal will be neutral and will be defended by the Panamanian army.

### Torrijo's charisma and his determination to replace the infamous Panama Canal Treaty of 1903 made him one of Latin America's most important leaders

One major objective of current U.S. pressure on the Panamanian government is to win changes in the treaties, which would allow the United States to preserve its mili-



Big Stick

tary presence in the country beyond the year 2000. The United States would be willing to cede Panama the rights to administer the canal and to return Canal Zone lands where there are no bases in return for a continued U.S. military presence.

The principal obstacle for changing the treaties' texts lies in the legacy of Omar Torrijos which is still present in the Panamanian army and the government. Within the armed forces, from the command structure down through the officers corps and the troops, there is a widespread consciousness of the need to hold firm to the current treaties and resist U.S. pressures. The U.S. formula for achieving its objectives is based on the rapidly growing disenchantment with Noriega and the governing Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD). There are persistent comments that Nicolas Ardito Barletta won the May 1984 elections through fraud. Considered a trusted ally of the United States, it would seem that Barletta's 1985 resignation kindled U.S. discontent and set the stage for the recent charges against Noriega. The United States seeks to strengthen the right-wing opposition in the 1989 elections, hoping for a government more sympathetic to the idea of a new accord on the issue of military bases.

### The "Narcoterror" Charge

Panama's current political crisis dates back to the July 31, 1981 death of Omar Torrijos in a plane crash that even Torrijos' family members blame on the CIA. Since 1981, Panama has had six presidents (Aristides Royo, Ricardo de la Espriella, Jorge Illueca, Ardito Barletta, Eric Delvalle and Manuel Solís Palma) and three commanders of its armed forces (Florencio Flores, Rubén Darío Paredes and Manuel A. Noriega). Since 1968, only once—in 1984—was a president elected by a direct and universal vote. These facts are overwhelming evidence of the fragility and weakness of the Panamanian political system and help explain why the armed forces play such an important political role. They also help explain why Colonel Díaz Herrera's June 1987 declarations sent shockwaves through the entire society and set off the wave of protest now centered around Noriega.

The Reagan Administration has used a variety of methods to discredit, pressure and even destabilize other countries when it considers it necessary. One method is to accuse a government or specific political and military leaders of being tied to drug trafficking or of supporting "terrorist" groups. "Narcoterrorism," as it is called, is considered to be a serious threat to U.S. security, and the United States has been willing to confront it with military, legal, political and diplomatic means. Nonetheless, within the umbrella charge of supporting drug trafficking, there is no correlation between the importance of the phenomenon in each country and the pressure brought to bear against its government. For example, while Colombia and Bolivia are the most important drug producing and exporting countries, much more drastic sanctions and pressures have been placed on Mexico and Panama. Charges of drug trafficking have been and are being used to pressure Mexico and Panama to cede ground on certain positions, especially in their work on behalf of dialogue and peace in Central America and in their opposition to U.S. low intensity warfare in the region.

It is important to recall that the first Central America peace plan was actually promoted by Omar Torrijos in May



Erick Arturo del Valle

1981, shortly before his death. Later, Panama sponsored and hosted the Contadora Group in January 1983 and on numerous occasions it has firmly supported the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. All of this has irritated the Reagan administration. At the same time, the administration's discourse in favor of democracy has had an impact on Panama. The call for democracy may have a debilitating effect on the *de facto* power enjoyed by the armed forces at a time the United States considers it important to support right-wing forces and political parties elections are scheduled for 1989.

The war in Central American has played a crucial role in Panama's political crisis. Because of the conflict, the United States will seek to prolong its presence in Panama unless the Esquipulas efforts or other initiatives for dialogue can be made to bear fruit. This situation has brought Panama to the center of the regional crisis and its strategic importance has become even more critical.

### **Torrijos is Still Present**

For all of these reasons, the United States opposes the continuation of "Torrijismo" in the Panamanian government and is seeking ways to use the current crisis to its advantage. On February 25, a move headed by President Delvalle and openly supported by the United States to depose General Noriega began. Delvalle was unsuccessful in the attempt and was dismissed by Panama's National Assembly which named Education Minister, Manuel Solís Palma to replace him. As a result, Panama is submerged in a process of accelerated political polarization in which former president Delvalle claims to be the country's legiti-

mate leader. Delvalle has sought protection in the Canal Zone and is heading the rightist and pro-U.S. National Civil Crusade.

It is important to recall that Delvalle was not elected by direct vote, but was named to the office by the National Assembly after Ardito Barletta was deposed. The same mechanism used to make him president was employed to dismiss him.

An alliance held together by the governing Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) maintains a majority in the national assembly. The PRD does not support any changes in the Torrijos Carter treaties. The issue at stake is the defense of Panama's right to self-determination and sovereignty. It is a question of support for the "Torrijista" legacy and the national assembly's decisions or support for the U.S. solution which flames political confrontation in the very heart of Panamanian society, opening the possibility for a civil war and favoring right-wing forces and a reversal of the canal treaties.

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## **The war in Central America has played a crucial role in Panam's current political crisis**

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Today, eleven years after the treaties were signed, a significant part of the zone has been returned to Panama and the binational Joint Commission for the Panama Canal is operating. Nonetheless, there are 10,000 U.S. troops in the zone, housed at four bases: Kobbe, Howard, Sherman and Albrook. In addition, the United States has strengthened its military presence in violation of the spirit of the treaties by transferring part of its command structure and troops from Fort MacPherson, Virginia to Panama.

Since the political crisis exploded on February 25 after Delvalle's dismissal, there has been persistent talk of the possibility of a U.S. military invasion. Such an action would reinforce the history of military occupation of the country and could provoke a direct confrontation between U.S. Army troops and the Panamanian army, headed by Noriega. That would certainly lead to a civil war whose outcome is impossible to predict given the current political polarization.

The three factors underlying Panama's political crisis are also the most important elements for determining its resolution: the internal political polarization, the U.S. position regarding respect for the spirit and letter of the treaties, and U.S. and Panamanian policies toward Central America.

We can only hope that the Panamanian people, free from foreign interference will decide their future. And we hope that the Latin American and anti-imperialist spirit, of which Panama—despite its diminutive size—has provided a great example, will once again prevail. □

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<sup>1</sup> Gregorio Selser, "Las bases de EE.UU. en Panamá, el destino del Comando Sur y la Escuela de las Américas", *Nueva Sociedad*, Caracas, No. 63, Nov-Dec 1982; Raúl Leis, *Comando Sur. Poder Hostil* CEAS-PA, Panamá, 1985.

# 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

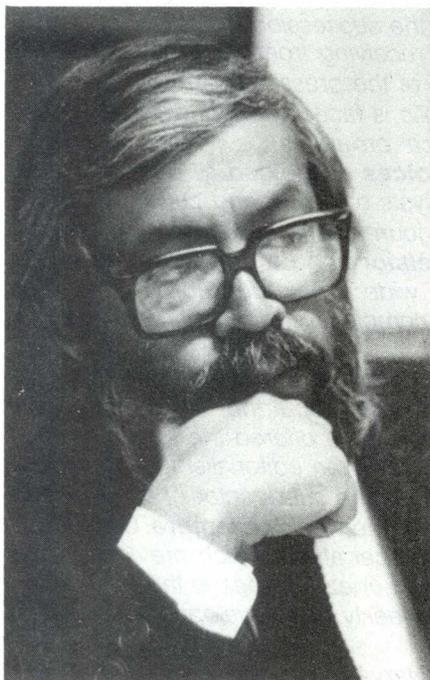
press in the electoral process. Their intention is not solely to inform, nor to limit their criticism to abuses of power. Instead, they hope to contribute with the written word to the democratization of antiquated methods of governing which have remained unaltered in Mexico for more than fifty years.

**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)

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.

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

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*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,



Cuauhtémoc 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 trotskyst 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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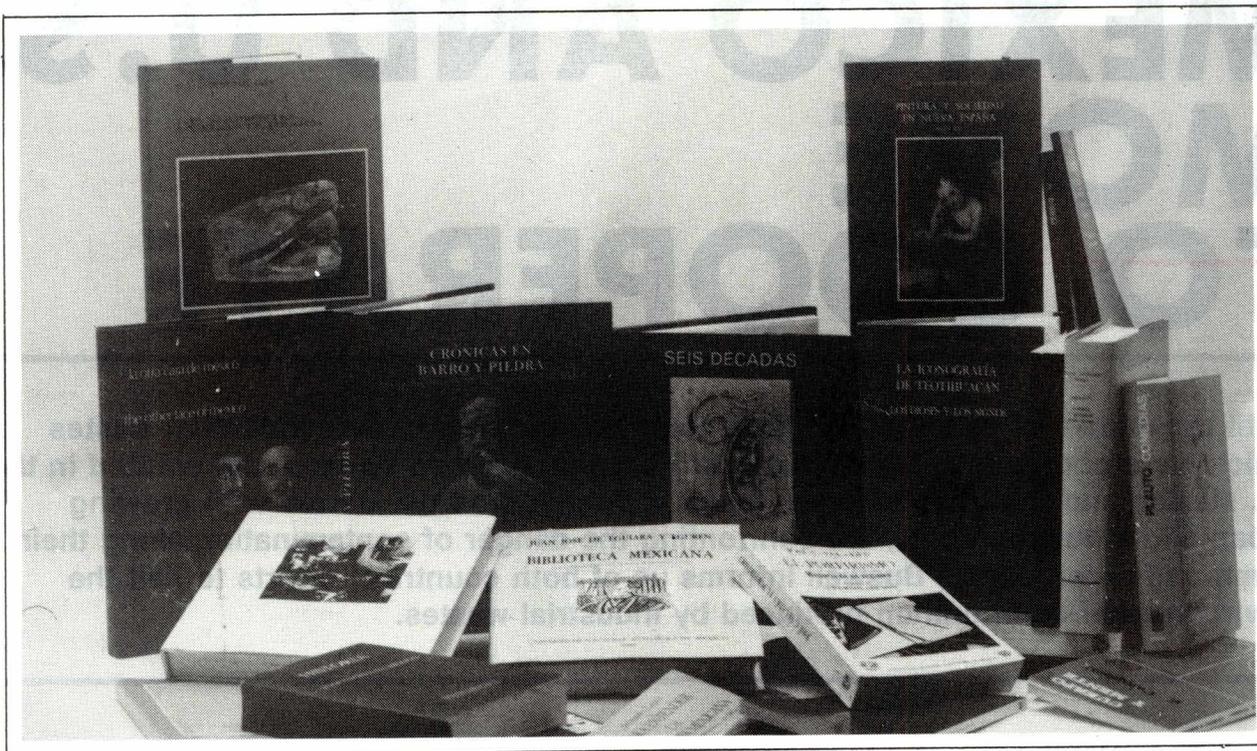
PRI street propaganda. (Photo by José Fuentes)

*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. □

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTÓNOMA DE MÉXICO

# BOOKS



## MEXICO'S BOOKS, ABOUT MEXICO

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# AS POLLUTION CROSSES THE BORDER, MEXICO AND U.S. MOVE TO COOPERATE

**Until the middle of this century, few voices raised concern over industrial wastes which were poured into rivers, lakes and oceans, dumped on land and emitted in the air. Mexico and the United States, faced with a long border dotted with growing urban and industrial areas, are confronting the danger of contamination along their common border. Jackie Buswell informs us of both countries' efforts to halt the environmental deterioration produced by industrial wastes.**

Mexico and the United States are currently breaking new ground in international cooperation to control environmental contamination along their 2,000 mile border. Old border conflicts are buried in this project, which is based on the undeniable fact that mountains, rivers, valleys and air streams constitute an integral whole that human boundaries cannot ignore. It was only in 1983 when the two neighbors signed their first General Agreement on Cooperation for the Protection and Improvement of the Environment in the Border Area.

This Agreement forms the base for further annexes providing for cooperation on specific environmental issues, in recognition of the "importance of a healthful environment to the long-term economic and social well being of present and future generations of each country." Both parties to the Agreement "undertake to adopt the

appropriate measures to prevent, reduce and eliminate sources of pollution in their respective territory which affects the border area of the other."

Since the Agreement was signed in 1983 in La Paz by Presidents Miguel de la Madrid and Ronald Reagan, four annexes have been added: 1) on water and drainage problems in the Tijuana-San Diego area; 2) a joint contingency plan for accidents and emergencies; 3) on the cross-border transportation of dangerous wastes and substances; and 4) concerning copper smelters in Arizona and Sonora, which were causing cross-border air pollution with high emissions of sulphur dioxide.

Of all these agreements, annexes, clauses and phrases, the most radical one that breaks new ground in relationships between the United States and Mexico is Annex 3, which deals with the exportation

by the United States of toxic substances and wastes into Mexico. Efrain Rosales Aguilera, of Mexico's Ministry of Urban Development and Ecology (SEDUE), says the annex is a world leader in binational and international environment protection policy.

"Before November 1986, when this annex was signed, the United States would let us know they wanted to send toxic waste to Mexico for disposal, and if we didn't send back a letter promptly saying 'no', that load of toxic waste would come here. Now, the exporting country has to advise in writing 45 days before planned shipment, and Mexico has 45 days to reply. If an affirmative answer is not received from us, the cargo may not be sent."

Furthermore, the annex stipulates that the United States has the obligation to take back any toxic



Tire dumpyard. (Photo from Novedades archive)

substance that arrives in Mexico in violation of laws and agreements. SEDUE hopes to control clandestine *empresas fantasmas* which make money from transporting dangerous toxic substances and waste into Mexico for storage or recycling here. Now, Mexico can refuse to receive the material, and it agrees to import dangerous substances only for recycling, not for storage disposal. That is, Mexico now refuses to act as burial ground for excess products of its northern neighbor's industrial production.

Quantities of these excess products are often reported in the media in news items such as: "Ship with radio active waste turned away from Costa Rica," or "Ship with industrial garbage refused admission to Central American ports."

Under Annex 3, the United States also undertakes to clean up any area affected by any toxic substance imported to Mexico without permission and to restore the area to its prior ecological balance. This too is a radical element in binational cooperation to protect the environment. Rosales explains: between 1972 and 1979, a certain Mr. Rosiclaire in Zacatecas illegally imported 4,500 tons of dangerous substances from Texas. The toxic waste included

mercury chloride, which is highly dangerous. "We found out about it, and even though we put the man in prison for more than two years, we couldn't send back a gram of that stuff."

Today, cooperation between the SEDUE and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has greatly reduced the level of illegal transportation of toxic materials into Mexico. "Some 250,000 tons of toxic substances have been controlled since the Annex went into effect. We have said no to some cargos," continues Rosales. He points out the size of the problem: "We receive applications (for transportation of dangerous substances) almost daily."

What are these toxic wastes? They include solvents, residues, paints, asbestos, acetone, zinc, mercury and other mineral wastes. The SEDUE regulates, inspects and sets norms for waste processing installations to assure they use adequate sites and processes to treat and desintoxicate waste materials through chemical, physical and biological recycling. One such deposit is in San Luis Potosí, while another in Tijuana treats solvents and oils.

Members of the SEDUE and EPA have begun working on

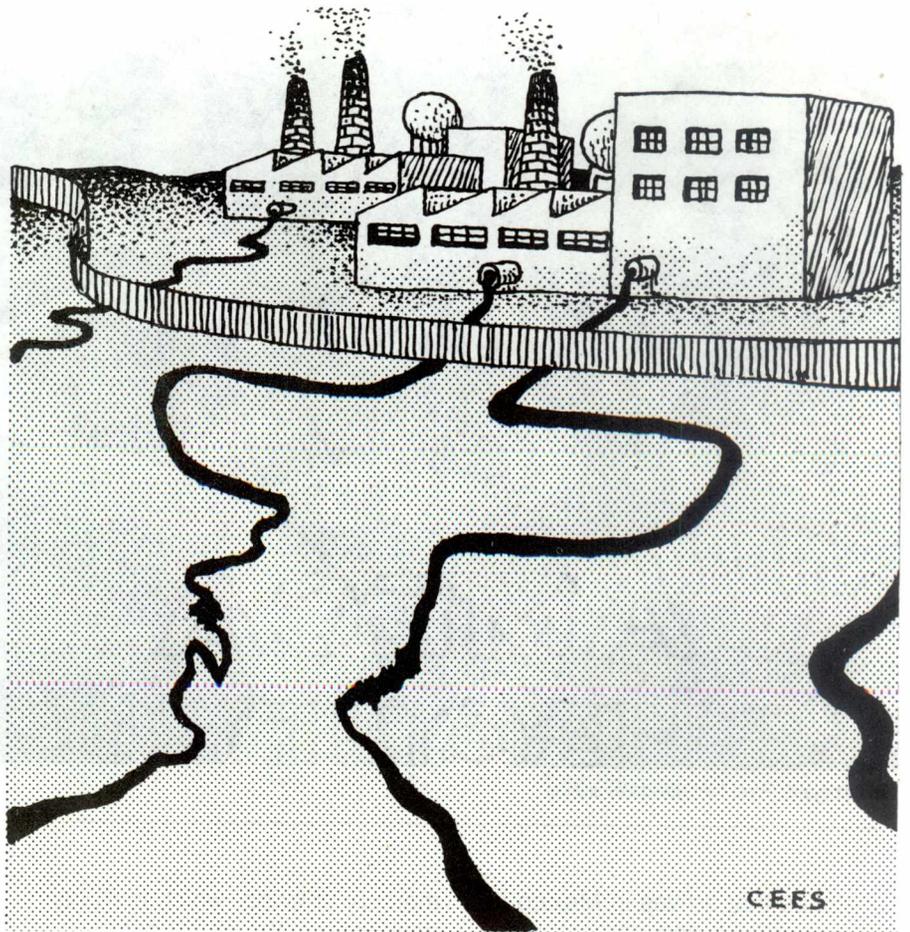
contingency plans in case of accidents and emergencies that affect the border area. This area is defined in the Agreement as 100 kilometers inside each country from the border. Any accident involving transportation or inadequate disposal of toxic materials could provoke serious health risks and dangers to the environment. Annex 2, signed in July 1985, provides for joint response teams which will work out means of collaborating in case of accident. This collaboration will be voluntary: "Each side learns about the other's resources, but there are no obligations on either side, in respect for national sovereignty," explains Science Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, Ann Simon. Training courses and other encounters aimed at increasing communication and understanding of mutual ecological problems also take place between officials and advisers from both sides so that in case of accident or emergency, joint response teams will be ready to operate.

A Joint Contingency Plan for Marine Accidents has also been signed by Mexico and the United States. In effect since March 30 1981, this contingency plan concerns pollution of the marine environment due to discharge or

threat of discharge of hydrocarbons or any dangerous substance. with Alarming accidents have occurred in the Gulf of Mexico and

**The U.S. has the obligation to take back any toxic substances that arrives in Mexico in violation of laws and agreements**

along the border area. From June 1979 to March 1980, crude oil and gas spills from the Ixtoc-1 well near Campeche, constituted what is considered the most serious case of marine pollution in history. The spill continued for 281 days, with a loss of more than 3 million barrels of oil. In 1983, a Cobalt-60 bomb, used in hospitals for radiation treatment of cancer, was sold as scrap metal in Ciudad Juárez,



**TOXIC WASTES ON THE BORDER: THE PRICE OF DEVELOPMENT?**

In-bond industries or *maquiladoras* established along Mexico's northern border since the 1960s are an international project, mainly binational, where Mexico provides the site and labor for fabrication and transformation of products to be sold outside of Mexico. Supposedly, everyone is content with this arrangement: foreign companies benefit from low manufacturing costs and Mexicans benefit from greater employment opportunities. Yet the costs of this rapid industrialization process have to be considered. Negative effects on workers' health have already been reported, while negative effects on the environment are beginning to cause concern.

Dr. Roberto Sánchez, of the Northern Border College, says that in-bond industries operate with little control over their use of toxic substances and that little is known about the number, size and location of contaminating substances.

He cites a report by Barry Castleman on "Multinational Corporations in Developing Countries" in which the author points out that the protection of workers and the environment in multinational industrial plants in the Third World is remarkably poor in comparison with the operations of the same companies in the United States. According to Castleman there are two standards for the protection of workers and environment: those applied in the United States and those applied in developing coun-

tries. Examples given by Sánchez to prove this point include the manufacture of asbestos fiber in Agua Prieta and Ciudad Juárez by a U.S. company. Asbestos dust causes cancer and other lung diseases.

There are also double standards in occupational health. "People exchange their health for money," says Dr. Federico Ortiz Quesada. Meanwhile, Mexico is currently among the many nations which have damaged, or are damaging, their environment in exchange for "industrial development" and money.

Waste materials from the in-bond industries constitute a serious problem. Sánchez says little is known about the quantity or quality of waste materials, nor about their final destination. Laws stipulate that in-bond industries must export their waste materials back to the country of origin, but Sánchez says this is not always done. In a report by the Northern Border College on in-bond industries and their waste products. Sánchez states:

"The pollution created by transnational and multinational *maquiladora* (in-bond) plants, including waste from toxic and dangerous industrial residuals, could have important contaminating effects on both sides of the border. The strong interdependence between Mexico and the United States in environmental matters may be a double-edged sword. Such an inter-

dependence could promote cooperation and joint efforts at finding mutually beneficial solutions for common problems, or it could increase political pressures and environmental, economic and social deterioration with.

"The binational negotiations held to date between Mexico and the United States reflect an asymmetry in power favoring the United States which has led to unilateral solutions. The responsibility of in-bond industries which have caused environment degradation and health hazards must be taken into account in negotiations on cross-border pollution. If not, then Mexico will not only be subsidizing the operations of transnational and multinational businesses through low labor and operating costs, but it will also be paying for cleaning up their pollution."

There are eleven sectors in the in-bond industries which potentially generate dangerous waste products. These sectors are: electronics, metals, automobile, plastics, chemical, electrical, wood, leather, printing, secondary petro-chemicals and glass.

Toxic substances used in assembly and production include: solvents, metals, acids, epoxic resins. Solvents are the agents which cause most health damage, especially those used in the electronics industry. Those most frequently used are the most highly toxic: chlorohydrins. Other solvents include Freon, acetone, and isopropyl alcohol.

The plastics industry produces toys, domestic, industrial, sporting and medical goods. The primary waste products are plastic residues, latex, resins, fiber glass, as well as paints, dyes and solvents. Paints contain solvents when disposed of in large quantities are considered toxic and dangerous. In the United States, disposal of more than five gallons of paint is considered toxic waste and is regulated by legislation.

It is ironic to observe that production of medical equipment constitutes a health hazard for workers and environment through the use of solvents, PVC and adhesives such as cyclohexane.

The automobile industry uses solvents, acids, paints, plastics and resins. The electrical industry uses solvents to clean components. The electronics industry uses metals for soldering solvents, silicon, varnish and dyes. The metal, leather and wood industries employ acids, solvents, paints and lacquers.

A study by the Northern Border College concluded that these substances cause a wide range of diseases, from minor infections and irritations, to cancer and damage to the reproductive and nervous systems.

The study involved 772 in-bond plants in Tijuana, Mexicali, Nogales, Ciudad Juárez, Nuevo Laredo, Reynosa and Matamoros found that 671 plants—86 percent—use toxic substances. The sectors which are growing most rapidly—electronics, automobile parts, plastics and metal—are those which most use toxic substances.

Sánchez says that although various representatives from the in-bond industry have assured him they send waste material back to the United States, there is little evidence to prove that this is fact. Sánchez says it can be assumed that waste material is being buried in Mexican territory without minimal safety measures to protect environment and public health. Clandestine deposits exist, but their number and local is not known. "The cost of waste disposal in the United States is so high and in Mexico is so comparatively cheap, that companies might easily 'forget' to export their wastes." Although

in-bond companies are required by a treaty which went into effect in January 1987 to export their toxic wastes back to the United States, Sánchez says that investigations so far show that most toxic wastes from in-bond industry remain in Mexico.

Sánchez concludes that a complete evaluation of industrialization along Mexico's northern border must be carried out, and social, economic and ecological factors assessed. Failure to do so, he says, is to condemn the population of border areas to pay for the benefits received by the United States from the in-bond industry in Mexico. These benefits include low cost of labor (termed "ridiculously low" by one U.S. businessman), lack of strict control over occupational health, lack of environment protection and use of toxic substances in foreign territory.

Ortiz Quesada, author of several books on public health and poverty, makes the following analysis of what he terms "irrational industrialization at any cost":

"It is obvious that industrialization at any cost belittles the seriousness of the damage to workers' health and to the environment. It is a model of development that ignores people and nature... We assume that workplace hazards will be more serious and more dangerous in Third World countries. Thus, a pathology of poverty must be added to a pathology of 'industrialism,' which will not even alleviate that poverty."



River contaminated with trash and chemical wastes. (Photo from Novedades archive)

Chihuahua. It was then melted down into bars for construction, and was sold and distributed in both Mexico and the United States. Great efforts were made to recuperate this radioactive metal which was later buried in La Pedrera, Chihuahua.

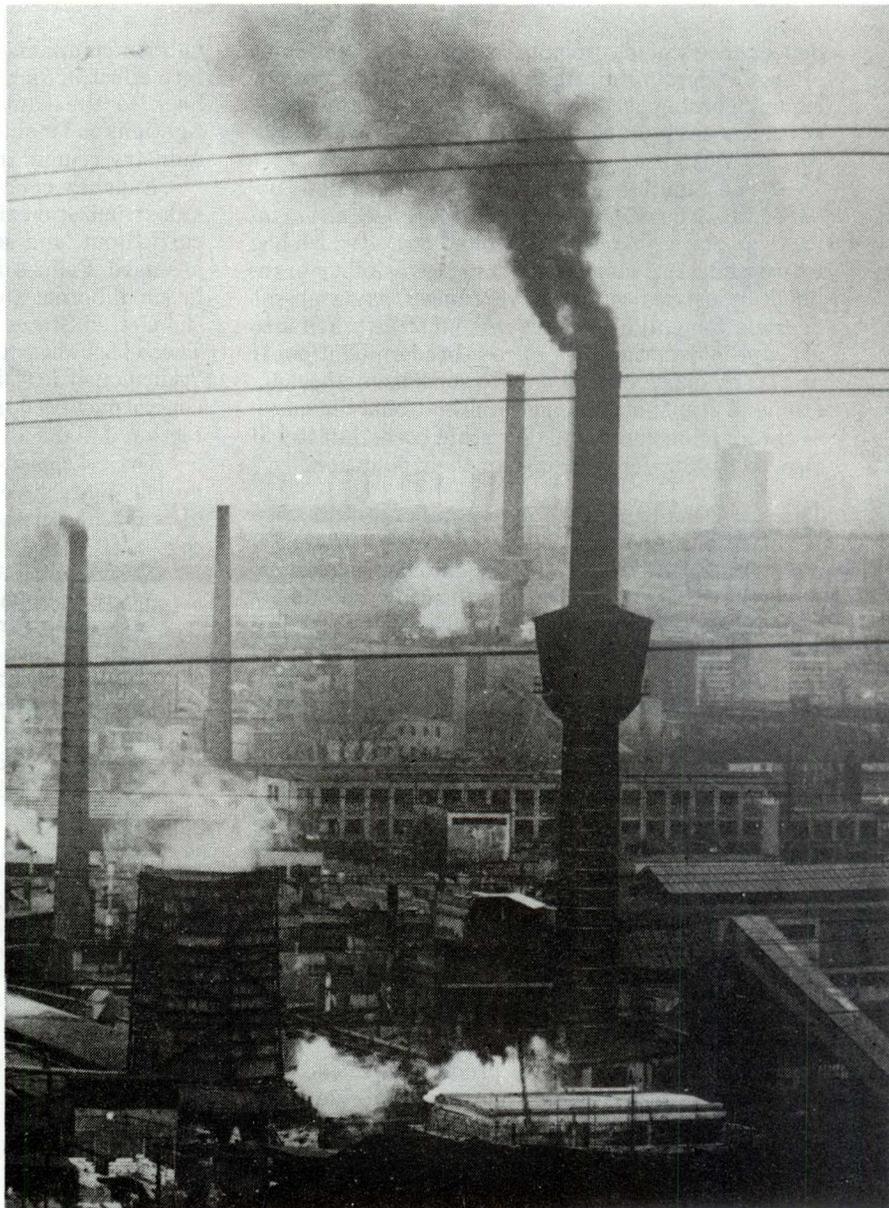
**Sister Cities Along the Border**

The border area is arid, mountainous, with deserts, canyons, rivers. It is subject to earthquakes on the west and hurricanes from the east. Extreme temperatures are experienced. Each winter we read of people who "die of the cold" in this zone: some die of cold, some die of carbon monoxide poisoning caused by faulty heating. Economic activities in the area over recent years include agriculture, livestock, mining, industry, oil drilling and refining.

**Although El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua are politically separate cities, they share common rainfall, air currents and pollution**

There are some 50 cities along the border with more than 50,000 inhabitants. The U.S. cities are generally cleaner with paved streets, though not without their poverty areas, while sections of the Mexican cities lack pavement, drinking water and drainage facilities, especially in sprawling "spontaneous settlements" which house migrating populations.

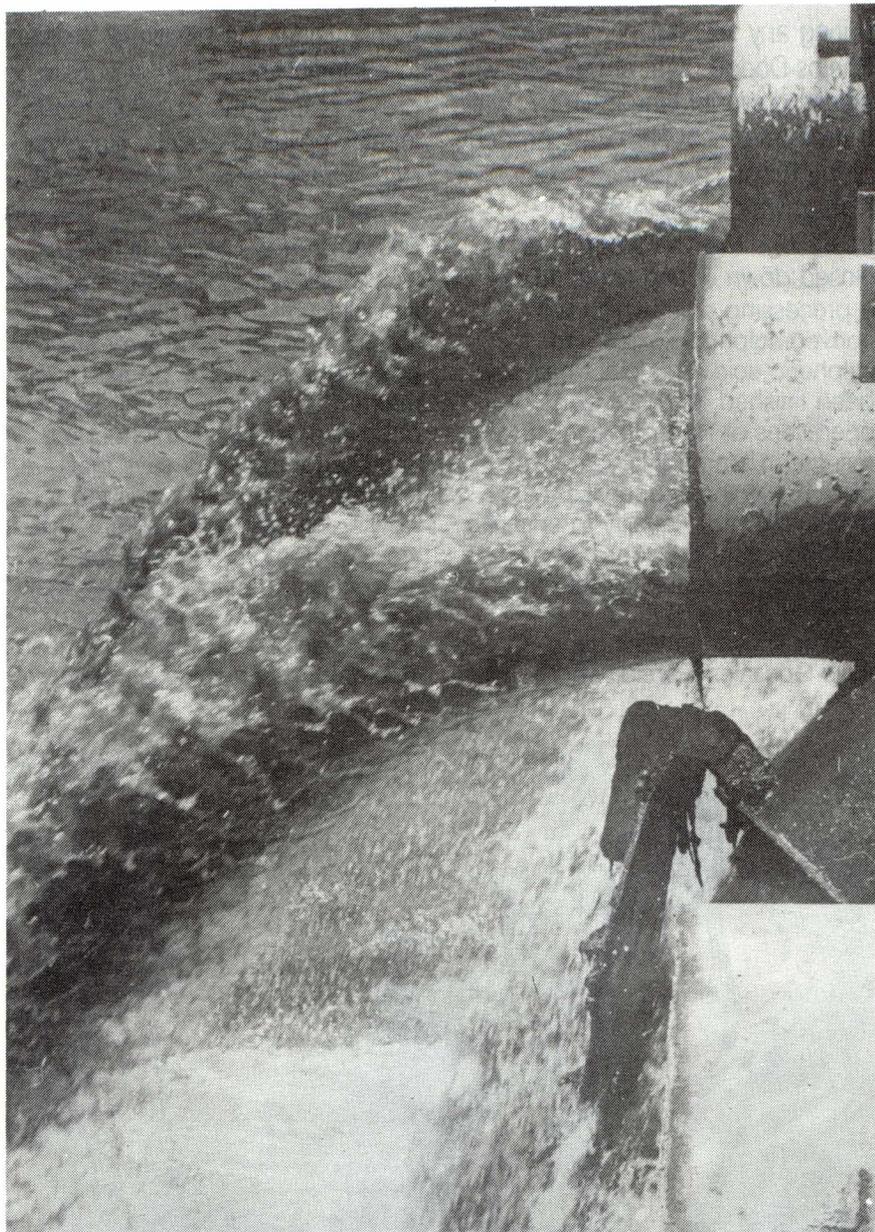
Some of these twin cities face serious pollution problems, including acid rain. According to Dr. Ernesto Jáuregui, researcher at the Autonomous National University's Atmospheric Science Center, there is a long list of cross-border problems shared by Mexico and the United States, such as the migration of persons, movement of merchandise, control of drug traffic, water supply and sewerage, and air contamination. Jáuregui says this last item is given a low priority in binational considerations, yet studies have shown that residents in El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, suffer high



**Air contamination.** (Photo from Novedades archive)

levels of lead and other heavy metals in their air, due to industrial processes carried out in El Paso. The studies show that health of residents in both cities has been affected. In fact, to call them two different populations is to deny the geographical unity of the area: the cities are located in a valley of the Río Bravo and share common air currents, rainfall and other natural phenomena. Similarly, San Diego and Tijuana, in the words of U.S. Embassy official Ann Simon, "constitute one common metropolitan area, even though they're in two different countries." According to studies by Jáuregui and others, winds carry polluted gases from San Diego

towards Tijuana, and carry in the other direction, polluting dust from Tijuana. All this gets mixed up together, and is often held over the area in thermic inversions. Jáuregui added that a significant source of air pollution along the border are the long lines of vehicles waiting to pass U.S. Border Inspection points. Vehicles often wait hours with their engines turned on, spewing out fumes that constitute a health hazard to Border Inspection employees, to the travellers and to the main problem confronting the sister cities that has most been is that of water supply and drainage. The rivers that flow through Tijuana and Mexicali



Toxic wastes drain into nearby river. (Photo from Novedades archive)

naturally flow downhill into California, taking with them whatever water and pollutants collected along the way. Tijuana and Mexicali are on higher ground: thus, says Ann Simon, "Mexico is in the geographically stronger position." However sanitation authorities in Tijuana have faced problems over the years due to contamination of beaches near San Diego. David Gidi, of the SEDUE, says that the United States is very strict in its demands for adequate treatment of waters that flow into seas and rivers that affect U.S. territory and ecosystems. Gidi says that Mexico, recognizing that "it is also our obligation," has made great efforts to improve sanitation. A new sewage treatment

plant south of Tijuana was opened by President Miguel de la Madrid in January 1987. This plant had to be closed down last November due to a fissure on the rock floor. The Mexican undersecretary for Urban Development, Francisco Covarrubias Gaytán, announced at the end of February that the plant has now been reopened, after repairs on faults in the filtering system. He informed that the leaks had been plugged with thick layers of impermeable paste, asphalt and fiberglass.

Tijuana's sewage treatment has caused troubled relations with San Diego county where beaches have been closed down due to sewage spills. Because of the sea currents,

sewage sent out to the ocean might return to coastal areas and contaminate beaches. David Ávalos, Chicano arts worker in San Diego county, says, "San Diego has got its own sewage problems; it's not just Tijuana." Roberto Sánchez, of the Northern Border College in Tijuana, commented: "San Diego's drainage problems are not talked about, or at least, not much. The bilateral talks are always about contamination of U.S. seas and rivers by Mexican waters." Meanwhile, Ann Simon of the U.S. Embassy says: "There are no problems with San Diego's sanitation."

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**"We need a billion dollars to solve the San Diego-Tijuana water treatment problem"**

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Sánchez continues: "There are important points in the bilateral ecosystem that are not talked about. In San Diego, there's a population of two millions, in Tijuana, around one million. Both areas are growing rapidly. There have been sewage spills at La Joya and Mission Beaches. "Perhaps the plant built by Mexico was not the best technically ... "but it was built with pressures from the Unites States to solve the problem promptly."

New proposals are being considered to solve Tijuana's water and drainage problems. They include the extension of drinking water and drainage networks to greater parts of the population. Gidi says that today 80 percent of Tijuana's population has drainage, and 60 percent has drinking water. Covarrubias also announced in February, funding of 20 billion pesos for public works to extend drinking water supplies to 90 percent of Tijuana's population, and for the construction of a new sewage treatment plant in the east of the city. Another proposal for San Diego and Tijuana's water and

drainage problems, is for a binational sewage treatment plan in U.S. territory. Economic difficulties stand in the way. "We need a billion dollars to solve the Tijuana San Diego water treatment problems," says Leroy Simpkins, of the U.S. Embassy Science and Technology Department.

In Mexicali, substantial efforts have been made to clean up the New River. Here, 12 or 14 industries have contaminated the river system, as well as local slaughter houses and the nearby garbage dump. David Gidi says the garbage dump and 85 percent of the slaughter houses have now been relocated, and that industrial wastes which used to find their way into the river system, will be completely under control by March this year. The Ministry of Water Resources (SARH), supervised by the SEDUE, is about to finish construction which will deviate waters from their natural flow into the United States, for use in irrigation in Mexican agriculture. Also, binational investment, including resources, equipment and labor will be made to improve Mexicali's drainage system.

Binational treatment plant are not new along the border: one was installed in the 1950s in Nogales, Arizona to serve the twin city of the same name Nogales, Sonora. This plant was renovated in 1972 and will be further expanded in 1988.

**The Gray Triangle**

Sonora and Arizona share air pollution problems caused by copper smelters in Douglas, Arizona, half a mile from the border, in Cananea, Sonora, 22 miles from the border, and in Naco, Sonora, 57 miles from the border.

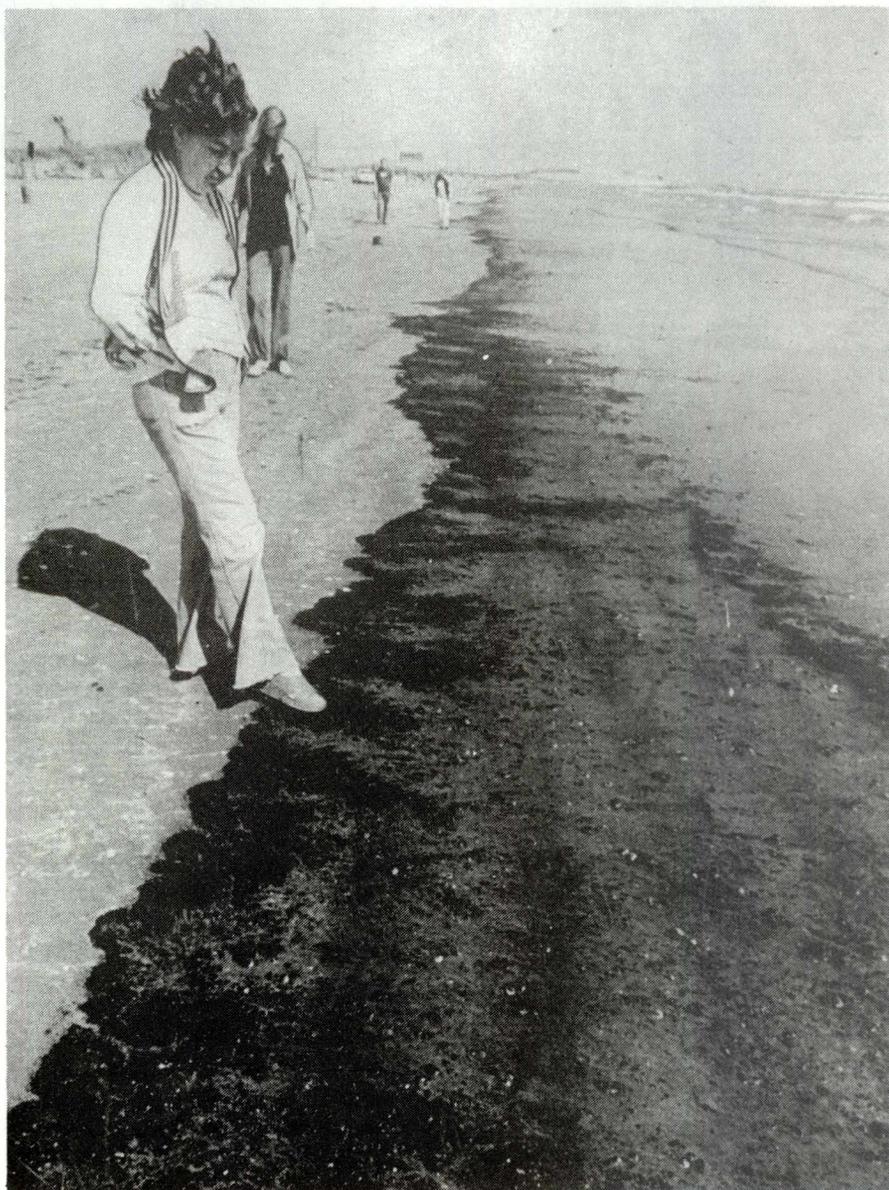
Rogelio González García of the SEDUE, says that at present the smelter at Cananea is operating at only 70 percent of its capacity due to dangerously high emissions of sulphur dioxide.

In Annex 4 to the Agreement, signed in January 1987, both nations agreed that emissions of sulphur dioxide should not exceed .065 percent by volume

during any six-hour period. The Phelps-Dodge plant at Douglas was closed down in January 1987, while a new smelter at Naco, property of the Empresa Mexicana de Cobre, which was to begin operations two years ago, has closed down during construction of a processing plant which will convert sulphur dioxide into sulphuric acid. This plant has now been finished, and smelting operations at Naco should resume in March this year. The SEDUE will then supervise the measuring of air quality to ensure that Mexicana de Cobre is complying satisfactorily with the terms of Annex 4.

"Air knows no boundary," says González García, who

highly values the binational contacts to evaluate and control air quality, prevent atmospheric pollution and identify polluting agents. However, UNAM researcher, Ernesto Jáuregui, says that the northern border area of Mexico generally lacks sufficient monitors to evaluate air pollution factors. "If we can't measure the problem, we can't work out a solution," he said, referring in particular to air transport of pollution between Tijuana and San Diego. Jáuregui says that technologically, Mexico, is the weaker partner in the talks. "There are always more 'experts' on any theme from the United States than from Mexico at discussions and negotiations —and this often means that the Mexican voice is not heard."



**Beach contaminated by oil spill.** (Photo from Novedades archive)

While Mexico might be in a geographically stronger position in the biological ecosystem of Tijuana-San Diego, academics point out that this nation is not the stronger partner at the negotiating table. "The attitude of the United States is not very flexible," says Sánchez of the Northern Border College. "The U.S. is rigid in negotiations, applies pressures, pushes for rapid decisions. Mexico needs to better its negotiating capacity, to strengthen its position at the talks. Mexico also needs to have complete information about environment pollution so as to realistically assess transborder problems."

Some issues affecting Mexico's ecology were denounced by Fernando Ortiz Monasterio, on February 11 of this year. The vicepresident of the Mexican Conservationist Federation revealed that a disposal site for atomic waste is being built in New Mexico, not far from the Mexican border at Carlsbad. Ortiz Monasterio claimed that the disposal site will consist of tunnels 900 meters below ground, where 55,000 cubic meters of transuranium products will be stored in domes of salt.

Ortiz called on Mexico to defend its sovereignty and environment in this matter, as pollution could reach Mexico through underground water streams. He also exhorted Mexican authorities to confront the United States with the problem of underground nuclear tests carried out in New Mexico. He said that radioactivity is released during these tests, and affects the health of nearby populations. He recalled a well-known Mexican actor, Pedro Armendariz, who died of cancer five years after working on a film in a desert close to the zone of underground nuclear tests. Ortiz said that Mexico should defend its environment along the border, above ground and in underground streams and rivers. □

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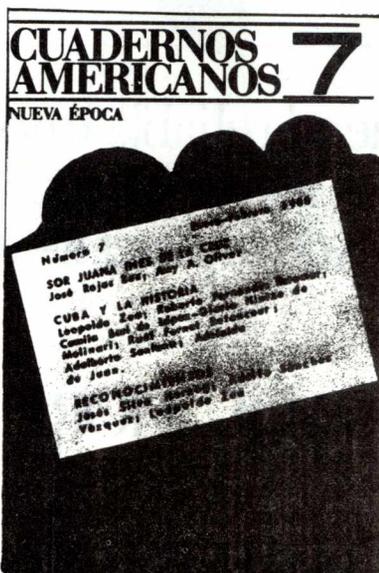
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Raúl Trejo Delarbre

# THE THREE FACES OF MEXICAN TELEVISION

Imagine that instead of the large television networks ABC, NBC and CBS there was only one television consortium. Imagine that Don Rather, instead of being an aggressive interviewer of the vice-president, was an open collaborator and propagandist for the government. Add to this the possibility that instead of the PBS network, there existed only a few isolated television channels with a cultural or educational bent. Consider also the possibility that the U.S. government had its own national television network that depended directly on the State Department.

The comparison is certainly difficult. But that is how difficult it is to describe television in my country to non-Mexican readers. Mexican television, although it is obviously and deeply influenced by U.S. television programming, bears little resemblance to the system of propriety and social and political equilibrium present in U.S. television. Nor does the Mexican television model resemble the Western European television where the government's presence has been so dominant that there are now calls for a "deregulation" of the television industry to allow private groups to operate television channels. In Mexico the situation is as far from the U.S. model as it is from

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## Since 1972, the Mexican government has begun forming its own TV network

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the Western European one. Here, as in the United States, the exploitation of television as a business and as a cultural industry has been the responsibility, basically, of private interests. But, unlike a free enterprise system where rivalry acts as a stimulus, Mexico television developed during its first twenty years under the auspices one company. And, in contrast with the European model, the Mexican state showed little interest in the electronic communication medium until the early 1970s. On the other hand the attempts on the part of independent social groups and new private enterprises to make professional television have been scarce and, up to the present, almost always unsuccessful.

## The Most Successful Business in the Mexican Crisis

Mexican television is known both inside and outside the country for the notable capacity of its techni-

cians, for its presence in other nations and of course for its outstanding financial boom. Television is big business anywhere: given the investment required, television profits can be astronomical.

Mexican television has been no exception and because of the peculiar conditions in which it has developed, Mexican television has been a unique business in the world of electronic communications.

Although technical experiments and financial investment began in the 1940s in Mexico, the first formal TV transmission did not take place until July 31 1950, when Channel 4 first transmitted from Mexico City. One month later Mexican President Miguel Alemán Valdés' State of the Nation address was transmitted. Although not premeditated, these first events in Mexican television would have historical significance. Since that time, Mexican television has been directed by private interests, although without disregarding the government's interests. According to Mexican constitution, air space through which the electronic signals pass belongs to the state. Thus, the government concedes the right to transmit by radio or television to private groups and to public institutions. The principal concessionary today is the same one that in July 1951 began television transmissions in Mexico City. *Televisa*, at present the principal communications consortium in the

Spanish-speaking world, and without doubt, one of the most influential in the world, has its origins in the group of companies which began promoting commercial television in Mexico in the 1950s.

The character of private television in Mexico—conceived as a money-making instrument rather than a medium for information, education or service—has prevailed during the nearly forty years it has existed. The company that began television transmissions inaugurated three channels in Mexico City in the 1950s and soon thereafter expanded throughout the country. First known as *Telesistema Mexicano*, in December 1972 it took over the only other private competitor and changed its name to *Televisa* (*Televisión vía Satélite*). During the 1970s *Televisa* grew at a rate that was unusual in the world telecommunications industry. At present, it dominates the greater part of television transmitting and repeating stations in Mexico, and has affiliates in other countries. Its most important foreign affiliate is *Univisión* which heads more than 300 cable TV, stations in the United States. *Televisa*, inside and outside of Mexico, is connected with video film production, radio and recording companies, as well as with tourism, advertising, entertainment, sports, museums and news agencies. In spite of Mexico's economic crisis, *Televisa* has made notable financial progress during the last few years.

### Despite cordial relations between Televisa and the government, conflicts often arise in reporting on Central America

If one were to take into account only *Televisa's* advertising revenues from the three national chains that it owns inside Mexico it would be considered the most important private consortium in the country. In 1986 *Televisa* sold more than 766 billion pesos worth of publicity space for Mexican commercials during television peak hours. Without a doubt, only the state-owned oil company PEMEX has greater revenues than *Televisa*.



Miguel Alemán Velasco, President of Televisa. (Photo by Herón Alemán)

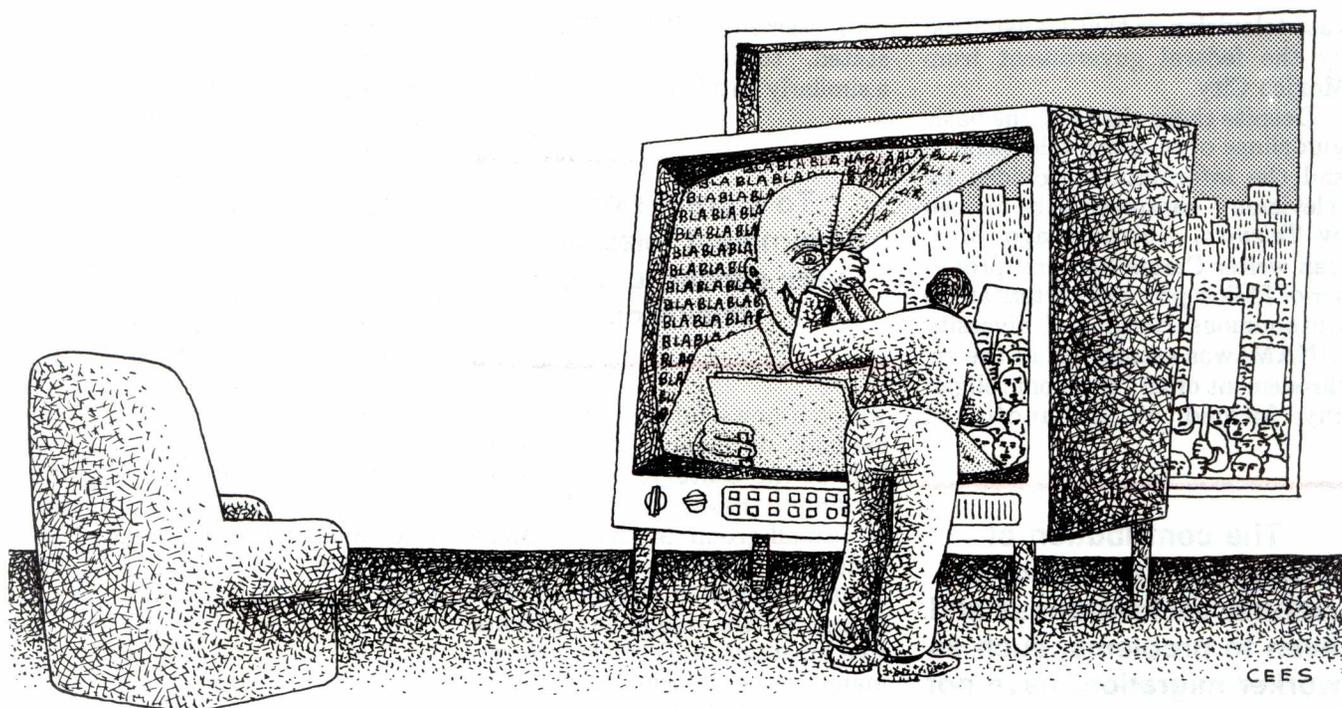
### Unmeasured Political and Cultural Influence

But perhaps more important than *Televisa's* financial strength is its political and ideological influence. It has often been said that *Televisa* has become the country's Ministry of Education. Children and young Mexicans pay more attention to televised messages than to classroom instruction. Various researchers have shown that Mexicans with an elementary school education know more about cartoon characters than about national heroes. That is, without doubt, an international phenomenon. But in the case of Mexico, the cultural omnipresence of this medium is particularly serious since TV programs frequently are not even made in Mexico nor do they have any connection with Mexican interests. U.S. programming continues to occupy a very large portion of *Televisa's* air time. Several years ago, Mexican writer Carlos Monsivais described the situation by saying that we are faced with "the first generation of Americans born in Mexico."

But more decisive than the indirect American cultural penetration is the specifically political influence of *Televisa's* owners. The political importance of *Televisa* has been recognized by the Mexican

government, which has maintained a close alliance with the private television network. In exchange for its non-critical attitude towards the government, *Televisa* receives preferential treatment in the transmission of its signals by the public microwave network and the state-owned satellite system, as well as exemption from taxes. The most important concession has been the almost unlimited permission which the government has granted *Televisa* in the lucrative entertainment industry. One of the best known examples of *Televisa's* influence was the World Soccer Cup which Mexico hosted in 1986. Due to its influence over the International Soccer Federation (FIFA), *Televisa* managed to overcome the negotiations headed by Henry Kissinger who tried to bring the World Cup to the United States. The 1986 championship provided incalculable gains for *Televisa* and its partners, despite complaints from several European countries about the poor quality of some transmissions.

Although *Televisa* maintains cordial relations with the Mexican government, on occasions *Televisa* finds itself the target of criticisms by government officials and members of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). One of the reasons for such confrontations is *Televisa's* reticence to accept the Mexican government's foreign policy, particularly with regards to the situation in Central America. While Mexico has shown solidarity with the government and people of Nicaragua, *Televisa* has supported Ronald Reagan's position in Central America and has even refused to give space to artistic and cultural events featuring Nicaraguans. In 1986, the well-known *Televisa* director Raúl Velasco refused to present the Nicaraguan beauty queen in his Sunday television program, insisting that he did not want to "offend" his Miami audience by bringing someone to the screen who represented the Sandinistas. Velasco's attitude was condemned by a legislator in the Chamber of Deputies who stated that the private TV consortium did not have the right to "act as an electronic chancellor." Nevertheless, relations between the government and private television in Mexico have



noticeably improved. Both Miguel Alemán Velasco, son of the Mexican ex-president and himself president of *Televisa* since 1986, and Emilio Azcárraga Milmo, principal shareholder and president of the council heading *Televisa* and *Univisa*, have indicated that they are active members of the PRI.

The main TV news program anchored by Jacobo Zabludovsky dedicates approximately a fifth of its 30 minutes daily transmission time to information on the PRI presidential campaign. The combined time given to coverage of the opposition candidates does not reach even half of that time. The entire opposition has criticized *Televisa's* handling of information and all the parties—primarily the PRI—understand that the 1988 electoral results will be greatly influenced by television.

#### State Television, a Still Undefined Project

In order not to depend solely on its alliance with *Televisa*, the Mexican government has been forming its own television network since the 1970s. In 1972, the government acquired Channel 13, previously a private channel. Since then, it has increased its participation in the electronic medium through numerous local repeat stations. With the inauguration of Channel 7 and a national network in May 1986, the

federal government established an official TV system, called *Imevisión* (Mexican Television Institute) which is directly dependent on the Ministry of the Interior. The existence of the two national networks, one private and one state-owned, and of some local *Imevisión* channels, has provided a balance, in relative terms, to *Televisa's* cultural and informative hegemony.

To a great extent, government television is very similar to private television, partly because there has not been another sufficiently attractive and solid model. In order to attract the *Televisa* audience, *Imevisión* has almost always fallen back on the same programming as private television: foreign series, soap operas and game shows. *Imevisión* has suffered notorious administrative instability because it is subject to political control. State-owned Channel 13 had seven directors between 1976 and 1981, which prevented it from developing medium range projects. Even today, state-owned television, in contrast with private television, has not developed its own personality.

A third option has been developing in the rest of the country: television owned by state government. In the last few years, approximately twenty TV stations of this kind have been established. Although each state TV station has its own peculiar characteristics, together

they constitute a novelty as much in their programming as in the relation with their audience. Although funded by state governments including Quintana Roo, Oaxaca, Michoacán, Tlaxcala, Hidalgo, Veracruz and Tabasco, state television has taken into account not only official information but also local concerns. Because these TV stations have ties to the social situations in each city or region, they awaken a new interest in their TV audience. Local audiences begin to see television not only as a source of messages from the center of the country (or from foreign countries) but also as a vehicle for expressing their own opinions. This is an option that is also subject to bureaucratic changes.

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#### Mexican television developed during its first 20 years under the auspices of one company, today the largest TV monopoly in the Spanish-speaking world

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In Michoacán and Veracruz for example, changes in state government meant inevitable upsets in the work of local public TV stations. Nonetheless state government-owned television is already seen as a new possibility unlike either pri-

vate television or that transmitted by the federal government from Mexico City.

Despite these changes, the basic guidelines of Mexican television — and the information provided by television— continues to be defined by *Televisa*. Not long ago, Mexican writer Carlos Pereyra, professor of Philosophy and Letters at the Autonomous National University (UNAM) was astonished at the enthronement of an “electronic oligarchy formed by a handful of

businessmen.” “It is difficult,” he stated, “to find in the whole world a similarly antidemocratic situation

**To a great extent,  
government television is  
very similar to private  
television**

where a powerful communications medium, developing in the second half of the century, functions according to the exclusive arbitration of a small group. Millions of Mexicans have almost no other record of national and international reality beyond the repugnant informative strategy of *Televisa*.” Surely many of the deformations and insufficiencies of Mexican television cannot be attributed only to his medium; limitations of political cul-

ture and the deviations in the Mexican systems are also to blame. But the contribution of television to Mexico’s cultural backwardness and even to problems, such as worker migration, have not been minor. In July 1985, Senator Guadalupe Rivera stated that television’s cultural “invasion” has contributed among other things to the illegal emigration of “hundreds of thousands of peasants and workers from other sectors [who] abandon the country every year with the idea that in the United States they will find all that [the media] let them believe, but the reality is something else and they will discover this much later.” □

**The contribution of  
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# THE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY IS HARD HIT BY INFLATION

Javier Aranda Luna

The crisis which Mexico's publishing industry is undergoing is also a cultural one. In recent years, writers such as Elena Poniatowska, José Emilio Pacheco and Carlos Monsivais have stressed that the industry's crisis affects the chances of improving secondary and higher edu-

cation. Books have become a luxury reducing access to scientific and cultural information. Recently, Monsivais remarked that book prices were a form of "implicit censorship" for those who need them. For Poniatowska, this crisis is an offense against one's right to read:

"it sabotages the country's own potential."

In 1982 the price of books published in Mexico rose 75 percent and imported books rose 150 percent. Between December 1987 and January of this year the cost of Fernando del Paso's latest book *Noticias del Imperio* increased by 25 percent while imports doubled in price. This means that, at present, an excellent novel such as Del Paso's costs a little more than the equivalent of four days wages at the current minimum wage, while a book by the Spanish publisher *Tusquest*, for example, can be purchased with five days' salary. Monsivais' words of 1985 are even more relevant today: "When inflation is as uncontrolled as ours, the most uncontrolled part of it hits books."

According to an analysis in the Integral Program for the Promotion of the Book Industry carried out by the Ministry of Trade and Industrial Development and by the Ministry of Education, the Mexican publishing industry has remained stagnant in the past three years mainly as a result of the shrinking domestic market. The report also states that the twenty leading publishers in the private sector have been unable to produce more than 33 million copies annually. It adds that although there is "no adequate information available" all seems to



Few buyers for expensive books. (Photo by José Fuentes)

Journalist.

indicate that the present number of publications in the industry "is below that reached in the period 1975-1980." An example of how far the publishing industry has actually declined in recent years is the drop in new titles by 33 percent between 1985 and 1986. During the same period the total number of publications—including reprints—of over one hundred companies fell 9.1 percent according to government statistics. Rogelio Carvajal, publishing director of *Grijalbo*, one of the 20 largest books publishers, notes that in 1987 the number of new editions published fell in relation to the previous year. "Preference was given to reprints when resources were allocated" because "rampant inflation compelled us to look at the more short-term and profitable market." Thus, last year, *Grijalbo* published 49 new titles, 88.3 percent less than its reprints.

#### Fewer New Titles

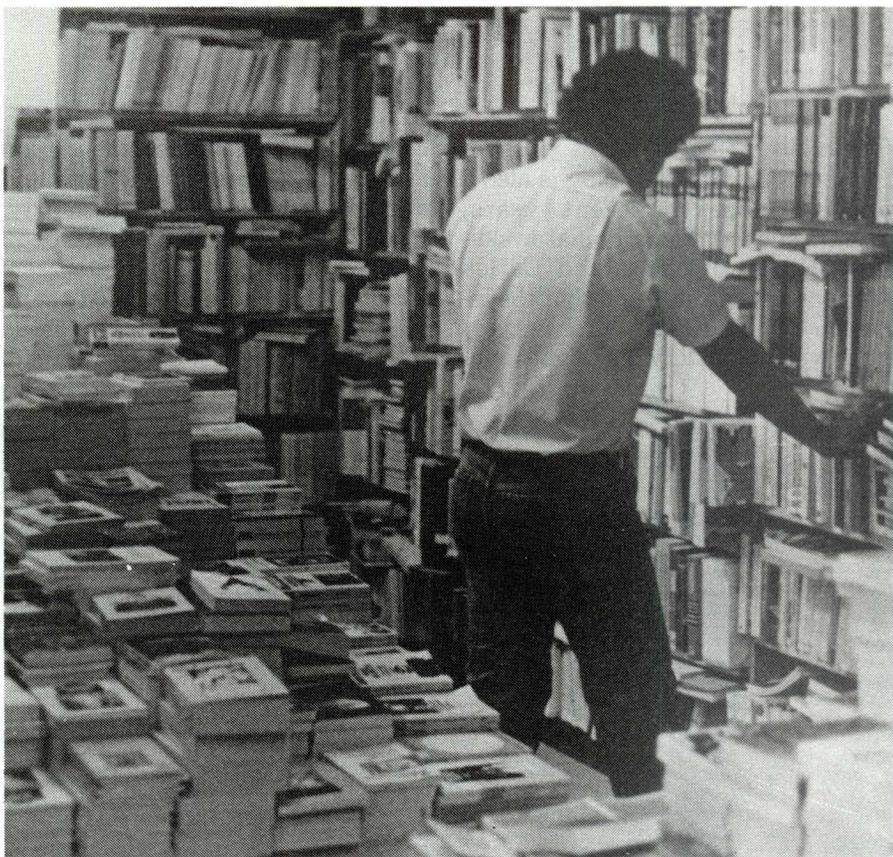
If there are fewer new editions this implies that, apart from lagging behind on information because of the high cost of books, we are also falling behind—even those of us who can afford new books—because publishers are producing fewer editions. In these times of crisis, companies do not want to take the risks involved in publishing new books by Mexican authors. And the value of the peso makes buying rights to foreign authors expensive. In 1976, 5,000 books were translated into Spanish. By 1985 the number of translations had greatly fallen, according to Guillermo Schavelzon, former director of the Center for the Promotion of Mexican Books.

Such problems have not escaped the *Fondo de Cultura Económica* (FCE) a publishing company found-

Terrés has stated that because of the lack of resources, the state-subsidized company will publish fewer young writers because "they are not profitable" and fewer older authors who do not bring in quick returns. "This is a serious problem because Paz and Fuentes were once young and we published their first books," explained García Terrés. The worst part of it all is that not even "profitable" authors can be published normally. García Terrés claims that in 1987, the latest book which Octavio Paz submitted was "vouched for with my Christmas' bonus and that of other top staff that's how we had to work". What

and Industrial Development show that in 1986 1,101 more titles were published in 1986 than in 1983. However, the figures for 1986 correspond to 108 publishers while those of 1983 correspond to 69 publishers. It should also be pointed out that in both cases a large number of the general production consisted of text and reference books and that although only 69 publishers were surveyed in 1983, in that year 4,194,704 more copies were printed than in 1986.

Another important publishing company, *Siglo XXI* has published approximately 1,800 titles with over 20 million copies. However, it



Widely read books. (Photo by José Fuentes)

#### Between 1982 and 1987, the price of paper in Mexico rose, 1,416 percent

ed in 1934 and considered to be one of Mexico's "indispensable" cultural institutions. Suffice it to say that the first books of writers such as Carlos Fuentes, Octavio Paz and Juan Rulfo were published by FCE. Its present director, Jaime García

has allowed the FCE to continue adding new titles is that it signed many contract "when it was still cheap to do so." And if this is what is happening to large publishers, smaller but by no means less important companies such as *El Ermitaño*, have had to cease production.

Data collected by the Committee for the Development of the Publishing Industry and the Book Trade, a subsidiary of the Ministry Trade

is still "undecided" about defining this year's publishing program because of the crisis. In 1982 it published 110 new books in collaboration with its affiliates in Colombia, Spain and Argentina, as opposed to only 70 last year. Since 1982 its leading affiliate, Mexico, has greatly reduced its production of new titles. Martín Soler, *Siglo XXI*'s director attributes this serious decline in production to various causes. "From 1965 until now,

## Books Printed and Bound in Mexico from 1983 to 1986

| Year | New Books |            | Reeditions and Reprints |            | Total  |            |
|------|-----------|------------|-------------------------|------------|--------|------------|
|      | Titles    | Copies     | Titles                  | Copies     | Titles | Copies     |
| 1983 | 1,514     | 19,863,115 | 3,288                   | 37,002,492 | 4,802  | 56,865,607 |
| 1984 | 2,123     | 20,412,993 | 5,403                   | 42,162,821 | 7,526  | 62,575,814 |
| 1985 | 3,923     | 26,117,154 | 6,161                   | 45,680,260 | 10,084 | 71,797,414 |
| 1986 | 2,615     | 26,923,397 | 6,556                   | 46,905,082 | 9,171  | 72,828,479 |

Data taken from the Ministry of Trade and Industrial Development. Statistics correspond to the following number of publishing companies surveyed: 69 in 1983, 158 in 1984, 112 in 1985 and 108 in 1986.

annual sales have fallen 10 percent, author's royalties have risen 100 percent in dollars in the world market and there are continuous increases in the cost of paper and production." Between 1982 and 1987, the price of paper has gone up 1,416 percent. As a result of this, some claim that while paper constituted only one third of the production costs of a book in the early 1980s, now it is three quarters of production costs. The publishers, *Editorial Diana*, which underwent their worst crisis a few years ago, hope to publish at least half of the 280 new editions they issued in 1984, according to director José Luis Ramírez Cota. In spite of everything, Ramírez is optimistic because he believes that the company is back on its feet again.

### Uncertain Future

There is constant uncertainty among publishers as to the number of books to be published in 1988 says Neus Espresate of *Era* publishers. "If things continue as they are production will be cut". Economic cutbacks have forced *Era* to reduce its new publications considerably. When compared to 1980, figures for 1985 show a drop of 53.3 percent.

"The fall in purchasing power and the high increase in costs have caused our sales to drop. When compared to 1986, last year's sales fell 10 percent but all this is not new, it has been going on for some time," observes Homero Gayosso, director of the *Grupo Editorial Planeta* which includes the publish-

ers by the same name, *Seix Barral*, *Ariel* and *Joaquín Mortiz*. For Gayosso and his colleagues, exports are the "last hope" in this crisis. Because Mexico's economic crisis coincides with a similar crisis in the rest of Latin America, the market has diminished. Confronted with this situation, *Planeta* is seeking "to globalize production," that is, to publish jointly with companies in other countries in order to unify publications and lower reduce costs. "The idea is to publish in Mexico because, despite everything, it's cheaper here. The plan is already on foot, we'll start in Ecuador."

Soler, from *Siglo XXI*, is emphatic. "Publishers who do not export in the near future will have to close

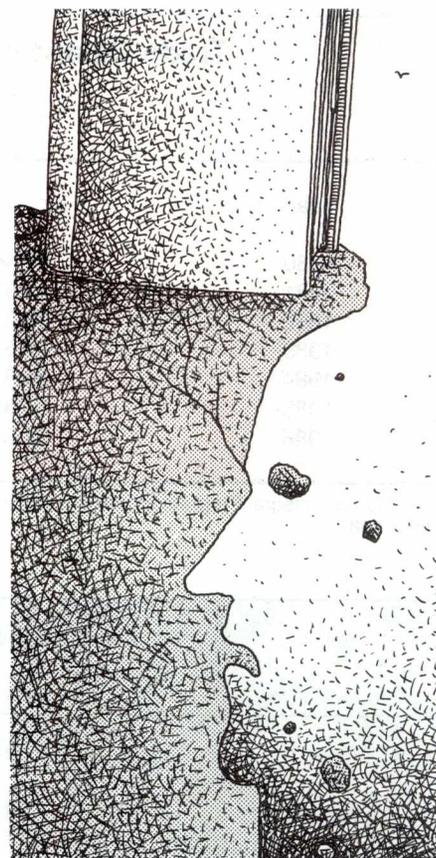
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**At the beginning of the 1980s, the average number of copies per new title was 5,000 now it is 3,000**

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down." He warns however, that it is complicated business. "The program to provide incentives for export isn't working in the publishing industry. On the one hand, the Mexican government which needs the dollars we bring in, imposes restrictions on us for its benefit and, on the other, it is naturally interested in us exporting more. It's difficult to work like that."

According to government statistics, between 1981 and 1983 book imports fell 83 percent, while exports fell 50 percent. Between 1981



and 1986 imports dropped by 49.8 percent and exports 57.3 percent.

Another serious problem facing the book industry is production cuts, which have brought investments in machinery and equipment for graphic production to a severe halt. The figures speak for themselves: from 1981 to 1983 imports fell 84 percent and from 1981 to 1986 imports fell 70.4 percent. The long-term consequences of this situation, if measures are not introduced to remedy it, can easily be imagined.

**State Publishers**

Not all publishing companies are in private hands. Universities, cultural institutions, research centers and the Ministry of Education publish thousands of books annually.

The Ministry of Education, for example, has published 87 editions in the last five years with almost 32 million copies and this year it hopes to produce 389 in 19 series with approximately 17 million copies. The figures for 1988's publishing program are not definite because as of the first week in February the Ministry of Education's budget had still not been approved.

the 77 publications in 1987, this year will only see between 55 and 60.

The writer and director of the Literature department, Marco Antonio Campos, believes that joint publishing which the University has used since 1980 is one way of reducing costs. María Guadalupe Pérez, deputy director of publications at the Mexican Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT) adds that in joint publishing not only are costs shared with other institutions or publishers but the risks are also spread among the various parties.

For Antonio Campos joint

Campos is concerned that book prices in Mexico have risen faster than the general inflation rate. "I think this year they increased by over 200 percent." He adds, "areas which should receive most subsidies are the least subsidized." He seems optimistic about this year's sales because UNAM has a good stock of books, because UNAM's books are the cheapest on the market, and because university rector Jorge Carpizo's interest in improving distribution, sales "have gone up four or five times since he came in."

The National Polytechnic Institute is an important supplier of books for students since its Office

**Trade Balance of the Publishing Industry and Graphic Arts**

(exclusively books)  
(value in thousands of dollars)

| Year | Imports | Exports | Balance  |
|------|---------|---------|----------|
| 1980 | 96,469  | 45,887  | (50,582) |
| 1981 | 132,518 | 41,915  | (90,603) |
| 1982 | 95,215  | 36,850  | (58,365) |
| 1983 | 22,572  | 20,700  | ( 1,872) |
| 1984 | 33,812  | 21,231  | (12,581) |
| 1985 | 57,310  | 19,892  | (37,418) |
| 1986 | 66,559  | 17,893  | (48,666) |

Source: Integral Program for the Promotion of the Book Industry published by the Ministry of Trade and Industrial Development, Nov., 1987.

**Machinery and Equipment Import for Graphic Arts Industry**

(value in thousands of dollars)

| Year  | 1980    | 1981    | 1982    | 1983   | 1984   | 1985   | 1986   |
|-------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Value | 123,519 | 161,389 | 125,399 | 25,819 | 38,151 | 60,729 | 47,825 |

Source: Integral Program for the Promotion of the Book Industry published by the Ministry of Trade and Industrial Development, Nov., 1987.

Every year, universities publish texts for secondary schools and colleges. In the case of UNAM it is difficult to have a general idea of production since institutes, faculties and research centers are totally autonomous in this respect. UNAM's Office of Literature which has succeeded in maintaining a significant level of publications will reduce its production due to "the severe financial cutback," according to Marco Antonio Campos. Thus, of

publishing is "ideal" in times of uncontrolled inflation but "it has its drawbacks since some institutions—and I'm talking about large governmental bodies—take their time in paying or simply never pay. This is terrible because we always pay immediately." For this reason, he states, "we will continue to work with those who pay and we won't work with those who don't until they change."

of Libraries and Publications produces the textbooks required each semester. The National Institute of Fine Arts will publish between 30 and 40 new titles in 1988, most joint publishing efforts. The crisis has led to a proliferation of joint publications. However because of the government's austerity measures, there are institutions which have been unable to see their work through.

In general, the crisis in the publishing industry has led to a reduction in copies produced because of the lower demand. There are some publishers who do not even include information on the number of copies in their editions. At the beginning of the 1980s, the average number of copies was 5,000, now it is 3,000 even if they are works of average importance. Students, unable to buy textbooks, especially specialized ones, because of their high cost, are resorting to photocopies. José Emilio Pacheco, parodying Roland

Barthes, has said that we live "in the xerox degree of literature," a degree in which, since only specific chapters are reproduced, our knowledge is so compartmentalized that the panoramic view of the subjects which books broach is lost. Added to this is the proverbial shortage of bookstores, acknowledged by both the Education and the of Trade and Industrial Development ministries. There are only 400 bookstores in the entire country, 100 less than in 1984 because of the crisis. There is only one

bookstore for every 200,000 inhabitants. And, according to the last survey undertaken by the Ministry of Trade and Industrial Development, 54.5 percent of all book sales occur in the Mexico City metropolitan area and another 12 percent in the metropolitan areas of Guadalajara and Monterrey. Reading, a basic civil right and an important democratic exercise, is becoming increasingly difficult. Knowledge is becoming increasingly privatized. □

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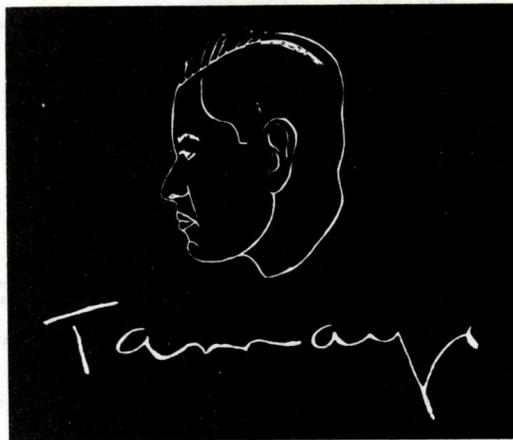
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# MEXICAN ROCK: THE GHOST OF PARADISE LIVES

Victor Roura

If our country was suddenly flooded by dozens of recordings by young rock and roll musicians, it wasn't due to a sudden interest in rock and roll, rather, it was due to authorities who allowed this to happen.

At the end of the 1950s, several rock bands contacted recording studios in order to record the new U.S. musical sound. The musicians had no freedom. They were at the mercy of the incipient television industry and of the rigid radio programming of the period. Rock and roll, therefore, became a fashion not a movement. It became an established current, one more branch of the music industry.

Created as a fashion, rock was forced to follow the rules of the market. It was a product created for instant sale. It had to leave aside its artistic objectives. That's how our first rock and roll functioned, as a commercial game. For example, musicians were told, "If you sing well you'll have a chance at a spot in a Loco Valdez or Antonio Badú movie." When the young entertainers enjoyed themselves with their parents' permission (some of the new stars were the children of well-known entertainers or people well-connected to the industry), the doors to the recording studios, television, and radio were open to them.

These young stars were, obviously, non-threatening. They were safe examples, role models for the youth of that period who had no chance of reaching stardom, a youth which lacked opportunities. Paradoxically, the Mexican rock and roll stars were conservative. The path they followed, unfortunately, did not lead to the creation of permanent work. The majority of the young musicians were being eliminated from the road to stardom while a minority astutely realized that putting on a false personality would ensure then success.

## A New Horizon

Towards the end of the sixties when the first group of rock and roll stars had gone out of fashion, many musicians, almost *en masse*, arrived from various regions of the country, mainly from the northern part of Mexico. These musicians had enriched themselves musically by listening to imported records. In less than two years, they succeeded in changing some of the customs of the middle-class neighborhoods of the city. The afternoon reunions became jam sessions, and the parties held in warehouses, soccer fields, and abandoned buildings became known as *hoyo fonqui's*, or funky holes, a name given to them

by the young writer Parmenides Garcia Saldaña.

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**Rock arrived in Mexico as a ready-made product for instant sale, artistic intentions were put to one side**

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From 1968 on, rock in Mexico has gone its own way forming currents which at times separated, at other times disappeared altogether. While a new phase of rock and roll began in Mexico in 1968, the musicians of the period ignored the student movement and preferred to immerse themselves in analyzing and questioning the results of the latest Led Zeppelin tour. These musicians were concerned mainly with writing the next song, introducing it to commercial radio and collecting their royalties. Meanwhile the student movement of 1968 experienced catastrophic results when on October 2 young people were shot by the military under orders of President Gustavo Diaz Ordaz. 1968 for Mexican rock and rollers went by unnoticed.

During this second phase of Mexican rock and roll, musicians composed their songs in English. Some of the bands which appeared at the end of the sixties were Dug Dug's, Peace

---

Journalist and author of five books concerning popular Mexican music.

and Love, Ritual, Spiders, Tequila, 39.4, Iguana, Javier Batiz, Love Army, Three Souls in my Mind, El Amor, Tinta Blanca, La Division del Norte, Bandido, Epilogo, La Tribu, and Enigma.

Although plenty of ideas flowed,

lacked stability. The musicians did not read. Their bookshelves were bare. Television dominated people's attention. Television was the sacred temple of idleness. It was on television that the U.S. and British superstars could be seen and heard.

tors of the record companies. At the beginning of the seventies, the majority of the rock bands had the opportunity to record an album. On the one hand, a lack of skill as well as the lack of discipline led to songs of poor quality. On the other hand, the use of a foreign language, in this case English (so as to reaffirm our dependence and to consolidate the colony), worsened the situation. Rock became a distant language, not because of its rhythm but because of its inability to communicate. However, spaces opened up for rock in television, radio and in film. Two movies were made, *La Verdadera Vocación de Magdalena* ("Magdalena's True Vocation") by Jaime Humberto Hermosillo and "Bikinis and Rock", the infamous film in which groups like Peace and Love and Bandido appeared along with the Mexican comedian Loco Valdez.



Betsy Pecanins. (Photo by Rogelio Cuéllar)

**Avándaro Music Festival**

Then came the Avándaro music festival, the first and last of its kind. Avandaro, which took place on September 11 and 12, 1971 in state of Mexico, attracted thousands of rock fans (an estimated half a million attended). They came to enjoy the live performances of bands such as Dug Dug's, Epilogo, Tequila, Division del Norte, Peace and Love, Ritual, Bandido, los Yaqui, Tinta Blanca, El Amor, and Three Souls in my Mind. Avándaro wanted to be a Mexican Woodstock. A few of the emcees spoke in English while all the rock bands except Three Souls, El Amor, and Tinta Blanca sang in English, transporting the audience to another land. The festival was being broadcast live, but the broadcast was suspended after 12:30 a.m. when Felipe Maldonado yelled "Screw your mothers if you don't sing."

Avándaro occurred just three months after students and teachers had been once again fiercely repressed during that terrible afternoon of June 10, 1971. However, in the rock and roll world no one cared. The apolitical attitude was as unfortunate as it was surprising. After the Avandaro festival, no one wanted to be responsible for Mexican rock. The media closed their doors to the rock musicians. Rock musicians once again found themselves

ideology was lacking. The language of the rock and roller was a different language, a hip language made up colloquialisms and slang. It's not that the hip language lacked richness in expression, rather the rock musicians limited their vocabulary. Someone said with good reason that the Mexican rock stars had the uncanny ability to "freak out" everyone with their language. Perhaps, because of this limited vocabulary, the rock of this period

It was enough to be a modest poet of rhyme. As an example:

*I like to go on a roll  
I play with a rock and roll band  
And I don't care what they think  
If I feel fine.*

There is nothing easier than getting used to having the doors slammed on your face by the direc-

confronting the authorities. Faced with unemployment, the musicians insisted on their own ways of getting together in their own space — in the funky holes. They formed a committee to speak with President Echeverría. They were unsuccessful.

Once again, participation in rock and roll was limited to a small group.

Radio stations stopped playing rock music. Rarely were rock musicians invited to do TV spots. Now and then they managed to get into recording studios. By the mid seventies, rock was a thing of the past. It had no voice in society.

By the end of the seventies and on into the eighties we would see an increase in independent labels, the only possible alternative.

Then the third phase began. This occurred when the first effort towards a more authentically Mexican rock arose although we see this trend in the first period with songs like "Haciendote el Amor" ("Making love to You") by Los Locos del Ritmo.

*What would happen to me  
What would happen to you  
If people found out  
That we make love all day*

These types of lyrics (subversive in nature) began to be used more frequently in the eighties. New elements became acceptable and were utilized, such as the daily poetry of street language. This was the "onda" or, hip rock.

*Hey, bartender, serve me  
another drink*

*I want to get drunk  
I want to feel my worst  
I want to drink a lot to forget  
Listen bartender, don't make  
me beg  
I know what I want and I  
want to get drunk  
Since the woman I love went  
to bed with some other guy.*

This new hip rock, a response to "ranchera" music, a type of Mexican country and western music, and blues discovers that something is amiss in Mexican rock and that it manifests itself in the corruption, repression, and daily injustices of the police. The hip rocker sees that the world is upside down but does not know how to put it right side up. However, while the hip rocker suddenly challenges the system, he also displays his own sexism, violence and fascism. There are two types of hip groups, the protestors and the reactionaries.

The former tendency has the largest number of followers. They create a progressive rock, although not exactly Pink Floyd nor Tangerine Dream: none of the national groups are blessed with the sound equipment necessary to compete with the foreign rock bands. This is the rock with progressive, advanced ideas. Guillermo Briseño demonstrates his sharp look at the social reality of his country:

*A charro\* while being born  
with a national omen  
strikes his horse with his reign  
with stormy lassos  
And the omen tells him  
That in other times he would  
walk  
with metal livestock*

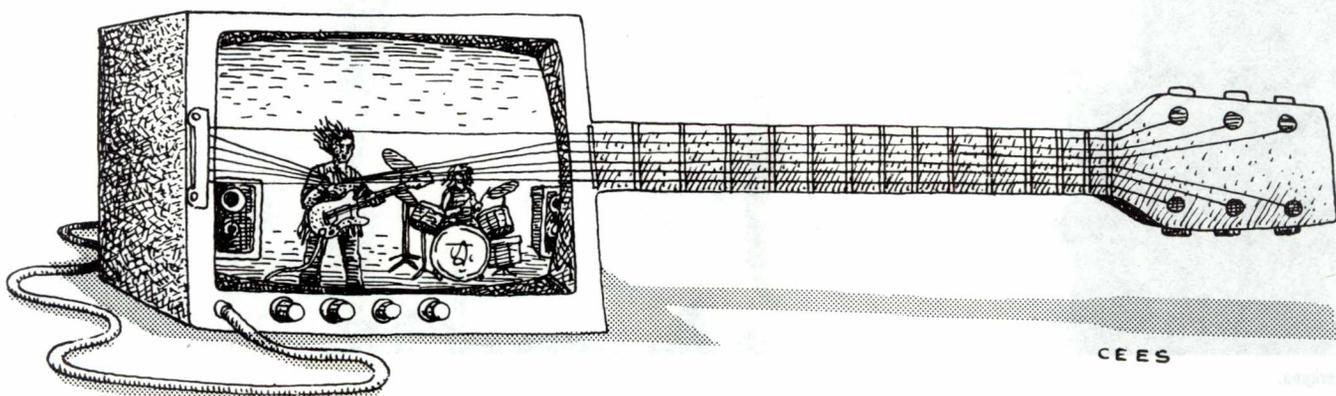
*speeding up the milking  
process  
Riding a desk  
Gaining in on  
the general public  
He managed to place reality in  
a closet*

**In 1968, rock musicians were more concerned with analyzing the results of the latest Led Zeppelin tour than with the repression of the student movement**

*He became a hundred-year-old  
ghost  
of international fame  
He planted a partisan group  
Over the tomb of the calendar  
and shapes history to suit his  
interests*

In other words, it is a rock which searches for a new path, a rock which seeks a new expression, even though it seldom succeeds in doing this. Rock bands and singers who identify with this tendency included Carlos Arellano, Camerata Rupeste, Jaime López, Rockdrigo, Iconoclasta, Cecilia Toussaint, Nobilis Factum, Flight, Mama Z, Musica Contra Cultura, Tierra Baldía and Trolebús. This tendency

\* a "charro" is a Mexican horseman, but a "charro" is also slang for a sold-out labor union leader.



doesn't necessarily require progressive instrumentation.

The use of the parody is in itself an important element of this phase. Instead of singing "I'm not a rebel without a cause, I'm not even wild, all I want is to dance rock and roll..." Federico Arana, from the Naftalina band changes it to "I'm not an orthodox Marxist nor am I a Trotskyist. All I want to do is to form a trade union and to practice self-determination." What is said isn't as important as how you say it. The band Botellita de Jerez is one of several groups which little by little approaches this tendency:

*The unions and the bosses  
have lowered my morale  
If I let them, they'll pull my  
pants down, too  
Yes, because justice takes time  
And I just can't wait  
I prefer to walk in my mind...  
Hey Jesus, don't come back  
They just might shave off your  
hair  
In the Age of Aquarius no  
one will understand you  
People will freak out just look-  
ing at your hair  
and that'll make you cry.*

**Rock in the 1970s continued  
to use English: it was a  
distant language**

As with the hip rock, this tendency is divided equally into two phases. On the one hand there are bands who have worked incessantly at perfecting their instrumentation, even though they have not been successful in creating a balance between the high quality of their music and their mediocre lyrics. On the other hand, there are bands who, although unsuccessful in synchronizing their songs with their music, have produced high quality lyrics.

The third and last tendency of Mexican rock and roll is the one which for various reasons will be usually linked with the other two tendencies. In other words, it depends on the development of the other two. This is a rock with the times, a rock which follows the international music trends: electro-acoustic in the mid-seventies, disco in 1976, punk in 1979, new wave at the

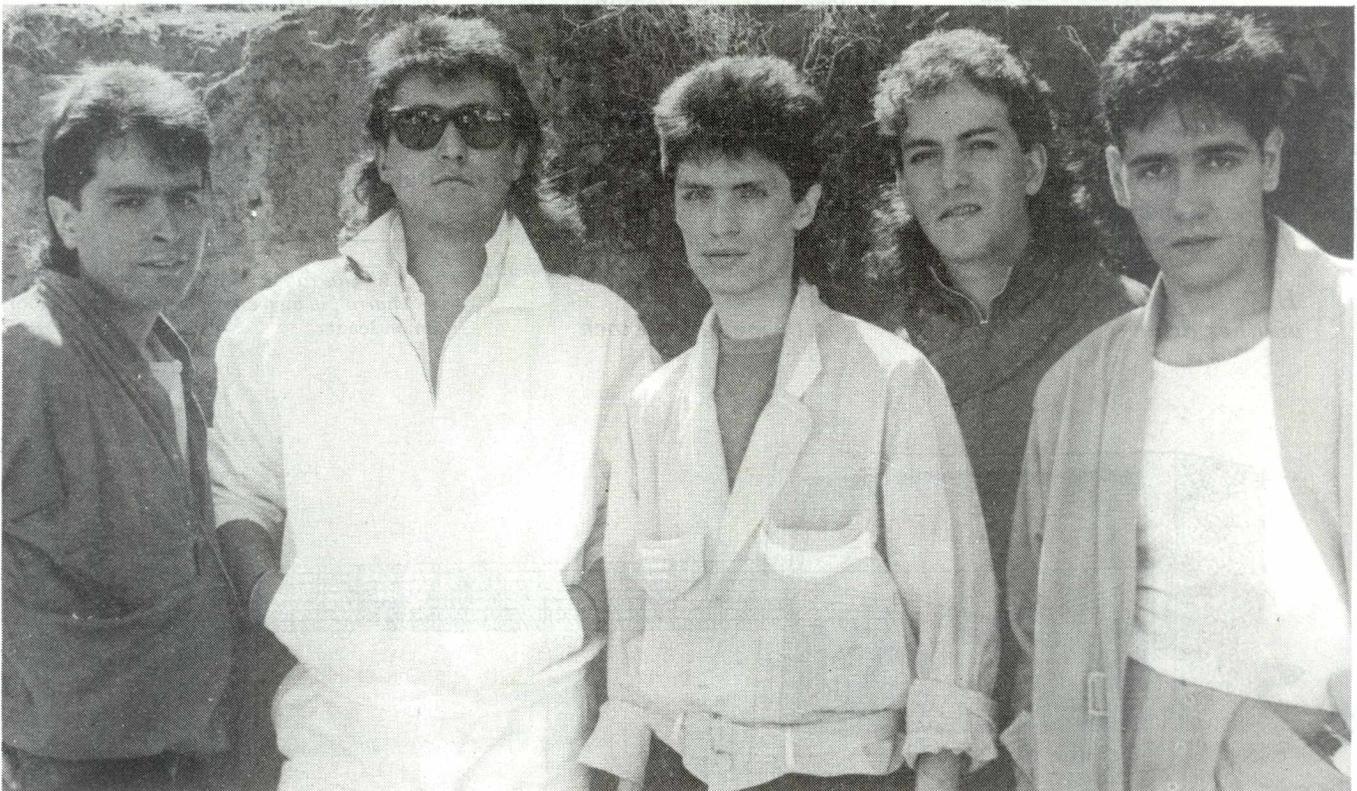
beginning of the eighties and reggae around the same period.

Rock, by the mid eighties, is managed by local television stations. The singers are chosen by the recording companies, thereby, making them more commercial. Those who continue to make their own music without compromising their identity are marginalized by the music industry which prefers complacent rock bands. Something similar occurred during the first phase at the end of the fifties. Thus, the cycle is repeated with attempts at cooptation once again by the authorities.

It is not until 1986 when a local radio station, (Nucleo Radio Mil) begins to play new rock music not heard before on Mexico radio.

**A High Quality Sound**

Rock 101 FM begins to feature several bands from Argentina and Spain who sing in Spanish and who break with the norm which says that there is no rock besides that which is composed in English. After 25 years of programming rock in English, Mexican radio starts to play rock in Spanish once again as in the first phase.



Kerigma.

# ROCK IN SPANISH HITS MEXICO'S AIRWAVE

Place: Nucleo Radio Mil. Time: 10 a.m. Theme: Interview with Luis Gerardo Salas, artistic director of Rock 101 (FM) and Espacio 59 (AM). Complication: Luis Gerardo has not arrived. Meanwhile, an attentive and hospitable young man with a penetrating stare takes pity on me: "Welcome to the world of rock," he says to me smiling. "Would you like to talk to me until Gerardo gets here?" "I'd like that but aren't I in the way? Do you have time?" "Yes. Gerardo won't be long. We could start in on it." And for a while Francisco Mulliert also a rock fan, introduces us to the rock world seen from the point of view of his vocation, his passion, and from the beginnings of rock.

Francisco Mulliert is animated in his conversation. He tells us that apart from being a collaborator of Gerardo Salas, he produces two programs: *El Jinete Nocturno* (The Night Ranger) designed for night workers, and *El Fantasma del Rock* (The Rock Ghost) that tells the history of rock from its blues origins in 1870. "In the program there appears a ghost sent by the Supreme Council of Spirits of Music," explains Mulliert. "It was my idea to use the ghost as the main thread in the narrative. The ghost crosses the United States, England, the North of Mexico and Africa which are the central points in the rise of rock. The ghost has written immense volumes, a complete collection of his adventures in the search for rock. For example: from last January to March we were speaking about blues. The chapter is called *Ajonjolí de todos los moles rocanroleros* (Sesame from all the rock sauces) Why a ghost?" Francisco asks himself. "Because in 1959 they kill rock in the United States and England. They substitute the rockers for an image of well-behaved youth and begin the fabrication of rock idols. From this comes the idea of the ghost: they kill rock and roll, but not its spirit."

Espacio 59—one of the stations directed by Luis Gerardo Salas and under the influence of Rock 101—became a novelty in radio programming in 1987. Its programming is varied, with priority for productions in Spanish. What is striking about Espacio 59 is that since it began, other radio stations on the AM wavelength have had to bring themselves up to date.

With respect to the origin of rock in Spanish, Gerardo Salas says, "It arose basically in Mexico, where it gained more momentum because of the

influence of groups on the border with the United States. At the end of the 1950s Latin America hardly imported any records and in Spain there was Franco. In the United States, rock and roll was at its height and had a lot of influence on Mexican radio. In this period the phenomenon of the 'opportunists' was also visible in Mexico where rock and roll also came into fashion, as seen for example, in the film *Rebel Without a Cause*.

"At that period", continues Gerardo Salas, "rock groups played in the *Cine de las Americas* and the *Internacional* on Insurgentes Avenue. Among the rock groups were the Teen Tops, The Rebeldes del rock and The Locos del Ritmo. Enrique Guzmán, César Costa, Julissa and Angélica María were among the singers. It is interesting that in Mexico they tried not to be so violent. The groups played before a film: there was a 'jam session' then a 'nice film with Doris Day' for example, and finally, a rock film. Each time there was music they all started to dance on stage. *Cine de las Americas* had a stage then. The cinema was turned into a 'happening' until 1959 when they destroyed the *Cine de las Americas*. The police arrive. There is the usual 'razzia' (police raids) and then comes the 'fetishization of violence' in rock. That's the way it is seen in Mexico." The rocker becomes a fetish, a cool-cat, a stray cat as he is called by the writer Parmenides García Saldaña in the book "En route for fashion."

At the end of 1967 and 1968 there was rock art, poetry and cinema. In 1969-1970 the Mexican edition of the magazine *Rolling Stone* was published. Parmenides, Nikito Nipongo, Federico Arana, José Agustín wrote for it. *Rolling Stone*, continues Gerardo Salas, "brought out at the most 10 numbers before the government closed it down, in my opinion, simply because the government did not want young people to speak. If they speak, they think and if they think, they question. In 1971 anything to do with young people was prohibited. The resentment, the feeling of 68 remained."

In a parallel way, in 1971 the decadence of psychedelic music arrives. Rock goes underground. In Mexico, according to Gerardo Salas, the 'underground' appears only in isolated efforts. "The Tri would be the most important of the underground groups, this group reflects the experience of the gang, of the underprivileged: it

conserves the essence of rock," adds Gerardo Salas, "The rest of the groups in Mexico suffer an 'involution.'"

In Argentina, rock appears in the small lapse of democracy between two military coups. What is interesting, explains Salas, is that this rock comes from the initial rockers in Mexico: Teen Tops, Enrique Guzman and Cesar Costa. Argentine rock developed Charlie Garcia, Leon Gieco, Pedro Asnar, Grupo Almendra and Spinetta, while Mexico rock went "underground."

In Spain, now out of the Franco regime and with the socialists in power, rock is widely played on the radio. This rock has an impressive influence due to its quality and it is convenient for the record industry.

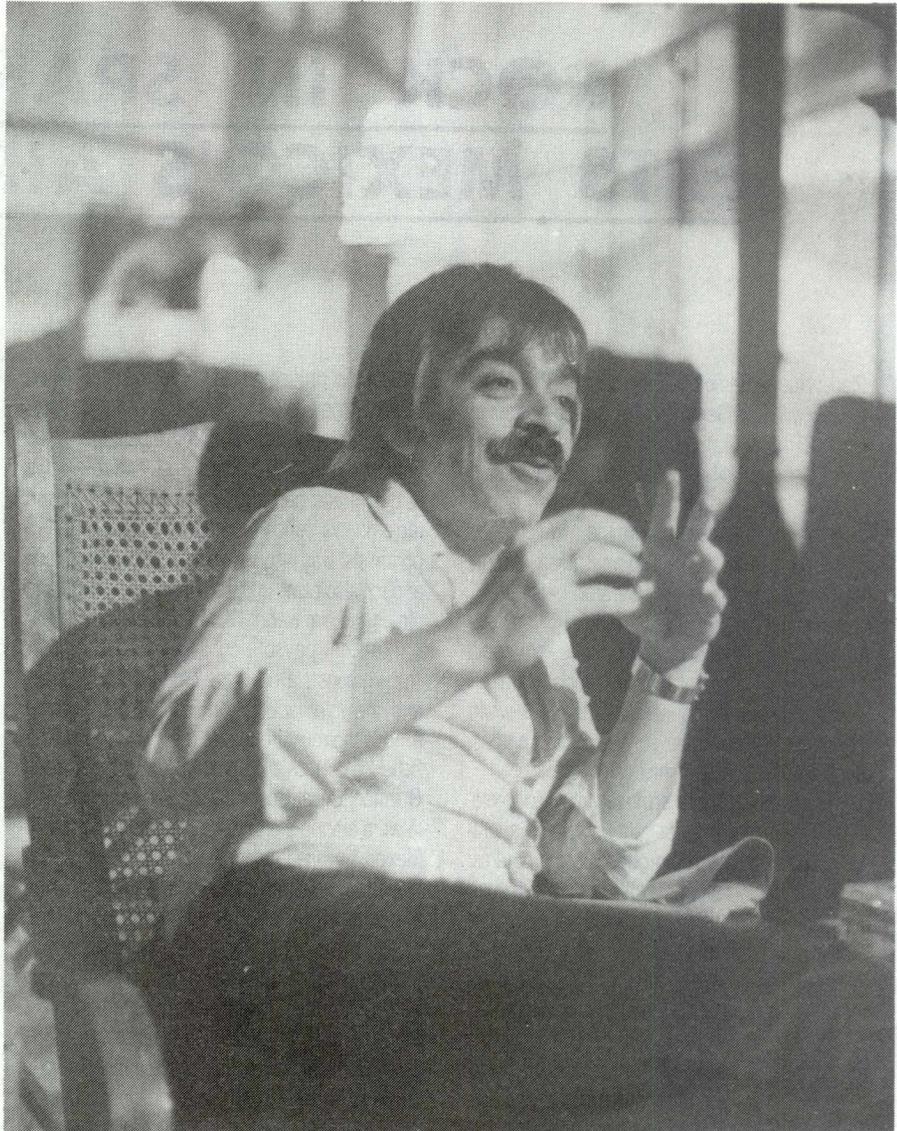
Radio rock in Mexico, explains Gerardo Salas while he waits for a telephone call to be answered, begins with the new wave movement and is not widespread until 1982-1983 when WFM plays only rock in English. WFM is the first station to say that they are playing rock and does not attempt to intertwine it with other kinds of music. Later, says Gerardo Salas, we come in "with a little bit more force" with Rock 101 and Espacio 59. "Rock 101," he states, "is a complete success. There are those who insist that it is not rock. That rock has to be aggressive, violent. That's the way the establishment thinks."

In the programs directed by Gerardo Salas a lot of Spanish rock is played: Radio Futura, Alaska y Dinarama, Miguel Ríos, Los inhumanos, La Unión, Loquillo, and Trogloditas. From Argentine rock they play Charlie Garcia, The Grandparents of Nothing, Porchetto and Spinetta. The Mexican groups include the Caifanes, Dangerous Rhythm and Neon among others.

"Rock, given its origin and the bases of its essence," says Gerardo Salas, "reflects the human reality that we live, not the social reality." Real rock "is an art form, not a political force. It wasn't in 1968, although some young people used it as such, but rock rises above protest." "Rock," concludes Salas, "is music, is intention, is rhythm, is voice. Rock reflects the energy of young people. It unites their internal universality, their feelings, their essence, their complexity. Rock in the 1980s is less local, more universal."

Because of this trend, new bands have appeared. In a recent contest sponsored by the Arreola RCA-Victor label and Rock 101FM, three hundred rock bands from all over the country participated. The first-place winner was a Mexico City band called Los Amantes de Lola. However as of yet none of the Mexican bands have acquired the international recognition that Argentinian and Spanish bands and singers such as Charley García, Soda Estereo, Miguel Mateos, Miguel Ríos, Nacha Pop, Mecano, and Radio Futura have obtained.

It is now radio and not television which has the most influence over young people's musical tastes. If television has continued to determine people's musical tastes, it has created another type of rock and roll audience, one which is more complacent, an audience which doesn't care whether it listens to Tatiana or Yuri, Emmanuel or Mijares, Timbiriche or Fresas, Botellita de Jerez or the Mondragon Band. For the first time Mexican rock will be heard on different labels. As never before, record companies are investing millions of pesos in local bands such as Los Amantes de Lola, Arturo Huízar, Los Trapos, Amagedon, Boni y Los Enemigos del Silencio, Cecilia Tousseint and Los Caifanes. It is said that, finally, the Mexican rock bands will have clear, high-quality sound.



Guillermo Briseño. (Photo by Liliana Contreras)



Mamá-Z in concert. (Photo by Fabrizio León)

This process has just begun. How long will this last? For the moment, and despite the palpable enthusiasm of the musicians and producers alike, no one knows for sure. Television in Mexico can at any moment silence any musical initiative which differs from the one it has established.

Yes, these are new days for Mexican rock. Yet, no one can say for sure now long the trend towards valuing and listening to Mexican rock will last. Something similar to this occurred in the past but it wasn't much more than a phase. Yesterday's ominous shadow is still an annoying ghost. In Mexico, the Ghost of Paradise continues to roam. He is none other than that creative rock and roller who succumbed to the powerful music industry. □

# MEXICO THROUGH THE LENS OF EDWARD WESTON

José Fuentes Salinas

If we consider Manuel Alvarez Bravo to be one of the founders of contemporary Mexican photography—he is the only photographer whose work appears in the Mexico City's Museum of Modern Art next to those of the great muralists—then we can easily appreciate the presence of Edward Weston in Mexico.

This extraordinary photographer, who created the distinctive seal of the Carmel School, arrived in Mexico in 1923, accompanied by his model and student Tina Modotti and his son Chandler. At that time, the effervescence of post-Revolutionary art and the Mexican countryside contributed to Weston's themes, as much as he contributed to the appreciation of incipient contemporary Mexican photography.

Before Alvarez Bravo and Weston, the most important banners of Mexican photography were in the hands of photojournalists, such as Casasola and the Mayo brothers. From Weston on, Mexico would no longer be known in the world solely by images from the Revolution or romantic landscapes.

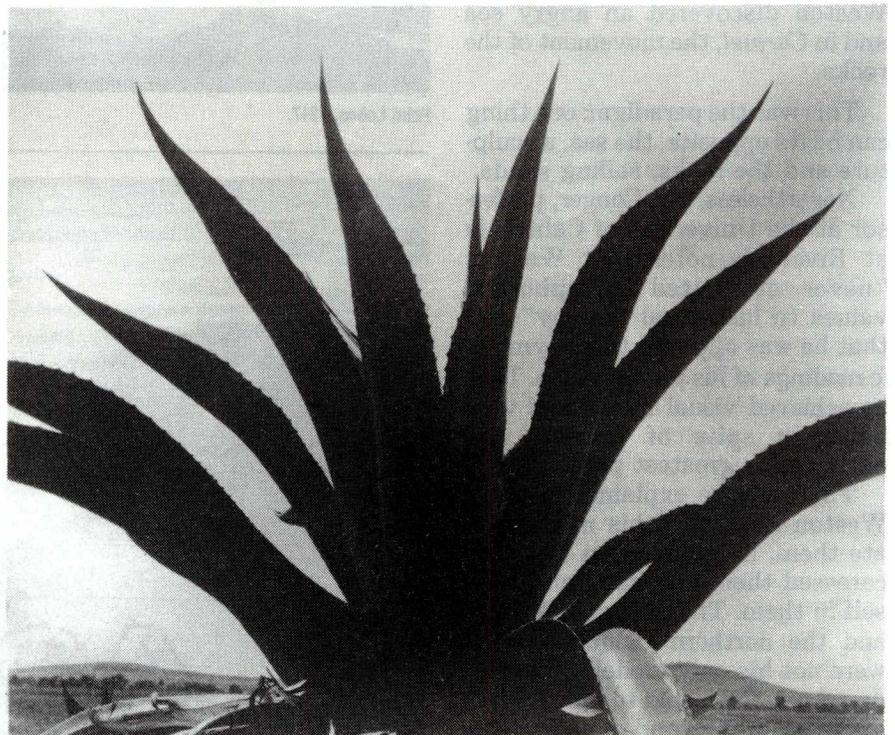
For two years, Modotti, who modelled for Diego Rivera's murals *Germinacion* (Germination) and *La Tierra Virgen* (The Virgin Earth) at the Autonomous University of Chapingo, and Weston formed the

group of painters and muralist of the Mexican "Renaissance," including Siqueiros, Orozco, Jean Charlot, Dr. Atl, O'Higgins, Rivera and others.

Alvarez Bravo had the opportunity to know the talent of both Weston and Modotti at first hand. He was the only person who said goodbye to Modotti when she was deported from Mexico in 1927 for her political views. Since then, he

would become responsible for taking her place in the task of photographing the murals of Mexican painters.

On one occasion, Alvarez Bravo said of Modotti "...she was a great friend of mine. She used to show me her photographs and also those that Edward Weston sent her. Although she and Weston no longer lived together, they continued to be good friends."



Maguay cactus, 1926.

Journalist.

Based on all of this, the importance of the exhibition "The Carmel Photographic Tradition: The Weston Years," at the Mexico City Museum of Modern Art during the months of January and February is evident. This event, prepared by the Monterey Peninsula Museum of Art to commemorate the centennial of Edward Weston's birth (1886-1958), allowed us to appreciate work that had previously only been known via printed means, with the exception of the show organized by his children Brett and Cole, exhibited in 1966 at the same museum.

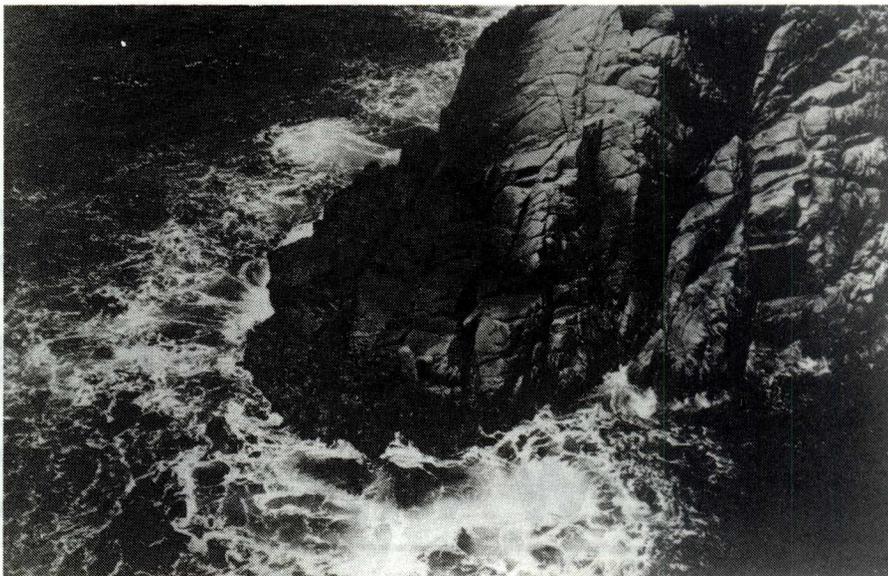
In addition to representing the Weston family (Edward, Cole, Brett and Warren), the exhibition included works by Imogen Cunningham, Wynn Bullock, Beumont Newhall, Moreley Baer, Willard Van Dyke, Ruth Bernhard, Ansel Adams and other equally important photographers. Some of them, even in more recent times, have contributed to the conversion of the Westonian aesthetic into a paradigm capable of unifying them into a school.

This would be the "aesthetic disorder of nature": branches that do not lead to an exact sky, wrinkled cypresses in movement, shells sleeping in the eternity of their forms, and oceans of sand surprised by shadows. In *The Valley of Death*, Weston discovered an angry sea and in *Carmel*, the movement of the rocks.

This was the paradigm: one thing can be its opposite, the sea, a sculpture and the rocks, sailing sands.

Nevertheless, Dr. Conger, professor at the University of California at Riverside notes that Weston, "never attributed metaphorical values to his visual fantasy" and that he was opposed to all symbolic readings of his photographs. That he achieved visual metaphors very much in spite of himself was perhaps his greatest paradox.

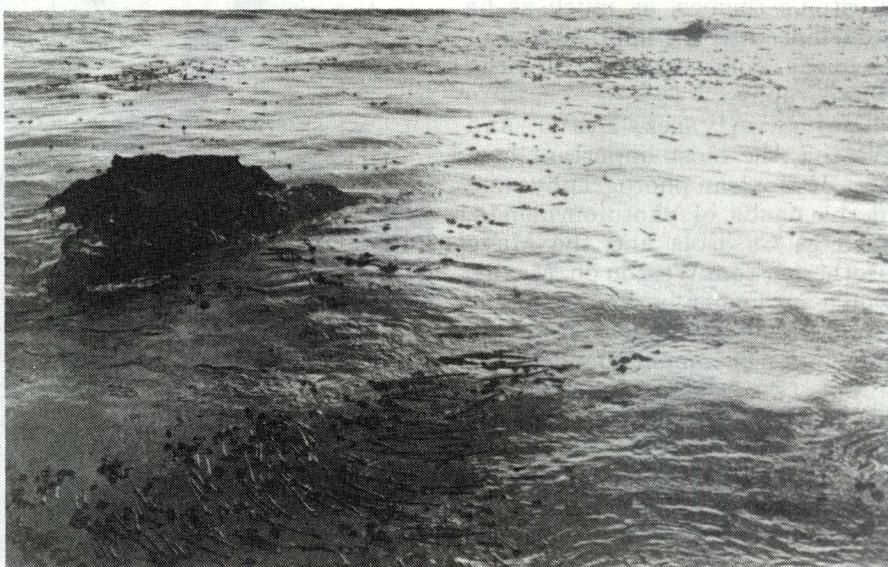
This may be explained because Weston lived with his models, he ate them, he stepped on them, he caressed them and immersed himself in them. The nature of Mexico and the northern California coast were not his only models. Once his daughter, Cole, said to him, "Brett says that he's proud of eating (the still-life) Bell Pepper No. 30 (that his father made famous)."



Point Lobos, 1937.



Point Lobos, 1947.



Monterey Coast, 1940.

The "Carmel Photographic Tradition" exhibition is presented in Mexico while the Mexican Photography Council, plagued by economic difficulties, is celebrating its tenth anniversary with an exhibition and sale of post cards of Mexican photographers.

### The Legacy of the Classics

The exhibition of 80 post cards provides a comprehensive vision of what photography in Mexico is today. This panorama offers a mixture of different styles, themes and aesthetic conceptions, in which one may observe shades of the Carmel School brought to life again through the lenses of young photographers.

This is not because the works deal with tree trunks, rocks, waves and rending clouds but rather because they continue to extract new qualities from objects and from the human figure itself, capturing its impermanence, as in *El Abrazo* ("The Embrace") by Maritza López (1986). It should be remembered that for Weston, the matter of originality—as notes Conger—is virtually lacking in stylistic importance, "...his main concern was the excellence of his own interpretation."

At a time when documentary photography and pamphlet photography in which the linguistic message is the dominant element have achieved greater prominence in Mexico, it is important to re-evaluate the visual metaphors, symbolism and techniques considered by photographers to be classical.

This does not involve the copying of images, but rather the discovery of the essence of creative processes, as achieved by Wynn Bullock in *Navigation without Numbers* (1957), Moreley Baer in *Storm Cloud, Portuguese Cordillera* (1971) or Edward Weston and Brett Weston in their almost identical surfs of dunes (1933 and 1936) and the rephrasing of the nude executed by Edward Weston.

Edward Weston, exhausted by his activities as a portraitist and by the urban environment that surrounded Glendale, came to Mexico with a great capacity for surprise and innocence, for seeing new angles, constructing new links between the models that were offered to him in natural and spontaneous



Homage to E. Weston, Point Lobos, 1938. Van Deren Coke.



Oak, Condado de Monterey, 1929.



Pulquería, México, 1926.

form. It is here where he unleashes a storm of creativity. "Mexico was a huge battlefield; I forever lost the mistrustful fury of three years, all concrete and personal love and I won a new, abstract one, a love that embraces all and that has saved me from any danger of becoming a maladjusted neurotic," Weston stated in 1927.

He portrayed *pulquerías*—bars where pulque, and alcoholic beverage made from fermented maguey cactus juice, is served—maguey cactus, public toilets and social figures such as his friends Diego Rivera and senator Manuel Hernández Galván. It is said that before disembarking from the ship, it seemed as if he had never before seen a cloud and he began to study. "A cloud ignited by the sun that ascended from the ocean, a slender white column, higher and higher, toward the glorious climax of the blue paradise..." he wrote in a letter to Johan Hagemeyer.

Apart from the instantaneous photos that he shot while travelling by train, he dedicated himself to in-

depth studies of Teotihuacan, San Cristóbal Ecatepec, Tepotzotlán and Baranca de Oblatos, near Guadalajara. In Mexico, the photographer found a source of inspiration that he would never abandon. "Work with still-lives," notes Conger, "landscapes and clouds, begun in Mexico, became an integral part (of his work) for the rest of his career."

Nevertheless, Weston's economic situation was no better than the one he had left in California. He and Modotti survived on shooting portraits and with the income that they received from a contract with the Autonomous National University (UNAM) to illustrate Anita Brenner's book *Idols behind Altars*, a difficult task that required their movement to different places in the country.

And based on what is known from Ansel Adams and Imogen Cunningham, Weston's precarious economic situation did not improve when he returned to the West Coast. "Edward could never allow himself to buy anything from anyone. He

never knew what he could have done," notes Cunningham.

Another of Weston's merits is that he went beyond the dichotomy of the two primitive types of photography inherited from the nineteenth century: documentary and picturesque. Weston, just as Alvarez Bravo, showed ephemeral aspects of Mexico, such as fruits, toys and crafted clay vegetables that are really more than that.

Photographers who have worked in Mexico have been seduced by the country's myth, folklore and cultural paradoxes.

Their observations recorded in images have had multiple functions; they have served as both a chronicle and as publicity. Mexico is a country with a great potential for tourism, but few have been able to see beyond the f-stop 4.5 as did the Westons.

For this reason, the "Carmel Tradition" exhibition, made possible thanks to the museums where it was exhibited and Monterey County, has been a long awaited celebration.

## BOOKS

POETRY:  
NEW WOMEN'S  
VOICES

"I took a close look with enthusiasm at the poetry which was being written by young Mexican women today. I found myself full of resignation, sadness and an existential chaos of the present. During my long research I realized that the young women poets were more conscious of themselves, they were more aware of their own bodies. For women poets, erotic poetry is a more real interpretation of love poetry." Italian researcher Valeria Manca who spent more than a year working on a poetry anthology of young women and eroticism made the above observation in a recent interview published in the Mexican newsweekly, *Proceso*.

The growing interest in the literature of Mexico's youth and in particular young women writers, is an accurate reflection of the proliferation of new voices which have been shaping the literary world in the last decades.

Proof of this is the volume *Caligrafía de Ariadna* which unites the most recent books of five young women poets all born between 1951 and 1962: Julieta Arteaga, María Ángeles Juárez, Perla Schwartz, Marianne Toussaint and Aura María Vidales.

The poet Raúl Renan reveals the contents of this collective book in his attempt to understand the work of the five women: "To say they follow the tradition of the best female writers would come closest to an elementary judgment. Yet it would add nothing to an understanding of this new poetry which rises legitimately from the interior of the poetic spirit. One of the authors registers the feeling of separation experienced in being a mother (Perla Schwartz). Another, begins with the poet's natural state: solitude, even though she appears to renounce it in her love poetry (Julieta Arteaga). Another, with the sensitive touch of a lover, gives us a sensual version of love (Ángeles Juárez).

The next looks at the course of life through a veil of bitterness (Marianne Toussaint). Yet another confronts the enigma of the mystery of what is and what is not and proposes a revelation (Aura María Vidales)."

Elsa Cross, a poet and a contemporary of the five writers, stated in a review of *Caligrafía de Ariadna*. "Three of them, Arteaga, Juárez and Schwartz deal with very clear, uniform themes in a consistent way. At times it almost seems to be a chronicle, a poetic diary. In the case of Julieta Arteaga, the theme is loneliness. Sadness is omnipresent in her poems. In the same way, but with different symbols, the theme of abandonment which suddenly bursts into María Ángeles Juárez's book does not alter in any way the amorous and erotic pace which is found throughout. Perla Schwartz deals in a very moving way with a theme little touched upon by Mexican



women poets, that of motherhood." Elsa Cross says that Marianne Toussaint's poetry appears to be more intangible and complex. It is not external events which guide and conform the writing of the poem. On the contrary, it is an internal matter which through language seeks to settle in external forms." In Aura María Vidales's poetry "there is a romantic vitality in the classical sense of the word" and "a delicateness of perception and expression which suggests much more than it says, for example, in the image of a young girl who/ will leave/ her eyes/ in the darkness, a very beautiful image which reflects her book."

The recurring themes in the voices of these authors become apparent in the verses they have created: loneliness in Arteaga's poems: "It is true what they say out there/ solitude has no name/ you can take it or leave it—at will;" eroticism and abandonment in Juárez's poetry: "I think of you, Manuel/ your eyes/ which

flee my mind/ like a handful of gray birds/ which carry oblivion in their wings;" the complicity and wrench of motherhood in Schwartz: "You are a drop which will become/ a cascade,/ nine months will go by/ and you will be a flood;" the course of life and the rediscovery of its origins in Toussaint's book: "I want to be: at the point/ in the center/ at the departure;" the delicate perception of what is and what is not in Vidales's look: "That man/ was not mine/ but his eyes/ looked as if they were mine."

Sadness, abandonment, eroticism as awareness and loss, existential chaos, search and solitude are some of the themes these authors touch upon. They all reveal, because of their youth or in spite of it, great sensitivity and solidity in their work.

Arteaga, Julieta; Juárez, María Angeles; Schwartz, Perla; Toussaint, Marianne; Vidales, Aura María. **Caligrafía de Ariadna**. Ediciones de Punto de Partida UNAM, 1987. 112 pages.

AN  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
HISTORY  
OF MEXICO

This environmental history of Mexico sets out to write a new kind of story: not the usual history of conquests, wars, revolutions, discoveries, possessions, colonizations and so on, but one about and with Nature. The story is told by Nature, who talks about "my environment" and "my eco-systems" and tells how in the past tens of thousands of years humans have become a planetary threat.

The story begins when humans first arrived in America some 70,000 years ago—"when men did not confront my forces, but adapted themselves to them"—and arrived in what is now Mexico around 25,000 years ago. Then the story of survival: hunting ("I'll never forget those occasions when some group managed to capture a mammoth"), food collection, the making of tools, the use of fire, and human's intents to understand natural phenomena.

Later came the development of agriculture—"one of the most dramatic moments of my existence" adds Nature—when Mexicans began to cultivate corn, chile, pumpkin, avocado, maguey, nopales, cocoa and amaranth.

There were "abrupt changes" for Nature following the arrival of the Spanish: "I remember with great sorrow the years which followed... the indigenous population was brutally robbed and exploited" and 60 years after the Coquest

the native population was reduced by two-thirds, due mainly to epidemics.

The Spanish also brought new plants and animals to Mexico, causing changes in Nature's eco-systems. Forests and mines were exploited more intensively, new methods of production and distribution were implemented. Nature then relates the development of the Industrial Age in the 19th century, the Urbanization, from 1940 to 1980, finally arriving to the Age of Crisis, 1980 to 1986. Nature claims that the impoverishment of important parts of the society, is the result of the impoverishment of Nature.

She summarizes some points of Mexico's current environmental crisis: soil erosion, deforestation, overexploitation and exhaustion of non-renewable resources, air pollution and the decrease in the quality and quantity of water supplies.

The book's 366 pages are filled with interesting ecological and anthropological information. Nature's story is backed up by many illustrations from historical sources, as well as precise information on a variety of subjects, ranging from the Ice Age to modern industrial accidents.

"*Tierra Profanada*" is not apocalyptic in tone, but it is finally, apocalyptic in message. Nature calls on humans to "change the exploitative relationship between you and me...if not, I'll have to continue alone the infinite path of the Universe." She warns against the dangers of nuclear accidents, referring to Chernobyl and Three Mile Island, and to the construction of Mexico's first nuclear plant in Laguna Verde, Veracruz: "I've seen volcanic convulsions and unions of the oceans, but a nuclear accident could shake me up in my most intimate insides."

Finally she reminds us that she has known many other species which disappeared after being unable to adapt to changes produced by crisis. "Remember what happened to the dinosaurs," she warns.

Valuable annexes at the end of the book include lists of "critical incidents in the environmental deterioration in Mexico", as well as an extensive bibliography. *Tierra Profanada* is fascinating reading material, told in accessible language and full of life. The group of researchers and writers led by Fernando Ortiz Monasterio have made a valuable contribution not only in the field of Mexican ecological history, but to our understanding of the relationship between Nature and Society.

**Tierra Profanada: Historia Ambiental de México:** Fernando Ortiz Monasterio et al. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Secretaría de Desarrollo Urbano y Ecología, Colección Divulgación. México, 1987.

*Juan García Ponce*  
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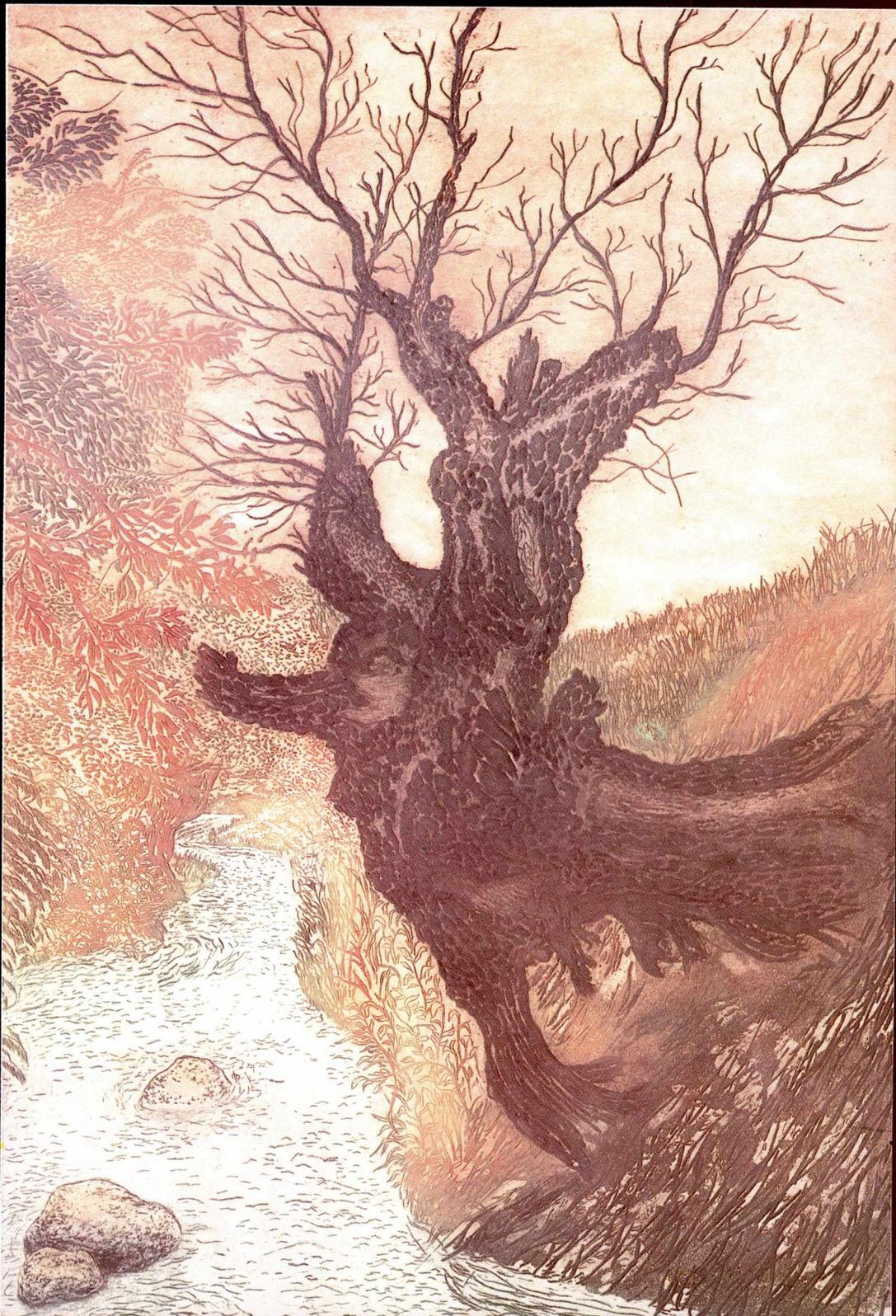
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