BERKELEY REVIEW OF

Latin American Studies

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

SPRING–SUMMER 2010

Mexico's Multiple Centennials

Berkeley Welcomes Bachelet

U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum

Diego Rivera in Detroit

Berkeley Review of Latin American Studies
Spring–Summer 2010

The Berkeley Review of Latin American Studies is published by
the Center for Latin American Studies, 2334 Bowditch Street, Berkeley, CA 94720.

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Additional thanks to: María Angélica Álvarez, Michelle Bachelet, Eva Barrio Escofet, Graham W.J. Beal, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the Detroit Institute of Arts, Melanie Fisch, Jessica Lee Gonsalves Occhialini, Tyche Hendricks, Robert Hensleigh, the Library of Congress, Sally Marshall, Office of the Governor of Zacatecas, Bertrand Patenaude, Adriana Puente, Carmelita Reyes, Samantha Schaevitz, Susan Urrutia, Mary Joann Wallace, Zacatecas Ministry of Tourism.

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Front cover: A statue of Pancho Villa in Zacatecas, Mexico.
Photo courtesy of the Zacatecas Ministry of Tourism.

Comment

In early May, UC Berkeley was honored to host Chilean President Michelle Bachelet on her first visit to the United States after completing her historic term as president. Her week-long visit included extensive interactions with a broad cross-section of Berkeley faculty and students, ranging from seismologists to cultural historians. Her itinerary also brought her to UC San Francisco, where she met with faculty, medical researchers and the Chancellor, and to Oakland's all-immigrant International High School, where she spoke with the senior class, which included several refugees. The Review opens with President Bachelet's talk on the "Chilean Path to Progressive Change," a theme that has important resonance throughout the Americas.

This year, Mexico observes both the bicentennial of its 1810 struggle for independence and the centennial of its 1910 revolution. To commemorate these events, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas writes on "The Promise and Legacy of the Mexican Revolution," a theme on which he also taught a course at UC Berkeley in spring 2010. A second article on this topic analyzes historian Lorenzo Meyer's talk on the enduring meaning of Mexican independence and the revolution in the context of contemporary Mexican politics.

The spring 2010 meeting of the U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum focused on immigration and the high costs of delaying reform for a system that virtually all observers view as broken. The Forum brought together about 20 scholars, political figures, entrepreneurs, journalists and labor leaders from throughout Mexico and the United States. The meetings took place in Zacatecas, Mexico, a state of particular importance in both the War for Independence and the revolution and one that is critical for understanding immigration today. Governor Amalia García hosted the meetings, which are discussed in three articles in this issue.

The great Mexican muralist Diego Rivera appears in two articles. Graham Beal, the director of the Detroit Institute of Arts, discusses Rivera's legendary Detroit Industry murals, which some critics view as his finest work. Beal weaves together an analysis of the power of Rivera's art, the context in which the murals were painted and the history of Detroit. Rivera makes another appearance in historian Bertrand Patenaude's article on Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky's exile in Mexico and his eventual murder there in 1940.

While there are tough, even traumatic, challenges facing Mexico and Latin America, President Bachelet laid out the hope that these challenges can be met.

— Harley Shaiken

Michelle Bachelet (center) with Beatriz Manz and Harley Shaiken on the Berkeley campus, 2010.

Photo by Dionicia Ramos.

Paseo Peatonal Huérfanos, a pedestrian bridge in Santiago.
Photo by Isaías Campbell.

Photo by Jim Block.

Michelle Bachelet speaks at Berkeley, May 2010.

BERKELEY WELCOMES BACHELET

The Chilean Path to Progressive Change

by Michelle Bachelet

Chile's President Michelle Bachelet spent six eventful days at UC Berkeley in early May, just two months after leaving office. During her time in the Bay Area, she met with geologists at the Berkeley Seismological Lab, doctors at UC San Francisco Medical Center, Chilean students attending UC Berkeley and immigrant high school students at Oakland's International School, in addition to giving a sold-out public address. Everywhere she went, President Bachelet impressed those she met with her warmth, humor and intelligence. The following article is based on her public address.

Let me begin by thanking the University of California, Berkeley, for inviting me again, now as a former president, to share a few ideas with you.

I also wish to acknowledge the constant and historic relationship between California and Chile, a relationship that dates back to the 19th century.

Chile and California have been linked from the time of the legend of Joaquin Murrieta, mentioned in Isabel Allende's magnificent novel *Daughter of Fortune*, to the 1965 Chile–California Plan, which brought UC professors to Chile and Chilean graduate students to the University of California — a plan that was relaunched in 2008 during my administration with a view to improving productivity and competitiveness. Chile and California also share many geological similarities, a fact that was tragically illustrated by the terrible earthquake that struck the central region of Chile from Santiago to Concepción, on February 27 of this year, a region so climactically similar to California that it grows many of the same agricultural products. And this university has been a constant partner along the way.

For all these things, I thank you very, very much from the bottom of our heart.

This is the first speech I have given in an English-speaking country since I left the presidency.

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Photo by Francisco Javier Cornejos.

Chile's Museum of Memory and Human Rights, commissioned by President Michelle Bachelet.

I appear before you as the former president of a country that in recent years has been able to make great strides in its development.

Chile is today not only a consolidated democracy, it is also a country that has achieved an average growth rate of more than 5 percent, has more than doubled its national product and has almost tripled its per capita income.

In order to talk about the progressive Chilean path, we need to talk about the last 20 years. Of course, compared to the history of the planet, 20 years is nothing. But for us, 20 years has meant a great deal.

In the 20 years since regaining its democracy, Chile has reduced its poverty rate from 40 percent to 13 percent and extreme poverty from 20 percent to 3 percent.

And it is a country that over the last four years built a social protection network that covers its citizens from the cradle to old age, and it did so in the midst of an economic crisis.

Chile was able to build these programs because it implemented countercyclical policies that allowed it to become one of the strongest emerging economies in the world, placing it, in one generation, on the road towards becoming a developed economy.

But this is probably all old news.

So I want to center my remarks today on a few of the fundamental ideas that lie behind the construction of today's Chile, the Chile we have built since recovering our democracy in 1990.

Perhaps the first and most important lesson is political.

I am referring to the need to understand democracy as an end in itself, as a space for reaching and renewing agreements, and not as a tool for special interests willing to dispose of it as soon as it does not serve its supposed purpose.

That is why in Chile we never say that we have built a "new" country. Or that we need to construct a "new" Chile. That would be presumptuous and counterproductive.

Because if there is one lesson that at least a majority of Chileans has learned, it is that Chile, and other countries like it, have no future if they continue to see themselves as a nation of enemies.

We will go nowhere if we do not understand that democracy is not a platform for messianic projects but rather a space where different projects, views and opinions converge in the interest of the great objectives we share as a society.

I know this sounds great. And it sounds easy, and of course, it's not easy. It involves enormous costs and perseverance because its success depends on incrementalism, which for societies with great social needs can often seem unbearably slow. The pressure for creative alternatives is great.

But history has taught us that the costs of these alternative paths are infinitely greater. History has also shown that if we are able to reach broad agreements over time, the fruits of democracy will ripen.

This has certainly been the Chilean experience. Chile is a successful democracy. Imperfect? Yes. Do unresolved problems remain? Of course, but no more so than in any other democracy. Yet it is democracy itself that allows us carry out a process that does, ultimately, deliver the public goods that our citizens and their children expect and deserve.

Our per capita GDP, measured in purchasing power parity terms, reached $15,000 this year, despite the effects of the crisis. In five years, we expect it to reach $20,000 — the level of many developed countries in the 1980s and 90s — although I want to acknowledge that this estimate could change due to the terrible consequences of the earthquake and tsunami that struck Chile in February.

One important aspect of our agreement-reaching capacity is the ability to modify and adjust those agreements as the country progresses.

So whereas in 1990 our fundamental agreements may have been precarious and limited to democracy, the maintenance of an open market economy and the need to avoid an authoritarian regression, over time we have been able to widen and deepen those accords, contributing to the consolidation of our democracy.

For example, in 1990 General Pinochet remained as head of the army. Yet by 2000, the country had reached a new consensus on human rights in which the armed forces accepted the need to try and punish those responsible for human rights violations as well as the responsibility for handing over whatever information might be useful for the courts.

So while it is true that none of the military leaders who led the coup d'état in 1973 ever faced trial, many of those who were involved in the subsequent repression are today either on trial or in prison, and the courts continue to investigate hundreds of cases. Yet no one in Chile feels that democracy is in danger. On the contrary, it gets stronger every day.

A second lesson from the Chilean experience is the need to achieve a greater balance between democracy, the market, the state and sustainable development.

One of the keys to Chile's development was to accept in 1990 — when the world was still dominated by the neoliberal paradigm that only came to an end with the 2008 crisis — the need to have a strong state to bring about growth with equity.

We said at that time, and during my government as well, that we have to include to grow and grow to include. There

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Michelle Bachelet with Barbara Romanowicz, director of UC Berkeley's Seismological Lab, examining a record of the 2010 Chilean earthquake.

Photo by Jim Block.

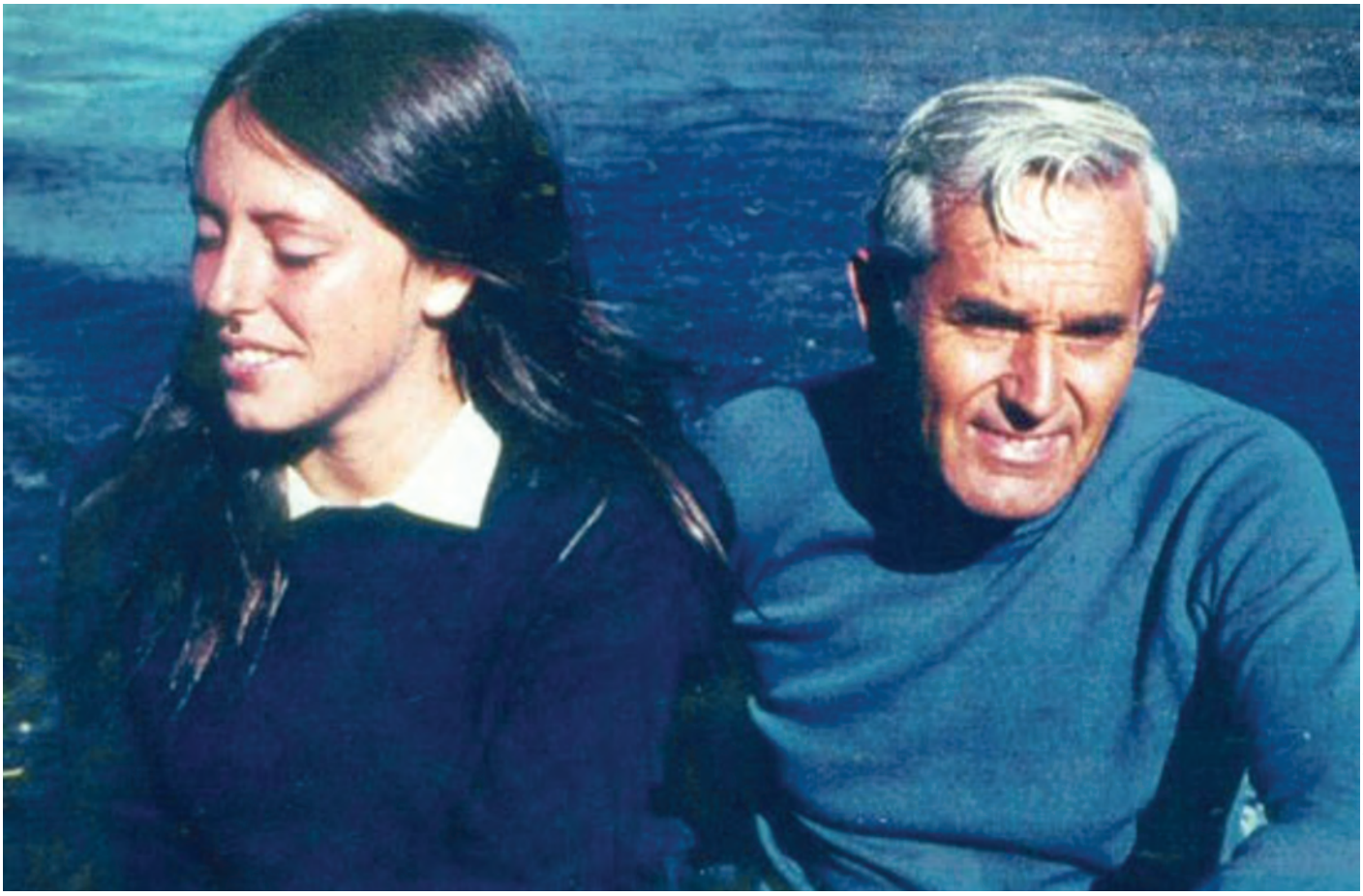

Photo courtesy of Michelle Bachelet.

Michelle Bachelet with her father, General Alberto Bachelet.

is a symbiotic relationship between the two. And you don't have to make a trade-off between economic growth and equal opportunities and social justice. It is true that Chile was a neoliberal laboratory. It was one of the first cases in which those policies were implemented. That is why we learned, very early on, of neoliberalism's great social costs, of the social deficit it created. In 1990, we embarked upon a policy of growth with equity, an idea that would evolve and mature, conceptually and politically.

Conceptually, we abandoned the idea of the old welfare state — which was in crisis in Europe and had, in fact, led to the appearance of neoliberalism — but we also left aside those policies that were exclusively contribution-based, focused merely on individual savings and private insurance and channeled direct support only for the poorest sectors.

We moved, in other words, toward a new model, based on democracy and social rights.

Its policies would offer support and universality, as befitting a modern welfare state, founded on the conviction that the state must recognize and guarantee certain civil, political and especially social rights to all its citizens — not only to those who have the money for private insurance, which of course we have kept.

Experience has taught us that in the end, rights are indivisible. A good deal of the current global discontent with democracy comes from its incapacity to generate real equality of opportunity and to supply the public goods required to improve people's lives. Democracy has to deliver. Otherwise people become unhappy with it because their lives are not getting any better.

In other words, in Chile we learned that while democratic rules are absolutely indispensable, they are not enough.

Achieving all this demands rigorous fiscal and political discipline. It imposes an obligation to save in the good times so that you can invest when times get tough.

It demands that social rights be guaranteed over time and that benefits do not have to be cut back when conditions are not the best, as is the case today.

This is not easy, and even less so in times of crisis. The challenges are formidable but not insurmountable, and there are several countries in our own region that have demonstrated that we can succeed.

And I think that Chile has done so. We implemented a countercyclical policy and saved when the price of copper was high, which allowed us to increase social spending by 7.8 percent in 2009 when we were being hit the hardest by the crisis and our people needed it

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Shared Experiences

On May 5, 2010, President Michelle Bachelet visited Oakland International High School. Headed by principal Carmelita Reyes, this public school serves recent immigrants to the United States. President Bachelet spoke with the senior class, which included students from 15 countries who spoke 11 different languages. Among them were refugees and exiles who found in her a person who had faced — and overcome — many of the same trials that they themselves had experienced. The following is a short excerpt from their conversation.

Ren: Good Morning Mrs. President. I am Ren from Nepal, but I was born in Bhutan. I spent 18 years in Nepal as a refugee because the government of Bhutan forced us to leave our country, and I have a question about your background. I know that you and your mother were also forced to leave your country, and I know that you are able to come [back] — and became president of Chile. How did you feel to come back into your country to live? What was your experience like when you returned?

Bachelet: I came back to my country at a time when the military regime was still there. So it was a very difficult time, because all of us wanted democracy back. We were doing whatever we thought we needed so that democracy would come back. So it was a very scary time, a difficult time, but on the other hand, I felt that I should go back to my country and try to do the best there. And I could do it. There were thousands of Chileans who could not get back into the country. I could, and I did.

And since then, I have been there for so many years. And you know what, in some sense, the idea of being somebody who has been in exile, who has been in prison, whose father died in prison because of the torture, it was also a factor in why people voted for me. Because even though all those things happened, I have never felt that the answer was revenge on the country. I always felt that the answer is to protect, to build democracy, to protect democracy, to understand that diversity is so important. And the important thing is that everyone — no matter the race, country of origin, religion, or ideological point of view — all of us may be different, but we are all important. And we can all be part of a nation, part of society. And for me, this is very deep. So I think people understood that.

There is a concept that is very related, and it is probably something that this school helps you with: it is called resilience. Do you know what the word resilience means? I will explain it in simple words because this comes from physics, but I am not a physics girl, not at all. Materials, when they are pressed with something, with heat, they can return to their original form with some adjustment. So when you are talking about people with resilience, they are people who have had bad times — refugees, immigrants who are taken from their country and have had to adjust to a totally different society — but have been able to stand up and continue walking. They have been able to get all the opportunities that the new place offers and have a good life. And I am sure that you are all very resilient and that will help you a lot in your life. I imagine that this school has helped a lot in that. Not only by learning English, but also by having this place where I imagine you feel at home, you feel good, you feel protected.

Michelle Bachelet with students from Oakland International High School.

Photo courtesy of Oakland International High School.

Photo by Nelson Condeza.

The Canela Wind Park represents Chile's commitment to sustainable development.

the most. The success of Chile's progressive policies have shown that in Latin America, and in the rest of the world, you can be popular without being populist.

Chile will continue to face many challenges in the future, especially now after the earthquake, but it is also very clearly moving forward, together with the rest of Latin America, on the road toward development.

The international crisis was a blow for Latin America. It put the brakes on a long cycle of economic growth that lifted 37 million Latin Americans out of poverty in six years. To make matters worse, it came on top of a food crisis.

However, democratic Latin America handled the downturn better than previous crises and better than other regions and is now starting to recover.

The current challenge is how to transform this recovery into sustained growth and collective prosperity for the citizens of Latin America. To do this, the region must consolidate democracy, increase innovation and productivity and pursue further regional and world integration.

The need for democratic consolidation became clear after the crisis in Honduras. In the past 25 years, there have been close to 20 interruptions of democratically elected governments, a statistic that clearly demonstrates the centrality of this subject for our region.

While it is true that we have democratic governments, democracy is not fully consolidated. According to some scholars, democracy in Latin America is perpetually in crisis, so we need to be permanently alert. More pessimistic observers argue that the democratic spirit has already been injured and a sort of democratic recession is taking place in some countries. As a doctor, I have always believed that we need to take preventative measures and not take democracy's health for granted.

We still have a lot of work to do. The real situation of democracy in Latin America must be monitored, and we must take special care to address three central issues: the consolidation of institutions and the rule of law; the increase in people's empowerment and social and political involvement; and the development of reliable systems for delivering certain public goods and social rights to citizens. As Carlos Fuentes used to say, democracy has to be a synonym for welfare, equality and dignity.

To consolidate democracy in Latin America requires the total acceptance of the democratic rules of the game. But this alone is not enough.

There are new pressures. Free and competitive elections, civil liberties and respect for human rights are, without any doubt, the essence of democracy. Personal guarantees, freely elected authorities, freedom of thought, of religion, of the press and of association must be respected.

Although most Latin American states respect civil liberties and individual guarantees, in many

places people cannot exercise those rights because of social inequality or fear of organized crime.

We must, then, defeat organized crime, corruption, inefficient judicial systems and police brutality. But we must also provide a minimum of public goods, reduce inequality and aggressively tackle poverty.

This last point is especially true in Latin America because during the 1980s and 90s social issues did not receive as much attention as democratization and economic modernization. Even during my presidency, when I attended international meetings regarding the financial crisis or when I read the statements of G-20 countries, social issues were still seen as less of a priority. And I think that is something to worry about because not paying enough attention to social issues produces a lot of suffering and it also erodes the democratic legitimacy that was so difficult to build.

We cannot wait any longer to move toward a society of freedom, equal rights and equal opportunities that offers benefits to all and not just a few privileged minorities.

I believe it is in this area that the success of economic and social policy in countries such as Chile and Brazil will be important.

While a few countries in our region are adopting populist policies, many others have opted for progressive policies aimed at reducing deficits — fiscal, social and democratic — and these policies are working.

Even in countries such as Chile where right or center-right parties have come to power, they have accepted the need to implement or maintain the redistributive policies that we progressives have supported for so long. This is an historic opportunity to establish a new consensus in the region and take another great step towards democratic consolidation. So while it may seem like a victory for progressives, the real winners are the democratic systems themselves.

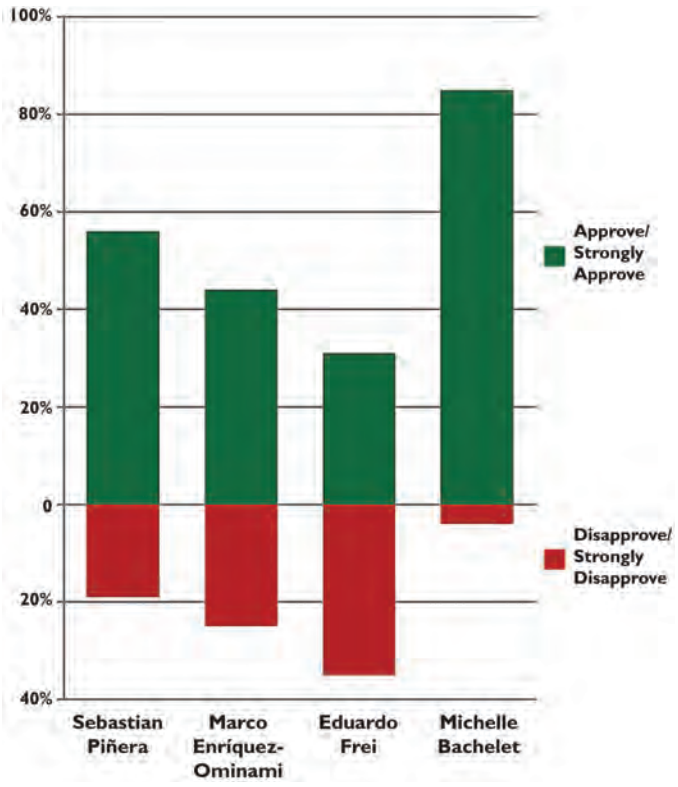
The second challenge is innovation, meaning sustained growth, productivity and competiveness. Prices for the principal Latin American exports have doubled or tripled in recent years. The challenge for Latin American countries is to take advantage of this situation and lay the foundations for stable growth and a less-volatile economy.

During the last few years, until the start of the present crisis, Latin America and the Caribbean achieved a dynamic export market and better access to target markets. However, as far as competitiveness goes, there is still much work to do.

The real challenge in this area lies in improving our productivity levels and diversifying production and export

Michelle Bachelet visits with Dr. Sam Hawgood (center), Dean of the UC San Francisco School of Medicine, faculty and researchers.

Photo by Rhyen Coombs.



Michelle Bachelet's approval ratings dwarf those of the three major candidates from the 2010 election to succeed her.
(Data from Estudio Nacional de Opinión Pública N°62, June-July 2010, Centro de Estudios Publicos, Chile.)

bases by incorporating more value and knowledge into the goods and services being exported.

This requires a change of attitude. It requires leadership from those in power. Fortunately, many of us have learned the lessons of past mistakes. During the last few years, we did not spend in Chile. We invested in our own productivity through programs such as the Bicentennial Fund for Advanced Human Capital, which used the surplus from the high price of copper to help young people get more training at institutions around the world, including Berkeley, of course. We did this because we need people prepared to be on the front line of science and technology.Finally, Latin America must move in the direction of more regional and international integration.

The share of intraregional exports in relation to total exports increased from 14 percent in 1990 to 20 percent in 2008. However, this is still far below the intraregional trade levels among other regional blocs, such as the European Union, the NAFTA countries and the members of ASEAN.

In other words, there is little integration of the region's manufacturing chains. Greater intra-industry trade within the region would lead to greater interdependence, less volatility in inter-regional trade and a strengthening of economic links. This would allow the larger economies to grow while also supporting the smaller ones.

The relatively low level of intraregional trade in Latin America is due in part to high costs which are, in turn, the result of a lack of adequate infrastructure, poor logistics and high administrative costs. In order to bring down the cost of intraregional trade, Chile, Bolivia and Brazil developed a bi-oceanic corridor, 3,000 kilometers long, stretching from Santos in Brazil, through Bolivia, to Iquique and Arica in Chile. By connecting the Atlantic and the Pacific, this route opens up many new possibilities. Finding additional solutions that bring the cost of intraregional trade down would greatly increase Latin America's competitiveness, attract foreign investment and promote the diversification of exports to the rest of the world.

Greater integration would also allow us to take better advantage of the opportunities offered by the Asia Pacific region. We must build commercial alliances, produce synergies and strengthen productive complimentarity in line with a 21st century economy.

But I must insist that all this requires a new approach. We must leave years of political antagonism behind us and work together to face a dynamic new world. More than anything else, we must move forward on concrete issues and not get trapped in rhetoric. Nothing that I have mentioned here is impossible. On the contrary, history is full of realities that were once thought to be impossible.

Three decades ago, it seemed impossible that Third World countries like Chile could catch up to developed countries. Three decades ago, democracy in Latin America was a dream.

Today, we must prove that democracy can integrate liberty, opportunity, welfare and citizenship.

These dimensions must go hand-in-hand with democratic procedures to ensure that people experience a qualitative and quantitative improvement in their daily lives.

This is what we have started to do in Chile. And it remains the focus of our struggle in the years ahead.

We can create a country that is economically successful while at the same time providing better living conditions for its citizens. Chile has done it. That doesn't mean that there aren't enormous challenges that remain to be overcome, but we have to have hope for Latin America because it can be done. Every country must find its own way, but it is what the people of our region deserve. And that's what we try to do in our country, and I will continue to work toward that goal now, not as a president but as a former president.

Michelle Bachelet served as president of Chile from 2006-10. She spoke for CLAS on May 4, 2010.

This article is adapted from her talk.

After her talk, President Bachelet took questions from the audience and the Internet, including the following:

Q: What was your experience running as a woman in 2005, and do you think your gender was ultimately an asset or a detriment?

A: Well, I always thought it was an asset — even though it had its moments. For me, I was a good student. I won all the prizes and awards at my school. No one ever questioned my competence as a child. As a doctor, I led a group of interns, and we were very successful. No one ever asked, "Is she competent because she's a woman?" Suddenly, you are a candidate for president, and you start hearing the most amazing things. And I couldn't believe it because in my whole life, I had never been in this situation. Of course, I had experienced the situation that many women have had, where I presented a good idea to my colleagues, and they were all men at that time, and they looked at me and said, "Okay, let's keep discussing." And then later, one of my friends proposed the same, same, same, same idea, but with a little more eloquence, and everyone said, "Brilliant! You are a genius!"

Well, this sort of thing happens to women, where they have to work two or three times as hard to show that they're good enough. But it's a matter of evolution. Because now in Chile — I am not going to say that nobody thinks that women are incompetent. No, I would say: nobody dares say out loud that women are incompetent. And I think that's important.

…[D]uring the primaries here… if President Lagos was moved by something, and his eyes were watering a little and his throat was choked, everyone said, "Oh, how good to have a president who is sensitive." If it happened to me it was, "Oh, she's hysterical. She can't control her emotions." …And if a male politician was big, they would say he was solid — and I was the fatty. I am not complaining. I am just trying to describe to you how things were at the beginning.

And journalists ask you things that you would never imagine. I remember someone asking me, "Tell me, do you have to take your children to a psychiatrist?" I said to him, "Did you at anytime ask that of President Eduardo Frei? Of President Lagos? Or General Pinochet?" I am telling you these things to point out that every time any of us starts something new we have to confront prejudices. We have to confront resistance to change. And that is normal. I knew that it would happen. Sometimes it wasn't pleasant, I have to tell you. But I knew it came with the suit; it came with the job. And if I could be successful at this, I would be opening doors and windows for so many women — and men, because they would free themselves of prejudice. Many men told me, "Thank you. I have three little girls and do not want them to have a bad time in the future. I want them to have all the possibilities."

Michelle Bachelet responds to the audience during her public talk.

Photo by Jim Block.

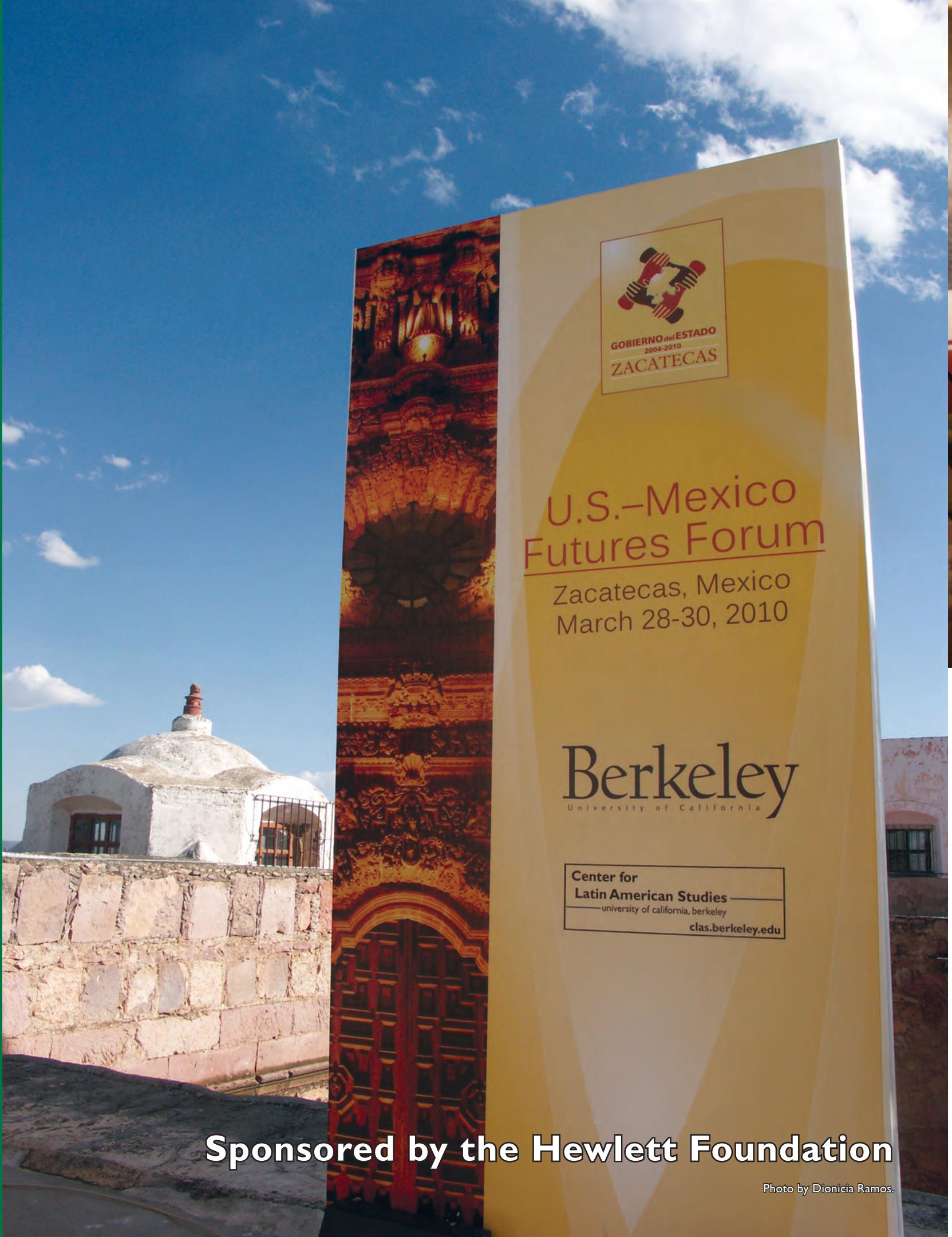


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Photo by Dionicia Ramos.

Governor Amalia García Medina addresses members of the forum.
(Photo courtesy of the Office of the Governor of Zacatecas.)

IMMIGRATION

The Long and Winding Road

by Brian Palmer-Rubin

What issue captures the complex relationship between Mexico and the United States better than immigration? With roughly 10 percent of Mexico's population living north of the Rio Grande, and hundreds more crossing the border daily, it is clear that immigration is among the most important foreign policy issues facing the two countries. Participants in the Immigration Panel of the U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum held on March 29 in Zacatecas, Mexico, reinforced the urgency of the issue. A 90-minute discussion of immigration trends, government programs and proposals for reform on both sides of the border underscored the fact that Mexican immigration to the United States, a binational issue by definition, must be dealt with through binational cooperation.

The three presenters at the Forum rank among the best-qualified observers of the political and economic implications of the seemingly never-ending immigration reform saga: Amalia García, governor of Zacatecas; Maria Echaveste, co-founder of the Nueva Vista Group; and Tamar Jacoby, president of ImmigrationWorks USA. Their remarks opened a discussion among a group of influential actors, including members of Congress, academics, journalists and social movement leaders from both countries.

In debating the appropriate response to the rise in undocumented immigration over the past few decades, it is easy for people in the U.S. to forget the impact that this mass exodus has had on Mexico. As governor of Zacatecas, García was well suited to bring this reality into stark relief. The state, like much of Mexico, is beset with a dearth of

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working age men and women and a pandemic of separated families and the accompanying social problems.

What can be done to improve economic and social conditions in a state where so many have opted to move to the U.S. in search of education and jobs? One strategy implemented by García's administration is a set of programs designed to lure immigrants back to Zacatecas, placing particular emphasis on migrants with training in high-tech industries. The state has also actively worked to support hometown organizations in the United States, which are formed by groups of native Zacatecans who want to give back to their home communities. While the enactment of such programs by the state government provides opportunities at home for some would-be migrants, many Zacatecans hope for a change in U.S. immigration policy that would make it easier to move back and forth across the border, enabling them to work in the U.S. while maintaining regular contact with their families in Mexico.

Following García's remarks, Echaveste and Jacoby presented their views on the prospects for immigration reform in the United States. The two experts' remarks centered around the most prominent proposal for comprehensive immigration reform, a bipartisan framework developed by Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Charles Schumer (D-NY). At the time of the Forum, this project represented the most significant attempt made by legislators to pass comprehensive immigration reform since 2007, when the McCain-Kennedy bill died in Congress after two years of debate and negotiation.

The Graham-Schumer framework, and subsequent versions developed by congressional Democrats, may well prove to be the right proposal at the wrong time. The proposal is made up of three main components that, in principle, enjoy support from both sides of the aisle: tougher border enforcement, a guest-worker program to manage future worker flows and a path to citizenship for undocumented migrants currently living in the United States. Despite support for pieces of the proposed bill, however, chances are slim that it will be taken up before the midterm elections in November.

The delay in Congress is not surprising: immigration reform has long been one of the most divisive issues in the United States. According to Echaveste, debates over immigration stir up voters' deeply held opinions about basic human rights, unemployment, homeland security and American national identity. Negotiating this hornets nest of issues demands a propitious political climate. With tensions running high across the country, the consensus among the participants in the session was that it would be difficult to make the compromises required for such a controversial reform at this time.

In spite of the obstacles, the immigration debate has continued to progress in fits and starts throughout 2010, as lawmakers waver between the potential electoral costs and benefits of supporting reform. Both parties face internal divisions on the issue. For Democrats, tackling immigration reform would help solidify Latino support in the midterm elections. However, it is unclear whether that boost would be enough to offset the votes that they would lose by alienating independents and members of the party base who oppose elements of the bill.

The loudest voices in the Republican Party, on the other hand, most notably those associated with the Tea Party movement, profess staunch opposition to any policy that could possibly be construed as granting "amnesty" to illegal aliens. Capitalizing on voters' concern about unemployment, these leaders also resist moves to increase the presence of immigrant labor through guest-worker programs. For the moment, these factions have drowned out the voices of the party's long-term strategists, who fear permanently antagonizing the growing Latino population, and of its more pragmatic, business-minded wing, which wants to normalize immigration policy to secure a steady flow of cheap labor.

The window of opportunity to address immigration reform is closing quickly. The Democrats are expected to lose seats in both the House of Representatives and in the Senate in the November election. According to Echaveste, even if Democrats retain majorities in both houses, the loss of these seats would still make it more difficult to push through meaningful reform.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, a Democrat from Nevada, is among those facing a serious threat in his bid for reelection. In an attempt to secure the Latino vote, Reid proclaimed his intention to fast-track the reform bill at an April 10 pro-immigration rally in Las Vegas. This announcement drew the ire of Lindsey Graham, one of the few Republicans to have publicly supported immigration reform. Graham complained that moving forward on immigration in 2010 would further strain bipartisan relations, potentially undermining climate change legislation, another bipartisan initiative on which he has collaborated.

Even if comprehensive immigration reform is not passed before the midterm elections, Democrats such as Reid are betting that by forcing their Republican colleagues to take a stand against the initiative, they will win the public opinion battle. It remains to be seen whether this gamble will pay off. The late-April passage of a law in Arizona that allows police to question and detain any person suspected of being in the country illegally has laid bare the nation's

Photo by Loomis Dean/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images.

Illegal immigrants being deported, 1951.

deep divisions on immigration. While some have called for a boycott of Arizona to protest the new law, a June 1 poll by Quinnipiac University found that 51 percent of Americans support it, while 31 percent oppose. Even among the Latino community, the law has a surprisingly high level of support (37 percent), with 52 percent opposing.

Politicians seeking to win Republican primary elections have responded to public opinion by eagerly declaring that, if elected, they would be tough on immigration. For example, Steve Poizner posed an unexpectedly strong threat to Meg Whitman, the eventual Republican nominee for the governorship of California, by claiming that he and not Whitman had supported the Arizona law immediately upon its adoption. Stuart Stevens, Poizner's chief campaign consultant told The New York Times that immigration "is the only issue." Such a strict stance is risky, especially in a state like California where one in six voters in the general election are expected to be Hispanic.

Given this volatile political climate, the "piecemeal" approach may represent the most realistic path for new legislation in the near term. Echaveste described two pieces of the comprehensive reform package that could be addressed on their own and would have a greater chance of achieving passage in 2010: the Agricultural Jobs Opportunities, Benefits and Security Act (known as AgJobs), which would provide a legal funnel of foreign agricultural workers to the United States, and the Development, Relief and Education of Alien Minors Act (the Dream Act), which would grant permanent residency to certain undocumented minors, allowing them to attend universities in the U.S. while paying in-state tuition rates. According to Echaveste, these bills would encounter less resistance than comprehensive immigration reform, yet may build momentum for tackling the more contentious issues after the midterm elections.

Such an approach would be insufficiently ambitious to satisfy the pro-immigration lobby, a group with which Echaveste is intimately familiar, owing to her position as co-founder of the Nueva Vista Group, an advocacy organization that has been a major player in the immigration policy debate. While many pro-immigrant organizations are pushing for comprehensive reform with a path to citizenship, Echaveste argued that the piecemeal approach would be the most feasible option for achieving any meaningful reform this year. A failed attempt at comprehensive immigration reform in 2010, she reasoned, could push the issue off the congressional docket for several years, as occurred with the McCain-Kennedy bill.

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Photo by Carrie Sloan.

Demonstrators protest Arizona's Senate Bill 1070 in a May Day march in Chicago.

Jacoby shared Echaveste's skepticism about the prospects for comprehensive immigration reform in 2010. Even the piecemeal approach would represent an uphill battle in the current political climate, maintained Jacoby, who has written extensively on immigration in a wide range of media and advocated for reform as president of ImmigrationWorks USA, a Washington, D.C.-based confederation of pro-immigration business coalitions. Given this panorama, Jacoby argued that the Graham-Schumer framework is the country's best shot at comprehensive reform in the near future and stated that Schumer had "won her over" with his determination to get this reform passed.

While opposing the push for reform in 2010 on pragmatic grounds, Jacoby remained optimistic about the prospects for the Graham-Schumer framework. In her view, the proposal's supporters have learned important lessons from the failings of McCain-Kennedy. The framework takes as its baseline the three pillars of the McCain-Kennedy proposal, but it is presented more as a "law-and-order" initiative, allowing Republican legislators to support it without alienating constituents nervous about the social and economic impact of unfettered illegal immigration.

The differences between McCain-Kennedy and Graham-Schumer are not simply a matter of spin, however. In terms of security, the new framework promises to be tougher than McCain-Kennedy, with increases in funding for the border patrol and the adoption of "biometric" identification cards for migrants that would facilitate the detection of unlawful immigrants during the hiring process. Furthermore, the proposed legislation would establish guidelines to mete out punishments to the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States. These punishments would not be severe, probably being limited to fines or community service, said Jacoby. Nonetheless, such signals that the government is willing to "get tough" on immigration could help garner bipartisan support for reform in a country where many voters feel threatened by immigration.

Another much-discussed element of immigration reform is the proposal to increase legal immigration in order to satisfy the demand for immigrant labor in the United States. Jacoby attested that key figures in the debate tend to agree more than disagree on this issue. Both business organizations, such as the National Chamber of Commerce, and labor confederations, such as the AFL-CIO, support an increase in the number of legal migrants.

Where business and labor organizations disagree is over whether immigration reform should provide permanent or temporary residency for migrant workers. According to

Jacoby, business groups tend to favor the idea of temporary workers in order to maximize labor market flexibility, whereas labor organizations push for a permanent worker program that would make migrants less vulnerable to exploitation by their employers.

Having acknowledged these sticking points, Jacoby expressed optimism about the prospects for compromise once a bill is on the table: "Business and labor make deals all the time in America over stuff bigger than this," she said.

Rafael Fernández de Castro, Adviser to Mexican President Felipe Calderón on International Affairs, asked Jacoby what she thought the Mexican government could do to advance immigration reform. Jacoby responded that Mexican politicians should cast themselves in a partnership role with the United States rather than making demands on the U.S. government. The prospects for immigration reform would be improved, she said, if politicians from both countries avoided the finger pointing that has led to failings in binational anti-narcotics efforts.

Multiple lawmakers present expressed the opinion that decision makers in Washington shouldn't let the bitter partisan climate prevent them from moving forward on this urgent policy issue. "If not now, when? If not us, who?" asked California State Senator Gilbert Cedillo rhetorically.

Congressman Mike Honda (D-Calif.) upped the ante: "Even if this means that Obama will be a one-term president, I'll back him on it."

Such commitment to improving the conditions faced by immigrants was well received by the Mexican opinion leaders present at the session. What remains to be seen is whether the proponents of comprehensive immigration reform can win the public opinion battle in the United States.

The Immigration Panel was part of the U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum held in Zacatecas, Mexico, March 28-30, 2010. The presenters on the panel included Amalia García, Governor of Zacatecas; Maria Echaveste, co-founder of the Nueva Vista Group and lecturer at Berkeley Law; and Tamar Jacoby, president and CEO of ImmigrationWorks USA.

Brian Palmer-Rubin is a Ph.D. student in the Charles and Louise Travers Department of Political Science at UC Berkeley.

The bodies of 72 migrants allegedly killed by the Zetas drug gang were found in August 2010 in San Fernando, Tamaulipas.

Photo from the Associated Press/El Universal.

Photo by Dionicia Ramos.

Harley Shaiken, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Gil Cedillo speak with locals in the Jerez plaza.

U.S.–MEXICO FUTURES FORUM

Immigration Viewed From the Other Side

by Jude Joffe-Block

Over the past nine years, Armando Fernández has helped raise tens of thousands of dollars for public works projects in his hometown of San Juan del Centro in the central Mexican state of Zacatecas. But 35-year-old Fernández lives in Corona, California, and left Mexico at the age of 13. He and other migrants from San Juan del Centro pool their earnings in the U.S. to build public works projects back home. They are organized as a hometown association, a club of migrants dedicated to working together to improve their native communities.

"I've always been attached to my town," Fernández explained at the U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum in Zacatecas. "I call it my town because I was born here." Fernández's hometown association began by making improvements to the elementary school he once attended. "I believe if we support education, any country will develop into a great nation," he said. "This is why we are we are trying to improve quality of life, so they can have a better future."

For many Mexicans, the desire for immigration reform in the U.S. is just as much about ensuring a better future for those who remain in Mexico as it is about gaining rights for migrants abroad. Reforms that would make it easier for Mexicans to work in the United States legally could actually help those workers support their home communities in Mexico. Fernández, a civil engineer, now holds dual American and Mexican citizenship, which allows him to travel freely between his two countries and to help bring prosperity to both his hometowns. In fact, he is the fourth generation in his family to lead a binational life. His great-grandparents worked in Arizona early in

the century when many Zacatecans were recruited for mining and agriculture jobs. His grandfather was born in the United States, but later returned with his parents to Zacatecas after the Mexican Revolution. Fernandez's father then headed north as one of the 4 million Mexicans who worked on American farms as part of the *bracero* guest worker program that ran from 1942 to 1964. But tighter enforcement at the border means that undocumented immigrants working in El Norte today are increasingly less likely to go home since they know it could be too risky or expensive to ever make it back to the United States.

Zacatecas, which is among the Mexican states with the highest proportion of residents living abroad, is emblematic of the challenges and opportunities that migration to the United States poses for communities on the southern side of the border. There are an estimated 600,000 natives of Zacatecas currently living in the U.S., a figure which is equal to 40 percent of the 1.5 million who still live in the state. This dramatic outflow of people has forced both the government and migrants abroad to develop innovative programs in the hopes of building a productive future for the state.

Fernández's hometown of San Juan del Centro is located in the mostly rural municipality of Jerez, where the morning session of the U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum was held on March 29, 2010. The municipality's 55,000 residents have had ties to the United States for the past century, a fact which became immediately evident after just a few minutes in the leafy central plaza in the town of Jerez, the municipal seat. An older man operating a shoeshine stand told participants of his son who disappeared while crossing the desert to work in the U.S. A young man strolling with friends turned out to be a U.S. citizen visiting his extended relatives while on spring break from a California college.

The state government of Zacatecas is at the forefront of public policy intended to turn migration into an advantage rather than a catastrophe for the state. Zacatecas has pioneered three innovative strategies to maintain unity and progress in the face of mass migration, all of which are on display in Jerez: active hometown associations in the U.S.; government programs that encourage migrants to remain connected to the state and even to return; and a political voice for migrants.

In recent years, the state has received roughly $480 million annually in remittances. In addition to sending money back to individual families, Zacatecans have trail-blazed initiatives to donate to their towns. Zacatecan migrants first started organizing themselves in hometown associations in Southern California in the 1970s. By the 1980s, the clubs began to coordinate with state and municipal authorities to support development projects back home. The number of such associations throughout the United States is estimated to be in the hundreds, and they are widely considered to be a model for how transnational communities can achieve progress.

The state of Zacatecas instituted a matching program to encourage these communal remittances. The program has been adopted by the federal government and is called Tres por Uno (Three for One). If a project passes a feasibility study, for each dollar that migrants give, the municipal, state and federal governments will match that dollar so that the total donation quadruples in value.

According to Zacatecas Governor Amalia García, the Three for One program has supported more than 1,000 projects in the state. Classrooms, playgrounds and roads have been built with the funds. In the town of Jerez, the program helped support a project to build a new campus of the state university. Migrants also donate money for scholarships so that young people can continue studying rather than crossing the border for work. "Even with the economic crisis, they contribute," said García. "They do it for the love of their country."

García has also tried to attract migrants back to the state to live. Her administration has instituted a program called Para los que Regresen (For Those Who Come Back). This program offers scholarships to young migrants who return to Zacatecas to study.

Ideally, the governor said, returning migrants could use experience gained abroad to help build industries that would in turn employ other Zacatecans so they would not have seek work in the United States. Migrants who have learned English or acquired skills in the culinary or hospitality industries have the potential to improve tourism ventures in Zacatecas. Others might return with knowledge that could help advance new high-tech industries in areas such as solar technology or software, García said.

Given the centrality of migration to the economic and family life of state residents, Zacatecas also has pioneered avenues toward incorporating migrants into civic life. In 2000, a Zacatecan entrepreneur living in Winters, California, ran for mayor in the town of Jerez, which sparked a national debate and legal fight about the place of migrants in Mexican politics. Ultimately, in Zacatecas, it became possible for migrant candidates to run for political office. Two seats are now reserved for migrants in the state assembly.

One of the current migrant assembly-members, Sebastián Martínez, was president of a hometown association in Fort Worth, Texas, where he lived for 20 years before assuming political office in Mexico. He said he has created opportunities for Zacatecan youth, such as baseball, music and *ballet folklórico* programs, with the goal of enriching civil society and making it easier for Zacatecans to choose to stay in their communities. "I believe there are

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opportunities in this county," he said of his native Mexico. "They just have to be made."

While García, Fernández and Martínez all work to improve life in Zacatecas, they each asserted that comprehensive immigration reform in the U.S. was badly needed for Zacatecans on both sides of the border.

"We all have relatives in the United States — all of us," said García, whose uncles picked citrus in California. "For us, it is part of our life." But she says increased border security has made it more difficult for Zacatecans to come and go as they did in years past.

The American debate over immigration does not usually recognize that some Mexican families have been crossing the border periodically to work for more than a century, said Harley Shaiken. "That was very enriching, in cultural and in economic terms, to all concerned," he said.

Yet for some Mexican migrants to the United States, their dreams go beyond the right to legally cross the border and work in the U.S. A migrant, who gave his name only as Enrique, explained that he had returned home to Jerez after he couldn't find work as an undocumented immigrant in the United States. When Maria Echaveste of the Berkeley Law School asked him what kind of immigration reform he would most like to see the American Congress enact — a path to citizenship, a temporary guest worker program or a permanent guest worker program without the option of citizenship — Enrique's choice was clear. "I would like people to be legalized the way they were legalized back in '86," Enrique said, referring to the last amnesty passed under President Ronald Reagan. "That if you have a good record, if you haven't committed felonies, that you have a chance to become a citizen."

A visit to Jerez was part of the U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum held in Zacatecas, Mexico, March 28-30, 2010. Forum participants heard from Amalia García, Governor of Zacatecas; Sebastián Martínez, Migrant Representative to the State Assembly; Fernando Robledo, State Migration Office; Alma Ávila, Municipal President of Jerez; Armando Fernández, San Juan del Centro Hometown Association; and Enrique, a Jerez resident and returned migrant who declined to share his last name.

Jude Joffe-Block is a graduate of the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism.

A group of Mexican cowboys, or *charros,* parades through the streets of Jerez.

Photo courtesy of the Zacatecas Ministry of Tourism

Photo by Melanie Velez.

Entering Arizona.

U.S.–MEXICO FUTURES FORUM

We're All Arizonans Now — The Fallout of SB 1070

by Tamar Jacoby

What a difference a few months make. As recently as March 2010, Arizona was still just a state — not yet shorthand for America's ever-widening divide over illegal immigration.

The passage of Arizona SB 1070 has transformed the national immigration debate, fueling passion and intensity and hardening arguments to the point that there's almost no point in talking any more — people on both sides are that entrenched.

In a radical departure from settled law, SB 1070 makes illegal immigration a state crime in Arizona — until now, it has been entirely a federal matter. Even more controversially, the measure authorizes and in some cases requires local police to detain people they think may be unauthorized. A devilishly ingenious, and disingenuous, piece of lawyering, the legislation is designed to appear reasonable and pass the test of constitutionality, but it gives police far-reaching power to harass unlawful immigrants with the goal of driving them out of the U.S. — a strategy the law's framers call "attrition through enforcement."

Everyone in America has an opinion about the measure and — due in part to this sly crafting — it has become a political Rorschach test.

President Barack Obama, President Felipe Calderón of Mexico, The New York Times, the Catholic Church, the AFL-CIO and a Who's Who of Latino pop stars, among others, have denounced the legislation. More than 15 American cities have passed boycott measures

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Photo by Bill Pugliano/Getty Images.

Protestors urge a boycott of Arizona at an immigration rally in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

forbidding their employees to travel to Arizona. Dozens of conferences and conventions scheduled to take place there have been cancelled. The national immigrants-rights movement — one of the fastest growing and most influential political forces to emerge in the U.S. in recent years — is now focused all but exclusively on combating the new law. And tens of thousands of people across the country have participated in demonstrations pillorying it as a racially motivated assault on immigrants and an invitation to ethnic profiling. In some circles, the very word Arizona has become synonymous with racism — on a par with and compared to outrages committed in Nazi Germany.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the divide, poll after poll shows that some 60 percent of Americans support SB 1070. What exactly do they understand about the measure, and why do they endorse it? It's hard to say — none of the polling has probed very deeply. Some supporters talk about stemming border violence and controlling crime — particularly the brazen, mob-style crime committed by international smuggling cartels. Others seem more bothered by the simple illegality of illegal immigration. Few surveys, now or in the past, show voters to be particularly angry at unlawful immigrants or eager to punish them. But many are very angry at the dysfunctional immigration system — and at a political class that doesn't seem bothered by millions of people making a mockery of the law.

What percentage of those who tell pollsters they support SB 1070 grasp that it will encourage profiling or the harassment of otherwise law-abiding illegal immigrants? Is that what they are endorsing? Or is their support merely an inchoate cry for government — any level of government — to get control of who is entering the country? According to the Rasmussen Report, a polling operation, roughly half of those who endorse the Arizona law are at least "somewhat concerned" about potential "civil rights violations." But nuanced or not, the measure's backers too have attracted some strident spokespeople. Just listen to Sarah Palin, who defends SB 1070 as "noble and just" and urges followers to defy the "boycott crowd."

Beneath the bitter politics, there's a serious debate — actually several of them. How threatening is the crime in Arizona? (According to a recent FBI report, Phoenix is one of the four safest cities in America — and in Arizona, as across the U.S., the immigrant influx has corresponded with a decline in crime.) Is drug violence from Mexico spilling north across the border? (Not yet, or not significantly, but that could happen at any moment, and drug cartels increasingly dominate the smuggling of illegal immigrants.) Is SB 1070 unconstitutional? (The five legal challenges heading for federal

court will eventually decide that.) Just how serious an offense is illegal immigration, and how should America respond to people who, though guilty of entering the country unlawfully, have done nothing else wrong? These are all important questions.

But quite apart from any substantive issues and whatever its consequences in Arizona, arguably the most devastating effect of SB 1070 is political — the way it's poisoning the American immigration debate.

Not just immigrants-rights advocates but well-meaning liberals across the country stand increasingly at odds on this issue with 60 percent of the American public. Where one side sees law enforcement and personal security, the other sees racism. The very term enforcement has become a dirty word to many immigrants-rights activists. And to the 60 percent who back the measure, reform advocates look increasingly suspect — unwilling to admit an obvious truth (that illegal immigrants have broken the law) and far too ready to play the race card against those with legitimate concerns. Increasingly, for both sides, immigration is becoming an issue of good versus evil. And in that kind of moralistic standoff, there is no middle ground — no room for politics or compromise.

It's a disastrous course — and one all too familiar in American politics. Consider the stalemate of all stalemates: abortion. On immigration as on abortion, increasingly the two sides speak different languages. Pro-life vs. pro-choice. Pro-enforcement vs. pro-reform. Each camp reads what it wants into its signature term, but the other camp reads something entirely different. Each side sees the other as morally reprehensible. Each is sure it's right. We as a nation can't resolve the problem, but we can't let go of it either — and it soon poisons other issues, making it hard to do even basic things, like confirm judges.

Photo by John Moore/Getty Images.

A supporter of SB 1070 outside the Arizona state capitol building, July 2010.

Can we come back from this brink? It's far from clear. Other recent public opinion research on immigration, confirming dozens of polls conducted over the past five years, suggests that the overwhelming majority of Americans views the issue through a pragmatic lens. Voters are troubled by endemic illegal immigration and the way it is eroding the rule of law. They support much tougher enforcement, both on the border and in the workplace. But large majorities also grasp that millions of workers and their families cannot realistically be deported, and voters are impatient for the government to find a solution to the problem. This common-sense pragmatism is the polar opposite of the holier-than-thou moralism of the Arizona debate — and it could, potentially, serve as a counterweight. But as history shows, pragmatism and moderation rarely trump emotion in politics. Once a wedge issue, in most cases, always a wedge issue — it's hard to put that toothpaste back in the tube.

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The best thing that could happen now: the battle could subside, as other, more pressing issues — jobs, the economy, the size and reach of government — come to the fore during the autumn campaign season. And after a lull — who knows how long — a more reasoned policy debate might resume. The problem: even then, the lines of the debate may be redrawn — radically redrawn — as a result of Arizona. In fact, those lines are already shifting, and not for the good.

Elected officials from Florida to California have raced to adopt a new mantra: border security. Just weeks after SB 1070 became law, former immigration reform champion Sen. John McCain, now fending off a primary challenge from the right, aired a campaign ad that showed him walking the border with a tough-talking sheriff and promising to "complete the danged fence" — the same border fence he had mocked bitterly just three years before. President Obama quickly saw the way the tide was turning and ran to get ahead of it, requesting 1,200 National Guard troops for the border. Then in May, instead of starting work on comprehensive reform, the Senate debated three amendments to a must-pass spending bill that would have quintupled resources and manpower on the border. None of the three drew the necessary 60 votes, but all came close, with support from moderate Democrats as well as Republicans.

At the same time, even as lawmakers embrace enforcement, reform advocates are increasingly denouncing it. Their arguments: it's expensive, it's unnecessary, it's futile, it hasn't worked in the past, it won't solve the problem — to increase enforcement spending now, this mantra goes, is "throwing good money after bad." These aren't new claims: the reform movement has never been enthusiastic about tough immigration enforcement. But now, for many, it seems as if every effort to make the law stick is on a par with Arizona's overwrought policing. And right or wrong, the reformers' qualms make them a perfect foil for enforcement hawks in Congress and the media.

This isn't a new turn of events — the immigration debate has gone through phases like this in the past, often just before national elections. But the rhetoric is more strident this time around — and the likely consequences for immigration reform are more alarming.

Because the truth is that better, more effective enforcement will be a critical piece of any immigration overhaul. And there can be no hope politically of passing a reform package without a national consensus on enforcement, both on the border and in the workplace.

Richard Trumka, president of the AFL-CIO, speaks at an anti-SB 1070 rally.

Photo by Natalia Jaramillo.

Photo by Mark Wilson/Getty Images.

Senator John McCain and Arizona sheriffs Paul Babeu and Larry Dever hold a news conference on the border situation in Arizona.

The immigrants-rights advocates aren't wrong: enforcement alone is not the answer on immigration. The system is broken — thoroughly and fundamentally broken. The enforcement mechanisms on the books are weak and outmoded. The country's annual admissions quotas are dangerously out of sync with its economic interests. There aren't enough visas for highly skilled workers — the talent we need to remain globally competitive. And there is virtually no way for the foreign labor force that sustains the bottom of the economy — at farms, seasonal resorts, restaurant kitchens and construction sites — to enter the country legally. Decades of unrealistically low legal quotas combined with lax enforcement have produced a vast illegal population living on the margins of society. And there's enough snarled red tape gumming up the system to confound Kafka himself — four- to five- to 22-year waits (depending on which line you're waiting in), a green card backlog of 4.5 million (those are people authorized to enter the U.S. but not yet admitted) and unwieldy, unnecessary bureaucracy of every imaginable kind at every point.

Just cracking down harder on a system like this will not solve the problem. And yes, just talking tough is all too often — particularly for Republicans — a way of avoiding the harder conversation about what change is needed. Still, we cannot hope to fix immigration without better, more competent, more convincing enforcement. And in the context of a system that works, enforcement will be a boon to everyone, newcomers and native-born alike, with an interest in a fair and workable, nondiscriminatory immigration process.

Perhaps the best analogy is highway patrol — imagine a 25 mile per hour speed limit on an interstate highway. With a limit this unrealistically low, almost everyone on the road will find themselves breaking the law. The limit will be all but unenforceable, and any effort to make it stick will fall somewhere between annoying and draconian. The public would soon be up in arms — or more likely at each others throats — with at least some people defending the limit, unreasonable as it was, simply because it was law. And soon enough, for many, enforcement would become a dirty word. But ultimately the problem is not enforcement — the problem is the bad law.

The argument for enhanced enforcement starts with politics — both the politics of tackling the issue and the politics of passing an overhaul. The Obama administration, like the Bush administration before it, maintains — and I believe rightly so — that restoring the government's credibility on enforcement is necessary to pave the way for public acceptance of reform. As is, after years of inept and half-hearted enforcement, voters don't trust the government

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Photo by Lenny Ignelzi/Associated Press.

Immigration agents detain employees of San Diego's French Gourmet Restaurant in a raid that led to felony indictments against the restaurant's owner and manager.

to handle immigration — and, the thinking goes, Washington needs to restore that trust before Americans will support an overhaul. Immigrants'-rights advocates increasingly question this logic. Even those who swallowed hard and accepted it two or three years ago are beginning to ask when the investment will pay off — after all, they argue, the crackdown drags on, and grows harsher, with scant change of heart among the public. The advocates have a fair question. But in truth, although illegal border crossings are down, that's due in part to the slow economy — we don't need as many immigrant workers in a downturn. And it's hard to say with a straight face that U.S. immigration law is being effectively enforced — particularly in the workplace.

Enhanced enforcement will be even more of a political necessity once a bill is introduced, whenever that happens. Tough, effective enforcement provisions are the only way to attract Republican support. They are also essential to provide cover for skittish centrist Democrats. They're the key to the grand bargain it's going to take to pass any bill: without meaningful enforcement on the border and in the workplace, there is simply no chance that enough lawmakers in either party will vote for legalizing 11 million unlawful immigrants. The math is inescapable and beyond any doubt — this is the only path to a majority in either the House or the Senate.

But beyond politics, effective workplace enforcement is also good immigration policy — an indispensable piece of any serious overhaul.

What, after all, is the goal of comprehensive immigration reform? Yes, it's about providing a realistic, humane answer for the unlawful immigrants already living and working in the United States. That's the provision that gets the most attention and will once again, when the debate resumes, generate the most controversy. But a second, arguably even more important, goal is creating a system that works for the future: that allows the immigrants we decide we need and want in America to enter in a safe, controlled, legal fashion. This means streamlining procedures, eliminating bureaucracy and reducing waits and backlogs. It also means devising a better, more flexible system for deciding how many immigrants we want and need — for economic and other reasons. And once we have more flexible, realistic limits in place — the immigration equivalent of a 65 to 75 mile per hour interstate speed limit — enforcing those rules effectively will benefit everyone involved.

However the immigration system affects you, your calculus will look different in a post-reform world. Immigrant workers who choose to come the legal way — assuming the overhaul creates a workable, legal pipeline — won't want to be undermined by other people coming illegally. Employers who follow the rules and hire authorized workers won't want to be undercut by competitors hiring unlawful ones. Border agents' focus will shift from chasing busboys and farmhands to stopping drug smugglers and potential terrorists. And there will be no debate: the public will want Customs and Border Patrol to have the resources they need. Enforcement hawks and doves alike will endorse a system that eliminates fraud and fights identity theft, that steers immigrants toward safe, legal ways to enter the U.S. and, by giving legal immigrants the means to prove they are who they say they are, combats discrimination.

Under the existing, unrealistic system, enforcement can feel like an imposition and worse — separating children from parents, putting productive American employers out of business, uprooting the lives of otherwise law-abiding people who have the bad luck to be stopped for traffic violations. But once we fix what's broken — if and when Congress rises to the challenge of fixing it — effective enforcement will be essential to maintaining the integrity of the system.

Another way of putting this: ultimately, the purpose of reform is to restore public confidence — confidence in the nuts and bolts of the law but also in the historic ideal of America as a nation of immigrants. Without that confidence, there's nothing but trouble ahead — and the only way to restore confidence is with effective enforcement. No, enforcement alone won't solve the problem. But without enforcement, we are nowhere. And a partisan, moralistic debate demonizing enforcement can only set us back, making it much harder to take the steps we as a nation need to take.

In the end, the lesson of Arizona is simple — and circular.

That the system is broken is well understood and has been for a long time now by people across the political spectrum. The federal government should have stepped in years ago. The outlines of the solution are clear enough, and Congress has had ample opportunities to enact something. If it had — in 2006 or 2007 — Arizona never would have happened. The passage of SB 1070 is a direct consequence of Washington's failure to act. But — and here's where things get circular — the Arizona legislation and the all-or-nothing, good-vs.-evil debate it has spawned are going to make it much harder for Congress to do what it needs to do. Arizona demonstrates the costs of inaction. It proves beyond a doubt that the status quo is unsustainable. But it is almost surely going to prolong that status quo — perhaps for a long time to come.

Tamar Jacoby is president of ImmigrationWorks USA, a national federation of small business owners advocating immigration reform.

Tamar Jacoby speaks at the U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum.

Photo by Dionicia Ramos.

MEXICO'S CENTENNIALS

Cárdenas: Making and Teaching History

by Jude Joffe-Block

Mexico is facing troubling times. The nation's GDP dropped 6.8 percent in 2009. A challenging war on drug trafficking has sparked a new era of violence and claimed more than 22,000 lives since 2006. Nearly half the country lives in poverty. Is this the Mexico that Francisco Madero and Emiliano Zapata, the protagonists of the Mexican Revolution, envisioned?

Exactly 100 years ago, revolutionaries disenchanted with the status quo overthrew the dictator Porfirio Díaz and struggled to build a new government. In his talk for the Center for Latin American Studies, Mexican political leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas described their mobilization as "a social reaction against a change-resistant system… Nothing seemed to move in Mexico, apparently everything remained immobile, people were tired, disenchanted, irritated."

A vision of democracy, equality, justice, education and progress kindled the various movements that broke out in 1910. While those revolutionary ideals helped shape the 1917 Constitution, the aspirations of the revolution's protagonists were never fully attained, said Cárdenas, who has been described by some as "the father of the Mexican left." Many of the revolutionary era goals remain unfulfilled a century later, and Cárdenas argued that Mexico can and should begin a renewed fight to fulfill them.

Harley Shaiken, Chair of Berkeley's Center for Latin American Studies introduced Cárdenas to the audience of over 400 by stating that when it came to selecting a speaker to discuss the legacy of the Mexican Revolution, he could think of no one "more appropriate, more fitting" than Cárdenas.

Indeed, Cárdenas, who was born in 1934, just months before his father was elected president of Mexico, is personally linked to some of the most critical moments and developments in modern Mexican history.

His father's presidency is considered by many analysts to have been the era in which the greatest number of revolutionary promises were fulfilled. Land redistribution — a chief priority of Emiliano Zapata's revolutionary faction — more than doubled under the Lázaro Cárdenas administration.

President Cárdenas was also responsible for the expropriation of foreign-owned oil companies and the nationalization of the oil industry in 1938, a move the younger Cárdenas called "the most important feat of revolutionary policy." Cárdenas peppered his lecture with insights about his father's decision to take that historic step and shared the reflections that his father recorded in his personal diary at the time.

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas followed his father into politics, becoming a senator and later a governor of the state of Michoacán. He held these posts as a member of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI), a later incarnation of the party his father founded, which governed Mexico without interruption for over 71 years. But in the 1980s, Cárdenas was among a faction of politicians who began to clash with the PRI.

In his lecture, Cárdenas said that if one were to fast-forward from the start of his father's administration in 1934 to the year 1982, it would mean transitioning from a system committed to the revolution's ideals to one that "consistently and consciously" took action against revolutionary works, legislation and institutions.

Disillusioned, Cárdenas advocated for a more democratic political process. In 1987, he was among a group of PRI politicians who left the party to form the National Democratic Front, a precursor to the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Party of the Democratic Revolution, PRD), which is the country's largest center-left party today. He became the new party's presidential nominee in 1988 but lost to the PRI candidate, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, in what is widely recognized to be among the most fraudulent elections in Mexican history. As a three-time presidential candidate and mayor of Mexico City under the PRD banner, Cárdenas' efforts helped pave the way for major electoral reforms that allowed opposition parties to gain ground, mandated fairer elections and ultimately ended the PRI's single-party rule.

While Mexican elections did become significantly more democratic by the late 1990s, Cárdenas maintained that true democracy has yet to be achieved. "What the Mexican people have been fighting for is not only to assure that the vote of every citizen is fully respected," he said. "Democracy is that and much more — it is equality, and Mexican society is one of the most unequal in the world." Democracy also entails such principles as social welfare, economic growth, job opportunities and access to knowledge, he added, all areas where Mexico is lacking.

Photo by Beth Perry.

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (center) with (from left) José Narro Robles, Rector of UNAM; Enrique del Val; Jose Luis Talancón; and Harley Shaiken.

Acknowledging that the global economic crisis is partially responsible for Mexico's ills, Cárdenas still insisted that three decades of misguided public policies are the root cause of the country's current conditions.

In response to a question from the audience about what public policies should be a priority for Mexican leaders in 2010, Cárdenas rattled off a checklist of needed reforms.

First on the list was reducing inequality, a goal he said could be advanced by making social security universal.

Another priority would be to renegotiate the provisions of the North American Free Trade Agreement and to enact other agricultural reforms that would make it easier for rural families to support themselves by farming.

A third would be to improve U.S.–Mexico relations, including negotiating a better border policy, increasing opportunities at home so Mexicans are not forced to migrate and encouraging the U.S. to curb the demand for drugs as part of its shared responsibility for combating drug trafficking.

In a radio interview for the San Francisco public radio show, "Forum," on the day of his lecture, Cárdenas explained that the modern movement he envisions would have some key differences from the upheaval that occurred in 1910. "We are not talking of a violent revolution," he told the show's host, Michael Krasny. "We have to strengthen the progressive sectors in Mexico. We have to get much more organized; we have to get people to participate more actively in politics."

Cárdenas' semester at Berkeley is the culmination of many years of collaboration with the Center for Latin American Studies. A participant in the U.S.–Mexico Future's Forum since 2006, he was a visiting professor at Berkeley for the 2010 spring semester, teaching a course on the legacy and promise of the revolution. He also taught a month-long course on Mexico's democratic transition at UC Berkeley in 2006. "It is very interesting to be with young people and see what they are thinking about," he said in an interview, noting that being a professor entails "a different kind of pressure" from other jobs he has held.

Cuauhtémoc Cardenas is one of the founders of the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) and served as mayor of Mexico City from 1997-99. He gave a talk titled, "The Promise and Legacy of the Mexican Revolution," at UC Berkeley on Feb 3, 2010.

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MEXICO'S CENTENNIALS

The Promise and Legacy of the Mexican Revolution

by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas spoke for CLAS on February 3, 2010. This article is adapted from his talk.

Today I will discuss why the Mexican Revolution broke out, the key decisions that shaped the country's revolutionary transformation, its setbacks and why I think that the ideals and unattained goals of the Mexican Revolution are still valid for Mexicans seeking to build a democratic and sovereign nation and an egalitarian and progressive society.

The social and political movement known as the Mexican Revolution exploded as a reaction against the long-lasting dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, an authoritarian regime centered on one man and one man's decisions. It was a social reaction against a change-resistant system. Nothing seemed to move in Mexico. People were tired, disenchanted and irritated because there were no opportunities but those offered by the dictator.

Porfirio Díaz, a hero in the wars against the French Intervention and Maximilian of the Habsburg Empire, ran twice as a presidential candidate and lost. He took up arms against the outcomes of those elections, was defeated, arrested and amnestied. He persisted in rebellion, eventually ousting the president and taking office himself.

His slogan during the uprisings was "No Reelection," and at first, Díaz seemed to abide by this promise, leaving office in 1880 at the end of his four-year term. A politician close to him, a general who had also fought against the Intervention and Maximilian, was elected (or chosen) to succeed Díaz. However, Díaz ran in the next election, arguing that he was the only one who could successfully run Mexico. He won, and the Constitution was reformed in 1887, allowing the president to be reelected once. Díaz was then elected for the next term, 1888-92.

Another constitutional reform soon took place, removing the limits on reelection. Díaz was elected president in 1896, 1900 and 1904, this time to serve a six-year term. Then, in 1908, Díaz made a significant mistake: he gave an interview to an American journalist, James Creelman — which was published in both Mexico and the United States — in which he declared not only that Mexico was mature enough for democracy and that democratic practices should revive, but also that he would not run for office in 1910 and would look favorably upon the emergence of an opposition party.

Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Porfirio Díaz poses in full dress uniform, August 13, 1910.

No one really believed he wouldn't run, but many thought there would be an open, democratic race for the vice-presidency. By 1910, Díaz would be 80. His term would end in 1916, so it was thought that whoever was elected vice-president would succeed Díaz in office.

The Creelman interview provided the spark that led to the emergence of an anti-reelection movement. Francisco I. Madero, a member of a well-to-do family with a position in local politics in the state of Coahuila,

actively participated in the anti-reelection movement. He wrote *The Presidential Succession of 1910*, a book in which he severely criticized the Díaz administration and proposed the creation of an Anti-Reelection Party. He soon became the party's presidential candidate.

When election season came around, Díaz made the announcement that everyone was expecting: he would run for office once again.

A few weeks before the election, Madero was arrested on trumped-up charges, as were 5,000 of his followers. He was given the city of San Luis Potosí as his prison. The election took place in July 1910, while Madero remained a prisoner there. To no one's surprise, Díaz was declared president-elect, and the country, with Díaz at its head, prepared for the September celebrations of the centennial of Mexico's independence. Large and impressive diplomatic missions arrived from all over the world to witness the festivities: parades, diplomatic receptions, dedications of museums and new schools, the opening of the National University and so on. Díaz was at the zenith of his power, with the country in his fist. At least so it seemed.

However, unbeknownst to either Díaz or Madero, something had been boiling just beneath the surface for years. Discontent was much deeper and more widespread than the governing class realized. By the turn of the century, a small group of self-proclaimed liberals had been organizing throughout the country, distributing their publication Regeneración (Regeneration). In it, they demanded that the government respect the Constitution, comply with the Reform Laws (which included the separation of church and state and the suppression of religious education) and restore democracy. They also began organizing the Mexican Liberal Party under the leadership of Ricardo Flores Magón.

Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Pancho Villa (in the presidential chair) with Emiliano Zapata and supporters in Mexico City.

Díaz did not tolerate criticism or opposition, so when the liberals opposed his reelection in 1903, they began to be persecuted. Many were jailed or forced into exile. Liberal publications were forbidden, and no space was allowed them in public, open politics. This caused them to radicalize, and they began preparing an insurrection.

In mid-1906, the Mexican Liberal Party published a manifesto outlining its most important demands. First and foremost was a proposal to reform the Constitution in order to ban the reelection of the president, vice-president and state governors. Other demands included the complete secularization of education, an eight-hour workday, a minimum daily wage, workers' compensation, sanitary worker housing, the annulment of peasants' debts to landowners and the protection of indigenous people's rights. Magonistas also called for an armed uprising against the Porfirian government.

During his imprisonment, Madero had not been idle. He remained in contact with his followers, and he also made preparations to rebel. Eventually escaping from his prison-city, Madero set up operations in San Antonio, Texas. From there, he launched the Plan of San Luis Potosí on October 5, 1910, in which he rejected the outcome of the election and demanded its annulment. He proclaimed himself provisional president and called for armed revolution, to begin punctually at 6:00 p.m. on November 20, 1910.

Madero's convocation shook the country. It was the spark that set fire to the tinder that had long been accumulating: the aspirations of change provoked by the Díaz–

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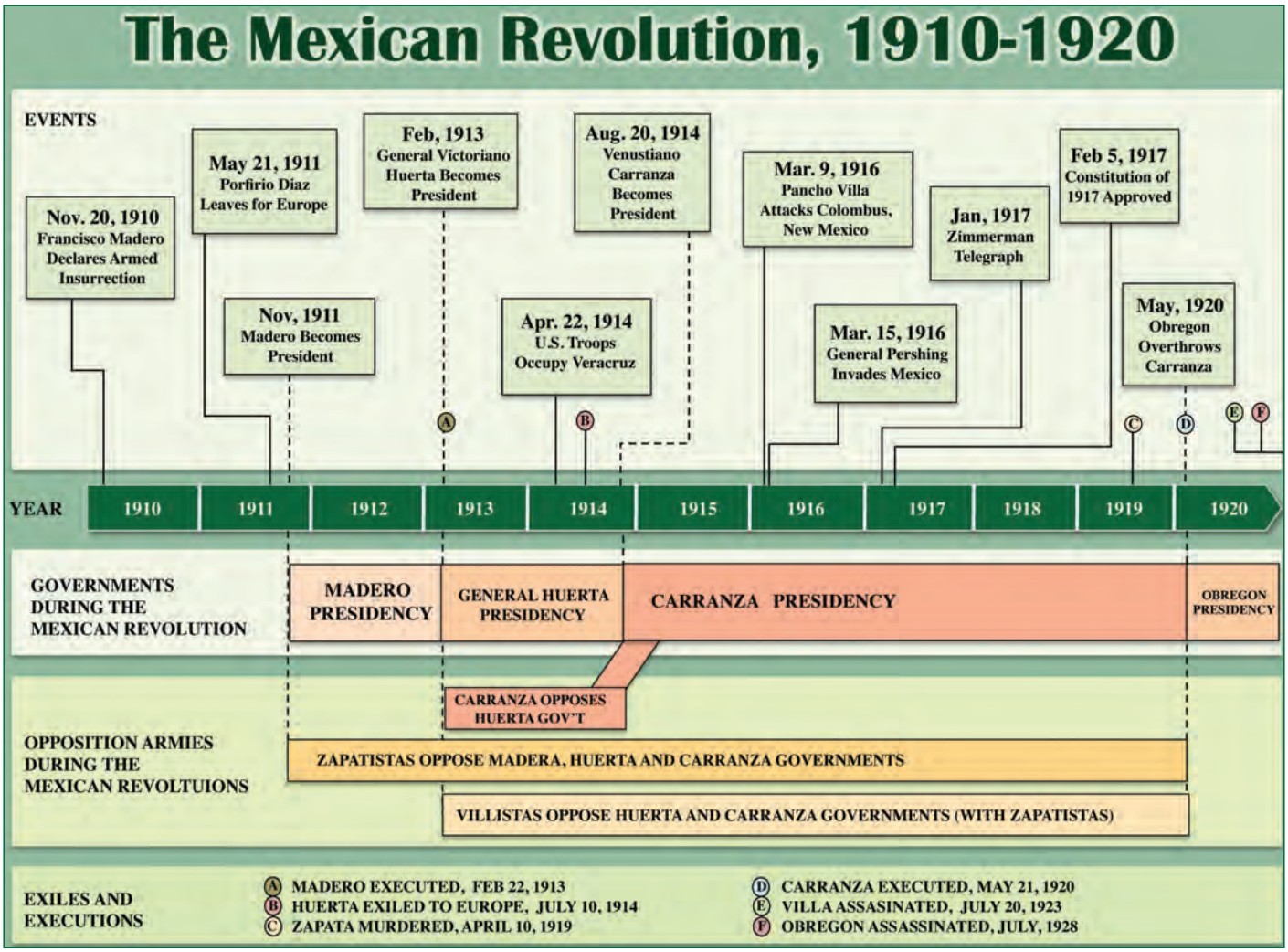

A timeline of major events of the Mexican Revolution.

Creelman interview, the ideas put forth by the Mexican Liberal Party, the anti-reelection movement and a long drought that had resulted in several years of poor harvests. Revolution erupted everywhere. New military leaders emerged: Pascual Orozco, Francisco Villa, Emiliano Zapata. The federal army was incapable of controlling the uprising and suffered a serious defeat, more political than military, when Ciudad Juárez, the most important border city, fell to the revolutionaries commanded by Orozco.

The Treaty of Ciudad Juárez was signed by the revolutionaries and the government on May 21, 1911. Under its terms, Díaz agreed to resign and go into exile, and a new presidential election was planned. However, the treaty contained three provisions that would prove fatal to Madero: the creation of a provisional government headed not by a revolutionary but by a recognized Porfirian; the demobilization of the revolutionary armies, while the federal army remained intact; and the acceptance of the Congress selected by Díaz and elected in 1910, with which the new government would have to deal.

In November 1911, Madero was elected president in the fairest election ever held in Mexico. However, his fellow revolutionaries were not convinced that Madero would deliver on their more substantial demands and began to rebel even before he was elected. Pascual Orozco withdrew recognition of Madero as Chief of the Revolution; Emiliano Zapata proclaimed the Plan of Ayala, demanding the immediate restoration of lands to dispossessed villages. Orozco was defeated and went into exile, and Zapata was held, with more or less difficulty, under military control.

The Porfirians revolted as well: Bernardo Reyes and Félix Díaz, the deposed leader's nephew, both tried to overthrow Madero and were defeated and imprisoned. At the same time, the new president had to face opposition in Congress; fierce criticism from the Porfirian press, now free and unrepressed; and the impatience of the revolutionaries, who saw the slow and obstructed government as being incapable of responding to their demands. These difficulties were compounded by a federal army, commanded by Porfirian generals, that had little sympathy for the new government.

The troubled new administration lasted only 15 months before being toppled in a coup instigated by the U.S. ambassador, Henry Lane Wilson. An admirer of Díaz, who viscerally disliked Madero, he conspired with the military commanders in the capital. Madero and Vice-President Pino Suárez were arrested, forced to resign and held prisoner in the National Palace. In a nod to constitutional law, the foreign minister, Pedro Lascuráin, who was third in line for the presidency, succeeded them for 45 minutes, during which time he named the military commander Victoriano Huerta secretary of government, the position fourth in line for the presidency. Lascuráin then resigned, making Huerta (known in Mexico as "the Usurper") president of Mexico. Huerta promptly ordered the assassination of both the president and the vice-president.

The revolutionaries reacted immediately. The Governor of Coahuila, Venustiano Carranza, issued the Plan of Guadalupe, calling on the people to take up arms against the usurpers and fight to restore constitutional order. After several months of hard fighting, the Constitutionalists, as Carranza's followers were known, triumphed. But their victory was unstable. The Constitutionalists, Villistas and Zapatistas tried to reach an agreement and failed. Fighting resumed, this time pitting revolutionary against revolutionary, with Carranza on one side and Villa and Zapata on the other.

The Constitutionalists defeated Villa, who withdrew to Chihuahua, while Zapata kept control of large portions of the state of Morelos, where land was restored to the villages. The Constitutionalists took control of the country, save for Villa and Zapata's strongholds, and established provisional military state governments. They began to implement new policies like land reform and the recognition of workers' rights, and Carranza convened a Constitutional Convention.

The Congress met in December 1916 in the city of Querétaro. Carranza submitted a project that was considered moderate to conservative by the radical wing of the Constitutionalists. His proposal contained some elements of the Liberal Party's program combined with Zapata's demands for agrarian reform. Intense discussions took place in Querétaro, with the radicals managing to push through most of their demands.

The resulting Constitution clearly expressed the goals and ideals of the Revolution. It sketched the outline of the progressive and democratic nation for which the revolutionaries had fought, with articles establishing secular education, an eight-hour workday and the right to strike. Another central provision reaffirmed an idea that dated back to the struggle for independence: Article 39 proclaimed that national sovereignty resides in the people, who have at all times the right to alter or modify their form of government. At the core of the 1917 Constitution, however, was Article 27. It recognized the nation's right to impose constraints on private property as dictated by the public interest, to regulate the exploitation of natural resources and to grant land to villages.

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Uncle Sam does his best to "civilize" a wayward Mexico, 1916.

Image by John T. McCutcheon.

Photo courtesy of Graham Beal.

ART

From left: Clifford and Jean Wight, Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, Edsel Ford's mother Clara and an unknown person in Detroit.

Mutual Admiration, Mutual Exploitation:
Rivera, Ford and the Detroit Industry Murals

by Graham W.J. Beal

At the turn of the last century, Detroit was a small city of a few hundred thousand people. But with the advent of the auto industry, and with Henry Ford paying $5 a day, people flooded in from all over the world. By the 1920s, the city was rolling in money. The Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) opened in 1927. The planning analysis for the museum projected that, if the city continued to grow at its then-current rate, by 1935 it would surpass Chicago to become the second city in the United States, and by 1953 it would surpass New York to become the first city. Those were the kinds of ambitions that lay behind the creation of the DIA.

The museum's presiding genius was William Valentiner, a German scholar, a Rembrandt specialist and a man with extraordinarily wide tastes. He was an enthusiast for Islamic art; he was personal friends with the German Expressionists; he bought the first Van Gogh and the first Matisse to enter into an American museum collection. Between 1920 and the early 1930s, with the help of Detroit's personal wealth and city money, Valentiner transformed the DIA from a respectable Midwestern museum into one of the half-dozen top art collections in the country, which it remains today.

Valentiner was a bold man in many ways. He met Diego Rivera when he was in California at the invitation of tennis champion Helen Wills Moody, a personal friend. Moody was featured in the mural that Rivera was creating for San Francisco's Pacific Stock Exchange Luncheon Club. Seeing Rivera at work, Valentiner was inspired to have him paint murals in the DIA's garden court — as had been the original intent of DIA architect Paul Cret. The museum director made a commitment to the artist, but then he had to find the money.

Back in Detroit, Valentiner talked to DIA patron-supreme Edsel Ford, who immediately agreed to pay $10,000 for Rivera to come and create the murals. Rivera was in New York at this time to be on hand for the Museum of Modern Art's retrospective of his work — he was only the second artist to be so honored (Matisse was the first). In New York, he became involved with the Mexican Artists Association,

and there was a sense that art could be used to improve the wary relationship between the United States and Mexico. Rivera was such an ebullient individual that it was impossible to dislike him, even if he was a communist. He also worked in a heroic, realist style that was easily graspable.

Valentiner was planning for the future. In one of his letters, he wrote, "I had always hoped to have on my museum walls a series of frescoes by a painter of our time, since where could a building be found nowadays that would last as long as a museum." But he soon discovered that there was not much enthusiasm on the part of the Detroit Arts Commission for a Mexican communist. From 1919 to 1999, the DIA was a city department operating under the direction of the Arts Commission, which in 1931 was headed by Albert Kahn, the great architect of Ford's industrial buildings. Valentiner had to persuade these individuals to support the Rivera mural. He had the money from Edsel, but in those days, he still needed the Commission's approval.

Valentiner made headway, undoubtedly with the use of the $10,000 that Ford had supplied, and he wrote to Rivera saying, "The Arts Commission would be pleased if you could find something out of the history of Detroit, or some motif suggesting the development of industry in this town. But in the end, they decided to leave it entirely to you." It seems clear that what Valentiner had in mind at the time was something like the Helen Moody Wills paintings, something that had an allegorical slant to it. They were to get something completely different.

In spite of the support of the Arts Commission, there was head-scratching as to why Henry Ford was allowing the mural to go forward. Some thought it was a publicity stunt: Ford getting an advertisement on the walls of a public museum. Others were surprised that he allowed it to happen. A few days before Rivera arrived, there was a hunger march on the River Rouge Plant. The police, the army and Pinkerton agents opened fire on the marchers, killing five people and wounding 20. There remains a very strong sense, although there is nothing in the Ford records to back this up, that Henry Ford did not step in to block the mural because he felt it would be good publicity one way or another for the Ford Company to do something this magnificent.

In April–May 1932, Rivera worked at the plant, producing hundreds of sketches. What is amazing about the murals is the way that Rivera seemed to retain most of the

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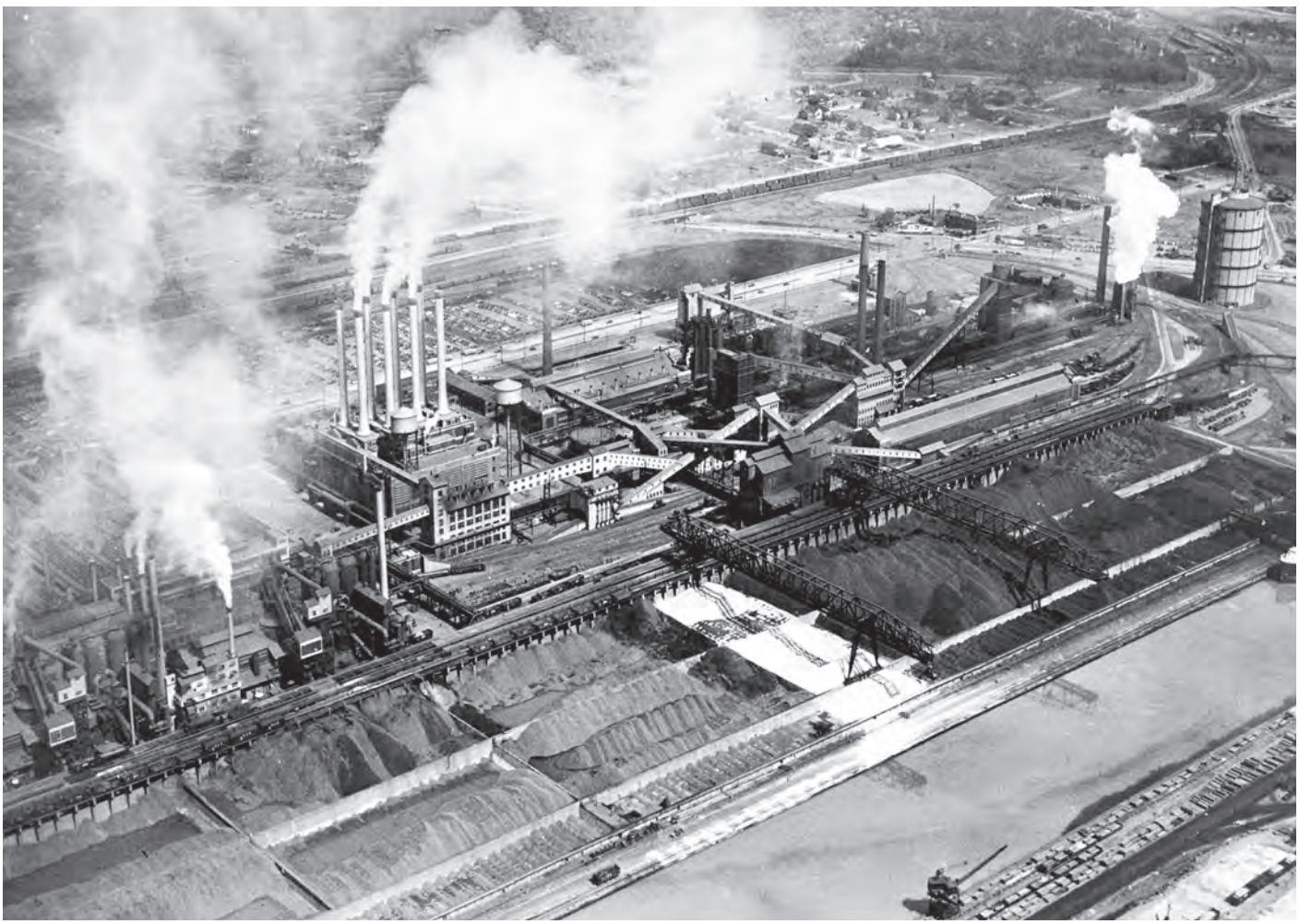
The River Rouge Plant in the 1950s.



Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University.

details in his head. He went from a simple sketch to a full-blown work of art with almost no intermediary drawings. He would sketch out the framework, but for the details he relied on his memory and on photographs. He didn't do a lot of studies, it's not like Raphael — study of an arm, study of a torso — he just went directly forward.

Initially, Edsel Ford was shown only two presentation drawings — for the main panels on the north and south walls. Ford was so excited by the drawings, so the story goes, that he decided to increase Rivera's fee to a very strange sum: it went from $10,000 to $20,889. Some time after that, Rivera presented drawings of the rest of the panels without asking for more money. Rivera charged $100 a square foot, and the agreed-upon fee was not much less than that. They also agreed that the museum would pay for all of the materials, while Rivera would pay his assistants. This was a time when French cobalt blue cost $22 a pound. Some pigments cost much less than that, but lapis lazuli was expensive stuff. So it was quite a step that the museum had taken. Rivera, meanwhile, had the ability to do whatever he wanted with regard to his assistants.

Rivera had four main assistants who he paid $12 a week: Clifford White, who had worked with Rivera on the murals in San Francisco; Andrés Hernández Sánchez Flores, the chemist who worked with the pigments; Ernest Halberstadt; and Arthur Niendorf. Now this is 20 years after Henry Ford had been paying $5 a day for unskilled labor. And they were the lucky ones. The others didn't get anything at all. They had to learn to get by and were taught by those who did get paid to use barter, to trade sketches for a visit to the dentist or whatever it was they needed.

In spite of the nonexistent pay, a number of people came to work for Rivera. Francis Jean Clarence West Plantagenet, Lord Hastings was one of his more unusual assistants. He was one of several communist peers who turned up in British politics in the 1920s and 30s. He and his wife were touring America, and he hooked up with Rivera, becoming his assistant until his visa ran out. Other assistants included Stephen Dimitroff and Lucienne Bloch, who later married. A young man named Paul Meier Klienbordt also turned up. He'd been in jail for being part of some labor riots in Pennsylvania after which he changed his name to Pablo Davis, jumped on a train with 60 cents in his pocket and came to work for Rivera.

Eventually, Halberstadt got tired of having no soles on his shoes and asked Rivera for $18 a week, a $6 raise. When Rivera refused, Halberstadt threatened to walk up and down in front of the museum saying that the artist was "unfair to labor." Rivera gave him the $18, but he didn't speak to Halberstadt for a long time after that — and Halberstadt was one of his main assistants. Later, Steven Dimitroff fell ill after not eating for four days. When Rivera heard that Dimitroff was in bad shape and absolutely out of money, he started to pay $8 a month.

Diego Rivera poses with Frida Kahlo, his assistants and their wives, Christmas 1932.

Photo courtesy of Graham Beal.

But that was after Dimitroff had worked for nothing for three months.

Rivera used his assistants to prepare the walls, but he painted everything himself. The mural is mainly a true fresco, but there are a couple of areas where he obviously went back and repainted the dried surface. It took him about 10 months to paint the whole thing, and he didn't work everyday.

Of course, Frida Kahlo came to Detroit with Rivera, and they took an apartment. Frida absolutely hated it. She didn't like the food, didn't like the weather. She thought New York was pretty bad, but she went back there as much as possible to get away from Detroit. The city was also the site of one of Frida's miscarriages, which was commemorated in one of her paintings. That event has a possible link to Rivera's mural as well.

Walking from the DIA's Great Hall into the Rivera Court, the first thing you see, on the east wall, is an embryo encased in a womb that can be read as both organic and inorganic. On each side are symbols of fecundity, with round, soft forms below them. One of these is a little panel of vegetables; another is a woman holding a lapful of corn. And if you turn around and face the west wall, that panel is all about man and machine. This sets up the series of extraordinary dualities which are the essence of the Rivera mural as a whole. On one side, there is agriculture and nature; on the other, there is man and the machine. On the machine side, Rivera included the figure of the "American Engineer," which is a composite portrait of Thomas Edison and Henry Ford. On his right, is a picture of the idealized American worker, with all this fabulous machinery behind him. This is said to be a portrait that combines the American worker with Rivera himself. Rivera put a red star on the worker's glove, which could make him a communist, except that one of the main leather glove-producing companies in Detroit was the Red Star Glove Company. It was just a nice coincidence that Rivera teasingly wove into the work.

Not only is there the juxtaposition of nature and machine, there is also the contrast between the good and the evil of modern technology as represented by vaccination (the good doctor is actually a portrait of William Valentiner) and chemical warfare. Rivera also brings together the two hemispheres: North and South. On one side, rubber is being taken from tropical trees, on the other is the Detroit skyline. There is a contrast between fish and speedboats, between civil and military aviation, between the hawk and the dove. He also contrasts man and machine. Several of the individuals working with the extraordinary machinery he depicts are portraits of people

Photo courtesy of Graham Beal.

Edsel Ford.

with whom he worked. Sánchez Flores, Dimitroff and Niendorf all appear in the mural. Rivera also put Latinos, African-Americans and whites together on the assembly line, blending realism with wishful idealism: at the time, all the people on the assembly lines were white; nonwhites were stuck with the really filthy jobs.

Rivera had a tremendous admiration for the industrial might and engineering of the United States. He spoke very fulsomely about America, the land of the new pyramids, as he called the great monuments that were being built. But in the mural, he chose to depict himself in solidarity with the workers. He painted himself on the assembly line, near the blast furnace — a rather sad-looking figure wearing a derby hat. He placed himself among the workers being poisoned by the plant, individuals who — in Rivera's way of thinking — were sacrificing themselves to the great god of industry and capitalism.

This theme is also referenced on the south wall. One of the things that Rivera prided himself on was the accuracy of the machinery. Nearly everything he painted was current, but the machine depicted on the south wall's

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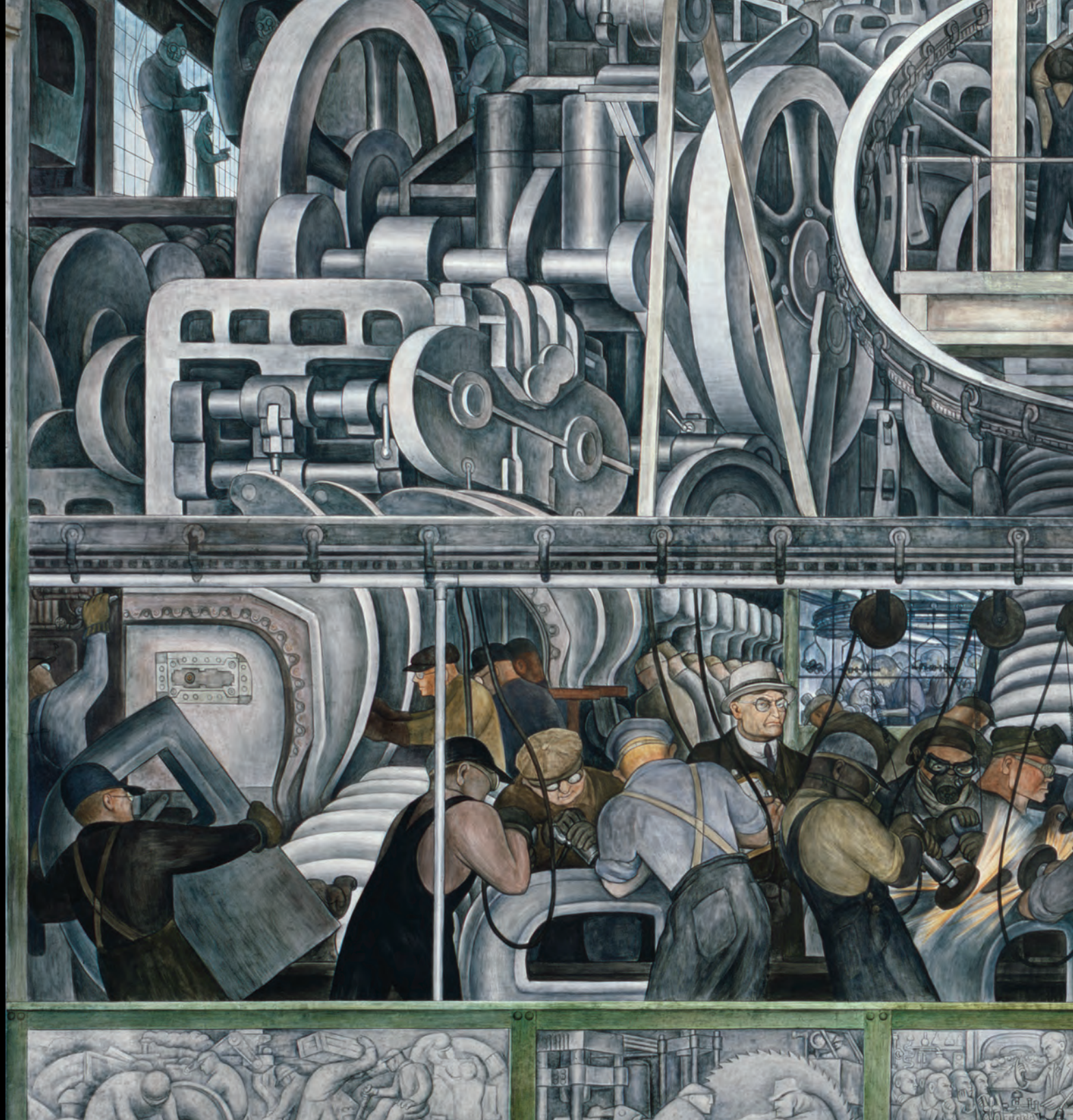
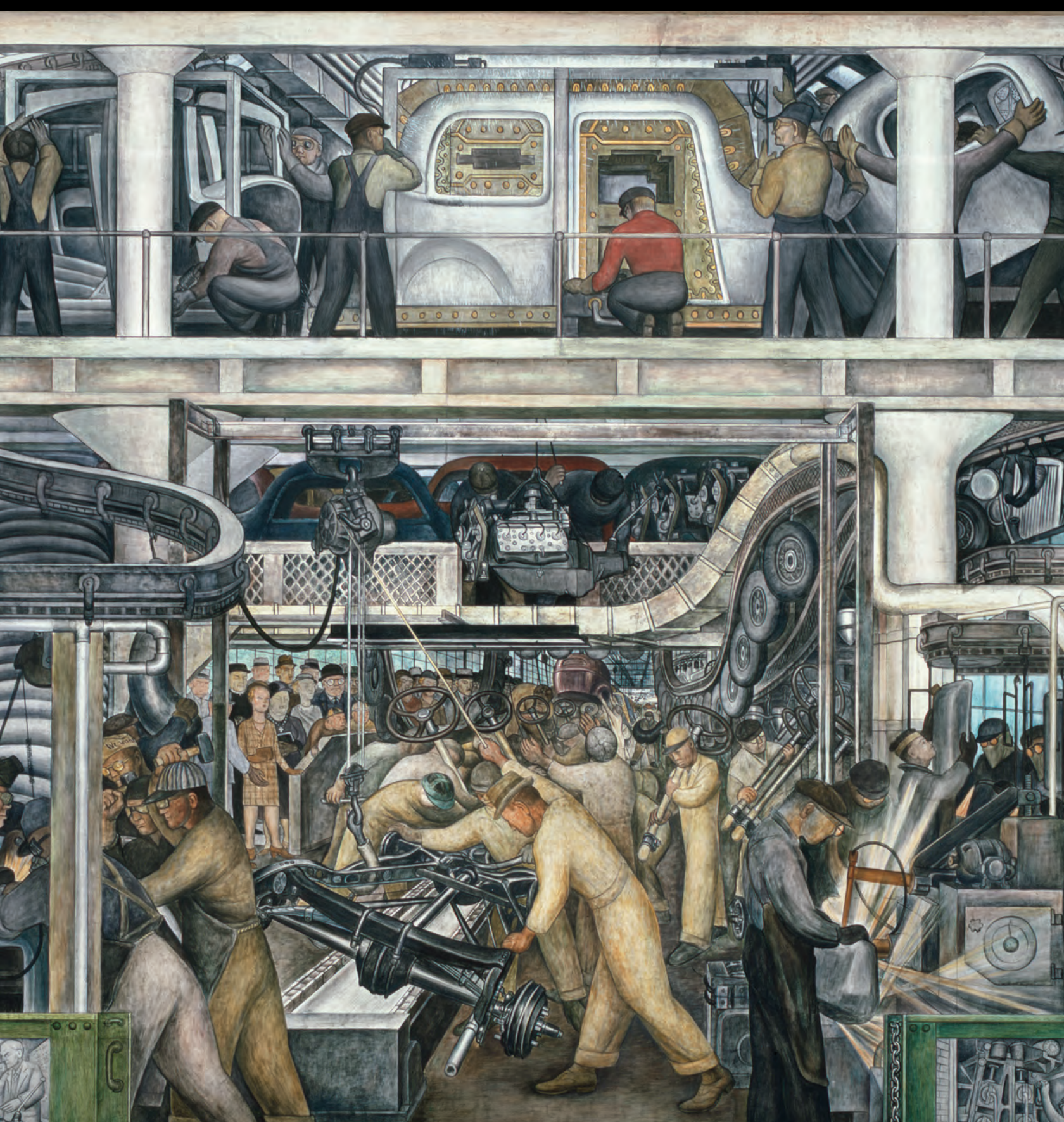
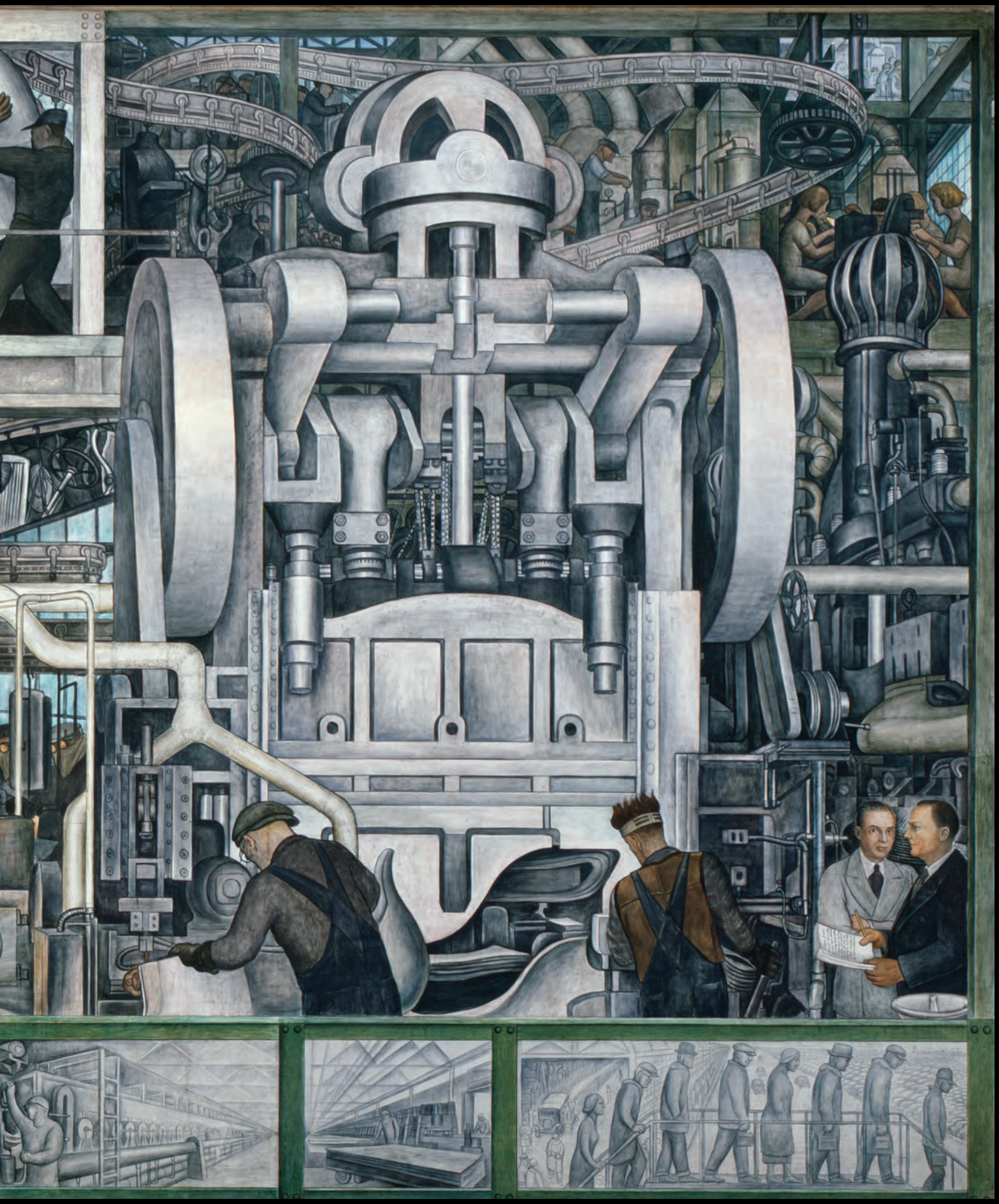
The main panel on the north wall.

Image courtesy of Graham Beal.





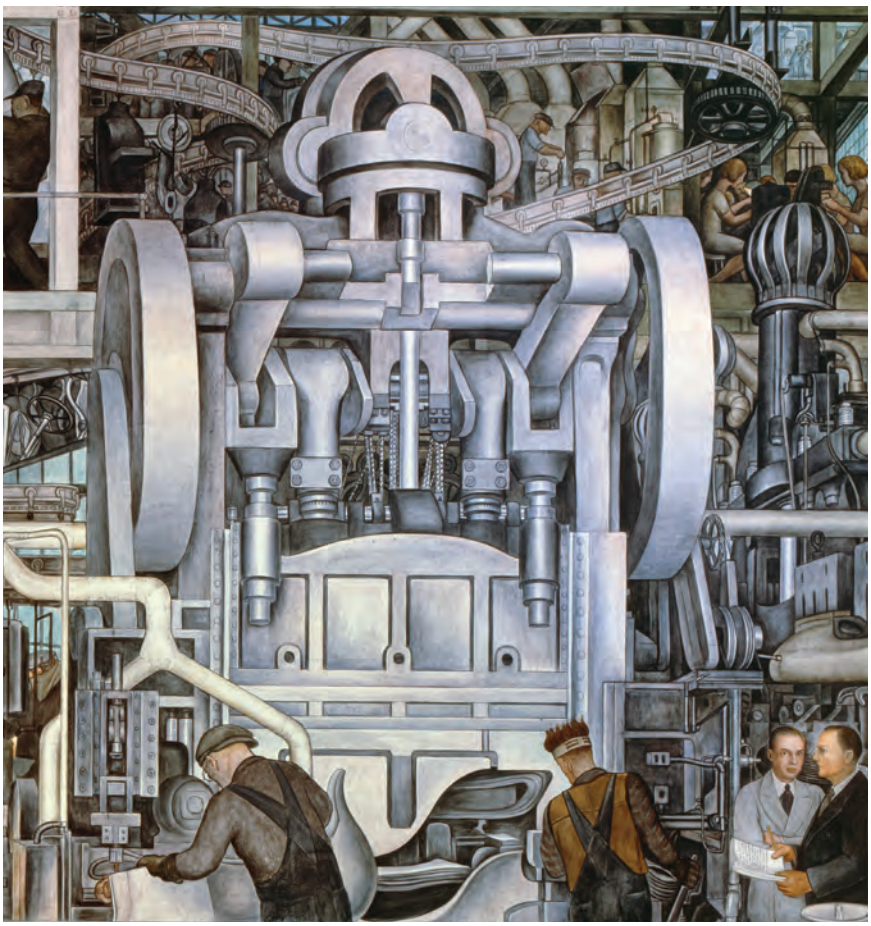


The main panel on the south wall.

Image courtesy of Graham Beal.

Details from the Detroit Industry Murals: On the left, William Valentiner, representing "the good doctor," vaccinates a young child. On the right, workers manufacture chemical weapons.
(Images courtesy of Graham Beal.)

The Aztec goddess Coatlicue and Rivera's stylized representation of her as a stamping machine.
(Photo from Luidger/Wikimedia; image courtesy of Graham Beal.)



main panel was already obsolete. It had been replaced by something much sleeker and more built-in. The reason that Rivera wanted to show its predecessor was that it reminded him of Coatlicue, one of the great goddesses of the Aztec world. Halberstadt appears in front of the machine, his hair standing on end. There is a literal explanation for this: the stamping machine created a whoosh of air when it came down. But it also gives the more symbolic impression that the workers are being sacrificed at the altar of this mechanical god.

The mural also captures one of the most important aspects of the River Rouge Plant: everything was done there. The raw materials — coal and steel — went in one end, and cars came out the other. They made their own glass; they made everything. That all changed later, of course. But Ford built his great empire on the concept of total control.

At the top of the mural on the north wall are great forms that Rivera called the Red and the Black races combined with hands coming out of the earth bearing riches. When you put the murals together, the blast furnace that forms part of the mural depicting the River Rouge Plant sends flame up to the volcano in the panel above, creating a direct linkage between the real and the symbolic, the man made and the natural. On the south wall is a panel illustrating the completion of the automobile. Again, there are connections with the panel above it, although they are not as direct as those on the opposite wall.

The design is coherent, but at the same time, it is so crammed with details that there is always something more to see. In the background of the mural, on the south wall, is a juxtaposition of workers and the bourgeoisie. In those days, it was possible to tour the River Rouge Plant, and people came to see this marvel of modern industry. Rivera's depiction of the bourgeoisie who came to visit is less than flattering: there is a plump, sour-faced woman with a cross around her neck; a rather sallow-looking priest; two fat little boys based on the comic strip "The Katzenjammer Kids"; and other people looking equally unpleasant. Amusingly, Dick Tracy is also in among the crowd.

Image courtesy of Graham Beal.

Henry Ford teaching apprentices in a mural detail.

Running along the bottom of the murals on the north and south walls is what we call the predella, a series of grisaille panels that follow the workers through the course of the day, just as the larger murals show the steps in the creation of a car. Workers are shown clocking in, performing their daily tasks and heading home in the evening.

One of my favorite panels shows Henry Ford teaching apprentices. These men, who left school and went to work in the factories, were known as monkeys. There was a sense that they weren't the brightest. Rivera picked up on that and gave them a slightly simian quality. The artist also turned the engine block into a dog, with legs and a tail. The legs mimic those of a cast iron stove, a reference to the fact that the reason the car industry got established in Detroit was because Michigan was the center of American cast iron manufacturing in the late 19th century. Thus, it was already the home of steel and iron-related industry. Another detail that I like is that Ford is making a gesture commonly used in Renaissance portraits of John the Baptist, which conveys the sense that a greater one is yet to come. In the background are students leaning over their books in such a way that they appear to be kowtowing to the figure of Henry Ford.

When the murals were opened to the public, on March 17, 1933, the people who saw them were stunned. Some were shocked. The Detroit Catholic Students Conference requested that "a committee be

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Image courtesy of Graham Beal.

Tourists, including Dick Tracy and the Katzenjammer Kids, observe the River Rouge Plant in this detail from the murals.

appointed by the Holy Name Society, the Knights of Columbus and the League of Catholic Women to investigate Rivera's murals, and if evidence warrants to protest against their retention on the tax-paid walls of this institution." The Detroit Daily News described the murals "as coarse in conception... foolishly vulgar… without meaning for the intelligent observer… a slander to Detroit working men…" and "un-American." A volunteer group was created to crystallize feelings against the murals and formally request that they be removed. The press was stoking all of this and ran articles following "the battle of the murals."

Valentiner tried to control the controversy. The museum published a booklet that tried to implicitly answer all of the accusations being made against the murals. Interestingly enough, when Valentiner called a press conference to deal with the controversy, he discovered he had only one native English speaker on his management staff: Valentiner was German, his curator of textiles was Swiss, his conservator was German, the head of Islamic art was Turkish. All these people had jobs in 1933, in the middle of the Great Depression. And so one man, Edgar Richardson, who later became the director, was deputed to go and talk to the press in what turned out to be rather amicable discussions.

There were also people who supported the murals. The Women's Division of the American Artists Professional League published an open letter saying that "had the City of Detroit Arts Commission heeded the request of the women and had engaged one of our own mural painters to do the work, there would be no controversy. But now that the deed is done, however, every effort must be made to prevent the murals' destruction." Edsel Ford, who initially remained aloof from the debate, finally issued words of support for the murals saying: "I am thoroughly convinced that the day will come when Detroit will be proud to have this work in its midst. In the years to come, they will be ranked among the truly great art treasures of America." A few days later, he released a statement through the Art Commission, saying: "I admire Rivera's spirit. I really believe he was trying to express his idea of the spirit of Detroit." And it was at that moment that the air seems to have gone out of the protests.

Looking back, Valentiner said, "I was never able to find out exactly how the attacks started. They came from Protestant as well as Roman Catholics sources, and they were connected with rumors to the effect that Rivera's painting in a public building was blasphemous. The curious fact was that these rumors were circulated long before the murals were shown." What is strongly suspected, in fact, is that Edsel Ford was behind the whole uproar. A man named Fred Black, who worked directly for Edsel Ford, later revealed that he had been told "to awaken some public interest in the museum and convince the city council that they should do something about it. They feel

that very few people go there and that the general public is not interested."

Due to the Depression, the museum's budget had been cut from $400,000 to $40,000, with the Arts Commission voting to dismiss all the curators and educators. Edsel Ford had stepped in and paid the salaries himself to keep the museum running. Many years later, Black claimed that his staff had fed information about the murals to the right people, to the clergy in particular, so that it broke in the Detroit papers. In 10 days, it was all over the world. "I would show Edsel Ford these things," he said, "and in most cases he would laugh. He thought it was a great scheme. We had accomplished the thing he wanted." The end result was that the City Council voted to replace some of the museum's funding, thereby relieving Edsel Ford of having to pay everyone's salary. And so it is possible that the final act of exploitation in this saga was that the Great Patron of Detroit arts, Edsel Ford himself, used Rivera and his murals to get people to come back to the museum and to reestablish its funding.

Graham W. J. Beal is the director of the Detroit Institute of Arts. This article was adapted from the transcript of a talk he gave for CLAS on February 25, 2010.

At last the job was finished,
  and the people flocked inside,
The clergy took one hasty look
  and they were horrified!
They pointed shaking fingers
  at the panel of Diseases,
And said the vaccinated child
  was no-one else but Jesus!

Oh jolly old Diego,
His enemies abound-o
The most prodigious, sacrilegious,
Son-of-a-gun Diego.
—Franklin M. Peck, 1933

The south and west walls of the Rivera Court in the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Photo courtesy of Graham Beal.

Bernard Wolfe Slide Collection, Hoover Institution Archives.

Leon Trotsky converses with Diego Rivera.

MEXICO'S CENTENNIALS

Exile and Murder in Mexico

by Bertrand M. Patenaude

There are two myths that die hard about Trotsky's last years in Mexico. The first has to do with Trotsky's affair with Frida Kahlo, which many people have heard about. If they haven't read about it, they've seen the 2002 movie "Frida," with Salma Hayek in the title role. The affair did in fact take place. The myth that dies hard about this affair is that Frida's husband, Diego Rivera, found out about it and that this led him to break off his friendship with Trotsky. The second myth has to do with the murder weapon that was used to assassinate Trotsky in his villa in Coyoacán, which is commonly believed to have been an ice pick. But let's start with Diego.

It was thanks to Diego Rivera that Trotsky landed in Mexico. After Stalin had routed Trotsky in the battle to succeed Lenin, who died in 1924, Stalin banished Trotsky from the Soviet Union, exiling him to Turkey in 1929. From there, Trotsky eventually moved to France in 1933, then to Norway in 1935, where he remained until December 1936, when the Norwegian government expelled him after coming under intense political pressure from Stalin. The first of the sensational Moscow show trials took place in August 1936. Leading Communists were put on trial for the most fantastic crimes, including assassination, espionage, wrecking and sabotage. Trotsky was portrayed as the mastermind of this conspiracy, directing its operations from abroad. This was the first of three such show trials, each involving major political figures, each time with Trotsky as chief defendant in absentia.

With Norway wanting to be rid of Trotsky, the only country in the world that would take him was Mexico,

thanks to its radical president, Lázaro Cárdenas, who thought it was the right thing to do, and also thanks to the crucial intercession with Cárdenas of Diego Rivera, who called himself a Trotskyist and was certainly hated by the Mexican Communists. The decision to grant Trotsky asylum was controversial, but nonetheless Trotsky and his wife Natalia were welcomed there in January 1937.

Diego and Frida allowed Trotsky and Natalia to reside in their Casa Azul, the Blue House, in Coyoacán, which at the time was a suburb outside Mexico City and is today one of the city's neighborhoods. Rivera was a vital source of funds during the first two years, selling off his paintings and at one point mortgaging his house in nearby San Angel in order to raise money to support Trotsky's household and to pay for his protection.

Diego and Frida were at Trotsky's side during the Dewey Commission hearings held at the Blue House in the spring of 1937. The Dewey Commission was an independent inquiry into the veracity of the Moscow Trials led by American philosopher and public intellectual John Dewey. Late in 1937, it issued a verdict of "not guilty": in other words, the outrageous charges leveled against Trotsky in the Moscow trials had not been proved.

It was after the departure from Mexico of the members of the Dewey Commission in April 1937 that Trotsky and Frida began their affair. Trotsky's relations with Kahlo became known to Natalia, and for a while, it threatened the Trotskys' marriage. They had a short separation that summer, when Trotsky moved to a hacienda about nine hours by car from Coyoacán. It was during that separation that Trotsky and Frida decided to call a halt to their affair.

There is absolutely no evidence that Diego (himself a champion philanderer) found out about any of this — either at the time or later on, when the friendship between Trotsky and Diego disintegrated. Had Rivera discovered that his wife was having an affair with the great Russian revolutionary, his hero, the man for whom he had arranged safe haven in Mexico, Rivera, a jealous man with a habit of threatening people at the point of a gun, might have ended Trotsky's life before Stalin's assassin did the job.

For a time, the friendship between Trotsky and Rivera remained strong. It was Diego who broke the news, in February 1938, that Trotsky's older son, Lyova, had died in a Paris clinic, after an operation to remove his appendix. We will probably never know whether foul play was involved on the part of the Soviet secret police, the NKVD, but Trotsky

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Trotsky's study has been preserved as it was on the day he died.

Photo by Carlos Lowry.

Alexander H. Buchman Papers, Hoover Institution Archives. Used with permission.

Trotsky tends one of the hundred plus rabbits he raised while in Mexico.

and Natalia had to assume that this was the case.

Trotsky's other children had already died or disappeared. Of his two daughters from a previous marriage, one died of natural causes in the USSR in the 1920s, the other by suicide in Berlin in 1933. Trotsky and Natalia had a younger son, Sergei, who was arrested in Moscow and later shot. Other family members in the USSR endured a similar fate, as did most of Trotsky's followers, all of them swept up in Stalin's Great Terror.

Trotsky's organization in Paris had been penetrated by the NKVD. In fact, his son Lyova's closest confidant was an NKVD agent, so it is conceivable that Lyova's death was murder. Beginning in 1938, Trotsky had to worry about the NKVD's growing presence in Mexico. This was the result of the Spanish Civil War, a time when Spain became a major recruiting and training ground for the NKVD. As General Franco's Falangist forces rolled to victory, Mexico became a haven for refugees from the war, defenders of the Republic whose number included Stalinist sympathizers, among them NKVD agents.

Diego Rivera's help in building up the defenses at the Blue House and in hiring guards was critically important.

The guards were mostly Americans, young men from New York and also from Minneapolis, where the Trotskyists had put down roots among the Teamsters organization. Despite Diego's generosity, the shortage of funds was scandalous. Trotsky's staff always seemed to be on its last peso. Also scandalous was the poor quality of some of the men sent down to guard him. One keeps asking oneself: Is this the best the great Trotsky could attract? Trotsky himself complained constantly about the quality of the guards, and because of this, he often resisted being guarded.

To support himself and his household, Trotsky continued writing, as he had throughout the 1930s. He established his reputation in the West with his epic *History of the Russian Revolution* and his memoirs, *My Life*, both published in the early 1930s. In Mexico, he agreed to write a biography of Stalin. It was an assignment he resisted because he found his subject very distasteful, but out of financial desperation, he had to take it on. So here we have the remarkable situation of a man having to write the biography of the dictator trying to have him killed in order to protect himself against that dictator's assassins.

Trotsky got off to a fast start with his biography of Stalin in the spring of 1938, but the work bogged down when he reached the part of the story where he and Stalin began to clash politically in Soviet Russia after 1917. Trotsky got serious writer's block, and his health began to fail, with the return of symptoms — fatigue, lethargy, high blood pressure — of a mysterious illness

Photo courtesy of The National Archives.

Trotsky poses with American Trotskyites, April 1940.

that had paralyzed him at critical moments in the power struggle of the 1920s.

The entire situation — the lack of funds, the health problems, the demands of publisher and agent, etc. — got worse in the fall of 1938, when the friendship between Trotsky and Diego began to fracture. This had nothing to do with Frida, who was away in New York and then in Paris, exhibiting her work. Rather, the friendship seems to have been destined to go sour. You had, on the one hand, the rigid, prickly, angular Trotsky and, on the other, the reckless, riotous, gargantuan Diego. The lion and the elephant. Diego bathed irregularly, dressed carelessly and seldom arrived on time for anything. Trotsky, meanwhile, was a stickler for neatness, regimen and routine. Both men had tremendous work ethics, but Diego's self-discipline was restricted almost entirely to his painting. And with brush in hand, he tended to lose track of everything else.

On the Day of the Dead, November 2, 1938, Diego walked into Trotsky's study at the Blue House and presented him with a sugar skull with the name STALIN spelled out across the forehead. Trotsky was not amused. As soon as Diego had left the house, Trotsky ordered his assistant to have the offending object destroyed.

The friendship was now fast unraveling. The split came that winter, at the start of Mexico's long presidential election season (which would culminate in July 1940 with the election of Manuel Ávila Camacho to succeed Cárdenas, who was ineligible for reelection). Diego's erratic attempts to influence the presidential campaign made it clear to Trotsky that the painter was not a Trotskyist after all — indeed, apparently not even a Marxist. Given Diego's very public political "zig-zagging," as Trotsky called it, Trotsky, who had pledged not to involve himself in Mexican politics, felt he had no choice but to separate himself from Diego and move out of the Blue House. A new villa was found a few blocks away, and Trotsky moved in on May 5, 1939.

Trotsky and Diego would never meet again. At this point in the story, another of the Big Three Mexican muralists, David Alfaro Siqueiros, enters the picture. (Trotsky had a brief and memorable meeting with the other great Mexican muralist, José Clemente Orozco, in Guadalajara in the summer of 1938.) Siqueiros was the late bloomer of the Big Three muralists, partly because he was very heavily involved in Communist politics. Siqueiros went off to fight in the Spanish Civil War. It is said that he commanded a brigade and then a division of the Republican Army, attaining the rank of lieutenant colonel. It is very likely that while he was in Spain he was recruited by the NKVD.

After his return to Mexico in January 1939, Siqueiros began work on one of his most important murals, "Portrait

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Photo from Keystone/Getty Images.

Communist leaders including Joseph Stalin (far right) and Leon Trotsky (second from left) salute supporters during the Russian Revolution.

of the Bourgeoisie," a masterpiece of 1930s mural art located in the stairwell of the Mexican Electricians Union in Mexico City. But he was also involved in an activity on the side, sponsored by the NKVD: he was enlisted to lead a commando raid on Trotsky's home. The raid took place before dawn on May 24, 1940. Twenty men dressed in police and military uniforms and armed with machine guns entered the grounds, let in by one of Trotsky's American guards from New York, who had been enlisted by the NKVD. Once in place outside the Trotskys' bedroom, and with Trotsky's guards pinned down in their quarters, the intruders unleashed a barrage of machine gun fire, a crossfire from three directions into the bedroom.

The raiders carried three homemade bombs, only one of which went off, in a room adjacent to the bedroom. They left after 15 minutes, believing that they had completed the job, but in fact they had failed. Trotsky and Natalia had ducked down in a corner of the room and survived. Trotsky's comrades called it a "miraculous escape," although Trotsky insisted that his survival was the result of sheer luck.

Now began the frantic preparations for the next attack, and the anticipation was that it would be carried out with bombs. The villa was to be transformed into a fortress. Turrets would be constructed atop the high walls, double iron doors would replace the wooden entrance to the garage, steel shutters would cover the windows, bomb-proof wire netting would be raised and barbed-wire barriers would be moved into position. But even as these fortifications began to rise up, the NKVD decided to resort to its fallback plan. The assignment of liquidating Trotsky — and the orders came from Stalin himself — would be entrusted to a lone operative who had managed to penetrate Trotsky's inner circle.

He was Ramón Mercader, a Spaniard recruited by the NKVD during the civil war. In Paris in the summer of 1938, Mercader, disguised as a Belgian student using the alias Jacques Mornard, seduced the sister of one of Trotsky's former assistants. She was a Brooklyn Trotskyist by the name of Sylvia Ageloff. Mercader-Mornard followed Sylvia to New York in the fall of 1939. Now assuming the identity of Frank Jacson [sic], Canadian businessman, he maneuvered Sylvia down to Mexico City and used her to insinuate himself into Trotsky's household. He claimed to have been a heavy financial supporter of the French Trotskyists back in Paris — and of course by the summer of 1940, there was no way to verify this information with the French Trotskyists, who were on the run from the invading Germans.

The outbreak of World War II, which began with the Nazi–Soviet Pact of August 1939, struck a strong blow against Trotsky and his followers in New York City, the center of the Trotskyist movement at that time. When the war in Europe began, Trotsky insisted on supporting

the Soviet Union, despite the fact that Stalin's regime had wiped out his family and comrades and was trying to have him killed. Trotsky tried to justify the Soviet occupation of eastern Poland and the Baltic states as well as the Winter War against Finland in 1939-40 by arguing that the Red Army was spreading socialism to these conquered lands — that is, the state ownership of the means of production. Trotsky continued to maintain that the Soviet Union was a workers' state, despite the fact that at the same time he classified the Stalinist regime, together with Nazi Germany, as "totalitarian."

Trotsky's stance on the war and the Soviet Union split the Trotskyists in the United States: a majority supported Trotsky (many doing so more out of loyalty than out of conviction), while a minority wanted him to condemn Soviet military aggression outright and deny that the USSR was a workers' state of any kind. Sylvia Ageloff, the cat's paw in the story, took the side of the minority, and when she got to Mexico City at the beginning of 1940, she was invited to a debate with Trotsky and the guards at the house in Coyoacán.

This is where Ramón Mercader saw his opening. Posing as a supporter of Trotsky in this ideological dispute, he wrote a draft of an article defending the majority position. He had it ready in August 1940 and asked Trotsky to read it. He maneuvered to be alone with Trotsky in the late afternoon of August 20, as the guards were busy on the roof installing a new siren, just received from the comrades in Los Angeles.

Mercader, whom Trotsky continued to believe was a Canadian businessman by the name of Frank Jacson, a man who sympathized with the cause and was a potential source of much-needed funds, entered Trotsky's study at around 5:30 p.m., carrying his trench coat. Inside the coat was a dagger, a handgun and a pickaxe — not an ice pick, as is commonly believed, but a pickaxe: one end was pointed, like an ice pick, the other was flat and wide; the handle, about a foot long, had been cut down for concealment. The pickaxe was the assassin's weapon of choice. He was able to carry out his deadly assignment even though Trotsky put up a ferocious struggle for his life.

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A detail from the Rivera mural "Man, Controller of the Universe."

Photo by Gabriel Aguillera.

The Promise and Legacy of the Mexican Revolution

continued from page 33

Peasants' demand for land had become the Revolution's central cause. Progress toward agrarian reform became the measure by which post-revolutionary governments were judged. Carranza, for example, distributed 292,000 acres. The following six administrations distributed 16,575,000 acres of mostly marginal lands in an effort that was widely regarded as insufficient. It wasn't until the election of Lázaro Cárdenas in 1934 that the pace of land distribution accelerated: 39,358,000 acres were distributed during his term in office, more than double the amount under previous administrations. Not only were high-quality lands given to peasants, but they were also complemented with government irrigation projects and organizational assistance.

The new Constitution also impacted the government's relationship with foreign-owned oil companies, a relationship that had been rocky since the time of Madero. In June 1912, his administration increased the oil export tax by 20 cents per ton (equivalent to 3 cents per barrel), an insignificant rise even in those days. Ambassador Lane Wilson responded immediately, sending a harsh diplomatic note protesting the "discriminatory and almost confiscatory tax" on the export of oil products.

By the end of 1914, Constitutionalist forces occupied Tampico, the Gulf Coast headquarters of the foreign oil companies. The military commander, Lt. Col. Francisco J. Múgica, required oil exporters to register at the customs office so that they could pay their taxes. The oil companies refused. Múgica responded by ordering the closure of oil pipelines. Under pressure, British and American companies grudgingly agreed to pay the taxes.

In 1917, the Carranza administration levied new taxes on oil exports and on land used for oil production, leading to another wave of protests by the oil companies. When new legislation regarding drilling concessions on national lands was approved in 1920, protests reached such a dimension that the government suspended the granting of drilling concessions.

In early 1925, just a few weeks after taking office, President Plutarco Elías Calles proposed a new law regulating oil exploitation. The reaction from the United States was swift. U.S. Secretary of State Frank Billings Kellogg issued a harsh criticism of the Mexican government for certain agrarian policies and for increasing workers' salaries — nothing to do with oil legislation. At the same time, the U.S. ambassador, James R. Sheffield, attacked the still-unfinished legislation. The situation became so tense that by the end of the year armed intervention seemed imminent, and President Calles ordered the military commander in La Huasteca, one of the main oil producing areas, to set fire to the wells if the Americans invaded.

President Portes Gil, who succeeded Calles, wrote in his *Memorias* (*Memoirs*):

> General Calles let events go serenely by, and when he was convinced that the United States would begin an armed intervention in a matter of hours, he telegraphed the American president, telling him he was sending, with a person of his absolute confidence, original, very important documents, that he wished him to see before he committed the crime of invading national territory; and if, after reading those documents, the government of the United States still maintained its aggressive attitude toward Mexico, he would make them public so the world could judge the unheard-of outrage to be committed against a weak nation that was merely defending its sovereignty. Those documents were Secretary of State Kellogg's letters, which had reached President Calles hands through means that remain a mystery… On September 22, Ambassador Sheffield left his post…

Those letters, obtained by a spy who had infiltrated the U.S. embassy in Mexico, exposed the involvement of Ambassador Sheffield and Secretary of State Kellogg with the oil companies.

As these events demonstrate, oil has been a subject of conflict between the United States and Mexico ever since the Revolution took power. In fact, the most important feat of revolutionary policy was, without a doubt, the expropriation of the oil companies and the nationalization of the oil industry in 1938.

By the end of 1933, the party created by President Calles, the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (National Revolutionary Party, PNR), had approved a Six Year Plan for the term 1934-40 and proclaimed Lázaro Cárdenas its presidential candidate. The Plan declared that Article 27 of the Constitution would take effect, thereby nationalizing the subsoil, and also that the state would intervene to balance the economic forces in the oil industry and stimulate the development of national enterprises.

Encouraged by these moves, several oil unions merged to form the Sindicato de Trabajadores Petroleros de la República Mexicana (Mexican Petroleum Workers' Syndicate, STPRM), in 1936. Among the new union's

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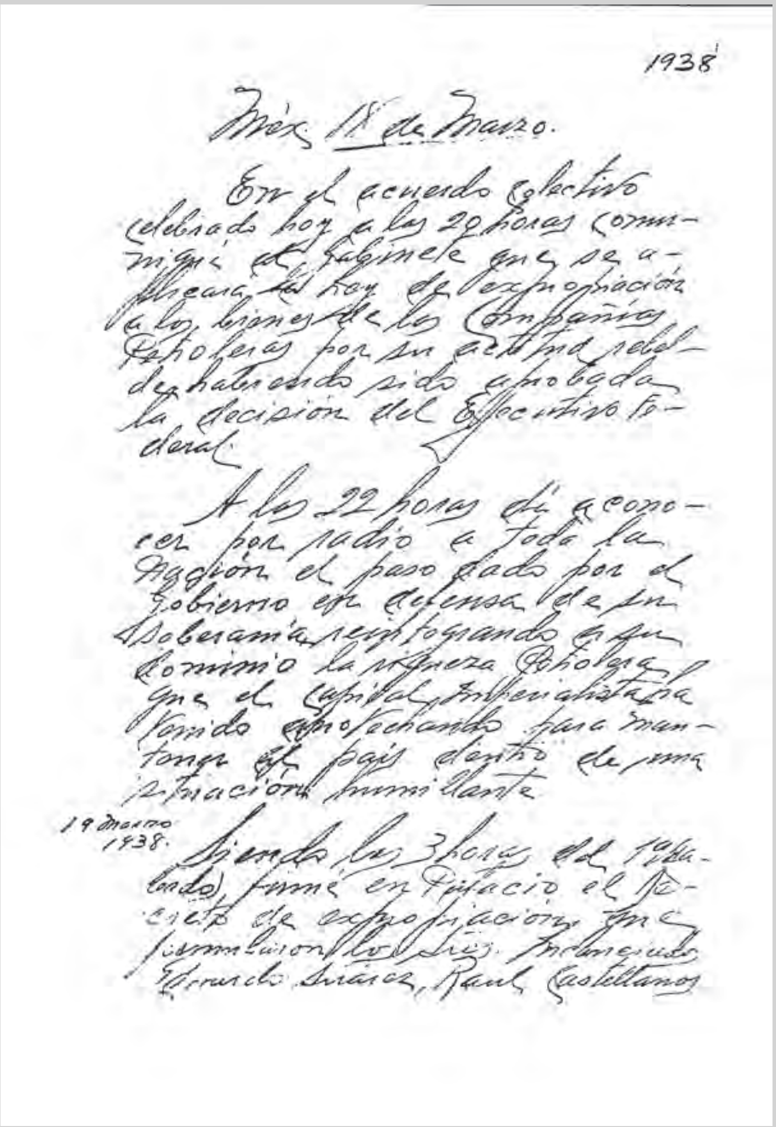

1938

Méx. 18 de Marzo.

En el acuerdo colectivo celebrado hoy a las 20 horas comuniqué al Gabinete que se aplicaría la Ley de Expropiación a los bienes de las Compañías Petroleras por su actitud rebelde, habiendo sido aprobada la decisión del Ejecutivo Federal.

A las 22 horas di a conocer por radio a toda la Nación el paso dado por el Gobierno en defensa de su Soberanía, reintegrando a su dominio la riqueza petrolera que el capital imperialista ha venido aprovechando para mantener al país dentro de una situación humillante.

19 marzo 1938. Siendo las 3 horas del Sábado, firmé en Palacio el Decreto de expropiación que formularon los Sres. Licenciados Eduardo Suárez, Raul Castellanos,

Antonio Villalobos, Enrique Calderón, Gustavo Corona, el Secretario de Economía Efraín Buenrostro y el Ingeniero Manuel Santillán, Director de la Administración General del Petróleo.

Con este acto así, México contribuye con los demás países de Hispano América para que se sacudan un tanto la dictadura económica del capitalismo imperialista.

The March 18, 1938, diary entry of President Lázaro Cárdenas, which records the nationalization of the oil industry.
(Image courtesy of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas.)

Left:
The Cárdenas family picnics in the garden at Los Pinos, March 19, 1938.
(Photo courtesy of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas.)

Below:
Lázaro Cárdenas at the zoo with his grandsons Lázaro and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Batel, 1969.
(Photo courtesy of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas.)

demands were an increase in wages and improvements in working conditions. When their demands were rejected, the workers declared a strike. At this point, the Cárdenas government intervened, appointing a special commission to rule on the dispute but requiring that workers continue working so oil production could continue. Labor authorities, in several instances, ruled in favor of the workers. However, the companies refused to abide by their verdicts until the case reached the Supreme Court, which confirmed the previous findings in favor of the workers.

Throughout the conflict, Lázaro Cárdenas kept a diary in which he recorded his thoughts. My personal impression is that even before becoming president, Cárdenas thought that it was necessary to better control the oil industry and to increase the state's participation in oil exploitation, but that he considered nationalization unviable. If he even thought about it, he kept it to himself as an ideal that would be very difficult to achieve.

However, the evolution of the labor conflict began to open up new possibilities. In a diary entry from January 1, 1938, after the Federal Labor Board had ruled in favor of the workers and while the case was in the hands of the Supreme Court, Cárdenas wrote:

> National unrest. Foreign oil companies, supported by their governments, always rebel against submitting to the nation's laws. We shall see… Restore to the nation's full domain the conceded deposits, which they keep as simple reserves, preventing the country's progress…

Another entry, dated March 9, 1938 reads:

> On the 7th, by conduct of the United States Embassy, the oil companies' representatives asked to meet with me. They said their companies faced the impossibility of complying with the verdict, and wanted a consultation to see if compliance could be postponed. They were told the process had ended, and they had to comply with it.
>
> At 10 p.m. the same day, I met with the leaders of the oil union, who informed me that they had decided to terminate their working contracts, having seen the companies' rebellious attitude, expressing once more their support of the government's decisions…
>
> Mexico has today the great opportunity of freeing itself from the political and economic pressures exerted by the oil companies [which have been] exploiting, for their own benefit, one of our major natural resources…
>
> Several revolutionary administrations have tried to intervene in the subsoil concessions granted to foreign companies, but circumstances have not been propitious because of existing international pressures and internal problems. But today conditions are different; there are no armed confrontations within the country, and a new world war is at the door. England and the United States frequently speak in favor of democracy and the sovereignty of nations, so it may be the moment to see if their governments will do as they say when Mexico makes use of its sovereign rights…
>
> On returning from Zacatepec… I called out of the car to General Francisco Múgica, Secretary of Communications. I told him of my decision to expropriate the oil companies' assets if they refused to comply with the Supreme Court's ruling.
>
> We agreed that another opportunity to restore the nation's oil wealth is unlikely to present itself. Not doing so out of fear of possible diplomatic demands from England or the United States would be unpatriotic, and the people would — justifiably — hold us responsible.

On March 10, Cárdenas wrote:

> Up to now, no official mention has been made of the intention to expropriate. When the time comes, notice will be given.
>
> In political and financial centers, it is generally believed, even by the companies, that the government might arrive but only to occupy the industrial installations.
>
> A decision on this serious matter cannot wait much longer.

On March 18, around 10 p.m., the expropriation of the oil companies was announced. On March 19, with the nation in turmoil and in the midst of a strong international reaction, Cárdenas went on a picnic with his family and close friends.

The 1917 Constitution set the foundation for the rule of law. But when the time came to transfer power, the newly formed democratic institutions proved weak. The successions of 1920, 1924 and 1928-29 were all decided at gunpoint.

It was through the process of consolidating the new political system, while at the same time keeping internal peace, that Calles' National Revolutionary Party was formed. The precursor to today's Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI), >>

Photo courtesy of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas.

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas campaigns for Head of Government of Mexico City, 1997.

the PNR was a conglomeration of regional parties and regional political bosses that soon became the center of real power in Mexico. That power was exercised by Calles, who came to be known as the Jefe Máximo (Maximum Chief) during the six years after he left the presidency, a period known as the Maximato.

During the Maximato, successions were resolved peacefully, even when political confrontations between PNR candidates arose, as occurred in 1930 and 1934. It wasn't until 1935, when a stark confrontation between Calles and President Cárdenas put an end to the Maximato, that the last word in political decisions was transferred to the president.

In the period between 1934 and 1982, the Mexican political system gradually lost its flexibility and hardened into a rigid political machine, transforming from a system committed to the Revolution's ideals and goals to one that consciously and consistently took action against revolutionary legislation and institutions. The power of the president also grew during this period, particularly with regard to succession. At first, the president played the role of arbiter among competing presidential candidates from the official party. By 1958, however, choosing the party's next presidential candidate became the personal and uncontested decision of the president.

By mid-1986, things began to change: a movement toward contested elections emerged and expanded within the PRI, and more widely, within Mexico's dominant political system. The central demands of this movement, which became known as the Democratic Current, were for the government to pay more attention to the people's living conditions and for the party to abide by its own internal rules and elect its candidates through democratic procedures. The stage was set for a confrontation over the upcoming 1988 presidential and congressional elections.

The Democratic Current gained support among the party's rank and file and began to challenge the president's unofficial powers, among them the power to choose a successor. The party apparatus closed ranks around the president, harshly attacking the reformers. Every possibility of acting within the party was denied the movement's members. When the president exercised his informal privilege of designating the party's presidential candidate, the Democratic Current broke with the PRI and became part of the opposition, joining with other political parties and social organizations to form the Frente Democrático Nacional (National Democratic Front, FDN).

Democratization from within the system turned out to be a losing battle, but it was, nonetheless, the beginning of a political transition. In spite of the opposition's mobilization of voters, the PRI stole the 1988 election through massive electoral fraud. While the FDN used every legal and political resource at its disposal in an attempt to stop the consummation of fraud, people were not organized, and there was no culture of citizen participation in politics. The FDN didn't have the capacity to peacefully assemble a popular movement strong enough to force the PRI to acknowledge defeat.

In spite of the setback, the Democratic Front continued to work to democratize Mexico's political system, eventually transforming itself

into a new party, the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Party of the Democratic Revolution, PRD). Its first goal was to establish respect for the vote. It took years and several important events — some of them painful and tragic — to turn this goal into reality. Over 600 people were assassinated — with their killers going unpunished — in the process of organizing the new political party. Fraud remained routine in local elections, and progressive opposition movements were repressed. The Zapatistas rose up in southern Mexico. Presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio was assassinated. Mexico suffered through a deep economic crisis.

Meanwhile, people were becoming more and more conscious that their participation and their vote could change Mexico. They began putting pressure on the state, pushing through political and legal reforms that made electoral authority independent of the executive. Opposition parties and candidates began to be represented in the media. Finally, in the midterm elections of 1997, the official party lost its absolute majority in the lower chamber of Congress, and the PRD candidate was elected mayor of Mexico City. From then on, Mexico continued to have real, if imperfect, elections.

However, creating a system in which the vote of every citizen is fully respected is only part of what the Mexican people have been fighting for. Democracy is that and much more. It is equality, and Mexican society is one of the most unequal in the world: the richest 1 percent earn 9.2 percent of gross income while the poorest 1 percent receive just 0.07 percent, that is, 130 times less. Democracy is social welfare, and poverty affects 65.6 percent of the population, a total of 70.1 million people. It is social welfare, and over 40 percent of the labor force lacks social security, and 26 million Mexicans work in the informal economy. Democracy means growth, and the Mexican economy shrank 8 percent in 2009 and is predicted to grow by just 1 percent this year. Democracy means opportunity, and during the past year over a million formal jobs were lost, and 20 million people were unemployed. It means opportunity in Mexico, and over 12 million Mexicans have been forced by circumstances to live and work in irregular migratory situations in the United States. It means access to knowledge, and education and research budgets are being cut.

This situation may be in part a consequence of the world economic crisis, but it is also the result of three decades of bad policies that prioritized the concentration of wealth and looked outside our nation's borders for the solutions to Mexican problems.

To move forward, we have to remember the goals for which Mexicans struggled in the last century. The revolutionaries fought for democracy; for equality and justice; for education, knowledge and culture; for a just and generous nation; for shared progress; and for a fair and equitable world order. If we want to build a new Mexico, the Revolution's teachings can show us the way.

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas is one of the founders of the PRD. He served as the Head of Government of Mexico City from 1997-99 and is currently president of the Fundación para la Democracia. He spoke for CLAS on February 3, 2010. This article is adapted from a transcript of his talk.

Signs marking a historic route in commemoration of Mexico's dual anniversaries.

Image by Gary Denness.

Photo by Fernando Castillo/Latin Content/Getty Images.

President Felipe Calderón speaks at a ceremony honoring heroes of the War of Independence.

MEXICO'S CENTENNIALS

Limited Independence, Limited Democracy

by Lucas Novaes and Sinaia Urrusti Frenk

This year, Mexico is commemorating its two most important historical landmarks since Spain's conquest in 1519: the bicentennial of the War of Independence and the centennial of the Mexican Revolution. While the Calderón administration has planned an elaborate national celebration with thousands of events across the country, in his talk for the Center for Latin American Studies, Mexican historian Lorenzo Meyer was adamant that there is little to celebrate. The nation is suffering from low growth, inequality and a tsunami of crime related to drug trafficking. Indeed, Meyer, one of the country's most active political analysts, echoed a 2008 report by the U.S. Joint Forces Command that characterized Mexico as being in danger of becoming a failed state.

In the course of his talk, Meyer advanced a hypothesis that is unlikely to earn him an invitation to any of this year's celebratory events. "The Mexican Revolution is meaningless in regard to the substantive issues," he said, "because we are exactly like the rest of Latin America, and the other Latin American countries didn't have a revolution 100 years ago." To support his claim, Meyer cited statistics comparing poverty and inequality in Mexico and Latin America. Mexican income inequality is actually slightly worse than the Latin American average. The poorest 20 percent of the population receives 3.6 percent of total

income; in Latin America, that figure is 3.8 percent. Mexico does slightly better on poverty: according to the United Nations, 34 percent of Mexicans live below the poverty line, while the regional average is approximately 40 percent. The country also lags behind on growth. The International Monetary Fund's (IMF) figures show that, during the last decade, the Mexican economy grew an average of 1.9 percent per year, while Latin American countries grew, on average 3.7 percent per year — almost twice as much.

How did Mexico reach this discouraging point? To find an answer, Meyer went back to colonial times. New Spain — as Mexico was then known — was, he said, the perfect colony. Not only was it the most productive Spanish territory in the Americas, it was also the most tractable. While New Spain experienced many local rebellions over local issues, there were no significant challenges to Spanish rule after the fall of the Aztec Empire as there were in Peru, Spain's second most important colony.

The initial move toward independence, when it came, was more a response to external events — the Napoleonic Wars — than it was a desire to overturn the status quo. Miguel Hidalgo y Castilla, a *criollo* (Mexican-born Spanish) priest in the city of Querétaro, fomented a plot to separate Mexico from Napoleonic Spain and place it under the rule of King Ferdinand VII, the deposed Spanish monarch. When his plan was exposed, Hidalgo y Castilla issued the famous "Grito de Dolores" urging his parishioners to march against the government. In addition to the priests and intellectuals who had formed his initial movement, Indians and peasants responded to his call, and their grievances began to overlay

Image from Paliano/Wikimedia Commons.

King Ferdinand VII of Spain (Portrait by Vicente López Portaña, 1829).

the original, essentially conservative, focus of the insurrection. Hidalgo y Castilla soon found himself at the head of an undisciplined army whose slogan was, "Death to the Gachupines," (a derogatory term for *peninsulares* or natives of Spain). After a few early victories — including the taking of Guanajuato, which resulted in a massacre of local criollos and peninsulares — Hidalgo y Castillas was defeated and executed.

José María Morelos, a mestizo priest and keen military strategist, took up the fight, declaring independence from Spain and even drafting a new Constitution. When he, too, was executed in 1815, the rebellion devolved into a succession of local revolts that continued to bedevil the authorities for the next several years. Events took a particularly curious turn in 1820-21 when Colonel Augustín de Iturbide was sent to defeat the rebels in Oaxaca. A staunch conservative known for the brutality with which he had put down the insurrection in its early years, Iturbide hardly seemed the man destined to cleave Mexico from Spain. However, a coup on the peninsula coincided with his expedition; the victorious generals forced King Ferdinand VII to reinstate the liberal Constitution of 1812. Incensed by Spain's swing to

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the left, Iturbide joined with the rebels and marched on Mexico City. Thus was independence won, but it was an independence that reinforced the power of the traditional elite. As Meyer pointed out, Mexico changed to avoid change. There was a relocation of the capital from Madrid to Mexico City, but there was no real transformation in the political power structure.

An important consequence of the War of Independence was the consolidation of the negative relationship between the elite and the lower classes. The tiny group of whites and mestizos at the top of the social pyramid had traditionally regarded the lower classes as dangerous. Events such as the massacre in Guanajuato confirmed this belief and unleashed a merciless counteroffensive that Meyer compared to the Guatemalan government's attack on indigenous communities in the 1980s and '90s. The peculiar end to the War of Independence, with the conservative Iturbide essentially co-opting and neutralizing the rebels, left inter-class hostilities intact. In Meyer's words, "Mexico began independence as a failed state and continued that way until the 1880s."

In the intervening decades, banditry was widespread and law enforcement rare. This gave birth to an age of bandit-heroes who emerged from the lower classes and dared to confront the corrupt social structure. Meyer referenced the work of Chris Frazer, an American historian who has argued that from this era on, legendary bandits have formed an important part of the Mexican popular imagination.

The weakness and lawlessness of post-Independence Mexico brought it hard against the parameters of its new sovereignty: its proximity to the United States. U.S. troops crossed the border several times in the 19th century, most importantly during the Mexican-American War (or the First North American Intervention, as it is known south of the Rio Grande), in which Mexico lost 55 percent of its territory. Mexico soon learned that it had won merely "independence within limits." To this day, Mexico cannot aspire to be a fully independent nation due to its economic dependence on and geographical proximity to the United States, Meyer argued.

Stability began to be reestablished during the administration of Benito Juárez and was consolidated during "the Porfiriato," the period from 1876 to 1911 dominated by President Porfirio Díaz. In the words of Meyer, Juárez and Díaz "created a liberal dictatorship that was able to run things." Díaz "introduced law and order," Meyer commented, adding, "Well, order more

Calavera zapatista (Zapatista skeleton), by the Mexican illustrator J.G. Posada (1852-1913).

Image by J.G. Posada.

Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

This composite picture portrays Francisco Madero leaving the National Palace on February 9, 1913, the first of the Ten Tragic Days that would end in his assassination.

than law." The dictator was viewed very positively in the United States, and the U.S. stopped intervening in Mexico during his tenure in office.

In Díaz's success, however, lay the seed of his ultimate failure. A brilliant politician, Díaz always knew who was who in the local political arenas across Mexico. He was a master at spotting and countering those who were capable of making trouble for him. By creating such a centralized and personalized system, he also eliminated all those capable of succeeding him. As Díaz aged, the problem of transferring power became more acute.

It was against this backdrop that Francisco I. Madero, a wealthy member of the elite, waged an "anti-reelection" campaign against Díaz and ran for the presidency in 1910. Madero was jailed and escaped into exile, and Díaz was reelected in a blatantly fraudulent election. From his base in San Antonio, Texas, Madero organized an armed resistance to the Díaz government that ultimately brought him to the presidency. In the process, he unleashed the Mexican Revolution, a force that ultimately proved to be beyond his control. As Meyer noted, Madero's original intention was "to modernize the political structure, not to create a revolution or to involve the dangerous classes."

Madero was overthrown and then shot in early 1913, and the Mexican Revolution recommenced with multiple factions fighting one another, initiating another long period of instability. While the Revolution is generally considered to have ended in 1920, the following decade continued to see outbreaks of violence. Meyer credited Lázaro Cárdenas with finally restoring peace and "a new kind of stability." "Díaz's stability was political control," he said. "The new stability was created by the introduction of huge, historical reforms," including agrarian and labor reforms and the professionalization of the army. It was "stability with social justice." Unfortunately for Mexico, this period of reform did not last beyond Cárdenas' term in office (1934-40). Instead, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI) capitalized on these gains to consolidate what Meyer termed, tongue planted firmly in cheek, "the best authoritarian system in Latin America — perhaps in the world."

Under the PRI, Mexico commenced a 70-year-long period of uninterrupted one-party rule. The *priistas* solved the problem of succession that had foiled Porfirio Díaz by allotting each president only one term in office but allowing him to handpick his successor with the help of

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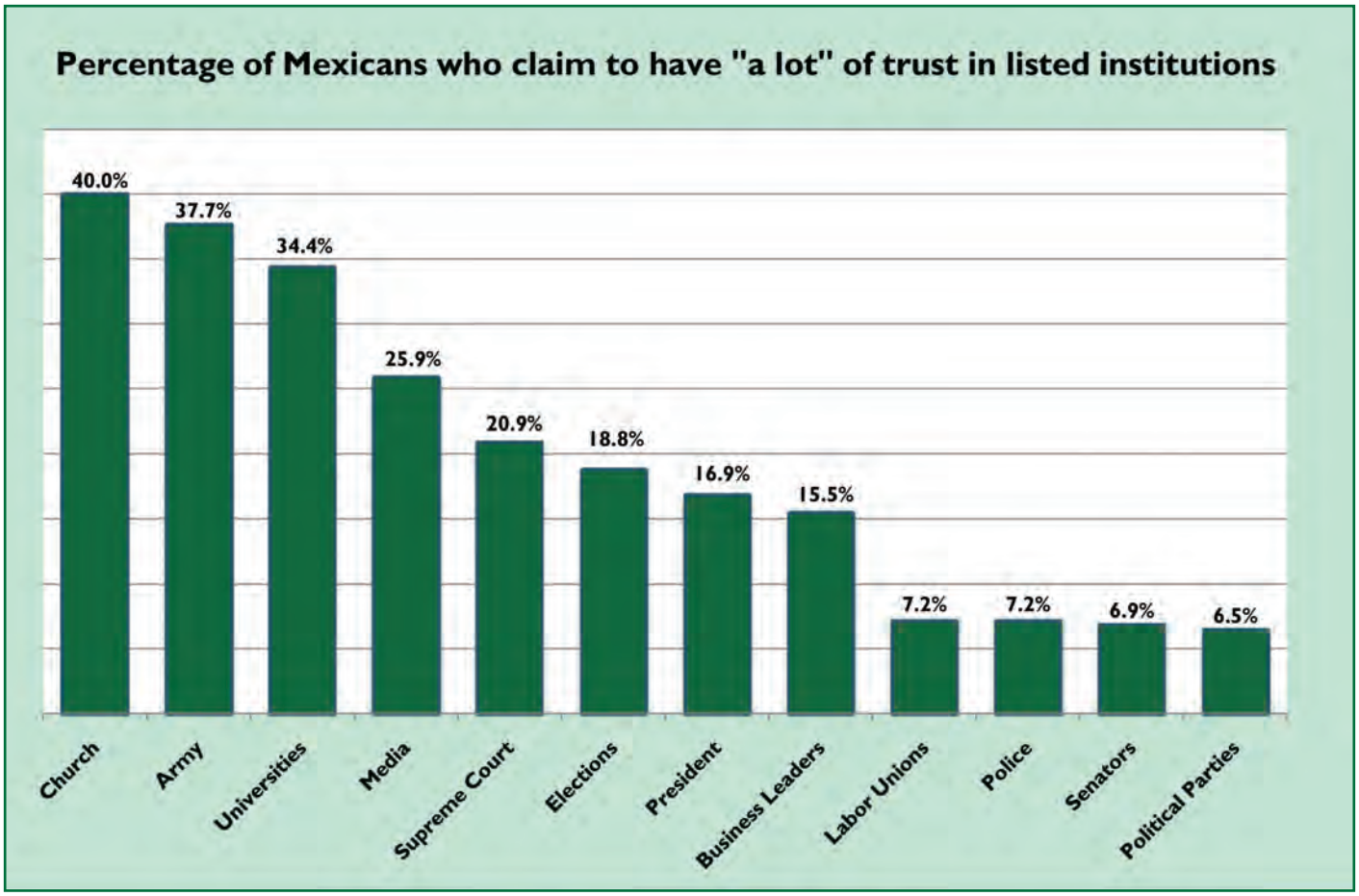

Data from the "Economía, gobierno y politica" poll conducted by Consulta Mitofsky, May 2010.

top party leaders. Meyer summed up this period saying, "If the legacy of Independence is independence within limits, the legacy of the Revolution is democracy within limits."

In spite of the corruption and stunted democracy that characterized the rule of the PRI, many Mexicans held positive views of the government for several decades. One of the goals of the Revolution had been to reduce the gap between the rich and poor, and the PRI initially presided over a period of economic development and growth that seemed to promise progress toward that goal. Meyer cited a public opinion survey from the 1960s that found that, in general, Mexicans were proud of the Revolution and of their political system, even though they were well-aware of the existence of widespread corruption.

By the late 1970s "the dream began to unravel," Meyer said. The 1980s brought the crash in oil prices, and 1994 saw the Mexican Peso Crisis in which the currency underwent a severe devaluation. The end of the PRI's grip on power with the 2000 election of Vicente Fox, a member of the Partido Acción Nacional (National Action Party, PAN), led to a brief period of optimism. However, the drug war unleashed by his successor, the current president Felipe Calderón, has dragged Mexico back down the road toward instability.

A recent survey by Consulta Mitofsky, Mexico's leading public opinion research firm, made clear how far public confidence has fallen since the 1960s. Tellingly, the institutions most distrusted by Mexicans are those necessary for a well-functioning democracy. The five institutions with the lowest levels of trust were the Senate, unions, the police, Congress and, in last place, political parties. Surprisingly, the most trusted institutions in Mexico were none other than those inherited from colonial times, namely the Church, universities and the army.

Even though Spain no longer holds a pivotal position in Mexico, in many ways the U.S. has stepped into that country's former role. For Meyer, the world is small from Mexico's perspective: the outside world is the United States. The dependence of Mexico's economy on its northern partner can be quickly assessed. Mexican trade is more concentrated in the United States than at any time since World War II, when Mexico was cut off from Asian and European markets, accounting for 77 percent of Mexican exports. Additionally, more than 10 percent of Mexico's population lives on U.S. soil, making remittances the nation's second largest source of income. Thus, it was no surprise that during the recent financial crisis the Mexican economy was hit like almost no other — according to the

IMF, only 15 countries experienced a more severe decline in real GDP in 2009 than Mexico.

Even Mexico's main security problem, narco-trafficking, is inextricably linked to the country's geographical proximity to the U.S. drug market. For Meyer, the current situation of extreme drug-related violence is related to the larger problem of limited independence. "Dependency theory was unfashionable for a while," Meyer said, referring to a set of theories that gained currency in the 1960s and posited that resource-exporting, developing nations are at a perpetual disadvantage in their dealings with industrialized countries, "but I think it is still very useful for explaining our relationship with the outside world."

If crises are an opportunity to advance constructive change, Mexico is missing the window of opportunity. According to Meyer, Mexico is instead going through one of those periods in history when "mediocrity is everywhere." Perhaps the wars commemorated this year brought positive and necessary change to Mexican society, but these movements also crystallized into a partially independent state plagued by chronic political and social inequality. Meyer may be right: perhaps the most appropriate way to commemorate the successes and failures of the Mexican War of Independence and the Revolution is to study them in an effort to understand Mexico's current crisis.

Lorenzo Meyer is a public intellectual and emeritus professor of History at El Colegio de México in Mexico City. He spoke for CLAS on March 31, 2010.

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President Calderón attends the presentation of the program of activities commemorating Mexico's dual centennials.

Photo by Alfredo Guerrero.

Photo by Guillermo Arias/Associated Press.

Practitioners of "yoga without borders" meet on opposite sides of the Tijuana–San Diego border fence.

THE BORDER

Permeable Membrane

by Tyche Hendricks

The hostility and frustration embodied in the new Arizona law empowering police to detain suspected undocumented immigrants bubbled up from a potent brew that includes a tough economy, border enforcement strategies that shifted illegal migration routes from California over to Arizona and the failure of Congress to act on immigration reform. In addition, during Arizona's boom years, the state attracted both American retirees and younger immigrant workers, leading to a generational culture clash between older voters unaccustomed to Arizona's historical ties to Mexico and newly arrived Mexicans.

The law's passage triggered a renewed push for an overhaul of federal immigration policy, but it also led to predictable calls for more police and fencing to "seal" the 2,000-mile border. Indeed the "secure the border" stance has long been a popular — and easy — position for Democrats and Republicans alike. Federal outlays for border enforcement have grown five-fold over the past decade, with $11.4 billion budgeted for 2010.

My reporting in the borderlands made it clear to me that the problem of illegal immigration cannot be solved at the border. Nor is Arizona's scapegoating of individual immigrants likely to be effective; unauthorized workers (more than half of whom are Mexican) come here in response to much larger forces embedded in the deeply intertwined economies of the United States and Mexico.

I first went to the border as a reporter for The San Francisco Chronicle to cover undocumented immigration — an issue most Americans now associate with the border. In my reporting in Mexico, I met migrants in Sonora waiting for the right moment to try their luck at jumping the fence: a brother and sister from Oaxaca carrying a Fresno phone number and a supply of leathery, homemade corn tortillas; a couple from Chiapas hoping to make it over with their two small children; a pregnant woman

from Mexico City who had become separated from her husband on their first attempt to cross. On the Arizona side of the line, I spent time with Border Patrol agents "cutting for sign," or tracking migrants in the desert; with armed vigilantes who boasted of nighttime immigrant patrols; and with a county medical examiner working to identify the hundreds of bodies of those who died trying to make it to America.

In reporting their stories, the two sides of the line felt to me like parallel worlds, cut off from one another. That's the way a lot of news coverage treats the border: as a divide. And if my reporting had ended there, that's all I would have seen. But my editor let me go back to the borderlands. And in the course of multiple reporting trips over several years, other stories came into focus and with them a fuller sense of the borderlands as a dynamic region that straddles the boundary and extends into two countries.

I saw the way that both Mexican and American families have been drawn to the border by the maquiladora economy, the way that Mexican border cities are slammed by both cartel violence and growing drug addiction and the way that endangered species are further threatened by both countries' diversion of Colorado River water. The two nations — and the people of the borderlands — are linked in myriad ways. Like a cell wall, the border regulates what crosses it, but there's plenty flowing back and forth. And nowhere was that as vivid as at one rural ferry crossing.

A marker on the Tijuana–San Diego border.
(Photo by Nathan Gibbs.)

The green-brown water of the Rio Grande swirls and eddies as it flows eastward past the overhanging trees on the shore at Los Ebanos, Texas, site of the last hand-pulled ferry crossing on the U.S.–Mexico border. The steel barge, tethered to a system of cables and pulleys, plies the river from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day. The ferry's deck can accommodate three cars, a dozen pedestrians and a few stocky men in feed store caps and dusty blue jeans who grasp a rope spanning the river and pull rhythmically, leaning their bodies into the work. On the 39th pull, the ferry floats across the midline of the river, leaving the United States and entering Mexico.

Elsewhere along its length, the international line is marked by a steel wall flooded with stadium lights or a few strands of barbed wire tacked to wooden fence posts. At the San Ysidro port of entry, a painted yellow stripe across 24 lanes of traffic indicates the place where one country ends and the other begins. At Reynosa, a plaque in the center of a bridge over the Rio Grande marks the dividing line. Here at Los Ebanos, the river's midpoint exists somewhere on the muddy bottom, but no sign points it out. It must be imagined.

When most Americans think of the border, they think of a line on a map or a fence erected in the desert sand. Politicians talk about "sealing the border" and debate how much hardware and manpower are needed to accomplish the task. The 1,952-mile border is indeed a boundary — a dividing line between two countries with distinct histories, traditions and languages. It is the world's longest frontier between a developed and a developing country. But the border is also a very permeable membrane where commerce and culture, air and water, workers and students, pollution and disease flow back and forth daily.

Here on the ferry on the river's surface, people, cars, bicycles, groceries and small loads of goods travel back and forth. There are some tourists, drawn by the quaintness of this international gateway between two country villages, but most passengers are local. They live in Los Ebanos, named for the grand ebony trees growing there, or in the Mexican town of Díaz Ordaz, a couple of miles down the road. They take the ferry (50 cents for pedestrians, $2.50 for vehicles) to work, to the supermarket or to visit relatives. They know each other and the ferrymen and the customs inspectors on each bank. For them, the border is not so much a boundary line as it is a meeting point, a place where different parts of their lives converge.

More than that, the border is the axis of a region. There are obvious differences between life on the Mexican side and the American side. And each section of the border — from the Lower Rio Grande Valley to the Paso del Norte to the

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Photo by Jerry Reek/photomondiale.com.

Los Ebanos Ferry.

high Sonoran Desert to the Tijuana/San Diego metropolis — has its own particular character. Some scholars have described these subregions as transborder corridors, each with a distinctive culture defined by its geography, economy and population. But in every part of the borderlands, and on both sides of the line, the region is defined by its proximity to the border and to the country on the other side. The land is one continuous place. The history is interconnected. And the people who inhabit the borderlands interact frequently across the international divide.

It's not as if there is no border line. Homeland security inspections are a fact of life, even at the rustic ferry crossing at Los Ebanos. And binational tensions play out frequently, whether over pollution or truck traffic or the causes and consequences of drug-related violence. But equally real are the relationships that link the two sides, just as the little hand-pulled barge does each day. The border's influence, like the muddy water, laps at both countries.

At this juncture where the United States and Mexico meet, a border culture has evolved that sets the region apart from other areas of either country. Michael Dear, a UC Berkeley geographer, calls the U.S.–Mexico borderlands a "third nation," a hybrid place where many residents have adopted a transnational mindset, conducting their lives in both countries, even as the border wall is being constructed between them. Journalist Ricardo Sandoval calls the border a seam that stitches the two nations together. For University of Arizona historian Oscar J. Martínez, who has examined the varying levels of transborder interaction in the lives of Mexican and American residents of the region, the borderlands is a binational region.

"Nowhere else do so many millions of people from two so dissimilar nations live in such close proximity and interact with each other so intensely," Martínez has written. "What distinguishes borderlanders from the rest of the citizenry is the effect of the boundary on their daily lives. On the one hand, the border is a barrier that limits activity and hinders movement, but, on the other, it offers tremendous opportunities to benefit from proximity to another nation."

Mexican migration to the United States is part of a complex interplay of economic, cultural and technological forces, argue Douglas Massey, Jorge Durand and Nolan Malone in their book *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican*

Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration. "Migration is a natural outgrowth of the disruptions and dislocations that occur in this process of market expansion and penetration," they write. "The international migration of labor generally parallels the international movement of goods and capital, only in reverse."

An immigration overhaul that includes legal ways for Mexican workers to enter the country — combined with tough sanctions on employers who flout immigration and labor laws, and probably a universal work authorization document for all U.S. workers — is a necessary first step in dealing with the issue of unauthorized immigration. But by itself, it's not a sufficient solution.

Mexico is our neighbor and third-largest trading partner, and we are Mexico's first largest. Mexicans have been migrating to the United States for over a century, taking jobs not only in border states but in the steel mills and stockyards of Chicago, the mines of Colorado and the orchards of Michigan. Our two countries — with their interconnected histories and economies — must work closely together to help Mexico provide meaningful jobs for her people and encourage investment at home.

There are plenty of opportunities. Joint investments in improving Mexico's economy, infrastructure, educational system and the democratic and judicial institutions of civil society are more likely to deter migration than are billions of dollars spent on fences and policing. That's a proposal put forward by American University Professor Robert Pastor and Jeff Faux of the Economic Policy Institute, among others. Why should American taxpayers worry about Mexican highways or schools or ports or courtrooms? asks former Mexican Foreign Minister Jorge Castañeda bluntly. "Well, because the countries are so intertwined that everything spills over. And if you don't have jobs and you don't have law enforcement and you don't have cooperation on these issues between the two countries, you have consequences: you have drug trafficking, you have immigration, you have less trade, you have real dangers and problems for American citizens in Mexico."

Until American and Mexican policymakers get serious about that collaboration, border residents, in Arizona and elsewhere, will bear the brunt of uncontrolled immigration, not to mention the brutal drug war. It's not surprising that their patience is wearing thin. But border communities are also the places where we can most clearly see the ties that bind the United States and Mexico, where Americans and Mexicans conduct their lives on both sides of the boundary and grapple together with shared problems.

We can take inspiration from the doctors I met in Nogales, Arizona, and Nogales, Sonora, collaborating on health care improvements. Or the environmentalists in the Imperial and Mexicali valleys teaming up to fight polluters and protect the air and water that they share. Or the Texas university leaders encouraging Mexican students who wish to enroll in border universities because they understand that Mexico's well-being affects their own state's future. It's that spirit — rather than profiling people with foreign accents — that will lead to solutions.

The border is a place that's alive with the energy of cultural exchange and international commerce, freighted with the burdens of too-rapid growth and binational conflicts and underlain by a deep sense of history. It is much more complicated, indeed much richer, than most people who live hundreds of miles from it usually imagine. Both nations have made a symbol of the border, often with overheated rhetoric, but for 12 million people, it is simply home. It is more a borderlands than a border line.

Tyche Hendricks is an editor at KQED Public Radio and a lecturer in the Graduate School of Journalism at UC Berkeley. Her book *The Wind Doesn't Need a Passport: Stories from the U.S.–Mexico Borderlands* was released in May by the University of California Press. She spoke for CLAS on May 6, 2010.

Photo by Sandy Huffaker Jr.

Photo by Neil O'Halloran.

A hawksbill turtle that may outlive many governments.

ENVIRONMENT

Surviving the Political Storms

by Paul Steinberg

How can we govern the Earth's resources sustainably when the institutions of governance are themselves subject to chronic turnover? Consider the life of a sea turtle hatchling born on a Caribbean beach in 1960. From the time that it first waddled precariously to the sea, to the day when it finally reached sexual maturity a half century later, it had to navigate a succession of political and economic storms. During that period, the world saw more than 200 successful military coups. From 1946 to 2003, 229 armed conflicts took place in 148 nations. From 1970 to 2006, 39 countries experienced triple-digit annual inflation for more than one year.

Changes such as these can affect whether sensitive beach habitat has protected status, whether tourist-based conservation strategies are able to thrive and whether fishermen respect the law. The environmental movements that have arisen throughout the world in recent decades often point to the need for change in our thinking, in our daily practices and in our political institutions. Yet in societies subject to chronic political and economic upheaval, the associated churning of institutions threatens to undercut efforts at sustainable development.

Rethinking Policy Change

What does it take to bring about needed changes in government policies? Research on this question has focused almost exclusively on the United States and other stable industrialized countries. Against a backdrop of stable institutions, researchers have found that major reforms are typically associated with changes in social conditions, such as growth in the influence of NGOs, the energy crisis of the 1970s or the election of Ronald Reagan with his anti-regulatory agenda. They point to key moments, such as the installation of a new legislature or committee chair or to swings in national mood, as the windows of opportunity that make policy change possible.

But what does this literature tell us about policy change in Latin America and other regions where political upheaval and economic crisis are the norm? It is certainly true that social change has provided opportunities for reformers in Latin American countries to advance environmental agendas.

- When Amazonian indigenous people mobilized in the early 1990s, catching Bolivia's political establishment by surprise, conservationists and indigenous leaders were quick to forge alliances. They exploited the political opening and made a push for indigenous management of protected areas, leading to the creation of Gran Chaco National Park, the world's largest protected dry tropical forest.
- In Brazil, environmental groups that had maintained a low profile during military rule were animated and united during the democratic transition of the mid-1980s. This political opening provided them an opportunity to push for and to help write an environmental chapter in the new constitution.
- Costa Rican reformers seized the opportunity presented by the Sandinista uprising in neighboring Nicaragua, expropriating land owned by that country's dictator, Anastasio Somoza, and turning it into one of Costa Rica's first national parks. They exploited the crisis and drew on longstanding nationalist sentiment to help consolidate what is today one of the world's great national park systems.

Clearly, large-scale shifts in national conditions provide opportunities for policy innovation and institutional reform. But what happens when there is "too much" change? The very conditions that in moderation promote policy change in stable democracies may, when present in excess, inhibit it by preventing the consolidation of reforms. After all, moments of crisis provide an opening for opponents of environmental regulation as well. Even without actual reversals of policy, major political and economic developments can distract public attention, leading to a decline in funding or lapses in regulatory oversight.

Consider the following examples:

- In the mid-1990s, Ecuador's environment minister Yolanda Kakabadse was doing an exceptional job of reforming policies and practices to promote sustainable development. Her efforts attracted substantial international support and won praise from domestic conservation groups — until her government was ousted in a coup.
- Guatemala's attempts to attract international funding for forest-based climate mitigation projects have foundered because the country's legal and institutional uncertainty has deterred potential partners.
- In the early 1990s, Bolivian environmental reformers created a national environmental trust fund to "dampen the oscillations" associated with political change and budgetary cycles. They created a solid organizational structure that attracted significant funding from foreign governments and the World Bank and served as a model that was subsequently replicated throughout the developing world. Yet after a change of government in the late 1990s, the fund was broken up and scattered among various agencies, ultimately scaring away donors.

In 1987, the Brundtland Commission famously defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." To achieve this goal requires putting in place new institutions and social practices that endure for decades and even centuries. Yet as these examples demonstrate, environmental sustainability requires sustainable institutions.

The need for institutions that last carries significant implications for social science research on policy and governance. When the durability of institutions is no longer the default assumption for theories of change, the question becomes: What mechanisms can be used to create institutional resilience in the face of social instability?

Tethering to Professional Bureaucracies

Policy reformers in unstable political systems are acutely aware of the tenuous nature of their influence, and they frequently pursue strategies with this limitation in mind. They can often be found attaching numerous tethers to their new policy initiatives, like boat owners at the docks before an approaching squall. Often the social storm makes a mockery of these attempts, tossing the institutional structure onto the rocky shoals. In other cases, however, the tethers hold, and new policies achieve a measure of consolidation over time.

There are several tethers at reformers' disposal, each with its own strengths and limitations. The classic approach is to embed a new policy or set of policies in government bureaucracies that provide long-term public goods and have a measure of insulation from the whims of patronage politics.

A number of East Asian countries benefit from highly professional bureaucracies that serve as a buffer against the effects of turnover and crisis. In most developing and

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post-communist countries, however, bureaucracies provide at best a thin thread of continuity across administrations. In these settings, political change at the executive level is associated with turnover in agency personnel reaching well into the ranks of mid-level managers. Latin America is particularly prone to patronage-based appointments, which lead to job insecurity and compromise the effectiveness of the agency.

One way to hedge against the weaknesses of an unstable bureaucracy is to create a quasi-state agency. These organizations have a government-sanctioned public function but enjoy considerable autonomy in hiring and management decisions, making them less susceptible to manipulation by political leaders.

The number of quasi-state agencies in developing countries has grown in recent decades, partly in response to concerns about patronage and corruption. But institutional autonomy comes at a cost. Apart from concerns about public accountability, autonomy can compromise the effectiveness of an agency that has a transformative mission. The mission of an environmental agency typically requires its staff to confront powerful entrenched interests, such as mining companies, ministries of agriculture and planning unaccustomed to prioritizing environmental concerns and forestry agencies rife with patronage and corruption. Confronting these vested interests is an undertaking that requires high-level political support, not autonomy from politicians.

In fact, the designers of Costa Rica's environment ministry debated this issue at length in the 1980s. Younger participants in that debate — including the future president, Oscar Arias — argued for an autonomous agency. However, their more seasoned colleagues prevailed, contending that only a cabinet-level government agency would have the necessary political clout.

Another strategy is to design institutions so that they are less vulnerable to the effects of political turnover. Bolivia's forest superintendency, created as part of that country's forestry law reforms of 1996, is an example of this approach. To reduce the risk of political manipulation, the superintendent is nominated by the Senate and approved by the president. To promote consistency over time, the appointment lasts for six years, spanning two administrations.

Tethering to Social Constituencies

Reformers attempting to consolidate green policies are not limited to working within state structures. At the broadest level, an important mechanism for durability is the rise of a policy culture — an enduring set of social expectations concerning government action in a particular issue area. With the growth of environmental movements in many non-Western countries, political leaders of all stripes are increasingly expected to address environmental issues. In the Costa Rica of the 1970s, for example, if the president wished to support the national parks, that was laudable but purely optional from a political standpoint. Today, if a Costa Rican president tried to abolish the park system, there would be a national uproar.

Efforts to create a green policy culture depend heavily on non-state actors, such as university scientists, investigative journalists, public interest law firms, organic farmers, professional associations and grassroots advocacy groups. These non-state actors not only broaden awareness of environmental issues but can also serve as an important source of policy continuity. In many countries, NGOs have government-sanctioned roles in managing national parks, monitoring pollution and working with local communities. These groups may also serve as advisors to newly installed political leaders and agency officials, bringing them up to speed on longstanding efforts, advocating for continued financial and political support and offering their technical services as consultants, all of which promote continuity. Crucially, NGOs also provide employment opportunities for reformers to continue developing policy proposals during periods when political shifts prevent their direct participation in government.

Economic constituencies can likewise provide a thread of continuity across administrations. Policies that provide income streams to those who protect natural resources — through ecotourism, community forestry, organic agriculture standards and so forth — create not only economic incentives for sustainable behavior but also political incentives to voice objections if any attempt is made to overturn these policies.

Informal, multipartisan networks among environmentalists are another tool that can be used to ensure consistent advocacy for given policies and programs across successive administrations. Such networks have proven to be an important source of continuity in Costa Rica. There, the boards of directors of environmental NGOs and quasi-state organizations are often explicitly multipartisan in order to bolster the organizations' long-term prospects.

Creating Resilient Networks

Reformers in chronically unstable political systems can improve the odds that their policies will endure by building constituencies and spreading regulatory responsibilities across numerous agencies and levels of government. These linkages can be either horizontal or vertical.

Photo by Stephen Montgomery.

A road is built through the forest to reach oil fields in Ecuador.

Horizontally, the prospects for durability improve when the goals and regulatory routines of new policies aren't confined to a small environmental agency. Traditional government ministries in areas like planning and foreign affairs are stronger than new environmental agencies and therefore better able to withstand social upheaval. In South Africa, for example, officials report that once environmental policy was linked to international trade issues, it became easier to solicit continued high-level support for sustainability.

Vertical tethers can be established both "downward" and "upward." Over the past two decades, dozens of developing countries have decentralized important features of natural resource policy and management to local governments. When a town or regional government has a vested interest in the long-term viability of a protected area (for watershed protection or local tourism, for example), its leaders can be expected to push to safeguard that area despite shifts in national leadership. Strengthening vertical linkages through decentralization does carry risks, however. Local governments are highly susceptible to the influence of resource extraction industries and other powerful economic actors, and local politicians may prioritize short-term income-generating opportunities and their associated political benefits. Thus, it is critical that decentralization be accompanied by national regulatory standards.

Vertical linkages established upward include treaty commitments, participation in transnational advocacy networks and support from international donors. Because organizations like the United Nations Development Program and Conservation International operate outside the domestic political system, they aren't subject to the local pressures threatening domestic environmental institutions. Conversely, foreign organizations lack national roots, and their influence can be quite shallow if other tethers are not secured. To return to the Bolivian example mentioned previously, managers of Bolivia's environmental trust fund did an outstanding job of building an international constituency for their new institution. However, they invested relatively little in building domestic political constituencies that might have been able to prevent the demise of the institution when a new regime came to power.

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Photo by J. Griffin Stewart.

A waterfall in Santa Rosa National Park, Costa Rica, formerly the property of Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza.

Conclusions

Sustainability requires not merely "political will" on the part of states and societies but sustained institutional responses to long-term policy problems ranging from water shortages to deforestation. Yet activists and policy reformers on the front lines of environmental struggles are often so preoccupied with putting out the latest brush fire — a legislative proposal that has stalled in the senate, a company illegally harvesting timber from a park — that they fail to reflect on the long-term prospects of environmental institutions. Proponents of sustainability in Latin America would do well to think about the decades-long process of reforming state institutions and to develop strategies with this long-term goal in mind. This requires a culture shift for environmental and development organizations and their funders, away from an obsessive focus on short-term objectives and toward a more strategic consideration of the long-term consolidation of environmental institutions. More explicit attention should be given to issues like the design of state agencies, the role of policy-oriented, non-state actors and methods for establishing networks of constituencies outside environmental policy agencies.

For social scientists, there is a need to develop a richer understanding of comparative policy processes. The policy sciences have produced theories of change that bear little resemblance to the conditions experienced by most of the world's people and political systems. Meanwhile, the field of comparative politics has largely shunned policy studies in favor of an emphasis on macro-level phenomena such as democratization. As the challenge for new democracies turns from regime change to the business of governance, socially relevant theory is needed to explore the political processes that promote or impede the provision of public goods. The health of people and of ecosystems depends on state institutions doing the right thing over a sustained period of time. For that to happen, researchers and reformers alike need to clearly understand the obstacles they face and the strategies available to surmount them.

* This article is adapted from a chapter of the forthcoming book *Comparative Environmental Politics*, edited by Paul F. Steinberg and Stacy D. VanDeveer, to be published by MIT Press in 2011.

Paul Steinberg is an associate professor of Political Science and Environmental Policy at Harvey Mudd College and a visiting scholar at UC Berkeley's Department of Environmental Science, Policy and Management. He gave a talk for CLAS on April 12, 2010.

HUMAN RIGHTS

An ad urges Guatemalans to report domestic violence.
(Photo by Orlando Sierra/AFP/Getty Images.)

Refuge From Femicide: Facing Gendered Violence in Guatemala

by Anthony Fontes

For 10 years, Rodi Alvarado's husband beat her mercilessly. He used his fists, his belt, his boots, his gun, his knife. He had been a soldier in the Guatemalan military during the country's long civil war, and he would taunt her during the beatings, bragging about having bayoneted babies and burned old people alive during his years in combat. The threat behind the verbal abuse was not lost on Alvarado. She was meant to understand that he would think nothing of killing her, too.

The Guatemalan police were no help. Alvarado went to them repeatedly, but their inaction only emboldened her husband. This is not unusual. The few statistics that are kept show that less than 2 percent of all reported incidents of abuse and murder of women are even investigated; far fewer are brought to court. So, in 1995, Alvarado gathered the courage and the resources to escape to the United States. She applied for and received asylum, only to have it reversed by the U.S. Board of Immigration Appeals four years later.

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It would take 10 more years and the personal intervention of three attorneys general under three separate presidents before she won final approval of her case in 2009. Her victory was highly publicized, garnering front page status in The New York Times. Her lawyer, Karen Musalo, reflected on the enormous importance of this precedent-setting case, telling The Times that Alvarado's search for refuge in the United States "has been the iconic case of domestic abuse as a basis for asylum."

Musalo, who is director of the Center for Gender and Refugee Studies at UC Hastings School of Law, has been involved with every aspect of Alvarado's journey through the U.S. asylum system. Prior to taking on Alvarado's case, she represented Central American refugees fleeing what she termed "traditional forms of political violence and repression" — victims of the civil wars in Guatemala and El Salvador. However, in the years following the signing of peace accords, Musalo and her colleagues found themselves representing a different kind of refugee — women fleeing alone or with their children to escape extreme forms of gender-based violence.

Domestic abuse has long been an issue in Central America — and in the rest of the world — but human rights advocates argue that the rising tide of violence against women in Guatemala goes beyond typical intra-familial conflict. In her talk for the Center for Latin American Studies, Musalo described the killing of Guatemalan women as "femicide," a term most famously employed to describe the legion of raped and mutilated female bodies found in the borderlands of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Rodi Alvarado was not simply fleeing an abusive husband, Musalo argued. She had escaped from institutional and societal prejudices that made safety impossible in her home country.

Femicide is a provocative term. It lifts the murder of women out of the mass of violent crime taking place in Guatemala and highlights its gendered aspect. For Musalo, the label is warranted. In her talk, she was at pains to describe how the violence from which Alvarado and others have fled is directly tied to their identity as women. While violent crime is endemic in postwar Guatemala — homicide rates swelled to around 38 per 100,000 in 2008 — Musalo echoed a growing chorus of voices concerned that the violence directed at women is qualitatively different from other types of violent crime. Many of the bodies of women found in garbage piles and back allies, in the trunks of cars and along the roadside, bear the tell-tale marks of rape and torture. The mutilation of sexual parts is common. Generally, the abuse perpetrated against these women before and after they are killed demonstrates a deep desire to destroy not only the victim's life but also her womanhood.

Who are the perpetrators of these crimes? Why are women the targets of such savage violence? According to Musalo, there are no clear answers to these questions. The Guatemalan government has neither the will nor the capacity to conduct thorough investigations into these killings. In an affidavit submitted in the Alvarado case, Guatemalan lawyer and human rights advocate Hilda Morales Trujillo attests that over 4,000 women were murdered between January 2000 and December 2008. However, she adds that "the absence of effective investigation and prosecution makes it impossible to determine the motive behind each of the killings."

In place of answers, several theories have been put forth to explain the femicides. None completely explains the rising death toll, but taken together, they provide a contextual understanding of why women have been targeted.

The most widely cited theory is that the violence is a legacy of Guatemala's three-decade civil war. The conflict peaked in the mid-1980s when the government employed scorched earth campaigns against indigenous Mayan communities and paramilitary death squads targeted suspected leftist sympathizers in urban areas. A 1996 UN report accused the Guatemalan military of attempting to commit genocide against its Mayan population and found the government responsible for more than 95 percent of the human rights abuses committed during the war. One aspect of the extreme violence that marked this era was the use of gender-based violence as a tool of terror. Noncombatant women were targeted for physical mutilation — the cutting off of breasts for example — and rape. The present-day violence against women is understood as the continued fall-out from the war. Alvarado's husband gloating over his civil war exploits provides a telling example of the continuum of violence in times of war and peace.

Another oft-cited explanation is Guatemala's deep and abiding gender inequality, which is normalized in both cultural and legal terms. Guatemala has always been a deeply patriarchal society that privileges men's authority over women in general and over their wives and children in particular. The 1998 Constitution, for example, explicitly sets forth the husband's rights as the legal head of his family. Furthermore, until the late 1980s, the criminal code treated violence between husband and wife as a private affair in which the law should not intervene; men could also avoid prosecution for rape if they married their victim, who could be as young as 12 years old. Such laws continue to contribute to the high level of impunity that marks Guatemalan society, especially in terms of how men are expected to treat women.

When killers, rapists and domestic abusers know that they have less than a 1 percent chance of being investigated for a crime, they need not fear punishment. Much of the blame for the legal system's incapacity to take on domestic violence has been heaped on the police and judiciary. Both are seen as weak and corrupt by Guatemalans and outside observers alike. Many people refuse to report crimes because to do so is automatically to make oneself a suspect. When a cadaver is found, too often the area isn't cordoned off, and the crime scene is quickly contaminated. The police and the prosecution often compete against each other, refusing to cooperate in an efficient manner. Furthermore, forensic crime investigation tools like DNA sampling, which are commonly used in the United States, are largely absent in Guatemala. The government simply does not have the capacity to employ such methods.

Civil society groups outraged by the government's inability to protect Guatemalan women have won some symbolic victories. The 1996 Constitution included provisions against intra-familial violence and introduced restraining orders into the penal code. Many judges, however, still believe it is "unconstitutional" for the government to intervene in a man's family affairs. There are other laws on the books that show at least a desire to stem the floodtide of abuse and murder: a 2008 law specifies a range of acts of violence against women as criminal and prohibits the invocation of "cultural relativism" as a means of defense, for example. Still, according to UN Special Rapporteur María Isabel Vélez Franco, the number of femicides has increased every year. Clearly, the toxic cocktail of impunity, extreme prejudice against women and the legacy of civil war violence will not be solved by written laws alone.

Photo by Eric Eisenberg/Associated Press.

Rody Alvarado listens as her attorney Karen Musalo explains that her asylum petition was granted.

Continuing femicides have far-reaching implications for the U.S. asylum system and Latin American societies. Both El Salvador and Honduras have murder rates higher than Guatemala's and have shown a rise in woman-killings over the last 10 years. And while Alvarado's recent victory in her asylum claim seems to show that the U.S. is becoming more open to providing refuge for victims of domestic abuse, exile abroad is hardly an ideal solution for most women. But what is the alternative? Rodi Alvarado summed it up starkly in a televised interview. Describing what it is like to live with such extreme daily violence, she said "*…empezamos a creer que sólo la muerte tiene la solución.*" We begin to think that death is the only solution.

Karen Musalo is director of the Center for Gender and Refugee Studies at the University of California, Hastings College of the Law. She spoke for CLAS on Thursday, April 8, 2010.

Anthony Fontes is a graduate student in Geography at UC Berkeley.

Popular songs formed an important cultural backdrop to the Mexican Revolution. This revolutionary-era handbill contains "Popular Maderist Songs" that commemorate the defeat of Porfirio Díaz in Ciudad Juárez and a fallen martyr of the uprising.

Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Hoja. No. I

CANTOS POPULARES MADERISTAS

LA ENTRADA
A CIUDAD JUAREZ

Canción popular

Amigos: les contaré
Lo que en Ciudad Juárez pasó,
Que al gobierno porfirista
Madero lo derrumbó!
Pocos decían ¡ay, señores!
¿Qué pasa con don Porfirio?
¡Pues que está viejo y no puede
Y ahora es el gran delirio!
Pascual Orozco les dijo:
¡Yo tengo los suficientes
Elementos pa la guerra,
Que vivan los insurgentes!
Y
Y decía el pueblo: ¡allí tienen
Puras ametralladoras .....
Y Pancho Villa decía:
¡Son nuestras ó malas horas!
Y el porfirismo en su macho,
Decía calando la espuela,
¡Ló que es aquí les ganamos!
¡No somos chicos de escuela!
Y el maderismo al oírle,
Con toda el alma decía:
Veremos lo que nos toca!
¡Es aurora de otro día!
Entremos, pero parejo,
Y si la toma ganamos,
¡Ya está que á ese mal gobierno
Con su itacate le enviamos!
Y entraron, pero del juerte
Y el triunfo fué verdadero
Y el porfirismo cayó
Al grito ¡viva Madero!

AL HEROICO
Aquiles Serdán

Aquiles Serdán ha muerto,
Todo mundo se decía,
Pero de hacerle justicia
Ya se nos llegará el día.
Serdán fué el mártir querido
En la causa maderismo.
Que echó abajo el mal gobierno
Del llamado porfirismo.
Cuando su muerte se supo
Sodos temían por Madero,
Porque era su buen amigo,
Por eso cayó él primero.
Pero la suerte jué giiena
Y prontito les ganamos,
Y Madero es va nuestro héroe
Y de Serdán Recordamos.
Cuando platiques de él,
Piensa que vive en la
Y que la patria gustosa
Le dará eterna memoria.
¡Que viva Aquiles Serdán!
Del maderismo el primero,
De todos yo soy amigo
Que viva el héroe madero!

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Masks on exhibit in the Museo Rafael Coronel in Zacatecas, Mexico.
Photo courtesy of the Zacatecas Ministry of Tourism.

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