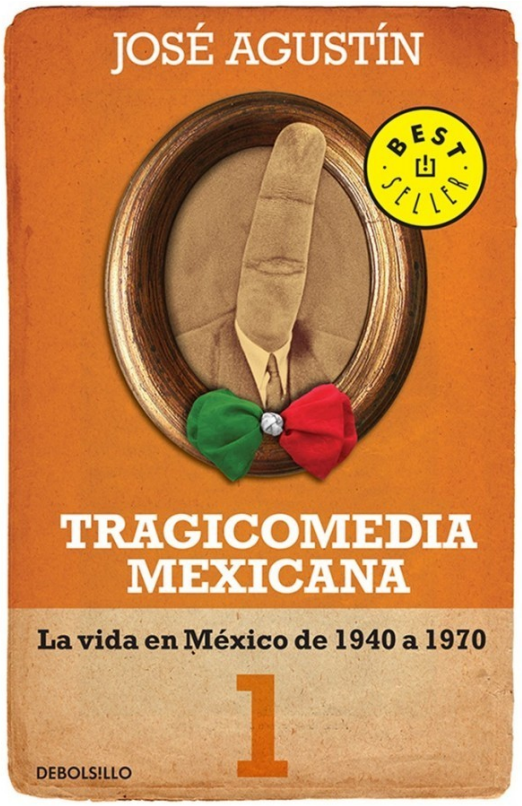
# Mexican Tragicomedy Vol. 1

## The Life of Mexico from 1940 to 1970

José Agustín

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# [About the author]

**José Agustín** was born in Acapulco in 1944. A little less than two decades later he began to publish, placing himself at the forefront of his generation. He was a member of the literary workshop of Juan José Arreola, who published his first novel, *La tumba* , in 1964. He has been a fellow of the Mexican Center of Writers and of the Fulbright and Guggenheim foundations. He has written plays and film scripts, a field in which he directed various projects. Among his works are *De perfil* (1966), *Inventando que sueño* (1968), *Se está haciendo tarde (final en laguna)* (1973, Dos Océanos award from the Biarritz Festival, France), *El rey se acerca a His Temple* (1976), *Deserted Cities* (1984, Colima Narrative Prize), *Near the Fire* (1986), *Prison Rock* (1986), *There is No Censorship* (1988), *Spilled Honey* (1992), *The Belly del Tepozteco* (1993), *Two hours of sun* (1994), *The counterculture in Mexico* (1996), *Flight over the depths* (2008) *Stories Complete* (2001), *The Great Rock Albums* (2001), *Life with my widow* (2004, Mazatlán Literature Prize), *Armablanca* (2006) and *Diario de brigadista* (2010). He has published essays and historical chronicles, including three volumes of *Tragicomedia mexicana* (1990, 1992, 1998). In 2011, the Legislative Assembly of the Federal District awarded him the Medal of Merit in the Arts for his literary career; and he was awarded, along with Daniel Sada, the National Prize for Sciences and Arts that same year.

# [Epigraph]

*To Andrés, Jesús and Agustín, may it be easy for them! and to Mercedes Certucha and Homero Gayosso*

# 1. The Transition (1940-1946)

## Here Comes Golden Eggs!

In 1940, Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo married for the second time and Mexico was on the tail of the tiger. There was intense unrest. Lázaro Cárdenas's revolutionary measures (agrarian reform, strengthening of workers, socialist education and oil expropriation) benefited the people but also aroused active opposition from landowners, bosses, the Church and part of the middle class in the cities. All these forces identified Cárdenas as a communist danger and defended themselves by attacking: investments were reduced, capital fled and a speculative fever of urban land was unleashed, which in 1940 increased in value by up to 200 percent. The rich also rushed to buy luxury imported cars, and Packards, Lincolns and Cadillacs circulated the streets, paved or not, of Mexican cities.

The big foreign companies, for their part, contributed to the economic chaos by withdrawing their money from Mexican banks, which simply stopped granting loans. As usual, the government continued to overextend itself and therefore printed banknotes vigorously; price increases, especially for basic goods, deepened the shortage and ended up exasperating the entire population, since no one was still recovering from the effects of the oil expropriation and, trying not to worry too much, the great war was taking place in Europe, Africa and Asia.

The rejection of Cárdenas benefited two military leaders: Joaquín Amaro, a radical right-winger, and the "moderate" Juan Andrew Almazán, a former Huerta member, "businessman and commander of troops," who in January 1940 founded the Revolutionary Party of National Unification ( PRUN ). Amaro was not far behind and created the Federation of Revolutionary Oppositional Groups ( FARO ). The two new dissidents of the system announced their candidacies for the presidency of the Republic and (Almazán with greater caution) spoke out against socialist education, the ejidos, the Confederation of Mexican Workers ( CTM ), the left, the expropriation of oil and the anti-democracy of the official party. Both proposed "to restore the confidence of investors and rectify the mistakes made." However, it soon became clear that Almazán was far ahead of Amaro.

The enormous strength that the right was gaining was decisive for President Cárdenas to choose a successor, since his reforms to the system did not include the will to democratize but rather the consolidation of the impressive powers of the presidency. Within the Party of the Mexican Revolution ( PRM ) there were two vigorous cam-

paigns seeking the official candidacy for "the big one." One of them, that of General Francisco J. Múgica, Secretary of Communications, represented the continuity and expansion of the revolutionary reforms, and was the natural choice of the left. Cárdenas knew that if he leaned towards Múgica, as he very possibly wanted, the right would become exacerbated against him and the situation could become unmanageable. He therefore chose the other existing candidate, that of General Manuel Ávila Camacho, Secretary of War and Navy, who had managed to position himself in the "center" and was a neutral element who could unify the great diversity of interests that were boiling in the PRM , in addition to taking away the flags of the opposition without abdicating the principles of the Mexican Revolution. "You will be the President of the Republic," Lázaro Cárdenas is said to have informed Ávila Camacho. "And if anyone receives a card or letter from me, do not pay attention to it. It will be because I was forced to give it."

Lázaro Cárdenas used all the ostentatious weight of his office in favor of his chosen one. He brought him together with Vicente Lombardo Toledano, Marx's old wolf, general secretary of the then very powerful CTM , and managed to get the distinguished teacher of high opportunism to support Ávila Camacho, because "it was necessary to choose," Lombardo declared, "not the man who offered the most to the labor movement but the one who would guarantee the unity of the Mexican people and its revolutionary sector." With this, General Múgica began to say goodbye to his presidential ambitions.

The National Peasant Confederation ( CNC ), the always weak and manipulable peasant sector, also satisfied the president's wishes and supported the candidacy of Ávila Camacho. The same occurred with a majority of military officers (the most conflictive sector of the party) and governors, led by the young and eager governor of Veracruz, Miguel Alemán, who was named general secretary of the Pro-Ávila Camacho Committee, thereby practically ensuring his position in the next cabinet.

With all that force behind him, Ávila Camacho raised the conservative volume of his campaign and never tired of suggesting that he would carry out the rectifications that were demanded. On the opposition side, Joaquín Amaro saw that he had little chance of winning and, grumbling, withdrew from the electoral game.

Rafael Sánchez Tapia had also been registered as a candidate, but he never gained any traction. The National Action Party (PAN ) had only just been founded in 1939 by Manuel Gómez Morin and did not present a candidate for the presidency, but it supported Andrew Almazán.

Thus, all expectations were pinned on Manuel Ávila Camacho, who had the overwhelming support of the government, and on Juan Andrew Almazán, whose "green wave" grew and grew in the cities and gained the support of many people. Almazán's campaign soon became a real threat, and the government and the PRM plotted a ruthless "dirty war" against the Almazanists. In several cities (Monterrey, Puebla, Pachuca, for example) the local authorities harshly repressed the opposition and there were numerous deaths and injuries; in many other parts of the Republic all pro-Almazán

activity was systematically harassed and obstructed. All these circumstances were ominously rarefying the political atmosphere of the country.

President Cárdenas had promised that the elections would be clean and that there would be absolute respect for the popular vote. But Almazán kept repeating that the government and the PRM would carry out a fraud of such colossal and gross proportions that a national insurrection in defense of the vote would undoubtedly break out. General Almazán had planned, for when that happened, to form his own Almazanist congress, "seat of the legitimately elected powers," which would qualify the elections, name him president-elect, and elect a substitute president. Almazán would go to the United States and lead the revolt, call a general strike, and coordinate the armed groups that would take over the cities.

Tensions were at their limit on July 7. The trigger for the conflicts was a purely surrealist arrangement, whereby polling stations were set up with one employee of the authorities and the first five citizens who showed up. Of course, everyone wanted to be the first to arrive. Both the PRM and the PRUN formed heavily equipped shock brigades. The CTM had promised 40,000 workers to do "electoral surveillance," but at the last minute the workers disobeyed their leaders and the CTM brigades never showed up. This allowed many polling stations to be occupied by supporters of Almazan. Manuel Ávila Camacho was unpleasantly surprised to find that all the officials at the polling station where he voted had photos of Almazan on their lapels.

Gonzalo N. Santos, the chief of San Luis Potosí, left us in his *Memoirs* a narrative of the events of July 7 that is truly extraordinary for its cynicism. By seven in the morning, Santos had already killed an Almazan supporter in a shootout; he then formed a shock brigade that came to have more than 300 people, and with it he dedicated himself to attacking polling stations with gunfire. People went out to vote in large numbers and, at least in the cities, they did so overwhelmingly in favor of Almazan and the PRUN candidates . But soon after, the brigades of the Pro-Ávila Camacho Committee arrived and, with gunfire, made voters and polling station representatives flee. They knocked down tables, broke ballot boxes, and exchanged gunfire with the Almazan supporters, who were numerous and were everywhere.

President Cárdenas, accompanied by the Undersecretary of the Interior, Agustín Arroyo Ch., drove around in his car to watch the voting, and found that the polling station where he was to vote was well guarded by the Almazanists. By telephone, Arroyo Ch. urged the brigades to intervene so that the president could vote in adequate conditions. The shock group quickly responded to the call. From several blocks around the polling station there were shooters on balconies and rooftops, and all of them were shooting down the Avilacamacha troops, thanks to the irrefutable bursts of Thompson machine guns with which they made their way.

"Give up, you sons of bitches, here comes the Golden Eggs!" shouted General Miguel Z. Martinez, who would later become head of the Alemán police in the capital. The defenders capitulated and "after a cannon shot to the head" they left one by one. "Quickly, you bastards, whoever stops will be hunted down like a deer." The firemen

arrived instantly and, with high-pressure hoses, cleaned up the blood stains that were everywhere; the Red Cross, helpful, removed the corpses and wounded. The polling station was rearranged, a new ballot box was put in, and at last the citizen president and his companion, Arroyo Ch., were able to vote. "The street is so clean," said Cardenas upon leaving the polling station. Santos recounts: "I answered him: 'Where the president of the Republic votes, there should be no garbage dump. ' He almost smiled, shook my hand, and got into his car. Arroyo Ch., less hypocritical, told me: 'This is very well watered, are you going to have a dance?' I answered: 'No, Chicote, we already had one and with very good music.' Cárdenas turned a deaf ear...

"I ordered the improvised members of the polling station to put in the new ballot box, because it would be inexplicable that in 'the sacred urn' there were only two votes: that of General Lázaro Cárdenas, President of the Republic, and that of Arroyo Ch., Undersecretary of the Interior. I told the 'scrutineers': 'Empty the register and fill the little box, and do not discriminate against the dead, because everyone is a citizen and has the right to vote.'"

Armed encounters took place throughout Mexico City throughout the day. In the afternoon, huge Almazanist crowds gathered around El Caballito. They were awaiting the arrival of their leader so they could charge against the Palace, which, of course, was already well guarded by the army. But Almazan never arrived.

In the end, 30 people were reported dead and 157 wounded. Clashes took place almost everywhere, but were especially bloody in Ciudad Juarez, San Luis Potosi, Monterrey, Ciudad del Carmen, Puebla, Saltillo, Toluca, Ciudad Madero and Coatepec. The elections were peaceful only in Nogales, Hermosillo, Tampico, Piedras Negras, Mazatlan, Torreon, Chihuahua and Ensenada. Officially, there were 17 deaths in the provinces. The disturbances, clashes and irregularities were so numerous that Juan Andrew Almazan openly alleged illegality.

For his part, Manuel Ávila Camacho went to rest that night at his house. Gonzalo N. Santos relates: "Don Manuel told me: 'Well, I have the impression that they have won the elections and I, in those conditions, out of shame and decorum, am not going to accept winning.' Don Manuel burst into tears. I told him: 'No, sir, do not have that impression, it is false, the capital of the Republic has always been reactionary, but now it is more so; these votes for Almazán, you can be sure that they were cast against Cárdenas and also against the Revolution... But for no reason and in no way are we going to betray the Revolution by allowing Almazán to vote, never!' Don Manuel began to cry again and told me: 'I will never betray the Revolution and for it I do not mind losing my life as I have already demonstrated, but I will not accept a victory like that.'" Of course, the next day he had already changed his mind.

After the elections, Sánchez Tapia announced that he was rejoining the army, which made it clear that he had only entered the contest to legitimize the elections by accepting the result. Cárdenas bought rifles and ammunition, and carried out movements in the army in anticipation of the insurrection. And Almazán flew to Cuba. He wanted to meet with Cordell Hull, the American Secretary of State, who was participating in

the Havana Conference, in which the northern empire sought to ensure the support of the Latin American countries in the world war. To begin with, Hull did not want to receive Almazán. Then, he denied him a visa under an assumed name and, finally, the American government revealed to Cárdenas details of Almazán's military plans. He, of course, was unaware that days before Miguel Alemán had spoken in Washington with Sumner Welles, the Undersecretary of State. Alemán gave him guarantees that Ávila Camacho would support the United States in the war, and that he would resolve the controversies between the two countries. The United States therefore agreed to send Vice President Henry Wallace to strengthen the battered legitimacy of the transfer of powers. However, if the Mexican delegation at the Havana Conference did not cooperate with the United States delegation, confidential information revealing that the elections had been a tragic farce could reach the Almazanistas.

On August 15, the Electoral College, completely controlled by the PRM , had already qualified the elections and gave the presidency to Ávila Camacho with two and a half million votes. A last sinister joke was made about Almazán by recognizing him with 15 thousand votes! Complaints of electoral fraud were heard everywhere, since the press and the radio supported Almazán; only *El Popular* , leftist, and *El Nacional* , official, supported the government. In September, two congresses were formed: the Almazanist one and the official one. In the first, Juan Andrew Almazán was declared president-elect, who was then in the south of the United States, without daring to do anything. Shortly afterwards, the Plan of Yautepec was promulgated and Manuel Zarzosa, Almazán's right-hand man, died in Monterrey. He never returned to the country nor led any insurrection. In November, he resigned from the post of president-elect, "as the only way to achieve the tranquility to which my supporters have a right." These people, for their part, had already had a taste of the barbarity that still prevailed in the system, and then they were hit by a hangover that plunged them into frustration, first, and finally into the conviction that they had been betrayed.

All of this, in a short time, generated a deep distrust of the citizens towards the electoral processes, which translated into apathy, disinterest and high rates of abstentionism, which always benefited the government and the official party.

In his last government report, Lázaro Cárdenas said in reference to the elections and without paying attention to the cheers for Al Mazán that were heard in the Chamber of Deputies: "The government rejects, based on its democratic concept, the use of all violence that it has incessantly tried to banish from the public life of the country. Therefore, it roundly condemns any contrary procedure, whatever the tendency or significance of the victim or the aggressor. And it considers it even more reprehensible when such a system is presented with foreign contributions, devoid of any feeling of respect for the State that welcomed it."

But none of this could erase the resentment and deep offense of the population because of the electoral fraud. After the report, Cárdenas spent the remaining 90 days with the utmost discretion: all the while he supported his chosen one to the point that he even softened many of his political positions so as not to hinder him. Quietly, behind

the scenes, as politics is done in Mexico, he moved his pieces and applied pressure so that his ideas and his followers would not be left completely uncovered. He had hopes that the next administration would be guided by the second six-year plan that his best cadres had prepared.

General Ávila Camacho, for his part, emphasized his moderate and conciliatory traits, and businessmen breathed a sigh of relief when they saw that the president-elect had declared himself a believer ("now he will be called Ávila Camacho , " people joked), which scandalized many of the old Jacobins. But things began to clear up towards the end of November, and only the very absent-minded did not realize that there would soon be serious changes in the regime. Few, however, understood the scope that the new rules of the game that were beginning to take shape would have.

On December 1, Manuel Ávila Camacho took office. The general realized that everything had gone well for him up to that point, but also that his position was not firm enough. To begin with, he had to "restore the confidence" of investors, as he had promised, in order to calm the waters of discontent and ease the pressures of the wealthy people, who were confident of their power in the face of the avalanche of concessions they were obtaining. Ávila Camacho's main objective was to take full advantage of the situation offered by the world war to industrialize the country. In this way, not only would he make businessmen happy, but Mexico would no longer be a backward country, neither self-sufficient nor a supplier of unprocessed raw materials. The idea was that, without rejecting foreign capital in the least, an industrial infrastructure had to be developed so that we would not have to import all the new and good things that high technology offered, since Mexican industry would take care of keeping us well supplied and, as far as possible, up to date and of good quality. Therefore, from the beginning the president rejected all rhetoric that could seem socialist, he encouraged and even used the new anti-communist fashion and he was determined to promote the industrialization of the country. He allocated between 50 and 60 percent of government spending to support private enterprise. Of course, from the beginning he also ignored the famous second six-year plan with which Cárdenas intended to consolidate his reforms, he rejected any type of planning with a socialist scent, and imposed the pragmatism of the supposedly free market.

After some hesitation, the businessmen decided to take advantage of the opportunity. There was no point in holding on to ideological resentments if the regime offered such good conditions. The passion for Almazan or the sympathies for the PAN were left behind . Many hard-working and ambitious titans of industry had emerged with the governments of the revolution and moved very well within such peculiar waters. Others went from high political positions to juicy businesses that enriched them in a short time. And still others, those of Porfirian roots who survived the Revolution, also became integrated into the new politics. For example, the high leaders of the Monterrey group in January 1942 met with President Ávila Camacho to happily tell him that they were renouncing their oppositional tendencies because they had seen that the new government in truth "did not fall into the errors of the previous one." In reality, all

the bosses received enormous benefits, ranging from tax exemptions, subsidies, credits, streamlining of procedures and even outright complicity in many cases.

On the political level, Ávila Camacho had to balance between an official (Cardenista) left that was still very powerful and an increasingly belligerent right that did not cease its pressures. The new president's idea was to make the two political poles confront each other while he positioned himself as the supreme arbiter, alternating concessions to each group according to their specific needs. To the right he would offer the "rectification" of the controversial reforms (socialist education and agrarian distribution), but at the moment he considered it appropriate. To deal with the left he had to dismantle the positions that Cárdenas had left him and reduce the power of the CTM in the political and labor fields. The best way to do all this was to strengthen himself and his brand new team. To do so, he had the immense power that the Revolution had given to the presidency (and that Cárdenas consolidated and expanded), and also the context of the world war, which allowed him to call for national unity with more than justified reasons.

Ávila Camacho's cabinet was an example of the conciliatory negotiations necessary to heal the cracks in the system. To satisfy the right-wing supporters of Callista, he placed Ezequiel Padilla in Foreign Relations, who was "very well connected with the United States." In the Ministry of Economy he appointed Javier Gaxiola, who belonged to the group of political entrepreneurs of former President Abelardo L. Rodríguez.

For his part, Cárdenas had managed to get several politicians who identified with his ideas to obtain important positions. Luis Sánchez Pontón was appointed to Public Education to guarantee the continuation of socialist education. Ignacio García Téllez obtained the brand new Secretary of Labor and Social Security, which emerged from what was the Autonomous Department of Labor. And he placed Jesús Garza in Communications and Public Works. By the way, this appointment infuriated Maximino Ávila Camacho, governor, chieftain of Puebla and brother of the president, who wanted that position for himself. Maximino ranted to anyone who would listen that Cárdenas had chosen his brother because he was weak and easily manipulated. "Another maximato!" complained the governor of Puebla, who would undoubtedly have preferred a "maximinato." By the way, there was a joke that when he had breakfast, Don Manuel ate tongue because his brother kept the eggs.

But Maximino and the jokes were completely wrong. Cárdenas did not claim to be a maximato, although he was attentive to what was happening and tried to preserve what he had done. This placed him squarely in politics. In reality, Lázaro Cárdenas was very present in the political life of the country practically until his death, but Ávila Camacho and the other presidents did what they wanted. And Manuel Ávila Camacho was not a softie either, even though his emotional outbursts might suggest so. "A flirtatious woman tends to be a whore, and a good man tends to be an idiot," says the popular expression, but the "gentleman president" from the beginning showed signs that he could not even remotely be considered good-natured or clumsy.

Among his first measures was the suppression of the military sector of the official party. There were real caciques in the army, whose command of troops made them prone to revolt. Shortly before, General Cedillo, governor of San Luis Potosí, had been defeated in his bullish adventure. The awareness of limiting the army chiefs was common in those days and the need for the armed forces to become professional and for the presidents of Mexico to be civilians was in the air, something that Cárdenas would have gladly satisfied if circumstances had permitted it. In a certain way, choosing Ávila Camacho was already a step in that direction, since Don Manuel did not distinguish himself in command of troops and his military career had to be traced among the administrative areas.

In 1940, the country had 19.6 million inhabitants, distributed mainly in the countryside and inland cities. But Mexico City was the unequivocal center of national life. For example, Leon Trotsky lived there. One day, he saw, terrified, a commando that included the muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros attack his house and burst into his bedroom with bullets. Old Leon saved himself by diving under the bed, but shortly afterward his secretary's boyfriend, Ramón Mercader, or Jacques Mornard, killed him with a pickaxe. Siqueiros was arrested, but he always denied his involvement.

These two, and José Clemente Orozco, had already painted the core of their work and perhaps as a reflection or consequence of the changes that were beginning in Mexico, muralism, more identified with the active stages of the Revolution, began to decline, and with it began the departure of the Mexicanist current: cultured women with shawls, chongos and indigenous dresses (Frida Kahlo, of course, in Tehuana). It had been the first time that for a period of time the Indians and their culture were appreciated: the greatness of their past, the achievements of their civilization, the archaeological pieces, the masks and so on. In its place, a cosmopolitan tendency began to emerge, which meant the resounding triumph of intellectuals such as Alfonso Reyes and the Contemporáneos, who went from the "opposition" to full power in the so-called Republic of Letters. In painting, Rufino Tamayo and Juan Soriano first began to gain strength, followed by Carlos Mérida and Pedro Coronel a little later. Except for the later work of the same three great artists, and of Juan O'Gorman and Chávez Morado, those who joined the so-called Mexican School of Painting were unaware that they had climbed onto the worst possible bandwagon and that their destiny would be limited to painting murals in municipal presidencies.

Surrealism also gained frank legitimacy, and in 1940 a great International Exhibition of Surrealism took place at the Mexican Art Gallery, with the presence of the eminent guru André Bretón, who saw surrealism in every Mexican cactus, which allowed him to issue his famous dictum: "Mexico is a surrealist country," which was followed, years later, by the also famous joke that, in effect, here Kafka would be a writer of customs.

In that same year, 1940, Malcolm Lowry left the country, amidst incredible (surreal) bureaucratic obstacles, without knowing that eight years later he would return to Mexico and this time things would be worse for him. He already had the first manuscript of *Under the Volcano in his suitcase* . But the great novelty in Mexico, besides reading

Papini and swimming in the Deportivo Chapultepec, was the presence of the Spanish Republicans (Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, Pedro Garfias, Enrique Díez-Canedo, José Moreno Villa, Wenceslao Roces, among others) that Cárdenas had welcomed a year earlier. With them, the Casa de España was formed, which in 1940 became El Colegio de México. The purpose of this institution was to "create the intellectual elites of Mexico." The Colegio was directed by Alfonso Reyes, of whom the joke was made: in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is Reyes. The teachers were paid 500 pesos a month and among the most famous founding students were the brothers Pablo and Henrique González Casanova, the historian Luis González and the scholar Antonio Alatorre.

At the antipodes, Oswaldo Díaz Ruanova records in his book *Los existencialistas mexicanos* that José Revueltas led lively gatherings at the Rendez-vous restaurant. Revueltas was 27 years old in 1941, when he published his novel *Los mu ros de agua* , based on his own experiences in 1934 in the Islas Marías prison. Revueltas' literary start was dazzling; after *Los paredes* he won an international prize with his hallucinating novel *El luto humano* (from which, without a doubt, Juan Rulfo drew) and consolidated his exceptional quality with the stories of *Dios en la tierra* . Other very solid young writers were those of the magazine *Taller* , especially Efraín Huerta and Octavio Paz, both revolutionary poets. Paz had even sung to the Spanish republicans in the Civil War. Huerta, for his part, was a supporter of a Dionysian idea of the Revolution, and already from then on he was enthusiastic about the intoxication of women and alcohol. Soon the two poets would diverge their paths: Paz published *Entre la piedra y la flor in 1941* ; later he would return to Europe and develop as an intellectual of the highest level. Huerta would remain in Mexico City and would be the home of poetry linked to the people.

In 1941, the poet Xavier Villaurrutia offered *Décima muerte* , and Carlos Pellicer *Recinto y otras imágenes* , but the great novelty in the national panorama was the beginning of the anti-communist furor. In January, the ex-president Abelardo Rodríguez openly launched himself against "social experiments based on exotic ideas". Marxism-exoticism had been born, whose ghost would be the food of official and business speeches for decades.

In reality, the anti-communist attacks had little ideological basis (the "McCarthyist mystique" had not yet been born) but rather they concealed attacks on Cárdenas and what were considered his forces, especially Vicente Lombardo Toledano and the five little wolves of the CTM , who, due to their embeddedness in the system and their capacity to stop or hinder production, represented a real danger. The aim was to dismantle the power of the official left.

PRM 's labor sector was dominated by the CTM , which was in the hands of Lombardo Toledano and the five little wolves, so called because in 1929, during the heyday of Luis N. Morones and the Mexican Regional Workers Confederation ( CROM ), Fidel Velázquez and his comrades Fernando Amilpa, Jesús Yurén, Alfonso Sánchez Madariaga and Luis Quintero left the great central. "The CROM has the characteristics

of a gigantic oak tree," Morones sang, inspired, "with strong and large roots and a gigantic trunk: from that trunk five miserable worms left for unknown directions." The response was not long in coming: "You fool, Morones, who in your feverish imagination see worms... What you call worms are five little wolves that soon, very soon, will eat the chickens in your yard."

In 1941, it was clear that the prophecy of the little wolves was going very well. In February, during the II Congress of the CTM , Vicente Lombardo Toledano punctually left the general secretary and gave the post to the old milkman Fidel Velázquez, who said before President Ávila Camacho: "I am not a communist, but I admire the communists because they are revolutionaries like me and like all the members of the CTM . Lombardo, who so successfully and so intelligently directed the CTM , knows that we are sincere, and he also knows that we can direct the organization, direct it according to its guidelines, because he is not leaving the Confederation, he will not be able to leave because we will never let him go, as we will not let him go now." The unanimity in the applause for Lombardo was the same with which he was expelled from the CTM years later.

The first thing Fidel Velázquez did was to guarantee that he would support the president. The Lobitos, like their former boss Lombardo Toledano, were not thinking of carrying out an ideological struggle, nor were they even concerned with defending the workers; rather, what they intended was to preserve as much as possible and strengthen that support through total collaboration with the new president. The latter, for his part, was not so sure, and just in case he presented reforms to the Federal Labor Law to tighten the regulation of the right to strike, to punish illegal strikes and wildcat strikes, and to contain violence in the life of the unions, since groups of gunmen frequently forced terrified workers to join the CTM .

In addition, Ávila Camacho promoted the emergence of the Renovación group in the Chamber of Deputies, where the left had a majority (in the Senate, however, the balance of forces favored the right). This group began to launch strong attacks against the Secretaries of State identified with Cárdenas. The military deputy Enrique Carrola Antuna denounced that the Ministries of Education, Communications and Labor were in the hands of communists. The press supported him energetically. Carrola later intensified his attacks on the Banco de Crédito Ejidal: "Ninety percent of the personnel," he warned, scandalized, "sympathizes with communism."

In May of that year, the press was up in arms because striking students at a teacher training college in the state of Guerrero had burned a Mexican flag to display the red and black flag of the strike. Both the federal and state governments ordered investigations and found out that, of course, no flag had been burned, but also that the communists, in this case the militants of the Mexican Communist Party ( PCM ), had control of the school. In any case, Deputy Carrola had already asked for Sánchez Pontón's dismissal from the SEP .

Although in his report of September 1st Ávila Camacho made it clear that he would not ask his ministers to resign because of pressure from social forces, on September 10th

Sánchez Pontón presented his resignation, "for health reasons." It was the opportune moment to begin the educational "rectification." The new secretary Octavio Véjar Vázquez, from the start said that he would not allow exotic ideas to predominate in the teaching plans and that education should have a spiritual purpose; he accepted that religion and national traditions were links of nationality, recognized the role of the family as the main educator and in this way opened the royal road to private education.

The events at the SEP delighted the business and official right, and they celebrated by demanding the total repeal of Article 3 of the Constitution. In several cities there were demonstrations of thousands to protest against socialist education (40 thousand people in front of the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City). In reality, Ávila Camacho was dying to get rid of socialist education, but he was not going to give in to the pressures of the right because every particle of power he lost would fatten his opponents; Furthermore, it was a question of asserting authority, and that is why he announced that he did not intend to repeal the constitutional precept but rather regulate it, even though that required acts of arduous rhetorical balancing act in order to be able to preserve the terms "socialist education" while dismantling it and turning a blind eye to the schools that various religious orders were preparing to offer to the upper middle class and the rich of the country: Lasallians, Marists and Jesuits, mainly.

Once Sánchez Pontón was eliminated, the Secretary of Communications, Jesús de la Garza, had also been the target of tenacious attacks from the right, and he also ended up resigning. The president wanted to make a fortune with this move and took advantage of the trip to fulfill the whim of his brother, who always wanted (apart from being president) that position. Maximino Ávila Camacho took office with an escort of 50 cars and motorcyclists, burst into his offices followed by two aides armed with Thompson machine guns, and only afterward did it occur to him to protest as Secretary of State before the president of the republic, his younger brother.

In 1941, the United States entered the war after the bombing of Pearl Bay, and this precipitated peace with the neighboring power. All previous claims were settled, the United States agreed to compensation for the expropriated oil companies, and Mexico, in turn, agreed to help it, and it was granted access to credit systems after years of being declared insolvent. For the first time in history, the presidents of Mexico and the United States met on Mexican soil, which would become common and even routine practice in subsequent years. In all these negotiations, Foreign Minister Ezequiel Padilla played a leading role, which fueled the presidential ambitions he had already cultivated.

The proximity of the war had an immediate effect in Mexico. Both chambers tried to stop the left-right disputes and the Antifascist Parliamentary Committee was formed. Vicente Lombardo Toledano organized antifascist rallies in support of the government in which he attacked the mainstream press, the PAN and synarchism.

However, the need for unity due to the war did not prevent Ávila Camacho's first confrontation with the private sector, on the occasion of the reforms to the Chambers Law. Until then, the Confederation of Chambers of Commerce was dominated

by that of Mexico City. As it was not convenient for the president to deal with a single employers' front, which was economically very powerful and in the hands of an extremely conservative sector, he proposed separating the merchants from the industrialists, and the latter from each other. In this way, in addition to the already existing Confederation of Employers' Chambers (Coparmex), the confederations of Chambers of Commerce (Concanaco), of Industrial Chambers (Concamin) and of Transformation Industries (Canacintra) emerged.

At the end of the year, the Ávila Camacho government made it clear that in order to satisfactorily change the Party of the Mexican Revolution, it was not enough to eliminate the military sector. The workers' sector still had a lot of strength, and it was necessary to rein it in. The peasant sector served as a counterweight, since the CNC was easily manipulated because the peasants were always more controlled. But it was not enough. It was necessary to strengthen the popular sector, which was very weak due to the heterogeneity of the forces that comprised it. Several senators, duly instructed, began to ask for the creation of a strong popular sector. This would be a sector of the stature of the workers and peasants, but its undisputed leader had to be President Ávila Camacho. During 1942 work was done on this project, until the National Confederation of Popular Organizations ( CNOP ) was established in February 1943.

Just as nationalism lost ground in painting, something similar occurred in music. The great nationalist, inventive and imaginative current of Silvestre Revueltas (who died in 1940), Carlos Chávez, Blas Galindo and Pablo Moncayo (in 1944 he managed to premiere, with great success, his *Huapango* ) began to decline in favor of the compositional patterns of the then quite mature international avant-garde, and the new authors, who really stood out until the fifties and sixties, were Joaquín Gutiérrez Heras, Rafael Elizondo, Mario Kuri, Jiménez Mabarak, Miguel Bernal, Armando Lavalle, Raúl Cosío, Jorge González Ávila, Leonardo Velázquez, Manuel Henríquez, Héctor Quintanar and Julio Estrada.

In literature, the League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists, which had caused so much noise in the previous decade, disappeared from the map. The stridentist movement was also a thing of the past. On the other hand, the presence of José Vasconcelos in the National Library caused a sensation; to hear him meant to be in front of "the intelligence of the angels," considered Oswaldo Díaz Ruanova. But the one who ruled the intellectual life was Alfonso Reyes. José Gorostiza and Jaime Torres Bodet continued to climb the official ladder. Novo did his extraordinary journalism and also worked in advertising, with "the boss Augusto Elías." Jorge Cuesta died in 1942, and his terrible death still makes one's hair stand on end: the master emasculated himself after a frustrated siege of his own sister (Elías Nandino version). Octavio Paz, in 1942, published *A la orilla del mundo* . Xavier Villaurrutia dedicated himself to the theater and wrote his incredible décimas and hendecasyllables.

In 1942, Mexican cinema was booming. The big phenomenon of the year was the appearance of María Félix, who filmed *El peñón de las ánimas* alongside Jorge Negrete.

The singing charro was undoubtedly the king of the cinema, the most popular, among other things because of his relationship with Gloria Marín, and he was famous for being bossy and arrogant. María Félix, on the other hand, came when she wanted, obeyed no one and did whatever she wanted. Therefore, her fights with Jorge Negrete were legendary. Later, as expected, they got married. The following year, María Félix's dizzying fame would be consolidated with the release of *Doña Bárbara* , a film version of the novel by Rómulo Gallegos. At that time, making a film cost 350 thousand pesos. Cinema was a big business and the film studios kept churning out films with the hottest actors: Arturo de Córdova, Pedro Armendariz, Emilio Tuero; the Soler brothers Fernando, Andrés, Julian and Domingo; Joaquin Pardave, Cantinflas, Isabela Corona, Maria Elena Marques, Dolores del Rio, Andrea Palma and Sara Garcia.

It was the famous Golden Age of National Cinema, when the domestic market had been conquered and the Central and South American markets were also dominated. The main stars embodied archetypal forces and were true vessels that received the projections of countless people. The mythical relationship was genuine, much more so than now, because the level of collective consciousness was considerably lower, at least in general terms, and unconscious forces manifested themselves with much greater fluidity. Films were made with what can now be considered true innocence, with the enthusiasm of a frankly successful first era. The industry was not as contaminated by the vulgarity of the search for maximum profit through minimum investment, as occurred from the fifties onwards. Film people sought to make money, and a lot of it, but they also wanted to express themselves, and that is why there were films that managed to be sinister and sublime at the same time: the innocence of a 10-year-old whore, Revueltas would say.

In 1943, Emilio Fernández filmed *María Candelaria* , an undisputed box-office hit, and *Flor silvestre* , one of his most significant works. El Indio undoubtedly contributed to the mythologisation of Mexican cinema in the 1940s. His films were box-office successes and won important awards at the most prestigious European competitions, where the image that El Indio gave of Mexico was greatly appreciated, since it reinforced the fiercest stereotypes of the "land of death, the infernal paradise" that many foreigners liked and still like to cultivate. El Indio also became an artistic vehicle for the Mexican Revolution, which in the cinema took on a dramatic and aesthetic image, thanks to the carefully illuminated and technically impeccable shots of Gabriel Figueroa.

In popular music, during the Avila Machado era, the great success of Agustín Lara, the poet-musician, who reflected the last great manifestation of the old bohemian and "proudly corny" romanticism, continued. Lara's gift for versifying and creating melodies was extraordinary, and his sensitivity managed to capture that of a good part of the nation, hence his success. A marijuana addict, a singer of whores and sordid cabarets, Lara also reflected the *Zeitgeist* by singing about the landscape and the cities for the excellent reason that it came naturally to him. Lara reached the height of popularity when his romance with María Félix became famous. This new version of Beauty and

the Beast, or the Triumph of the Spirit over Matter, shocked the Mexican public. With the leader Lara also came the great popularity of Pedro Vargas, Ana María González and Toña la Negra, his interpreters. Equally important was the presence of María Luisa Landín, with her enervating boleros, the Martínez Gil Brothers and the extraordinary ranchero singer Lucha Reyes, the highest ceiling that vernacular Mexican song has ever reached. Lucha Reyes was a woman with hair on her chest who often sang songs for men ("if you have curves I have a slide, let's see if that Cuquita wants to slide"), because she contained within herself all the rough Mexico that was ready to eat Mexican eggs sprinkled with gunpowder for breakfast and that didn't take off its gun even to sleep ("if they throw a lasso at me, I respond with bullets"); but she also extracted very fine aspects of the popular soul, as in "Por una mujer ladina" or "La Panchita" (by Joaquín Pardavé), or, if not, she rescued a luminous country air, with all its rich colloquial language ("I feel lacia, lacia, lacia, it's that you bring me agorzomada"). Lucha Reyes' vigor, vitality, and charisma only found something equivalent a little later, with the appearance of Pedro Infante. Reyes (not *related* to Don Poncho) committed suicide in 1944, and there were persistent rumors about the involvement of the Terrible Chief Maximino Ávila Camacho, who was also a famous womanizer. But, as we know, rumors and gossip are inherent to popular idols, since being recipients of the projections of thousands of spectators, they are unbeatable spaces for the emergence of all kinds of legends (such as that of Chamaco Domínguez, author, it was said, of almost all of Agustín Lara's songs).

The national cinema sparked the creativity of several composers, especially the duo Esperón and Cortázar, who composed excellent songs for films. Ernesto Cortázar, before teaming up with Manuel Esperón, was part of the excellent group Los Trovadores Tamaulipecos (Lorenzo Barcelata, Agustín Ramírez, Cortázar, Planes and Caballero), who, like Guti Cárdenas, made very successful recordings in New York in the early 1930s. And since we are on the subject of gossip, it was said that Lorenzo Barcelata had acquired, for a carton of beer, the lyrics and music of the famous song "María Elena" from its true author, the Guerrero native Agustín Ramírez, who also composed "Acapulqueña", "Por los caminos del sur", "Caleta" and "La sanmarqueña".

Another who was at the top was Cantinflas, who in the previous decade caused a sensation first for his performances in the tents and then for the cinema: *Águila o sol* and *Ahí está The detail* was the springboards that allowed him to become an absolute celebrity. As we know, the ability to talk and talk without saying much was so decisive that the term "cantinflismo" was born. Of course, this type of speech was the exclusive domain of politicians, but none of them enjoyed the popularity of Cantinflas because no one had his grace and wit. Cantinflas represented the "pelado", the screwed-up guy, and as long as he maintained his connection with the people, the comedian was incomparable. Unfortunately, not only Mario Moreno changed his social status, but his character did too, and at that time began the spectacular qualitative decline of Cantinflas, who in the fifties was only a poor imitation of himself and a sad bourgeois clown. But at the beginning of the forties Cantinflas was still the one in

hilarious films like *El gendarme desconocida* or *Sangre y arena* . The other comedians recognised Cantinflas' abilities and people like Manuel Medel, El Chicote, Chato Ortín and Panzón Soto admitted that something different had arrived that epitomised what they had done and that had a great influence on new comedians like Jesús Martínez, *Palillo* , who left Guadalajara to triumph in the big tops of Mexico City until he arrived to stay at the Follies theatre in the middle of the decade. Palillo, following in the tradition of Roberto Soto, Panzón, railed against the government, against the public starvers and looters, and as in those years the shortage of food began to cause havoc, Palillo always had material for his philippics.

In the first half of the 1940s, Francisco Gabilondo Soler, Cri Cri, who had begun his fertile and beautiful musical career in the previous decade, also shone enormously. By that time, Cri Cri had already composed several of his extraordinary hits in children's songs, such as "El ratón vaquero" or the prodigious "El comal y la olla." Of course, Cri Cri had a first-rate melodic capacity, as well as a mimetic disposition to recreate airs or tunes from other countries. His songs condensed all the tenderness, freshness and innocence that represented the best of Mexican families of the time, but, in addition, in the work of Gabilondo Soler a radiant Mexicanness stood out, which rescued popular atmospheres, colloquial verbal wit and also malice and intelligence. Cri Cri fed the childish souls of children in the thirties, forties, fifties, sixties, seventies, and even in the eighties, already very old, Cri Cri was still alive in many Mexican families, as confirmed by the fact that his main records continued to be reissued. Already in his eighties, Cri Cri had the humor and energy to sing in public extremely funny versions of "Negrita Cucurumbé" or "El negrito Sandía". Cri Cri's work is impeccable, well-rounded and brilliant, to the point that he even survived a horrendous tribute that, presumably with good will, was given to him by the Televisa consortium in the eighties, when we had to choke on the "cultured" versions of Cri Cri's songs sung by ( *of all people* ) Plácido Domingo and Mireille Mathieu.

In 1942, while work continued to form the CNOP , the struggles between the left and the right also continued intensely, which, in reality, rather represented the efforts of President Ávila Camacho to have total control of the country, since what can be considered the traditional right by then no longer doubted the benefits of the regime and was busy doing business with great pleasure.

A major problem remained Lázaro Cárdenas. Beginning in September 1941, the government considered the entire strip of states with coasts on the Pacific Ocean to be a militarized zone. Ávila Camacho appointed General Cárdenas commander of this enormous militarized region. However, in February 1942, the governor of Sinaloa called a meeting of governors of the Pacific states, and this was seen as a move by Lázaro Cárdenas to gain influence in all those states (from Sonora and Baja California to Chiapas). The newspapers strongly attacked the board of governors, and gossip ran high enough that Cárdenas decided not to attend the meeting, which, without him, was a failure.

The presence of Cárdenas was very important given the attacks that the official left was receiving since the beginning of the anti-communist campaigns and the demonization of "exotic ideas." The offensive was so dense that Vicente Lombardo Toledano came up with the idea that the working class should temporarily renounce the right to strike, since these were "not times to sharpen the class struggle." The unions, of course, were horrified by the idea, but, just in case, they did not say anything. But several factors led them to adopt Lombardo's idea. On the one hand, a futuristic struggle for the presidency of the Republic was already visible. Ezequiel Padilla was capitalizing to the maximum on his preponderance in international issues, decisive given the context of the world war. But also fighting for "the great" was Maximino Ávila Camacho, who launched frequent attacks against Cárdenas, the CTM , Lombardo and any leftist bastion. Maximino had amassed a large fortune to finance his presidential ambitions. He had partnered with the Swedish millionaire Axel Werner Grenn, and from his position in Communications and Public Works he had a large stake in profiting from contracts for road construction, urban improvements in the Federal District and irrigation projects. And Miguel Alemán, the Secretary of the Interior, took advantage of the network of political influences that his position represented to strengthen himself throughout the country. Alemán was very careful that the benefits that arose from the left-right struggle not only benefited the president but himself as well.

It was soon discovered, for example, that the three presidential hopefuls were behind the attacks on Cardenas by the famous junta of governors. Both Padilla and Alemán had fomented the rumors and criticism in the press, and Maximino, who was already famous for his anti-communist crusade, not only said that these Cardenas meetings were agitations but also energetically blocked attempts to call another similar meeting with the governors of the northern states.

In May, the Germans sank the tankers *Potrero del Llano* and *Faja de Oro* , which precipitated Mexico's entry into the war. To begin with, war was declared on the Axis and the United Nations Pact was signed. The president declared a state of national emergency and, of course, called for maximum unity and collaboration throughout the country. Because of the war, the Law of Compulsory Military Service, which affected 18-year-olds, came into force in August 1942, and on November 12 the registration of conscripts of the famous class of 1924 began. There were even blackouts and rehearsals for war emergencies that greatly excited the population. And Lázaro Cárdenas was named Secretary of Defense.

This temporarily halted the attacks on the workers and their offensives against the Secretary of Education, Octavio Véjar Vázquez, who, undaunted, was eliminating communists from the teaching profession. On May 26, the CTM , through Fidel Velázquez, proudly proposed the workers' commitment to renounce the sacrosanct right to strike, although it was careful to ask for "employer reciprocity to find fair solutions to labor conflicts." The government and private enterprise, as was to be expected, applauded this "extraordinary sacrifice of solidarity by the workers," and both Lombardo and the

leaders of the main unions breathed a sigh of relief at seeing that the ”anti-communist” offensive was somewhat subsiding.

This was taken advantage of by Fidel Velázquez to begin what would be a long and disastrous reign over the workers.

In 1942, Fidel had to leave the post of general secretary of the CTM , but the leader resisted until the very end. Since non-reelection was sacred, Fidel Velázquez hid his pretensions of perpetuating himself under the proposal that his mandate be “extended” for two more years; in other words, he asked that the term of the general secretary of the Confederation be four years, and not two. Several labor leaders opposed Fidel’s plans, shouting “I know my people, my lieutenant,” but the wolves moved their pieces to eliminate their opponents and finally achieved the extension of the general secretary’s mandate.

Meanwhile, to somewhat mitigate the beatings on the workers, President Ávila Camacho continued work on the creation of one of his major projects and his most important achievement: the Mexican Social Security Institute, which was initially very problematic. The workers, contrary to expectations, rejected it, because they considered the contributions they had to pay to “insure themselves” to be too heavy. The employers, for their part, flatly refused to pay them.

They were too busy making money to think about sharing it. By 1942, exports of raw materials had increased substantially due to the war, which later allowed them to sell textiles, chemical products and other products as well. A lot of money was coming in, and with it machinery was bought to develop the industry. But while many saw enormous economic benefits, the great majority continued to suffer in order to survive. It was difficult to contain popular discontent. By then it was clear that the shortage, which had begun in 1941, was increasing alarmingly a year later. The private sector had also taken advantage of the workers’ renunciation of the right to strike and was dedicated to making ”staff adjustments” and to hoarding and hiding basic products in order to increase their price. In addition, the bosses were happily swimming in the corruption of the system to do business. The country’s main political forces (the president, the PRM and the candidates Maximino, Alemán and Padilla) supported them in everything and the only adversaries (Cárdenas and the leftists) were firmly contained by the government itself. The rich could not only invest profitably in whatever they wanted and had in their power numerous and important exports abroad at war, they also had all the public works undertaken by the government and which usually passed through the hands of Maximino Ávila Camacho.

Under these conditions, the employers were able to harden. The workers had formed a unifying Workers’ Pact which later became a National Workers’ Council, which sought to unify all the workers’ confederations in a single central and which brought together Fidel Velázquez and the old Luis N. Morones, still head of the CROM . Both complained that the employers did not adhere to the policy of unity, but rather took advantage of the conditions to enrich themselves outrageously. The president tried to form a Workers-Industrial Pact to discipline the employers and merchants a little, and

thus stop, or calm down, the hoarding, the concealment and subsequent price increase of food, the suspension of staff cuts and the closure of companies without prior notice to authorities and unions.

The private sector rejected the Pact and made it clear that any condition imposed on them was unjustifiable, divisive and unpatriotic, since they identified themselves remorselessly with the country (if the government did it, why not them?). The most they managed to do was to propose a Single Clause Pact, which stipulated the need to "put efforts at the service of the country," and we already know what they understood by country, "and to preserve the union within the legal precepts and contractual norms," which of course, at that time, entirely favored them, since there was not even a legal strike to fear. They called this the National Employers' Council, and Aaron Saenz, leader of the bankers, was named president. Avila Camacho accepted this arrangement reluctantly and was content with the employers participating in the Supreme Defense Council, made up of representatives of all organized social forces. Their activities consisted of guiding and developing the activities of war, military defense, economic, financial, commercial, agricultural, market, legal and national spirit. All this sounded very nice but of course it did not stop the high cost, the artificial scarcity and the free rein given to people with money. But, yes, the respectable public was able to enjoy the spectacle of seeing together the former presidents Plutarco Elías Calles, Pascual Ortiz Rubio, Abelardo Rodríguez, Emilio Portes Gil and Lázaro Cárdenas.

In 1942, the fighter from Morelos, Rubén Jaramillo, made his public appearance, but was murdered during the government of López Mateos. In 1942, the manager of the Zacatepec sugar mill, created by Lázaro Cárdenas, was mired in corruption and had terrible relations with the sugarcane growers. Jaramillo, who led the peasants, demanded that the manager be held accountable. But the manager enjoyed the full support of Governor Elpidio Perdomo, who made his delicate pronouncements heard: "Hit the scumbags hard." From then on, the repression of the sugarcane growers began and the harassment forced Jaramillo to go to the mountains with 90 men and from there he began his guerrilla activities. "He was just defending himself," said the peasants, and they helped him in any way they could, so Jaramillo successfully evaded the troops that sought to arrest him.

But Jaramillo was not a real problem. What worried Ávila Camacho was how to curb corporate greed and the resulting high prices. It was clear to the people that the government was incapable of containing shortages and price increases, no matter how much it talked about national unity and solidarity.

To distract themselves from the high cost of living, apparently inherent to the country's so-called economic growth, the people relied on tents and sports. The vicious circle of boxing formed by Chango Casanova, Joe Conde and Juan Zurita excited fans. The bullfighters Armilla, Soldado and Silverio Pérez (who later dedicated himself to politics) were also admired. In soccer, the space was dominated by Chivas de Guadalajara, Asturias and Club España. The famous match between Asturias and Moctezuma

in 1942 cost two pesos per seat. In baseball, the Industriales de Monterrey and Águila de Veracruz were extremely popular.

In the city streets, children played the traditional "cascara" or street soccer, and others, a few, played baseball or "tochito." But almost everyone had fun jumping over the plane (Cortázar's hopscotch, only without the "sky"), playing "encantados," hide-and-seek, "burro corredo" or "burro dieciséis" ("sixteen, boys, run!"), playing "cebollitas" or its thicker version: "tamalada." Middle-class children already showed influences from the United States when playing "estop" or asking for "taim." Those who could traveled around on their bicycles, donkeys, or bürulas. The kids already read "monitos" or "cuentos" translated from English. As Elena Poniatowska states in *"La Flor de Lis"* , *Little Lulu* , *Periquita* and *Lorenzo and Pepita were already in circulation* , but in reality, American comics would not infest the newsstands until the fifties. The strong Mexican comic strip was in *Pepín* and *Chamaco* . In the first one, *La Sagrada Familia Burrón appeared* , by Gabriel Vargas, more caustic and anarchist at that time, because the Burrón family (doña Borola and don Regino and their bodoques) were extremely poor, they lived in a miserable neighborhood in the center of the city (the "Callejón del Cuajo"); this comic strip presented excellent drawings, with sometimes sincerely inspired shots, and the texts abounded in criticisms of the authorities. Over time, *La Familia Burrón* moved towards the middle class, but it never made a fool of itself and never lost its wit or virulence.

In *Chamaco* people also read the terrible dramas of Yolanda Vargas Dulché (who would live one of them in 1989), and *Los Supersabios* , by Germán Butze. In the fifties, *Rolando el rabioso would appear* . The main newspapers at that time were *El Universal* , directed by Miguel Lanz Duret and with articles by Alfonso Junco, Mauricio Magdaleno, Carlos González Peña and Antonio Caso; *Excélsior* , by Rodrigo del Llano, in one of his most right-wing periods; *El Nacional* , official ("in its golden age", said Daniel Cosío Villegas), gave opportunities to the young Ermilo Abreu Gómez, Raúl Noriega, Fernando Benítez, and gave space to the Spaniards Margarita Nelken and Juan Rejano; The latter produced a cultural supplement of excellent quality and, together with *Romance* , the literary tabloid edited by Rafael Giménez Siles, served as a starting point for the cultural supplements of the following years. Also in circulation were *Novedades* , *El Popular* , dominated by the Lombardist left, and *La Prensa* . The magazines with the largest circulation were *Hoy* , *Mañana* , *Jueves* , *Voz* and *Revista de Revistas.*

In radio, after XEQ , the most powerful station was XEW , which in the previous decade had played an essential role in the rise of popular idols. Radio sets crept in wherever electricity reached, and radio stations from the interior began to spring up everywhere, but Emilio Azcárraga's XEW soon achieved a reasonably national coverage and was undoubtedly the maximum power in radio, transmitting songs, information, interviews and also daily radio soap operas and radio series, which kept people glued to the set. Cri Cri, Agustín Lara or Pedro Vargas were essential parts of radio. In 1940,

XEQK emerged , the "exact time of the Observatory of Mexico," which gave the time minute by minute between very fast mini-announcements.

The American swing and jitterbug craze also filtered through the radio, but Mexico had not yet become Americanized, although of course many people who could afford it preferred to smoke imported cigars, or "faced" ones, like Lucky Strikes, Chesterfields or Camels; those same people drank Coca Cola, listened to Glenn Miller and Tommy Dorsey, but the vast majority, including the middle class, in the mid-forties preferred Mexican soft drinks: Pato Pascual, Mundet soft drinks, or fruit waters, "from horchata to chia my soul is reborn," or "excellent Mexican beer," as Malcolm Lowry said, who knew what he was talking about and did not hesitate to describe Mexico as "rich tequila country." Pulque was also drunk a lot, and its industry, from the plains of Apam, was still prosperous, since pulque was a symbol of national identity. The infinite variations of corn were widely eaten, such as tortillas, sopes, picadas, tostadas, enchiladas, enfrijoladas, chalupas, tlacoyos, or atoles of different flavors. Pinole was a common delicacy. Chocolate was beaten, sauces were made in a mortar and pestle to obtain adequate oxygenation, tortillas were made by hand and at home, most of the time in braziers and griddles.

Refrigerators were cooled with ice blocks; toilets, when they existed, had the tank at the top of the feed pipe and were chain-operated, and beds had a strict brass headboard. On the streets there were vendors selling sweet potatoes and bananas, alegrías and cocadas, raspados, snow cones, ice cream and paletas (they sold *dry ice* ), meringues (ready to be thrown in), guajolotes or pípilas; there were also sharpeners, junk dealers, and buyers of old newspapers. There were many coal and petroleum stalls, and the pharmacies were apothecaries, where the apothecary (at the door) maintained a connection with the old alchemists and prepared all kinds of compounds. Small shops predominated, although of course there were already large ones, which, like the bakeries (run by Spanish people), housed stalls selling tamales and atole, pumpkin seeds, roasted corn, vendors of pork rinds, balloons, and a newspaper stand on their sides.

The train continued to be a very important means of communication, but roads and highways were also being built to connect the country; however, there were countless areas that were difficult to access and the journey to them could take many days on mules and in pangas to cross the rivers. Electricity and radio telephony were also gradually spreading (telephones were still relatively few and people knew that the answer was "good", one of the strangest things in the world, because that was how they qualified whether the reception of the signal was adequate; or "bad" if it was not heard well).

In small towns, people still lived decades ago; the roads were rough, there was no electricity or gas, no radios, and much less cars; people traveled on horseback or in carts, on donkeys or mules; the cinema, a fair or some attraction would occasionally come and life would come alive during religious festivals and with Sunday strolls ("the girls over there, the boys over here, and the dads and moms sitting on the benches," Chava

Flores sang years later); people would also go out to see the profusely, intoxicatingly starry skies and the wonderful shooting stars while people, lying down and in peace, talked; otherwise, at night or on gloomy and rainy days, there would be the narration of legends and fantastic stories, where unreality took the place of honor after its daily devaluation in favor of an overvalued rationality.

In many small towns (and in some not so small ones) more than 130 years after independence, many Spaniards controlled the commerce or the entire life of the town, if they were not held hostage by the local chieftains, imposed through murders, white guards and corruption to buy dangerous men or desirable women. Gonzalo N. Santos was an excellent example of the powerful chieftain who had to be courted by the different governments in the electoral rounds.

More and more cars were seen, and they became so popular that the saying "Mercedes Benz, how much for the Nash?" "Well, sometimes Dodge and sometimes Ford." "No Fiat?" "No, only Packard." "Then Chevrolet, your Mercury" was invented (already in these metaphysical themes we must remember the gloss of the film companies: "Don't give me Movietone because if Paramount gives me Twentieth Century Fox, you'll get Metro Goldwyn Mayer for Columbia Pictures").

In the 1940s, men from the cities wore wide, double-breasted jackets with large shoulder pads and lapels, and equally wide trousers with numerous pleats, but without going to the extremes of the famous Tarzans ("they call them Tarzans, a bunch of lazy people!" sang Lucha Reyes), also called pachucos de la frontera, one of the first clearly countercultural manifestations of such vitality that it would even withstand the interpretive sieges of Octavio Paz a few years later. All men wore hats, whether palm, southern, Texan or felt for city dwellers, "from Sonora to Yucatán Tardán hats are used," said the slogan, which Alfonso Reyes twisted upon hearing a concert: "From Sonora to Yucatán you can hear Chopán music." And for many people, an indispensable part of their attire, as vital as their boxer shorts (big, baggy, boxer-style), was the pistol, fusca or matona, an inexhaustible source of jokes. Just like Diego Rivera and Siqueiros, the vast majority carried different models, revolvers or pistols, but they carried guns and often used their weapons. It was an instant reflection of the "rough Mexico" that still swarmed and continued to be a dispenser of machismo. Every now and then there were "de-pistolization" campaigns.

Women also wore an endless variety of hats and followed the fashions of long dresses, with lots of fabric, below the knee, stockings with their proper crease in the back, blouses buttoned up to the neck, because the prevailing morality was "strict"; they wore makeup with taste (rouge on the cheekbones, mascaraed eyelashes, a very red mouth, eyebrows plucked à la María Félix). They read *Paquita de Jueves* , and most of them dedicated themselves to "household chores," as was usually stated in official documents.

But what in the seventies would be a strong female presence, in the forties it barely moved. During Cardenismo a group of left-wing women had formed the Frente Único Pro Derechos de la Mujer, which came to house Frida Kahlo, Concha Michel, Adelina

Zendejas, Soledad Orozco and Esther Chapa, but the FUPDM was soon absorbed by the PRM and in the years of Avilacamacha, much less propitious, it disappeared. However, the question of women's suffrage, one of the main premises of the FUPDM , had been left in the air.

In early 1943, the country was shocked by the appearance of a new volcano in Dionisio Pulido's cornfield in Paricutín, Michoacán. For days it was the center of the immense, shocking and chilling spectacle produced by explosions and the expulsion of fire, gases, rocks, ashes, a white-hot semi-liquid mass, and lava that flowed at 10 kilometers per hour. At night, in the center of the valley, a resplendent red mountain rose, marked by glowing lines. Numerous researchers from all over the world came to Paricutín to see the phenomenon, about which José Revueltas wrote a splendid chronicle.

In 1943, the CNOP was finally established as a strong sector. It was the ideal vehicle to take seats from the CTM and the CNC in the elections for deputies that would take place in the middle of the year. In addition, the CNOP represented a space for the middle class, which was clearly growing and growing and becoming a unique driving force of the new, frankly capitalist development. It brought together small rural landowners, small-scale merchants and industrialists, cooperative members, artisans, professionals, intellectuals, bureaucrats, and women's and youth groups. Antonio Nava Castillo (who in the sixties would explode in the government of Puebla) was appointed as general secretary, but total control was in the hands of the Avila Camacho deputies. In reality, Avila Camacho established the vital features of the new sector: total subordination to the executive and a tool for various intrigues.

With the CNOP ready, negotiations could begin for the distribution of seats (everyone was sure of winning) in the upcoming legislature. To this end, the three sectors established a "pact of honor" to not invade "zones of influence." President Ávila Camacho carried out the solemn and transcendental rite of the "palomeo" (a sign of approval next to the name of the proposed deputy), made the list to his very personal taste, and with this the sectors left their grievances. Through the submissive CNOP and CNC , the president kept 120 seats, 21 went to the CTM , which also had no desire to fight, and the rest were distributed among the smaller groups. The ridicule of the day corresponded to the poor Mexican Communist Party, which tried to obtain a PRM seat for the leader Dionisio Encinas, a pillar of Stalinism. To make matters worse, Narciso Bassols left the PCM and formed the League of Political Action, which at least in name managed to get rid of the much-demonized label "communist."

Meanwhile, the National Action Party had just consolidated itself as a right-wing party, as could be seen in its Third National Assembly, where leader Manuel Gómez Morin criticized Ávila Camacho for "fostering accommodating quietism or deceived disorientation and making possible with them the survival of the forces of destruction and corruption." He also announced that the PAN would participate in the elections.

The PRM was worried: the PAN could fan the flames of Almazanism; after all, things had changed, but for many it had not been for the better: high prices, the

concealment of products and speculation were sources of discontent that could be used against the regime. It was therefore decided to remove the flag of high prices from the PAN and the CTM senator Fernando Amilpa was instructed or suggested to hold the Secretary of Economy Javier Gaxiola responsible for all the economic ills of the country. Amilpa, with great pleasure, asked for Gaxiola's immediate resignation.

Everything was in place for the elections. Even the electoral law had been amended, but this, of course, continued to ensure government control over the process. Local authorities would control the integration and purification of the electoral roll, the definition of districts and the designation of polling stations. The provision that the first five citizens to arrive would be constituted at the polling station was also maintained.

The PAN finally presented candidates in 21 districts in 11 states and the Federal District, and claimed to be "strong" in more than 10 states. It called for the elimination of socialist education, effective municipal autonomy, measures against high prices, for the State to arbitrate but not be the owner of the economy, as well as true reforms to the Federal Electoral Law to guarantee free elections. For its part, the PRM considered that the PAN did not deserve the honors of refutation and only dedicated insults, slander and sharp disqualifications to it.

It was not surprising then that on election day there were again attacks on the polling stations and theft of ballot boxes, but these were unnecessary, since the PAN opposition did not try to fight with weapons for the polling stations, and the lack of interest and apathy of the people was immense in almost all of the Republic, which was a deplorable result of the immense electoral fraud of three years before. The fraud in this case rather served to finish designing the composition of the Chamber in the following legislature. There were attempts to subtract seats from the CTM but it managed to maintain its positions. The sessions of the electoral college, however, had its climactic moments.

The most spectacular one occurred when the college gave the seat for the second district of Oaxaca to a candidate who presented himself as an independent because the PRM had taken the fourth district from him to give it to another more influential candidate. The one who had truly triumphed, and from the PRM as well, was Jorge Meixueiro, who, in addition to having the rare triphthong *uei* in his surname, allowed himself to shock Congress when he went up to the podium and without further ado shot himself there and then.

Meixueiro's suicide, in the end, managed to impose a minimum of sanity on the electoral college, which was forced to open up a little and allow the defense of the disputed cases on the platform. In this way, it had to swallow the speech ("forceful and well-founded," describes it as Luis Medina) of Narciso Bassols, who pointed out truly grotesque irregularities, such as Ávila Camacho himself voting outside of Mexico City due to manipulations in the electoral process. He asked that the voting documentation be reviewed, and the PRM responded that it would never end if they started reading all the voting records. In the end, to demonstrate its power, the government kept "the

whole cart" and only gave two seats to "independent" candidates (like the one who caused Meixueiro's suicide). Nothing for the PAN or for Bassols.

The elections and their unedifying and boring results were the setting for protests against high prices, and specifically against Francisco Javier Gaxiola, the Secretary of the Economy. In the press, he was accused of supporting hoarders in order to benefit economically from his family. There were many rumours that Ávila Camacho was behind the attacks on Gaxiola, which, of course, was true: in doing so, the president was drawing a line under Abelardo L. Rodríguez's side, ingratiating himself a little with the suffering leftists, reaffirming his power and surely having a lot of fun.

The CTM organized a demonstration of 80,000 people in Mexico City, and shortly afterwards, in Durango, the mob raided the railway warehouses and looted the corn stored there. This led Ávila Camacho to issue several decrees: "to compensate for the insufficient wages of the workers," to freeze prices, to control corn stocks and to intensify sugar production. All this, in the long run, proved useless.

Meanwhile, the problems that began with the Social Security project intensified in 1943 and reached their climax in the July riots in the Zócalo. People were beaten and injured by the public forces, and the scandal was enormous. The workers protested because they had been charged Social Security contributions, since the employers flatly refused to pay them, and therefore, at the end of the year, Ávila Camacho modified the Social Security Law so that the contributions would be obtained from taxes.

At the same time, the teachers culminated a year-long campaign to oust Octavio Véjar Vázquez from the Education Secretariat. Véjar had gone too far in trying to subjugate the teachers' unions. The new secretary was the poet Jaime Torres Bodet, who, to avoid problems, declared from the start: "I am not a politician."

One of the people who fanned the flames against the deposed Secretary of Education was Maximino Ávila Camacho, who, in this case, did so to draw attention and strengthen his chances of being a candidate for the presidency of the Republic. Maximino always considered himself stronger and more capable than his brother, and it is said that he flew into a rage when Cárdenas leaned towards Manuel and not towards him. After the change of powers, Maximino never hid his presidential pretensions and, once named Secretary of Communications and Public Works, he began a notorious campaign to obtain funds, allies and sympathizers. In addition to his association with the Swedish millionaire Werner Grenn and undertaking several businesses, he also sought power through the press and, allied with Regino Hernández Llergo, gave funds to the magazine *Hoy* . But that was not enough. Maximino wanted a newspaper and started creating *El Demócrata* , but he abandoned his plans when Lanz Duret, director of *El Universal* , refused to sell him a second-hand press.

Needless to say, Maximino was more of a problem than a help for the president, but the latter tried not to get involved with him and never denied or corrected Maximino's actions, which, by the way, often favored him as well, since they helped him to clear the field of "leftists." The most that Ávila Camacho ever said was that "his relatives had no influence in the government," and Maximino, in turn, declared that he had participated

in the government before his brother, "I have the right to intervene in politics," he said bluntly. However, he did not have great hopes. Under no circumstances was the president going to point the finger in his brother's direction. Maximino understood that his chances of becoming president were very remote, and at the end of 1943 he renounced his ambitions in exchange for influencing the succession.

And he did. On several occasions he had strong clashes with Miguel Alemán, the super-minister of the Interior, who twice submitted his resignation, but it was never accepted, explains historian Luis Medina, because the president had promised to leave him all internal political control. Since he could not defeat Alemán, Maximino directed his aggression against General Cárdenas, Lombardo Toledano, the labor leaders and several secretaries of state, among whom were the Secretary of Labor, the Secretary of Education and the Secretary of the Economy.

By 1944 it was clear that there were only two candidates (or "aspirants," as Cosío Villegas called them) with any chance: Ezequiel Padilla and Miguel Alemán. Alemán was very careful, and all his blows were delivered from a position of absolute cover that would not put him in immediate danger. On the other hand, Ezequiel Padilla, without going to the extremes of Maximino, was constantly the subject of news in the press; because of the war, Foreign Relations was a key position in the cabinet. In 1942, the American magazine *Look* called him "a new man of world stature." Furthermore, it was known that Ambassador Messersmith had a clear fondness for Padilla and a clear antipathy towards Miguel Alemán. And in the end, Padilla's popularity in the neighboring empire was so obvious that it began to reduce his chances of reaching the presidency. Ávila Camacho had to remove him from the list since 1943, because from that moment on the president avoided by all means opening periods of "pre-candidacies" in the PRM , and he limited himself to asking for calm, everything would be in its time and the party mechanisms would have the last word. And the systematic attacks against the Guerrero darling of the gringos began. It was rumored that Ávila Camacho encouraged the personal attacks that the magazines *Hoy* and *Así* dedicated to the chancellor. The left, which longed to ingratiate itself with Ávila Camacho, joined in the criticism. It was soon seen, then, that Ezequiel Padilla, like Maximino, was a figure too noisy, who attracted criticism and attacks from both the right and the left, which was marginalizing him from the official nomination of the PRM .

Of course, there were other contenders. General Miguel Henríquez Guzmán (it was said that with the support of Cárdenas) again signed up for the PRM candidacy . But by then it was already very difficult to eliminate the general impression that presidents should no longer be military men, but civilians. The world war allowed Ávila Camacho to make numerous changes in the army, with the aim of depoliticizing and professionalizing it, and by then the chances of Mexico having new military presidents were increasingly remote. At that time, three other well-known PRM members had more possibilities: Javier Rojo Gómez, regent of Mexico City; Marte R. Gómez, secretary of Agriculture, and Gustavo Baz, secretary of Health, but none of them had the

vast resources at their disposal as Miguel Alemán or Padilla, and little by little they withdrew.

In 1944, the newly appointed Secretary of Education, Torres Bodet, showed that he was interested in other things besides the persistent struggle against the increasingly weakened leftist teachers. Torres Bodet created the Teacher Training Institute, with the noble aim of raising the level of teachers. However, they did not like the new project, since it tied salary increases to "performance" at the Institute. Torres Bodet changed the primary school textbooks, taking due care that no socialist stench would offend parents. In addition, he called on private initiative to build schools together: by the end of the year the poet had already built 588 of them. This plan went hand in hand with the Literacy Campaign, which Torres Bodet undertook with great enthusiasm and the full support of the president. Ten million primers were printed to reduce the shameful 47.8 percent of illiteracy. However, the campaign did not yield the expected results; by the end of 1945, barely more than 200,000 of the nine million illiterate people had become literate. The mischievous Salvador Novo (a close friend of Torres Bodet, by the way, to the point that he called him "Torres Bidet") must have sensed something of this when, according to Carlos Monsiváis, he wrote the following verses: "The community exclaimed, upon hearing the novelty: 'Stop being illiterate, to read Torres Bodet? Frankly, what an atrocity!'" Nevertheless, the campaign became permanent (in Torres Bodet's beauty salon) and by the end of 1947 it managed to surpass one million literate people (there were only eight million left). Sadly, the campaign quietly died out in 1948. In exchange for the failure in literacy, Torres Bodet was given the honor of removing the "socialist" part of the third constitutional article. In December 1945, Don Jaime submitted his reform project to the president: the "disconcerting expression" was eliminated, and private individuals were authorized to create schools of all types and grades, once they joined the SEP and submitted to official programs. Religious corporations or societies and ministers of worship were also prohibited from intervening in education, to which, naturally, the government turned a blind eye, since not only did religious schools continue but they began to expand.

Over time, religious schools would end up educating those who, by the 1980s, would be the most prominent members of the government. Ávila Camacho found no objections to Torres Bodet's project, so he sent it to the Chamber of Deputies, which, of course, approved it almost without problems, and at the end of 1946, shortly before the transfer of powers, the Chamber of Deputies declared the third constitutional article reformed. By then, it was the only thing left of the Cardenista reforms.

The situation in the countryside had indeed been reversed towards the end of the Avila Camacho administration. Since coming to power, Avila Camacho began to dismantle Lázaro Cárdenas' agrarian reform. First, he issued a decree that divided up the ejidos, "to protect them from those who use the system to spread exotic ideas and exercise undue hegemony within the ejido communities."

From then on, the ejidos became increasingly unprotected, and the private farmer became stronger. Due to the notable decrease in the number of land deliveries, Kafkaesque

bureaucracy and exasperating procedures to resolve cases of land disputes, numerous land invasions took place, which allowed Ávila Camacho to compensate the affected farmers with excellent irrigated land, national lands and enormous facilities for production. In this way, many affected owners obtained much more than they had lost. All this generated great problems in the countryside, and the private sector simply asked for agrarian protection. The government responded that "the changes had to be gradual." The "parcelling" policy that encouraged "individual ambition" over collective concerns continued, and the extension of the plots was extended to double the previous surface area.

The revolutionary "dogma" of the distribution of land was still "sacred," and Ávila Camacho also made his distributions, but these were of very poor, uncultivated, or simply unusable lands. As if that were not enough, the accreditation procedures could take up to 35 years. Many peasants simply rejected the lands granted. And that was all, because the government insisted that "there was no more land to distribute."

Instead, the Office of Small Property was strengthened, and with this, latifundism returned, with increasing force: it was enough to divide a huge area into small plots and put them in the name of relatives or front men. These "small owners" soon created their own white guards, in the purest Pedro Páramo style. As if that were not enough, the neo-latifundists generally had the open complicity of state and municipal authorities, who deliberately made mistakes in the location plans or in the allocations to allow the farmers to protect themselves or, at least, create true labyrinths of documents.

The ejidatarios were increasingly at risk of being dispossessed, and the ejidos around the main cities soon fell, devouring everything around them as they grew. Support for private farmers was such that the number of certificates of inalienability issued by the Ávila Camacho government was impressive. They were given excellent irrigation districts, and in 1944 60 percent of the irrigated lands already belonged to smallholders.

And the campaigns against the collectivization of the countryside did not cease. The PAN considered the agrarian reform as a "foolish class hypertrophy that has filled us with hunger and ruin." It was said that in the ejidos there was only incompetence, lack of organization and corruption. Naturally, many ejidos did produce, but they were forced to grow crops for export: coffee, cereals, vegetables and cotton, which were especially destined for the markets of the countries at war, and the general policy of the government in agrarian matters was against the national market, which, of course, suffered from shortages, with the corresponding hoarding and high prices.

In the end, Ávila Camacho did not decide to implement the agrarian protection. In July 1945, Silvano Barba González, head of the Agrarian Department, called the First National Revolutionary Congress of Agrarian Law, which rejected the protection. However, Norberto Aguirre Palancares of the Revolutionary Bloc of Deputies, attacked the Congress because it was pure "demagoguery and agitation in the countryside." Small property had to be defended. This paved the way for the next government to grant the agrarian protection.

The anti-agrarian policy of Manuel Ávila Camacho, in addition to privatizing the countryside, generated discontent among the peasants, and, for example, the dispossession of 200 towns in the Bajío strengthened the National Union of the Synarchists, which capitalized more than anyone else on peasant complaints. On the other hand, the denial of requests for land plus the numerous resolutions of inapplicability of agricultural and livestock lands that protected more than three million hectares of private agriculture discouraged the peasants to such an extent that a growing bracerismo began: more and more people, desperate because of the misery in the countryside, either moved to some big city or simply emigrated legally or illegally to the United States. Otherwise, large caravans of hunger were frequent, heading from regions in the interior, on foot and in vain, to Mexico City to demand justice from the president.

For his part, towards the end of his administration, he made it clear, even to those who were not interested, that his agrarian policy had been splendid. He claimed great successes in his conduct towards ejidos and small property. The increase in exports (as if the context of the war had not counted) was his great pride. He also assured that the latifundia had been dismantled thanks to the growth of small property, which could be true in a very ethereal theory, since in the insolent practice precisely the overlapping of small property occurred through front men and the emergence of great caciques and very powerful farmers was propitiated, especially in the north of the country. In any case, the president boasted of having brought the "agrarian reform" almost to its culmination.

With the defeat of what was once the official left (since by then everyone was avoiding, like AIDS, the affront of being labeled "leftists") both in the countryside and in education, the battle was centered on the workers' sector and their positions in the legislative chambers. After using the workers to get rid of the Secretary of Economy Francisco Javier Gaxiola, the president, through the pre-programmed response to the presidential report carried out by the former Vasconcelos member Herminio Ahumada, criticized the left for "promoting immorality, radicalism and anarchy" and in passing scolded the deputies for the way the recent elections had been conducted.

Senator and second-in-command of the CTM, Fernando Amilpa, attacked Ahumada as soon as Ávila Camacho had left the chamber and succeeded in having him removed as president of Congress and having the leftist Carlos Madrazo take his place. As soon as the president found out what had happened, he scolded the leader of the PRM majority for allowing such a vote, and he, in turn, transferred the blows to the deputies who had gone along with the leftist bluff, so that *the next day* the agreements had already been revoked and Ahumada was once again president of Congress. Carlos Madrazo, furious, accused the leader of the majority of "dividing the Chamber by supporting a reactionary" and immediately left the session accompanied by Amilpa, Octavio Sentíes, Ruffo Figueroa, Jesús Yurén, Víctor Alfonso Maldonado and the rest of the minority still considered "leftist."

At first, things seemed to go no further, but Ávila Camacho decided to take revenge for Madrazo's rebellion. At the beginning of 1945, the Ministry of Labor reported

that several deputies were trafficking in cards that allowed peasants to emigrate to the United States as laborers. Of course, one of the accused was Carlos Madrazo. A judicial process was initiated that constituted an enormous scandal and, to avoid an intricate process of impeachment in Congress, Ávila Camacho himself recommended that Madrazo and his colleagues ask for leave. It was said that Miguel Alemán was behind the maneuver, who at that time was very busy trying to get the president to name him as the PRM candidate for the presidency. The accused finally obtained conditional freedom and the official left, through its undisputed head, the Secretary of Defense Lázaro Cárdenas, returned the blow. The National Defense Department announced its intention to subject General Pablo Macías Valenzuela, governor of Sinaloa and a close associate of President Ávila Camacho, to a court martial. As time went by, as was to be expected, the justice system, always ready to satisfy the whims of high-ranking politicians, gave favorable rulings to both Madrazo and the governor of Sinaloa.

In 1944, Eduardo Suárez, Secretary of the Treasury, and Eduardo Villaseñor, from the Bank of Mexico, commissioned Daniel Cosío Villegas to represent our country at the Bretton Woods Conference, where institutions such as the International Monetary Fund were created and where Cosío went head to head with the famous economist John N. Keynes, alias "El Lord," who tried to rudely ignore Cosío's observations, until the latter was forced to stop him. That same year, the "first lady," Mrs. Ana Soledad Orozco de Ávila Camacho, was busy censoring films such as *Pueblo olvidado* , by John Ford, based on a novel by John Steinbeck. But it was at the end of the six-year term when Mrs. Soledad did not hold back; she found out that the regent of the capital, Javier Rojo Gómez, had commissioned an indecent statue of Diana the Huntress from the sculptor Juan Olaguíbel. The Lady asked for photos of the work, was horrified by the goddess's succulent nakedness, and ordered that she be given a loincloth. Olaguíbel, like many capital city residents afterwards, was very pleased with his work and acted as crazy as he could, but finally had no choice but to put underwear on Diana, who was placed on the corner of Reforma and Lieja, where no one could stop seeing her until the road works, in the time of Genghis Hank, moved her from her place. By the way, after Diana was installed, an effigy of Ariel, also rigorously naked, was placed almost in front of Diana the Huntress, which motivated some girls from nearby schools to go "to see the Diana." For his part, Don Alfonso Reyecito, still director of El Colegio de México, published his famous essay *El deslinde* , in which he gave a line in favor of the formalist tendencies of Mexican literature. In poetry, the best was *The Death of the Angel* , by Rubén Bonifaz Nuño; *Wastelands of Dreams* , by Alí Chumacero, and *The men of the dawn* by Efraín Huerta.

But the literary stars did not even remotely have the penetration of the cinematic ones. In 1945, the Ariel of the Academy of Cinematography (a pathetic imitation of the Academy and the Oscar of the United States) was awarded to Dolores del Río for her work in *Las abandonados* . This served to demonstrate that Del Río was still in force and had not been swallowed up by María Félix, who legend made appear not

only as a devourer of men but also of women. La Félix was the undisputed queen of Mexican cinema. That same year, the magazine *México Cinema,* with all its horrendous name, reported that the "most sought-after" artists in Mexico were: María Félix (250 thousand pesos per film; with that amount you could buy a mansion), Cantinflas (200 thousand), Arturo de Córdova (100 thousand), Jorge Negrete (75 thousand) and Pedro Armendáriz (50 thousand pesos per film contract).

As for Cantinflas, the ineffable Gonzalo N. Santos, in his combative *Memoirs* , tells that Maximino Ávila Camacho had become enthralled with the flamenco dancer Conchita Martínez, and, in order to have her, in the old style of King David he ordered his bodyguards to beat up the Spanish woman's husband and then expel him from the country. Maximino (who wore one-piece patent leather shoes with very high heels and various colors) organized a party at the "small" house he gave Conchita and invited the governor of Puebla, the director of the Lottery, the head of the Agrarian Department, the head of the Indigenous Department, other politicians, several young women, and the learned Mario Moreno. As was his custom, Maximino ranted against "the villainous Miguel Alemán." But the show was put on by Cantinflas and was involuntarily humorous. Cantinflas joined in the conversation and, to everyone's surprise, became very serious and gave a very solemn speech. Everyone present burst out laughing, even more than with the famous scene between Cantinflas and Pardavé in *Ahí está el detalle* . The comedian got carried away and proceeded to talk about the people. "You shut up and speak to us in your language," Santos interrupted him, "you don't know the people, you know the public."

The day after that drunken night, Maximino went to Puebla, where he was offered a banquet with five thousand people. Maximino felt ill, they took him home and there one of the greatest stars of national political folklore died. Miguel Alemán must have breathed a sigh of relief. Shortly afterwards, the American magazine *Time* said that Alemán prospered with death: he was a deputy when the incumbent, Manlio Fabio Altamirano, died, and he became governor after the assassination of the elected governor, Javier Rojo Gómez, and Maximino's death cleared the way for him to the presidency.

In 1945, it could be said that President Ávila Camacho had done his part: he had already dismantled the pernicious Cardenista reforms and managed to "regain the confidence" of private enterprise. The basic components of the system that would prevail 50 years later were already there: the supercharged presidential system, the official party and those of the opposition, the sectors of the party (one of them commissioned for the president: the CNOP ), the agrarian leagues, the confederations of commerce and industry, the bankers' associations.

The president already had all the power at the moment when he was forced to give it up; "nobody knows who they work for," he must have thought at some point. At his feet he saw the silent and deaf war between the candidates for the presidency. Naturally, there were only two possible candidates: Alemán and Padilla. But at that time not only was Ambassador Messersmith making his sympathy for Padilla and his

dislike for Alemán clear, but pressure came from Washington in favor of the Secretary of Foreign Relations. This made the president finally lean towards Alemán and completely eliminate Padilla, who, on the other hand, never had much of a chance, since he was not one of Ávila Camacho's "people."

Furthermore, Miguel Alemán had worked hard. First he won the support of more than 20 governors and then he got the green light from Lázaro Cárdenas. The general, as we can see, was actually using Miguel Henríquez Guzmán's candidacy as a lever of pressure. With this, and by then also with the backing of Fidel Velázquez, a pro-Alemán committee was formed, which immediately proceeded to nominate him for the PRM candidacy . Ávila Camacho accepted an invitation that Alemán made him at his modest country house in Martínez de la Torre, Veracruz, and this was the signal for the charge to begin. It was May 20, 1945, and the world war was about to end.

The CTM was the first sector to give its support to Miguel Alemán, but it was not free. Vicente Lombardo Toledano put on a tough act and proposed a program that the candidate should adopt and, in addition, let it be known that he expected at least a position in the cabinet. Lombardo's program, on the other hand, was tailored to Alemán: industrialization via national unity, and agrarian reform to support economic growth. Since the first stage of the revolution had already been consolidated, Lombardo said, the masses would support Alemán, but they would also censure his "errors or deviations."

Alemán watched Lombardo's performance impassively and then took the floor. He made it clear to him that he should not expect price controls, that all his support would be for private companies and foreign capital that came in, so that the workers should avoid disproportionate demands.

He made it clear that he would take a firm hand in the countryside, because for optimal agricultural work there would have to be tranquility and no longer the unrest caused by "the enemies of the peasants." To finish quickly, Alemán implied that the idea of obtaining a position in the cabinet in exchange for the support they gave him was ridiculous. In any case, the workers applauded him and Lombardo Toledano called him "the Puppy of the Revolution" in a tone of reproach.

After the CTM came the brunt of the attack, and Alemán's candidacy was supported by the peasant union, the bureaucrats' union, the recently created and well-domesticated CNOP and, not to be left behind, the Mexican Communist Party, which apparently could be Stalinist and PRIist at the same time. To stem any discontent in the army, Ávila Camacho ordered the retirement of the oldest and most caciquile elements and promised that young officers would be promoted quickly; however, once and for all "the army must recognize its divorce from politics," he warned.

Under these conditions, Alemán resigned from the Interior Ministry. He was replaced by Primo Villa Michel, a well-known friend of Ezequiel Padilla, who was thus signaled that if he were to take over, the government would be neutral. Ávila Camacho wanted to get rid of the stigma of the elections of six years earlier and avoid accusations

of electoral fraud (which were made against him anyway, since, of course, there was electoral fraud, although in a proportion infinitely less problematic than in 1940).

Ezequiel Padilla decided to do it out of excitement. First he went to the United States to check the gringo support, but, like Almazán six years earlier, the most he got were promises of neutrality. Upon his return, he was met with attacks from the Alemán supporters, who accused him of unlimited ambition for power, and of pretending to be at the service of the Revolution when in reality he was a reactionary. Over time it became clear that, in reality, this was a portrait of Alemán, who wanted to be reelected and decisively finished what Ávila Camacho had begun: burying the Mexican Revolution in favor of a capitalism satellite to that of the United States.

Padilla met with Ávila Camacho, who swore to him that he would be absolutely impartial. On July 6, he resigned from Foreign Relations, but waited a little longer. Only after the report did he decide to believe that the offers of impartiality were good and he threw himself into the fight for the presidency. The first thing he tried was to win over the great support that Almazán had, but the conditions were very different, since the right was comfortable with Ávila Camacho and the poor left was already very punished. Nevertheless, he presented a broad project to win all possible votes. To begin with, he emphasized the need for a true democracy in order to avoid shameful frauds like that of 1940. He also considered the rapid industrialization of the country to be a priority and promised a "gigantic" program of public works. This went hand in hand with a rejection of communism and, not to mention fascism, as well as a frank anti-unionism. He promised women's suffrage and a truly free municipality, moderate state intervention in the economy, total openness to foreign investment and almost unconditional support for the United States.

Faced with this, Miguel Alemán was forced to define his project, which, after all, was almost identical to that of his opponent; Alemán tried to make it seem that only he and his team were "up to date," they knew about the spectacular changes in the world panorama since the end of the war and what Mexico needed to modernize and make the leap out of underdevelopment. Like Ávila Camacho, Alemán proposed that the country stop being an exporter of raw materials because we were ready for the production of manufactured articles through Mexican capital, technicians and workers. Large machinery and advances would be brought from abroad that would allow industrialization, which, in addition, would mean a prompt evaluation of the standard of living of the most needy classes. In fact, he terrified his followers when he suggested that drastic measures against high prices were essential, as well as a reduction in prices. Along with the production of articles that would satisfy the country's requirements, Alemán intended to promote the electrical, chemical, steel, mechanical and oil industries, as well as transport, since all of this was indispensable to support the famous industrialization. This meant, of course, containing workers' demands and agricultural production that would support industry and that could increase exports, since the balance of payments had returned to being in deficit.

In fact, the plans of Padilla and Alemán were almost identical, and the official candidate was forced to emphasize the need for democratization in the official party and throughout the country, the fight against corruption ("moralization of society") and the quasi-sacred approach to Mexicanness, to contrast it with Padilla's flagrant gringuism.

He was not far behind. At the end of November he joined his Mexican Democratic Party ( PDM ), which immediately proceeded to nominate him as a candidate for the presidency. On this occasion Padilla was "tough" and accused the government of reveling in electoral fraud (another one was imminent, he said) and of abusing force. Of course, the Alemán supporters proceeded to brand him "Huertista, millionaire and demagogue."

With the electoral game well established, Ávila Camacho proceeded to make the final adjustments: political reform was essential, since the old law dated back to 1918 and all the opposition parties ( PDM , PAN , FPP , PCM and the Sinarquistas) agreed that it was a mockery to talk about democratization without attacking the mechanisms of imposition, electoral fraud, illegal intervention by authorities and without the participation of the opposition parties. In addition, as is known, Ávila Camacho wanted to leave with a clean image that would also legitimize Miguel Alemán.

By December 1945, Elías Nandino's *Espejo de mi muerte (Mirror of my death ) and Margarita Michelena's Paraíso y nostalgia (Paradise and nostalgia) had already appeared* , and the chambers already had the executive's initiative for a new Federal Electoral Law. This law took away from the municipalities the power to make the electoral roll, establish the polling stations, and supervise the electoral processes, and in its place federal agencies arose that would serve as a model for state and municipal agencies. The Federal Electoral Surveillance Commission was created (made up of a Secretary of the Interior and a representative of the executive, a deputy, a senator, two Supreme Court judges, and two commissioners from the most important parties). In addition, the Electoral Roll Council was created (made up of the Director General of Statistics, the Director of Post Offices, and the Director of Population). Of course, the determination that the first five "citizens" to arrive should constitute the polling stations was eliminated.

As can be seen, the new law was still a huge curve in favor of the government and the official party, since they had the overwhelming majority in the new electoral bodies, so the opposition parties protested against the "exaggerated intervention of public power in the elections" and pointed out that not even *all* the parties had representation, but only "the two most important ones." The CTM also opposed it, but the wolves argued that they did so because "there was no need for a new law, the old one was fine." As expected, the law was approved without problems, and only the representatives of the Supreme Court were eliminated from the Oversight Commission.

With the splendid cushion provided by the electoral law, Ávila Camacho and Alemán proceeded to change the PRM so that everything would remain the same. It was deemed necessary to reform the party for several reasons: the main one was that the

PRM still reeked of Lázaro Cárdenas, its creator; in addition, in the PRM , made up of corporations, the workers' corporation continued to have a great weight (although the CNOP , the "popular" sector, had already been strengthened), but by then it was no longer necessary to compromise with the workers, there was no longer a war that required an "internal front."

On January 18, 1946, the delegates (duly instructed) declared the old PRM dissolved ("it had already fulfilled its historic mission") and approved the Declaration of Principles, the Program of Action and the statutes of the ta-da, ta-da! Institutional Revolutionary Party, the PRI (or RIP , as the cartoonist Rius called it years later). The leader of the new party, Rafael Pascasio Gamboa, nominated Miguel Alemán for president (whom some called "el Ratón Miguelito," since he had in his sights, they said, "la Gata Félix").

Apart from that, there were no major changes (it was "the same old story," Felix might have said). The Three Sectors continued (the workers were now a minority) and two new secretariats were created in the National Executive Committee: the Women's Action Secretariat and the Youth Action Secretariat, since the need to give more attention to women and young people was in the air. The great novelty consisted in opening up the workers' sector to new organizations (of course to continue weakening the CTM ) and several confederations signed up immediately: the miners' union, the Workers and Peasants Confederation of Mexico, the General Workers' Confederation, the National Proletariat Confederation and the National Electricians' Confederation. And the Great Democratization of the new party was announced! All selection of candidates had to be done by individual vote in booths set up after the call. However, since the legendary control of the center could be lost through democratic processes, a "pact of sectors" was created without any hesitation so that any candidate could only come from one of the three corporations; in this way the newly created PRI showed one of what would be its characteristics: the ability to reconcile the most aberrant opposites in the best hermetic tradition, such as democracy and anti-democracy in this case, since the internal elections would be unnecessary if the sectors, true sources of manipulation, distributed the candidacies according to their needs.

Since the PRM metamorphosis into the PRI , the government tried to convince people that democratic forms would soon be in place "like in the most developed countries." By the way, one of these, the United States, was still a problem for Miguel Alemán, so, if six years earlier the young man from Veracruz had traveled to Washington to convince the empire of Ávila Camacho's "good intentions," in 1946 he met with Guy Ray, first secretary of the American embassy. Confidentially, as these things usually are, Alemán clarified that the neighboring country should not worry about the support that the PRI candidate would receive from the CTM and from notorious communists like Vicente Lombardo Toledano; he added that he would not accept communists in his government and that Lombardo was not in a position to demand anything. In addition, for its industrialization purposes Mexico would rely fundamentally on the United States, and not on England or other European countries. Apparently, Alemán got what

he was looking for, because shortly afterward Washington withdrew the conflictive ambassador Messersmith and sent Walter Thurston in his place, who first ignored Padilla when he came to visit him, even willing to shine his shoes.

In addition to Alemán and Padilla, there were two other candidates: that of General Agustín Castro, via the National Constitutionalist Party ( PNC ), and that of General Enrique Calderón, who formed the Popular Revolutionary Reivindicator Party ( PRPR ), which served to create confusion, to mediate old military officers and to divide the remnants of the official left that still remained, since General Henríquez Guzmán at the last minute decided not to compete for the presidency. All these parties obtained registration in May, including the synarchist Popular Force Party and the PCM . The PAN did not present a candidate for the presidency, but the Avilacamacha "plurality" was already a reality, and the still president did not tire of assuring that the elections would be very clean, the army would monitor them and any type of violence or electoral fraud would be prevented.

In reality, the presidential campaigns were calm, except for some boycotts by the authorities of the opposition, as it was undoubtedly hard work to shake off decades-old habits. And finally, on July 7, the elections took place.

There were no hectic shootouts like those in 1940. Only in Pachuca were there dead and wounded when the Padilla supporters faced the troops. Ávila Camacho boasted of the cleanliness of the elections, but from the first moment the PDM , PAN and PRPR alleged electoral fraud. These, at least in San Luis Potosí, did occur. The chief Gonzalo N. Santos, with the stern face that characterized him, simply said that he, as governor of the state, let the people vote in peace, but that, at night, he sent for the removal of some ballot boxes (guarded by the army). The lieutenant in charge of the guard flatly refused to allow the removal of the ballot boxes and Santos had to call the head of the military zone, who explained to him that by strict orders of President Ávila Camacho he could not allow any of that. "Are you playing dumb, my general, or are you really dumb?" Don't screw up, don't smear the president, who knows how to do things gently and not roughly, why do you think you have me in San Luis Potosí?" General Miguel Molinar explained that the officer in charge of the custody was proof against any bribery. Santos then recommended that they send that officer out of there, with congratulations, and that someone "truly trustworthy" stay in his place. This was done, and Santos was able to remove not one, but all the ballot boxes. Beforehand, of course, he had taken care to change the original ones for others that he had ordered made and that had screws on the lids. In this way they opened the urns and arranged the "vote" as they pleased. Later, everyone found out about the theft of the ballot boxes and asked Santos if that was not immoral. "In politics and in the game," Santos declared, "morality is a tree that bears blackberries." He added that his way of fighting for the Revolution would be blindly approved by Carranza, Obregón, Calles and Cárdenas. "The electoral law," he added, "is like the game of mochitanga: one smart guy and many idiots."

Padilla went to the Supreme Court to ask for the elections to be annulled, but, as expected, they ignored him, and, in the meantime, the Electoral College qualified the elections and gave 1.8 million votes to Alemán, 450 thousand to Padilla (a notable 19 percent, because now there was democracy) and insubstantial amounts to Calderón and Castro. All the senators went to the PRI , as well as 132 deputies; four seats were awarded to the PAN , one to the Fuerza Popular and two to the "independents," but nothing to the PDM or the PCM , since all of them could be opposition, but some were more opposition than others, and those had no place in a decent system.

In December, Ávila Camacho handed over the presidential sash to Alemán Valdés, who proposed that Mexico would be democratized, that there would be industrial modernization, exaltation of Mexican identity, a fight against dishonest officials, and a "work cabinet, not a political cabinet," made up of brilliant technicians and university graduates, all of them civilians, of course. His cabinet, which earned praise from the private sector, included Antonio Ruiz Galindo (Economy), Ramón Beteta (Treasury), Nazario Ortiz Garaza (Agriculture), Agustín García López (Communications), Manuel Gual Vidal (Education), and Héctor Pérez Martínez (governor). The latter died in 1948, and was replaced by Ruiz Cortines, the Veracruz protégé whom Alemán brought back from the governorship of Veracruz.

The now ex-president Ávila Camacho retired to his home with his wife, and although he was certainly attentive to national political life, he did not actually lead a power group with a political presence during Alemán's government, or even after. Many consulted him before making political decisions, but this was more because of the weight that the former office had given him, not so much because his endorsement was essential. President Alemán, in essence, did not inform him of his actions, and possibly Ávila Camacho, "the gentleman president," as he was still called, was often surprised by the bold moves of his successor.

# 2. The Heavy Hand (1946-1952)

## Mexican Modernization

In his first days in office, Miguel Alemán made his presence felt. Anti-communism, now strengthened by pressure from the United States, was here to stay and became the banner of all those who wanted to be in government, including the workers' unions. Among these, only the big unions (oil workers, railroad workers, electricians) tried to preserve their autonomy and decision-making capacity; they realized that official policies consisted of containing workers' demands as much as possible for the benefit of the private sector, which was not so difficult, since Vicente Lombardo Toledano and the wolves of the CTM were willing to give up anything in order to preserve their positions and privileges. Therefore, Jesús Ortega, leader of the oil workers, asked the company to level wages. Pemex responded negatively and the union ordered a general strike on December 19, 1946. The strike was accepted by almost all sections of the SRTPRM . But no one calculated the forcefulness of President Alemán's response: the army took over Pemex facilities throughout the country and took charge of fuel distribution, the company in turn rescinded the contract of the national and sectional leaders of the union, and the government initiated an economic conflict before the Conciliation and Arbitration Board to reform the collective contract.

In the face of this blow, public opinion sank into stupor, private initiative applauded the "energetic action of the president" and the labor leaders remained fearfully silent. Shortly before Christmas, Alemán declared that the repression of the oil workers did not mean that his government intended to subjugate the working class, since "the regime would be incapable of moving away from the great social contents of the Revolution." Of course, the workers understood exactly the opposite; some, the few militants who remained, sought ways to confront the new situation, and the others hastened to ingratiate themselves with the government. Lombardo Toledano asked the unions to condemn the oil strike and to hold an extraordinary convention of the SRTPRM . This began in the first days of 1947. The national leaders resigned from their positions in the union to avoid the termination of their work contracts, and thus a new executive committee was formed headed by Antonio Hernández Ábrego. Pemex took advantage of this surrender to make staff adjustments, to reduce temporary workers and to increase the number of confidential employees. Finally, the collective contract was reformed so that Pemex could contract the company's development and social works on its own. By the way, from the beginning Miguel Alemán created by decree the Federal Secu-

rity Directorate ( DFS ), in charge of the Ministry of the Interior. General Marcelino Inzurreta, the first director of the DFS , called career officers. Credential number 1 was for General Melchor Cárdenas. The DFS was the office of espionage and "political control." Héctor Martínez Cabañas, Enrique Cordero, Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios, Miguel Nazar Haro, José Antonio Zorrilla Pérez and many other gems passed through it.

Another bombshell, although expected, was the reforms to Article 27 of the Constitution. Without a doubt, Alemán wanted to take advantage of the relative "honeymoon" of the first days of government to get rid of this problem and, by chance, strengthen himself even more. Like Ávila Camacho, President Alemán proposed increasing production in the countryside to expand exports and substitute imports; agriculture should support industrialization. Alemán believed that good development of the countryside could be generated through private investment, since for him only "small landowners" produced as they should. During the previous six-year term, seeing that the government indulged them, businessmen demanded "security in the countryside," which, simply, translated as the request for agrarian protection for "genuine Mexicans," as farmers called themselves.

Alemán satisfied them as soon as he could; he granted protection to agricultural or livestock properties with certificates of non-affectability and set the limit for small property at 100 hectares. These reforms were approved unanimously in the chambers, and the CNC did not dare to complain, even though the agrarian protection undermined the poor peasants. Only the ejidatarios of La Laguna, faithful Cardenistas, protested, but they were left alone. The government made it clear that the reforms could not be considered counterrevolutionary, since small property was an integral part of the Revolution. But no one questioned small property, only the protection for the regime's favorites: the private sector.

The agrarian protection was only the first taste of Alemán's recipes for the countryside. During the first three years of his government, the distribution of land practically stopped. All that was talked about was "increasing production": the stage of agrarian distribution and the fight against large estates, it was insisted, was over. It was not until 1949, when the demonstrations, protest meetings and terrible marches of peasants to the capital intensified, that the president resumed the distribution, but, of course, he was very careful to only grant land that was almost useless.

Instead, the government invested heavily in irrigation, electrification and road works, and large amounts of low-interest loans were also channelled, so it was very advantageous for the rich to go into farming, even though most of them had barely seen a cow in a photograph, so people soon dubbed them "nylon farmers".

In the countryside, there was also the problem of foot-and-mouth disease, which Alemán was not so sure of and lost his charm. The president could be very macho with the workers and the poor of the country, but when the United States entered the game, the modernizer did not know what to do. From the beginning of 1946, foot-and-mouth disease arrived from the south and spread among Mexican cattle. The

government called in experts from abroad and they recommended a broad vaccination program to save the cattle. But the United States "was terrified"; it considered that the epidemic could spread to its country (even though it only occurred in central Mexico) and without further ado they pressured the use of the modern "sanitary rifle" or extermination method, which consisted of sacrificing all the sick cattle (by then more than 600 thousand heads). Not only that, the neighboring power implied that the Mexicans were a bit stupid to deal with the epidemic and therefore proposed that a joint team, of course led by the gringos, be in charge of the slaughter.

Alemán thought about it for a while, but in 1947 he decided to please the Americans and use the sanitary rifle. The binational team was formed and it was decided to exterminate two thousand cattle a day throughout the year. From the beginning of the campaign, protests were felt throughout almost the entire country and a strong anti-American feeling arose, since many people were annoyed by the arrogance of the American technicians, in addition to the fact that they earned much more money and obtained better conditions for the same work as their national counterparts. Complaints about the poor way in which the campaign was carried out grew, and soon numerous incidents occurred, since the peasants considered it ridiculous to exterminate animals that could still be cured, and even, as José Emilio Pacheco says, cattle "suspicious or susceptible to illness." Sometimes they preferred to go to the mountains with all their cattle and, other times, they simply faced off with bullets against those with the "sanitary rifle." The government, concerned, reiterated that those affected would be compensated with the commercial value of each slaughtered animal. But it was then discovered that there was a notorious trafficking of compensations and that, in addition, instead of giving money or tractors, the government gave mules.

The Sinarquistas were accused of causing the bloody clashes in the countryside, but they clarified that they had nothing to do with it. The PAN condemned the extermination and favored vaccination, and the left, not to be left behind, also attacked the Sinarquistas. Rumors spread that Lázaro Cárdenas was encouraging opposition to the campaign, and when a clash took place in Michoacán in which more than 50 peasants died, Cárdenas came out to ask the people of Michoacán to remain calm and "collaborate with the government." Alemán decided to form a National Committee for the Campaign Against Foot and Mouth Disease and immediately called on Cárdenas to lead it. But the general refused and, as he suggests in his memoirs, recommended that the president put on his sanitary rifle, not give in so rudely to the whims of the United States and opt for vaccination. In any case, Alemán backed down; In November 1947 he presented a Solomonic plan that combined quarantine, vaccinations and the slaughter of animals "only when necessary". Throughout the six-year term, vaccination was the only method used, but in less than a year, modern policies wiped out nearly 700,000 heads of cattle.

Another major problem was the question of the braceros. Because of the war, Mexico signed a "temporary agreement" with the United States so that thousands of peasants, chosen by the Mexican government, would go to help the farmers in the southern United

States. At the end of the war, the neighboring country no longer seemed to be in favor of the bracero policy, among other things because as many illegals (or "wetbacks" as they were also called) had entered its land as legals. Mass deportations of wetbacks began and the issue frequently made headlines, because the US immigration authorities subjected the braceros to inhumane mistreatment, in addition to the fact that they generally suffered conditions of exploitation worthy of slave times.

In fact, the United States chose to ask for agricultural workers whenever they were needed, but when they were not, it closed the border and complained about the annoying invasion of "greasy" people. The wetbacks never stopped trying to cross into the United States, which caused serious problems in the border cities, and at the official level the agreements continued to be signed year after year, except that Washington soon preferred that the Mexican government deal directly with the border farmers and in fact refused to sanction those who insisted on hiring illegals for a pittance and in inhumane conditions, but who, nevertheless, were preferable to the indigence to which they had been subjected by the agrarian policy of the regime.

The emigration of these peasants was understandable. From the beginning of the German era, it was clear that the rich were the big beneficiaries; and they showed off at great "fantasy" and "black and white" balls, and drew attention with their extravagances. The social pages became very important (Rosario Sansores, the Duke of Otranto, the magazine *Social* ) and the rich made the Lomas de Chapultepec, the port of Acapulco (reached by Aerovías Guest DC -3s), the Country Club, the Jockey Club, the "Californian style", the Uruguayan basket and charity teas, the Hipódromo de las Américas, the equestrian associations, the University Club, the Bankers Club, the Ambassadeurs restaurant, the Alameda baths, the Deportivo Chapultepec, whiskey, cocktails, mink coats and electric blankets fashionable. The old "aristocracy" (protected by the pedigree of their surnames, usually doubled like those of politicians) tried to establish distances between the outbreak of the new rich, usually politicians or leaders or opportunists of all kinds.

But there were not many "self-made men" who became rich; in fact, wealth tended to be concentrated in a few hands, and the Alemán government offered the majority hard years of exploitation to subsidize the wealth of the few. Low wages and excessive prices were Alemán's economic foundations and, therefore, compensatory, a sort of measured and pharisaical interest in the life of the poor arose, especially through the cinema, which frequently dealt with the theme of cabaret singers and stories from the slums. Through these films, more unconsciously than consciously, a Manichean vision of the poor crystallized, peculiarities and forms of conduct were imprinted, and the supposed "natural laws" were reiterated in which the poor owed the rich submission, loyalty, respect, reverence and extreme docility. The quasi-mystical virulence of anticommunism reinforced the tendency to consider valid the Christian moral values coined during the Colony, but as a reality of money worship and overwhelming corruption to obtain it began to be experienced, what predominated was the empire of increasingly empty formalism and the consolidation of moral corruption, hypocrisy and pharisaism.

President Alemán continued to exercise control of the political apparatus. One of his means was the removal of the heads of governors that took place at the beginning of the administration. The first to fall was the governor of Jalisco, Marcelino García Barragán, who had insisted on supporting the candidacy of Henríquez Guzmán. Such an action was punished by the president, who overthrew García Barragán (Secretary of Defense in 1968) when he was only a few weeks away from completing his term.

In March 1947, Hugo Pedro González was ousted from the government of Tamaulipas; like García Barragán, González went where he should not have and supported the "pre-candidacy" of Rojo Gómez. Furthermore, González belonged to the group of former president Emilio Portes Gil, who, with this coup, was practically excluded from the most important areas of influence. In his case, Article 76 of the Constitution was used and the dreaded Disappearance of Powers arose, which would end up becoming fashionable among Mexican presidents. With these revenges, moreover, the president was implying that he would have no mercy on dissidents and that it was better for all politicians to "discipline themselves."

Also killed were Juan M. Esponda, governor of Chiapas, a well-known seller of municipal presidencies, and Edmundo Sánchez Cano, governor of Oaxaca. In Durango, governor Blas Corral became deathly ill and had to be hospitalized, which caused a mess in which there were two interim governors. And the governor of Coahuila, Ignacio Cepeda Dávila, to be blunt, committed suicide. The center did not like the substitute, so he soon fell and was replaced by a man from Alemán. This happened in July 1947. In eight months, six governors had been erased from the national flag, and Alemán had almost all the power in his hands.

On the other hand, the workers' sector and what remained of the left were increasingly in a weaker position. The division was evident and became clear when the "extended" period of Fidel Velázquez ended and it was necessary to elect a new general secretary. The "lobitos" did not want to lose control of the Confederation for any reason and proposed Fernando Amilpa. This led them to clash with the large industrial unions, who wanted a total clean-up, an end to the continuity and a renewal in the CTM . The wolves resorted to all their tricks and got their way, but it cost them the dismemberment of the central, because the opposition, led by the railroad leaders Luis Gomez Z. and Valentin Campa, opted to create a new confederation, the Única de Trabajadores ( CUT ), which took telephone operators, oil workers, electricians, tram drivers, aircraft mechanics, cement workers and others, almost 200 thousand members left the CTM . To fill these gaps, the CTM recruited peasants and agricultural workers with its gangster methods. The CNC protested angrily, but the operation was already done. Amilpa, the new head of the CTM , immediately offered his unconditional and uncritical support to the president.

Vicente Lombardo Toledano supported the Lobitos, his old disciples. The renowned teacher warned that he was being left out of the big games. His influence in the CTM was strong but it was clearly tending to diminish, as Fidel Velázquez and the old Lobos were doing so less and less. Lombardo was forced to support them in their maneuvers

against Gómez Z., in exchange for the central substantially backing him in his most cherished project, the formation of his own political organization, "popular." Lombardo even agreed that the CTM should change its old and most aggressive slogan, "For a classless society," for the less compromising one: "For the emancipation of Mexico." The communists protested, not so much because of the change of slogan but because they were now left out of the big union positions. The CTM wanted to quickly get rid of everything that linked it with the demonized "communism."

Lombardo had already made progress in his attempt to create the Popular Party. He had begun work in 1944, but he slowed down because Ávila Camacho asked him to do it and to wait until after the elections. The good Lombardo did it, but on July 10, 1946, he declared that he was seeking the unification of the left not in a Marxist-worker party but in a great coalition of "democratic and progressive" forces that would fight "for the ideals of the Mexican Revolution." In January 1947, the famous Marxist round tables began, in which the Mexican Communist Party, the Workers' University, the Unified Socialist Action and several important intellectuals participated, among them José Revueltas, who was living one of his worst ideological periods. Those who participated grumbled about the blow to the oil workers and the introduction of agrarian protection, but they all agreed that the fight for socialism should be postponed and an attempt should be made to conclude the "bourgeois-democratic revolution." The super-Stalinist leaders of the PCM , Hernán Laborde and Dionisio Encinas, argued that state capitalism should be promoted. But in the end, almost everyone (Siqueiros was one of the few who challenged Lombardo's theories, for which he was accused of being a provocateur) agreed in considering Alemán as a "progressive bourgeois" and in supporting industrialization.

Alemán was certainly pleased. In fact, he had been very pleased that Lombardo had created his party (if he had not suggested it), since it would undoubtedly be located on a very manipulable left; this would allow him to eliminate all leftists from the government, and now the PRI could register itself in a supposed "center", alien, as they said in the times of Ávila Camacho, to the extremes of the left and right. The latter automatically included the PAN and the synarchist Partido Fuerza Popular, although, in reality, the PRI and the government were as far to the right as those groups, if not even more so. With official approval, and after carrying out his preparatory work, Lombardo Toledano finally formed the Partido Popular in 1948, after gaining notable followers, among whom were José Revueltas (he had been expelled from the PCM at the beginning of the decade), Enrique Ramírez y Ramírez and Salvador Novo!

However, things were not easy for the new party. The government distanced itself from it as much as possible, except when it was necessary to use it, and, to make matters worse, the labor leaders violated the pact ("every politician who deserves respect must violate his pacts," said Gonzalo N. Santos) and Fernando Amilpa flatly refused the support of the central to the new PP , despite Lombardo's conciliatory attitudes. But Fidel Velázquez not only turned his back on his former boss but expelled him from the CTM and took advantage of the trip to rant against communism. How far away

were those days, at the beginning of the decade, when Fidel declaimed "I admire the communists" and showered praise on Lombardo! From that moment on, Lombardo would lose his right to visit the roof of the Mexican State and, with his Popular Party, he was forced to play along with the government in order to survive.

Miguel Alemán was the first civilian president and made "civility" the hallmark of the government, as well as its "youth," which symbolized the young Mexico that, self-confident, was growing rapidly and eager to enter the major leagues. Among his first plans was the democratization of the country and the struggle for better living conditions for the people, who by then were increasingly resentful of high costs and inflation.

Alemán was aware that the political base on which he stood ("barbaric," José Revueltas called it; "directed," Octavio Paz) sabotaged from within any serious attempt at democratization. Of course, the roots of anti-democracy were to be found in Mexican presidentialism and in the official party. As Alemán was struggling to get rid of obstacles and accumulate all the power, it became evident that the presidency itself was not going to be democratized soon. But there was still the official party, and in 1947 Alemán indicated to Rodolfo Sánchez Taboada, president of the PRI , that internal life should conform to democratic principles; local and state candidates should be popular politicians, known in the region, and no longer imposed from the center via the sectors. Sánchez Taboada timidly tried to hold a more or less free internal election in León, Guanajuato, in June 1947. However, neither of the contending factions accepted defeat and the PRI executive committee had a hard time resolving the conflict, even having to replace the governor and send Luis Echeverría, Sánchez Taboada's private secretary, to impose unity "at all costs." Something similar happened later in Tampico, where, because of the municipal elections, the CNC and the PRI authorities ended up in a dispute . Here, too, the unification of the PRI members of Tampico was difficult, and that was enough for the PRI to give up its plans for democratization, especially when the three sectors of the party celebrated a pact to keep their quota of elected posts. With this, democracy within the PRI finally languished. However, since the "young" politicians were left with certain illusions of democratization, the president was forced to create a forum in which they could operate, and so he formed the National Institute of Mexican Youth in February 1950. The party continued to be dominated by the imposition of candidates and the consequent "full-car" policy, that is, the government winning by all means, almost never losing an election. This in turn represented the perpetuation of all the systems of electoral alchemy to manipulate and disguise the results of the elections. The old guard had triumphed, but this rather favored the president.

Everything seemed optimistic and secure in Miguel Alemán's government, but the conditions were far from favorable, especially in economic matters. Although the world war had favored exports, once it ended everything changed. Many of the foreign markets were lost. The United States industry wanted to expand again, which was easy in Mexico because the industrialists that Ávila Camacho had encouraged so much came

out with products of very poor or low quality, and people did not hesitate to buy, if they could, American products (which accentuated a progressive preference for what came from the United States, whatever it was).

Exports were no longer possible as they had been during the war, and it was decided that production would be directed to the domestic market, and for this purpose tariff barriers were raised to stop foreign competition. However, several American companies chose to abide by the conditions that Mexico set for foreign investment, which in practice were not rigid, or "could be fixed," and obtained great profits, like Sears Roebuck, which "came to stay."

But in 1947 there was a shortage of raw materials, credit and electricity, inadequate transport and obsolete machinery. Inflation was not abating, the government was tending towards deficit spending and many rich people preferred to devote themselves to pure speculation.

In the face of all this, Miguel Alemán announced that he would not devalue the peso and that his economic policy would be neither inflationary nor deflationary, because it was about accelerating economic growth. The president did not want to raise taxes, so to finance himself he opted to strengthen domestic savings and seek foreign credit. He tried to intensify agricultural and industrial production in order to stop inflation. He gave all the support he could to the private sector and the State itself started large investments by contracting private companies. He raised tariffs, prohibited luxury imports, gave credit to industry, kept taxes low, set agricultural prices that ensured cheap raw materials, applied very strict worker control and managed to substantially reduce strikes. However, businessmen complained of "excessive protection of workers" and demanded the repeal of collective labor contracts and periodic salary reviews. They did not want ranks ("merit should be encouraged, not seniority") and tried to avoid any contribution to Social Security. They protested against price controls (which were symbolic, since they were rarely applied) and, finally, they tried to increase the pressure so that the government would make as many concessions as possible.

The Alemán government tried to obtain money as best it could, since the large-scale public works program was causing public spending to increase rapidly. The first loans began to arrive, which was a relief. President Truman of the United States visited the capital (it was the first time that an American president had come to Mexico City). Alemán and Truman emphasized the "interdependence" of the two countries and their "good will." The following month, Alemán visited Washington and was received with great enthusiasm. The first concrete result of both visits was that more lines of credit were opened for our country and there was an agreement "for the stabilization of the peso." But Alemán returned with the impression that little had been achieved with the Americans.

This was especially true with respect to the situation of our currency. By mid-1947 the loss of dollars was alarming. Much was going through imports and little was arriving through exports. They could not even sell cattle because of the terrible foot-and-mouth disease epidemic that overwhelmed the country during that time. The

Mexican-American Stabilization Fund had granted credits for 10 million dollars, but the foreign exchange reserves lost more than 100 million. The flight of capital was already an unquestionable reality; in addition, businesses and the rich knew that devaluation was imminent and called for it by dollarizing. José Emilio Pacheco reports that the Alemán supporters "amassed fortunes by opportunely exchanging their pesos for dollars." Alemán claimed that he did not want to devalue or impose exchange controls, so he began to desperately seek new credits from abroad. He received another 10 million dollars, but the crisis continued throughout 1947 and early 1948. Dollar and gold reserves fell dramatically. Everyone who had five thousand pesos (and was aware of these things) wanted to have his thousand dollars.

On June 21, the devaluation could no longer be stopped, despite new loans from the International Monetary Fund, the Stabilization Fund and the Eximbank. The exchange rate was set at 6.88 per dollar, but even this was unstable, so the government floated the peso. Finance Minister Ramón Beteta stood up for his president and blamed the devaluation on "the international situation." The Alemán administration had therefore made no mistake.

Many people thought the opposite. The PAN and the Bankers' Club blamed the government for not having devalued in time and for spending excessively. The left considered that indulging private initiative had led to waste, corruption and an unfair distribution of wealth, since very few enjoyed the great luxuries paid for by the poverty of the great majority. Narciso Bassols, in the *Revista de Economía* , did not mince words and said that industrialization was anarchic, without a fixed direction, and that public works favored speculation and waste. The government, in addition, had opted for foreign loans when it should have carried out a fiscal reform. In any case, the devaluation was a fact and, finally, the peso stopped floating and stopped at 8.65 per dollar.

The devaluation brought popular discontent to a head. Since 1942, the discontent had not ceased, but in 1947 and 1948 it was already very intense and several leaders feared that the bases would overwhelm them. This issue, in a certain way, also fed the ideas that Daniel Cosío Villegas expressed in his essay "The Crisis of Mexico" that was published in *Cuadernos Americanos* in 1947. In this extraordinary work, the historian stated that the Mexican Revolution had proposed to democratize the country and favor the vast majority of the poor. It had also allowed Mexico to face itself, to recognize itself and develop. But the intentions had been far above those who had to make them a reality. The goals were reasonable, Cosío explained, therefore the smallness of the great leaders was alarming. Democratization was not even remotely achieved, and the most that had been achieved was that the presidents did not perpetuate themselves in power and went beyond the condition of caudillos or chieftains. The separation of powers was a fallacy and the press had become simple commerce. The agrarian reform lacked vision, initiative; it lacked technique and perseverance. The workers had become a mere appendage of the government, which had debased them. But the worst was the corruption, prevarication, theft, and embezzlement, which created a new

bourgeoisie, which led the country to economic inequality. The most alarming thing about Cosío Villegas's proposals, as Enrique Krauze points out, was the conclusion that the national identity was about to be lost. Mexico was in a very serious crisis and the need for change was urgent. If this were not done, the country would end up "trusting its greatest problems to the inspiration, imitation and submission of the United States, not only because it is a rich and powerful neighbor, but because of the success it has had and which we have not been able to achieve. We would call upon that country for money, technical training, paths to culture and art, political advice, and we would end up adopting its entire table of values, so foreign to our history, our convenience and our taste. To the American influence, already overwhelming in itself, would be added the concealed conviction of some, the frank interests of others, the indifference or pessimism of most, to make possible the process of sacrifice of nationality, and, even more serious, of the security, dominion and happiness that is achieved by those who have carved out their own destiny."

In the 1980s, we saw how right Cosío Villegas had been almost 40 years earlier. Not only did the system's anti-democracy and the terrible economic inequality begin to come to a head, but many people said, without shame, that they would like Mexico to be part of the United States; there was a strong campaign to put commercial products in English ("Shadow is performance"), what used to have a Spanish name had already been changed ("Dulcereal de Trigo" to "Sugar Smacks"), it was fashionable among the upper middle class to write party invitations in English, or to speak in English at the slightest provocation (especially in front of servants or employees), countless toys displayed the American flag, many businesses had English names (generally with terrible spelling) and, of course, the Mexican economy was severely conditioned by the International Monetary Fund, the government or the banks of the United States. It was then clear that Cosío's timely and grave warnings had been a voice crying in the wilderness. Fortunately, the lucidity and integrity of people like him prevented the national identity from collapsing completely; on the contrary, it was partly strengthened through culture and the raising of the level of collective consciousness, and in fact a struggle had begun, apparently definitive, between one part of Mexico against the other, and it was not only a "dispute for the nation" but it was a profound change of skin.

The devaluation also precipitated other problems with the workers. In 1948, the railroad workers elected Jesus Diaz de Leon, better known as the Charro for his fondness for the (very expensive) tricks of charrería. But the real power was held by Luis Gomez Z., who in September ignored the union and took the conclusions of the special commission to the newly formed Confederation of Workers. This was what President Alemán needed to implement one of his innovations: charrismo, that is, the manipulation of the workers through white unions and the sending of rebel leaders to jail. Diaz de Leon did not beat around the bush and accused Gomez Z. and Pedro Sanchez Castorena of embezzling more than 200 thousand pesos. Of course, Díaz de León should have taken the accusation to the union's Vigilance Committee, but the Charro did not want to do so because the committee was controlled by Gómez Z. So he resorted to criminal

proceedings, which meant government intervention. The result was that Gómez Z.'s followers on the Vigilance Committee disavowed Díaz de León as general secretary and put Francisco Quintana in his place. Díaz de León, with the government's complicity, used Fidel Velázquez's favorite tactics: using gunmen to violently seize control of the entire railroad union. The government fully supported Díaz de León, officially recognized him, and ended up sending Gómez Z., Sánchez Castorena, and Valentín Campa to jail.

Once the conflict was "resolved," it was not surprising that, as had happened at the beginning of the six-year term with the oil workers, the Railways took advantage of the blow to carry out a drastic restructuring of the company. An economic trial was initiated to reduce salaries, 12 thousand workers were fired, and many advantages and benefits were eliminated: overtime, passes, medical assistance, paid leave, in addition to the creation of 500 new positions for trusted employees (which, in the end, amounted to two thousand).

President Alemán had scored another knockout victory in his struggles to subdue the workers, since he not only subdued and tamed the railroad workers but also managed to seriously intimidate the other industrial unions that were showing themselves to be rebellious. In fact, most of the workers preferred to submit, and in the end only a few (oil workers and miners) tried to form an independent union that would serve as a tool of struggle. Thus, in the midst of an intense "anti-communist" campaign by Coparmex and the government, the General Union of Workers and Peasants of Mexico ( UGOCM ) emerged, which defined itself as "left-wing and against union gangsterism." But this new organization was denied registration and was sabotaged from all sides, so it never gained much strength, and in 1949 President Alemán could boast of a tight control of the workers in favor of "industrialization."

But not everyone was disciplined. In 1948, the millionaire Jorge Pasquel, manager of the daily *Novedades* , suppressed the column "Presente" by the journalist Jorge Piñó Sandoval, who was not satisfied with Pasquel's modern authoritarianism, but instead obtained funds and in July published his magazine *Presente* , with the collaboration of the cover artist Antonio Arias Bernal, the cartoonists Abel Quezada, Ernesto García Cabral and Fa-Cha, and the collaborators Renato Leduc, José Pagés Llergo, René Capistrán Garza, Tomás Perrín and Jorge Ferretis. The magazine (which cost 20 cents) came out with its sword in the air and soon became famous for its forceful criticism of the government and the high officials close to Alemán. Among Piñó Sandoval's denunciations was an investigation of the fabulous mansions, sometimes small palaces, that the Alemán supporters had managed to build in less than two years; Among these were those of Antonio Díaz Lombardo, from IMSS , Ramón Beteta (from the Treasury), Fernando Casas Alemán (Department of the DF ), Carlos M. Cinta (from Nacional Regulatory Agency), Enrique Parra Hernández (who was called the "minister without portfolio") and Andrés Gómez (relative of Alemán and senior official of Agriculture). There were also reports of outrageous business dealings by Antonio Ruiz Galindo, Secretary of the Economy, who was the owner of the furniture company DM

Nacional, which allowed him to fill government offices with his products. Or the Díaz Lombardo business deals in Social Security, which ranged from "the trafficking in the construction of clinics and hospitals, in the contracts with the subrogated pharmacies, in the distribution of positions and in the purchases of that institution," reported the magazine *Proceso* in 1983, which added: "It was discovered that the square meter of construction was paid by the IMSS at a rate of 360 pesos, when the commercial price, verified by *Presente* , was 200 pesos."

In his 1948 report, Alemán made a veiled threat to *Presente* . Shortly before, a group of gunmen had raided and devastated the workshops where the magazine was printed, and shortly after, the Productora e Importadora de Papel, S.A. ( PIPSA ) cancelled the supply of paper and offered it a much more expensive one in exchange, which made *Presente* reduce its pages and increase the price by 10 cents. By then, attacks on freedom of expression were increasing: two publication directors were killed, several magazines and newspapers were closed down, and the controversial performances of *El gesticulador* by Rodolfo Usigli were suppressed. Since it was written in 1938 and published in 1944, this work had many problems, because, as with *La sombra del Caudillo* by Martín Luis Guzmán, numerous politicians and military officers felt that they were being targeted. In 1947, the director Alfredo Gómez de la Vega managed to stage it at the Bellas Artes Theatre with María Douglas, Carmen Montejo and Rodolfo Landa. The premiere, naturally, was a scandal that the government did not like at all. The director of the INBA Theatre Department , Salvador Novo, was therefore in charge of obstructing the play as much as possible, but when he made some murderous statements against *El gesticulador* , Usigli became furious and in the dressing room of director Gómez de la Vega he simply complained to him; Novo did not say anything at that moment, but left the theatre, waited for the great playwright outside and when he saw him approaching he knocked him down with two powerful slaps. Afterwards, Novo declared to the press: "Usigli is a paranoid eager for notoriety", to which the aforementioned replied: "You cannot be in agreement with people with ambiguous habits."

At this time, Alemán not only gave us charrismo but also national guarurismo, and he himself surrounded himself with large personal guards, which made other officials soon imitate him. Even then it was also possible to notice that, in addition to his intimates (called the "parallel cabinet"), the beneficiaries of Miguel Alemán's government were the group of businessmen known as the "Fraction of the Forty" (all of whom made their fortunes in that decade), and perhaps that is why people liked to refer to them as "Ali Baba and the forty thieves." Jorge Pasquel and Melchor Perrusquía were businessmen very close to the president, as were Bernardo Quintana, Bruno Pagliai, Eloy Vallina, Carlos Hank González, Gastón Azcárraga, Rómulo O'Farril, Gabriel Alarcón and Carlos Trouyet. From all these magnates, the powerful groups ICA , Comermex, Atlántico and Industria y Comercio eventually emerged , and years later Alemán and his friends came to have great control of the media through companies such as Televisa, *Novedades* , *El Heraldo de México* , *Avance* , Editorial Novaro and Editorial Diana.

Juan Fragoso, Elvira Concheiro and Antonio Gutiérrez also report in *El poder de la alta burguesía* that, with Emilio Azcárraga, years later Alemán intervened in the hotel industry through the hotels Fiesta Palace, Paraíso Marriot, Ritz and Condesa del Mar.

## Struggles in Culture

From the beginning, President Miguel Alemán declared himself a supporter of culture. One of his first measures was the creation of the National Institute of Fine Arts ( INBA ), directed by the composer Carlos Chávez; from the INBA emerged the Symphony Orchestra of the National Conservatory, which was later called the Symphony Orchestra of Mexico and finally the National Symphony Orchestra, which for almost 20 years was directed by Luis Herrera de la Fuente. Experts said that Herrera was so enthusiastic on the podium that he would tap his feet to the works he conducted.

Alemán also called the Big Three and commissioned murals in public buildings. Of these, the brilliant José Clemente Orozco died shortly after, in September 1949; his presence grew over time, despite the fierce attacks that were directed at the muralists. He was always seen with more respect for his virulence, humor and extraordinary vigor. His vision of violence, hitting rock bottom through criticism and his desolate, naked vision of reality made him ahead of his time. At the end of the eighties he was more relevant than ever. And Diego continued to fuel scandals. One of them took place when he painted the Reforma hotel, belonging to the Pañi family, and caricatured several key figures in national life in an Orozquian style. Pañi "corrected" the grotesque images, but this cost him a terrible fight with the painter, who went looking for him with a gun in his hand and accompanied by several union members. Rivera eventually succeeded in establishing that no owner has the right to modify a work of art.

Later, he was commissioned to paint another mural in the newly built (and very modern) Del Prado hotel. Diego painted one of his masterpieces there, Dream *of a Sunday Afternoon in the Alameda* , in which, with his traditional provocative spirit, he wrote the phrase (by Ignacio Ramírez and many others) "God does not exist." This caused a mob of religious fanatics to erase the phrase of the Necromancer from the mural. The protests against the "blasphemy" rose to such a point that Diego eliminated the phrase, escorted by a large contingent of intellectuals and artists that the press called a "group of communists." For his part, President Alemán gave his learned opinion on the matter: "We should not have a discussion of national order around painting. The country does not want ideological struggle, it wants work. Do you think that these places in the north of the country, for example, are interested in Diego Rivera's painting?"

The fanatical intolerance of Mexican Catholics found one of its most grotesque expressions when the Sinarquistas, already at the end of 1948, organized a rally in the Alameda (the one with Diego's mural), where the Hemiciclo a Juárez is located. The Benemérito (or Bomberito Juárez, as Loco Valdés called him years later on television,

which caused him to be suspended) continued to ignite the fury of the ultra-rightists almost 100 years later (in some private schools children had to say "can I go to Juárez?" when they wanted to go to the bathroom). That day the Sinarquistas climbed the statue of the old liberal and put a hood over his head. The Alemán government was furious like never before, which allowed it, shortly after, to suppress the registration of the Fuerza Popular Party. The furious intolerance of the Sinarquistas was undoubtedly fueled by their own mystique, but also by the climate of anti-communist fury that was widespread at the time (the president of the PRI , Sánchez Taboada, had already declared that communism was an "exotic doctrine," in case some absent-minded person had not guessed it from the thousands of condemnations of Marxist-exoticism). "Exotic," by the way, was also the name given to the dancers who showed their navels and who caused a sensation at that time: Tongolele, the one with the lock of hair and the statuesque body above all, but Su Muy Key was also famous. These exotics, so that they would not be associated with the doctrines of the same name, in the movies tended to be extremely modest because of the oppressive moral climate of the time. Many of them could not even be called "navel-wearing," since they did not show even that knot of flesh. "I never showed my belly button in my films," said Ninón Sevilla, the no-less-spectacular-blonde-who-became-famous-dancing-rumba. "Now nobody believes it. But that's how the censors were. I had a reputation as a scandalous woman and I didn't even reach the belly button," she once said, "in national cinema, there were no people more moral than the rumberas, the cabaret dancers and people like that. We were the morality and we didn't show our panties for nothing. So when a lady and a gentleman make love in a film, the world falls apart." This happened, precisely, in the film *La diosdea arrodillada* , by Tito Davison, script by José Revueltas and with María Félix. A love sequence, which at this point could be filmed by a nun, caused scandal and moral offense to critics and journalists.

Several cinematic myths had already begun: that of the rumberas and cabaret singers, melodramas that had to be watched with dozens of handkerchiefs, in which Ninón Sevilla, Meche Barba, Rosita Fornés, Rosa Carmina and/or María Antonieta Pons were exploited, humiliated and vilified by men, society and fate. All of them fed the most devious fantasies and fervent masturbation of the then adolescents (but later too: when these films were broadcast on television).

By 1947 (the year in which *Enamorada* , by Indio Fernández, swept the Arieles), Pedro Infante had already arrived in the capital, where he was discovered and starred in several films. But his true popularity arose with the premiere of *Nosotros los pobres* , by Ismael Rodríguez. The poor people (but also the middle class and many "upper-class" ladies) happily succumbed to the charisma, good looks, good voice, vital energy, warmth, simplicity and sympathy of the charro singer. Pedro Infante went beyond the condition of "idol" and became a true national myth because he embodied an archetypal figure in Mexico. His character Pepe el Toro (a good, hard-working, loving man, overwhelmed by increasingly gruesome misfortunes) gave rise to two more films, which, although not remotely as good, were huge box-office hits. With Ismael

Rodríguez, Infante experienced great successes ( *ATM* , *Qué te ha dado esa mujer* , *Los tres huastecos* ), but he returned to great heights in *La oveja negra* , which, with all its plot recipes and merciless exploitation of feelings, is the best cinema. No one like Pedro Infante managed, or has managed, to constellate so many signs of national identity, so when he died in a plane crash in 1957, there was genuine mourning throughout the country and a presence was consolidated that at the end of the eighties was still alive and effective.

Another character with unusual grace and charisma was Germán Valdés, Tin Tan, who entered the national cinema with a firm footing in the late 40s. With Gilberto Martínez Solares, Tin Tan reached some frankly brilliant moments of comedy. Martínez Solares and Tin Tan formed a famous team that included Vitola, Borolas, the dwarf Tun Tun and the carnal Marcelo. The gandallesque grace of the pachuco Tin Tan was transformed into true anarchy and delirious imagination (as in the part of the psychiatric hospital of Dr. Lucas Demente in *Las locas de Tin Tan* ). The best of Germán Valdés was filmed in the late 40s and early 50s: *El rey del barrio* , *El ceniciento* , *Calabacitas lágrimas* , *El barefoot sultan* and *Kill me because I'm dying.*

The great attraction of the Germanism, however, was the mambo and its creator Dámaso Pérez Prado, who came from Cuba to settle in Mexico with great spectacularity ("how beautifully and deliciously the Mexican women dance the mambo, they move their waists and shoulders just like the Cuban women do," sang the extraordinary Beny Moré). Pérez Prado became Mexicanized with great gusto, and soon he was composing mambos for the "ruleteros or chafiretes," at the Poli, at the Uni and other manifestations of life in our country. His rhythm was charged with strong energy, it was usually lively and explosive and generated a way of dancing that required skill and physical condition. It was also deeply sensual. The Seal Face orchestra, as it was called, was composed primarily of brass, and Pérez Prado's musical arrangements became legendary for their complexity and refinement, and because they clearly integrated the best of the use of brass by the great American bands, such as those of Glenn Miller or Stan Kenton (the "Mambo a la Kenton" was excellent).

The mambo caused a sensation in Mexican society, as it was in keeping with the times when nightlife and the atmosphere of collective celebrations were prevalent, fostered by the rich, ready to celebrate the exorbitant profits that the Alemán regime provided them. For the people it was an opportunity to shake off the desperation caused by the increasing hardship of life.

Mambo, rumba and cabaret dancers were elements that came together in another of the golden legends of Germanism: Nightlife. For the wealthy, the emerging middle class and the overwhelmingly poor, there were places to go to dance, see shows and "sketches": from the Leda, Ciros, Club de los Artistas and Waikiki, to the Smyrna and Montecarlo salons, La Valenciana, La Bohemia, or the Colonial, Follies and Margo theatres. Then, to vent the nocturnal frenzy, there was the red light district, which was actually a group of streets located around the central part of San Juan de Letrán: the streets of Órgano (very *ad hoc* ), Rayón, Pajaritos or Vizcaínas, which, of course,

were for the people, the plebs, the fluff, because the spoiled ones of the regime, the rich, had their luxurious brothels, endowed with the elegance of the forties, so no one well-off had to hang around (unless they wanted "strong emotions" or had to take a tourist for a ride) around the wild parts of Plaza de Garibaldi, with its mariachi, Tenampa, songs, and possibilities for all kinds of events.

As in the twenties and thirties, in the forties the bailongo (or "dancing", as they say it should be called) also flourished, only by then the unbeatable danzón was gradually occupying an honorary and traditional place in the face of the onslaught of swing, bugui-bugui or the overwhelming mambo.

Meanwhile, in the intellectual world, the international consecration of Rufino Tamayo was taken for granted through the book of rich reproductions dedicated to him in the United States. But, despite his notorious decline, the master was still Diego Rivera. In 1948, the *Times magazine* published the Saporranesque face of the brilliant painter and that was the prelude to the great national homage that Fernando Gamboa organized through a grand exhibition, summarizing his work at Bellas Artes. On that occasion, the scandal in turn consisted of the nude of the young poet Pita Amor that, together with the portrait of María Félix, opened the exhibition. Frida Kahlo had to be assisted on a stretcher, since by then the poor woman was suffering the horrors of metal or plaster corsets and was a frequent hospital client; not even her "fridos", who painted in pulquerías, managed to lighten her up a bit.

In 1948, Pablo Neruda asked the Mexican government for asylum; from his seat as senator, the poet thundered against the president of Chile, which put him in mortal danger. "Pure publicity," was said here in Mexico, where, in tune with "modernization," all kinds of "social" art were increasingly less popular. Neruda, after all, did not seek asylum in our country, but the one who did come, "to stay," was the editor Arnaldo Orfila Reynal. On a trip to Buenos Aires, Daniel Cosío Villegas recruited him and brought him to direct the Fondo de Cultura Económica with a salary of 1,500 pesos a month (the Fondo, by the way, paid two pesos a page of translation, which, as we see, has always been very poorly paid in Mexico).

That year, Salvador Novo published his excellent book *Nueva grandeza mexicana* , but the maestro had given all his energy to the theater, since his friend Carlos Chávez appointed him head of the Theater Department of the brand new Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes ( INBA ). Novo was one of the few intellectuals who was not afraid of being "contaminated" by the modernity that Alemán promoted, and he made a lot of money doing publicity for Augusto Elías. Carlos Monsiváis reports that Novo was the author of the famous slogan "Follow Fab's three movements: soak, wring, and store," because detergents and an invasion of electrical appliances had already arrived in Mexico: refrigerators, washing machines, blenders, irons, vacuum cleaners, electric blankets, and other wonders of the Western world. The new products (purchasable if they were imported or smuggled, despicable if they were national) were advertised profusely in the media: the radio, which continued to be very powerful (without knowing that the arrival of the television was just around the corner), the

major newspapers and magazines *Hoy* , *Mañana* , *Revista de Revistas* , *Paquita* , *Social* and others (even the official *Tiempo* , which Martín Luis Guzmán formed, clarifying that "any resemblance to another publication was a coincidence," because *Tiempo* , coincidentally, was almost identical to *Time* ) obtained good income through the advertising phenomenon, which grew strongly, and led by the hand to companies that gave reports on the solvency of businesses that asked for loans.

In 1949, a new and extremely gifted author appeared, Juan José Arreola, who with *Varia invención* showed that Mexico had a sophisticated, cosmopolitan stylist who was up to date and spoke impeccable French. Actor, mime, declaimer, Arreola showed off his moon-worn corduroy jackets (it would be many years before the Maestro appeared on television screens in dazzling cashmere) and introduced an entirely new air into Mexican literature.

For his part, José Revueltas wrote scripts for the cinema, especially with Roberto Gavaldón, and had problems with his Marxist comrades. In 1949 he published *Los días terrenales* , a splendid novel in which appeared devastating criticisms of the leaders and militants of the Mexican Communist Party. The communists, who did not dare to attack the government of Miguel Alemán, did not hesitate to hurl insults and criticisms at Revueltas, and even Pablo Neruda took advantage of a visit he made to Mexico and issued a bilious warning for comrade Revueltas to stop these abominations. Faced with this avalanche of criticism, the writer managed to get the publisher to withdraw the book from public circulation. It was evident that, as was said in *Los días terrenales* , in the communist militancy there were "red priests," people who transferred an intense religiosity to Marxism, which, of course, in its very nature harbored the possibility of such deformations. A year later, poor Revueltas experienced something similar again. This time the centre of the scandal was his play *El Cuadrante de la Soledad* , directed by the young up-and-coming Ignacio Retes with sets by Diego Rivera. The leftists again considered that the play was an attack on the good name of the Mexican communists, and the tantrums of many intellectuals, especially Enrique Ramírez y Ramírez, caused Revueltas to give in again and the performances of *El Cuadrante* were suspended.

Around that time, Octavio Paz began to publish definitive books: first was *Libertad bajo palabra (Freedom under Word)* and, a year later, his collection of essays, now classics, *El laberinto de la soledad (The Labyrinth of Solitude* ). Apparently, as long as solitude was confined to labyrinths and not to quadrants, there were no problems, since Paz's book was an instant and resounding success. His ideas about masks, myths, and popular culture attracted a lot of attention and provided a topic for endless discussions. Poetry during the Alemanismo period shone with the definitive edition of *Nostalgia de la muerte (Nostalgia for Death* ), the masterpiece by Xavier Villaurrutia; with *Trayectoria del polvo (Trajectory of Dust)* and *Presentación en el Templo (Presentation in the Temple* ), by Rosario Castellanos.

"The Mexican" became a topic again, given the Alemán "doctrine of Mexicanness," and it was appropriated by the Hiperión group, "the Mexican existentialists," as Díaz Ruanova called them. The Hiperión group, students of the philosopher José ("Quechin")

Gaos, were Leopoldo Zea, Emilio Uranga, Ricardo Guerra, Joaquín Sánchez McGregor, Jorge Carrión and Jorge Portilla, and their teacher said of them: "The Hyperions have temper and bad temper." They met at the Kikos and Sanborns, at Angelina Moroleón's house or at La Rambla, a famous cantina on Chapultepec Avenue and Bucareli. Uranga published his *Analysis of the Being of the Mexican* , Jorge Carrión, "Myth and Magic of the Mexican," Leopoldo Zea brought his idol Arnold Toynbee to Mexico and Jorge Portilla, author of the *Phenomenology of Relaxation* , surprised everyone with his religious fervor, which in the least excluded Dionysian pleasures, and with his dazzling intelligence.

Philosophy was of enormous importance to these young intellectuals of the early 1950s; in addition to the Hyperions, says Díaz Ruanova, there were the Hegelians Fernando Salmerón and Alejandro Rossi (the Venezuelan-Italian who stayed in Mexico) and the Marxists Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, Wenceslao Roces, José Revueltas and Carlos Félix (although later Jorge Carrión became strongly involved in Marxist thought, and Luis Villoro even considered forming the Mexican Workers' Party as a result of the events of 1968). Revueltas, for his part, attracted the young "mysticists" Eduardo Lizalde and Enrique González Rojo to Marxism.

In 1950, the golden age of Mexican cinema was beginning to decline, but Luis Buñuel, on the other hand, found decisive veins in Mexico. His masterpiece *Los olvidados* made a splash at the Cannes film festival, after many people here had made inane complaints who considered the film "degrading." Buñuel said that a hairdresser simply could not accept that a Mexican Mother behaved like the enigmatic Stella Inda did in *Los olvidados* . However, international success silenced the mouths of the underdeveloped Mexicans who were complaining and the public was better prepared to face the abysmal horrors of Buñuel's film.

However, one of the great events in Mexican life in that period was television. In 1947, Miguel Alemán initially sent Salvador Novo to the United States and Great Britain to study and observe television in order to consider whether it should be commercial and privately owned, as in the United States, or state-owned, as in Europe. In 1950, the first television broadcast in Mexico took place: the fourth presidential report. The government granted the concession of the first broadcasting station, Channel 4, to the O'Farril family, well known for their fortune in the media; later, another concession was given, that of Channel 2, to Emilio Azcárraga, the czar of XEW , and, finally, Channel 5 was granted to the inventor Guillermo González Camarena, who, unfortunately, never managed to find the necessary support for his investigations.

Initially, Channel 4 broadcast three and a half hours a day for the 2,500 receivers of the 10,000 authorized by the Ministry of Economy. Local production was greatly encouraged, and the teleplays commissioned by the INBA and directed by Salvador Novo stood out. Television amazed the public, and those who had a receiver usually received many visits from all those who wanted to see the miraculous marriage of film and radio in their own home.

Novo, by the way, took advantage of his position as the Director of Theatre at the INBA like no one else and managed to ensure that, for the only time in history, the solemn and sacred main hall of the Palace of Fine Arts hosted Mexican plays, and by unknown authors, too. The first of these was Emilio Carballido, who at the age of 25 achieved success through the biggest door of all with his play *Rosalba y los Llaveros* . From then on, Carballido showed unusual gifts, irrefutable talent, malice, sense of humor and insight, which led him to become the greatest author of Mexican drama during the second half of this century. The audience applauded *Rosalba* , but this acclaim did not prevent some reporters from complaining because during the performances an actress exclaimed: "I'm leaving this fucking house!", which was also frowned upon by Carlos Chávez, who gave instructions for the Intolerable Ordinariez to be omitted: Novo, for his part, feigned deafness until the complaints in the press increased and the Secretary of Education Gual Vidal himself ordered the elimination of the flagrant pinche.

The success of Emilio Carballido encouraged Novo to repeat, and this time he chose the play *Los signos del zodiaco* , by the also very young Sergio Magaña, who also became one of the greatest playwrights in Mexico. *Los signos* was a great success, and catapulted Magaña to stardom. Unfortunately, during the following administration neither Novo repeated nor did Ruiz Cortines show much interest in culture, so Carballido and Magaña were the only ones who could boast that they had premiered their first works in the very Palace of Fine Arts.

These two playwrights were also among the first to benefit from the great novelty in the literary world in 1951: the scholarships from the Mexico City Writing Center (which bore its name in English with impunity because it was provided by the Rockefeller Foundation via the writer Margaret Shedd; only years later it would be called the Mexican Writers Center, when Felipe García Beraza managed to obtain the sponsorship of Mexican businessmen, such as Carlos Prieto and Carlos Trouyet). The other lucky ones who obtained the scholarships were Juan José Arreola, Juan Rulfo and the poet Rubén Bonifaz Nuño; the first class of the Mexican Writers Center, then, was a real hitch, which undoubtedly contributed to it becoming a decisive point in Mexican literature in the second half of the century.

That same year Octavio Paz published his book of poems *¿Águila o sol?* , which consolidated him as the number one poet in Mexico, since José Gorostiza had already been devoured by his opus magnum *Muerte sin fin* and Xavier Villaurrutia died in 1951. A year later David Alfaro Siqueiros finished his mural *Cuauhtémoc redivivo* , Novo premiered *La culta dama* and Luis Buñuel filmed *Subida al cielo* with beautiful songs by Agustín Ramírez. The investigations into all things Mexican continued as well: José Gaos published *En torno a la filosofía mexicana ,* and Leopoldo Zea *La filosofía como compromiso* . The anthropologist Alberto Ruz discovered the great tomb of Palenque, full of offerings, grave goods, necklaces. And two great men died: Mariano Azuela and Enrique González Martínez.

But the real interest of 1952, naturally above literature, elections and the change of powers, was the chronic manifestation of good and evil: wrestling, especially since television began to broadcast it. On Friday nights, people would go crazy at the Gran Teatro de la Arena México: the fights of the superstars El Santo and Gori Guerrero (the atomic couple), El Cavernario Galindo and Wolf Ruvinskis (the infernal couple), Tarzán López and Enrique Llanes (the technical couple), Blue Demon and his brother Black Shadow, El Verdugo and Murciélago Velázquez (a writer and, like Ruvinskis, also an actor), all of them worthy heirs of Charro Aguayo, Firpo Segura and Black Guzmán. Television and wrestling fed off each other at first, but then came the conflicts. The big stars did not want to submit to Azcárraga's company, so he set up his own ring in the studios on Chapultepec Avenue and created his stable of wrestlers: the scabs Lalo el Exótico (the ghost of exoticism roamed Mexico), the *Médico Asesino* , the Bulldog and Tonina Jackson, but none of them had the same popularity as the professionals of the Arena México. This indicated, on the one hand, the combination of paternalism, despotism, exploitation and manipulation that television exercised over its artists and employees, which would reach extremes of high hilarity years later. Wrestling on television lasted until 1954, when it was suspended due to the high doses of moralism that the government of Ruiz Cortines and his regent Ernesto Uruchurtu brought to differentiate themselves from Miguel Alemán.

However, the fights continued to be very popular, and in fact created a curious phenomenon: the mythification of El Santo, which is accompanied by the films about wrestlers. Soon, the adventures of El Santo appeared in comics, drawn by José G. Cruz, which were extremely popular. El Santo also starred in many films, which were usually combined with stories about souls, monsters or other gothic items. The films were so bad that, as they say, they were very good, and there was even a cult among French critics for the films about Mexican wrestlers, which proves that stupidity is everywhere, including the *Cahiers du Cinema* . El Santo survived all of that (even the joyful film *Adiós héroe mío* , by José Buil, which almost gave him a heart attack, and the sieges by cartoonists Jis and Trino, at the end of the eighties) and as an old man he continued fighting, followed by his son (El Santo Chico), "in favor of good and justice" (because in his beginnings El Santo was more like Hell's Angel, since he was tough among tough guys).

Another athlete who became famous during Alemán's reign was the diver Joaquín Capilla, a bronze medalist, and Humberto Mariles, a gold medalist at the London Olympics. Mariles capitalized on his success to create the National Equestrian Association, where the newly rich of political lineage sent their children to learn elegant horsemanship. It was the fashionable sport. But many years later poor Mariles, whom Alemán loved so much, suffered more than his precious horse Arete when he became entangled in an international drug trafficking scandal that led him to jail.

# Re-election, Divine Treasure

In 1949 the government boasted so much about its "gigantic public works program" that it even organized an exhibition to celebrate them in Mexico City. But this did not lessen the harshness of the high cost of living and Salvador Novo wrote in the magazine *Mañana* : "It had never been seen that an egg cost first fifty, then sixty-five, up to eighty-five cents; purslane is two pesos and fifty per kilo; it had never been seen that an onion cost two pesos per kilo, and for a dozen small artichokes they charge ten pesos, and fifteen for a dozen of the larger ones." In Mexico City, middle-class neighborhoods were emerging, such as Lindavista, "no down payment and no interest," said the advertisement, "buy a lot at the Lindavista Golf Club. Only 200 pesos a month. Each lot is worth 12 thousand pesos." A bottle of Potrero rum cost four and a half; imported whiskey, twenty-three pesos. Raleigh cigarettes, which had just appeared, gave away matches with the purchase of each pack. The government froze the price of dough at twenty-five cents and that of tortillas at fifty, and published comparative tables of the prices of basic consumer goods in other countries. The trade, in turn, washed its hands of the matter. "Blaming us is like blaming the mailman when he brings bad news," they used to say ever since.

Meanwhile, Mexico called, almost begged, for the arrival of foreign capital, "as long as it complied with the laws of the country," which indicated: no more than 49 percent. This should be taken with a grain of salt; in fact, the conditions were so good that American capital (the Europeans were very poor due to the reconstruction) took possession of the automobile assemblies, spare parts, radios and televisions, agricultural machinery, synthetic fabrics and fibers, medicines, processed foods, which motivated Lázaro Cárdenas to express his displeasure in 1952, possibly after passing by Insurgentes Avenue in Mexico City, where the Sears Roebuck department store had been installed; at Christmas, he amazed the public by putting up an enormous mechanical Santa Claus whose laughter could be heard from afar. The city dwellers were unaware that Santa Claus was laughing heartily at the fact that from then on, American Christmas customs would easily displace the somewhat modern Three Kings' Days and the anachronistic Nativity scenes.

In 1949, there was a noisy controversy over the remains of Emperor Cuauhtémoc, which Eulalia Guzmán claimed to have discovered in Ixcateopan, Guerrero. This perfectly framed the so-called "doctrine of Mexicanness" of President Alemán, who, in view of the fact that he was increasingly joining forces with the powerful and unstoppable United States, at least repeated to himself that there is no other like Mexico and that the Virgin Mary said things would be much better here. Mexicanness was supposedly a rejection of "imperialism" and the highlighting of national values, since "there were our own solutions for our problems."

There was friction between Minister Beteta and the businessmen over the tax on luxury items, the tax placed on the government's "tax-free" bonds, and the fact that they did not like the tax on excess profits at all. And American tourists began to arrive,

since, after the devaluation, their dollars were going a long way in our country. They also went to the fashionable place, Acapulco, where the bay was immense, there were beaches for all tastes, the waters were crystal clear, and in the brand new Papagayo, Caleta and Club de Pesca hotels they spent magnificent times as befitted well-born people.

The famine did not cease, but by the end of 1949 the government's economic situation began to improve. The balance of payments improved and more credits arrived from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development ( IBRD ) and the Eximbank, and Alemán was able to enthusiastically continue with his construction program. Acapulco, of course, benefited from these investments, although many people indicated that the tourist improvements in the port were due to Alemán having bought land and planning large personal investments in the port. In fact, there were persistent rumors that the president was taking advantage of his position to enrich himself as no one had done in the governments of the Revolution, which were not characterized by the impeccable honesty of their officials. Corruption was a burden that weighed more and more and contaminated everything. Below, people became accustomed to paying all kinds of bribes; above, the same: businessmen knew that to make things easier they had to grease many hands and officials did not feel guilty about accepting or outright demanding handouts.

The economic upturn was due to the Korean War and the resulting need for raw materials. In addition, wealthy Mexicans realized that the currency was unlikely to devalue further, so they brought their capital back. In 1950, economic growth rose to a spectacular nine percent (but inflation rose by the same amount), and President Alemán was able to pay the International Monetary Fund and the U.S. Treasury on time. At home, credit increased, but so did the money in circulation, so that in 1951 inflation reached what was then the horrendous figure of 24 percent a year. There were signs of recession in the Mexican economy, experts said.

By then, President Alemán had inaugurated the Pan-American Highway, which, at least in theory, connected the entire country. He also carried out large works of electrification and irrigation for private farmers, expanded Social Security, opened avenues in the capital, built the first multi-family homes and the Viaduct, the first "modern" work in Mexico City; he built a new airport a little further from the old one in Balbuena, he also began the erection of the University City, and even inaugurated it in 1952 when the work could barely be seen (in reality CU did not begin to operate until 1954). Alemán followed the custom of starting works and inaugurating them in whatever condition they were: generally, half-finished, and they remained that way because after all they had already been inaugurated. Alemán also left many works unfinished, and a good number of them were not finished by Ruiz Cortines, because, after all, he rather dedicated himself to beheading Alemánism. President Alemán had a high regard for himself and that is why he ordered the erection of a huge and decidedly ugly statue of himself at the Ciudad Universitaria (that is, at the southern entrance to the city, so that tourists could say: "Look how they love Walt Disney in Mexico"). He

named the hydroelectric system, the apartment complex and the Viaduct after him, and his self-homages were abundant everywhere. From then on, all presidents did the same (or allowed their officials to do so): they named streets, buildings, schools and institutions after him with impunity.

In 1951, in the midst of the rush of construction projects that were generating fortunes for businessmen and officials, the president's reasons for concern were not the workers' protests (the miners of Nueva Rosita went on strike and carried out the famous Caravan of Hunger, on foot, from the northern tip of Coahuila to Mexico City, where they occupied the 18 de marzo sports center; they held a large rally in the main square, but when they tried to repeat it, the police surrounded them, beat them, and locked them up, in an ominous prefiguration of Pinochet's methods, inside the sports center, which was called "the Miguel Alemán prison"; the government ruled against them and sent them back to Nueva Rosita by train); rather, the president was faced with the imminence of the presidential succession. It was no secret that Alemán wanted to be reelected, or, at the very least, extend his term (the Fidel Velázquez style seemed very effective). The private secretary Rogerio de la Selva, several secretaries of state and the "shadow cabinet" were in charge of selling the idea of Alemán's reelection. Of course, there were many willing to support him, but in reality the majority of the country's political forces refused to hear about reelection. The former presidents Cárdenas and Ávila Camacho flatly rejected the possibility. Cárdenas had already received a visit from Ramón Beteta, the Secretary of Finance, who told him that if the third world war broke out via Korea, perhaps the president would prolong his term and take extreme measures against the leftists. It is said that, in turn, Cárdenas commented: "Poor lawyer Alemán, surrounded by so many undesirables. He will not know what to do with so much money." The Article 39 group and the CROM , duly instructed by the president, declared themselves in favor of reelection and the response was not very encouraging. In the end, Alemán was unable to create a favorable consensus and had no choice but to give up on the Obregonazo.

With that out of the way, Alemán reluctantly had to constitute himself as the Great Elector. But wanting to be re-elected was a very serious mistake that weakened him greatly. He could no longer give his finger at will or work properly with his successor. The political apparatus could actually veto Fernando Casas Alemán, regent of the capital, who by then was putting the pedal to the metal in his campaign. Possibly Alemán would have chosen him with pleasure, but now the general atmosphere was against such a blatant "continuism." In that context, to a certain extent Alemán found himself in a situation relatively similar to that of Cárdenas when he had to name a successor: he could not do so by the most like-minded because the consensus clearly prevented it. Cárdenas, it seems, by then seemed to support the claims of Miguel Henríquez Guzmán, a millionaire general, who realized that Alemán would hardly be inclined to vote for him, so he had already begun work to launch himself as a presidential candidate.

Alemán, in the end, had to support the other most talked-about candidate, Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, Secretary of the Interior and also known (according to Gonzalo N. Santos) as Uncle Coba, because of his inclination to obsequiously flatter the bosses. Ruiz Cortines had been very close to Alemán, who paved the way for him to the governorship of Veracruz and then took him to the fourth bat of the cabinet. However, it is possible that Ruiz Cortines did not like the forced appointment of the president and that for that reason he put so much energy into contrasting him later. In any case, if Alemán expected old Ruiz Cortines to watch his back, he was completely wrong.

In his squeezable *Memoirs* , Gonzalo N. Santos reveals many interesting details about Adolfo Ruiz Cortines. This young man from Veracruz was a low-level customs employee and did not hesitate to collaborate with the Americans when they took over the port of Veracruz in 1914. By then he was a "roto" or "dark-skinned man, with very large black eyes and thick black eyebrows" who dressed neatly and wore a straw hat. Later, still poor, he wanted to marry Lucía Carrillo, a very rich girl, but her relatives opposed it because Fito "had supported the gringos." In view of this, the then Adolfo Ruiz decided to resort to the Shunammite trick. He pretended to be deathly ill and asked that before he died they allow him to marry the girl. He acted so well that he convinced everyone, especially because he made them see the small detail that he had previously allowed himself to impregnate the young lady. The marriage took place. Shortly afterwards, Adolfo Ruiz had recovered splendidly and was celebrating with a "three-story glass" of tequila. General Francisco Mariel, who had witnessed the wedding from the "dying man's" bed, commented: "This Fito Ruiz is a great actor, I thought he was dying."

At that time, Ruiz Cortines was 24 years old and was "a great rumba and danzón dancer and... he had a lot of appeal to the whores at the brothel, who called him 'the Fakir'... In his youth, Fito Ruiz was what the French call *a very well-behaved young man* . As Minister of the Interior, he became very austere and drank cognac secretly," says Santos. Later, Fito Ruiz became Adolfo Ruiz Cortines when he was a federal deputy for Tuxpan, which also allowed him to support the energetic young Miguel Alemán. It was difficult for Ruiz Cortines to obtain the deputyship because Carlos Barón Obregón opposed him and published evidence that he had served the invaders in 1914. Of course, when he emerged with solid prospects for the presidency, Ruiz Cortines was worried that Barón would bring the "incident" to light. Santos recommended that he give him "two sacks," or two million pesos, to keep quiet. Since Ruiz Cortines did not have the money, he called the manager of the Banco Agrícola, José María Dávila, to whom he said: "'Dear Chema, for a strategic battle of the Revolution, two million pesos are needed in cash. Could the Revolution count on this money with your help and through me?' Dávila gladly gave the money, and Barón Obregón accepted it, delighted."

For his part, the millionaire Miguel Henríquez Guzmán was dying to occupy the seat, and due to his efforts he did not get the job. Six years earlier he had reached the finals, and in 1951 he tried to get Alemán to choose him. To do this he dedicated himself to bombarding the candidacy of Casas Alemán, who seemed the strongest. He

told his followers—Marcelino García Barragán, Antonio Ríos Zertuche, César Martino, Wenceslao Labra, Pedro Martínez Tornell and Ernesto Soto Reyes—to put pressure within the PRI for an expansion of internal democracy, since they sensed, and rightly so, that the president did not view them with much favor; Alemán's close associates had a strong influence on him and were antipathetic to the Henriquistas. However, the PRI president , Sánchez Taboada, responded harshly when Labra and Martino started the Henriquista peasant groups, and they, from then on, increased their criticism, always veiled, of the presidential designation system that later became popularized as "the finger pointing."

In October 1951, the PRI 's national convention nominated Adolfo Ruiz Cortines as its candidate. Cortines quickly appointed Gilberto Flores Muñoz as his campaign manager, since PRI president Rodolfo Sánchez Taboada had supported Casas Alemán. By then, Henríquez Guzmán had broken away from the system and officially registered the Federation of People's Parties ( FPP ), which was viewed coldly by the government but gained the sympathy of students and professionals annoyed by the PRI 's undemocratic methods . Henríquez was said to have the support of Lázaro Cárdenas (it was even public knowledge that the general's wife, Amalia Solórzano, and his son Cuauhtémoc were involved in the Henriquistas' organizations). But Cárdenas neither vetoed nor publicly endorsed the FPP . Years later, Cárdenas recounted that Henríquez went to see him to ask for his support, and the general cut him off: "National representation can only be achieved in two ways: by the unanimous will of the people, to the point that the government is forced to recognize the victory, or when the government sympathizes with the candidate in question."

Henríquez Guzmán's ambition worried the government, not so much because he had a chance of winning, but because it revealed the deep annoyance of the people and the left: high prices exasperated everyone, corruption had turned into cynicism by hiding behind the cloak of "public works," peasants had become impoverished, workers were constantly being beaten, dissidents were savagely repressed, and subordination to the United States was increasingly flagrant. Faced with all this, the official candidate Ruiz Cortines had to do something.

The Henriquistas began their political campaign by claiming that they were the true representatives of the revolution and its ideals, since the government had deviated from revolutionary doctrines through immorality, mockery of the vote and the formation of excessively privileged groups.

In addition to the FPP , most likely to take votes away from Henríquez and to ingratiate itself with the government, the brand new Popular Party nominated, of course, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, who was increasingly losing weight in the official apparatus (after the 1952 elections he was practically out of action). The PAN , in turn, launched the candidacy of Efraín González Luna, "to try its luck." Twelve years after its creation, the National Action Party was taking shape and was establishing itself as a very limited but real force, which in the long run legitimized the government.

The elections took place under heavy military surveillance (five soldiers at each polling station), probably to intimidate the Henriquistas, since several of them were military men and still had a taste for armed uprisings. As usual, everything was prepared for Ruiz Cortines and the PRI to emerge victorious "in any circumstance." At the end of the day, the PRI declared its absolute victory, and the Henriquista high command denounced that a great electoral fraud had taken place and that the legitimate winner was their candidate.

The next day, the Henriquistas held a large meeting in the Alameda Central to celebrate their victory. The police and the army attended the meeting in a civilized manner, brutally repressing the opposition-dissidents. They beat everyone, there were several dead, dozens wounded, and 500 demonstrators were arrested. The press, as usual, did not report any of this. This last display of Miguel Alemán's heavy hand motivated an urgent meeting of the Henriquistas. "It was about," says Raymundo Ramos in a newspaper article, "continuing to take over mayoralties and, finally, ignoring the government of the Republic and establishing the presidential term of General Henríquez. The consensus in favor of the rebellion was majority, but the casting vote of the one who should lead it was missing. General García Barragán left the room once he had cast his vote in favor of the project, and said to those who were still arguing: 'I'm going to sleep. Let me know if you decide... but I think *this one* will back out.' Henríquez turned pale and swallowed the terrible truth of those words. The multimillionaire general was already a declared anti-communist whose relations with Don Lázaro had definitely soured.

The electoral bodies of the Ministry of the Interior gave the presidency of the Republic to Adolfo Ruiz Cortines with 74.31 percent of the votes; they decided to give half a million votes (15.87 percent) to Henríquez Guzmán; González Luna did not do well and obtained 7.82 percent of the vote, and poor Lombardo Toledano was given 1.98: almost ridiculous, but the PP did not lose its registration. And in his last report, the optimist Miguel Alemán said that "during the preparation of these electoral acts, the most absolute tolerance and understanding prevailed on the part of the government... We can glimpse the Mexico we long for, whose agricultural growth produces enough for its maintenance... The efforts to combat poverty were fruitful."

Once defeated, the disciplined Henriquistas were reintegrated, "with open arms," into the bosom of the revolutionary family, because, among other things, the latter no longer wanted exhausting internal disputes or splits (Henríquez's was the third in 18 years), and wanted to be flexible, reintegrating the dissidents, if they complied with the increasingly strict discipline of the political system that had just been consolidated. Reintegration was not difficult, because Ruiz Cortines himself had taken up at least two Henriquista banners: the fight against corruption and high prices. García Barragán, Ríos Zertuche and César Martino were among the first to return to the PRI .

Many professionals withdrew from the FPP , realizing that it was languishing rapidly. And a few remained with the idea of an armed uprising. In January 1954, an assault took place on the barracks in Delicias, Chihuahua. The press hinted that

the army had news of the plan and that it was therefore easy to contain it. Both the government and the press blamed the Henriquistas, so when they organized a demonstration on February 5, the authorities took advantage of the situation to repress it with the pretext that the "drunk" demonstrators had attacked pedestrians and merchants. The next day, the press was filled with all kinds of advertisements from the PRI sectors that called for "the full weight of the law against the subversives." Diligently, in less than a month, the Ministry of the Interior cancelled the registration of the Federation of People's Parties.

Miguel Alemán, meanwhile, resigned himself to handing over the power he had enjoyed for so long. At the end of his government, his unpopularity was evident. In addition to his economic policies, which had fostered a corruption that had always existed but which from then on was unleashed, Alemán distinguished himself by his authoritarian and abusive character against anyone who was against the government. With the Federal Security Directorate and the crime of "social dissolution," he dedicated himself to spying on and imprisoning dissidents. "The Land of Mañana is the recipient of foreign investment," writes Carlos Monsiváis, "and in turn there are the murders of ejidatarios, giving rise to subdivisions, layoffs, beatings, and prisons for workers determined to be free trade unionists, repression maintained through complacency and the complicity of multi-class habits, ideas, and passions... Despotism is tempered by murder, fraud, and plunder, and it is given prestige by the charities distributed from the loot."

Just as he favored and indulged businessmen in businesses that often went beyond the legal framework, Alemán did not hesitate to crush the defenseless who dared to express their ideas. In this way, he established the repressive tendency of the Mexican State, which at the end of the 1950s and throughout the 1960s would become an essential part of the personal style of governing of the presidents of the Revolution.

# 3. The Stabilizing Development (1952-1958)

## The Politics of Contrast

On December 1, 1952, the transfer of powers took place, and Miguel Alemán surely had to be patient, since the new president actually criticized the previous administration (despite his responsibility in it). Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, in his inauguration speech, admitted that corruption was a deep wound in the country, that actions were urgently needed to counteract the shortage, as well as economic measures to confront the recessionary crisis that was being experienced.

To rectify the abuses of the Alemán administration, the new president appointed a cabinet that was no longer made up of "brilliant technicians," "young university graduates," or close associates of Alemán. Antonio Carrillo Flores occupied the Treasury portfolio, which would be very busy throughout the six-year term; Gilberto Loyo took charge of the Ministry of the Economy; Ángel Carvajal, of the Ministry of the Interior; Luis Padilla Nervo, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Adolfo López Mateos was in charge of the Ministry of Labor.

But observers were less interested in the composition of the cabinet than in the fact that the new president was clearly distancing himself from Miguel Alemán. This impression was confirmed when, in December, Ruiz Cortines flooded Congress with a package of laws, as new Mexican presidents usually do. From then on, officials had to "declare their assets" upon entering office; at any time, without prior complaint, anyone who showed signs of "inexplicable enrichment" could be investigated ex officio. This law was not actually applied, but it was much discussed because of its dedication to the previous administration. Ruiz Cortines, it was said, would carry out "relentless moralization."

The criticism of Alemán was also implicit in one of the first measures taken by Ruiz Cortines to curb high prices and restore the purchasing power of the population: a tremendous "anti-monopoly" law, with severe sanctions for hoarders who were scattering goods under the pretext that a third world war was imminent. Not only would very high fines be applied to hoarders, but they could also be imprisoned for up to nine years. Ruiz Cortines accompanied this measure with price controls, which were announced as rigid, with the lowering of the price of beans and corn, and with the strengthening of the Mexican Export and Import Company Ceimsa, which in the sixties would become

Conasupo. Ceimsa would be in charge of the distribution of basic articles to prevent voracious merchants from continuing to do their thing. In addition, the new president announced that he would implement an "austerity" policy, which would significantly restrict government spending. The "gigantic public works program" that had been so celebrated by private enterprise was therefore suspended. And luxury Cadillacs were banned! The only visible continuity was the reform of constitutional articles 34 and 115 that granted full political rights to women; as Olga Pellicer de Brody points out in "El afianzamiento de la equilibrio política" (The Strengthening of Political Stability), the penultimate volume of the *Historia de la Revolución Mexicana (History of the Mexican Revolution)* , at that time no women's organization fought for this conquest, which, therefore, had to be seen "as a free concession from the executive, a sign of the progressive attitude and good will that the new president intended to project."

These measures irritated Mexican businessmen and right-wingers in general, but in December 1952 and January of the following year, hot gossip continued to revolve around Ruiz Cortines's "anti-Alemanism," which was real, although many specialists, like the regime, preferred to deny it. From his campaign, Ruiz Cortines made it clear that he would try to stop Miguel Alemán. In Guerrero, for example, he ordered one of his goldfinches to fiercely attack Governor Alejandro Gómez Maganda, one of Alemán's staunchest defenders. Gómez Maganda's loyalty to his boss went so far as to ignore warnings and even publish advertisements in the national press defending Miguel Alemán. Of course, after this, in 1954, the president resorted to the "disappearance" of powers and Gómez Maganda went to the bench amid insults. Ruiz Cortines also forced the "voluntary resignation" of Tomás Marentes, governor of Yucatán, who was a member of Alemán's so-called "parallel cabinet," made up of his closest associates. To eliminate Marentes, they took advantage of the violence that took place at a meeting of henequeros and the strike that the next day was carried out by supposed students who upset the city and who confronted the police and caused all kinds of destruction. It is very plausible that these problems were orchestrated from the center, because the army did not receive orders to intervene and the police acted in an extremely passive manner, which is by no means the norm when the police forces go to public protests. To top it all off, two envoys from the Interior Ministry arrived in Mérida who "resolved the conflicts" without Marentes being able to do anything. What he did do was fly immediately to the capital, where he was ordered to resign.

But this only confirmed what was evident in January 1953: Ruiz Cortines was trying to distance himself from Miguel Alemán as much as possible. This was surely due to the pragmatic need to show a "new image" through a "policy of contrast," as Olga Pellicer de Brody called it. Miguel Alemán understood this and in January 1953 he had to praise Ruiz Cortines' projects, since they were "of vital importance for the nation," and, to avoid further problems, he went on vacation in Europe. If Alemán had even thought that he could manipulate Ruiz Cortines, he soon had to get rid of the idea, and he also disciplined himself (which implied that the new government would not promote low blows for the "inexplicable enrichment" of the former president, who by then knew

to what extent Uncle Coba was an expert in kicking under the table, and how he loved secret maneuvers to disgrace people). Alemán harbored a lifelong resentment toward Ruiz Cortines, who was so quick to expose him as a source of corruption.

If Ruiz Cortines wanted to have all the power without obstacles, after Alemán left Mexico he no longer faced any obstacles. The new president of the PRI , General Gabriel Leyva Velázquez, immediately declared that the party was absolutely Ruizcortinist and that he would reform the PRI statutes so that they "would adapt to the ideology and norms established by the president." From that moment on, PRI members and officials competed tenaciously to see who would praise Ruiz Cortines the best. The PRI then consolidated itself as a great placement agency, as a carrier of support for the president and as the instrument of many of his whims.

PRI 's executive committee, it is obvious that the sectors showed the same docility: the CNC , always the weakest sector, did not try in the least to thwart any presidential wishes, much less did it concern itself with attending to the needs of the thousands of peasants and small landowners who suffered a notable abandonment throughout the six-year term. The CNOP , strengthened during the two previous regimes, also placed itself at the complete disposal of Ruiz Cortines. And it was no longer necessary to contain the CTM , since it was very quiet after the blows of Alemán, who, in addition, before leaving, turned the CROC against it .

In 1952, Fidel Velázquez had been re-elected general secretary of the CTM . The non-re-election had been respected, since Fidel returned to head the union after the period of Fernando Amilpa (of course, from then on, like Porfirio Díaz, Velázquez would be re-elected punctually every four years, which would be imitated by various labor leaders). This iron control of the CTM by the Wolves caused the union to split on numerous occasions in the 1940s. Other "confederations" emerged from it: the National Proletarian Union ( CPN ), the Union of Workers and Peasants of Mexico ( COCM ), the Union of Workers, of Luis Gómez Z. ( CUT ) and the National Union of Workers ( CNT ). All these groups, orchestrated by the government, formed the Revolutionary Confederation of Workers and Peasants ( CROC ) in April 1952 , headed by Luis Gomez Z., who had remained loyal to the regime after his imprisonment in 1948. From the beginning, the CROC enjoyed the open support of Alemán, and also of Ruiz Cortines. Fidel Velázquez was furious and began to criticize the new union, since many of its members were his enemies. The CROC naturally responded to the attacks, and for a long time the two unions entertained themselves by cultivating a mutual feud; the leaders of the CROC , according to Fidel Velázquez, acted "as unscrupulous provocateurs, and it seems that their only mission is to divide the most serious unions in the country." Fidel Velázquez, in order to ingratiate himself with Ruiz Cortines, who had expressed his desire for the workers to unify, proposed the creation of a new unified central, and even assured that he would be willing to resign if that were necessary. The CROC initially laughed, but then saw the emergence of the "Guadalajara Pact", which in 1953 formed the Workers' Unity Block ( BUO ) with the federalized unification of the CTM , the CROM , the COT and the unions of telephone operators, electricians,

tram workers, railroad workers and miners. The CROC did not join the BUO , which, after all, as Luis Araiza said, was "a blind giant without a guide", which was concretized by bringing workers to give massive support to the government. The BUO functioned, to a certain extent, from 1953, but was not formally established until 1955.

But in 1953, workers, whether in conflict or not, witnessed Ruiz Cortines' efforts to impose austerity on his government and to contain price increases, which almost immediately motivated "distrust" and protests from the private sector. Ruiz Cortines did apply the anti-monopoly law, at least during 1953, and in that year there were more than 16 thousand fines to hoarding merchants. The supervision of price control was assigned to the Ministry of the Interior, which created an army of inspectors to ensure that the control imposed on 78 food products and 30 industrial products was not violated. Grocers, shopkeepers, butchers, tortilla makers and pharmacies (pharmacies were still called "boticas") were the most sanctioned. In addition, Ceimsa imported large quantities of corn, beans and wheat to avoid shortages and the consequent general rise in prices.

The businessmen focused their attacks on Ceimsa (unfair competition, harmful and disastrous intervention by the State, a resounding failure, an official monopoly and other such niceties). The national press, headed by the ultra-conservative newspaper *Excelsior* , by Rodrigo del Llano, supported the protests of the private sector.

But what most irritated the company and the press was the austerity policy, which left many projects unfinished, suspended others and reduced funds for the countryside and transport. All the government's contractors and suppliers were very upset. The president of the Bankers Association announced that private investors would begin a "waiting period", which meant the paralysis of the productive apparatus during that year and the inevitable flight of capital.

This did worry Ruiz Cortines. It was one thing to "contrast" Miguel Alemán's regime and another to be boycotted by businessmen. The contraction of investments, the flight of capital, plus government austerity caused economic growth to slow down in 1953 and made Ruiz Cortines modify his views and begin what was later called "stabilizing development": prudence in public spending, low salaries, search for foreign credits, openness to US investments and stability of prices and the parity of the peso.

The possibility of increasing investments and credits from the United States was feasible given the "good neighborliness" with the "cousins from the north." In 1953, Ruiz Cortines met with his American counterpart Dwight Eisenhower on the occasion of the inauguration of the Falcón dam on the Rio Bravo (which, of course, would benefit the "pribravo" farmers). The advanced age of both leaders contributed to everything being cordial and with good wishes. Even though our country refused to participate in military pacts and tried, at least, to cement its autonomy in foreign relations, in the United States they had realized that the "revolutionary" Mexican governments would not cause problems, but, on the contrary, were reliable, predictable and extremely flexible in their idea of nationalism and the Mexicanness so exalted by Alemán. As an American magazine later said, Mexico had tax exemptions, facilities for repatriating

profits, the 49 percent on foreign investment was very relative, investments were recovered “in one or two years” and the average profit was an excellent 15 percent. On the other hand, although in 1953 Gilberto Loyo, Secretary of Economy, declared that Mexico preferred not to resort to foreign loans because it could finance itself through internal savings, a year later the point of view had changed completely and the country was increasingly hunting for credits from the IBRD , the IMF , Eximbank and anyone who wanted to lend money. As early as 1955 the regime was proud (as it continued to be until the late 1980s) of the “great confidence it inspired in the world, because no one doubted its ability to pay.”

By early 1954, Ruiz Cortines clearly had complete control of the political landscape. That year, the Federation of People’s Parties was deregistered, but the creation of the Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution ( PARM ) was also hatched. The government encouraged the group Heroes of the Revolution, made up of veterans of the armed movement and some military personnel, to form the new party, which in a way tried to neutralize the claims that the Mexican Revolution had gone astray. The PARM was not registered legally until 1957, and was always considered a ”satellite” party, controlled by the government at a remote level. With the emergence of the PARM , the opposition at that time was confined to the PAN , the PP and the PARM , but only the former represented a true opposition, and the PARM served to raise a pseudo-democratic façade and to legitimize, by accepting them, the victories of the PRI . It was not until 1988, that is, 34 years later, that the PARM presented its own candidate for president, since (like the PPS ) it generally ”adhered” to the candidates presented by the official party.

But the creation of the PARM did not surprise anyone, as did the economic problems. Ruiz Cortines, aware that he had to “self-rectify” his first proposals, was determined to restore the lost balance. The immediate thing was to stop the capital flight, since in the first three months of 1954 many millions of dollars had quietly gone to the United States. The president and his ministers Carrillo Flores and Gilberto Loyo then devised a new devaluation, since, at that time, no one expected it nor was there panic buying of dollars. The authorities secretly made their preparations and not even the International Monetary Fund was not notified. With the cunning that characterized the man with the bow tie, Wednesday of Holy Week at six in the evening was chosen to announce the measure, because the banks had already closed and would not open until four days later. Television and radio reported that the peso was devalued to 12.50 per dollar. Anyone who wanted to speculate on the measure found no place to exchange dollars and American tourists were harassed to sell their dollars at the already old exchange rate of 8.65.

As is well known, every devaluation is a trigger for price increases, and Ruiz Cortines, who began his government by severely controlling them, dedicated himself to ensuring that businesses did not re-label merchandise in stores and warehouses. However, prices rose in many places and, upon realizing this, the public began to panic buy. Salaries, as expected, did not rise, so suddenly the most needy people discovered that their

already very low purchasing power had seriously diminished. At first the labor unions did not say anything, but later gave their support to the president and showed their determination by declaring that they would vigorously combat hoarders. Both the CTM and the CROC and the "pocket unions" that formed the Guadalajara Pact, which gave rise to the BUO , agreed on unrestricted support. Although the rise in inflation and shortages were incontrovertible facts, on May 1st the workers ratified their support for "their friend and boss" the President of the Republic and offensive slogans like those from a year earlier ("Santa Madriza, patron saint of the grenadiers") were no longer seen.

In addition to the devaluation, Ruiz Cortines had already started public works, although not with the euphoria of Miguel Alemán. Exports began to grow, since with the devaluation Mexican products were a bargain abroad. And credits fell: in 1954, 50 million dollars arrived, which were used to fatten the reserves and to start works in the countryside, in industry, in transport and in state-owned companies, especially Petróleos Mexicanos and the Federal Electricity Commission. The result of all this was that economic growth was restarted and both the government and the private sector ended up very satisfied.

But nothing stopped the high cost of living. Already in the May Day parade, numerous banners were calling for higher wages. Pressure was mounting on the unions to demand wage increases, and in mid-May the president inaugurated the custom of addressing the nation via "chained" radio and television. Ruiz Cortines offered a 10 percent raise to bureaucrats and begged employers to improve their employees' salaries by the same amount. Finally, he uttered the phrase that made him famous: "Mexico for fruitful and creative work." As was to be expected, the labor leaders were full of servile flattery for the president.

The generous private sector agreed to the 10 percent increase, although this was not sufficient in the least in the face of the ravages of the devaluation, which was 24.5 percent. This percentage was demanded by the CROC and also by the UGOCM , which, in the face of official hostility, was increasingly confined to the countryside. Faced with this, the CTM was forced to do something more and then Fidel Velázquez surprised the population by announcing that if they did not obtain a 24 percent increase, all the CTM unions would go on general strike! Of course, the big wolf was careful to make it clear to the businessmen and the government that they would follow "until exhaustion, the paths of understanding, mutual arrangement, conciliation." Of course, so that they would see that the wolves were "very macho" Fidel warned that the strike would be legal, but if they found obstacles then "it would be revolutionary."

The CROC , which had seemed very combative a short time before, when it saw what the CTM had decided , immediately declared itself against the dreaded general strike ("tutus, tutus per cuder", the president liked to say in private, which meant: "all, all to screw you"; by the way, Carlos Monsiváis reports that every time Ruiz Cortines said something "leperada", he would exclaim: "Sorry, investiture").

The private sector was alarmed by the threat of the revolutionary Fidel Velázquez. It was unaware at the time that Fidel Velázquez had a penchant for bragging. "I can eat a plate of meat with my tongue," could well have said Adolfo López Mateos, Secretary of Labor, who in just 11 days settled the whole matter; of the more than five thousand protests demanding a 24 or 30 percent increase, there was not a single strike, not by bakers, nor by gasoline dispatchers, nor by telegraph operators, bureaucrats, nor by employees of radio stations, gas stations, cemeteries or cabarets. Almost all accepted the famous 10 percent proposed by the president and only in some cases was 12, 15 or 16 percent granted. Only the workers of the Mexican Electric Industry ( IEM ), the textile industry and the film industry went on strike, but they too gave in with a salary increase of a fabulous 12 percent.

Ultimately, experts say that Fidel Velázquez's strike threat was extremely useful, as it showed national and foreign investors that the Mexican working class could synchronize splendidly with the government in order to create optimal conditions for capitalism, which began, at least in underdeveloped countries, with cheap labor. With the "general strike," Fidel Velázquez demonstrated that he could properly mediate workers' protests, even if they had to knot their stomachs and look in the shop windows at the wonders of the "modern" world, which continued to amaze: there were four-engine airplanes and it no longer took 30 hours to travel to Europe, as had happened just six years earlier; household appliances, like automobiles, changed models and introduced "advances" that were often useless but very striking. There were already "sellomatic" tires, hi-fi, "atomic" pens and the first American-style "supermarket", sterile and with few staff. Planned obsolescence was advancing. The poor, at least, could know that all this existed even if they could not remotely afford it: cars, televisions, refrigerators and telephones remained out of their reach, but, on the other hand, the middle classes were growing, distancing themselves from the poorest and beginning to become familiar with the advances, without realizing that an entire world view was permeating through them.

Working class wages began to improve somewhat, and from 1954 onwards, stabilizing developments meant that prices were no longer too high. This meant that, for at least two years (1955 and 1956), the general situation in Mexico went through a phase of relative calm.

But in 1954, amidst the flood of strike notices, problems with the United States also flared up over the braceros. The invasion of illegals, or wetbacks, was growing spectacularly (there were already more than a million by then) and the empire of the north now insisted on renewing the agreements to apply a consistent immigration policy. The Mexican government, under these conditions, opted to delay the talks, so suddenly the Eisenhower administration simply proposed that it would unilaterally hire the braceros. Ruiz Cortines very delicately declared that it did not seem right to him to be sidelined in this matter so important for Mexico. Therefore, he announced that he would not authorize the departure of workers. But there were already thousands of

them at the border, waiting to be hired legally. Of course, many thousands of Mexicans were trying to cross at any cost.

The National Defense Secretariat announced that it would offer all its vacancies to employ these people, and it also proposed a "plan of interest in the national territory" through which the northern cities would start urgent works of remodeling, paving, lighting, etc., to employ those who insisted on going to work with the gringos to escape national poverty. None of this was done, in the end. Armed police detachments were also placed in key areas of the border with California to prevent crossing once hiring on the other side began. In Mexicali more than seven thousand tried to do so (in Tijuana there were more than a thousand) and all of them were repressed by the public force that did not know any other way to deal with this type of problem. There were many beaten, dozens wounded and the extreme violence alarmed many people.

In view of this, the United States abandoned unilateral contracts and signed a new agreement with Mexico, which, as always, blatantly favored the interests of American farmers. In this way, thousands of Mexicans were able to come to work legally (in 1957 there were already more than 400,000). However, there were a million illegals and the United States decided to expel them through what was known as Operation Wetback. Surveillance was increased and border guards captured more than two thousand illegals per day. They were put on buses or train cars and taken as far south as possible, to prevent the expelled from feeling the temptation to return soon. More than 750,000 were arrested and expelled throughout that year, which created extraordinary problems in Mexico, since the peasants were not only the most dispossessed but there were fewer and fewer of them. By then, it was estimated that there were nearly four million poor rural workers who were barely managing to survive. The massive arrival of a million more only exacerbated all the problems in the countryside, where, as is known, agricultural development programs, bank loans and irrigation works only benefited the powerful private farmers who quietly reintegrated the large estates into national life. The arrival of hundreds of thousands of wetbacks, in time, paved the way for the land invasions that broke out in 1958.

1954 was undoubtedly the crucial year for the Ruiz Cortines government. In May, the United States decided to put an end to "the Guatemalan problem," which did not really exist, or at least not to the paranoid extent that American anti-communists claimed. Jacobo Arbenz's social reforms could not even remotely be considered "communist," but in the midst of the Cold War, anyone could be considered subversive (as demonstrated by Senator McCarthy's activities at the beginning of the decade). The United States "denounced," alarmed, that the socialist bloc was arming Guatemala, and in June "mercenary" troops invaded the small Central American republic.

The Mexican leftists, who after the action of Santa Madriza, patron saint of the grenadiers, were frankly disgusted by the abuse of power and the open intervention of the United States in what they considered their "backyard," formed the Society of Friends of Guatemala, published protest notices and marched through the streets in support of the Arbenz government. Lázaro Cárdenas sent a telegram of sympathy to

the Guatemalan people. The students of the Polytechnic and the University forgot about the "classics" of American football and the "dog" parades and organized rallies and fundraisers to help Guatemala. This was enough for the Mexican right to feel scandalized by the "open subversive activity" of the Mexican communists. The press was delighted to insult students and leftists, and the García Valseca network focused its attacks on Lázaro Cárdenas, whom it accused of "misappropriation of funds." *Excelsior* and *El Universal* reprinted the lies. In view of this, the government, through General Leyva Velázquez, president of the PRI , took advantage of the trip to emphasize its irreversible anti-communism and its repudiation of this type of strange ideologies that did not respond to the inherent patriotism of the psychology of the Mexican, "whose maximum vibration is produced by the National Anthem and loves Mexico." With this, the left had a minimal taste of the repressions that would come in the following years.

## From Chachachá to Rock and Roll

At the end of 1952, Salvador Novo inaugurated his Teatro de la Capilla, located in Coyoacán, where, in addition to the forum for stage experimentation, the master of masters later offered the wonders of his condition as a cook in a restaurant that served pepper steak and soups that Novo made "with his own little hands." The important presence at the event was not Alfonso Reyes or the literacy poet Jaime Torres Bodet, but the "first lady" Mrs. María Izaguirre, second wife of the president Adolfo Ruiz Cortines. This ominous presence, on the other hand, signaled what would be the definitive decline of Salvador Novo (or Nalgador Sobo, as he was also called, with a laugh), who from then on would sink into the swamps of officialdom (in 1968 Novo, like Martín Luis Guzmán and other intellectual luminaries, turned against the student movement, and, when he died, in 1974, the teacher's funeral became a cold official act).

The presence of Mrs. Maria was a warning of one of the first laws that Ruiz Cortines would issue in December 1952: the granting of political rights to women, who from that moment on could vote not only in the elections for deputies, as had already occurred in 1949, but in the presidential elections as well! However, this measure, which was undoubtedly very good, did not mean much for the condition of women in Mexico, who were educated for marriage. Of course, many of them were already studying at university, but the majority, if they studied, prepared themselves for a "business career" and could aspire to the wonder of being executive secretaries or "parliamentarians"! Others, who were not attracted by the great future of being secretaries, studied to be educators or even teachers. It is clear that many women had a taste for and inclination towards family life (which, of course, has always been and will always be vital to the good health of society), but those who had professional or executive concerns were faced with a social environment that discouraged and even repressed those who tried to "violate the traditional functions of the sexes": women, the Church, the kitchen

and children, as the German machos would say. In fact, professional opportunities for women were scarce, just as machismo was omnipresent.

At home, middle-class ladies at least had the relief of their maids (no one would have called them "domestic servants" back then), who generally came from a nearby town, worked all day and a good part of the night, and only enjoyed the great opportunity to watch a little television at dusk, after going for bread and facing the sieges of the "cat-hunters" who tried to take them, after a healthy dance of the delicious cha-cha-cha, the new sensational rhythm, at the California Dancing Club, to the fat mattresses of the hotels (if the boss's son, or the boss himself, had not already assaulted them in the more convenient but equally sordid "servant's room" of middle-class houses or apartments). At best, the maids could aspire to last many years in a job and become "part of the family" with the same paternalistic conception with which the State treated the people.

The maids were one of the lowest social levels and resented the fearsome racism that reigned in Mexico. Any blond person with light eyes (oh, how wonderful to have green eyes, or better yet, blue) was highly appreciated, just as black people and Indians were rejected. If they were Indians, it was worse; although Indians were the object of the most sinister doses of paternalism and condescension, no social group has been the object of so much dispossession, exploitation, discrimination or rejection in our country. In the Colony, there was discussion about whether Indians "had a soul or not," but in independent Mexico things were no better. Neither the Juarista reform nor the Revolution escaped crushing the country's indigenous groups, and it was always considered that the national essence was mestizaje, so the Indians had to "integrate," that is: acculturate, and lose languages, traditions and ways of life. The notion of reservations was supposedly abhorred in Mexico, but Mexican governments never tired of moving Indians (especially the "problematic" ones) from one side of the country to the other, especially to Campeche. This occurred even in the 1970s, when the concepts of treatment of Indians were changing and the preservation of the specific traits and ways of "ethnic groups" was beginning to be considered extremely important for the health of the country.

But in the early 1950s, the Indian was only good for exploitation and for the little he had to be robbed for the benefit, once again, of private farmers. Naturally, this racism (which covered practically the entire spectrum of society) implied the specific weight of malinchismo (explored intensely, at that time, by studies of "the Mexican"), which also covered all social strata (and very especially, at that time, the intelligentsia) and which was indirectly encouraged by the notions of "industrialization" and "developmentalism," since these opened the door to uncritical and even devout admiration of the foreign, especially the "white, bearded man."

To racism and malinchismo we must add classism, equally increased by the capitalist flight of the country, which at that time was beginning to reach the delights of state monopoly capital. Society clearly marked the distances between those-who-were-not-equal ("what happened? There are still social classes!" was often heard). The difference

between decent people, of good birth, and the scumbags, the uneducated, ignorant and filthy skinheads was very important. From the bastard, constant self-abasement, docility and, if possible, flattery were expected. The higher up the "social scale" the more natural and logical the arrogance, contempt and despotism towards those below, who, on the other hand, were perfectly in agreement with this treatment, after centuries of alienation. The poor taught their children to be docile and "respectful" of the middle class or "the upper class" (as Gabriel Vargas called them, who, by the way, had already left *Pepín* and edited *La Familia Burrón* on the García Valseca network). If some miserable bastard wanted to climb the hierarchy and reach "the top" he had to be very clever, work hard for the boss, give him all his loyalty, guess what he wanted and get ahead of him, if possible; find out the weak points of the boss and compensate for it with severe doses of flattery and servility, especially when the time for promotion approached; you had to know the boss's tastes and share them, even if they caused disgust inside; you had to attract attention, but not too much ("he who moves does not appear in the photo"); do not pressure unless the boss was pressurizable; In the top team, a group had to be formed or an existing one had to be strengthened, a network of relationships and possible alliances had to be established, and, of course, anyone who was also struggling to climb to the top had to be hindered or completely eliminated. In any case, it was necessary to be aware that the boss was making the big decision and that he should be showered with praise. Any resemblance to the way in which the Secretaries of State fought to obtain the highest office is either pure coincidence or proof that the system was reflected in all aspects of national life.

In the fifties, the moral atmosphere was not very airy. Prejudices and social conventions were almost impregnable. Customs were increasingly rigid and formal, although everything was still very unconscious. Hierarchies and authoritarianism went hand in hand throughout Mexican society. The macho notions of virginity and submission of women, and the mockery of homosexuals, remained unbeaten, since the prevailing sexism, also unconscious, was total. Sex was absolutely taboo, and those with "unorthodox" sexual preferences had to conform to a clandestine and certainly dangerous underworld.

This "morality" increased in the first years of Ruizcortinism, when the ineffable and occasional *comic relief* of the system Ernesto Uruchurtu, regent of the capital, made his appearance, who applied in his own way the "politics of contrast"; since the Alemanism implied the "splendor" of the night life, with its exotic and its alcoholic adventures, Uruchurtu, with all the u's in his name, took charge of frustrating the pachangueros: he ordered that the night clubs closed at one in the morning and closed the "scandalous places", although, of course, he did not mess with the legendary brothel of the Bandida, Graciela Olmos, where the top brass of the politicians met to drink whiskey, the girls, and listen to the brave and lépero corridos with which the Bandida benefited her buddies and with which she ranted against the enemies of her friends. Many of the pro-Alemanist politicians who went to the bench found there the right

place to shout their misfortunes to the rhythm of the verses of La Bandida, author, by the way, of the corrido "Siete Leguas".

Censorship did not apply to Doña Graciela's home, but it was omnipresent in film, theatre, television and publications. However, the desire for "modernisation" led to minimal uncovering. The first nudes then appeared, as had already occurred in European cinematography (in the Prado cinema or in the notorious Río cinema, the crowd of onanists went into ecstasy before the breasts of the daring Silvana Pampanini, Françoise Arnoul or Martine Carol). In Mexico, nudes were intended to be "aesthetic" but were frankly static, and the pioneers of bare breasts were Ana Luisa Pelufo, Columba Domínguez, Kitty de Hoyos, Amanda del Llano and Aída Araceli; these nudes were highly appreciated, despite their status as still photos and the unfathomable hypocrisy that hid behind "art".

Uruchurtu (you had to "stop your little horn" to say its waving name) also allowed, as an escape valve, the national turncoat staff to have a taste for the "porn" magazines of the time, *Vea* and *Vodevil* , which were never missing in hairdressers and which deserved indignant campaigns from the young fascists of the University Movement for Orientation Renewal ( MURO ) who, with the joints, were the greatest pestilence in the University.

Despite all this, the austerity, the greyness and the "moralization" of Ruizcortin-Uruchur were frankly anticlimactic. The energetic decapitation of the Alemán movement meant, from the beginning, a change of mood throughout the country. Euphoria and the rhythm of the mambo gave way to a kind of hangover, and not exactly benign, a kind of awakening from a dream to another dream of cloudy days. This "moral depression" was not attenuated by the flowers that Uru (there are too many Basque úes) planted on the median strips of Insurgentes Avenue and Paseo de la Reforma, nor by the sinuosities of the delicious, cachondón, cha-cha-chá, which, like everything good in that era, came from Cuba. The Aragón Orchestra, the América Orchestra and the trumpeter Enrique Jorrín were the introducers of the new fashion that, of course, swept the boards. Almost everyone succumbed to the delicacies of cha-cha-cha, and at the ineffable 15th-anniversary parties (in the *ad hoc salons* ) as soon as the "ladies" and "chamberlains" finished off the rigorous Strauss waltz (ah, "Voices of Spring"), the good stuff came with "The Martians," "The Tunnel" or "The Cha-Cha-Cha Classes," which soon took their academic stronghold in national cinema. But the latter, poor thing, had already left the golden age, entered into pure commercialism and lost all brilliance and freshness. Only Luis Buñuel (by then more Mexican than "the mole") continued making good films. In 1953, *La ilusión travels by tram* showed us, among other things, the new urban landscape: large buildings, avenues over the old rivers, Uruchurtian flowers and an expansion that devoured the four cardinal points; In the south, for example, the former towns of Mixcoac, Coyoacán and San Ángel had already been integrated into the city, and only Tlalpan, Tepepan and Xochimilco seemed somewhat remote. Buñuel also portrayed Mexico City splendidly in *Ensayo de un crimen* , which he filmed in 1955 with the beautiful Miroslava and Rita Macedo, and Ernesto Alonso,

in a very free version that was as good as Rodolfo Usigli's delightful novel. The latter, for his part, was still the greatest national playwright after his great successes of the 1940s, *La familia cena en casa* and his political chef d'ouvre *El gesticulador* , which, as usual, had premiered amid severe censorship problems. In the 1950s, Usigli was in his Coronas phase *,* but his decisive work had already been written and premiered.

In 1954, the lively publisher and bookseller Rafael Giménez Siles attracted a lot of attention when he advertised successful books on the large illuminated marquees of his Librerías de Cristal, such as *...Y México se fugió en el desierto (And Mexico took refuge in the desert* ), in which José Fuentes Mares had joined forces with the chief Terrazas. That same year, the Centro de Estudios Mexicanos ( CEM ) was formed, with Alfonso Caso, Pablo González Casanova, Francisco Martínez de la Vega, Enrique Cabrera and Alonso Aguilar. The CEM proposed high-level studies on national problems, and one of its first major themes was the analysis of foreign investments in Mexico.

That same year, the year of the surprise devaluation, the painter Frida Kahlo died. Andrés Iduarte (author of *A Child in the Mexican Revolution* ) was director of Bellas Artes, and, as he had loved Frida very much, he arranged for her to be laid to rest with honors in the lobby of the Palace of Bellas Artes. The top brass of Mexican communism gathered there. Diego Rivera was not sure that Frida was dead. "I am horrified by the idea that she still has capillary activity. The hairs on her skin stand up," he said, "I am terrified of cremating her like that." "But it is very simple," Rosa Castro replied, "let the doctor open her veins. If there is no blood flowing, she is dead." Right there they cut the jugular vein of the corpse and a few drops came out.

Iduarte never imagined that one of the fridos, Arturo García Bustos, would cover the coffin with a red flag that displayed a hammer and sickle in the center of a white star. Given the anti-communist atmosphere of the time, Iduarte was dismayed. He asked Diego to remove the flag, but the great muralist threatened to take the body out into the street to hold a wake there. At that moment General Lázaro Cárdenas arrived. He, without worrying about the flag, stood guard of honor next to the coffin, with his son Cuauhtémoc, César Martino, Andrés Henestrosa, Siqueiros, Diego and Iduarte himself, who had informed the presidency of everything that had happened. "If General Cárdenas is standing guard," they told him, "you should too." And he did.

The next day the press was furious about the "Russophile farce" that had besmirched Bellas Artes. The scandal was such that Iduarte was immediately expelled from the INBA . Diego, in turn, managed to be readmitted to the Mexican Communist Party, something he had been begging for on his knees for several years. Shortly afterwards he remarried, contracted cancer, traveled to the USSR to undergo radiation, painted his last pictures and died in 1957, at the age of 71.

In 1955, Telesistema Mexicano, SA was formed, made up of the groups of Rómulo O'Farril and Emilio Azcárraga, who had absorbed the interests of González Camarena. By then, television was already very popular, and there were more and more receivers. American series were arriving, but local programs were highly appreciated: the *Duelo de dibujantes* , where Freyre, Chango García Cabral, and other cartoon stars appeared

(Abel Quezada already painted the rich with a ring in their nose and the police with flies around them, and he did the advertising for Wildroot glitter). The Terrible Mad Monk also appeared with his midnight horror stories. Numerous Mexican films from the "golden age" were broadcast. Soap operas were also beginning, which in the sixties would already be an institution, "the middle ground between social realization and absolute pessimism," says Carlos Monsiváis; melodramas that were "the expression and fixation of socially valid feelings that reinforced the dominant morality." The successful announcers were Paco Malgesto, the high school student Álvaro Gálvez y Fuentes, and Pedro Ferriz, who years later would see UFOs everywhere. For children there was Enrique Alonso's *Fantastic Theater* , Cachirulo, sponsored by Exprés Pulverizado chocolate; also the caricatures of Felix the Cat, whose tail served as a question mark or a cane, and those of the clown Coco (in English, Koko), who went outside the drawing and played pranks on the cartoonist, undoubtedly an "advance" of the currents of the artist who contemplates himself.

There was no more wrestling, but there was televised boxing, and you could see the sensation of the moment, Ratón Macías, a bantamweight and a good guy, not a go-getter like the Kids Aztecas, the Changos Casanovas, or Toluco López, also very popular and a strong fighter, the opposite of Fili Nava who spent his time running around the ring. Ratón never wanted to fight Costeñito Gutiérrez, or Baby Face Gutiérrez, who came from abroad with great accreditation (he was on the verge of competing for the world bantamweight championship in Australia), but who never did it here. Ratón Macías turned out to be such a good boy that, when he retired, he became an entrepreneur and launched the Mexi-Cola soft drink on the market, which tasted awful and couldn't even compete with Spur-Cola (by then people were also drinking Del Valle soft drinks, Delawere Punch, obviously imported, and Barrilitos Dr. Brown, because the Mexican population had already taken the definitive plunge into soft drinks, earning the dubious honor of becoming the country that drank the most bottled liquids: of course, Coca-Cola and Pepsi at the top).

On TV you could also watch bullfights (Sunday afternoons), with the great hits of Carlos Arruza, Luis Procuna (who starred in the splendid film-truth Carlos Velo *Torero* ), Fermín Rivera, Calesero, Manuel Capetillo and Joselito Huerta. Of course, you could also watch football matches: the "Spanish" teams had already disappeared from the map and the winners of the moment were Marte, Zacatepec and Oro, without discounting, of course, Guadalajara, which would soon become more powerful, especially in 1957, and Atlante. In baseball, the event of the fifties was the emergence of the capital team, the Tigres (owned by business boss Alejo Peralta), whose games with the Diablos Rojos almost instantly became "classics" (at the end of the decade, the Tigres hired Chacumbele, a handsome black Cuban who sang, danced and cheered on the dugout of the capital team). Other "classics" were the Guadalajara-Atlante games or the Poli-Uni of "American" football, already in the brand new stadium of Ciudad Universitaria. These games of the Burros Blancos against the Pumas attracted many young people from the middle class, and already had the famous "cheers"; the UNAM team was

commanded by Luis Rodríguez, Palillo, a fossil par excellence and a famous personality of the University like the well-known giant Wama. These porras, as is known, used to be fierce, and gave rise to the "porros" of later years, who became ruffians in the pay of politicians and officials to crush revolutionary student movements with frankly gangster-like methods, worthy of the CTM .

By the way, entering high schools or university colleges at that time meant a sure shave and humiliating participation in the parades of "dogs," the first-year students, who would parade down Insurgentes Avenue covered in oil, covered in feathers, herded by kicks, while merchants closed their businesses and complained about these "young vandals." Such initiations, on the other hand, were nothing compared to those that took place in the army or the Military College.

But not everything was scandalous in sports. There was great national pride for the triumph of swimmer Damián Pizá (who also never got into trouble like the one of the illustrious general Mariles) or baseball player Beto Ávila who made it big in the "American" league of the United States, as he was batting champion with the Cleveland Indians in 1954.

In 1953, the Fondo de Cultura Económica published *El Llano en llamas* , the first book by the Jalisco native Juan Rulfo, and two years later his legendary novel *Pedro Páramo* , which was harshly criticized by the poet from the fonda de campo, Alí Chumacero. It was not until the end of the decade that this novel was recognized as a splendid book and, later, as the masterpiece that it is. As is known, Juan Rulfo never published another book, to the point that he became, as it was said later, the only author who became more famous with each work that *he did not* publish. This gave rise to the Rulfian legend, but for the writer it represented a terrible triumph that he had to pay for and that plunged him into abysmal neuroses, bitterness and the calling card of the regime.

Rulfo and Juan José Arreola formed an antithetical and complementary partnership. Arreola had already published his extraordinary book *Confabulario* and, in addition, he was becoming a great editor. In his collection Los Presentes he published Julio Cortázar for the first time (in Mexico), and opened the door to literature to many important people: Elena Poniatowska, Fernando del Paso, José de la Colina and, especially, to the young Carlos Fuentes, who debuted with the book of short stories *Los días enmascarados* . In him there were already several defining features of this great writer: an extraordinary narrative capacity, lyrical and reflective richness, and the talent to know how to fuse in his own and unmistakable style the identifying marks of others: the mythical obsession of Octavio Paz, the political consciousness of José Revueltas, the cosmopolitanism and high culture of Arreola and the desolate Mexicanness of Rulfo. *The Masked Days* was very well received, but Fuentes's big breakthrough was his ambitious novel *The Most Transparent Region* , published in 1958 by the Fondo de Cultura Económica (Joaquín Díez-Canedo in charge of production). Bearing the influence of John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer* , *The Region* was a milestone: it set a course in terms of theme (Mexico City as a great character), technique (broad

experimentation, unbridled lyricism, fusion of genres), and it also brought back the breath of the muralists by "painting" the city in an immense fresco; by then Mexico City was a considerably modern city (the cosmopolitan sector that in the sixties was known as the "pink zone" in the Juárez neighborhood was already taking shape), but it was still free of overcrowding and pollution. The Mexican success of *La región* quickly spread to the United States and Europe, and gave rise to the formal emergence of the horribly named "boom" of Latin American literature in the sixties.

During this period, Octavio Paz published *La estación violenta* , which included the poem "Piedra de sol," his famous masterpiece. He, along with Arreola and Fuentes and other young enthusiasts, had fun at the Casa del Lago in Chapultepec Forest with Poesía en Voz Alta, performed plays, gave recitals, and practiced cultural cannibalism.

This group (sans Arreola) settled in the newspaper *Novedades at the end of the decade* , formed the cultural supplement "México en la Cultura" under the direction of Fernando Benítez, and proclaimed itself the Artistic and Cultural Vanguard, Heir to Alfonso Reyes and Los Contemporáneos. The group expanded its influence when Fuentes and the fierce literary critic Emmanuel Carballo jointly directed the *Revista Mexicana de Literatura* . Elena Poniatowska appeared in Benítez's supplement, who in addition to her work as a prose writer soon became famous as an interviewer, because with a very innocent face she would ask terrible questions that no one in their right mind would have dared to ask. At the end of the fifties, Josefina Vicens also made her appearance, publishing *El libro vacío (The Empty Book* ), a kind of literary Möbius strip that contemplates itself. Rosario Castellanos, a pioneer of feminism, a poet of apparently simple verses and a magnificent prose writer, as she showed in her Chiapas novel *Balún Canán, also shone* . At the antipodes, Luis Spota achieved one of the great successes of the decade (and his best book) with *Casi el paraíso* , which brought to the fore the provincialism of the rich Mexicans, always ready to revere the European aristocrats, even if they were easily taken for a ride, as happens in the book. Sergio Galindo also stood out with *El bordo* , and Emilio Carballido, while still triumphing in the theatre, successfully moved into narrative with his magnificent novel *El norte* . In poetry, Jaime Sabines was the greatest revelation, followed by Jaime García Terrés ( *Las provincias del aire* ), and Tomás Segovia ( *Apariciones* ), Eduardo Lizalde and Marco Antonio Montes de Oca. In 1958, *Picardía mexicana , by A. Jiménez,* was also published , which collected the double entendres and naughty jokes, such as that of the "English rooster", which would become its logo.

In popular music, in addition to the invasion of the Cuban cha-cha-chá, the Churumbeles from Spain and the Chilean Lucho Gatica ("you moo and I moan"), the public gladly supported the great boleros of Álvaro Carrillo and the romantic trios that in 1944 began with Los Panchos, their very fine requinto and the voice of Hernando Avilés. Los Panchos strummed a series of hits through excellent boleros, such as "Sin ti", "Rayito de luna" and "Me voy pal pueblo". In addition, this trio set the tone for the others: requintos of an almost virtuoso level, a combination of voices supported by a good singer, sweet and cadenced rhythms, generated by the maracas and

the supporting guitar, and, above all, highly melodious compositions, clear verses and strong romanticism. Los Tres Ases, with Marco Antonio Muñiz; The Tecolines, and, at the end of the decade, the Tres Caballeros, and the Dandys, with dramatic and abysmal overtones, were the highlights of the great era of trios. What bolerazos these great popular musicians (always in suits and ties) gave us, who, naturally, supplied the musical arsenal to the sessions of friends, of all ages, who in the heat of harmony (and drinks) took out their guitars and, all together, began to play boleros, and, once they were excited, to play ranchera songs.

In these, the absolute master was José Alfredo Jiménez, who since 1947 impressed the respectable audience with his classics "Yo" and "Ella", the prelude to a rich series of compositions that he himself sang, or, if not, Pedro Infante, Jorge Negrete, Lola Beltrán or Lucha Villa. José Alfredo's talent bordered on genius, and many times he had to epitomize aspects of the national soul, as in "La vida no vale nada" or "El rey", which expressed the ultimate realities of millions of Mexicans: a healthy and essential perplexity before existence that underlined the desolation of a very hard social reality for the people. However, while José Alfredo revealed the contradictory and Sorjuanesque depths of love, which led men to cry in bars ("he dismantled the preaching of machismo and legitimized and promulgated the 'tears of the very macho'," says Carlos Monsiváis), he also manifested the way in which popular wisdom overcame the great problems: "life is worth nothing but I am still the king": in the midst of the most atrocious conflicts, it is sensed that the human condition is unique and that, deep down, nothing and no one can avoid the value conferred by the mere fact of being alive. José Alfredo was accused of being a dipsomaniac, irresponsible, incapable of facing reality, of living in the cantina and of being an irreversible chauvinist, which, naturally, can be found in his songs, but it was overlooked that by expressing all this the composer was expressing it, objectifying it and giving rise to awareness (and subsequent transformation), in addition to the fact that he did so with extraordinary musical talent, through very beautiful melodies that can only be accused of being monotonous if the formal mechanisms of popular song are unknown. In addition, it was a gross collective hypocrisy to demonize behavioral effects of the people that responded to realities of extreme exploitation, manipulation and paternalism. On the other hand, José Alfredo was the vehicle of transition of the ranchera song, which was increasingly moving away from the countryside, from the ranches, and was settling in the changing urban environment, which, later, would generate terrible mutations: the "ranchera" songs of the seventies would far exceed the spectrum of machismo to reach the antipodes in the case of Juan Gabriel.

The influence of the United States was felt with cumulative force in almost all aspects of Mexican life, and music was no exception. From there came the final part of the era of the great orchestras (Ray Anthony, Billy May, Ray Coniff at the end of the decade), which was reproduced here by Luis Arcaraz ("viajera que vas"), Pablo Beltrán Ruiz and Juan García Whatchamacallit Esquivel. But soon the change would be radical and the taste for these orchestras and singers like Eddie Fisher faded before

the predominance of the preferences of middle-class youth, who at first succumbed to the black leather jackets and Hell's Angels-style motorcycle of Marlon Brando in *The Wild One* , where the actor Elia Kazan would inaugurate the type of the marginal youth who rejects the rigidities of society. In 1955 the great youth myth of James Dean emerged, which, shortly after, with the premiere of *Rebel Without a Cause* , would cause havoc here and around the world. All the Mexican kids were enthused by James Dean's charisma and countercultural air, and jeans became popular (private schools banned them), along with white socks and red jackets (girls, on the other hand, wore anklets, crinolines and ponytails). The so-called "rebellion without a cause" of the second half of the fifties represented a change in American influences. For the first time, it was no longer unbridled consumerism or the dictates of the Establishment that prevailed, but the first manifestations of counterculture, which there and here were acute symptoms of the youth's dissatisfaction with the anti-communist way of life and rigid social formalities. The vehicle of this rebellion was a phenomenon charged with energy, vitality, high technology and an irrefutable sense of power: rock and roll, a musical form that came from the deepest strata of the American popular scene: the marginal life of blacks in the cities and the white tradition of the countryside, which, by incorporating improvisation and the marginal atmosphere of jazz, and the youth culture of the middle classes, generated a new universal language for the expression of young people who (at first unconsciously) tried to shake off the authoritarian manipulation of adults.

Rock and roll (later simply "rock") also spread to Mexico and since 1955 has left a deep impression on many young people. This was not just a phenomenon of docile mimicry, but rather the manifestation of equivalent emotional conditions in many young urban and middle-class Mexicans. Here, too, there was an urgent need for emotional liberation, because that was what rock and roll was at first.

Musically, at first, rock and roll in Mexico was made by adults (the youngest was Gloria Ríos) who considered it just another fad, which would pass like mambo and cha-cha-cha; they had to squeeze all the juice out of this new fad that was proposing an "anti-aesthetic" aesthetic, where screams and howls were the most normal thing, and distortion and a "frenetic rhythm" were a natural part of the package, but this was something that only young people could do, which happened in our country in 1957. Los Locos del Ritmo, the Teen Tops and the Black Jeans were in charge of the first big hits. The unfortunate, though understandable, thing was that the Mexican groups did not compose their own material in Spanish and dedicated themselves to translating (or "rehashing") the most famous numbers of American rock and roll. Only Los Locos del Ritmo initially created something original: "Tus ojos," a conventional but acceptable ballad, and "Yo no soy un rebelde," which became a quasi-anthem for youth with its statements: "I am not a rebel without a cause, nor am I unbridled, all I want is to dance rock and roll and be allowed to fool around without rhyme or reason." This assertion (which could not have been more frank) caused a scandal in Mexican society; it was not seen that wanting to have a good time and without worries was

something perfectly normal at that age, that young people were already fed up with the lack of understanding that came with seeing them as "rebels without a reason," and that they also showed the beginnings of the agony of a whole way of being and living in Mexico.

In the 1950s, the old rural conception of Mexico was gradually left behind. It was the "farewell to the national image of the charro and the china poblana," says Carlos Monsiváis. Industrialization and development generated forms of urban culture, but also a clear process of profound changes in national identity; at worst it was an obvious denationalization, but at its best it implied beginning to test the new features of the national being. The first manifestations of a new sensibility and a new mentality emerged that would clearly emerge at the end of the 1960s and that in the 1970s and 1980s would already be an indisputable reality.

The youth, "rebels without a cause," and rock and roll were sharply demonized by society, which denoted precisely the rigidity and the arteriosclerosis of the country's political-economic-social system that led to intolerance towards what could heal it. On the political side, teachers, railroad workers, and dissident leftists were repressed, and on the cultural side, attempts were made to crush the youth and their air of renewal. Both were sides of the same coin that began a transformation in the country. The attacks on the youth created the so-called "generation gap" and this occupied a lot of space in the press, which virulently attacked communists and rock and rollers. The kids were denigrated in all tones and ridiculous extremes were reached, such as the anti-rock and roll campaign following the alleged statements of Elvis Presley: "I prefer to kiss three black women than a Mexican."

Authoritarianism in families, schools, businesses and institutions; the gradual loss of effectiveness of the Catholic Church in providing psychological stability to the masses; the narrow-mindedness fostered by anti-communism, which encouraged irrationality and the recurrence of repressive methods, was considered an unbeatable way of dealing with young people. Traditional values were increasingly diluted by the loss of substance and were converted into exercises in poor rhetoric, demagogy, or, worse still, into the conscious use of what George Orwell, the Revolter of the English, called "doublethink": asserting the most aberrant contradictions or, simply, saying one thing to do exactly the opposite.

Rock music was an outlet in those days. It was not even remotely a vehicle for a certain conception of life, as it was 10 years later; in any case, it gave evidence of the ways of youth life: school, flirting, arguments with parents, tastes, fun and lots of energy. The young people were not unbridled, as they were accused of, although some youth gangs, which appeared at that time among the middle class, did commit various outrages, usually encouraged by moral repression, as occurred during the premiere of the film *El rey criollo* , by Elvis Presley, at the Las Américas cinema (Parménides García Saldaña, in his book of stories of the same name, gives a splendid account of what happened there); rather, they rebelled against the rigidity and intolerance, against the emptiness of the proposals of society, whose visible goals consisted of the cult of

money, status, "social success" and power. These premises emerged by themselves from the nature of economic growth and were encouraged by the many and very subtle forms of corruption that had come to stay. It was not that the young people emerged as a special force in political life; rather, they were among the first to unconsciously manifest an order that was essentially unsatisfactory; all they demanded was to be "allowed to be"; they wanted to express themselves and develop in less morally and culturally oppressive environments, so their rebellion had profound implications and complemented the political struggles of the workers, and, like them, they were fought and repressed with unusual virulence.

## "Saint Madriza, Patron Saint of the Grenadiers"

In 1955, President Ruiz Cortines was not very popular. People only emphasized his advanced age and that is why they called him the Charro Prince (which, as we know, was a euphemism for "el Pinche Vetarro") and attributed to him an old joke: Ruiz Cortines would put his hand in his pocket; however, it was full of holes, and the president would say: "Raisins? When did I buy raisins?" But his administration, at least momentarily, had emerged from economic problems and proudly proclaimed that the growth in 1954 had been "like in the great times of Alemánism." Exports that year reached true records and Antonio Carrillo Flores, Secretary of the Treasury, considered that the new economic policy was what the country needed after the Avila Machado transition and the inflationary start of Alemánism. At last, "equilibrium" had been reached, "stabilizing development."

Firstly, the idea of not resorting to external credits, as Loyo had proposed in 1953, was abandoned; on the contrary, these became essential for the government, which never wanted to apply a rigorous fiscal policy, as in developed countries, in order to create ideal conditions for investors, both foreign and domestic.

Exemptions and all kinds of incentives were common for the company, so the government only imposed taxes on the middle class and workers (years later it would come up with fierce taxes on the purchase and ownership of cars, "value added" and "luxury consumption"). Since it did not want to use bank deposits and savings, it was best to submit to international loans, which at that time did not have such usurious conditions as in the eighties. The loans also served to finance the state-owned companies, whose policy consisted of keeping their product and service prices relatively low, even if this meant that they operated in the red. The almost total dependence on the United States did not matter too much, because apart from the problem of the braceros, everything was "good neighborliness," and in 1958 the foreign debt was already 626 million dollars.

Ruiz Cortines restarted government spending, but these were managed in a moderate manner so as not to trigger price increases. Spending should not unbalance the budget under any circumstances in order to reconcile stability with growth. Moder-

ation was also sought in monetary policy and labyrinthine banking operations were carried out to better utilize the surpluses and to prevent the increase in circulation. Silver coins were minted for savers who, by buying and saving them, helped to reduce the money in circulation. Finally, all this allowed the new parity of the peso not to suffer too many blows and to remain fixed at 12.50 throughout the six-year term (and in the following 20 years, since it was not until 1976 that the horror of devaluations began again).

Without too many economic problems, the government was able to focus its attention on the 1955 elections for deputies. The PRI began a gigantic membership campaign to reach, modestly, two million members, 20 percent of the citizenry. To achieve this, all state workers were incorporated into the PRI . Naturally, membership was not individual but corporate, so a good part of the PRI members were "captives." Others gladly signed up of their own free will, since they realized that the official party was the sure ticket to get a job or to do business. And since the government was accustomed to sprucing up the results of the votes to its liking, there is reason to suppose that the Max Factor touch also colored the spectacular figure of three million Mexicans ("one million 230 thousand were women," it said proudly) that the PRI had in 1955. Only the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had such a large number of members.

To choose candidates for deputies and seven governorships, Ruiz Cortines resorted to the entertaining system of personal election and the "approval" of candidates proposed by the three PRI corporations . Needless to say, the apathy of the people in these elections was similar to that of the previous ones, and given the notorious weakness of the opposition, the official party won comfortably and once again applied the "full cart" policy. The dissensions of old militants had already been left behind and the discipline of the "revolutionary family" seemed to be increasingly better oiled. All politicians and the private sector and the living forces obeyed the rules of the game, the unwritten, intangible provisions, which nevertheless weighed more and more and began to become rigid.

Former President Alemán was extremely discreet, but his son Miguelito, then 24 years old, found open doors in business. Through a series of lightning operations, Miguel Alemán Velasco bought, at 10 pesos per meter, five and a half million square meters on the borders of the DF and the State of Mexico and thus created the Ciudad Satélite subdivision with his company Urbanización Nacional. Miguelito reserved 60 thousand square meters to build his own residence and for "commercial purposes." But in 1956 everything seemed totally calm, although, of course, there were very sharp conflicts brewing beneath the surface that at that time almost no one was able to foresee. Fidel Velázquez had won the absolute "trust" of the government and businessmen, and that is why no one wanted to prevent the former milkman and by then old wolf from achieving what he had always intended: to be reelected *ad nauseam* as general secretary of the CTM . The textile workers, duly instructed, proposed re-election. No one in the CTM made a sound . Like the president, Velázquez already had total, almost

unbroken control over his union members. This control had been carried out through all kinds of maneuvers and open gunfighting actions, which forced many unions to join the great central and accept the leaders that had been imposed on them. The workers' system was a concentric circle, a reflection of the national political system, just as many institutions of national life already were, or were beginning to be. Fidel Velázquez knew how to handle "revolutionary rhetoric" and was an expert in "suggesting" the pill so that the slowest workers could believe that he was doing something for them. The others, those who realized it, were either in collusion with the game or were "purged" from the union ranks, if not ending up in jail or in the cemeteries. The wealth of the labor leaders was already scandalous; in addition to the five coyotes and their immediate associates, the power and wealth of other labor leaders was also notable, such as Luis Gómez Z. and his former rival Charro Díaz de León; or Manuel Sánchez Vite, of the National Union of Education Workers ( SNTE ), to cite just a few illustrious examples of the time.

After the threat of the dreaded general strike of 1954, Fidel Velázquez liked to show himself bold and demanding in order to end up accepting what was proposed to him from the beginning. Or less. One of these examples was given in the negotiations to set the minimum wage for 1958. Fidel asked for 48 pesos and argued that with that amount the workers could barely obtain their basic needs, which, of course, was correct; however, the minimum wage for 1957 was 11 pesos, and Conciliation and Arbitration set the 1958 rate at 12, and that was the one that remained.

At the end of 1956, attention was drawn to the National Polytechnic Institute ( IPN ), whose director was the millionaire Alejo Peralta. At that time, some students from the provinces were given lodging and food, and these, led by Nicandro Mendoza, president of the National Federation of Technical Students ( FNET ), began protests that Ruiz Cortines ended up crushing. In September, the army took over the IPN facilities ; hundreds of students were arrested, the boarding school was closed, and Nicandro Mendoza ended up in jail.

In 1957 exports continued to fall (the boom of 1955 had been only an exception), agricultural production was very poor, imports of inputs increased, the foreign debt grew, speculators began to withdraw their capital and the ability to acquire manufactured goods was reduced. The government prudently put aside the self-justifying optimism of the previous years and as a solution to the problems only came up with the brilliant and original idea of resorting to foreign loans, since only in this way could they avoid raising taxes, imposing exchange controls, devaluing the currency or restarting the nightmare of price increases. Public spending was again restricted as far as possible, credits were increased to some extent and an attempt was made to expand exports. All this helped, but it could not avoid shortages of products and the increase in the cost of living. To make matters worse, a terrible earthquake shook Mexico City, knocking down the angel on the Independence Column and causing material damage, as well as causing great fear among the chilangos.

In the midst of new economic difficulties, which a minimum of planning could have foreseen, Ruiz Cortines faced what Alemán called "the most difficult step for a ruler" (Mexican, of course): appointing his successor. From the beginning, Ruiz Cortines delighted in making many people believe that his sympathies were with the Secretary of Health, Dr. Ignacio Morones Prieto, whom he did not hesitate to call "a new Juárez." The latter, of course, felt that he had the consent to win followers and to carry out negotiations "the Mexican way," that is, in the utmost secrecy and without publicity, which in the following decade was colloquially called "the grill" or "the darkness."

The other "pre-candidate" with strength and support was the Minister of Agriculture Gilberto Flores Muñoz (who years later would be murdered with machetes, as well as his wife, the writer who signed with the name Ana Mairena). Ángel Carvajal also felt he had a chance of obtaining Ruiz Cortines' appointment and had already begun his work to strengthen himself. But the ones who "were" the most were Morones and Flores Muñoz. It was even said that María Izaguirre, Ruiz Cortines' second wife, presented Flores Muñoz's wife everywhere as "the future first lady." It is also said that once Ruiz Cortines was in agreement with Flores Muñoz; suddenly he called the Secretary of Finance and told him: "Do what is necessary so that all the documents and papers of the Ministry of Agriculture are clean. Politics is coming and this Chicken," as he called Flores Muñoz, "has to be clean. We already know, moreover, that he is. But look closely at the matter we asked you for. Without delay, please." The Secretary of Agriculture, however, had a sniff, and commented that it was said that the successor was López Mateos. "That's what they're saying, Pollo, that's what they're saying," responded Ruiz Cortines. He then called Agustín Olachea, the leader of the PRI , and asked him "who was in the running for the big one." Olachea mentioned Flores Muñoz, Ángel Carvajal and Dr. Morones Prieto, "honest like Juárez, like Juárez austere, like Juárez patriotic," Ruiz Cortines described him. "And what is said about López Mateos?" he asked at the end. "That he's very tender," responded the leader of the PRI . In any case, the president ordered him to investigate whether, as was said, López Mateos was a Protestant. In any case, Olachea returned with the reports on López Mateos (he was not a Protestant; Evita, his wife, was, but not a practicing Protestant); At this, the president exclaimed: "Don't go on, general, that's the one, that's the one!" In reality, almost no one talked about López Mateos, who, although he had distinguished himself in the solution of the workers' problems of 1954, was not looking for followers nor did he seem interested in the presidency. Therefore, it was a huge surprise for politicians, observers and "experts" that the finger was pointed in favor of the latter. According to the chief Gonzalo N. Santos, Ruiz Cortines chose him because he saw him as "a colorless man" who could be controlled by remote control. "The revolution was going to be divided," Santos recounts that Ruiz Cortines explained to him to justify his decision for López Mateos, "because Morones acquired a lot of strength and Flores Muñoz has also attracted contingents for his candidacy and so we opted to save the unity of the revolution first." In any case, López Mateos turned out to be "the girl." To continue with the insidious gossip of the resentful Santos (since in the

seventies President Echeverría ordered a campaign against his chieftaincy, caliphate or prebosity; and later López Portillo expropriated the Gargaleote estate): López Mateos "was the natural son of an Asturian Spaniard named Don Mariano Gerardo López." It was also rumored that López Mateos was not even Mexican, natural or not, but Guatemalan.

In 1957 there were no more disagreements within the revolutionary family and everyone accepted Ruiz Cortines' decision.

López Mateos had a certain reputation as a "leftist" because in his youth he had supported Vasconcelos; and since the main problems that were beginning to grow were among the workers, the appointment of the Secretary of Labor was consequent. The consensus in favor of López Mateos was so overwhelming that even the Popular Party supported his candidacy, so the only opposition the PRI had was from the National Action Party, which proposed Luis H. Álvarez to compete for the presidency.

One of the first things López Mateos did was to name Alfredo del Mazo Vélez as coordinator of his campaign, since the president of the PRI , Agustín Olachea, was not a reliable candidate; "his limitations were evident," it was said.

But the attention generated by the presidential campaigns diminished in the face of the avalanche of problems that arose in 1958. From the beginning of the year, the peasants expressed their discontent and despair at the open abandonment to which they were subjected by the Mexican Revolution, which only remembered them when it required large contingents of transporters, and in exchange for a cake and a soft drink, they were put on flatbed trucks to cheer on officials. Two thousand peasants invaded private lands in Sinaloa, where there were many large estates disguised as large estates. The army besieged the invaders but they refused to leave, which caused very tense situations. The press blamed Jacinto López, leader of the General Union of Workers and Peasants of Mexico ( UGOCM ), for instigating the invaders. Gilberto Flores Muñoz, the Secretary of Agriculture, flew to Sinaloa, formed a commission to study the case and ended up handing over 4,840 hectares to almost 500 families. It was announced that 14,000 more hectares would soon be granted.

Shortly afterwards, the unemployed farm workers of La Laguna organized hit-and-run invasions: they stayed on the land for a few days and then moved on to other lands. Flores Muñoz went there as well and again blamed Jacinto López and the UGOCM . The invasions continued in Sonora, Nayarit, Colima and Baja California. The army evicted the peasants almost everywhere. Gregorio Hernández of the UGOCM was arrested and claimed that Jacinto López had ordered the invasions. The government then went after López, arresting him in Cananea, Sonora in July and imprisoning him with five of his men as common criminals. But something had to be done to prevent the epidemic of land invasions.

During his entire term in office, Ruiz Cortines had practically forgotten the old tradition of the Revolution of distributing land (as we know, it was generally unscrupulous, and the bureaucratic tangle often prevented the beneficiaries from taking possession of the land). But faced with problems, he decided to confiscate the Cananea estate, which

consisted of 500 thousand hectares and, in addition, belonged to the Cananea Cattle Company, which acquired it from the Green family. In August, the expropriation finally took place, which was, of course, generously compensated by the government at 125 pesos per hectare, immediately and in cash. The farmers were very happy, because, as in the times of Ávila Camacho, expropriations were excellent business. The transport of peasants for the ceremony of distribution was spectacular, and thus Ruiz Cortines concluded his mandate boasting of being a great benefactor of the peasants when for almost his entire six-year term he had neglected them. Jacinto López, in prison, was one of the first leaders who could appreciate the benefits of the "agrarian president."

Land invasions occupied the headlines in the first part of 1958, but soon public attention shifted to the issue of the teachers, who, after the "rectifications" and the witch hunt that Ávila Camacho unleashed against the "communist-Cardenista teachers," had been tamed with the creation of the National Union of Education Workers. The SNTE soon became one of the most corrupt unions in the country, despite the fact that it was alarming that the education of Mexican children was in such hands. First Jesús Robles Martínez and then Manuel Sánchez Vite were responsible for amassing enormous fortunes that gave them a reputation as caciques. The SNTE , of course, was supported by the government at all times, since, like the CTM , it supported official policies and brought not only teachers to public events but also huge contingents of children from official primary schools who did not even receive a Mimí lollipop. Teachers' salaries were always contained and any outbreak of rebellion was crushed, so discontent within the teaching profession continued to grow. In 1956, elementary school teachers in the Federal District, dissatisfied with the 14 percent raise obtained by the SNTE , organized a protest meeting, called by Othón Salazar and Encarnación Pérez Rivero, who demanded a 30 percent salary increase. Othón Salazar won the esteem and confidence of the teachers, and they tried to bring him onto the board of the DF sectional committee . But the SNTE closed ranks and prevented Othón's promotion. Therefore, the elementary school teachers in the DF organized their own congress and elected Salazar and Pérez Rivero. The government ignored these appointments and gave all its support to the SNTE . In response to this, Othón Salazar created the Revolutionary Teachers' Movement ( MRM ) and began to extend his influence, in addition to managing to arouse the enthusiastic support of the normal school students, since Othón had been their leader during his time as a student.

With this force, and aware that an election year would have to temper the repressive nature of the regime, Othón Salazar organized a large demonstration in April 1958 that reached the main square of the capital to demand the increase that they had asked for two years earlier and that was naturally never granted. There were 100,000 participants, including teachers, students, railroad workers, telegraph workers and oil workers. Ruiz Cortines, however, wanted to teach the teachers a lesson and, in turn, the railroad workers and telegraph workers who had also rebelled, and ordered the grenadiers to break up the demonstration. The grenadiers, as usual, displayed disproportionate brutality and ferociously attacked the demonstrators who fled in terror.

Hurt by the punishment, the MRM members ordered a strike in all the primary schools in Mexico City until they were granted the increase they had requested. Many people supported the teachers and the normal school students organized new demonstrations in April that were increasingly attracting more people from the town. And, although the SEP and the SNTE declared that the teachers' strike was a failure, the truth is that the strike had been a great success. The other sections of the SNTE were quick to condemn the MRM and the SEP , then led by Ángel Ceniceros, refused to enter into talks with Othón Salazar, since "he was not a legitimate representative." In response, the teachers set up a permanent sit-in in the courtyards of the SEP , which became a real popular party. There was music, speeches at all hours and solidarity collections.

The press, as expected, was harsh in its criticism of the teachers, especially because, as Olga Pellicer de Brody quotes, "the SEP building is the scene of a lamentable and shameful spectacle... women and children sleep there, make coffee and eat their food." The secretary of the presidency, Benito Coquet, began talks with Othón Salazar, and on May 12 the secretary of education announced that the strikers' salaries for May would be paid. During the Teachers' Day celebrations, the old fox Ruiz Cortines took the floor and announced that starting July 1 (a few days before the elections), teachers would be given a pay raise. With this, Othón ordered that the SEP yards be cleared and that the strike be called off on July 3. He was aware that they had obtained a substantial victory thanks to the timing of the presidential elections, but also that their situation was still difficult, since the Ministry of Labor did not recognize the MRM as a representative of Section IX of the union; in addition, despite its growing popularity, the teachers' movement had only reached Mexico City. Once the elections were over, it was very likely that the government would "get even" and, to avoid this, the MRM had to be strengthened as much as possible .

At the same time, the railroad movement also shook the country. Since 1948, when Miguel Alemán gave us charrismo and inaugurated the fashion of imprisoning rebel leaders, the railroad workers were at the mercy of a union that was absolutely subservient to the government, which, as a reflection, imposed rigid and authoritarian conditions on them. Already during the Ruizcortinist administration, Roberto Amorós was named manager of the Railways and immediately showed his despotic nature and treated the railroad workers with a truly heavy hand, especially in 1954, when a "tortuguista" movement took place and Amorós fired numerous workers to "stop the agitation." The working conditions were extremely hard, and the possibility of obtaining better wages, already remote during the developmentalism, was almost impossible in the Railways, which, on the other hand, was rapidly falling behind in the life of the country. Unlike the previous decade, when trains were still indispensable, by the late 1950s industry and commerce had turned to other means of transport, and railways were lagging behind in terms of renewing and modernising their equipment.

The terrible working conditions threatened to make the existence of the Railways explosive. In 1957, after a substantial, though still insufficient, increase was finally

granted, Jesús Ortega took possession of the general secretary of the union and immediately issued the threat that any railway worker who protested would be "liable to social dissolution." In 1958 a group of railway workers insisted that their wages were the most backward of all the working class and so the creation of a Great Commission for Salary Increases was proposed, which would be formed with representatives from each section of the SNTFRM . This idea displeased the executive committee, but in view of the unanimous acceptance of the proposal it had no choice but to support it. The commission was formed in May 1958 and Demetrio Vallejo was appointed as representative of section 13, who would soon preside over it. From the beginning, Jesús Ortega tried to sabotage the work of the Grand Commission and even tried to dissolve it, but he was unable to do so. On May 9, Vallejo and the other representatives concluded that a monthly increase of 350 pesos was necessary for all railroad workers of any rank. Both Amorós and Ortega exclaimed that the request was excessive, but Vallejo explained that with this increase the railroad workers would barely reach the salary level of 10 years ago. Since the entire union supported the commission, the union had no choice but to agree to request the increase, although it reduced it to 200 pesos instead of the 350 pesos agreed upon. Since land invasions were at their peak in May, as were the actions of Othón Salazar and the MRM , the government decided to be cautious in view of the imminent elections and President Ruiz Cortines declared that he would call the Secretaries of Economy and Finance to study the railroad workers' request.

In response, Ortega met cordially with Amorós and presented him with the request for 200 pesos a month. The manager asked for two months to study the request. The Grand Commission immediately rejected such a period and also stated that the 200 pesos that the union had asked for were not enough; they had to fight for the 350, depose the local leaders and pressure the executive committee to recognize the new leaders. This was known as the Plan del Sureste, because it was proposed by the delegate from Chiapas and was supported by Demetrio Vallejo and section 13. To show that they were not threatening to "negotiate" in the style of Fidel Velázquez, the rank and file deposed the executive committee of the section to which Vallejo belonged. It was argued that asking for 60 days to resolve the problem was dragging the feet, and therefore a 10-day deadline was set for both the company and the executive committee of the union. This period would begin on June 16 and end on the 25th. If by then the response was negative, or they were ignored, a two-hour strike would be held. If after that the negative response persisted, the strikes would continue, but the duration would be two hours longer for each day that passed.

This resolution was taken on July 11. By then the teachers had succeeded in getting the government to give in to their initial demands, but other unions had also demanded wage increases, and the telegraph workers (who created the Telegraph Workers' Alliance to counter the union), the oil workers, telephone operators and electricians were showing themselves to be more demanding. Many people in the town sympathised with these movements and had attended the MRM demonstrations . The high school

students also showed solidarity with the workers, and not only that: since the city's urban transport had raised its fares, the young people protested and seized buses, so Ruiz Cortines ordered the army to occupy the facilities of the National Polytechnic Institute. All these displays of discontent from so many people were unusual in the country, and the elections, which were already very close, were threatened by the climate of rebellion. There were frequent rallies and demonstrations, and many people outside the party, especially young people from the middle class, became accustomed to taking to the streets to protest. In response to this, the government tried to establish a kind of "stabilizing equilibrium" by alternating repression and concessions when there was no other option.

1958 was an explosive year (as were, to a much lesser extent, 1948, and, to a greater extent, 1968 and 1988), but even so, manager Amorós persisted in his policy of Olympian disdain toward the workers of his company. He did practically nothing to avert the Plan del Sureste and the possibility of gradual and progressive strikes; he met with the people of the union calmly and apparently put off the matter. On the other hand, Vallejo and those from the southeast went around the union sections to consolidate the union in case the strikes had to take place. On June 25, Jesús Ortega rejected the Plan del Sureste and the claim to obtain 350 pesos. Amorós, for his part, said that he would only deal with "the legal representatives of the union."

There was no choice but to suspend work. To the astonishment of the government, Amorós and Ortega, the strike involved all the railway workers. There was not the slightest disorder and, once the two hours were over, activities resumed peacefully. This time no one could concoct, as was said in the case of the teachers, that "the strike had been a failure." From that moment on, it began to be said that the communists were trying to unhinged the country and that the mastermind of the events was none other than the fearsome Valentín Campa. In any case, the next day the strike lasted exactly four hours, and everyone began to get seriously worried.

The press was already hot on condemnations of the railroad workers. On June 28, the strike began at 10 a.m. and, in perfect order, ended at four in the afternoon, exactly six hours later. At one in the afternoon, a large demonstration took place in the main square, "to meet with the president." Of course, Ruiz Cortines did not appear or receive them, but the demonstrators did see the grenadiers and the army, who beat them up and dispersed them. At the same time, Amorós understood, by then, that things were serious and met with the Grand Commission. He proposed an increase of 180 pesos. The commission had reduced the request to 250. There was no agreement, but Amorós said that "the president was very worried" and wanted to meet with the rebels. The strike that day had already caused many problems and the money losses were considerable. The elections would take place in six days, and the government was very worried.

On June 29, the work stoppage lasted eight hours, and a day later, when the strike lasted 10 hours, the president received the Grand Commission and proposed a 215 pesos increase. The railroad workers immediately accepted the proposal and the strikes were

suspended. By then, the "rail" workers were already demanding the fall of Jesús Ortega and that elections be held to choose a new executive committee. Demetrio Vallejo, for his part, was already president of the Grand Commission and suggested that Ortega himself resign to avoid further problems.

The elections, which had been providential for teachers and railroad workers, were able to be held without problems and, in accordance with the steps of the electoral process, days later it was reported that the PRI candidate , Adolfo López Mateos, had obtained an absolute victory over his adversary Luis H. Álvarez, of the PAN . Once the figures were adjusted to suit the government, it turned out that López Mateos had obtained 90.43 percent over the scant 9.42 (705 thousand votes out of nearly nine and a half million votes). The PRI was definitively consolidated as a "full-car steamroller."

The electoral question had been resolved, but labor conflicts were still more alive than ever, with two popular leaders achieving victories over the heavy official apparatus. In addition, an independence movement had already emerged in the oil union (a year later Joaquín Hernández Galicia, better known as La Quina, would take control of the union and for 20 years would do as he pleased and make insane amounts of money) and many more workers were irritated, so the government repressed the oil workers, denied registration to the Telegraphers' Alliance, raided the offices of the Communist Party and imprisoned supporters of the railroad leader to try to counteract the successes of Othón and Vallejo, who, by mid-August, were seen as virtual winners of the elections at their respective congresses. Since Vallejo was a tougher nut to crack, attention shifted to the teachers. The congress that the MRM had called for took place , and Othón won (with a standing ovation that lasted 35 minutes), but the SNTE also held its own, which meant that the authorities would continue to legally ignore the MRM , which, in order to exert pressure, organised a demonstration on 8 September. This was supported by railway workers, discontented workers of all kinds, students and the general population of Mexico City. But the government was determined to put an end to the teachers' problem. The demonstration was violently repressed by the army, riot police and police; the demonstrators responded with stones and Molotov cocktails, but they were dispersed and many were injured and arrested. Among these were, precisely, Othón Salazar and Chon Pérez Rivero, who ended up in Lecumberri prison and became notorious political prisoners who immediately deserved the support of all the weak leftist forces.

Meanwhile, Angel Carvajal, Secretary of the Interior, entered into talks with the remaining MRM leaders and with SNTE leader Enrique W. Sanchez. The Interior flatly refused to release Salazar and Perez Rivero but agreed to a new congress of Section IX, in which the MRM won. However, Othon remained in jail and, without him, the cause of the elementary school teachers of the DF seemed, in the long run, doomed in advance. Indeed, as early as 1960, the SNTE had no problem ignoring and dismissing the MRM leaders in Section IX.

As for the railroad workers, the government had already begun some repressive actions against them; besides the fact that the Monterrey leader Román Guerra Mon-

temayor had been tortured and killed in Monterrey, and that militants close to Vallejo had been arrested, the government hoped that these intimidations would soften the behavior of the main leader; Ortega's resignation as general secretary of the SNTFRM was hastened , but the new leader, Salvador Quesada, also disavowed Vallejo and announced sanctions against his followers.

The Grand Commission, for its part, ignored these movements in the union and held its convention, which elected Demetrio Vallejo. For its part, the new executive committee headed by Salvador Quesada also held its convention on the same day, in which it threatened to send the opposition to jail and denounced that they were in the hands of the Communist Party, the Mexican Peasant Workers' Party ( POCM ) and the Popular Party (which, in a spectacular change, added the ironic adjective "Socialist" to its name and became the PPS ). The truth is that Vallejo did consult these parties, and he himself was a member of the POCM . Once again, Valentín Campa was blamed for instigating the strikes. The CTM , naturally, supported Quesada, and Fidel Velázquez disqualified Vallejo and the Grand Commission: "There were illegal strikes, wildcat strikes," he said, "tumultuous demonstrations, invasion of union premises and public buildings, attacks on the main communication routes, attacks and insults to the government, aggressions against the interests and lives of individuals and encounters with the police in public places that created a climate of alarm and unrest. This is a true conspiracy by international communism to provoke the disarticulation of the social environment of the peoples that are a target, to first seize the strategic points of the leadership of the workers' movement, of the peasants, of the bureaucracy, of the media such as the press, the radio and the government itself, in order to later extend its hegemony to the absolute control of the institutions."

For his part, Vallejo called for another demonstration, but this time to thank the president for the increase. In this context, the public forces abstained from attacking them, but the demonstration was guarded by a very large number of police. Vallejo decided to take advantage of the flight he had and get the government and the company to recognize the executive committee that emerged from the convention. If this did not happen, there would be another two-hour strike, which would be extended by two hours each day, as the previous time. Since the Railways did not respond, the strike took place on July 26, despite strong pressure and intimidation against the railroad workers to stop them from supporting the rebel leaders.

This time the government did not let any more time pass, because it knew that Vallejo was not going to give up. The Secretary of the Interior called for talks that same day and made the condition that the strikes be stopped. Vallejo accepted and for several days the negotiations were stalled, because each side stuck to their own and did not want to give in. The Interior even ordered the public forces to break up "any meeting" and Vallejo announced that the strikes would be restarted: two hours on July 31 and an hour more would be added each day that passed without a favorable response. The first strike was carried out, and like those of the previous cycle, it was orderly and total throughout the country. By then the press was not only insulting

the railroad workers in rebellion but demanding that they be repressed. The private sector also called for repression, with open belligerence on the part of the merchants.

Faced with this, the government, already desperate, decided to use force. On August 2, the army took possession of all the railway installations in the national territory and the police made arrests throughout the country, but, at that time, Demetrio Vallejo was not bothered; the detainees were charged with damage to property and the company warned that all the strikers had to return to work or else they would also be imprisoned and fired from their jobs. However, this display of force actually strengthened the unity of the workers, who continued the strike. Faced with this, the government gave in: it decided to release the prisoners and agreed to hold new elections in the SNTFRM .

The troops began to leave the railways and the strike ended on August 7. The situation was heated. At the end of that month the students filled the main square with hijacked trucks and burned some of them. On August 30 they burned two large cardboard dolls representing General Rosendo Topete, deputy chief of the Preventive Police, and José Valdovinos, president of the Truckers' Alliance. The students had already "painted" on the palace walls "death to bad government", "Down with the monopoly", "Municipalization of transport", when the riot police expelled them with tear gas and water jets.

The success of the railroad workers was decisive, due to Vallejo's firmness and the extraordinary unity of the workers, who managed to resist pressure, threats, repression and even the threat of the army. Of course, as has been shown, the historical situation was also a decisive factor, since the "interregnum" undoubtedly favored the movement: neither Ruiz Cortines, who was leaving, nor López Mateos, then president-elect, were in possession of all the power. Therefore, the press and private initiative had to swallow their courage to see the "immoral, demagogues, communists, subversives, agitators, railroad workers," etc., carry out their general elections. Demetrio Vallejo obtained the general secretary position by a landslide (the company candidate obtained nine votes against almost 60 thousand in favor of Vallejo). The victory of the railroad workers, however, meant the ruin of Othón Salazar, since the government no longer wanted to give in to the teachers' case, and in the long run the imprisonment of Salazar and Pérez Rivero was only an ominous omen for Vallejo.

Of course, the government did not wait for López Mateos to take office and from September 1958 onwards it began to undermine Vallejo's strength and to "create the conditions" for his removal from the general secretary of the union. The situation remained explosive among oil workers, telephone operators and students. Fidel Velázquez again had to resort to "revolutionary rhetoric" and called for a strike for a 25 percent raise in order to be able to influence the workers. Vallejo, for his part, tried to distance himself from the "charro" practices and removed the SNTFRM from the Workers' Unity Block. He also wasted no time in correcting many situations of extreme injustice among the railroad workers. But, from the beginning, he also faced the offensive that the government and the company were setting for him: several of his colleagues abandoned him, because the new general secretary proceeded to get rid of many people from the

old guard who were clearly trying to hinder him. They presented him with demands. Furthermore, the press and the leaders of Section 15 were scandalized because Vallejo restored the union rights of Valentín Campa, who, for his participation in the 1948 movement, was demonized more than anyone else as a "red phenomenon and communist agitator." From September onwards, the union became a hotbed of crickets, and in these conditions the change of government came.

# 4. The "Correct" Left (1958-1964)

## The Bicycle Revolution

In December 1958, Adolfo Ruiz Cortines threw off the presidential sash and went home very happy. As in boxing, the bell had saved him and he did not have to tighten the repression to get the workers to let themselves be exploited again, submissively and even gratefully. From then on, the former president cultivated his political group in any case and did not fail to make himself present during the following governments; his house on Revolución Avenue was called "Los Pinitos," but in reality he did not try to manage López Mateos. He alone thought that the policy of "economic development within monetary stability" should be continued, and he immediately made this known through his Secretary of Finance, Antonio Ortiz Mena, who came to have a very strong influence in the López Mateos administration. The cabinet also included, in Economy, Raúl Salinas Lozano, father of Carlos Salinas de Gortari, who took power in 1988; Manuel Tello, in Foreign Relations; Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, known as "tough" and even "violent," in the Interior Ministry; Jaime Torres Bodet, the contemporary poet, in Public Education; Ernesto Uruchurtu was an inheritance from Ruiz Cortines that López Mateos gladly accepted, and Donato Miranda Fonseca occupied the newly created Secretariat of the Presidency, in charge of coordinating programs and expenses of all the paramilitary and state agencies. According to experts, this secretariat was a sign of the taste for plans that later characterized the López Mateos government, and that was a true plague during the times of technocracy.

This new government appeared in the midst of severe problems; the public protests and the bellicose rebellion of Demetrio Vallejo continued to cause unrest. In addition, many people were not making ends meet with what they earned and gladly joined the workers' demonstrations demanding wage increases or true union autonomy. On the other hand, the balance of payments was negative for the second time, the Essential Imports were taking away the monetary reserves and the famous 12.50 parity was threatened.

The new government tried to limit imports, substitute them as much as possible and raise the respective tariffs. And it reduced public spending as much as possible. At least during the first half of the year, López Mateos and his team went slowly, cautiously. But as private initiative did exactly the same, the result was the kind of economic paralysis that frequently occurred at the beginning of each six-year term.

There were also problems in the countryside, and there, at first, López Mateos wanted to demonstrate the weak closeness to popular causes that he had retained from his Vasconcelos days, when he was against the government. From the beginning he made it clear that in order to avoid the invasion of lands, land had to be distributed to poor peasants. This did not please private farmers and businessmen in general, who were very happy with the 18 years of anti-communism. In less than two years, that is, by the end of 1960, López Mateos had already distributed more than three million hectares (as usual, at least of the best quality), reorganized many ejidos, especially cattle ranchers, and tried to contain the tendency for private farmers to rent ejido lands, with the corresponding proletarianization or emigration of the peasants. Of course, through agricultural production it was hoped to support industry. However, this "new breath" of agrarian reform did not even come close to lifting the peasants out of poverty or calming the popular bases, which, at the beginning of 1959, continued to be extremely restless.

In politics there were no problems, or they were easily solved. In December 1958, PAN deputy José Castillo Molina went up to the podium of the Chamber of Deputies and insulted Miguel Alemán, Ruiz Cortines and López Mateos with gusto. No PRI member wanted to answer him and José Ortiz Ávila had to do so, but Castillo Molina, from his seat, swore at him with signs and stuck out his tongue. Exasperated, Ortiz Ávila warned him: "What I said on the podium I support with the barrel of my pistol." And he brandished his weapon. Castillo Molina had better leave. Ortiz Ávila got drunk thinking that he had ruined himself politically, but, on the contrary, Secretary of the Interior Díaz Ordaz and the president congratulated him. Almost a year later, it was learned that Castillo Molina was planning to question López Mateos in the presidential report. The matter was entrusted to Ortiz Ávila, who arranged it by sitting next to Castillo with his gun clearly visible.

The popular inclination to protest publicly received a boost right at the beginning of 1959, when dictator Fulgencio Batista unexpectedly fled Cuba and the forces of Fidel Castro Ruz's 26th of July Movement took over the entire island. Fidel Castro entered Havana and the Cuban Revolution was the biggest news story in the world.

In Mexico, the leftists proclaimed their enthusiasm, and the government, which had after all come from a revolution, welcomed the undisputed triumph of Fidel Castro, Che Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos. Nevertheless, a large part of the Mexican workers continued to fight, and the ideas of revolution were not very popular with the system. Several dissidents from the oil workers' union who actively showed solidarity with the railroad workers had already been expelled. Likewise, some telephone operators were fired for "indiscipline." Fidel Velázquez had to get "angry"; he asked for a 25 percent raise, threatened to start "thousands of strikes," organized his own demonstrations and even surprised many people when he declared that social justice in Mexico was a myth, that our country was world champion in unfair distribution of wealth, that price controls were useless and that the profits of 25 companies alone were "greater than the entire federal budget."

As for the railroad workers, as soon as López Mateos took office as president, Demetrio Vallejo presented a study on the conditions existing in Ferrocarriles Nacionales. Vallejo especially asked for the rates to be increased, since these were very low, if not ridiculous, in order to favor the large mining companies, almost all foreigners, who used the railroads to transport their minerals. For example, in 1958 the iron companies paid 27.35 pesos per ton when the transport of corn cost 42.85. Furthermore, as José Luis Reyna states in "El conflicto ferrocarrilero: de la inmovilidad a la acción" (The railroad conflict: from immobility to action), the railroads did not raise their rates after the devaluation of 1954, "so that if a mining company paid 10 dollars before, it only paid 6.92 afterwards."

The new Secretary of Assets, Eduardo Bustamante, and the recently appointed Director of Railways, Benjamín Méndez, refused to raise rates because "the increase would harm small Mexican mining companies" and, of course, would mean suspending the juicy subsidy for large foreign companies. To make matters worse, in January 1959 the collective contract was revised and the railway union asked for a 16.66 percent increase on the 215 pesos obtained in July 1958, in addition to another percentage as a savings fund and the construction of housing or a 10 pesos daily increase in rent. With this, the railway union aspired to reach the living standards of telephone operators, electricians and oil workers. If rates were raised, Vallejo reasoned, the company would operate without losses, even with a surplus, and could accede to the demands of the railway workers. The new manager, Benjamin Mendez, hinted that the company was almost bankrupt; this was true, and it was also due to the large sums that were spent on payments to "trusted personnel" and the corruption that spread in the company during the administration of Roberto Amoros; Jose Luis Reyna states that "in 1958 alone, an item of "small works" worth 371 million pesos was found without justification."

Although the government and the company had made an effort to bombard several leaders with thousands of pesos in order to weaken Vallejo's executive committee, in reality the railroad workers were well united around their leader (who was short, spicy, and "very womanizing," says Elena Poniatowska). The union called a strike, the company asked for an extension, and the new Secretary of Labor, Salomón González Blanco, tried, or pretended, to conciliate.

But Vallejo wanted to cover a lot. In addition to the strike notice, he presented López Mateos with a plan to restructure the railways: he proposed a new board of directors made up of people who knew about transport and did not only think about profit; he again proposed raising fares and even a defined policy regarding loans from abroad, the interest rates of which were exorbitant. Since, in addition to the problems Vallejo was facing, there were labor conflicts with electricians, streetcar workers, telegraph workers, oil workers, miners and telephone operators, panic arose between the government and the private sector, which worsened when Vallejo sent a memorandum to the president against the government's apparent plans to privatize some areas of Pemex.

The press, through editorials and statements from all kinds of people, viciously attacked Vallejo, who, they said, lacked "all moral principles." The press and the man-

agement of the Railways especially criticized Vallejo because he had reinstated the notorious communist and social destroyer Valentín Campa, who, it was said, was controlling Vallejo. In addition, the company was advancing in its work of disunity among the railroad workers, and there were already several leaders, duly programmed, who bitterly attacked the Oaxacan leader. He, for his part, grew in the face of the punishment and, instead of yielding, asked that the positions of trust be eliminated (a real supplier of business and "aviatorships," that is: hired people who only showed up to collect), and ignored the protests because he accepted the advice of the leftist parties Mexican Communist, Peasant Worker and Popular Socialist.

By February 1959, the campaign against Vallejo was intense and well orchestrated. The PRI said that the railroad leader was "an agent of international communism, at the service of a foreign embassy that sought to overthrow the government." The press also insulted Vallejo with increasing ferocity, and the government declared that it would not permit the large demonstration that the railroad workers were organizing, which had already received the solidarity of other unions, peasants, students, and the townspeople. The ban was immovable ("for contravening traffic regulations") and the railroad workers had to content themselves with a meeting in Buenavista, tensely guarded by the police and riot police.

Two days before February 25, the day scheduled for the start of the new strike, the Railways flatly refused to grant the raise demanded by the union, a rumor was spread that there was an arrest warrant for Vallejo, and commerce and industry were up in arms because, if the railroad strike broke out, it would represent "very serious damage to the country." But Vallejo and his supporters did not give in to the pressure and the strike began on the agreed day. Exactly half an hour later, the Federal Board of Conciliation and Arbitration declared it nonexistent. However, a day later an agreement was signed granting a 16.66 percent raise; large sums were also allocated to medical services, a promise was made to intensify the creation of housing, and the company promised to restructure and implement new rates.

This was yet another victory, at that time unusual, for Vallejo and the railroad workers. The strike was immediately called off and service was normalized. Everything seemed to be settled, and yet, inexplicably, the executive committee of the SNTFRM did not include the cases of the Mexican, Pacific and Terminal de Veracruz railroads in the February 26 contract.

The union made the same demands, and since Ferrocarril Mexicano did not accept them, they were called to strike. During the month of March, intense discussions took place between the union, the company and the Ministry of Labor, and finally Vallejo decided to go on strike on March 25, Wednesday of Holy Week, when countless vacationers were using all possible means of transportation. No progress was made in the talks and on the appointed day, in the middle of Holy Week, a new strike broke out on the Mexican and Pacific railroads. The Conciliation and Arbitration Department again declared it non-existent.

This time there were serious differences of opinion within the Political Trade Union Coalition, made up of the executive committee of the railway union and the Popular Socialist, Peasant and Mexican Communist parties. The latter and the executive committee were in favour of continuing the strike. The former two were against it. They could not come to an agreement. But, in any case, it was no longer worth the effort. One day after the strike began, repression began: eight thousand workers from the Pacific Railway and five thousand from the Mexican Railway were fired. New staff were hired. Vallejo asked all the sections to show solidarity with the strike, and on Holy Saturday the strike was total throughout the railway system. In the morning of that day Vallejo and Salomón González Blanco, head of Labour, locked themselves in to negotiate the strike. Neither party wanted to give in and agreed to meet again that same night, but in the afternoon Vallejo was arrested and the government carried out a devastating plan of arrests and dismissals throughout the country. The display of force was unprecedented, and at times it seemed that Mexico City was at least under siege. The "secret agents," the grenadiers with their batons and the soldiers with fixed bayonets, carried out arrests throughout the city, which was naturally patrolled by the police and the army. Throughout the country the presence of the troops and the police forces froze the blood of the population, and in Guadalajara, Matías Romero and Piedra Blanca there were clashes between the people and the repressive contingents. The public force acted with icy effectiveness and precision (plus the usual arbitrariness and brutality) and in this way the railroad workers were crushed in almost a day. The next day the press said that "supported by the public force and elements of the Mexican army, agents of the Federal Judicial Police arrested more than 300 agitators yesterday led by their general secretary, the communist Demetrio Vallejo."

Vallejo ended up in Lecumberri, Crujía I as it was, where he had time to reflect on his policy of applying pressure to the full. In a relatively short time, and helped by very peculiar circumstances, he achieved what no one else could: that the government gave in, at least momentarily, to just and very important struggles. However, events precipitated, Vallejo did not want or could not stop the accelerated march of events and ended up crushed by the forceful blows of the new president, who hesitated a little but then decided to resort to a firm hand with the same coldness as Miguel Alemán.

In any case, the railroad movement was decisive for modern Mexico: at first it strengthened the regime and determined the repressive line that would prevail in the sixties; on the other hand, it was the beginning of popular protests that, little by little, generated the context in which 1968 occurred. It was also an alarm signal. For 18 years, economic growth was at the expense of the people, who, naturally, had to rebel sooner or later. The longer this situation persisted, the more popular discontent would become more acute, as was seen 30 years later, in 1988. With the defeat of Vallejo and the teachers, the López Mateos government returned to "normality" and regained almost total control over Mexican workers. Vallejo was charged with the crimes of social dissolution, attacks on the main communication routes, crimes against the national economy, mutiny and uprising, coercion against the authorities and threats against

the company. Nearly 20 thousand railroad workers were laid off and 40 accompanied their leader to Lecumberri. New representatives, "of non-exalted union tendencies," were appointed to replace Vallejo, and they immediately expelled Valentín Campa from the SNTFRM and ran to kneel before President López Mateos.

For his part, he did not hide his satisfaction at the "solution to the conflict," which was widely applauded by the country's active forces, and he began to show sympathy for the National Confederation of Workers ( CNT ), headed by Senator Rafael Galvan and Agustin Sanchez Delint, leaders of the electricians, and for the Engrane group of Angel Olivo Solis. Fidel Velazquez (who got nothing from his demands for the 52 percent increase) did not like the fact that Lopez Mateos attended the CNT congresses and that he named Rafael Galvan as head of the workers' sector of the PRI . Lopez Mateos also aimed his weapons at Pedro Vivanco, leader of the oil workers, who, upon falling, allowed the rise of Joaquin Hernandez Galicia, "La Quina," a friend of Fidel Velazquez. On the other hand, the president also made sure that Luis Gómez Z., head with Valentín Campa of the railway movement of 1948, could return to direct the Railways. Finally, the pilots, who went on strike to have their Trade Union Association of Aviation Pilots ( ASPA ) recognised, finally triumphed and were able to establish decent relations with the aviation companies.

With the labor situation now calm, López Mateos was able to concentrate on economic matters, which were not going well. He modified the Law of Executive Powers in Economic Matters to obtain even more power: he could now determine the goods and services that would be subject to control, and he had the ability to set maximum wholesale and retail prices. In the second half of 1959, López Mateos gradually abandoned the restriction of government spending and proceeded to make greater investments, so that the economy could recover its pace. With his minister Ortiz Mena, he restructured the Ministry of Finance and divided it into the undersecretariats of Income, Expenditures and Credits, which, like all agencies, had to send their investment programs to Donato Miranda Fonseca, Secretary of the Presidency. By the way, this did not please many ministers, who were accustomed to obeying only the president and who were perfectly aware of the unusual power that Miranda Fonseca obtained by being the center of the distribution of money.

Despite the government's prudent economic recovery, private enterprise preferred to continue to hold back its investments. Because of López Mateos' agrarian speeches and tendencies toward minimal planning, businessmen preferred to wait for the government to give greater signs that, like previous governments, it would entirely favor the private sector. In any case, although at the end of the year the López Mateos administration had fallen into a "moderate" deficit, López Mateos obtained credits from abroad, managed to precariously balance the payments, stopped the rise in the cost of living, and was able to dedicate himself to strengthening the infrastructure of electricity, steel, and oil. He understood the importance of the petrochemical industry, and since private enterprise did not want to invest in that area, the government took charge of doing so.

López Mateos also launched an ambitious plan for the automobile industry, so that it would go from being a mere assembly line to a true manufacturer, and opened the way for European companies to compete in Mexico with the Americans that dominated the market. Soon, another type of vehicle was seen in Mexico City. By the mid-1950s, Volkswagen had arrived from Germany with its famous "vocho," or beetle-like sedan, which over time became very popular in our country (in 1960, the vocho cost 18 thousand pesos). The Japanese Datsun also arrived to stay, and the European Mercedes Benz (rumor was strong that López Mateos had economic interests in this company), Volvo, Hansa, Austin, Hillman, Peugeot and the Citroën, which "breathed" and went up and down, like the drop of Cri Cri's stream. López Mateos liked cars, especially sports cars, and according to his biographer Justo Sierra Casasús, he used to sneak away from his bodyguards to go for a ride through the streets of Mexico City, especially along the Periférico Ring Road that he himself inaugurated in 1961 (and which he modestly named after himself).

PRI leader Alfonso Corona del Rosal began to make himself known. Since the repression of workers gave López Mateos a tough image and his government a right-wing image, Del Rosal did not hesitate to define the López Mateos administration: it was "wisely left-wing." Some thought that López Mateos was indeed very wise in crushing the left-wing workers, but others did not quite know what he meant. The right found these statements alarming and unleashed a wave of declarations and protests. They were especially against the government using the term "left" to describe itself. In view of the scandal that arose, the president had to intervene publicly and qualified: "My government is of the extreme left within the Constitution." This seemed even worse to the private sector and the right-wing forces that surrounded it, and the practical result was that in 1960 businessmen not only continued to restrict their investments but also began, quietly, to withdraw their capital.

Meanwhile, warnings were beginning to be heard about the uncontrolled growth of the country and especially of Mexico City, which by then had more than three million inhabitants and was already showing the beginnings of a very pretty "pink zone," but also an evident belt of misery that by then was beginning to infest the northern, eastern and western areas of the capital. In addition, the ruler Uruchurtu authorized subdivisions in the Federal District, and Ciudad Satélite was already making itself known with its high towers. In 1960 a great national census was carried out, and this in turn showed that for the first time in the history of Mexico the majority of the population lived in cities. The countryside (so battered by the governments of Ávila Camacho, Alemán, Ruiz Cortines and also by López Mateos, although the latter tried to give a different image) was increasingly abandoned by the peasants, who preferred to go as laborers to the United States or to live poorly in the big cities, whose growth was not stopping. In the capital, due to the lack of an adequate transportation system, the "peseros" or collective taxis appeared, which for one peso carried passengers along the big avenues, especially Reforma and Insurgentes (the "Florid roads" of Uruchurtu). Before that, crazy taxis had appeared, like the "crocodiles", called that because they

were green and had a strip of inverted white triangles like fangs, and the "cotorras", which, of course, were bright green and yellow.

López Mateos liked to go on drag races in his sports car in Mexico City, but he liked to travel even more. Since 1960 he announced that he would travel to several Latin American countries. No Mexican president had ever been concerned with establishing personal relations with countries outside the United States. Mexican life depended so heavily on American life that Ávila Camacho, Alemán and Ruiz Cortines only looked to the northern country. López Mateos, on the other hand, understood that Mexico needed to broaden its perspectives and that is why he started the custom of Mexican presidents taking their good trips around the world. In the end he traveled through the United States, South America, the Caribbean, Europe, India, Japan, Indonesia, the Philippines, Yugoslavia and Egypt. López Mateos liked this a lot but at first it cost him two things: one, the least serious, that the people began to call him "López Paseos," which, according to Justo Sierra Casasús, irritated the president. "Look, Justo," the president complains in the book *López Mateos* , "it wouldn't be outrageous for them to call me that, when all I'm trying to do is promote Mexico's name throughout the world... That whole López Paseos thing makes me sick." By the way, since the president was more physically attractive than his predecessors, and he seemed friendly and had an easy smile, people knew that he was a great fan of women, and a joke was made that López Mateos, upon arriving at work in the morning, would ask his personal secretary: "What's my turn today, trips or old ladies?" Others said that the president either wore the sleeves of his jacket too big or had very small hands, so they called him the Boss Mangotas or the Boss Manitas, or simply "Polcas," as bosses were called in some places.

The other, much more serious, disadvantage of López Mateos' first series of trips was that the fierce muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros preceded him and, especially in Caracas, fiercely criticized him and even accused him of treason. Siqueiros' indignation arose from the anti-worker brutality and made him declare that López Mateos' government was "extremely right-wing and unconstitutional." He also happily repeated the chant: "López Mateos, güey, güey, güey!" Siqueiros returned to Mexico and the president began his tour, extremely upset by the stones that the painter had put in his way. On September 9, 1960, Siqueiros was in his car when agents of the federal court caught up with him. The muralist wanted to get rid of them and the persecution that took place added new laurels to the mythical life of Siqueiros, who was finally arrested along with Filomeno Mata Jr., then director of the bulletin of the Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners. Both were sent to the first wing of the Black Palace of Lecumberri, accused, as was to be expected, of social dissolution. Siqueiros spent almost four years in Lecumberri, with Othón, Vallejo, Mata and Campa.

The thoughtless exercise of the system's everyday authoritarianism was counterproductive for López Mateos. Containing his anger and not sending the muralist to jail would have been seen as a magnanimous gesture that, in a way, also compensated for the abuses against teachers and railroad workers; on the other hand, imprisoning

Siqueiros meant enduring years of international campaigns calling for the Mexican painter's release, especially when he went on a hunger strike. In 1961 Pablo Neruda traveled to Cuba and, after publishing the octosyllabic poems *Cantar de gesta* , he passed through Mexico and wrote the famous sonnet "A Siqueiros, al partir" ("I have seen your painting imprisoned, which is to imprison the flame"), which was reproduced here on the cover of the famous magazine *Polítical* . To counter the outpouring of solidarity from abroad, Siqueiros was called in Mexico a "traitor to the country, a stateless person, a renegade, a fraud, a provocateur, a slanderer, an agent of the foreigner, a cunning, disloyal, disturbed, unbalanced, stupid, childish, ignorant, exhibitionist, insolent, a swindler, a fool, a criminal with a big brush, paranoid, schizophrenic, decrepit," but none of this seemed to have much impact on him, and Siqueiros devoted himself to painting easel pictures in his cell in the first wing, visited by many people and with a star halo. On July 11, 1964, López Mateos thought that it would look better if he himself freed the painter, otherwise Díaz Ordaz, then in a campaign, would without the slightest doubt release Siqueiros as soon as he took power. So he called Luis Echeverría, then head of the Interior Ministry, and together they signed the pardon decree.

In 1960, López Mateos tried to compensate for his anti-popular policy by nationalizing (or Mexicanizing, so as not to offend anti-communist ears) the electricity industry. This act was not bathed in the drama of the expropriation of oil, since in reality it was a relatively peaceful purchase. For decades, Mexlight and American Foreign Power had wanted to raise rates with premeditation, malice aforethought and advantage, and since generally no government allowed it, the electricity companies refused to expand the electricity supply networks. This motivated the government to create the Federal Electricity Commission, which began to produce the energy that the American companies refused to generate, so they considered the 400 million dollars offered by the government attractive and closed the deal. A year later, all electricity was in the hands of the Mexican State. Naturally, the government made the most of the "Mexicanization" and celebrated it loudly in all the media and on large illuminated signs on the avenues of Mexico City. López Mateos tried to give a "revolutionary" image, talking about redistributions and nationalizations, to counteract the almost numinous, mythopoetic effects of the Cuban Revolution among the youth and a certain middle class, and to dilute a little the extremely notorious political prisoners and the anti-worker line. But neither did the mythification of the Cuban Revolution diminish, nor did the campaigns for the freedom of political prisoners cease, nor did different cultural and countercultural displays cease to appear that expressed a growing disgust for the ways of life of the governments of the Mexican Revolution.

This was the warning of the president, who, in addition to the agrarian redistributions, the nationalization of electricity, the establishment of the petrochemical industry via Pemex, sought to neutralize the complaints of the workers, and especially those who served the government, and created the, ugh, Institute of Security and Social Services for State Workers ( ISSSTE ) that undoubtedly benefited the bureaucracy enormously although it also became a source of corruption and a political springboard. The Mex-

ican Social Security Institute ( IMSS ) was expanded and carried out a promotion of culture through the Casas de la Asegurada (Insured Houses) that were renamed as Social Welfare Centers and that gave classes in theater, dance, painting, as well as cooking, knitting, sewing and other classes "for the ladies," according to the sexist custom of the time. In response to the union unrest, López Mateos also launched large investments (and quite a few big deals) in the urbanization of the Federal District and in the construction of housing: he also built multi-family homes, such as the Nonoalco-Tlatelolco complex, which was badly damaged after the 1985 earthquake (this revealed that the buildings had been built with the worst materials).

He also created "section B" of article 123 of the Constitution, which turned bureaucrats into "exceptional workers."

Finally, López Mateos also transformed the old Ceimsa (Mexican Export and Import Company, SA) into Conasupo (National Company for Popular Subsistence) in order to market basic necessities without going through the corrupt practices of private commerce. Of course, like Ceimsa before it, Conasupo was the preferred target of attacks from the private sector and the right, and at that time it represented one more reason to express to López Mateos the profound contempt for his "wise left" policies (later it would be said: statist and populist).

Of course, all this cost the government a lot of money, and since it collected little and produced without energy, it resorted eagerly to foreign debt. Private enterprise continued to be unwilling to invest, and continued to send its capital, discreetly, abroad, especially to the United States.

In March 1961, the PRI president , Alfonso Corona del Rosal, once again showed his mettle: "The Mexican Revolution got off its horse and took off its chaps a long time ago," he said. General Corona responded in this way to alleged statements by Lázaro Cárdenas: "A new revolution will be the only remedy." Cárdenas, for his part, sent word that he had never said anything of the sort, and the PRI leader received laughter and criticism.

That year, López Mateos got into another controversy with the private sector over the creation of free textbooks for primary education that the Ministry of Public Education began to distribute. The right was terribly upset, considering it an affront to the right of parents to educate their children freely and a kind of sui generis indoctrination. The protests were noisy and through spurious parents' associations, newspaper advertisements, editorials, leaflets and statements to the media.

The books, on the other hand, reinforced the PRI's conception of life, hammered home the ritualization of patriotic myths, venerated Hidalgo, Morelos and Juárez, and hammered home the canonization of Carranza, Obregón, Calles, Cárdenas *et al.* , without neglecting to give space to Zapata and, with more grudging pharisaical sympathy, to Villa. In addition, the free text tried to be up to date with the most contemporary knowledge and disciplines and to be an accessible product, relatively objective in parts and idyllic in others, to encourage in the child the identification of country and government, and the uncritical subordination of children to the political-

social system that by then was already clearly in the process of rigidification. In reality, a project such as free textbooks was perfectly consistent with the nature of the Mexican regime, and if it aroused so much opposition from conservatives (at the end of the eighties the opposition continued) it was because this represented an excellent weapon of pressure.

To reinforce the right-wing campaign against the free textbook, the oligarchy soon took over the American anti-communist campaigns, which had become more intense since the Cuban Revolution, and unleashed a true campaign of anti-Marxist paranoia. One of the first steps took place in Puebla, where the regional oligarchy took a very dim view of the new "communist" authorities of the Puebla university. A demonstration of more than 100,000 people shouted their rejection of atheism. The attacks against the Autonomous University of Puebla intensified and the army laid siege to the Carolino. In July 1961, troops patrolled the streets of Puebla. The private sector decreed a commercial boycott and the suspension of tax payments until the organic law that opened the way for "communist" academics was repealed. This entire offensive against the UAP generated the reinforcement of religious and anti-communist fanaticism. The campaign "Christianity yes, communism no" and "This is a decent home, Protestant or communist propaganda is not accepted" was launched nationwide and was extremely intense, especially in that year. In private schools, church pulpits, editorial pages, statements and many leaflets, the Mexican right (with all its abysmal differences and nuances) tried to counteract the air coming from Cuba and also tried to draw a line under the government so that it would not continue to engage in policies that "only fostered distrust." Enough of leftist statements, whether appropriate or not, and of "Mexicanizations."

As part of this strategy, the private sector decided to continue restricting its investments and to take its capital to the United States and other countries. In turn, López Mateos continued to compensate for this policy of pressure through public spending, supported by loans from abroad. These were not difficult to obtain: the Mexican government had not only proven to be a good and punctual payer, but, following the Revolution in Cuba, the United States did not hesitate to give money to Latin American countries ("threatened by the leprosy of communism"). In 1963, the president of the United States, John F. Kennedy, put into practice his "alliance for progress," which among other things meant relatively easy loans for Latin American governments.

Concern about the events in Cuba increased in mid-1961, when the Bay of Pigs invasion failed and Fidel's revolutionary government managed not only to contain the invaders but to inflict the first historic defeat on the United States. After the May invasion, large demonstrations in support of the Cuban revolution took place in Mexico. The first of these was extremely well attended, and the government allowed it, despite right-wing insistence that it be suppressed; a decisive factor in ensuring that the large demonstration was respected was that General Lázaro Cárdenas led it and took it to the main square. There, the most hardened young people asked Cárdenas when the new revolution would begin; the ex-president, as expected, flatly replied that this was not

the time. A few days later, the left organized a new demonstration in support of Cuba, but this time Cárdenas would no longer lead it and the government brutally dissolved it, because, he explained, "it would not tolerate any attempt at agitation." This unleashed an atmosphere of intimidation towards the leftists; in addition to the demonization of communism, political espionage, arrests and other "preventive measures" were increased to prevent the youth and leftists from continuing to demonstrate.

This new reiteration of authoritarian and conservative faith by the "leftist" López Mateos finally convinced the businessmen that the government deserved their trust. Therefore, they resumed their investments to try to catch up with foreign companies (read American) that had practically no competition in the production of consumer goods, since they had the capital and the distribution methods, in addition to the increasingly complex technology that many products required: large machines and of course all the parts and numerous small machines that compose them. At the beginning of the sixties, foreign investment was overwhelming in Mexico and many voices, even within the government, were sounding the alarm.

National entrepreneurs, for their part, continued to obtain magnificent dividends and clear oligopolies were already emerging. Money was concentrated in fewer hands, and financial capital was becoming stronger. Although the State had seen the need to expand its activities through state-owned companies, which grew and grew, in reality the Mexican capitalists continued to obtain all kinds of support and, in turn, tried to imitate the operating methods of the large foreign capitalists, but at no time did they try to assimilate the inventiveness, creativity and rigor in the quality standards of their products. They simply contented themselves with lagging behind and never had the energy, or the greatness, to create their own patents, to fully develop the capacities of their industrial and commercial complexes.

In fact, private enterprise, despite its boast of efficiency and its criticism of the State as a poor administrator, was in fact a pathetic example of underdevelopment. Allowed by governments and unable to compete with the large transnationals that owned the technological secrets, private enterprise was content to exploit its sphere of action to the maximum, rigidifying (as occurred throughout society) its hierarchies and modes of operation with forms of authoritarian paternalism; in addition, it narrowed the rise to the top to benefit its young cadres from the most powerful families and religious schools. And if that were not enough, it allowed its own forms of corruption, which increasingly deviated from "Christian" criteria and "decency." Safeguarded by a fierce hypocrisy, private enterprise was progressively dehumanized by the excessive worship of money and status.

In any case, the private sector was not willing to criticize itself or give up an inch of the space it had conquered, and only when they considered that President López Mateos gave sufficient guarantees that his "personal style of governing" did not imply "dangerous Cardenista regressions" or worse still, "experiments tending towards communism," did they decide to return the capital they had fled and to resume their well-remunerated investments. By 1962, the gross domestic product had increased, and

in 1963 the "successful" stabilizing development was underway again. The currency was not devalued, prices did not reach inflation, and the national product not only recovered its rates of the 1950s but gave rise to talk of the "Mexican miracle."

To celebrate the restoration of harmony with the bosses and absolute political control of the system, in 1962 López Mateos, just as Ávila Camacho had done 20 years earlier, called together all the living ex-presidents, and together with him appeared Pascual Ortiz Rubio, Emilio Portes Gil, Abelardo L. Rodríguez, Lázaro Cárdenas, Miguel Alemán and the raisin man Adolfo Ruiz Cortines. However, López Mateos was not content with bringing together in a disciplined manner those who usually kicked each other in the shins, but he put them all in charge of running a state-owned enterprise. The most famous appointments were those of Cárdenas (the Balsas River Basin) and Alemán (the National Tourism Council), since both ex-presidents in one way or another represented the "left" and the "right" within the Revolution.

Cárdenas gave his full support to the creation of the National Liberation Movement ( MLN ), which brought together the leading militants of the non-communist left and the so-called "fifí intellectuals": Enrique González Pedrero, Francisco López Cámara, Víctor Flores Olea, Carlos Fuentes, Pablo González Casanova, among them (almost all of them contributors to the magazine *Política* ). There were also Cardenistas and some theoretical Marxists. The MLN was actually part of a collective wave ("national liberation movements" had also formed in other parts of Latin America) and constituted an extremely moderate leftist proposal: it was a "broad front" that sought to unify the country's eternally atomized progressive forces. The Communist Party ( PCM ), in turn, took advantage of the flight to create the Latin American Movement ( MAL ), which served as a meeting point and recruitment center for many young people, especially university students, who participated in the teachers' and railroad workers' movements, and who after the Cuban Revolution refused to meekly integrate into the system. Many moved from the MAL to the PCM or the MLN , depending on the radical nature of their leftism.

MLN 's activities , among other things because of the specific weight of its participants and the moderation of its approaches. In any case, it gave them a harsh treatment: strong police espionage, arrests and arbitrary acts when necessary and cooptation of the main members, which, over time, bore fruit, since González Pedrero, Flores Olea, López Cámara and Fuentes later joined the government (although Fuentes and López Cámara, later still, got off the State wagon). The life of the MLN , in the end, did not last long nor did it have important direct effects, but at one point it animated the political life of Mexico, and contributed to raising awareness of issues that seemed utopian, such as the unification of the left in broad fronts, and of presenting organized resistance to the total domination of the system in the life of the country. The MLN also automatically gave rise to its counterpart, the Mr. Hyde of this Dr. Jekyll: the Mexican Civic Front for Revolutionary Affirmation, with Miguel Alemán at the head of a team of conservative politicians linked to the PRI and the right. The

Civic Front made noise for a while, attracted some peasants, and disappeared when the MLN dissolved into almost nothing.

Meanwhile, López Mateos was dealing with the United States and managed to get the land called El Chamizal, next to Ciudad Juárez, returned to the country. The López Mateos government invested a lot of energy in this, and the United States agreed because it was something rather symbolic that could be given up so as not to have irrelevant problems with Mexico. Justo Sierra Casasús, López Mateos' biographer, says that there were 20 volumes of documentation on the case, and that Kennedy was too lazy to even look through the papers. He asked the interpreter: "'Mr. Ambassador, ask President López Mateos how much the El Chamizal case is worth in millions.' The Mexican president's response was immediate: 'Tell Mr. President Kennedy that I am not a real estate agent.'" Kennedy must have been upset, because the talks were suspended, although everything was later settled.

In 1962 Kennedy visited Mexico City, which motivated the left to try to protest in some way; flyers and graffiti were made, a demonstration was called, but nothing more was achieved. The Secretary of the Interior, led by the eager Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, proceeded to arrest members of the Communist Party and left-wing sympathizers who could cause problems. When Kennedy finally arrived, there were no visible demonstrations of repudiation (like those that Vice President Richard Nixon suffered when he traveled through South America in the mid-1950s). López Mateos also welcomed French President Charles de Gaulle and Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie with a large display of entourage, who inaugurated the Ethiopia roundabout at the intersection of Cuauhtémoc, Xola and San Antonio avenues in the south of Mexico City (incidentally, years later that roundabout became famous for an ingenious robbery: they placed a mannequin armed with a rifle in a window in front of a bank, and the thief, by means of a telephone call, made off with a large sum of money).

Meanwhile, in the countryside, the "new stage of agrarian reform" was already running out of steam. Once he had made his distributions, President López Mateos must have felt that he could breathe in peace, "the Revolution had fulfilled its duty to the noble peasants," and afterwards he largely lost interest in agrarian issues. He gave free rein to private farmers and the new landowners and tried to ensure that the "agrarian reform" would industrialize agricultural products. But food was imported and the misery of the unprotected peasants, especially the Indians, was deepening. Many were looking for land and invading it, as at the end of the Ruizcortin period.

In Morelos and the neighboring states, Rubén Jaramillo had a reputation for being a true defender of the peasants' causes, in the purest Zapatista tradition. In 1962, Jaramillo led the invasion of the Michoacan estates of Michapa and El Guarín, but the soldiers evicted the invaders and the government decided to settle accounts with Jaramillo, who had already been a guerrilla in the mountains and later fought for the candidacy of Miguel Henríquez Guzmán. He was considered a communist agitator and one day in 1962 the troops kidnapped him with his wife and children; they took them all to Xochicalco. There they riddled them mercilessly. They found 12 bullets in

Jaramillo's wife and it was said that they even shot the child she was carrying in her womb. It was a violent, brutal, merciless crime. The news of the murder was minimized in the press, and only the magazine *Polítical* dealt with the matter at length. Carlos Fuentes later narrated Jaramillo's death in *Siempre!.*

In the state of Guerrero the situation was difficult. Faced with the harsh exploitation of the peasants, in 1960 Genaro Vázquez Rojas formed the Guerrero Civic Committee ( CCG ), whose members became known as "the civics." The CCG worked hard to overthrow Governor Raúl Caballero Aburto and organized a popular civic strike, in which taxes were not paid and no one obeyed regulations. The entire state was in turmoil and on December 30 the army opened fire on the "civics" and there were 18 dead, dozens wounded and numerous prisoners. It was the Chilpancingo Massacre. Faced with this, the CCG demanded the resignation of the governor, which was granted by López Mateos at the beginning of 1961. The CCG had already taken over 13 municipalities. However, the fall of the governor gradually restored "normal order." Genaro Vázquez then restructured his group and called it the Asociación Cívica Guerrerense ( ACG ), which actively participated in the elections of December 1962. No victory was recognized and the ACG mobilized again, until in Iguala they were repressed and seven dead, 23 wounded and 280 imprisoned were counted. The ACG became illegal and throughout the state the repression became noticeably more acute. The interim governor Arturo Martínez Adame ordered the arrest of Genaro Vázquez, who fled Guerrero. At the end of the decade he would reappear as a guerrilla.

By 1963, businessmen had reestablished "confidence" in the government, that is, they had been granted all the concessions they had asked for, and development continued. López Mateos continued his investments, especially in the state-owned industry: oil, petrochemicals, electricity and mining received strong boosts. On the other hand, he gave free rein to foreign and national private initiative in the vast field of manufacturing industries, which were given credits, low taxes, and also low tariffs on services and goods. This caused private, national and foreign businessmen to distort the economic structure of the country, or at least that is what Esteban Mancilla and Olga Pellicer de Brody state in the last volume of the *History of the Mexican Revolution* ; They point out that entrepreneurs kept productivity levels low, concentrated on a few geographic areas of the country and ignored others completely, produced for a "rickety internal market," depended blindly "on foreign technology without worrying about developing their own," and allowed foreigners to dominate the most dynamic sectors of the economy.

In that same year, with the approach of the presidential succession, the political panorama intensified. It is possible that the creation of the National Liberation Movement encouraged other leftists to organize themselves better to counteract the rigid policies of López Mateos, who, in order to achieve stability, as José Luis Reyna says, "either negotiated or repressed, but did not tolerate it." Thus appeared the Independent Peasant Central ( CCI ), formed by Ramón Danzós Palomino, Arturo Orona and Alfonso Garzón. The CCI represented an attempt to create independent political organizations that would go beyond the manipulation of the National Peasant Confed-

eration. The government, of course, paid attention to the new central, and although it probably considered that it did not represent any great danger, it began to work on the leaders anyway, with the result that a year later they had already divided and there were two CCIs : that of Danzós Palomino and that led by Alfonso Garzón and Humberto Serrano, alias El Invasor, who soon aligned themselves with the PRI and the government. Thus, if the CCI ever represented a possibility of true defense of the peasants, this hope was dissipated in October 1964, since the existence of two centrals with the same name at least created confusion and represented a door to mediate any serious attempt made in favor of the peasants.

For his part, President López Mateos decided to carry out yet another reform to the electoral law. The government was concerned about the scant legitimacy that it had by functioning as an all-out steamroller while the other parties were struggling to survive and barely managed to win a few seats in Congress. To give a greater illusion of plurality and democracy via the opposition, but without losing any of the fundamental levers of power, the new electoral law of 1963 came up with the invention of party deputies, or plurinominals. With this new modality, the registered opposition could obtain seats even if it had not won a majority in a district. Depending on the number of votes obtained, a party could have up to 20 plurinominal deputies, and in this way all registered parties ( PAN , PPS and PARM ) managed to obtain seats and give a minimal illusion of democratic play. This reform strengthened the regime, which retained all power but was also able to argue that in Mexico minorities had space to express themselves. It also issued the Federal Law of Workers in the Service of the State, which prohibited bureaucrats from joining unions or organizations outside the PRI , and which restricted the right to strike.

That same year, the OAS meeting took place in Punta del Este, Uruguay, where the United States used all its strength to get the countries of the continent to break diplomatic relations with Cuba and join the economic boycott that the empire had orchestrated against the island. In fact, all Latin American countries agreed, and later complied, to break relations with the regime of Fidel Castro Ruz, who had declared since 1961 that he would try to build socialism. Mexico was the only country that did not break with Cuba, although, in Punta del Este, Foreign Minister Tello served up on a silver platter the argument that allowed the others to break with Fidel Castro: according to the Mexican Foreign Minister, the representative democracies of America were incompatible with Marxism-Leninism. This formula was very popular with the Americans, who applied it immediately and, in the long run, it made it easier for them to acquiesce to López Mateos' unusual position. Throughout the decade, although Mexico cooled its relationship with Cuba and subjected those who traveled to the island to mistreatment, surveillance and inconvenience, our country was the only one in America that kept open the lines of communication with the Cuban Revolution, which, over time, proved extremely important.

But in Mexico the big issue was presidential succession. In March, the PRI broke its lethargy and its leader Alfonso Corona del Rosal announced that the official party

would restructure itself and draw up a program for its next presidential candidate. A Programming Meeting was held, in which the then deputy Jesús Reyes Heroles declared that the PRI was not a class party, but a party of classes. The idea of a restructuring made many think that democratic forms would be implemented in the PRI . But the restructuring attempts of that year finally ended in much ado and nothing concrete. However, the idea of democratizing the party of the Revolution penetrated some of its militants, and shortly afterward Carlos Madrazo would find himself in numerous conflicts for this reason when it was his turn to preside over the PRI from December 1964.

For its part, the CTM also tried to reactivate itself to prevent the National Confederation of Workers ( CNT ) of Rafael Galván, or increasingly strong leaders like Luis Gómez Z., who was already the head of the railroad workers' union, from taking away its power and influence. Fidel Velázquez had not stopped getting himself punctually re-elected as general secretary of the CTM , and in 1963 he increased the number of meetings of the central throughout the Republic and brought out new banners: the fight for a distribution of profits, which was eventually granted, and for the 40-hour work week, which was postponed.

Everyone was waiting to see who would be "the dark horse." According to Luis Echeverría, this term comes from the palenques, where sometimes a rooster is presented covered with a cloth so that the gamblers do not know what animal it is (hence also why the aspirants to the big prize are called "my rooster," informed Don Luis learnedly). López Mateos himself was a perfect "dark horse," since, before his "unveiling," Ruiz Cortines managed to get all the politicians to go along with the bluff of other aspirants. López Mateos, who practically did not form a team and who remained quiet without saying much, was a huge surprise for the "experts."

In 1963, as always, several Secretaries of State reached the "home stretch." They were Antonio Ortiz Mena, from the Treasury, who had managed to get the government to overcome economic problems and continue development and stability; Donato Miranda Fonseca was also mentioned a lot, as he had managed to weave an intricate network of political relationships through his privileged office, the Secretariat of the Presidency; there was also Javier Barros Sierra, who would later become rector of UNAM in 1968; and, last but by no means the end, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, "Gustavito," as the president called him, who, apparently, always thought of him. The leader of the Senate, Manuel Moreno Sánchez, was also a very close friend of the president and had hopes that López Mateos would choose him.

By 1964, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz had orchestrated his campaign very well so that López Mateos would notice him. Gonzalo N. Santos, at the end of his *Memoirs* , tells that he organized a dinner at his country house in Cuernavaca and invited the president and almost the entire cabinet, except for Donato Miranda Fonseca, since the latter was Díaz Ordaz's most serious rival, whom Santos supported. At that party there were cockfights. Santos took his favorite and placed him in front of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz. "Ladies and gentlemen," said Santos, "this rooster that I am going to release in a few

minutes is the dark horse." He then invited Díaz Ordaz to hold the rooster, which the then Secretary of the Interior did without hesitation. The majority of those present bet against Santos' rooster and López Mateos discreetly abstained. The hidden rooster won and Santos served glasses of an "old" Napoleon brandy. "Let's toast," he said to López Mateos, and he replied: "Yes, but not alone; serve Gustavito a glass to toast the three of us."

By mid-year, Corona del Rosal visited the leader of the Senate, Moreno Sánchez, and asked him to support Díaz Ordaz. Moreno Sánchez not only felt he was a presidential candidate, but he was also a staunch enemy of Díaz Ordaz, so, upset, he went to see López Mateos to complain. The president responded that he knew nothing about that, that Corona del Rosal was surely "carrying water to his mill." However, he asked his friend Moreno Sánchez to find out among the politicians why Díaz Ordaz was said to be violent and reactionary. "When I make the decision," López Mateos concluded, "you will be the first to know."

Later, the president invited Moreno Sánchez to talk. The Senate leader arrived punctually at the president's garden, who said to him: "You know, I couldn't sleep last night." "So you've already made up your mind," Moreno Sánchez commented. "Yes." "Okay." "...It's Díaz Ordaz," the president revealed. Moreno Sánchez immediately expressed his disagreement. But López Mateos only explained that he had also thought of Barros Sierra, but he "did not have the qualities of a politician"; and of Donato Miranda Fonseca, "who had many favorable aspects but not enough." And of Antonio Ortiz Mena, whom he ruled out as soon as he learned that all the former presidents supported him. "For that reason it couldn't be Ortiz Mena," López Mateos explained.

It is also said that López Mateos called the Secretary of the Interior and after the usual greetings, he told him: "Comrade, it's your turn to go to hell. You will be the PRI candidate for president."

In October 1963, the PRI convention unanimously named Gustavo Díaz Ordaz as presidential candidate. He left the Interior Ministry to Luis Echeverría and proceeded to prepare his presidential campaign. In order to avoid indiscipline among the PRI members, López Mateos gave jobs to several politicians who were in the banking sector and who could cause problems. He relocated Gilberto Flores Muñoz, Francisco Galindo Ochoa and Alfonso Martínez Domínguez, for example. In addition, he surprised many by his last-minute choice of advisors. The president was very fond of boxing and bullfighting, and it is said that he sometimes liked to go to the Plaza México. One of his favorite bullfighters was Joaquín Rodríguez, Cagancho, and since the latter was in financial difficulties, he asked for an audience with López Mateos. When he left, Cagancho was smiling, happy. When he found out, Donato Miranda Fonseca almost fell off his chair: he could not imagine that a bullfighter could be named advisor to the president of the republic.

At the end of the year, Vicente Lombardo Toledano performed prodigious ideological balancing acts to convince the participants in the Third National Assembly of the Popular Socialist Party of the benefits of what he called an "alliance with the PRI

." He worked so well that the next day everyone agreed that the PPS should not launch a candidate, but should instead join the PRI candidate . The PAN , for its part, nominated José González Torres.

In 1964, the presidential campaigns took place. On that occasion, everything seemed to be in perfect order: there were no uncomfortable dissidents of the system fighting for the presidency; the opposition of the PAN did not present the slightest problem, even though González Torres mildly criticized the government. The left did not make noise: there were no resounding labor conflicts as there had been six years earlier, and the Mexican Communist Party, outside the law, contributed to the candidacy of Ramón Danzós Palomino through the Frente Electoral del Pueblo ( FEP ), whose historical nonexistence was indisputable.

In the elections of July 1964, then, there was no problem. It was the moment of maximum strength of the "revolutionary" regime, when, even at the most difficult and debilitating moment, the presidential succession, everything was under control: the economic situation had stabilized, private initiative was not withdrawing its capital and in fact was satisfied with the prospect of the Secretary of the Interior, who had done so well, governing the country. And the political situation was calm. Although it recognized a considerable margin of abstention, the Federal Electoral Commission and then the Electoral College gave the victory to Díaz Ordaz with 88 percent of the votes; the PAN obtained 10.97 percent and, thanks to the reforms to the electoral law, had 20 deputies in Congress. The PPS and the PARM also had their plurinominals.

By the way, the first "interpellation" of recent times took place during the sessions of the Electoral College of the Chamber of Deputies, which preceded those of 1988. The former mayor of Ciudad Camargo, Tamaulipas, Luis G. Olloqui, was a presumed deputy for the PARM and his case was being debated. Olloqui spent his time eating popcorn ("not popped," specifies the information in the newspaper *La Jornada* ) and listened to Advento Guerra, from the PRI , who disgusted him. "He is accused of poor administration and improper use of financial resources. He also stole the watch from the Camargo presidency," Guerra said. "I'll answer you about the watch right now," Olloqui interrupted him, "you'll see." But Advento Guerra continued to criticize him. "You lie, Advento, you lie, you lie a thousand times!" shouted Olloqui and continued eating popcorn. "He did not become a deputy," concludes *La Jornada.*

Adolfo López Mateos felt very confident about his successor. Just as it happened when he received power from Ruiz Cortines, the transition from López Mateos to Díaz Ordaz would be framed by PRI discipline and orthodoxy. Afterwards, the two ended up hating each other.

At the end of his term, Justo Sierra Casasús recounts that López Mateos had headaches that made him lock himself in a dark room in the palace. Julio Scherer García in turn referred to what Humberto Romero, the president's personal secretary, told him, who drove away those waiting in the waiting room: Romero took the president to a room with padded walls. "Hours passed until the iron cooled in the skull and with the end of the suffering the president came back to life," Scherer writes. "'It's over,

Humberto.' 'Rest, Adolfo.' 'I'm fine. Let's go.' And again the greetings, the audiences, the frank laughter that captivated the ladies above all."

Headaches ("migraines," the president always considered) were signs of Adolfo López Mateos' terrible end. Ultimately, his left eye, left leg, left hand, right foot, and right hand became immobilized. "He used orthopedic devices to be able to take a few steps," Sierra Casasús says. Afterwards, he was completely paralyzed, with only vegetative functions (and most likely fully conscious and unable to express himself), until he died in 1969.

## Culture in Mexico

In late 1958, when Adolfo Ruiz Cortines handed over the presidential power to his namesake López Mateos, rock and roll and rumbeadas were all the rage in Mexico. Although rock was accessible to everyone, not everyone could tune into the necessary wave frequency and there were many people, including young people of course, who neither understood nor were interested in rock and roll. On the other hand, tropical music "was as Mexican as ranchera songs," and that is why rumbeadas were in fashion. At Saturday night parties, Lobo y Melón was never missing with their "Amalia Batista" ("I throw her and I throw the basin and she goes with the guapachá") so that the lively dancers could show off the floor. When less vigor was required, they switched to the cha-cha-cha danzones of Carlos Campos and Mariano Mercerón. We could already hear, but had not yet reached the peak of success, the Sonora Santanera of Carlos Colorado, for many simply the Santa, who, with Sonia López, achieved millionaire sales of "El ladrón". To dance "de cachetito" (or "de carton de cerveza") we could also hear, oh paradox, Ray Coniff, the only non-rock and roll gringo with lightning success in Mexico.

In 1959 , the French film *Rififí aux hommes (Rififi among men* ) was a surprising success. It was a robbery by burglary. People said that "it has been at the Prado cinema for over *a year now* ." The government eventually banned the film because it involved a robbery exactly like the one in *Rififí* .

In Mexico, in 1959, people were already reading (in addition to Carlos Fuentes, who finished painting via *La región más transparencia* , and Jorge López Páez, who made a splendid debut with *El solitario Atlántico* ) Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Par Lagervist, and they heard about the existentialists. What was understood by existentialism in more or less popular terms (certain sectors of middle-class youth) was saying: "Life has no meaning but it is worth living," dressing in strictly black trousers and turtleneck sweaters and looking bored or very depressed. "Existentialist" cafés attracted attention in Mexico City. Places like El Gato Rojo, La Rana Sabia, Acuario, El Sótano, tended to be small, dark, with plenty of espresso coffee and with spontaneous members of the public who read poems when the music, of course jazz, took a break. Mexicans didn't have their Juliette Greco, but many of those interested in beatniks

(actually "existentialism" and "beatniks" were almost the same thing for many) did have the fabulous magazine *El Corno Emplumado* , in which Sergio Mondragón and Margaret Randall translated Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Gregory Corso, Gary Snyder and Jack Kerouac. There really weren't many beatniks in Mexico, but "existentialist" cafés did become quite popular, as an indication that a certain urban middle class was tending to become countercultural.

The dissemination of high culture, like money, was increasingly concentrated in fewer people. The group of intellectuals who collaborated on the cultural supplement *México en la Cultura* , showed solidarity with Fernando Benítez when the newspaper's management fired him for frankly reactionary reasons. However, José Pagés Llergo, director of *Siempre!* offered them the central space in his magazine and they soon came to light.

*Culture in Mexico* , with Benítez, Fuentes, Emmanuel Carballo, Elena Poniatowska and the young José Emilio Pacheco and Carlos Monsiváis. The first had already published stories with

Juan José Arreola was serious, a polymath, an avid reader with a strong sense of justice; Monsiváis, for his part, displayed his Salvadoran influence: high intelligence, devastating irony, demystifying talents and interest in popular culture. Both came from the magazine *Estaciones* , by the poet Elías Nandino, which gave ample opportunities to young people.

Benítez and Fuentes were also present with several writers who eventually came to form the conservative-intellectualist sector of the group: Juan García Ponce, Juan Vicente Melo, Tomás Segovia, Salvador Elizondo, José de la Colina, and Sergio Pitol. Poniatowska, Monsiváis, Pacheco, Carballo, Luis Guillermo Piazza, and María Luisa Mendoza formed the "popular sector." The two currents were the ground floor, while on the upper floor (or lower level) lived Paz, Benítez, Fuentes, Jaime García Terrés, and the poet-philosopher Ramón Xirau. The *La Cultura en México group* also had the *Revista de la Universidad* and the *Revista Mexicana de Literatura* , and they soon took over the intellectual milieu and won many loyal followers because they represented the intellectual and artistic avant-garde, the most advanced in the country. They were joined by the editorialists of the magazine *Política* : González Pedrero, López Cámara and Flores Olea. And also by exiled writers such as Tito Monterroso, Luis Cardoza y Aragón and Gabriel García Márquez. They were soon joined by film critics ( *Nuevo Cine* , *La Semana en el Cine* ) Emilio García Riera, Jomi García Ascot, José de la Colina, Salvador Elizondo (who later created the magazine *S.* Nob ), and theatre directors Juan José Gurrola, Juan Ibáñez and José Luis Ibáñez (and with them their groups of actors). And by painters: José Luis Cuevas, who at the age of 15 mounted his first exhibition and who had gained notoriety for his unbridled criticism of Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros and José Clemente Orozco and muralism in general. At that time Cuevas also collaborated with *Nueva Presencia* , which promoted figurative and abstract painting. The painters Alberto Gironella, Vicente Rojo and Manuel Felguérez also circulated with Cuevas in the group.

As you can see, the group was a real bulldozer. In the late fifties and early sixties they were not yet functioning as a mafia, they were even, to a certain extent, critical dissidents of the system, which they found, and rightly so, excessively underdeveloped and anachronistic in mentality. However, in the mid-sixties, the members of *La Cultura in Mexico* became more and more of the Establishment and the criteria of sharp disqualification of artistic manifestations that they did not favor became repressive, given the power they came to amass. In 1959 the entire group mourned the death of Alfonso Reyes, who, without a doubt, was their spiritual father and intellectual model. Samuel Ramos also died that year, but the group did not mourn it so much; while recognizing Ramos' contributions, he was an intellectual example that did not interest them. Mexican was "out", what was needed was cosmopolitanism, being up to date, certain that one was at the intellectual level of the best in the world and in no way as huarachudas infantry of the international vanguard.

At that time, Huberto Batis, another prominent member of the group, was expelled along with Tito Monterroso from El Colegio de México by Daniel Cosío Villegas because it took too long to get tickets. Batis joined the writer Carlos Valdés and they formed Cuadernos del Viento : pages that did open up, as *Estaciones had done before* , to young enthusiasts who were interested in culture and who, comparatively, were increasingly numerous and tended to escape sociological categorizations. In 1959 Tito Monterroso published his first, excellent, book: *Obras del Viento, published by the Spanish newspaper El Colegio de México. Complete* ( *and other stories* ), which contains the very famous text "The dinosaur", which was still there in 1960, when Sergio Galindo offered his excellent novel *El bordo* . Carlos Fuentes, after the great effort of *The most transparent region* , published a short, linear and splendid novel, *Good consciences* , which, like all the important books of the time, appeared in Orfila Reynal's Fondo de Cultura Económica under the wise production of Joaquín Díez-Canedo.

In fact, Carlos Fuentes was the leading figure of the sixties. He not only consolidated the international success of *La región* with decisive books such as *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* y *Aura* (both from 1962), *Cantar de ciegos* (1964) and *Cambio de piel* (1967), but his presence far exceeded the narrow margins that society imposed on artists and intellectuals. His political criticism was timely and lucid, and with his books and his personal magnetism he became the most popular character among educated people and many young people who saw in him an almost perfect intellectual hero. When, in the middle of the decade, the First Experimental Film Competition was organized, he was the author that all the filmmakers wanted to adapt. The peak of this popularity took place in December 1969 when Fuentes celebrated his novel *Cumpleaños* with a legendary cocktail at the La Ópera bar, where the new intellectuals felt very comfortable in that Porfirian atmosphere. Candice Bergen and William Styron, guest stars, monopolized the cameras; Good whiskey and even better cognac were distributed without any hesitation and the end-of-day drunkenness was much talked about.

At the antipodes was José Revueltas, who in 1960 published his book of short stories *Dormir en tierra (To Sleep on the Ground* ), which contains several masterpieces of

the genre. But in reality, the most important thing for Revueltas was still communist thought, and in 1960 he also published his *Ensayo sobre un proletariado sin cabeza (Essay on a Headless Proletariat* ), in which he criticized the Mexican Communist, Popular Socialist and Peasant Worker parties for not being up to the level of the significance of the railroad movement. This confirmed Revueltas' idea that the Mexican proletariat lacked a true revolutionary head and that the Communist Party, due to its detachment from the people, was historically nonexistent. Shortly before, José Revueltas had presented *México: democracia bárbara (Mexico: barbaric democracy* ), in which he observed the presidential succession of 1958 in a penetrating manner and where he concluded that Mexican democratic practices were, at best, "barbaric." This was one of the first texts in Mexico that fully confronted what was then the Great Enigma of the Methods of Presidential Succession, which for Revueltas could well be considered "à la Mexicana." At that time, the people knew very little about what was happening in the government leadership, which maintained almost total secrecy.

In poetry appeared *Light from here* , by Tomás Segovia, *Before the light the birds sing* , by Marco Antonio Montes de Oca, and *Livid light* , by Rosario Castellanos. And *La mutinous spike* , with materials from five leftist poets: Oscar Oliva, Juan Bañuelos, Eraclio Zepeda, Jaime Augusto Shelley and Jaime Labastida, who in 1965 were reunited in the book *Occupation of the Word* . In 1961 *Fuego de poor* , by Rubén Bonifaz Nuño and UNAM published the *Material poetic* , by Carlos Pellicer, huge as a tombstone, which contained the work written between 1918 and 1961.

In 1961, Mexico was hungry for the world. The news of the orbital voyages of the Soviets Gagarin and Titov made a deep impression, and the cultural world was enthusiastic about avant-garde plays, especially the absurd theatre of Ionesco. Meanwhile, Mexican dramaturgy was still ruled by Emilio Carballido, who presented *Te juro Juana que I'm looking forward* to a big hit, which he repeated with *Yo también I speak of the rose* . Magaña wrote little, and the new author who attracted attention was Hugo Argüelles, who achieved instant stardom with his works *Los cuervos están de luto* and *Los prodigiosos* , where he expanded on black humor.

The French New Wave was causing a sensation in the cinema. Many young people watched the early films of Godard, Truffaut and Resnais almost religiously. The Italians Visconti ( *Rocco and his Brothers* ), Fellini ( *La Doubli Vie* ) and Antonioni ( *La Nuit* ) were also admired. Film reviews in Acapulco were beginning, attracting big names in the film industry. But film production in Mexico was alarmingly poor. Luis Buñuel, of course, was still at the top, but in 1961 he went to film in Spain, after several decades of exile, and with money from the Mexican Gustavo Alatriste (owner of the magazines *Sucesos* and *La Familia* , where Gabriel García Márquez worked) and with the acting of Silvia Pinal (Alatriste's wife at the time) he produced *Viridiana* , one of his greatest works, which was in the least behind the portentous *Nazarín* , which he filmed in 1958. Buñuel returned to Mexico, but would film little here. With the Alatriste-Pinal duo, the Aragonese made *El ángel exterminador* , a hallucinative story that clearly comes from a dream, and *Simón del desierto* , a much lesser work that has the clumsiness of

presenting hell as a den where not only is rock and roll heard but it is also performed by the group Los Monjes, led by one of Julio Bracho's sons.

This master, by the way, in 1962 filmed *La sombra del Caudillo* in a horrendous adaptation of the great novel by Martín Luis Guzmán. If the novel caused a scandal when it was published, more than 30 years earlier, at the beginning of the sixties it continued to disturb the regime, which, outright, opted to censor the film and put it in cans for many years: in 1989, by the way, it was still not released publicly, although some people had already been able to see it on video. The censorship had done the same thing in 1959, when Roberto Gavaldón adapted B. Traven's work *La rosa blanca to the cinema* ; the commercial exhibition of this film was also prohibited without giving the slightest explanation and it also ended up in cans. There were few suitable filmmakers in Mexico and the depressing commercial panorama closed the doors to them. Only Luis Alcoriza found support in the company of Antonio Matouk (Angélica Ortiz, production manager) and demonstrated that the years he spent as Buñuel's assistant bore fruit with two notable films: *Tlayucan* and *Tiburoneros* . But apart from that, the national cinema was desolate, dominated by producers accustomed to profiting from the loans given to them by the Cinematographic Bank and who rode with great pleasure. The corruption of these producers (Wallerstein, Ripstein, Calderón, Rosas Priego) led them to favor an absolutely inane cinema, so bad that it barely managed to alienate the respectable. A magnificent example of these "criteria" was the avalanche of "youth" films of the time. Aware of the tremendous success of rock and rollers and the rise of young people in general, producers filmed "musical comedies" whose only joke was to present rock idols, since moralizing, the obvious desire to manipulate and creative laziness were rampant in almost all the films they made (and which were already called "garbage" by the public). All this gave an arsenal to the critics of *La Semana en el Cine* and *Nuevo Cine* who made fun of the garbage and denounced the censorship and the backward criteria of national cinema.

However, television criticism had not yet emerged. Telesistema Mexicano was emerging as a great monopoly (the State did not even offer competition, much less resistance) and progressively established in the country's population the most unfortunate models of the "American way of life" and alienation in all its forms. Soap operas were already a national institution and the public had become accustomed to watching tear-jerking, poorly produced, melodramas that lasted for months on its evening programming. For writing soap operas, Vicente Leñero, who in 1961 published his novel *La voz adolorida* (years later it was transformed into *A fuerza de palabras* ), had to suffer the ridicule of the intellectuals of the Establishment. In addition to soap operas, Telesistema presented old American television series ("Los intocables", "Combate", "Yo quiero a Lucy"), poorly dubbed cartoons and "entertainment" programs. Among these, the best was the appearance of Manuel Valdés, the Loco (brother of the then fat Tin Tan), who in "Variedades de mediodía" first, and "de medianoche" later, became famous for his uncontrollable humor and his great ability to improvise one clown after another. The Loco's humor was definitely new, and at times could even be subversive,

or so judged the Dreaded Television Censorship, which became furious when the good Loco referred to the good Benemérito de las Américas as "Bomberito Juárez." Unfortunately, these healthy, demystifying and ingenious crazy things were not abundant on television, which step by step became a devastating influence, to the point that later Telesistema was considered to be the true Secretariat of Public Education, since it reached the deepest part of Mexican society (or so it seemed).

To make matters worse, in 1963, Walter Buchanan, Secretary of Communications, launched a call for tenders for a new television channel: Channel 13. The National Autonomous University of Mexico had been fighting to have its own channel since the early 1950s, but got nothing. At the beginning of the six-year term, however, the National Polytechnic Institute was granted the concession for Channel 11, a cultural channel with a very low budget; at first, no one could watch it, because its signal was so weak; therefore, it was right for UNAM to get its own. Several officials seemed interested in this, but in the end, Communications ended up ignoring the University and granted Channel 13 to a Mr. Salas that no one knew. Numerous media magnates also wanted the new channel and immediately filed appeals before the Supreme Court of Justice alleging priority. For this reason, the concession of the new canal was put on hold and was not finally resolved until 1968 (but on that occasion the UNAM was also unable to obtain it , despite the efforts made in that regard by the rector Barros Sierra).

In the press, the great event was the emergence of *El Día* , which in 1961 the astute López Mateos provided to Enrique Ramírez y Ramírez, an old militant of the left, who later allowed himself to be co-opted by the system ("the revolution must be made from within") and as a reward he received his own newspaper. Thanks to the good official subsidy, this newspaper did not worry about advertising and played down the importance of its social pages. It abounded in international information with a discreet "leftist" tone. In addition, it later had the good sense to establish a daily cultural page that, when it was entrusted to Arturo Cantú, reached magnificent levels. The other major newspapers ( *Excélsior* , *Novedades* , *El Universal* ) continued with frankly conservative lines, generated by inertia and the intricate game of "embutes" or "chayotes" ("without my chayo I am not here," the journalists joked cynically), that is: the bribes that the press chiefs of the departments handed out in sealed envelopes to ensure the complicity of the reporters. The most popular newspaper (after the notorious sensationalism of *Zócalo* in the fifties) was *La Prensa* , with its provincial criteria (the worst insult of the time) of putting forward the red note, which would later be disgustingly exploited by *Magazine de Policía* or *Alarma* . The main sports newspapers were *Esto* , *Ovaciones* and *La Afición* (the latter giving more emphasis to baseball, while the first two dealt with soccer). On Sundays, *El Fígaro* was read , with its purple pages, full of photos of the beauties; Efraín Huerta was in charge of film criticism. The key magazines were *Siempre!,* by Pagés Llergo, with the caricatures of Carreño and of the stars of the fifties, Chango García Cabral and Manuel Freyre. The main political thinkers collaborated on the sepia pages of the weekly, which was an

absolute success among the political milieu and the public; the magazine *Polítical* , by Manuel Marcué Pardiñas, was also widely read, as he arrived in a brand new Jaguar car to his offices in Bucareli. *Política* was more combative than *Siempre!* and soon became the preferred publication of the left, which avidly read the articles and reports on events that the rest of the press practically ignored, such as the death of Jaramillo or the vicissitudes of the Cuban Revolution.

Among the comics, *La Familia Burrón continued to shine, but Lágrimas, risas y amor (Tears, Laughter, and Love )* sold the most . At that time, *Chanoc appeared* , which later became very important, as did *Kalimán* and, later, *El Payo (The Payo* ). But the market was totally dominated by Editorial Novaro, which filled the stands with its translations of American comics: the old *Pequeña Lulú ( Little Lulu* ), *Lorenzo y Pepita (Lorenzo and Pepita* ), plus *Cuentos de Walt Disney (Walt Disney Tales* ), the comics of Conejo de la Suerte (Lucky Rabbit), El Pájaro Loco (Woody Bird), as well as those of Superman, Batman and other "superheroes" who, of course, compensated the weak citizen with the dream of "superpowers." Sentimental (and appropriately "fat") comics such as *La Novela Semanal (Weekly Novel )* or *Novela de Amor (Love Novel ) were also very successful* , competing *extensively* with the publications of Yolanda Vargas Dulché. And there were already photo novels, which in the seventies reached a great boom: they were equally sentimental stories that were photographed with budding actors. At first, photo novels penetrated slowly, but later they made a lot of people money. And there were "feminine" and "masculine" magazines. *La Familia* , by Gustavo Alatriste (and later directed by Cristina Pacheco) was very popular, but already at the end of López Mateos and at the beginning of Diazordacism, *Kena* , *Claudia de México* , *Rutas de Passion* and other offspring that confined women (as the whole society still did) to cooking, sewing and tailoring, to gossip about artists, to the praise of fashions and the life of the rich, especially if they were aristocrats. On the male side, from the end of the fifties, James R. Fortson tried to emulate the American Hugh Hefner and prescribed us the magazine *D'Etiqueta , which followed the Playboy* model in terms of "cultural" reports, the cult of fashion and automobiles, jokes and caricatures, but still without the "women" (horror of the term) showing their breasts, because the government continued on the iron line of paternalistic censorship. Shortly after, Fortson started *Caballero.*

There were also humorous publications in the early sixties. Rius, who was already beginning to gain fame, joined forces with Almada and the Spaniard Gila (who caused a sensation in Mexico with his "telephone" humor) and the three of them started La *Gallina* , whose first issue made it clear that the magazine could be read with confidence since Roberto Blanco Moheno did not publish in it. *La Gallina 's humor* tended strongly toward the political, and for this reason it was viewed with suspicion by the authorities. The penultimate issue, from a distance, looked like *Life en Español magazine* , and only when you got closer could you read the tiny letters that said: "This is not *Life en Español* , it is *La Gallina." "Chicken in Mexican* ." The next, and final, issue took a long time to appear, and when it did come out, the magazine's devoted

public saw that, in true *Mad style* , it was reported: "This time we didn't put anything on the cover so as not to get into another fight." Rius then created *Los Supermachos* , which was a huge success, and then embarked on didactic-political books using the language of comics ( *Cuba for Beginners* , *Marx for beginners* ) and managed to reach ever wider audiences. Shortly afterwards, a few issues of *Mano magazine appeared* , more directly influenced by the American *Mad* , created by the then very young Gustavo Sainz, Nacho Méndez and Sergio Aragonés; the latter later left the country and found work precisely at *Mad* , where, to this day, he is in charge of the "marginal dramas".

*Mano* appeared , the theatre received a decisive boost with the appearance of Juan José Gurrola, who directed and acted (with Enrique Rocha) in the excellent staging of *Bajo el bosque blanco* , by the poet Dylan Thomas, who among his great merits is having provided his name to Bob Dylan. From then on, Gurrola would carry out theatrical performances of excellent quality, and with authors such as Pierre Klossowski or ee cummings he placed himself at the head of theatrical experimentation in Mexico. Around that time Juan Ibáñez made his legendary staging of *Divinas palabras* , which led him to triumph at the Nancy Theatre Festival, France. Ibáñez would later go on to direct films. In 1962, the Chilean Alejandro Jodorowsky arrived in Mexico, a disciple of the French mime Marcel Marceau and the Spanish madman Arrabal, from whom Jodorowsky learned the "panic luck". In Mexico, Alexandro paid homage to his teacher with the staging of *Fando and Lis* , which caused a sensation at the Teatro de la Esfera. The good consciences were also scandalized by the "ephemeral" shows, which were quite entertaining if one had the presence of mind to see quasi-rituals of slaughtered chickens or actors defecating on stage. Jodorowsky brought us up to date with Eugene Ionesco performances, and with the excellent actor Carlos Ancira he staged *The Lesson* , *Rhinoceroses* , *The Chairs* and other works by the Romanian leader (Gurrola, at the Casa del Lago, was in charge of the famous *Bald Singer* , who still combs his hair in the same way). By the way, at the end of the six-year term Carlos Ancira premiered his monologue *The Diary of a Madman* , by Gogol, which he staged thousands of times in Mexico and abroad practically until his death at the end of the eighties.

In 1962, literature made a significant advance with the appearance of Editorial Era, named after the initials of its main partners: Neus Espresate, the painter Vicente Rojo, and the owner of Imprenta Madero, José Azorín. Era published Raúl Ortiz y Ortiz's superb translation of Malcolm Lowry's *Bajo el volcán* , and published Gabriel García Márquez and national authors such as Carlos Fuentes and Fernando Benítez. It also strengthened the hitherto scarce network of national literature editions. In the fifties, the Fondo de Cultura Económica, through the Letras Mexicanas collection, paved the way; Juan José Arreola followed in the middle of the decade with his Los Presentes editions, and at the end of the fifties, the Universidad Veracruzana launched its Ficción series, which gave space to numerous young writers. The outlook improved even further in 1963, when Joaquín Díez-Canedo left his position as general manager of the Fondo de

Cultura Económica and opened the Joaquín Mortiz Publishing House, which initially gave us works by Günter Grass, Agustín Yáñez, Elena Garro ( *Los Recuerdos del Porvenir* ) and Juan José Arreola, who returned to literature after 10 years to open the popular Serie del Volador with his "voice" novel *La Feria* . Arreola also replaced Ramón Xirau as director of the Centro Mexicano de Escritores (Mexico's Center for Writers) and, with Juan Rulfo, was in charge of coordinating the sessions for scholarship holders (Rulfo, by the way, announced every year the "imminent" appearance of his novel *La cordillera* ). Arreola deservedly acquired the prestige of being the one who helped the young people the most, since he not only looked after the scholarship holders of the Writers' Centre but also started "the last of the great literary workshops of the old era" in his apartment in Río de la Plata in the Cuauhtémoc neighbourhood . Arreola did not have criteria as *exclusive* as the *La Cultura group in Mexico* and his workshop was attended by people of all ages and with all kinds of literary interests, but the very young predominated, such as José Carlos Becerra, Elsa Cross, Alejandro Aura, Víctor Villela and Raúl Garduño (in poetry), and Gerardo de la Torre, René Avilés Fabila, Federico Campbell, Jorge Arturo Ojeda, Eduardo Rodríguez Solís, Rafael Rodríguez Castañeda and Alex Olhovich (in prose). This group worked through 1963 and in 1964 published the magazine *Mester* and its first book: *La tumba* , a short novel by José Agustín, which presented the phenomenon of young people seen from the perspective of youth itself (almost all youth works were written by older people, which largely determined the style and conception of youth itself). This type of novel used a language that artistically rescued the speech of young people, and was also loaded with a vitality, irreverence and freshness that is difficult to achieve when one is older. Ultimately, this phenomenon was also an increasingly clear manifestation of the leading role that young people were beginning to have in Mexico.

By then, what was known as the *boom* of Latin American literature was already an exciting reality, and in the end, it meant that the international public (read Europe and the United States) finally recognized the formidable literature that Latin Americans had been producing since the 1940s. In 1960, the translations of *The Most Transparent Region had already appeared, with great success* ; in 1961, Jorge Luis Borges won the International Literature Prize, awarded by more than 10 publishers from various countries; in 1962, Fuentes returned to the top levels with *Aura* and *The Death of Artemio. Cruz* , which became strong international successes. Also highly resonant was the Biblioteca Breve prize, from the Spanish publishing house Seix Barral, which awarded the first novel by the young Peruvian Mario Vargas Llosa, *La ciudad y los perros* . This appeared in 1963 and coincided with the publication of *Rayuela , the intricate, joyful, and very human masterpiece by the Argentine Julio Cortázar. Shortly after, Tres tristes* appeared. *Tigres* , by Guillermo Cabrera Infante, alias G. Caín; *Paradiso* , by José Lezama Lima; and *Cien años de soledad* , by Gabriel García Márquez, thus completing the honor roll of the horribly named *boom* . All these authors did not hide their sympathies for the Cuban Revolution (until it expelled Cabrera Infante), which contributed to the existence of a strong Latin American consciousness and the need

for greater ties of union between the underdeveloped peoples of the continent. In Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru and Argentina, the authors of the *boom* were widely read, they fostered a new sensitivity and awareness of political and social order. Their qualitative level was excellent, and for that reason the authors of the *boom* (who in the long run were reduced to four: García Márquez, Fuentes, Vargas Llosa and Cortázar) always received unusual attention.

In 1963, the writer Vicente Leñero surprisingly won the famous Biblioteca Breve prize with his novel *Los albañiles* , which had been rejected by the Fondo de Cultura Económica in Mexico just a year earlier. The endorsement of Leñero's work was impressive, and yet the literary establishment was outraged. It was said that from that moment on, the Biblioteca Breve prize lost all its seriousness. Carlos Barral traveled to Mexico City to present the prize and, to his surprise, the award cocktail was ignored by the high Mexican intellectuals, and, later, Leñero suffered a campaign to try to minimize it; he was especially accused of writing soap operas and of being a practicing Catholic, which showed that religion in culture was at its nadir, and only Jorge Portilla, the phenomenologist of nonsense, could manage to put his religiosity forward without suffering the ridicule of his peers. *Los albañiles* was a very important book in Mexico, partly because it did not adhere to the current that disdained social themes and the use of a language that artistically elaborated colloquial speech. By then, the tendency to emphasize form and avoid all "provincialism" was already very strong. However, Leñero's novel managed to cover social issues through a very complex artistic form that indicated how deeply the author had assimilated the literary experiments of the French *nouveau roman* and its leading men Alain Robbe-Grillet, Claude Simón, Nathalie Sarraute *et al* .

Misunderstanding, rejecting and then snubbing Vicente Leñero was one of the weakest points of the then-called literary mafia. Another of these serious errors was the vile snubbing inflicted on José Revueltas. In 1964, Revueltas published one of his masterpieces, the "political thriller" *Los errores (The Errors* ), which condensed his experiences in the communist movement and thoroughly criticized Stalinist authoritarianism. In *Los errores (The Errors* ), Revueltas balanced the adventures of communist militants with the sordid underworld of whores, pimps, dwarfs, thieves and alcoholics, and produced everlasting pages imbued with wisdom, a wealth of knowledge, genuine inspiration and poetic and disturbing heights.

By stopping Leñero and ignoring Revueltas, it was clear that what was initially a dynamic, disturbing and enriching group carried within it the seeds of intellectual aristocratic authoritarianism. That is why Daniel Cosío Villegas had told them: "Could I ask you for a little modesty, or, if you will, temperance? It is only recently that you have come to believe that you are the custodians of Mexican culture, and that only you can speak in its name." By 1964, they were already known as "the mafia" because they themselves liked the term and played with it with a wit that did not manage to go beyond cynicism. By then, the group directly or indirectly controlled the *Siempre! supplement.* , the *Revista Mexicana de Literatura* , the *Revista de la*

*Universidad* , the *Revista de Bellas Artes* , *Cuadernos del Viento* , *Diálogos* (which Ramón Xirau had started a year earlier with the support of El Colegio de México), Radio UNAM , the Casa del Lago and various cultural dissemination offices with all their payrolls. The government gradually began to recognize their intellectual strength and in fact proceeded to bring many of them together. Therefore, the mafia had a very good time in the sixties because they had everything they wanted: appreciation from the highest spheres and admiration from many young people. They undoubtedly carried out important works for culture, in addition to the quality of their individual production, which meant magnificent story books by José de la Colina ( *The Fight with the Panther* ), Sergio Pitol ( *Fenced Time* , *Hell for All* ), Inés Arredondo ( *The Signal* ), Juan García Ponce ( *First Image* , *The Night* ), Juan Vicente Melo ( *The Enemy Walls* , *Weekend* ), Jorge Ibargüengoitia ( *The Lightning of August* ), José Emilio Pacheco ( *The Distant Wind* ), Elena Poniatowska ( *The Tales of Lilus Kikus* ), Fernando Benitez ( *The Old King* , *Poisoned Water* ), to mention only the narrators. However, their rejection of chauvinism and provincialism (the most terrible charges they used to utter) led them to enthusiastically but uncritically support European culture and to underestimate many important aspects of national culture. It was common, for example, to hear that Mexico had never produced a single masterpiece (not even Sor Juana was spared). The greatest disdain was shown towards narrative with a "social" air and towards muralism (which of course by then was finished, but not before producing extraordinary works). The mafia was loudly cosmopolitan and avant-garde and raised as its banners Alfonso Reyes, the Contemporáneos, Octavio Paz and Rufino Tamayo, which would not be bad if they had added to those names those of Vasconcelos, Mariano Azuela, Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Samuel Ramos and José Revueltas, for example. The mafia carried out incessant campaigns of self-exaltation and mutual homage, since they only admitted their friends or those who shared their sectarian premises, and ignored or bitterly criticized those they considered "indecent" or "very minor." They ended up believing themselves to be the masters to the point of calling for tributes and praise from anyone who wanted to have respectability in the culture and some work in the process.

In reality, the mafia of the sixties showed how far the country itself had come in its detachment from its popular roots and in the consequent uncritical admiration of what was new coming from abroad. They were always ready to dance to the choreographies set by others, from the games of in/out, camp and trivia (coming from New York) or the theoretical dictates of artistic appreciation (coming from Europe). Like the new middle class, the system's leaders and the economic magnates, the mafia did not want to mix with the "culture of poverty" of which Oscar Lewis spoke. A large part of the country, in its process of growth, tended to reject Old Mexico but, as it had nothing else, it opened its eyes in amazement to what was happening in Europe or in New York, just as it had happened during the Porfirian regime, and in reality, the governments of the Revolution increasingly resembled that of Porfirio Díaz. The mafia, then, reflected all this with its due sophistication. They were the modern thing in Mexico, which is

why they felt so at home in the Zona Rosa (in the absence of Greenwich Village or Quartier Latin), where they set up their "headquarters": Cuevas painted ephemeral murals in the area and everyone gathered at the Tirol café (that's why it was said: Oh mafia, don't back out, you still have your last Tirol).

In the landscape of the pink zone there was no room for poets like Jaime Sabines, who quietly produced excellent books ( *Horal* , *La signal* , *Tarumba* ) and that in the sixties he was already a mature author ( *Diario semanario* , *Yuria* ). This great poet obviously could not be included in the old idea of "cultural nationalism" (to which muralism and the novel of the Revolution were linked). Sabines shared with this a very deep perception of the roots, but his renovating spirit, which included a strong closeness to the people and their language (the vigorous integration of the "bad words" in "Something about the death of Major Sabines"), a severe will to touch the bottom of himself and an immense capacity for love and understanding of women; all this marks Sabines (as well as Revueltas and Leñero) as an extremely important precedent of the "spirit of 68", which left behind, as overcome, the polemic nationalism (provincialism) vs. cosmopolitanism (avant-garde), since without complexes or hesitations he admitted both polarities and resolved in the synthesis of a new sensibility that implied a different appreciation of Mexico. In poetry, in addition to Sabines, Jaime García Terrés ( *The Warring States* ) and José Emilio Pacheco ( *The elements of the night* ), Gabriel Zaid ( *Following* ) and Homero Aridjis ( *Watching her sleep* ). Efraín Huerta published his great poem *El Tajín* and Octavio Paz reached the ceiling of his poetic work with *Salamandra.*

In popular music, the great success was for Javier Solís (who to a small extent filled the gap left by Pedro Infante's death) and Lucha Villa stood out. Jazz was also heard, with Mario Patrón, Juan José Calatayud and Tino Contreras. In rock, after the start of 1958 and 1959, the system was in a hurry to mediatize that music that, judging by the virulence with which it was attacked, was considered subversive and dissolving. The way to achieve this was to "co-opt", through commercial promotion, the most outstanding rock and rollers, which made the groups temporarily disappear. In their place appeared the "soloists": Enrique Guzmán (he left the Teen Tops), César Costa (he defected from the Black Jeans), Johnny Laboriel (he left the Rebeldes del Rock), Manolo Muñoz (ex of the Gibson Boys) and the beautiful Angélica María and Julissa. All of them had extraordinary success and, unconscious as they were, they soon forgot about rock and roll rebellion and became docile instruments of the "artistic directors" and film producers. However, when it seemed that the mediatization of Fidel Velázquez had been completely achieved, around 1964 new blood arrived, which now came from the border: Javier Bátiz, from Tijuana, was one of the first (and one of the great characters that national rock has produced); after him, kids from Ciudad Juárez, Reynosa and Matamoros began to arrive, and even from Durango, like Armando Nava's Dug Dugs. The chilango group Los Sinners, with the writer Federico Arana, attracted attention at the Ruser café in the Roma neighborhood; that is, when the riot police had not closed the place, which happened frequently. The same thing happened with other rock and

roll clubs like Harlem, Schiaffarello (or Chafarelo), Hullaballoo and, at the end of the decade, A Plein Soleil. The police would arrive, arrest the kids who were dancing on the seats and drinking Coca-Cola or lemonade, mistreat them and take them to the police stations, where their parents had to rescue them, not without compromising their dignity (by putting up with moralistic speeches) and also large sums of money (to make things easier). The repression of rock was intense during the López Mateos government, but the "personal style" of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz was still missing in the following six-year term.

Everything was changing in Mexico, which by the beginning of the decade had almost 35 million inhabitants (most of them, for the first time in history, in cities). Old-style rural life was rapidly evaporating and the influence of the United States was advancing in the urban centres, concentrated in the middle class, which was beginning to have some glimmers of refinement, although it could not yet boast of knowing good wines and travelling to Europe and the United States as happened at the end of the 1970s. Fashions had changed: in the previous decade women's skirts had gradually risen and by 1960 they were at the strategic height of the knees, therefore, they were more fitted.

Women wore high, pointed heels, stockings no longer had a crease, and the first pantyhose were in circulation. Bras were rather large and hard, and almost all underwear tended to be conservative, although strapless bras and bikini bottoms for men and women had already appeared. On the beach, bikinis were "here to stay," although they were not yet too revealing, but could rather be considered two-piece suits ("You don't swim at all?" "I didn't wear a suit"). Makeup was the order of the day, although shades varied, and the archetypal red no longer had a monopoly on lipstick. In the sixties, the incredible fashion of "balloon" dresses appeared, which really looked like balloon dresses, since they inflated all over the body and closed dramatically at the knees. With this came the grotesque "pyramidal hairstyles," which threatened to grow to disproportionate proportions with hairspray, spray-fixatives, or even elaborate structures that formed high, rigid chimneys or wide snags; the neck, of course, was left uncovered, which was fine, but stroking such hair meant appreciating the texture of the concrete.

Men abandoned hats at some point in the fifties; trousers became narrower, losing their pleats, and dropped in waist; jackets were no longer double-breasted but open, with one or two buttons (but later they became three and even four); ties became narrower until they became puny strips, as did lapels, and shoulder pads disappeared; not even Tin Tan wore them anymore. The shine of hair also diminished and much less brilliantine was used (goodbye Glostora and Wildroot, with all the drawings by Abel Quezada). Deodorants were now sticks and not in bottles, like the old Mum, and the double-edged razor was replaced by the single-edged razor with a vulture beak. Nobody used sock bras anymore (which some daring women, like Antonia Mora, the author of *Del oficio* , considered "very sexy").

The capital was already a city with everything, or almost everything, but nightlife was still restricted to the Uruchurtian "dead line" of one in the morning; yes, there

were restaurants with all kinds of food (although the Japanese had not yet arrived, the Chinese restaurants on Dolores Street were the best). Speaking of food, among the onslaughts of the "gringo wave" was the total naturalization, in the cities, of hot dogs, hamburgers, sandwiches, pancakes, etc. In addition, American-style "supermarkets" were already proliferating: aseptic and dehumanized, which arrived from the mid-fifties. And yet, in the midst of all that, the taco was still standing, increasingly powerful and omnipresent, beyond social classes. In the sixties, the taco al charcoal would become fashionable, usually with grilled onions, whether it was steak, rib or chop. They cost one peso (al pastor tacos cost fifty cents during the Lopez Mateo era). Pulque, on the other hand, was on the way out, losing more and more prestige among the middle class and persisting only in the pages of *La Familia Burrón* . Among people with means, whiskey had completely displaced cognac. Those who could not afford the 100 pesos that a good whiskey cost could buy a bottle of Castillo rum for 25 pesos, much more popular at the time than Bacardi. If not, there was Oso Negro vodka or Gilbey's gin. Almost no one drank brandy, and the Cuba Libre was entering its heyday. The most popular cigars were Raleighs, with or without a filter; blond tobacco had just consolidated itself in popular taste (Belmonts were still around). Among the dark cigars, the Delicados (or Delincuentes) reigned, but there were also the Del Prado (or Del Pasto), the Alas (or Alacranes), Casinos, Elegantes and Negritos, all of them "flowers of scaffolding", although the Faros, Carmencitas, Tigres and others were becoming legendary. Almost no one made their own leaf cigars anymore. By the way, López Mateos smoked Elegantes.

The students created problems because, in the early sixties, there were no longer enough secondary schools, and every year the number of students rejected by the high schools, which were almost all in the first class, increased. The young right-wingers of the Movimiento Universitario de Renovada Orientación ( MURO ) continued their nefarious activities, and the thugs had already become established in the schools, who no longer only cheered on the American football teams but received money from university officials or government politicians to break up genuine student movements by means of brutality and barbarism. The thugs and the strong young men of the Pentatlón, in the course of a few years, gave rise to one of the worst vices of the system: the "halcones" or groups of young people coldly prepared to form paramilitary shock groups.

# 5. The End of the Dream (1964-1970)

## The Ring Without Ropes

*La semana de colores (which contains the now classic story "It's the Tlaxcalans' Fault")* had appeared , and Gustavo Díaz Ordaz took possession of the Mexican presidency while López Mateos retired home to nurse his devastating migraines.

Díaz Ordaz apparently found favorable conditions. The economic problems did not seem so pressing and the new president continued orthodoxly the "stabilizing development" of the two previous regimes; therefore, there were no more problems with the businessmen, since they knew that the president was made to measure. Nor was there the climate of worker insurgency that alarmed the system during the end of the Ruizcortinismo and the beginning of the López Mateos government; worker control was strong and, except for some inveterate rebels, the stability of the regime was an indisputable reality. The problems with the United States were minimal, except for the issue of fishing rights on the coasts, but this took time to become more acute. In addition, our country had already appeared in the world and was beginning to be noticed. The balance of payments inevitably caused problems, but credits from abroad flowed punctually because "there was confidence in Mexico," which filled the regime with pride. The middle class grew in the cities. It was said that there was democracy, since governments were elected and there were also the opposition parties PAN , PARM and PPS , which, after the reforms of the electoral law by López Mateos, already had representation in Congress. It was said that there was full freedom and respect for human rights ("except for the freedom to attack freedoms") and not much attention was paid to the guerrilla in the state of Guerrero, or to issues such as authoritarianism, paternalism and censorship, since all of that, apparently, was part of the idiosyncrasy and way of being. In Mexico, a unique, "mixed" system had been found, with its own path and its own solutions. Ecological issues and overpopulation did not seem alarming. There was even talk of the "Mexican miracle, the pride of the nation in the eyes of the world."

However, although stability and social peace through beatings were indisputable facts, the development model was rapidly deteriorating at that time, although only a few people could perceive this, those who throughout the Lopez Mateo era spoke of urgent social changes. These people did not swallow, for example, the question of the

"mixed" system, which claimed to be a fair medium between capitalism and socialism; in reality it was a concerted coexistence between private capitalism and state capitalism. Little by little people realized that democracy in Mexico was more formal than anything else, and that the political system was anything but democratic: the president, through the official party, had absolute control of all the mechanisms of power, and only the business sector had the resources to modify its criteria. But in December 1964 the understanding between private initiative and government was almost total. A multitude of problems were growing without anyone trying to contain them: poverty in the countryside, emigration to the big cities and to the United States, ecological devastation, rampant overpopulation, increasing dependence on the United States and on Mexican private enterprise, addiction to foreign debt, distorted industrialization and, of course, an unfair distribution of wealth. As if that were not enough, life goals and world views were becoming exhausted, rigid, and increasingly generating greater discontent among some sectors of society, especially middle-class youth.

However, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz did not seem worried. Without hesitation, he considered that the development model was the correct one, so he did not seek any kind of modifications. His cabinet reflected this: Antonio Ortiz Mena, a star of finance in the previous six-year term, repeated his position as Secretary of the Treasury; Luis Echeverría, who had served his boss so well and is now president, took charge of the Interior; Agustín Yáñez, a novelist, occupied the Public Education portfolio; Antonio Padilla Segura went to Communications, and Ernesto Uruchurtu repeated his position as "regency" of Mexico City. Finally, the strategic Secretary of the Presidency was occupied by Emilio Martínez Manautou. Carlos A. Madrazo remained in charge of the PRI , who from the beginning stated that he would carry out a democratization of the official party, especially in terms of the selection of candidates. Madrazo was a "vehement speaker," says Elias Chavez of *Proceso* magazine , and he hinted that the "finger pointing" was coming to an end. "We are not going to appoint candidates," he said, "the party members will do it; we will work in the light of day; we will stick to obeying the popular will." He also wanted to get rid of those from the PRI who denigrated the revolution with their conduct and who "do not live off the sweat of their brow, but off the sweat of the one across the way." He promised that he would fight to ensure that officials stick to their immediate duties, because "the best business in politics is not to make a business out of it."

Madrazo did not look favorably on a project presented by the revolutionary-from-the-interior Enrique Ramírez y Ramírez, Miguel Covián Pérez and others. The idea was to obtain the reelection of the deputies for one consecutive time; the senators, of course, would have to remain faithful to the dogma of non-reelection. On December 27, 1964, Congress, led by Alfonso Martínez Domínguez, and with the approval of the president, of course, approved the project, after an intense discussion. Madrazo and many others believed that this was the first step to allow the reelection of the president and proceeded to work to overturn the already approved modification to article 59 of the constitution. In the IV Ordinary National Assembly, at the end of April 1965,

Madrazo fought head-on the reelection of the deputies and shortly after managed to have the project rejected, which brought him the animosity of many politicians. Madrazo's problems continued: shortly afterward, the governor of Sinaloa, Leopoldo Sánchez Celis, wanted to impose several of his friends in the mayoralties of Culiacán and Rosario. This went directly against Madrazo's democratizing aspirations, who immediately annulled the "internal elections" to prevent the governor's friends from being named candidates. However, Sánchez Celis, surely with Díaz Ordaz's approval, took up the fight and enabled his favorites as independent candidates and then rigged the elections so that they would beat his own party!

Madrazo looked very bad after this. It was evident that the support he received from above was crumbling, even though by then many young militants were enthusiastic about the democratizing air, as was the case of Gonzalo Martínez Corbalá, president of the PRI of the DF , and of several members of the PRI youth, such as Carlos Reta Martínez. Madrazo was also not pleased that the Lions Club of Mexico City joined the PRI en masse , with the approval of the leader of the Senate Manuel Moreno Moreno, who, as Elías Chávez also writes, did not clarify whether the lions "would form part of the peasant, popular or working class sector, or if the leonine or feline sector would be created." The leader of the Senate, however, stated that the Lions Clubs were "a public institution as rooted in the feelings and in the heart of the people as is the Senate of the Republic."

By the second half of 1965, Madrazo had many governors, caciques, leaders, deputies and senators against him, who were trying to oust him from the PRI . In November, Madrazo had to swallow his attempts at democratization and President Díaz Ordaz asked him to resign. Madrazo resigned and was out of the national scene. During the 1968 riots, it was rumored that he was financing the "subversion of the students" and later, when he died in an accident, the rumors were that he had been assassinated. The new president of the PRI was Lauro Ortega, who arrived with instructions to cut off all hope of democratization. Therefore, he dismissed Gonzalo Martínez Corbalá from the PRI in the DF without warning . This led to the resignation from the PRI youth of Rodolfo Echeverría Ruiz, nephew of Luis Echeverría, and of Manuel Camacho Solís and Patricio Chirinos, who would rise to the top in 1988 with Carlos Salinas de Gortari.

In 1965, President Díaz Ordaz finally got fed up with Uruchurtu having governed the capital since 1952 and dismissed him; he appointed Alfonso Corona del Rosal, also a former leader of the ruling party, in his place. The well-known chaperoned revolutionary brought in Rodolfo González Guevara, his right-hand man and, years later, also the "democratizer" of the PRI . By then, the president had absolute discipline from the people of the system. With the noisy Carlos A. Madrazo out of the way, Díaz Ordaz enjoyed immense presidential power and gave generous gifts to whomever he liked. In his book *Los presidentes* , Julio Scherer García recounts that, on the eve of a long trip through South America, he asked the president to intercede so that he could meet with several heads of state. "With great pleasure," replied Díaz Ordaz, and not only did

he comply with the offer, but through Emilio Martínez Manautou he sent Scherer an envelope that "could be useful later" and that he was to open when the plane had taken off. "I tore the envelope open," Scherer García recounts, "it was heating up hundred-dollar bills." Scherer refused to accept it and the secretary of the Presidency warned him: "You will offend the president, your friend."

Julio Scherer García also says that Díaz Ordaz ("rarely drank. I never saw him smoke. He was skeletal and sharp") confided to him that the difference between the Ministry of the Interior and the presidency of the Republic consisted of "the ropes," and clarified that "the Secretary of the Interior fights in a ring protected by ropes"; on the other hand, the president "fights in a ring without ropes; if he falls, he falls into the void." Díaz Ordaz also offered Scherer a dozen shirts, "hand-embroidered, carefully crafted," made to measure and with Peking silk by Sulka, of London, and with the initials of the lucky owner. Scherer also adds that President Díaz Ordaz occasionally joked about his ugliness, but that "if someone played along, his anger exploded."

The people, who could not know anything about high politics due to the impenetrable secrecy of the system, only noticed Díaz Ordaz's undeniable ugliness. They called him the Mandril, the Chango, the Trumpudo, the Hocicón, the Monster of Laguna Prieta and so on.

But Díaz Ordaz's personality was clearly revealed that year when eight thousand resident doctors from five hospitals in Mexico City and 48 states began a strike movement seeking improvements in their working conditions. The strike affected the official health centers of the IMSS , SSA and ISSSTE . The young doctors were terrified to discover that working for the government (or the private sector) meant falling into exploitation and unlimited discomfort, and so they went on strike and held demonstrations so that the president would hear them and the people would learn of their demands. Díaz Ordaz heard them so well that he immediately proceeded to repress and crush the movement, with the authoritarianism and taste for violence that he displayed as Secretary of the Interior. Soon the doctors had to retreat and the people knew from then on what the new executive's methods of dissuasion would be. A year later, in response to student problems at the Nicolaíta University in Morelia, the president ordered the army to invade the campus and subdue by force and imprison the complainants, among whom was the rector Eli de Gortari. The same thing happened in 1967, when student conflicts occurred at the University of Sonora.

Many people continued to talk about revolution, as in the period of López Mateos, and Genaro Vázquez Rojas did so with weapons in hand on the Costa Grande of Guerrero while eluding the army and receiving the support of the peasants. In 1965, in addition to Lucio Cabañas's group, a guerrilla group emerged in Chihuahua, which, in the style of Fidel Castro, on September 23 attacked the military barracks in Ciudad Madera; the assault failed, but in time gave rise to the appearance of the September 23 Communist League, famous in the seventies. All these manifestations of discontent, together with countercultural discontent, culminated in the summer of 1968.

But in 1965 there were other things of concern. For example, the participation of foreign capital, which through the large transnationals already dominated strategic sectors of industrial activity: 48 percent of the 50 companies that obtained the largest gross production in the country were totally or partially controlled by foreign capital. And wealth continued to be concentrated in a few hands: 1.5 percent of the 136 thousand industrial establishments controlled 77 percent of the investment, and the 407 largest companies (barely 0.3 percent) owned 46 percent of the total invested capital.

To alleviate this situation, Díaz Ordaz relied, like all the governments of the Revolution, on foreign policy. That year, the United States sent its *marines* to the Dominican Republic with impunity to eliminate the newly elected government, and Díaz Ordaz immediately condemned the invasion. At least personally, the president was not a fan of the United States; he told Julio Scherer García: "There is no true Mexican who would not like to settle the outstanding accounts with the United States. The gringos accept our insults. They don't like them, but they don't go beyond that." However, during his term, Díaz Ordaz allowed American capital to continue to appropriate key areas of the national economy.

In April 1965, the big gossip was spread by Marx's old wolf Vicente Lombardo Toledano, who, at 71 years of age, enthusiastically married María Teresa Puente, much younger than him. Lombardo died a little later, in 1969, and the political class was shocked, because the founder of the PPS was a determining figure in an entire era in Mexico. Another who gave priority to very mature passion was President Díaz Ordaz himself, who at that time was maintaining a fierce affair with the singer Irma Serrano, famous for her lack of inhibition in showing her breasts and for her fondness for witchcraft and other "black arts." By the way, it was also rumored that Díaz Ordaz was addicted to witch doctors, but, apparently, none of them predicted the bitterness that would come upon him later.

The social columns did not mention this. But in 1965, Mexico launched two new newspapers: the movie magnate Gabriel Alarcón started *El Heraldo de México* , whose great innovation was color photographs and offset printing. The social pages of *El Heraldo* , with Nicolás Sánchez Osorio, became fashionable among the rich Mexicans who casually admitted to being called "los cuic." *El Heraldo* also gave wide forums to Raúl Velasco, who managed the entertainment section with Guillermo Vázquez Villalobos. Curiously, this newspaper, which from the beginning was characterized by a not exactly very refined right-wing stance, gave strong support to rock music in its entertainment section, which was generally banned in all media. The writers Juan Tovar and Parménides García Saldaña paved the way for the diffusion of rock and roll from 1967 onwards.

For his part, Colonel García Valseca, owner of a huge chain of "Soles" newspapers throughout the republic, also started *El Sol de México , also printing in color,* with the same provincial criteria with which he worked in the interior, so that the new *Sol* never penetrated the already very cosmopolitan world of Mexico City. Journalist Carlos Loret de Mola, by the way, implied that García Valseca could not read; at least,

he never saw him do so, since someone always read aloud to him what his newspapers published.

In 1965, the "active" schools appeared. The first was the Manuel Bartolomé de Cosío, which established a new sensitivity with democratic assemblies, the use of informal address to teachers and a broader sense of freedom.

In the middle of the year, Gustavo Sainz became a superstar with the publication of *Gazapo* , which showed the maturation process of a young man who breaks away from paternalism and conventionality to advance on his own. Of course, but nobody noticed it at the time, something similar was happening in the country, whose young population was rapidly breaking free from old molds and forming a new nation. In addition to *Gazapo* , another indisputable literary success was Salvador Elizondo with his hallucinatory and disturbing novel *Farabeuf* , which, immersed in the most definitive intellectuality, at the same time meant a break-continuity in "cultured" literature through its mystical-perverse theme. Vicente Leñero continued the most intricate experiments with his splendid novel *Estudio Q* , and Ricardo Garibay dealt very well with the theme of the death of the father in *Beber un cáliz* . All these books were published by Joaquín Mortiz. The Era publishing house, in turn, presented the extraordinary study by Pablo González Casanova *Democracy in Mexico* , and *The Phenomenology of Relaxation* , by Jorge Portilla. In poetry, the best were *Harvest of the Minstrel* , by Marco Antonio Montes de Oca, and *I am the Other* , by Sergio Mondragón.

In the world of books, the biggest scandal was *The Children of Sanchez* , by the American anthropologist Oscar Lewis. This scholar had already reported on the life of a poor family from Tepoztlán, Morelos, in *Anthropology of Poverty* . Lewis followed the family, who like many others emigrated to the capital, and with a wise use of the tape recorder left us stupefied by revealing the ways of life, or "culture of poverty," in Tepito. The Mexican Society of Geography and Statistics was outraged by what it considered "distortions of national reality," and initiated a lawsuit in the Supreme Court against the book, published by the Fondo de Cultura Económica. President Díaz Ordaz then fired Arnaldo Orfila Reynal, who had directed the Fondo since the late 1940s. The intellectual community, and specifically the two floors of the mafia, demonstrated against Orfila's dismissal, and then a very important event for the life of the country took place. Orfila and the intellectuals who supported him did not resign themselves to the presidential decision but rather resisted by calling on the public to buy shares in a new publishing company. The people supported the project without reservation, Elena Poniatowska gave away her house to Gabriel Mancera and thus Siglo XXI Editores was born, which published its first titles in 1966. Meanwhile, the trial against *Los hijos de Sánchez* took place and finally the Supreme Court issued a ruling in favor of the book and its open circulation in the national territory. Since the "new" Fondo de Cultura, directed by Salvador Azuela, no longer wanted to continue publishing it, Joaquín Mortiz did so and certainly made a lot of money with Lewis's work.

The artistic life also became lively with the 1st Experimental Film Competition organized by the Union of Workers in Film Production ( STPC ). The competition showed that Mexican cinema had reached a pestilential nadir, and also that new concepts about filmmaking were proliferating. The idea of "inspiring films" (some said they were "halitosis-inducing") such as *Viento negro* by Servando González, was useless; this type of production was the State's "project" to dignify cinematography, since there was nothing to do with private producers. Therefore, the STPC competition was well attended and stimulating. First place went to a very notable film, *La Fórmula Secreta* , directed by photographer Rubén Gámez based on a script by Juan Rulfo. Juan José Gurrola, Juan Ibáñez, José Luis Ibáñez, Salomón Láiter and Héctor Mendoza also stood out in the competition.

The latter, for his part, contributed to the renewal of the staging with his refreshing and imaginative treatment of *Don Gil de las calzas verdes* , staged at Ciudad Universitaria with actors who even skated around the stage. Héctor Mendoza had debuted in 1954 with a highly successful piece, *Las cosas simples* , one of the most popular works of the time along with *Cada quien su vida* , by Luis G. Basurto. But in the sixties, Mendoza moved into theatre direction and soon became legendary as a theatre teacher, along with Luisa Josefina Hernández and Emilio Carballido. With Héctor Mendoza, Gurrola, Jodorowsky, the Ibáñez brothers and Héctor Azar (who later staged the splendid *Juego de escarnios* ), Mexican theatre already had a solid and brilliant group of directors.

STPC film competition , in 1966 the Banco Cinematográfico held a competition for scripts and plots, which also attracted the interest and enthusiasm of many people. On that occasion, the winners were Carlos Fuentes and Juan Ibáñez with *Los caifanes* , which in 1967 was filmed and released to great success with the public and critics. *Los caifanes* also featured a great group of actors who would stand out in the seventies: Sergio Jiménez, Ernesto Gómez Cruz, Eduardo López Rojas and the folk singer Óscar Chávez. The film's protagonist, Julissa, daughter of Rita Macedo, also demonstrated that she could move from vile commercialism to more appreciable work. For her part, Angélica María, a youth idol like few others, also began a turn from easy commercialism to less conventional work, as in the successful film *Cinco de chocolate y uno de fresa* , which was also a great box office success. The director of this film was Carlos Velo, who also made a version of *Pedro Páramo* , by Juan Rulfo. The script, by Carlos Fuentes and Velo himself, was so clear that it took away the poetic mystery of the story, but the worst mistake of the film was to cast the dull American actor John Gavin as Pedro Páramo!, who years later would become known in Mexico through sinister commercials and finally as a very annoying ambassador of the United States.

By then the commotion at the shows was the presence of the Spanish singer Raphael, who managed to gather hordes of fans, made up of some teenagers, many women with a grim air and numerous elderly gentlemen who were enthusiastic about the mannerisms of this extremely mediocre singer but owner of an undeniable charisma. Another Spaniard who attracted enormous attention at that time was the bullfighter El

Cordobés, who scandalized bullfighting fans with his unorthodox tricks and his noisy personality. Paco Camino was also in the limelight, along with Manolo Martínez.

PRI president and already with a reputation as a "decapitator of democratizers," in April 1966 came up with the idea that the PRI should add a "business sector." Given the poverty of the popular and peasant sectors, and the rigid control of the workers' sector (Fidel Velázquez continued to be reelected, punctually, every four years), many people considered that the businessmen were the true masters and lords of the official party, so why the formality of granting them a "sector"? But Lauro Ortega was serious, and, therefore, in Morelia, Toluca and Tepic, he continued to speak of the need for the new PRI sector; "the men of private initiative," he said with his terrifying use of language, "can no longer be said to be reactionaries. Now they are present in the ranks of the Party of the Revolution and add their efforts to those made by peasants, workers and people of the popular sector." The jokes continued and the old guard militants were scandalized, so Lauro Ortega, and President Díaz Ordaz after him, had to back down. All this ultimately reflected the golden age of business-government harmony, which in those pre-68 years was reaching its zenith. The labor leaders, who served the interests of capital so well, in any case, when making public statements, could not accept any of this. Fidel Velázquez then declared that the very idea of incorporating businessmen into the PRI implied "distorting its doctrine and its mission."

The labor leaders, on the other hand, in 1966 dismantled the old Workers' Unity Bloc ( BUO ) and, in its place, devised a new center of mass support and support for the government: the Labor Congress, which incorporated, "now yes," all the most important confederations, federations and industrial unions, except for those misguided ones who continued to talk about "freedom for political prisoners" or, worse still, revolution. The Labor Congress tried to give a cleaner image to the labor leaders, but in practice it did not represent much of what the very sad BUO already was .

In May 1966, the Azteca Stadium was inaugurated with a game between America and Torino of Italy. More than 100,000 people were there. President Díaz Ordaz arrived late and the crowd greeted him with loud and prolonged booing. But that was nothing compared to the booing and repudiation that was directed at President De la Madrid 20 years later.

In Congress, meanwhile, the deputies entertained themselves by discussing whether the name of Francisco Villa should be inscribed, with its proper Golden Letters, in the columns that group the names of the great stars of the country. The speeches for and against resorted to all kinds of arguments, and behind them the most diverse interests were hidden. Vicente Salgado Páez, of the PRI , for example, said: "So we have that next to the glorious name of Emiliano Zapata appears that of Venustiano Carranza, when we know that Carranza's people killed Zapata; then we have Obregón, who sacrificed Carranza. Now we will put Villa in there too." In effect, the regimes of the Revolution had achieved the miracle (no less spectacular than that of developmentalism) that any person, symbol or important idea in the history of Mexico was eventually capitalized by the PRI , even if it was a matter of aberrant contradictions, such as those pointed out by

Salgado Páez. The PRI already had the eagle and the serpent, the Virgin of Guadalupe, the colors of the flag, Cuauhtémoc and Cortés, Hidalgo-Morelos-Guerrero-Iturbide-Juárez-Díaz-Madero-Carranza-Obregón-Zapata and Annexes, so why not good old Pancho Villa too? The enamored Lombardo Toledano took charge of reconciling things and then the vote took place: by 168 votes in favor and 16 against, Pancho Villa left behind his status as a bandit who frightens Americans and became a stern father of the country.

In 1966, rector Ignacio Chávez was unable to complete his second term at the head of UNAM due to a strike over regularization courses and exams. He was succeeded by Javier Barros Sierra, and the University Student Council was created, made up of young people from the Communist Party ( PCM ) and the PRI , who, with a general strike, obtained automatic passage and the disappearance of the security force. A year later, Barros Sierra made a name for himself by expelling the MURO counselors and the UNAM officials who were supporting them. The overcrowding of the National University was already chronic and reflected the very low esteem that the PRI government gave to education. Little by little, Mexico was placed on the list of countries that invested the least in educational matters, and young people resented this and demonstrated against it. In the past, young people with "political concerns" used to assault buses in protest against rising transport prices, but in the mid-sixties, students were concerned that the system only allowed the development of the rich who could afford private higher education (the Iberoamericana and La Salle universities already existed, the ultra-elitist Anáhuac was about to open, and the Monterrey group of technological institutions were expanding and becoming stronger) or the middle class with the influence to gain admission to public schools. This destroyed the elaborate myth of the poor youth who studies during the day, works at night, graduates with great sacrifice and conquers the world.

The world of young people reappeared in literature, and *De perfil* , by José Agustín, expanded the space opened by *La tumba* and *Gazapo* . Eduardo Lizalde published *Cada cosa es Babel* , and José Emilio Pacheco, *El resto del fuego* . But the most eagerly awaited book of 1966 was *José Trigo* , by Fernando del Paso. For several years there had been talk that Del Paso had written an exceptional novel, a kind of "Mexican Ulysses," and soon Del Paso's highly anticipated novel opened the literature collection of the recently created Editorial Siglo XXI. Juan Rulfo and Juan José Arreola enthusiastically endorsed this book, which accumulated praise, the Villaurrutia prize, and good sales. For their part, the novels for young people (to which *Pasto verde* , by Parménides García Saldaña, was soon added) also gave enormous importance to language, but with an entertaining and youthful ludicism. They were considered part of an anti-solemn current in culture. These novels could be seen as a kind of verbal rock and roll in that they established a bridge between high culture and popular culture. They represented a substantial change in the narrative due to their countercultural charge, which, for the critic Emmanuel Carballo, "between laughter and jokes, put explosive charges on national institutions: the Church, the family, the government." For young people, they

represented a "sentimental education," a sign of identity, an expression of themselves and the awareness that they should be protagonists and not mere spectators; young people were beginning to realize that life in Mexico was too small for them: it was too formalistic, paternalistic-authoritarian, prejudiced and hypocritical, with moral criteria worthy of the Middle Ages that rapidly wore down the Catholic faith, with goals that were too materialistic and shrouded in corruption. The so-called "generation gap" had opened a terrible distance between young people and adults, which, in turn, brought new phenomena that altered the social landscape.

Curiously, one of these new samples of reality had in part sprouted up in the world of the Indians. In the 1950s, the millionaire mycologist R. Gordon Wasson "discovered" Mexican hallucinogens and traveled to Oaxaca to have Maria Sabina put him in conversation with God through "a soul-shattering event," as Wasson described his experience with *Mexican psylocibe* . Wasson took samples of the Oaxacan mushrooms to Albert Hoffmann, the chemist who discovered LSD , and he analyzed them and laid the groundwork for their synthesis. Meanwhile, in the United States, the government and the army carried out experiments with hallucinogenic drugs for military purposes, and several academics were also interested in the psychic effects provided by hallucinogenic plants and the synthesized products that triggered the same effects ("entheogenics," Wasson called them). It was through these paths that writer Ken Kesey and psychologists Timothy Leary, Richard Alpert and Ralph Metzner, who were fired from Harvard University for experimenting with hallucinogens, came to psychedelia. Between anthropologists and ethnobotanists like Wasson, Roger Heim, Albert Hoffmann, Peter T. Furst, Weston La Barre, Gutierre Tibón; writers like Ken Kesey and Aldous Huxley, and "drop-out" psychologists like Leary and company, the Mexican lands were highly visited but now to consume the psychedelic flora: hallucinatory mushrooms of various kinds, ololiuqui or virgin seeds and peyote, to mention only the best known. *Life magazine* dedicated an extensive report to Huautla and María Sabina.

Leary and Kesey largely generated the hippies, who, like their psycho-pomps, began to invade Mexico quietly but persistently. Over time, the hippies were considered a very important manifestation of the counterculture characteristic of the second half of the sixties. Rock was their natural vehicle of expression, especially since 1966, when the forms and themes of this music were substantially modified, which ceased to be a mere emotional release to become a source of awareness and a countercultural complex. The *weltans-chauung* of the hippies implied a profound mystical-esoteric, Christian and orientalist, visionary and psychological religiosity. Marijuana became the common drug and the hippie tended to circulate in many places, in the "role". American hippies traveled around Mexico in search of places of spectacular natural beauty and far from so-called civilization (although, of course, they were equipped with the high technology that rock is based on). Thus they arrived in Cabo San Lucas, Puerto Vallarta, Acapulco, Oaxaca and its beaches, Tepoztlán, Palenque, San Cristóbal de Las Casas, and settled there. Very soon a Mexican counterpart began to form, "the first genera-

tion of Americans born in Mexico," as Carlos Monsiváis called it, who also wore long hair, untidy clothes and a hallucinogenic communion with nature; however, Mexican hippies identified themselves with the Indians, since they, for centuries before, had a very sophisticated culture regarding hallucinogenic plants and the cartography of interior spaces that were just beginning to be explored on a massive scale. Thus, the hippies wore sandals, cotton sandals, cotton shirts, necklaces and pendants, colorful bracelets, and so on. They consciously repudiated the negative fruits of Western civilization and showed it through their appearance and in the expression of ideas and "doctrines." In Mexico, the hippie became, as Enrique Marroquín states in *La contracultura como protesta* , a jipiteca, and in addition to the appreciation for indigenous culture (which had not occurred since the time of Diego Rivera), he soon formed his own language, which was strongly nourished by prison slang, popular expressions, and which launched numerous terms (later called the language of the wave), sometimes just to play with words, but on other occasions, most of them, to refer to phenomena, perceptions, modes of communication or states of mind that had no equivalent in the common Castilian-Mexican language.

In their epicurean return to nature, the hippies held very open moral criteria; they knew they were "outside the law", outside of society, and they advocated freedom in all its forms: "do what you want", they said; other very famous slogans were "Peace and love", "Turn on, tune in and free yourself". They sought to change society through the expansion of consciousness and the broadening of perception; the change was internal, individual, but also social because the hippie sought to "turn on" other individualities, which would bring about social change. Naturally, it was a movement that never managed to articulate itself clearly and rather shared a diversity of stimuli without reflecting too much on them, since the other side of the hippie was hedonistic, the conquest of pleasure, play and a reasonable laziness. They were too busy with the adventures of the mind to put their ideas in order. In aspiring to a transformation of society under a complex of cultural nature, the hippies placed themselves in utopian terrain, but utopias excited them, which denoted the romantic naivety typical of a youth movement. However, they expressed themselves loudly despite the growing hostility and undoubtedly left traces and themes of reflection that remained pending for a time, perhaps because of the prematureness of their approach.

From the beginning, the hippies undertook pilgrimages to Huautla or the peyote regions accompanied by strong doses of rock. From the beginning, they were also rejected. Mexican society, as in the United States, was scandalized by the horror of the long-haired-unshaven men and tried to stop them as best they could. Massive doses of repudiation were injected through the media and the authorities began a real hunt that over time began to populate the country's prisons, especially the Palais Noir in Lecumberri, which in addition to its famous political prisoners now had massive prisoners, also political even if it didn't seem so. Rock, for its part, was also curtailed as much as possible (except for chewing, which did not offend good consciences, and that year the television program "Orfeón a Go Go" on Channel 5 was very successful),

but there were still good groups, such as Bátiz, the Love Army, the Dug Dugs, Peace and Love, Sinners, the Tequila and the Three Souls in my Mind.

In 1967, the hippie epidemic began to grow among middle-class youth and the popular strata of the cities. But the big event was that Mexico had won the 1968 Olympics, and the Díaz Ordaz government was strutting about what was considered a foreign endorsement of the Mexican Revolutionary regime and of the president in particular. Naturally, Díaz Ordaz would go all out and the Olympics would be "unforgettable", "flower carpets will be laid out all the way to the main square to welcome visitors", it was said. Paternalistically, "good behavior" was requested from the people in general, so that "the eyes of the whole world would see the peace and stability of the Mexican people". The preparations would include a "cultural Olympiad"; Numerous international artists, such as Claudio Arrau and Leonard Bernstein, visited our country, and sculptors from different countries presented works (nothing exceptional, by the way, generally of unimaginative abstraction) that were placed along the "Olympic route" in the southern part of the Periférico in Mexico City. The cultural Olympiad later extended to the ruins of Teotihuacán, where a light and sound show was held with text by Salvador Novo (who, by the way, won the National Prize for Literature in 1967 and in 1968 the street in Coyoacan where he lived was named after him). A festival of mural paintings made by children was also held (a thousand times better than the sculptures on the Periférico). Finally, the slogan "Everything is possible in peace" was launched, with which the regime had just exalted itself without the slightest trace of self-awareness. The slogan, on the other hand, became an immense sarcasm after the Tlatelolco massacre. But before that October 2nd that could not be forgotten, Tlatelolco was famous because in the modern Foreign Relations Tower of the Plaza de las Tres Culturas, President Díaz Ordaz culminated a minimal attempt to obtain a certain international prestige through the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America, which was better known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Fourteen lazy Latin American countries, incapable of any atomic dream, signed this agreement without hesitation, but other important countries of the continent, such as the United States, Argentina, Cuba and Brazil, refused to sign it, so the pacifist effectiveness of the Treaty of Tlatelolco was rather rhetorical.

At that time, Father Gregorio Lemercier scandalized the Catholic world because he and his monks underwent psychoanalysis in his monastery in Cuernavaca. Both the Mexican Curia and the Vatican leadership were terribly offended, since for them Lemercier's precedent implied leaving the Church in the hands of Freud. Of course, they forbade his perverse psychoanalytic practices, and Lemercier had to renounce his habits. The Catholic world suddenly knew that things were changing irreversibly, if it had not already noticed in March 1965, when practicing Catholics who went to mass for the first time in their lives saw that the priest officiated facing forward, no longer with his back turned, and that the mass was also in Spanish, since Latin was finally a dead language after more than two thousand years. The Mexican people were mostly Catholic, but the advance of Protestantism was increasingly visible. For decades it had been viciously

and fanatically fought by the Catholic Curia and at the beginning of the decade it had been equated with, horrifyingly, communism ("this is a decent home, communist or Protestant propaganda is not allowed," could be read on the stickers on many houses). The old cults, such as Baptist, Evangelical, Anglican, Adventist and others, had been consolidated as legitimate religious minorities, but the advance of fanatical sects such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons and other bellicose variants that advanced unhindered among the peasants of Morelos, Puebla and Oaxaca was also notable. The path had been opened and fertilized by the Summer Institute of Linguistics ( SIL ), which arrived in Mexico at the end of the 1930s, admitted by the Cárdenas government, to translate the Protestant Bible into the different Indian languages. Incidentally, it was an SIL missionary-translator who warned R. Gordon Wasson of the existence of hallucinatory mushrooms in the mountains of Oaxaca. The nefarious Dianetics was beginning among the urban middle class. And, stimulated by hippies, numerous esoteric or theosophical groups were emerging. All of this represented alternative paths for people's religiosity, and were conclusive signs of the loss of effectiveness of the Catholic Church as a safeguard of the psychological equilibrium of the people.

Cuernavaca was in fashion. In addition to Father Lemercier's monastery, Bishop Sergio Méndez Arceo attracted attention there. He embodied the other side of the crisis of the Church: liberation theology; the participation of priests in popular movements and the return to identification with the needs of the poorest. The Red Bishop, as Margarita Michelena called Méndez Arceo, was increasingly becoming an authentic force in the political life of the country, in opposition to the old ultra-reactionary groups that controlled the Church. In addition to the rebel priests Lemercier and Méndez Arceo, in Cuernavaca there was also Iván Illich, a wise religious man, educator, with an extraordinary mind; Erich Fromm, very popular at the time, and Merle Oberon, the actress from *Wuthering Heights* and a shining star of the jet-set, which was dense in Cuernavaca. David Alfaro Siqueiros set up his studio there, ready to receive presidents. The legend of Malcolm Lowry and *Under the Volcano grew.*

In 1967, the anthologies published by Empresas Editoriales attracted attention: the one on *19th Century Mexican Poetry* by José Emilio Pacheco and the one on *20th Century Mexican Poetry* by Carlos Monsiváis; the one on *20th Century Mexican Stories* and the *19 Protagonists of Mexican Literature* by Emmanuel Carballo, as well as the collection of articles by Salvador Novo published as *Life in Mexico* (during the presidential terms of Lázaro Cárdenas, Manuel Ávila Camacho and Miguel Alemán). Octavio Paz published *Blanco* ; José Carlos Becerra, *Relación de los hechos* ; Rubén Bonifaz Nuño, *Siete de espadas* ; and Homero Aridjis, *Persephone* . In prose, Carlos Fuentes published *Cambio de piel* , one of his most ambitious works and with moments of brilliance. *The Mafia* , by Luis Guillermo Piazza, tried to cement the mythification of the literary group of the same name, but instead it meant its epitaph, because from then on the mafia lost control of the cultural life of the country, since this began to diversify to the point that it was no longer possible for a single group to encompass it in its entirety. René Avilés Fabila was less wrong in this respect, who in *Los juegos*

carried out a virulent satire against the mafia and cultural life in general. Vicente Leñero concluded his fascinating literary experiments with *El garabato* , and José Emilio Pacheco wrote *Morirás lejos* , a sober and complex novel on the question of the Jews and absolute evil. All these books manifested a true effervescence in Mexican narrative. Young people were now a fashionable topic. The editors of Diógenes, Rafael Giménez Siles and Emmanuel Carballo, opened an elaborate contest for first novels: the one with the most reviews, the most sales, and the most votes from readers who had the patience to fill out and mail in the book's detachable page would win. *Pasto verde* , by Parménides García Saldaña, was undoubtedly the most important novel of the whole group; it was a cathartic, anarchic text, the lucidity of madness, as well as a meticulous dissection of the urban middle class and what was already known as la onda: the very visible movement of the Mexican hippies. In *El rey criollo* and in *Pasto verde* , Parménides (who significantly baptized his central character as Epicuro or "Epicrudo") left evidence of his condition as a minefield and of the sharpening of the times. Later, he became the eminence grise of the wave (the group Three Souls in my Mind, later El Tri, became the musical spokesperson for these young people). In 1967, of course, *One Hundred Years of Solitude appeared* , the prodigious masterpiece of Gabriel García Márquez, which took the *boom* to its peak and became a cause for rejoicing throughout Latin America and the rest of the world a little later. The success of this novel was instantaneous, overwhelming, overwhelming and created true "fans" who could recite it by heart. To succeed, it did not need publicity or promotion of any kind, but only the specific weight of its greatness.

In popular music, besides Raphael's success, the Sonora Santanera continued, now without Sonia López. The prominence of Eulalio González, Piporro, who in the middle of the decade filled the radio with his northern polkas and the very funny comments or mini-dialogues that he included in them, was fading. El Piporro had the virtue of placing the United States very well ("with the güeros you earn money but here you have to spend it, come to the border where you will really enjoy it"). His place was taken by the very different, not at all humorous, Cornelio Reyna, who, like El *Piporro* , was not only popular in Mexico, but also among the Chicanos of the American South. Chava Flores, in the capital, continued with his splendid humorous songs. In ranchera music, Vicente Fernández appeared, and Lucha Villa consolidated herself as a great interpreter. But the big breakthrough was that of Armando Manzanero, a Yucatecan composer of beautiful romantic songs ("Esta tarde vi llover") that spread rapidly throughout Mexico.

In sports, athletes were preparing for the Mexican Olympics, although no one had any hopes of the national team achieving great triumphs. In soccer, after Guadalajara's string of championships in the early and mid-sixties, Cruz Azul acquired the status of a great popular team at the end of the decade. Toluca also entered the competition hard. In boxing, the triumphs of José Becerra, who at the end of the fifties avenged Ratón Macías and won the world bantamweight championship, were still remembered. At the end of the sixties, fans were enthusiastic about José Medel and the Cuban Man-

tequilla Nápoles, who, like Pérez Prado, decided to become completely Mexicanized. In addition, from Tepito emerged Rubén Olivares, el Púas, who in the seventies, with his compadre el Famoso Gómez, gave much to talk about for his bellicosity as a fighter, for his unsurpassed verbal wit and for his social concern that even later led him to seek a seat in the Socialist Workers Party.

Under the impact of the counterculture, fashions changed rapidly and bordered on the extravagant. Women's skirts rose to unimaginable heights, and in 1969 girls had to wear underwear made of the same fabric as the ultra-miniskirt. With the latter, pantyhose became established. Women toned down their makeup a bit and wore straight hair with a middle part. Men abhorred glitter and wore three- or four-button suits, but then came the jackets without lapels, in the "early Beatles" style, or the Mao collar, Chinese style, generally accompanied by a medallion or pendant on the chest. Trousers were "bell-bottomed", some of them so large that they looked like flags. Men's hair, following the hippie impulse, grew and grew, despite the protests of conservatives; "Christ wore long hair," was a common response from the long-haired-but-not-hippies who hung out in the pink zone, or "zonaja," and read *Zona Rosa* , where stars of the moment such as Carlos Monsiváis and José Luis Cuevas collaborated.

In the Acapulco film reviews, you could see Sharon Tate up close with Roman Polanski (for speaking to them confidentially, Parménides García Saldaña was fired from *El Heraldo de México* ), Gina Lollobrigida, Sue Lyon and other international actresses who alternated with the nationals Silvia Pinal, Claudia Islas, Isela Vega or Mauricio Garcés, who discovered his prototype of a Mexican Don Juan in the film *Don Juan 67* , by Carlos Velo. Alejandro Jodorowsky presented his film *Fando y Lis* at the Fort of San Diego and offended the Mexican (or Mexinacos) producers who even asked that Article 33 of the Constitution be applied to him. Jodorowsky had already enlightened us with the works of Ionesco and Arrabal, and since he ran out of idols, he proceeded to write his own texts, such as his *ad hoc version* of *Así hablaba Zaratustra* , in which Isela Vega appeared naked and hieratic while saying thoughtful lines with her leading man at the time, Jorge Luke. The "uncovering" began. Jodorowsky also caused a sensation when, in front of the television cameras, he destroyed a piano with an axe. With Fernando Ge and Alfonso Arau he made a splendid rock program: *1,2,3,4,5 a gogó* (everything was "a gogó" at that time). On television, by the way, Jacobo Zabludovsky climbed positions.

In 1968, Joaquín Mortiz was already the publisher of the new literature, and it was said that President Díaz Ordaz was having family problems, not so much because of his fierce romance with Irma Serrano, la Tigresa, but because his youngest son, Alfredito, turned out to be a rock and roller. The tragedy of the poor-father-who-could-not-avoid-the-mockery-of-one-of-his-offspring-falling-so-low deserved the discreet commiseration of the men of the system, who were not so worried about the PAN winning municipal elections (as happened in Tijuana and Mexicali), because after all the regime had formidable makeup artists and could declare the annoying elections null, or the alchemists could simply transform defeats into victories so that "the balance of the

system would not be altered." Politicians were not worried about Genaro and Lucio's guerrilla in Guerrero, or about student conflicts like those in Michoacán, Sonora or Chihuahua, because it was known that the president "was very macho" and knew how to give the rebels what they deserved: beatings and jail. Rather, politicians were concerned that they would not lack tickets for the Olympic games and that the presidential succession was already close. The strongest "hidden" candidates were Emilio Martínez Manautou, Secretary of the Presidency; Antonio Ortiz Mena, from the Treasury, who was again on the list of those "in the know"; Alfonso Corona del Rosal, who, as city regent, took advantage of the construction of the subway to his advantage; and the Secretary of the Interior, Luis Echeverría, famous for taking Fidel Velázquez's dictum very seriously: "He who moves, does not appear in the photo." Echeverría was eager to guess President Díaz Ordaz's wishes, and the latter, according to Julio Scherer García, commented on him: "He is very green. He has the mentality of an undersecretary in charge of the office... If he has nothing to do, he invents it. He is obsessed with work for the sake of work... Every night he has the editorials of *El Nacional read to him over the phone* , as if anyone cared about those pamphlets... I invited him to play golf early, and he arrived at dawn." Despite all this, Echeverría, quietly, used all his resources to win supporters. Many believed that he would be the chosen one because he occupied the key portfolio: Government, and because in 1967 he had given the speech on the anniversary of the Constitution, of course in Querétaro.

Everything seemed to be in order: the "Mexican miracle" of stability and economic growth had reached its peak, and for many naïve supporters the Díaz-Ordaz slogan "Everything is possible in peace" seemed an indisputable truth. Construction and preparations for the Olympics continued apace. In May, in addition to the publication of books such as *El Hipogeo Secreto* by Salvador Elizondo; *Los peces* by Sergio Fernández; *Pueblo en vilo* by Luis González; *Espejo humeante* by Juan Bañuelos; *Pasto verde* by Parménides García Saldaña; Julio Castillo revealed himself as an extraordinary theatrical talent with *El cementerio de los Automóviles (The Cemetery of Automobiles* ) and the appearance of the painting *La muerte del Che (The Death of Che* ) by Augusto Ramírez, there was the Prague Spring and the student movement in Paris; In the United States, the army or the police intervened to stop the hippie scandal and the youth's rejection of the Vietnam War, and more and more students preferred to burn their recruitment cards and go to jail or flee the country. No one imagined that something similar could happen here. However, for 10 years, young Mexicans had also expressed their rejection of the system, despite the Mexican miracle, as evidenced by the raids and arrests of hippie kids, by then already known as "cool kids" and rock and rollers throughout the Republic.

In July 1968, the hot summer began: the grenadiers, following their customs, brutally and disproportionately suppressed a student dispute that young high school students held in the Ciudadela of the capital, precisely the terrible area of the tragic decade of 1913. Outraged, the students declared a strike and organized a protest demonstration on July 26, which coincided with the lackluster rally that the Mexican Communist

Party ( PCM ) held every year to commemorate the Revolution in Cuba. The new student demonstration was repressed with greater violence, in addition to the fact that it was obvious that "someone" had left projectiles strategically distributed so that young people disguised as students, pre-halcones, could cause damage that would be attributed to the demonstrators; On the other hand, the coincidence of students and PCM led the government to immediately argue that "subversive forces from abroad were orchestrating a conspiracy to discredit Mexico in the proximity of the Olympics." In view of this, numerous PCM militants were arrested who , on that occasion, had nothing, or almost nothing, to do with the events, since their historical nonexistence was quite certain. The boys from the high schools became even more enraged, and during the last days of July they resisted the grenadiers and the army with stones, Molotov cocktails and barricades made of overturned vehicles. The skirmishes lasted until the army in the early hours of the morning besieged the National Preparatory School and initiated the fashion of bazooka shots to show that the government "was serious." The bazooka shot that time destroyed the beautiful baroque gate of the building, which generated criticism for the barbarity of the aggressors. The students formed a National Strike Committee ( CNH ), with the support of the country's leftist sectors and writers and artists. The CNH organized small brigades to inform the people of their version of events, since from July 26, television, radio and the press had viciously attacked "those poor students manipulated by communists." The government tried to end the disturbances as soon as possible and to do so it resorted to the very heavy hand, well-oiled since 1959. However, the harshness of the regime could not contain the youth resistance, which gained sympathy through lightning rallies in markets, factories, corners, buses, etc.

In August, Díaz Ordaz changed tactics when he saw that stubborn authoritarianism was not achieving anything, and that it looked very bad. From Guadalajara, he told the students that his hand was outstretched there; "high five," he added, so that they would see that he could also be "very friendly." "First, we would have to give him the paraffin test," the young people responded. In reality, the government was disconcerted. "The movement was quickly organized, disconcerting the traditional controls that had been exercised by the Ministry of the Interior, the DDF and its police and investigative agents," writes José López Portillo. "The organization of meetings and demonstrations was *sui generis* and did not follow conceived and controllable patterns... New people and different procedures, disconcerting the official controllers." The striking students were now from almost all the high schools and colleges, and the CNH proposed a six-point plan to solve everything: dismissal of high-ranking police chiefs, abolition of the riot police and the crime of social dissolution, release of prisoners and those arrested, and compensation for the families of dead or injured students. They also called for a dialogue between the government and the CNH , public and televised throughout the country. A new demonstration took place and more than 100,000 people shouted insults at the American embassy, which with black humor stood next to the Independence column; cries of "sellout press!" were also heard when the boys passed in front of the

*Excelsior newspaper* . The march culminated in a packed zócalo, which was considered a genuine popular victory.

Shortly after, a new demonstration in support of the students took place, and this time more than 200,000 participants came, happy and carefree, showing no credibility in the system. The country's ruling forces were then outraged and called for the repression of the students, who were criticized for being stateless (since their heroes were Che Guevara and Ho Chi-Minh, two flagrant communists) and for insulting the authorities "with obscenities." The extreme irritation of the conservatives was due to the proximity of the Olympic Games and the noise we were making abroad; also to seeing that what should have been a matter of "a spanking" was getting longer and more widespread. The new demonstration again reached the main square, where, despite shouts of "come out to the balcony, big mouth," President Díaz Ordaz did not want to show his sweet features to the crowd. In fact, José López Portillo had been entrusted with attending to the protesters from inside the palace if they asked for an interview. But the students wanted a public dialogue, and López Portillo saw, first, the arrival of the "control" forces at the Zócalo, disguised as "street sweepers, vendors, workers seeking jobs, curious people, idlers"; in the afternoon, the roaring crowds arrived. López Portillo says that sometimes he would look out from the third-floor balcony and people would throw 20-cent coins at him. The students decided to camp there until they got a response from the authorities; a red-and-black strike flag was raised in the middle of the Zócalo and the cathedral bells rang in support of the student movement. At midnight, the army ran from the main square to the camp there, and the next day the media, the private sector and the editorials tore their clothes at the terrible offense that was committed against the national flag when a strike flag replaced the national one. The government organized a huge act of redress with thousands of people brought in from the labor unions and the bureaucracy. The attacks against the students intensified, since it was evident that the student movement had become popular and that it represented an escape valve for many people who were dissatisfied with the system. Nevertheless, the government clung to the thesis of an international conspiracy and continued the arrests of brigade members, political espionage and intimidation through the deployment of political and military forces in Mexico City. It was truly blood-curdling to see the tanks and military trucks full of soldiers on the avenues of the capital.

Ciudad Universitaria had become the center of the student movement and the campus was a territory of permanent meetings and cultural events in a frankly joyful and hopeful atmosphere. The students camped there had a sensational time, that is, when there were not intense meetings in which people talked and talked. On September 1st, President Gustavito (as López Paseos called him) declaimed: "Insults do not offend me, slander does not reach me; hatred has not been born in me." Of course, he gave his version of what was happening: "We received information that they were trying to hinder the Olympic games." It was an international conspiracy and the country was in danger. The incident that originated the problem had been "the culmination of a

very long series of attacks on freedom and rights." It had reached debauchery in all the media of expression and diffusion; "we have been tolerant to the point of criticism." Of course, he did not admit the existence of political prisoners in Mexico. "I will have the armed forces at my disposal," he also warned. "We do not want to take measures that we do not want, but that we will take if necessary... Dialogue is impossible when one side persists in remaining deaf and locks itself into the unreasonableness of accepting it only when there is nothing left to discuss." And he concluded, hurt: "What grave damage is done by the modern philosophers of destruction who are against everything and in favor of nothing!" The "dialogue" was an obvious projection, since Díaz Ordaz had agreed to name two negotiators (Andrés Caso and Jorge de la Vega), but in reality they could not agree on much with the CNH because they were following the line of not giving in and only pretending to communicate, and because by the beginning of September it is very likely that the final solution was already cooking at the highest heat, especially after the third demonstration on September 13, this time of more than 300 thousand people. In response to criticism that the movement was not interested in Mexico, the students carried pictures of Emiliano Zapata and the good Pancho Villa; and, to avoid being accused of being insulting, the participants promised to march in absolute silence, and many preferred to tape their mouths so as not to shout until they let off steam. Thus, this demonstration became known as "the silent one" and was the most impressive of all because of the tense atmosphere created by hundreds of thousands who marched without saying anything.

This was the stage of "excessive tolerance that has been criticized." The dialogue never took place, and even less so under "the ridiculous conditions of wanting to appear on television and on national television." The demonization of the students by the government (strongly supported by private initiative, the high-ranking labor leaders, the Church and many professional associations, true or false) reached its peak, and everything was ready for the reappearance of repressive violence.

After the national holidays, the army invaded the hitherto inviolable Ciudad Universitaria, and wounded and arrested many. Shortly afterwards, the troops besieged the Santo Tomás complex after a bloody siege, and on October 2, barely 10 days before the opening of the Olympic Games, the government ominously prohibited a new demonstration and the CNH settled for a rally in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas, in Tlatelolco. There took place the action (concerted or not) of the army and the military group Batallón Olimpia, which simulated a "provocation" by supposed snipers so that the army would intervene "when they saw that they and the attendees of the rally were being shot at." Two huge flares gave the signal for the attack and soon the army, the plainclothes police and the Batallón Olimpia entertained themselves by shooting at the people who ran everywhere and discovered that the exits were blocked. Many people were killed in the shootout, including Italian journalist Oriana Falacci, who later became a staunch critic of the Mexican government. Those who did not succumb sought refuge in the apartments of the housing complex, and although the people of Tlatelolco gave them shelter, the troops and the judicial police arrived there to take the majority

to Military Camp Number One, where, as General Félix Galván (Secretary of Defense during the López Portillo administration) later revealed, at least the judicial police had their own facilities and a free hand to torture, injure, kill and "disappear." At the Tlatelolco rally, the leaders of the CNH (Gilberto Guevara Niebla, Heberto Castillo, Raúl Álvarez Garín, Roberto Escudero, Tomás Cabeza de Vaca and Luis González de Alba, among others) were arrested. They all ended up in Lecumberri prison, where they occupied the C, M and N wings. Shortly afterwards, the writer José Revueltas also ended up there, and said "yes, I am" when he was accused of being the mastermind behind the riots.

The official lists counted 30 dead and 87 wounded, and it was estimated that at least 1,500 people were detained at Military Camp Number One. The press was given a line to justify the government's action and condemn the students "who had fired on the soldiers." "That night," Julio Scherer recounts, "in an urgent phone call the Secretary of the Interior had warned me that in Tlatelolco it was mainly soldiers who were being killed, and on the verge of hanging up the phone he had left the threatening phrase hanging in the air: 'Is that clear, right?'" It is not surprising then that almost all the media had unreservedly supported the massacre ordered by Díaz Ordaz and orchestrated by Manuel Díaz Escobar's Olimpia Battalion. The private sector was also full of praise for the president, as were the labor leaders. "The student movement," Fidel Velázquez diagnosed, "had essentially political aims, which emanate from international slogans and which are managed," *sic* , "by people outside the student body... The so-called student movement never had any justification at any time." Of course, the PRI politicians applauded their president, "who had saved the country." But Luis Echeverría himself declared years later that the country was never in danger. "In reality, life is managed by factors of production," Echeverría said. "The student movement did not lead to a social explosion because workers and peasants adhered to the system, and because the majority of people were not interested." In fact, in 1968 many people, not only in the capital but throughout the country, were not very interested in the movement, or were against the students, but, despite this, the sector that rebelled ended up being decisive for the immediate future of Mexico.

The student movement and the counterculture of the 1960s were actually two sides of the same coin, which became known as "1968" or "68." In any case, for a growing number of people it was clear that Mexico was closing a stage, awakening from the dream that began in 1940 and was characterized by the development and capitalist modernization of the country. Although the institutions were very solid, profound changes in society were evidently unavoidable. Over time, the idea gained ground that 1968 (the student movement and the counterculture) was, as even the presidents of the Republic said, "a watershed" in national life, the most important event in our history after the Revolution of 1910. It was so because it implied a gradual process of awareness for the country: it had grown in stability and relative social peace at the expense of the abuse and exploitation of the people; In exchange for the abundance of a few, the natural development of the great majority was cut short and hindered.

Changes began to emerge almost from the first moment. The new president was forced to respond, most of the time verbally, to some popular demands, and the economy also changed because businessmen stopped supporting a president who was infatuated with "leftist" rhetoric; thus began a crisis that became devastating. Developmentalism, which had reached that point, had caused serious ecological disturbances: pollution of cities and devastation of natural settings: poisoned rivers and seas, deforestation, migration from the countryside to the cities due to the enrichment of private farmers; alarming overpopulation with its aftermath of misery, marginality, drug addiction, and crime. In addition, developmentalism caused the upper and middle classes to tend to submit to the most questionable and vacuous American models, which led to a detachment from the country's traditional foundations. The Catholic cult, so important in the history of Mexico, was then losing its effectiveness and was increasingly emptying of content. The political system remained tightly cohesive, but there was already a clear urgency for a true democracy, for power not to be concentrated so much in the person of the president ("six-year monarch," as Cosío Villegas called him), for freedom of expression to be authentic, without censorship or manipulation; for the omnipresent corruption and all the vices that the regime had generated to be confronted before they ended up ruining the moral landscape of the nation. An urgent need arose to carry out objective investigations, without false illusions or euphemistic distortions, of all the major problems of the country. Popular sensitivity was also triggered, which through the arts, sciences and other cultural manifestations would grow to the point of being considered a cultural revolution that fostered awareness in other areas.

But in early October 1968, after the Tlatelolco massacre, no one could have imagined anything like this, because the long-awaited and at the same time disastrous Olympic Games were already underway. While Oriana Falacci was ranting from her wound bed, and the international press was reporting on her statements, Díaz Ordaz was inaugurating the XIX and second Olympic Games, which were broadcast to the whole world via satellite. At them, the black athletes of the United States also made a political scene by brandishing the fist of "black power." The Mexican press showed how backward and oligophrenic it could be by making the most of the national triumphs of Tibio Muñoz and Sergeant Pedraza. The Olympic Games, with all their spectacularity, which of course abounded in Mexico, were in truth overshadowed by the blood of the dead of Tlatelolco, and were the beginning of the decline of the Olympics, subject since then to terrorists, American or socialist boycotts, repressive climates and buckets of cold water like the Ben Johnson *affair* in 1988.

The Mexican government resented the 1968 coup from the beginning, but tried to minimize it and was able to do so because the presidential succession was already upon them and the media had other things to entertain themselves with. The political contest for the presidency was taking place in apparent civility among the candidates Echeverría, Martínez Manautou, Ortiz Mena and Corona del Rosal, who had even agreed to a pact "not to kick each other under the table." Díaz Ordaz did not go on to explain later, or it has not been revealed, why he rejected some and why he gave

the finger in favor of someone who, later, according to his criteria, would "betray" him and force him to say: "They made jokes about me for being ugly, but about him for being an idiot." How could he then choose someone like that? Without a doubt the courtesy and servility of the secretary counted, who, if he invited him to play golf, "would arrive at dawn." Also, the unrestricted support for the boss, the 15-hour work day, and of course, Echeverría's behavior during the student movement: loyalty, and use of repressive controls under the guise of a "policy of dialogue" that, although never practiced, served to save the formalism of "tolerance," as López Mateos had done before crushing the railroad workers.

In any case, Díaz Ordaz leaned toward his Secretary of the Interior, and, as far as we can see, he was very satisfied, too. He undoubtedly believed that he had chosen "the best man." Díaz Ordaz was smiling, "affectionate," Augusto Gómez Villanueva, then leader of the National Peasant Confederation ( CNC ), later recounted. He, along with Alfonso Martínez Domínguez, then president of the PRI , Fidel Velázquez, from the labor sector, and Reynaldo Guzmán Orozco, from the CNOP , were summoned by Díaz Ordaz to Los Pinos, where he told them: "I know that you are friends of Luis Echeverría, and it gives me great satisfaction that he is our candidate for the presidency... I want to add one thing," he told them later (or so Gómez Villanueva recounted), "from this date on, try to come to a direct understanding with Luis Echeverría." The latter, for his part, had quietly prepared his "infrastructure." According to Gómez Villanueva, that same day they already had several dozen peasants ready to be brought in so that the CNC would be the first to "launch the candidacy" of Echeverría, which would start the furious, desperate stampede of the buffalos, who would try to climb into the candidate's vehicle at any cost.

From that moment on, Echeverría began to "take off his mask" (or put on another one, who knows), and the introverted, stiff, reserved and calculating man, after his nomination, began to appear talkative, lively, hyperactive and prone to talking non-stop. He had his plan well hidden and he began to develop it as soon as he acquired power.

Díaz Ordaz, for his part, according to Scherer García, was affected by the events of 1968 much more than it seemed. "The country was changing," writes Scherer in *Los presidentes* . "It was public knowledge that the president was suffering from personality disorders, confusing introversion with solitude. His wife, doña Guadalupe Borja, disappeared from the public scene. Rumor had it that he could not withstand the nervous tension." In any case, at the end of 1969 Díaz Ordaz made yet another modification to the poor Federal Electoral Law, this time to give 18-year-olds the right to vote. "An obvious response to 1968," conclude researchers Samuel León and Germán Pérez.

Both the PPS and the PARM supported the candidacy of Luis Echeverría, who only faced competition from the PAN candidate , Efraín González Morfín, since the PCM , which was not registered, proposed "active abstention."

In 1969, Daniel Cosío Villegas caused a scandal when, in six articles published in *Excélsior,* he asked for the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States to be

revised, since its language was poor and incorrect, in addition to the fact that it was designed for an agrarian and rural society. The subject turned out to be taboo because criticism and responses to Cosío Villegas rained down, including an entire issue of the magazine *Estudios Políticos* , a series of televised interviews with the constituents who were still alive, and even a soap opera with María Félix called *La Constitution* ; on the other hand, important books were published: Octavio Paz, who won popular esteem by resigning from his post as ambassador to India because of Tlatelolco, published the "continuation" of *The Labyrinth of Solitude* with the title *Posdata* , in which he addressed the events of 1968 and tried to find their mythical rhizome. Elena Poniatowska, while preparing *The Night of Tlatelolco* , published another exceptional book, *Until I See You My Jesus* . Gustavo Sainz published his complex but entertaining novel *Obsesivos días circulares* ; Augusto Monterroso offered his splendid volume of short texts (or "flies") *The Black Sheep and Other Fables* . Finally, from Lecumberri, José Revueltas published his compact, dense masterpiece *El apando* , which says: prisoners and police are the same, the prison is only a reflection of the whole society, hence the title *El apando* , which are the punishment cells, the prison within the prison. In poetry, Alejandro Aura published *Alianza para vivir* , and Sergio Mondragón, *El aprendiz de brujo* .

On the other hand, in Caracas, Venezuela, the Rómulo Gallegos Prize was established for the best novel in Spanish published in the last five years; in Mexico, a commission was created, composed of Emmanuel Carballo and María del Carmen Millán, which would choose the national work or works for the prize. But the commission determined that no Mexican novel could compete with Lezama Lima, Carpentier, Onetti, Vargas Llosa, Cortázar. This outraged Fernando del Paso. And Margo Glantz came out with *Narrativa joven de México* , which when republished became *Onda y escritura en México* . With this book, Margo Glantz gave rise with impunity to the confusing and vilified concept "Literatura de la onda" (Literature of the wave), which was used as a battering ram to contain what was later considered "vulgarization of culture."

Carlos Monsiváis, for his part, joined forces with Alfonso Arau and the two wrote ironic and funny lyrics for the rock group Los Tepetatles, the direct ancestor of Botellita de Jerez in the eighties, which performed very successfully at the El Quid cabaret. Meanwhile, the rector of UNAM , Javier Barros Sierra, because of his enmity with President Díaz Ordaz, lost all opportunity for the University to have its own television channel. By then the Supreme Court had resolved the dispute over Channel 13, which was awarded to Francisco Aguirre, owner of radio stations and magazines. The concession for the new Channel 8 was also granted, out of 63 requests, to the Monterrey group. Both channels began their work to begin broadcasting as soon as possible. Channel 13 improvised some studios on Mina Street and Channel 8 occupied what had previously been the San Ángel Inn film studios.

By 1970, the big news in the capital, in addition to the inauguration of the first subway lines, was the imminent IX World Soccer Championship, which had also been awarded to Mexico. Because soccer is the most popular sport, and there was no Tlatelol-

cos to overshadow it, the soccer championship generated an unusual enthusiasm in our country. The Mexican team, led by Raúl Cárdenas, won two games, lost one and tied one; scored six goals and conceded four, reached the quarterfinals and obtained sixth place among 16 teams, and the public took to the streets in displays of delirium, a true eruption of the pleasure principle, which terrified the poor passers-by who were not so interested in the sport of kicking. There arose the cheer "Mé-xi-có. Mé-xi-có!" that years later would score its goals in politics. Mexico did not make it past the quarterfinals (but reaching them was considered a "miracle" as portentous as the "stabilizing" one), however, Brazil, with Pelé at the helm, won the championship and the people continued the party in the streets, which became an immense collective relief after the tensions of recent years.

Meanwhile, those in the know were amazed at the changes in the PRI candidate Luis Echeverría, who alarmed Díaz Ordaz and the Secretary of Defense, the former Henriquista Marcelino García Barragán, when, in Guadalajara, he asked for a minute of silence in honor of "the fallen" on October 2, 1968. The army was so outraged that they even considered the possibility of changing the candidate, but in the end inertia prevailed and Echeverría continued his campaign, in which he tried to distance himself as much as possible from the Díaz Ordaz government. Echeverría did not stop talking about all possible topics and took his adventures to the last towns and ranches of the country. Everywhere the candidate made it seem that during his government there would be "changes," which was observed with extreme bewilderment by the private sector.

For his part, Díaz Ordaz used the time he had left to modify the Federal Labor Law. The labor leadership had behaved extraordinarily well with the system during 1968 and the then president decided to reward them by expanding rights, guarantees and benefits. "Ironically," writes Manuel Camacho Solís in *El futuro imposible* , "President Díaz Ordaz achieved what no one since Cárdenas had achieved: the unity of the labor movement." At that time, the problems of the Colorado River also came to light. In 1961, the United States carried out drainage works on the Gila River, a tributary of the Colorado, and the resulting salinity ruined a very fertile cotton-growing area in Baja California. Once president, Luis Echeverría would take charge of settling the conflict.

In his last government report, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz took full responsibility for the events of 1968 and specifically the Tlatelolco massacre. Once again he claimed that the country was in danger and he had had to "save it." "With the natural, transitory, imbalances," he said, "sometimes painful and bloody, we have lived through another stage of our history, in full social peace so that freedoms are possible and maintaining freedoms so that order is a good and not an evil." In exchange for these "painful imbalances" that included those of grammar, Díaz Ordaz boasted that, during his term, the growth of the gross domestic product ( GDP ) had been 46 percent.

Meanwhile, the situation at Petróleos Mexicanos was precarious. Although 193 million barrels of crude oil and 665 million cubic feet of gas were extracted daily, this was not enough and the government had to import to satisfy internal needs. This

was just a sample of Mexico's problems during the turn of the decade and the turn of the administration. The conditions were not promising. Pablo González Casanova, in *Mexico today* , says that the productive sectors had been revitalized through the nationalization of the electric and petrochemical industries, the flow of foreign capital, the promotion of tourism and the control of workers, but there was already an oligopolistic structure due to the greater concentration of income and ownership of the means of production. The economy was absorbed by very few and they obtained super-profits through always low and insufficient salaries. The agricultural sector had generated foreign currency, raw materials and cheap labor, but the injustice in the countryside was painful. All the profits had gone to a few individuals who expanded their fake estates. On the other hand, protectionist and fiscal policies had also favoured oligopolistic companies, which achieved greater productivity through the most modern technology, which not everyone could afford.

The consumption of the upper classes had grown, naturally, as had the middle class, which was absorbed by business and bureaucracy. The rich and the middle class were fierce enthusiasts of the consumerist mentality, which was injected in insane doses to the rest of the people through the media, especially television. Unbridled consumerism led to "the brutal distortion of proletarian family spending," which allowed the landscape of shacks and miserable barracks with their television antenna. This, in turn, generated more profits for big business. There was a strong demand for imported products, but, on the contrary, a greater capacity to export was never achieved. Therefore, the country continued to depend on loans from abroad, and the debt grew, grew, and led to "a dead end," says González Casanova.

Foreign capital, including "direct" capital, continued to penetrate, consolidating the transnational exploitation scheme and aggravating Mexico's dependence on the United States. The industry had diversified and achieved an expansion of the market, but national companies had to make purchases from the large monopolies, which thus collected profits everywhere.

The regime had neglected strategic sectors, essential for the healthy development of the country: in the countryside the lag was dramatic. Energy was also extremely neglected. State spending ended up being subordinated to the short-term plans of private initiative; in addition, it supported "the accelerated expansion of the financial system" to such an extent, says Pablo González Casanova, "that it ended up becoming dependent on it." Likewise, the criterion of "financial stability at all costs" undermined the State and strengthened financiers and big businessmen.

Thus, at the beginning of the seventies, the private sector was not only powerful but also aware of its strength; it carefully and critically observed the "incomplete, vague and even contradictory" statements of the next president of the republic, and took note. Cosío Villegas recounts in *El estilo personal de gobernar* that a large bank memorized everything that Echeverría said in his campaign; the bank ultimately refused to give the results of the work; "the end was a blurred and confusing canvas," concludes Cosío.

The reactions of the powerful owners of money to the government of Luis Echeverría are not surprising, nor is the crisis that all this brought about, starting in 1971.

# Final note

This book is a chronicle of the main events that took place in Mexico from 1940 to 1988. The political, economic and cultural events of that period are presented in a broad and panoramic view, but it also concentrates attention to present greater nuances of certain moments.

From beginning to end there is a profound seriousness about the responsibility that a job of this nature entails, and there is nothing written here whose provenance cannot be located. I based myself on books, magazines and newspapers, and on conversations with numerous people who gave me their version of various events. I myself was a witness to much of the period and did not hesitate to use my own observations, although always with the support of published materials that moderated my subjectivity.

The sense of responsibility and the seriousness of the subject do not in the least exclude the possibility of an agile, fluid and even enjoyable reading. To this end, I did not disdain humor, irony, jokes, gossip and rumors in vogue. Reality is sometimes downright hilarious, but other times it is good to smile at it so as not to succumb to difficulties.

I have also tried to avoid tables, excessive figures, highly technical terminology and footnotes. In fact, much of this book has been put together through the strategic use of numerous and diverse sources, the list of which appears in the general bibliography; where the plundering was frank and abundant, or the citation is direct, the works are mentioned in the body of the text. It is, therefore, clear that this book does not add much to specialists, although it may interest them, but a wide audience will find it useful and entertaining.

The book is divided into six-year periods and in each of them I tried to note the most relevant aspects of the different aspects of life in Mexico. Of course, the nature of the work prevented me from trying to cover too much and limited the materials. Therefore, there may be countless omissions, and unfortunately many important or interesting events are barely outlined. On the other hand, the period in question is very recent; many things remain in the dark and in others the versions are often different; the information has not yet been established in certain cases and for that reason the existence of some minor inaccuracies is also possible; these, of course, are involuntary and are open to rectification.

The book is presented in three volumes; the first covers the period from 1940 to 1970, the second, from 1970 to 1982, and the third, from 1982 to 1994.

I sincerely believe that *Tragicomedia mexicana* may be of interest, and for that reason, in this inevitable note, I express my gratitude to all the people who helped

me, and especially to Carlos Barreto, who provided me with books and his collection of magazines; to the Grupo Editorial Planeta, who provided me with other essential books; to my sons Jesús and Andrés, who helped me in the preparation of the files; finally, to my brother Augusto and my wife Margarita, who read the manuscript and made very good observations.

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