

Historic debate in Mexico

The word *debate* comes from the Latin *debattō*, which means to hammer, beat, shake. Thus, debate is a contest, struggle, combat, a controversy among two or more persons.

Hopefully 1994 will be remembered in Mexico as the year of debate—that between the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) and the government for achieving peace in Chiapas, as well as the debate between presidential candidates—and not the year of violence.

With a 34-year lag vis à vis the modern institution of debates—the first was held in 1960 between John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon—which involves the use of radio and television to broadcast the match to a large audience, on May 12 a debate was held between the main presidential candidates, for the first time in the history of our country.

The National Action Party (PAN) was the first to promote the idea, through its draft Debate Law of 1982. The first candidate of the PRI (the Institutional Revolutionary Party, which has held power continuously for 65 years) to propose a debate with his opponents was the late Luis Donaldo Colosio. However, this debate could never have occurred without the willingness expressed by the PRI's replacement candidate, Ernesto Zedillo.

Thus Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano, candidate of the PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution), PAN candidate Diego Fernández de Cevallos and Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León went down in history as participants in this phase of Mexico's process of democratic modernization.

For the first time, opposition candidates gained radio and television coverage on an equal footing with the PRI's candidate, and voters had the chance to compare the presidential aspirants for themselves.

There is no doubt that Diego Fernández won the debate, not only because of his oratorical skill but due to the contents of his remarks. He captured audience attention from the start with his query: "Why is there poverty and injustice when Mexico is a rich country in every sense of the word?" This is a question we all ask ourselves.

In the combat that debate implies, he was also the only speaker to succeed in showing up some of his opponents' failings—he even came armed with proofs which he displayed to the audience—whereas neither Zedillo nor Cárdenas managed to refute him.

Cárdenas, who captured a high percentage of votes in 1988 and maintains that he was the real winner of that year's elections, may have lost the undecided vote due to

his performance in the debate—an important factor given that while Mexicans want change, they are also afraid of it. In fact, the first point Cárdenas made to the audience was not to be afraid of change.

A Mexican saying notes that the higher you are, the further you fall. And Zedillo, candidate of the government party, was the one who slipped furthest as a result of the debate—although this doesn't necessarily mean he'll take a fall in the August 21 elections.

He got off to a bad start by thanking his two opponents for accepting his invitation to debate; but as noted above, while the debate occurred because he was willing to participate, it was not the result of an initiative by Zedillo himself. Then he scolded the other two candidates for profiting from the name of Luis Donaldo Colosio, although the PRI is the only party to do so. He used the term "compatriots" over and over, and failed to utter a single memorable phrase.

He avoided commenting on issues that concern the public. This was the case, for example, when Fernández asked Zedillo to explain what happened with his predictions of economic growth and his National Development Plan, as well as when the PAN candidate told him while he was a good kid with high grades he flunked out in democracy, scoring his pre-debate statement that he would not form a pluralist government. Within a few days President Salinas himself came out in favor of pluralism.

But we will let you arrive at your own conclusions about the candidates on the basis of the summary of their speeches printed below. We have included their opening remarks so you can judge whether or not they gave a good drubbing to their opponents.

I **Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas.** The hour of this long-awaited debate has finally arrived....

I have traveled throughout the country over the past six years. I have found a countryside abandoned, factories closed, laid-off workers.... One can safely say that very few are better off than they were in 1988.... Except for a handful who have concentrated most of the country's wealth in their hands, the rest of us are looking for a change, and we want this change to be a just and well-thought-out one.

We should not be afraid of change. Let us think of the changes that occur in our own lives, in a child who grows up and starts changing into an adolescent, a young person,

an adult. As time passes we continue learning, acquiring new skills, new knowledge; we become more able to resolve our problems, and that is the change we want to occur in our country. A change that allows us to improve, that allows us to get to the root of our problems, a change which allows us a way out from the morass the current government has sunk us in, so that we can enter a new stage, of growth, of creativity, of the use of our resources....

It is indispensable that we go forward on the basis of these three key points: democracy, economic growth and social equity....

This government has created many poor people, and here I want to recall that the PRI's own candidate has stated that the greatest shame of the regime, of the government he has been a part of, is the poverty in which it has sunk millions of Mexicans....

Ernest Zedillo. Good evening, compatriots.... I thank [the other candidates] for accepting my invitation to engage in this debate, which will certainly strengthen our democracy.... Tonight's debate is about, and for, the future of Mexico. Every Mexican family will have the well-being it deserves and which

is its right as a result of what we Mexicans have done in the past and what we will do from now on; not because of what we have *not* done in the past. So this debate is about the future and not the past, compatriots....

I come from a family in which daily life sometimes meant limitations, and sometimes poverty. And nevertheless, thanks to my parents' and teachers' efforts, thanks to the opportunities Mexico has given me, today I am here, aspiring to be your president. This is Mexico, land of opportunities....

My aspiration to serve you, compatriots, is backed up by a lifetime of work, of study, of knowledge, of acquaintance with the country's problems. It is backed up by a long career of public service, which I began when I was very young, a career which has taken me from the most modest posts of public administration to heading two government ministries. I know I am the youngest of the candidates for president, but I assure you that I am the one with the most experience of good government....

Many compatriots are aggrieved by injustice, by the lack of security, by violence, and often by the corruption

Ernesto Zedillo, presidential candidate of the PRI

On March 29—in the wake of the assassination of Luis Donaldo Colosio on March 23—Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León was nominated as the PRI's candidate for the presidency.

Ernesto Zedillo was born on December 27, 1951, in Mexico City. As a student, he was forced to work as a shoe-shiner, newspaper vendor and even a scrap-metal collector in order to be able to complete his studies. He attended primary school in Baja California and likes to be called a Baja Californian because of his roots in that state—which is currently governed by the opposition PAN and was the site of Colosio's slaying.

Between 1974 and 1978 he completed his Master's degree and Ph.D. in economics at Yale. The title of his doctoral thesis was "Public Foreign Debt in Mexico: Recent History and Future Optimum Growth As Linked to Oil."

Zedillo's political career began in 1978 at the Banco de México. He was Secretary of Planning and the Federal Budget (a post held by the last two presidents, Miguel de la Madrid and Carlos Salinas), Secretary of Public Education, and Luis Donaldo Colosio's campaign manager.

His political fortunes have risen spectacularly over the past 16 years, but winning the August 21 elections will be a real challenge for the PRI as a result of recent months' events: the Chiapas uprising, Colosio's assassination and the kidnapping of high-ranking Mexican executives.

The short time remaining to Zedillo before the elections has turned radio and TV into strategic platforms for this electoral campaign.

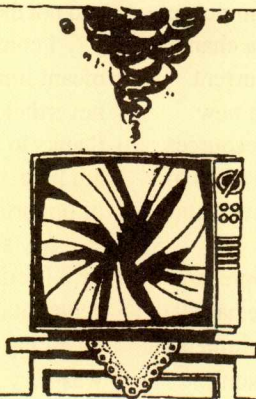
For the first time in the country's political history, a debate was held among key presidential candidates. On May 12, Zedillo and his two most powerful opponents—Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas of the PRD and the PAN's Diego Fernández de Cevallos—inaugurated this method of campaigning in Mexico. Colosio had proposed and accepted this public debate with his rivals.

According to political analyst Luis Fernando Núñez Valbuena, "Today more than ever, Ernesto Zedillo's campaign will be a decisive factor in whether or not the PRI wins, and he has two quite strong competitors: Cárdenas and Diego. Now electoral competition is a reality."

Nevertheless, the presidential candidates' main objective should be to convince the electorate to vote on August 21. Otherwise, the winner will have been non-participation.

CALDERÓN en REFORMA
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A FEW NOTES ON THE DEBATE

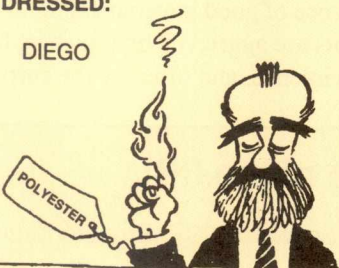


THE MOST UP-TIGHT:
ZEDILLO



THE WORST DRESSED:

DIEGO



THE MOST LUGUBRIOUS:

CUAUHTÉMOC



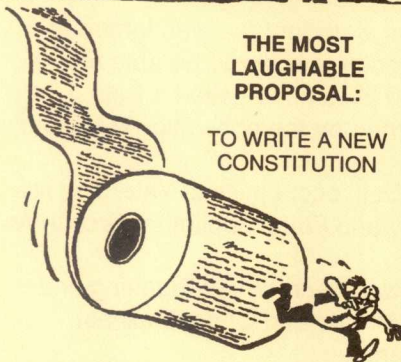
THE MOST-REPEATED CLICHÉ ("CRUTCH" IN SPANISH):

"COMPATRIOTS."



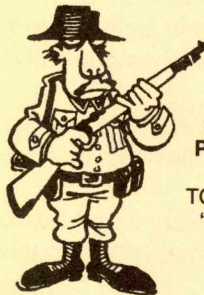
THE MOST LAUGHABLE PROPOSAL:

TO WRITE A NEW CONSTITUTION



THE SCARIEST PROPOSAL:

TO CREATE A "NATIONAL GUARD."



THE BIGGEST BRICK THROWN FROM A GLASS HOUSE:

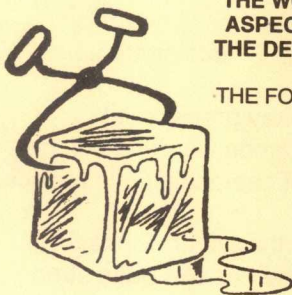
"DON'T SEEK PROFIT FROM COLOSIO'S DEATH."

...WE OWN THE COPYRIGHT



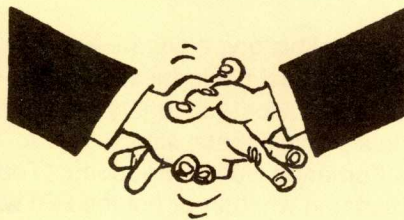
THE WORST ASPECT OF THE DEBATE:

THE FORMAT



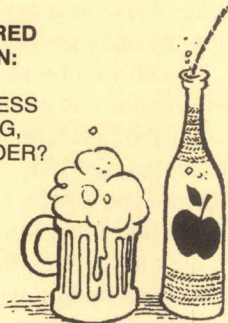
THE BEST PART OF THE DEBATE:

THEY ALL SHOOK HANDS



THE UNANSWERED QUESTION:

WHICH IS LESS FATTENING, BEER OR CIDER?



Chaparrero

of the police forces, the judicial authorities and prosecutors' offices.

Because of this I am proposing a total reform of our justice system. It has to be a reform from the foundations, almost from scratch, because we need a justice system that works for Mexicans; to establish a state of law which protects citizens' rights, which avoids violence, which delivers us from insecurity....

Regarding economic issues, without giving ground to inflation and without returning to the policies of the past, we need to grow once again. Our economy must grow much faster than the population, so we can generate the jobs you are demanding. I am therefore proposing an economic policy, one of whose central points will be promoting investment, so we can take advantage of our enormous domestic market as well as the new international markets which have opened up to us....

Poverty is our greatest challenge. We must work so that the millions of Mexicans who still live in conditions of poverty will be able to overcome it.... And we will do this strengthening our federalism, making decisions not here in the center of the country but there, where you live, and we will do this, compatriots, strengthening our democracy....

Diego Fernández. Mexican citizens, friends. We are a young nation with a majority made up of young people. We are a peace-loving people, who want to work in order to live in dignity, who want to progress. We have a great moral, cultural, religious and historical wealth. Our land is large and beautiful, and it yields us minerals and much oil.

As part of our heritage we also have the oceans' eternal embrace. More than sixteen thousand miles of coastline... with all that implies from the standpoint of tourism, food supplies and trade. And with all this, with everything that we are, with everything we have, the question that must be asked is: why is there hunger, why is there deprivation, why is there unemployment, why is there a lack of security, why is there guerrilla war, why is death amongst us?

I think this is because we have not achieved a just order. Because we have not been able to form good governments. Because politics does not tend to conform to ethics and because the economy has not been genuinely human.

No, Dr. Zedillo. We have not come here to speak only of the future. To speak of the future we must also speak of the present, and to understand the present we must speak of the past....

For me, above and beyond the scope of this debate, my concern is to invite you, the men and women of Mexico... to vote freely and in good conscience so that we can democratically guide the nation's destiny.

And if we all agree that change is urgent, we should also agree that we do not want to change, Dr. Zedillo, in a way that will leave everything as it was; nor, Mr.



Ernesto Zedillo, Diego Fernández and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (from left to right) smile before the debate starts.

Cárdenas, in a way that would take us back to a past which should not return....

We seek a change which does not mean destroying all that is Mexico, because much of what we do have has come at a high price for the Mexican people. We need to achieve a change that consolidates the good aspects, but at the same time is able to overcome and rectify deviations in politics and economics....

In the opposition, compatriots, we have succeeded in making the government carry out some rectifications, and when it has done so we have supported those decisions for the good of Mexico, for you, for the nation. But we have also clearly stated our differences with the government. This is a difference on political as well as economic issues. And I will state it here, albeit briefly. We continue to defend effective suffrage, which the government does not respect; the division of [governmental] powers, which is not respected in Mexico; authentic federalism, municipal life—in a word a state of law. And regarding economic affairs, we continue to fight for a genuinely human economy at the service of man, in which we will all have opportunities to work, as well as for the distribution and sharing out of wealth.... We have a country, we have a people, what we need is a good government. The National Action Party has a democratic internal life and wants to share that with you, because it wants Mexico to live democratically....

II

Ernesto Zedillo. Over the past five years our country has made a great effort to overcome a profound financial crisis.... In only one month of campaigning I have received more than 34,000 letters, and the common denominator of many of them is people's anguish at not having a job, a good job or a better wage. For this reason I am proposing

that we establish, as the coming years' greatest priority, the recovery of economic growth....

A central point in that strategy must have to do with medium-sized and small businesses, businesses which generate 60 percent of the country's jobs and account for the greater part of Mexico's export capacity. For this reason I am proposing a fiscal policy, a credit policy, a policy for encouraging training and technology to provide small and medium-sized businesses with a new viability, and thereby generate the jobs that you need.

Attention to the countryside is also a very important item on this agenda.... I propose a policy of very heavy investment in the countryside: of training for peasants, of new technology, of opportune credit at just prices, a policy enabling them to commercialize their products....

The time has come, as Luis Donaldo used to say, to go from good national finances to good family finances; that the effects of good macroeconomics be felt in the pockets and at the tables of Mexican workers and peasants.... That will be our challenge in the following years, and I am sure we will succeed in meeting it, so long as we look to the future, so long as we do not regress to the policies of the past and do not experiment with that which already demonstrated its complete failure.

Diego Fernández. We have come to debate. I want to dedicate most of my time to Dr. Zedillo, because of what he represents, but these minutes are directed at you, Engineer Cárdenas.¹

In several different forums you have been saying that the choice facing Mexico is between the official option and the democratic option that you represent. I will take the liberty of demonstrating to you, with facts, that you do not represent a democratic option, and that you are a man with one face when in the opposition and another when in government.

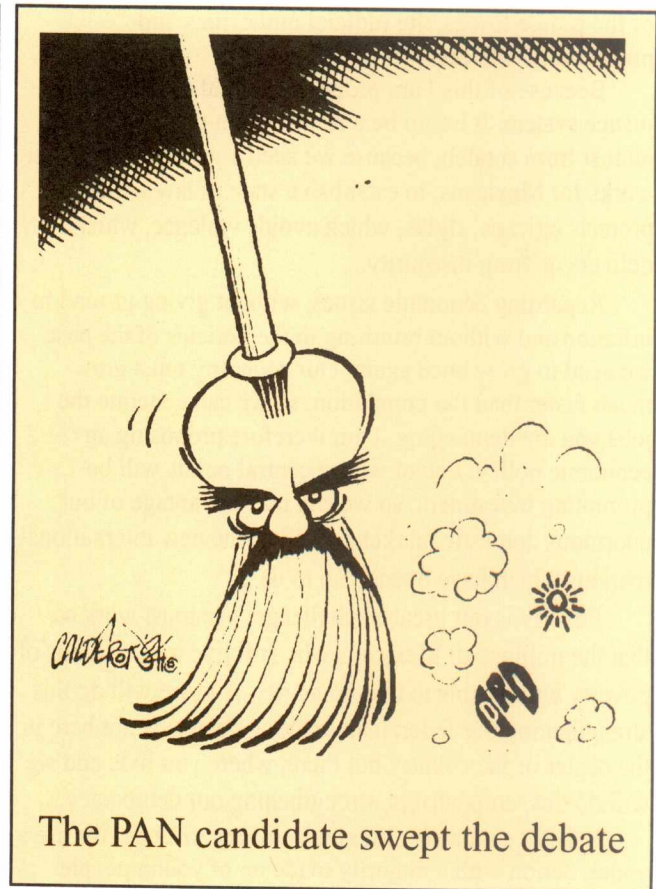
Today, as part of the opposition, you state with democratic intransigence that the government must get its hands off of electoral processes. But you promulgated this electoral law in Michoacán, where you were in control of the elections.² Here it is [shows law].

Today, speaking at schools and universities, you present yourself as a tolerant and pluralist man, respectful of young people, of freedom of speech, of academic freedom, while in your day, in 1985 in Michoacán, Marxism-Leninism was imposed. Here is the [curriculum] text if you would like to look it over. I have it here at your disposal.

That's not all; while you put yourself forward today as someone who is tolerant, respectful, and we could say

¹ In Mexico "Engineer," like several other academic titles, is often used in the same way as "Professor" or "Dr." Cárdenas' academic title is Engineer. (Editor's note.)

² Cárdenas served as PRI governor of the state of Michoacán from 1980 to 1986. (Editor's note.)



sympathetic towards the students, you don't tell them that in Michoacán you promulgated a law that genuinely damaged the dignity not only of students but of an entire people.

I will take the liberty of reading you just one article; this bears your signature, and hopefully you haven't forgotten that. Article 101 of the state's education law says: "Any student who carries out any kind of individual or collective act that infringes public order will be expelled from the state educational system." Under this law all the young people of 1968³ would have been thrown out of the nation's educational system. You aren't telling the students about that.

Another point: today you criticize the government, and rightly so, for immorally and illegally giving money to the PRI. Nevertheless, when you were governor of your home state you gave money to the PRI, and you have admitted this. I have a recording of your voice here if you would like to listen to it.

Finally, you have insisted that you are opposed to the *dedazo*.⁴ I would like to show you here today, with documents, that it is true that you have been opposed to the presidential *dedazo*, but only when it did not benefit you. I

³ Massive student protests occurred in Mexico in 1968. (Editor's note.)

⁴ The *dedazo* (pointing of the finger) is the nomination of candidates by the president or other public officials. See "How Presidential Succession Works in Mexico," *Voices of Mexico* 26, January-March 1994, pp 75-81. (Editor's note.)

am going back a few years, and Mr. Zedillo, please allow me to talk about history. In 1974 you [Cárdenas] said that when [then-president] Echeverría used the methods of exclusion to designate Mr. Torres Manzo as a candidate, you put out a public manifesto which the government didn't like. I have the manifesto here. However, some years later you were governor of your home state of Michoacán, and when a friend of yours asked you "How did you become governor?" you answered: "I told the president I was interested. Later they told me I was the candidate."

Investigation into the Colosio case

The events surrounding the assassination of PRI presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio Murrieta on March 23 —just after he had given a campaign speech in Tijuana— have still not been clarified.

The only fact clearly established so far is that the assassin was 23-year-old Mario Aburto Martínez, a native of Michoacán living in Tijuana. Detained at the scene of the crime, moments after the assassination, Aburto has repeatedly ratified his declaration that he shot Colosio.

The course of the investigation has been characterized by a lack of precise information and the enormous number of doubts it has produced.

In the first official version, released a day after the events, the Attorney General's Office cited Aburto as the sole perpetrator of the crime. However, the special Assistant Attorney General's Office, created at the president's behest to take charge of the investigation, states that photos and video footage show simultaneous and concerted actions by at least five individuals in addition to Aburto —lending credence to the hypothesis of a plot to assassinate the PRI candidate.

Three of these individuals have been identified and are currently being held, together with Aburto, in the top-security Almoloya de Juárez Prison in the state of Mexico. The accused —Tranquilino Sánchez Venegas, Vicente Mayoral Valenzuela and his son, Rodolfo Mayoral Esquer, invited by members of the local PRI committee to participate without pay in the candidate's security detail— have so far denied any involvement in the crime.

To date there has been no information making it possible to identify the person or persons nor the motives behind the crime.

Mr. Cárdenas, this proves that you have one face as part of the opposition and another as part of the government. I agree that you have a great aspiration, an obsession with being president. But we have known you both in the opposition and in the government, and we do not believe that you would be an option of modernity for Mexico. To finish, I would just like to tell you that if the Mexican people has to believe that you are a democratic option, then we would have to believe Aburto when he says he is a pacifist.⁵

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. I have never hidden what I am, and I don't hide it now. I recognize the events in which I have participated during my life. I have nothing to reproach myself with in that regard....

The proposals which we heard in the first part of this segment may sound very similar to our viewers and listeners....

We have strong differences with the PRI and the National Action Party.... We cannot believe, we have no reason to believe either the PRI candidate or his party. They say one thing and do another. We all know that the 1988 elections were marked by fraud and that they produced a government which up through today —and this can no longer be remedied— has lacked legitimacy....

We also have differences with National Action. One difference in particular led us not only to have different positions but to clash in terms of our views on how to move toward democracy. That was when the constitutional reform on electoral matters was put to a vote in 1989, when the PAN voted together with the PRI to move backwards, to close democratic spaces, and this put us on opposite sides.

However, I would like to use this occasion to invite National Action to join forces to move our country toward democracy, that we unite so that in joint action National Action and the Party of the Democratic Revolution can make a decisive contribution to democratic change in our country.

We cannot believe the government's candidate. Only now, it seems, does he realize that there is corruption, there is unemployment, that many things are lacking in our country.... He recognizes the failure of the government's policies because of all the regression they have brought the country. So we have no reason to believe the system, the regime which has been the number one manufacturer of poverty in our country, which offered us a million new jobs a year and has barely been able to fulfill one third of that figure. Which promised us sustained, supported, growing education, while what we have is a big deterioration of the educational system.

We cannot believe those who promised us economic growth, when today what we have is clearly stagnation. Let us

⁵ Aburto is the accused assassin of Colosio; see box on this page about the course of investigations in the Colosio case. (Editor's note.)

Daniel Mendoza / Imagenlatina.



The three parties invited the faithful to watch their candidates on giant screens (photo of PRI rally).

recall that it was under the guidance of Dr. Zedillo [as Secretary of Programming and the Budget] that the National Development Plan was prepared. At this point, at the end of the six-year presidential term, we were supposed to be growing 6 percent, but the rate is barely 0.4 percent. These policies, the policies Dr. Zedillo offers, can only bring us six more years of the same thing, six years of stagnation, six years of corruption, six years of pollution, six years which would mean only a fall into the abyss for the Mexican people.

III

Diego Fernández. Mr. Cárdenas: of course we are very willing to contribute to the fight for democracy together with all who wish to do so, but in a serious way, not just when it is convenient or circumstantially opportune. You did not rebut any of the charges, and now I will devote these minutes to Dr. Zedillo.

Dr. Zedillo: I would like to say something to you that many millions of Mexicans might want to tell you. From the information you have given us recently, we know you have been a good kid, with high grades; but in terms of democracy we sincerely believe you have flunked. I'll tell you why. Allow me to make a comparison.

I am here because thousands of free men and women in the National Action Party freely voted for this candidacy. Yet I would like to tell you, with all due respect, that you are here as a result of two tragedies: first, Colosio's death; and second, designation by the president.

You are in no way guilty of the first, which is beyond your control; but the second disqualifies you, at least if what we're talking about is democracy.

Moving to another topic, in the time remaining to me. Economics is your forte. We know you are a good economist, and your most prominent participation in the government, which you mentioned a little here, has been precisely in the economic field; and in this field the government has failed in fundamental ways.

As a political party, we have tried to act in a completely honorable way, and we have acknowledged, without embarrassment, the things the government has done right. That is the function of the honorable opposition: not to destroy everything, nor to question everything arbitrarily.

But I want to tell you that when we have disagreements we state them as well. For us, your National Development Plan means 40 million poor people. Certainly, there are some macroeconomic changes, which we have recognized, but they do not justify the final result. Hopefully you can tell us what happened with the predictions you made, as [planning] secretary, regarding the current account deficit. You made predictions which repeatedly turned out wrong, over the course of years, to the tune of billions of dollars, and hopefully you can also tell us, if time permits, what happened with your goal of 6 percent growth for 1993. We are at least 15 times beneath that level—and while we're talking about projections, promises and plans, I would like to tell you here and now that we ought to believe you 15 times less than what you say.

Cuahtémoc Cárdenas. I am surprised by the democracy that National Action's candidate sometimes preaches. I would think we'd have to see Vicente Fox instead of Carlos Medina as the head of government in Guanajuato.⁶ It's just a thought I'll leave you with....

Why should we believe the official candidate now when he offers us change, given that this regime—of which the official party's candidate has been a very prominent functionary, I wouldn't say a man with experience of good government, because what we have seen of his time in office in really a fiasco, a fiasco in planning, a fiasco in education. In any case, why should we believe the PRI candidate... since it is only now that he realizes there is corruption in the government?...

Ernesto Zedillo. First of all, I would very respectfully ask the gentlemen candidates not to try to profit from the assassination of Luis Donaldo Colosio. Especially you, Mr. Engineer Cárdenas, who very frequently used your well-known verbal violence during Luis Donaldo Colosio's campaign. I was particularly offended when on December 10 in Hermosillo, Sonora, you called Luis Donaldo Colosio a bad Mexican and said he acted against the interests of the country. Instead of seeking to profit politically from his image, you should be asking the Colosio family's forgiveness.

Engineer Cárdenas has said that the proposals sound similar; and it is true, since his proposals have started to sound more like the government's. The more he's realized

⁶ The PAN claimed victory for its candidate, Vicente Fox, in the recent gubernatorial elections in the state of Guanajuato. Nevertheless, PRI candidate Ramón Aguirre took office, only to resign a few days later and be replaced by PAN member Carlos Medina. (Editor's note.)

that his proposals are not accepted by the Mexican people, the more he has adopted the proposals of the government.

The question posed here is this: what would have happened if six years ago Mr. Cárdenas, who did not win then, had won, and if we had adopted the economic policies he put forward then —economic policies of public deficit, policies to ignore inflation, policies of uncontrolled government spending, policies for more government-owned enterprises with subsidies paid for by the people?

The answer is quite clear, compatriots: today the country would be sunk in the deepest poverty; our economy would be a disaster....

We have everything needed for a growing economy; we already have the foundations, thanks to the sacrifices and efforts that have been made. I propose that we return to growth, and that we apply the resources from that growth to the fight against poverty. I repeat that the fight against poverty is our greatest challenge. I am sure that fighting and defeating poverty will be the greatest achievement of our generation.

IV

Cuahtémoc Cárdenas. The foundations of our platform are democratic change, the transition to democracy, ending the current regime of the government party, and, moreover, recovering a productive economy. It is indispensable that... there begin to be respect for the law and the Constitution, which today are systematically violated by the authorities. Abiding by the law will give us a radically different country.

We are for the division of powers, for authentic federalism, for municipal autonomy, for developing a regime of freedoms in our country. And we want our economy to recover on the basis of concentrating and developing economic policy for generating jobs, the most important challenge the Mexican people will have to face at this, the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st....

We will start off with an emergency plan... an intensive public-works program which could become the leading factor for economic growth in our country. At the same time we will start preparing a plan for sustained growth, which we could put into effect starting in 1996 —that is, after one year in office— a plan which would allow us to reactivate productive investment and finance our development without causing indebtedness. That is, spending only what is earned.

That we would be able, additionally, to carry out a deep-going fiscal reform allowing us to have a more just and simpler tax system, and to put an end to fiscal terrorism. We will get rid of the two-percent tax on business assets....

But I would not want to end this segment without mentioning other concerns. The government continues to violate our laws systematically. It continues to create

government agencies and to appoint functionaries who earn very high salaries while ignoring the laws which the government itself has enacted.

What was this National Security Department created for? This placed a functionary over the heads of the Secretaries of the Interior, National Defense and the Navy. This is an offense to our armed forces.

We also see that the government is buying armored vehicles equipped with water cannons. Is that for the elections? What do they want those machines for? Why were they delivered to the Secretariat of National Defense, when they never should have been brought into the country at all? In any case these are for the police: the municipal police, the metropolitan police. Or does the government want to place the armed forces in confrontation with the citizenry?... That is the only explanation for these policies: to continue pitting Mexicans against Mexicans; not to seek a resolution of problems through reconciliation.

Ernesto Zedillo. I would like to devote this time period to a subject of the utmost importance for all Mexicans: the subject of education.

You know that education is the key to individual, family and national advancement.... I am convinced that in the next years we must carry out a great crusade for national education. I had the very high honor of serving as Secretary of Education for almost two years. With the support of the women and men who serve as teachers in Mexico I was able to participate in an educational reform which has led us to decentralize the educational system, out of the hands of the federal government and into those of local governments. This was a genuine act of federalism, because we took power, resources and authority away from the federal government and gave them to local governments. We were able to carry out the first reform of study plans, programs and materials in 20 years; to establish a new system for teacher development in Mexico; to work on reforming Article Three of the Constitution, which established... the government's obligation to provide pre-school education.

With all this, compatriots, we know that much remains to be done with regard to education. For this reason, I propose... that we put an end to illiteracy, that we ensure that

“The wild, violent Mexico, mistakenly called barbarous, is not yet in the tomb; it merely sleeps. Let us not rouse it.... We would all be destroyed if the wild Mexico awoke”

Jesús Reyes Heróles



all primary-school-age children attend school, because 15 percent of children still do not enter primary school, and many drop out before completing primary school; that we make obligatory secondary education a reality; that we multiply the opportunities for training and technological education; that we give a big push to higher education, in the public universities, in the technological institutes; that we make sure that no young person who has the talent, capability and desire to do so is kept from attending university. Let us establish a national system of scholarships for them.... The best investment we can make in our country is investment in people. That is the foundation of Mexico's future.

Diego Fernández. I must respond to two imputations. First, Mr. Cárdenas, in Guanajuato National Action won the election. If we were able to redress the injustice only in part, do not blame us; that was what we obtained. We are not culpable of a fraud which was only partially redressed. However, I would like to say that hopefully on future occasions, in the debates you suggest, we can talk about electoral matters. For the present, I have here 23 cases in Michoacán when the beneficiary was your party, and not on the sort of clear basis as in the case of the victory of National Action and Fox in Guanajuato. This will be available to you in any debate.

Secondly, Dr. Zedillo, I have given you no cause to recommend that I not seek profit from Colosio's death. I have been very respectful in the face of that tragedy; I was aghast at it, and I said so publicly. I merely said that one of the reasons you are here was that crime, but I also said that it was beyond your control, and that you are not to blame for it. I have not sought to profit from the cunning and cowardly crime committed against Colosio.

I will move on to proposals. From National Action's viewpoint it is not a question of putting forward a voluntaristic and demagogic list of recipes. Mexico's

problem is that the country needs to be reconstructed, and the country's reconstruction demands that as Mexicans all of us make a great effort to have a clear conception, from a genuinely human viewpoint, of what Mexico is, with its history, Dr. Zedillo, with its present, and for its future....

Some fundamental measures —pardon me for stating them very briefly, since only a few minutes are available: as president of the republic I will form a pluralist government; this is fundamental. It will not be a party government. And a pluralist government is necessary if we want to find peace and concord among Mexicans.

As president of Mexico, Mr. Zedillo, Mr. Cárdenas, I will not be the head of a political party. I think I will be the first president of Mexico not to be the head of a political party.

I will respect and fulfill the twenty agreements for democracy which a very broad and very distinguished group of citizens from all over the country has put before the candidates. I made these agreements my own because they coincide with the National Action Party's theses and programs, and I reiterate that pledge.

I will respect the federalist powers of the states and municipalities. And this is a clear and viable offer: I will immediately raise, by 100 percent, the amount of funds going to all the country's municipalities.... And don't tell me this is a voluntaristic increase, because it can be done simply by removing one spending program from the hands of the president of the republic.

As part of a great national crusade for public security, I would propose the creation of a National Guard, the basis for which already exists in the Constitution. As part of the administration of justice, I will propose the creation of a General Council to restructure and overhaul that branch of government.

A national crusade is urgently needed with regard to education as well. To emphasize anew the importance of teachers, not to change the Secretary of Education three or four times —as occurred during this six-year presidential term; and spending must be increased... above all if a tax-deductibility policy is established.

In the government to come we will have to achieve absolute discipline and honesty in the government's own spending. We will have to carry out a just, simple, clear and permanent regulation of our administrative and judicial laws, so that small and medium-sized industry, as well as the countryside, may flourish.

And speaking of the countryside, it demands justice, and money. I can only say to you, as time is running out: in the countryside, not one *latifundio* and not one land invasion...⁷

⁷ A *latifundio* is the sort of large landed estate that prevailed before the Mexican Revolution. Land invasions are unauthorized seizures of estates or other lands by peasants. (Editor's note.)

V

Ernesto Zedillo. At this time I would like to stress the issue of justice.

One of the most important wrongs suffered by individuals and families is the lack of security. We must admit that today the citizen does not feel the law is on his side. Every day we hear about acts of violence, acts of aggression against honorable and decent citizens. We must frankly recognize that our system of justice leaves much to be desired.... Because of this, one of the fundamental proposals of the government I propose to lead is carrying out a total reform of our justice system.

This reform must include a review of existing laws, since —let us admit it— unjust laws still exist in our country. A clear example are those laws which do not give women full equality in the exercise of their rights.

I have proposed a reform for transforming this situation. I have also said that the executive branch should not have a monopoly over the offices of the judicial police, and I will promote a reform to break that monopoly. Together with state government, within the

framework of our federal pact, I will transform the way in which police agencies are currently trained, function and carry out their duties.

I will promote reforms of the judicial branch in order to give it greater autonomy and complete independence from the federal executive branch. But it will also have to be a reform which guarantees us that judges will be just, that they always side legally with the citizen.... I propose that this be one of the first points attended to by our government....

Diego Fernández. The financial opening of this country is undoubtedly urgent. The government has committed a crime by opening the borders to competition against the countryside as well as small, medium-sized and “micro” businesses, while protecting a banking oligopoly. This is unjust, and it is a crime which cannot continue.

We need to attract domestic and foreign savings in order to capitalize the countryside as well as small, medium-sized and micro businesses. We also need to promote the participation of all society in creating a modern infrastructure. Just think of the railways. They come from the time of Don Porfirio [Díaz], a hundred years ago.

Negotiating the debate

In 1982, the PAN submitted a proposal for a Debate Law —the first precedent on this subject in Mexico.

Nevertheless, it took eleven years for a PRI presidential candidate to agree to participate in a public debate with opposition candidates. On November 28, 1993 —the day Luis Donaldo Colosio was nominated by the PRI— PRD presidential candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas invited him to a public comparison of the two projects for the country that each of them represented.

On accepting the proposal that afternoon, Colosio said: “I shall invite candidates from other parties to a broad debate in order to compare ideas and programs.”

This marked the beginning of contacts between the political parties to negotiate the terms of the debate, as well as of the polemic between the candidates as to which parties should participate. However, the armed uprising in Chiapas overshadowed the issue of the debate at that time.

Ernesto Zedillo, replacement candidate for the slain Colosio, took up the debate proposal. On April 24, almost a month after his nomination, Zedillo invited Cárdenas and Diego Fernández, the PAN candidate, to participate in the “first debate between presidential candidates in Mexico’s modern history.”

However, three other candidates (of the nine registered), were to go down in history as protagonists of the first public debate in the country’s history: Rafael Aguilar Talamantes (PFCRN), Jorge González Torres (PVEM) and Pablo Emilio Madero (UNO). On May 11, rather than actually debating, these three candidates set forth their ideas and proposals on democracy, poverty, unemployment, public safety, social justice and education —topics they had previously agreed on and which they discussed over a 90-minute period.

The next day saw the historic debate between the country’s three main political forces —the PRI, PAN and PRD, which receive between 80 and 90 per cent of all votes.

While the “debate” between the minority opposition candidates was open to the public, the mass media were not even allowed in for security reasons. While both debates were televised, the one that captured Mexican society’s attention was obviously the one held on May 12. In fact, it has been estimated that this program broke all previous viewers’ ratings in the history of Mexican television, including sports events.

Sources: *La Jornada*, May 12, 1994, and *Reforma*, May 11, 1994.

First-ever presidential debate

May 11 marked the first debate ever held among presidential candidates in Mexico. The participants were Rafael Aguilar Talamantes, candidate of the Party of the Cardenista Front of National Reconstruction (PFCRN); Jorge González Torres of the Green Ecology Party of Mexico (PVEM); and Pablo Emilio Madero Belden, of the National Opposition Union (UNO).

The candidates of the remaining three minor parties —Cecilia Soto of the Labor Party (PT), Marcela Lombardo of the People's Socialist Party (PPS) and Alvaro Pérez Treviño of the Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution (PARM)— refused to participate, as a protest against not being invited to the “great debate” held the following day between the PRI, the PAN and the PRD.

I will promote an immediate opening-up and pluralism in the media, without injustice and with malice to none... We all need to have communications media which will be useful to society.

A final point: it is urgent that the government carry out —always— a frank, sincere, constructive dialogue with the entire population and call on it to work for the good of Mexico.

The government of the republic must guarantee that in the face of the law there will be neither harshness nor tolerance, but simply justice and understanding, always, so all Mexicans can understand one another in concord. And I propose, with your help, to lead a federal government, a presidency, which guarantees nobility, gentlemanly dignity and managerial ability....

It is necessary that now, once and for all, we Mexicans have a government we can support, that we can trust and upon which we can make demands. It is unjust that, once again, plans come and go, that once again they

be a sort of literature which is gone with the wind. What is in demand today is a commitment to truth, and today the democratic position is, without a doubt, the National Action Party.

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. It is late in the day for the PRI's candidate to realize that there is corruption and there are deficiencies in the police forces, in the judicial offices, in the administration of justice. We can pose the question here: why is he just realizing this now? And above all, why is he denouncing this now, and not when he was an official of the current administration?

It is only now that he realizes that in education —and he was Secretary of Education— many are the things left unfulfilled. Primary and secondary education are obligatory according to the Constitution. One quarter of the children who should be going to primary school do not attend primary school. As for secondary schools, only 26 out of every 100 who should complete their secondary education do so. This government has made no effort to abide by the

Citizens' proposals

The issues of greatest concern to Mexicans —which were suggested for the debate between the PAN, PRD and PRI— are education, the economy, public safety and democracy.

Of the 1,417 individuals who responded to the survey conducted by *Reforma* (Mexico City) and *El Norte* (Monterrey) newspapers, 46% thought that education should be the first of multiple subjects for debate, with particular emphasis on the quality of public education.

This was followed by the economy (42%), with unemployment being the main concern; public safety (41%); democracy (40%); the countryside (29%); ecology (25%); social policy (18%); communications and transport (13%); public services (11%); foreign policy and trade (10%); current affairs (8%), including the Chiapas uprising and the assassination of Colosio; federalism (8%); the Church (7%); and the mass media (5%).

Reforma, May 9, 1994.

constitutional requirement to make primary and secondary education genuinely obligatory.

Neither has this government been concerned with improving conditions for teachers. Today, in real terms, they are earning less than half—that is, 48 percent—of what they earned in 1981.

So why should we believe that the official candidate will now really begin to concern himself with education, that now there will be training programs, that now there will be more and better schools for the Mexican people?

During his term, with very high spending... to formulate and publish textbooks.... The Secretariat of Education has not given a public explanation as to why it failed in the contest held [to write] these books, when prizes were paid, and the spending was carried out for these books, which are sitting in warehouses, when our children are lacking basic textbooks in the schools of the entire country.

What does the PRI candidate offer us? More of the same, more lies, more broken promises. I do not believe that this is what we Mexicans want....

VI

Diego Fernández. We would like to stress that, today more than ever, it is necessary to seek the vote of the entire Mexican people; but the vote which Mexico needs is the vote of conscience, the vote of reason, the vote which seeks a better destiny for all.

We cannot accept the vote of fear, of that complicit fear which, if it occurred, would allow—to Mexico's misfortune—that everything continue to be the same; and to go on the same means to get worse. Neither should it be the vote of bitterness and the vote of resentment that comes with revenge and that comes with violence. We need the vote of concord, the vote of peace....

Let me make a special appeal to the young people of this country, who need to participate seriously and in depth, without lies, without pranks, without cowardice. All the Mexican people needs to participate, but there is a storehouse, a patrimony, an incalculable wealth in the women of Mexico, and I believe that the women can, if they so decide, change Mexico on August 21st; that on August 21st they can change the direction of this country,

Debate conditions

Setting. A closed, sand-colored circle. The candidates were placed in the middle along the edges of an equilateral triangle, with the moderator in the center on a lower level. Podiums A, B and C were assigned to Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, Ernesto Zedillo and Diego Fernández respectively, by means of a drawing held half an hour before the debate. The candidates delivered their speeches standing behind high work-tables.

Participation. The debate lasted an hour and a half and was divided into three parts: initial exposition, political ideas and proposals, and final message. In accordance with the results of the drawing, each candidate spoke seven times, in rotating order:

1. A, B and C: 8 minutes each
2. B, C and A: 5 minutes
3. C, A and B: 3 minutes
4. A, B and C: 5 minutes
5. B, C and A: 3 minutes
6. C, A and B: 3 minutes
7. A, B and C: 3 minutes

Rules. Candidates were not allowed to interrupt each other. During their final contribution to the debate, the candidates were not allowed to attack their opponents, since the latter would have no further opportunity to respond.

Time control. Two warning lights were installed so the moderator could use an amber-colored light to advise candidates that they had 30 seconds left to speak, and a red light to advise them that they had 5 seconds left.

Audiovisual arrangements. Ten cameras were installed, seven operating and three in reserve, with a fixed setting. Thus they only relayed images of a single candidate giving his speech, without showing the other contenders, thus preventing viewers from seeing the latter's reactions when they were mentioned. A mobile camera was used for the beginning and end of the program. Equalizers were not used in the sound lines, so as to prevent voice manipulation.

Attendees. Each candidate was allowed 20 guests, including two representatives and two technical supervisors who were permitted access to all areas. On security grounds, entry was forbidden to journalists.

which improves only through the work of all its sons and daughters....

Dr. Zedillo said a few days ago that he will not form a pluralist government; that is tragic. Today, anybody who understands the sign of the times must grant a great breadth of viewpoints in the formation of the new government....

Cuahtémoc Cárdenas. I do not know how the National Action Party candidate can call on all Mexicans to join him to change the country, when he has shown a clear disdain for many Mexicans.

I would just like to recall that on one occasion when a group of Mexicans was rightly demanding housing, since they had none, he called them *descalzonzados* [people with no underwear]....

Last Sunday the PRI candidate met with taxi drivers. They offered him a beer and he said he would drink it, but would they please serve it to him in a glass so it would look like [non-alcoholic] cider.

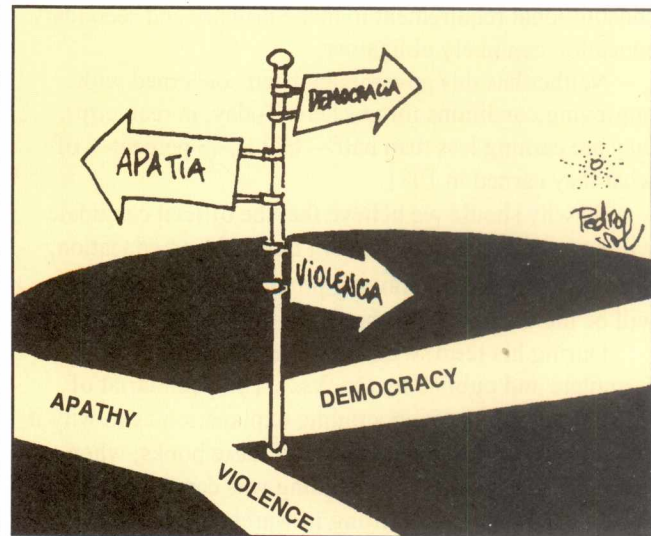
I ask: does the PRI candidate want to give Mexicans beer for cider and cider for beer? Is that the proposal of the current candidate of the official party, Dr. Zedillo, who has so many university degrees and so many academic distinctions which he himself boasts of? Is that the kind of government he wants to give the Mexican people? I repeat, to give us cider for beer and beer for cider?

I would also like to reflect on who the PRI candidate can govern with, who is supporting him.... Let us recall the manifesto which the media have dubbed the "Manifesto of the Dinosaurs."⁸ This is what the PRI candidate offers us, to return to corruption, to return to populist practices, to return to having the support of those who are largely responsible for the disasters, for the situation of economic, social and political deterioration we are living in at this time....

Ernesto Zedillo. Half-truths are half-lies, and one must not lie to the people, not even a little.... Engineer Cárdenas, when he referred to issues of education, wanted to tell a bit of the truth, and in doing so he told a big lie.

He presented an inaccurate balance-sheet on the current government's educational efforts. Perhaps his advisors, with very bad intentions, did not provide him with the correct facts. During the present administration, in real

⁸ This was an ad published in the Mexican press, signed by prominent officials of previous administrations, some of whom have been accused of corruption and unexplained wealth, as well as functionaries of the current government, who were accused of committing an offense against election laws by publicly supporting a candidate. ("Dinosaurs" is a term used to refer to old-guard, "hard-line" PRI leaders.) The document has also been called the "Ignominious Manifesto." The PAN filed a legal complaint against the manifesto's promoter, Carlos Hank González, Secretary of Agriculture and Water Resources. It is worth noting that our Editorial Director, Hugo B. Margáin, refused to sign the statement. (Editor's note.)



terms, educational spending increased one hundred percent, and most of that spending went toward raising the salaries of the teachers of Mexico.

It is true that there is still a long way to go, and that is my pledge. He did not exactly tell the truth either when he talked about those books in warehouses. It is true that there was a contest, and finally the jury decided that those books should not be printed, and they were not printed. There are no books sitting in warehouses as you alleged, so I beseech you that we stick to complete truths.

I want to devote the remaining time in this segment, compatriots, to speaking about the issue of democracy, to affirm before you that my personal commitment, my commitment as a Mexican, is to the democratic advance of our motherland.

I want to assure you, compatriots, that on August 21st we do not only want your vote. We want legality, credibility, legitimacy, and I am convinced that, thanks to the electoral reforms that have been carried out in recent years, the Mexican people will have an electoral system that fully guarantees the effectiveness of their suffrage.

I do have confidence in the almost two million Mexicans who will be participating in the preparation and carrying out of these elections. Only a minority of those almost two million Mexicans belong to my party. So let us have confidence. The coming elections will be clean.

VII

Cuahtémoc Cárdenas. I call on all of you, all Mexicans, so we may win the right to build our democracy. I propose to form a government with the best Mexicans, men and women. A government which will not be of the PRD alone, but which will include those who have participated actively in the democratic movement, people from non-governmental organizations, from business, banking, commerce, people who are now in the universities, in order to have a pluralist

New Public Security Department

At the end of last year, Mexico was one of the few countries without modern military teams, at both the technical and staff level. However, on April 26 President Carlos Salinas de Gortari organized the National Public Security Department, aimed at "creating mechanisms for coordination between the national and Federal District Attorney Generals' offices, and establishing timely, effective channels of communication between the Secretariats of the Interior, National Defense and the Navy, as well as the Federal District Department."

The head of this new department, Arsenio Farell Cubillas—who has served as Secretary of Labor and Social Security over the past 12 years, declared that the department would provide backup to already existing units and implement new security measures, such as:

1. The creation of a special police force in at least 17 Mexican states, comprising personnel trained in techniques for establishing public order. During the initial phase, departments will be set up in the states of Yucatan, Quintana Roo, Chihuahua, Sonora, Baja California, Nuevo León and Guerrero.
2. The organization of anti-terrorist groups, with the aim of putting an end to the terrorism manifested in the country's recent spate of kidnappings. Nearly 300 agents have been trained by instructors from the United States, Spain and Argentina, who gave courses on explosive handling and investigation, assaults on buildings and intelligence.
3. The purchase of anti-riot equipment. The Secretariat of National Defense has imported 296 vehicles for military use, including jeeps, trucks, tanks, double motorcycles and armored trucks with water cannons.
4. The establishment of interdisciplinary police units to combat drug-trafficking in Baja California, made up of federal, state and municipal agents with the objective of combating drug-related activities and crimes.

The creation of this department has produced a number of reactions, but it was formed in response to events in recent months: the armed conflict in Chiapas, the assassination of Colosio and the kidnapping of high-ranking Mexican industrialists.

The discovery in Managua of a list of 150 potential kidnap victims, 77 of whom are Mexican, is an indication that Mexico has become a perfect target for kidnappers. Since the beginning of the current administration, a wave of kidnapping has been unleashed that includes that of Fernando Senderos Mestre (Grupo Desc), Juan Bosco Gutiérrez Cortina (Gutsa), Joaquín Vargas Guajardo (Multivisión), Alfredo Harp Helú (Banamex-Accival) and Angel Losada Moreno (Gigante), the last two of whom have not yet been rescued.

Luis Germán Cárcoba, chairman of the CCE (Business Coordination Council), while denying that the country faces a financial or political crisis, remarked that the problem of lack of security cannot be solved by means of a single mechanism, but only by abiding by the law, with the participation of society as a whole. There has been considerable pressure from businessmen demanding improved public safety, who have expressed concern that Mexico might become a country with similar levels of fear and insecurity as certain Central and South American nations.

According to the writer Carlos Fuentes, this new department is an "anti-constitutional mammoth that undermines the powers of the Attorney General's Office, the Secretariat of the Interior and even the Secretariats for National Defense and the Navy, removing their legal capacity for coordinating matters among themselves and imposing an illegal chain of intermediate power between the president and his secretaries of state."

One of the department's most vociferous critics has been PRD Senator Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, who declared it unconstitutional. "It is a reflection of political instability and insecurity. It contravenes the agreement signed on January 27, after the peace talks in Chiapas."

Despite its critics, the National Public Security Department went into gear immediately after it was created. Only time will judge its success. One can only hope that this organization will not be a step backwards for democracy or become a means of repression and denial of freedoms for the civilian population.

Meanwhile, businessmen no longer trust the security that the nation can provide, seeking protection in the form of multi-million international insurance policies instead.

Mónica Ching
Assistant Editor.

government, the government our country needs to be able to make the transition to democracy.

This is a commitment, and I must stress this: I will call a national consultation to review our Constitution, so we can have a new Constituent Congress in 1997, which can produce a new fundamental law bringing together our aspirations... in order to resolve the country's problems.

The next government will not be one in which the PRD will replace the PRI. We do not want more government parties....

We have confidence in the vote and in the coming elections, despite the conditions in which they are being held.

Let us keep in mind that changes which seemed impossible—today Mandela is president of South Africa; today the opposition has won in Panama—did not appear credible only a few days ago. Let us have confidence in ourselves. Let us go into these elections with faith, with courage, with many votes, so that the vote will be what decides the destiny of our country in this, the end of the 20th century.

I make this pledge before you, to respect the electoral result and see that it is respected.... We want Carlos Salinas to make the commitment not to intervene in this election, that he pledge that this election, on August 21st, will not be the same as the election of July 6th [1988].

I have confidence in the backing of my compatriots. I have confidence that together with you we will be forming the next government, and that this will be the government which builds and develops democracy in our country.

Ernesto Zedillo. Compatriots, I sincerely thank you for your attention. Candidates, sirs, I thank you for having accepted this invitation. I invite you to debate with me again, and that this time we do it together with the rest of the candidates....

I propose to you, compatriots, that together we work for an economy that will generate the jobs and the wages that you are demanding. I propose to you that together we work for that reform and that implementation of a new



Daniel Mendoza / Imagenlatina

PAN members gather to watch the debate.

“Reason, the mother of tolerance, is the only thing capable of warding off bloodthirsty phantoms”

Octavio Paz

system of justice which will eliminate insecurity, violence and aggression against the citizen.

I propose to you, compatriots, that we deploy a great battle against poverty. I propose to you, compatriots, that in that battle we think of poverty-stricken peasants, of our Indian brothers, of the retired, of the handicapped. I propose to you that we make real the juridical equality of women before the law. I propose to you, compatriots, that we work together in the following years to build a future of progress for our children. I ask that this coming August 21st you go to the polls, that you go the polls with the confidence that your vote will be respected. And I ask that when you cast your vote you think only of the future of your children, the future of your families. Thank you very much, compatriots.

Diego Fernández. In accordance with the rules of this debate, in this last segment I cannot give a harsh rebuttal, since Mr. Cárdenas cannot reply. I only want to say to you, Mr. Cárdenas, that your accusation is not just. I did not call the poor people who were demanding houses *descalzonados*. That is what I called the leaders who push them forward while not showing their own faces. Read *Proceso*, a professional, serious journal of communication, and you will see the text of what I said and what I maintain now. I did not call them that; excuse me, but I cannot accept your accusation.

To finish, the National Action Party has been fighting for democracy for 54 years; for 54 years it has been fighting for Mexico to live in a state of law, and we are going to achieve this in the next government; to achieve as well a humane economy that will provide everyone with a decent life, sources of employment, justice and legality for all, so that we can thereby guarantee a sufficient and secure, decent life for all Mexican families.

I want to say to you, to end, that if I have not failed you as a candidate, I will not fail you as president. That I need you on August 21st, but I will need you even more over the next six years, because with your help I can be a good president of Mexico.



While the debate did not suffice when it came to learning the candidates' platforms, it did provide a look at their personalities. It remains to be seen what impact it will have on the August 21 elections ❧

Marybel Toro Gayol
Managing Editor.