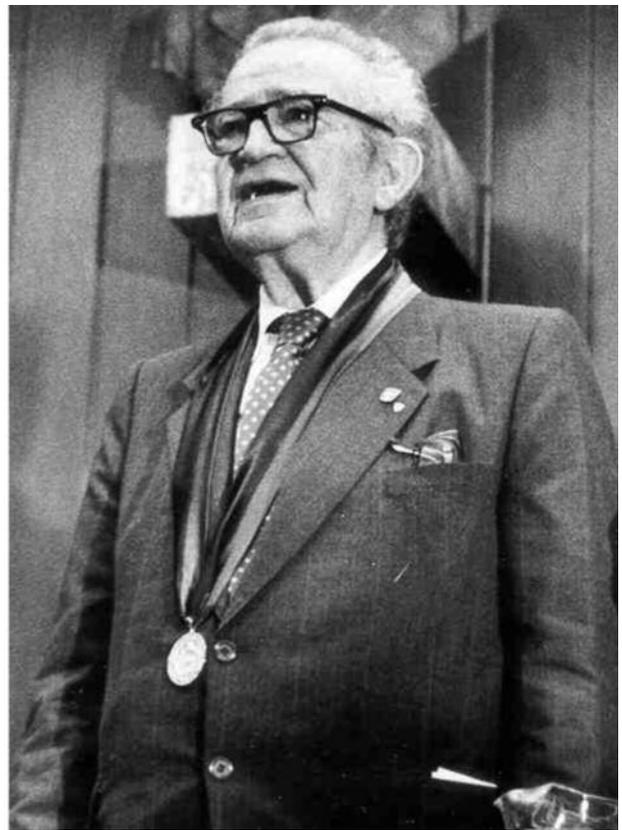


Remembering Andrés Serra Rojas A Moral Duty

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Photos courtesy of Dirección General de Comunicación Social de la UNAM

"To quote Addison: 'What a pity that we can die for our country but once.'"¹

Andrés Serra Rojas was born October 13, 1904, in Pichucalco, Chiapas, and died last September 24, only 20 days before his ninety-seventh birthday.

There are many reasons why we should remember him: his contributions to the political and legal sciences are

invaluable. Among his dozens of books are *Ciencia Política* (Political Science), *Teoría general del Estado* (General Theory of the State), *Derecho administrativo* (Administrative Law), *Derecho económico* (Economic Law), *Historia de las ideas e instituciones políticas* (History of Political Ideas and Institutions), *Antología política* (Political Anthology), *Hagamos lo imposible* (Let Us Do the Impossible) and *Mexica-*

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nidad: proyección de la nación mexicana hacia el siglo XXI (Mexican-ness: A Projection of the Mexican Nation into the Twenty-First Century).

He was professor emeritus and received an honorable doctorate degree from the National Autonomous University of Mexico, the highest honors a professor and researcher can achieve in that house of learning.

Andrés Serra Rojas referred without hesitation to the past. He knew like the Roman philosopher Cicero that “time does not pass uselessly and life ends by revealing to us the meaning of history.”²

He very often delved into our country’s history—which he undoubtedly adored—and managed to give it the most objective interpretation possible.

I remember that when I was in my third semester of law, on one of my frequent, pleasant visits to the library of the Institute for Legal Research, motivated by curiosity, I encountered the book *Los caudillos de la revolución de Ayutla; una de las etapas más interesantes y agitadas de la vida institucional de México* (The Caudillos of the Revolution of Ayutla; One of the Most Interesting and Agitated Stages in the Institutional Life of Mexico), the third in the series “Mexican Political Institutions,” published in 1962, written by Don Andrés. I reread this historical piece for this article; among other issues, Serra sought to revalue the political role and moral situation of Ignacio Comonfort, about whom he writes:

The history of that period confirmed the lasting experience of Comonfort: you govern with all or against all. Democracy is either the norm of government or there is no road but dictatorship. A people will never be happy when a faction or a privileged minority takes over the sources of wealth in the face of the immense majority, defenseless and mainly agricultural. He ... did not want to be the maker of poverty because the people always have to put up with it.³

Words replete with experience, and so needed as a reality in the Mexico of today, since Don Andrés not only knew the world of ideas, but participated actively in politics, taking on important responsibilities both in the executive and the legislative branches of government. As a man concerned with the welfare of the Mexican people, he always sought solutions in the realm of government and had the opportunity of serving his country from different parts of the public administration and in the Chambers of Deputies and

Senators. From that perspective, he reasoned and described the problems generated in the different branches of government and designed formulas for solving many of the problems that plague Mexico’s public administration, published in his *Tratado de derecho administrativo* (Treatise on Administrative Law) and other texts.

Andrés Serra Rojas passionately loved our university’s School of Law. He always referred to it as “the school.” It may have been one of the things he loved most, since he dedicated to it not only many hours of work but also a great part of his writings. He never undervalued the importance of the young, who in each generation represented the possibility of forging new ranks of attorneys. Mexico’s youth was the main object of his concerns and reflections. Thus, in his work on the Ayutla revolution, we read:

A young people like ours must care for the memory of its great men who raised high the banner of truth when infamy attempts to tarnish their merits.⁴

Without a doubt, we are carrying out our moral duty by paying homage to a great man who raised high the banner of truth and sought a way for many of us to feel appropriate admiration for the illustrious personages of whom he spoke in his writings. Sometimes, History (with a capital “H”) and history (with a small “h”) coincide and reach an undeniable congruence when we evoke a person of the stature of Andrés Serra Rojas, who contributed with his life and work to the construction of many of the pillars of the legal and political life of our country and, personally, of the construction of those of us who had the privilege of knowing him; in addition to wonderful memories, his legacy to us is his admirable example of study, dedication and, above all, generosity. **MM**

NOTES

¹ Andrés Serra Rojas, *Los caudillos de la revolución de Ayutla; una de las etapas más interesantes y agitadas de la vida institucional de México* (Mexico City: Instituciones Políticas Nacionales, 1962), pp. 9-10.

² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.