

Some recollections

I knew Francisco Ruiz Massieu since he was a student. He was distinguished by his clear vocation to become, in time, a public servant. He studied the problems of our country and participated in students groups united by a single objective: to seek solutions to our long-standing deficiencies and thereby strengthen progress for all, distributing benefits to the neediest.

I remember, upon returning to Mexico from abroad, having breakfast with some of the students who were anxious to prepare themselves to serve Mexico. We discussed and debated international and domestic issues. The group's academic training was excellent. They had made the highest grades at the university and all were motivated by the desire to work and confront the nation's problems. Today this group occupies top-level posts in our government.

After Ruiz Massieu became governor of Guerrero, I found myself in frequent contact with him again. He provided outstanding assistance to the university magazine *Voices of Mexico*. We also had the pleasure of publishing two of his articles: "Mexico's Political Assets" (issue No. 18, January-March, 1992) and "Limited Transition: The Chilean Case" (issue No. 27, April-June, 1994). The latter refers to the democratic changes that took place in Chile and Spain, when the dictatorships of Pinochet and Franco were democratically replaced.

Ruiz Massieu was convinced of the benefits of democracy and his final activities in the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) centered on a struggle to establish a straightforward democracy in our country, with democratic rules within the PRI for the selection of candidates.

From the conversations of that time I remember some of his key concerns: he was in favor of mass education to abolish illiteracy once and for all, since he considered this Mexico's greatest problem. "It is urgent to combat the ignorance of the majority who live in grinding poverty; otherwise democracy cannot really work," he stressed.

"If we fail to construct a solid base for democracy, we will live in a dangerous state of transition. In the absence of democracy the national ulcer of *caudillismo* will grow," he commented —unaware that he himself would be a victim of political violence.

We discussed the defense of the government through democracy. If aspirants to public office are nominated in a

unilateral way, this produces serious, deep-going resentments against those who decide in favor of one and not another. We talked about the case of Manuel Camacho, who —disappointed at not being named successor to the president— clumsily provoked a crisis during a difficult and worrisome year. If the PRI had nominated its presidential candidate according to clear democratic rules, no one would have felt cheated.

I have insisted on this point because of the drama of the assassination of Ruiz Massieu, apparently carried out as the fruit of hatreds and resentments on the part of those who found themselves left on the political sidelines.

As a result of my contact with Ruiz Massieu, I always considered him an honest, idealistic man, a talented jurist who wanted to fight for the good of Mexico and the genuine rule of law. His merit did not remain at the theoretical level; he worked tirelessly for his goals through action. He played an important role as PRI representative to the Federal Electoral Institute, distinguishing himself through his clear and concrete contributions.

He reached a top-level post in the PRI and had been named coordinator of the party's caucus in the Chamber of Deputies. We expected a lot from José Francisco Ruiz Massieu. We knew he was well prepared for the job. "Automatic majority votes are undesirable," he said in his last speech before the deputies-elect of the PRI. He asked for rational votes based on study and analysis, as well as dignity, unity and loyalty.

He was a supporter of separation between the PRI and the government, of converting the PRI into a party with a doctrine of progress so that, on the basis of study and research, it could anticipate government decisions. "To condemn and combat the system's deviations would be our greatest contribution to Mexico," he said.

Luis Donaldo Colosio, supporter of change, died by assassination. José Francisco Ruiz Massieu also wanted change and was murdered by criminals from his own party. These two sacrifices obligate us to struggle for the victims' ideals, since the salvation of our country will be democracy. ❧

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