

Challenges of the democratization process

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The concept of “democracy” has suffered the most extreme forms of abuse; the meanings it takes on, ranging over diverse forms of discourse, not only differ from one another but are even counterposed.

Needless to say, this neither aids comprehension of the subject nor contributes to establishing clear goals.

If by democracy we understand citizens’ ability to choose between political options, and a formula by which these diverse options can coexist and compete in a civilized way, then in Mexico we find ourselves relatively close to a democratic solution. Nevertheless, this happy outcome (which the main political forces at least claim to desire) is not assured and may still be shifted in other directions or simply bog down.

But democracy must also be sustainable, that is, reproduce itself as such. This requires formulae of government which, while expressing and recreating existing political pluralism, are “efficient”; in other words, which have the capacity to lubricate a country’s governability. This is the subject of the following notes.

The text is divided into four parts: a) “From the single-party to the multi-party system,” which seeks to describe the changes undergone by the party system; b) “From elections without competition to competitive elections,” which attempts to illustrate changes in the meaning and centrality of electoral processes; c) “The necessary electoral reform,” which alludes to the changes required for the attempt to definitively establish intra-party contests through electoral processes; and d) “Continuity or change in the governmental system?” which seeks to draw attention to the way changes in the electoral and party systems seem to call for changes in the system of government *per se*.

From the single-party to the multi-party system

Among the changes required, in order to pave the way for the coexistence of diversity and the citizenry’s ability to

make choices, are these: a) the existence of a system of parties worthy of the name, and b) clean, free and equitable elections. Both conditions are blazing a trail for themselves in our country. Let us examine each in turn.

The party system has moved from a practically single-party formula to a (still asymmetrical) multi-party formula. For many decades the fundamentals of politics were processed under the mantle of a single party grouping, flanked by marginal or merely “testimonial” political formations.

The creation of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR, National Revolutionary Party) in 1929 dispelled an initial centrifugal wave set in motion by the revolutionary movement that occurred at the beginning of the century. Dispersion was changed into concentration; the multiplication of local, state and regional parties was reconverted into a centralizing movement.

This was a matter not of coincidence but of construction. After the multiplying wave of groupings that marked the end of the revolution’s armed phase—which led to the creation of dozens, nay hundreds, of national, regional, state and even municipal parties—with the establishment of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario in 1929 this tendency was reversed and a centralizing process was begun, which, in its time, ordered and institutionalized the nation’s political life.

For military officers, “strongmen,” revolutionary *caudillos* [traditional leaders], politicians and so on, the PNR was a first civic formula for processing their interests and a common platform for reproducing the many-hued network of interests and expectations that arose with the armed struggle.

With the PNR’s conversion into the Partido de la Revolución Mexicana (PRM, Party of the Mexican Revolution) in 1938, the great mass organizations (worker, peasant and “popular” or grass-roots federations) as well as the army were fully incorporated into the party; this meant the construction of a kind of all-embracing umbrella group which left a very narrow margin for the emergence and

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reproduction of other party options. With the incorporation of the great mass organizations into the official party, a broad alliance of forces was consolidated, which would process their interests and demands beneath the initials and tricolor emblem of a single party grouping.

The PRM's conversion into the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI, Institutional Revolutionary Party) in 1946 followed this same impulse, although the "military sector" was no longer included in the party's organization. Thus, over the course of many years, the PNR, PRM and PRI were "virtually single" parties, while, on their flanks, alternative efforts arose and disappeared.

The hegemony of the ideology of the Mexican Revolution; the framework of institutions designed for dealing with various social demands; economic growth—which, while concentrating income and wealth, did allow for a better standard of living for every new generation; the (unequal) alliance between the governing "class" and huge mass groupings, etc.: all this led to the functioning of the system which Giovanni Sartori considered a paradigm of pragmatic hegemonic party systems, that non-competitive system which, due to its pragmatic ideology, never committed the same excesses as totalitarian regimes.

The various splits undergone by the "revolutionary family" (from José Vasconcelos to Juan Andrew Almazán, Ezequiel Padilla and General Henríquez) turned out to be ephemeral. These schisms, which sought to compete on the basis of political platforms distinct from the official program, went the way—after the elections—of those who advanced them: political disappearance or death.

The initially narrow spaces slowly tended to expand. Organizations were built to the right and left of the official party, which began to build bridges of communication with ever-wider fringes of the electorate, expressing the fact that the nation's diversity does not fit beneath the umbrella of a single party.

By the late 1960s it seemed clear that the "virtually single" party system was unable to cover the plurality of sensibilities and options emerging from an increasingly complex and differentiated society. From this standpoint, the 1968 student movement can be viewed as a rebellion of the children of the middle layers who did not identify, and did not want to identify, with the traditional formula of political activity. The vertical channels of the PRI were too narrow for them, and they sought democratic means for expressing their diagnoses and needs.

1968 was followed by a "democratic opening," consisting of a liberalization of available areas in the press, which began to publish a growing number of critical inquiries and commentaries. The touchstone regarding

reform of the party system may be found in the 1977 electoral reform.

After the student movement, conflicts arose in several universities, as well as a wave of trade-union insurgency which sought to found or regain spaces for expressing workers' demands. There were innumerable land seizures and the growth of peasant groups outside the official peasant federation; new publications and political groups appeared, together with both urban and rural guerrilla movements. Taken as a rather contradictory whole, these phenomena expressed the need for new channels for political activity.

Yet this growing conflictivity arose within a closed party system which was essentially disconnected from the conflicts taking place. Thus, while political tensions grew, the 1976 elections were held with just one presidential candidate running. The PRI candidate was also supported by the PPS (People's Socialist Party) and PARM (Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution), while the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN, National Action Party) was in the midst of an internal crisis and found itself unable to present a candidate. The Communist Party, excluded from the body politic, presented the candidacy of Valentín Campa as a way of highlighting its own existence as well as the artificiality of the legal norms which kept it segregated from the legal world.

The electoral reform of 1977 opened the way for the incorporation of political options which, until then, had been artificially marginalized, and restructured the traditional formula for the composition of the Chamber of Deputies so as to bring the winds of pluralism into the so-called lower house. At the time, this was a preventive measure which sought to liberalize political relations and reduce tensions, but which wound up being the keystone for a process which slowly turned into an avalanche.

The formation of new political parties and the strengthening of some of the traditional alternatives unleashed a seemingly unstoppable process. A process spurred on fundamentally by the differentiation of society, translating into a differentiation of votes and the forging of ever stronger and more deeply rooted electoral reference points.

We find ourselves in a system of parties which is quite different from the single-party system, since throughout the nation's territory one sees the (obviously unequal) strength of other options.

In recent years we have seen long-established parties multiply their voting base (the PAN), while others, produced by splits in the PRI together with long and complicated unification processes—such as the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD)—have implanted themselves across broad regions of the nation. This is a

phenomenon which seems irreversible (can anyone imagine the complex Mexico of today and tomorrow resolving its political differences within the narrow framework of a single-party model?), fed by the process of differentiation undergone by Mexican society itself.

This strengthening of party options has been accompanied and stimulated by a succession of legal and institutional reforms which recognize parties as "public interest entities," on the basis of which the parties have a range of rights and obligations. Thus, parties receive public financing, free postage, radio and television access and are subject to special fiscal rules as well as being the only groupings permitted to run candidates for elected office.

Their legal status, rights and prerogatives, as well as their monopoly on political action within the electoral framework, make them central actors in political life, leading to the creation of a party system which is unlikely to be undone.

While the parties' asymmetries in terms of resources, their highly unequal social implantation and, above all, their different relations with government prevent us from speaking of a system of parties in the strict sense, the very dynamic of their recurring electoral competition is multiplying the possibilities for a transition from the virtually single-party system to a competitive and open system of parties.

From elections without competition to competitive elections

The transformations of the party system modified the very meaning of electoral processes, which went from being ritual moments to events increasingly characterized by competition. In turn, the mechanics of elections have been strengthening the need for a party system worthy of the name.

From 1929 through the present, the PRI has never lost a presidential election; the same was true until 1989 for gubernatorial elections and for senatorial races until 1988. This provides a picture of the extended period of elections without real competition (with a few, honorable exceptions). These were ritual elections, in which the winners and losers were predetermined. They complied with constitutional and legal prerequisites but were conditioned by a single-party political system.

Electoral proceedings were punctually carried out, for years, as a way of legitimizing government power.

The elections were never suspended; they were held regularly and on time. Nevertheless, given the existing system of parties, they were more in the nature of formal procedures than genuine races for executive and legislative posts.

The key moment in the process was the *destape* (unveiling) of the PRI's candidate, after which the formula of a campaign—which served to consolidate accords and commitments—was adhered to. Much of our electoral mythology highlights and focuses more on the moment when the official party's candidate is named, rather than the day voters turn out to the polls. And this is not

surprising. Over the course of many decades the moment which generated tension and passion was when the *destape* occurred, after which all the rest was a procedure devoid of real competition.

In recent years, however, competition has not only been increasing but has broken with many of the myths which seemed unchangeable for decades

(suffice it to recall the idea that the PRI "could not give up a border state since this would imperil national sovereignty"). Little by little, the process of voting differentiation—flowing from a process of social differentiation which includes the wearing out of the ideology of the Mexican Revolution and the emergence of other ideological reference points—was creating and strengthening party poles other than the official one, until it converted the elections into increasingly competitive formulae. There are many indicators of this process, but it is sufficient to observe the voting percentages from presidential elections (see table).

Yet the important thing is that the dynamic of systematic and recurrent elections serves to consolidate the presence of political parties, whose own deployment is increasing the level of competitiveness in electoral races.

But just as parties have developed not only *de facto* but *de jure* as well, elections not only become an increasingly relevant and competitive moment, but their organization and conditions have merited a series of reforms which tend to make them increasingly impartial and equitable.

It would be sufficient to observe how the 1988 and 1994 elections were organized, the subjects covered by electoral legislation just five or six years ago in comparison to those covered today, or any other matter in this field (the progressive agenda for these changes is very extensive, and this is not the time or place to repeat it), in order to confirm

Year	PRI candidate	%
1970	Luis Echeverría	84.63
1976	José López Portillo	100
1982	Miguel de la Madrid	70.99
1988	Carlos Salinas	50.74
1994	Ernesto Zedillo	48.77

that the tendency is for elections to clear a path for themselves as the increasingly open formula through which the diverse political options compete.

It is true that the conditions in which electoral competition occurs continue to be markedly unequal, with flagrant advantages for the PRI (e.g., with regard to financial resources or television coverage), but the fact is that routine elections are ever fewer while competition increases from one election to the next.

Thus, just as when speaking of the system of parties we find a transition from a "virtually single" party system to another (nascent) one, in the electoral field we are slowly passing from non-competition to an increase in competitiveness.

The necessary electoral reform

The tendencies described above (strengthening of the party system and increasing competitive elections) could scarcely be obstructed for an extended period without generating a spiral of decomposition and authoritarianism.

The parties recognized this themselves when they signed the Commitments for a National Political Accord in January 1995, putting first on the agenda the realization of a federal electoral reform which would give rise to successive reforms in the various states and the Federal District (Mexico City).

What is involved here is paving the way for recreating and strengthening an authentic party system and for competition to develop in impartial and equitable terms.

If these two objectives (impartiality and equity) are achieved, then election races will wind up consolidating themselves in this country as the procedure, recognized by all, for winning government and legislative office. And this, in turn, will reinforce the centrality of parties and the mechanics according to which they coexist and compete.

Thus, I do not consider it excessive to highlight the enormous importance that an accord among the country's main political parties will have in this regard. On the basis of such an accord, electoral processes should be the source of legitimacy (rather than post-electoral wear and tear) and a formula presupposing partial and momentary victories and defeats, in counterposition to our old political code which involved total and eternal victories and defeats.

It is no accident that the agenda for the coming reform includes the issues of electoral institutions and procedures aimed at providing guarantees of absolute impartiality towards all contenders. Much progress has been made in this field, but we need electoral rules and authorities which win competitors' full and absolute trust, which is the only formula for definitively dismantling the spirals of challenges and conflicts resulting from electoral processes administered with real or suspected partiality.

Similarly, the reform must deal with the acute problems of inequality which mark our elections, since, when elections are held in conditions of flagrant inequality, the presumably democratic edifice tends to tilt to one side and thereby to become distorted. Two key links in this field seem to be the work of the mass media and campaign finances.

With regard to the former, they must contribute to affirming the culture and values of democracy. In terms of the latter, there seems to be an increasing consensus for establishing genuine spending caps and a more functional and timely supervision of parties' resources, so that the conditions for competition will not be so flagrantly unequal.

Each party, each analyst, every journalist may have their own agenda for change, but the compass for these changes must be the effort to open the doors wide so that what has already begun (the party system and competitive elections) will end up establishing itself definitively.

If we succeed in having parties and the competition among them begin to reproduce themselves without major difficulties, we will have reached—in many cases without being aware of it—the threshold of democratic politics. While they would not resolve all the country's problems, such politics would solve the two problems we referred to at the beginning of this article: citizens' ability to choose and decide between the different political options presented to them, and the possibilities for the already existing political plurality to express itself, coexist and compete in a civilized manner.

Such would be a promising outcome, because it involves a formula for bringing together national unity and plurality and, further, because it could open a horizon of democratic stability for the nation, which presently seems to be demanded by the political dynamic as well as the economic situation.

We should not forget that democracy as we have posed it here is the result of a construction in which political elites have an untransferable responsibility, since it is not a revealed truth and still less the mechanical product of the inertia of confrontation. This is the construction of a plurality of forces which recognize each other mutually and offer a civilized way to settle their differences and conflicts. A joint construction by a conjunction of contradictory currents which, if they were on the same ideological and programmatic wavelength, would make democracy itself unnecessary—since democracy offers a productive route for, but does not put an end to, conflict and dissension.

Within this framework, five citizen councillors from the General Council of the Federal Electoral Institute (Santiago Creel, Miguel Angel Granados Chapa, José Agustín Ortiz Pinchetti, Ricardo Pozas and myself)

presented a proposed agenda for a new electoral reform. This is an initiative which seeks to be read as one more input towards the eventual reform which we believe to be necessary and which has been spoken of by the leaders of the main political parties and the president himself.

The list of subjects and proposals does not claim to be exhaustive, much less to replace the work which the various parties' legislators must—if they come to an agreement—carry out. On the contrary, it is addressed, first and foremost, precisely to the parliamentary groups which will eventually concern themselves with this issue.

The proposals put forward are debatable, but the objectives are defensible and they can forge a solid national consensus. This would involve designing electoral legislation seeking to buttress four great values: 1) impartial electoral authorities and procedures; 2) equitable conditions for competition; 3) democratic representation formulae; and 4) a strong, functional system of parties.

Rather than reproducing a text whose nature and length exceed the space available here, we will provide a kind of "sampling" of what it contains:

1. *Guiding principles, electoral institutions and procedures.* It is proposed that political rights be considered individual guarantees which can be defended through court orders (*amparos*), as well as developing the principles of certitude, legality, independence, impartiality and objectivity already found, albeit merely stated, in legislation; and to further incorporate the principle of equity.

The executive branch would be removed from the higher collegiate body which presides over the electoral authority, in order to reinforce this body's impartiality. The citizen councillors would be the only ones with the right to voice and vote. The presence of party representatives would continue as it is now (equal representation, with the right of voice but not vote), while the councillors differ as to whether councillors from the legislative branch should participate and whether or not their presence should be transitory. In any case, such a presence should reflect the pluralism presently existing within that branch.

It would be optimal for the citizen councillors to arise from a consensus among the country's main political forces, but juridically it is stated that they shall result from a qualified vote [i.e., a two-thirds majority] in the Chamber of Deputies (no single party has enough votes to achieve its proposals without agreement of other parties), at the initiative of the parliamentary blocs. They would hold office for only six years (their term is currently eight years) and half of them would be chosen every three years, so that there would be a subset of "veterans" and another consisting of "novices." The president of the General Council would be named from among the citizen councillors.

The citizen councillors and the members of the Local Councils would be appointed through qualified vote by the

General Council, and the district citizen councillors would be selected through the Local Councils' qualified votes.

The Director General of the reformed Federal Electoral Institute would be chosen from three candidates whom a qualified majority [two thirds] of the General Council would propose to the Chamber of Deputies; the Chamber, again by qualified majority, would make the final decision. This formula seeks to have the Director General enjoy the confidence both of the political parties (present in the Chamber of Deputies) and of the General Council. The executive directors would be elected by a qualified majority of the Council after being nominated by the councillors or the Director General.

The electoral body should increase its work regarding democratic civic education, be financially autonomous and strengthen its professional service.

Other proposals involve creating voting centers which would allow greater oversight on election day and speed up vote tabulation; redrawing electoral districts (as already mandated by law) so they will contain similar numbers of voters; and the abolition of the Electoral College, replacing it with the Federal Electoral Tribunal, which would have the last word in this field.

The Tribunal's magistrates would be appointed by a qualified majority of the Chamber (as is the case presently), but would be nominated by the parliamentary blocs and not by Mexico's President. The special district attorney would be appointed by the president after nomination by the General Council. The objective of all these measures is to have the authorities and procedures guarantee impartiality in electoral races.

2. *Conditions for competition.* Three main fields are explored in the pursuit of equity: the communications media, party financing and expenses, and preventing the illegitimate transfer of public resources to political parties.

With regard to the media, the major reform would derive from the "right to information," which is presently a constitutional dead letter due to lack of regulation. Nevertheless, in the specifically electoral field the proposal is to regulate news activity in order to make it "objective, equitable and truthful," without infringing on the freedom of expression; to establish the right of reply; to make available full information on the media's income; to increase official time for party programs; to establish specific caps on spending for advertisements; and to periodically publicize the findings gathered by the electoral authorities on the comportment of radio and television news programs.

With respect to party financing and spending, the proposal is to increase the equal shares of public financing given to the parties, establish an electoral comptroller's office under the auspices of the General Council, drastically lower the caps on campaign spending and the limits of private donations—so as to allow social and civic

organizations to contribute to a given party only with the prior consent of such organizations' members—and to have oversight of parties' financial reports before and after election day. All financing and spending (by candidates or others) should be charged to the parties themselves.

To prevent the illegitimate transfer of public funds to any party, the suggestion is that the Chamber of Deputies' Higher Treasury Accountancy Office be assigned to the largest minority bloc in the Chamber, and that the Penal Code also be fine-tuned in this regard.

Another recommendation is to begin a debate on parties' use of the national symbols and colors, as well as the question of voting by Mexicans living abroad. Support was also expressed for the idea (already embodied in the law) of producing a citizen identification card.

3. *Democratization of representation.* The goal is to have voting percentages in all legislative areas translate into a similar percentage of seats. We propose the continuation of the Chamber of Deputies' system of mixed composition, in which "plurinominal" seats are distributed in such a way as to avoid over- and under-representation of the various parties. Nevertheless, it would be necessary to study formulae for representation and agreements which do not promote ungovernability.

For the Senate, we suggest a system of proportional representation by entity, since the current model is quite rigid (three for the majority and one for the largest minority). For the Federal District's Representative Assembly, we propose a schema similar to the Chamber of Deputies' (mixed and proportional). We also called for the nation's capital to have an elected government.¹

4. *Parties, political associations and coalitions.* To contribute to building a strong system of parties, it is necessary to keep the door wide open to the entry of new party formations, and also to widen the exit for those options which fail to achieve the minimal citizen support specified by the law. It would even be useful to differentiate between the minimal vote percentage required for a party to maintain its electoral registration (which could continue at 1.5% of the vote) and the minimum needed for entering the Chamber of Deputies by means of plurinominal seats (which could be 3%).

It would be appropriate to reestablish the category of political associations, in order to offer a channel of action for minority political tendencies or organized regional forces. Nevertheless, in order to prevent representation from becoming atomized, such associations should be able to participate in elections only when they form a coalition with a political party. Similarly, the law should not put up artificial barriers to the formation of coalitions.

¹ Mexico's President currently appoints the Regent of Mexico City. (Editor's note.)

Campaign periods should be shortened, since a country with scarcities and shortfalls such as Mexico's cannot afford the luxury of extravagance involved in campaigns of titanic proportions. And it also seems necessary to reduce the periods between the election, ratification and swearing-in of the President and Congress. All that these long delays accomplish is to introduce uncertainty and tension.

Thus we are dealing with a broad, densely packed agenda developed with the aim of forging electoral legislation which will lead to confidence, participation and civilized coexistence.

Continuity or change in the governmental system?

Is it possible to modify our party and electoral systems without changing the governmental system? In other words, can we construct an authentic system of parties and a competitive electoral system while the governmental system remains untouched? The answer is no, and I will attempt to explain why.

Our party system has undergone clear changes, as has our electoral system, while the formula of government has—despite some reforms—remained basically petrified.

The workings of political pluralism are what explain, in the final analysis, the changes undergone by our party and electoral systems, and they have left their imprint on all of national politics. Given that it is unthinkable (at least for me) that this tendency could be cut short or reversed, it therefore seems necessary to consider the impact that increasingly competitive elections will have, bringing with them alternation, oscillations in the votes received by different options, and the eventual disappearance of absolute majorities.

Until recently, under the republican, democratic, federal and representative schema enshrined in the Constitution, there was a political bloc which always held the majority in every area of the state apparatus. The Executive and the two houses of Congress were in the hands of politicians who came from the ranks of a single party grouping.

While the basic provisions regarding the election of the federal and state executive branches have not changed at all, the norms for composition of the federal Chambers, local congresses and municipalities have undergone modifications, while maintaining a series of "padlocks" whose fundamental reservation is the need—as it is written and stated—to forge absolute majorities, even if no single party obtains an absolute majority of votes.

In our country the Executive is embodied in a single person. The President of the Republic is chosen by means of universal, secret and direct election, and can win—according to the Constitution—by a plurality of votes. In other words, one does not require an absolute majority

(50% plus one) of the vote in order to become president. It's a "game" of winner-take-all, while those who are defeated lose everything.

The Chamber of Deputies—which was the first to feel the winds of pluralism and the venue for experimentation in forming different political forces—nevertheless maintains a formula of composition which, in the most probable of scenarios, will wind up over-representing the majority and under-representing minorities, so that the plurality of votes (less than 50%) will end up with more than an absolute majority of seats. This is not mere speculation. In the 1994 federal elections we witnessed how the PRI, with 50.56% of the votes, obtained 60% of the seats. A number of different statistical exercises have shown that a party obtaining between 45% and 60% of the votes will always come out with 60% in the Chamber.

In the Senate, the formula of three senators for each state's majority and one for the largest minority will also have the effect of over-representing the majority and under-representing minorities.

With a schema such as this, which within certain parameters guarantees a comfortable absolute majority for the front-running party, why should problems arise? Because it is a schema which artificially constructs that majority in government institutions.

What will happen in the event of a federal election where no party receives more than half the effective votes, but which nonetheless results in one party having an absolute majority in both houses as well as controlling the executive branch? What will be the reaction of the minorities—which, taken together, could have more votes than the majority—to this way of translating electoral reality into institutional reality?

These questions are not the product of merely academic concerns. In the last two presidential races such a situation was on the point of crystallization. So we had better face it head on rather than closing our eyes.

Some Latin American countries now have a second round of voting when no presidential candidate receives an absolute majority of votes. Yet this cure is worse than the "disease." Such a procedure artificially polarizes the country into two great blocs, leading to the creation of shaky coalitions. But above all, since it is not applied to the composition of Congress (those countries normally use proportional representation formulae), it thereby creates the illusion of very strong presidents who nevertheless lack similar back-up in the legislative branch. As a result, recurrent conflicts between the two branches end up undermining governability and efficiency.

Second rounds in presidential elections are marked by the "mythological" yearning for presidents to have majority support, in absolute terms. Yet, given their very nature, they construct that majority for a single moment

which is difficult to prolong when the elections come to an end.

With regard to the legislature, it seems necessary that votes be translated as faithfully as possible into seats. In the Chamber of Deputies, each political force must have the number of representatives indicated by the percentage of votes it has received. A mixed system such as our own could result in proportional representation if it is clearly accepted that plurinominal deputies will serve to correct tendencies towards over- and under-representation produced by the "uninominal" formula.

While maintaining the same number of senators per state, the criterion of proportional shares in each state could similarly be introduced, so that each state would be represented by an array of senators similar to the shares of votes received by the main political forces.

Nevertheless, electing a president who may win by a plurality of votes, while establishing strict proportionality at least in the Chamber of Deputies, could lead us into serious governability problems. Lacking sufficient votes, the executive branch could see many of its key initiatives repeatedly blocked (the Income Law and the Budget, for example), opening up a genuine "government crisis."

It is this fear which, up to the present, has motivated the design of our formulae for the composition of the legislative branch. This concern is appropriate, but the "solution" is less so, since by artificially constructing absolute majorities it may eventually lead to a much greater crisis than the one it seeks to prevent.

And so? I believe it is possible to find a way out of this labyrinth if we use a "recipe" from parliamentary regimes and inject it into our presidential regime. This would be the expedient of a presidential cabinet which is approved by the Chamber of Deputies. Thus, if a president and his party win an absolute majority of votes and thereby the same majority of seats, the president will have no problem in winning approval for a single-party cabinet. Yet if the president and his party lack the absolute majority of votes and seats, then they will be obliged to construct a two- or three-party legislative bloc which can provide support for their administration, and the first step will be negotiation of a coalition cabinet.

Given our presidentialist tradition, this proposal may sound like heresy. Nevertheless—above and beyond the specific "recipe"—there seems to be no turning back from the differentiation of voting and representation, and this makes it necessary to find formulae for the composition of government institutions which deal with the not so distant eventuality that none of the contending forces will win a majority of votes for itself alone. If that happens, it would be best to have legal procedures at hand which will clearly promote the formation of coalition governments. ❧