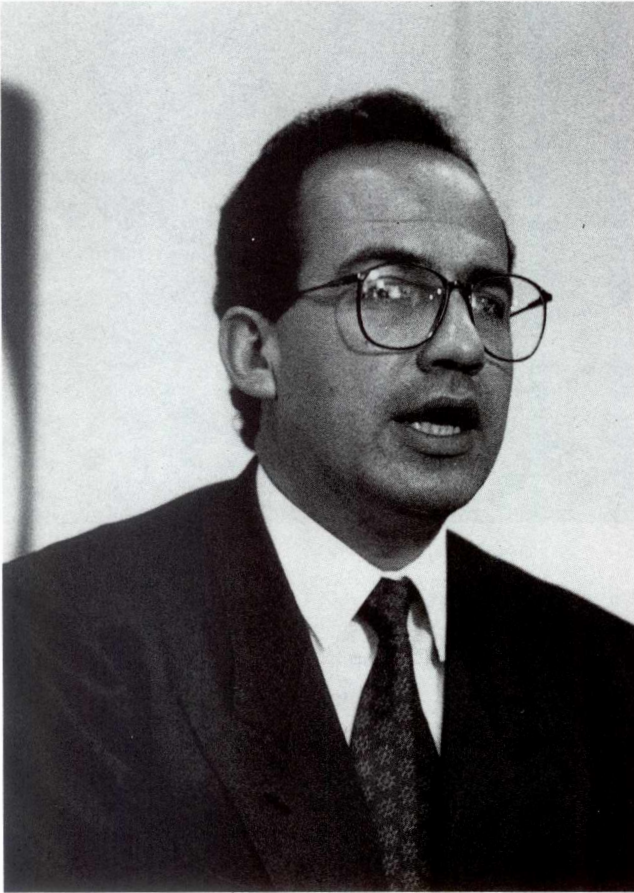


A Continuing Challenge

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In my opinion, the most important aspects of the political reform in Mexico are still pending, and my party, the National Action Party, demands they be implemented:

- The definitive elimination of the state party;
- The elimination of improper use of the national colors in the electoral symbol of the party in power;
- The end of the manipulation of poverty by the government to guarantee votes to the governing party;
- The establishment of the National Citizens Register and the issuing of a national identity card which would have better and broader uses than the current voter registration card;
- The incorporation of participatory democracy into the Constitution: plebiscite, referendum, citizens' initiative and freedom to organize in political associations;
- The right of all candidates and parties to public recourse regarding false or misleading information;
- The installation of centers concentrating several polling places, etc.

The most important challenge, then, is still before us. For PAN militants, this challenge is both a stimulus and a commitment. This does not in any way mean that we underestimate what has already been achieved:

- Individual affiliation to political parties, guaranteed by the Constitution;
- Equity as a guiding principle of the electoral framework;
- Improved regulations for limiting party campaign spending;
- A more equitable distribution of public funds for party campaign expenses;

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- More independent electoral officials with the elimination of the participation of the executive branch in the General Council of the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE);
- The incorporation of the Federal Electoral Tribunal (TFE) into the federal judiciary branch;
- A better way of determining the make-up of the Senate;
- A more equitable ratio between the percentage of votes and the percentage of representation in the Chamber of Deputies;
- Better legal procedures for presenting a case before the Federal Supreme Court to request that it declare electoral laws unconstitutional;
- Writing common principles into the Constitution for state electoral laws;
- Election of the mayor of Mexico City;
- Establishment of legal recourse for the constitutional control of local electoral authorities' acts and decisions;
- Establishment of a ceiling of 300 deputies for any single political party, etc.

The troubled times we live in often make us forget our achievements. Too often we forget that —politically— only ten years ago we were living in unspeakable backwardness: the basis for the world's dictatorships —including, of course, Mexico's— is being able to impose their rules on the community. For the world, my country seemed a model of political control, envied by dictators who urged their hired scribblers to find a way to set up Mexico's "perfect dictatorship" in their own countries.

In that situation, our fight was frequently misunderstood and attacked from different sides, undoubtedly because, no matter how much they despised us, our adversaries knew even then that, like it or not, we were right.

And we still are. This is proven not only by our contribution to the reform process but also by the heritage of political culture which we are willing to bestow.

We have always backed our demands with arguments and proposals. In the final stages of the recent reform, we fixed our position to emphasize the following constitutional changes:

- Explicit rules for public funding, eliminating discretionary decision-making in its allocation and apportionment;
- The permanent use of the mass media by political parties, with a balanced distribution of air time;

- In the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE): retaining the representation of the legislative branch, without the right to vote, but with the right to speak; the election of councilors based on a proportional number of votes; the election of the president by the councilors themselves;
- The right of supreme court justices to rule on the constitutionality of acts and decisions regarding electoral matters brought before them;
- Election of electoral tribunal justices by the Senate, upon proposal from the Federal Judiciary Council;
- Application of sanctions to political parties which surpass legally stipulated campaign spending limits on a local level;
- Attributing to Mexico City's Legislative Assembly the power to pass its own government charter and electoral legislation; and the election of the local head of government by universal, free, direct and secret ballot, etc.

An impartial analysis of our proposals, compared with the final results of the reform, will show that we have moved forward toward more democratic laws and practices, understood as the lucid participation of the community in the political life of the country. This participation, however, requires even greater political efforts to strengthen the basis for Mexicans' living together. It also requires stimuli for institutional political participation, without any manipulation or partisan exploitation —frequently induced from the government— of our people's basic needs.

Maintaining an atmosphere and attitude conducive to change for the better has always been the PAN's aim; this requires, at the same time, that the government permanently maintain the political determination to do so, which is essential for moving forward and consolidating the gains and perfecting initial results, without ruling out new democratic achievements. As of now, a step backward by the government would be suicide on the part of the ruling party because the dynamic of growing public participation makes the victories achieved irreversible.

In sum, what has been gained is of considerable importance, but before us stretches a long road of demands and achievements still to be attained. We take up this challenge based on our own convictions and the fundamental imperative of political morality. ❧