

The circumstances of his resignation from the embassy in New York were the patent demonstration of the abyss that already separated him from the Fox project. To the incontrovertible reality of the U.S. perception of Mexico as its back yard, Fox responded with evasions and false indignation. To Adolfo's memorable letter of resignation, he responded with the silence of the tomb. Perhaps because by that time, they had very little to say to each other.

I am not certain, but I believe that the return to the desert of the opposition must have been both bitter and liberating for Adolfo. Bitter because he had spent time, effort and political capital on an administration that did not deserve it: he had to start again, without clear allies and with many doors closed to him. Liberating, because Adolfo had the soul of an oppositionist: he fed on the fight against those in power, on denouncing the tyrannical, on fair fights and on free speech, on everything he could not have when he was an administration official and representative.

His death came at the worst possible moment, just when he was rebuilding his life, when he was about to once again become the imperious, exhilarating dissident of his best years. I do not know what he would have done with his newly recovered freedom, but I am convinced that he still had a lot of aces up his sleeve. Perhaps he would have gone back to Congress or written a book or headed up some citizens' campaign. Undoubtedly, these and many other possibilities flew around his permanently animated brain.

To honor Adolfo, only one thing comes to mind: to continue the struggle. To write the books he left unwritten, join the fights he would have carried out, argue for the causes he would have defended.

I completely lack his charisma and his creativity, his energy and his intelligence. I only have some of his passion: he infected me with it as my boss and as a friend, as a public figure and as a private man. It is my inheritance and I promise to make good use of it.

Experiences With Adolfo Aguilar Zinser

Cassio Luiselli Fernández*

I met Adolfo Aguilar almost 30 years ago at Harvard University. A dear mutual friend, Eugenio Anguiano Roch, introduced us. We were attending a boring, ceremonious seminar about Mexico-U.S. relations. Happily, we soon found it more interesting and pleasant to chat amongst ourselves and make jokes about the gratuitous solemnity of the lecturers, then all very much older than ourselves. We visited bookstores and took long walks through the campus. It was the birth of a close friendship that enormously enriched my life and which I continue to be thankful for.

His overwhelming eloquence and charm, his wit and intelligence made his company a pleasure, a challenge, but

above all a great reason for joy. I remember our rambles, still young and unconcerned, our journeys together and innumerable academic and political events. I remember, of course, the discussions about where Mexico was going, but also the unending laughter and shared joy of living. Very often Adolfo and I did not agree, but between us there was never any lack of respect or dialogue, much less good humor. There was something of the Don Quixote in Adolfo, and I very often told him so. His walk and his slender, rather lean physique, but above his way of fighting and "cutting through entanglements"¹ made them seem more and more alike with the passing of the years.

Our friendship was nourished not only by politics, travel and the intellect; we also shared our taste for being fathers and for our families. Our children Valeria and Adolfo, Jr., spend

* Professor at the Monterrey Technological Institute of Higher Learning (ITESM).

unending moments of their childhood together, which I trust herald the continued friendship in the next generation. The last time we were together with our children was at the residence of Mexico's mission to the United Nations in New York. He and his wife Marta and their son Adolfo visited us in Korea (Nicolás had not been born yet), where I was the Mexican ambassador. We traveled together through Asia and spent extraordinary moments enjoying how different things were and comparing them with Mexico. I remember that Adolfo was then a very decided opponent of the government and some were uncomfortable with him visiting his friend the ambassador. But not then-Foreign Minister Fernando Solana, an open, free man who never discouraged respectful dialogue with lucid, honest men like Adolfo, even if they did not think like the sitting administration.

The thing is that Adolfo made those in power uncomfortable on innumerable occasions. We have the case of the investigation into corruption in the now-defunct Conasupo; his defense against the injustices and abuses heaped on the first, shaky victories of democracy, like the case of Dr. Nava in San Luis Potosí; the protests against electoral fraud in Chihuahua in 1986; and his support for Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in 1988. Later came the founding of the San Ángel Group with Jorge Castañeda and, then, the Commitments of the Nation. Aguilar Zinser was a brilliant deputy in parliamentary debates and a tenacious, independent senator. His eloquence and valor earned him the respect, admiration and dislike of many colleagues. He was as good with the spoken word as with the pen, and his brilliant articles published every Friday in the *Reforma* daily prove it. Hopefully they will be collected and published in book form, since in addition to their quality, they clearly reflect pages in Mexican life in these years of transformations.

Adolfo Aguilar was a strategist and effective spokesperson for the second candidacy of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas for the presidency. After his defeat, Adolfo commented that unfortunately, the way the campaign had been waged had been wrong and that insufficient attention had been paid to television. He was right and he wrote it all down in a very insightful book about how Cárdenas eluded victory. At that time, many criticized the book and Adolfo's daring for having written it. Adolfo always maintained genuine affection

and respect for Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. The distance between them pained him, something he mentioned on many occasions. I remember that conversation from one of the walks he organized with his dear friend Antonio Saldívar on the Tepozteco mountain that he enjoyed so much on Sundays.

But if you read the book carefully, you can find well-founded observations and criticisms by someone who is loyal but independent. Adolfo told me only a few weeks ago that he had had a very fortunate encounter with Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, which is why he was so welcome during the wake attended by the Aguilar Zinser family and his wife Marta. His support for Vicente Fox's candidacy was not, as many argued, a 180-degree turn. Quite to the contrary, there is a very clear line of continuity: anyone who knew Adolfo knew perfectly well that it was once again his desire for a change to democracy that spurred him to support the then-PAN challenger. Not only did he support him, but he was one of the main architects of his victory, and with that, the installation of democratic alternation in office in Mexico. This is why the president's condolences were also welcome.

It is necessary to say that the power structure was not generous to Adolfo. It is as unfair as it is inexplicable that one of the pillars of Fox's victory and democratic alternation in office did not become a member of the cabinet. Several times he commented to me his dissatisfaction with his fictional post of "national security advisor," something as pompous as it was useless in a country where nobody wants to share sensitive information or work as a team on delicate matters like intelligence. But it should also be noted that he did not feel comfortable in a powerful post.

Adolfo Aguilar bestowed pride and dignity on Mexico in the UN Security Council. His courage, eloquence, lucidity and charm earned him the respect of everyone and the affection of many. His ferocious opposition to the never-justified U.S. invasion of Iraq made both Bush and Colin Powell uncomfortable. After trying first to change his mind, they then tried to have him removed. But that did not happen and Mexico (together with Chile) was key in ensuring that the resolution approving the war did not prosper. In the end, not only his friend Secretary-General Kofi Annan, but also Condoleezza Rice herself, whom he had met when they both

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held the post of national security advisor, paid him a well-deserved tribute.

Adolfo's last months were not easy: they were marked by important changes in his life and work. After leaving his post as ambassador to the United Nations, he worked at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. Rector Juan Ramón de la Fuente lent him his support and soon Adolfo, with his talent and wide audience, began to make valuable contributions to the university.

I remember the visit to Mexico of a man who was key to unmasking Bush's intentions of invading Iraq, Hans Blix, who always spoke affectionately and respectfully of Adolfo. Adolfo was working on a book about the Security Council, and for that he was preparing a stay at the University of California at Berkeley, which he loved.

In the last months, we two began to develop projects together once again. The last time that he was at the Monterrey Technological Institute of Higher Learning was to attend a round table discussion we had organized about the possible integration of Mexico and the United States. Together with Gabriel García Márquez, he also enthusiastically helped me organize a series of Colombian-Mexican events, which still have not been held, that will explore Mexico's bilateral relations with that Andean nation.

Adolfo was held in high regard by friends and adversaries alike. That is also a sign of honor of many members of the political class's different parties, as well as the intellectuals, officials and businessmen who went to the house on Francisco Sosa Street to pay their respects and express their condolences, something that happens only with brave men with integrity like Adolfo.

Of the many posthumous acknowledgments of my friend, I would like to mention the obituary published in what is undoubtedly the world's most influential weekly magazine, *The Economist*, that circulates worldwide. It alludes to Mexico being the U.S.'s "back yard", saying, quite rightly and justifiably, that while Adolfo headed up Mexico's delegation to the Security Council, no one ever thought that Mexico could be anyone's back yard. However, no matter how just and important the homages and obituaries are, I am heartily sorry for them because they speak to his irremediable absence. That hurts. Adolfo will be sorely missed, above all in the times to come. ■■■

NOTES

¹ The author is quoting a well-known phrase from *Don Quixote*. [Editor's Note.]



At the UN Security Council, during the Iraq crisis.