gang-raped. Witnesses told the court that the rapes extended to 12-year-old girls. One 19-year-old girl was raped by seven men, according to a witness, and had suffered terrible pain and hemorrhaging. Some were also murdered. The camp had no running water and only limited lavatories. On or about October 1, 1992, according the Court, people were deported from the camp "upon signing an agreement to relinquish all their material goods. Thus the Trnopolje camp was the culmination of the campaign of ethnic cleansing since those Muslims and Croats who were not killed at Omarska or Keraterm camps were, from Trnopolje, deported from Bosnia and Herzegovina." The issue of the barbed-wire fence, while the focus of *LM*'s campaign, turned out to be a red herring. Fikret Alic, like the other men behind the fence, was being forcibly held there. (He had recently come from Keraterm camp, where he had witnessed the massacre of 200 prisoners in a single night.) It was not a four-sided barbed-wire fence, though no one ever asserted that it was. The barbed-wire made two sides; the other two sides were a wall and a non-barbed-wire fence guarded by heavily armed Serbs, ready to shoot to kill.

As so frequently happens in cases like this, the mere existence of the discussion is in many respects a victory for whatever peculiar brand of revisionism is being touted, however ludicrous its evidentiary basis. As ITN's Richard Tait laments, "What we have in the press, it seems, is more interest about wild allegations about what was reported in the camp than in the crimes against humanity that we now understand were committed there." ■

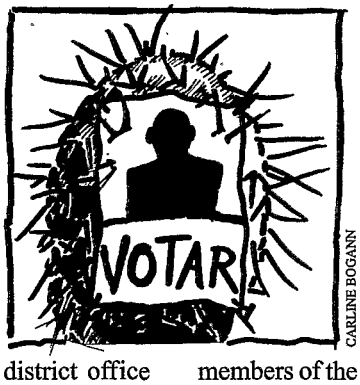
FROM BEATINGS IN THE STREETS TO A BEATING AT THE POLLS: WILL THE PRI LEARN A LESSON?

Mexico's Morning After

SCOTT SHERMAN

Mexico City

Víctor Hugo Campos Linas lives and works on a quiet block in 20 de Noviembre, a middle-class neighborhood not far from the Mexico City airport. A 56-year-old father of four, he is the owner of a bustling little shop that sells construction supplies. He is also, in this vicinity especially, an influential member of the center-left Party of the Democratic Revolution (P.R.D.). Last month that nearly cost him his life.



CARLINE BOGANN

At 10 P.M. on June 12, Campos Linas and his 28-year-old son, Alvaro, locked up the P.R.D.'s district office and hailed a taxi to take them home. As soon as he was inside the vehicle, his intuition told him something was amiss: The windows were tinted, the lights were off and the driver was mysteriously taciturn. The car turned down an empty street, and they were quickly surrounded by six men, all in their mid-20s.

For the next two hours, father and son were savagely beaten with nightsticks and tortured with lit cigarettes. The assailants evidently knew that Campos Linas had had surgery on his right knee fifteen years before, because he received more than fifty blows there, and an equal number to his head and chest. Throughout the attack, which took place inside the taxi, the thugs unleashed a stream of insults about the P.R.D. and death threats against his family, including his grandchildren.

Campos Linas, a P.R.D. candidate for the Mexico City assembly, is convinced that the assault was politically motivated. After all, his district is dominated by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), and in recent months the opposition P.R.D., through hard work, has successfully challenged the PRI's hegemony. As the July 6 election approached, PRI leaders were pledging to retain the zone "at any price."

Scott Sherman has written on Mexico for the Los Angeles Times, Newsday *and* The Dallas Morning News.

No one has suggested that President Ernesto Zedillo ordered the attack. But the crime, which has yet to be solved, reveals the degree to which violence and impunity are an ongoing reality in a country that is undergoing a democratic transition. The stunning victory of the P.R.D.'s Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in the Mexico City mayor's race—which makes him the city's first freely elected head since 1928—could not have occurred without the sacrifice of people like Campos Linas. Since 1989, more than 470 members of the P.R.D. have been killed, a statistic that contradicts President Zedillo's assertion that the rule of law has been implanted in Mexico. Yet it is undeniable that much has changed here. Most significant, on election day the PRI was stripped of the congressional majority it maintained for almost seven decades. This means that Mexican politics has entered an unprecedented era in which the president, who has historically exercised quasi-monarchical power, will have to negotiate with an increasingly robust opposition.

For Cárdenas, who will become the second most prominent political figure in Mexico, it all began in 1987. Dismayed by the antidemocratic and increasingly conservative orientation of the PRI, in whose ranks he had spent most of his career, he made a courageous decision to abandon the ruling party. Shortly thereafter, he stunned the country by declaring that he would seek the presidency as the leader of an independent coalition of leftist organizations. In so doing, Cárdenas broke all the rules of the Mexican political game, in which the sitting president appoints his successor. His opponent was Carlos Salinas, an ambitious Harvard-educated economist.

The economy fell apart in the 1980s under the inept leadership of President Miguel de la Madrid, and Mexicans, especially the urban middle class, exacted revenge by voting for the

challenger in the 1988 elections. When it became clear that the PRI's candidate was far behind in the early returns, the computer network tracking the vote suddenly crashed, and several days later the Interior Ministry announced that Salinas had won by a slim margin. It is widely assumed that the election was stolen from Cárdenas; the truth will never be known, because the ballots were incinerated by the government in 1992.

Cárdenas sought justice in the courts and in numerous public forums, and for months the climate was tense. "An order from him," the historian Enrique Krauze has written, "would have sent Mexico up in flames." Instead he chose the path of nonviolence, and in 1989 founded the P.R.D., which united renegade PRI members and the old Mexican left.

Stung by the international outcry, Salinas set out to do two things. First, he rebuilt the PRI's heavily eroded base. An expensive program of public works, known as *Solidaridad*, brought plumbing, schools and basketball courts to impoverished rural zones, while the urban population was pacified with price and exchange-rate stability. By 1991, when midterm elections were held, the PRI had recovered and the P.R.D. received only 8 percent of the vote.

Americans do not have the luxury of remaining detached from the mess (including colossal violence) that built up on the PRI's watch.

Salinas's second aim was to destroy the P.R.D.'s credibility by painting it as violent and dogmatic, by denying it electoral victories and by harassing Cárdenas, who had announced his intention to seek the presidency again in 1994. The most notorious incident took place in September 1993 in Xalapa, Veracruz, when PRI officials hired some miniskirted transvestite dancers to crash one of Cárdenas's fundraisers. Camera crews recorded a scowling Cárdenas being kissed on the cheeks by the performers, and within hours the image was on every TV screen in the nation.

Cárdenas spent those years crisscrossing the country, focusing much of his energy on the impoverished countryside, but the abuse took its toll. In the 1994 election he was trounced by Zedillo. In that campaign, the PRI spent an estimated $700 million compared with the P.R.D.'s $3 million, and the media—especially the TV conglomerate Televisa—ignored the P.R.D. The victory highlighted the awesome political skill and cohesion of the ruling party, which managed to overcome two devastating events: the guerrilla uprising in Chiapas and the assassination of its presidential candidate, Luis Donaldo Colosio. Cárdenas garnered only 17 percent of the vote. Pundits proclaimed the demise of the P.R.D., and the left was stunned and dispirited. In a doleful article for the *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, novelist Paco Ignacio Taibo II wondered aloud: "Are these sons of bitches eternal?"

Before he became an object of scorn and ridicule, Carlos Salinas was a popular and charismatic president. When he insisted that Mexico's entry into the First World was inevitable, millions of his countrymen believed him. He had, after all, tamed the beast of inflation while simultaneously negotiating NAFTA. To be sure, his free-market policies were a boon to the wealthy: In 1994, notes the economic historian Carlos Marichal, 183,000 individuals held capital equivalent to 51 percent of total G.N.P. But there was considerable optimism that the economy, precarious since 1982, was finally on the right track.

It was not to be. Following the bungled peso devaluation of December 1994, which triggered $5 billion in capital flight, the economy collapsed and the country was plunged into the worst depression it had known since the thirties, a depression that endures today. The U.S. media never adequately conveyed the desperation and pain caused by *la crisis*, but only the very rich have been exempt from its consequences: More than 2 million jobs were lost, food prices and interest rates soared and thousands of small businesses declared bankruptcy. A year after the devaluation, it was estimated that 75 percent of families could not afford basic necessities. Each day more than a thousand people abandon the countryside for the overcrowded capital. In April, a reporter from the newsmagazine *Proceso* traveled to the birthplace of Emiliano Zapata—and discovered that three of his great-grandchildren have migrated illegally to the United States in search of employment.

The fury of the nation was directed at Salinas. At the end of a term, every president devalues the peso and, in so doing, presents his successor with a clean slate. But Salinas refused to honor the tradition, and Mexicans attribute it to selfish personal motives (his desire to become president of the World Trade Organization). When the inevitable devaluation occurred three weeks into Zedillo's term, it was a disaster. Subsequent revelations of malfeasance in the Salinas administration—particularly the disclosure of his brother Raúl's $100 million Swiss bank account—destroyed what was left of his reputation. The conservative National Action Party, PAN, which controls four states in addition to the large cities and which enthusiastically supported Salinas and his economic program, was also caught in the undertow of Mexico City public opinion. But on July 6, the PAN tightened its grip over northern Mexico with impressive victories in the states of Nuevo León and Querétaro.

The eclipse of Salinas, whom *The Economist* had hailed as "one of the great men of the 20th century," gave new life to his most implacable foe—Cárdenas, who, from 1988 on, never once acknowledged the legitimacy of Salinas's presidency or stopped assailing his free-market policies as a potential catastrophe for Mexico. Today the term "neoliberal" is an epithet, and Cárdenas, whose honesty was never in doubt, has been reborn.

For this election, in which voters selected the lower house of Congress, one-third of the Senate and five governors, the playing field was substantially improved, although it remained tilted in favor of the PRI. For the first time, civilians (rather than the powerful Interior Ministry) administered the election, while the media provided fair and balanced coverage, at least in Mexico City. Most significant, the parties now receive public funding, which gave the P.R.D. a $50 million war chest. (The PRI got $114 million.) These are giant steps forward, and Cárdenas himself has acknowledged that Zedillo deserves some of the credit for the political opening.

The financial windfall enabled the P.R.D., for the first time in its history, to create a powerful organizational structure. Under the tireless leadership of its new president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the signs of professionalization are everywhere: the

slick TV commercials made by a company that produces *telenovelas*; the shrewd decision to advertise the P.R.D.'s message during soccer matches; the 13 million campaign leaflets drawn by the country's best political cartoonists, which brilliantly evoke the hypocrisy of Salinas and Zedillo; and the army of 63,000 volunteers who visited more than 2 million homes in the capital. Someone even convinced Cárdenas, whose demeanor is unremittingly grave, to smile for the cameras. In short, the P.R.D.—whose platform emphasizes social justice, clean government, women's rights and the renegotiation of Mexico's $150 billion foreign debt—learned how to execute a modern campaign. This has significant implications for the presidential election of 2000.

While the electoral process has changed for the better, the PRI has not. In the final months, it harassed leading political commentators, blocked external funding for human rights groups attempting to monitor the election, and shamelessly purchased votes in some rural and urban areas. The PRI's hapless mayoral candidate, Alfredo del Mazo, continually likened the P.R.D. to "traitors," and his closing rally was, as usual, packed with *acarreados*—people who, for forty pesos and a ham sandwich, were bused in to cheer for the candidate.

Sinister occurrences proliferated in the last month of the campaign. A full-page ad in the newspaper *Excelsior*, signed by a previously unknown group, roared: A VOTE FOR CUAUHTÉMOC CÁRDENAS IS A VOTE FOR FIDEL CASTRO. On June 18 Víctor Quintana, a P.R.D. congressman who had been investigating corruption in the PRI, was kidnapped and beaten. Quintana is the vice president of Equipo Pueblo, a leading nongovernmental organization whose computers were stolen the previous week. A few weeks earlier, the office of the pre-eminent watchdog coalition, Civic Alliance, was also burglarized, and its computers, too, were stolen.

Americans do not have the luxury of remaining detached from these events. Mexico now provides the United States with most of its cocaine, and the colossal violence associated with the Mexican drug trade suggests that our southern neighbor is headed in Colombia's direction. The whole sordid mess happened on the PRI's watch, but the Clinton Administration, to its everlasting discredit, remains firmly in Zedillo's corner.

"This election," Octavio Paz wrote in the newspaper *Reforma*, "represents, perhaps, a new epoch in Mexican history." Yet, a decisive break from the past is unlikely because the "sons of bitches" still control the presidency, the trade unions, the military and much else. But, as the events of July 6 illustrate, they are not eternal. ■

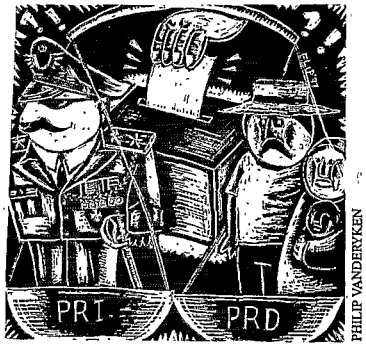
UNTIL NOW, MEXICANS HAVE BEEN LIMITED TO BEING EITHER SPECTATORS OR VICTIMS.

No More Fiesta of Bullets

ELENA PONIATOWSKA

Mexico City

The question "Who are you voting for?" never existed before in Mexico. Since 1930, elections have not been an integral part of Mexico's political life, except that of its politicians. "Nothing is going to change." In Mexico at last, the rules of the game have changed. Even the undecided, the apathetic, those who become afraid at the last minute and fall back on tradition ("Bad things, already familiar, are better than good things unknown," goes the saying) were subjected to a continuous bombardment of commercials, slogans and advertisements. Even *they* became excited. The national structure is boiling; there are more than 3 million activists, counting non-governmental organizations, university students, women and street children. One gang boy, active in a brigade, responded: "It's not that I love politics, but what else can a fucked-up guy like me do but give my support to Cuauhtémoc [Cárdenas, the opposition candidate for Mayor of Mexico City]?"



PHILIP VANDERYKEN

Other than sounding like the street-fighting man of Rolling Stones repute, supporting Cárdenas was the peoples' best option. It was also the option of the poor, of women, of minorities that have openly declared their adherence to this stern, serious candidate whose charisma is the lack of charisma, as Carlos Monsiváis, one of the most respected writers and political critics in Mexico, has said.

The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) has lost, and its historical past is not the least bit more appalling than its present. In March 1994, Luis Donaldo Colosio, the PRI's presidential candidate, was murdered in Tijuana during a political rally; in September 1994, José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, the PRI's general secretary, was slain by a bullet; in December of the same year, the peso was devalued; in February 1995, Raúl Salinas de Gortari, "the uncomfortable brother" of the president, was arrested; in November 1995, his present wife, Paulina Catañón, tried to get part of the immense Salinas fortune out of Switzerland and was arrested. This series of thrillers culminated with the arrest of the bald General, Jesus Gutiérrez Rebollo, the government official responsible for tracking down the very narcotraffickers with whom he was complicit. All these episodes of our tragic farce are sprinkled with the white powder that drifts over the continent from the south in order to feed the north. In January 1994, nonetheless, the Zapatista guerrilla uprising sounded a true note. It ridiculed NAFTA and asked, What is Mexico going to do with its nearly 10 million Indians? In June 1996, another group, the E.P.R., made its debut in a traditionally guerrilla state, Guerrero.

Elena Poniatowska has written more than forty books, including her recent novel, Tinisima *(Farrar, Straus & Giroux).*