THE MEXICO CITY MIDDLE CLASS, 1940-1970: BETWEEN TRADITION, THE STATE, AND THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

Between 1940 and 1970, the Mexican state led by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) undertook an economic project of unprecedented urban and industrial expansion that required strong social support and legitimacy to succeed. Urban and industrial growth demanded high levels of political stability, middle-class support, cheap labor and raw materials. The PRI’s revolutionary legacy became a matter of rhetoric, and by means of corporatism the party sought to exert major control upon workers and peasants. Meanwhile, the PRI-led state offered the Mexican middle class leadership in the party by means of the National Confederation of Popular Organizations (CNOP), where the middle class found a corporatist haven. However, as the state courted the middle class, it was forced to hold contradictory visions seeking to satisfy the very paradoxical middle class. The middle class integrated a diversity of cultural, political and economic visions ranging from liberalism to conservatism.

During the period, the middle class received important benefits from social policies on education, health, economy and labor, implemented in the context of the state’s urban and industrial expansion policies. Nonetheless, this only added to the paradoxical trends shaping the middle class. While seeking to consolidate a leadership position from
different political and economic fronts, the middle class reflected some of the most
evident contradictions of the Mexican state. The middle class often contested the very
state that was laying the ground for its development. During the 1960s such contestation
became more evident than ever, as middle-class voices ranged from radicals and social
reformers to conservatives and tradition-defenders.

The paradox between modernization from above and outside, and the struggle to
preserve tradition from within and below, is illustrated by the relationship between the
Mexican state and the middle class. The symbiosis between the middle class and the state
prompted both to seek the conciliation of their places amid profound contradictions in the
Mexican political and economic system. This dissertation argues that as middle-class
members thrive, they developed an agency and dynamic of their own that often
challenged the very foundations of the political system and U.S-influenced
modernization.
I acknowledge the strong cultural and educational legacy received from my parents, Flaviano and Elena, who provided me with the bases for this accomplishment.

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SGMKJ

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INTRODUCTION

In a twentieth-century world shaped by demographic growth and explosive urbanization, industrialization and national political consolidations, and by accelerating globalization, middle classes have expanded to become increasingly important social constituencies and political participants. In Mexico, from being a relatively small group of artisans and professionals, the middle class expanded in unprecedented way. In fact, the 1910 revolutionary process meant a profound transition where new middle-class political and social leaders replaced old elites and lay the bases for structural change. Between 1940 and 1970, the Mexican middle class grew more than ever before amidst a state-led process of intense industrial and urban development. In the process, the diverse families that expanded to occupy the space between the powerful and the poor lived at the vortex of multiple paradoxes.

In large part, their middle-class roles and lives were called into being by the growth of a national state, the authoritarian-populist regime of the PRI that promoted industrial development and secular ways while it proclaimed nationalist distance from the United States. Yet the United States became pivotal since the Mexican society evolved under its continuous cultural influence, and the state relied on U.S. capital to consolidate its economic model. Meanwhile, the Mexican middle class looked to the U.S. for models of “modern” consumption, while holding close to long-established, deeply Catholic, values in daily lives and family ways. And to layer paradox onto paradox: while the regime promoted the interests of entrepreneurs and the middle class to facilitate industrialization, it proclaimed a primary commitment to labor and workers’ welfare;
while the regime focused on unprecedented urbanization, facilitating elite and middle class lives, it insisted that it was the legitimate heir of an agrarian revolution and most devoted to peasant welfare.

Amid all those linked paradoxes, after 1940 the middle classes became ever more pivotal as a base of regime power, courted in policy, programs, and propaganda while workers and peasants faced growing controls—covered by rhetorical praise. Yet the turn to the middle classes could not resolve the deepening paradoxes of regime policy. The boom years of the “Mexican Miracle” from 1940 into the 1960s were replaced by economic instability and profound social inequality. As economic and urban expansion deepened, the state’s economic model entered a profound crisis where fewer middle-class members received the system’s benefits. Then, reduced state support to middle class-oriented policies and social polarization became the trend. By the 1960s the middle classes themselves divided: many among their youth led the university protests that culminated in deadly repression at Tlatelolco in 1968; others resisted the regime from a more traditional and classical middle-class standpoint characterizing the National Action Party (PAN). That dual, seemingly paradoxical opposition revealed its underlying coherence as a middle class project in the aftermath of Tlatelolco. Then leaders and intellectuals of the PAN voiced sharp public opposition to the killings of students at Tlatelolco. This presaged further political developments of the late-20th century political transition from the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) to the PAN-led regime.
The Mexican Middle Class

Defining the middle-sectors of Mexican society is challenging by nature. An income-based definition is not enough to capture the complex variables behind the definition of social class. On the other hand, an approach based on properties is not enough to differentiate between middle, upper, and lower classes either.\(^1\) A combination of variables such as occupation, educational level, purchasing power, patterns of consumption, diet, and income, altogether, are to be considered in order to create better parameters for social class definition. The Mexican middle classes are characterized by their work on non-manual tasks, their predominantly urban profile and their relatively high educational level.\(^2\) Their access to culture and consumer products (which lower sectors of society lack) is also a key feature.\(^3\) As in Brazil,\(^4\) formal education has given access to professional roles and cultural activities—theater, film, magazines—which played a key

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\(^1\) Today, according to an income-based criterion those earning above 4 minimum salaries per month in Mexico would be categorized as members of the middle-classes. See Alduncin, *Los valores de los mexicanos*, México, Banamex-Fomento Cultural Banamex, 1986-1993, vol. 3, 43. However, there might be people that are neither earning over 4 minimum salaries in a particular moment, nor are real estate owners, and even so they can be considered as middle-class. For example, a young professional who is just starting his professional practice, earning an incipient salary or no salary at all, with no property of his own, he still would be considered as middle-class. In this case, the skills and potential social place of that student account more for its social classification than his actual income or properties.

\(^2\) In the Seminar on Mexican middle-classes that took place in Tepoztlán, Morelos, in 1987, Claudio Stern offered an insightful definition of middle class that highlights some of the most important characteristics of that social group. In that occasion, Stern said, “They are a group that performs non-manual tasks, living mostly in urban centers and developing activities in the secondary sector (industry) and predominantly in the tertiary economic sector (commerce, transportation and services). Generally they minimally have some years of middle-level education, and they have an income level that let them satisfy not only their basic needs but also additional ones.” Loaeza & Stern, *Las clases medias en la coyuntura actual*, Tepoztlán, Morelos, El Colegio de México, 1987, 21

\(^3\) In this regard, José Iturriaga has said, “Las clases medias se distinguen frente a las clases populares urbana y rural en que tienen un mayor acceso a la cultura, a los bienes de consumo, ya porque poseen mejores ingresos o ya porque poseen un nivel educativo mayor que les permite distribuir sus ingresos con más provecho para el núcleo familiar.” José Iturriaga, *La estructura social y cultural de México*, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1951, 78

role in the Mexican middle class’ self-definition. Higher educational levels and intellectual engagement, as well as the performance of non-manual work to make their living, are among the most important factors shaping middle class identities in Mexico, as elsewhere in Latin America. On the other hand, the middle classes have accounted for much of the expansion of consumerism in Mexico between 1940 and 1970, since they could reserve financial resources for the satisfaction of non-basic needs. In so doing, they have been important targets for industrial expansion in the area of consumer products that characterized the process of Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) in that period.

Although the middle classes tend to identify with the upper echelons of society, their members also enjoy certain social capillarity resulting from their natural heterogeneity as social group. Social capillarity means that some middle class members have appropriated the causes of the proletariat as far as they have conceived this as an adequate political channel of expression for their own discontent. Yet, on the other hand, they have also assumed major closeness to the elites when this was good for their social expectations. So, while some Mexican middle class leaders could fight for working class causes and even belong to communist movements, eventually they could also side with the state and the elites, obtaining important political and economic benefits from so doing. As we will see below, events between 1940 and 1970 provide good examples of middle class social capillarity.5

5 Concerning middle class capillarity, Arturo González Cosío says, “Es importante también describir cómo las clases medias de la sociedad europea del siglo XX y las clases medias de distintos países latinoamericanos, asiáticos y africanos actúan como sectores intermedios que se mueven en la zona de capilaridad social. A veces se adscriben a luchas concretas del proletariado y otras a objetivos de la burguesía. Siguen en términos de Simmel, patrones de conducta y valores de las clases altas y son además transmisores de éstos hacia las clases populares siguiendo así la ‘catarata’ de la moda que los hace tan cambiantes y anacrónicos, apetitos que van desde un afán de cierta aristocracia hasta el orgullo de dignidades académicas, con sentimentalismos y actitudes morales que corresponden tanto a los estratos
Building on these elements helps outline a working definition of middle class, useful for this analysis. I understand the Mexican middle class as those social sectors that mainly make their living from performing non-manual work, holding relatively high educational levels, and with a privileged access to cultural, health and leisure services, principally available in urban areas. Thus, the Mexican middle class is basically composed of bureaucrats, small-merchants, intellectuals, artists, higher-education students, teachers, and all sorts of employees in the urban-services areas.

A historical study of the Mexican middle class offers the advantage of approaching the evolving relationships among this social sector, the state, and national or supranational modernizing influences during a pivotal time of transition. This work will examine middle class’ agency and changing identities during a time of rapid socioeconomic change and emerging political conflict. Classic studies using a sociological approach, such as C. Wright Mills’ *White Collar* or more recent works, or with a demographic-sociological approach, such as William A. Clark’s *Immigrants and the American Dream* have emphasized socioeconomic analyses to expand the understanding of the middle class and its identity in the United States.  

Using a more historical approach, in *A Consumer’s Republic* Elizabeth Cohen has shifted analysis of the cultural construction of middle class’ identity to focus on consumerism and suburbanization. Other authors such as David J. Dent, and Bart Landry have approached

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the construction of middle class identity and cultural integration among the African American population, emphasizing the profound contradictions underlying such processes. Jürgen Kocka, while analyzing the German and European middle classes extensively, has placed the historical study of the U.S. middle class in international perspective, finding the U.S. middle class less defined by education or occupation than its European counterpart. However, there is dearth of work on Mexico, a country that from 1940 faced a state-led project of modernization and unprecedented socioeconomic and cultural influences from United States.

The lack of literature about the Mexican middle class reflects a neglect common for the Latin American region. The important contributions of Brian Owensby on the Brazilian middle-class as it struggled for a place in a society polarized between oligarchies and organized workers, and of Larissa Lomnitz and Ana Melnick’s on the Chilean middle class as it grappled to survive in the face of neoliberalism are notable exceptions. However, the early differentiation of the Mexican middle class in the second half of the 19th century, the sector’s long growth, and its recent struggles to maintain Mexican traditions in the face of the attractions of U.S.-influenced modernity are unique.

An important hypothesis that has guided my work is that the paradox between modernization from above and outside and the struggle to preserve tradition from within and below has created an enduring contradiction that marks the Mexican middle class.

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10 See Brian Owensby, 159-184.

That contradiction demands analysis that focuses on the relationship between the Mexican state, U.S. economic and cultural influence, and the diverse sectors of the Mexican middle class as it faced rapid urban expansion and political challenges. Some of the questions that guide my research are: How did continuous struggle between traditional values and “modern” consumption impact social agency, changing identities, and political actions? How did middle class peoples depend upon the state bureaucracy and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), yet find spaces for independent action and new self-definitions? How have middle-class actors fueled political oppositions from both the left and the right? How did unpopular state policies during the 1960s radicalize sectors of the middle class, especially students, professionals, and intellectuals, against the state?

In Latin America the middle classes have attained prestige associated with their role as an example of modernity and change. Their link with higher levels of education and knowledge provides them with a privileged place in their societies. They have become a symbol of social mobility and urbanization. This is highly valued by governments that seek to show their commitment with modernization and change. When modernization turns out to be an essential part of the state’s development program, the middle classes become the focus for some of the most important policies of change. In this regard, Soledad Loaeza says: “Esto se explica porque cuando en una determinada sociedad la modernidad se convierte en un objetivo mayoritariamente deseado, el capital social más valioso es el conocimiento”12 Due to their intersection with both lower and upper social sectors, they are a relatively adaptable, at times malleable group. However, this can also

be the source for profound contradiction among middle class members. They can be among the most radical leftist-oriented militants, while they can also be very traditionalist and conservative. They might support modernization and social change or they may seek to preserve essential values and customs at all expense. This creates a continuous and strong paradox within the middle class.

Between 1940 and 1970, as Mexico entered and consolidated a new stage of U.S.-influenced modernization, the Mexican middle class experienced unprecedented expansion, mirroring some of the most important paradoxes of the Mexican political and economic regime. In this work I will suggest that the relation between the middle class and the Mexican state constituted a key element in the political machinery that permitted the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) longevity in the presidential chair. On the other hand, during this period, the Mexican middle class faced unprecedented influence from United States’ consumerism and modernization, while struggling to preserve family, religious and nationalist values. Despite revolutionary and nationalist political rhetoric, the Mexican state also became closer to the United States than ever before, as renewed bilateral political and economic links were strengthened. While the post-revolutionary governments claimed the direct heritage of the Mexican revolution, their modernization policies of urban-industrial development and the expansion of trade and public services in Mexico City reflected the fact that the Mexican state privileged urban upper- and middle-class improvement above that of working-class and peasant groups.

The paradox between modernization from above and outside, and the struggle to preserve tradition from within and below, is illustrated by the relationship between the Mexican state and the middle class. Professional education, the bureaucratic expansion of
the state, industry and the development of urban trades have been basic engines for middle-class growth in Mexico. The symbiosis between the middle class and the state prompted both to seek the conciliation of their places amid profound contradictions in the Mexican political and economic system. In such a context, gaining consistent middle class support was of the utmost importance for the regime. However, the middle-class sectors of Mexico have struggled to preserve their most important cultural values: family, religion and nationalism, among others. In this work I will argue that as middle-class members throve, they developed an agency and dynamic of their own that often challenged the very foundations of the political system and U.S-influenced modernization.

In this work we will analyze the Mexican middle class throughout diverse chapters dedicated to shed light on fundamental aspects of middle class correlation with tradition, religion, education, the United States, Mexican politics and the Mexican state. Chapter I will offer an overview of the Mexican middle class´ general development in the first decades of the 20th century, from the Porfirio Díaz´s regime up to the Lázaro Cárdenas presidential period (1934-1940). Chapter II will discuss the links between the middle class and religion, and how the Mexican middle class developed its own ways of approaching religion, often beyond institutional influence from the state or the Church itself. Chapter III will focus on university education and the Mexican state´s rhetorical use of education as the means for gaining middle class support, while undertaking an economic development project that left behind most of the underprivileged groups of Mexican society (and eventually the middle class itself). Chapter IV will study the building of a Mexican middle-class cultural vision under the continuous influence of the
United States cultural crusade. Chapter V will analyze the Mexican middle class position and reactions facing influence from abroad in the context of U.S. growing closeness to the Mexican state. Chapter VI will reflect on the Mexican political scenario between 1940 and 1970 by means of the most important political parties at the time: the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the Popular Party (PP) and the National Action Party (PAN), and how they all can be understood as middle-class based parties, sharing more commonalities than not. Last, chapter VII will seek to shed light on the 1968 Tlatelolco-massacre, an event that deeply changed the relation between the Mexican middle class and the PRI-led Mexican state. The 1968 Tlatelolco-massacre became the ultimate expression of a series of contradictions in the relation between the Mexican middle class and the state, accumulating since the 1940s. In fact, the 1968 Tlatelolco-massacre became a turning point with an enduring effect that eventually led to major positioning of the PAN in the political arena. Meanwhile the PRI faced increasingly hard conditions for honoring its discourse of being the agrarian and populist heir of the Revolution.
CHAPTER I
THE MEXICAN MIDDLE CLASS DEVELOPMENT

The most important origins for the consolidation of a Mexican middle class can be traced back to the Porfiriato (1878-1910), when political stability combined with urban expansion was favorable for the expansion of a middle class in the big cities. This sector consisted of professionals, bureaucrats, artisans, small merchants and some educated people, swelling the ranks of employees linked to the expanding machinery of the state. Already during the 1850s there were scattered middle class sectors of professionals (mostly lawyers), bureaucrats, artisans and small merchants in the most important urban areas of Mexico. These groups consisted of people with limited properties, localized between the landed-aristocracy and the uneducated proletarian masses. However, the constant political instability suffered by the country from independence to the 1870s did not permit a solid and constant expansion of the groups of professionals and urban bureaucrats that formed that period’s middle class. This happened with artisans and merchants as well; they constantly suffered the economic downturns associated with political turbulence, and continuously faced the hardships of social uncertainty. It was not until the period of the pax porfiriana after 1876 that the urban middle classes found a highly favorable environment for their expansion. The best example of this was Porfirian Mexico City.

Mexico City witnessed the growth of middle social sectors seeking to improve the organization of the city, while isolating working class neighborhoods and imposing

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13 Ibid., 44.
hygienic and moralizing regulations over them. During the Porfiriato the different neighborhoods of the city became more segregated by social class than ever, with a westward movement of upper and middle classes to *colonias* such as Las Lomas, Polanco and La Condesa, among others. In fact, according to John Lear, upper- and middle-classes comprised 22 percent of Mexico City’s population by 1910. The city attracted important numbers of immigrants from diverse regions of Mexico, many of whom were hired as domestic servants by the expanding urban middle-classes. According to Pablo Piccato, the city grew from close to 200,000 inhabitants during the 19th-century, to 329,774 at the end of that century, and to 615,327 in 1921. Women constituted over 55% of the population, while in Northern Mexico the rule was the opposite, men predominating over women. Since that time, one of the most important social markers of a middle-class person was to be fully engaged in non-manual activities, leaving all physical activities to the working class groups. This applied even to home-activities, making it necessary for aspiring middle classes to hire one or two domestic servants. Then, as the middle classes expanded, numerous immigrant women from rural areas swelled the popular sectors of the urban area. As middle class neighborhoods grew, popular neighborhoods also did, challenging middle class desires for improved order and homogeneity in the city.

15 John Lear, *Workers, Neighbors and Citizens*, Nebraska, University of Nebraska, 2001, 29
16 Ibid., 58
18 Ibid., 22
Middle Class and Politics: The Limits of Social Reform

During the 1910 revolution some sectors of the middle classes found important opportunities for leadership and social prestige, but the armed conflict also marked a period in which their expansion slowed. This paralleled a demographic decrease of over 800,000 inhabitants in the country between 1910 and 1920.\(^{19}\) Many among the middle class decried the revolution and the instability that it brought. Above all, middle class members of the National Catholic Party and the *Ateneo de la Juventud* became among the most important ideological defenders of Porfirio Díaz, and later, Victoriano Huerta. Although middle class leaders such as Álvaro Obregón, Plutarco Elías Calles and Adolfo de la Huerta, among others, represented new political trends of middle class progressivism and social mobility in the country, the urban middle classes suffered a period of sharp uncertainty and economic instability that nurtured a contradictory position in the Revolution. However, overall, the Mexican middle class offered fundamental support for the political and economic change the Revolution brought about in the country.

When Francisco Madero proclaimed his Plan of San Luis Potosí, important antecedents of middle class antagonism against Porfirio Díaz’s system already existed. For instance, the Flores Magón brothers are considered direct predecessors of the 1910 rebellion lead by Francisco Madero. From the late 1890s and into the 1900s the Flores Magón brothers denounced the Díaz regime, and their political ideas propitiated important social uprisings like the Acayucan revolt, and the Cananea and Río Blaco

\(^{19}\) See José Iturriaga, 49
strikes. The Flores Magón brothers became an important source of middle-class´ political and social critique deeply influencing the turn-of-the-century Mexican society.

Even though Francisco Madero was a part of the northern landed-elites, his claims on democracy and political change strongly appealed to the middle class. However, the middle class disliked the Aquiles Serdán group’s participation in the maderista movement. Serdán had a radical orientation to the working class that offered popular strength to Madero´s movement. In such a context, the urban middle class supported Madero, but sought to advance its own agenda that was more politically-centered and moderate.

The San Luis Potosí Plan opened the gates to violent responses against Profirio Díaz by maderista supporters reacting against the electoral fraud that stole the presidential elections from Madero´s political party. The Plan particularly stood by the support of the San Luis Potosí middle- and upper- social sectors that had been alienated from any benefits from the Porfirian administration. Soon other social sectors throughout the country joined the rebellion of the popular masses, which was often lead by middle-class rural landowners or urban pro-democrats. This became a fundamental factor in Madero´s provisional triumph, ousting Díaz from the presidential chair in 1911. However, once in power, Madero proved too lukewarm on social and economic reform. He relied in excess on old porfirian officials who he kept in key government or military positions. In order to overthrow Díaz, Madero turned to the popular masses for violent

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support guided by middle- or upper- class leaders. Nonetheless, once he secured the presidential chair his social conservatism led him to trust old porfirian authorities, a decision that soon proved fatal for his regime.

The decade of 1910 witnessed harsh revolutionary conflict. Middle class participation was everywhere. After Madero was assassinated by Victoriano Huerta—a high-ranking porfirian general—from 1813Venustiano Carranza and his middle- and upper-class Northern supporters launched an offensive against the new dictator. Yet once they succeeded overthrowing Huerta, the basically conservative character of Carranza became evident. Social reform turned out to be a question of political rhetoric and agrarian distribution and real improvement for workers and peasants were far from becoming realities. As Carranza was a large landowner himself, he avoided antagonizing with other powerful proprietors. The Agua Prieta Plan launched in 1920 by Plutarco Elías Calles, Álvaro Obregón and Adolfo de la Huerta meant the beginning of a real transition of power from the old landed group—represented by Carranza—to a politically emergent middle class, represented by the Sonoran group of Calles, Obregón and De la Huerta. The Agua Prieta Plan triumphed and Carranza was ousted from power. With this, a structural transformation of the country became possible. That transformation would take place under the modernizing and capitalistic view of a triumphant progressive middle class represented by the Sonoran group.

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24 Engracia Loyo, Gobiernos revolucionarios y educación popular en México, Mexico, El Colegio de México, 1999, 27.

25 See Arnaldo Córdova, La Revolución en crisis: la aventura del maximato, Mexico, Cal y Arena, 1999, 49.
National Revolutionary Party (PNR) by Calles in 1929 are found in this transition from the Carranza-led government to a middle-class-led state.

From 1920 to 1940 an improved political scenario and the positioning of middle class leaders in prominent political and administrative positions meant better opportunities for this social group’s expansion as statistics below reflect. It was a period in which traditional porfírian middle classes and new progressive middle classes began to clash in the process of building the Mexican new national identity. Soledad Loaeza states: “Desde esta perspectiva, las clases medias se dividen en tradicionales y modernizantes o emergentes. La oposición entre estos segmentos político-ideológicos nace de una in confortable superposición de los valores modernos sobre los tradicionales que no acaban de desaparecer.”26 The 1924 political confrontation between José Vasconcelos and his supporters, running against Álvaro Obregón’s re-electionist aims, shows the extent of this conflict.

Still, the entire Mexican middle class shared a common expectation of achieving political stability and social unity under the guidance of leaders of their own. The middle-class’ vision entailed becoming the social reformers needed by the country in order to help people achieve better conditions of living. The victors of the Revolution, Álvaro Obregón, Plutarco Elías Calles, Adolfo de la Huerta and their followers sought a new national order where education played a fundamental role. Their middle-class’ perspective privileged education over other popular demands like land distribution or a

26 Loaeza, Clases medias..., p. 54.
deep change in the relations of production. In this regard, they were still conservative. However, their middle-class conservatism was mediated by their goal of turning Mexico into a modern capitalistic nation, where capitalists, workers and peasants could work together stimulating national development. Meanwhile, a ruling and educated middle class consolidated its role as a politically leading social group.

Operating as the head of the newly created Secretariat of Public Education, Vasconcelos was the initiator of the state’s cultural crusade to consolidate a post-revolutionary national identity. In essence, the educational project promoted by Vasconcelos incorporated important elements of the Porfirian tradition: educational programs and textbooks molded according to middle-class stereotypes of family and status, based on urban necessities and focusing on the cultivation of the students’ moral formation. In this, Vasconcelos’ educational project contradicted Álvaro Obregón’s vision of modern, radically lay and scientific education. This happened despite the fact that Vasconcelos worked for the Obregón presidential administration (1920-1924). Indeed, Vasconcelos’ educational goals consisted of highlighting a nationalist and humanistic education. Mary Kay Vaughn says that “In the 1920s, Daniel Delgadillo’s reader, Adelante, centered on families of the modest urban middle sector. In these patriarchal nests, women were subservient and never left the house. Problems and strife were absent. Children helped and obeyed their parents and studied. References to children from richer and poorer strata encouraged charity toward the poor and acceptance

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of the rich.” On the other hand, models of living such as those portrayed by the bureaucrat’s family and home were offered, promising that “social mobility was possible through conformity, hard work, and education.”

Between 1924 and 1928, the political and economic perspective of Plutarco Elías Calles deeply relied on education in order to modernize the rural areas of the country. This meant shifting from the educational leadership long held by the Church to state dominance in the educational arena. This effort led to one of the most profound clashes between the traditional and the progressive middle classes. Calles’ vision favored the expansion of an urban-industrial project. Yet he provoked the Cristero War between 1926 and 1929 that became a violent confrontation between the modernizing middle class project lead by the Sonoran group and the traditionalist perspective of many among the middle class. Even though the conflict spread in mostly rural areas of Central and Western Mexico, its intellectual leadership found base among the middle class of urban places like Mexico City itself, Guadalajara or Guanajuato. The conflict was ultimately calmed by President Emilio Portes Gil’s willingness to negotiate and make the implementation of the anticlerical legislation more flexible. The middle class modernizing project had to find the way to integrate traditional middle-class visions and make concessions to the Catholic Church. This became the paradigm for keeping national unity and avoiding the repetition of a conflict like the Cristero War, which seriously threatened national stability.

29 Ibid.
30 See Loyo, XVII.
Between 1932 and 1940 reformed educational programs showed the important commitment of middle-class progressives culminating in Cárdenas presidency of 1934 to 1940. In 1932, the Secretariat of Public Education, led by Narciso Bassols, designed new curricula oriented to incorporate rural communities into a new national and cultural discourse. Later, there was a continuation of this revolutionary education in which the popular groups became central subjects. From 1934 on, socialist education became the symbol of a post-revolutionary state seeking to extend its cultural discourse to even the most isolated communities. Anticlericalism and the moral support of teachers for land distribution programs were important ingredients of socialist education. The educational crusade of the state, as Mary Kay Vaughn has suggested, achieved its highest identification level with rural causes, developing a newly created concern for the campesino identity. Vaughn says, “Manuel Velázquez Andrade’s Fermín … moved the campesino child and family to center stage. It described the misery of class hierarchy and the struggle of the poor to improve their lives through arms and politics. Fermín marked the beginning of a torrent of campesino-focused textbooks and didactic material.”

However, the fact that the Mexican Communist Party was left behind when the PNR became the Mexican Revolutionary Party (PRM) in 1938 was symptomatic of Lázaro Cárdenas’ complex political vision. Urban workers were not going to be represented by the radical and communist sector with origins in Luis Morones’ Revolutionary Confederation of Mexican Workers (CROM), but by the much more moderate Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) built around strong men such as Fidel Velázquez, who played a determinant role in controlling the workers’ demands in ways

32 Vaughn, 41.
adjusted to the economic policies of the government. In so doing, the Mexican state looked forward to improving its legitimacy in the sight of the Mexican capitalists, undoubtedly an important part of the post-revolutionary political scenario.

Characterizing Cárdenas’ political agenda as socialist would misread the real and complex purposes behind his political and economic programs. Although we may find socialist rhetoric in Cárdenas’ government, he never sacrificed his relationship with the capitalist and entrepreneurial sectors of the Mexican society. In fact, one of the main interests of Cárdenas was to stimulate Mexican economic development by offering the industrial sector an opportunity to grow in the context of a state-led economy and protectionism.33 This became clear after the oil expropriation, when conservative sectors in the Mexican society agitated, fearing more radical cardenista expropriations and interventionist policies. In this context, in 1940 Cárdenas supported Manuel Ávila Camacho as his presidential successor instead of Francisco J. Múgica, who was seen as the natural heir to Cárdenas’ radical policies. Cárdenas saw Ávila Camacho as the best presidential option in the Mexican political environment of the time. Strong pressures from the conservative middle and upper classes with roots in the old porfírist society influenced him.34 Many of these conservative political expressions found voice through the Unión Nacional Sinarquista (UNS), the Middle Classes Confederation (CCM) and the Mexican Republic Confederation of Employers (COPARMEX). These forces, in fact, led to the creation of the openly middle-class biased National Action Party (PAN) in 1939, as the conservative political opposition for the PRM. So, during the process of consolidation

34 See Adolfo Gilly, El cardenismo: una utopía mexicana, Mexico, Cal y Arena, 1997.
of the dominant party under Cárdenas’ corporatism and radical trends, the conservative sectors of the Mexican society started a simultaneous process of reorganization, mobilizing major political participation to challenge the PRM, which led to the creation of the PAN. As Cárdenas´ chosen successor, Ávila Camacho would mitigate some of the dangerous middle-class unrest threatening the PRM.

After the revolution, between 1920 and 1940 improved educational opportunities and centralization of political power in the urban areas meant more possibilities for middle class dynamism and influence in the political and economic spheres. Nonetheless, the most important period of consolidation of middle class expansion and identity took place between 1940 and 1970, as a result of the state’s new policies promoting urban and industrial growth. By that time, social prestige and educational opportunities benefited urban middle classes in unprecedented manner. Particularly, starting in the government of Manuel Ávila Camacho, and consolidating during Miguel Alemán Valdés’ rule (1946-1952), the middle class became the paradigm of revolutionary ideology and accomplishment. The transition from functionaries with military origins to public servants with pure civilian origins, starting with President Alemán, shows the profound change underway. Beginning in the 1940s the post-revolutionary state clearly oriented the political and economic balance in favor of the middle classes as they collaborated and took an active role in the national government.

In 1943, the National Confederation of Popular Organizations (CNOP) was created as the corporation within the PRM that would offer a special place for a middle class constituency. Middle class representatives also became the most important actors in the mainstream opposition political parties. In 1939, the PAN was founded by Manuel
Gómez Morín and others such as Efraín González Luna and Luis Calderón Vega, who belonged to the middle class sector that found haven behind the walls of the National University. On the other hand, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, the popular labor leader and founder of the Popular Party in 1947, was originally a member of the upper-middle class, in spite of his proletarian rhetoric and his self-assumed proletarian class identity. This meant that the Mexican political scenario—right, left, and center—came to be dominated by the rising urban and highly-educated middle class.

The PRM—later Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)—consolidation of political power during the 1940s came to represent the concretization of middle-class preeminence in the Mexican political sphere. This was among the most important legacies of the revolutionary process of the decade of 1910. The middle class became a fundamental protagonist in politics. While sustaining the rhetoric of populism and support for workers and peasants, the empowered middle class undertook a project of capitalist development with the most important gains for large industrialists and entrepreneurs and their closest middle-class allies. Social reform was subordinated to that project. The middle-class led Mexican state created strong government institutions for supporting extensive educational, health and social development programs in the country. These programs added to the PRI-led state’s quest for “revolutionary” legitimacy. However, such programs always faced the limits of budgetary constraints and top-ranking capitalists’ pressures upon the government. In the end, by the late 1960s, deep income inequalities accompanied by strong symptoms of middle class discontent marked the beginning of a

new era of cyclical economic crises and constant political challenges for the PRI-led state.

**Middle Class Expansion between 1940 and 1970**

As demographic growth boomed in Mexico, a parallel expansion of the people that could be considered as middle class also took place. While in 1920 the Mexican population was around 14 million people, by 1940 20 million inhabitants populated Mexico, in 1950 there were almost 26 million inhabitants, in 1960 the population was 35 million, and in 1970 the population was slightly above 48 million inhabitants.\(^\text{36}\) Concerning the composition of social classes, while only about 7% of the population could be considered as part of the middle-class in 1920; in 1940 around 17% were middle-class; by 1960, 22% people were middle class; and in 1970 around 25% of the population could be considered as middle-class.\(^\text{37}\) Thus, the middle class grew from about a million people in 1920 to twelve million by 1970. Middle class expansion came with a boom in industrial and bureaucratic activity and created a growing demand for the service of domestic workers in Mexico City.

Among the Mexican middle classes making a living without engaging in physical labor was of the utmost importance, and it has been an important factor for their definition and identity. Being a merchant, a professional, a bureaucrat, a supervisor, an intellectual, an artist, were clear signs of belonging to the middle classes. Unlike the United States, it was hard to be considered part of the Mexican middle classes if you


\(^{37}\) See Loaeza & Stern, 24.
were a blue collar worker or a farmer, even though you were skilled. Some well-to-do farmers could be considered part of the middle or even upper-classes, but neither skilled workers nor prosperous farmers were really representative of the social status defining middle-class in Mexico. Being middle class was closely related to being urban and making a living from some of the non-manual labor opportunities offered by the expanding urban trades and bureaucratic positions. The Mexican heritage behind the definition of social class clearly relied on Iberian prejudices against dependence on physical labor to make a living, defining hard work as low-class. In the Iberian tradition all those performing any kind of physical labor were looked upon with certain contempt. Accordingly, you had to be an official, an employee, ecclesiastic, lawyer or doctor to be a respected person. In consequence, other occupations were considered inferior in the Mexican society.\textsuperscript{38} The less physical activity the better the social status. Therefore it is logical to expect from the Mexican middle classes a marked disdain for any kind of physical labor and the urgent need to keep apart from any task of this kind in order to keep their identity.

From the increase of domestic servants in Mexico City between 1940 and 1970, some interesting conclusions about the Mexican middle class profile can be obtained. Nathaniel Whetten offers interesting insights in this regard as he says about the Mexican middle classes: “They probably employ a domestic servant, or two, to assist with the housework so that the wife as well as the husband may shake off the drudgery of physical

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{38} See López Cámara, \textit{La estructura económica y social de México en la época de la Reforma}, Siglo XXI, México, 1967, 215.
\end{itemize}
labor which is generally regarded as indicative of lower class position.”

In Figure 1 it is possible to see the correlation between middle-class-economically-active population’s growth and domestic servants’ growth in Mexico City:

Fig. 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1950</th>
<th>1970</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mexico City</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Population</strong></td>
<td>1,757,530</td>
<td>3,050,442</td>
<td>6,874,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Middle Class Economically Active Population</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(8%)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Domestic Servants</strong></td>
<td>82,745</td>
<td>205,177</td>
<td>541,063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(5%)</strong></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: information excerpted from different population censuses.


40 In calculating these numbers, I used information from the 1940, 1950, 1960 and 1970 national censuses. In so doing I added up people working in industries, communication and transportation, commerce, public service and liberal professions, cataloged as professionals, employees and assistants. They worked for the government, independently, for commerce or for industries. I also added people catalogued as directors, proprietors, shareholders or entrepreneurs, which were around one thousand people in 1940, 42, 846 in 1960 and 97,231 in 1970. I must warn that a minority of members of this latter group could be considered as upper class, rather than middle class. In these calculations we miss members of middle class families that belonged to the economically inactive population (children, students, and housewives). Yet, as domestic servants are part of the economically active population, comparing them with the numbers of middle class economically active population offers better bases in the making of demographic proportions. In the final table I did not include numbers for 1960 since they are outliers. See Dirección General de Estadística, Censo General de Población, 1940, resumen general, Secretaría de la Economía Nacional, 1940, 19-29; Dirección General de Estadística, VII Censo General de Población, 1950, Secretaría de Economía, 1953, 58, 67; Dirección General de Estadística, VIII Censo General de Población, 1960, Secretaría de Industria y Comercio, 1962, 421; Mercedes, Pedrero, Indicadores para el estudio de la población económicamente activa basados en la información censal de 1970, Dirección General de Estadística, 1970.
As Mexico City population grew, so did too the economically active population of the middle class. In similar proportion, performing paid domestic work increased. The proportion of domestic servants to middle class economically active people remained relatively constant between 1940 and 1950. The proportion was 1 domestic servant to 1.64 middle-class economically active persons in 1940 and 1 to 1.65 in 1950. In 1970 the proportion nearly returned to its previous level at 1 to 1.82. The increasing number of domestic servants during the period corresponds with an important growth in the urban middle class, and the attraction that industrialization and commerce expansion in the city exerted upon inhabitants in rural areas.

This work’s time frame, 1940-1970, coincides with the stages known as Growth with Inflation (1940-1952) and Stabilizing Development (1952-1970), times when post-revolutionary governments promoted an urban-industrial development project. Such a project was meant to increase the country’s international competitiveness in the short term. During the period, presidential administrations created a strong alliance with industrialists and entrepreneurs in order to use the corporatist control of the government over workers and peasants that was achieved under Cárdenas’ regime. The state’s rhetoric centered on national industrialization while promoting social development. This time was known as the “Mexican miracle” since an average GNP growth of 6% per year was achieved.

The 1940s brought profound political and economic change besides deep demographic and social transformation. While urbanization was still incipient in the 1930s, in the 1940s and 1950s this process became an unstoppable trend, defining the construction of modern Mexico. While in 1940, 64.91% of Mexicans still lived in rural
regions, between 1940 and 1960 the urban population grew at an unprecedented pace, so that by 1960, 76% of population lived in cities with 50,000 inhabitants or more. Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey concentrated more than half the country’s population and around 60% of national industrial output. In 1960, Mexico City itself concentrated around 55% of industrial production. On the other hand, this city’s population had unprecedented growth between 1940 and 1970. During this period, the Federal District population grew four times, rising from 1.7 million inhabitants to almost 7 million. Years of instability and struggle for economic betterment did bring increasing industrialization and major economic development.

Urbanization and industrialization were among the most important stimulants of middle class growth between 1940 and 1970. These occurred in the midst of an expanding bureaucratic state, policies stressing major support to higher education and middle-class social mobility, and increasing influence of the United States on Mexico. In 1950, in his analysis of the rise of the middle class, Nathan Whetten identified trends in post-revolutionary Mexico that contributed to middle class expansion from the 1940s onward. Among important social changes, he highlighted a decrease in the illiteracy rate from 70% in 1930 to 52% percent in 1940, and to less than 50% in 1944; a decline in the death rate from 26.6 in 1930 to 20.6 in 1944 (per thousand inhabitants); and land distribution. Although these aspects reflected the impact of post-revolutionary state

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41 See José Iturriaga, 19.
43 Ibid., 19-20.
44 Nathaniel Whetten considers that the contingent of post-revolutionary middle-classes was joined by some elites that were dispossessed from their properties during the process of agrarian distribution. Despite the supposed payment that these former landlords would receive for their expropriated lands, Whetten says that
policies that helped to improve the living conditions of some sectors of the lower class inducing a shift in the upper class composition, they are not enough to explain the impressive middle class expansion during the period. By emphasizing the role of professional education, the bureaucratic expansion of the state, industry and urban trades as basic engines for middle class growth, it is possible to obtain a more complete scenario of middle class expansion. In this, the influence of the United States also played an important role in shaping the identity of the new contingent of middle class representatives.

very often they were not paid or the payment they received was too low that these former hacendados could not keep their previous social position. Accordingly, Whetten says, “Many of these former hacendados have slipped from their secure position among the upper class and are now clinging tenaciously to a position in the growing middle class. Some have retained the small remnants of their former estates and have settled down to becoming middle class farmers; others have disposed of their holdings, purchased a home in Mexico City or Guadalajara and are living modestly on former savings or on what might be earned in a small business enterprise. Some have invested in real estate in Mexico City, while others have invested their remaining capital in industry or commerce. Many of these former hacendados are now too busy trying to make ends meet to be classified any longer among the upper class.” On the other hand, Whetten finds that the development of small ranchers and colonizers of previously abandoned lands have permitted the expansion of an agrarian middle class, mainly in central and northern Mexico. see Nathaniel Whetten, 21.

Concerning the relation between education and the middle-classes, Whetten says, “The schools tend to serve somewhat as a ladder for climbing to the middle class. This is especially true of the institutions of higher learning. During the five-year period 1942-46, 26, 401 professional degrees were conferred by the various universities and technical schools in Mexico. These were awarded to lawyers, agronomists, engineers, doctors, dentists, nurses, school teachers and others. Some join the liberal professions and others go into government service. Most of them would definitely be classified among the middle class.” (24) About the bureaucratic expansion of the state, Whetten says, “A fairly large proportion of the federal and state employees would probably be white-collar workers and functionaries, and most of them would be classified as middle class. Many have small incomes but they have forsaken physical labor and are struggling to maintain a respectable appearance and to acquire middle class symbols.” (25) Concerning the industrial middle class, Whetten asserts, “According to an index worked out by the Oficina de Barómetros Económicos in Mexico, the volume of industrial production for the country as a whole rose from 87.6 in 1925 to 212.2 in 1944 (with 1929 equaling 100). In 1940, 10.9 percent of Mexico’s gainfully employed were working in industry. In the writer’s opinion, the directors, managers, and most of the supervisors in the industrial establishments would belong to the middle class. Some of the more highly skilled and unskilled workers laborers would be grouped in the lower class because of their comparatively low levels of living.” (26). Later Whetten says, “Finally, commerce and trade should be mentioned as contributing to the growth of a middle class. In 1940, there were 552,457 persons in Mexico who were working in the various fields of commerce and trade. They constituted 3.3 percent of the gainfully employed of the country. Merchants and shopkeepers have been an important segment of the small middle class throughout Mexico’s history. More recently, with the development of urbanization and the expansion of highways and communication lines, they have increased greatly in numbers and importance, especially in the larger cities. They are becoming important also in some of the most prosperous agricultural regions.” See Whetten, 26-27.
CHAPTER II

MIDDLE CLASS AND RELIGION IN MEXICO: THE LIMITS OF INSTITUTIONAL POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS CONTROL

As the Mexican middle-class grew at the intersection of tradition, the state, and the United States, the strongest thread of tradition came from the cultural world of religion and the family ways it promoted. Catholicism is a historical legacy rooted in Mexico’s colonial foundations; it endured as it adapted during the era of political and cultural conflicts that shaped the nineteenth century. During and after the revolution of the early twentieth century, the Mexican middle class retained a powerful commitment to Catholic religiosity while facing the challenges of modernity, urbanization and social change. Middle-class Catholics often became uneasy with the truce that the Mexican Church as an institution had implicitly agreed upon with the Mexican lay state. Therefore, middle-class religiosity often entailed criticism of the PRI-led political system, adamantly defending the family and the moral values considered at risk in the face of state impositions. Although the political system allowed and even stimulated the middle-class religious approach—since religiosity seemingly contributed to social unity and political stability in Mexico—middle-class religiosity also offered bases for interpreting the secular state as blatantly corrupt and betraying national traditions. For many of the deeply religious in the Mexican middle class, this contradiction gradually eroded the image and legitimacy of the PRI-lead state. In the aftermath of the 1968-Tlatelolco massacre of
students it was the catholically-rooted National Action Party (PAN) that offered the most public criticism of the regime’s deadly actions.

The State’s Political Discourse and Religion

Beginning in the 1940s, the PRI-lead political system changed its political discourse. Cárdenas’ discourse of social reform and left-leaning trends was replaced by Manuel Ávila Camacho’s discourse of national unity and political stability. Also, with Ávila Camacho, a relatively peaceful relation with the Church was being built. Beyond any legal limitations to open Church interference in political matters, the state actually found that the Church played an important role as a catalyst for social unity and strong reference for individual behavior. While avoiding being openly associated in any possible way with religion and the Church, presidents like Ávila Camacho and Miguel Alemán Valdés acknowledged and even stimulated the social presence of the Church.

By the time, prominent members of the Mexican religious hierarchy, like Archbishop Luis María Martínez, were often seen sharing public dinners with politicians and powerful entrepreneurs, and even making comments on Mexican public life and the importance of keeping traditional values and national unity.

Since religion was an important element of middle-class identity in Mexico, the middle-class leaning PRI-lead state was careful enough to avoid confrontations with the Church beyond political rhetoric. On his side, when asked about his position on religion,

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46 Loaeza, *Clases medias…*, p. 156.
47 Ibid.
48 See Rafael Loyola (ed.), *Entre la Guerra y la estabilidad política: el México de los 40*, Mexico, Editorial Grijalbo-CONACULTA, 1990, 45.
Manuel Ávila Camacho had openly asserted: “I am a believer”. Such assertion, indeed, marked the turning point in the relation between the government and the Church. The Church was not considered any longer a symbol of reactionary danger undermining the Mexican revolution. Instead, Ávila Camacho found in the Church a potential ally in seeking to counter detractors in right-leaning groups like the National Action Party (PAN). That potential support was to be strongly capitalized by Ávila Camacho’s successor, Miguel Alemán Valdés.

Although Miguel Alemán did not offer any reliable information or expression about his own religious sentiments and he sought to be identified with the progressive left, his actions spoke by themselves concerning the new relation with the Church and associated middle-class sectors. For example, he reformed Constitutional article 3 eliminating Cárdenas´ reform which originally asserted that education should be socialist. On the other hand, Alemán created the necessary ambiguities in article 3 for the Church to offer private education as long as it was not directly (or openly) associated with religious doctrine. Thus, Alemán worked on building a much improved relation with the Mexican middle class and its traditional devotion to family, religion and education.

As Ávila Camacho and Miguel Alemán sought to improve state relations with the middle class, they used the Church´s social discourse of unity, order, social peace and conformity at their advantage. They understood the strong relation between the Church and the middle classes they courted. It was a relation that evolved from the private

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50 Guy Ray says in this regard: “No reliable information is available regarding the real religious sentiments of Lic. Miguel Alemán, but he has been known as a leftist and in his political career has at least been careful to avoid being identified with the church in any way”, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Mexico, Internal Affairs, part II 1940-1944, microfilm 88/2010 b, reel 2.
schools administered by religious associations where the middle- and upper- classes sent their sons and daughters. Strongly tied to the private school environment, these sectors consolidated organizations like the National Union of Family Parents which operated since the late 1910s.

Even though the post-revolutionary state placed lay and scientific education among the top national priorities, during the 1940s there was an implicit acceptance on the Church’s participation in education. By the time, opinion-makers in the Popular Party, for example, criticized the growing role of the Church in education. Accordingly, Juan Ortega y Arenas asserted,

En estos días de crisis, hemos visto con ansia cómo el arma que el proletariado más necesita, la educación, trata de ser alejada nuevamente de sus posibilidades. Inútil mencionar que ni el aliento Revolucionario, ni la sombra gigante de Lázaro Cárdenas han podido detener este retroceso, hijo de unos cuantos súbditos de las fuerzas económicas poderosas que quieren impedir el progreso del pueblo […] Nuevamente sabemos que el Clero es llamado, como siempre, a facilitar la tarea de eternizar la ignorancia de los más, en beneficio de un puñado de ricos. […] ¿Pero es que acaso esa misión le corresponde al clero? ¿Por qué la burguesía acude a él? 51

Nonetheless, such a critique avoided mentioning that the PRI-lead state itself allowed such a trend. Neither Ávila Camacho nor Miguel Alemán fought against clergy participation in education and in the political environment. Any anticlerical mention they might have made, never went beyond mere political rhetoric seeking to create a public imaginary of a revolutionary process where the Church had been subdued and limited.

Particularly Alemán worked hard on transforming the government relation with the Church. He in fact supported public works in Mexico City to favor the Church. Among them, the most important was the boulevard connecting the city with the Virgin of Guadalupe shrine.\textsuperscript{52} Also, public expressions of faith and religion were allowed again in public roads. Alemán’s government justified this by alleging how important it was for the PRI-lead democracy to respect popular tradition and will. According to Alemán’s discourse, a relevant part of the revolutionary legacy was unconditional support to freedom of expression and popular preference (with no direct mention, of course, on the potential religious ingredients of such a preference). Nonetheless, Alemán’s government was characterized by its hard repression against workers´ movements, such as in the oil and railroad industries.\textsuperscript{53} In so doing, Alemán sought to provide Mexico’s industrial growth with a disciplined labor that satisfied entrepreneurial needs both in Mexico and the United States.

Part of PRI’s political middle ground by the time consisted of keeping balance between progressivism and conservatism. Important part of such a middle ground included creating a new relation with the Church. Accordingly, the state laid the bases for a more permissive atmosphere in terms of religious expression pleasing the Church’s hierarchy, while also keeping a left-leaning rhetorical discourse of anticlericalism. When Adolfo Ruíz Cortines was elected president amidst scandals of electoral fraud (against general Miguel Henríquez Guzmán and his supporters) and corruption, the Church rewarded the government by instructing its bishops and superiors to work with the

\textsuperscript{52} See Niblo, \textit{Mexico in the 1940s…}, 225.

administration, contributing to social unity and political stability by means of supportive preaching to their congregations.

The symbiosis between government and the Church was reinforced with Adolfo Ruíz Cortines pretensions of austerity and morality. As a reaction to Miguel Alemán’s government image of rampant corruption, Ruíz Cortines tried to take distance from his predecessor, building a new image of the government. This trend fitted nicely with the Church and conservative middle-class expectations for the country. Mexico City’s major, Ernesto Uruchurtu, repressed night-clubs and urban spectacles. New censorship regulations on movies and theatre seemed to have been expressly designed to satisfy the most moralizing expectations of all sorts of middle-class conservative social reformers and Catholic-Church followers.

Adolfo López Mateos, presidential successor of Ruíz Cortines, like his predecessors avoided direct conflict with the Church and was highly supportive to the urban and educated middle-class. However, his educational policies that created the free-textbooks for elementary-education students, brought about major inconformity and contestation among the conservative middle-class. Additionally, López Mateos political rhetoric reflected his apparent sympathies for left-leaning groups—even though his acts, like brutally repressing rallying workers or jailing dissidents like David Alfaro Siqueiros often contradicted that rhetoric. The problem was that the free textbooks reinforced a PRI-style lay conception of life and patriotism opposed by many among the middle class. Then, broad middle-class movements opposing the textbooks expanded throughout Mexico, claiming that the government was interfering with parents´ right to

54 José Agustín, La tragicomedia..., 189.
decide their sons´ and daughters´ education. Those movements went to the extreme of associating the textbooks and the government with foreign communist interests corrupting national family and Catholic values. Events in Cuba where Fidel Castro´s socialist revolution had succeeded in 1959 triggered the ghost of communism in the imagination of the Church and the Mexican conservative middle-class. Therefore, attacks against the government focused on how government intromission in education by means of textbooks and left-leaning rhetoric was risking national unity and trust in government. But beyond that, López Mateos avoided major difficulties. In achieving this, López Mateos obtained key support from the most powerful entrepreneurial groups, which trusted him as his economic policies delivered excellent opportunities for their enrichment, and a disciplined labor and peasant movement, often by means of repression and hidden negotiations.

Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, the last president of the period here analyzed faced growing inconformity among students and the youth in general. During his presidential term, the political and economic contradictions of the regime became clearer than ever before, awakening strong student contestation against the government. With Díaz Ordaz, the regime´s authoritarianism seemed to reach its pinnacle. The government lowered budget used for higher education, while harshly repressing protesting students. Even though Díaz Ordaz developed a strong relation with the private sector and the Church, his highly repressive implementations culminating in the October-1968-Tlatelolco massacre, brought him growing middle-class opposition. Therefore, the Family Christian
Movement (MFC) and the PAN were among those openly raising their voice denouncing government’s excesses\textsuperscript{55}.

In the period between 1940 and 1970, the late-Díaz Ordaz´ administration handled some of the most challenging situations related to middle-class presence. The imagery of social unity and political stability so carefully manufactured by the PRI-lead political system, seriously threatened to vanish. During the 1968-student movement, PAN activism linked to Catholicism and a moral perspective gained momentum from different fronts. The voices of Rafael Preciado Hernández, Efraín González Morfín, Gerardo Medina Valdés and José Ángel Conchello Dávila were raised in the Mexican Congress showing the legitimacy of the student movement and the government´s profound authoritarianism. Rafael Preciado said,

La responsabilidad del mal sistema de educación que padece México, y de las influencias perniciosas que lo agravan, creando un ambiente adverso en casi todos sus aspectos a una recta formación moral de la niñez y de la juventud, es fundamentalmente de nosotros los adultos, y no de los niños y jóvenes. Y entre los adultos, la máxima responsabilidad compete a los intelectuales que han venido formando parte de los gobiernos que se han sucedido en México, y que lejos de preocuparse y plantear a fondo el problema de la educación, se han aferrado a una posición irracional, anticuada y gravemente lesiva para el futuro de nuestra patria.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{55} See editorials and articles by Gerardo Medina Valdés, Luis Tercero Gallardo and Pedro César Acosta in \textit{La Nación}, during October 1968, and editorials the \textit{Boletín del Movimiento Familiar Cristiano} during November 1968. In such publications, authors coincide in responsibilizing the government for the massacre, and justify student rebelliousnes in the ground of growing government corruption and socioeconomic inequalities making the poor poorer and the wealthy wealthier.

\textsuperscript{56} Rafael Preciado Hernández, Discourse pronounced on September 20, 1968, in Juan José Rodríguez Prats (comp.), \textit{Documentos y decisiones cruciales en la historia de Acción Nacional}, Tatevari Ediciones, México, 2009, p. 106.
On the other hand, José Ángel Conchello Dávila asserted,

Onde por ahí la idea de que son comunistas [los estudiantes del movimiento], “macarthismo” de importación de última hora que no nos hemos sacudido; pare ellos, para los que nos restriega a cada momento el fantasma del comunismo, quiero decirles que en Francia, un teólogo protestante, Jorge Casales, andaba en las manifestaciones y decía: “Cómo no estar llenos de alegría y de esperanza al oír a los jóvenes estudiantes y obreros decirlo con violencia como lo demostraron con valor, que las razones para vivir son más importantes que la vida misma.”

Later, Conchello continues,

Dice Romano Guardini, al hablar del fin de los tiempos modernos, que el futuro exigirá del hombre de mañana tres virtudes. Ascetismo, ascetismo más allá del consumismo glotón que nos rodea, en que tres mil veces al día la publicidad nos dice compra esto, haz esto, haz lo otro. Ascetismo moral. Seriedad. Seriedad para ver qué es lo que está en juego más allá de las promesas de progreso o de la crítica de las organizaciones establecidas. Seriedad para calificar sinceramente lo que hoy parece que sea el burro sagrado, sean constituciones, sean instituciones sagradas. Seriedad para afrontar y revisar. Y por último heroísmo, pero no el heroísmo montado a caballo, no ese heroísmo tipo Carlyle, que todavía el secretario de Educación quería imponerles a los jóvenes. Es un nuevo tipo de heroísmo, del que presenta su pecho y su conciencia para darse a lo que venga. Un heroísmo que ha perdido, gracias a Dios, la idea del éxito, que no se trata ni de triunfar en los negocios ni en la política. Del heroísmo de la entrega y de la renunciación.

Accordingly, for these perspectives the student movement was an expression of youth discontent against a political and economic system that was corrupting Mexican society by means of consumerism, a biased educational system, and immoral ambitions.

57 José Ángel Conchello, Discourse pronounced on September 20, 1968, in Juan José Rodríguez Pratts (comp.), *Documentos y decisiones…*, 112.

58 Ibid. 113.
Therefore, for these opinion-makers the only viable solution was a heroic crusade undertaken by men and women of good will, holding the banner of moral asceticism, seriousness, and heroism. Such position expressed a middle-class Messianic vision wherein the highest duty of saving the nation and society corresponded to the representatives of a supposedly virtuous middle class (considered as such just for the fact of being respectful to traditions and to national Catholicism), whose sons and daughters were being harshly repressed by a dishonest and corrupt state.

**The Christian Family Movement**

The political context between 1940 and 1970 offered the bases for middle-class expansion not only in economic, political and educational terms as seen in previous chapters, but also in its evolving relation with its religious traditions. Such traditions often became the reference for the middle-class taking a stand against the state, criticizing its economic and political implementations, even beyond the institutional control of the Church. This is how the Family Christian Movement (MFC) arose in the late-1950s, mainly appealing to urban families with relatively high educational and cultural backgrounds.

The Movement found its origins in father Pedro Richards´ work in Argentina and Uruguay by 1948. Father Richards promoted the integration of a Catholic family movement that favored family meetings to strengthen Catholic family life. The movement expanded to Mexico in 1958 by means of Catholic middle-class families who brought father Richards to Mexico in order to settle the bases for the movement. For Mexican middle-class families consolidating the movement, this meant expanding their
foundation for facing threats against tradition and family unity coming from the lay state and growing U.S. cultural influence upon national society.

Such families found in the MFC the means for creating strong and independent social networks for practical purposes beyond strictly confessional or Church institutional perspectives. Among those purposes, they included censoring government management of the media and direct public opinion in order to make the government accountable for blatant corruption and socioeconomic inequalities in the country. In this, the MFC strengthened work previously performed by PAN opinion-makers. For instance, the first number of the MFC brochure included a diversity of articles criticizing cinema projections in the city and highlighting the importance of education in order to prevent people from watching what they qualified as immoral and mediocre movies. One editorial says,

El objetivo final de la educación cinematográfica es imprimir al cine una dirección enteramente distinta a la que hoy tiene –diversión, opio, espejismo- en la vida de los jóvenes y aún de los mismo adultos […] JUZGAR Y APRECIAR EL FILME: He aquí el punto central de la educación cinematográfica. Si el objetivo de esta educación es ‘educar a los espectadores que sepan y quieran’ asistir a una sesión de cine como cristianos inteligentes, si lo esencial de esta educación consiste en ‘redimir a la conciencia del espectador de la pasividad, despertándoles el sentido crítico tanto ideológico como artístico’, la clave de la educación cinematográfica será: estimular el ejercicio activo de las facultades críticas del espectador […] Esta finalidad es satisfactoriamente lograda mediante el análisis cinematográfico, que es el instrumento educativo principal.  

59 “Iniciación al cine”, in Boletín del Movimiento Familiar Cristiano, Number 1, 1958, 5.
The MFC was also concerned with other subjects such as the influence of US culture on the Mexican middle-class families, particularly in the matter of divorce and what they considered lack of attention to children and the youth.\textsuperscript{60} They envisioned materialism and rupture with tradition as the most important trouble hurting Mexican society, particularly the social status-seeking middle-class. The MFC expressed in another editorial,  

¿Pero es que no hemos comprendido como padres de familia, que la máxima empresa de cada uno, la empresa máxima de nuestros tiempos debe ser la de educar a nuestros hijos? […] Y esa empresa máxima de que hablamos, ¿qué sabemos de ella? Paternidad no es tener hijos solamente, puesto que ya vimos que ni aun los animales se conforman con ello, sino que también los cuidan y enseñan mientras son capaces de bastarse a sí mismo. Y si hablamos de educación tenemos que aceptar que no sabemos nada de ello, que somos en general unos verdaderos aficionados. Ya que para los padres de familia actuales nuestra única preocupación es la de aumentar los fondos de nuestra chequera, muchos creen que en ella tiene la respuestas para el problema de la educación, y así pues, inscriben a sus hijos en el colegio más caro y exclusivo de México y están seguros y convencidos de que entre más cara sea la colegiatura, mejor estarán cumpliendo con su obligación y creen que la escuela puede hacer los que ellos no hacen. […] ¡Qué triste manera de entender nuestra obligación como padres! Revela claro está, la época materialista en que vivimos…\textsuperscript{61}

Then the movement sought to offer orientation to family parents in their educational role both at home and in schools. On the other hand, the movement also promoted morality in the general environment particularly in aspects relative to cinema and mass media. They

\textsuperscript{60} See Salvador López Rojas, \textit{Boletín del Movimiento Familiar Cristiano}, July 1968, 14-18.

\textsuperscript{61} Fernando Barbará Zetina, “Federación de asociaciones de padres de familia”, in \textit{Boletín del Movimiento…}, January 31, 1963, 18-19.
sought an education in schools that was in track with education at home according to family values and Christian traditions.

Even though U.S. cultural influence and capitalist liberalism was seen with reluctance by the MFC, Soviet influence was thought even a greater threat in the worldwide scenario. MFC perspective considered that, in the end, U.S. influence and support was less negative than Soviet help. On this, an editorial in the *Boletín del Movimiento Familiar Cristiano* says:

La gran publicidad que el bloque soviético da a cada oferta de ayuda (ya sea cumplida o no) a los países africanos o americanos, produce un cuadro totalmente falso de lo que realmente ha sucedido […] A mediados de 1961, el Programa de Ayuda Soviética para todos los países sub-desarrollados para un periodo de ocho años, llegó a la cifra de 4,000 millones de dólares. La ayuda de Estados Unidos, en tanto, para los países sub desarrollados, solamente en un año (1959-1960) ascendió a 2,860 millones de dólares […] Tomando en consideración el hecho de que más de la mitad de la prometida ayuda del bloque soviético no fue realmente otorgada, la diferencia se torna considerablemente mayor […] Debe recordarse además que la ayuda soviética va dirigida solamente para puntos determinados, previamente escogidos y la ayuda americana se reparte prácticamente entre todos los puntos del planeta, desde Japón y Formosa en el Oriente, hasta los países de Latino América en Occidente. Moscú selecciona a los países a los que presta ayuda, si servirán a los intereses soviéticos y en cambio la ayuda americana, por ser tan ampliamente distribuida, pierde el impacto de la concentración.62

The MFC position apparently expressed the fact that they thought US influence to be less threatening than Soviet expansionism. Middle-class MFC found US influence closer to its values as a social class, since such influence promoted consumerism, social stability,

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middle-class’ importance over other groups like workers or peasants, and individual improvement by education and family support. However, when US influence took a religious form, by means of Protestantism, the threat it posed was conceived as identical as that of communism.

Part of the US cultural influence included increasing attempts by protestants and evangelical practitioners to expand their influence to Latin America. During the 1950s and 1960s strong waves of North American missionaries entered Mexico and other Latin American countries seeking new practitioners. This process finds its most immediate antecedent in the work of the Summer Institute for Languages, which was allowed to begin operations in Mexico during Lázaro Cárdenas´ presidential administration. The Institute translated the Protestant Bible into a broad variety of indigenous languages, and offered the bases for the expansion of a diversity of Protestant movements in Mexico, like Baptists, Evangelists, Anglicans, Adventists, Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons among many others. Nonetheless, poor and rural communities offered major potential for a positive impact of their evangelizing work, wherein Pentecostals have been the most

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63 On this Anthony Gill says, “For nearly five centuries, the Catholic Church had a virtual monopoly over Latin America’s religious landscape. For all intents and purposes, it was the only supplier of religious services until de mid-1800s, when a wave of liberal governments opened the doors to non-Catholic religions. Even with this opportunity to expand, Protestantism remained a benign challenge to Catholicism’s dominance until the mid-twentieth century when North American missionaries turned their proselytizing energies toward the region […] By the 1960s, Protestantism had become a significant pastoral challenge for Catholic bishops in a number of countries.”, in Anthony Gill, Rendering unto Caesar, Chicago, University of Chicago Press,79.

64 According to Gill, the Pentecostal movement “is distinct from other Protestant missions in a number of ways. Theologically, Pentecostals share three common traits that differentiate them from other evangelicals: faith healing, glossolalia (i.e., speaking in tongues) and prophecy. Like other Protestant denominations, Pentecostals emphasize one’s direct link to God. However they stress emotional and spiritual connections over the more intellectual tendencies of the older mainline denominations (e.g., Methodism). Charisma (versus scholarly knowledge of the Bible) figures as the most important leadership quality among Pentecostals […] The unique organizational structure of Pentecostalism facilitates rapid expansion. Due to the prominence of charismatic leadership, the movements is highly schismatic. New Pentecostal churches often arise when the dynamic members of one congregation leave to form their own ministry. Each Pentecostal church is more or less an autonomous entity.” See Gill, 83.
successful. Meanwhile, middle-class homes, mainly in urban areas, were less willing to even just listen to protestant propaganda. Commonly the doors of middle-class homes used to add one good-sized sign at their entrances; such a sign expressed: “Éste es un hogar decente, no se admite propaganda comunista o protestante”.65 Consolidating middle-class rejection to what they called foreign religious doctrines was also part of MFC main objectives.

During the 1960s, the MFC suffered major transformations as the Catholic faith received the modernizing influence of Pope Juan XXIII with its 1961-encyclical Mater et Magistra. The 1950s Cold War context increased the expanding influence of communism throughout Eastern Europe and Latin America. By the late-1950s the Cuban Revolution shook the Latin American region with its socialist and anti-Catholic trends. Such process became highly influential behind university walls, particularly in Mexico, the starting point for many leftists and revolutionaries to expand their movements to other Latin American terrains. Many among the younger and most educated middle-class members in Mexico were increasingly atheistic or at least skeptical to Catholicism. In this context, the Catholic Church strove to keep its influence and better respond to the new challenge. On this, an editorial in the MFC journal says: “La juventud tiene muy mala fama bebe, fuma y baila el twist, fornica, roba automóviles y gasta dinero. Frente a la nueva ola, los adultos parecen sentirse consternados, aterrados y arrollados. Tienen miedo... Sin embargo los jóvenes de hoy no son tan terribles. Es más, muy pocas veces han sido tan razonables como lo son en la actualidad.”66 Accordingly, the MFC became more open to

65 José Agustín, La tragicomedia..., 248.
66 Editorial, Boletín del Movimiento Familiar Cristiano, May 1-5, 1964, 5.
new trends like rock-and-roll and sought to have a better understanding of the causes behind youth rebelliousness. In so doing, the MFC acknowledged that adults, and particularly a deteriorating political and economic system under the PRI were to a large extent responsible for youth’s disenchantment and inconformity.

By the time, the MFC reflected its members´ self-reflection as a social group that should better respond to the reality of society. This was a society with sharp socioeconomic inequalities and broad geographic areas, mainly rural, suffering the problems of marginalization and poor development. Thus, MFC members shared middle-class self-conception as potential reformers of society, in a Messianic way. As they were part of the middle class, they were among those with better access to culture and education. Then they felt having the patriotic and religious duty of openly questioning some of the most important problems in society, and awakening other social groups´ awareness about the situation. Accordingly, their confessional practice should not any longer be merely expressed in a spiritual or immaterial realm. Instead, they sought to gain major incidence on clearly economic and practical issues, at least by means of social critique and political participation. The context offered by Catholicism and its highest representatives, in fact, created solid grounds for such a perspective in the MFC.

Pope Juan XXIII reforms sought to create a more responsive Church that became more appealing to the people. This why even the Catholic ritual was modified by 1965, so that Catholicism reached better far beyond the Vatican in Rome, and also faced from a better position the challenges posed by more flexible and current confessional movements like Protestantism, particularly Pentecostalism. Therefore, priests were to office mass facing directly the audience and replacing long-time-dead-language Latin for
specific local languages like Spanish. In so doing, the Church sought to strengthen the appeal of the Catholic religion among congregations worldwide.

In Mexico, during the 1960s, as the middle-class youth protested against the government or became hippies, alternative visions of Catholicism spread, as they were promoted by people like father Gregorio Lemercier, or father Sergio Méndez Arceo. They both responded to the modernizing challenge facing the Church with their own perspectives of Catholicism. While father Lemercier scandalized the Vatican and the Catholic world for founding a monastery in Cuernavaca were all the monks submitted to psychoanalysis, bishop Méndez Arceo also in Cuernavaca promoted the Liberation Theology movement. The Liberation Theology movement criticized old ultraconservative Catholic groups by addressing the importance of consolidating a more participative Church, able to support popular groups and assist poor and rural communities in their most immediate needs. In fact, the Liberation Theology movement became a highly influential movement in Latin America, which efficiently challenged Pentecostals influence in a broad diversity of marginalized rural communities.

This social awareness in important sectors of the Church had a profound impact on the Mexican Catholic middle class. As they started to realize the profound contradictions in the Mexican political system, being shocked by growing repression of the authorities against students and opponents to the PRI-lead regime, they expanded their critical perception. They even justified why the middle-class youth was seeking alternative ways like becoming hippies or joining radical groups contesting the government.
Underlying MFC critical perspective there was a traditional position from which the Mexican state and consumerism were criticized. They mainly found the roots of the problem in excessive materialism and consumerism following imported models from the US middle class, and instilled by the mass-media and the state. On this, Xavier Cacho SJ, a Jesuit and MFC opinion-maker says,

La sociedad ‘de consumo’, en la que estamos y en la que desenvolvemos nuestra vida, nos empuja incesantemente a desear más, a comprar más, a tener más. Un bombardeo sistemático de la publicidad que cañonea por todos los medios de comunicación masiva (cine, T.V., radio y prensa) nos persuade al ‘consumo’ […] Insensiblemente la publicidad de ventas nos ha persuadido que nuestra vida es para tener más.67

Father Cacho soundly expresses Catholic middle-class perception that mass-media and materialism were dangerously challenging family values. Accordingly, the pursuit of material assets was absorbing too much time from people, creating adverse conditions for spiritual development and social harmony. Father Cacho continues,

Tomando esa afirmación [that our life’s goal is having more] como motivo de vida absoluto, llegaríamos probablemente a una gran prosperidad económica acompañada de una notable desigualdad socio-económica, porque nos meteríamos en el camino de la rebatiña, donde cada quien trataría sencillamente de tener más, a costa de lo que sea y de quien sea. Llegaríamos, asimismo, y esto sería quizá lo más peligroso, a una sociedad deshumanizada, porque tener más, como primer valor, esclaviza al hombre obligándolo a trabajos forzados para poseer más, arrebatándole el tiempo y la atención que todo hombre, crecer humanamente en la

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Then, for father Cacho, materialism and consumerism might disrupt social harmony and put at risk human freedom. Thus, youth’s rebelliousness and inconformity may appear as a virtue, as long as they seek for self-definition beyond the logic of the market in terms of peace and love. Father Cacho also says,

Los educadores hemos oído mil veces de boca de los jóvenes que ellos quieren **ser más**, aunque no tengan más. En ocasiones ellos no saben expresar claramente en palabras este deseo, por lo cual apelan a la protesta pasiva de huir a otros mundos donde el amor y lo humano sí ocupen el primer lugar en la jerarquía de valores. Cuando ellos y sus padres no son capaces de dialogar, porque no saben hacerlo, porque nadie se los ha enseñado, porque sólo saben el camino de **tener más**; entonces se apela a lo inhumano, a la rebeldía, a las falsas salidas, ya se llamen drogas, suicidio, inadaptación, protesta, o como se quiera.69

In the end, parents and teachers are made responsible for youth’s inconformity in a society that seems to betray human essence in the quest for material satisfaction. Father Cacho concludes,

El **tener más** se refiere a cuanto tenemos nosotros de necesidades eventuales y extrínsecas. Será, pues, necesario **tener**, con límites inclusive amplios; pero es peligroso romper toda barrera y lanzarnos al **tener más y más** indiscriminadamente. En este último caso, habremos renunciado a las necesidades permanentes e intrínsecas, localizables en lo más específicamente humano: la justicia, la convivencia, el espíritu, la paz interior. Renunciando a **ser** humanos, nos entregamos a la desorientación, al desenfreno provocado por el vacío interior, a la terrible desesperación, a no comprender a los demás, a ser agresivos como

68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
fieras en lugar de gozar la convivencia humana […] Invitamos a todos los Maestros a redoblar esfuerzos por hacer de nuestros adolescentes y jóvenes mejores personas, superiores por ser más, no por tener más.\(^{70}\)

The MFC approach to social problems in Mexico entailed engaging in a cultural and educational crusade targeting homes, schools and the mass media, what they called “temporal structures”. The movement’s strategy consisted of organizing family heads (mother and father) to invite other parents to their homes and get them involved in the movement.\(^{71}\) This organization sought to have a direct impact in “temporal structures”, so that they could be transformed into means for reaching spiritual realms and reconnecting families with Catholic life, while understanding social, political and economic problems. Members were supposed to work as a strong social network expanding its links by means of personal relations and friendship. The movement found its main strength in the fact that at least until 1970 it developed important networks among professionals and highly educated people, mainly located in urban areas like Mexico City. MFC meetings often created an auspicious environment for discussion on topics beyond religion and family tradition. Actually, many meetings often approached a broad diversity of topics ranging from sexual revolution, politics and how to better understand the rebellious 1960s-youth.

MFC strength clearly relied on its middle-class composition, and response capacity to 1960s- transformation trends demanding from Catholic families better responses to social needs and youth’s inconformity.

MFC potential precisely relied in its capacity of appealing to middle class parents with relatively high levels of education. In fact, this is why in the aftermath of the

\(^{70}\) Ibid.

\(^{71}\) See Boletín del Movimiento Familiar Cristiano, June 30, 1962, 20.
Tlatelolco massacre of October 2, the MFC was among the major challengers of the government, evidencing its excesses and criticizing its incapacity for dealing with students’ legitimate demands. After all, many among the repressed and killed students were the sons or daughters of parents belonging to the MFC or linked to it by means of close friends or relatives. For the Church, this situation got out of its institutional control. In fact, while the Mexican Church remained basically cautious and even supportive to Díaz Ordaz, the MFC expressed direct opposition and criticism against the government. This situation made the Church’s religious hierarchy aware that reforms were necessary in order to make the movement more institutionally controlled.

In the Encuentros Diocesanos de Dirigentes by 1969 and 1970, organized by the Archdiocese of Mexico, there is evidence on how the Church evolved seeking major control over the MFC. The 1969-Encuentro firstly focused on the importance of creating a new awareness beyond materialism and exploitation. One of the Encuentro documents says,

El desarrollo o crecimiento a veces se entiende de modo no auténtico al referirlo sólo al crecimiento económico. No se puede hablar de desarrollo únicamente a base del índice de crecimiento del ingreso per cápita, ya que este ‘promedio’ nos oculta la injusticia en que puede apoyarse este crecimiento en beneficio de unos cuantos privilegiados que explotan a la mayoría del pueblo. Podemos señalar algunos índices del subdesarrollo que pueden ayudarnos a entender, pro contraste, lo que entendemos por desarrollo (integral) gran mortalidad infantil, subalimentación de una mayoría de la población, sub-empleo, analfabetismo, deficiencia en los cuadros científicos y técnicos y en la industrialización e infra-
estructuras. (Según estos índices se clasifican a los países como subdesarrollados).\textsuperscript{72}

The document makes an implicit criticism against conceiving underdevelopment as merely related to lack of material and economic development. According to the Archdioceses’ perspective, real underdevelopment was related to human and spiritual issues. Thus, the document continues,

Con todo, si queremos profundizar más y pensamos que el desarrollo no puede ser sino el crecimiento armónico e integral de todo el hombre y de todos los hombres, podemos afirmar que aunque se abatiera los índices de subdesarrollo arriba indicado, todavía puede haber otros índices de subdesarrollo. Dicho de otra manera: hay pueblos que suelen llamarse ‘Desarrollados’ y que sin embargo, están ‘sub-desarrollados’. Algunos de estos índices pueden ser: la explotación de otros países o sectores de la población para el crecimiento económico, una técnica y tecnocracia que esclavizan, explotan al hombre en lugar de servirlo, la inestabilidad familiar, el egoísmo colectivo en sus diversas formas de discriminación, el lujo y el confort como ideales de la vida, la vida social masificada y anónima, el cerrarse a la reflexión filosófica y a los valores religiosos, etc.\textsuperscript{73}

Then, elements characterizing the evolution of highly developed capitalist countries, like the United States, are considered like some kind of human and spiritual underdevelopment: authoritarianism, human exploitation, family instability, individualism, deterioration of human values, etc. Therefore, the document highlights the importance of structural change in current society. But, accordingly, structural change

\textsuperscript{72} Documents for the \textit{Encuentro Diocesano}, August 29, 30 and 31, 1969, Archdiocesis of Mexico, p. 2, Mexico City Archbishop’s Archive.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
must imply real benefits for all members of society, otherwise change would make no sense at all. Regarding this, the document expresses,

Lo importante es que ese cambio de estructuras sea tarea de todos mediante la participación responsable; pero urge que ese cambio sea ‘audaz y profundo’, para que nuestro desarrollo económico, social, cultural, político y religioso no sea para beneficio de unos cuantos, sino para que todo el pueblo participe en la oración de una política, de una economía, de una cultura, de las asociaciones, de la misma Iglesia al servicio de todo el hombre y de todos los hombres mexicanos.74

Such structural change was justified since social inequality, more than ever, seemed to be the source of conflict, evidencing profound inconsistencies in the Mexican political system. In fact, the document expresses great concern with the development of a sharp family crisis, directly related to social, political and economic problems. The document states,

Hay un gran subdesarrollo referido a los niveles de vida familiar. El 60% de las familias mexicanas tienen, según datos oficiales, ingresos menores de $750.00 mensuales. Sólo el 6% recibe uno mayor de $3,000.00. Cerca del 85% de los hogares mexicanos carecen de una casa adecuada. Existe un déficit de cerca de dos millones de viviendas. Se calcula un analfabetismo funcional de un 44%, cuando menos.75

Then, sharp social inequality is considered as one of the main causes behind the family crisis that was endangering Mexican traditions and Church’s leadership. But other causes are clearly asserted by the document,

Por otra parte, la crisis familiar la provoca también el proceso de cambio que experimenta el país. La industrialización, la difusión de los medios de

74 Ibid., 5.
75 Ibid., 3.
comunicación y el avance técnico y científico moderno, producen un rompimiento del equilibrio de las estructuras e instituciones tradicionales. El desequilibrio afecta extraordinariamente las escalas de valores, las normas, las actitudes y las motivaciones, las formas de conducta, la realización de los papeles de conducta de cada miembro de la familia, la armonía entre padres e hijos y entre aquéllos que pertenecen a generaciones diferentes; y en fin, hacen que la estructura familiar tal y como funcionaba –al menos teóricamente- a seguir los patrones tradicionales, no se adapte ya a la vida moderna. Aparece entonces una disfuncionalidad familiar; ni se puede vivir con las normas y costumbres de antes, ni se sabe cómo se debe vivir ahora; cuál debe ser el comportamiento de los padres frente a los hijos, del hombre frente a la mujer y viceversa.  

As seen so far, the document expresses criticism against developments in the political and economic system deteriorating what is considered as essential values and traditions. In this it retakes many of the MFC views and seems to agree with a critical approach. However, in organizational terms, the document starts what was later consolidated as more control from the Church upon the movement. Such control began by tightening the relation between local teams conformed by families addressing common goals, and regional zones supervised by priests and Church authorities. On this, the document starts by acknowledging the importance of the team of families integrating a basic community,

Hay una comunidad básica en el MFC y ésta es el EQUIPO, es una comunidad de amor, de amistad. Un equipo reúne a matrimonios, en realidad, familias, que comparten un mismo interés; que buscan el mismo fin y que los mantiene en órbita como fuerza centrífuga y que debe lanzarlos fuera del MFC. El equipo es la

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76 Ibid., 4.
fuente de energía que debe impulsar a los matrimonios fuera de su esfera, realizando acciones específicas que a su vez, lance a otras familias.\textsuperscript{77}

Immediately after this, the document elaborates on the concept of zone. The zone as an important unit of organizational control and supervision upon a diversity of basic communities or family teams, “La ZONA es una estructura, pero más que eso, es una AUTÉNTICA COMUNIDAD de servicios que necesita unificarse, llenarse de los dones que Dios envía a través de los sacerdotes y medios de formación con que cuenta el MFC. La Zona es la Iglesia básica del MFC.”\textsuperscript{78} Accordingly, there should be a profound transformation wherein the zone became more prominent and present in the work of base communities. Then, the document goes ahead,

La estructura donde se debe iniciar el cambio es en la Zona, sin excluir al ‘Equipo’ con la importancia que tiene como pequeña comunidad […] En esta nueva estructuración proponemos cambiar el concepto de Zona que veníamos manejando en lo referente a ser un conjunto de Equipos de una misma etapa de formación, para dar el concepto de ZONA INTEGRAL, es decir: LA ZONA DEBERA SER UNA AUTENÍCA COMUNIDAD DE IGLESIA, COMUNIDAD DE AMOR Y DE SERVICIO hacia todas las familias que pertenecen a esa comunidad.\textsuperscript{79}

Therefore, the goal would be to tighten institutional control upon zones and teams, under the direct influence of the Church. This was the Church not just as an abstract entity, but the Church as a consolidated institution with a robust hierarchy seeking to better control its diversity of branches and congregations. Thus, family teams would be guided by

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
institutional parameters, so that their margins of self-definition and independent interpretations of their duties facing social problems were less ample.

By 1970, the process was more focused on control than on social criticism, as evidenced by documents prepared for that year’s Encuentro Diocesano de Dirigentes. Such documents conceived of the Movement as the means for promoting family human and Christian values, forming people educated in the Catholic faith, and actively committed to developing links between its members and the Church.\textsuperscript{80} On the other hand, the MFC was supposed to be more inclusive. Documents for the Encuentro say, “Las estructuras con que actualmente cuenta el MFC en la Arquidiócesis de México, fueron ideadas pensando en el enorme beneficio que representarían para sus miembros, pues la idea general de estas estructuras fue, y es hasta la fecha, que el Movimiento es una institución que está al servicio de las familias, pero de todas las familias de la comunidad.”\textsuperscript{81} In so doing, the document stresses the importance of expanding the movement’s networks beyond its original middle-class base, so that more popular groups and neighborhoods were included.

From the moment ecclesiastical authorities sought to exert major control upon the movement by means of tightening links between zones and family teams, middle-class families found less motivation for participating in the movement. Important source for middle-class interest in being part of the movement consisted of the openness they found to freely analyzing and voicing their opinions on social, political and economic problems, with other Catholics sharing similar levels of education and culture. This was even

\textsuperscript{80} See Documents for the Encuentro diocesano de dirigentes, November, 13, 14 y 15, 1970, Arquidiócesis de México, p. 2, Mexico City Archbishop’s Archives.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 1.
intellectually stimulating for them, while also allowed them to express their Catholic devotion and appreciation for Mexican family tradition. However, major institutional control upon the movement meant more strict guidelines and goals to comply with. This situation undermined previous possibilities for self-definition, and stressed the necessity of following top-down ways for operating, having the institutional Church at the center of the process. While during the 1960s the movement was mainly composed of middle-class families and essentially worked through informal networks, the 1970s witnessed major growth in the participation of popular groups and poor neighborhoods at the expense of middle-class membership. Major control of the Church upon local membership also brought about a profound level of decay in the movement. An important cause behind that was the fact that informal social networks eroded as they were replaced by a tightened control of the Church upon every local cell, mediated by local priests and congregations.

Understanding the importance Catholicism played for the Mexican middle class, the Mexican state sought to keep an improved relation with the Church between 1940 and 1970. PRI-presidents not only relaxed the implementation of prohibitions against public expressions of the cult, but they went so far as to reform educational legislation and even invest budget in public works to improve access to shrines and places of Catholic meeting. The Church, meanwhile, rewarded the state by remaining silent about some of the most evident contradictions in the political and economic system. Catholic priests regularly preached asking people to keep unity and respect for the government. In the
end, a symbiosis between the Church and the Mexican state was consolidated in order to
support social unity and political stability.

Nonetheless, middle-class religiosity was not necessarily fully aligned with the
Church’s institutional control. Often, middle-class religiosity took forms that went far
beyond Church’s stipulations. The Family Christian Movement (MFC) during the 1960s
was an important example. Educated and urban middle-class members of the movement
usually seized the opportunity of participating in the MFC to consolidate strong social
networks and discuss all sorts of political and social matters in their meetings. MFC
meetings offered a space for exchanging points of view on current issues that evidenced
clear contradictions in the political system. MFC social networks were in large extent
independent and difficult to be institutionally controlled. Their dynamism relied on their
capacity to address topics that often evidenced current problems and government failures.
They continuously voiced their opinions by means of the MFC boletín and their
networks, paving the way for more extensive analysis on problems of their concern.
CHAPTER III

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION: A TOOL FOR SOCIAL CHANGE, OR CHANGE FOR THE SOCIAL TOOLS?

Historically, the Mexican middle classes have considered education their most solid ladder for social mobility. Becoming a licensed professional has been a symbol of higher possibilities for social and economic improvement. At least until the 1970s, university education was a source of profound pride, since becoming a “licenciado” was similar to obtaining a nobility title that opened the doors to new opportunities for self-improvement. Beginning in the 1940s, university graduated “licenciados” permeated the top positions in the political and economic spheres of the country. Education turned out to be one of the most important markers of social status to differentiate between the middle and lower sectors of society. For the middle classes, education represented progress and an important feature of national development. This conception legitimated the post-revolutionary state’s emphasis on education as a tool for social change, impacting favorably the improvement of people’s social position. Supposedly a more educated society would become a more egalitarian one. Yet, education did not always reach all social sectors, providing them with equal opportunities for self-improvement. On the other hand, many among the middle class youth joining higher education eventually created their own social interpretation and political perspectives that often contradicted those of the state. Also, the influence of prominent intellectuals played an important role.

82 Concerning the relation between the Mexican middle classes and education, Soledad Loaeza has said, “La educación determina tanto su situación como su posición en la estructura social, les permite desempeñar una determinada ocupación, constituye el marco de referencia de sus patrones de consumo, es asimismo la base de sus pretensiones a una posición especial en la jerarquía del prestigio social, y es en fin, la piedra de toque de una identidad cultural que se funda en términos relativos de conocimiento y se expresa en un cierto estilo de vida.” Soledad Loaeza, Clases medias..., 31.
Altogether, students and intellectuals with different political tendencies seemed to turn the game around as they questioned the social tools utilized by the state’s model of development. Those that by their very existence seemed to provide legitimacy to the state’s discourse of education as the means for social mobility also were among the most important challengers of the political and economic system.

**Middle Class and Intellectuals**

Due to the symbolic value of education, the middle classes have believed education to be their most important social capital. The social prestige associated to education has, in fact, been more important than economic status. Lacking the economic resources and consumer power of the upper classes, the middle classes have usually considered that culture and education are their most important contribution to society. Intellectuals and academics have played an important role seemingly validating these assumptions. Often, they have become the protagonists of political events, either from the “Ivy Tower” position provided by universities, or out of their direct intervention in the government apparatus. Middle class intellectuals such as Salvador Novo, Leopoldo Zea, José Vasconcelos, Narciso Bassols, Pablo González Casanova, Fernando Benítez, Carlos Fuentes, Víctor Flores Olea, Octavio Paz, Francisco López Cámara, among others, have become a symbol of middle class pride for their contributions in the cultural and political spheres. Yet, they have also portrayed profound contradictions in the relation between highly educated middle class representatives and the Mexican state, as we will see below.

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83 Ibid., 55.
Between 1940 and 1970, the expansion of the Mexican middle classes in urban areas was accompanied by an unprecedented emphasis on education as a source of political legitimacy for the dominant political party, the PRI. Increasing support to education, mainly in its higher levels, brought about infrastructure development that supported the expansion of Mexican intellectuals and university graduates. Yet, many among intellectuals and higher education students became the most important detractors against state policies and its model of development, once it began to show strong inconsistencies. To an important extent the Mexican state tolerated this situation in order to show its commitment with democracy and plurality. However, as soon as voices against the political system challenged with extending their appeal to the popular sectors or seriously undermining the international image of the state, strong and effective repression replaced previous conciliation and tolerance. The 1958-1959-harsh repression of students, railroad and telegraph workers, and the 1968-Tlatelolco massacre offer strong evidence of this.

Intellectuals in Mexico have played an essential role indirectly legitimizing the post-revolutionary Mexican state, even when they have taken an antagonistic position against the government. Although many intellectuals have been openly critical to the system, their very existence and capacity of making their voice be heard has offered a source for system legitimization. Apparently, the Mexican state has been open to critical public voices even though they were aligned with the opposition. In fact the public educational system has allocated the most important amount of educational resources in higher
educational levels.\textsuperscript{84} This has meant that institutional infrastructures where intellectuals find their natural haven, have received unprecedented financial resources.

Many intellectuals have played a protagonist role in the Mexican policy-making. Among them, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, Manuel Gómez Morín, Jesús Reyes Heroles, Víctor Flores Olea, Narcisso Bassols, Pablo González Casanova, Carlos Fuentes and Octavio Paz have been of paramount importance. In the \textit{Sociological Imagination}, Charles Wright Mills has said that participation in the policy-making, “requires the intellectual to make explicit judgments and decide on theories, methods and facts.”\textsuperscript{85} Then, intellectuals play an essential role as social analysts and interpreters of reality. Through periodicals or other mass media, their voices become powerful elements in the political balance. In Mexico, the role of intellectuals as social and political analysts and denouncers of political inconsistencies in the government has a long and important tradition.

During the late-Porfiriato, beginning in 1907, the Ateneo de la Juventud incorporated an important group of brilliant middle class intellectuals like Alfonso Reyes, Antonio Caso, Pedro Henríquez Ureña and José Vasconcelos. This group held philosophical and cultural ideas that opposed the positivist perspective that dominated the porfirian cultural and political world. The Ateneo members developed humanistic and idealistic conceptions, countering scientist and utilitarian approaches characteristic of Auguste Comte’s positivism, which offered the base for the rule of the Porfírian political


Many of the Ateneo members became prominent professors in the National University, where they propagated their most important humanistic ideals: intellectual expansion, spiritual values, cosmopolitan openness, while at the same time a profound appreciation for the national culture. Others, like Vasconcelos, had direct political participation in the cultural reconstruction of the country after the revolution (he became the first secretary of the newly created Secretariat of Public Education [SEP], between 1921 and 1924). The Ateneo de la Juventud is the 20th-century most important antecedent for the integration of intellectual groups composed of highly educated middle class representatives impacting directly on important aspects of the Mexican society.

Later on, in 1916, the group of the Siete Sabios, (the “Seven Wise Men”) was formed under the tutelage of prominent members of El Ateneo like Pedro Heríquez Ureña and Antonio Caso, who were direct mentors of the group. This group was also known as the Society for Concerts and Conferences. The group’s members aimed at promoting culture among university students. Key figures representative of the impact of highly educated sectors of the middle class on the Mexican political life belonged to the Seven Wise Men: Vicente Lombardo Toledano, Manuel Gómez Morín, Teófilo Olea y Leyva, Alberto Vásquez del Mercado among others. Olea y Leyva and Vásquez del Mercado became prominent ministers of the Mexican Supreme Court later. Links of friendship and mutual respect were preserved in spite of future political discrepancies among some of this group’s members. For example, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, who later became a prominent labor leader and left-wing politician, always kept a relation of cordiality with

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Manuel Gómez Morín, the founding father of the National Action Party (PAN), no matter their profound political differences.\textsuperscript{88}

Reacting to the philosophical romanticism of the Ateneo members, the Contemporáneos group was consolidated with the appearance of the first number of the Contemporáneos magazine in 1928. Figures like Salvador Novo, Jaime Torres Bodet, Xavier Villaurrutia, José Gorostiza, Bernardo Ortiz de Montellano and Carlos Pellicer, among others, participated in this magazine. The most important goal of this group was to stimulate universal and cosmopolitan ideas in the Mexican society.\textsuperscript{89} The group aimed at finding a middle ground between science and philosophy.

Between 1947 and 1948, the Hiperión appeared as another group of intellectuals. They sought to elevate Mexican reality to a range of universality from an existentialist point of view.\textsuperscript{90} Personages like Leopoldo Zea, Luis Villoro, Fausto Vega and Ricardo Guerra formed the group. Pablo González Casanova, who later became one of the key figures behind the politicization of UNAM's students, was close to the group, even though he was not a part of it. This group aimed to creating a philosophical nationalism that countered the philosophical europeanism still dominant by that time. Revaluing Mexican culture facing the challenges of modernity was paramount for the members of this group of intellectuals.

\textsuperscript{88} An article paying homage to Vicente Lombardo Toledano after his passing away says, “De muy distinto signo fue la presencia allí del licenciado Manuel Gómez Morín, fundador de Acción Nacional, a quien por encima de profundas divergencias ligó siempre una gran amistad personal con Lombardo desde los días en que ambos, como estudiantes, constituían aquel grupo llamado de ‘Los Siete Sabios’, con otros destacados intelectuales.” “Homenaje a Lombardo y Andrés Magallón”, in \textit{La Nación}, December 1, 1968, p. 26 & Marcela Lombardo Toledano, recorded interview, min. 60.

\textsuperscript{89} See Suárez, 125.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 127.
Members of the Ateneo, the Siete Sabios, the Contemporáneos and Hiperión directed their efforts to create currents of thought with an impact on the general population. However, this aim was not achieved since the most important beneficiaries of these groups’ cultural contributions happened to be among the most educated members of the middle class. Indeed, the educated middle class usually learned from the cultural products generated by these intellectuals and profited from them. Like the market for consumer products, elevated cultural ideas were monopolized by those among the population with the necessary consumption power: the middle class. Outstanding members of the middle class generated those ideas, and also middle class representatives became the most important recipients of them. The popular groups were still too marginalized from higher educational levels that their approach to these intellectuals’ ideas was generally limited to some superficial notions taught in the elementary or secondary studies (which most of the population was actually unable to reach).

**Creating the Educational Paradigm**

One of the main legacies from Porfirio Díaz’s regime in México was a European-oriented culture, wherein national history rooted in prehispanic and colonial times was set aside, and even considered one of the main obstacles to the country’s development. Modernity, as envisioned by the cultural and political porfirista elites, the “scientists”, required the importation of major influences not only from foreign capitals, but also from “modern” ideas generated in Europe. In general terms, there was little expectation that Mexican history would offer anything to modernization.
After Díaz was overthrown, the 1910 revolution would mark a fundamental transformation in the country’s history not only in the political and economic spheres but also in the educational and cultural realms. With Carranza occupying the presidential chair from the middle of the 1910s onward, the Constitution of 1917 was enacted. The constitutional congress met in Querétaro and established the fundamental civic guarantees for the Mexican citizenship. The document incorporated articles designed to protect worker’s rights, to offer social development guarantees in terms of health and education, and to develop a national identity based on new labor and educational values, putting before anything else the national interest. Concerning education, the Constitution demanded the promotion and financing of public education, scientific and technological research, and national cultural development around historic values and principles rooted in Mexico’s history, as primordial responsibilities of the post-revolutionary state.

After the country got through the violent turmoil of the 1910s, the new 1920s-political and -cultural discourse of the Revolution sought to promote nationalist values reassessing the importance of the Mexican historical legacy. The new state aimed to reach every point of the country with educational programs, targeting not only the upper and educated social classes. The new political and cultural discourse articulated in the governmental spheres also took elements from the Marxist ideology and its analysis of the classes struggle. Nonetheless, there was a deep transformation of the political ideology in terms of presenting the whole Mexican nation as a proletarian one facing the capitalist imperialism, represented by the United States and other foreign influences. The revolutionary state institutionalized such discourse and assumed the role of the new

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political and cultural order’s guardian, opposed to reactionary interests coming from the international powers.

The new political trends seeking to consolidate the revolutionary process from the 1920s up to the 1930s found in the educational and cultural fields important ways to promote and legitimate the new political and economic discourse to build a new national identity. In doing so, previous cultural and educational patterns supporting Díaz’s Europeanism were transformed into a nationalist discourse.

During the post-revolutionary period, intellectuals and artists coming from the ebullient Mexican middle-classes generated a cultural movement parallel to the political and economic transformation the country was experiencing. This cultural movement became a fundamental factor in leading the population to identify with the ideological discourse of the revolutionary groups. The new cultural discourse revalued formerly forgotten aspects such as the pre-hispanic legacy, as well as traditions and popular practices from across the country.

The educational system played a fundamental role in promoting the new political and cultural discourse, since the access of teachers and educators to the most remote populations and communities became them a “joining element between the revolutionary bourgeoisie and the peasants, and for this they were in the closest contact with the popular masses”.\(^{92}\) Álvaro Obregón’s and Plutarco Elías Calles’ governments found basic support for political legitimacy in this educational system operated by intellectuals such as José Vasconcelos. While Secretary of Public Education during Obregón’s

\(^{92}\) Ibíd., 72.
administration, Vasconcelos started an unprecedented consolidation of what later became the Mexican Educational System.

José Vasconcelos, who had been an active member of the intellectual and progressive group the “Ateneo de la Juventud” during Díaz’ times, implemented educational and cultural programs seeking to achieve a cultural revolution supported by the state. In accomplishing this mission, he promoted the centralization of the educational tasks in the federal government. This was contrary to what Carranza had implemented as he radically decentralized the educational activities by making the educational area of his government a mere Department.

Since the educational system was so important for the post-revolutionary state, the state reformed the Constitution to give the federation jurisdiction over schools throughout the country in 1921. In doing so, the state changed what in 1917 had been enacted in the 3rd constitutional article offering more independence for schools. “This federalization, which in reality was a centralization, allowed the federal government to take charge of the country general education, through the Secretariat of Public Education, created that very year”.93

Vasconcelos implemented the National Campaign to Fight the Illiteracy. The campaign’s goal was to offer literacy opportunities to 6,973,855 illiterates existent throughout the country.94 This campaign was implemented by using both volunteers and a number of teachers paid by the state. The quantitative results of the campaign were

94 See Loyo, 126.
limited since there were few teachers and students. Still, it represented a relevant effort to make the society aware of the huge problem that illiteracy represented for the country.

Other relevant implementations of Vasconcelos as the secretary of education were the cultural missions and the rural school, both oriented to offer major educational opportunities to the popular masses of peasants and workers. Under the concept of the cultural missions, the educational missionaries took “books and the practices of hygiene to populations in distant areas of South and Central Mexico. They would live in the town’s houses and would use the poor instruments at their hand to teach how to read and write, to boil the water, and they tried to inculcate such simple habits as washing hands, making latrines, cleaning the stables and workshops and fabricating soap”.

Rural education had the objective of taking to peasant and indigenous communities the knowledge of how to read and write, and very practical elements concerning rural tasks. Still, central mission of the teachers was to be a political link between the state and the rural masses, transmitting the state’s ideological construction.

As the head of the Secretariat of Public Education, Vasconcelos promoted education as the best way to get legitimacy for the state among Mexicans. In so doing, Vasconcelos even challenged the elitist National Preparatory School separating secondary studies from the Preparatory school, and making these a part of the state-managed public education system. Vasconcelos aimed at making secondary studies available to the whole population, though the reality would be far from such ideal. Ultimately, the post-revolutionary state found in education, “a principle in which everybody would agree,

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since it did not constitute a menace for the existing property relations and contributed indeed to the country’s development.”

The regime of Plutarco Elías Calles got meaningful advantages from the role of teachers not only in the cities but also in the rural communities from 1924 to 1928. By that time teachers had become one of the most revolutionary social sectors and highly influential in the mobilization of peasant masses. This influence of teachers in the popular spheres was an important motivation for Calles to maintaining links to the Mexican Communist Party (PCM) to which most teachers were affiliated. Nonetheless, beginning his presidential term, Calles cancelled the literacy campaign and reduced the educational budget since the economic situation of the country started to suffer from the international economic instability that led to the drop of primary products’ prices.

Calles emphasized the relevance of linking education to the productive needs of the country, promoting an education linked to practical agrarian issues. In doing this, there had been important influence from the Office of Education of the United States whose recommendations were followed by Calles as he sought to improve the relationship between Mexico and that country. He also emphasized the laicization of education as a way to strengthen the image of the state among the rural population relative to modernization and progress.

When Emilio Portes Gil, Pascual Ortiz Rubio, and Abelardo Rodrígues occupied successively the presidential chair in the period known as the “Maximato”, educational policies continued the trends inaugurated by Calles, with even deeper emphasis on the

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96 Ibid., 117.
97 Loyo, 221.
relations between education and practical needs. In this period, the state began its major involvement in the national economy seeking to stimulate the industrialization of the country, while education was seen as a useful tool to legitimize the revolutionary discourse of the political elite. The anticlericalism of the state continued as an integral part of the educational discourse, despite violent opposition in rural and conservative regions, where the population hardly accepted the anticlerical approach from the state. Nonetheless, the state continued its policies to consolidate its national presence seeking to undermine the presence of priests and the church in education.

The teachers organized through different unions and political groups across the country. They constituted a fundamental political actor, whose most radical sectors identified with the Mexican Communist Party, and challenged the state’s conservative and limited agrarian reform implemented in the period. Mary Kay Vaughan presents with clarity this key role of the teachers,

the teachers had to organize their communities –integrated by workers and peasants, family heads, mothers, the youth and children- to replace the vertical systems of power… In the communities, the teachers formed or consolidated the peasant and mining unions, joining them together in federations of both workers and peasants. They demanded lands through the ejidal endowment… they asked access to water and the application of labor laws and the election of municipal functionaries belonging to their own groups.98

The first integration of the National Revolutionary Party (PNR) by Calles in 1928 responded to the interest of the post-revolutionary political elites to create a hegemonic party able to guarantee both political stability and the continuity of the ruling group in the power. Nonetheless, the party lacked political representation of the popular bases. It

98 Vaughan, 104.
worked as sort of bureaucratic structure seeking to protect the political interests of the enclosed revolutionary elite.

By 1934, in Lázaro Cárdenas’ presidential term the party began to broaden its social base by incorporating popular groups like peasants and workers into its political structure. Cárdenas saw the necessity of obtaining support from both peasants and urban workers to improve the capacity of the party to prolong its power. If the party had continued as a mere alliance of the political elites and the bureaucracy, the political risk would have been great. In fact, the capacity of Cárdenas to reform the party strengthened his political power. His ability to integrate the PNR as a corporatist party, in which society’s diversity of sectors found opportunities for political participation as they followed the trends established by the president, gave Cárdenas the possibility of mobilizing broad popular support when political crises arose. The political process during the oil expropriation crisis in 1938 revealed the capacity of the Mexican state consolidated by Cárdenas to get support and legitimacy from popular forces. Whereas Calles was able to consolidate the post-revolutionary political power around his own figure from 1928 to 1934, Cárdenas remade that political consolidation around the presidential office, no matter what other important figures might exist in the political scenario. His capacity to do so depended on incorporating into the party representations of different social sectors. The origins of the Mexican “presidentialism”, then, can be found in these implementations by Cárdenas. They granted the president broader political and economic margin of action in leading the country despite divisions provoked by other top state officials or governors. This new capacity of the president to rely on the
corporatist structure of the party in power became a key factor in developing the economic and educational policies implemented by the state later.

Cárdenas gained major support from peasants by implementing an unprecedented agrarian reform. In fact, this distribution surpassed that done by all previous revolutionary governments combined. While governments from Venustiano Carranza’s to Abelardo Rodríguez’ granted around 9 million of hectares to the peasants, Cárdenas granted 20 million of hectares through his 6 years of rule. Even so, qualifying Cárdenas as an agrarian ruler would be imprecise. His political vision was much broader and included skillful ways to deal with other social sectors such as the urban workers and the industrial entrepreneurs.

On education, Cárdenas promoted a “socialist” education able to issue a national and popular culture dominated by collective values rather than by individual ones. Cárdenas expressed his interest that workers and peasants were the main beneficiaries of educational improvements guided by the Mexican state. The aim was to link popular sectors by means of the school with new opportunities of social mobilization and political participation in the context of the party corporations. “Socialist” education would be the banner of progress and anticlericalism, necessary to consolidate the national spirit. Mexican history was presented, “as a social fight of the exploited classes demanding their rights, justice and modernity”.

On the other hand, the Church, was presented as “the enemy. The Church was the protector of the rich and perpetuator of backwardness, contrary to the fight of social classes”. “Socialist” education was associated with the

99 Vaughan, 167.
100 Ibid.
peasant mobilization to implement the agrarian re-distribution, since the teachers offered both their academic knowledge and their stimulus to peasants to promote social change. In consequence, the landed elites and local caciques opposed this education, and they counted with the Church’s support. They often tried to expel the teachers or even eliminate them. In the most conservative towns, the Church succeeded in agitating the population so that it attacked the teachers responsible for implementing Cárdenas’ educational policies in the community.

Cárdenas was convinced of the importance of alliances with the entrepreneurial sector, but he also promoted a radical educational revolution related to his interest of taking progress and agrarian reform to the rural communities. In doing so, he claimed political control and sought cultural hegemony. While Cárdenas was shaking hands with the main industrialists and keeping good relations with the United States, he also supported the autonomy of other Latin American countries and their quest to favor the popular sectors, as his support for the Sandinista movement, the Spanish republic, and the Cuban revolution later on, demonstrated. These factors altogether express a very complex Cárdenas, able to combine his socialist and popular goals with the pragmatic needs of the Mexican state, seeking to consolidate a capitalist and industrial economy in the context of growing power and influence of both conservative domestic groups and of the United States in the international sphere.

The Mexican state alliance with the emergent industrial sector has to be observed in the light of a number of social policies implemented by the pos-revolutionary governments. One of them, which is highly important, concerns with education. Education was used by the pos-revolutionary governments beginning with Obregón’s as a
source of political and ideological legitimacy and important means to promoting individual and social improvements. Education, then, is an important element of analysis to understand the real impact of post-revolutionary policies on the Mexican society.

Crucial questions concerning education during the first two decades after the 1910 revolution are, what was the role of the “socialist” education promoted by Obregón and Calles, and later on by Cárdenas? How did the post-revolutionary governments dare to challenge the power of the Church in a dominantly Catholic country by implementing anti-religious measures, such as eliminating the traditional influence of the Church upon education? Trying to come up with possible answers, we may argue that at its very beginnings one important point of the post-revolutionary project had to do with turning Mexico from a rural country into a much more urban an industrialized nation. Indeed, an important turning point concerning this process occurred during the 1930s and 1940s when first the international depression and later on the World War II led to a sharp reduction of the world consumption of primary products. By then, Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) policies started to be implemented in consequence. During the 1920s, under Obregón’s presidential administration, the Mexican state was still incipient in its urbanization and industrialization process; nonetheless, under Calles leadership, a process of focusing on the cities, the urban worker, and growing industrial interests was initiated. This process clearly restricted state support for the rural communities. As Luis Medina says, “Calles’ agrarian vision rather than being permeated by the idea of traditional agrarian communities in the context of a bucolic Mexico, was mostly concerned with the concept of small landlords, who were owners of the land, the
technical means and the necessary know-how to make it highly productive”. Calles was trusted that by having the support of the main revolutionary “caudillos” integrated around the PNR, further governments would be able to consolidate their political power among the different Mexican localities in spite of their regional interests. Although different agrarian governors often opposed to the central state interests, the Mexican state began a process of political power consolidation under Calles.

Concerning the Church, the most conservative and religious sectors of the Mexican society have traditionally existed in the countryside. Popular religiosity, however, did not prevent government attacks against the Church and the implementation of socialist educational measures. Meanwhile, on the other hand, the post-revolutionary state realized the importance of gaining support from the middle and upper classes, mainly in the cities. Then, the Mexican state’s identity was shaped by a paradoxical and complex combination between a socialist discourse ideologically oriented, and a capitalist industrial and urban orientation in practical terms. Indeed, during Miguel Alemán administration in the second half of the 1940s the Mexican state turned totally into the industrial and urban sectors. However, Calles’ early alliances with industrial and urban workers demonstrated began impelling that trend. Actually, such trend was one of the most important roots of the post-revolutionary consolidation. This was a process of leaving the plow to take the machine. In doing so, the first step was to stimulate small land properties fitting the necessities of the capitalist development of the country better.

This paradox was highlighted by the educational trends under the pos-revolutionary state led by Lázaro Cárdenas: “socialism” existed in the ideological discourse, whereas

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the practice was mostly related to a capitalist development style in the context of Keynesian world trends, wherein a state led economy was the economic model to follow. This is the root of the contradiction found by Daniel Morales in his *The State, Corporatist Politics and Educational Policy Making in Mexico*, concerning the educational policies and the real practices of the Mexican state.\(^{102}\) Whereas the pos-revolutionary governments implemented educational policies shaped by a socialist and popular orientation, the main benefits of such policies were actually received by the middle and upper sectors of the Mexican social structure. As we will see below, patterns of income distribution during the Import Substitution Industrialization years (1940-1976) were incompatible with real possibilities for the poorest social groups to better their educational attainments.

By incorporating peasants and labor under the corporatist organization of the PRM, Cárdenas was able to create a formidable machinery of political control highly favorable to capitalist interests. This capacity of control became a key factor to later implement the Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) policies, which main antecedent may be already found under Cárdenas’ administration. As Luis Medina says, “Ultimately, the social vindications –agrarian distribution and labor rights- which Cárdenas took into expressions never seen before, did not contradict with the capitalism in México. On the contrary, they stimulated it as nothing before”.\(^{103}\)

The social policies implemented by post-revolutionary governments emphasized delivering educational opportunities to the Mexican society. Education, in fact, became

\(^{102}\) Morales, XI-XXII.

\(^{103}\) Medina, 117.
an ideological tool and important source of Revolutionary legitimacy for the Mexican state. Beginning with the Obregón administration, the teacher became an important means to promote state policies and ideology even in the most isolated regions of the country. With Cárdenas, the teacher as soldier of the socialist education also became guarantor and supervisor of the agrarian reform process. The educational sector was an important element of political control in the corporatist structure of the PRM, implemented by Cárdenas. The different teachers’ organizations were directly incorporated under the umbrella of the labor sector in the PRM. Nonetheless, in the context of the contradictory policies of the Mexican state, the teachers sector would eventually also prove to be one of the most radical labor sectors, hard to control in spite of the hierarchical corporatist structure of the party. From 1954 to 1958, the political rallies led by the SNTE protesting against the devaluation and economic policies implemented under the Ruíz Cortines administration, were be highly representative of this. The SNTE, in fact, accumulated so much power that it ultimately came to represent an important obstacle for many proposals of educational modernization responding to the new interests of the pro-capitalist and industrialist state. Nonetheless, the state overcame this obstacle by granting prominent political positions and executive administrative roles in the government to many important educational leaders.

From 1940 on, the Mexican state was primarily concerned with keeping solid ties with both the domestic capitalist sector and the U.S. The main goal of the state-led economy was to promote domestic entrepreneurs, favoring domestic capital accumulation. In this context, education had to respond to the new necessities arising from the most powerful economic groups in the nation. Education promoted by the state
would have to give an answer to new demands for qualified labor arising from the industrial and entrepreneurial sector.

From Ávila Camacho on, the Mexican economic context was permeated by a broad implementation of capitalist promotion policies. As industrial entrepreneurs received broad support from the state in terms of market protection and even subsidies, urban workers and urban middle classes tended to expand. Meanwhile, the Mexican countryside was gradually left behind in terms of state financial support and investment. At the beginning, the state led economy conceived of an economic development in which the rural sector would provide the primary materials for the nascent industry. This would mean an equilibrate growth of both the rural and industrial sectors. Nonetheless, the real fact was that the state’s economic model gave an asymmetric advantage to industrial and urban developments. Concerning education, the main benefits of public education would tend to be enjoyed by the middle and upper sectors able to take advantage of educational opportunities in the cities, whereas the poorest sectors, mainly in the rural areas, achieved less educationally because of scarce financial resources preventing their children from remaining in school.

In 1942, Manuel Ávila Camacho enacted the Organic Law of Education and reformed the 3rd constitutional article, concerning education. In doing so, Ávila Camacho aimed to strengthen the participation of private investment in education and finally put behind the socialist education model implemented by his predecessor. The socialist educational vision was to be replaced by an education shaped by the concepts of nationalism, social unity, love for the country, international solidarity, democracy, justice and peace. This transformation responded to those demands coming from conservative
sectors in the Mexican society, middle- and upper- class based. Since Cárdenas’ times, these sectors pressured the government to soften its interventionist posture. Ávila Camacho sought to broaden the alliance between the state and the entrepreneurial sectors, while strengthening benefits for the middle classes.

The Organic Law enacted by Ávila Camacho put aside socialist education’s objectives of transforming the society and promoting the gradual collectivization of the means of production. Instead, the new goals were to promote the integral cultural development of the students in the frame of social coexistence, democratic conviction, fraternity and the consolidation of national unity. Additionally, the state opened the educational sphere to private capitals, trying to offer national and international entrepreneurs a new political image.

By these means, Ávila Camacho was able to respond to demands arising from the conservative sectors of the PRM, from the National Action Party (PAN), as well as from Mexican clergy and its civil arm, the National Association of Family Parents. This reform distanced the state from any socialist orientation of the Mexican revolution. In doing so, the state sought a political system closer to both the western democratic tradition and the western capitalist development.

Finally, Ávila Camacho unified the variety of teacher’s unions operating until then by creating in 1943 the National Union of Education Workers (SNTE), which allowed the state to increase its control over the teachers by dealing directly with the hierarchical representatives instead of with the membership. In fact, the leaders forming the National Executive Committee of the SNTE accumulated so much power that many base groups in the union started to oppose them. As we mentioned above, in 1958, under Ruiz Cortines
administration, the teacher’s bases led by Othón Salazar organized a huge demonstration that was brutally repressed. Later on, in 1960, teachers recently graduated from the National School of Teachers opposed the authorities because of the policy sending them to perform their social service in the countryside. Nonetheless, the authorities were able to solve the problem by dealing through the hierarchical structure of the SNTE. Ultimately, the SNTE leaders were so powerful, that their decisions tended to dominate in spite of the opposition in the bases.

President Miguel Alemán’s economic policies from 1947 to 1952 stressed industrialization and urbanization as never before. At this time, the necessity of both industry and government for professionals able to satisfy either managerial positions in enterprises or directive functions in the political bureaucracy found its maximum expression. The reformed party in power, now called Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), recruited new members among the university middle class to be part of the political group and to occupy relevant federal and state governmental positions. Meanwhile, the construction of the University City in Southern Mexico City reflected the interest of the state in stimulating the growth of higher education, according to industrial and political needs.

The PRI aimed to increase its relation with the entrepreneurial sector, mainly under the leadership of Miguel Alemán. Alemán and his political group of professionals and technocrats promoted the discourse that the revolutionary process had already been completed. The conception of the dominant party as an institutional one was related to an ideological image of completeness in which aspects such as the ejido, the right to form unions, the right to collective labor contracts, the social security policies, the property of
the nation of land and subsoil, the public education, and political and economic freedom, offered a broad scenario of supposedly institutionalized revolutionary achievements. Additionally, this institutionalization process also responded to the interest of the alemanista group in increasing the promotion of industry and capital by creating an image of rapid social gains already attained. This would justify the need for less revolutionary dynamics and more political conservatism.

The economic vision of the new political elites promoting Stabilizing Growth allied with industry and capital stressed the role of the city and industry, while real benefits for the poorer social sectors in the countryside declined. Alemán and his group, in fact, incorporated a new political style in the hegemonic party marked by the inclusion of civilian presidents and a process of gradual separation between the state and the popular sectors. In avoiding political instability arising from these sectors the corporatist control of workers and peasants by the party hierarchical structure was a key factor. The major influence in undertaking the party’s decisions, thus, would come from the most prominent union leaders, and not from the corporatist bases of the popular sectors. In this context, the state sought a strong alliance between entrepreneurs and labor leaders, but with the upper-hand for employers. The corporatist structure of the party offered clear opportunity to broaden benefits for industrialists and entrepreneurs, while the state was able to control and avoid radicalization coming from labor and peasants, using the political mediation of union leaders favorable to the party elites’ policies. Meanwhile, Alemán decreed the extension of protection rights against expropriation favoring the owners of land susceptible of distribution as a part of the agrarian reform in the countryside. This reflected the declining interest of the government in continuing the
agrarian trends promoted by Cárdenas. Ultimately, the cities would be considered much more important than the countryside.

Daniel Morales says that during the alemanista period, “education began to reflect the trends of the model of economic and political development… Education for the rural masses became closer in its content to that delivered in large urban centers; a literacy campaign became a major concern for the government seeking to modernize large sectors of the rural population; and the overall expenditures in education grew…” However, such trend meaningfully strengthened the budget for higher education, wherein the Mexican political elites focused their expectations. The state lost sight of the important asymmetric growth between the cities and the countryside, favoring the former with better public spending and investment.

This trend of asymmetric budgetary growth between the rural areas and the industrialized ones was evident by 1955, with Adolfo Ruíz Cortines in the presidency (see Fig. 2). As we can appreciate in the figure below, while the most advanced areas showed total investment per capita above the national average, 1.55 dollars, the less developed and most rural areas had levels well below that average. On the other hand, whereas the most advanced areas, except Tamaulipas, were able to get a major part of their resources from their domestic economic growth, the less advanced areas mostly depended from federal resources (Fig. 2)

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104 Morales, 19.
This process of asymmetric economic and educational growth set the scenario for further socioeconomic problems in the country. These problems would be aggravated by subsequent crises provoked by state’s inflationary policies laying in the capacity of financing fiscal deficits with external debt. Actually, despite the important economic achievements of the Stabilizing Development during Ruíz Cortines’ and López Mateos’ presidential administrations, their regimes were not able to increase the fiscal base to support the public budget. The economic policies of the state in favor of private investment included important tax exemptions and reductions for industries and enterprises. The main source of financing fiscal deficits was through external debt backed by strong levels of economic growth achieved during this period. Average rates of growth of 6% of GDP per year demonstrated what many authors call the “Mexican economic miracle”. Nonetheless, the main destination of the public expenditures is questionable. Although there was important state investment of in the social field, such as in education and health, many expenses were in subsidies and support to industries operating in the
red. Many of them even became part of the federal administration in the form of “paraestatales”, as enterprises directly administered by the federal government. On the other hand, as Morales says, “the capital intensive production, requiring the import of advanced technology, contributed to a rapid increase of the national external debt and heavily affected the balance of trade as well as the unemployment situation, bringing the development process into a sharp decline”. This decline broadly manifested in the last years of president Echeverría’s administration and from 1982 up to recent years.

From 1950 to 1960, as we can appreciate in figure 3, the average national percentage of estimated rural primary school-age population enrolled grew from 35.7% to 52.5%. Nonetheless, whereas the behavior of this indicator increased well beyond the national average in the most advanced states, the less advanced and more rural ones presented levels below the national average. The same was true concerning the percentage of enrollment in sixth grade, with the exception of Oaxaca.

Fig. 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entity</th>
<th>Percentage of estimated rural primary school-age population enrolled</th>
<th>Percentage of estimated rural primary school-age population enrolled</th>
<th>Percentage of enrollment concentrated in first grade</th>
<th>Percentage of enrollment in sixth grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Republic</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baja California</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>76.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuevo León</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamaulipas</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Advanced:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zacatecas</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidalgo</td>
<td>78.8</td>
<td>77.6</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>49.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guerrero</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>74.3</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oaxaca</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiapas</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>33.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Nash, 1965: 49

105 Ibid., 22.
The Adolfo López Mateos’ government (1958-1964) attempted to start an educational structural reform to permit the state to deliver better educational services to workers and peasants. In 1959, his administration created the National Commission for the Free Schoolbook (CONALITEG), responsible for delivering free schoolbooks to all the children in the country studying primary education. Another important implementation was the design of the National Plan for the Improvement and Expansion of Primary Education, better known as the Eleven Years Plan, in 1959. This plan sought to establish the bases for the most desirable educational development until 1970 to improve the educational level of the country, fighting the main educational problems such as illiteracy and school attrition. By implementing this plan, the state sought to predict future demand of primary education until 1970 and anticipate the needs for teachers, schools and financial resources.

Throughout the plan’s period the state had the capacity to support demands higher than those originally predicted by introducing double sessions in the schools and building new schools. Moreover, new teachers were trained and the free schoolbooks were key in contributing to the implementation of the plan. Nonetheless, results in terms of quality were very limited as long as the state was unable to design educational policies able to involve the whole economic and political sectors of the Mexican society. Instead, the Secretariat of Public Education assumed total responsibility for the process, revealing the huge educational centralization existent in the country. On the other hand, although educational coverage grew, the educational project of equality and quality seemed to be incompatible with the economic trends of the country, which primarily benefited middle- and upper-classes living in the country’s most urbanized areas.
By the 1960s, the literacy level and the mean educational attainment in the country deeply reflected the growing disparities between the most developed areas and the less ones. Whereas the most advanced areas presented literacy levels at least 10% above the national average, the less developed presented levels below 20% or more with the exception of Tlaxcala and Zacatecas. Concerning the mean educational attainment the disparities were more dramatic, since most of the less developed areas did not present even 2 years of average educational attainment (Fig. 4).

As we can appreciate in Figure 5, those states that showed the lowest levels of financial support and educational attainment were precisely those in which the major levels of population remained as rural labor force between 1940 and 1960. Meanwhile the
levels of rural labor force tended to decrease in the most advanced states because of the growing process of industrialization and productive diversification during the ISI period in Mexico.

Fig. 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Labor Force in Agriculture</th>
<th>Entity</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1950</th>
<th>1960</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Republic</td>
<td></td>
<td>65.4</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>53.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal District</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baja California Norte</td>
<td></td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonora</td>
<td></td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>52.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chihuahua</td>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coahuila</td>
<td></td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>44.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuevo León</td>
<td></td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamaulipas</td>
<td></td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>49.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Advanced</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zacatecas</td>
<td></td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>78.8</td>
<td>79.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidalgo</td>
<td></td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>70.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tlaxcala</td>
<td></td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>67.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guerrero</td>
<td></td>
<td>87.4</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>80.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oaxaca</td>
<td></td>
<td>84.7</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>81.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiapas</td>
<td></td>
<td>85.8</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>79.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Nash, 1965: 49

During the Gustavo Díaz Ordaz’ presidential term, disparities became more evident than ever. In fact, the very middle class began to resent the consequences of the Stabilizing Development policies. In the context of inflationary problems and fiscal deficits, Díaz Ordaz tried to guarantee the continuity of the Stabilizing Development project by supporting private capital with low taxes and good opportunities of financing, while reducing public expenditures in social programs, such as education and health, to avoid fiscal deficits. This situation distressed the middle classes. The new left with notable roots behind university walls found in this its most relevant motivation for manifesting its critical positions and opposition to the state.
The Mexican state’s focus on continuing Stabilizing Development policies permitted neither the hegemonic party nor the president to understand the importance of gaining the support of the middle classes. The harsh repression of the student movement in 1968 demonstrated that blindness. Ultimately, the 1968 political turmoil was the consequence of restrictive monetary policies against education, one of the national values, while the hegemonic party could not reform to get broader political control over the middle classes. The political price paid because of Díaz Ordaz’ and the PRI’s mistakes was so high that the party could not overcome the ensuing national resentment. One lesson to further presidents was that turning against one of the national values, education, would bring very high political costs in terms of legitimacy and popular support from the middle classes.

Ultimately, the Stabilizing Development’s policies mainly benefited some industrial and entrepreneurial groups. The middle classes also got important benefits principally from the educational support from the state. Nonetheless, as this educational support declined during Díaz Ordaz’ regime, sharp social discontent arose. Concerning the poorer classes mainly living in the countryside, the trend was clear, as Ifigenia Martínez’ and Pablo González Casanova’s studies already proved during the 1960s. By that time, the 49% of income distribution tended to concentrate in the upper levels of the society, whereas the lower sectors only got less than 3% of income.\(^{106}\)

Trying to offer a general synthesis of different educational stages during the post-revolutionary Mexico, we may quote Pablo Latapí, who addresses five main projects: 1) the Vasconcelos’ project, complemented by the experiences of rural education from the

\(^{106}\) Medina, 170.
Revolution (1921); 2) the socialist project mainly implemented during Cárdenas’ presidential term. This project still presented some partial manifestation from 1940 to 1946 under Ávila Camacho’s term (1934-1946); 3) the technological project, oriented by the industrialization trends in the country, with antecedents since Calles (1928); 4) the National Unity School in which the socialist orientations of the cardenista project tended to be replaced by the ideology of national unity and abstract values (1943-1948); and 5) the modernizing project, which dominated from the 1970s onward.\textsuperscript{107} Beginning in 1970 the dominant educational trends became permeated by the idea of educational modernization, implemented as the means the PRI-led state used to respond to growing contradictions between the revolutionary ideological discourse and the pragmatic implementations of the state, in the context of continuous economic and educational crises with direct impact on the Mexican middle class.

**Education as the Essential Tool for Social Development**

By presenting education as the essential tool for social development, the post-revolutionary state neglected some of the most profound socioeconomic problems in Mexico. Between 1940 and 1970 the state increased its support for higher education, from which mainly the urban middle class youth did profit. A central part of political rhetoric was that everybody should have access to every educational level. State-subsidized higher public education aimed to provide all sectors of the Mexican society with that possibility. However, profound socioeconomic problems in the country created situations in which working-class and peasant families were unable to keep their children

\textsuperscript{107} Pablo Latapí, *Un siglo de educación en México*, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 22.
in school over time, since their children were expected to leave to join the workforce and contribute to family income. Thus, it was mainly the sons and daughters of middle class families who were able to take advantage of higher educational opportunities.108

Responding to middle class demands for social mobility became one of the most crucial goals of the post-revolutionary state, aiming at creating a strong middle-class-base of political support. After the revolution of 1910 middle-class leaders such as Álvaro Obregón and Plutarco Elías Calles were the ultimate victors from the process. The National Revolutionary Party (PNR), created by Calles in 1929, was mostly a political apparatus composed of the middle class bureaucracy and revolutionary group that held the power in Mexico City. In the 1930s, the incorporation of the peasant and working class sectors to the party, which was Lázaro Cárdenas’s work, did not end the importance of middle class dominance within the party. The party leaders and most prominent representatives were still part of the bureaucratic middle class typical of the PNR times.109 In 1943, the creation of the National Confederation of Popular Organizations (CNOP) confirmed the fundamental role that the middle classes would continue playing in the party.

For the state, the middle classes became key guarantor of political stability since they seemed to validate its rhetoric of progress, stability, unity, institutionalization of the

108 Already in the 1960s, the literacy level and mean educational attainment in the country reflected the growing disparities between the most developed areas concentrating the major amount of middle class people, and less advantaged regions. Whereas the most advanced areas (Federal District, Baja California Norte, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León y Tamaulipas) presented literacy levels at least 10% above the national average (62.2%), the less developed (Guerrero, Oaxaca, Chiapas) presented levels of 20% or more below that average. Concerning the mean educational attainment the disparities were even more dramatic, since most of the less developed areas did not present even 2 years of average educational attainment, while the Federal District (the area with major concentration of middle classes) presented an average of 4.6 years. See Charles Nash Mayers, Education and National Development in Mexico, New Jersey, Princeton University, 1965, 49

109 Arnaldo Córdova, 234.
revolution and social improvement for everybody, in spite of the lack of radical reforms in favor of workers and peasants. The National Confederation of Popular Organizations (CNOP) was created as the means to incorporate middle class groups into the direct control of the official party. Theoretically the CNOP would be an equal of the National Peasants Confederation (CNC) and the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM). Yet, the political balance soon favored the CNOP since Miguel Alemán, once he was the president, emphasized the creation of a new and strong bureaucratic class consisting of professionals and middle class representatives. In fact, Miguel Alemán himself, Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, Adolfo López Mateos, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz and Luis Echeverría Álvarez, presidents between 1946 and 1976, claimed to be members of the “middle classes” and were important CNOP members before occupying the presidential chair.\textsuperscript{110} Thus, CNOP middle class members became essential to the endurance of the official party’s political power, while keeping at bay workers’ and peasant’s demands for profound social reform. In 1947 Vicente Lombardo Toledano asserted, “La composición del gobierno, considerado en su conjunto no es más que la proyección de la correlación de las fuerzas que existen afuera. En términos marxistas, este gobierno es, no un gobierno del proletariado, sino un gobierno de la burguesía; pero no es el gobierno de la burguesía reaccionaria, es el gobierno de la pequeña burguesía y de la burguesía progresista del país…”\textsuperscript{111} This government of the petite bourgeoisie, as Toledano called it, filled new positions in the growing bureaucratic structure with educated urban employees extracted from the middle classes. In so doing, the official party offered an image of increasing

\textsuperscript{110} See David Schers, \textit{The Popular Sector of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional of Mexico}, Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv University, 1972, 23.

opportunities for employment and economic growth to the new contingents of middle class professionals, seeking to obtain their expertise and political loyalty.

The Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI) recruited new members among the university middle class to be part of the dominant political group and occupy prominent federal and state governmental positions. This was the response to both middle-class demands for social mobility and to the inherent risk of middle class contestation to the system. The construction of the University City in Southern Mexico City (1948-1954) reflected the state’s interest in stimulating the growth of higher education, according to industrial and political needs. Ultimately Miguel Alemán was the first civilian president who became such not only for his own political connections but also because of his educational background as a university graduate. His appointment as the candidate for the presidency symbolized the new winds blowing in the Mexican political scenario, in which the time of military and revolutionary political leaders was coming to an end.\textsuperscript{112} This new epoch opened the doors of political office to a flourishing bureaucracy prepared behind the walls of university classrooms, as if the revolution was institutionalized by putting its legacy into the hands of middle class educated representatives.\textsuperscript{113}

The post-revolutionary state’s educational project mirrored some of the most important contradictions of the economic model of development. While economic

\textsuperscript{112} In fact, since 1940 the military sector of the PRM disappeared by presidential decree. See Miguel Osorio Marbán, *El sector popular del PRI*, México: Coordinación Nacional de Estudios Históricos, Políticos y Sociales, PRI, 1994, 36 y 37.

\textsuperscript{113} Salvador Novo offered direct testimony of this as he refers to a travel in which he accompanied members of the high bureaucracy of Mexico City to Torreón. He says, “fui tranquilizándome al advertir que el nuevo tipo de los políticos, senadores y diputados ya no es el tremebundo de antaño, sino que consiste en hombres jóvenes, profesionistas cultos muy a tono con el gabinete, como López Mateos o José López Bermudez, o mi viejo amigo Antonio Taracena.” Salvador Novo, *La vida en México en el período presidencial de Miguel Alemán*, 252.
expansion mostly benefited the urban and industrialized areas of the country, education also offered its benefits to the most developed areas in economic terms. Then, the most socially advantaged population sectors were among those receiving the most important benefits from education, while the rural poor and indigenous population remained among the most marginalized groups in educational terms.\footnote{In this regard Daniel Morales says, “Although elementary education has reached all social sectors and all regions, it has had differential outcome that benefit particularly those social groups located in the intermediate and higher level of the social stratification scale, especially those living in urban areas in the more developed regions of the country.” Morales, 51.} Education has been the means to support the state’s rhetoric that social mobility is available for everybody. However, “education has… been instrumental in the process of socioeconomic modernization facilitating the reproduction of a capitalist model of unequal development at the local level”\footnote{See Morales, 5.} On the other hand, higher education was the educational level with the most support between 1960 and 1980, period in which its infrastructure more than tripled, while its coverage grew ten times.\footnote{While in 1964 there were 80 private and public universities throughout Mexico, attending 116,628 students, in 1982 there were 315 universities, offering educational services to 1.2 million students. The UNAM only attended around 500,000 students at the upper high school and university levels. See Morales, 67.} Mexico City’s middle class received some of the most important benefits of such an educational model.
CHAPTER IV

SHAPING THE MEXICAN DREAM: THE U.S. INFLUENCE

Between 1940 and 1970, the urban middle classes were exposed to a new cosmopolitanism influenced by U.S. consumption patterns and culture. While the post-revolutionary state actively sought to insert Mexico in the international arena by developing a new partnership with the United States, the middle classes linked their aspirations for modernity with higher consumption possibilities and access to some of the new U.S. products available in the market. Additionally, the U.S. Department of State’s Office of Inter-American Affairs led a cultural crusade aimed to counter fascist and communist influences in Latin America, particularly in Mexico. This agency also stimulated U.S. businesses to forge a new understanding between Mexico and the United States. This understanding was to be characterized by the appreciation and even the romanticizing of Mexican culture. Improving the presence of U.S. businesses and their profits in Mexico seemingly required major engagement of U.S. entrepreneurs with local cultural values. To achieve this, U.S. diplomats and business executives became literate in Mexican culture. Then, increasing U.S. economic influence on Mexico demanded a cultural approach that took advantage of Mexicans’ aims to industrialize and modernize. Meanwhile, middle-class Mexicans incorporated much of the U.S. material and economic influence as that strengthened their status and separated them from lower social groups. Still, the cultural aspects of U.S. influence faced the most important challenges.

The Mexican middle class constituted the most important target for both, the U.S. entrepreneurial and cultural crusades. The expanding middle classes concentrated some of the most important levels of commercial and cultural consumption capacity in Mexico. However, U.S. influence also faced its most profound challenges as sharp contradictions existed within the Mexican middle classes. On the one hand, Mexican economic nationalists opposed a broad openness of the Mexican economy to U.S. investors. Many of these economic nationalists were small and middle entrepreneurs that were part of the upper middle classes in the country. On the other hand, while the influence of the U.S. material culture was generally accepted, many other foreign cultural values faced rejection. Traditional values relative to the family, Catholic morality, the role of women at home, among others, were felt threatened by U.S. influence. In the context of increasing engagement with the United States, promoted by the Mexican state starting in 1940, diverse middle-class sectors contested U.S. cultural influence, no matter their political leanings or cultural background. Yet, at the time, the Mexican middle class was also forged under the fire of increasing transnational and transcultural interaction with the United States. The middle class incorporated new cultural traits expressed, among others, by growing consumerism, an escalating integration of women to the labor market, the incorporation of industrialized food to the Mexican diet, the increasing influence of U.S. mass media, and the day-to-day use of English-borrowed words.

The Bases of Economic Influence and Consumerism

As the Mexican state implemented a new political and economic model beginning in 1940, consumerism became increasingly important, reflecting the apparent stability that
the country was to live in the following years. The bourgeoning middle classes portrayed what could be called the “Mexican dream”, aiming to parallel the “American dream” of their northern neighbors. In the Mexican case, this dream implied an expanding purchasing power not only to supply the household with necessary goods, but also to bolster the status of being middle class. As a part of the dream, the middle class gave legitimacy to the state’s economic model of development that focused on increasing productivity in the urban and industrial areas at the expense of the countryside. The post-revolutionary regime’s promises of social mobility seemingly became a reality, as the middle class ranks swelled in unprecedented ways until the 1970s. In such a context, consumerism appeared to be coherent with middle class’ expectations for modernity and social reform.

Beginning in the 1940s, President Lázaro Cárdenas’ redistributionist economic policies were replaced by short-term profit-seeking policies that benefited not only the Mexican economic elites, but also important U.S. business groups. The Mexican state, led by Manuel Ávila Camacho first, and later by Miguel Alemán, shifted the economic policies of the country to a scheme that privileged productivity over economic redistribution. Such productivity scheme meant keeping wages and raw materials’ prices low. These policies secured quick and high profits for investors, while boosting unprecedented productive expansion. The Mexican state followed models developed in the United States that focused on increasing the Gross National Product (GNP) while

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118 Soledad Loaeza and Claudio Stern offer a calculation of this middle class expansion. According to them, while only about 7% of the population could be considered as part of the middle-class in 1920, in 1940 around 17% were middle-class, by 1960, 22% people were middle class, and in 1970 around 25% of the population could be considered as middle-class. See Loaeza and Stern, 24. Yet, according to James Wilkie, between 1940 and 1950 only, the middle class swelled from 12.5% to 25%, and in 1960 this social sector already represented 33.5% of the population. James Wilkie, *The Mexican Revolution: Federal Expenditure and Social Change since 1910*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1970, 203.
expanding industrial profits by means of reducing production costs.\textsuperscript{119} This meant that the maximum possible amounts of surplus were to be extracted from labor. It also implied that urban and industrial areas would grow in unprecedented way at the expense of rural regions, which provided cheap labor and raw materials necessary for urban and industrial growth. The urban middle classes received collateral benefits from the new model of economic development, such as more available jobs in the government, industry and in the services sector of Mexico City and other important cities.\textsuperscript{120} Then, the Mexican middle-class found unprecedented opportunities for growth. Yet social justice for the inhabitants of rural and marginalized areas was dropped in favor of higher productivity.

After 1940, the influence of the United States on Mexico became stronger than ever. At the time, the Mexican state developed a new relation of cooperation and openness towards its northern neighbor. This brought about increasing influence of U.S. economic models of development and unprecedented investment in key areas of Mexican productivity such as steel, cars, chemicals, agriculture and public works. Even though there was a 49\% limit in the proportion of foreign capital to national capital invested in joint ventures, very often that proportion exceeded the allowed percentage limit. This happened by means of nationals who lent their names (‘prestanombres’) so that foreign investors, mostly from the United States, did not openly appear as those participating in


\textsuperscript{120} Based on information from the Dirección General de Muestreo, SIC, compiled in a document called, \textit{La población económicamente activa de México, 1964-1965}, Arturo González Cosío shows that in 1965, 75.12\% of professionals and technicians reported having a better occupation than their parents; 59.95\% managers, administrators and directive functionaries did likewise; 55.58\% office workers and people in similar jobs also reported that; and 57.24\% persons dedicated to the sales area reported that fact as well. Percentages could be higher, but the amount of people that preferred not to report or said that they would be unable to define that is relatively high (between 20 and 30\% depending on the category). See Arturo González Cosío, \textit{Clases medias y movilidad social en México}, México, Editorial Extemporáneos, 1976, 116 y 117.
the corresponding business. Yet, economic influence did not happen alone. Influence in cultural aspects became an integral part of the U.S. strategy of appealing to Mexicans and creating a more receptive atmosphere for U.S. interests in Mexico. Promoting a consumerist-approach in economic and cultural terms was an important part of that strategy. Nonetheless, that approach did not reach all sectors of Mexican society, since an essential part of the Mexican economic model implied keeping labor and raw materials cheap to provide large profits for national and foreign entrepreneurs. This economic model undermined the Mexican domestic consumer market. In fact, economic nationalists in the Cámara Nacional de Industrias de Transformación (CNIT) opposed such an economic model arguing that under-consumption was the real problem that had to be addressed. In their view, the national economic model should help develop the domestic market while privileging Mexican investors with credits, tax breaks, favorable import and export regulations and improving workers’ wages.\(^{121}\) Meanwhile, PAN analysts criticized economic policies that they considered inadequate to address the social injustice prevailing in the country.\(^{122}\) Also, they were wary on the increasing cultural influence of the United States. Yet, the Mexican government rejected those perspectives

\(^{121}\) See Niblo, *War, Diplomacy and Development…*, 7.

\(^{122}\) A 1940 PAN inform says, “El proceso de industrialización en México es todavía incipiente. El Estado pudo y debió prever y ordenar justicieramente los fenómenos sociales consecuencia de esa industrialización, antes de que ellos dieran origen a las situaciones de hecho que en otras partes han causado. No sucedió así. Por ruda ignorancia y por conveniencia política, la historia de la intervención del Poder Público en la organización industrial en México, es la de una serie de interferencias del propio Poder para gestionar, enardecer y desorientar la lucha social. Inepto para construir, incapaz de entender sus deberes de justicia, ignorante de los fines y de las posibilidades de la autoridad, ha rehuido (sic.) también su responsabilidad en la organización del trabajo, ha preferido capitalizar políticamente la lucha que de la industrialización deriva, y ha entregado sus recurso sen manos de intermediarios irresponsables, para que ellos sean no los que resuelvan el problema, sino los que prosperen con él.”, “La situación de México: Informe del presidente de Acción Nacional en la segunda Convención Nacional”, in *Boletín de Acción Nacional*, May 1, 1940, p. 2.
and sided with U.S. investors and economists in the implementation of a model that created quick profits for large national and foreign entrepreneurs while expanding the purchasing power of just a fraction of the population: the upper- and middle-classes. The middle class, particularly, was to offer political legitimacy while the working class and peasant sectors were directly controlled by the corporatist machinery of the PRI.

During World War II Mexico played an important role as supplier of cheap raw materials like henequen, cotton and mining products, as well as labor to satisfy the needs of the United States’ war economy. The Mexican government supported the domestic consolidation of an agro-export economy whose earnings would help finance the new industrial endeavors of the country. Yet, the production of necessary staples for the national market decreased as agricultural products for the U.S. market received greater support. Meanwhile, as Stephen Niblo has discussed, the effort to boost the country’s industrialization welcomed the participation of U.S. capital in different joint ventures with Mexicans. As industrial productivity expanded, so did a consumer market mainly oriented to provide for middle-class necessities. For example, during the wartime period, basic foodstuffs became scarce in the domestic market. Meanwhile, U.S. consumer products expanded since they had unprecedented levels of demand in Mexico. Because of the products’ cost and their limited availability restricted to the most urbanized areas of Mexico, they mainly targeted the expanding urban middle class. On the other hand, middle class’ demand for these products was high as access to them conferred a status that confirmed the buyers’ social ascendancy.

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123 See Angus Wright, *The Death of Ramon González*, Texas, University of Texas Press, 2005, 150.
124 Niblo, *War, Diplomacy and Development*..., 172-175.
125 See Julio Moreno, 97.
The influence of the material culture of the United States contributed to shaping middle class values since it was coherent with middle class’ aspirations to upper class standards of living. Accordingly, the possession or lack of some material goods became an important indicator of what being middle class meant in Mexico between 1940 and 1970. Middle class members admired the economic development obtained by their northern neighbors in the United States. The Mexican middle-class longed for products imported from the United States since they seemingly portrayed modernity while reasserting middle-class’ identity.126 And being in touch with that modernity offered middle-class members the opportunity to distance themselves from local traditions that they considered backward.127 The acquisition of domestic appliances and other electric goods became essential for the middle-class home. Other products of U.S. technology like watches, photographic cameras and radios were also appreciated as symbols of urbanism and modernity. Being urban and modern turned out to be an important distinction of middle class status.

As consumerism became a social marker for the middle classes, U.S. products expanded their market in Mexico overwhelmingly. Kellog’s Corn Flakes, Campbell’s soups, soft-drinks, industrialized food, cosmetics, and electro-domestics, among many others, became appreciated goods for everyday consumption. Shopping in the newly opened Sears store in Mexico City was an indicator of belonging to the thriving middle

127 See Julio Moreno, 207
class. Also, traveling to the United States to buy directly some of the new gadgets and clothes available soon turned out to be a matter of social status. As the Mexican middle classes learned of the wealth, material progress and organization of that country, they wanted to see some of that lifestyle in their own homes. This would be an important way to assert middle class separation from lower social groups, despite the fact that, often, the Mexican middle classes faced the limitations of less purchasing power than their U.S. counterparts and many had to resign themselves to buy the domestic version of U.S. products. Nonetheless, eventually consumerism became an important status marker for the Mexican middle classes, as it began to reflect economic improvement and social class status.

The material influence on the Mexican middle class was also stimulated as a result of a U.S. strategy seeking to broaden its Pan-American influence, while constraining any possible influence of rival powers like Germany and the USSR in the region. Stephen Niblo has suggested that the success of the U.S. strategy relied on its capacity to incorporate elements of the Mexican elite into the system in innovative ways. On the other hand, even though material modernity became essential for many among the middle class, traditions still occupied an important place. So, the preservation of traditional

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128 Moreno says, “Sears marketed its store as an innovative American retail establishment that would create a space for customers to purchase American merchandise and ‘experience’ a middle-class lifestyle through consumption.” Moreno, 14.

129 Nathaniel Whetten clearly describes the situation of the Mexican middle classes as he says, “They practice habits of cleanliness and sanitation and endeavor to provide their homes with furnishings that will distinguish them from those of the lower class families. Most of these government workers try hard to educate their children and endeavor to acquaint themselves with art and literature. Some try to maintain a much higher standard of living than their incomes justify. These are solely distressed when their clothes become a bit shabby and when their ‘respectable’ personal appearance is threatened. Sometimes they are tempted beyond their powers of resistance when placed in positions where they can handle public funds or exact illegal fees for services rendered”. Nathaniel Whetten, 25.

130 Niblo, *War, Diplomacy and Development…*, 170.
cultural values such as those relative to family and religion remained a priority. In such a context, U.S. businesses interested in penetrating the Mexican market had to fit Mexican cultural expectations in order to have any opportunity to succeed in their expansive endeavors. This is what Julio Moreno has called the creation of a “middle ground”. In such a process Nelson Rockefeller’s recommendations as the Coordinator of the strategic Office of International Affairs, a branch of the U.S. Department of State, were highly influential. Those recommendations consisted of a new “form of diplomacy that insisted on understanding, respecting, and even romanticizing Mexican culture in order to cement a solid and mutually beneficial relationship between the two countries. They encouraged American diplomats and business executives to become culturally literate on ‘Mexico,’ arguing that an understanding of Mexican culture and society was the basis for efficient policies and business strategies…”  

Blatant economic and cultural imperialism would not succeed in Mexico. Instead, more refined methods were implemented to gain the support of Mexicans, and also prevent Mexican economic nationalists and cultural conservatives from undermining U.S. influence. After all, Mexicans themselves had a positive view of material progress and industrialization as long as these offered room for national self-definition.

New refinement in U.S. techniques to gain influence demanded major understanding of local values so that cultural influence opened the way to increased economic participation. For example, when Sears was inaugurated, Mexico City’s bishop was invited to bless the event. This happening proved highly successful as masses of potential

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[131] Julio Moreno, 8.
customers attended the inauguration and soon made Sears a highly successful store.\textsuperscript{132} Accordingly, Mexican consumers would better accept products and business practices that they could relate to nationalist and revolutionary ideals.\textsuperscript{133} Then, advertising the newly available consumer products became a highly professionalized industry that reflected continuous negotiation between Mexican and U.S. cultural values.\textsuperscript{134} Such an influence targeted most importantly the Mexican middle class as its members became among the most influential in the national policy-making, and in the promotion and interpretation of national culture.\textsuperscript{135}

Beginning in the 1940s, the state presented industrial and economic development as the natural outcome of the revolutionary process lived by the country years before. Unity and stability were portrayed as key ingredients for achieving economic strength and upward mobility in society. Yet, such developments required the backing of capital and technology that was to be found in the newly consolidated relationship with the United States. U.S.-lifestyle and organization began to be seen as the paradigm of progress.\textsuperscript{136} Accordingly, a correlation between revolution, progress and U.S. models of life seemed to underlay Mexican economic and cultural trends. The government validated such assumptions.


\textsuperscript{133} Julio Moreno, 2.

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 127.


\textsuperscript{136} Julio Moreno, 6.
The Mexican government stimulated the adoption of the values of a “consumer democracy”, seeking to follow the model of post-war United States. Such a model served the goals of the Mexican state. Instead of real political democracy, broader consumption opportunities were offered to those who represented a potential risk to eventually challenging the authoritarian state: the middle class sector. Increased diversity in the consumer market was achieved by escalating reliance on U.S. imports. Meanwhile, the Mexican state presented political stability as essential to attain the necessary level of economic improvement to satisfy middle-class consumption expectations.

In the United States, since the 1930s, New Deal progressive reformers and their followers avoided labor radicalization and social-class conflict by promoting the expansion of working class’ purchasing power. Supposedly, the U.S. working class could expect to join the burgeoning contingents of the middle class as the post-war economy boomed. In fact, a post-war prosperous U.S. economy facilitated an unprecedented expansion of working class’ purchasing power, while consumerism was associated with helping the nation to increase its potential development. In the United States consumerism was promoted as the banner for nationalism and modernity. The working class had no apparent reason to oppose industrialists anymore since the capitalist machinery was actually rewarding them. Democracy was then proposed as a matter of increasing purchasing power and opportunities for consumption. This sought to replace working class’ aims for broad and all-inclusive social reform or direct participation in

137 See Liza Cohen, 115-116.
138 Ibid., 121-125.
A new “consumer democracy” was in the process of being consolidated, and also exported as the reference model for other countries.

In Mexico, a consumerist expansion took place among the urban middle class. Yet, such expansion faced sharp limitations caused by the 1940s inflationary trends and continuous deterioration of real wages. Meanwhile, the working class and peasant sector lagged behind. This meant that “consumer democracy” was a democracy only for those privileged enough to buy the new and expensive products available in the market. This kind of democracy found expression in a supposed liberty of choice in the consumer market that offered its broad variety of products to middle class buyers. Influential U.S. businesses like Sears helped to develop the Mexican conception of “purchasing power”. For example, Sears presented its products and its own organizational system as narrowly associated to the striving middle class. Supposedly, Mexicans would consolidate their middle-class status as they participated in the Sears-culture (presented as the ultimate synthesis of U.S. culture), either by purchasing the store products or contributing to the store with their direct labor.

During the 1940s, consumerism contributed to strengthen the economic model of development followed by the state: higher productivity would supposedly increase the consumption power of the population. Meanwhile, the state portrayed the upper- and middle-classes as representative of the general population, while disadvantaged sectors

141 Julio Moreno, 3.
142 Ibid., 74.
were submerged in denial or neglect.\footnote{On this, see John Mraz’s insightful analysis on how during the 1940s Mexican magazines reflected government trends highlighting the presence of the upper and middle classes while neglecting any reference to the underprivileged groups. Mraz, “Today, Tomorrow and Always; The Golden Age of Illustrated Magazines in Mexico, 1937-1960”, in Joseph, Rubenstein and Zolov, 120-133.} This trend was formalized during Miguel Alemán’s presidential term, between 1946 and 1952.\footnote{Ibid., p. 120.} In the end, Alemán’s regime cultivated and institutionalized the seed that previous post-revolutionary regimes had planted: a growing ascendency of middle-class professionals in the government and a pro-business model of development that privileged urban-industrial growth.

By 1947, problems in the balance of trade led the government to restrict the importation of luxury products and consumer durables. On the other hand, the state aimed to stimulating nascent industries that would supposedly produce domestically what was previously imported. Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) became the paradigm to follow. According to this model, the state would stimulate the domestic production of previously imported consumer goods by offering national industrials tax exemptions and protection from international competition in the form of tariffs. Meanwhile, the state would facilitate the importation of capital goods necessary to the national industry. This would be the base to expand the national productive base of consumer goods. However, most domestic products hid important amounts of foreign capital, mainly from U.S. investors, under the form of joint ventures with national capitalists. Years before, Manuel Ávila Camacho’s industrialization project already opened the doors to substantial participation of foreign capital in domestic industrialization.\footnote{Niblo, Mexico in the 1940s…, 89 and 92.} And this situation was consolidated with Alemán’s major reliance on financial support from international lending institutions controlled by the United States such as the International Bank for
Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank), the Export-Import Bank, and from U.S. private investors.\textsuperscript{146} Multiple joint-ventures between U.S. and Mexican entrepreneurs shaped the industrialization process of the country at the expense of other projects with a more nationalistic orientation. Meanwhile, consumerism remained an important ingredient in the model, since the state aimed to gain political legitimacy among the middle-class sectors of the population.\textsuperscript{147} Yet, the supply of consumer products for the middle class did not develop as a domestically-focused project. Instead, it heavily relied on direct imports from the United States or on the production by Mexican-based U.S. trans-nationals like General Electric, General Motors, RCA, Colgate, Palmolive, among other companies that required the extensive importation of U.S. capital goods to keep productivity going.

During the administration of Miguel Alemán, in fact, the importation of capital goods expanded in an unprecedented way, and this trend developed steadily until 1970. Statistics on the growth of the importation of capital goods are particularly revealing. As we can appreciate in the following table, from 1940 to 1970 the expansion of imports of capital goods was striking. These imports came to represent an 80\% average out of the total. Between 1952 and 1958, the amount paid for the importation of capital goods tended to be higher than the amounts of private investment. Meanwhile, between 1963 and 1970 private investment outpaced expenditures in imported capital goods. Yet, this only reflected the fact that growth in the volume of industrial production index became much faster after 1963. Meanwhile dependency on imported capital goods was still

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., p. 171.

strong as reflected by the fact that expenditures in such imports kept growing at a constant pace. (Fig. 6)

As the Mexican economy increased its reliance on the importation of capital goods indispensable for ISI implementation, dependency on U.S. capital and borrowing from U.S.-controlled international financial organisms was also bigger. The support of external capital usually targeted large enterprises that were already operating or transnationals. This situation was opposed by Mexican economic nationalists who supported a different and more endogenous project of development. Although they accepted that foreign capital was needed, they thought that foreign investment should be nationalized by receiving the same treatment as national investment in terms of rights and duties. In a

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Años</th>
<th>Inversión privada total (millones de pesos)</th>
<th>Importaciones de bienes de capital (millones de pesos)</th>
<th>Indice del volumen de la producción industrial 1960=100</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>2156</td>
<td>1572</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>4732</td>
<td>5362</td>
<td>55.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>10770</td>
<td>11300</td>
<td>84.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>22936</td>
<td>11484</td>
<td>123.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>27251</td>
<td>15764</td>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td><strong>50930</strong></td>
<td><strong>23294</strong></td>
<td><strong>224.4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

letter to the president, José R. Colín, an important industrialist, said: “We Mexican industrialists want foreign capital to be nationalized and to really become ours, the same as the industries that it stimulates; thus all industrial activities that are established in the Republic will enjoy the same rights and obligations.”

They saw growing U.S. direct participation in the Mexican economy with suspicion. In fact, the U.S. government was particularly concerned with the negative role that economic nationalists could play for “American interests”. During the 1940s, U.S. diplomats saw the fight against economic nationalists as an important priority.

Economic nationalists constituted a strong front composed of small- and medium-size entrepreneurs in the Cámara Nacional de Industrias de la Transformación (CNIT). Most economic nationalists belonged to the thriving industrial and merchant upper-middle class that were trying to create a niche for their enterprises in a context already dominated by large and powerful entrepreneurs. Initially, they had a relatively powerful voice expressing their opposition to escalating involvement of U.S. businesses in the Mexican economy. For economic nationalists like Alejandro Ruiz Galindo, José R. Colín and José Domingo Lavín, foreign capital should be nationalized and tightly regulated under Mexican laws. This meant that foreign capital should serve the expansion of the national industry linked to broad consumption in the domestic market, instead of supporting the agro-export economy and capital-intensive transnational sectors. On the other hand, according to economic nationalists, the growth of the domestic market

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148 Quoted by Niblo, War, Diplomacy and Development..., 197.
149 Ibid., 7 and 201.
150 Sanford Mosk, Industrial Revolution in Mexico, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1950, 22.
151 Niblo, War, Diplomacy and Development..., 197.
should also be stimulated by protecting Mexican enfant industries that would provide new and well-paid jobs to the working-class sector. Then, the importation of luxury products and other consumer goods should be tightly restricted, in order to stimulate the expansion of real domestic producers (instead of trans-nationals) that would eventually become competitive in the international market. In fact, industrialists holding this point of view sided with labor unions in pursuing an improvement in workers’ conditions of living.

Economic nationalists formed an unprecedented alliance between capital and labor that threatened the interests of U.S. capital and prominent Mexicans belonging to organizations such as the Confederación Patronal Mexicana, the Cámara Nacional de la Industria, and the Cámara Nacional de Comercio. In 1942, the CTM–headed by Vicente Lombardo Toledano—delivered the president a critical analysis of the Mexican economic situation and a proposal on immediate actions to take. In the perspective of this organization, growing inflation was a result of an excessive dependency on the U.S. economy and the lack of sufficient consumer products that paralleled growing demand in the Mexican market. Lombardo’s CTM demanded major state intervention in the economy, regulating imports and exports and also favoring the necessary conditions to consolidate the domestic market. Meanwhile, small- and medium-size entrepreneurs in the CNIT held a vision of necessary cooperation with labor, reasoning that industrialization should create an opportunity for Mexican workers. In the end, according to their reasoning, those workers were the same that will eventually purchase

152 See “El programa para la salvación económica del país”, in El Popular, January 22, 1942, 5.
153 Ibid.
154 Niblo, Wa, Diplomacy and Development..., 198.
the articles produced by Mexican entrepreneurs. They also argued that “industries that were based on low-wage scales should be shunted, and they talked about creating an ‘index of the absorption of labor’ as a criterion by which projects should be judged, subsidized, and financed.” The bases for a CTM-CNIT agreement seemed to be in process of development.

During the 1945-Chapultepec Conference, members of the CNIT strongly attacked a “U.S. tariff reduction proposal on the ground that it would destroy Latin American industries.” And they appeared to be successful, since the Latin American delegations were seemingly influenced by such attack and ultimately rejected the U.S. tariff reduction proposal. This created a solid momentum for the relative influence of CNIT economic nationalists. Right after the Chapultepec Conference, the Cámara Nacional de Industrias de la Transformación (CNIT) closed an agreement with the CTM, consisting of a general statement on bringing about “economic progress and economic independence for Mexico, leading to higher standards of living for the Mexican people.” The most important aspect of the CNIT-CTM agreement is expressed by the conciliatory tone of its terms. The agreement offered the ground to create new commitments in which industrialists and organized labor could operate in a mutually beneficial context, including better work conditions for labor as well as higher productive quality and efficiency. This was intended to have a positive impact strengthening the domestic market and consumption.

The economic nationalists’ program also emphasized government subsidies to infant

155 Ibid.
157 Ibid., pp. 33-34.
158 Ibid., p. 28
industries as an essential support for consolidating the domestic industry. Tax and import duties exemptions were also proposed as vital towards that end. Yet, any kind of U.S. intervention in the Mexican economy was out of the question since it was considered disruptive and inadequate for the national interest.\textsuperscript{159}

Another nationalist front cautioning against increasing U.S. economic intervention in Mexico was integrated by analysts in the National Action Party (PAN). For these analysts, inflationary problems in Mexico and the deterioration of production for the domestic market were often correlated to a U.S.-dominated economic context. For example, in 1942 a central article in \textit{La Nación} focused on a conference by Eduardo Villaseñor, the Bank of Mexico manager. In that article, Villaseñor is quoted attributing the growth of dollar inflows to the Mexican money market as an important cause behind inflation.\textsuperscript{160} On the one hand, Mexico exported tremendous amounts of raw materials to satisfy the necessities of the U.S. war-economy and received payment in dollars. On the other hand, many U.S. investors supplied the Mexican bank system with dollars since they wanted to avoid growing U.S. taxes on liquid capitals. Those funds became inflationary because, due to the limitations of the U.S. war-focused productivity, Mexico was unable to spend that money importing needed capital and consumer goods. In a follow-up article, the lack of U.S. political will to supply the Mexican industrial base with much-needed machinery is addressed. According to the PAN analyst, Eduardo Villaseñor started negotiations to purchase sub-utilized U.S. machinery to supply Mexican requirements. Yet, suddenly the U.S. government interrupted negotiations since

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 32-52.

\textsuperscript{160} Julio Sánchez, “Villaseñor denuncia las causas de la inflación y afirma que los EE. UU. deben ser más cumplidores”, in \textit{La Nación}, September 1942, 9.
it preferred to keep the machinery instead of selling it to Mexico. These events awakened suspicion among PAN sympathizers who claimed to defend national economic autonomy, along with Mexican traditions and the Spanish heritage.

Reacting to that situation, George Messersmith, the U.S. Ambassador in Mexico at the time, focused on gaining the support of top-bankers and members of the Frente Patronal Mexicano. He also argued that the United States was giving Mexico its due share of scarce materials by exporting them to the Mexican market, “en la misma proporción en que los recibía el pueblo americano”. Economic nationalism was to be avoided at all cost in Mexico. Protectionism and strong state intervention had been fine for the U.S. New Deal era, but a similar undertaking was not acceptable in Mexico. Mexico’s economy, according to the U.S. point of view, required the support of foreign capital. Also, the domestic market was seen as incipient. U.S. diplomats and entrepreneurs developed a rhetoric presenting their actions as supporting Mexico’s development and incorporation to the international market. Yet, keeping privileged access to Mexican labor and raw materials underlay their most important interest in the country. Also, increasing opportunities for the allocation of U.S. consumer products counted as a primary reason. However, this interest largely focused on the expanding Mexican middle class, which offered a solid although still exclusivist domestic market for those products.

In the end economic nationalists were not to succeed. Being unsympathetic to their approach, presidents Manuel Ávila Camacho and Miguel Alemán gave their full political backing to a model that involved the free flow of U.S. capital. Such posture gained the

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161 Julio Sánchez, “La visita de Presidentes, en cifras: en EE. UU. hay maquinaria usada que nos vendría muy bien”, in La Nación, September 1942, 10.

trust of the U.S government and entrepreneurs, who were convinced that Mexico was entering a new stage of openness and friendship towards the United States. According to Niblo, “Under the Ávila Camacho administration, Mexican industrialists who were willing to collaborate with foreign investors fared better than the economic nationalists. Among those willing to collaborate, Aarón Sáenz, Manuel Suárez, Agustín Legorreta, and others sided with political allies such as Maximino Ávila Camacho and Abelardo Rodríguez in organizing the major business deals of the period.”

Although state intervention remained a pivotal element in economic development projects, such intervention would only took the form of active stimulation of investment. Large Mexican entrepreneurs found unprecedented opportunities for quick profits as they associated with their U.S. counterparts, and they were not willing to risk losing those profits. New large industrial projects obtained privileged U.S. support through technical advise, capital investment and Export-Import Bank loans.

On the other hand, the owners of old and well-developed Mexican industries like beer and textiles opposed economic nationalists since they wanted to hold their export markets, and feared that stronger protectionism would hurt their own international presence.

Then, powerful Mexican businessmen and politicians were among the most important U.S. allies undermining the possibilities for economic nationalists to succeed. Meanwhile, the redistribution aspects of Keynesianism were left aside.

163 Niblo, War, Diplomacy and Development..., 9.
164 Mosk, 26.
165 Ibid., 24.
166 Niblo, War, Diplomacy and Development..., 8.
Inflation remained a problem during the 1940s and up to 1955, in the context of growing consumerism in Mexico.\textsuperscript{167} The expanding middle class longed to purchase products that required the extensive importation of capital goods, and national industry did not suffice to satisfy those expectations. On the other hand, disparities between real wages and prices became acute from the mid-1940s, and kept increasing thereafter. For example, between 1929 and 1945 the average salary index in Mexico City grew from 100 to 402, while the living expenses index grew from 100 to 501 during the same period.\textsuperscript{168} Meanwhile, during the administration of Miguel Alemán (1946-1952), inflation grew almost 200%.\textsuperscript{169} In 1944, Efraín González Luna, one of the PAN founding fathers, addressed the inflationary problems from a moralistic perspective: “Nadie, o casi nadie, piensa en que la economía está sujeta a la ley moral y en que, por consiguiente, hay una moral de los precios y de las ganancias que reprueba el desenfreno lucrativo. La idea de la comunidad humana como una familia y de la justicia y el amor recíprocos como substancia imprescindible y obligatoria de las relaciones sociales, está en pleno ocaso.”\textsuperscript{170} Later, addressing growing consumerism and economic ambition in society, he said, “El rechazo de la pobreza no como privación de lo necesario, sino simplemente como renuncia a lo superfluo, y el olvido práctico de una Providencia superior que vela sobre el hoy y el mañana de los hombres, envenenan incluso las ideas y la conducta de quienes profesan una acendrada espiritualidad en otras zonas de conducta.”\textsuperscript{171} This approach

\textsuperscript{168} J. Domínguez, “99% de la población mexicana tiene ahora un nivel de vida inferior al de antes de la guerra y de la inflación”, in \textit{La Nación}, July 1946, 35.
\textsuperscript{169} “En seis años, casi se han duplicado los precios en México”, in \textit{La Nación}, 1953, 34.
\textsuperscript{170} Efraín González Luna, “Varias crisis”, in \textit{La Nación}, July 1946, 35.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid.
paralleled economic analyses attributing inflation to exorbitant consumption rates due to money in excess circulating in the market, during and right after the war.\textsuperscript{172} And this phenomenon was reinforced by the fact that consumption became an important matter of status for the Mexican middle class.\textsuperscript{173} Even though after 1955 and up to 1970 inflation stabilized, it kept growing a 4\% average per year, responding to continuous growth in the market aggregate demand.\textsuperscript{174}

Extreme dependency on the importation of capital goods, a relatively limited domestic market focused on middle-class’ consumerism, and growing external indebtedness continued throughout the 1950s and 1960s. This situation eventually led to the severe financial problems characteristic of the second half of the 1970s and early-1980s. On the other hand, in spite of the impressive economic growth achieved during the “Economic Miracle” period, between 1952 and 1970, averaging around a 6\% yearly growth, unemployment remained an important problem that aggravated during the 1960s. For example, between 1960 and 1976 “employment grew only 2.3 percent per year, although the rate of growth of the labor force was 3.4 percent.\textsuperscript{175} The capital intensive production characteristic of Mexico’s ISI period did not contribute to expand the labor market at the pace necessary to satisfy the growing young population demanding

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\item \textsuperscript{172} See J. Domínguez, “99\% de la población mexicana…”, \textit{La Nación}, September 1946, 23.
\item \textsuperscript{173} In this regard, Soledad Loaeza says, “Mientras que el ahorro y la cautela económica han sido siempre considerados rasgos distintivos del \textit{ethos} pequeño burgués europeo, en México se piensa que las clases medias tienden, casi por definición, a vivir por encima de sus posibilidades, con lo que manifiestan una sed insaciable de \textit{status}. Es posible que el origen de esta diferencia sea, por una parte, una visión profundamente arraigada en el espíritu de las clases medias mexicanas en el sentido de que viven en una sociedad relativamente abierta, en la que siempre que ha sido necesario ha sido posible desplazar a las clases altas y, por otra parte, el hecho de que han tendido a elegir sus modelos de consumo en sociedades mucho más ricas que la propia.”, \textit{Clases medias…}, 29.
\item \textsuperscript{174} Messmacher and Werner, “La política monetaria en México…”, 22.
\item \textsuperscript{175} Daniel Morales, 21.
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employment. Since U.S. investments were incorporated into already existing industries or enterprises like the automotive industry, such investment did not have a positive impact on labor market expansion. Then, the new available jobs for young people were minimal. Already in the 1960s the possibilities to satisfy middle class’ consumerist expectations showed signs of exhaustion. The constant deterioration of real salaries became a problem that impacted negatively the lower- and middle- sectors of society. Economic inconsistencies increased and eventually created middle class distrust towards the government. The possibilities for consolidating a U.S.-style Mexican dream were gradually lost until the definite debacles of the late-1970s and early 1980s radically challenged middle-class aspirations for material prosperity and upward mobility.

The U.S. Cultural Crusade

During the 1940s, the United States actively sought to enhance its sway in Mexico. Particularly in the cultural and educational arena, direct efforts by the U.S. government to counter internationally pernicious influences on Mexico were notable. On the other hand, direct contact with the Mexican cultural and educational spheres proved important for advancing the U.S. economic interests in the country according to Nelson Rockefeller’s suggested strategy. Rockefeller, as mentioned before, coordinated the Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA). The agency, created in 1940 within the Department of State, turned out to be important foundation for the U.S. cultural crusade in Mexico. Although one of the most important aims of the agency was to counter potential Axis propaganda in Latin America its work went well beyond those initial goals. Attempts by the Soviet Union to influence Latin America, political activities of communist parties, and also the
expansion of some domestic ultraconservative groups such as Sinarquistas and members of the Mexican Institute of Hispanic Culture were considered as important threats for U.S. influence. Accordingly, two evident challenges to U.S. cultural influence existed in Mexico, one from the political left and another from groups that defended national cultural values. The middle classes played central roles in both of them.

In the 1940s the Mexican government showed increasing openness to the U.S. influence in different terrains. The discourse of national unity promoted by Manuel Ávila Camacho coexisted with growing influence of the United States in economic and cultural issues. After all, business with U.S. entrepreneurs represented a golden opportunity for top-level Mexican politicians and industrialists. Nationalism made sense as long as it was reserved to political rhetoric and particular cultural issues like those relative to family, religion, folklorism, etc. Besides, the discourse of nationalism also contributed to strengthening the legitimacy of the post-revolutionary state. Yet, economic aspects were to be dominated by an expanding role of foreign interests in the domestic sphere. On the other hand, U.S. cultural influence paralleling economic expansion was made possible by the renewed relationship with Mexico in the early 1940s. U.S. Ambassador in Mexico, George Messersmith, and Mexican Ambassador in the U.S., Dr. Francisco Castillo Nájera, played important roles in the consolidation of the bilateral relationship.176

Supposedly, mutual influence between both countries would determine the new

176 Castillo Nájera said in a discourse pronounced in the George Washington University, “Actualmente es ostensible la transformación de las relaciones México-Norteamericanas, no sólo en su aspecto superficial, sino lo que es de la mayor trascendencia, en los elementos básicos, en el espíritu esencial en que se inspiran los gobiernos y los pueblos en sus múltiples e íntimos contactos.” “Realizaciones futuras entre México y Estados Unidos”, in El Popular, January 14, 1942, p. 4. On the other hand, Messersmith said, “En vista de la estrecha amistad que se ha logrado cultivada entre los Estados Unidos y México, juzgo que no habrá un solo (sic.) problema entre ambos países que no quede resuelto conforme bases de equidad y con una permanencia indefinida...” “Todos los problemas de EE. UU. Y México serán resueltos a base de absoluta equidad”, La Nación, February 15, 1942, 1.
international scenario, and both would benefit in equal extent from the newly consolidated partnership. This offered the Mexican state the necessary pretext for promoting an escalating presence of U.S. capital in the Mexican economy, in spite of contestation from nationalistic voices. Also, major cultural influence was to take place in a context of mutual learning and understanding.

Expanding the market for U.S. products and gaining support in the war effort required increasing influence of U.S. ways among Mexican consumers. By means of advertising U.S. products the OIAA could commercialize the war effort in which Mexico’s participation was deemed so important. As Julio Moreno has shown, “most American companies cooperated with Rockefeller’s OIAA, but some were especially determined to end Nazi influence in Mexico.”¹⁷⁷ Then, U.S. companies like Sterling Products, Bristol Myers, Dulcería La Suiza, El Águila Cigarette, Tangee and Coca Cola “sponsored sports, music, and comedy shows” that included propagandistic and war advertising.¹⁷⁸ Other brands like General Motors, General Electric, RCA, Coleman, among others, portrayed U.S. industrial and technological superiority in comparison with German products.¹⁷⁹ This strategy sought to assert the leadership of the United States in the Western world. Since the Mexican middle class proved the most important consumers of U.S. products, both material and cultural, they became the primary target of such strategy. Yet, besides Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union and communism represented another rival whose possible influence among the middle class was considered a potential threat.

¹⁷⁷ Julio Moreno, 75.
¹⁷⁸ Ibid.
¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 73-74.
The Soviet Union and communism appealed to some people among the educated middle class sectors and even among some members of the Mexican government, increasing U.S. concern about socialist presence in Mexico. The appointment of Constantin Oumansky in 1944 as the Soviet ambassador in Mexico represented a turning point in the relations between Mexico and that country. Oumansky was very close to USSR premier Joseph Stalin and he had just previously been the ambassador of that country in the United States. The presence of Oumansky in Mexico evidenced the highly strategic position the country had obtained in the international scenario. Oumansky was described by Víctor Manuel Villaseñor in his memoirs as “a very talented and appealing man, who had been the ambassador of his country in Washington.” Under Oumansky’s leadership, the Soviet embassy, located in an ancient Porfirian mansion, became an important meeting center for the most diverse representatives of the Mexican intelligentsia. Also, with the purpose of promoting cultural and scientific exchange between Mexico and the USSR, the Mexican-Russian Institute for Cultural Exchange was created in March 1944. According to Villaseñor, who in the 1950s became one of the most important directors of a Mexican state-led enterprise, this was the first institution of this type in Mexico, settled to promote cultural relations with a foreign country. Villaseñor himself was appointed as the general secretary of the Institute, which soon started to publish a very popular monthly magazine called *Cultura Soviética*, directed to appeal to the Mexican intelligentsia. Villaseñor, Narciso Bassols (former Secretary of Education in 1932) and many other representatives of the educated middle classes such as

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180 Villaseñor, 37.
181 Ibid., 37
182 Ibid., 38.
José Iturriaga, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Federico Silva, Andrés Henestrosa and Diego Rivera kept strong links with the Soviet Union and the communist doctrine. In the perspective of U.S. informers, the Soviet Union had given solid steps in gaining the sympathies of the Mexican population, mainly among educated social groups. For them, Communist ideology was making its way among prominent representatives of the Mexican middle classes, and the United States government was concerned about this.

Opposition against a common enemy, Nazis and fascists, created a propitious context not only for Mexican intellectuals but also for government officials to express their sympathies for the Soviet Union, while keeping an open attitude to the United States. After all, the Nazis were a common enemy for Soviets and the United States. For many among the Mexican politicized middle classes, the Soviet Union represented the most formidable front against Nazism and Fascism. The revolutionary character claimed by the Mexican government for itself, in fact demanded some open appraisal for Soviets and socialism, at least in rhetorical terms. Even wealthy industrialists connected with the government, like José Domingo Lavín, expressed open admiration for the Soviet Union and solidarity with the working class’ struggle. Yet, praise more often than not was directed to both Soviets and Americans as though they were part of a common front against ultra-conservative factions that sympathized with Nazis and fascists. This way,

183 Special report from John Edgar Hoover, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, to the Department of State, September 25, 1946, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Mexico, Internal Affairs, part II 1945-1949, microfilm 88/2011 b, reel 33.

184 In a ceremony in the Palace of the Fine Arts commemorating 28th anniversary of the Russian revolution, José Domingo Lavín, “Anunció una nueva lucha, denunció la propaganda perversa contra la URSS y rindió homenaje al pueblo de Rusia”. “Aniversario de la URSS: palabras, y políticos que comprometen la posición internacional de México”, in La Nación, October 1946, 25.

185 For example, Lic. César Garizurieta, congressman for the PRM, declared, “Con demasiada frecuencia, los elementos revolucionarios del país han insistido sobre la urgente necesidad de combatir a los elementos conservadores que, agrupados en organismos aparentemente apolíticos, en realidad conspiran en contra de
the dominant party, the government and prominent people associated with it could maintain a neutral political discourse in which the Soviet Union together with the United States played an important role. Nonetheless, an important level of concern among U.S. politicians and entrepreneurs was awakened by this apparent ambiguity of the Mexican government.

The United States government was strongly interested in countering “pernicious” socialist or communist influences in Mexico by increasing its cultural presence among the middle sectors of the population. The U.S. cultural crusade particularly targeted universities and students because they were considered to be highly susceptible to communist influence. By that time, higher education students were receiving strong influence from leftist academicians and intellectuals. Spanish professors contributed to this situation through their work in the university environment. They came with the contingent of refugees that fleeing from the fascist government of Francisco Franco in Spain received political asylum in Mexico in 1939. These immigrants were called the “reds” since they represented the leftist Republican government in exile and had an

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186 After making a thorough description of the student population of the National University, located on the Justo Sierra street, Guy Ray says that “it is specifically in these elements of the University where the least knowledge of and understanding for the United States as a nation exist.” Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Mexico, Internal Affairs, part II 1940-1944, microfilm 88/2010 b, reel 2.
important impact on the Mexican cultural and intellectual life, filling with revolutionary ideas the National University academic world. Although the University was still predominantly conservative during the 1940s and most of the 1950s, solid seeds for the 1960s-leftist radicalization germinated from the initial influence of Spanish professors and intellectuals.

Then, for the U.S., support for cultural and educational endeavors became pivotal to cultivating the relationship with Mexico, especially with its middle class. For example, aiming at strengthening the links between Mexico and the United States, the Benjamin Franklin Library was inaugurated in 1942, following a project proposed by Josephus Daniels since 1941. The main goal of this library was to become a cultural enterprise to influence Mexican educated social groups, particularly the middle classes and young university students. The library offered the Mexican middle classes English courses and the opportunity to become more literate on U.S. culture.

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187 Salvador Novo offers direct testimony of the important impact of these immigrants on the Mexican cultural life, “Lo que imparten novedad, singularidad y privilegio a la inmigración española de 1939, es el mayoreo a que ocurrió, el carácter romático que lo rodeaba y el tinte político –‘los rojos’- que la distinguían. […] O como el hecho de que con los refugiados de 1939 viniera otra riqueza: la de los hombres distinguidos, en varias disciplinas que con ellos llegaron: un José Gaos, filósofo; un Adolfo Salazar, musicógrafo; un Sacristán, financiero; un Díez-Canedo, literato –para sólo citar a unos cuantos de los muchos hombres de estudio, aventados por la política, que una vez restituidos a una atmósfera propicia, empezarían a germinar en la nueva tierra y con buenos frutos la semilla de su saber. […]Bien pronto se instalaron en un medio tan acogedor como simbiótico. Las redacciones de los periódicos abrieron cordialmente sus puertas a cronistas, críticos, escritores, gacetilleros. El cine, la radio, más tarde la televisión; la pintura, la música, la escultura, el teatro, las oficinas públicas, la Universidad, las escuelas secundarias, contaron rápidamente con representantes muy activos y laboriosos de la nueva inmigración. Hoy ocupan en todas partes y lugares, y desempeñan funciones, de un privilegio que por peso específico les han deparado su propia laboriosidad…” Salvador Novo, *La vida en México en el periodo presidencial de Adolfo Ruiz Cortines*, 80-81.

188 Josephus Daniels, the renowned ambassador of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, stressed the importance of gaining the confidence and support of Mexico toward the United States.

189 On August 1943, Guy Ray attests this in correspondence with the Department of State regarding the convenience of finding a best location for the library. He says, “The passing of time, study of the Library’s activities and functions, the volume of accessions, the type of serious visitor to the Library, and conversations with prominent Mexican educators, all now indicate that the Library is not located in the
The U.S. government developed particular interest in supporting Mexican libraries by means of providing funding for U.S. books. The Mexican middle classes highly appreciated education as an essential condition for status and social mobility. Supplying university libraries with U.S. books worked as an excellent means to promote U.S. culture among the burgeoning middle-class youth that filled universities. Under the project called, “Books for Latin America”, the Benjamin Franklin Library mediated the reception and allocation of thousand of U.S. books for Mexican libraries, donated by the American Library Association.¹⁹¹ Many other books were also donated by the Rockefeller foundation.¹⁹² Most beneficiary libraries of these books belonged to different schools and institutions in the National University, while also other libraries like the one in the National School of Anthropology and History, and El Colegio de México were considered highly relevant for these donations.¹⁹³ Other libraries in the states were awarded with funds, like the library of the Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey, the University of Yucatán, the Instituto Preparatorio de Xalapa, among others.¹⁹⁴ Concerning the library of el Colegio de México, an official briefing says, “The Library of the Colegio

¹⁹⁰ An Embassy briefing by Charles A. Thomson says, “People in untold thousands are keenly desirous of learning English at present and would flock to these classes provided that they are placed in the hands of teachers who can teach English in a living fashion and make to work pleasant and interesting.” Suggestions for a Branch of Annex of the Biblioteca Benjamin Franklin in the University Quarters, July 15, 1943, National Archives, 17.

¹⁹¹ “Transmitting Lists of Libraries in the Republic of Mexico to be Favored Under the 1944 Allotment of Funds”, Briefing of the U.S. Embassy in Mexico to the Secretary of State, March 31, 1944, p. 1. National Archives in College Park.

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁹³ Ibid., pp. 2 and 3.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 3.
de México is possibly the best and the most active library in the City of Mexico. Although this library has funds for the purchase of new books, it is nevertheless believed entirely proper that it be added with a further and increased allotment of funds."195 A particular emphasis was also put in the allotment of funds for the Escuela Normal Superior. The briefing says, since “this School is the highest institution maintained by the Ministry of Public Education for the training of teachers and the Cultural Institute [coordinated by the Benjamin Franklin library] concurs with the Embassy in believing that a reasonable allotment of funds for this School for the purchase of books on pedagogy would be entirely appropriate.”196 While El Colegio de México became a very prestigious academic institution, it represented a potential source of critique against U.S. influence in Latin America. In the end, the founding fathers of this educational institution were among the 1939-Republican Spanish refugees that strengthened the cultural life of Mexico and brought with them strong left-leaning academic models. On the other hand, the special allotment for the Escuela Normal Superior also made sense as this institution formed basic-education teachers, one of the most combative and left-leaning group in Mexican politics. By targeting these schools, it can be inferred that the Embassy sought to advance the cultural presence of the United States inside them: books, seemingly, were the best option at hand.

The U.S. support to university infrastructure improvement dedicated especial attention to the Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey (ITESM), in Nuevo León. In September 1943 the ITESM opened its doors to offer an alternative to public higher

195 Ibid.
196 Ibid.
education, mainly to that offered by the National University. The Instituto began offering high school education as well as professional studies in industrial engineering and accounting. The Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey was a good candidate for support as it resembled U.S. colleges and was one of the few universities that were not considered contaminated with communist or socialist ideals in Mexico at the time. Besides, Monterrey became a model of the modern industrialization paradigm as it concentrated some of the most important industrial plants in Mexico. The United States government was particularly interested in strengthening links with the powerful business group that supported the institution. Eugenio and Roberto Garza Sada, Virgilio Garza, Joel Rocha and Rodolfo Barragán, were among prominent industrialists and professionals that created the Asociación de Enseñanza de Investigación Superior. Members of such organization coordinated the creation of the Instituto and its board of directors included Eugenio Garza Sada (a graduate from the Massachussets Institute of Technology), Virgilio Garza Treviño (a graduate from St. Louis University), Bernardo Elosua (a graduate from MIT), Jesús Llagune (a graduate from Pierce School of Business Administration in Philadelphia) and Ricardo Margain Zozoya (with a law degree from the University of Nuevo León). They created this educational institution in order to offer

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197 In this regard, Guy W. Ray, second secretary of Embassy, says to the Secretary of State in letter of March 31, 1944, “Early in February, the Cultural Relations Officer visited the City of Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, and at that time was able to study the new Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey, Nuevo León, which is under the direction of Ing. Avalos Vez formerly of the Escuela Superior de Ingeniería Mecánica y Eléctrica of Mexico City. This new Institute which opened in September, 1943, is supported largely by the important industries of the City of Monterrey and it is believed that it is worthy of a special allotment of funds.” Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Mexico, Internal Affairs, part II 1940-1944, microfilm 88/2010 b, reel 2.

198 Dispatch from the Consulate of the U.S. in Monterrey to the Department of State, July 14, 1958, p. 3. National Archives.
the regional middle class youth with local higher superior education linked to immediate industrial needs.

A scarcely publicized reason behind the creation of the Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey was the fact that local industrialists wanted to prevent the escalating emigration of local youngsters to relatively near U.S. colleges. So, the Instituto was created “para evitar la fuga de los estudiantes regiomontanos a la Unión Americana, y formar de acuerdo con las necesidades regionales, las costumbres de la localidad y las posibilidades reales, una nueva capa dirigente para ocupar los puestos de responsabilidad en la ciudad mencionada”.199 In spite of Monterrey group members’ openness to U.S. laissez-faire policies and their support to U.S. investment, they opposed excessive cultural influence of the U.S. that could threaten local and national values. The local middle- and upper- class youth would be the inheritors of the Monterrey group tradition. And as such, local youngsters should keep their elders’ traditions. After all, the Monterrey dynasty could be traced back to the Porfirian era, when men like Patricio Milmo, Isaac Garza, Francisco Sada, José Muguerza, and Valentín Rivero took the group to industrial prominence, based on glass and beer production. These men were essentially conservative, fundamental Catholics and nationalist in cultural terms.200 They were representative of most middle- and upper- class Mexicans’ ambivalence towards the United States: appreciating the material benefits of U.S. culture, but seeing cultural influence with suspicion and even open rejection. And vice-versa, U.S. officials saw

199 Aloysius, “Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey”, in La Nación, 1943, 8.
200 Niblo, War, Diplomacy, and Development…., 168.
with suspicion the perceived influence of the Monterrey group in Mexican political issues, as the group was considered to be soft on the Nazi threat.\textsuperscript{201}

Offering Mexican students the opportunity to directly experience the U.S. educational environment became an important strategy for the U.S. government. Rockefeller’s office created the Roosevelt scholarships to foment Pan-American unity. According to this program, twenty Latin American students (one from each country) would stay a year in U.S. colleges. Simultaneously, ten U.S. students would stay in Latin American universities during the same period. These scholarships were the beginning of increasing academic and intellectual exchange between Latin America and the United States. Yet, their initial intent was to intensify the understanding and openness towards the U.S. among Latin American young middle-class representatives.\textsuperscript{202} Mexican students were particularly targeted for their participation in the program.

As core propagators of values within the family, women also became key target for the spreading of U.S. cultural influence within Mexican society. Their impact as opinion leaders at home was of the utmost importance to propagate U.S. models of life and consumption. In an interesting chronicle, Salvador Novo addresses a project undertaken by a magazine to stimulate women to save money in some financial institutions in order to have so-called extra money available to improve their own image and that of their

\textsuperscript{201} Ibid., 170.

\textsuperscript{202} Nelson A. Rockefeller said as he made the program public, “Juntas, las veintiuna repúblicas Americanas hacen frente al futuro, durante la guerra y después de ella. El programa de becas, que conjuntamente acaban de arreglar las repúblicas Americanas, proporciona otro fuerte lazo para asegurar la cooperación que es esencial para la victoria y la paz estable. Las naciones del Nuevo Mundo reconocen que la confianza y el respeto mutuos, nacidos de una verdadera comprensión, son la base de la solidaridad actual y de la paz permanente. El programa de becas es una parte integral de los distintos gobiernos para producir estos dos objetivos.” “Treinta becas ‘Roosevelt’ fomentarán intensamente la unidad panamericana”, in \textit{El Popular}, February 8, 1942, 5.
homes in the short-term. The magazine asserted that this would be an excellent way to keep their husbands at home, since they would find the peace and tranquility that the streets lacked in a beautiful home. The project was clearly targeting middle class women. Women were deemed an essential starting point to modernizing the Mexican middle-class family and home, while stimulating them to highlight their femininity by purchasing the newly available U.S. beauty products.

Women offered key contributions to consolidate middle class identity in Mexico not only at home, but also at the workplace. They represented the stability of the family and men, but many of them also made a large part of the working middle-class in the capital city. Understanding this, U.S. entrepreneurs sought to publish magazines and periodicals aimed at transmitting consumerist cultural values to Mexican women and girls. In another chronicle Salvador Novo, for example, describes the visit of Mr. George Hecht who was the proprietor of many periodicals for children and the youth in the United States. In fact, Hecht came to Mexico with multiple recommendation letters from U.S. government officials, and especially from the U.S. Commissioner for Education to talk with Jaime Torres Bodet, Secretary of Education for the Mexican government.

203 Regarding the project, Novo says, “Al leer esto, recuerdo que un amigo mío, cuyo hijo acaba de casarse con una chica norteamericana, se ha visto felicitado por ello por más de un marido mexicano de señora también mexicana. El argumento es que las americanas saben retener a sus maridos mejor que las mexicanas. Les hacen agradable el hogar. Disponen atractivamente la mesa, preparan bonitos desayunos y comidas, andan siempre arregladas y pintadas, estudian la luz, el sillón cómodo, las revistas agradables, el tabaco; aprenden a preparar cocktails y highballs. A cualquier hora que llegue el marido, aunque llegue con amigos, le hacen de comer, le sirven de beber, con estereotipada sonrisa…Las mexicanas, en cambio, según los informes autorizados de las fuentes experimentales, andan preferentemente en fachas, en chanclas, en bata, despeinadas. Si se les va la criada, ya no hay modo de comer, y la presencia inesperada de visitas es para ellas una tragedia insuperable.” Salvador Novo, La vida en México en el período presidencial de Manuel Ávila Camacho, 400.

204 In 1970 from 711,741 economically active women in Mexico City, 348,751 women were performing middle-class jobs, in commerce or financial offices, in the public service or in liberal professions. This means that around 50% of Mexico City’s economically active women performed such middle-class jobs. See VIII Censo de población…1960, 421 and Mercedes Pedrero, Indicadores para el estudio de la población…1970, 251.
Although Hecht wanted to publish different types of periodicals in Spanish in Mexico, he was particularly interested in making a Spanish version of his *Call for Girls*, which would be called *Muchachas*. As Novo says, “se destinará a pochizar a las changuitas de los doce a los veinte años…” In his chronicle Novo also criticizes the growing invasion of foreign enterprises and technicians hurting national publicity enterprises and local wages. U.S.-financed media played an important role in the cultural crusade to increasing the identification of Mexican society with capitalist-oriented values.

The fact that many women increased their participation in the labor-market did not mean that their traditional role in the family was entirely modified. In fact, advertisements and the media also communicated an image of women as housewives, as mothers, and as sources of morality and good taste in the family. Even advertisements intending to sell U.S. products presented women as those in charge of every task at home. In the Mexican newspapers of the period one finds many advertisements featuring images of women taking advantage of the inventions of progress: laundry machines, irons, vacuums, etc. Having these innovations available at home became a symbol of middle-class status. They also facilitated tasks for women that had to combine the double role of housewives and middle-class employees. The influence of United States role-models particularly emphasized the role of women as home improvers. Such role-models

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205 Novo, *La vida en México en el periodo presidencial de Manuel Ávila Camacho*, 312.

206 Ibid., 312.

207 A random check on different numbers of *Excélsior* and *Novedades* between 1940 and 1960 provides plentiful examples of the image of women at home in the context of middle class family values and consumerism. During that period, women at home were portrayed neatly and very well-dressed, while taking care of their homes using some of the newest vacuums or domestic utensils imported from the United States.
endowed women’s ingenuity at home and at work with connotations of unlimited autonomy and creativity.

U.S. images also suggested that women should re-examine and re-invent their own images, using the new beauty and health care products available in the market. Magazines and newspapers advertised U.S.-produced cosmetics by brands like Cutex, Hinds Cream, mixing OIIA pro-U.S. propaganda and symbols that represented Pan-American solidarity. These brands portrayed women as independent, able for leadership and to occupy prominent positions in society. Other brands like Max Factor utilized the spin offered by the image of Hollywood actresses in order to promote U.S.-style beauty ideals. Ponds also sought to globalize U.S. beauty models by means of incorporating promotional campaigns whereby Mexican women could obtain beauty recommendations from U.S. popular figures like actress Geraldine Spreckels. Palmolive meanwhile, according to Julio Moreno, sought to create a middle ground of beauty advertisement, in which Mexican beauty prototypes were publicized. The advertisement and commercialization of U.S. beauty products in Mexico were part of the process whereby women were supposed to obtain a more active role in society. They were to assert their feminine identity by means of highlighting their beauty while also portraying and defending the achievements of U.S.-style freedom and democracy at home. Then, the new and modern definition of feminine identity was in much conditioned to imitating U.S.-based prototypes, which served to business interests

208 Julio Moreno, 75.
209 Ibid.
210 Ibid., 138.
211 Ibid., 139.
212 Ibid.
receiving higher profits thanks to increasing consumerism. However, on the other hand, a collateral and very important effect of this phenomenon consisted of the shaking of traditional Mexican-style family roles and the appearance of new opportunities for women’s self-definition and pro-activity.

As magazines became excellent means to publicize U.S. culture and ways, U.S. magazines made their way to the hands of middle-class Mexicans. For example, Life, maybe the most important of them, offered middle-class Mexicans a pictures-illustrated overview of the “American Way of Life”, reinforcing their aspirations for it. Life portrayed the ideals of modern family according to U.S. standards: “white, middle class, heterosexual, and patriarchal”. And those fit the ideals of the Mexican middle class, which additionally longed for the organization and material comfort that seemed to be available for the U.S. standard middle-class family. Apparently, that was the true meaning of progress and modernity.

The availability of U.S.-based information and advertisements in Mexican magazines became a primary link to modernity and cosmopolitanism among the middle class. Realizing about this, the U.S. Embassy assisted the publication of magazine Vida, which since 1947 published material supplied through the Embassy’s Information Office. The magazine covered issues focused on health, social security and education that could be of interest for Mexican educated groups, mainly middle-class. Insertions of U.S. advertisement and propaganda were common in magazines like “Nosotros”, “Así” or in

214 “Magazine ‘Vida’ Begins Publication in Mexico City”, Embassy Dispatch to the Secretary of State, April 23, 1947. Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Mexico, Internal Affairs, part II 1940-1944.
periodicals like *La República*, official communications organ of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). During the 1940s, *La República* was said “to possess the largest circulation of any Mexican magazine: Approximately 35,000 copies per week”\(^\text{215}\). So, it became a strategic means for publicizing U.S.-related political and cultural events. Besides, the characteristics of the publication transferred an aura of Mexican “official character” to propagandized U.S. issues. Even conservative magazines like *Hoy* and *Mañana*, directed by José Pagés Llergo, incorporated a good deal of U.S. publicity and reportages. In these magazines, most of U.S.-linked reportages addressed Hollywood celebrities and their glamorous lives. In fact, *Hoy* claimed to be the only Spanish-language periodical in the world to have a complete and exclusive editorial staff in Hollywood\(^\text{216}\). *Mañana*, on the other hand, kept constant communication with the managers and representatives of Hollywood celebrities in order to get their autographed pictures and publicize them\(^\text{217}\). Even *Siempre*—another magazine created by Pagés Llergo later, and featuring more critical contents—often included color photographs of actresses in sensual poses, like the “modest equivalent of a *Playboy* centerfold”\(^\text{218}\). Ranging from political and international events to the Hollywood popular celebrity culture, magazines helped advance the promotion of U.S. culture and consumerism in Mexico. Soon, common Mexicans learned about the “U.S. way of life” through idealizations of the middle-class family or by the latest events in the lives of the most acclaimed screen celebrities.


\(^{217}\) Ibid., 133.

\(^{218}\) Ibid., 142.
Even the origins of the Golden Age of Mexican cinema, starting in 1940, were directly related to collaborative work with the United States, as Seth Fein has convincingly argued.\textsuperscript{219} Mexico achieved unprecedented cinematographic productivity as the United States’ movies production declined because of the war. Mexican productions seemed to fill the vacant slot left by the scarcity of U.S. movies. Yet, as Fein argues, U.S. capital and know-how importantly supported the development of Mexican cinema as a counter-measure to the cinema produced in non-allied and suspiciously pro-fascist Latin American countries, particularly Argentina. Also, the U.S. government gave the Mexican cinematographic industry privileged access to scarce film stock.\textsuperscript{220} Although an important level of self-definition existed in Mexican productions at the time, the influence of U.S. capital and technology determined that movies’ contents would be sympathetic to U.S. interests, or at least would not interfere with them.\textsuperscript{221} Following Rockefeller’s middle ground strategy to obtain more effective influence, U.S. cinematographic investors recognized the important accomplishments of Mexican cinema and gave domestic producers liberty enough to create contents that seemed to evidence high levels of nationalism and revolutionary modernity. As it happened with the industrialization and consumerist model, cinematographic modernity was more successful among Mexicans as long as it was shown as a natural development out of the revolution and national progress.

\textsuperscript{219} Seth Fein, Myths of “Cultural Imperialism and Nationalism in Golden Age Mexican Cinema”, in Joseph, Rubenstein and Zolov, 164.
\textsuperscript{220} Ibid., 167.
\textsuperscript{221} Ibid., 165.
Eventually the U.S. mass-media style, as it incorporated film celebrities to the regular consumption market, became an important part of Mexican popular culture. This fact was reinforced by the fact that the U.S. cinematographic industry was reactivated after the war was over. Then hundreds of U.S. movies began invading the Mexican market, targeting indiscriminately all kinds of audiences. Soon new Hollywood stars and celebrities turned out to occupy an important place in the minds of Mexicans. The conception of “celebrity” was another U.S.-cultural import in Mexico. As John Mraz has said, “the fame fabricated by the mass media became an ‘instrument of psychological control’”.

As in the United States, cinematographic stars became role models for the common Mexican population. Young and mature people admired the new idols and wanted to be more like them. They thought that by consuming products similar to those purchased by the stars, they could be closer to their glamorous way of life. This served to reinforce the consumer culture in gestation in the country. As children were allowed to attend movie presentations of all kind, they also began to develop this “role model” consciousness based on cinematographic stars at an early age. In 1946, a poll undertaken by *La Nación* and some public school teachers illustrated the extent to which the cinema influenced on children’s expectations. Most children, between 8 and 11 years old, considered movies as a need and as an example to base their lives on. Then, the new spectators and potential consumers of U.S.-influenced modernity were importantly shaped by means of Walt Disney and even adult-oriented movies like Salomé, The

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223 In that poll, which was applied to 136 children in different schools in Mexico City, one 10-years old girl wrote (the original orthography and sintaxis is respected): “El cine sirve para enseñar a una e instruir porque dan películas con misterio por eso me gusta a mi enseña cosas buenas cuento de fantasía, música bailes etc películas por quien vasarse en la vida me gustan las películas como “Canción Inolvidable”, “La Barraca”, todas las películas tristes de música y cortos de Walt disney ¿Es muy bonito el cine!”, in *La Nación*, 1946, 8.
Return of the Vampire, Models, Love Traps, Awakening, False Angel, Scarlet Street, among many other Hollywood productions that in Mexico were deemed appropriate for children.224

During the 1950s, the flourishing relationship between the United States and Mexico was consolidated. As U.S. movies and propaganda flooded the Mexican market, also travel from the United States to Mexico and vice-versa was facilitated by the recently completed Mexican section of the Pan-American Highway, connecting Mexico City with the United States. Then, myriads of U.S. tourists could visit Mexico and directly witness the profound transformation that was taking place in a country that was in open process of urban and industrial development. A new vision of a Mexico that combined the richness of its cultural past with the material progress and comfort of modernity was “increasingly disseminated from both sides of the border”.225 This new U.S. perception of Mexico helped attract not only large numbers of foreign visitors but also investments and new business opportunities.226 On the other hand, Mexicans could also travel to the United States with more expediency, reinforcing their opportunities for close exposition to U.S. culture. They witnessed the unprecedented prosperity and material development that was taking place in the neighboring country and brought back new ambitions and expectations. They also brought major openness to assimilate U.S.-influenced tastes and customs.

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224 In 1946, the National Action Party and the Unión Nacional de Padres de Familia coordinated a campaign criticizing the projection of adult-oriented movies to all kind of audiences. More on this will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.


226 Ibid., 240.
Industrialized foods and bottled carbonated soft drinks became another important symbol of the escalating U.S. cultural influence on Mexico. And, initially, they found their most important market among the urban middle class, less able to spend the time necessary for the preparation of traditional food and drinks. Beginning in the 1940s, pancakes and eggs became a common breakfast among that social sector.\(^\text{227}\) Also, expensive packed bread threatened to replace traditional “bolillos”, although unsuccessfully.\(^\text{228}\) Canned vegetables and other industrialized food turned into everyday consumption assets, as urban women had to dedicate more time to work outside home. “Pepsi” and “Coca-Cola” began their way to occupying the leadership in the soft-drinks consumption market. Nonetheless, that place was disputed by some of the most important domestic brands like Mundet and Jarritos. The market for snacks also grew, as new varieties produced by Sabritas and Bali made their appearance (both companies were eventually bought by Pepsico\(^\text{229}\)). As U.S. industrialized-food brands and food styles consolidated their place in the taste of Mexicans during the 1950s and 1960s, the general cultural influence of Mexico’s northern neighbor became more pervasive.

In 1958, the Mexican Secretary of Education, Lic. José Ángel Ceniceros expressed the relative success of the U.S. cultural crusade in a letter sent to the Ambassador of the United States in turn, concerning a recent concert of the Philharmonic Orchestra of New York in the Palace of the Fine Arts and the National Auditorium in Mexico City. Ceniceros says,

\(^{227}\) Jeffrey Pilcher, “Mexico’s Pepsi Challenge”, in Joseph, Rubenstein and Zolov, 81 and 82.

\(^{228}\) Ibid.

\(^{229}\) Ibid., 79.
Considero, señor Embajador, que la natural y efusiva respuesta de nuestro público corresponde por igual a los merecimientos del excelente conjunto enviado por su país al nuestro, y a la indudable evolución y buen caminamiento de las relaciones entre nuestros dos países, ciertamente acrecentadas en los últimos tiempos, debido, entre otras cosas, a la certera y eficaz colaboración de usted, a la manera de entender nuestra idiosincrasia y de dar presencia a Norteamérica, en México, y con los elementos de la cultura y del arte. Éste es un sentimiento igualmente compartido por quien formula estas líneas y por nuestro amigo el licenciado don Miguel Álvarez Acosta, Director de Bellas Artes que ha compartido con nosotros tareas unánimes. […] Es deseable, señor Embajador que esta conducta pueda verse acrecentada en el futuro. Nos queda la satisfacción de haber creído firmemente que los mejores lazos entre los pueblos son aquellos que en forma espontánea, emotiva y a veces apasionada, nos dan las gentes más luminosas de nuestros pueblos, o sea, los maestros, los filósofos, los estetas.  

The strategic importance of expanding the U.S. cultural influence upon Mexico and Latin America remained strong during the 1950s and 1960s, amid the Cold War international scenario. Although Rockefeller’s Office of Inter-American Affairs only existed until 1946, the Department of State took over its functions, and later the United States Information Agency (USIA) continued working on the cultural crusade, from its inception in 1953. Programs of cultural and educational exchange consolidated, while U.S. products and their advertisement kept helping to promote the image of a benevolent democracy, champion of liberal values in the world. Yet, Mexican officials were loyal, at least in the rhetorical level, to their policies of keeping a middle ground in cultural negotiations with both world powers. As they supported increasing cultural exchange with the U.S., they did likewise with the USSR. In 1968, for example, Mexico negotiated important agreements for cultural exchange with both, the United States and the Soviet

Union. Such agreements were validated by President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz. The United States government remained wary of that kind of ambivalent attitude of Mexican officials.

In the United States, fears of Soviet influence in Mexico were generally exaggerated and led U.S. Embassy officials to overreact in numerous occasions. For example, an Embassy brief in 1961 proposed conditioning financial assistance to Mexico in exchange for,

A clear and consistent repudiation of communist infiltration into the political life of Mexico followed by concrete acts quietly to remove from public office known members of the communist party; to combat communist influence in educational institutions and organized labor; to exercise an effective control over the importation of communist propaganda from the Sino-Soviet bloc and Cuba, and the publication in Mexico of Sino-Soviet financed propaganda; to eliminate communist propaganda from textbooks and other reading material used by students in primary and secondary schools […]

Although the Soviet Union became appealing in rhetorical terms to students and intellectuals, even the late-1960s student mobilizations were not linked to direct Soviet influence, as U.S. sources documented at the time. Communist propaganda, on the other hand, did not have any profound impact among the middle class, other than becoming part of the discourse of a few radical leaders. True challenge to U.S. influence

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232 U.S. Embassy in Mexico report to the Department of State, The National Security Archives, George Washington University, After the Revolution, doct. 4, p. 2.

did not actually come from radical communist influence. In spite of recognition to Fidel Castro’s government in the aftermath of the Cuban revolution, Mexico remained committed to the values of liberal capitalism. Socialist allusions were a matter of rhetoric and abstract references politically convenient for Mexican “left-leaning” presidents like Adolfo López Mateos (1958-1964) and Luis Echeverría Álvarez (1970-1976). However, the most important opposition to U.S. cultural influence came from sectors defending local traditions and nationalism. And those sectors were not necessarily direct opponents of the liberal capitalist system. Although diverse in their political convictions, they agreed in one particular point: the importance of asserting Mexican identity amidst growing U.S. influence.
CHAPTER V

ADAPTING THE MEXICAN DREAM

While the material and economic influence of the United States was better accepted by the Mexican middle-classes, cultural influence faced more ambiguous reception. After all, consumerism and the incorporation of U.S. material innovations seemed to be an almost natural element in the construction of middle class identity. Accordingly, the achievements of middle class’ social mobility through education were to be reflected by better access to domestic and imported consumer goods. As industrialization was accepted as a sign of modernity, consumerism and U.S. products also appeared to be a part of that road to modernity that middle-class Mexicans wanted to experience. Yet, as Mexicans faced major cultural influence from the United States by means of the cinema, magazines, advertisements, and direct cultural exchanges, among others, concerns about the endangering of traditions like Catholic religion and morality, the role of women, family values and the Spanish language emerged. Profound caution towards the cultural influence of the United States was expressed by middle-class groups, ranging from ultraconservative to left-leaning. In the end, those voices sought to appropriate and interpret U.S. cultural influence in their own terms, while keeping a sense of nationalism and tradition alive. In the end, U.S. cultural impact added importantly to the identity of the Mexican middle class and population in general. However, local values and traditions offered constant referent to measure the extent to which some aspects of the influence were adopted or not.
Reactions to Increasing U.S. Influence

As growing cultural influence took place during the 1940s, ultraconservative groups in particular were against an increasing proximity between Mexico and the United States. Ultra-Catholic and ultra-nationalistic groups like the Mexican Institute of Hispanic Culture and the Sinarquistas, in fact, believed the national state was a traitor to national interests since it was expanding its relationship with its northern neighbor. The Mexican Institute of Hispanic culture and the Sinarquistas were profiled by the U.S. government as having a clear anti-U.S. tendency. And the Institute created concern among U.S. authorities since its members were prominent middle- and upper-class personalities of the Mexican society. The Sinarquistas, on the other hand, were much less influential in top-political circles since its membership was largely based on peasant groups and lower-middle class leaders based in rural areas of Western-Central Mexico. Yet, in extreme conditions of open rebellion, the Sinarquistas posed the risk of being more subversive than more urbanized and middle- to upper-class ultraconservative movements. The Cristero War between 1926 and 1929 showed what ultraconservative Catholic-oriented popular groups were able to do when violently opposing the government.

The Mexican Institute of Hispanic Culture was founded on September 1948 by top-members of the Mexican intelligentsia such as José Vasconcelos, who was the president. Other prominent sympathizers and important entrepreneurs such as

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234 In communication of October 27, 1948 to the Secretary of State in Washington, Philip Rainer, cultural officer of the U.S. embassy in Mexico, described the recently founded Institute as having “as officers men, generally speaking, who enjoy considerable repute in Mexico, despite their uniformly rightist character. That the Institute can do an effective job in the strictly cultural relations field, among certain and important groups, is obvious, provided it avails itself of all its opportunities. It can doubtless also do effective work in those alleged phases of its activities having an anti-American and anti-Communist aspect.” Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Mexico, Internal Affairs, part II 1945-1949, microfilm 88/2011 b, reel 33.
Santiago Galas Arce and Armando Chávez Camacho were members of the organization. Some of them, such as Vasconcelos and Galas Arce, were even said to have had connections with Nazi Germany, while maintaining current relations with Francisco Franco’s fascist regime in Spain. Other prominent members in the board of directors of the Institute were Juan Sánchez Navarro, who was also a technical adviser of the Cámara de la Industria de la Transformación (the organism to which most economic nationalists belonged), and Armando Chávez Camacho, Director of El Universal Gráfico an important afternoon paper in Mexico City. The Institute sought to promote Spanish culture and links with Francisco Franco’s Spain, while keeping an anti-U.S. and anti-communist approach. Yet, what most concerned U.S. observers was the Institute’s intent to get involved in labor issues, and its possible link with the popular-based Sinarquistas.

However, for the tranquility of U.S. diplomats, none of those possibilities ever became a reality. Ultraconservative trends among the Mexican upper- and middle-classes could well be tolerated, but not so linkages with ultraconservative lower-sectors of society. Such a linkage would have constituted a tremendous obstacle for U.S. cultural penetration.

The politically moderated and more mainstream middle-class-based National Action Party (PAN) was profoundly committed with preserving traditions and nationalism, and therefore considered U.S. cultural influence as a threat to Mexican values. In fact, Manuel Gómez Morín, the middle-class founding father of the PAN, openly rejected the

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235 Dispatch 1809, from the U.S. Embassy in Mexico to the Secretary of State, October 27, 1948. Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Mexico, Internal Affairs, part II 1945-1949.

236 Ibid., p. 3.
influence of the United States in Mexico.\footnote{A report of October 17, 1945 from Guy Ray, second secretary of the embassy of the U.S. in Mexico, to the Secretary of State clearly portrays this situation. In this report, Ray says, “Gómez Morín stated on one occasion that he was prepared to admit that certain material benefits might accrue to Mexico from collaboration with the United States but that he and his friends in Acción Nacional were not willing to surrender Mexican and Spanish culture in exchange for physical benefits which might be obtained from closer association with the United States. Gómez Morín admitted frankly that he was opposed to any effort to increase cultural relations between Mexico and the United States and refers specifically to the exchange of professors and students, which he termed a ‘contamination of Mexicans’, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Mexico, Internal Affairs, part II 1945-1949, microfilm 88/2011 b, reel 33.} Also PAN analysts and other party politicians constantly criticized the deals closed between the Mexican government and the United States. During World War II, for example, it was the PAN position that Mexico should not openly ally with the United States. For PAN analysts, allying with the United States meant subordinating fundamental national interests to determinations imposed from that country.\footnote{Issac Guzmán says, “Así están los que dicen que la única política viable en México es la que se acoge a las órdenes de Washington. Y ellos mismo deben saber que la sumisión política refleja la sumisión en todos los demás aspectos de la vida social. El hecho de estar pendientes de las consignas de la Casa Blanca, revela que es bien poco lo que podemos considerar como verdaderamente nuestro. Y duele, en realidad, que esos pesimistas, a quienes su decadencia ha colocado en la condición de siervos, declaren que debemos estar con los Estados Unidos para seguirlos a donde ellos quieran llevarnos.”, in Boletín de Acción Nacional, August 15, 1940, 4.} Nationalism became a matter of preserving Hispanic culture, Catholicism, as well as family traditions and values, while being very cautious about or frankly rejecting U.S.-imported values. And this perspective was shared by most middle-class members in general. Although the economic and material development of Mexico’s northern neighbor proved particularly appealing to middle class’ aspirations, nationalism and local values also played an important role in asserting middle class identity in cultural terms. Members of the middle class took the role of censors and denouncers of the possible deterioration of Mexican values because of increasing U.S. cultural influence.

Keeping the purity of Spanish language, for example, became a matter of concern for intellectuals and politicians. Beginning in 1940, the incorporation of English-borrowed
terms into Spanish became customary. This situation was reinforced by the increasing economic presence of the United States that soon translated into cultural impact. Abundance of street-advertising in English reflected the escalating influence of U.S. products and consumerism in the Mexican market. The voice of PAN analysts and politicians did not wait long to denounce such situation. Renowned Luis Cabrera, university professor and respected politician, added to those denounces saying:

La parte relativa a la defensa del lenguaje me ha preocupado siempre y he pensado […] que entre la codicia mercantil, la cursilería reporteril y la apatía de los que hablan castellano, se está pudriendo nuestro idioma. […] Alguna vez he pensado que la Academia de la Lengua en países como el nuestro, no debe limitarse a una actitud pasiva de limpiar, fijar y hacer relucir lo que ya tenemos, sino que debe asumir una actitud combativa contra la invasión de los anglicismos que es el problema fundamental de la defensa de nuestro idioma en México.

Then, language corruption was associated with greed and carelessness. Proposing more tighten arbitration from the Language Academy was an indirect way to demand major interest from national institutions in general to fight against English-borrowed terms. Among those institutions, the government was deemed as sharing important responsibility behind the problem, because of its lack of standards and regulations.

239 Alfonso Junco says, “¿Costaría alguna cosa poner invariablemente nuestros rótulos en castellano? Si hay disposición gubernativa en tal sentido, urge hacerla cumplir; si no la hay, urge darla. Y urge, or sobre la presión oficial, que los hombres de México sintamos este incentivo del decoro, y tengamos a honor el auge de nuestro idioma y a vergüenza su desdén. […] Las gentes de negocios, los jefes del comercio y la industria, pueden, en este orden sacudir una rutina y cumplir una tarea tan fácil como fértil. Enormemente acrecidas, por el apremio de las circunstancias, nuestras relaciones económicas con los Estados Unidos, toda nuestra correspondencia para ellos debe ser en español. Así como ellos escriben —con raras excepciones— en inglés, nosotros debemos escribir en castellano. Recíproco es el interés —quizá mayor el suyo ahora—, y no hay motivo que justifique este abandono de adoptar en el trato de negocios la lengua del vecino. […] Si alguna institución de allá no entiende nuestro idioma, palpará la necesidad de tener quien lo entienda. Y esto dará ocupación a gentes (sic.) de nuestra lengua. E invitará a su estudio. Y hará que más se estime, por la necesidad de conocerla.” “En defensa de México”, in La Nación, April 25, 1942, 9.

240 Luis Cabrera, “Carta a Alfonso Junco a propósito de ‘Defensa de México’”, in La Nación, May 9, 1942, 3.
The U.S. cultural influence was quickly obtaining a place in Mexican culture. Such influence was shaped, though, according to local trends. In the 1940s German Valdés “Tin Tán” filmed his first movies with great success. He became the living portrait of the unrefined *pachuco*, who was urban, funny, smart, good lover, an unstoppable mocker of the upper classes, and also extraordinarily resourceful.\(^{241}\) Valdés’ *pachuco* used a language in which varied English vocabulary complemented some of his most important and colorful expressions.\(^{242}\) Although he was seen with “disdain by both the traditional Mexican society and the nouveau riche of alemanismo”,\(^{243}\) he symbolized the syncretism suffered by Mexican culture at the time. Besides, mixing English words with Spanish was not a monopoly of the *pachuco* since this trend eventually became common among the middle and upper sectors of society. Terms such as *cocktail party, drive inn, sandwich, lunch*, among many others, were of common usage for most upper and middle class members. At any well-organized party, the highballs or *jaiboles* (as the term was hispanicized in Mexico), a drink made of whiskey mixed with ginger ale or plain soda, were a must. Also, smoking Lucky Strike cigarettes symbolized elegance and cosmopolitanism, especially while you were reading *Time* or *Reader’s Digest Selections*. Even in the written prose of highly educated and intellectual middle-class people such as Salvador Novo, an abundance of English-borrowed terms is clearly evident. Novo’s urban chronicles for the 1940s are plenty of words such as *drink, party, social relations*,

\(^{241}\) A deeply critical approach to the development of the Pachuco image in the United States is offered by Octavio Paz in the opening chapter of his *Laberinto de la soledad*, México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1959, 9-25.


informally, writer, cocktails, dash, among many others. Seemingly, Novo used these words in order to make an irony of common usages at the time. Yet, such a situation illustrates the extent of influence of this practice. For example, in one of his urban chronicles, Novo describes a last-moment invitation to an important social event in this way, “Ya estaba yo muy a gusto en mi cama; con mi bolsa de agua caliente; mi Life y un volumen de comedias en un acto por leer; con el burgués radio encendido; con los luckies a mano, cuando un teléfono angustiado me conminó a vestirme de tuxedo y volar a una cena. Al social secretary de aquella familia se le había olvidado invitarme, y mi presencia era imprescindible.” For the middle and upper classes of society, modernity meant being urban and in touch with U.S. role-models. Years before, during the Porfiriato, knowing French and being attuned to French culture symbolized distinction and education, but from the 1940s onward learning English became the new trend to follow. However, this trend was shaped under the constant modelling of domestic traditions and local cultural practices.

As the influence of U.S. role-models increased through the mass media, movies, trips of Mexicans to that country, and advertisements, antagonistic reaction in Mexico did not wait long to make its nationalist and traditional voice heard. Such contestation came from diverse fronts, no matter their political sympathies. In 1945 some of the most important newspapers already expressed profound social concern with keeping the Mexican family identity untouched by growing influences from the United States, considered to be pernicious. For example, the editorial section of Novedades in 1945 discussed the

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244 See Salvador Novo, La vida en México en el periodo presidencial de Manuel Ávila Camacho, and La vida en México en el periodo presidencial de Miguel Alemán.

245 Salvador Novo, La vida en México en el periodo presidencial de Manuel Ávila Camacho, 106.
inappropriateness for Mexico of many U.S.-imported movies exhibited in the main urban cinemas. Its author based his opinion in a Secretariat of Labor and Social Prevision statement. In that statement, the Secretariat attributed problems of family dissolution, women subversion of traditional roles and youth rebelliousness to the “negative” influence of U.S. movies in Mexico. Although rhetorical in large extent when coming from the state, this kind of actions gave some sense of coherence to the prevalent discourse of patriotism and national unity. On the other hand, such public displays reflected the defense of traditional values that took increasing force among civil organizations and other political actors like the PAN.

An intense campaign criticizing the projection of U.S. movies to all kind of audiences, even children, occupied the central pages of the PAN periodical, La Nación,

246 The editorial says, “Con todo, si en lo esencial, y pesele a quien le pesare, México sigue siendo México; si ha logrado resistir el embate de doctrinas exóticas y de prédicas contrarias a la verdadera índole de su pueblo, no por ello dejan éstas de poner en peligro, sobre todo por lo que a las nuevas generaciones se refiere, la vida futura de la nación... Tanto es así, que la propia Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social... señala claramente el peligro que entraña la exhibición de cintas cinematográficas norteamericanas, propias tal vez para nuestros 'buenos vecinos'; pero que, aquí en México, sólo han logrado que decrezca el patriotismo y se quebrante 'la unidad material y espiritual que existía en el hogar mexicano y le valió ser tomado por plausible ejemplo de todas las naciones de la tierra.' Later, the editorial adds, “la Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social, con muy buen acuerdo por cierto, pone de manifiesto los gravísimos daños que les han causado a los niños mexicanos 'las películas norteamericanas, tales como las pornográficas, de vaqueros del oeste, descriptivas de hábitos y costumbres americanas, gángsters (homicidios, duelos, suicidios) y muchas otras más, de temas y acciones inconvenientes', señalando que los niños y los adolescentes de México se han ido acostumbrando poco a poco a juzgar a los hombres, no por sus prendas morales, sino por el buen éxito material que logran en la vida, 'y, particularmente, por sus condiciones económicas, lo cual es un sello netamente característico de la escuela norteamericana.' Editorial Section, Novedades, October 13, 1945

247 Among many other issues, in that occasion the Secretariat of Labor asserted that, “Los hábitos torcidos que la juventud mexicana ha adquirido con la influencia del cine, se refleja grandemente en la formación de los actuales hogares, en donde es posible observar que la tradicional virtud y abnegación de la mujer mexicana, como esposa y como madre, ha sufrido modificaciones de importancia no sólo como consecuencia del comportamiento moderno de los hombres, sino también en gran parte a la influencia del cine norteamericano.” Among the most important negative outcomes of this influence the Secretariat announced, “Falta de responsabilidad de los padres. Incomprensión de los deberes de los hijos para con los padres. Tendencia en la mujer a obtener una mayor libertad, que con justicia debe concedérselle, pero sin que raye en los límites del libertinaje que en muchos casos se observa en la actualidad. Disminución por parte del hombre en la estimación de la honra de la mujer, sus buenas acciones y sus problemas.” Note published in El Nacional, October 12, 1945, 1.
during 1946. That campaign criticized the fact that movies portraying adult affairs were deemed appropriate for children by censors. Those affairs included prostitution, sensual dancing, mafia plots, and killings, among others. Although in the articles generally there is no direct allusion to the fact that the majority of these movies were U.S. productions, most criticized movies were, in fact, Hollywood exhibits. The Unión Nacional de Padres de Familia (a middle-class conservative organization strongly linked to the Mexican Catholic Church) brought into PAN analysts’ attention the “inadequate” classification of such movies. According to La Nación “la Unión Nacional de Padres de Familia ha emprendido una campaña –en la que pondrá en juego todas su fuerzas y sus recursos- con objeto de moralizar el cine que se exhibe a la niñez”. This campaign took place as U.S. cinematographic productions took off again, after years of being in a halt because of the war. New U.S. productions offered spectators with movies that approached all kinds of subjects highlighting lascivious aspects. Yet those very aspects that were palatable to U.S. sensibilities seeking to get over previous rigors caused by the wartime effort, seemed to hurt Mexican middle-class’ traditions-concerned sensibilities.

As Mexican censors were questioned concerning their criterion for doing their job, their coordinator Antonio Castro Leal (former rector of the National University) expressed a strongly liberal point of view. When he was told that European standards for censoring movies were strict and did not allow children under 16 years attend the movies, Hollywood movies like Salomé, El regreso del vampiro, Las modelos, Trampas de amor, Despertar revelador, Un ángel disfrazado, Mala mujer, among many others are addressed as immoral and inappropriate in different articles in La Nación.

248 The article adds that Lic. Agustín Navarro, speaker of la Unión de Padres de Familia said, “ya nos hemos dirigido a los escritores, en especial a los que forman parte de la UNPF, para que hagan argumentos apropiados para niños, con tópicos de patriotismo y, sobre todo, en los que campee por copleto una trama interesante y moral.” José Chávez González, “Los menores de 16 años tienen prohibida la entrada a los cines en Canadá, Suiza y Noruega, pero en México la censura opina que pueden ver ‘Amor Prohibido’, ‘Salomé’, etc.”, in La Nación, April 1946, 9.
Castro Leal responded that his office used much more open U.S. standards. Those standards, according to him, allowed movies to be exhibited to all kinds of audience with few restrictions. As he explained how the U.S. system worked, Castro Leal said that there existed,

Una especie de código de honor que las empresas productoras voluntariamente establecieron. Había la censura, y las dificultades creadas entre ella y las compañías hicieron que éstas llegaran a establecer una serie de normas para la producción de películas, a fin de evitar que pudieran ser suspendidas, con la consiguiente pérdida económica. Así fue como la Hay’s Office llegó a la elaboración de un código que fuera aceptable para el Estado y dentro de cuyos lineamientos tendría que hacerse la producción. Entonces, la censura prácticamente no tiene que intervenir, en los Estados Unidos, desde la elaboración de la película y todas las películas pueden ser vistas por cualquier clase de público.\(^{250}\)

With this assertion, Castro Leal evidenced the fact that U.S. cultural influence was so important that even the censorship system of that country shaped the Mexican cinematographic market. Consequently, U.S. productions faced minimal restrictions to penetrate all Mexican audiences, increasing movies’ opportunities to impact on Mexican viewers. The only criterion forbidding a movie from being exhibited or not, was applied to political topics. According to Castro Leal, “Se ha seguido la norma de no permitir ninguna [película] que pueda ser ofensiva a países amigos, por lo que ve a lo internacional; y en lo interno, ninguna que pinte a México o a sus gobernantes en tal forma que pueda resultar en descrédito para nuestro país.”\(^{251}\) Then, as long as politically subversive contents were not included in the film, any other thing could be presented. In

\(^{250}\) “La denuncia de La Nación logra objetivos: multas por exhibir películas impropias para niños en matinés y alterar la calificación de las cintas”, in La Nación, April 1946, 10.

\(^{251}\) Ibid., 10.
the end, censors worked for the Office of Supervision in the Secretary of Government, which would logically be particularly interested in preventing politically subversive contents from being exhibited in the movies. This situation was bitterly criticized by PAN analysts who thought the government was too concerned with preventing the exhibition of political problems and corruption, instead of addressing the “moral” inadequacy in the content of many movies. Seemingly, before anything else the government supported the financial interest of cinematographic producers—many of them in Hollywood—while keeping an eye in possible threats to the government’s rhetoric of national unity and stability. Meanwhile, middle-class analysts in the PAN and other civil organizations sought to play a direct role in counter-attacking what they deemed to be a negative influence on family and religion.

The campaign achieved some incipient results as the Office of Supervision established norms for censors to base their work and also imposed fines to some of the movie theaters that showed children movies that were not intended for them. Yet, this did not seem to have been enough to contain the wave of theaters still showing U.S. and Mexican adult-oriented movies to children. Even a movie that had been banned in Atlanta, Milwaukee and Nueva York in the United States was being presented in the Alameda movie theater, classified for all audiences. “Scarlet Street” (“Mala Mujer” by its translation into Spanish) showed scenes of prostitution and the stabbing of the female

252 An article by Rafael Bernal says, “La verdad no se puede amordazar por más supervisores que le pongan a las cintas; y el presentar la verdad sobre ciertos hombres o ciertos tipos de hombres no es ni será nunca un descrédito para el país, por más que estos hombres ocupen cargos elevados y sean unos perfectos rateros. […] Esta actitud política de los censores (¿Por qué llamarlos supervisores?) nos parece que tiende más a vigilar que el público mexicano no se dé cuenta, en la forma tan real como lo presenta el cine, de los desmanes de nuestros gobernantes que a cuidar el buen nombre de México en el extranjero.” Rafael Bernal, “Para saber a ‘a qué atenerse’ el público tiene derecho a conocer las normas que la censura oficial aplica para la autorización de las películas”, in La Nación, April 1946, 9.
main character under the hands of her pimp. PAN analysts like Ramón Bernal raised the voice, asking Mexican censors to fine the Alameda Theater, and forbid the movie to be shown to children.253 This situation evidenced the fact that commitments made by Castro Leal’s Office of Supervision were far from being fulfilled. Nonetheless, it also evidenced that PAN analysts and other middle-class concerned observers kept a constant eye trying to filter highly influential mass media products according to their convictions.

National cinema stars like Cantinflas, Sara García, Joaquín Pardavé and Mapy Cortés supported the campaign to dignify movies exhibited in Mexico. These celebrities supported the national cinema, the importance of censoring movies adequately, the development of more nationalistic and educational themes, and also the presentation of a modern image of Mexico, portraying its middle class and high levels of urbanization.254 PAN analysts, particularly, promoted the incorporation of more middle-class themes in the movies, superseding the Mexican stereotype of charros, toros and rancheros. For instance, Rafael Bernal argued, “El drama de nuestra clase media en las ciudades ha sido presentado en el cine en repetidas ocasiones, algunas de ellas con éxito, pero nunca se ha realizado plenamente. El tema se presta y, si no se ha aprovechado, es por falta de capacidad en los escritores y en los productores. Francia y los Estados Unidos han hecho

253 Rafael Bernal, “La censura oficial parece haber aprobado como propias para niños una cinta prohibida hasta en los Estados Unidos.-Se debe deslindar responsabilidad”, in La Nación, April 1946, 10.

254 Cantinflas, for example, particularly supported the production of national movies and the fact that movies should “dar a conocer a nuestro país, nuestras constumbres y nuestro modo de sentir. Que nos conozcan perfectamente los otros países, que no han leído sino lo oficial sobre el nuestro y sobre los demás; que conozcan la evolución de México. […] A este país, si algo le ha hecho bien, es el cine nacional; y muchos países lo quieren a través de él”. Interview with Mario Moreno “Cantinflas”, in La Nación, 1946, p. 14. On the other hand, Mapy Cortés said, “Se han producido muchas películas en las que sólo se trata de lo popular, en que sólo se presentan algunas clases sociales. […] por las que creen en otras partes que eso somos y nada más. No; hay que mostrar también la educación, la verdadera cultura de México, todos los aspectos reales que aquí existen.”, “Interview with Mapy Cortés”, in La Nación, April 1946, 12.
maravillas con él.” In fact, creating a more diverse cinematographic industry became a serious matter of concern for middle-class analysts, notwithstanding their political inclination. Being in touch with the most up-to-date cinematographic trends in the United States was not enough for developing better arguments and higher quality movies. As Mexico entered the path of U.S.-influenced modernity, voices defending nationalism and traditions sought to assimilate, transform and present such modernity in their own terms. And those were Mexican middle class’ terms, since in the end those tradition-defending voices belonged to that social sector. As the Mexican middle class became essential source of legitimacy for the government’s discourse of social change and modernity, its members claimed to be trustworthy representatives of the new national scenario: they reclaimed the protagonist position that they thought deserved in the promotion of Mexico’s image, nationally and internationally.

The PAN campaign seeking more strict censorship on adult-oriented movies was also representative of one aspect the Mexican middle class particularly cared about: the family. Among traditional values, the family has been one of the most important permeating every sphere of Mexican society. The family has been fundamental social

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255 Rafael Bernal, “Los temas de las cintas nacionales: charros, toros, tiempos de Don Porfirio, Revolución y un poco de comedia.-Urge busca temas sustanciales de México”, in La Nación, April 1946, 12.

256 José Carbo says, “Ha habido algunos aspirantes a autores que han hecho viajes a Hollywood, para... aprender a ser autores. La cosa es como para destemillarse de risa. Es lo mismo que si se dijera: voy a estudiar para ser O’Neil, o Benavente, o Bernard Shaw, o Shakespeare. Se podrá, por medio del estudio, llegar a dominar lo que se llama técnica del teatro (da lo mismo en este caso referirse al teatro que al cine), pero lo que nunca se podrá aprender en libros ni en aulas, es el genio creador, la pasión humana, los sentimientos universales y, mucho menos, podrá llegarse por medio de ningún texto a interpretar los sentimientos de la humanidad y a transcribir, sin caer en la frialdad de lo metódico, esos sentimientos y esa pasión de los humanos.” “La crisis de argumentos en la cinematografía mexicana”, El Popular, July 29, 1946, 3.
cell, where traditions and culture are reproduced. The family has also been the means of integrating the individual with the community and its traditions. In fact, one of the most important rhetorical figures in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution was the revolutionary family, with the president portraying the almighty patriarch, responsible for its governed people. After all, the Mexican middle classes like their U.S. counterparts kept patriarchalism as an important element in their family and social idealizations. And such appreciation of the patriarchal family led the Mexican state to self-assume the image of the top-patriarch, through the president, as the means to exert amplified political authority.

As a conception created by post-revolutionary governments, the revolutionary family not only was a matter of corporatism and state control over the working class, but it also aimed to permeate every level of the Mexican society with a state-centered ideology. After 1940, with the conservative shift of the post-revolutionary governments, this ideology supposedly facilitated economic development and social mobility, while keeping unity, stability and nationalism. Thus, the Mexican middle classes could create parallels between their own family patriarchal values and those of the national state. As Octavio Paz has said, “Behind the respect for Señor Presidente there is the traditional image of the Father… In the center of the family: the father. The father figure is two-pronged, the duality of patriarch and macho. The patriarch protects, is good, powerful, wise. The macho is the terrible man, the chingón, the father who has left, who has abandoned a wife and children. The image of Mexican authority is inspired by these two extremes.”

the mentality of middle class *desarrollismo*. The family meant important foundation for social stability and status. Accordingly, it was in the family where the most essential educational and moral values were to be inculcated. Manuel Ávila Camacho, aware of this, made constant reference to the importance of the family as the main nucleus of national unity, governance and economic expansion. Family values and principles of Catholic morality were importantly related to the essence of being Mexican, and those values were highly appreciated by the middle classes.

High concern for the preservation of the patriarchal family was not a monopoly of Mexican conservative sectors; it also got the attention of representatives of all currents of thought. In the 1950s, for instance, José Iturriaga already expressed middle class concern about the deterioration of family values in the context of growing influence of the United States, and major urbanization and industrialization.\(^{258}\) Moreover, Iturriaga showed that increasing disintegration of community cohesiveness and the dissolution of the rigid social structure of small towns had a direct correlation with the rise in divorce rates.\(^{259}\) Iturriaga also considered that family cohesiveness was disappearing as women entered the urban labor force. According to him, of all the personnel that worked in the Mexican industry in 1940, 14.44% were women. From this percentage, 17.50% worked in commerce and financial institutions, 7.64% in the public service, and 9.39% in liberal professions. The numerical growth of women employed in the public service was very

\(^{258}\) In this regard, Iturriaga says, “Pero aparte de las razones estrictamente económicas y sociológicas locales que favorecen la modificación estructural de la familia, existe otra que debe mencionarse: la imitación extralógica nacida de nuestra vecindad con los Estados Unidos.” José Iturriaga, 33.

\(^{259}\) Iturriaga asserts, “la ciudad rompe la sensación de vecindad propia de las aldeas, de tal modo que deja de funcionar la rígida censura social tan característica de los pequeños poblados. De aquí que el divorcio y otras formas de disolución familiar aparezcan con más frecuencia en los centros urbanos que en el campo. Tan es esto así, que a pesar de que la población rural era en 1940 casi dos veces mayor que la urbana, en ésta se registraron empero cuatro veces más divorcios que en aquélla.”Ibid., 30.

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important, understandably. In this regard, Iturriaga’s data shows an expansion from 1,785 women working in the public service in 1910, to 10,184 in 1930, and later to 42,227 in 1940. In commerce, the extent of expansion is also striking because from 39,837 women working in commerce in 1930, the numbers almost tripled in 1940 as 96,697 women worked in commercial areas by that time. In 1960, from a total of 531,200 economically active women, 239,023 women worked as professionals, as directors, or also in offices or in commerce, while in 1970, from 711,741 economically active women, 348,751 women performed such middle class jobs in Mexico City. This means that the expansion of women performing works typical of the middle classes boomed in the post-revolutionary period between 1920 and 1940, and this tendency of growth remained constant at least until 1970. In 1960 and also in 1970 around half of the economically active women in Mexico City were part of the middle classes as shown by the kind of work they performed. Improving the consumer capacity of the middle-class household demanded the work of both the wife and husband, eroding patriarchal prejudices excluding women from the role as bread-winners, and also challenging the traditional cohesiveness of the Mexican family. Additionally the influence of U.S. role models through the mass media opened the doors to increasing acceptance of divorce as an alternative among the urban middle-class population.

Mexican women represented a bridge to transmit new consumerist values and modernization trends at home, representing a primary target for the U.S. cultural crusade. As a Life-style patriarchal culture was promoted in Mexico, magazines in general

260 Ibid., 30.
261 See VIII Censo de población...1960, 421 and Mercedes Pedrero, Indicadores para el estudio de la población...1970, 251.
advertised an image of women taking thorough care of their homes, embellishing them and making them more appealing for their husbands. This would supposedly fit neatly the Mexican middle class man’s family idealization. Yet, this Americanization of the Mexican home did not consider the fact that Mexicans had a special cult for the public space and the public plaza. For Mexicans, the public plaza represented an important space for socialization and self-assertion. Thus, as soon as being at home back from work, many Mexican husbands were more interested in going out with their couples than in staying at their places to enjoy any possible embellishment undertaken by their wives. In this regard, Salvador Novo refers to some examples of people close to him for whom neither home improvement nor spending more time at home were among their highest priorities. In spite of how much U.S. images contributed to strengthening home esteem and housewives’ role-models, those images very often clashed with Mexican customs and values.

From a Left-leaning point of view, the penetration of U.S. magazines was attacked since they propagated conceptions that seemingly violated Mexican customs. In 1952, U.S. magazines were denounced by the most important Left-leaning periodical at the time, El Popular, for displacing national periodicals and corrupting local customs and ideals. They were also condemned for seeking to impact on Latin American opinion,

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262 Novo, *La vida en México en el periodo presidencial de Manuel Ávila Camacho*, 400.

263 An editorial article in *El Popular* says, “Alarmante resulta ya la circulación de las revistas norteamericanas editadas en español en nuestro país y en toda la América Latina. Son muchas las publicaciones de los Estados Unidos que, desde hace algún tiempo, imprimen en castellano, o en lo que así puede llamarse por facilidad de lenguaje, millones de ejemplares detinados a nutrir de lectura a los habitantes de la América Latina, desplazando, como es natural, a las publicaciones nacionales y haciendo una competencia desigual, sin lealtad a los periódicos hispanoamericanos. […] Esto no es, sin embargo, lo más importante ni lo más grave del peligro que tal invasión entraña, sino otro, muchísimo más digno de tomarse en consideración: el hecho de que tales revistas no son sino órganos de penetración de la concepción imperialista del mundo y vehículos de corrupción y adulteración de las ideas, las costumbres y,
portraying the U.S. as saviors of the world, while hiding plans for economic and cultural domination.\textsuperscript{264} From an anti-imperialistic standpoint middle-class analysts thought that magazines represented an instrument of manipulation and cultural deception, undermining Mexican family values and traditions. In this, the Left-leaning approach strongly paralleled more conservative and mainstream middle-class perspectives at the time, converging in the end in a patriarchal vision of Mexican society.

Among the Mexican middle class, a Catholic-based conception of family and womanhood predominated. Although accepting unstoppable trends to major self-assertion and participation among women in the political sphere,\textsuperscript{265} conservative points of view highlighted women’s essentiality as core holders of the family tradition and morality.\textsuperscript{266} In 1952, meeting with the PAN’s Feminine Sector, the party’s presidential candidate Efraín González Luna said,

\textit{Es tanto la mujer en la familia, que poco tenemos que decir en relación con este tema. Es el elemento esencialísimo, la piedra angular, la estructura esencial, la raíz y la savia, el principio vital, el fuego del hogar, la llama alrededor de la cual los hijos, la familia toda, viven. La mujer es indiscutiblemente el factor principal de la familia. La familia es lo que es en ella la madre, lo que es en ella la esposa.[…] Especialmente en el orden de la formación de las almas, no es comparable –aun

en suma, la cultura latinoamericana.” “La perniciosa labor de las revistas yanquis que se editan en español”, \textit{El Popular}, July 22, 1952, 1.

\textsuperscript{264} Ibid., 3.

\textsuperscript{265} The PAN was composed of an important feminine political sector that influenced on obtaining the right to vote for women in 1947 and legal capacity to stand for election in 1953.

\textsuperscript{266} In 1943, an article in \textit{La Nación} criticized the fact that women were increasingly involved in jobs out of their own homes. The article, wrote with an open conservative overtone, said, “Visto en la superficie, el trabajo femenino está lleno de colorido. Es que ellas logran arrastrar sus encantos hasta las oficinas. Pero claramente, la flor puesta en el escritorio, el perfume en el salón de las secretarias, la coqueta distribución de las cortinas, eso es algo que está fuera de sitio: que proclama a gritos la noble finalidad de la casa propia, del cariñoso hogar. Todo esto, (sic.) se ha fugado de la casa y la ha empobrecido, porque las cosas se marchan con la dueña que no puede vivir sin ellas. Y toda huida es inestable, como aroma femenino en medio del tránsito.” “Mujeres que trabajan”, in \textit{La Nación}, 1943, 23.
According to this approach, women were responsible primarily for securing family unity and morality. Women were also pivotal in the preservation of traditional Mexican family values and social stability. In that sense women’s contribution to the “common good” of society was considered paramount. Yet, facing the contemporary pressures of modernity, this conservative position developed a middle ground: as the traditional family was conceived as essential for social order preservation, women were also conceived as fundamental for their contribution to that social order by means of participating in the political life of the country. Efraín González Luna emphasized the fact that women were as smart, rational and independent as men, and therefore, “la mujer tiene responsabilidad y misión social y política, como las tiene el hombre.”

Then, in that regard a more progressive point of view concerning the role of women in society did in fact prevail. However, under the intrinsically cultural point of view, women were still seen as a pillar and example for the traditional family that had to be kept at all cost.

Cultural foreign influence that challenged the family unity and women’s role behind it was to be attacked. And those attacks were directed against both liberal capitalism and socialism. The 1951-Segunda Semana Social de México, organized by Acción Católica Mexicana and supported by PAN representatives, offered key insights about the most

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267 “Mensaje del candidato nacional a la mujer mexicana”, in La Nación, 1952, 6.
268 Ibid., 7.
important points on which religious-based cultural middle-class criticism focused. An article in *La Nación* addresses those aspects,

La Segunda Semana Social de México tendrá como tema central de estudio ‘la construcción de la familia en el momento actual de México’. Al señalar su capital importancia, la Convocatoria respectiva hace hincapié en que ‘la triste realidad de nuestra Patria, reflejo de la realidad mundial de los últimos tiempos, nos muestra cómo las doctrinas exóticas y filosofías materialistas han introducido desconcierto en los espíritus y han dañado y tienden a dañar más aún, esa pequeña comunidad natural que se llama la familia, tratando satánicamente de desvirtuarla en su origen, en su constitución, en su naturaleza y en la nobleza de sus fines.²⁶⁹

Accordingly, the Mexican family should preserve its Christian and indissoluble character in order to keep the authentic self of Mexico.²⁷⁰ The Segunda Semana Social reached a conclusion that dangerous ideological currents prevailed in the Mexican scenario:

Una interpretación protestante y jansenista del tradicionalismo en la familia; un falso concepto de libertad; el liberalismo, cuyas leyes, impuestas a la sociedad, aún privan, en virtud de las cuales el Estado se atribuye funciones y facultades que de ninguna manera le corresponden; una tendencia cada vez más marcada en la mujer a menospreciar su altísima misión, desatendiendo sus deberes a impulso de una corriente exótica en nuestro medio mexicano.²⁷¹

The mention of that “exotic current” was ambiguous enough to avoid frontally attacking feminist, liberal and scientific influences from the United States. Yet, those influences were dangerously challenging Mexican family traditions since—along with the *Life*-style patriarchal family model—they also brought about major acceptance of


²⁷⁰ Ibid.


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divorce, new scientific research on birth-control, and more liberal patterns in gender and family relations. All those elements, in the end, challenged the patriarchal role-models that were not only valued in Mexico, but also in the United States. The seeds for a countercultural movement were in process of cultivation. Their results would not take long to show up in the Mexican scenario as they did in the United States, transforming long-held social conceptions and values.

The Countercultural Reactions

During the 1950s and 1960s the influence of U.S. liberal trends and countercultural movements gained many adepts among the middle class youth in Mexico. This youth was neither as family-oriented nor as satisfied with the prevalent social order as their parents had been. Young middle class people challenged the patriarchal system and rigid morality that was so important for middle class self-conception. Leftist radicalism behind university walls, liberal trends in the U.S. leading to the 1960s-sexual revolution, and the appearance of rock-and-roll were highly influential in shaping this challenge. Participating spontaneously in the countercultural movement became middle class youth’s social marker as it was a monopoly of relatively educated urban young people which contested the very system that shaped their social class condition.\(^{272}\) In the end, the influence of Rock and Roll and cosmopolitan countercultural trends from the United States and Europe were mostly accessible to urban and educated youngsters that enjoyed some of the most important achievements of the Mexican post-revolutionary regime.

\(^{272}\) In this regard, Gabriel Careaga said, “The middle class authoritarian youth often appear as unsatisfied, as impatient and tend to participate as rebel groups facing a culture and organization of society.” Careaga, *Mitos y fantasías de la clase media en México*, México, Joaquín Mortiz, 1976, 67.
Between 1950 and 1970 Mexico City grew tremendously, and so did the possible places where young people could escape the surveillance and control of their parents. The limits of traditional neighborhoods suddenly expanded, while a new sense of urbanism and cosmopolitanism influenced youngsters. On the other hand, government-financed building areas also expanded. The big yards of some of these places became the meeting point for the young sons and daughters of public employees and other middle class families. In these areas, young men and women reproduced some of the activities and models of behavior that they learned while watching U.S. imported movies. Seeking to resemble James Dean, Marlon Brandon, Elvis Presley and other young popular-culture heroes, the “rebeldes sin causa” became a new paradigm among the Mexican middle class youth.

At the time, the middle class youth had become particularly ambitious of change and opportunities. They learned to appreciate the possibilities of gaining major autonomy and self-determination, abandoning some of the traditional parameters followed by their parents. Mexico’s rally towards modernity meant that not only industries and cities expanded, the mentality of middle-class young people also did. That mentality was importantly influenced by exogenous models taken from the United States. However, such models did not necessarily agree with mainstream liberal capitalistic values promoted in the United States. As U.S. youngsters sought to create a culture of their own, going beyond old values and ways of life, Mexican young people also found inspiration in new perspectives of living. They were willing to undertake new responsibilities and

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shape a world that responded better to their expectations and challenges. The middle class youth had become less conformist and more proactive in comparison to their progenitors’ generation. For example, in 1959, an article in *El Popular* said,

Hemos tratado de analizar en forma simple la vida de un joven mexicano, trae su cauda de temores, de angustias, de pocas satisfacciones, pero su carga positiva de deseos, de ideales, de programas es extraordinaria, ya el joven mexicano no tiene el conformismo que tenía otro joven también mexicano hace 25 años. Los tiempos cambian las cosas, cambian a las personas, cambian los procedimientos y también hasta las oportunidades. […] Así vemos que ahora los jóvenes no se conforman con poco; quieren ser universitarios, politécnicos, técnicos en pequeñas industrias, ayudantes de laboratorio, etc., etc., sus ambiciones han mejorado.  

However, those ambitions were not finding corresponding opportunities in a context where socioeconomic inequality began to be evident and jobs were not easily available. The post-revolutionary rhetoric of revolutionary change and social improvement became harder to hold. The article goes ahead saying,

Pero el país, se encuentra ante una desigualdad de demografía terrible; nacen miles y miles de mexicanos al año, pero, no nacen al parejo miles y miles de oportunidades para que tantas y tantos en edad juvenil, puedan tener los primeros pasos de una meta (sic.). Las industrias crecen también y solicitan jóvenes calificados, con multitud de requisitos, con buenos salarios pero con exigencias que en estas horas no se pueden cumplir, porque las escuelas de formación profesional, no tienen las capacidades para absorber la demanda de aprendizaje. […] Son líneas dirigentes; crece la población juvenil, pero se alejan las posibilidades para que los jóvenes encuentren trabajo; la capacitación no se puede improvisar y hemos observado, estudiando casos concretos de muchachos que no quieren salir del paso; que desean hacer las cosas

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muy bien y que su sentido autocrítico, corresponde ya a hombres de mayor madurez emocional.\textsuperscript{275}

New ambitions and expectations among the Mexican middle-class youth awakened their interest in knowing more about their counterparts in the United States and Europe. The national discourse that stressed the importance of nationalism, local values and traditions did not satisfy new aspirations to modernity and material progress. Their parents’ cautioning statements on sex and teachings on moral values seemed obsolete and created to set limits and control where there should not be any. To some extent Mexican middle-class youngsters saw the United States with envy and admiration at the time. The United States projected an image of being the champion of economic progress and cultural transformation. After WWII, thousands of U.S. youngsters abandoned their hometowns to look for opportunities in other areas of the country or even in other countries. So, a culture of major autonomy and self-determination had developed among the U.S. youth. Why could the Mexican middle class youth not have the same kind of possibilities? After all, generally they had higher educational level than their parents and they were more exposed to international influences.

Travels to Mexico by U.S. counterculturalists, “beatniks” in the 1950s and “hippies” in the 1960s, helped to increase the exposure among the Mexican middle-class youth to countercultural trends. For U.S. counterculturalists, Mexico represented an easily available place that still offered places that seemed to be beyond the influx of modernity and artificiality.\textsuperscript{276} Their Mexican counterparts, on the other hand, got in touch with these U.S. seekers of new experiences, and learned to appreciate their rebellious character as

\textsuperscript{275} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{276} Eric Zolov, “Discovering a Land…”, in Joseph, Rubenstein and Zolov, 256.
well as their anti-patriarchal philosophy.\textsuperscript{277} In the end, Mexican middle-class counterculture was synthesized in the name “La Onda”, which “reflected a number of transcultural influences, including that of foreign hippies.”\textsuperscript{278} La Onda channeled the concern of the Mexican middle-class youth on creating its own expression and beliefs, challenging the traditional, nationalistic and authoritarian discourse of the state, often reproduced at home. By means of La Onda, Mexican youngsters appropriated the transnational influence that they received, creating a style of their own that shaped their music, literature, language, dressing and places to meet.

La Onda became a way of life that challenged patriarchal values and sought to create a new discourse based on a more dynamic and modern perspective of life. Such a perspective addressed youth popular culture, slang, rock-and-roll music and lyrics, as well as revolutionary and antiauthoritarian trends.\textsuperscript{279} In literature, authors like José Agustín, Gustavo Sainz and Parménides García Saldaña, among many others, offered a disenchanted and critical version of their universe although still remaining immersed in it.\textsuperscript{280} Their language was irreverent, iconoclastic and profoundly rebellious. Their literature made a parody of the urban middle class, their values, their beliefs, their “Mexican way of life.” At the same time, they tried to take some distance from the world they lived in and sought new alternatives, building a new code of values and cultural ways.\textsuperscript{281} Yet, it was only after the Tlatelolco massacre of October 1968 that La Onda

\textsuperscript{277} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{278} Ibid., 257.
\textsuperscript{280} Margo Glantz, quoted by Bruce-Novoa, Ibid., 38.
\textsuperscript{281} Ibid., 39.
authors became more challenging and politicized, reflecting that in their writings. Before that, their antiestablishment attitudes and actions seemed to essentially be a pose, following the pattern of their time countercultural trends that in the end constituted a reaffirmation of their protagonists’ bourgeois identity. Only after the violent slap of reality over violently repressed middle-class students in 1968, La Onda authors abandoned their self-contained and almost frivolous critique of their immediate family terrain. Then, La Onda authors turned their interest into a profound questioning of the Mexican political and economic institutions that shaped the urban and middle-class ground where they had been raised. They finally consolidated the appropriation of the mix of influences that shaped their early development.

The antagonistic reaction among middle-class parenthood and the authorities to youth’s rebelliousness was strong. Influential conservative organizations such as the Mexican League of Decency and the UNPF began an open offensive censoring public spectacles, banning nudity from the movies and ferociously criticizing rock and roll and youth’s rebelliousness. Even the Marxist Left saw danger in the new U.S.-influenced attitude of the Mexican middle-class youth. In the 1970s, Arturo González Cosío, for instance, said concerning the middle-class youth: “Desconcertados, desprecian a sus países y creen asimilarse a un estilo que en realidad les es ajeno y difícil de aplicar”. According to Marxists’ point of view, the Mexican youth’s countercultural movement

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282 The Tlatelolco Massacre will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

283 Bruce-Novoa, “La Onda as a Parody…”, in José Agustín, 41.

284 Rubén Martínez says, “Maybe the single thing the government, the Catholic Church, and the Marxist Left could all agree on was that Mexican youth were imperiled by the Protestant, decadent, and individualistic North.” “Corazón del Rocanrol”, in Joseph, Rubenstein and Zolov, 379.

285 Arturo González Cosío, Clases medias y movilidad social en México…, 51.
was reactionary in essence, reasserting bourgeois values and beliefs. Meanwhile, since the late-1950s the authorities launched a continuous persecution against “rebeldes sin causa” and attendants to “cafés cantantes” and other underground places where rebellious youngsters met.\footnote{An article in \textit{El Popular} reports, “También la policía no descansa en sus razzias contra los jóvenes copetudos y enfundados en estrechos pantalones que se les conoce como ‘rebeldes sin causa’. En todos los centros de vicio, y sin que nadie los espere, sorpresivamente llegan los guardianes del orden, empezando a llenar sus carrocerías con vaguillos de toda laya. Estas razzias, según fuimos informados, continuarán indefinidamente.” “Clausura de hoteles de ‘paso’ y detención de ‘enemigas del sol’, disposición en marcha”, in \textit{El Popular}, October 22, 1959, 4.} During the 1960s, rock and roll was largely domesticated, and the mass media offered less challenging Mexican versions, exemplified by singers such as Enrique Guzmán, César Costa, Angélica María and Julissa.\footnote{Accordingly, Zolov says, “The containment of rock ‘n’ roll during the early 1960s was part of a broader movement of self-policing the boundaries of media representation. Such efforts to ‘clean up’ the representation of modern Mexico did not originate with agents of the media, but, under the pressure of conservative watchdog groups and the 1960 law regulating broadcasting, every effort was made to demonstrate a willingness to conform rather than provoke. Thus in July 1963 the National Chamber of Broadcasting Industries addressed a letter to President Lopez Mateos reaffirming its commitment to ‘elevate the cultural, civic and social level of our transmissions in order to comply faithfully with the social function which the law requires.’ Zolov, \textit{Refried Elvis}…, 89} Yet, the most educated and progressive middle class sectors kept their loyalty to original and countercultural rock from England or the United States, and to some of the most important Mexican versions of that time as well\footnote{Zolov asserts that Mexico’s grand era of rocancrol took place between 1959 and 1964, when Orfeon launched Mexican rocancrol groups like Los Loud Jets, Los Locos del Ritmo, Los Rebeldes del Rock, Los Hitter and Los Hooligans, among others. Zolov, \textit{Refried Elvis}…, 65.}. Eventually Jimmy Hendrix, The Doors, Janis Joplin, The Rolling Stones, Deep Purple and The Beatles became strong symbols of change and cultural confrontation among the Mexican middle-class youth.

In 1971, the Avándaro Festival, in the outskirts of Mexico City, represented the pinnacle of La Onda movement. According to Rubén Martínez, “the spectacle was a mirror image of Woodstock […] and anywhere between one hundred thousand (government figure) and half a million (rockero version) chavos de la onda attended the
two-day festival featuring bands like Three Souls in My Mind, Love Army, and El Ritual." With the 1968-Tlatelolco massacre so recent, Mexican authorities feared a possible surge of violent confrontation against the police forces that were watching over the event. Yet, Avándaro developed as a pacific festival, where Mexican youngsters shared their appreciation for rock and roll, and reaffirmed their countercultural identity. At the time, having long hair, being “universitario”, using a particular slang, reading culturally subversive books and wearing some particular clothes marked the cultural sensibilities of Mexican middle-class youth.

Between the 1950s and the 1970s, rock and roll had a strong impact among the middle class youth, sharpening contradictions between middle-class traditional values and modernizing trends highly influential among younger generations. By being connected with the new wave of rock and roll, some of the most progressive and young middle class sectors sought to create an alternative identity, contesting unwanted cultural aspects of the prevalent system. They found haven in existentialist and alternative cafes as well as meeting points in places such as La Zona Rosa in the heart of Mexico City.

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289 Rubén Martínez, “Corazón del Rocanrol”, in Joseph, Rubenstein and Zolov, 381.

290 Zolov, Refried Elvis…, 113.

291 Zolov says, “The tension between accepting rock ‘n’ roll as a modernizing agent and viewing it as the embodiment of a threat to social stability was manifested in the press and the public mind-set during the mid-to-late 1950s. This conflict mirrored the profound changes present in everyday life: the increased cultural and economic ties with the United States, manifested especially in the rising consumer culture; the rapid transformation of the urban environment, reflected in both the development of new public works and increased rural migration to the capital; a political environment in which the rhetoric of the Revolutionary Family belied the reality of a closed political system. The official heroes of the Revolution had come to have less relevance for a new generation of urban youth who discovered a closer connection with James Dean and Elvis Presley than with Benito Juarez or Emiliano Zapata, much less Jorge Negrete or Javier Solís (both renowned ranchera singers).” Zolov, Refried Elvis…, 40.

292 La Zona Rosa is a place located in one of the most important plazas of Mexico City, close to the centric intersection between Avenida Insurgentes and Paseo de la Reforma. During the 1960s and 1970s La Zona Rosa became meeting point for all kind of intellectuals, bohemians, hippies, and people proposing alternative life-styles. The many cafes, art galleries and exotic stores of the area symbolized the profound
Nonetheless, the influence of rock and roll and counterculture itself was not the only detonator leading the youth to directly confront the government by the late-1960s. Profound social and economic contradictions in the Mexican political scenario and within middle-class paradigms of education and social mobility stimulated youth’s discontent in a way that transcended all expectations in the Mexican political regime.

The Mexican middle-class’ response to U.S. cultural influence was the response of a social sector that sought to reassert its leadership in the interpretation of culture and its transmission to other social groups. In the end, the Mexican middle class assumed that it was the most educated social group in the country and also the group that best portrayed post-revolutionary promises of social change and modernization. Its members in the government, political parties and civil society fully engaged in the task of reformation that thought necessary in order to achieve a Mexico more attuned with new international trends, while best satisfying their own economic expectations. Such reformation meant escalating industrialization and urbanization. However, reformation took place under the strong influence of powerful political and economic interests within Mexico and in the United States. Those interests boosted the process of transnational and transcultural influences in unprecedented way, as this created a Mexican social context where quick profits were easily available, and major U.S. presence could be consolidated. The Mexican middle class played an important role giving legitimacy to that process by means of expanding consumerism, and incorporating new cultural traits. Apparently,

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transformation of the youngest sectors of the Mexican middle classes. La Zona Rosa offered a space in which the authoritarianism of family parents and the state were kept at bay.
consumerism added to the social status of the middle class, while helping to improve the national economy. Yet, in the end, sharp contradictions in the Mexican model of development and excessive reliance in the external sector created profound problems that led to the late-1970s and early-1980s financial crises.

For the Mexican middle class, modernization was rather a matter of economic and material change, and the United States offered the model to follow. The cultural aspects of that kind of modernization were accepted as long as they contributed to material and economic betterment. For instance, women could not be denied a new and more active role in politics, as they became an important sector of the middle-class working force that contributed to material and economic improvement at home and in society. Meanwhile, middle-class representatives watched over the process of cultural change taking place in Mexico and contested what they felt threatened deep-rooted traditions and cultural values. Yet, the cultural impact of appropriating external modernization trends went well beyond being a provisional result of increasing material and economic influence from the United States. Family traditions, education, moral and religious values, gender roles and the Mexican patriarchal culture in general faced strong challenges and transformations that had durable and profound impact. And those were reinforced by changing mentalities among the Mexican middle-class urban youth, influenced by transnational counterculture and rock and roll. By the late-1960s profound contradictions in the Mexican political and economic system stirred the claims for change among the middle-class youth. Yet, this time, the youth met unprecedented violent repression from the state in Tlatelolco. This unprecedented event profoundly changed the relationship between the middle classes and the post-revolutionary governments.
CHAPTER VI

THE POLITICS OF MIDDLE CLASS POPULISM

Post-revolutionary politics in Mexico evidenced the expanding importance of the national middle class, which became highly influential. The middle classes were important inheritors of the revolutionary legacy and also among the most important victors in the process, at least until the 1970s. In spite of the agrarian features of the 1910s-revolution, political consolidation took place among urban-based middle class constituencies, operating from Mexico City. First with Álvaro Obregón and Plutarco Elías Calles in the 1920s, and later with Lázaro Cárdenas in the 1930s, the urban-based middle class consolidated its political capital, supported by a national project that privileged urban and industrial development. The period after 1940 witnessed the culmination of such a trend, as the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) and the Partido Popular (PP) became the most important protagonists in the political arena. Although the PRI manipulated political balance to its own favor, the other two parties constituted important political fronts with relevant impact on the Mexican political arena through the leverage of their middle-class representatives.

The PAN and PP became important actors in the political parties’ arena as other political groups lacked the high level of urban influence and middle class composition characterizing them. For instance, the Partido Comunista Mexicano (PCM) was already on the decline in the 1940s, while the ultraconservative Unión Nacional Sinarquista (UNS) and the Sinarquista movement—a version of lower-class radicalism on the right
according to Stephen Niblo—were abolished by the federal government in 1944. The PAN began operating in 1939, when Manuel Gómez Morín and other prominent middle-class representatives created the party. The PAN gained strength through time and became an opposition party with relative weight in the electoral scenario. Also in the 1940s, the PRI’s middle-class based Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares (CNOP) became the paramount organization within the corporatist structure of the party in power. Since its inception in 1943, the CNOP became more influential than the peasant and worker corporations, and thereafter most presidents found their political origins within the CNOP. While offering a counterbalance for CTM presence, the CNOP eventually marginalized the CNC. Meanwhile, in 1947, the Popular Party was created by Vicente Lombardo Toledano and other distinguished left-leaning middle-class representatives, among politicians, intellectuals and artists. The PP became the political arm whereby Lombardo contested or supported the regime from a left-leaning position, although avoiding radicalism. Then, the 1940s inaugurated an era in which middle-class politics, from different fronts, shaped the Mexican scenario, consolidating the bases for the high levels of political stability that characterized the country during the following decades.

Niblo says that by 1945, the Communist Party only could claim 3,913 members. Meanwhile, the UNS and the Sinarquista movement were abolished on June 23, 1944, and further issues of their publication *El Sinarquista* were forbidden. Mexico in the 1940s, pp. 140-141. Yet, the PCM survived in the illegality and performing clandestine activities until it received legal registration in 1977. In 1981, the PCM dissolved to join other left-leaning parties to form the Unified Socialist Party of Mexico (PSUM). Concerning sinarquistas, they also kept working in the illegality until President Luis Echeverría’s electoral opening offered the UNS the opportunity to participate in legal electoral processes.

Soledad Loaeza says, “La teoría de la modernización aplicada al análisis del fraccionamiento ideológico de las clases medias intenta capturar la dinámica que se asocia con ellas e incorporar la influencia del sistema político sobre su comportamiento, en un proceso en el que primero aparecen como la vanguardia del cambio para convertirse después, una vez asegurada su posición de participación, en el centro de la estabilidad política.” See Loaeza, *Clases medias*..., 54.
This chapter seeks to demonstrate that between 1940 and 1970 the most important middle class’ political factions shared more in political terms than not. A common political denominator like looking for a political middle ground seems to contradict the argument of authors arguing the political heterogeneity of the Mexican middle class, and irreconcilable differences among its most important representatives. Even though some middle class sectors identified with trends ranging from the Left to the Right of the political spectrum, the most influential middle class political sectors sought the consolidation of a political middle ground. This quest for a political middle ground meant a very active role for the Mexican middle class in politics, as opposed to opinions portraying this sector as passive and dominated by those in power.\(^{295}\) Middle class politics has been the politics of the active construction of stability, favorable for the consolidation of middle class importance in Mexico. In fact, between 1940 and 1970 the most important political parties were middle-class parties.

The construction of a political middle ground has not meant that a parallel economic middle ground with balanced benefits for different social sectors has taken place in Mexico. Instead, a political middle ground has provided a convenient context for developing conditions favorable to economic elites’ consolidation. Between 1940 and 1970 the Mexican middle class seemingly had good opportunities for riding the same development wagon ridden by the capitalist sector. Meanwhile, workers faced decreasing real wages and the intermediation of union leaders that often worked for their own individual gains. Peasants, on the other hand, faced unfavorable conditions for

\(^{295}\) Gabriel Careaga and Arturo González Cosío among other Mexican authors portrayed the Mexican middle class as essentially passive and non-challenging to the political system. See González Cosío, *Clases medias y movilidad social en México…*, 267.
commercializing their agricultural products and also displacement by large agro-businesses. The construction of a political middle ground helped avoid labor and peasants radicalization, while implementing an economic project of urban and industrial development that favored the upper-sectors of society, and also, seemingly, the middle classes. Such a political middle ground was built by the most important political actors at the time, in the PRI, PP and PAN.

The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the National Confederation of Popular Organizations (CNOP): Consolidating the Branch, while Building the Foundations of the New Political Regime

Maybe nothing portrays best the new political trends after 1940 than the fact that president Manuel Ávila Camacho sought to find a middle ground in politics. Avoiding the radical discourse of Cárdenas’ times, and also rejecting ultraconservative positions, Ávila Camacho put himself in the middle of the political spectrum. Also within his own political party, he placed himself between left-leaning cardenistas like Ignacio García Téllez, minister of labor, General Heriberto Jara, minister of the navy, Antonio Villalobos, president of the PRM, and Lázaro Cárdenas himself, minister of defense, and the right-leaning group associated with Abelardo Rodríguez and Emilio Portes Gil.296 Under Ávila Camacho, the banner of national unity aimed to express this middle-ground trend. Radicalization was to be avoided at all cost, in order to allow Mexico to be more responsive to new international challenges demanding domestic stability, while modernizing the economic and productive spheres.

296 See Niblo, Mexico in the 1940s..., 141.
In terms of the Mexican labor movement, national unity meant that workers should not pose a threat to the state economic policies nor to capitalists’ new entrepreneurial ventures. The conflictive international scenario of the early 1940s offered an excellent justification for the state to demand workers and their leaders to be more cooperative. Labor stability would make possible Mexico’s international cooperation to the war effort in full extent. Mexico was to play the essential role of being the provider of cheap raw materials for the U.S. war economy, while undertaking a process of domestic economic and productive reform leading to major industrialization. Also the generalized industrial drive at the time, proved important for achieving labor cooperation. Support to industrialization as the panacea for rapid modernization that would make Mexico more autonomous and internationally competitive was almost unanimous among social sectors.

After all, Ávila Camacho wanted “to preserve capitalism while trying to maintain some of the reforms of the Mexican Revolution.” However, an escalating industrialization in the country would happen on the basis of cheap wages and extensive exploitation of the country’s agricultural sector.

In 1941, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, until then the leader of the most important umbrella union, the Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos, was pushed by Manuel Ávila Camacho and PRM followers to abandon his post and undertake an independent political path that led him to eventually create the PP in 1947. Replacing Lombardo Toledano, Fidel Velázquez took the CTM’s leadership, becoming the strong man of the Mexican organized labor movement. Nonetheless, Fidel Velázquez turned out to be the kingpin that the government needed in order to make the labor movement more

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297 Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s*…, 77.
responsive to the goals of capitalists and political authorities seeking to improve the country’s productive output, while making it more attractive to foreign investors. A legalistic approach to resolving workers’ claims replaced broader and more profound reform.\textsuperscript{298} The attainment of those goals required an extensive de-radicalization of the labor movement that was only made possible through the intermediation of Fidel Velázquez, while keeping Lombardo’s powerful influence on workers at bay, in the realm of middle-class party politics.

The new policies under Ávila Camacho—conservative in comparison to policies implemented by his predecessor Lázaro Cárdenas, but progressive in comparison to policies of radical \textit{laissez-faire} idealized by many in the entrepreneurial sector—sought conciliation with the national middle classes. While Cárdenas had focused on strengthening the relation between the state, workers and peasants, Ávila Camacho sought the support of the urban middle classes. The controversial 1940-presidential elections evidenced a profound gap between the state and politically influential middle classes supporting the conservative opposition candidate Juan Andreu Almazán.\textsuperscript{299} Cárdenas’ socialist education, his focus on agrarian issues and limited attention to urban needs brought middle class’ distrust towards the government. Gaining increasing support from the national middle classes became among Ávila Camacho’s most important

\textsuperscript{298} Concerning a potential railworkers strike at the time, Salvador Novo says, : “La actitud del Gobierno ha estado atenta a la solución de los problemas de la clase trabajadora, para que se resuelvan dentro de las normas legales y de mayor justicia para los mismos, así como para que no se mengüe la unificación y fuerza de sus organizaciones y puedan éstas continuar superándose en beneficio de sus propios agremiados. Espera pues el Presidente que los ferrocarrileros recapaciten sobre su actitud, pues el Gobierno está dispuesto dentro de las pautas legales de la administración, a que cesen esas injustificadas actitudes.” Salvador Novo, \textit{La vida en México en el periodo presidencial de Manuel Ávila Camacho}, 118.

\textsuperscript{299} Violence and blood characterized those elections, as Ávila Camacho supporters attacked people that intended to vote for Andreu Almazán. Also, allegations of electoral fraud were common among the urban middle classes, who expressed their support for Andreu Almazán. See Soledad Loaeza, \textit{El Partido Acción Nacional: la larga marcha 1939-1994}, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1999, 179.
priorities. The creation of the National Confederation of Popular Organizations (CNOP) in 1943 brought the middle class to the center of the dominant party’s political arena.\textsuperscript{300} In fact, the CNOP creation had been among the most important projects of Manuel Ávila Camacho since his presidential candidacy.\textsuperscript{301} The CNOP was to become an organization that helped private property, establish legal rights for professionals, support small industry, guarantee credit to small firms and farms, promote the formation of cooperatives, solve the urban housing problem and defend the rights of renters.\textsuperscript{302} For the Mexican middle class, the message was one of renewed government commitment with urban expansion and industrial development that would offer unprecedented benefits for this social group.

Initially, the PRI’s Popular Sector, the immediate antecedent for the CNOP, incorporated not only the middle classes but also representatives of the military. In 1940 the military sector disappeared from the PRM following Ávila Camacho’s initiative.\textsuperscript{303}

\textsuperscript{300} In the inaugural discourse of the first CNOP assembly in February 1943, licenciado Antonio Villalobos, president of the PRM said: “Algo faltaba en la familia revolucionaria hasta la víspera de este acontecimiento. Dentro de nuestras filas notábamos el vacío que era necesario llenar. Teníamos a la clase campesina organizada, la cual empuñó el rifle y peleó en las etapas heroicas de la Revolución. Contábamos con los obreros sindicalizados, que integraron los Batallones Rojos, movilizaron los trenes y en distintas formas ayudaron al constitucionalismo. Pero habíamos olvidado a la clase media y a diversas ramas del proletariado, cuyo derecho al disfrute de la riqueza, de la cultura y demás modalidades del bienestar social es indiscutible, no sólo por tratarse de elementos que con su esfuerzo intelectual y material concurren a la producción, sino en virtud de haber participado activamente en la gesta redentora, ya que la Revolución Mexicana iniciada en 1910, como la Revolución Francesa de 1789, fue obra de los trabajadores del campo y de la ciudad, de los pequeños agricultores, de los artesanos, de numerosos abogados e intelectuales de izquierda, de muchos maestros de escuela, empleados de oficinas, estudiantes y mujeres abnegadas, dignas herederas espirituales de la corregidora Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez y de doña Leona Vicario.” Osorio, 57.

\textsuperscript{301} Osorio, 46.

\textsuperscript{302} Davis, 309-310.

\textsuperscript{303} The presidential agreement whereby the military sector disappears from the PRM says: “Considerando que el Partido de la Revolución Mexicana ha cumplido dignamente en los últimos años su misión histórica, encauzando los esfuerzos ciudadanos hacia una transformación radical de la situación económica y social de nuestro país… que estas conquistas tienen ya caracteres de firmeza y permanencia, y que es oportuno fomentar el libre y peculiar desarrollo cívico de los grupos socialmente definidos, dentro de los límites de la Ley, y que es necesario que nuestras fuerzas armadas cumplan la misión que legalmente les corresponde,
Right after this, prominent politicians with a military background joined the Popular Sector of the PRI. In so doing, military representatives like Eduardo Hernández Cházaro, Antonio Nava Castillo, Luis Márquez Ricaño, Alfredo Serralangue and Antonio Portas, among others, contributed to boost the relative weight of the Popular Sector in the PRI.\textsuperscript{304} Also, after Mexico declared the war against the Axis power, a five-thousand member Civic Guard of the Mexican Revolution was included within the Popular Sector. According to Diane Davis, this “served as a mechanism to ideologically link the sector’s middle-class constituents to the nation’s armed forces under the banner of national unity.”\textsuperscript{305} The CNOP was also the means for the state to channel extra financial resources to offer both state employees and the military social services and housing support. Appeasing the military became one of the most important political goals of the state. Yet, this sector’s political preeminence gradually dimmed, as represented by the fact the Ávila Camacho strongly discouraged General Miguel Henríquez Guzmán from even accepting his followers’ proposition to be a presidential pre-candidate.\textsuperscript{306} Instead, Miguel Alemán Valdés received Ávila Camacho’s blessing as the PRI’s presidential candidate. Manuel Ávila Camacho was, then, the last member of the military that became a president. His image as a ruler was that of a civilian business-oriented man, rather than the image of the traditional revolutionary military caudillo. He represented the transition to full civilian rule in Mexico. And civilian rule would be undertaken by representatives of the newly

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para cuyo efecto resulta indispensable mantenerlas apartadas de la política electoral que pone en peligro la necesaria cohesión d elos militares en servicio activo. Ha tenido a bien girar a usted el siguiente Acuerdo. Comuníquese al Consejo Nacional del Partido de la Revolución Mexicana que no se autoriza a los militares en servicio activo para que continúen figurando como miembros de dicho Partido.” Osorio, 36 y 37.
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\textsuperscript{304} Ibid., 38.  
\textsuperscript{305} Ibid., 322.  
\textsuperscript{306} See Servín, 81-85.
dominant group, the urban-based and university-educated middle classes. Ávila Camacho’s presidential successor, Miguel Alemán Valdés, was the paradigm of new political times to come.

In its origins the CNOP was intended to offer participation in the party to any social sector which fitted neither in the CTM nor in the CNC, the other PRI corporations. Yet, middle class representatives in the CNOP clearly predominated, elevating their political leverage. Even though the CNOP was denominated as a “popular” sector in the party, its composition was clearly middle-class-based. The CNOP worked offering a political space for the burgeoning middle classes within the PRI. Ultimately 7 out of 10 branches in the CNOP structure included distinctive sectors of the middle class: bureaucrats, small proprietors, small industrialists, small merchants (including street vendors), professionals and intellectuals, the youth (including students), and artisans. In the end many members of the remaining 3 branches were rather members of the middle class: members of cooperatives, women’s groups, and other diversified groups. The 1943-CNOP declaration of principles clearly expressed its character as a social class organization:

La Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares se organiza para la defensa de los intereses de sus componentes como clase social; para demandar reivindicaciones específicas y lograr el desarrollo de su capacidad productiva mediante el libre desenvolvimiento de su potencialidad creadora.

Reconoce por lo tanto, la necesidad de capacitar económica y culturalmente a sus miembros y de participar en la política activa del país dentro de las filas del Partido de la Revolución Mexicana, como un medio para utilizar el poder público en

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307 See Schers, 18-19.
beneficio de sus intereses de clase sin perder jamás de vista el provecho de la nación.\textsuperscript{308}

The CNOP was conceived as an organization that would integrate apparently disparate social groups or components into one broader sector or social class. Accordingly, as a social class, a middle-class group, the CNOP would act seeking to serve best its members’ class interests. And, supposedly, those interests would intersect with party and state politics aiming to achieve higher ends for the Mexican nation. Yet, the CNOP was actually created as a PRI organization seeking to gain middle class support to state policies, while offering a space for the corporatist or mediated political participation of its members. Using public power to benefit CNOP members’ class interests truly meant using CNOP leaders’ position to conciliate different or possibly divergent goals among CNOP constituencies. Also, the CNOP worked as a source of fresh politicians, loyal to the President and with no previous commitment with the CTM or CNC.\textsuperscript{309} For the state, political conciliation within the CNOP meant the possibility of creating a strong middle-class, “popular,” front supporting government’s policies.

The CNOP used contradictory terms to address its middle-class constituencies. Terms as “popular” or “proletarian” were used indistinctively in making reference to CNOP’s middle class. For example, on January 23 1944 the CNOP met in the Palacio de Bellas Artes so that the formal leaders of new “colonos” (urban dwellers) organizations took office. In that occasion, Lauro Ortega, president of the Popular Sector Leagues in Mexico City addressed the audience of “colonos” and other CNOP members, saying: “Los gobiernos revolucionarios de Cárdenas y Ávila Camacho han entregado a los

\textsuperscript{308} Osorio, 71-72.

\textsuperscript{309} See Servín, 30.
colonos del Distrito Federal más de 50,000 lotes de terreno para que construyeran sus hogares y se han consolidado al amparo del Departamento Central más de 150 colonias proletarias, donde los colonos viven, unos en casas de tabique, otros en casas de madera o de lámina, pero todos han conseguido el anhelo de dar a su familia un techo propio […] Baste citar que en el periodo comprendido del 1o de enero de 1941 a diciembre de 1943 han sido beneficiados 17,326 jefes de familia por la dotación de lotes que ha hecho el Departamento del Distrito Federal por conducto de la Oficina de Colonias, habiendo asimismo dictado en este período treinta expropiaciones para la formación de otras tantas colonias proletarias.”

Yet in that very occasion, César Cervantes, CNOP leader in Mexico City addressed the fact that, “el primer magistrado de la República tenía un afecto especial hacia la clase media del país, y que a eso se debían sus acuerdos y decretos de expropiación de terrenos para la construcción de casas, escuelas, mercados y otras obras de carácter social, que han venido a beneficiar considerablemente al pueblo del Distrito Federal.” By using interchangeably the terms “proletarian”, “popular” and “middle-class”, CNOP leaders sought to emphasize the supposed popular character of the organization. This served the populist rhetoric of the PRI leadership and the president. As the PRI sought to strengthen its popular self-attributions, the party endowed CNOP’s middle-class with a proletarian character. The fact that CNOP small merchants, professionals, bureaucrats, small industrialists and intellectuals were “proletarianized” in conceptual terms, evidences PRI’s underlying interests. Accordingly, while CNOP members were promoted as representing a common social class front—rather identified

310 “Discurso del Dr. Lauro Ortega,” in Osorio, 87-88.
311 “Discurso del Sr. César Cervantes,” in Osorio, 89.
with the middle class—, they were also presented as a popular or proletarian group, adding to PRI’s revolutionary legitimacy.

The Federación de Sindicatos de Trabajadores al Servicio del Estado (FSTSE), created during Cárdenas administration, was the CNOP’s backbone. The FSTSE became essential to the CNOP as it provided a direct bridge between this organization and the government through its affiliated bureaucracy. On the other hand, since bureaucrats were included as a meaningful part of the CNOP their middle class character was stressed, decreasing the potential risk of their joining CTM workers. In the end, the CNOP aimed to strengthening the PRI vote-gaining machinery by becoming the most important means for conciliating different “popular” groups like cooperative members, small owners, proprietors and merchants, professionals and intellectuals, youth, female groups and craftsmen. Yet, bureaucrats and representatives of the party machinery kept the most important positions of leadership in the organization, making the FSTSE the core CNOP organization. In 1945 Alfonso Martínez Domínguez clearly expressed the symbiosis between bureaucrats and the political party as he formalized FSTSE’s support for Miguel Alemán’s candidature. At that time, Martínez Domínguez was a FSTSE representative who later became FSTSE leader and also CNOP’s general secretary. In that occasion he said:

…el Estado logró una estrecha vinculación con sus servidores, hecho que ha venido a redundar en beneficio de las enormes tareas señaladas por la Revolución. Nuestra colaboración leal con el actual gobierno y con el que por voluntad arrolladora del

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312 In June 1945, according to Alfonso Martínez Domínguez, a representative of the FSTSE who later became its leader and also CNOP’s, public servants were 33% of the Mexican economically active population. See “Discurso de Alfonso Martínez Domínguez”, in Osorio, 104.

313 See Schers,16.
pueblo de México, habrá de presidir usted, señor licenciado Miguel Alemán, se significará muy especialmente en un constante esfuerzo por superar los servicios públicos y será el resultado de la absoluta identidad ideológica al asociarse gobernantes y trabajadores como consecuencia del reconocimiento de los primeros a los derechos de los segundos y de la convicción acendrada y firme que mutuamente nos anima a acelerar la marcha de la administración en beneficio del país […] Podemos afirmar pues, que en cada empleado existe un soldado al servicio del pueblo.\(^{314}\)

The FSTSE provided essential support to the PRI when elections were about to come. This support also consisted of coordinating and organizing other CNOP groups to offer their open backing to PRI candidates.\(^{315}\) The FSTSE offered the pillar for CNOP’s middle-ground politics, whereby contradictory and heterogeneous middle-class political currents to the Right or Left became aligned to keep party stability and internal cohesive support for its candidates. In the CNOP National Convention of June 1945, Antonio Nava Castillo, General Secretary of the CNOP expressed,

Al proclamarlo su candidato esta convención nacional, hacemos resaltar que la cooperación que ofrecemos no es una vana fórmula oportunista, sino la expresión libre de la voluntad de la clase media nacional, que cuenta con valores positivos y representa uno de los más importantes sectores de la vida económica y social de la República, pues en sus filas militan los comerciantes y los pequeños industriales; los campesinos dueños de la pequeña propiedad y los cooperativistas; los burócratas, los profesionistas e intelectuales; los artesanos y los grupos juveniles y femeniles organizados; es decir, todo este núcleo trabajador, progresista y heroico, que hombro con hombro con los campesinos y los obreros, han intervenido activamente en nuestras gestas de independencia y de reforma; de revolución y democracia,

\(^{314}\) “Discurso de Alfonso Martínez Domínguez”, in Osorio, 104-105.

\(^{315}\) Schers, 22.
encabezando y orientando siempre a las masas, y luchando a su vera sin restricción, hasta consolidar el triunfo.\textsuperscript{316}

CNOP leadership provided the foundation for creating and promoting an image of a middle class front that apparently shared a general and homogeneous ideological conviction, expressed in terms of CNOP and PRM ideals. In this construction, there was no affinity for the Right or Left of the political spectrum. Instead, a middle ground formulated in terms of progressive and revolutionary rhetoric was built.

Under Miguel Alemán the CNOP became very strong. Miguel Alemán focused on developing unprecedented urban and industrial development in Mexico. Middle class support was primary for this. In the CNOP National Convention of June 1945, when Alemán received this organization’s endorsement for his presidential candidacy, he frontally addressed his goal to design policies targeting the Mexican middle class. He said,

Estos grupos llamados populares o de la clase media, constituidos principalmente por burócratas, por pequeños comerciantes e industriales, por integrantes de cooperativas, por técnicos, por artesanos, por profesionistas universitarios, por maestros, por intelectuales y artistas y por todos aquellos que no están determinados por la actitud absolutamente industrial o campesina, merecen, por la calidad humana que los integra, una solícita preocupación de parte del Estado […] Tal preocupación gubernativa no debe ser imprecisa y al azar; debe estar subordinada a un plan y presentar resoluciones concretas.\textsuperscript{317}

Alemán’s project targeting the middle class (or “popular” group) was essentially urban, and focused on elevating the educational level and technical skills of middle class

\textsuperscript{316} “Discurso de Antonio Nava Castillo”, in Osorio, 108-109.
\textsuperscript{317} “Discurso de Miguel Alemán al rendir su protesta como candidato de la CNOP”, in Osorio, 111.
members, improving their health services, their access to balanced diets, good clothing and furniture, and also to less expensive housing. In the end, Alemán deepened Ávila Camacho’s trends, prioritizing urban and industrial development. Meanwhile, the Mexican middle class obtained extensive benefits from this kind of development, as urban and industrial expansion also meant an increase in jobs and opportunities for the middle class of Mexico City and other important urban areas. Besides, more fiscal resources were directed to urban education and health services, and also to subsidize housing in the cities.

Between 1946 and 1952, Miguel Alemán and his group consolidated the new political style initiated by Ávila Camacho. Such a style was marked by the predominance of civilian politicians, many of whom were graduated “licenciados” from the National University like Alemán himself. Also, a process of separation between the state and other popular constituencies in the CTM and CNC (the workers’ and peasants’ organizations) became more profound. After all, since January 1946, right when Alemán officially launched his presidential candidature, the Party of the Mexican Revolution (PRM) changed its name for that of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). This sent a message of profound change in the party. This change implied that a new era of civilian presidents—starting with Alemán himself—was to begin. Also, this change suggested that the revolution had been institutionalized. Accordingly, government institutions were now the ultimate achievement of the revolution and also became revolution’s paradigm. Supposedly the ideals of the Revolution had found concrete reality in institutions such as public education, health, agrarian reform, freedom of speech, etc. Yet, the PRI top-

\[318\] Ibid., 112-113.
hierarchy monopolized the political decision-making behind those “institutions” gradually broadening the gap between them and popular groups. Even though the CNOP was intended to bridge that gap, its popular character only existed in a rhetorical way and under the corporatist guidance of the party. In the end, the government focused on consolidating a middle-class base of civilian political leaders who became more influential on government matters than representatives of the peasant and working-class corporations. After all, middle class representatives were seen as the new banner of the post-revolutionary rhetoric of social mobility, institutionalization and political stability.

In dealing with the popular sectors, represented by the CTM and the CNC, Manuel Ávila Camacho and Miguel Alemán consolidated a strong alliance between entrepreneurs and labor leaders, granting them extraordinary privileges and concessions in exchange for their political support. Using the corporative structure of the party and by means of co-opted union leaders, the state disciplined CTM workers and CNC peasants. The political mediation of union leaders favorable to the party elites’ policies became essential to avoid labor and peasant radicalization. Meanwhile, Alemán, for example, decreed the extension of protection rights against expropriation favoring the owners of land susceptible of distribution as part of the agrarian reform in the countryside. With this, constitutional article 27 was reformed, offering major protection to agrarian private property, and stimulating individual productivity. This reflected the declining interest of the government in continuing distributional agrarian trends among peasant communities promoted during Lázaro Cárdenas government between 1934 and 1940. In the end, cities and industrial development were considered much more important than the countryside.

319 On the historical origins of such a pact, see Davis, 291.
Urban and industrial expansion was the base for the government’s modernization project. And implementing such a project required tighter political control and stability.

PRI’s middle-class political cooptation was implemented by the workings of the CNOP in large extent. The CNOP leadership sought continuous support of professionals and students, since they were considered valuable assets that best represented middle-class ideals of education and social mobility. Particularly students with strong antecedents as university activists were considered good candidates for cooptation. Some of them brought their own group of followers to the CNOP, and this expanded their own possibilities for political advancement under the patronage of CNOP well-established leaders. Other students or professionals created professional organizations that helped the CNOP and PRI by making political propaganda, organizing fund raising activities, or performing electoral functions on the elections day.\(^{320}\) The CNOP served PRI’s goals, offering a channel for recruiting middle class students or professionals that otherwise might have been attracted by the political opposition. Also, an increasing incorporation of professionals and middle class representatives in the state bureaucratic machinery was an incentive for growing middle class support to the government. That support was channeled through the FSTSE and, in the end, by means of CNOP-influenced political propaganda.

Getting through different political and economic crises, the CNOP proved a formidable support for Miguel Alemán. Profound trade deficits provoked by growing importation of capital goods under ISI policies forced Alemán to devaluate the Mexican peso in 1948. Meanwhile, inflation remained an important problem challenging the

\(^{320}\) Schers, 51.
nation’s economic proficiency. In such a context, Alemán faced constant demands from workers for better wages or the renegotiation of their collective contracts. The CNOP, filled with Alemán supporters, provided the muscle to help the government keep political stability. As the CNOP obtained preeminence over the CTM and CNC, its middle-class members took over an important percentage of federal congressional posts. While in 1943 the CNOP held around 43% of congressional seats, by 1967 it already held 55%. Then, CNOP pro-Alemán members in Congress offered invaluable support in passing presidential legislation. Future presidents also enjoyed key congressional support from “cenopistas.”

Miguel Alemán’s CNOP developed a doctrine of “mexicanidad” in which being part of the middle-class and avoiding political extremes were prime features. Accordingly, “mexicanidad” was a reassertion of revolutionary principles that rejected extremisms to the Left or to the Right of the political spectrum, and the middle class was the guardian of that “mexicanidad.” Special emphasis was also made in “mexicanidad” as supposedly identified with anticommunism. Yet, CNOP voices also often attacked those that they considered representative of political betrayal oriented to the Right, particularly the sinarquistas. CNOP’s doctrine of “mexicanidad” reinforced the primary role of middle-class politicians in the political party and government.

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321 See Servín, 119.
322 See Medina Peña, 156.
324 Ibid.
By 1952, when presidential elections were to be held again, the CNOP had fully consolidated its political power under Alemán’s patronage. Most Mexican congressmen, governors and top-ranking politicians were professionals with middle-class origins.\(^{326}\) Also, many of these politicians found initial momentum in their participation in the CNOP. Occupying a position in the party or in the federal congress became a condition to make a political career.\(^{327}\) And the CNOP provided some of the most important opportunities for aspiring professionals to launch their political careers.

The 1952 presidential elections were discredited by violence and claims of fraud. Followers of the opposition candidate from the Federación de Partidos del Pueblo (FPP), General Miguel Henríquez Guzmán, faced harsh repression from government forces.\(^{328}\) General Henríquez’s followers claimed electoral fraud and dirty play from the government. Yet, General Henríquez’s challenge to the PRI candidate, Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, for the presidential chair was difficult to hold. Although Henríquez had been an important “priísta” himself, he belonged to a previous generation of military-politicians that were being displaced from the political arena.\(^{329}\) On the other hand, Henríquez followers were mainly of popular origins—that is peasants or workers. Meanwhile, Ruiz


\(^{327}\) Medina Peña, *Hacia el nuevo…*, 157.

\(^{328}\) See a thorough analysis and recount on the facts and violent events surrounding Miguel Henríquez Guzmán’s presidential candidacy in Elisa Servín, *Ruptura y oposición*.

\(^{329}\) On July 3, 1952, the CNOP made this institutional declaration on Henríquez and his followers, “Así, los violentos, los resentidos, los rencorosos, los expulsados de la vida pública en castigo a sus inmoralidades, concupiscencias y caludicaciones siguen a Miguel Henríquez Guzmán, militar afortunado y contratista más afortunado todavía. Es indudable que quienes sirvieron sin interrupciones, reservas ni protestas, y casi siempre sin dignidad, a los gobiernos que ahora condenan tan agresiva como injustamente, carecen por completo de autoridad moral para residenciar al régimen que ellos mismo aplaudieron, al que ansiosamente quisieron pertenecer o al que prestaron sus colaboraciones.” “Voto colectivo de la CNOP”, in *Historia documental…*, vol. I. 245.
Cortines obtained Miguel Alemán’s support and also that of the middle-class-based CNOP.\textsuperscript{330} In the end, Ruiz Cortines had been the “Oficial Mayor” in the Department for the Federal District. In that position, Ruiz Cortines administered Mexico City’s government financial resources, while developing solid and durable connections with CNOP urban constituencies.

Adolfo Ruiz Cortines basically continued Alemán policies, while seeking to balance the national economy. In advancing his economic policies and containing potential political opposition within the PRI, like Alemán, Ruiz Cortines also relied on CNOP and middle-class support. Seeking increasing support among middle-class women, Ruiz Cortines modified constitutional article 34 to provide women the right to vote. This move added to Ruiz Cortines political capital among the urban middle class and women in particular.\textsuperscript{331} Ruiz Cortines needed larger support from the middle class in order to advance his projected economic reforms. First, he reduced public expenses to counter inflation. Later, the 1954-devaluation helped offset problems in the balance of trade. Yet, this brought about slower economic growth and a sharper deterioration of real wages, which stimulated social unrest. Since 1953, in the state of Morelos, Rubén Jaramillo had risen in guerrilla warfare becoming a strong problem for the regime. Jaramillo was among the supporters of Henríquez presidential bid. Years later, violent repression

\textsuperscript{330} CNOP leadership formalized this support expressing: “el C. Adolfo Ruiz Cortines satisface ampliamente las aspiraciones de la clase media progresista del país agrupada en el Sector Popular, porque por su indiscutible y activa militancia revolucionaria, por la acrisolada rectitud de su conducta y por su probada capacidad en la administración gubernamental, se singulariza el señor Ruiz Cortines como el ciudadano indicado para suceder en la Presidencia de la República al señor licenciado Miguel Alemán, quien con tanto honor y elevado patriotismo ha sabido dirigir los destinos de la patria en una etapa de trabajo y de tranquilidad social sin precedente, que promete consolidar y superar los innegables aciertos de nuestro gran movimiento constructivo.” See “La CNOP proclama la candidatura de Adolfo Ruiz Cortines para presidente de la República”, in \textit{Historia documental}, vol. I., 229-230.

\textsuperscript{331} See \textit{Historia Documental}…, 269.
against striking teachers in April 1958 announced future social mobilizations and conflict in years to come.

Adolfo López Mateos, Ruiz Cortines successor, began his presidential term crushing the railroad workers movement, and jailing its most important leaders, Valentín Campa and Demetrio Vallejo in March 1959. Despite this, López Mateos was generally considered a left-leaning ruler. Actual political developments, however, made López Mateos’ government too complex to be aligned under a bilateral perspective of political poles.

Adolfo López Mateos administration best illustrates some of the most profound contradictions of the Mexican state between 1940 and 1970. And these very contradictions were the essence of PRI-style middle-ground politics. Also such contradictions evidenced a profound separation between government discourse and real practice. Although showing a left-leaning orientation in public discourse and some political actions, López Mateos was responsible for unprecedented repression against demonstrators during his regime. For example, while keeping links with revolutionary Cuba and often shaking hands with Fidel Castro, López Mateos cracked down on local communists and radicals. While he carried out a large agrarian distribution process (second only after Lázaro Cárdenas’), López Mateos ordered harsh repression against railroad workers and teachers seeking an improvement in their working conditions. While being considered by the PPS and Lombardo Toledano as the leader for a progressive front against imperialist forces, López Mateos jailed Valentín Campa, Demetrio Vallejo, David Alfaro Siqueiros and other figures among radical leaders, artists and intellectuals. While seeking to offer an image of Mexican government autonomy from United States political
influence and also nationalizing the electrical industry, López Mateos granted U.S. investors some of the most profitable business participation levels in Mexico.332

In the end, López Mateos sought to offer an image of a left-leaning and popular leader, with “popular” origins, while at the same time keeping at bay radical influences in the country. This was, in fact, CNOP’s middle-class populist style in action. In November 1957, when the CNOP formalized its support to López Mateos presidential candidature, José María Benítez wrote:

De nuevo un hombre del pueblo y vinculado con el pueblo se perfila en nuestro horizonte político, para recibir la honrosa responsabilidad de mantener al país durante el próximo sexenio en la ruta de la prosperidad material, del desarrollo cultural y democrático, que nos viene señalando desde hace cuarenta años, el índice imperativo de la Revolución […] Se explica de manera sencilla el hecho de que México haya sido gobernado desde su independencia por hombres salidos de las clases populares […] Y actualmente cuajados ya los Sectores Campesino y Obrero, el Sector Popular, la clase media, actúa al lado de aquéllos, ceñido a la estrategia del Partido Revolucionario Institucional, pero atento a su ritmo particular y desarrollo y a las condiciones especiales derivadas de su papel en el panorama nacional, para mejor interpretar y servir los inmediatos y futuros objetivos de la Revolución Mexicana […] De esta clase popular procede el candidato a la Presidencia de la República del Partido Revolucionario Institucional: el señor licenciado Adolfo López Mateos […] El señor licenciado Adolfo López Mateos sintetiza las virtudes cívicas tradicionales de nuestra clase media, de nuestro Sector Popular. Su vida personal es ejemplo del empeño inteligente, caluroso, que consideramos derivado de la apetencia apasionada de lo español, y la meditativa, tenaz y señorial fuerza de lo indígena,

332 José Luis Ceceña’s study of around 2000 top enterprises during López Mateos’ regime offers an image of the important strength of foreign investors. They controlled or owned 54% of the 400 largest enterprises. See Pablo González Casanova, La democracia en México, México, Era, 1967, 52-54.
culminantes en el delta de una cultura de raigambre occidental, desprovista del primitivismo brutal de nuestros días.\textsuperscript{333}

Then, López Mateos was depicted as a man from the “pueblo” (the common people), yet, he was also depicted as a man from the middle-class, a professional, intellectual and teacher. This middle class, in PRI-terms, was also the “popular class,” the class that best expressed the essence of Mexico: Spanish and indigenous, representative of a Mexico of middle grounds. So, PRI political discourse suggested the middle class as the paradigm of social development since, accordingly, its members best represented “popular” groups. In this discourse, the middle class represented stability and progress by means of keeping a political middle ground, in which neither the Left nor Right would dominate.

The 1959-creation of the Public Opinion National Institute (INOP) showed the predominant place the CNOP had obtained by that time. The INOP worked on the bases of polls and meetings among CNOP sections.\textsuperscript{334} Accordingly, every Mexican citizen mailed his/her opinions on national or local issues to the CNOP. Discussions considering these opinions were held, seeking to reach relevant conclusions for the national political and social scenarios. Yet, the INOP also worked as the means to attract new adepts to the party, through CNOP affiliation. With this, the CNOP leadership sought to broaden its knowledge and control of national political opinion, while also increasing its middle-class constituencies.

\textsuperscript{333} “Opinión de José María Benítez”, in \textit{Historia Documental}..., 265-266.

\textsuperscript{334} The General Secretary of the CNOP, Dr. Luiz Vázquez Campos said, “Como base de la organización del nuevo Instituto actuarán las 12 centrales nacionales que forman parte de la clase media, tales como comerciantes en pequeño, locatarios, trabajadores no asalariados, maestros, burócratas, trabajadores de la seguridad social, colonos, inquilinos, etc.”. See “Propuesta de la CNOP para crear el Instituto de la Opinión Pública”, in Osorio, 154.
The creation and dissolution of the National Liberation Movement (MLN) did happen amidst conditions in which middle-ground middle-class PRI politics became broadly evident. In 1961, former president Lázaro Cárdenas—who had remained silent for almost two decades—suddenly reappeared in the political arena, organizing the Latin American Conference for Political Sovereignty, Economic Independence and Peace. Defense and support for the 1959-Cuban revolution offered the central motivation for the conference.335 Also the 1961-recession created the economic context for growing inconformity among Mexican political groups. According to a Foreign Service dispatch by the first secretary in the U.S. Embassy in Mexico, Joseph Montllor, the MLN was constituted in the first meeting to create a committee for National Sovereignty and Economic Emancipation as a follow-up of the previous Conference. In this report, the name of prominent intellectuals and political figures appear: Narciso Bassols, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, Heberto Castillo, José Chávez Morado, Carlos Fuentes, Eli de Gortari, Manuel Marcué Pardiñas, among others.336 The goals of the movement: An improvement in the standard of living, better education facilities, the repudiation of the Rio Pact, the dissolution of the Inter-American Defense Board and of the Joint Mexican-U.S. Defense Commission, and “the creation of a National Committee of Solidarity with Cuba, for the denunciation of the aggressive US policy toward Castro, and for the maintenance of a policy of non-intervention and self-determination with respect to the island.”337 This movement’s origins seemed to offer a new strength to the Mexican Left,

336 Ibid.
337 Ibid.
whereby it might be able to pull the mainstream political arena to the Left. After all, López Mateos himself offered the image of a Left-leaning president.

Cuban revolutionary influence on workers and middle class groups such as students and intellectuals, as well as escalating contradictions in the economic model of Stabilizing Development created a tense political atmosphere in the country. The late-1950s and the 1960s were characterized by increasing social mobilizations, mainly of workers and students. Also, more radical Left-leaning groups like Trotskyites, Spartacists and Maoists, among others, began to appear and extend their appeal to university students as a part of a New Left trend. Simultaneously, anti-communist groups created their own national campaign against the Left under the slogan an “Cristianismo, sí – Comunismo, no”. Facing this situation, conservative sectors in the PRI offered their own response, organizing anti-communist demonstrations. According to Montllor, “In late May former President Abelardo Rodríguez in a letter addressed to leaders of associations representing commercial, industrial and banking interests suggested an organization designed to spread among workers, farmers, white collar workers and youth, the principles of political, social and economic liberalism as an antidote to communism.”

Abelardo Rodríguez and Miguel Alemán, in fact, led the anticommunist Frente Cívico de Acción Revolucionaria (FCMAR), which had strong ties with López Mateos government. Perhaps this was a way to counter the relative political weight that pro-Church groups were gaining exploiting middle-class anti-communist sentiment.  

338 Ibid.
339 The Frente provided the government with many elements to act as security agents preventing communists and anti-U.S. protestors from spoiling the welcome to President Kennedy during his visit to Mexico during the summer of 1962. See U.S. Embassy in Mexico to U.S. Department of State, September 13, 1962, pp. 2-3, National Security Archives-George Washington University, After the Revolution, doct. 23.
Some of these groups gathered meaningful constituencies and threatened to become a nuisance for the government as they launched a national campaign against the Left. Then, in June, López Mateos expressed the official middle-ground position, by asserting that he would not tolerate agitation from either political extreme. In addition, two PRI manifestoes were published on August 24 1961. One of them—the anticommunist—was partially drafted by Miguel Alemán and signed by other PRI politicians such as Foreign Minister Ezequiel Padilla. Yet, the PRI also generated a leftist manifesto that sought to give some balance. This situation illustrated PRI quest for a political middle ground that often evidenced party’s internal contradictions: Lázaro Cárdenas was still a powerful figure, leading the left-leaning PRI sector, while an opposite sector, led by Abelardo Rodríguez and Miguel Alemán, was also highly influential.

The MLN did not prosper since internal divisions undermined its political strength. Some members aimed to constitute a political party to offer direct electoral opposition to the PRI in the 1964 elections. Some others like strongman Lázaro Cárdenas preferred to keep the movement like an influential hemispheric-wide political front but with no direct participation in the elections. On the other hand, Lombardo Toledano’s PPS supported the PRI rather than the MLN. In the end, many of the MLN members joined other parties such as the PCM. The movement eventually could not resist these pressures toward fragmentation and disintegrated.

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341 Ibid.
342 Ibid.
López Mateos’ position regarding the Cuban revolution and communism offers important traces of PRI middle ground politics. While meeting with U.S. authorities, López Mateos openly expressed that the Mexican government was not sympathetic to the Cuban revolution nor communism. Yet, he also claimed that he had to stand for the nonintervention doctrine of Mexican foreign relations. This meant that since Mexico recognized other countries’ self-determination, López Mateos would have to recognize the Cuban revolutionary government.

Even though U.S. officials suggested the president that Mexico should stand against Cuba in the OAS, López Mateos prioritized domestic foreign relations policy. Also, domestic pressure from the Left within the PRI and among Mexican public opinion was taken seriously by López Mateos. In fact, during President John F. Kennedy visit to Mexico during the summer of 1962, López Mateos appointed two left-leaning sympathizers, one to serve as his personal translator and another as Kennedy’s main escort officer. López Mateos’ translator, Alfonso Rosen Zweig, was the son of a former Mexican ambassador to the Soviet Union, and was a close personal friend of Vicente Lombardo Toledano, the Popular Socialist Party (PPS). Meanwhile, Kennedy’s escort, Lt. Gen. Cristóbal Guzmán Cárdenas, was close to Lázaro Cárdenas and was said to be a communist sympathizer. U.S. authorities were suspicious about this. They considered that López Mateos wanted the content of his private conversations with Kennedy to reach Lázaro Cárdenas ears, and those of the political Left. Most likely, this would be the way to guarantee the Mexican Left and

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344 U.S. Embassy in Mexico to U.S. Department of State, December 18, 1961, pp. 4-6, National Security Archives-George Washington University, After the Revolution, doct. 08.


346 Ibid., 2
general public opinion that López Mateos was not making special concessions to the United States or carrying out secret negotiations. As a political maneuver, this aimed at adding to López Mateos’ domestic prestige, while sending the U.S. a subtle message reasserting Mexican political self-determination.

The PRI political machinery included diverse political currents—even though they often contradicted each other—as the means to keep the party’s image as an all-inclusive political institution that promoted democracy. During his term at office, López Mateos sought to neutralize both the Left and the Right seeking to consolidate his own middle-ground style and keeping party unity. And he was successful in important extent.\textsuperscript{347} In fact, López Mateos’ choice of a presidential successor in the person of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz evidenced López Mateos’ priority of keeping a middle-ground political style. Díaz Ordaz’s presidential candidacy even obtained the support of such disparate political groups ranging from Lombardo Toledano’s PPS to the right-wing Partido Nacionalista Mexicano and also the Sinarquistas.\textsuperscript{348} Although the Mexican Communist Party (PCM), the People’s Electoral Front (FEP) and other communist organizations considered Díaz Ordaz as pro-Church and pro-yanqui, in general he was considered a moderate in the political circles of the country. As with previous presidential candidates, the CNOP promoted Díaz Ordaz as a person with roots in the “pueblo”, which actually was

\textsuperscript{347} Robert Adams, a counselor in the U.S. Embassy in Mexico reported in this regard, “López Mateos throughout his administration has balanced off the pressures of the so-called right (‘Alemanismo’) and the extreme left (‘Cardenismo’) sectors in the PRI. His deft manipulation of politics has apparently succeeded so far, and there are many observers who believe that López Mateos now has sufficient power to select his successor almost at will.” U.S. Embassy in Mexico to U.S. Department of State, June 11, 1963, p. 1, National Security Archives-George Washington University, After the Revolution, doct. 35.

\textsuperscript{348} U.S. Embassy in Mexico to U.S. Department of State, Nov. 5, 1963, p. 1, National Security Archives-George Washington University, After the Revolution, doct. 36.
representative of the middle class. Yet, Díaz Ordaz commitment with the “pueblo”, moderation and middle-ground politics was soon to suffer some of the most important challenges a Mexican president had faced since the 1940s.

As the President of Mexico, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz faced escalating mobilization of students and other politically influential groups. Also, the economic situation of the country became ever more challenging, since increasing deficit in external trade and the weight of foreign indebtedness forced the state to cut the budget for important social programs. Many among the middle class, mainly new generations and students, grew disappointed at the regime. Meanwhile, demands for decentralization and democratization inside the PRI became stronger than ever.

Carlos Madrazo, PRI president between 1964 and 1965, attempted to undertake a profound reform process within the party. He sought to increase the direct participation of the party’s rank and file in the selection of party leaders, and also vitalize the PRI by a massive program of individual re-affiliation. He envisioned a less corporative and more individualized party. This would have meant a profound reform of the party’s structure that best responded to new demands by PRI constituencies. Also, Madrazo prioritized

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349 Right after his formal recognition as the CNOP presidential candidate, Everardo Gámiz Fernández, General Secretary of the Union of D.F. Workers said: “El licenciado Díaz Ordaz es hombre surgido del pueblo, por lo que lo invito a bajar a la calle para compartir con la clase media el júbilo que la embarga […] Hoy, la clase media organizada en la CNOP de la ciudad de México, viene a expresar su júbilo, porque la vigencia de los principios de la Revolución y la lucha del pueblo por justicia social, continuará en sus manos con el mismo vigor y la pasión patriótica del señor presidente López Mateos.” Later, Alfonso Martínez Domínguez, CNOP General Secretary, said: “El país tiene hoy el signo alentador de que la clase media mexicana está organizándose cada vez mejor y está luchando en el seno del PRI por la realización de los postulados revolucionarios, que su precandidatura es motivo de júbilo entusiasta en el seno del sector popular del país, donde a usted se le conoce ampliamente por su vida pública y su probidad de funcionario. Nos complace expresarle esta determinación tan importante.” “Manifestación de la CNOP a favor del Lic. Díaz Ordaz”, in Historia documental…, November 6, 1963, vol. 2, 132-134.

developing PRI’s capacity to forecast social unrest in order to remedy its potential causes before actual conflict took place. In so doing, he envisioned a more direct connection between the party and the population by means of more autonomous local and state representations. For example, municipal authorities would be elected in open democratic processes among local PRI militants, instead of being appointed by behind-the-doors negotiations between governors and local representations of the CNOP, CTM and CNC. In the end, Madrazo proposed more vigorous and independent PRI organisms, less subordinated to the formal government structure headed by the President, governors and local chieftains. To an important extent, this meant making the party’s corporative structure more flexible. Consequently, Madrazo faced strong opposition from old political strongmen (like Salvador Nava in San Luis Potosí), some governors (like Práxedes Giner Durán, governor of Chihuahua) and powerful PRI leaders, which led him to resign his post in November 1965.

As opposed to the CNC and the CTM, the CNOP was the only party corporation that never expressed any level of support to Madrazo’s initiatives. In fact, when the CNOP leadership accepted Madrazo’s resignation to his post, their official position was that he had not seized adequately the party’s historical positive achievements. The CNOP considered aspects characteristic of PRI middle-ground politics as the party’s main achievements: unity among divergent ideological currents within the party, common goals for diverse social groups represented in the party, harmony among local, regional

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352 Ibid., 148.

353 *Historia documental…*, vol. 2, 185.
and national interests in the party, the political incorporation of women, and the healthy coexistence of politicians from different generations. Yet, had Madrazo’s reforms been carried out, the CNOP would have become more appealing for middle class constituencies that had grown aloof regarding PRI internal politics. CNOP’s rigid hierarchical-corporative structure resulted much less attractive for potential young middle class constituencies than one or two decades before. In 1968, the inability of the regime to avoid student radicalization by means of CNOP-affiliated student leaders evidenced the deterioration of this organization’s previous political grip on middle class groups.

Keeping Stabilizing Development policies favoring industrial investment and capital gain, and meaningfully decreasing public expenses brought about difficult political conditions for Díaz Ordaz’s regime. As with previous presidents, CNOP support was essential to achieve stability within the party and in the legislative chambers. The CNOP leadership portrayed Díaz Ordaz as a socially conscious reformer that brought “un nuevo estilo a la política mexicana, y su mismo lenguaje es un lenguaje nuevo, directo y sencillo inspirado siempre en los principios de la Revolución Mexicana […] Díaz Ordaz actúa en consecuencia, acelerando el reparto de la tierra con su concepto de reforma agraria integral […] con su respeto a las conquistas de los trabajadores, con el avance democrático que significa la credencial permanente de elector y, sobre todo, con su política internacional […] Sólo aquellos que siguen obsesionados por el retroceso, los excesivamente impacientes –empeñados en ensayar en México experimentos inaplicables a nuestras realidades objetivas y al modo de pensar y de ser de nuestro pueblo— pueden negar que el Gobierno del presidente Díaz Ordaz esté construyendo un México más

354 Ibid., 184-185.
fuerte, más culto, más sano y más independiente." Yet, social reality seemed to contradict these conceptions. Income inequality and constant social mobilizations posed important threat for regime stability.

After Díaz Ordaz, President Luis Echeverría Álvarez sought to rebuild PRI middle-ground politics, yet under a populist perspective. While courting intellectuals, students and people in the world of culture, Echeverría also struck against communists, demonstrators and so called radicals. The 1971 Corpus Christi Thursday massacre against students and the closure of periodical Excélsior (because its constant criticism against the government) offer some examples of how contradictory his regime was. However, Echeverría multiplied fourteenfold the educational budget and raised meaningfully the budget for all public expenses, while keeping the best relations with Chilean president Salvador Allende, and Cuban Fidel Castro.

The Popular Party (PP): Sharing the Branch, while Seeking a New Identity

Middle-ground politics from the Left were best exemplified by Vicente Lombardo Toledano’s Popular Party (PP), which in 1961 became the Popular Socialist Party (PPS). Since its inception in 1947, the party sought to offer an alternative political front, while increasing the political representation of popular groups. Nonetheless, the party’s middle-class representatives kept constantly negotiating with the government and legitimizing its policies. In so doing, Lombardo Toledano and the PP leadership sought to find a middle-

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355 Ibid., 192-193.
356 A 1968-statistical study carried out by Banco de México showed that while 15% of population concentrated 50% of national income, the other 50% was shared by 85% of the population. Banco de México, La distribución del ingreso en México, México: FCE, 1974, 7-10.
ground in which contestation mixed with open support to the state. In exchange, the state gave the party notable levels of acknowledgement, proved by the fact that until the late-1980s, it was the most solid formal left-leaning party and also with the longest history in the country.

The Popular Party was created to offer a new political alternative to face political and economic challenges in Mexico. According to the party manifesto, those challenges mainly consisted of low wages, increasing influence of the United States, lack of political plurality in the country, income inequality, and the political influence of strongmen, among others.\footnote{357} Even though the party seemed to blame the political regime for these conditions, originally it neither attacked the president nor the PRI. So, according to the party’s document asserting its Razón histórica, principios, programa y estatutos,

La dictadura en México ha sido y será, mientras el régimen político no cambie, más que resultado de la voluntad de un Presidente de la República autoritario, consecuencia lógica de la falta de partidos políticos que, como ocurre ya en la mayoría de los países del mundo, hagan oír su voz de una manera libre y respetada en el seno del Parlamento […] Ahora, el pueblo cuenta con el compromiso solemne contraído por el Primer Mandatario del país, el licenciado Miguel Alemán, de estudiar y presentar en el próximo periodo ordinario de sesiones del Congreso de la Unión, una iniciativa de reformas a la Ley Electoral de Poderes Federales, que garantice la pureza del sufragio y el libre juego de los partidos políticos, sentando así las bases más firmes para el advenimiento de un amplio régimen democrático.\footnote{358}

Then, the party seemed to trust Miguel Alemán’s will to create solid grounds for real political reform, advancing the path towards democracy (yet such a reform did not

\footnote{357} Razón Histórica, principios, programa y estatutos del Partido Popular, Partido Popular, June, 1948, 7-9.
\footnote{358} Ibid., 11.
actually take place). In fact, Lombardo Toledano conferred on Alemán’s presidential election a democratic character. For Lombardo, Alemán’s government counted with the legitimacy endowed by the vote of “the immense majority of the Mexican people.”

Then, Lombardo avoided frontal opposition to the dominant party and its president. In so doing, Lombardo aimed to building a middle ground open to negotiation with the PRI, while creating and strengthening an alternative partisan identity.

Lombardo Toledano conceived of the PP as a party that would not only avoid challenging the regime, but also would recognize and support its achievements. When the party was created, Lombardo made a pledge to work with the PRI to achieve political stability, since he believed that PRI global orchestration from the perspective of the federal government was still necessary. In a special dinner in the Chapultepec restaurant, Lombardo expressed its intentions to keep support for the PRI. Lombardo said:

El PRI, a pesar de sus fallas de origen, está cumpliendo una tarea sin duda importante en la evolución política de nuestro país. Por eso afirmo que el PRI, el Partido Revolucionario Institucional, debe ser mantenido para coordinar la labor política de los funcionarios del Gobierno. Hay funciones que deben ser cumplidas por algunas instituciones, y hay otras que deben, de un modo fatal, lógico, ser realizadas por otra institución diferente... Desde este punto de vista, el partido oficial ha de ser eco del Gobierno, su función crítica no puede existir, y es lógico que no exista. Por eso la función de un partido oficial como el PRI, tiene que ser la función

359 Vicente Lombardo Toleano, Un nuevo partido para México y su pueblo (booklet containing Lombardo’s discourse explaining his initiative to create the Popular Party), México, Popular Party, 1947, 14.

360 Addressing how different sectors of the population expressed the necessity of a new party among “the progressive forces of the country”, Lombardo Toledano said: “Entre la pequeña burguesía de las ciudades, entre los intelectuales, entre los profesionistas, entre los maestros, entre los servidores del Estado, también la conciencia de clase crece y los problemas del país se discuten de una manera apasionada y profunda. Se empieza a hablar ya, entonces, de nuevas formas políticas de organización. Se ha hablado de la necesidad de hacer un partido marxista. Se ha hablado de un partido liberal, y se ha hablado también de un partido de la burguesía industrial progresista de México”. Ibid.
que de hecho realiza, y que es necesaria: la función de coordinación de la acción política de los funcionarios que piensan de manera semejante, mientras la propia evolución histórica de México no permita otra clase de actividades y otra clase de elementos en la acción cívica.\(^{361}\)

Accordingly, the PP should not contribute to political instability by confronting the PRI. And, on the contrary, the PP should work harmoniously with the PRI to consolidate a balanced political order. In fact, after the creation of the party, Lombardo kept strong links with Miguel Alemán Valdés and considered his government as one identified with the progressive petite-bourgeoisie of the country, which sought to lead the struggle of the Mexican proletariat.\(^{362}\) This opinion was reinforced by the fact that while visiting the United States, Alemán had declared that the Mexican Revolution had not finished yet and that further transformation of Mexico was necessary.\(^{363}\) Then, in political rallies Lombardo continuously expressed that the PP would not be an opposition party, but a party offering constructive criticism. By so doing, Lombardo also acknowledged the value of the PRI as a machinery of national political coordination, whose disappearance would be a terrible mistake.\(^{364}\)

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\(^{361}\) Quoted in Villaseñor, 114

\(^{362}\) Víctor Manuel Villaseñor reports Lombardo saying in a meeting with political correligionaries: El gobierno del licenciado Miguel Alemán es la lógica continuación de los gobiernos de Manuel Ávila Camacho y de Lázaro Cárdenas, desde el punto de vista del desarrollo de un régimen democrático burgués... La composición del gobierno, considerado en su conjunto no es más que la proyección de la correlación de las fuerzas que existen afuera. En términos marxistas, este gobierno es, no un gobierno del proletariado, sino un gobierno de la burguesía; pero no es el gobierno de la burguesía reaccionaria, es el gobierno de la pequeña burguesía y de la burguesía progresista del país... Es claro que el gobierno de Alemán no puede realizar la tarea que se ha propuesto alcanzar la Revolución Mexicana, él solo. Si los objetivos inmediatos de la Revolución mexicana son los ya mencionados, y el proletariado ha de encabezar esta revolución asociado con otras fuerzas del pueblo, empleando la unidad nacional como táctica, es claro entonces que el gobierno es una parte de la realización de esos objetivos.” Villaseñor, Biografía de un hombre de izquierda, 102.

\(^{363}\) Ibid., 115.

\(^{364}\) Ibid., 116 and 126.
This situation awakened the critique of PP’s radically-oriented politicians like Narciso Bassols and Víctor Manuel Villaseñor, who questioned Lombardo’s intention to support the discourse of National Unity promoted by the state. They were harshly critical to the PRI and considered the engagement with working-class interests beyond the regime’s rhetoric of National Unity, pivotal. Villaseñor, for example, thought of the PRI as a merely instrument of the government to control elections. Maybe this is why Lombardo did not include Villaseñor and Bassols in the National Executive Committee of the Party, integrated on September 1947. It was only because of Villaseñor’s and Bassols’ complaints on this regard that commissions requiring their participation were created later. Yet, more moderate—even conservative, some would argue—middle-class representatives received the most important commissions. For instance, Octavio Véjar Vázquez became the general secretary of program, and Salvador Novo, the secretary of propaganda. Clearly Lombardo wanted to make clear the fact that the PRI should not be concerned with a possible radicalization of the PP. Yet, after the 1949-congressional elections, Narcisso Bassols and Víctor Manuel Villaseñor decided to leave the party for good since they considered the PP was heading to open accommodation inside PRI-manipulated politics.

365 See Villaseñor, 103-104 and 111.

366 Villaseñor declared, “El PRI no es un partido político en el verdadero sentido del término; es ya un anacronismo, un organismo superado por las exigencias de la vida política de México. Alguien ha dicho, y no sin razón, a mi juicio, que es ya tan sólo un instrumento del gobierno para controlar las elecciones y que entre los años que transcurren entre elección y elección actúa únicamente como agencia de colocaciones burocráticas.” Villaseñor, 134.

367 Bassols and Villaseñor decided to abandon the party under the following circumstances: During the 1949 congressional elections, the government only recognized the victory of one of the candidates of the PP, while pretending that all other available positions had been won by the PRI. While Lombardo and the Political Commission of the PP decided to accept the congressional seat offered to Ignacio Pesqueira, one of their Sonoran candidates, Bassols and Villaseñor, among other radicals, considered that doing so would be to follow the political game of the PRI. Later, when assessing the political role of the PP, Villaseñor has
The insertion of the PP in the national political life exemplified how middle-ground politics took shape, seeking to avoid left- or right- leaning labels. Véjar Vázquez, the most important voice in the party after Lombardo, evidenced this fact. In a political rally of January 1948, Véjar Vázquez said:

El capitalismo en lo porvenir ha de humanizarse, ya que la sociedad está lista para un orden basado en una relación nueva de hombre a hombre. No soy antimarxista, pero consigo que el marxismo debe ser reemplazado por una filosofía social que sirva mejor a la ascensión obrera y que esté más limpia que él de todo compromiso con un régimen económico que ha probado su impotencia y su inmoralidad... Nuestra democracia no debe ser de izquierdas ni de derechas, sino plenamente democrática.

Los hombres que formamos el Comité Coordinador del PP, queremos organizar un partido político que se coloque más arriba de las sectas y de las clases sociales; un partido político, que, dando cabida a todos los patriotas, formule, un programa tomando en cuenta, en síntesis armoniosa, todas esas fuerzas que son las realidades vitales de nuestra nacionalidad.368

Such a perspective created the ground for negotiation with the PRI, while offering space for some degree of opposition when considered appropriate. It was a move that endowed the PP broad capacity for political maneuverability while consolidating its relative weight in the national political scenario.

The PP made a pledge of defending working-class interests, but this happened from the middle-class’ point of view of its most important members. The PP was ruled by a broad gamma of middle-class representatives and intellectuals such as Andrés said, “De aquellas aspiraciones que tan grande resonancia lograron alcanzar en 1947 y 1948 y que crearon una extraordinaria coyuntura en la vida política de nuestro país, únicamente subsistió un fantasma dócil y sumiso a la política de los gobiernos de Alemán, Ruiz Cortines, López Mateos, Díaz Ordaz y Echeverría, desempeñando la función de comparsa en los comicios y en las sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados, lógico e inevitable resultado de la acomodaticia trayectoria política de Lombardo.” Villaseñor, 182.

368 Quoted by Villaseñor, 129.
Henestrosa, Diego Rivera, Enrique Ramírez y Ramírez, Federico Silva, Gustavo Solórzano, Luis Torres, José Rogelio Álvarez, Salvador Novo, José Gómez Robleda, Miguel Gleason Álvarez, Gabriel Figueroa, Salvador Toscano, Leopoldo Méndez, among many others. In the end, the party centered its functioning on top-down negotiations in which the social bases of workers and peasants were hardly included. During its beginnings, rather than finding legitimacy in the grassroots social movement, the party found its most important legitimacy in the highest authorities of the alemanista government.

Example of these top-down negotiations was the position of the Party regarding the peso devaluation of 1948. Salvador Novo narrates how the leadership of the Party met in Lombardo’s home to discuss a public manifesto. Novo seemed to approve of the manifesto as he asserted, “El documento había sido cuidadosamente fraseado. No se trataba, había que hacerlo claro, de un partido de oposición como el Sinarquista o como Acción Nacional, para los cuales todo lo que hiciera el gobierno estaría siempre mal. El PP no lo criticaría todo, pero no podía dejar de censurar los pasos y las medidas erróneas y perjudiciales en cuanto las viera, y en cuanto su corrección oportuna pudiera enderezar el rumbo de un gobierno cuyos lineamientos generales aprobaba.” Then, according to Novo, the PP would become an evaluator of the regime, while keeping an important degree of constructive support.

Keeping stability and peace in the country occupied a prime place in Lombardo’s mind. The path to the 1952-elections was showing a potentially conflictive scenario. Alemán’s followers were seeking some kind of Constitutional reform allowing the re-

\[\text{Salvador Novo, La vida en México en el periodo presidencial de Miguel Alemán, 174-175}\]
election of their leader or at least the prolongation of his presidential mandate. On the other hand, General Miguel Henríquez had a strong group of followers in the Federación de Partidos del Pueblo Mexicano (FPPM) and also seemingly the support of Lázaro Cárdenas.\textsuperscript{370} By 1950, Lombardo Toledano expressed his opinion that a common presidential candidate for all the progressive forces of the country would help strengthen the country’s unity and stability.\textsuperscript{371} According to Lombardo, the fact that progressive sectors were divided in that moment characterized by foreign pressure and profound economic, social and political problems created a dire risk for the country.\textsuperscript{372} Such a candidate should make the commitment to rule under the program of the Revolution.\textsuperscript{373} Yet, making an agreement among different political forces in the Left to have such a candidate proved difficult if not impossible. Then, Lombardo decided to become a candidate himself for the presidential post.

Lombardo Toledano, in the end, made clear his differences with Miguel Alemán and official presidential candidate Adolfo Ruíz Cortines.\textsuperscript{374} His most important argument was that Alemán had not honored his commitment to reform the Electoral Law, and that social conditions in the country worsened during his government. Ruíz Cortines was seen as the continuator of Alemán’s inadequate policies favoring capitalists and opening the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[370] See Elisa Servín, \textit{Ruptura y oposición}.
\item[372] Ibid., LI
\item[373] Ibid., XXXVII
\item[374] Lombardo said, “‘Mi discrepancia con el señor Ruíz Cortines consiste en la discrepancia política que yo tengo con el régimen del señor Presidente Miguel Alemán.’” “Los yanquis no se atreverían a derrocar a un gobierno producto del pueblo.- Lombardo”, in \textit{El Popular}, July 3, 1952, 3.
\end{footnotes}
economy in excess to U.S. influence, particularly in the oil production area.\textsuperscript{375} Then, the PP became a constant advocate for Electoral Reform, government social programs, and economic nationalism. Yet, direct confrontation with the PRI was to be avoided at all cost.

Lombardo’s program as the PP presidential candidate can be synthesized in the following words:

El programa del Partido Popular plantea, fundamentalmente, el restablecimiento del programa histórico de nuestra Revolución Mexicana; su exigencia esencial es la de poner de nuevo las instituciones de nuestro gobierno al servicio de las grandes mayorías de nuestro pueblo, de manera que estas últimas dispongan de todos los medios para expresar y plasmar su voluntad por los canales democráticos, disfruten del nivel de vida a que las hacen acreedoras su trabajo y los recursos naturales de nuestro país, tengan acceso a las manifestaciones superiores de la cultura y vivan en una patria libre de toda intervención extranjera.\textsuperscript{376}

Those signing their adhesion to the program were mostly middle-class intellectuals and artists like David Alfaro Siqueiros, Leopoldo Méndez, Alejandro Carrillo, Manuel Álvarez Bravo, José Revueltas, Vicente Méndez Rostro, Luis Covarrubias, Guillermo Toussaint, Federico Silva, Roberto Ortiz Gris, Eli de Gortari, among many others.\textsuperscript{377} In so doing, the PP sought to counter a myriad of intellectuals that had already expressed their support for Adolfo Ruíz Cortines, the PRI candidate. This situation evidenced the

\textsuperscript{375} An article in \textit{El Popular} says, “Con la firma de los contratos con el grupo de tres compañías norteamericanas, Edwin Pauley, American Independent Oil Company y la Signal Oil Co., se inició la política de regreso del capital privado extranjero. Una y otra parte contratantes han dado muchas muestras de optimismo. Y la corriente inversionista se ha desarrollado con cierta pujanza.”. “Un sistema legal favorable al imperialismo” in \textit{El Popular}, July 26, 1952, 1.

\textsuperscript{376} “No votaremos por Adolfo Ruíz Cortines”, in \textit{El Popular}, July 5, 1952, 4.

important role given to middle-class artists and intellectuals, whose support seemingly helped endow political programs with important levels of political legitimacy.

Lombardo centered his PP presidential candidate discourse on the endangering situation that economic inequalities and excessive reliance on the United States represented for Mexico. In this regard, he challenged his political rivals to build a program with solid solutions for this situation. He said that he was willing to share a common political program with other progressive forces of the country—namely the PRI, the FPPM, the PCM and the PARM (Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution)—as long as the program was a sound one, contributing to keep stability and economic progress. In the end, Lombardo was seeking other parties to join his own electoral platform. However, this did not happen (the Communist Party was a lukewarm exception, since it left the PP to join Henríquez after elections). Lombardo expressed: “Por eso mi candidatura es candidatura de unidad en medio de la diversidad de candidatos.” Accordingly, his candidature aimed to be a candidature of unity, a candidature in which middle ground politics among progressive political forces were going to predominate.

Although Lombardo Toledano and his party condemned the violent attack against Henríquez’s followers during elections day, they did not actually trust Henríquez. According to Lombardo, Henríquez had sought a pact with the Unión Nacional Sinarquista, an ultraconservative group, while later seeking a pact with the Communist

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379 Ibid., 20.
Party. Henríquez had also sought proximity with the United States. For Lombardo, Henríquez had no sense of political direction. Yet, Henríquez was only a man of his time, and as he looked for apparently disparate agreements, he was trying to build his own version of middle-ground politics, which in the end were middle-class politics.

In the end, after the elections, Lombardo and his followers were rather concerned with the manipulation of elections by the official party. According to Lombardo, tremendous fraud had taken place, placing the number of votes favoring the PP below those favoring Henríquez and the National Action Party (PAN), a fact that Lombardo considered unacceptable. Lombardo argued that massive demonstrations in his favor showed the fact that he was going to obtain many more votes than those officially publicized after elections. At all cost the PP sought to evidence how much more appealing it was to the popular sectors of society than Henríquez’s party. Yet, Henríquez’s followers were those that suffered violent repression from the state, and massive demonstrations supportint the FPPM offered an idea of the degree of challenge this party was coming to represent for the regime.

After the 1952-electoral controversy, Lombardo kept his openness to negotiation with the official party. While building on a strong left-leaning rhetoric of anti-U.S. imperialism and anti-corruption in politics, the PP never attacked frontally the regime nor became as radical as the Communist Party. In the end, the mainly middle-class constituencies in the PP kept political moderation. In fact, PP perspective on the PRI

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381 “Los cómputos de ayer confirman la monstruosidad del fraude electoral”, El popular, 14 julio 1952, 1.
grew positive again by the late 1950s. As a token of this, outgoing president Adolfo Ruíz Cortines was praised by important members of the PP, as expressed by editorial opinions in *El popular*—the party’s communication organ. \(^{382}\) Open adhesion to presidential candidate Adolfo López Mateos by the PP was also expressed in open terms. An editorial in *El popular* says in this regard:

La fuerza de la candidatura de López Mateos es tal que ha causado un impacto muy poderoso en la vida de los partidos y en su interrelación. Además del PRI que fue el que la lanzó, otros partidos la han hecho suya o han dejado en libertad a sus miembros para votar por ella. Y en cuanto a la oposición de derecha que hasta ahora había venido operando con un programa aparentemente coherente, ha visto derrumbarse su capacidad para impresionar a la ciudadanía y ha tenido que lanzarse a una desesperada campaña de injurias y de actos de provocación. Pero no se reduce a esto el vigor de la candidatura de López Mateos; no es solamente una candidatura más fuerte que las demás ni ha influido solamente en las decisiones de los otros partidos. Ha aparecido también como una fuerza capaz de contribuir a un cambio decisivo en las prácticas electorales de su propio partido y de las fuerzas que éste representa. Tal vez si el PRI no hubiera participado en la lucha con esta candidatura, muchos de los vicios electorales que ahora empiezan a ser liquidados, seguirían pareciendo como ‘un mal necesario.’ \(^{383}\)

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\(^{382}\) The editorial by Alejandro Carrillo says, “En primer término debe reconocerse que el Presidente Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, que asumió el poder en condiciones muy difíciles logró en el curso de su gestión gubernativa, sobreponerse a muchos obstáculos y crear en la última etapa un clima propicio a la unidad de lo que ha dado en llamarse el amplio sector revolucionario. Aunque en el tratamiento que se ha dado, por parte de la Administración, a ciertos problemas de importancia, han existido y existen discrepancias, la obra general del Gobierno –esto es innegable a la luz de los hechos–, ha merecido el consenso de la gran mayoría del pueblo y de los partidarios de la Revolución Mexicana. Al mismo tiempo, el Presidente con su austeridad personal, su patriotismo, su ponderación, su sensibilidad para escuchar y atender las demandas y los requerimientos de sus compatriotas, conquistó una autoridad moral que no ha declinado, sino va en ascenso. “Es manifiesta la fe del pueblo en Adolfo López Mateos”, *El popular*, 4 julio de 1958, 1.

This editorial implies that López Mateos’ candidature helped develop an important degree of unity among different political parties, and also contributed to reform PRI’s electoral practices. Explaining how such a reform took place, the editorial continues:

Las elecciones de mañana serán la culminación de una campaña política sin precedente en nuestra historia. Contribuyeron a darle un aspecto nuevo, por un lado, un vigoroso resurgimiento de la conciencia ciudadana, y, por el otro, un esfuerzo como no se había visto antes por parte del Poder Público, para poner en manos del pueblo un mecanismo electoral eficaz e imparcial. Un factor más de transformación del panorama electoral ha sido la candidatura del licenciado López Mateos. Esta candidatura ha sido decisiva en la caracterización de la campaña, porque, al mismo tiempo que recogía los anhelos de renovación política del pueblo y remozaba el programa de la Revolución Mexicana, contribuía a la expansión de un clima de confianza y optimismo respecto del desarrollo pacífico de la vida nacional. According to this, López Mateos’ candidature evidenced the fact that positive electoral reform took place. Also, in editorial terms, growing political awareness among voting citizens became a reality. In expressing this, the editorial endowed López Mateos with a political aura of being the means for supreme conciliation among divergent political sectors and citizens. And indeed, López Mateos’ discourse was one of balance between extremes. Yet, López Mateos’ underlying intention was to neutralize both the Left and Right in order to strengthen PRI’s leading position in the political scenario.

By granting full support to López Mateos, the PP joined his crusade to reinforce PRI-style middle ground politics, while fighting growing political presence of so-called non-progressive parties, namely the PAN. Seemingly, López Mateos represented a potential for unity and stability in a country in which economic and social contradictions were

384 Ibid.
becoming ever more profound. On the other hand, apparently, López Mateos offered a swing to the Left that was closer to the spirit of the Mexican Revolution. Then, with López Mateos, revolutionary rhetoric found continuous nourishment. And the PP not only shared but also publicized this rhetoric. In the end, for the PP, López Mateos played a role of leadership for some kind of progressive coalition. In that coalition the PP and the PRI seemed to share a basic common opponent, the National Action Party (PAN). U.S. “imperialism”, the Catholic Church, the Unión Nacional Sinarquista and Miguel Alemán-led Frente Cívico Mexicano de Reafirmación Revolucionaria were also mentioned by Lombardo as important enemies. Yet, the PAN constituted the most concrete enemy since it was becoming very influential and also was having meaningful electoral results. Published in *El popular* in October 1959, a note reports on words by Rodolfo González Guevara, PRI chief in the Federal District:

Lanzándose violentamente contra los manirrotos del Partido Acción Nacional y sus secuaces y jerifaltes, González Guevara los increpó en los siguientes términos:

‘A la cabeza de estos malos mexicanos, a la cabeza de estos sectores económicamente fuertes, es decir, los ricos, que traicionan al Presidente López Mateos, está un partido nefasto para el país, el Partido Acción Nacional, que es el enemigo principal de la Revolución y de México, que está traficando con los caros intereses populares, defendiendo en lo político y en lo económico a estos banqueros, a estos industriales y comerciantes que están de acuerdo con los grandes monopolios norteamericanos para detener la Reforma Agraria, frenar y corromper el movimiento obrero, impedir que el pueblo mexicano luche por su mejoramiento económico. Por eso el PRI hace un llamado al pueblo de México y muy especialmente al pueblo del
According to González Guevara, PAN members represented the rich, the anti-revolution and an unpatriotic alliance with the United States. So, for him, the PAN was colluding with members of the top-bourgeoisie and U.S. interests. And the PP, by publicizing this opinion in its communication organ, implicitly took it as an opinion of its own. In fact, for Lombardo Toledano, the PPS and the PRI were the only democratic parties in the country. In article published in Revista *Siempre* in January 1963, Lombardo supported his opinion in these terms:

Son democráticos porque el PRI representa a la burguesía nacional que, a pesar de sus contradicciones internas y sus vacilaciones frente a las presiones provenientes del exterior, no se la puede calificar como a una clase social sometida al imperialismo. Sobre esta cuestión tan importante el PPS difiere de la corriente de la izquierda sectaria que tantos obstáculos ha creado en la vida de México en las últimas décadas. En los países semicoloniales como el nuestro, la burguesía nacional es todavía una clase social progresista, como lo demuestra el impulso dado a la nación en muchos aspectos de su vida económica, social y cultural y su actitud ante los problemas internacionales. No es el proletariado el que ha dirigido a la república, sino la burguesía y si a veces algunos de los que, representándola, la han traicionado desde el poder, olvidando las metas de la revolución democráticoburguesa a la que han estado ligados, este hecho no significa que su clase, como tal, haya perdido su dinámica y sus objetivos, que no son los de la clase obrera; pero coinciden en esta etapa con muchas demandas del pueblo.\(^{386}\)

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\(^{385}\) “Destaca el PRI la amistad del pueblo de EE.UU., y ataca a los monopolios”, *El popular*, October 12 1959, 4.

In 1961, the PP changed its name to Socialist Popular Party (PPS). In so doing, the party sought to express a Marxist-Leninist vocation. Yet, as Lombardo evidences in the previous quotation, the PPS kept seeking a political middle-ground, in which the middle-class, the “petite bourgeoisie”, played a preeminent role. Consequently, the PPS did not aim at breaking with the national bourgeoisie at all. And, in fact, the party found its most important strength among its own middle-class leadership and constituencies. Meanwhile, the National Action Party (PAN) was seen as the party of a “dangerous” and non-democratic bourgeoisie allied with non-popular interests. Neither PRI nor PPS voices considered the facts that PAN members and advocates were as middle-class as they were, they strongly demanded the PRI-led government compliance with revolutionary precepts of social reform, and they were among the harshest challengers of government dealings with the United States.

For Lombardo Toledano open support for López Mateos and his leadership of a common progressive front became a matter of national stability. Lombardo Toledano expressed this position as though anticommunists were directly attacking Adolfo López Mateos’ progressive regime. In January 1963, Lombardo said,

El anticomunismo, considerado en su conjunto o en cada una de sus partes si no llegaran éstas a unirse en un solo bloque, representa la rectificación a la política positiva del gobierno que ha presidido el licenciado Adolfo López Mateos. Por esta causa, todas las corrientes democráticas del país, independientemente de las discrepancias que entre ellas existen y ante el peligro de que el anticomunismo, apoyado resueltamente desde los Estados Unidos, trate de alterar la situación, provocando la guerra civil, intentando un golpe de Estado o, por lo menos, haciendo
un gran escándalo para que la futura administración rectifique a la actual y les dé acomodo a sus elementos, se asocia para cerrarle el paso al enemigo común.\textsuperscript{387}

In the end, such a common enemy was not only the PAN, but also what Lombardo defined as sectarianism among diverse left-leaning movements.\textsuperscript{388} For instance, Lázaro Cárdenas-supported MLN (created in 1961) was openly opposed by the PRI, and so too by the PPS. On the other hand, the 1962-created Independent Peasantry Central (CCI) also constituted another leftist front with shades of radicalism that was opposed by the PRI, Lombardo and the PPS. In this regard, Lombardo said,

Hemos condenado el dogmatismo y el sectarismo que ha caracterizado a los autores de la nueva agrupación campesina, porque obran sin tomar en cuenta la realidad, la correlación de las fuerzas políticas y sociales de nuestro país, la necesidad de la acción común de todos los sectores democráticos para reducir a la impotencia a las fuerzas y a los instrumentos del anticomunismo. Por que no puede haber sino dos campos en los actuales momentos: o la alianza de los antinacionalistas, o la alianza de los pro-imperialistas. No puede haber una tercera corriente en este gran alineamiento de los componentes del pueblo mexicano.\textsuperscript{389}

Yet, underlying such an apparent polarization of politics—anti-imperialists v.s. imperialists—middle-ground politics was the most important aspect at stake. So, anti-imperialism could not be shaped by radical or communist groups. Instead, according to

\textsuperscript{387} Vicente Lombardo Toledano, “México y Moscú. El anticomunismo y la sucesión presidencial. Las discrepancias de la izquierda mexicana” (article originally published in Revista Siempre on January 23, 1963), in Escritos en Siempre, México, CEFySVTL, 1994, 748.

\textsuperscript{388} Defending López Mateos government from “sectarian” attacks, Lombardo Toledano said, “Si el gobierno del presidente López Mateos es un agente del imperialismo norteamericano, como los sectarios lo afirman, entonces lo que hay que hacer es derrocarlo con las armas, porque con las injurias no caerá. Pero si no es un instrumento del imperialismo, como la mayoría del pueblo mexicano lo siente y lo afirma, entonces la única línea táctica posible es la de impulsar los aspectos positivos de su administración, para que la futura no sólo continúe con el mismo rumbo, sino supere a la obra del actual gobierno, llevando a la Revolución Mexicana hasta sus últimas consecuencias. Éste es el punto en el cual discrepan las gentes de la izquierda.” Ibid., 750.

\textsuperscript{389} Ibid., 749-750.
the PPS, it should be lead under the banner of institutional politics, which, in the end, were López Mateos-led (or PRI-led) politics. Middle-ground or middle-class politics was something to keep in power at all cost.

By November 1963, when Gustavo Díaz Ordaz became the presidential candidate of López Mateos’ choice, the PPS and Lombardo also granted their full support to him. In the end, Lombardo seemed to expect the PRI to truly honor its social commitment with the working and middle classes, while excluding big entrepreneurs, agriculturalists and cattle ranchers. Accordingly, the PRI would seek a more egalitarian social regime, strengthening the state-led economy and endowing popular groups with more political agency. Yet, Díaz Ordaz was soon to show some of the harshest expressions of authoritarianism and repression Mexican history had ever seen.

The 1968 escalating confrontation between students and government was taken cautiously by the PPS National Direction—headed by Lombardo Toledano and integrated by politicians like Jorge Cruickshank García, Cándido Jaramillo, Manuel Stephens García, Hortensia Rojas Velázquez, and Alejandro Gascón Mercado, among others. PPS reaction to these events was coherent with Lombardo’s long-held vision that a myriad of Left-leaning radical groups actually hurt the possibilities of creating a broader leftist political front. Accordingly, these groups also endangered the country’s political stability and often served interests that were contrary to their own political affiliation.

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390 Vicente Lombardo Toledano, “¿Aspira el PRI a ser un partido popular?” (article originally published in Revista Siempre on December 11, 1963), in Escritos en Siempre..., 760.

391 Ibid.

392 The manifiesto, signed by Lombardo Toledano and 11 more PPS leaders, referred to the violent confrontation between students and authorities during August 1968. The document says, “¿Qué papel desempeñaron en los disturbios minúsculos grupos de ‘ultras’ de la pseudoizquierda que hablaron de ‘lucha de barricadas’ y de ‘guerrillas urbanas’, y pandillas de maleantes que se valen de cualquier escándalo para
vision, the U.S. CIA and ultra-right-wing groups were infiltrated among student demonstrators seeking to cause political instability in the country.\footnote{Ibid., 54.} Even though the PPS criticized the authorities’ violent response against demonstrators, the party kept his support to the presidential institution headed by Gustavo Díaz Ordaz. In so doing, the PPS and Lombardo seemed to attribute the origins of the conflict to inefficient city authorities and manipulative infiltrates. Meanwhile, the PPS declared that Díaz Ordaz was doing his best as he negotiated with students, promising to open more space for political participation and a more egalitarian economic distribution of wealth.\footnote{The PPS leaders declared, “La esperanza del presidente Díaz Ordaz, de que el aliento a las justas aspiraciones de la juventud librase a México de las sacudidas que se han producido en otros países se vio, desgraciadamente, frustrada por los hechos de provocación que comentamos. Pero el propósito sigue siendo justo y el PPS confía en que será mantenido y en que, en el terreno de los derechos políticos, será otorgada la ciudadanía a la nueva generación desde la edad de 18 años.” Later, the document adds, “Ha dicho el presidente que su gobierno está para defender a los pobres y que los ricos se defiendan solos. Pero muchos de los gobernantes, en los diversos niveles, defienden a los ricos y azotan a los pobres. El postulado presidencial, que es sincero, debe ser respaldado por una acción enérgica que lo convierta en realidad.” Ibid., 858-859.} Even in the face of September 18 military occupation of University City, the PPS kept its support to the government and made a common front with the PRI and PARM to reject a PAN congressional proposal to force troops to retire from the university campus.\footnote{See Carlos Ortega, “El conflicto estudiantil en la Cámara: sólo el PAN defendió la Constitución y la autonomía”, in La Nación, October 1, 1968, 11.} In the end, Lombardo and the PPS had pledged their support to Díaz Ordaz call for national unity and political stability (for keeping middle-ground politics). Accordingly the PPS leaders stated in a joint manifesto,
El presidente Díaz Ordaz ha hecho un llamamiento para disminuir las diferencias y para restablecer la tranquilidad, con base en el reconocimiento de que al pueblo mexicano es más lo que lo une que lo que lo divide […] El “gran solitario de Palacio Nacional” ha tendido su mano a los mexicanos, en actitud cordial y amistosa, exhortando y comprometiéndose a juzgar los hechos en forma objetiva y ecuánime […] El Partido Popular Socialista acepta la exhortación presidencial […] Llama con vehemencia a la juventud y a todo el pueblo a responder positivamente a esta exhortación […] La acción unida del pueblo y de las fuerzas democráticas del gobierno hará fracasar la provocación de la reacción y del imperialismo, y permitirá continuar y acelerar la marcha en aras de nuevas metas revolucionarias y democráticas, que encarnan el anhelo de la nueva generación y del pueblo de México.396

Then, for the PPS, confrontation between students and government had its origins in a provocation by reactionary and imperialist sectors seeking to divide the Mexican people. Meanwhile, the party seemed to be confident that the President had the capacity and openness to resolve the situation by means of political negotiation. The tragic massacre of October 2 of 1968 proved how far from the truth these optimistic assumptions were.

The National Action Party (PAN): A Different Branch Converging in the Foundations of the Regime?

The National Action Party (PAN) appeared as a response to Cárdenas’ policies that apparently put aside the urban middle-class, while undertaking populist reform. Cárdenas seemed to have neglected urban problems and middle-class’ expectations on democracy and economic development. On the other hand, the PAN sought to create an alternative political front that promoted national unity and political stability. Indeed, the party goals seemed to belong to a transcendental sphere in which saving the fatherhood and national unity played the most important role. Instead of merely seeking to win elections, PAN rhetoric addressed the importance of looking after political stability and government honesty. So, in large degree, the party self-assumed the position of a government watchdog that was to keep an eye on government’s performance, criticizing irregularities and bringing long-overdue social problems to citizens’ attention. That would be the party’s most important contribution to the political environment of late-1930s-and-1940s-Mexico.

After the PRI the oldest legally recognized political party, the PAN was founded by several middle-class academics and intellectuals in 1939. Manuel Gómez Morín had been the National University rector, Efraín González Luna, Aquiles Elorduy, and Luis Calderón Vega were all representatives of an educated middle-class that sought to endow the party with a solid ideology and political doctrine. They created a party that was

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supposed to offer meaningful opposition to the PRM and its policies. The party founders disliked the direction taken by Mexico under Cárdenas policies. For them, Cárdenas’ style agrarian and economic reform strengthened presidentialism and one-party rule, undermining democracy. Another important concern was education and individual freedom. For PAN founders, Cárdenas’ socialist education represented an undesirable intromission of the state in family educational choices and individual freedom.

The PAN founders also stressed nationalism and the defense of the Hispanic heritage. They believed Lázaro Cárdenas betrayed the spirit of the Hispanic fatherhood since he challenged Catholic, family and property values. Cárdenas was seen as promoter of foreign ideologies identified with revolutionary Soviet Union and bolshevism. Meanwhile, however, United States economic materialism and increased cultural influence were rejected by PAN as well. PAN founders sought a third way, which was neither US capitalism nor USSR communism, but closer to the Mexican Hispanic heritage strongly grounded on the values of social Catholicism. 398

PAN’s third way was based on the social principles of the papal encyclica Rerum Novarum, which criticized both liberalism and socialism and promoted a return to traditional values of family and society, beyond material and political interests. However, the papal encyclica endowed the state with an important role in defending social interests. According to Leon XIII, the state should regulate social relations by means of corporations, so that the organic functioning of society was better served by groups and individuals. Then state authoritarianism was even considered beneficial as long as it became the guarantor of social harmony and the preservation of family and values.

PAN quest for a middle ground in politics was built on the bases of nationalism, Catholicism, and middle-class rejection of foreign influences (considered as radical) threatening local tradition. PAN foundation was grounded on Manuel Gómez Morín’s political and economic reformism against the PRM, and Efraín González Luna’s Catholic social doctrine. Such a doctrine was rooted in the 1920s Catholic movements that challenged state’s laicism and liberalism. In fact, such movements were among the strongest adversaries that lay revolutionaries like Álvaro Obregón and Plutarco Elías Calles had faced. PAN creation took at least in a theoretical way some of the organizational principles of those movements. However, PAN was a middle-class and urban movement as opposed to those movements which were rather popular and had important rural ingredients.

PAN links with the university context arose from Manuel Gómez Morín’s previous position as the rector of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) between 1933 and 1934. As the university rector, Gómez Morín developed strong ties with Mexico City’s urban intelligentsia, that opposed strong state intervention in university matters and defended professorial freedom. Many members of such intelligentsia participated in the First National Council of the PAN. Even former rectors of UNAM, like Ezequiel Chávez, Valentín Gama and Fernando Ocaranza, were counted among the participants of that Council. In fact, most members of this Council of 80 members, with the exception of 12, had a university degree.399 This strong identification between PAN ranks and a well-consolidated group of members with university backgrounds must have been an important stimulus for the PRM to begin choosing its

399Ibid., 125.
presidents and leadership among members with a university degree beginning with 1946-
presidential-candidate Miguel Alemán Valdés. The ruling-party reconciliation with the
university group was a solid step taken to strengthen links with the national middle class.
The 1940s became the decade of politicians with university degrees leading to middle-
class professional consolidation in the political arena.

In 1940, the PAN did not present a candidate of its own, and chose to support Juan
Andreu Almazán. For recently created PAN, supporting Almazán offered the opportunity
to create a political front that challenged PRI rule. Juan Andreu Almazán had important
levels of popularity gained by means of his inflammatory discourse denouncing the
ruling-party’s corruption and supposed communist alliances. Almazán, on the other hand,
before launching his presidential candidature had been the Chief of Operations in the
military zone of Nuevo León, where he had leverage among middle-class and
entrepreneurial sectors. Since the recently created PAN did not have a candidate of his
own, supporting Almazán seemed to be the best way to enter the political arena in
practical terms, as a real and proactive political party.  

Preserving national unity occupied a privileged place among PAN activists’ agenda
and also in the vision of Mexican middle class. Then, in spite of evident electoral fraud
and open violence in the electoral sites against Almazán followers, the PAN was cautious
in its reaction to those events. Elected PRM candidate Manuel Ávila Camacho knew how
to capitalize on that perspective, and expressed his aim of preserving and strengthening
national unity as one of his main presidential goals. Ávila Camacho catalogued
opposition parties like Almazán’s Revolutionary Party of National Unification (PRUN),

400 See James Wilkie, México visto en el siglo XX. Entrevistas con Manuel Gómez Morín…, 57.
PAN and others as threats to national unity and promoters of factious interests dividing the nation.

However, PAN founders Efraín González Luna and Manuel Gómez Morín had their own perspective on national unity. González Luna, for instance, catalogued the PRI-led state as a factious regime that hurt the people. On the other hand, he considered that “El mal de México, signo de esta crisis mundial, no es otra cosa que la ruptura de la unidad interna, el obscurecimiento del reconocimiento propio y el exclusivismo faccioso.” For him, the Mexican regime, “carece de programas, de orden, de justicia, de honradez, y en el que, por lo contrario, sobran la violencia y el fraude.” Acción Nacional’s response to such a situation, according to Gómez Morín should be one in which the party was responsible “en la lucha por nuestra estirpe, por nuestra historia, por nuestra geografía, por nuestra cultura, por nuestra vocación… peleando por reivindicar los principios esenciales de la dignidad del hombre y del Bien Común y estableciendo los cimientos de autenticidad, libertad responsable y común adhesión a valores superiores, en que se finca la existencia de una verdadera nación.” Particularly, the principle of “Bien Común” (Common Good) became the base for PAN political rhetoric. And the real quest for the Common Good was supposed to counter political monopoly and corruption, while strengthening national unity.

In 1946 Luis Cabrera was chosen as a candidate of “concentración nacional” (national convergence). With this, the party sought to create an image of having a national unity candidate, instead of a party-candidate that would be seen as a factious

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401 “Discurso de Gómez Morín ante la IV Convención del PAN”, in La Nación, febrero 1946, 7.
402 Ibid., 23.
403 Ibid., 7.
one. Renowned Luis Cabrera, once Venustiano Carranza´s spokesman, was such a candidate. He did not belong to the party, he was part of the generation of men that directly participated in the 1910 revolution and had a blameless reputation of honesty and nationalism. Even though Cabrera declined his nomination, the party kept him as the banner of diversity and unity. In the end, PAN leadership was aware that the party did not stand any chance in the presidential elections. Yet, Luis Cabrera was a symbol of the political middle-ground that the party looked for. According to PAN ideologues, that middle ground consisted of national unity beyond political factionalism. A national personality, but not a member of any political party, Cabrera served PAN rhetoric of social service vocation beyond any kind of political attachments or interests.

As PAN activists attacked what they called the “political oligarchy” (namely PRI politicians), they used the conception of “Common Good” as their point of reference. Accordingly, the state was not really supporting “Common Good” achievement, and, instead, it was subordinating the nation to PRI bureaucracy centralist interests.404 In its 1951 X Convention, PAN speakers like Luis Calderón Vega, expressed their perception that the government had become a dictatorship which created a political farce, strengthening the one-ruling-party system and making democracy impossible.405 In this regard, unlimited expansion of state power was considered a danger to the Nation and the “Common Good”. Such an expansion, accordingly, undermined authentic political competition and representation.

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404 García Lascuráin, et. al., 66.
405 Ibid.
For representatives in the PAN 10th Convention, the appointment of a PAN presidential candidate for the 1952-elections became a matter of “saving the nation.” With this, the party assumed a messianic position typical of the middle class. As its members are generally the most educated in society, they believe they have a natural right to provide their own societies with leadership and representation in order to save them from evildoings. As the presidential candidate to lead such a crusade to “save the nation”, the PAN appointed one of its founders, Efraín González Luna. Being a passionate defender of Catholic practitioners’ rights, he held an idealist perspective concerning politics and its social function. For him, the state should respect local traditions and the natural juridical order of people and communities. As one of the PAN founders, González Luna in fact provided much of the main substance for the party’s ideological bases. Such bases, more often than not disagreed with Gómez Morín economic and lay view. However, González Luna Catholic thought valued social reform wherein the state should promote social development by means of adequate policies concerning health, education and other areas with high social return. In achieving this, respect for traditions and the Hispanic heritage would be essential. Even though González Luna candidature for the presidential elections was unsuccessful, thereafter his discourse and political view shaped in important proportion PAN’s politics.

In 1958, PAN demands for social reform became louder than ever. As the presidential elections were approaching, PAN activists criticized economic inequality, industrial expansion at the expense of rural work, educational disparities between urban

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406 Ibid., 69.
407 Soledad Loaeza, Clases medias y política…, 47.
408 García Lascuráin, et. al., 71.
and rural areas, corruption in workers unions and lack of democracy in national politics. Social reform was highlighted as a matter of urgent attention. After addressing these issues as a priority, the PAN 13th Convention chose Luis H. Álvarez as the party presidential candidate that would lead Mexico to realize its maximum potential. Yet, most important, keeping national unity and achieving democracy seemed to be the most important goals for PAN activists. And those aspects would be the result of middle-ground politics, which for the party meant middle-class messianic politics, politics of salvation for the fatherhood, for the nation.

PAN middle ground politics is clearly expressed in the party’s quest for self-definition between Gómez Morín-style practical political and economic issues and González Luna-influenced ideology originated from the Catholic social vision and doctrine. Even though the PAN insisted in showing its lay character at any cost, the party actually addressed political issues from a metaphysical standpoint. Conceptions like common good, natural rights, saving the fatherhood, transforming people’s consciences, etc. were taken from humanistic Catholicism. At least until 1966, PAN political style was impractical and not really concerned with being too effective in the electoral arena. The party founding fathers, seemingly, were not primarily interested in achieving political power, but in creating an ethical alternative in politics. Then the party was rather concerned with transforming the people’s conscience, helping to get closer to democracy and social reform.

410 La Nación, November 30, 1957, 10.
After 1966, under the leadership of Adolfo Christlieb Ibarrola, the party became more practical, taking from the new doctrine of the Church that encouraged Catholics to participate more in politics and the resolution of social issues. So far, participation of PAN candidates in federal and local elections had been irregular and rather based on personal networks in the most important urban areas of the country, mainly Mexico City. Specific political and economic programs were practically absent. They also lacked a broadly-based militant organization, with formally registered members in the national level. However, with Adolfo Christlieb the party sought to modernize and be more appealing to a more complex and bigger middle-class potential constituency.

The presidential candidature of Luis H. Álvarez in 1958 had been the prelude to PAN long-overdue modernization. Álvarez was a young politician more interested in social and economic reform than in Catholic ideological doctrine. Álvarez’s program promoted social policies to fight poverty and unemployment, to defend private property against excessive state intervention. Álvarez also denounced “caciquismo” and corruption among PRI ranks. Even though Adolfo López Mateos, the PRI candidate, won the election, Álvarez inaugurated a new party era wherein political intervention had to become more practical and sound with socially appealing electoral programs.

PAN modernization brought about important outcomes. In fact, 1969-Yucatan elections represented a turning point in national politics as PAN candidates won Merida municipal office among many others in the state and seriously challenged PRI candidate for governor, Carlos Loret de Mola. U.S. informant Ray S. Cline clearly expresses the situation in a cable to the Department of State. He says,

The day when an opposition party can mount a substantial challenge to the official party at a politically significant level has arrived. The fact that significant numbers of the peasantry, one of the sources and mainstays of the Revolution, and the middle class, the offspring of the Revolution, appear to feel that their needs must be conveyed to the government outside the official party may be a sign that the myth of the Revolution is wearing a bit thin. Making the PRI-government complex more responsive to pressures from below will require much careful thought, and this process will be hindered by a natural reluctance to tinker with a system which has proven so effective in the past. There is no guarantee that the PRI-government will come to grips with the problem, nor is there any reason to think that they must over the short run. But, over the long run there seems to be no alternative but to face the issue of growing dissatisfaction with the status quo. The Yucatan elections may reveal the PRI’s first response to this problem.413

Those elections for governor were won by PRI candidate, Loret de Mola. However, they offered a magnificent opportunity for PAN constituencies to reorganize and realize the party’s concrete potential, beyond its confessional ideology or theoretical doctrine. The PAN had the possibility of not only contesting the one-rule party but also of doing it in a very effective manner. This was the result of continuous self-representation as the only party truly opposing what they thought were PRI politics of corruption and authoritarianism. As seen previously in this work chapter on the US cultural influence on the Mexican middle class, PAN opinion-makers created a solid image of representing the party that protected Hispanic Mexico’s traditional family and Catholic values against a PRI opening to US and communist influence. In so doing, PAN opinion-makers expressed their middle class character: assuming a messianic position in which they

would be the saviors of Mexicans who honestly believed in nationalism, and a higher potential for the nation based on the fulfillment of the common good.

By the late 1960s the PAN had already become the most important challenger of PRI one-party-rule. Contrary to allegations from both the PRI and the PP, the PAN was neither an ally of U.S. interests, nor the promoter of big capitals´ position. Instead, the PAN shared with PRI and PP the quest for a political middle ground featured by middle-class values and national unity aspirations. This is why during the 1968 student conflict with the government, the PAN was the only party openly criticizing government´s repression. In fact, during the September intervention of the military in the University City, the PAN sought to obtain a congressional ban for military troops to keep university invasion.414 Later—as we will discuss with detail in the following chapter—when the Tlatelolco massacre of October 2nd did happen, PAN opinion-makers where among the few who openly raised their voice denouncing Díaz Ordaz´s government violent excesses.

For the 1970 presidential race, Efraín González Morfín was selected as the PAN candidate. By then the party had already created a complex interpretation of itself, seeking to fit better in the time trends. Open support to student contestation against the government and a willingness to understand the new claims and expectations of the youth characterized PAN quest for modernity (influenced by the new Church openness and Pope Juan XXIII 1961-encyclical Mater et Magistra). González Morfín presidential

414 Carlos Ortega, “El conflicto estudiantil en la Cámara: sólo el PAN defendió la Constitución y la autonomía”, in La Nación, October 1, 1968, 11.
campaign discourse by the time evidenced this approach. He often asserted that the PAN was not a confessional party. He also said,

Acción Nacional nació precisamente en respuesta a una exigencia de cambio social y político, que es lo que se niegan ultraconservadores como Fidel Velázquez, Rafael Galván, Francisco Pérez Ríos, y demás casta de líderes que por nada del mundo están dispuestos a permitir cambios sociales a fondo, porque les privaría de sus cuantísimos privilegios.\footnote{Efraín González Morfín, “Si la izquierda es insatisfacción con el presente, el PAN sí es de izquierda”, \textit{La Nación}, 15 enero de 1970, 15.}

According to these arguments, the PAN was not a conservative party. Instead, those seeking to keep privileged situations for a small group in the PRI were those truly conservative. González Morfín went so far as to say that the PAN was actually a party of the Left, since it opposed PRI authoritarianism and PP continuous bargaining with the government.\footnote{Ibid.,16.} With these assertions, González Morfín expressed PAN understanding that in order to continue succeeding in the mainstream political arena, the party had to keep up with its modernization process superseding the conservative and confessional stereotype many electors still had about the PAN.

In that capacity for modernization and adaptability we can find the roots for PAN success in the 2000-presidential race, when Vicente Fox won the electoral contest by a meaningful difference from PRI candidate Francisco Labastida. The only way for the PAN to offer an alternative after over-seventy years of PRI presidential rule, was by means of favoring, at least in appearance, the lay and more flexible features of the party over the confessional and Catholic-based image. Also, the party developed strong links

\footnote{Efraín González Morfín, “Si la izquierda es insatisfacción con el presente, el PAN sí es de izquierda”, \textit{La Nación}, 15 enero de 1970, 15.}
\footnote{Ibid.,16.}
with large-capitals like the Monterrey Group of Northern Mexico, and shared the neoliberal economic vision that featured 1980s-trends to resolve deep financial crises.

In spite of their seeming differences, the most important political parties in Mexico between 1940 and 1970, the PRI, the PP and the PAN, shared more common aspects than not. They all were strongly middle-class based, and sought a political middle-ground. They settled their foundations on middle-class personalities like Plutarco Elías Calles, Lázaro Cárdenas, Miguel Alemán Valdés, Manuel Gómez Morín, and Vicente Lombardo Toledano. They had strong ties with the university and intellectuals. They shared the same concern of keeping national unity and political stability, since they were not willing to deeply shake the national scenario, which would have risked their middle-class position and alienated their middle-class supporters. And, in the end, they all crystallized an important outcome of the Mexican revolution: the transference of effective political power to the Mexican middle class, while creating appropriate conditions for large-capitalists to benefit and expand, in the context of an intensive process of urban and industrial growth.

The post-revolutionary PRI-lead Mexican state promoted a leftist and revolutionary political rhetoric that often was disconnected from concrete translation into political and economic actions. PRI development shows that middle class constituencies had the upper-hand in the party by means of the CNOP. Therefore, the Mexican state became closer to middle class’ interest than to worker’s or peasant’s goals. PRI presidential candidates beginning with Miguel Alemán all came from CNOP ranks, while the CNC and the CTM had a position in the corporatist structure of the party rather
mediated by corrupted leaders “charros” who favorably bargained according to the interest of big firms and entrepreneurs.

Neither the PP nor the PAN actually sought more popular inclusion in politics or greater participation of peasants and workers in the state decision-making processes. In spite of political rhetoric and inflammatory discourses their essential interest focused on their middle-class urban constituencies. They supported post-revolutionary state trends clearly in development by means of growing urbanization, industrialization, education and culture expansion. Both parties and the PRI altogether built a middle-class focused political system, while keeping at bay any other political alternative. PRI’s capacity of staying continuously in the presidential chair until the year 2000 might owe much to that not so accidental circumstance.
CHAPTER VII

THE CONTRADICTIONS OF MIDDLE CLASS POPULISM

Between 1940 and 1960, the PRI-led Mexican state sought to legitimize its political power by means of the rhetoric of populism and support to workers and peasants by means of the party’s corporatist structure. Nonetheless, the state implemented an economic project based on cheap labor and raw materials seeking the benefit of large industrialists and entrepreneurs. In fact, the corporatist structure of the party helped to control and to neutralize workers and peasants demands so that large capitalists could keep the upper-hand in their bargaining of wages and labor conditions. Instead of promoting domestic consumption by means of better wages and a more solid national productive output, the external sector was strengthened at the expense of local small producers and merchants. However, the economic project promoted urban expansion and industrialization, offering the middle classes the most benefits of development associated to the model. Meanwhile, the middle classes also got preeminence in the political context, favoring top-ranking industrialists’ benefits, and creating a populist discourse in which the revolutionary goals apparently had already become a reality. Profound income inequality and economic crises, nonetheless, complicated the scenario already in the 1960s. Clearly, the Stabilizing Development Project undertaken by the state was not meeting its objectives of growth with stability. The state faced profound budgetary deficits, and this situation provoked meaningful budgetary cuts to social programs and a strong decrease in domestic development. Both situations had their major impact on the previously ebullient urban middle-classes, which then began challenging the regime and
questioning its economic policies. Even the matter of the PRI-led state political legitimacy was also put at stake, and strong antagonism came from students, who found frustrated their expectations as the most important heirs of the revolutionary legacy.

**Political System Contradictions: The Roots of Middle-Class Challenges to the State**

Middle class diversity entailed the existence of hardcore leftist dissident sectors which disagreed with the state’s policies. They also became among its most important opponents. As the government’s good will and high expectations regarding the National University increased, student animosity and rebelliousness also grew stronger. Notwithstanding the important support of the state to the university, its students eventually became one of the most radicalized sectors of the middle classes. As early as 1942, left-leaning students, supported by progressive professors started opposing the elitist orientation of the university. Two years later, in 1944, leftist students and the University Professors Association (APU) led a strike that ended with the resignation of rector Rodolfo Brito Foucher, who had pro-fascist inclinations. Certainly, his resignation must have been facilitated by the fact that Manuel Ávila Camacho’s government was seeking to demonstrate its anti-Nazi commitment to the United States.

In 1948 another students strike paralyzed the University for many days, attracting harsh criticism from many middle class sectors, who thought that the University was becoming a haven for communist activists and radical thinkers. The leaders of the strike were believed to have direct links with the Communist Party.\(^{417}\) The striking students

wanted the removal of rector Salvador Zubirán, because he approved of the creation of the *Reglamento de Pagos* and regulated the payment of tuition in the National University (the equivalent to around 25 dollars per year). He also denied internal administration reforms that student activists demanded to the *Facultad de Derecho*. Moreover, Zubirán called on the intervention of the police to repress the rebellious students.

Renowned Mexican intellectual Salvador Novo, among others, reflects the opinion of the conservative middle class about this issue. After deprecating the enormous political agitation provoked by the students, Novo compares this situation with that existent in other areas of the country. His praising of the Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey (ITESM) as haven of good and pacific students sounds almost natural.418 Thus, Novo joined other members of the Mexican middle classes who started to profile National University students as incorrigible agitators, while the ITESM students were truly dedicated to their academic endeavors. This unfortunate conception prevailed in the future even with more force as student mobilization in public universities became sharper.

Clearly the opinion of Novo and other conservatives was an exaggeration. Until the late-1950s student groups in the National University were largely patronized by the PRI and the government and did not develop the kind of radical thought and mobilization characteristic of the 1960s. Institutions like the School of Political Sciences mainly served the interest of well-to-do students who aspired to obtain a prominent political position in the government.419 General trends in the university were still conservative and

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418 Novo, *La vida en México en el periodo presidencial de Miguel Alemán*, 159

student mobilization was supported by some left-leaning groups that were relatively incipient and disorganized.

The gradual strengthening of trends to the left in the University found reference in contradictory currents within the Mexican state itself and its validation of middle class political diversity. In fact, prominent members of the Mexican intelligentsia and even figures of the government, at least in their rhetoric, expressed their identification with leftist trends, or even with communism. Between 1940 and 1970 many of the most important PRI politicians in fact considered themselves to be part of the left-wing of the political spectrum, like Adolfo López Mateos, for instance. In an extreme case of contradiction, Miguel Alemán Valdés, responsible for an important swing of the party to the right, had strong ties with distinguished members of the Mexican leftist intelligentsia, and also financed left-leaning periodicals before being president from 1946 to 1952. Yet, the leftist affiliation of priísta politicians was largely a matter of political rhetoric.

On September, 25, 1946 a special report from John Edgar Hoover, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, to the Department of State, offered information about a publication with communist character called “1945” that later was called “1946”. This periodical included either as responsible of the publication or as collaborators top personalities of the Mexican intellectual and cultural life. The report includes a relatively detailed profile of renowned figures such as David Alfaro Siqueiros, José Revueltas, Federico Silva, Manuel Álvarez Bravo, José Mancisidor, José Chávez Morado, José Clemente Orozco, Louis Ortiz Monasterio, Salvador Toscano, Raúl Anguiano, José Iturriaga, José Alvarado, Dolores Álvarez Cueto, Andrés Henestrosa, María Izquierdo, Carlos Chávez, Juan de la Cavada, Enrique Ramírez Ramírez, Efraín Huerta and many others with intellectual and artistic backgrounds. Some of the participants in this publication were distinguished foreigners such as the Cuban intellectual Nicolás Guillén or the Spanish refugee Juan Rejano. There is a clear predominance of painters as can be realized from the names involved, although many writers and other kinds of distinguished members of the Mexican cultural and intellectual life can be detected in the list. Ultimately, the periodical was printed in the “Talleres de gráfica popular” and received financial support from the selling of paintings by Siqueiros, Diego Rivera, Leopoldo Méndez and Alfredo Zalce. The publication is cataloged as “strongly anti-United States, anti-Clerical, anti-Imperialistic, and pro-Communist”. The report also mentions the fact that the publication also received important financial aid from Miguel Alemán Valdez. The CTM and other labor syndicates were key supporters as well. From this, it seems that ultimately the Mexican state indirectly financed publications of this kind. Was it a way to keep them in track with the general policies of the state, while giving an image of liberty of expression and revolutionary diffusion of ideas in the printed media? Maybe the answer to this question is self-evident in that this publication was short-lived, as it coincidentally finished when president Alemán took the presidential chair. Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Mexico, Internal Affairs, part II 1945-1949, microfilm 88/2011 b, reel 33.

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The state offered some political interplay to radical leftist opposition and revolutionary discourse, as far as it occurred in its own political yard and among certain privileged social groups. This strategy also served to appeal to left-leaning intellectuals, who were becoming very influential by that time. Yet, such interplay might be terminated as soon as it was in the best interest of the state to do so. While leftist interplay was tolerated among the middle classes and the intelligentsia, it was harshly repressed as soon as it threatened to extend to the sphere of workers and peasants. Conflict threatening directly the interest of the most important owners of capital in Mexico was not a risk that the Mexican state wanted to take. Ultimately, the state’s economic project to an important extent relied on keeping low wages in order to create an appealing context for capital investment, either national or foreign.

Despite all its apparent inconsistencies, the state aimed at keeping an image of coherence between its actions and political discourse by stressing its commitment to public education and nationalism. During the 1950s, public functionaries, particularly in the Secretariat of Education, proclaimed continuously their nationalistic affiliation and the rejection of any determinism imposed from abroad: neither the United States nor the Soviet Union was an option, just Mexico. Yet, in practical economic and political

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421 In this regard, Soledad Loaeza says, “Mientras que en los medios campesinos y obrero el Estado frenaba y reprimía el desarrollo de las organizaciones ligadas al PCM, en las universidades, en los medios intelectuales y en general entre las clases medias se mostraba relativamente tolerante frente a las actividades de la izquierda.” Later, she adds, “No obstante la debilidad del PCM, en 1960 el Congreso de los Estados Unidos aseguraba que México era el país latinoamericano que producía y distribuía el mayor número de publicaciones de izquierda, y que ocupaba el segundo lugar después de Argentina en número de editoriales y librerías que difundían literatura catalogada como de izquierda.” Soledad Loaeza, Clases medias y política..., 137-138.

422 For example, the Minister of Public Education, Angel Ceniceros, during Adolfo Ruiz Cortines’ term said in public statement concerning the Eastern Europe crisis, “The Government has a clear and definite doctrine and an orientation of education which are and have a basis of true Mexicanism. That is to say, that Mexico respects and accepts the universal doctrines whatever may be their course and nature; that it respects the views of all of the great capitals and the thought from throughout the world, but that Mexico
matters it was clear the growing proximity of the Mexican state to the United States and Mexico’s rejection of both communism and the over-all influence of the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, educated middle class sectors posed challenges to the state from the left and right of the political spectrum. And these challenges grew stronger as political and economic contradictions became sharper.

During the 1940s, middle class intellectuals in the opposition National Action Party (PAN) were among the harshest detractors of the state. Denunciation of the limits of social reform, political corruption and critique of negotiations with the United States became common banner among these figures. For example, Manuel Gómez Morín and Efraín González Luna, among the founding fathers of the PAN, were particularly concerned with growing proximity between Mexico and the United States.

PAN has its own Mexicanist doctrine. We respect the doctrine of thought and social justice, as a doctrine of Moscow; we respect that of Washington because of the democratic example which it contains for the life of the world; we respect the ancient religious tradition represented by Rome, but from the view of political hegemony: Mexico, Mexico, Mexico.”Letter addressed by the Embassy of Mexico to the Department of State in the United States on August 13, 1957. Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Mexico, Internal Affairs, 1955-1959, microfilm 89/8019, reel 21.

In that letter, its author, Mr. Frank Ortiz, second secretary of the Embassy, laments that the Mexican minister of education did not publicize a reflection that had revealed while meeting in private with the Ambassador, Mr. Hills, instead of making his highly charged of nationalistic rhetoric statement. Accordingly, in that occasion, the minister said, “It is a fundamental and basic principle of the Mexican educational system that the present world is divided into two camps, one composed of freedom- and liberty-loving countries and another of countries lacking liberty. There is no neutral ground. One must be on one side or the other. By tradition, history and choice, Mexico is in the camp of the liberty-loving nations.” Ibid.

Concerning an agreement between Mexico and the U.S. on different political and economic issues, Manuel Gómez Morín says, “¿Los arreglos responden de verdad a las necesidades de México? ¿Están ajustados a la gravedad y a la trascendencia de las circunstancias actuales? ¿Establecen una fórmula para nuestras relaciones con los Estados Unidos? La respuesta es, lamentablemente, negativa. Ni aisladamente cada una de las cuestiones a que los arreglos se refieren, ni todas ellas juntas, tienen importancia capital, valor decisivo ni aun desde el punto de vista económico, para satisfacer las necesidades urgentes de México, para normar nuestra política internacional, para hacer frente a las condiciones dramáticas que la situación actual del mundo, o cualquiera de sus posibles desenlaces, han creado ya o determinarán en un futuro próximo.” “Los arreglos internacionales”, in Boletín de Acción Nacional, December 15, 1941, number 57, p. 3. On the other hand, concerning the support of Mexico to the U.S. in the war effort, Efraín González Luna says, “Corremos el riesgo de entrar en una guerra más bien ideológica, de solidaridad con los Estados Unidos de América y, circunstancialmente, de protesta contra episodios de agresión bien conocidos. Ni siquiera puede tener el carácter de guerra punitiva, dada la desproporción de nuestra fuerza
intellectuals and politicians thought the state was betraying the national interest, disregarding urgent domestic problems such as crisis in the rural sector and a general rise in prices in the consumption market.

In the educational arena, the PAN showed particular interest in the National University and its formational impact on the youth. Underlying such an interest, Manuel Gómez Morín had strong university antecedents as a student, a professor and also as the university rector, position that he occupied between 1933 and 1934. As the university rector, Gómez Morín directly faced the dire financial problems suffered by the university in 1933, when it was granted total autonomy by the state, while subsidies were cut at the same time.425 Led by Manuel Gómez Morín, the university became an important bastion struggling for teaching freedom, seeking to counter educational models imposed by the state.426 The state reacted constraining its support to the university. After leaving the university and entering the political world, founding the PAN, Gómez Morín held a constant eye on issues involving the National University. On the other hand, many among those who co-founded the PAN with Gómez Morín had an academic background. Luis Calderón Vega, Aquiles Elorduy, and Efraín González Luna, among others, constituted the intelligentsia shaping the PAN’s ideological approach to politics.


426 Regarding this struggle, Manuel Gómez Morín said, “…se trataba de la misma lucha por la libertad de enseñanza, que en la Universidad se vuelve más intensa, porque pensar en una universidad en que el maestro va a decidir lo que le ordenan en la Secretaría de Educación, ¡es monstruoso! En la Universidad nunca aceptamos la teoría de la universalidad socialista, ni ninguna otra forma de sectarismo. Yo fui rector, y había profesores socialistas y marxistas, y profesores no marxistas ni socialistas. Es decir, creo que no es compatible la idea de una subordinación doctrinal al gobierno, con el trabajo intelectual del maestro universitario.” Ibid., 51.
Other problems addressed by PAN militants concerned the implementation of Constitution’s article 3, whereby education was tightly regulated by the state. Since 1941, PAN ideologues argued that such an article was invasive of the family’s terrain, and also attacked Mexican traditions relative to the influence of religious and moral values on education.\footnote{Regarding this issue, Miguel Estrada Iturbide said, “En México no se entiende la educación. En México no solamente no se entiende la educación sino que deliberadamente se ha ido al más craso confusionismo en materia educativa; deliberadamente se ha llegado a ignorar no sólo que existe la educación verdadera, sino a perseguir positivamente una educación desfigurada que no merece llamarse educación porque en lugar de hacer valer al hombre, en lugar de poner al hombre en condiciones de relaizar lo mejor de sí mismo lo degrada y lo lleva no a la elevación de la persona, no a escalar las altas cumbres que la naturaleza humana puede alcanzar, sino a hundirlo en la más abyecta de las degradaciones.” “Cinco ideas fundamentales sobre la educación”, in \textit{La nación}, February 14, 1942, number 18, 6.} Traditionalist middle-class sectors conceived of Article 3 as a state’s intromission in the sphere of family values, morality and religiosity.\footnote{See Soledad Loaeza’s extensive study on middle class opposition to article 3, \textit{Clases medias y política en México: la querella escolar}.} Also, it was perceived as a challenge against freedom of teaching, linked to subversive communist activities. In 1943 Manuel Ávila Camacho modified the article eliminating its most radical aspects, suppressing socialist education and softening some of its antireligious previsions. National unity was the new priority for Ávila Camacho’s government. However, the struggle against article 3 continued until the 1960s, when PAN members and traditionalist middle class representatives perceived a strong communist threat behind government’s educational implementations. The teachers’ union, affiliated to the CTM, was particularly seen with suspicion, because of the supposed infiltration of communist supporters among its membership.\footnote{See Soledad Loaeza, \textit{Clases medias y política...}, 306.}

Among middle class challengers to the state, unionized elementary school teachers turned out to be among the most radicalized political groups in Mexico. Maybe this fact had to do with their origins as an organized movement. Since the 1920s the elementary
school teachers became the means used by the post-revolutionary state to promote its policies and ideology even in the most isolated regions of the country. Vicente Lombardo Toledano became the leader of the National Federation of Teachers by that time. During Lázaro Cárdenas presidency in the 1930s, the teacher as soldier of the socialist education also became guarantor and supervisor of the agrarian reform process.\textsuperscript{430} The educational sector was important for consolidating political control in the corporatist structure of the Revolutionary Mexican Party (PRM), implemented by Cárdenas. Different teachers’ organizations were directly incorporated under the umbrella of the labor sector in the PRM, coordinated by Lombardo Toledano’s then-recently created Mexican Workers Confederation (CTM). Later, in 1943, Manuel Ávila Camacho unified the variety of teachers unions operating until then by creating the National Union of Education Workers (SNTE), which allowed the state to increase its control on teachers, dealing directly with their hierarchical representatives while neglecting the rank-and-file. In fact, leaders in the National Executive Committee of the SNTE accumulated much power and this brought about the opposition of some groups within the union.\textsuperscript{431} Nonetheless, in the context of growing contradictions in the political and economic models of the Mexican state, the teachers sector proved to be one of the most radical labor groups, hard to control in spite of the hierarchical corporatist structure of the party. Among the diversity of middle class sectors, teachers became one that constantly challenged the state, highlighting its contradictions.

\textsuperscript{430} Vaughn, 57.

\textsuperscript{431} Morales, 52.
The SNTE became an essential actor in the bargaining of the educational policies of the country. As the state emphasized educational policies seeking to expand the infrastructure and coverage of education, the SNTE broadly increased its constituency. In fact, its constituency has largely been widened through the incorporation of people from rural areas seeking some level of social mobility. During the 1970s, the SNTE became the largest union in Mexico and one of the largest in Latin America, grouping over 500,000 members during the 1970s.\textsuperscript{432} This situation has given the SNTE an important strength in the negotiation of educational policies, and strong boycotting capacity against some of the state’s educational implementations.\textsuperscript{433} While SEP authorities have sought to undertake educational modernization and administrative reform, usually the SNTE has opposed such policies, considering them a threat to the union’s political leverage.

Teachers and students became some of the most important representatives of the Mexican left and its harsh critique against the ruling political system. Between 1940 and 1970 teachers and university students often protested against state policies, joining workers and popular groups. For example, as the transition from the administration of Adolfo Ruiz Cortines to that of Adolfo López Mateos was taking place in the period between 1958 and 1959, diverse union conflicts arose in the national political scenario. Teachers and students joined telegraph, railway and petroleum workers in repudiating the \textit{charrismo} system (system of coopted union leaders manipulated by the state), and

\textsuperscript{432} Morales, 53.

\textsuperscript{433} Daniel Morales says, “The SNTE has organized systematic nationwide boycotts of controversial decisions made by the SEP, which include obstructing the implementation of such policies. Among the areas of conflict have been the opposition of the SNTE to the plans and programs of teachers’ colleges; the appointment of delegates to the General Delegations of the SEP in the states; the appointments of higher officials in the general administrative and political structure of the SEP; and the administrative decentralization of the SEP that began in 1977 and which implies high risks for a centralized union.” Morales, 54.
confronted violent repression from the state.\textsuperscript{434} By siding with working-class groups, teachers and students exemplified middle class’ social capillarity, strengthening their own political position facing the government. In the case of students, the sons and daughters of the revolution rebelled against the authoritarian “father”, portrayed by the state that offered everything less political autonomy and economic certainty.

\textbf{Middle-Class Contestation to the State}

Leftist radicalization among students evidenced important flaws in both the state policies of middle class cooptation and the United States cultural crusade. Some years before the events of 1958 and 1959, during the 1956-Polytechnic Institute strike, correspondence between the U.S. Embassy in Mexico and the Department of State shows particular concern over the swing of some sectors of the Mexican middle classes to the left.\textsuperscript{435} It seems that on this occasion the government carefully tried to avoid the distrust of the Mexican middle classes and the intelligentsia by refraining from violent repression of

\textsuperscript{434} It is worth mentioning that Gustavo Díaz Ordaz was the minister of internal affairs by that time, and he was the one responsible for organizing the repressive forces of the state when those violent events took place. See the complete chronicle of events in the PAN periodical \textit{La Nación}, March 1959, 14-18.

\textsuperscript{435} In this report of June 27, 1956, John Cates, first secretary of the Embassy, includes some notes published in El Universal addressing the presence of Communists within the Polytechnic movement and their endangering of internal security in Mexico. In this document, Cates also says, “Numerous other aspects of the strike considerably outside the normal course of an alleged student movement for better conditions also served to put the Government’s unusual attitude into high relief. Notable among these larger aspects of the strike were the attacks on the United States and the Point IV program, the involvement of international Communist organizations and the openly commented upon internal political implications of the strike. The Government behaved throughout as if it were confronting a particularly thorny and major maneuver by its political opponents. The police and army were notable for their indecisiveness, even at times when hordes of students appeared to be getting completely out of hand. It is said this was the Government’s policy to avoid bloodshed. The Minister of Education patiently continued to meet with student leaders in the face of studied insolence on their part. That he would treat with the leaders, most of whom have only the most tenuous claims to being called students, in itself was cause for no little surprise to the outside observer.” Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Mexico, Internal Affairs, 1955-1959, microfilm 89/8019, reel 21, pp. 1 and 2.
those representatives of social mobility, the students. Moreover, the National Federation of Technical Students (FNET) became a very influential organization. Such an organization was considered by the United States Embassy as a dangerous resurgence of communism in Mexico, which was clearly an overstatement.\footnote{436} Contrarily, in later demonstrations of 1958, 1959 and 1968 the government was not indecisive in its response as it had been before, and applied all the force of police reaction against the demonstrators. The political and economic situation of the country deteriorated as the decade of the 1950s was closing to an end and the 1960s brought its history of social turbulence.

It is precisely in 1958 when the beginnings of strong student mobilizations can be traced. Since 1958, students recognized the first signs of exhaustion of the model of Stabilizing Development and became more aware about their own political importance. The sharp deterioration of real wages, growing inflation and decreasing job opportunities created the necessary conditions for students to grow disappointed about the state’s model of economic development. Students participated in demonstrations against the rates raise in the bus transportation system in the city, and later joined workers and teachers to protest the economic situation of the country.

The mobilization against the rates raise in the bus transportation system offered students a focus point to target their political activism and undertake their mobilization to unprecedented levels.\footnote{437} Such activism had been shaped under the influence of university

\footnote{436} John M. Cates’ report, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Mexico, Internal Affairs, 1955-1959, microfilm 89/8019, reel 21, p. 3

\footnote{437} According to José René Rivas Ontiveros, “La protesta juvenil en contra del alza de los pasajes en el transporte urbano de la Ciudad de México no solamente dio pauta a la conformación de la que de facto sería la primera movilización estudiantil de masas de carácter replicante en la historia de la Universidad
professors that advocated popular causes and followed the ideological bases of revolutionary Cardenismo. Yet, the very student movement often presented important contradictions emanating from the diversity of currents comprising it. Maoists, Marxists, Trotskyites began to conform what during the 1960s became one of the most important bastions of antigovernment contestation: university political culture. However, students’ organized public demonstrations were a successful mechanism to attract the support of other students in the National Polytechnic Institute (IPN), as well as workers and teachers. These groups, altogether, achieved the postponement of the raising of bus rates and some incipient labor conditions improvement for the bus drivers. This movement is meaningful because it represents the first massive defiance organized by students against state policies, creating the foundation for further mobilizations.

The increasing influence of radical political ideals on university students was a formidable enemy that the state faced most strongly in the late 1950s and during the 1960s. The Mexican left found important momentum in the successful Cuban revolution of 1959, and growing workers’ mobilizations that responded to the political and economic contradictions of the Mexican state. Particularly, the railroad workers’ strike of 1959, violently repressed by the government, created particular animosity among young radicals in the university. Youth’s militancy reflected this momentum, and a myriad of new left-leaning trends expanded. Traditional militancy in the two most important parties on the left, the Popular Party and the Communist Party, was expanded to a new and more radical militancy that reached behind public university walls, and was called the “New

Nacional Autónoma de México, sino que también sirvió para definir con mucho mayor nitidez que antes, el antagonismo político e ideológico que existía en el seno del movimiento estudiantil universitario y que a la postre se iría desarrollando irreversiblemente.” El proceso de politización y formación de liderazgos estudiantiles de izquierda en la UNAM, 1958-1972, doctoral dissertation, UNAM, 2004, 79.
Left”. Trotskytes, Spartaquists, Maoists, etc. came to nurture the growing number of young left-wing militants that began to influence the ideological shape of university classrooms. However, the most consistent influence of these New Left trends on university youngsters was consolidated in the mid-1960s, when student radicalization reached its highest levels. Groups of the New Left realized that the university walls offered an excellent haven for their ideological work, and sought to expand their influence among students.438 These groups tried to infiltrate their ideals among Student Associations members so that they were to become the base to promote further expansion of these groups’ ideological presence. They achieved their most important levels of influence in the UNAM, particularly in the schools of Economy, Political Sciences and Law, where multiple student groups developed differentiated ideological approaches to social criticism and change.

The late-1950s and early 1960s transformation faced by the School of Political Sciences in the UNAM reflects the agency of intellectuals that at some point were linked to the state, but also became among its most critical denouncers. The School of Political Sciences became among the most politically active university institutions, since its students showed profound levels of understanding about the national political, economic and cultural problems. Under the stimulation of Pablo González Casanova, who was the school’s director between 1957 and 1965, this institution became a generator of knowledgeable critique and contestation to the state policies. The plan of studies in the

438 José René Rivas Ontiveros says, “Fue en este periodo cuando la izquierda buscó y logró su penetración y ramificación en los centros de educación media y superior como nunca antes lo había logrado en su historia. Esto, sin embargo, no fue una mera casualidad sino en gran medida se debió a que la izquierda encontró que entonces los centros escolares eran algunos de los contadísimos espacios relativamente abiertos, en donde pudo desarrollar su actividad política con más libertad y menos peligro de ser reprimida.”, Ibid, 130.
School was reformed so that it stressed a more sociological formation among students, replacing the previous formalist and non-critical juridical approach.\textsuperscript{439} During this period Marxism became the fundamental methodological approach in the School, which counted distinguished left-leaning intellectuals among its most prominent faculty: Víctor Flores Olea, Francisco López Cámara and Enrique González Pedrero, among others. Later, in 1961, they became protagonists among the participants in the National Liberation Movement (MLN), showing their commitment with a political and economic project of structural transformation favoring the lower sectors of society.

Students contesting the state developed two essential demands that pervaded 1960s-mobilizations: release of political prisoners and derogation of article 145 which qualified the crime of “social dissolution”\textsuperscript{440}. The course inauguration of 1960, attended by president López Mateos, witnessed the first moment in which both demands were publicly made. Students, Carlos Monsiváis among them, directly addressed the president with their demands. Meanwhile other students held “pancartas” and distributed flyers demanding the liberation of one fellow student and other political prisoners, jailed since the repression against railroad workers had taken place in 1959. Increasing politicization among students began to bear its first fruits, as shown by growing commitment with broader social causes, and direct contestation to the presidential figure.

During the 1960-strike of students of the Teachers’ School, National University students offered their support to this strike and constantly addressed public forums seeking the liberation of political prisoners and derogation of article 145. The initial

\textsuperscript{439} Ibid., 152.

\textsuperscript{440} The government used this article as the means to judge and jail many political activists. Muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros was one of the most prominent victims of article 145 use.
violent repression of this movement by the army and police, created a stronger sense of solidarity among students from different institutions. The movement involved students from all the university schools supporting the Teachers School students, consolidating a massive demonstration in front of the National Palace by March 31. The government had no choice and had to negotiate with the strikers and attend their petitions to abrogate a decree that constrained the possibilities for graduating from the Teachers School.

Students also offered their committed support to the massive teachers’ demonstrations of August 1960, in which solution to magisterial problems and union autonomy was demanded. This movement suffered harsh repression too. However, such repression helped consolidate together some student organizations, like those supported by the student associations in the schools of Sciences, Philosophy, Medicine, Chemistry and Veterinary. In this context, on August 9, painter and intellectual David Alfaro Siqueiros was jailed because of his connection with the most recent teachers’ and student’s demonstrations against the government. Later, in 1962, Siqueiros was sentenced to serve eight years in prison under charges of “social dissolution”. For the students, Siqueiros became symbol of the victims of López Mateos government’s repression and inspirational motive since he openly expressed his support to radical change in Mexico. He constantly participated in rallies shoulder to shoulder with students, teachers and workers.

In the Mexican intellectual world, as seen, figures of paramount importance contributed in the public arena and behind the university walls to the controversial

441 Ibid., 259.

442 However, he received a government pardon and was released from prison in 1964.
political atmosphere of the late 1950s and early 1960s. In 1959, Carlos Fuentes, Víctor Flores Olea, Luis Villoro, and Francisco López Cámara, among others, founded El Espectador magazine, that aimed at communicating the social and political critique of its members. This group of intellectuals strongly attacked the government’s lack of democratic commitment, its manipulation to worker and peasant unions, the scarce political liberties, and censorship to the mass media.\textsuperscript{443} However, like previous intellectual groups, their impact was rather limited to the educated middle classes. Maybe that is why many of the members of this group joined the 1961-Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (MLN) that sought to undertake more direct political action.

Contradictory as it sounds critical intellectuals often mediated their critique against the state with their direct collaboration with the very political system. For example, Fernando Benítez authored \textit{Los indios de México}, where he insightfully evidenced the tremendous contradictions of the post-revolutionary regime concerning the Mexican indigenous population. Yet, eventually he recognized in the authority of the president, particularly Luis Echeverría (1970-1976), the only possible way to continue the revolutionary work in the country.\textsuperscript{444} The same opinion was voiced by other paramount intellectuals like Carlos Fuentes and Octavio Paz, who was the Mexican ambassador in India during the López Mateos’ and most of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz’s regime. On the other hand, Carlos Fuentes said that working with Echeverría the intellectuals were going to do what the muralists did (making the fine arts available to the common people).\textsuperscript{445}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{443} See Suárez, Los intelectuales…, 131-132.
  \item \textsuperscript{444} Ibid., 153.
  \item \textsuperscript{445} Claire Brewster, \textit{Responding to Crisis in Contemporary Mexico}, Arizona, University of Arizona Press, 2005, 72.
\end{itemize}
Meanwhile, Paz “appreciated the change of political atmosphere” and saw Echeverría’s attitude as a good and positive change.446 On the other hand, Benítez, Carlos Fuentes, Víctor Flores Olea, Rodolfo Stavenhagen and López Cámara participated in the consultant board of the Political, Economic and Social Studies Institute (IEPES), the PRI institution that offered specialized education and training to the party’s most influential membership.

One of the most important virtues of the PRI system consisted of its opening of wide enough spaces to accommodate intellectuals of all tendencies. Marxists and Classical Liberals met together under the tutelage of PRI-led political institutions. On the other hand, financial support to intellectual and cultural endeavors was at the core of this cooptation system. In this regard, Elena Poniatowska has said, “Los intelectuales siempre han estado con el régimen. Lo han estado incluso los que en la actualidad consideramos disidentes… Cosío Villegas lo hizo en el servicio exterior, Octavio Paz también,… Monsiváis no ha podido evitar una asomadita así de pasadita, a Los Pinos, Heber Castillo acudió a un desayuno en Antropología a los Premios Nacionales…, José Revueltas vive ahora con los $5,000 mensuales que le da Cinematografía por su trabajo en el cine.”447 Concerning Poniatowska herself, she posed a tremendous challenge to the state when she wrote her chronicle of the 1968 students massacre, *La noche de Tlatelolco*. Yet, as Claire Brewster says, “Poniatowska could have included herself, for although she refused the Villaaurrutia Prize for *La noche*, within days she accepted the award for a different book. There was a hasty rearrangement: on 14 November 1972,

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446 Ibid., 75.
447 Ibid., 88.
promoter Francisco Zendejas explained that Poniatowska would be given the 1970 Villaurrutia Prize for *Hasta no verte Jesús mío*. The confusion of dates was still unclear: *Hasta no verte* was published in 1969.\textsuperscript{448} Although intellectuals have been among the most important detractors of the Mexican state’s authoritarianism, they have also developed a profound symbiosis with the regime. It is in this symbiosis that fertile ground for intellectuals’ work and academic life has been developed. The PRI-led state understood the importance of intellectuals and highly educated middle class to consolidate a strong regime able to endure some of the most difficult political and economic challenges. The PRI permanence in power until 2000, in spite of serious political and economic reversals during the 1980s and 1990s is an indicator of the level of refinement and success achieved by the PRI’s adaptive system, able to find a middle ground and bring stability amidst the most contradictory intellectual, social and political currents of criticism.

The Mexican intellectual middle class had the educational formation and analytical tools to understand the profound problems that victimized the Mexican society. From the left or the right of the political spectrum, they offered the harshest critiques against government policies, and yet, they also found in the Mexican state the most important opportunities for their own survival and expansion. The state created the conditions that permitted intellectuals to perform their work linked to the government sphere. The state also offered many of these intellectuals the possibility to occupy influential positions in the bureaucratic structure. This followed a tradition that already existed since the immediate post-revolutionary period, in the 1920s, when members of the Ateneo de la

\textsuperscript{448} Ibid.
Juventud like José Vasconcelos became prominent politicians. Later, the Siete Sabios, los Contemporáneos and Hiperión also had some of their most brilliant minds committed to work in the public service, as we have seen above. The post-revolutionary state was open to assimilate and even encourage controlled critique from the intellectual and academic side of the political spectrum. This added to the political capital of the PRI and its image as democracy promoter. This also constitutes one of the major evidences of PRI’s tremendous flexibility and political shrewdness. The pinnacle of this process was built under Luis Echeverría’s regime and his particular interest in supporting intellectuals and expanding higher educational institutions in an unprecedented way during the first half of the 1970s.

**The 1968-Tlatelolco Massacre**

Middle class intellectual and university leftist mobilization became more challenging than ever in the 1960s as sharp contradictions in the state’s model of Stability with Economic Growth became evident. In 1961, the National Liberation Movement (MLN) was created as a strong political front seeking to unite the Mexican left and incorporating important middle class intellectuals such as Carlos Fuentes, Víctor Flores Olea, Narciso Bassols, José Chávez Morado, Elí de Gortari and Francisco López Cámara. In the MLN, prominent politicians like Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, Heberto Castillo, and Ignacio García Téllez, intellectuals promoted a defense on the national sovereignty and opposition to U.S. imperialism. Open support of Lázaro Cárdenas to this movement made it appear to the U.S. eyes as a blatant risk for its interests in México and Latin America. The MLN
openly manifested its pro-Cuban stance and this caused high concern among U.S. authorities.\footnote{In the talking points to be raised in the meeting between Presidents Johnson and López Mateos in California in 1964, the following reference is included: “…there is a vocal minority in Mexico, led by former President Lázaro Cárdenas, which still supports Castro. The hand of this pro-Castro element is strengthened by Mexico’s traditional strong opposition to intervention in the internal affairs of another state.”. Background Paper U.S.-Mexican Cooperation on Cuba, February 15, 1964, National Security Archives, George Washington University.}

The 1968-student mobilization became the culmination of a series of mobilizations that were already taking place throughout the 1960s. Between 1963 and 1968 around 45 meaningful student mobilizations took place around the country. Along with public universities in Mexico City, public universities in northern states of the country were among the most active: the University of Nuevo León, Chihuahua, Sinaloa, Sonora and Tamaulipas had an important level of student rioting.\footnote{U.S. Embassy report, doct. 9, August 23, 1968, pp. 4-10.} Altogether these are important areas were strong sectors of the Mexican middle class have developed. Student animosity in these areas suggests that the Mexican state was losing its grip among the youngest members of the sector that was so important for keeping political legitimacy.

In Mexico City’s UNAM, the 1966 mobilization against rector Ignacio Chávez was particularly important because of the number of students involved, its political implications and also its impact on students’ growing awareness of their own contestation power. Rector Chávez had led the university under a very authoritarian and repressive hand.\footnote{See Rivas Ontiveros, 330.} Students also disliked Chavez’s implementations that brought about the expansion of “bachillerato” from two to three years and the elimination of the automatic pass from “bachillerato” to the university level in the UNAM. The 1966 students’ strike began after Law School students seeking academic reform undertook closed-doors
negotiation with university authorities. Negotiations were held between the Law School Students’ Association and authorities. Although most of the demands finally received a positive response from the authorities, members of the Comité Coordinador de Lucha Estudiantil (CCLE) did not accept such negotiations. This Committee claimed to be the real student representation and that the authorities had negotiated with a non-representative group. And, indeed, they had the support of most Law School students, since on March 14, the Law School strike began with around one thousand students taking the school’s installations.

The Law School movement took broader proportions when Gustavo Díaz Ordaz’s government seemed to support the movement by contradicting rector Chávez’s arguments that the movement had political connotations going beyond the academic sphere. Luis Echeverría Álvarez, secretary of government, publicly said: “los problemas surgidos en la Facultad de Derecho son docentes y no ha aflorado ningún síntoma fuera de los netamente escolares”. This situation stimulated Student Associations in other schools to make their own claims for academic reform, pressing the university authorities. First the School of Economy and later the School of Political Sciences added their support to the Law School in this expanding student movement that soon incorporated some of the

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452 Seven fundamental demands were presented to the rector: “1.-Cambios de grupo. Rapidez y eliminación de los requisitos excesivos por parte de las autoridades. 2.-Exámenes parciales. Implantación de tres exámenes durante el año. 3.- Práctica forense. Revocación del acuerdo del Consejo Técnico en el sentido de que sea acreditable para los estudiantes que en 1965, o de años anteriores tuvieron derecho a cursarla. 4.- Horario sin maestro. No publicación de los horarios generales sin que estén completos por el personal docente. 5.-Cursos intensivos y exámenes de regularización con carácter de ordinarios. 6.-Escuela de Criminología y Criminalística. Instalación de este centro educativo que permita la capacitación de técnicos o el perfeccionamiento de otros. 7.- Problma de los expulsados. Revocación total de las expulsiones de Espiridón Payán Gallardo y Leopoldo Sánchez Duarte, ya que repartir propaganda para invitar a una asamblea estudiantil nada ‘tiene de injurioso y subversivo’” Flores Zavala, Ernesto, El estudiante inquieto: los movimientos estudiantiles 1966-1970, México, 1972, pp. 7-11, quoted in Rivas Ontiveros, 333.

453 Ibid., 336.
UNAM high schools. Repression from the university authorities against the students, using paid “students” (“porros”) and guards hired by the rector, worsened the situation. Rector Chávez was forced to resign by students that took over the rector offices and kept Chávez and the directors of many schools kidnapped for several hours.\textsuperscript{454}

The ultimate outcome of the 1966 student movement was a growing feeling of empowerment among students that brought about the creation of the Consejo Estudiantil Universitario (CEU). The CEU aimed at looking for an integral university reform that offered major political participation to students in the university policy-making. Also, the dissolution of the university repressive organisms, automatic pass from UNAM’s high school to college level, and student participation in budget programming and assignation were among the most important priorities.\textsuperscript{455} The new rector, Javier Barros Sierra showed his conciliatory will, granting most of the CEU’s requests. Eventually Barros Sierra became one of the university rectors that enjoyed the highest levels of support among students.

The indirect support given by Gustavo Díaz Ordaz’s government to this student movement was a key element underlying its relative success. Ultimately, it was not that Díaz Ordaz really supported the movement. Apparently Díaz Ordaz did not like Ignacio Chávez, since he had not helped the government to repress medical students during the 1964-mobilization.\textsuperscript{456} At that time, UNAM medical students joined medical doctors working for government health institutions, who struck asking an improvement in their

\textsuperscript{454} U.S. Embassy in Mexico report to the Department of State, The National Security Archives, George Washington University, The Tlatelolco Massacre, doc 9, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{455} Rivas Ontiveros, 358.
\textsuperscript{456} Ibid., 331.
labor conditions. Medical students proved an invaluable support in the movement, since they were amongst the most radicalized, challenging Díaz Ordaz’s limited offers of improvement. Rector Chávez, being a medical doctor himself, avoided any kind of repressive action that damaged his image within the medical community. Seemingly, Díaz Ordaz profoundly disliked Chávez passive attitude. Yet, Díaz Ordaz validation of the anti-Chávez 1966-movement proved a counterproductive political move for the government. Although the 1966 movement did not pose a direct challenge to government authority since it focused on internal university issues, student empowerment and major participation in the university policy-making created ideal conditions for further mobilization pursuing more ambitious objectives. The 1968 student movement went far beyond university issues and aimed to attain changes that importantly challenged Díaz Ordaz’s government.

During the 1960s the educational gap between the Mexican middle and upper urban classes and the rural poor became abysmal. In 1960, 40% of middle education students lived in Mexico City, although only 14% of the corresponding age group lived there. On the other hand, 73% of students in higher educational levels were concentrated in Mexico City, although only 15% of that corresponding age group lived there. Meanwhile, according to a study undertaken in 1968 by the Bank of Mexico, in 1950 the highest 2 deciles of the population received 59.8% of the national income and in 1968 they were receiving 67.5%. On the other hand, the 2 lowest deciles of the population, which received 5.1% of the national income in 1950, were only receiving 3.6% of that income.

457 See Nash., 95, 106
Moreover, increasing cuts in educational expenditures carried out by Díaz Ordaz’s regime and the anticipation of the Olympic Games taking place in Mexico City increased the animosity among leftist students and intellectuals. How was it possible that the state was projecting such a financial investment in organizing the Olympic Games, while it was reducing social expenses at the same time?

458 Quoted by Villaseñor, 569
As we can appreciate in Figure 7, the regime of Díaz Ordaz under-used meaningful parts of the educational budget approved by the Congress. Moreover, important shares of the cut were directed to higher education. Political mediation to contain the student movement might have been possible through the CNOP since some of its young members also occupied positions of leadership in the university student movement. Nonetheless, the CNOP proved rigid and too hierarchical to negotiate with the youth and the most radical sectors of the middle classes. Additionally, strategies for recruitment of the members of the CNOP relied on open political activism under the patronage of particular

\[\text{Sources: excerpted from Ornelas, 1995: 250}\]
sponsors in the organization. This situation was not appealing enough to enroll many leftist intellectuals and highly educated middle class representatives unwilling to be captured in a political network of patronage-clientelism. Key opportunities for social mobility were offered to middle class youth through higher education and further access to positions in the public administration. However, CNOP’s leverage on the leftist educated sectors of the middle classes failed to be effective and direct enough to mitigate radical mobilization in the scenario of public higher education during the late 1960s.

Before the 1968 movement began, student mobilizations were not taken as something able to trigger profound political problems as is reflected by correspondence between the U.S. Embassy in Mexico and the U.S. Department of State. On June 1968, the Ambassador recognized the complicated situation lived by the country. Among the most important problems, the worsening income distribution, increasing unemployment and urban poverty, as well as the inability of the government to cope with the external debt and growing trade deficits were considered paramount. However, the situation was not thought as one in which a national crisis was feasible, not even closely comparable to what happened in the student uprisings in France. On the other hand,

460 Confidential report from the U.S. Ambassador in Mexico to the Secretary of the Department of State, The National Security Archive, George Washington University, The Tlatelolco Massacre, doct. 1, June 1968, pp. 3 and 4.

461 The report says, “Student unrest is endemic and unpredictable in Mexico: it may break out on a large scale at any time and for any reason. However, the government has diverse means of guaging and influencing student opinion, and it has shown itself able and willing, when unrest exceeds what it considers acceptable limits, to crack down decisively, to date with salutary effects. Furthermore, student disorders, notwithstanding the wide publicity they receive, simply lack the muscle to create a national crisis unless the students receive overwhelming support from one or more of the mass sectors, i.e. organized labor, the urban poor or the peasant sector. To date the urban poor have been entirely apathetic to student agitation while urban labor and the peasant sectors, much of which are organized in overwhelming majority within the PRI-governmental structure and hence belong in a sense to the establishment, have likewise been either apathetic or hostile to student disorders. Thus to take a most recent case, student disorders in Villahermosa directed against the governor of Tabasco failed in large measure because of active peasant support for the governor.” Ibid., 2.
there was an optimistic assessment about the Mexican government capacity to keep its middle classes under control.\textsuperscript{462} Besides, students did not incorporate directly any of the possible demands of the peasant and labor sector as a later report evidences.\textsuperscript{463} For the U.S. Ambassador, the radical identification of many students was not considered a risk either. In his opinion, “Common life cycle is for young man to go through Marxist phase (often extreme) in university and to be absorbed by establishment shortly thereafter. Some are simply careerists who realize there is no other choice, but substantial number also believe that opportunities exist not only for personal betterment but for political participation and for social service.”\textsuperscript{464} This opinion reflected the confidence that radical attitudes among students would hardly go beyond the university walls. Yet, the 1968 events seemingly contradicted such an expectation that was shared by the Mexican government like its posture facing the immediately previous 1966-student unrest showed.

The 1968 movement was the culmination of a process of politicization among university students that took place throughout the 1960s, as we have seen above. In 1968, what began as the confrontation between Polytechnic students and students from a private high school affiliated to the UNAM, escalated to one of the most important social movements of the second half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Anticipating the growing impact of those events was almost impossible. The repressive intervention of anti-rallies police, the “granaderos”, against Polytechnic students brought students together against the

\textsuperscript{462} Ibid., 2.

\textsuperscript{463} An U.S. Embassy report says, “It is perhaps noteworthy that in none of the cases of student unrest mentioned above have the announced aims of the students included issues of direct interest to the labor or campesino sector. This may reflect the fact that there is little sympathy between students and campesino or labor youth who tend to look upon students as a privileged and pampered group.” Ibid., doct. 24, November 3, 1968, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{464} Ibid. doct. 2, July 1968, p. 3
representatives of public authority in a massive manifestation in the Zócalo on July 26.\textsuperscript{465} This manifestation ended in a violent confrontation with the “granaderos”. Other confrontations took place that day and the following. This led to the call for a general strike in Mexico Valley’s universities demanding the release of jailed students (which later evolved to the release of all political prisoners), economic compensation for the families of hurt or death students, the elimination of the “granaderos” corps and other repressive police (which later was replaced by the firing of the top-chiefs of the federal and local police forces), and the abrogation of Penal Code article 145 (the one used to jail David Alfaro Siqueiros and other political prisoners). Polytechnic institutions were the first to participate in the generalized strike. UNAM rector Javier Barros Sierra supported the students, condemning the violation of university autonomy by troops that occupied different UNAM schools in downtown installations.\textsuperscript{466} On August 4, most public high schools and universities in the Valley of Mexico had already joined the strike. From then until October 2, there were constant rallies, some of them attended by thousands of students, and there was constant repression by the “granaderos”, civilian-dressed police corps and the military mainly after late-August. One of the most monumental rallies took place on August 27, when around 500,000 participants rallied from Chapultepec to the Zócalo. By participating in these mobilizations, students showed their discontent with the

\textsuperscript{465} Ibid. doc. 3, July 1968, p. 1

\textsuperscript{466} This Embassy report says, “UNAM rector, Barros Sierra, in shrewd effort to forestall involvement his students, agreed with their protests against violation of university autonomy and personally lowered the school flag to half mast (UNAM autonomy violated when troops occupied UNAM-connected schools in downtown area; no troops evidently entered main UNAM campus).” Ibid., doc. 6, July 1968, p. 2
authoritarian state and the sharp contradictions that the Mexican political and economic system was showing.\textsuperscript{467}

Although the Mexican authorities sought to identify the movement as communist-led, with important influence from international organizations controlled from Moscow, this argument lacked solid fundaments. Most students participating in the movement did not have any kind of direct affiliation to the Mexican Communist Party, and least to international communist organizations. Even the U.S. perspective, usually driven by the communist scare, had to recognize the absence of evidence about real communist control of the movement. In confidential report to the Department of State, the U.S. Embassy says in this regard, “The role which communist agitators were able to play from this point on is not clear, however, and there is little doubt that many of the rampaging students were not under communist control. But for face-saving reasons the government will probably continue to stress the communist role and attempt to play down the degree of non-communist participation.”\textsuperscript{468} Later, another report says, “…[the] fact that majority of participants beyond control of communists or anyone else obscures the degree of communist involvement.”\textsuperscript{469} In further report about different student movements in

\textsuperscript{467} A U.S. Embassy report says that in an interview with George Denney, deputy director of INR, Dr. Víctor Urquidi, rector of COLMEX, “noted that even secondary students had traveled considerably throughout Mexico, something which had not been the case when Urquidi himself went to school. They could see, he said, the extent of poverty in Mexico, the iniquities of the tax system and therefore had come to the conclusion that the Mexican Revolution, and official claims for it, was a lie. Students were aware of government control of the communications media and this only reinforced the feeling that the system was replete with hypocrisy.” Ibid, doct. 14, September 23, 1968, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{468} Ibid., doct. 29, August 6, 1968, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{469} The report adds, “One disturbing consequence of riots, whoever the instigators, has been evident predisposition of large number of young Mexicans including many of high school age, to resort to violence. Window breaking, looting, use of Molotov cocktails, attempted seizure of arms, represent new dimensions in Mexican student agitation. Extension of disruption beyond university which had potential for damaging national programs such as Olympics and tourism another new dimension which can be expected to give new heart to extreme leftist groups. Two highly exploitable issues-police brutality, university autonomy-and prospect of martyrs must also be encouraging to these groups (sic.).”, Ibid, doct. 7, August 1968.
Mexico during the 1960s, the U.S. Embassy confirms that opinion, “This review indicates that the major focus of these disturbances has been on local issues with the degree of involvement of Communist groups ambiguous”. This opinion was to be confirmed by a later CIA report to the White House asserting the lack of evidence about Soviet or Cuban direct involvement behind the student riots. Then, seemingly, the movement’s leadership was authentically university-based and pursued goals beyond communist agitation or direct involvement. Although the government sought to undermine the movement’s image by identifying it with international communism, the actual absence of such an influence opened the possibilities for the movement to obtain the sympathies of important middle-class sectors of the Mexican society.

Most participants in the movement reflected their discontent with growing limitations in middle-class channels for social mobility. Particularly, a sector of professionals participating in the movement, made this point evident. In 1968, employment growth was not keeping pace with demand. According to René Ontiveros, three fundamental sectors integrated the movement: a) the most politicized leftist-students sector, mostly from the Schools of Political Sciences, Law, Economy and Philosophy (some of these students thought that through the movement a possible union between students and workers would be possible eventually); b) young radical groups, from UNAM and Polytechnic high schools, whose members suffered the first acts of

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471 The CIA report says, “The CIA analysis… concludes that the student demonstrations were sparked by domestic politics, not masterminded by Cubans or Soviets.” CIA report to the White House, National Security Archives. George Washington University, Mexico: The Tlatelolco Massacre, doct. 19, October 5, 1968, p. 1.

472 In interview with Robert E. Service, Víctor Torres Arriaga, professor in the School of Political Sciences attributed student radicalization “to the very real concern on the part of students about their job prospects once they are out of the university.” Ibid, doct. 22, October 22, 1968, p. 2.
repression from authorities, and were also among the most violent demonstrators; c) a professional sector, composed of intellectuals and professors, advanced university students or recent graduates, and university functionaries.\textsuperscript{473} Participants in the movement considered that political institutions offered limited possibilities for their inclusion in the national political decision-making process, using the formal channels available. Intellectuals like Juan Rulfo, Carlos Monsivais, José Revueltas, Gustavo Sainz, Jaime Sabines, Enrique Florescano, Carlos Bracho, Alejandro Aura, Fernando del Paso and Tomás Mojarro, among many others, publicized their support to the movement.\textsuperscript{474} The movement became the means for students, academics and intellectuals to show their active involvement in attacking a system that had become corrupt, excessively authoritarian and unable to deliver economic certainty.

The government’s urge to resume stability in the country because of the proximity of the Olympic Games and its relative confidence on the loss of support for striking students among the common citizenship, seem to have been the most important determinants behind the events that led to the October 2-massacre. According to U.S. Embassy reports, since late-August the Mexican government had decided on the necessity of terminating the movement.\textsuperscript{475} Seemingly the government thought that the students had lost the sympathy of most sectors of society.\textsuperscript{476} Also the challenging attitude of students during

\textsuperscript{473} Rivas Ontiveros, 395-397.
\textsuperscript{474} Rivas Ontiveros, 399.
\textsuperscript{475} CIA report to the White House, National Security Archives, George Washington University, Mexico: The Tlatelolco Massacre, doct. 12 August 1969, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{476} The report says, “Excesses of students or pseudo-students in extorting ‘contributions,’ interfering traffic, seizing buses and haranguing workers may have convinced GOM [Government of Mexico] leaders that public sympathy had veered away from students. Certainly vulgar, abusive personal attacks on Díaz Ordaz pasted or printed on walls throughout city and expresses in placards of marchers have offended many Mexicans, even those who do not admire President.” Ibid., p. 3.
the monumental rally of August 27 became the justification for growing repression.\textsuperscript{477} However, the proximity of the annual presidential report seemed to be determinant for the government to postpone its decision to take drastic measures.\textsuperscript{478} Yet, on September 1, during the presidential report, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz stated that the “government will take all actions necessary to uphold juridical order and prevent disruptions to national life.”.\textsuperscript{479} Thereafter, throughout September the government repressed every student rally, no matter its size. In fact, on September 18 the military entered University City seizing different installations that had been occupied by striking students. This event happened in part as a response to the successful monumental demonstration of September 13, in which above 200,000 participants rallied in complete order and silence to show that the government and not they were those creating chaos and violence in the city. This demonstration revived the enthusiasm of supporters of the student movement, in spite of escalating violent repression from the government. The goal of keeping the international image of Mexico during the Olympic Games made the government rush drastic measures to put an end to the conflict as soon as possible.

The October 2 massacre in the Plaza de Tlatelolco demonstrated the intransigence of Díaz Ordaz’s government. By the time of the massacre, the government’s version of the facts was that military firing in the Plaza de Tlatelolco responded to fire from violent students coming from surrounding buildings. Later research has shown that certainly

\textsuperscript{477} During that rally, many participants decided to mount a guard in the Zócalo until Díaz Ordaz showed up for public negotiation, and replaced the national flag for a red-and-black striking one, and also painted political consigns in the National Palace façade. See Rivas Ontiveros, 404.

\textsuperscript{478} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{479} The Embassy report adds, “With respect specifically to Olympics, and in more general sense, President has put national honor and the prestige of the presidency on the line. He has strong public backing except for important sectors of academic community for his position and we estimate that he has effectively blocked significant support for students from other sectors.” Ibid., doct. 13, p. 1.
snipers posted in those places attacked first, hurting General José Hernández Toledo, who led the military troops sent to avoid participants to march towards the Polytechnic Institute. Those snipers belonged to a group called Batallón Olimpia that the government presented as a Trotskyte-rebel group. Yet, further evidence has shown that these snipers were members of the “Estado Mayor Presidencial” (the presidential elite guard) dressed as civilians, supporting the military and police corps, coordinated by Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios, director of the Federal Security Agency.\(^{480}\) In the middle of gunfire many civilian demonstrators were killed or wounded, while around 1,000 were arrested by the military and police forces, according to official numbers.\(^{481}\) \((La Nación\textsuperscript{,} the PAN’s periodical, reports over 1,600 arrested people.)\(^{482}\) Although the government publicized a version saying that the number of dead people was around 20 or 30, recently disclosed FBI information reveals that over 200 people were killed during these events.\(^{483}\)

Additionally, recently released information suggests that the October 2-massacre was a Mexican government’s pre-calculated move in order to definitely terminate the student

\(^{480}\) The report says, “La tesis de que los francotiradores eran militares pertenecientes al EMP [Estado Mayor Presidencial] es la que tiene soporte en la documentación que hemos encontrado: En la declaración póstuma del Gral. Marcelino García Barragán se refiere a una conversación que sostuvo con el General Oropeza, a cargo del EMP, poco después de que inició la balacera: ‘Mi general, me dijo: tengo varios oficiales del Estado Mayor Presidencial apostados en algunos departamentos, armados con metralletas para ayudar al ejército con órdenes de disparar a los estudiantes armados, ya todos abandonaron los edificios, sólo me quedan dos que no alcanzaron a salir y la tropa ya va subiendo y como van registrando los cuartos temo que los vayan a matar, quiere usted ordenar al general Mazón que los respeten.” \textit{Historical Report to the Mexican Society} 2006, Special Prosecutor on Social and Political Movements of the Past (FEMOSPP), November 17, 2006, p. 122. The National Security Archives, George Washington University, The Dead of Tlatelolco, doct. 15.

\(^{481}\) The report of the Dirección Federal de Seguridad says, “Con relación a los acontecimientos suscitados en la Plaza de las Tres Culturas, de la Unidad Santiago-Tlatelolco, en esta Ciudad, hoy por la tarde fueron detenidas 1,043 (UN MIL CUARENTA Y TRES) personas.” \textit{Reporte de la Dirección Federal de Seguridad} firmado por Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios, Director of the Dirección Federal de Seguridad, National Security Archives, George Washington University, The Dead of Tlatelolco, doct. 2, October 2, 1968, p. 1.

\(^{482}\) See the extensive chronicle on the night of October 2 in Tlatelolco called “Huichilobos vuelve a Tlatelolco”, in \textit{La Nación}, October 5, 1968, 12-14.

mobilization. In a U.S. Embassy report of September 1968, the Mexican secretaries of Government and Foreign Relations are quoted as assuring to Embassy officers that the “government will put end to student agitation prior to Olympic Games and that no disruption of Games will occur.” On the other hand, on October 5, after the massacre took place, the government passed a resolution in the Chamber of Deputies supporting the repressive action. This resolution was opposed by the National Action Party (PAN) and the Popular Socialist Party (PPS). By opposing the government’s resolution, these political parties, with important middle-class constituency, showed the discontent of key middle class sectors with the government’s handling of the crisis. It was not only the left-leaned middle class the one condemning violence, but it was also the center-right middle class group.

The Impact of 1968-Tlatelolco in the Mexican Middle Class

Defining the extent of the impact that the 1968 movement had on the general middle class population is a difficult task. However, important traces can be obtained from the opinion of politicized Catholic sectors, such as those represented in the mainly middle-class Christian Family Movement (MFC), discussed in an earlier chapter in this work.

Yet, concerning the 1968 movement, there was an entire issue of the periodical

484 The report also says, “While this position by GOM (Government of Mexico) officials is to be expected, both officials gave impression of full confidence in ability GOM to do this. Emb. (Embassy) does not believe that significant disruption of games will occur or that visitors will be seriously endangered or inconvenienced by student agitation.” Ibid., doct. 16, September 1968, p. 2.

485 Embassy Report, doct. 21, October 20 1968, p. 15.

486 At least until the early 1970s, this movement was mainly middle-class based and more autonomous from the Church hierarchy. Later, this movement became more controlled by the hierarchy and more popular-based.
publication of the MFC dedicated to analyze the situation of young protesters at the time. Opinions voiced in the publication recognized the fundamental responsibility of adults and older generations to be more flexible and adapt to the new demands of the moment.\footnote{487} Other opinions voiced the dangers of applying what is thought to be just law with no previous negotiation or reasoning with those that law is applied upon.\footnote{488} Everywhere in the publication an agreement on the importance of negotiated change and flexibility prevails. For example, over 40 priests published a manifesto condemning the use of violence and recognizing the importance of profound changes in Mexico. The priests also rejected those opposed to change in order to enjoy a privileged situation. They finalize their manifesto, saying: “Como sacerdotes y como mexicanos nos hacemos solidarios del actual despertar de la juventud, calculando que si son muchos sus riesgos son mayores sus posibilidades para el futuro de un México mejor”.\footnote{489}

From opinions expressed by clerical authorities and middle class participants in the MFC, some general trend among other sectors of the middle class may be inferred. Since the Church has been so influential among the Mexican popular groups and particularly on

\footnote{487} The editorial column of the November issue of the *Gaceta del Movimiento Familiar Cristiano* says: “Debemos reflexionar hasta qué punto la reacción de esta juventud de hoy responde a una falta nuestra. Ya no se trata tan sólo de los conflictos concretos que surgen por todas partes y que se manifiestan de muy distintas maneras. Se trata de encontrar las causas profundas de estos conflictos… Quizás, en el fondo, lo que sucede es que nuestra generación no ha sido capaz de aceptar la necesidad de ir cambiando gradualmente con el mundo cambiante. Y, cuando no aceptamos el cambio gradual, corremos el riesgo de vernos obligados muy pronto a experimentar el cambio radical, generalmente más costoso y menos constructivos… No podemos seguir oponiendo dos generaciones. Tenemos que construir, juntos, el mundo de la nueva generación. Y para que esto sea posible, hemos de reconocer que será distinto y sin duda mejor que el nuestro.” *Gaceta del Movimiento Familiar Cristiano*, November 1968, 1.

\footnote{488} Julio Sahagún, S.J. said, “La ley, aunque sea justa, cuando no es comprendida y aceptada libremente, cuando se toma como el último determinante de la conducta, simplemente porque es la ley o por las presiones que se crean en torno a ella, se vuelve una coacción externa que impide la decisión y el crecimiento en la libertad y en la responsabilidad. En estos casos crea automatismos y malestares crecientes que llevan a las rebeldías y en última instancia, a la falta de buenas relaciones interpersonales incluso con el autor mediato o inmediato de la misma ley.” “Mensaje del padre Julio: los peligros de la ley justa”, Ibidem, 5.

\footnote{489} “Reflexiones de 43 sacerdotes mexicanos sobre el conflicto estudiantil”, Ibid, 13.
large groups of the middle class, the impact of the Church’s mainstream view on 1968-events must have been significant. In such view, considerations prevailed on the necessity of structural change in society and institutions of different orders. Following the Tlatelolco massacre, the Mexican Episcopal Committee published a pastoral letter in which the essential consideration was that a negotiated change of mentality, attitudes and structures should take place. Accordingly, violence should not be an alternative, openness to change and dialogue should be. The official opinion of the Church concerning worldwide young rebelliousness was symptomatic of an important degree of openness demanded by circumstances. Pope Paul VI addressed a message in which he criticized those who envisioned the youth as ruled by disorganization and uncontrolled rebellion. He also recognized the legitimate reasons for youth rebelliousness against mediocrity, social rigidity and materialism. The fact that middle-class-informed Catholics must have received a good deal of influence from these opinions, and that the MFC periodical

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490 Dom Helder Camara, Archbishop of Recife, Brazil, said, “Una primera observación fundamental: el mundo entero tiene necesidad de una revolución estructural… En el mundo subdesarrollado esta verdad parece evidente. Si se mira el mundo subdesarrollado bajo cualquier ángulo: económico, científico, político, social, religioso, se llega a comprender que de ningún modo bastará una revisión sumaria, superficial. Se debe intentar una revisión en profunda, un cambio profundo y rápido, se debe llegar a una revolución estructural… ¿Quién no sabe que, en los países subdesarrollados, existe el colonialismo interno, existe un pequeño grupo de privilegiados del país mismo, cuya riqueza se mantiene a expensas de la miseria de millones de conciudadanos?... Es un régimen semifeudal: apariencia de vida patriarcal, pero ausencia de los derechos de la persona, situación infrahumana y verdadera esclavitud. Los trabajadores rurales –verdaderos parias- no tienen acceso a la tierra que los grandes propietarios conservan baldía para la revalorización de mañana.”. Dom Helder Camara,“¿Es la violencia el único camino?, Ibid., 6-7.


492 In this message, the Paul VI said: “¿No es cierto que hoy la juventud está apasionada de verdad, de sinceridad, de ‘autenticidad’? ¿Esta no constituye un título de superioridad? ¿No hay acaso en su inquietud una rebeldía contra las hipocresías convencionales, de las cuales la sociedad de ayer estaba frecuentemente invadida? Y en la reacción, que parece inexplicable a los más, que los jóvenes desencadenan contra el bienestar, contra el orden burocrático y tecnológico, contra una sociedad sin ideales superiores y verdaderamente humanos, ¿no hay acaso una intolerancia hacia la mediocridad psicológica, moral y espiritual, hacia la insuficiencia sentimental, artística, religiosa, hacia la uniformidad impersonal de nuestro ambiente tal como la civilización moderna la va formando? y por eso, ¿no hay en esta insatisfacción juvenil una necesidad secreta de valores trascendentes…?” Paul VI’s message, published in Gaceta del Movimiento Familiar Cristiano, November 1968, 3.
offered an important level of criticism against government actions against rebellious students, suggests that in general the Mexican middle class was seriously concerned and shocked by the 1968-violent incidents.

Catholic openness to understanding the reasons of the youth’s social movements throughout the world found its most important origins in the anticommunist offensive undertaken by the Church. Such offensive required a reformed Church, more willing to engage the social problems of the world, particularly those concerning social injustice and underdevelopment. Pope Juan XXIII encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, published in 1961, marked a turning point in the Church’s perspective. This encyclical brought about a new era of Church’s increased commitment with the defense of social causes and against injustice and oppression. In such a context, the Mexican clergy developed an expanded awareness about the importance of its active participation criticizing structural problems in society that had led to sharp economic asymmetries and authoritarianism. Although this critique developed as part of a Church’s global project to counter communist influence, eventually some sectors of the clergy developed a more opened approach. Particularly the Mexican Social Secretariat (SSM) criticized the anticommunist struggle, saying that it hid the difficult economic situation suffered by popular groups.\(^{493}\) According to such perspective, addressing social problems transcended political ideologies and left- or right-wing identifications. Instead, helping to resolve the social problems of Mexico demanded an open and renewed vision in the Church, in which religious ritual was combined with help in practical issues of the common people’s everyday life.

\(^{493}\) See Loaeza, *Clases medias y política...,* 300.
Among traditional middle-class sectors, PAN militants and intellectuals are representative of those sectors’ opinion concerning the government’s handling of the student movement. For instance, the military occupation of University City was strongly attacked by the National Executive Committee of the PAN, which denounced it as an open violation to university autonomy. On September 20, the PAN presented a Congress initiative to ask the President to remove the military troops from University City. This initiative was rejected by the parliamentary groups of the PRI, PPS and PARM. Since July, when the student movement began, La Nación, the PAN’s official periodical, offered detailed chronicles of all the events leading to the night of October 2 and also of the massacre itself. The periodical offered an open space for the publication of letters written by student associations supporting the mobilization and condemning government’s violent repression. The position of authors analyzing the student movement was harshly critical against the government and sympathetic to the mobilized students. The government’s conservatism was criticized, and students were seen as the banner of new trends of change that needed serious attention.

Important and positive values

The statement says, “La autonomía universitaria ha sido violada por el Gobierno, al ordenar la ocupación militar de la Ciudad Universitaria. No es cierto que los edificios e instalaciones ocupados sean de la Nación. Son propiedad de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, conforme a las Leyes Orgánicas de 1929, de 1933 y la vigente de 1945. Nadie afirma que la autonomía universitaria implique extraterritorialidad; pero nadie puede negar que la Universidad goza de las garantías constitucionales que protegen la inviolabilidad. No hubo orden judicial para la ocupación de la Universidad, ni petición de autoridades universitarias para que el ejército invadiera las mismas. […] La medida tomada por el Gobierno, es la culminación lógica de una serie de errores iniciados con la negativa de reconocer que los acontecimientos estudiantiles, por exceso injustificado en el ejercicio de la fuerza policiaca, tomaron proporciones que bien pudieron haber sido evitadas hace tiempo.” Comité Ejecutivo Nacional del PAN, “Sí hubo violación de la autonomía universitaria”, in La Nación, September 19, 1968, 10.

See Carlos Ortega, “El conflicto estudiantil en la Cámara: sólo el PAN defendió la Constitución y la autonomía”, in La Nación, October 1, 1968, 11.

Dr. Antonio Brambila says, “La Revolución ha dejado de ser revolucionaria, por la sencilla razón de que es imposible una revolución permanente. La Revolución es ahora totalmente conservadora… Pero, ¿por qué los estudiantes? Porque los adultos, con una ocupación estable e intereses fijos en la vida, se acomodan más fácilmente con los males inevitables. Pero para esa edad impetuosa que es la juventud no hay males inevitables. Pero para esa edad impetuosa que es la juventud no hay males inevitables; todos los males son,
underlying the student movement were recognized and considered as a reflection of growing political awareness among the youth.  

Adolfo Christlieb Ibarrola, a top-ranking politician in the PAN, expressed a representative opinion contradicting government’s claims about external interests manipulating the students movement: “A nadie convence el argumento de que el movimiento carece de metas universitarias. Los hechos mismos –la muerte, las lesiones, las vejaciones y el encarcelamiento de universitarios- si no hubiera otras razones humanas, le han dado carácter universitario… Los problemas universitarios deben ser resueltos por universitarios.” Interestingly, La Nación was one of the few periodicals that reported extensively and with abundant details what happened the night of October 2 seeking the best possible journalistic objectivity.

The open support of the PAN to the 1968-student movement amidst government’s harsh use of violence has antecedents in the support offered to railroad and telegraph workers, teachers and students participating in the violently repressed mobilizations between 1958 and 1959. During those events, La Nación also offered extensive and

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497 An article in La nación says, “De todas maneras, sería necio seguir negándose a ver que debajo de este movimiento hay valores positivos muy dignos de tenerse en cuenta a la hora de decidir la necesaria revisión de planteamientos y conductas. Reducir todo a la disyuntiva ‘con el gobierno o con la subversión’ (término tan sobado por la propaganda oficial), acusa una muy peligrosa miopía política y social, equivaldría a contemplar este fenómeno de toma de conciencia colectiva como una simple raya en el agua, sin huella de trascendencia alguna. Mas para que todo el pueblo de México tenga una cabal visión de lo que está pasando, es preciso que así como lo ha venido haciendo Acción Nacional, asuman el gobierno mismo y todas las instituciones posiciones claras, definidas y razonadas.” Gerardo Medina Valdés, “Situación del conflicto: hubo o no hubo la ‘conjura’”, in La Nación, November 1, 1968, 9.

498 Ibid., 11.

499 According to a letter by Raúl González Schmal criticizing misrepresentations in the narration of the student mobilization events in other periodical called Milicia, “Es increíble que de las docenas de órganos informativos de carácter nacional, únicamente tres se atrevieron a decir la verdad, no a medias, sino toda la verdad: La Nación, ¿Por qué? y Gente. “Aclaraciones a Milicia. Es la injusticia, es la falsificación de la democracia”, in La Nación, December 1, 1968, 11.
detailed chronicles on the demonstrations and police repression. The periodical’s critique against the government’s brutal use of authority reflects the mainstream PAN position concerning those strikes.\textsuperscript{500} In one article, the author says, “Nuestro problema verdaderamente nacional, origen de todos los demás, es la dictadura, y mientras ésta perviva, los sindicatos de obreros, empleados públicos, maestros, etc., seguirán siendo instrumentos de ignominia y explotación, y seguirá rigiendo, como norma única en todos los órdenes de la vida colectiva, la imposición, la brutalidad, la injusticia.”\textsuperscript{501} In another article about the year-long repression to these mobilizations the author says,

La conjura verdadera contra México es la que realiza permanentemente el Régimen para acabar con todo intento de reivindicación y toda exigencia de justicia y respeto a la voluntad de las mayorías. Es la negativa sistemática del Gobierno a escuchar y atender las demandas justas del pueblo; es la conculcación oficial permanente de prerrogativas y derechos inalienables de la clase obrera, de los campesinos y del pueblo en general: el fraude electoral y la imposición; el sindicalismo político antidemocrático y venal; el cerrado control político y la explotación miserable de los campesinos; el fomento de la corrupción, el engaño y la demagogia para seguir usufructuando ilícitamente el Poder Público.\textsuperscript{502}

\textsuperscript{500} About the 1958-violent repression against railroad workers, the PANs press office declared, “El atraco perpetrado ayer por las fuerzas policíacas contra los ferrocarrileros, es una vergüenza para México. La felónía y la violencia empleadas contra los trabajadores, que fueron cruelmente golpeados, con fuerte saldo de heridos, así como las arbitrales detenciones de obreros, son un gravísimo atropello a las garantías individuales y una violación flagrante a la Constitución; con lo que el Régimen de Ruiz Cortines, en los últimos meses de su gestión, ha venido a exhibirse como una declarada dictadura”. Later, the declarations says, “Al protestar Acción Nacional, con toda energía, contra este nuevo atentado del Gobierno, reafirma sus tesis relativas al conflicto actual: 1.- Los graves daños que la Nación está sufriendo a consecuencia de los paros, son debidos a la conducta injustificada del Gobierno a intervenir en la vida de los sindicatos. 2.- Es totalmente injustificada la oposición de las autoridades a la exigencia de los trabajadores que piden la libertad, la autenticidad (sic.) y el respeto de su voto para designar a sus líderes. 3.- Es criminal la represión por la fuerza y principalmente el uso del Ejército para enfrentarlo a los trabajadores. 4.- Es injustificado el uso de esquiroles para sabotear la acción sindical de los obreros. El empleo de esquiroles es contrario a todo principio de organización profesional.” “Declaraciones del PAN: Ferrocarrileros y dignidad”, published in \textit{La Nación}, August 6, 1958, 12.


\textsuperscript{502} Luis Tercero Gallardo, “Un año de atentados contra el pueblo”, in \textit{La Nación}, October 5, 1968, 14.
During 1968, similar arguments were applied in defense of the students and against the government. Immediately after the massacre, one article in *La Nación* stated, “Y es que entablar contacto con la realidad implica cambiarla, si el contacto produce repugnancia. Y si lo mejor de México no lo intenta, entonces somos un pueblo perdido definitivamente. Por eso, el estudiante actúa y derrama su sangre.” Later, the author adds,

A la ‘democracia mexicana’ ya le queda grande el progreso. […] El sistema ha dado resultado para resolver urgentes e importantes problemas de una minoría, pero el grueso de la población sigue al margen de la justicia. Pendientes están una reforma agraria y un adecuado reparto de la riqueza común. No hay oportunidades reales de trabajo; el nivel de vida, tan elogiado por su aumento en los papeles donde se imprime la estadística, es ficticio; el incremento del ingreso nacional beneficia tan sólo a grupos reducidos. Mientras tanto, la inquietud crece. Y para encauzarla y hacerla provechosa, no son los discursos ni la represión los métodos más adecuados. The violent events of 1968 offered PAN politicians and intellectuals an excellent opportunity to evidence government’s mishandlings as well as its tremendously authoritarian nature. Also, those critiques offer traces on the impact of those events on middle-class sectors that did not necessarily share the left-leaning perspective of mobilized students. These traces show that beyond particular political identifications, the student mobilization and its harsh repression shocked important middle-class sectors, leading to greater disbelief in the government. Even before the October 2-massacre public opinion seemed to support the students, blame the government for the problem,

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504 Ibid.
and condemn violent repression against the students. After the tragedy of October 2, the relation between the state and the Mexican middle class suffered profound changes.

In its attempt to face the challenge represented by mobilized students, the state demonstrated its lack of political resources and its misconception of middle-class youth’s politicization. Díaz Ordaz’s repressive policies showed the most brutal face of the government and its lack of negotiation willingness. Real negotiation might have saved much of the violence that took place. In fact a report of the Director of Intelligence and Research in the Department of State directed to the Secretary of that organism, some days before the massacre reported that,

Perhaps the tragedy of the affair is that the Díaz Ordaz administration, which is a good government by Latin American standards, might have pacified the student community six or seven weeks ago, i. e., shortly after the bloody riots of 26 and 30 July, by partially agreeing to some student demands. A decision by the president in mid-August to allow a dialogue between student leaders and government officials could have cut the ground from the militant agitators and permitted the moderates to argue that Díaz Ordaz was not unmindful of student problems, particularly the matter of police interference in student intramural squabbles.

Díaz Ordaz’s maneuvers to control students and their tragic result are the best reflection of the growing miscommunication between the political apparatus and the

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506 The report adds, “The Minister of Government did offer to set up an investigation committee to examine charges, but the proposal was never fully accepted by the student leaders, possibly because the offer was merely to investigate and contained no indication that the government was prepared to recognize that police brutality was a problem. Several days after the investigating committee proposal was made public the students staged a giant demonstration in which sharp criticism was focused for the first time on the President’s person. This criticism reached unprecedented heights of scathing vulgarity on August 27 when student poster attacks openly called for an end to the Díaz Ordaz government.” Report from the Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, National Security Archives, George Washington University, The Tlatelolco Massacre, doct. 35, Sept. 26, 1968, 2.
challenging forces of organized students, supported by important middle-class sectors. In 1968 assessing the immediate impact of the massacre on Mexican society was a hard task. Apparently, the system stood up and recovered very well.Apparently, students were unable to seriously threaten the system as they did not count with the direct support of labor, peasants or other popular groups. Yet the long-term impact of the movement kept resonating every time a political crisis threatened stability in Mexico. The year of 1968 marked a turning point in the relation between the Mexican middle classes and the state. Much of the credibility that the state had gained in previous years was seriously undermined.

In the context of inflationary problems and fiscal deficits, Díaz Ordaz tried to guarantee the continuity of the Stabilizing Development project by supporting private capital with low taxes and good opportunities of industrial financing while reducing expenditures in social programs, such as education and health, to avoid fiscal deficits. Nonetheless, by limiting the use of the public budget for education, Díaz Ordaz stirred up the anger of students and other important sectors of the Mexican intelligentsia. He was reducing the opportunities for Mexican youth’s social mobility. The new-leftist middle class rooted behind university walls found in Díaz Ordaz’s policies its motivation to confront the post-revolutionary state, thereby exposing its contradictions as never before.

507 An U.S. Embassy report says, “Perhaps most important conclusion to be drawn is that to date political-social system has stood up under student attack very well. Notwithstanding intensive student effort… labor and campesino leadership stood firmly in support of the government and erosion of rank and file from leadership was insignificant. With evidence at hand, it is difficult to view these important sectors as seething with discontent. Urban poor likewise remained apart from the student movement. There was some evidence of middle class support but this was neither organized nor on large scale. Upper classes-business, financial industrial community were generally behind govt. Finally police and military showed no wavering in their loyalty. While some of more extreme students talked of revolution, it can well be asked if revolution, by whom? The students, alone, lack strength in Mexico seriously to threaten stability of govt.” U.S. Embassy report, doct. 23, Oct. 1968, 2.
Although prominent intellectuals like Salvador Novo and Martín Luis Guzmán supported Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, most intellectuals from all ranges of the political spectrum and identifications decried the repressive measures of the regime. For instance, Octavio Paz resigned his post as ambassador in India. From Paris, Carlos Fuentes openly criticized the regime and its policies, and later, in 1969, he came back to Mexico, where he reiterated his antigovernment sentiments and said that “criticar al César no es criticar a Roma;… que hacer críticas al gobierno no equivale a criticar a la nación.”

Middle-class left-leaning groups openly condemned Díaz Ordaz’s repressive policies and supported the students. Intellectuals like Carlos Monsiváis and Elena Poniatowska were among the most active helping those voices to have an expanded impact in public opinion. In fact, Elena Poniatowska gave active voice to those directly victimized by the repression by publishing her famous *Tlatelolco’s Night Chronicle.* Poniatowska’s work constituted the first literary work to publicize the events that happened the tragic night of October 2. She also published many of her interviews to student movement members, student-movement supporting intellectuals and academics in *Siempre* and other periodicals. *Meanwhile,* Carlos Monsiváis as the director of *La cultura en México* magazine, favored the inclusion of articles and chronicles about the student movement by left-leaning intellectuals, who denounced the government’s intransigence. With other intellectuals, like writer Juan García Ponce, Monsiváis signed a public letter condemning the government-led massacre in Tlatelolco. Later, Monsiváis published *Días de guardar,* where, in the light of the student movement, he discusses facts and problems of Mexican

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508 Brewster, 63.

509 There, Poniatowska recovers the live testimony of many jailed students and participants in the Tlatelolco demonstration, making a chronicle of events that night of October 2nd.
society during the 1960s. Repression is showed as connected to a corrupt political system and the impoverishment of millions of Mexicans.\textsuperscript{510} Both Poniatowska and Monsiváis symbolized the position of the most progressive sectors among the Mexican middle class, who were not only shocked by the violent repression of students, but also played an active role openly condemning and criticizing the government.

The tragedy of October 2 of 1968 also shocked the PPS such as it did the foundations of middle-ground middle-class politics in Mexico. Then, as a resolution to support the government’s repressive action was discussed in the Chamber of Deputies on October 5, the PPS joined the PAN in opposing the resolution. Yet, Lombardo and the PPS kept their position that actually the student movement originated in anticommmunist manipulation from imperialist interests, mainly foreign (namely the U.S.).\textsuperscript{511} For Lombardo, going back to the middle-ground represented by stability and national unity was the only viable solution for the country.\textsuperscript{512} Even though Lombardo could not see this since he passed away on November 16 that year, the PPS maintained its support to the PRI and shared Luis Echeverría Álvarez’s presidential candidature of 1970. With Echeverría, the PPS seemed to find concrete elements for the reconstruction of the middle-ground pact that Lombardo had built in its relation with PRI-politics. Yet, consolidating the progressive front that Lombardo envisioned became ever more difficult

\textsuperscript{510}Monsiváis, \textit{Días de guardar}, 15.

\textsuperscript{511}Lombardo stated, “Cien veces he dicho que en las condiciones actuales en que México vive las perturbaciones graves desde el punto de vista social o político, como preludio de la guerra civil, representan una ayuda enorme a las fuerzas de la derecha en el interior de nuestro país y a los agentes de las fuerzas dominantes de los países imperialistas, especialmente de nuestro vecino del norte.”, VLT, “¡Todos contra México!” (originally published in Revista \textit{Siempre} on November 20, 1968”, in VLT, \textit{Escríritos….}, T. IV, Vol. 2, 1048.

\textsuperscript{512}Lombardo expressed, “El único camino posible para resolver los problemas y las demandas apremiantes del pueblo es la unidad y la acción común de las fuerzas democráticas frente a cuestiones concretas, para que éstas se puedan resolver de una manera justa y rápida.” Ibid.
to achieve amidst Echeverría’s government profound contradictions, which in the end were sharp middle-ground contradictions that marked the end of a political era.

After 1968 a crisis of legitimacy began to develop until it reached its most critical point during the 1980s. But it was not limited to be a crisis relative to economic performance. Instead, a powerful source for such a crisis is found in the very contradictions of the system to continue reproducing the pedagogy of domination that previously had been relatively successful. Education as a social tool to legitimize the state proved insufficient to counter accumulating contradictions. Much like the economic expansion characteristic of the “Economic Miracle” period between 1940 and 1970, education did not really offer new paths for social development. Instead, it served the state’s aims for legitimacy and social control. Yet, after 1968 and during the 1970s, a profound crisis of pedagogical leadership showed the limitations of the state’s model for education-based legitimacy.

The government of Díaz Ordaz faced strong winds of social and political unrest in Mexican society. Guerrilla movements in Guerrero, Chihuahua, and—although incipient, still a threat—in Jalisco and Michoacán shook the system. But the most important sign of the beginning of PRI-middle ground political style deterioration took place on October 2, 1968, as the Tlatelolco massacre happened. The regime had been unable to use negotiation, instead of recurring to harsh violence against students and demonstrators in

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513 Daniel Morales has said: “Politically, education has served to legitimize a hegemonic power structure and a nationalistic political ideology that serve as a basis to the corporatist State controlling not only political life but also the direction and distribution of the benefits of the development process.” The State, Corporatist Politics, and Educational Policy Making in Mexico, New York: Praeger, 1990, 31.

Tlatelolco. Previously the regime had used violence to repress mobilizations of peasants and workers. Yet Tlatelolco represented the first time large-scale violence was used against students, the promising and young members of the so-far privileged Mexican middle-class. Between 1964 and 1970, the middle class that usually found a reflection of their aspirations in PRI-rule began to make evident a diversification in their political trust. For instance, in the presidential elections of 1964, the PAN candidate obtained 11% of the vote, in spite of claims of electoral fraud. In 1967, a PAN candidate was elected as the mayor of Merida, Yucatán’s capital city, by a three to one vote.\footnote{U.S. Embassy in Mexico to U.S. Department of State, Nov. 7, 1969, p. 2, National Security Archives-George Washington University, Before Democracy, doc. 8.} In 1969, also in Yucatán, gubernatorial elections were hotly contested between the PRI and PAN candidates. In the end the PRI candidate took over the gubernatorial chair, but constantly hit by PAN´s convincing claims of electoral fraud.\footnote{U.S. Embassy in Mexico to U.S. Department of State, Nov. 25, 1969, pp. 1-2, National Security Archives-George Washington University, Before Democracy, doc. 10.} A communicate between the U.S. Embassy of Mexico and the U.S. Department of State clearly expressed the new political winds of the time:

Now […] with the Revolution long past, the urban middle class seems more interested in effective government and less impressed with the fact that political power is in the hands of a few of its members. Many in the urban middle class are economically independent of the PRI-government complex and feel they have more to lose than gain from corrupt government. […] The day when an opposition party can mount a substantial challenge to the official party at a politically significant level has arrived. The fact that significant numbers of the peasantry, one of the sources and mainstays of the Revolution, and the middle class, the offspring of the Revolution, appear to feel that their needs must be conveyed to the government
outside the official party may be a sign that the myth of the Revolution is wearing a bit thin.\textsuperscript{517}

Accordingly, the inheritors of the post-revolutionary regimes, the middle class began looking for new alternatives outside the PRI. The PAN showed to be the strongest opposition party gradually increasing its capacity for regime contestation. In the end, the party shared the same middle-ground middle-class roots on which PRI politics had been built.\textsuperscript{518}

The pedagogical leadership of the state importantly relied on the role of the president as the head of the revolutionary family. That patriarchal role became seriously damaged after the October 1968 events, which marked the end of what some authors called a Golden Age of Mexican development.\textsuperscript{519} Between 1940 and 1968, the state had built an image of modernization and social unity that had transcended the national borders and had become the epitome of progress and political stability in the international arena dominated by the United States. During that period, the Mexican state promoted a patriarchal image of benevolence, moderation and self-containment that seemed to overcome the patriarchal macho image characterized by violence, authoritarianism and

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\textsuperscript{517} U.S. Embassy in Mexico to U.S. Department of State, Nov. 7, 1969, pp. 2 and 4, National Security Archives-George Washington University, Before Democracy, doct. 8.

\textsuperscript{518} Luis Medina says, “La abrumadora mayoría de los integrantes de esa generación enarboló un título de educación superior, principalmente de abogado, aunque no faltaron los ingenieros y los médicos. Fue la generación que rediseñó al partido de la Revolución y creó al PAN, principal partido de oposición. Creyentes en la técnica, sentaron las bases de muchas instituciones en México y abrieron las puertas a la siguiente generación, la primera tecnocrática.” Medina, 157.

\textsuperscript{519} Gilbert M. Joseph, Anne Rubenstein and Eric Zolov say, “The students’ challenge to the state’s patrimonial authority and the latter’s brutal response also dealt a mortal blow to the patriarchal culture that had been the very essence of Golden Age identity. Reassembling the patriarchal ideal of the Revolutionary Family would prove difficult, if not impossible, in the decades that followed.” “Assembling the fragments: Writing a Cultural History of Mexico Since 1940”, in Joseph, Rubenstein and Zolov, 12.
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excess. However, the 1968-repression brought back that violent and repressive image and questioned the ground on which the country’s political stability was built.
CONCLUSIONS

Between 1940 and 1970 the PRI-led Mexican state undertook an economic project of unprecedented urban and industrial expansion that required strong social support and legitimacy in order to succeed. In such a context, those sectors composing the Mexican middle class played an important political role. Urban and industrial growth demanded high levels of political stability, cheap labor and raw materials. In pursuing this, PRI’s revolutionary legacy became a matter of rhetoric, and by means of corporatism the party sought to exert major control upon workers and peasants. On the other hand, the PRI-led state offered the Mexican middle class leadership in the party by means of the National Confederation of Popular Organizations (CNOP), where the middle class found a corporatist haven. However, as the state courted the middle class, it was forced to hold contradictory visions seeking to satisfy the very paradoxical middle class. The reason of this: the middle class integrated a diversity of political and economic visions ranging from the radical Left to the most conservative Right. For instance, Adolfo López Mateos’ presidential administration offers the clearest expression of the regime’s paradox in action. While López Mateos held a Left-leaning political rhetoric and unprecedented agrarian distribution took place during his regime (only second after that operated by Lázaro Cárdenas), at the same time he brutally repressed workers´ demonstrations and jailed opposing leaders like Valentín Campa, Demetrio Vallejo and David Alfaro Siqueiros.

Even though the PRI-led state claimed to be an agrarian state, and the ultimate expression of revolutionary ideals, it implemented social policies in education, health and
social development that more often than not offered their major benefits to the urban middle- and upper- sectors of society. As growing industrialization and urbanization became the paradigm of modern Mexico, the urban middle class turned out to be a fundamental ally for the state. Such processes sought better economic gains for national economic elites, who required important levels of political stability and social unity. Middle-class’ consolidation provided the government and big capitalists with important levels of legitimacy in the context of the state’s revolutionary and populist rhetoric. Meanwhile, workers and peasants were kept at bay from effective political influence and labor reform.

In the favorable context of state policies between 1940 and 1970, the Mexican middle class became the most educated sector and many of its members were the important beneficiaries of the revolutionary promises of social change and modernization. The middle class received important benefits from social policies on education, health, economy and labor, implemented in the context of the state’s urban and industrial expansion policies. Nonetheless, this only added to the paradoxical trends shaping the middle class. While seeking to consolidate a leadership position from different political and economic fronts, the middle class reflected some of the most evident contradictions of the Mexican state. The middle class often contested the very state that was laying the ground for its development. During the 1960s such contestation became more evident than ever, as middle-class voices ranged from radicals and social reformers linked with the university and national intelligentsia, to conservatives and tradition-defenders in the PAN or in the Christian Family Movement (MFC).
As the Mexican middle class faced growing cultural influence from the United States, its paradoxical nature became more evident than ever. While accepting the material influence of U.S. culture, the Mexican middle class struggled to keep deeply appreciated cultural aspects such as family traditions, moral and religious values, gender roles, patriarchalism and nationalism. Whenever the middle class found those values at stake, contesting voices were ready to raise their opposition, claiming inappropriate alliances between the PRI-led state and the United States. Yet, amid increasing US influence, such cultural aspects have suffered continuous transformation and adaptation shaping today’s Mexican middle class.

The Mexican middle class developed an ambivalent perspective on U.S. influence on Mexico. On the one hand, U.S. consumerism and material betterment have represented a role-model to follow according to Mexican middle-class status aspirations. On the other hand, U.S. cultural influence on family, education and religious traditions has been received with a defensive attitude. Although the U.S. cultural influence has permeated all levels of Mexican society, processes of adaptation reflecting Mexican values have filtered such influence. For instance, even though divorce has become common and well-accepted among middle-class families, the family structure still works on the base of the extended-family (including grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles, nephews and nieces, godparents, etc.), beyond the basic cell of father, mother, sons and daughters. In spite of the fact that education has been regulated as lay and scientific by the state, the actual implementation of laws has often been loosened, and usually Catholic confessional groups are behind private education in the country. Even though, most middle-class Mexicans are more cultural Catholics than real practitioners, many among the middle
class still base their social criticism against the government and their involvement in public matters on confessional and Catholic moral perspectives. Then, for the Mexican middle class there is no inherent contradiction in preserving their Hispanic-Catholic heritage, while also adopting the U.S. material life-style and some of its cultural consequences.

As in other Latin American countries, education has been one of the most important social markers for the Mexican middle class. Understanding this, between 1940 and 1970 the Mexican state focused important efforts on both expanding higher education and offering appealing opportunities for members of the middle-class intelligentsia to participate in the political system. The PRI-led state found the means to create a middle-ground political base, able to even incorporate the most paradoxical intellectual and political trends, from the Left or the Right of the spectrum. Instead of advancing sound labor and agrarian reforms, the PRI-led state promoted education as the ultimate expression of revolutionary achievement and the means for social mobility. However, deep economic inequalities kept growing bigger during the 1960s, as Mexico pursued policies called Stabilizing Development, and this also translated into sharper disparities in terms of educational achievement in the country. While the most urbanized and industrialized areas in Mexico had the best economic and educational results, the most rural and least industrialized regions remained behind in both economic and educational performance.

Education, actually, never guaranteed by itself middle-class social mobility, least of all for peasants and workers. Instead of offering new paths for social development, education in fact served the state´s aims for legitimacy and social control. Education
served the state’s political rhetoric of opportunities for everybody. The state created an education-based model of legitimacy that worked well as it satisfied middle-class ideals of social mobility. But eventually reality overcame those ideals and accumulating economic and political contradictions became increasingly evident. Then, the middle class questioned and contested the very state they had previously supported.

By the late-1960s, profound contradictions in the Mexican political and economic system were more than evident. A system that was apparently legitimized by middle-class development was not even offering clear benefits for the middle class itself. Income concentration in the higher deciles of society evidenced this situation. In such a context, middle-class youth contested the government and met unprecedented violent repression from the state in 1968-Tlatelolco. This unexpected event profoundly changed the relationship between the middle classes and the post-revolutionary governments. The violent events of 1968 offered opposition politicians and intellectuals an excellent opportunity to evidence government’s mishandlings as well as its tremendously authoritarian nature.

Between 1930 and 1960, in the aftermath of the Revolution, the Mexican middle class consolidated strong political and economic leverage as its representatives came to organize the country’s politics, mediating peasants’ and workers’ demands, and helping strengthen a growing urban and industrially-oriented capitalist group. Meanwhile, in Brasil, even though the middle class strongly expanded associated with southern Sao Paulo industrialists and highly qualified workers supporting the Getulio Vargas regime, it did not become the central organizer or mediator in the regime. In Argentina, on the other hand, the middle class developed amidst the political and economic clash between landed
elites and urban working sectors, eventually siding with the landed elites and supporting the military dictatorship of the 1970s. In Mexico, on the other hand, the ruling middle class developed a popular-oriented discourse, while undertaking an economic and political model that clearly offered its most important benefit to the urban middle class and growing industrial elites. In the process, the old landed elites were replaced by industrialists and large entrepreneurs, while control on workers and peasants took place by means of corporatism and middle class’ mediation.

Beginning with Manuel Ávila Camacho in 1940, the state sought to gain major support from the middle class, while displacing other social sectors like peasants and workers. The 1943 inception of the CNOP clearly expressed the growing protagonist role of the middle class in politics. While other corporatist bodies in the PRI, like the CNC and the CTM (the peasants and workers corporations) began serving the state’s rhetorical discourse, the CNOP began to gain the upper-hand in the country’s political life. This was the means to create an appropriate environment for industrialization to take place, and for big capitalists to prosper in the economic field. While the middle classes kept high levels of political, educational and intellectual influence, big entrepreneurs obtained unprecedented expansion. The formula of cheap labor, cheap raw materials, an important degree of political stability by means of a relatively satisfied middle class, and government patronage seemed to work fine at least until the late 1960s. By then, the Stabilizing Development model proved ineffective as it faced new and more challenging international trends. The contraction of international markets created inflationary problems and fiscal deficits in Mexico that led Gustavo Díaz Ordaz to reduce social
expenditures, even in education and health. Middle class trust in the government eroded, and this created conditions for further inconformity and deepened distrust.

The most important political parties between 1940 and 1970—the PRI, the PAN and the PP—were essentially middle-class parties. At least until 1970, they all contributed to keep reasonable levels of political stability without actually struggling against each other in a drastic way. On its side, the PP became an ally for the PRI and never offered any real opposition to the ruling political system. Instead, Vicente Lombardo Toledano and its followers praised the PRI and built an image of friendly opposition that appeared to acknowledge PRI’s positive implementations, adding to PRI’s legitimacy. Meanwhile, the PRI offered its most prominent political positions—including the position of president of Mexico—to middle-class professionals, many of them formed within university walls. This made the PRI highly appealing for potential PAN-sympathizers, and gained support from intellectuals and academicians from all sorts of political trends. The PRI built an immense capacity for conciliating even the most opposite trends within the party’s amazingly broad political umbrella. This was the ultimate achievement of PRI-style middle-ground politics: an appearance of political stability and social unity.

However, middle class criticism and opposition against the PRI-led state political and economic contradictions gradually became the most challenging force the government had to face. Contestation came from different fronts ranging from PAN opinion-makers to brutally repressed students, and opened new venues for middle class opposition and regime criticism in the aftermath of the 1968-Tlatelolco massacre. The seeds for consolidating increasingly stronger middle class-opposition were already in place. Many of those seeds were cultivated by PAN middle-class activism. PAN activism
and students’ challenges against the government meant that the middle class itself was becoming the most important antagonist of a PRI-led regime that paradoxically sought middle-class legitimacy at all cost. Such legitimacy was essential for advancing the state’s political and economic projects.

This middle-class-focused political system helped build the arena for urban and industrial expansion. In such a context, large capitalists found the most favorable scenario to prosper. However, such prosperity did not necessarily mean that most middle class people increased their consumer power or standard of living. The economic system was rather focused on strengthening the external sector than on improving the Mexican domestic market. Large and export-oriented enterprises received special privileges while small- and medium-sized capitalists received much less support. Then, income concentrated in those closer to political and economic power, keeping at bay most middle-class people, workers and peasants. Eventually this led to sharp income inequalities and economic disparities. Most of the 1970s, and 1980s cyclical crises suffered by Mexico found their origins in such inconsistencies.

As the PRI-led state built a relatively harmonious relation with the highly influential Catholic Church so deeply appreciated by the Mexican middle-class, the Church avoided creating serious political interference. Even under the profound economic and political contradictions so evident by the late-1960s, the Church kept its relative silence. However, middle-class members participating in movements like the Christian Family Movement (MFC) were not so cautious or silent. As their social networks escaped institutional Church control, they built a perspective of their own. They expressed dissatisfaction and growing criticism against government policies and actions in meetings that were
originally intended to discuss issues of faith and family values. MFC networks were independent and difficult to control by the Church. They had a dynamism of their own that often overcame the movement’s original aims.

Right after the late-1960s crisis of the Tlatelolco-students massacre and the evident erosion of the Stabilizing Development model of the Mexican state, the Church sought to exert major control upon the MFC. The consolidation of Church control on the movement did happen by means of delimiting clear zones of action where congregational authorities such as priests and bishops exerted their authority. Such zones grouped a broad diversity of family cells that belonged to the movement. Also, the Church congregations sought to get more popular groups and neighborhoods involved in the MFC. However, in tightening this kind of delimited zone control, broader social networks were disrupted and the movement was much less appealing for middle-class participation. Therefore, from 1970 onward the MFC became more popular than middle-class based. The movement was also more concerned with aspects related to confessional issues than to social, political or economic.

The MFC showed the extent to which the Mexican middle-class was a complex and difficult sector for the government to exert its leverage. While the working-class sector and the peasant sector were either manipulated by “charro” leaders or brutally repressed in case they openly manifested against the government, there was no particular formula to handle the middle class. After all, the very regime was from middle-class origins. The most important sources of legitimacy for the regime indeed came from the very middle class as long as an appearance of social unity, political stability and economic development was held. Nonetheless, the end of the Stabilizing Development
period by 1970 already put into risk the state’s capacity of keeping those appearances. Cyclical sharp economic crisis began manifesting during the 1970s, the 1980s and the 1990s. Eventually this all led to a regime change by means of the National Action Party (PAN) taking over the presidential chair in 2000.

In the end, the PAN as a political party shared important elements with the MFC in terms of its broad middle-class social networks questioning and criticizing the regime in social, political and economic terms. The PAN also had strong links with the Mexican heritage coming from the Catholic Hispanic tradition, but highlighting the political and economic aspects over those with confessional origins. The PAN obtained the political victory in 2000 as it was able to show a public image of effective political and economic critique that promised effective change, while shading its confessional aspects (apparently the Manuel-Gómez-Morín perspective dominated upon the Efraín-González-Luna more confessional approach). Today, however, as confessional aspects have periodically made their presence more evident and seem to have a strong weight among key party constituencies, they seem to help little in consolidating the PAN appeal among the Mexican voting middle classes.

The period from 1940 to 1970 witnessed the consolidation of middle-class participation and a protagonist’s role in Mexico’s economic expansion and changing political life. Nonetheless, profound political, economic and social contradictions accumulated during the period. In dealing with a middle class that was living deepening contradictions, the PRI-led state sought to keep political stability in the face of profound economic instability and broadening socioeconomic inequality. Since the era that culminated in the conflicts of 1968, between 1970 and 2000, growing middle class
dissatisfaction with the PRI-led state gradually weakened the system’s apparent legitimacy. This was highlighted by the growing incapacity of the PRI-led state to addressing the expectations of an increasingly demanding and contradictory middle class. Such contradictions eventually led left-leaning segments of the middle class to split from the PRI and eventually create the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), led by Lázaro Cárdenas´ son, Cuauhtémoc, in the late 1980s. Such contradictions also gave the PAN major strength in the electoral arena, culminating with Vicente Fox´s presidential victory, mainly obtained by means of urban middle-class votes, in the 2000 electoral race.

Today, after two PAN-led presidential administrations, the position of the middle class in Mexican society and politics seems more contradictory than ever. Middle class expectations from regime change still seem unfulfilled. The state political and economic programs have not responded to middle class demands for a strengthened domestic economy and better opportunities for upward social mobility. Actually, during Felipe Calderón´s administration, policies have centered on a struggle against drug-trafficking with no visible outcomes or benefits for the middle class. Instead, violence throughout Mexico has reached unprecedented levels, with a negative impact on middle class expectations for social improvement and stability. As paradoxical as it might sound, the PAN-led state has not really courted the middle class, as PRI governments used to do. Despite the fact that the PAN has historically and openly been a middle class party, its programs while holding the Mexican presidency have lacked coherence and clear direction. Financial and economic implementations seem to have a mostly negative effect upon the middle class. While even the U.S. government broadly acknowledged the inappropriateness of economic neo-liberalism for facing the international financial crisis
of 2008, in Mexico the PAN-led state stubbornly applied old-school neoliberal drastic measures of austerity with a highly negative impact on the very sector that put PAN in power: the middle class. Government spending has been reduced even in health and education, credit for domestic consumption has become highly expensive, banks and large capital have the upper-hand in domestic finances backed by the government, and real wages touched the bottom of their purchasing power. Meanwhile, the Mexican middle class wonders about the virtues of an apparent democracy with only rhetorical benefits. Within the presidential cabinet, ministers often contradict each other and seem to be more reactive than active. Policies appear to correspond to a political party with a limited vision of immediate and short-term matters, and no long-term vision at all: a vision of state seems to be lacking. How does this affect PAN potential permanence in the presidential chair? The outcome of the upcoming-2012 presidential elections will shed light on this.
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