

exclude a minority and become a majority dictatorship."

Hungarian desires for political in addition to cultural autonomy stimulate Romanian anxieties. Romanians, Codita told me, are troubled lest Hungarians create a system of apartheid to insulate themselves. The DAHR doesn't just want schooling in the Hungarian language for Hungarians, it wants a separate educational system, from kindergarten through university. Such measures, Romanians fret, could be a prelude to demands for border changes. "The fear that there might later be an effort to reopen Trianon," Codita says, "is the bottom line."

Such worries were reinforced by MDF rhetoric in Budapest and qualifications in Hungarian statements about borders. When I asked Marko to address this, he affirmed that "we accept Romania as a sovereign state," but he would only declare the border issue "nonfunctional" since most Hungarians live in central Transylvania, away from frontiers. (Hedging on borders ended in Budapest when Horn became premier.) Moreover, nuance often vanishes when the Hungarians address Romanian politics. Marko insisted that the difference between Iliescu and Funar is only rhetorical since "they both maintain the idea of the nation-state." Means may vary, he reckoned, but the goal is the same, an identity of demos and ethnos that implies no future for a Hungarian minority. However, as a Western embassy source in Bucharest pointed out to me, Iliescu wants Funar removed, tried to be "somewhat accommodating" on the education bill (he was opposed by MPs in his own party) and covets improved relations with the West—"the last thing he needs is ethnic rioting."

Still, it would be difficult to dispute Anne-Marie Biro's protest that "Most Romanians have trouble with the notion of difference within the country." Few Romanians seem to have pondered—perhaps they don't want to ponder—what it means to accept a large minority in the country, especially one that feels besieged. Codita, for instance, though acknowledging that "there is no such thing as a nation-state in today's world" and accepting, in principle, some form of cultural autonomy for

Hungarians, was adamant: Romania must be a "unitary state."

In practice, this means that administration is highly centralized (the model is the old French system), with local power, including elected municipal governments, overseen by appointees of the interior ministry. A state, Codita upheld, "organizes the life of an entire community," and consequently "a state should have one education system." When I suggested that enhancing the powers of local government might be a good idea in general and could alleviate some Hungarian concerns in particular, I was informed that I was "imposing American ideas not relevant to Romania." And he insisted that the real problem was not discrimination against Hungarians but manipulative Hungarian politicians who didn't represent their community. He could not explain why, if this were the case, the DAHR received 80 percent of the vote of the Hungarian minority in the last elections.

Uncertainties

Ethnic strife, often ferocious, long preceded communism in Eastern and Central Europe. More time is needed to make a full assessment of communism's impact on national identities; we are still too close to the upheavals. More time is not needed to identify the worst postcommunist scenario, Yugoslavia, and to recognize that this catastrophe was due, in part, to the mistaken confidence of Tito's elite that ethnic animosities could be dissolved without nurturing democratic political culture. One hopes that specters of Bosnia stalk politicians in Eastern and Central Europe when they address ethnic issues. Their ability to temper, if it is impossible to resolve, nationalist conflicts will be an essential gauge of the region's future.

Material progress will be a necessary condition for tempering nationalism. Yet fostering democratic political culture and material progress will, at best, entail slow, knotty processes because the region's economic woes are grave. The ex-communists came to power as pragmatists promising an easier future; they

have not yet faced the limits on how much sausage they can put on the national plate.

True, they may make solidaristic appeals if times become difficult but, for the moment, it seems that economic liberalization has diluted social solidarity along with nationalistic impulses—all while expanding disparities be-

tween rich and poor. If ex-communists are unable to cope, political spaces can widen for nationalist-populist demagoguery. The fate of these uncertain democracies may depend on finding a way to foster social solidarity in a time of economic anxiety without animating destructive forms of nationalism. □

Notes

¹ Maurice Glasman, "The Great Deformation: Polanyi, Poland, and the Terrors of Planned Spontaneity" (*New Left Review*, May/June 1994).

² The comments by Szomolanyi are from her *Eastern Central Europe 2000: Transformations of Slovak Society*, a report commissioned by the European Union, and from a conversation I had with her in Bratislava in July 1994.

³ My presentation of Kuron's ideas mixes quotes from his pamphlet with elaborations he made to me in an interview on August 9, 1994 in Warsaw.

⁴ I wish to thank Gyorgy G. Markus for bringing this survey to my attention. Details are in *Magyarország Politikai Évkönyve* (Political Year Book of Hungary), (Budapest, 1993), pp. 621–40.

Jonathan Fox and Luis Hernández

LESSONS FROM THE MEXICAN ELECTIONS

Mexico's 1994 presidential election was supposed to bring both clean elections and the political comeback of the left. Instead, Mexico escaped the worldwide wave of democratization one more time. The Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), which includes center-left ex-members of the ruling party and most of both the old and new lefts, had hoped that 1994 would be a replay of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas's surprise 1988 triumph. His official 1988 tally of 31 percent was an unprecedented challenge to the ruling party-state, and many observers suspect that he actually won. In 1994, not only did the candidate of the government's Party of the Institutional Revolution (PRI) clearly come in first with almost 50 percent, but Cárdenas slipped far behind to third place with 17 percent, trailing the center-right National Action party's (PAN) 26

percent. The PRI swept the congressional races as well, preventing the rubber-stamp legislature from becoming an effective counterweight to presidential power.

New York Times editorials spoke of the reformers' victory over old-fashioned hardliners within the ruling party, but promarket technocrats are not necessarily political reformers. The new president, Ernesto Zedillo, certainly has promarket credentials, but he made a pact with his party's hard-line "dinosaurs" in order to get elected. Indeed, the murder of the ruling party's number two official reminded Mexicans that the dinosaurs are far from extinct. The ruling party's true political reformers were trying to separate the party from the state, but have had little impact so far.

In retrospect, it is not surprising that the

ruling party won the August elections. Its advantages of money, media, and coercion were overwhelming, and it did not take any chances. The PRI's victory can be explained by simply noting that the opposition was deeply divided. In no "founding election" in transitions to democracy has a divided opposition won over entrenched authoritarian incumbents. One Mexican opposition leader, PRD president Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, made hopeful pre-election comparisons to the Chilean plebiscite vote against Pinochet, but he neglected to recall that the democratic opposition only won there because of its unusual unity across the political spectrum—and even then Pinochet got 43 percent of the vote. But all this does not explain why the PRI won by such a large margin.

Many Mexican political analysts explain the PRI sweep with the "voto de miedo" hypothesis—the "fear vote." This phrase actually conflates two distinct arguments that need to be disentangled—a macro version and a micro version. In the argument's macro version, fear is associated with the widespread perception that a transition to a non-PRI government, even to an opposition party as tame as much of PAN, would provoke instability. And thanks to the skill with which the progovernment television managed images of the Chiapas rebellion and the assassination of presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio, political change was widely associated with open-ended violence and economic crisis. This fear of instability was actually well founded, in the sense that the threat of a capital strike by big business in response to an opposition victory was very real. The head of the Mexican Bankers' Association made explicit threats of capital flight in the press. On the political side, the Colosio murder and the apparent lack of a serious investigation were understood by many as a message that "premature" democratization would not be tolerated by the hard-line elements within the regime. Voter fears of change were explicitly encouraged by the semi-official media monopoly, with television ads where a child was asked, "Why are you crying?" "Because I'm afraid." "And why are you afraid?" "Because my father is afraid. . . ." Against this

backdrop, Ernesto Zedillo campaigned as the "peace candidate."

The micro version of the "fear vote" interpretation of the PRI's margin of victory focuses on how *individual* voters feared reprisals for supporting the opposition. This approach involves taking a "voter's eye view" of the process, looking at the combination of carrots and sticks that the ruling party-state used to try to influence individual decisions. It involves unpacking the election in terms of geography, class, and ethnicity. Most notably, the electoral process in rural areas was qualitatively different from the urban process. There were dramatic differences in the nature of the electoral process between Mexico City and the northern states, and the southern states of Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Veracruz. It is not difficult to guess where most of the United States observers were. Progovernment foreign observers proclaimed this Mexico's cleanest election ever, but that was not saying much.

The nonpartisan Mexican election watchdog coalition Civic Alliance brought together nongovernmental organizations and individual citizens from center right to center left, fielding over twelve thousand Mexican election observers and hundreds of international election "visitors," as they were officially called. The Civic Alliance observed a statistically representative stratified sample of over 1,800 polling places for their national quick count (out of more than 90,000). They did not find any single obvious "smoking gun" in terms of election law violations; instead, they found a diverse array of mechanisms that tarnished and distorted the process in different ways, so diverse that they found it impossible to quantify the overall effect on the electoral outcome. As a result, the Civic Alliance did not challenge the PRI presidential victory, but it did claim that the sum total of irregularities, whatever that was, certainly affected the PRI's margin of victory, many congressional races, and the Chiapas governor's race that took place the same day.

The Alliance's main emphasis was to produce a "quick count," in case the ruling party

tried to change the results after the voting, and to document election law violations on the voting day itself. They were not able to address the flagrant violations of weak campaign spending laws, nor did they have the capacity to check the validity of the controversial official voter rolls. The Alliance election observation effort was able to quantify the percentage of polling places affected by election law violations, though not the number of votes presumably affected by the violations. Here are a few of their conclusions, limited to procedural problems visible on election day:

- In 7.7 percent of polling places observed, voters without credentials were permitted to vote.
- In 7.5 percent of polling places, the indelible ink was not applied to all voters.
- In 3.8 percent of polling places, people with ink were allowed to vote.
- In 4.8 percent of polling places, the ink was easily removed.
- In 13.1 percent of polling places, ballots were annulled for only one party (presumably an opposition party). Where this occurred, the average share of ballots annulled was 9 percent of the total.
- In 69.5 percent of polling places observed, voters with credentials were not listed on the rolls, and were therefore not allowed to vote. When the Alliance's numbers were first published it had not yet quantified the number of people denied the vote, but in the latest report it calculated an average of only four voters turned away per polling place—much less than earlier PRD estimates.
- The secret ballot was violated in 38.6 percent of polling places observed nationwide. This figure ranged from 25.4 percent in the largest cities to over 51 percent in rural areas nationally, reaching 68 percent statewide in Chiapas, 58 percent in Veracruz, 55 percent in Michoacán, and 53 percent in Oaxaca.
- Direct pressures on voters were witnessed in 25 percent of the polling places, rising to 35.6 percent in rural areas. Most of these pressures were actually exercised *before* election day, and therefore not systematically

measured by observers. The most obvious vote-buying tool was the remarkably blatant political manipulation of millions of government crop subsidy checks distributed only days or weeks before the election—through a program designed to buffer the political cost of the NAFTA-related fall in the price of corn.

There are limits to the Alliance data on the violation of ballot secrecy. The Alliance was not able to quantify what *fraction* of voters were denied ballot secrecy in each polling place. One can only guess as to what happened in those Chiapas polling places where independent observers were not present. To sum up the point about the second version of the "fear vote" interpretation, many rural voters, especially in indigenous regions, had good reasons to fear individual reprisals if they voted for the opposition. Reprisals were also possible regardless of ballot secrecy, as in the rural community of Jaltenango la Paz, Chiapas, far from the region in revolt, where a local schoolteacher—the municipal leader of the PRD—was shot down while bicycling to town in September, apparently because the PRD won in his district.

The one place where the micro version of the "fear vote" explanation might have affected the actual election outcome (and not just the margin of PRI victory) was in the Chiapas governor's race (the only governor's race that coincided with the national election). In Chiapas, the main opposition candidate was one of the few on the PRD ticket who actually had a broad popular following. Amado Avendaño is a public interest lawyer and journalist who had worked for years with indigenous groups, and is trusted by both the Church and the Zapatistas. He defined himself as a candidate from civil society and was drafted to run on the PRD ticket because of the Chiapas crisis (the Mexican government does not allow nonparty candidacies). On the campaign trail, Avendaño barely survived a suspicious head-on collision in which three associates were killed.

The PRI's margin of victory in the governors' race was 50 percent to 35 percent. This means that Avendaño got twice the percentage Cárdenas did nationally, in spite of the lack of media access and the widespread violation of basic elec-

toral freedoms in most of the state. We'll never know who would have won a clean race for governor, but it is clear that the national government's unwillingness to ensure that the process was clean and credible in Chiapas makes continued instability and political violence in the state very likely. The number of troops in Chiapas reportedly doubled after the election, and the Zapatistas went on red alert. The national Civic Alliance concluded that "the case of Chiapas is most worrisome because of the high level of conflict in the region. Although the Civic Alliance did not observe the local elections . . . the high levels of irregularities in the federal elections also affected the elections for governor. We are therefore facing a provocation that affronts the millions of Mexicans who hoped . . . that this election would be a means to achieve peace in Chiapas."

By fall, the government and the Zapatistas had still not reached a negotiated settlement. Bishop Ruiz came out with a balanced proposal, but the government attached conditions that ended up weakening the bishop, who in turn came under renewed attack from anti-liberation theology elements within the church. Zedillo's transition team assigned low-level politicians to the negotiation process, while sending threatening military signals to the Zapatistas. Perhaps some kind of negotiated solution can be reached, but we may look back and see the 1994 governor's race as a historic missed opportunity for peaceful political change in Mexico's most authoritarian region.

At the national level, the presidential election suggests several lessons for future movements for electoral democracy in Mexico. First and foremost is the importance of building a broad multiparty coalition behind the most credible candidate possible. There are precedents—pluralist coalitions behind democratic "good government" candidates for governor at the state level—but so far Mexican politics has not produced a unifying figure at the national level.

Second, the partisan opposition needs to sink stronger roots in society to offset the ruling party's media domination and extensive network of clientelist controls. Both the PRD and the PAN have well-organized bases in a few

regions and states. But the PAN is known as the "asphalt party," never leaving the paved road network, while the PRD has not been able to engage with many of the non-party grass-roots movements that one would think are its natural constituencies. The PRD has such weak links with its own base that the leadership decided to choose its 1994 congressional candidates through backroom negotiations rather than open party primary elections. Before the selection process, the PRD promised half of its proportional representation seats to nonparty candidates from civil society, but these candidates tended to end up on the bottom half of the list, guaranteeing that party leaders would get most of the seats actually won.

Third, the PRD needs to find campaign strategies that convince the electorate that it has the capacity to go beyond criticism and govern effectively. The PAN's gradualist strategy has paid off politically, in that it has learned how to govern in practice at the municipal and state levels. The PRD, in contrast, has governed many small towns but has won only one state capitol and no governorships. Elements of the 1994 campaign strategy may also have backfired. For example, when PRD propaganda called for clean elections to avoid post-electoral political unrest, the government claimed this was a threat rather than an argument. In the aftermath of the Chiapas rebellion and Cárdenas's meeting with the Zapatistas, the regime's image managers proved especially adept at painting the PRD rather than the government itself as the source of violence (almost three hundred PRD activists have been murdered since the party was founded five years ago).

Finally, the election revealed a gaping political chasm between the intelligentsia and much of the electorate. Across the spectrum, Mexico City elites were surprised at the PRI's high margin of victory. In the aftermath of organized civil society's successful veto of the government's military response to the Chiapas rebellion, expectations of change were high. Many prodemocracy activists—mostly urban middle-class—felt predestined to win, and then the people let them down. For many Mexican citizens, however, grass-roots mobilizations

around local issues like social programs and municipal elections are often more engaging than national elections. The PRD has a weak track record in helping citizens to solve local problems, while that is precisely the PRI's speciality: solving specific material problems in exchange for political subordination. Local political battles are also widely seen as worth the risks they involve because there is more of a chance of winning something. National politics, in contrast, is quite remote; the president seems all-powerful and arbitrary, while few congressional representatives channel constituent demands upward. For most citizens, the progovernment television monopoly is the main link to national politics, and television is an arena where the PRD was unable to take advantage even of the little space available. Instead, Cárdenas's campaign strategy emphasized old-fashioned rallies in the plazas, which are fine for energizing the party faithful but not so good at reaching the fearful or undecided.

The shock of the 1994 election results catalyzed a major rethinking on the left end of the democratic opposition. Remarkably, the PRD emerged from the process much more unified than before. Radical groups inside and

outside the party advocated trying to block Zedillo's accession to power with open-ended mass protest, but they generally failed to inspire much support. The Zapatistas found themselves more isolated than they expected and took a prudent posture, focusing on the illegitimacy of the Chiapas governor's election. The dominant groups in the PRD took the position that Mexico faced a national crisis and were willing to engage in a broad multiparty dialogue over future political reform. Meanwhile, the second assassination of a top ruling party official struck fear in the hearts of Mexico's political opposition: if that is how ruling party factions solve their internal disputes, then no one on the outside is safe.

Most indicative of the regime's crisis of governability—transcending the electoral arena—is that both murdered national leaders bridged reformist and hard-line factions within the ruling party (and therefore may have been especially threatening to corrupt vested interests). It remains to be seen whether incoming President Zedillo will cave in to his authoritarian political allies or whether he will be willing to negotiate the next stage in Mexico's slow and far from steady political transition. □



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