

But the dominant party's tent was not big enough for everyone. The fabled Peace of the PRI probably involved a good deal more repression than scholars have thus far acknowledged. Organized labor in particular suffered profoundly under Alemán. The CTM, the umbrella organization of unions mobilized under Cárdenas, lost ground slowly during the Avila Camacho administration. In 1946, its leader, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, being miffed over a personal feud with presidential aspirant Ezequiel Padilla, threw the CTM's support behind Alemán and helped him secure the presidential nomination. Such a tactic proved to be an unmitigated blunder when Alemán returned the favor by effectively declaring war on organized labor. Even in his inauguration address he warned that the days of unauthorized strikes were over. When oil workers attempted a 24-hour work stoppage a few weeks later, the army rushed in and arrested the union's leaders, many of whom were jailed and beaten.

In Mexico City, the surviving Cardenista bureaucrats were coopted with new material incentives or quietly ushered into retirement. Those who balked or openly criticized the government, such as former socialist education secretary Narciso Bassols, faced ostracism and even surveillance by the security directorate. Many looked to Cárdenas himself for leadership, but the quiet-mannered former president refrained from political commentary. By 1952, it was widely believed that he tacitly supported the presidential candidacy of the reform-minded Miguel Henríquez Guzmán—an effort within the PRI that, given its dominance by Alemán loyalists, had no chance of winning the nomination.

The nature of repression in Mexico has always depended on one's money and status. Security forces monitored well-known critics, such as prominent Henriquistas (supporters of Henríquez Guzmán) in the capital, but did not risk the formidable ramifications of arresting them. A surprising number of well-placed opponents acquiesced to bribery and cooptation, including, apparently, Henríquez Guzmán himself. For those with slightly less political capital, such as students at the National University, repression took a more concrete form. When 4,000 youths staged an antigovernment protest in June 1951, Mayor Uruchurtu called out the riot police. Tear gas and billy clubs left 150 demonstrators injured, some of them hospitalized. For the working poor, the arm of the law exerted its muscle most overtly. Taxi drivers attempted a strike to protest their miserable working conditions in January 1950, only to see police raid their union headquarters and pummel their leaders in an orgy of violence that left two dead. When Henriquistas in the poor Indian state of Oaxaca orchestrated a successful general strike against the government in March 1952, the army moved in and

crushed it, opening fire on a peaceful demonstration in Oaxaca City and killing an untold number of long-forgotten victims. Another small-scale massacre took place in Mexico City's historic Alameda Park. And when the Henriquista movement, known institutionally as the Federation of Parties of the Mexican People (FPPM), still refused to yield in docility to the dominance of the PRI, it was outlawed. Alemanismo was by no means placing Mexico on the road to democracy.

Still, despite the considerable repression, cooptation above all else marked political life in Mexico under Alemán and his successors. If the savageness of the Federal Directorate of Security or the military is at all shocking, so, too, is the quite amazing success of the PRI machine at compromising and manipulating its natural opponents. Take, for example, the case of self-professed Marxist and labor leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano. Even as the government persecuted oil workers, taxi drivers, and others into submission, he acquiesced to its dictates and chanted the official party line. When he finally broke with Alemán and created the "opposition" Popular Party (PP), something was still unnatural. The PP operated in fact as a dummy opponent, spouting blandly predictable rhetoric about opposing "Yankee imperialism" even while it bent over backward to support the government on any substantive issues. (After it changed its name to the Popular Socialist Party in the 1960s, its rhetoric became, if possible, even more hollow.) In a similar fashion, the PRI coopted the right. The PAN played the role of a loyal opposition, fielding business candidates such as Luis Alvarez (1958) and José González Torres (1964) who railed as much against communism on the campaign trail as against their PRI opponents. Derisively labeled a banker's club, the party had little to oppose in terms of the direction the PRI was taking the country.

The PRI sanctioned and even encouraged the electoral straw-man competition of a whole host of minor parties, in large part because it provided a certain outward legitimacy to a political system that was in fact closed and rigid. Some groups, such as the Nationalist Party of Mexico (PNM), actually evolved with the establishment's blessing. Small and wholly fake opponents like the PNM and the misnamed Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution (PARM) answered a long-standing need in the political culture for avoiding the appearance of a dictatorship akin to that of the vilified Porfirio Díaz. If the government happened to channel funds to these window-dressing opponents or grant them a few meaningless seats in the compliant national congress, as it usually did, all the better for the appearance of democracy. But the PRI itself headed in the opposite direction when, in 1950, it replaced the practice of selecting candidates through staged primary elections with the much more honest, though blatantly undemocratic, method of simply announcing them in public. The reality in postwar Mexico, and a defining feature of Alemanismo, was the truth of a maxim coined by an astute observer of Mexico two decades earlier: The party is the government, and the government is the party.

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