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Rewriting History

Salinas, Zedillo and the 1992 Textbook Controversy*

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El presente trabajo analiza los libros de texto de historia de 1992 y la controversia política que provocaron. Se hacen comparaciones con libros de texto y con controversias anteriores. Los libros, vetados en los niveles más altos de la administración salinista, documentan un cambio ideológico en el gobierno mexicano. La controversia reveló profundas divisiones en el PRI y transformó las relaciones con los tradicionales enemigos de derecha del régimen.

Petroleum geologists detonate small explosions, whose seismic echoes reveal subsurface structures. When President Carlos Salinas and Education Secretary Ernesto Zedillo introduced a new series of official history texts at a public ceremony in August 1992, they unwittingly set off a controversy whose reverberations disclosed the tenuous structures of Mexican politics. This paper examines the Salinas-Zedillo textbooks and the politics surrounding them, drawing comparisons with previous texts and text controversies.

Like their predecessors, the new history texts were compulsory for all fourth, fifth and sixth graders under Mexico's Free-Text program (*Libros de Texto Gratuitos*). Their universal, mandatory status contributed to the controversy, which consumed acres of newsprint, provoked furious parliamentary debate, divided the (already factious) national teachers union, and prompted sometimes surprising judgements from the Catholic Church, parent groups, business organizations, the army, and at least two ex-presidents.

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The essence of the suspicions shared by critics of the new texts were captured in the opening lines of a column by Miguel Granados Chapa: "In order to avoid being accused of running counter to Mexican history, the government resolved to alter it through a vast operation of ideological revision..." (*Jornada*, 20 August 1992). Government spokesman, the authors and their supporters responded that, far from rewriting history to meet the regime's ideological needs, the new texts replaced the manichaeian history of official villains and heroes of the old texts with objective history based on modern scholarship (Aguilar Camín 1992; Florescano 1992; *Nacional*, 14 September 1992).

But the texts, proudly introduced by Salinas and Zedillo, had turned into a painful political liability, and the government was compelled to withdraw them. In January 1993, the education ministry announced a national competition for new texts in several categories, including history. In the months that followed, manuscripts were submitted in the history competition, a jury deliberated, winners were announced, and generous awards were paid to the authors. However, in August, days before the beginning of the school year, the ministry abruptly announced that the winning books were inadequate and would not, after all, be published.¹ For Mexicans, as for Russians in the last days of the Soviet Union, history—dependable, official, textbook history—had become problematic.

Analyzing the 1992 Texts

School texts have increasingly drawn the attention of historians and social scientists. The author of a recent study of geography texts explains why:

A school textbook is truly a key social document, a kind of modern stele. In the typical case a book becomes accepted as a . . . textbook only after it has been reviewed very carefully by the publisher, school boards and administrators, all of whom are intensely sensitive to the need to print acceptable doctrine; they are concerned to make it certain that children will read only those facts . . . acceptable as facts by the opinion-forming elite of the culture. The resulting textbook is, therefore, less an ordinary authored book

1. The books, for which the ministry paid the equivalent of \$165,000 each, contained numerous errors, according to Secretary Zedillo and some members of the jury. The authors claim they were ready to correct any errors and had been led to expect detailed comments from the education ministry, but the ministry cut off all communication shortly after the awards were made. Some political observers speculated that Zedillo was reluctant to risk his already diminished presidential prospects on another round of textbook controversy in (*Proceso*, 16 August 1993; *New York Times*, 30 August 1993).

than a vetted social statement of what is considered valid and acceptable for entry into the mind of the child (Blaut 1993).

In a similar vein, Mexican essayist Carlos Monsivais offered this thought on the textbook controversy: "The Government and groups of power believe that what is in the textbooks is in the hearts and minds of the next generation. For that reason they are intent on abolishing any subversive or politically incorrect thinking in the book" (*New York Times*, 30 August 1994). Whether or not school texts possess the power over young hearts and minds attributed to them, faith in their power is widespread among elites. It is this faith that makes textbooks such revealing cultural artifacts.

Both the timing and circumstances of their creation make the 1992 Mexican history texts especially worthy of analysis. These books were not the product of an anonymous bureaucracy. The agencies of the education ministry (officially, the Secretaría de Educación Pública or SEP) traditionally responsible for the production of textbooks were excluded from the process (*Proceso* 7 September 1992; *El Norte* 1992, 3). But both President Salinas and Secretary Zedillo were intimately involved from the beginning.² Bypassing the more formal methods of selecting authors that had been employed in the past, Salinas and Zedillo personally recruited the two main authors, Hector Aguilar Camín and Enrique Florescano, two well-regarded historians known to be close to the administration. In particular, the leader of the project, Aguilar Camín, regarded by political cognoscenti as a regime ideologue, was a personal friend of both the president and his education minister.³ Salinas and Zedillo both read the new texts in manuscript form and even selected the image used on the cover. Thus, their role in the public ceremony introducing the texts was no mere formality, and the new books can reasonably be assumed to represent the thinking of government at the highest levels.

The 1992 texts were created to fill an ideological gap—one which, even to a regime never noted for ideological consistency, must have seemed very wide. During the decade from 1982 to 1992, the Mexican government had broken decisively with its own

2. The following account of the roles played by Salinas and Zedillo is based on interviews with two of the principals in the affaire: Enrique Florescano, one of the authors, and Gilberto Guevara, Subsecretary for Basic Education under Zedillo. Both were interviewed in July 1994. See also Florescano & Aguilar Camín 1992 and *El Norte* 1992.

3. Aguilar Camín and others who worked on the new texts were, as critics pointed out, associated with the "grupo Nexos," a circle of intellectuals tied to the pro-Salinas journal, *Nexos*.

past. A regime rooted in the 1910 Revolution, which had promoted Mexican nationalism, supported import-substitution industrialization, celebrated social reform, tamed the political power of the Catholic Church and canonized Emiliano Zapata and Lázaro Cárdenas, was facing, at very least, a historiographic challenge: What reading of history was consistent with its own current policies, from the embrace of neoliberal economics to the official abandonment of agrarian reform?

From this perspective, it is not surprising that the government had, through the 1980s, ducked its responsibility to replace the existing texts, which dated from the early 1970s, or that the 1992 and 1993 attempts to do so had failed. In the 1990s, as before, the politics of national history reflect the politics of the nation.

The Free-Text Program

The Free-Text program was initiated under President Adolfo López Mateos in the early 1960s (Vázquez 1975, 1995; Villa Lever 1988; Neumann and Cunningham 1982). Prior to the program's establishment, the education ministry had issued lists of commercially published texts 'authorized' for use in the public schools and had occasionally (most notably under Cárdenas) distributed textbooks to students. The free texts were thoughtfully prepared, but cheaply produced so they could be distributed massively. What made the Free-Text program special and controversial from the very beginning was its universal, compulsory character. Every schoolchild in the republic, of appropriate grade level, would be given the books without charge. Further, the texts would be mandatory: every school—federal, provincial or private—was required to use them. For the first time, all Mexican primary school students would have books and all would literally read from the same text, created and distributed by the state.

Of course, the promoters of the free texts were also aware that the books, which students were allowed to retain, went home with them. These official language, math, science, and history texts were often the only books in a poor household, where they became vehicles for educating and indoctrinating adults.

The 1992 books were the third series of official histories produced for the Free-Text program, each of which became the object of public debate. The histories in the first series, published in the 1960s under López Mateos,⁴ were written by separate authors (typically teachers) and selected through juried competitions. The sec-

4. Except the sixth-grade text (SEP 1966), originally issued under Díaz Ordaz.

ond series, published in the 1970s under Luis Echeverría, was assigned to a team of historians at the Colegio de México, coordinated by Josefina Zoraida Vázquez. These books, titled *Ciencias Sociales*, placed history in a social science context.

The sections that follow compare the three generations of history texts with regard to their treatments of the *Porfiriato*, Emiliano Zapata, the United States, and the Catholic Church.⁵ All are topics of considerable significance in Mexican history. The first three were central in the debate over the texts, for reasons that will be made clear as they are discussed. The Church, an unsurpassed object of historiographic controversy from the beginnings of the republic until quite recently, was barely mentioned in the 1992 textbook debate. This fact is, in itself, revealing, as the discussion will show. The final section of the paper compares the recent debate with earlier Free-Text controversies, giving special attention to the political coalitions that coalesced in support of or opposition to the textbooks.

The *Porfiriato*

For critics of the new histories, and perhaps even for their defenders, the *Porfiriato* was a not-so-distant mirror in which the Salinas administration could see its own features reflected. Both presidencies emphasized national “modernization,” foreign investment, export development, and large-scale commercial (rather than traditional peasant) agriculture—all under the guidance of strong government. But any comparison between Díaz and Salinas is obviously problematic for Mexico’s ruling party, given the PRI’s (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) self-proclaimed roots in the 1910 Revolution. Critics accused the 1992 text writers of polishing the Porfirian mirror in order to improve Salinas’s own image.

The Salinas-Zedillo texts are certainly kinder to Díaz and the era he dominated than their predecessors were. The López-Mateos texts describe Díaz as a “dictator” who subordinated everything to

5. The discussion emphasizes the particular texts most relevant to these comparisons. The analyses of the López-Mateos and Echeverría series focus on the (national history) fourth-grade texts and (modern world history) sixth-grade volumes (SEP 1960b, 1966, 1976-7, 1979.) The three abandoned books of the 1992 series were really one Mexican history text. Reflecting perhaps the haste with which the series was produced, the government published precisely the same text for fifth and sixth graders under two titles: *Mi Libro de Historia de México: Quinto Grado* and *Mi Libro de Historia de México: Sexto Grado*. The fourth-grade volume is a faithful outline of the fifth/sixth grade text, employing tedious bullet-point lists of historical facts. In this paper, characterizations of the 1992 series are largely based on the (obviously representative) sixth-grade text

the “material growth of the country” (SEP 1960b,148). These 1960s texts concede little or nothing to the *Porfiriato*. Fleeting observations about the nation’s progress are summarily crushed under weighty, figurative or literal ‘buts.’ For example, railroads were built, industry expanded, *but* benefits often flowed to foreign investors who “became owners of a large part of the nation’s wealth.” High culture advanced, *but* little was done for popular education. The middle class grew, “*but* the great majority of the people lived in precarious and painful conditions.” The government sponsored important public works, *but* permitted large landowners to seize peasant lands, often forcing the victims into debt peonage. (SEP 1960b, 147-155).⁶

Among the Echeverría histories, the sixth-grade text uses brief, negative observations about the era to introduce the Revolution. The fourth-grade volume, however, contains fuller coverage. Here the 1960s rhetoric of ‘but’ has been displaced by something approaching ‘and’. That is, the material and cultural advances of the long *Paz Porfiriana* are regarded as historically significant and intrinsically worthy of the student’s attention. At the same time, the text portrays Porfirian Mexico as an “unjust,” steeply stratified society, ruled by a dictator—a country where wealthy Mexicans and foreign investors enjoy a privileged existence, while the majority can barely feed themselves, debt peonage spreads, and strikes are repressed by the army (SEP 1976-7, 155-61, 198-203).

At first glance, the *Porfiriato* of the Salinas-Zedillo texts is familiar territory: under the umbrella of political stability, the economy flourishes and the culture advances, while democracy is denied, Indians lose their lands, and strikes are put down. But the relative weight of these elements and the way they are treated differentiate these texts from all their predecessors. In particular, social and cultural concerns are subordinated to an intense focus on economic “modernization”—including economic growth, the extension of the railroads, the expansion of commercial agriculture, mining and manufacturing.

The exposition repeatedly returns to the role of foreign investment in Porfirian Mexico. In contrast to the López-Mateos and

6. Emphasis added. See also SEP 1960a,113-4 and SEP 1966, 223-6. For simplicity’s sake, citations will attribute all official texts to their publisher, the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP). Authorship, if indicated in the textbook, is listed in the bibliography. Some editions do not list authors. Sometimes later editions incorporate changes made by SEP, rather than the authors. The publication dates cited are taken from the title page or copyright data. Printing dates, if different, are indicated in the bibliography. In the texts, no clear distinction is made between printings and editions. The “sixth edition” may simply be the sixth printing

Echeverría texts, the Salinas-Zedillo histories regard the regime's openness to foreign capital as an unqualified good. In a quick, end-of-the-chapter summary of "principal ideas," the authors conclude that the Díaz government's "good administration . . . attracted foreign investment, which promoted economic growth." (SEP 1992, 99). The accumulation of large landholdings in the hands of foreigners, a concern of the predecessor texts, is never alluded to in the 1992 texts (SEP 1960b, 151; SEP 1976-7a, 156).

In contrast to the earlier textbooks and the standard scholarly literature, the Salinas-Zedillo authors are reticent about class structure and class conflict in Porfirian Mexico.⁷ They seem uncomfortable with class terminology. Even "middle class," a benign term used in earlier histories is studiously avoided here.⁸ The 1992 texts refer, without further explanation, to "new social groups" and "young professionals" (SEP 1992, 105).⁹ There is no privileged or wealthy class, by any name, in the *Porfiriato* as portrayed in the Salinas-Zedillo texts.¹⁰ Even big landowners are absent. This lacuna forces the authors to depend on inanimate historical agents to explain developments in the countryside. The 1992 texts recognize that rural tensions were growing as peasant communities were stripped of their lands, but attribute the process to "the porfirian policy of progress," the extension of the rail system, and the expansion of sugar cane, hemp, and cotton cultivation (rather than powerful railroad *companies* or rich landowners). Students learn that "commercial crops grew at the expense of the lands of [peasant] communities"—as if such crops sprouted spontaneously on peasant lands (SEP 1992, 99, 102, 106).

In setting the stage for the 1910 Revolution, the Salinas-Zedillo authors examine rising lower-class dissatisfaction, but their account is abstract and schematic. For example, they report that the "growth of [manufacturing] formed a working class (*clase obrera*) that wanted to improve its conditions of work." This is the sole use of "class" in the chapters on the *Porfiriato* and students who encounter the term embedded in this peculiar construction might have a hard time discerning its precise meaning. The text fails to describe the conditions that workers wanted to improve or explain

7. Recent scholarly works whose treatment of the *Porfiriato* is illustrative of this concern with class includes Aguilar Camín and Meyer 1993 (whose first author, ironically, was one of the two principal authors of the 1992 texts), Hart 1987, Meyer and Sherman 1995, and Knight 1986.

8. The term is used somewhat dismissively in a López Mateos text (SEP 1960b, 151, 155) and more concretely in an Echeverría volume (SEP 1976-7a, 160).

9. "New social groups" apparently also includes factory workers.

10. There are, however, references to "investors" and "entrepreneurs."

who was rejecting their demands, though it refers to two strikes that were violently repressed by Díaz's army. Similarly the text indicates that many peasants who lost their lands had to accept "peonage." But unlike the predecessor texts it does not explain the meaning of peonage or describe the mechanisms of debt bondage (SEP 1992, 106; SEP 1976-7a, 156-7; SEP 1960b, 151-2). More generally, rural problems are discussed in reference to "the Indians" or "traditional peasant communities"—rubrics that seem refer to limited populations. The typically urban, ten to twelve year-old Mexican student of the 1990s, would come away from the new texts without knowing what she or he could easily learn from the López-Mateos and Echeverría texts: In 1910, the majority of Mexicans were peasants and desperately poor.

Partisans of the Salinas-Zedillo texts often point to the *Porfiriato* chapters as evidence that the new histories incorporate advances in the historiography of Mexico. The new texts certainly offer more information about the *Porfiriato* than their immediate predecessors. Especially in their emphasis on economic change, they reflect the scholarship of recent decades. But the same ideas are evident in the Echeverría texts. The main departures from precedent in 1992 are the uncritical treatment of foreign investment and the disinclination to examine class phenomena. Rather than representing the accumulation of historical knowledge, these differences reveal a shift in viewpoint.

Zapata and the Revolution

The *Porfiriato* long provided the postrevolutionary Mexican regime with an easy, seemingly unambiguous, negative reference point for the telling of modern Mexican history. The 1910 Revolution, in contrast, presented a difficult challenge. The leading figures of the Revolution—including Francisco Madero, Emiliano Zapata, Pancho Villa, Venustiano Carranza, and Alvaro Obregón—were adopted by the governments of the PRI as national heroes, but their careers were problematic material for official history.¹¹ All these men died violent deaths, typically at the hands of other revolutionaries. Zapata proved to be an especially perplexing figure. He was the charismatic leader of a peasant uprising, who, more than any major figure of 1910, was identified with a specific revolutionary ideal: agrarian reform. Yet he was opposed militarily, at one time or another, by Madero, Obregón, and Carranza, whose government arranged Zapata's assassination.

11. On the virtual canonization of Zapata and other revolutionary heroes see O'Malley 1986.

Official texts of the Cárdenas era embraced this history, promoting Zapata as mythic hero who sought justice for exploited peasants and was opposed by revolutionary leaders who had forgotten why the people had risen in arms; his assassination was a dastardly act (SEP 1935, 85-6; SEP 1939, 62-3). As late as the 1950s, commercially published history texts authorized for use in the public schools, echoed the *cardenista* assessment (Miranda B. 1954, 355-61; González Blackaller 1954, 277, 300, 321; Monroy Padilla 1958, 150-4; Nuñez Mata 1955, 186-9, 209-11). But the histories published under the Free-Text program reflect more hesitant, often ambivalent attitudes Zapata.

This ambivalence reflects the varied uses that have been made of Zapata's name and image in the decades since his death in 1919. The contemporary *zapatista* movement in Chiapas is the most recent in a long series of radical movements that have invoked Zapata's memory. At the same time, the ruling party and its affiliates have converted Zapata into the symbol of its putative commitment to the Mexican peasantry, often using the anniversary of his death as an occasion for noble speech-making by ranking officials (O'Malley 1986).

The assessments of Zapata's revolutionary career in the López-Mateos texts are inconsistent, reflecting their varied authorship. The third-grade book, devoted almost entirely to Mexico before 1810, nonetheless finds space to praise Zapata as someone who "fought tirelessly for the return of land that had been unjustly taken from the peasants" (SEP 1960a, 120). In contrast, the largely post-1810 fourth-grade history belittles Zapata's career. The text suggests that Zapata and others took Madero's presumably reasonable reluctance to order immediate restitution of peasant lands as "a reason or pretext" to revolt against him. Zapata later opposed Carranza for reasons left unexplained and was assassinated under circumstances equally mysterious in this account (SEP 1960b, 178, 159-68). The sixth-grade text is a world history with a summary section on the 1910 Revolution. Here students learn that those who fought for the revolution were "heroes," with varied goals and that Zapata was one of several leaders, including Villa and Carranza, who sought "a social revolution" (SEP 1966, 226-27).

Like this last book, the Echeverría texts view the conflict among revolutionary factions through a soft-focus lens. While recognizing that revolutionary leaders pursued distinct aims, they do not reveal that these leaders opposed each other with armies and assassins' bullets. The sixth-grade text, for example, observes that after the fall of Díaz, the revolutionaries were divided between "leaders like Emiliano Zapata [who] wanted immediate justice for

the peasants [and] others who thought that with free elections, problems could be resolved. . . ." (SEP 1979, 116-7). The account recalls that Zapata joined Carranza, Obregón and others to fight the counter-revolutionary usurper Victoriano Huerta, but ignores the deadly wars they subsequently fought against one another. Zapata's assassination is not mentioned.

At the same time, this sixth-grade text, which is a social history of the modern world, places special emphasis on Zapata. A famous photographic image of Zapata is transformed into an icon used throughout a key chapter on the great social revolutions of the twentieth century. In the section on the Mexican Revolution, the meaning of Zapata's role is driven home with a boxed excerpt from John Womack's *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (1968). Womack recalls a meeting at which Madero asked Zapata to disarm his men and wait patiently for the government to resolve pending land issues. In reply, Zapata aimed his rifle at Madero's gold watch chain, saying, "Look Señor Madero, if I take advantage of the fact that I am armed to take your watch away . . . and later we meet again, both equally armed, would you have the right to demand its return?" Madero is reported to have accepted the premise, allowing Zapata to remind him that the defenseless peasants of Morelos had been forcibly deprived of their land by a few *hacendados*; now armed, they expected the immediate return of their property. The text closes with a chapter on modern Mexico that lifts Zapata into an implicit pantheon of national heroes that includes Hidalgo, Juárez and Cárdenas.¹²

The treatment of Zapata in the Salinas-Zedillo texts inevitably attracted the curiosity of politically aware Mexicans. Like many of his predecessors, Salinas had publicly celebrated the figure of Zapata, though his rural policies were far from *zapatista* in spirit. A few months before the publication of the new histories, the government had moved to reform Article 27 of the Constitution—a provision honored in earlier official histories as one of the fundamental achievements of the Revolution (SEP 1960b, 169; SEP 1966, 231; SEP 1974, 192, 207; SEP 1976-7, 207). Ironically, Salinas announced the action, which spelled the end of agrarian reform in Mexico, posed in front of a garish painting of an embattled Zapata on horseback.¹³

12. Neither the Womack box nor the modern Mexico chapter were present in the first edition (SEP 1974), though both were present in the sixth (SEP 1979). Boxed collateral readings were a stylistic innovation which, by the sixth edition, were used throughout the text.

13. This tableau is preserved in the PBS video, "Continent on the Move," in the *Americas* series (1993).

Readers of the new histories found Zapata reduced in stature from his earlier Free-Text incarnations. In the 1992 fourth-grade book, the meaning of Zapata's revolt is entirely hidden. Zapata is never identified with agrarian issues, even though land issues are recognized as contributing to the Revolution. Emiliano Zapata emerges as a purely military figure who leads a peasant army against Díaz, inexplicably turns against Madero, then opposes Huerta, and later contributes to "instability" by fighting Carranza (SEP 1992a, 62-3). With much more space to explore the period, the fifth/sixth-grade book is only slightly more informative. Zapata is, again, a military figure, with the same succession of enemies, except Madero. He continues fighting the government until his assassination (by persons unmentioned for reasons unspecified). Having mentioned, a few pages earlier, the destabilizing influence of sugar expansion in Morelos, the Salinas-Zedillo authors pass up the opportunity to use Zapata's revolt to link the social history of the *Porfiriato* and the 1910 Revolution. But the authors do, somewhat obscurely, tie Zapata to the land question. Noting disunity among revolutionary leaders in the wake of Huerta's defeat, they write that the revolutionaries "wanted different things [:] Zapata and the *zapatistas* wanted land. Villa . . . dreamed of autonomous producer colonies. Obregón and Calles desired a modern Mexico" (SEP 1992, 113).

Since the 1930s, the complicated history of the 1910 Revolution must have befuddled millions of little scholars. But Zapata is the one figure who represented identifiable social forces and fought for consistent objectives. Even the long list of his successive enemies has its own sad coherence. The offhanded treatment of Zapata in the Salinas-Zedillo texts obscures the meaning of his career and the Revolution itself.

The Church

The role of the Catholic Church, probably more than any other topic, has inspired polemics within and surrounding Mexican history textbooks (Vázquez 1975). From the time of Independence, conservative and liberal textbook writers have celebrated and condemned the Church. The radical texts distributed by the Cárdenas administration in the 1930s (and echoed in many later publications) were openly anti-Church and anti-religious. A fourth-grade reader in this tradition, describes the colonial clergy as "driven by insatiable ambitions . . . [to become] owners of vast landholdings worked by Indians for the benefit of the clergy itself" (SEP 1935, 44-5). Conservative texts replied in kind. According to a 1946 his-

tory, Obregón once took the archbishop of Durango prisoner and subjected him to multiple abuses, culminating in the removal of his pastoral ring, which Obregón placed on his own right hand. The author reports with satisfaction that the arm which Obregón subsequently lost to a battle wound was the one that “‘had profaned the ring” (Vázquez 1975, 205).

The Free-Text program put an end to this dual, divisive tradition by imposing obligatory official histories, which took a more dispassionate view of the Church’s role and, by and large, had little to say about religion, the Mexican Church, or the country’s long history of bitter Church-state conflicts.

Among the López-Mateos histories, the fourth-grade volume presents the fullest account of the Mexican Church. It also remains closest to the liberal political tradition, without being overtly anti-Church or anti-religious. Here the colonial Church is seen as a powerful but benign institution—missionary, protector of the Indians, educator, and philanthropist (SEP 1960b, 38-43). But students also learn that the Church “used all its spiritual power” to oppose the Independence movement and resist the reformist constitution of 1857 and that the “Catholic clergy” kept the poor “silent and passive” during the *Porfiriato* (SEP 1960b, 53, 104, 149). While the Church-state struggles of the last century are explored in ample detail, they are barely recognized after 1910. Summarizing Calles’s presidency, the book denies the Cristero War with a vague reference to “a serious political-religious conflict between public power and the Catholic clergy” (SEP 1960b, 172). The other López-Mateos era texts eschew negative observations about Church-state relations and provide only minimal coverage of the post-colonial Church (SEP 1960a, 1964, 1966).

The treatment of the Church in the Echeverría texts is generally inoffensive. The books preserve their predecessors’ benign conception of the colonial Church and present a dispassionate account of the Reform era. They have nothing to say about the Cristero War or related Church-state conflicts in the 1920s. The fourth-grade volume, in a neutral, factual voice, lists the “high clergy” among those who wanted to preserve Spanish rule. It passes up the opportunity to comment on the Church’s role during the *Porfiriato*. The other Echeverría texts exhibit little interest in the history of religion or the Catholic Church. One volume examines the Conquest without reference to Church participation.¹⁴

Salinas presided over an era of improving Church-state rela-

14. The text (SEP 1976,104-17) stresses economic geography, which may in part explain this exclusion.

tions. His government reopened diplomatic relations with the Vatican and removed the anticlerical provisions of the 1917 Constitution. Against this backdrop, the benign treatment of the Church in the 1992 texts might have drawn critical scrutiny. That it did not is indicative of the extent to which popular passions surrounding the role of the Church have dissipated, perhaps with the help of earlier free texts.

In general, the Salinas-Zedillo texts approach Church history in the same detached mood as the Echeverría texts. At some points they show greater willingness to examine sensitive topics. The new texts refer, for example, to the considerable wealth and power accumulated by the colonial Church, to political conflicts between Church and royal authorities in New Spain, and to the transformation of the Virgin de Guadalupe into a national symbol. On the other hand, they do not mention Bartolomé de las Casas, who appears in the two previous generations of texts (SEP 1960a, 103; SEP 1976-7a, 67) or otherwise refer to the role of the Church as protector of the Indians. Summarizing the significance of the colonial period, the authors note that most Mexicans are Catholics and owe this condition (along with the syncretistic elements in their faith) to the colonial experience—observations remarkable only because they are missing in earlier official texts (SEP 1992, 65-6)

The treatment of the Church-state conflicts of the Reform era in the new texts is so bloodless that the Three Years War appears inexplicable. The authors show no interest in the Porfirian clergy as agents of social control. They note that the regime “practiced religious tolerance” (SEP 1992, 97)—a remark likely to mystify alert readers since there is no discussion of religious *intolerance* during the preceding period. On the other hand, this is the first official text to examine the Cristero War and recognize the bitter religious conflicts that marked the late 1920s.

The Salinas-Zedillo and Echeverría authors share a dispassionate attitude toward the Church that would have astounded earlier generations of textbook writers, many of whom could recall periods of religious war. Although uneven, the coverage of Church-religious topics in the Salinas-Zedillo texts is more ample than their treatment in the Echeverría books. This difference may reflect the growing contemporary scholarly interest in such matters.

The United States, Foreign Investment, and Mexican Nationalism

The Salinas-Zedillo texts were written at a time when United States-Mexican relations were under intense scrutiny on both sides

of the border. Salinas had invested the prestige of his government in the pending North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the United States and Canada. Although the free-trade pact was strongly backed by the Bush administration, American public and Congressional opinion were both divided. With national elections approaching in the United States, the fate of the agreement in Washington was uncertain. Under these circumstances, critics of 1992 texts accused the Salinas government of rewriting national history with the intention of pandering to U.S. opinion and undermining traditional Mexican nationalism.

Encouraging the growth of nationalist sentiment was a traditional goal of Mexican textbook writers. Vásquez (1975, 222) distinguished two nationalist traditions in pre-World War II texts: a conservative world view she describes as "*hispanista, defensivo, yankófono y pestimista*" and a radical view she characterizes as "*indigenista, revolucionario, xenófono y populista*." The only obvious meeting point of these conceptions was distrust of American power (a viewpoint which found obvious support in the long history of U.S. intervention in Mexican affairs and seizure of Mexican territory). As late as the 1950s, resentment of the U.S. role in Mexican history, often compounded with a populist suspicion of foreign capital, was evident in the passionate language of government authorized texts. Thus, Henry Lane Wilson, the American ambassador who plotted the overthrow of Madero, was an "enemy of the Revolution . . . who interven[ed] in the most cynical and dirty manner" (González Blackaller 1954, 284).¹⁵ American and British petroleum companies accumulated land through "an active campaign of plunder and crime, of fraud and bribery" (Miranda B. 1953: 312).

From the beginning, the free texts—perhaps constrained by their official status and the politics of administrations disinclined to offend the United States—avoided such language, even as they narrated the same sorry history. The López-Mateos text for fifth graders attributes the 1847 War to U.S. "expansionism," rather than "nacent U.S. Imperialism," the phrase employed in a popular text of the 1950s (SEP 1964, 162; Vásquez 1975, 274). The books for the fourth and sixth grades accuse Díaz of handing the economy over to "foreign capitalists," who grow rich at "the expense of the poor and often by plundering the weak," but they fail to identify the nationalities of these rapacious investors (SEP 1960b, 148; SEP 1966, 225). None of the texts in the López Mateos series recalls Ambassador Wilson's subversive role.

15. Factually, this is not an unreasonable characterization of Wilson's role. For recent treatments of this episode in scholarly histories see Meyer and Sherman 1995, and Aguilar Camín and Meyer 1993, 33–7.

The Echeverría texts likewise avoid heated anti-Yankee language. Their telling of the history of U.S.-Mexican relations differs little from the first series. If anything in the books was offensive to Henry Wilson's recent successors in Mexico City it must have been their *dependencia* perspective—more evident in general statements about the Third World and its relations with the industrial countries, than in the narration of Mexican history.¹⁶

The Echeverría texts blame the 1847 War on “the ambitions of the North Americans,” but, unlike one of the López-Mateos texts, they do not rehearse the disingenuous U.S. diplomacy that preceded the conflict (SEP 1976-7a, 144-5; SEP 1979, 90; SEP 1960b, 94-5). Fourth graders learn that many of their 1847 compatriots “for the first time, felt themselves Mexican before the enemy . . . a Mexican nation was being formed” (SEP 1976, 145). American aggression, it seems, contributed to the emergence of Mexican nationhood. The texts note that Porfirian prosperity benefitted “a few Mexicans and foreigners” and that the regime gave special privileges to foreign investors, but do not connect these observations with Mexican poverty, as did the first series, or refer to the nationalities of investors (SEP 1976, 156, 202). But Henry Wilson returns as the (unnamed) “United States ambassador,” who plotted against Madero with the representatives of other governments “because they wanted to help foreigners who had businesses in Mexico” (SEP 1976, 204).

In a sweeping summary of Mexican history, the Echeverría sixth-grade text concludes that the United States and France took advantage of Mexico's early disorganization to attack it. “In these unjust wars we lost men and territory.” Mexico persevered and secured its national sovereignty. But the passage concludes that “political independence” is “not sufficient.” For example, Porfirian Mexico built railroads and factories, “but depended, in large measure, on the United States and European countries because it needed capital and technology” (SEP 1979, 189). A close reader of these lines might conclude that US and European investment is, at best, a necessary evil—a view consistent with the rest of the book.

The Salinas-Zedillo texts' coverage of the American role in Mexican history is extensive but bloodless. At the same time, these authors are, by and large, no more reluctant than their predecessors to present unpleasant facts about U.S.-Mexican relations in the century before World War II. They attribute the annexation of Texas and the 1847 War to “Manifest Destiny” (defined as the U.S. drive to “dominate” the continent) and observe that the United States initiated the war on a “pretext” (SEP 1992, 81-2). The books

16. See especially SEP 1974, 161-76. This section celebrates the nonaligned movement and various national liberation movements. It is less than sympathetic to U.S. policy toward Vietnam and Chile.

recall the use of American “rangers” to suppress the 1906 Cananea mining strike, Ambassador Wilson’s role in the overthrow of Madero, the occupation of Veracruz, the Pershing expedition, and—in some detail—the long struggle with the petroleum companies, backed by the US government, over subsoil mineral rights.

If anything distinguishes these latest official histories from their predecessors, it is not a benign view of American power but their sanguine attitude toward U.S. and other foreign investment. In the *Salinas-Zedillo Porfiriato*, U.S. investment and Mexico’s growing integration with the American economy are consistently associated with progress for Mexico and opportunities for Mexicans (SEP 1992, 98, 101-3). Without singling out American capitalists, texts in the earlier series indicate that Díaz made overly generous concessions to foreign investors, that foreigners accumulated large landholdings at the expense of Mexican peasants, and that foreign companies discriminated against Mexican workers. No such reservations about foreign investment are evident in the new texts (SEP 1960b, 150-1; SEP 1966, 225; SEP 1976, 202). While providing greater detail about the Cananea strike than earlier texts, the *Salinas-Zedillo* treatment fails to note the apparent reason Mexican authorities drew on a U.S. security force: the mining company was American owned (SEP 1964, 225; SEP 1974, 161; SEP 1992, 107).

The *Salinas-Zedillo* texts are almost defensive in their description of Cárdenas’s nationalization of the petroleum industry in 1938. The episode receives only limited attention in the López-Mateos textbooks (SEP 1960b, 173, 184; SEP 1966, 231). The Echeverría fourth-grade history places the event in a dependency context by emphasizing Cárdenas’s conviction that Mexico needed to control its key industries and asserting that “most countries” believe that nations should “control the exploitation of their own natural resources.” That text also stresses that the oil companies “paid no attention” to a court decision upholding workers’ “just” demands for wage increases (SEP 1976-7, 213). The *Salinas-Zedillo* texts propose a narrower justification for the nationalization: World War I had demonstrated the critical importance of a secure energy supply for “internal activities” and military requirements. Other Latin American countries, the text notes, had already taken steps to control petroleum resources. The 1992 texts barely mention and carefully evade judgement on the wage question. They note that Mexico faced an international boycott after the nationalization, but stress that Cárdenas could depend on “the understanding” of the U.S. government, which wanted friendly relations with Mexico as tensions built in Europe (SEP 1992, 134).

In effect, the Salinas-Zedillo account, in contrast to the Echeverría texts, suggests that oil is special, a matter of national security—not like other resources or industries and certainly not a model for action in other sectors of the economy. Wage demands, stressed in the earlier version, appear irrelevant in the new history of the 1938 confrontation. But both versions elude the truly volatile substance of the episode. When they ignored Cárdenas and the Mexican courts, the US and British petroleum companies were challenging the very sovereignty of the Mexican state. Cárdenas roused broad patriotic support with his move, which may (like the 1847 War) have contributed to the formation of Mexican nationhood.

The post-World War II era receives limited coverage in the first two series of free texts. In a broad discussion of contemporary Latin America, the Echeverría text for sixth graders emphasizes the inequity of a world order economically dominated by rich industrialized countries and their transnational corporations to the disadvantage of poor Third World nations. This situation has given rise to popular movements seeking to overcome dependency and poverty. The Cuban and Chilean revolutions are offered as examples. The “rich industrialized” countries are not singled out by name. The United States, however, is alluded to as the antagonist of the Cuban revolution and backer of the 1973 Chilean coup.

Far from brooding over dependency, the Salinas-Zedillo texts celebrate the open economy, foreign investment, and the dynamism of the U.S. economy. The authors preface their discussion of Mexico’s post-war growth with the following observation:

The United States, winner of the Second World War, became the world’s most powerful nation. It experienced an economic expansion without precedent. *Mexico benefitted from this situation.* [emphasis added] (SEP 1992, 138).

The new texts discuss the 1982 economic collapse without revealing the pivotal role played by the United States in resolving the immediate foreign payments crisis. But, in a separate context, the authors obliquely acknowledge Mexico’s new dependence on the United States, observing that U.S.–Mexican frictions over Central America in the 1980s “reduced Mexico’s capacity to negotiate its economic problems with the United States” (SEP 1992, 149). The new texts present the Salinas government’s neo-liberal economic policies, including the NAFTA initiative, as a decisive advance over the discredited, inefficient policies of the past (SEP 1992, 151). In the concluding chapter, students learn that Mexico’s hopes for democracy, modernization, and economic justice rest on its new openness to world markets, imported technology, and foreign investment (SEP 1992, 159).

Like the first two generations of free texts, the Salinas-Zedillo volumes are neither reticent about U.S. abuses of Mexican sovereignty prior to World War II nor inclined to inflame anti-Yankee sentiment. What separates the Salinas-Zedillo histories from free texts is their relentless enthusiasm for U.S. and other foreign investment, and for integration with the American economy. Foreign investment, seen as damaging in the López-Mateos texts, a (perhaps necessary) evil in the Echeverría texts, becomes a limitless good in the Salinas-Zedillo histories. Dependency on the United States, is likewise transformed from a danger into an opportunity.

Three Generations of Controversy

President Salinas and his education minister were apparently caught off guard by the reactions to the 1992 texts.¹⁷ They should not have been. The two previous generations of official texts had provoked bitter national controversies. Perhaps Salinas and Zedillo believed that the new books would mollify those who had resisted the earlier series, while failing to anticipate that the new textbooks would find new enemies.

In 1962 and 1975, the most significant resistance came from the traditional right: business groups, the Catholic Church and Catholic civic organizations, and the National Action Party (PAN)—often centered in conservative provincial cities such as Monterrey, Guadalajara, and Puebla. In both cases, opposition was led by the National Parents Union (UNPF), a militant Catholic, private education group. Support for the texts came from a united PRI officialdom, including leaders of the government, the party and its corporatist affiliates. Among them were the two presidents, their education ministers, and spokesmen for peasant groups and labor unions, including the official labor confederation CTM and the teacher's union SNTE (National Union of Education Workers). Although there were scattered criticisms from intellectuals on the left in 1962 and 1975, many of the country's most prominent intellectuals, including the rectors of twenty-eight universities, rallied behind the official texts in 1975 (Monson 1969; Villa Lever 1988, 69-94; Arias et al. 1981, 64-5; CONATE 1962).

17. In separate interviews, author Enrique Florescano noted that Salinas "*no la esperaba en absoluto*" and Education Sub-Secretary Gilberto Guevara commented that Zedillo believed that the books would advance his presidential aspirations. In several interviews, Mexican colleagues of the authors concurred that they—presumably reflecting the expectations of Salinas and Zedillo—were also quite innocent of the texts' explosive potential. (One of the anonymous reviewers for *MS/EM* rejected this conclusion, commenting, "*Conociendo a varios de [los autores] no estoy de acuerdo con esta opinión de dichos colegas. . . .*").

Although the players were generally the same, the 1975 controversy did not reproduce the earlier debate in substance or attain quite the same intensity. In 1962, critics denied the *right* of the government to dictate the national curriculum with official texts. In 1975, debate centered on the *content* of the texts; critics were offended by the treatment of reproductive biology in the natural science texts and the ideological tone of the social science books. In February 1962 an anti-Free Text demonstration drew a crowd of 150,000 or more—certainly one of the largest in the city's history (Monson 1969, 148). This level of popular mobilization did not occur in 1975.

The Church was less inclined to confront the government over the second generation texts. Although certain bishops supported militant opposition, others were more cautious. In carefully worded collective statements, the bishops conference warned against violent protest and noted that UNPF was an independent organization that could not speak for the Church. The episcopate declared that the texts "contain affirmations and manifest ideologies unacceptable to the Christian conscience [but they] are accurate in many other respects" (Villa Lever 1988, 187-188; Arias et al. 1981, 65-7).

On the government side, Echeverría was less aggressive in his public defense of the texts than López Mateos had been, though he did not back down. The authors invited Church leaders to comment on the new texts in manuscript and accepted some of their suggestions. Later, the government negotiated minor changes in the same books with UNPF and Monterrey business leaders (Villa Lever 1988, 169-200; Vázquez 1995, 14-17; Arias et al. 1981, 65-8; *El Norte* 1992).

In 1992, Mexican textbook politics underwent a remarkable transformation. The contrast with the 1962 and 1975 texts could not be greater. The enemies of the old texts became the defenders of the new histories. The once-solid rock of officialdom crumbled, leaving a few vocal supporters, some determined opponents, and many silent observers. Mexican intellectuals, who generally backed the official texts in 1975, were especially prominent in the 1992 opposition. Unlike their predecessors, Salinas and Zedillo backed away from the controversy, which they had never anticipated, and finally from the texts themselves.

First reactions were often the most revealing. The president of UNPF, speaking shortly after the unveiling of the texts at Los Pinos, characterized the texts as "the real history of Mexico" and recommended their use in affiliated private schools. The books, he said, "reconcile us with the past." Later in the debate, UNPF would reit-

erate its objection to mandatory texts, but the organization did not hesitate to criticize public school teachers who were boycotting the new books (*Jornada*, 8 August and 2 September; *El Norte*, 8 August 1992).

That same day the Mexican Employers Confederation (COPARMEX), a key private sector organization that had criticized the Echeverría texts, endorsed the new texts. According to a COPARMEX bulletin, the books reflected a historic advance, "a change in mentality," and a contribution to ending division among Mexicans. The texts told the "the facts as they were" without "glorifying" or "demonizing" historic figures. (*Jornada* 8 August 1992). COPARMEX would continue to defend the books and attack their critics (*Universal* 26 September 1992).

The Church's response was slower in coming, but also supportive. More than a month after the controversy began, the episcopate issued a lengthy statement praising the authors' "considerable effort to present national history with objectivity and clarity." The bishops interpreted the books as a step "toward reconciliation with our historic past" (a phrase similar to that used by the UNPF leader). Ironically, the bishops were not wholly satisfied with the portrayal of their own institution in the new histories. They found undue emphasis on the colonial Church's role as financier to the rich and insufficient attention to its roles as evangelizer, educator, and benefactor. But the bishops directed their strongest language at those who were resisting the books: "We find especially reproachable and immoral the attitude of those who are attempting to take advantage of this dispute to confuse public opinion. . . ." (*Jornada* and *Excelstor*, 12 September 1992).¹⁸

In Congress, the most ardent defender of the books was PAN leader and future presidential candidate, Diego Fernández de Cevallos, who said he had received them with "joy"—not because they were perfect, he insisted, but because they represented a positive new direction in education (*Financiero*, 3 September 1992). In a subsequent statement, written for the daily *El Universal* (13 September 1994), the party reiterated its opposition to mandatory, official texts, while suggesting that the 1992 histories had virtually overcome their official character by rejecting the narrow, biased, Manichaean vision of the old texts. While the old enemies of the Free-Text program concurred in their positive reactions to the new

18. This statement may have hidden some differences among the bishops. Days earlier, Bishop Felipe Aguirre Franco of Tuxla Gutiérrez was quoted as condemning the texts as "openly anti-religious, incomplete, and mutilated" (*Universal*, 3 September 1992).

texts, the once unified “revolutionary family” led by the PRI was at odds with itself. The first congressional response, which came a month after the issue had surfaced, was indicative. On September 2, the issue was debated in the Permanent Committee of the Congress, with the leftist opposition Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD) leading the attack. For the better part of six hours, Deputy Fernández de Cevallos and PRD Senator Porfirio Muñoz Ledo (a former president of the PRI and Secretary of Education under López Portillo) “exchanged adjectives” (*Financiero*, 3 September 1992). What was remarkable about the debate, aside from the prominent, antagonistic role played by a former PRI notable, was the virtual silence of Muñoz Ledo’s old colleagues in the governing party. By all accounts, they sat on their hands through most of the debate, leaving the defense to Fernández de Cevallos. The PRI’s major intervention consisted of a fax from the education ministry, read haltingly by a PRI legislator (*Financiero*, *Jornada*, and *El Norte*, 3 September 1992).

The apparent disarray of the PRI delegation reflected division within wider officialdom, especially SNTE, the teachers union.¹⁹ SNTE had strongly backed the government in the 1962 and 1975 Free-Text controversies. But in 1992, the union’s large dissident movement CNTE (National Coordinator of Educational Workers) played a leading role in rallying opposition to the new history texts. CNTE organized anti-text demonstrations and propagated a critique of the books that appealed to the country’s generally nationalistic public schoolteachers. By early September, CNTE had induced some of the union’s larger locals to announce that their members would refuse to use the books. SNTE Secretary General Elba Esther Gordillo, indebted to the Salinas administration that installed her in 1989, had appeared with Salinas and Zedillo when the histories were first introduced and refrained from criticizing them during the early weeks of the controversy. But Gordillo gradually yielded to pressure from below, especially after locals began to join the boycott campaign, and accepted the notion that the books were fundamentally flawed (SNTE 1992; Gordillo 1992; Aguilar Camín 1992a).

SNTE was amply represented in the Congress, where CNTE-PRD affiliated legislators such as Deputy Jesús Martín del Campo actively opposed the books. But observers noted that even the mainstream SNTE-PRI legislators rejected the new official histories.²⁰

19. This account of SNTE’s role draws on interviews with Gilberto Guevara, Jesús Martín del Campo, and articles from *Financiero*, *Jornada*, and *El Norte* and Russell 1994, 294–7

20. Gilberto Guevara, Subsecretary of SEP, and PRD Deputy Jesús Martín del

One of the most vocal critics of the texts in the PRI delegation was Senator Carlos Jonguitud, SNTE's long-time strongman, who had been forced out of the union leadership by Salinas in 1989 (*Financiero*, 2 September 1992).

Jonguitud's objections to the 1992 texts included what he regarded as their unfair treatment of José López Portillo and Luis Echeverría. His sentiments were presumably shared by many former associates and supporters of the two ex-presidents. López Portillo and Echeverría communicated their own dissatisfaction with the texts to Salinas. López Portillo received a visit from the unlucky Zedillo, sent by Salinas to hear his complaint (*Financiero*, 28 August and 2 September 1992; *Universal* 13 and 23 September 1992).

Another crucial source of opposition to the texts from within Mexican officialdom was the army, outraged by the depiction of its role in the bloody repression of the 1968 student movement. Defenders of the new histories noted that they were the first official texts to acknowledge the October 2 massacre in Tlatelolco, days before the beginning of the 1968 Olympics. This startling admission was, however, less forthright than its admirers claimed. In essence, the 1992 texts say, "the army did it"—as if the military had acted on its own volition.²¹ Without denying that the army had fired on civilians, military officers insisted that they had performed, as always, under the orders of the civilian authorities (Wager and Schulz 1994, 15; Wager 1994, 17; *Financiero*, 28 August 1992; *Novedades*, 27 August 1992).

Convinced that their prestige had been injured and that negative ideas about the army were being planted in the minds of Mexican children, the normally reticent military did not hesitate to react to the new texts. Zedillo received visits from General Antonio Riviello Bazán, the Secretary of Defense, and General Alfonso Corona del Rosal, Regent of Mexico City at the time of the 1968 massacre (*Universal*, 12 and 15 September 1992). Presumably, the opinions of the military were conveyed to the president in a less

Campo interviewed separately in July 1994 shared this observation. No one has done a systematic study of the congressional response to the controversy, a topic worthy of attention. The very fact that the congress would provide a high profile forum for such an issue is indicative of change in Mexican politics.

21. The passage (SEP 1992, 143) states that a student demonstration was "dissolved by the army in Tlatelolco. Blood ran and the city was terrified. It is not known how many died." Gilberto Guevara, the SEP subsecretary handing the textbooks in 1992 had been prominent among leaders of the student protestors in 1968—a coincidence which must have added to the military's sense of grievance.

public manner. Two military officers in the PRI congressional delegation, General Ramón Sánchez Mota and Captain Germán Corona de Rosal (son of the general) joined the attack on the books (*El Día*, 15 September 1992).²² Deputy Sánchez Mota, chairman of the armed services committee in the Chamber of Deputies, reminded his parliamentary colleagues that the Mexican army always operates under civilian authority and asserted that the new history books gave children a negative, distorted image of the army, especially in regard to the events of 1968.²³ Coming at a time of strained relations between the Salinas administration and the military, the army's objections to the books must have added powerfully to the movement to recall them (Wager and Schulz 1994, 15; Wager 1994, 10-20).

The Salinas-Zedillo texts did, of course, have official defenders. A party statement on the controversy described the 1992 texts as an "undeniable advance for education" (*Universal* 13 September 1992). A PRI woman's organization declared its support (*Novedades*, 28 September 1992). But what was most remarkable, at a time when the enemies of the regime were mounting a determined attack on the new official past, was the silence of key sectors of officialdom. For example, the PRI-affiliated labor and peasant confederations (CTM and CNC), which had publicly backed previous generations of official texts, did not, it seems, participate in the 1992 debate. The leaders of these organizations may have been disappointed by the content of the texts; they may have taken pleasure in the discomfort of Salinas and Zedillo, his potential heir; or perhaps they simply took their signals from Salinas, who avoided public comment on the new histories after they became the subject of controversy.

Conclusion

By the end of 1992, political observers assumed that Secretary Zedillo's unfortunate contact with textbook politics had extinguished whatever chance he had of receiving the official nomination. The secretary, suggested an irreverent Mexico City weekly, "*perdió su boleta para la grande*" (*Quehacer Político*, 14 September 1992). Only the strangest twists of political fate undermined this judgement and carried Zedillo to presidency. At least some of the attacks on the 1992 texts were aimed at the Zedillo himself—

22. Mexican law allows military officers, on leave, to serve in the Congress.

23. *La Afición and Ovaciones*, 14 September 1992, summarized in Amezcua n.d.: Anexos.

presidential politics dressed up as historiographic dispute. More broadly, the textbook controversy was a surrogate debate over the policies of *salinismo*.

There was, however, more substance to debate than these hidden agendas might suggest. The selected comparisons, developed above, between the Salinas-Zedillo texts and the two preceding generations of official texts demonstrate significant interpretative differences, suggestive of a shift in ideological perspective on the part of the Mexican regime. True, ideological consistency has never been the hallmark of the PRI. And, if there has been a coherent shift, it began before Salinas became president. But it does appear that the gap between official history and fundamental national policies had, by 1992, become so wide that Salinas, Zedillo, and the intellectuals associated with them felt pressured to close the breach. (The direct involvement of Salinas and Zedillo in the creation of the new texts is worth reemphasizing here).

Three broad themes or tendencies that distinguish the Salinas-Zedillo histories from their predecessors seem pertinent. One is the aversion to anything suggestive of stratification, exploitation, or class conflict. This tendency is clearest in the chapters on the *Porfiriato*, where privileged classes do not exist and fate of poor is difficult to decipher. But it is also evident elsewhere, such as in the treatment of Zapata's rebellion and worker demands in the petroleum industry.

A second distinguishing theme is the limitless enthusiasm for foreign investment and integration with the U.S. economy—which, again, is conspicuous in the section on the *Porfiriato*. It is also notable in the defensive interpretation of the petroleum nationalization, the focus on the benefits flowing to Mexico from post-war expansion of the U.S. economy, and, most remarkably, in the concluding chapter's assertion that economic growth, social justice and democracy will all flow from foreign investment, imported technology and openness to world markets.

A third theme, with implications for the other two, is a concern with "modernization." It is modernization that is celebrated in these texts, from the *Porfiriato* chapters to the closing observations on the sources of growth, justice and democracy. Modernization is closely associated with foreign capital, technology, and markets and with the United States. If these are the sources of progress, the accumulation of large landholdings in the hands of foreigners or the ownership of the oil industry should not be significant concerns. Admittedly, some Mexicans may, in the short run, be hurt by modernization, as were the peasants of the *Porfiriato*. But this is the in-

evitable cost of progress—not result of the exploitation of one class of Mexicans by another or the indifference of a state under the influence of the privileged to the fate of the poor. Hector Aguilar Camín, the lead author of the Salinas-Zedillo texts would later use this modernization argument to absolve the government of any responsibility for the rebellion in Chiapas (Aguilar Camín 1994).

These three tendencies in Salinas-Zedillo texts mark relative, rather than absolute contrasts with preceding generations of Free Texts. The López Mateos and Echeverría histories were not based on class analysis, economic nationalism, or “Yankee-phobia.” Their celebration of Zapata’s revolt and Cárdenas’s presidency were mostly lip service from a regime little concerned with their ideals. But the interpretative shift evident in the new texts is sufficient to suggest the influence of a powerful new orthodoxy. Even lip service to the old ideals had become intolerable.

However great the ideological shift reflected in the new books, the government might have contained the controversy, were it not for the growing independence of the Mexican press and very real changes in the political system. The best of the Mexican media pursued the story aggressively, while providing outlets for varied critical assessments of the books and the unfolding debate.

This third Free-Text debate was played out on a transformed political landscape. The government obtained the support of the right-wing forces that had long opposed the very idea of mandatory universal textbooks. Leaders of organizations from the private sector COPAMEX to the Catholic Church were not simply praising the books but vociferously attacking those who were critical of them. The changed attitude of the bishops conference is especially remarkable because the portrayal of the Church in the 1992 textbooks is not strikingly different from that in the 1975 texts. As the bishops themselves appeared to recognize, the treatment of the colonial Church was actually less friendly in 1992 than the 1970s. The bishops conference seemed to be responding to the government rather than the texts themselves, when it issued its statement of support. Likewise, the enthusiastic backing the books received from the PAN leadership seemed to extend well beyond the immediate issue. Its response to the texts suggests a more generalized rapprochement between the Mexican regime and the traditional right.

While the 1992 textbook controversy disclosed new support for the regime from the right, it also revealed an erosion of support and discipline within officialdom. Teachers, parliamentarians, for-

mer presidents, and even military officers were open in their opposition. Corporatist leaders who would once have automatically supported the regime in a public controversy, sat silent. Salinas and Zedillo found to their apparent surprise that they could not impose their will on the revolutionary family. For some future historian, this episode may provide early evidence of a process of disintegration of the ruling elite, subsequently dramatized in the events of 1994 and 1995.

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