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The Next Mexican Revolution

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On a hill overlooking the pastel homes and cobblestone streets of the colonial city of Guanajuato stands the colossal statue of *el pipila*, the silver miner who set fire to the massive wooden doors of the town's fortress in 1810, delivering it to the insurgent army. With his torch held high, *el pipila* is Mexico's Statue of Liberty, commemorating independence from Spain. He is also a reminder of unfinished business, of a yearning for liberty frustrated by new forms of authoritarian rule. Inscribed on the statue's base is a reminder—dated 1939—that “there remain other fortresses to set ablaze.”

Converted into a museum, the fortress chronicles the history of a rebellious, bellwether, state. It was from Guanajuato that the priest Miguel Hidalgo launched the war of independence in 1810; and from this bastion of 19th-century liberalism, Benito Juárez prevailed over the conservatives half a century later. Now, amid nationwide discontent over political instability, economic crisis, and corruption, Guanajuato is again spearheading revolution.

Turning Politics Upside Down

While armed rebellions in the southern states of Chiapas and Guerrero grab headlines, it is the revolution in Guanajuato that is shaping Mexico's future. Though armed with guns and a sense of just cause, the rebels have been unable to win either battles or elections, in large measure because they are based in peripheral communities in peripheral states. Their revolt is a last-ditch attempt to preserve a vanishing way of life. For every peasant who joins the guerrillas, scores leave southern Mexico altogether, seeking a new livelihood in central or northern Mexico, or the United States. Among their destinations is Guanajuato, a bustling industrial and agricultural state that better typifies the emerging Mexico. Dominating the fertile *Bajío* basin, Guanajuato straddles the geographic center of Mexico, 150 miles northwest of Mexico City, its location helping explain its disproportionate contribution to past and present Mexican history.

The Guanajuato revolt involves no armies, just hundreds of thousands of citizens armed with ballots. Guanajuato is one of four states that have broken the monopoly on power held by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) since 1929. And though the insurgent National Action Party (PAN) is anything but radical, its objectives—honest elections, decentralization of power, the rule of law—are nonetheless revolutionary in a country accustomed to authoritarianism, centralization, and one-party rule.

The chief protagonist of this civil revolution is a 53-year-old as feisty and idiosyncratic as any of the bearded and mustachioed personalities stamped on Mexican coins. He is a nationalist with a global outlook, a corporate manager and exporter with a strong social and ecological conscience. He is also a rebel within his own party. Impatient with the PAN leadership's gradualism, he argues that genuine reform can come only by uprooting the current political system altogether. Having achieved that aim in Guanajuato, he vows to do the same for Mexico by the year 2000, the date of the next presidential election. It is a theme that resonates among Mexicans weary of crisis and corruption. In May 1995, the voters of Guanajuato elected Vicente Fox governor by a two-to-one landslide, the greatest margin ever for an opposition politician in a Mexican gubernatorial election. A year later, he retains the support of 74 percent of the people of his state. That sort of appeal could make Fox the next president of Mexico, and the man who finally breaks the PRI's 67-year monopoly on power.

Fox began leaving his mark on Mexican politics from the moment he took his seat as a federal deputy in 1988. The Chamber of Deputies' first task was to designate a president-elect in the aftermath of an election tainted by fraud. With PRI candidate Carlos Salinas trailing in early returns, officials had shut down public access to the computerized vote count. Over the next few days, poll watchers found tens of thousands of ballots floating down rivers, and smoldering in burnt heaps along roadsides.

In the session in which the PRI majority nonetheless declared Salinas president-elect, Fox rose to the podium with two burnt ballots taped to his head, mocking Salinas' big ears. He then described a fictional visit to Salinas' living room, where the latter was explaining to his family why he was assuming the presidency without having won the election: "I've felt obligated to ask many of my friends to set aside moral scruples to help me achieve this victory, which I had to do because Mexico isn't ready for democracy...the truth is that the people did not vote for me; my friends had to stuff the ballot boxes." That set off pandemonium among the PRI deputies. Salinas, watching the proceedings on television, is said to have exclaimed, "Just who does this guy think he is?"¹

Who, indeed, is this flamboyant iconoclast who is turning Mexican politics upside-down? Fox's three most prominent traits are his nonconformity, ambition, and espousal of morality in private and public life. All three, one senses, are deeply rooted in his past.

Normality Was Never an Option

For Fox, normality was never an option. His mother was born in Spain, his paternal grandfather in the United States. His last name pegs him as the offspring of foreigners, as does his six-foot-four-inch frame. In a nation of immigrants like the United States or Canada, that might not be much of a liability. But in Mexico, a traditional society long suspicious of foreigners, being the child of an immigrant was until recently enough to disqualify a citizen from running for the presidency. With few exceptions, the country's ruling class consists of persons who were not only born of Mexican parents, but of fathers who themselves held high government office. Former president Carlos Salinas' father for example, was a senator and secretary of commerce and industry.

¹ *En Guanajuato, la acción principal es anular a Vicente Fox*, PROCESO #776 (16 September 1991), 6-7.

Ironically, in the one form of foreign exposure that has become acceptable for Mexican leaders—higher education—Fox stands out again. Whereas former presidents Miguel de la Madrid and Carlos Salinas obtained graduate degrees from Harvard, and President Ernesto Zedillo from Yale, Fox remained in Mexico. And in contrast to the secular education expected of PRI leaders, Fox studied with the Jesuits, at the Ibero-American University in Mexico City.

With the country's traditional leadership discredited by economic crisis and corruption, Fox has turned what might have been liabilities into political assets. As Ivy League Ph.Ds. bungle domestic affairs, Fox's more modest but practical Mexican education and business credentials make him seem better attuned to the country's political and economic realities. His religious values and upbringing are also reassuring to a public weary of scandals, such as the arrest of former president Carlos Salinas' elder brother Raúl on the charge of masterminding a political assassination, and the revelation that the same brother spirited away more than \$300 million of presumed kickbacks from the sale of state-owned businesses into European bank accounts.

Fox seems to have inherited his drive and ambition from his paternal grandfather. The senior Fox moved to Mexico from Cincinnati to relieve his asthma. Starting out as a night watchman, he gradually saved enough money to purchase a 5,000-hectare (12,355 acre) farm, which was pared down to a tenth that size by Revolutionary land reform in the 1930s.

Although Vicente grew up on the farm, he likewise set out on his own. After studying business administration at Ibero-American University, he began working for Coca-Cola as a route supervisor. Nine years later, he became president of Coca-Cola Mexico. After six years in that position, he declined an invitation to head the company's Latin America division, because it would mean leaving Mexico for Atlanta or Miami. He instead returned to the family farm in Guanajuato to run Grupo Fox, a consortium that exports shoes and boots to Europe and frozen broccoli, cauliflower, and Brussels sprouts to the United States.

Until 1987, Fox's only brush with politics came when he had to confront President Luis Echeverría Alvarez after PRI-organized squatters tried to seize yet another part of the family farm. But with the approach of the 1988 election, fellow-businessman and PAN presidential candidate Manuel Clouthier invited him to join his political crusade to end one-party rule. "Everybody complains in Mexico," Clouthier insisted, "let's do something about it." Fox agreed. Running for Congress to represent the city of León, Fox won by a margin of three to one.

A year later, Clouthier was dead, the victim of a suspicious accident in which a truck rammed his car head-on. Within a couple of weeks, the PAN, which had until then questioned the legitimacy of the Salinas presidency, struck a deal with the president. Arguing that Salinas had adopted much of the PAN's traditional platform, the party leadership opted for "co-governance" instead of what it saw as fruitless opposition. Though initially sympathetic with this approach, Fox became disenchanted with the lack of genuine progress toward reform. Promising a radical break with Mexico City, he returned to Guanajuato to run for the governorship.

The strain of the campaign broke Fox's marriage, forcing him to confront yet another taboo—against divorce in a Catholic society. Here again he was able to make a virtue of nonconformity. In a country renowned for machismo, it was his wife Lilian—a former executive secretary he met at Coca-Cola—who left him for another man, and he is the one raising the children. Though pained by the divorce, he says, "I saw Kramer vs. Kramer, and decided to fight for custody of my

children.” He won, and even now that he is governor, makes a point of starting and ending his workday early, so that he can return home to be with his children before they go to bed.

All four of Fox’s children (ages 7 to 15) are adopted. Still more unusual in a country where almost all adoptions are of light-skinned babies, the children are *mestizo*—that blend of native American and European features that characterizes most Mexicans. “The last thing I would think of would be to adopt a child because of some physical characteristic,” Vicente emphasizes. “One mustn’t look at a child with human eyes but with the eyes of the soul . . . I love my children more than anything in the world.”

Fox’s moral mindset tempers his individualism and ambition, and contributes to his ability to win the trust and support of middle and lower-class Mexicans. In Fox’s worldview, morality is all-encompassing: private profit can never justify social or ecological harm, nor can personal or partisan ambitions excuse harm to one’s nation or community.

Fox attributes his values and political vocation to two formative experiences. First, growing up on a farm, “where all my friends were poor; I went to their humble homes to eat and sleep, and be friends, something that is forever imprinted on my heart.” The other major influence was his Jesuit education, with its emphasis on the common good. “They teach you to serve your community and country; to work for—and be for—others. That’s why I’m in politics.”

An Enemy of the State

In Mexico’s authoritarian political culture, there are no greater threats to the status quo than nonconformity and morality, especially when they mean questioning *presidencialismo*, the cult of respect for arbitrary presidential authority. Mexican presidents don’t just wave the flag; they wear it as a sash of office, turning themselves into symbolic embodiments of the nation. Their party—the PRI—was until this August the only one legally permitted to use the national colors in its symbol. Anyone who would call into question the legitimacy of *el presidente*, as Fox did with Salinas, is treated as an enemy of the state.

When Fox made his first run for the governorship of Guanajuato in 1991, Mexico City used every means at its disposal to ensure he would not become governor. President Salinas personally intervened to reverse a court decision barring another opposition candidate—a carpetbagger—from entering the race. When this failed to divert enough of Fox’s support, the PRI followed up with wholesale fraud on Election Day. In at least 506 of the state’s 3850 polling stations, there were more ballots cast than registered voters.² Yet the PRI-dominated electoral commission declared the PRI candidate governor-elect.

But Fox would not give up. He led boisterous protests in the state’s major cities. With tens of thousands of angry citizens demonstrating in the town squares, the state became ungovernable, forcing Salinas to ask the machine candidate to step down. Then, in a deft counterstroke that tacitly conceded electoral fraud while denying the governorship to Fox, Salinas compelled the PRI-dominated state legislature to substitute a far less rebellious member of Fox’s party—the

² *Las cifras oficiales para el PRI en Guanajuato rebasaron hasta las esperanzas de Aguirre*, PROCESO 773 (26 August 1991), 14.

mayor of León—as interim governor. The president then stalled on holding a new election for the remainder of his term.

Mexico's Democratic Façade

Salinas' treatment of the courts and the legislature as appendages of executive power epitomizes the authoritarian realities behind Mexico's democratic façade. Since the founding of the PRI two-thirds of a century ago, no Mexican Congress has ever spurned a presidential initiative, nor has the Supreme Court questioned the constitutionality of a law or decree.

This is no accident. The PRI was formed not as a democratic party but as an extension of presidential authority. The Revolution of 1910, precipitated by an authoritarian president who resorted to fraud to secure reelection, made reelection impossible. So when the new strongman, General Plutarco Elías Calles, reached the end of his term in 1928, he formed a party that would allow him to continue to govern, through surrogates, from his living room in Cuernavaca. Though exiled by another strong-willed president six years later, his brainchild has magnified presidential powers ever since.

The secret to the PRI's success was its ability to coopt the most important sectors of Mexican society. To keep labor in check, the government actually formed labor unions, then incorporated them into the ruling party. Similarly, it organized peasants into *ejidos*, agrarian cooperatives that depended on the government for everything from land titles to loans for seed and fertilizer. High tariff barriers and subsidized oil, electricity, and rail freight won support from the business sector. Patronage employment in government and such state-owned industries as PEMEX (the national oil company) gave millions of Mexicans a personal stake in the preservation of the status quo. All of which removed any possibility of serious political competition.

One-party rule has given Mexican presidents the power to rewrite the Constitution and laws at will, and to use federal funds, police, troops, and prosecutors as they please. They also have extraordinary powers to intervene in the internal affairs of the country's 31 states. Not only are almost all state governments in the hands of the PRI, but they depend on the federal treasury for almost all of their budgets. That makes the Mexican political system highly centralized, accentuating its authoritarian features.

Until the 1980s, the system's saving grace was that it was highly inclusive. Drawing on the rhetoric of the Revolution, the PRI offered something for every major social sector: land reform for the peasantry, higher wages for industrial workers, government jobs for the middle class, and subsidies for everyone. For half a century, Mexico was an oasis of stability in the turbulent politics of Latin America. Then, in 1981, the price of oil plummeted, making the country's \$86 billion external debt (up from \$6 billion in 1970) unmanageable. Foreign loans dried up, and the government had to print money to pay its bills. In the ensuing inflation and devaluation, real wages fell more than 50 percent, the government was forced to pare subsidies, and the PRI began to split apart.

Carlos Salinas, who had to resort to fraud to secure the presidency in 1988, thought he could restore stability by substituting a new source of money—foreign investment—while reinforcing political controls. That entailed liberalizing the economy: reducing tariff barriers, privatizing state industries. But without political reform, privatization fostered cronyism and corruption.

Fortunes were made by friends and relatives of the president and by drug kingpins, while real wages declined. TELMEX stock soared while lower import tariffs wiped out small businesses and forced peasants off the land. By the end of Salinas' term, Mexico was coming unglued, with a peasant insurrection and assassinations of prominent politicians.

To his credit, President Ernesto Zedillo has recognized the need for political reform. He has even set a personal example, voluntarily relinquishing the informal powers of the presidency. These are the powers Zedillo holds as party chief, including the ability to instruct wayward PRI governors and mayors to step aside.

Without democratic checks and balances to take up the slack, however, state and local party bosses are getting out of hand. That is especially obvious in southern Mexico, where PRI power brokers have resorted to fraud to seize the governorships of Tabasco and Yucatán. In Guerrero, another hardline governor used the state police to massacre political opponents. Only after a videotape of the slaughter of seventeen peasants was shown on national television was the governor forced to take a leave of absence.

For real reform to emerge from within the PRI, the president would have to use his extraordinary powers against the forces of reaction within his own party. But that would mean fracturing the party, something Zedillo has been unwilling to do.

Turning to the Opposition

With the PRI unable to deliver credible reform, Mexicans are increasingly turning to the major opposition party, the PAN. Formed in 1939, the PAN has always represented the liberal side of Mexico's revolutionary tradition—clean elections, free markets, the rule of law. Though frequently described as a Mexican counterpart to the Republican Party, points of convergence tend to be limited to social issues, such as abortion and homosexuality, where the PAN has endorsed Catholic moral doctrine. Unlike the GOP, however, the PAN is not linked to the interests of the rich. That is because the PRI has coopted the upper class with special favors to big business, leaving the PAN almost exclusively a party of the middle class. A loose analogy could be made to a hypothetical GOP limited to the Christian Coalition and Reagan Democrats—highly populist, nationalist, family-oriented, and suspicious of trade deals negotiated by economic elites.

Reflecting its social base, the PAN's greatest weakness has been its failure to address the problem of poverty in a country where most inhabitants are poor. That has historically restricted its appeal to no more than a third of the electorate, except in some of the relatively more prosperous northern states and larger cities. Now that the PAN sees an opportunity to wrest support of new segments of the electorate from the PRI, that is changing.

Spearheading the effort to build a new PAN majority is Vicente Fox. In the spring of 1995, with Salinas discredited and in exile, Fox made a second run for the governorship of Guanajuato. This time he proved unstoppable, for three reasons. He had been vindicated in his criticisms of Salinas; the interim PAN governor had formed an independent electoral commission; and Fox won by such an overwhelming margin that any attempt to interfere would have been unthinkable.

The key to that margin was Fox's deliberate courting of the rural and working class vote. To emphasize his difference from other establishment candidates, whether of the PRI or the PAN, Fox ran for office in shirtsleeves, promising not to be desk-bound, and never to wear a tie. It is a promise he has kept. The governor spends most days outside the capital, visiting the state's 46 municipalities. And even when meeting with the president in Mexico City, he wears what has become his trademark outfit: Western boots from his León factory, kakhis, and blue shirts, open at the neck, sleeves rolled up. Blue is his party's color, and his informal dress represents his affirmation of the work ethic and repudiation of the great divide between the grey-suited *licenciados* (college graduates) who govern Mexico and the rest of the population.

Change will not come easy in a country that lacks a tradition of democratic accountability and self-reliance. Yet Fox gives the impression of a leader who is both strong and patient enough to take on the system, and prevail. Leticia Calzada, a federal Congresswoman who represents another opposition party, describes what happened on the governor's second day in office. On a visit to Celaya, the most indebted municipality in the state, owners and fans of the city's soccer team asked for a new stadium. "No," Fox said, "that's the municipality's responsibility, and at this point you have greater priorities." Stung by such blunt talk, members of the crowd began throwing rocks, forcing the governor to seek refuge in his bus. "What can you do?" Fox told the congresswoman, "In a country where people have been lied to for so long, one has to tell the truth even if it means getting stoned."

We Have No Cash

Among the more lasting impressions of the two days I spent sitting in on the governor's meetings was his ability to say no. A PRI municipal president, accustomed to pleading for supplemental appropriations, found himself cut short. "You've come to ask for *lana* [wool, slang for cash], *pero no hay lana*." Some merchants from Celaya (a city whose boosters evidently can't take a hint) asked for half a million dollars to buy land for a marketplace. "That's a private task," the governor replied. "Our economic development agency can help you seek partners and private financing, but we can't commit public funds."

In place of government grants to promote economic development, Fox is substituting technical assistance from experts with practical experience. Fox likes to emphasize that his economic development team consists of successful entrepreneurs, not academic economists. The hands-on approach carries over to education, where his priorities are to place a computer in every school, develop vocational training, and encourage the state university to focus on the state's development needs.

Uncharacteristically for a businessman turned politician, Fox is also committed to vigorous environmental protection. As a farmer, he is worried about the draining of the aquifer that sustains the region's agriculture. His response has been to design an aquifer protection plan modeled on the one used to rescue the Ogallala aquifer in the United States. To tackle deforestation and the state's badly polluted waters, he has formed an autonomous state environmental protection agency and an environmental prosecutor's office to pursue violators.

But Fox's central objective as governor is to devolve power away from Mexico City and closer to the citizens who are the country's nominal sovereigns. His strategy for doing so is threefold:

build a genuine federalism, devolve state powers to municipalities, and encourage direct citizen participation in municipal government.

Among Fox's first acts as governor was to meet with President Zedillo, and press for a transfer of jurisdictions in keeping with the constitutional mandate that states be "free and sovereign in all that concerns their internal affairs." He got a receptive hearing from the president, who has a reputation as a decent man but weak leader whose rhetoric outstrips his political nerve. At a conference on federalism in the neighboring state of Jalisco (likewise governed by the PAN), Zedillo had earlier described Mexican centralization as "oppressive," "backward," and "inefficient," saying it should be replaced by a "renewed federalism." Fox took him at his word.

This past January, Guanajuato became one of several states taking part in a pilot project in decentralization. The state took over responsibility for agriculture, social programs, and health care. In the case of social programs (such as potable water, sewers, electrification), the state went a step further, turning over control directly to municipalities. The state was also supposed to gain control of roads, water resources, and secondary and university education, but the transfer was thwarted by federal bureaucracies reluctant to surrender their cash cows. Following another meeting in July, Governor Fox got a commitment from President Zedillo to break the logjam.

Fox is now pressing for action on what he terms "phase two" of decentralization. He wants the present federal-state agreements turned into law. And he wants to increase the state's share of tax revenues, to meet its new responsibilities. According to Governor Fox, 90 percent of all taxes raised in Guanajuato go to the federal treasury. Only 20 percent of federal revenues are returned to states and municipalities. The federal government has traditionally relied on this fiscal straightjacket to indirectly govern the states while maintaining a legal fig leaf of state sovereignty. As matters stand, Guanajuato still has to secure federal approval for disbursement of funds committed to nominally decentralized functions.

Fox is proposing an immediate increase in federal revenue sharing to 30 percent, and an eventual increase to 40 percent. In the long run, he would also like to decentralize tax collection itself, along the U.S. model, by transferring the power to levy sales taxes from the federal government to the states.

Although the Constitution already reserves property taxes for the country's "Free Municipalities," most have until now received only a fraction of the tax revenues to which they are entitled. Federal and state governments have collected taxes on their behalf, losing much of the revenues to inefficiency and fraud, spending a good part of it themselves, and conditioning delivery of the remainder on political loyalty. Towns that dare vote for the opposition have traditionally been punished by withholding part of their tax revenues.

The PAN's answer to such abuses is *municipalización*, municipal empowerment, which after four years' control of the state administration, is already well underway. The state has turned over responsibility for public works—such as sewers, drinking water, construction of primary schools, and the paving of dirt roads and streets—to the municipalities. Significantly, it is also transferring control over taxation.

Twenty-five of the state's 46 municipalities are now collecting their own property taxes. That has not only made them more independent, but better financed. To maximize revenues,

municipalities have reassessed property values, identified delinquent taxpayers, and eliminated administrative inefficiencies. According to Carlos Arce Macías, a former PAN state legislator and executive director of the Association for the Free Municipality, León, which pioneered this process with the first PAN government in 1988, tripled its revenues in just one year. Its citizens have responded by electing three PAN administrations in a row.

Mexican Empowerment

When Governor Fox signed over control of an industrial park to the city of León, I had a chance to witness the third leg of decentralization: citizen empowerment. It was “Citizen Wednesday,” and the interior courtyard of city hall was ringed with tables bearing the insignia of state and municipal departments, from the police and transit authority to the state attorney general’s office. Every week, townsfolk are invited to discuss their concerns one-on-one with department heads, including the mayor.

In a country accustomed to vertical rule, this again is revolutionary. Citizens are learning they have a right to expect service from elected officials, reinforced by a computerized system that keeps track of their complaints until they are resolved. Public officials, on the other hand, are being made accountable. Fox has had signs posted in state offices that ask, “How is what I am doing contributing to the material and spiritual progress of Guanajuato?”

Looking at Mexico’s relations with its North American neighbors, Fox asks the same question, substituting Mexico for Guanajuato. By that standard, he argues, NAFTA falls short, having been negotiated with partisan political objectives. President Salinas was preoccupied with implementing the trade deal before the end of his term, in order to keep the PRI in office and bolster his chances to head the World Trade Organization. That meant rushing NAFTA into operation too fast. Spain, by contrast, went through an orderly ten-year transition into the European Union, in the course of which its laws and institutions were democratized and brought into conformity with the rest of Europe.

To keep the PRI in power, Salinas also overvalued the peso. That made imports affordable, contributing to an illusion of prosperity that secured middle class votes for the PRI in the August 1994 presidential election. But it crippled the Mexican export industries NAFTA was intended to support, such as agriculture and apparel. And it led to a devaluation of the peso and economic crisis.

Placing the Mexican economy on a firmer footing, Fox argues, will require major changes both in Mexico and in the U.S.-Mexican bilateral relationship. To gain the confidence of its own citizens as well as foreigners, Mexico will need a genuinely democratic, and fully accountable, government. The United States, on the other hand, needs to better appreciate the importance of Mexico—for better or for worse—to its own future. Because the countries share a long border, it is in the interest of both to build a genuine partnership. That means forsaking any idea of quick gains through speculative investments such as short-term bonds, whose high rates reflect the risks of dealing with the present government.

Like the Japanese and Europeans, Fox insists, the U.S. needs to take a longer-term view of the Mexican economy and build direct private investment in assets, land, and technology. That is the

only way that the Mexican economy will grow fast enough to absorb the millions of Mexicans who enter the labor force each year, thus reducing immigration pressures.

A helpful complement, if the U.S. can be persuaded it is in its own long-term interest, would be to form a European-style regional development fund to improve communications and transportation infrastructure in Mexico, making the country more attractive to private investment. Either way, only a true partnership can transform NAFTA from its present anemic state into an effective competitor to the European and East Asian economic blocs. Hence, says Fox, “NAFTA should be seen as a first step toward the eventual goal of a common market.”

The Fox Phenomenon

How seriously should one take the Fox phenomenon? An opinion poll conducted by the University of Guadalajara in June gave Fox a 74 percent approval rating after a year in office. Such popularity fosters talk that he is *presidenciable*. Though Fox is coy about his intentions, his actions suggest anything but indecision and underscore his political acumen.

Until recently, the Mexican constitution stipulated that in order to run for president, both of one's parents had to have been born in Mexico. Because his mother was born in Spain, Fox was ineligible. Most politicians would accept that as fate; Fox instead launched a campaign to amend the Constitution. He collected hundreds of thousands of signatures, and recruited the support of leading writers and intellectuals, including Carlos Fuentes and Octavio Paz. It worked. In 1993, the Constitution was amended, but with a curious twist. President Carlos Salinas delayed implementation until the year 2000, to prevent his nemesis from running—and possibly succeeding him—in 1994.

Three years later, Salinas is disgraced and in exile in Ireland, and Fox is in the second year of a six-year term as governor, with no constitutional impediment to running for the presidency. Does that mean he will run? “When John Kennedy said he would put a man on the moon in ten years,” Fox says, “he didn't say who that man would be.” Fox's commitment to the Mexican people, he says, is “to put a man in *Los Pinos* [the Mexican White House] in five years.” It is too early to say whether that man will be himself, another member of his party, or a coalition candidate, but Fox is clear on one point: “it will not be a member of the PRI.” Given the lack of any comparably popular PAN contender, and the fact that the PAN is the only party in a position to take over from the rapidly disintegrating PRI, the odds are—for now, at least—high that that person will be Vicente Fox.

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